Dam Safety Bill 2018 - TN Opposition

Why in news?

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A recent Tamil Nadu Assembly resolution demands that the Centre keeps the Dam Safety Bill 2018 in abeyance.

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What is the Bill on?

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- The objective is to help all states and Union Territories adopt uniform dam safety procedures.
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- The Bill is to address all issues concerning dam safety including
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i. regular inspection of dams
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ii. emergency action plan
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iii. comprehensive dam safety review
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iv. adequate repair and maintenance funds for dam safety
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v. Instrumentation and Safety Manuals
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- It proposes a National Committee and State Committees on Dam Safety.
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- The National Committee will formulate policies and regulations on Dam

Safety.
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What is the NDSA?

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- The National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) will mediate with the state organisations and dam owners.
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- It works for standardisation of dam safety-related data and practices.
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- Besides, it -
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i. gives dam safety assistance
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ii. maintains a national-level database of dams with records of failures
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iii. looks after design or construction of new dams
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iv. eliminates inter-state disputes
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What is the need?

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- Most dams in India are constructed and maintained by the states.
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- Some of the bigger ones are managed by autonomous bodies.
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- E.g. Damodar Valley Corporation or Bhakra Beas Management Board
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- There is lack of legal and institutional architecture for dam safety in India.
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- This has kept the dam safety an issue of concern for long.
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- Unsafe dams are a hazard and dam break may cause disasters.
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- The Centre has come up with the Bill when about 450 dams are being

constructed.
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Why is Tamil Nadu opposing?

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- The TN resolution proposed that the Bill had contentious clauses.
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- The Bill allows the NDSA to inspect dams situated across intra-state rivers.
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- This is being viewed as an attempt to encroach on the state’s powers and rights.
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- This is especially with respect to Dams constructed by the State Government in the neighbouring State.
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- It is said to cause various problems in their maintenance and operation.
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- It wants the Centre to arrive at a consensus with the states.
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- Till then, it asks the Centre to keep in abeyance the process of legislating on the Bill.
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What is the Mullaperiyar issue?

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- Tamil Nadu owns dams in Mullaperiyar, Parambikulam, Thunakadavu and Peruvaripallam in Kerala.
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- The two states have engaged in dispute over the Mullaperiyar dam.
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- Tamil Nadu government wants to raise the water level to 142 feet and carry out repair.
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- But Kerala has opposed it citing safety threats.
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- Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation (Amendment) Act 2006 limits the full reservoir level to 136 feet.
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- The Supreme Court had struck down the Act, and the order went against Kerala.
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- Eventually, an SC team inspected the dam and confirmed that the dam was safe.
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- Given this, the latest move by the Centre has made Tamil Nadu cautious about its authority and assets.
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- More objections are likely to follow from other states as well.
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Source: Indian Express

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