

Current Affairs of the Day

MGNREGA seeks ₹25,000 crores more

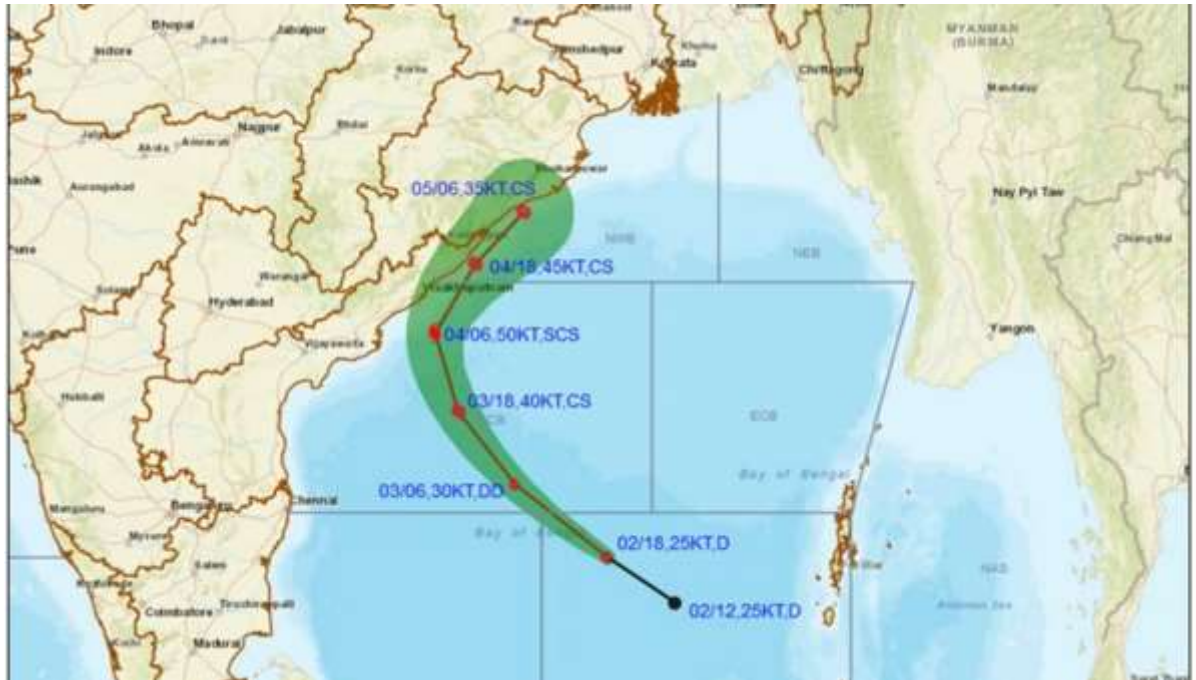
1. The Centre has sought ₹25,000 crores as additional funding for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme as part of the supplementary demand for grants submitted to Parliament after the demand-driven rural jobs scheme ran out of funds midway through the year.
2. The additional budget for MGNREGA was among the most keenly awaited, as pending payments for wages and materials have threatened to cripple the implementation of the scheme.

Rural distress

1. Continuing economic distress in rural India has led to increased demand for jobs under the scheme, which promises 100 days of unskilled work for every household at a pay of about ₹210 per day.
2. With four months remaining in the financial year, MGNREGA has finished spending the ₹73,000 crores initially allocated in the budget, and its financial statement now shows a negative net balance of ₹10,244 crores, including payments due.
3. Last year, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing lockdowns and widespread unemployment, MGNREGA, with a revised budget of ₹1.1 lakh crore, acted as a lifeline for the rural economy.

Cyclone Jawad to bring heavy rain to Odisha, Bengal and A.P.

1. Cyclone Jawad has formed in the Bay of Bengal and is expected to reach Paradip, on the Odisha coast, by Sunday with winds expected to touch 90 kmph as well as heavy rains in Odisha, West Bengal, and north Andhra Pradesh over the weekend.
2. The India Meteorological Department said the cyclone will briefly gain in strength and become a 'severe' cyclonic storm but is unlikely to make a conventional landfall. It is expected to skirt the coast near Paradip and plot a trajectory towards West Bengal.
3. Jawad currently lies about 650 km away from Paradip and is expected to reach the north Andhra Pradesh coast by Saturday noon.



'Dam Safety Act will bring in unified policies'

The Rajya Sabha passed the Dam Safety Bill, 2019. The Bill prompted a four-hour debate in the Upper House as several members voiced opposition to the key aspects of the legislation.

Highlights of the bill:

1. The Bill will lead to the establishment of the National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS) and the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA).
2. The NCDS, with expert representations from both Central and State agencies, will evolve unified dam safety policies and protocols for the entire country.
3. The NDSA will act as a regulatory body for ensuring the implementation of policy, guidelines and standards evolved by the NCDS.





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4. The focus of the two national institutions will be thus mostly on such dam safety issues that are generic in nature and of nationwide relevance.

5. Dam safety issues that are specific to an individual State will be essentially addressed by the concerned State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS). Each SCDS will also have representations from both upstream and downstream States, so as to provide amicable solutions.

An eye on dams

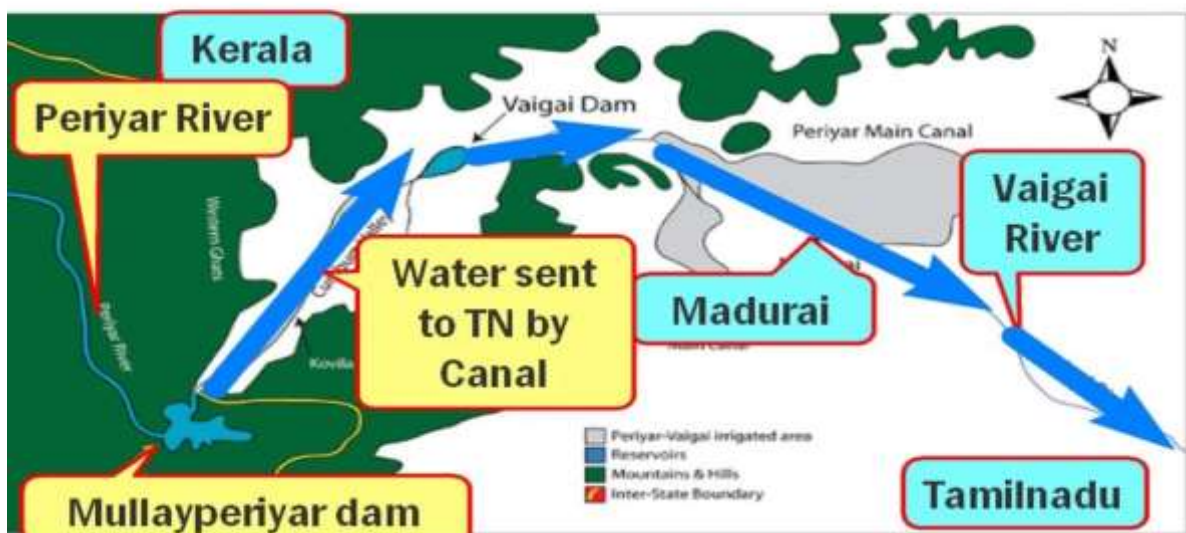
The Dam Safety Bill envisages the following functions for the National Dam Safety Authority:

- Liaise with State dam safety organisations and owners of dams for standardising safety-related data and practices
- Investigate dam failures and have the authority to fine States that are found amiss in implementing safety measures
- Look into "unresolved points of issue" between States which share dam territory and look to "eliminating potential causes for inter-state conflicts"



India has over 5,200 large dams; nearly 450 are under construction

Dispute between the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu



The Mullaperiyar dam

The best possible means of finding a permanent solution for the Mullaperiyar dam is perhaps laid down by the Dam Safety Bill. With the NDSA performing the role of a neutral dam safety organisation, it will be possible to bring



transparency in dam safety data and mitigation measures – an essential requirement for confidence building between the two States.

Additional facts about Dams

- Dams are artificial barriers on rivers which store water and help in irrigation, power generation, flood moderation, and water supply.
- In India, **dams higher than 15 m** or between 10 m and 15 m height that fulfil certain additional design conditions are called **large dams**.
- As on June 2019, India has **5,745 large dams** (includes dams under construction).
- Of these, 5,675 large dams are **operated by states**, 40 by **central public sector undertakings**, and five by **private agencies**.
- Over **75% of these dams are more than 20 years old** and about 220 dams are more than 100 years old.²
- Most of these large dams are in **Maharashtra (2394)**, **Madhya Pradesh (906)**, and **Gujarat (632)**.
- The **Central Dam Safety Organisation**, under the Central Water Commission (CWC), provides technical assistance to dam owners, and maintains data on dams.
 - CWC provides that each dam owner should carry out pre and post monsoon inspections (covering site conditions, dam operations) every year.
- The **National Committee on Dam Safety** devises dam safety policies and regulations.
- As per **Entry 17 of the State List**, states can make laws on water supply, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankments, water storage and water power, subject to Entry 56 of the Union List.
 - **Entry 56 of the Union List** allows Parliament to make laws on the regulation of inter-state rivers and river valleys if it declares such regulation to be expedient in public interest.



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India revokes PepsiCo's potato patent

1. Two years after PepsiCo India provoked outrage by suing nine Gujarati farmers for allegedly infringing patent rights by growing its registered potato variety, the company's registration of the variety has been revoked by the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights' Authority (PPV&FRA).

MINT GRAPHITI
A HOT POTATO ISSUE

WHY FCS MATTERS
THE FCS variety has lower water content that makes it better suited for use in processed food. It is used in PepsiCo's Lay's potato chips.

Feb 2016 PEPSICO receives plant variety protection rights to grow the FCS variety of potato.	5 April 2019 THE firm takes Gujarat farmers to court for growing the FCS variety.	25 April MORE than 190 activists urge the centre to ask Pepsi to withdraw the lawsuits.	26 April THE company says it has offered to settle the dispute out of court.	2 May PEPSICO issues a statement saying it has withdrawn the lawsuits.
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2. This judgment is a historic victory for the farmers of India. It should also prevent any other seed or food corporation from transgressing legally granted farmers' seed freedoms in India.
3. The FL-2027 variety of potatoes, used in Lay's potato chips, came to the limelight in April 2019, when it became the centrepiece for a David vs Goliath fight in the potato belt of northern Gujarat.
4. The potato was grown by about 12,000 farmers with whom the company had an exclusive contract to sell seeds and buy back their produce.
5. In 2016, the company registered the variety under the PPV&FR Act, 2001. Alleging that farmers who were not part of its "collaborative farming programme" were also growing and selling this variety in Gujarat, PepsiCo had filed rights infringement cases against nine farmers.



Why Protect Plant Varieties?

- To protect the intellectual property associated with the development of plant varieties in fulfilment of an agreement signed by India under the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- To recognize the rights of farmers arising from their contribution in conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources to develop new plant varieties.
- To stimulate public and private investment in plant breeding to accelerate agricultural Development and
- To ensure high quality seed and planting material to farmers by promoting the seed industry.

PPV& FR Act, 2001

- ❖ India is a Member of the World Trade Organization and also signed the agreement on Trade Related Aspects of the Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)
- ❖ Article 27.3 (b) of the TRIPS requires that member states have to protect the plant varieties either by patents, or by an effective *sui generis* system or by combination of both.
- ❖ India opted for the *sui generis* system for the protection of plant varieties giving importance to the farmers' rights, as enjoyed by them over centuries.
- ❖ India enacted the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Right Act, 2001
- ❖ PPV& FR Authority has been established under section 3 of the Act in November, 2005 to implement the provision of PPV & FR Act, 2001
- ❖ The PPV& FR Act is in conformity with the provision of ITPGRFA and also UPOV 1978 Convention.
- ❖ In tune with the concept enshrined in the Treaty, the Indian legislation on Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' rights, recognizes and protects the rights of the farmers for their contribution in conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources for the development of new plant varieties.
- ❖ The Act tries to balance farmers' rights and breeders' rights.



Breeders Rights (Section 28)

- An exclusive right on the breeder or his successor, his agent or licensee, to produce, sell, market, distribute, import or export the variety.
- A breeder may authorize any person to produce, sell, market or otherwise deal with the variety registered under this Act.
- Breeder shall enjoy provisional protection of his variety against any abusive act committed by any third party during the period between filling of application for registration and decision taken by Authority.

Farmers' Rights (Section 39)

Farmers right on seed :

To save their own seed from their crop and use it for sowing, re-sowing, exchanging, sharing and selling to other farmers provided that Farmer will not be entitled to sell branded seed of a protected variety.

Right to register traditional varieties :

Traditional varieties developed or conserved by farmers and new varieties developed by them are eligible for registration.

Farmers right for reward and recognition :

Important role played by farmers individually or collectively as community for conservation of varietal wealth of crop plants, now being recognized.



Farmers' Rights (Section 39)

Right to compensation:

In the event a farmer is unable to achieve the claimed performance of new variety, PBR holder will be liable to pay compensation to the affected farmers.

Farmers Right for protection against infringement :

Considering poor legal literacy prevailing among Farmers and to discourage legal harassment through infringement proceeding a safeguard to farmers against innocent infringement is provided in the Act.

Farmers Right for receiving free services :

Farmers are exempted from any fee in any proceeding before Registrar or Authority or Tribunal or High Court.

Shutterbug leads to a pretty find in Sikkim

1. The new species of butterfly, now named the Chocolate-bordered Flitter, also carries the scientific name *Zographetus dzonguensis*, after Dzongu in North Sikkim, the place where it was discovered.
2. Its closest relatives are *Zographetus pangi* in Guangdong, and *Zographetus hainanensis* in Hainan, both in southeastern China, close to Hong Kong.





A Survey suggests the fastest services growth since 2011

1. India's services sector activity expanded at the second-fastest pace in more than a decade during November, driven by a sustained rise in new work and improvement in market conditions, a monthly survey suggested.
2. The seasonally-adjusted India Services Business Activity Index was at 58.1 in November, fractionally lower than 58.4 in October. The November figure points to the fastest rise in output since July 2011.
3. For the fourth straight month, the services sector witnessed an expansion in output. In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion.
4. The recovery of the Indian services sector was extended to November. Although companies forecast higher business activity volumes, the expansion is expected to be restricted by price pressures.
5. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic and the related travel restrictions reportedly caused a further drop in international demand for Indian services.

<p>MAINS DAWP</p>	<p>Q1. Account for factors responsible for Dam mismanagement in India. Discuss the salient features of the Dam safety bill 2021 in this regard.</p>
<p>MCQs</p>	<p>Q1. Consider the following statements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Bay of Bengal is more cyclone-prone than the Arabian sea 2. All cyclones have a fully developed eye in the centre <p>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1 only b. 2 only c. Both 1 and 2 d. Neither 1 nor 2