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Special Issue

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All about How Sardar Sarovar Dam

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *The Sardar Sarovar Narmada Dam is a terminal dam built on the Narmada river at Kevadia in Gujarat's Narmada district. Called the 'lifeline of Gujarat', it usually has no water for irrigation during summers. However, this year, in the ongoing summer, the dam released about 1.3 Million Acre Feet (MAF) water for irrigation between April 1 and May 31 in its command area of 21.29 lakh hectares. And for the first time in the history of the dam, as many as 35 dams and reservoirs, close to 1,200 check dams and 1000 village tanks have been filled with Narmada water this year, according to the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL).*

The status as on date

- As of June 3, the dam had 122.72 metres with live storage of 1,711 million cubic metres. With an inflow of about 15,000 cusecs, the total outflow from the dam is at around 43000 cusecs —of which 12,965 cusecs is being released after generation of power from the Canal Head Power House and 30,361 cusecs from the Riverbed Powerhouse.
- River Narmada is a classic case of Integrated River Basin Planning, Development, and Management, with water storage available in all major, medium, and minor dams on the main river and its tributaries, shared amongst four party states – Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra — in the ratio stipulated by the 1979 award of the Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal.
- Out of the 28 MAF capacity of Narmada basin, Gujarat has been awarded a share of 9 MAF, while Madhya Pradesh has 18.25 MAF, Rajasthan 0.50 MAF, and Maharashtra 0.25 MAF. The power benefits from the project are to be shared thus: Madhya Pradesh at 57 per cent, Maharashtra at 27 per cent, and Gujarat at 16 per cent.
- In 2017, the dam was raised to a height of 138.68 meters (spillway level until 2017 was 121.92 meters) and 30 gates were installed. The dam achieved its Full Reservoir Level (FRL) for the first time in 2019.
- It also attained FRL in the monsoon of 2020 but SSNNL officials say that the live (utilisable) water storage capacity of Sardar Sarovar Dam does not even make up for 50 per cent of the annual water needs of the party states and, therefore, the water management at Sardar Sarovar becomes critically dependent on the regulated releases from the upstream reservoirs in Madhya Pradesh, where hydropower generation ensures water inflow from time to time.

The water management initiatives that helped harness water

- During the monsoon from July to October, the reservoir operation is well synchronised with the rain forecast in the catchment area.
- The strategic operation of River Bed Power House (RPBH) ensures that minimum water flows downstream into the sea and maximum water is used during the dam overflow period, which is not calculated in the annual water share. These measures help in maximizing the annual allocation of water share.
- Similarly, in non-monsoon months, the measures for efficient use of the allocated share typically include minimising the conventional and operational losses, avoiding water wastage, restricting water-intensive perennial crops, adopting of Underground Pipelines (UGPL); proper maintenance of canals and structures and operation of canals on a rotational basis. In SSP, about 60 per cent of canals constructed so far are UGPL.

How has Full Reservoir Level (FRL) helped?

- Although the Sardar Sarovar Dam, after attaining its full height, was inaugurated in September 2017, it could not be filled up to the FRL of 138.68 meters in 2017 and 2018 due to monsoon deficit.



- However, good rainfall in the catchment in 2019 and 2020, ensured that it achieved FRL for two consecutive years. “The live storage capacity of the Sardar Sarovar Dam increased by 3.7 times after the permission to close the gates was received in 2017. Its real benefit is realised now with the dam filled upto FRL for two consecutive years,” an SSNNL official said.
- The annual share allocated to Gujarat during the last two water years was 8.86 MAF (million acre-feet) in 2019 and 10.08 MAF in 2020, respectively.
- “However, in 2019-20, reservoir operation and water management were constrained a lot because it was the first time that the dam was to be filled to full capacity and stringent safety considerations were to be followed in order to check the strength of the structure for the first time,” the official added.

All about the G7

Context: *Advanced economies making up the G7 grouping have reached a “historic” deal on taxing multinational companies. Finance ministers meeting in London agreed to counter tax avoidance through measures to make companies pay in the countries where they do business. They also agreed in principle to ratify a global minimum corporate tax rate to counter the possibility of countries undercutting each other to attract investments. The deal involves the US, the UK, Germany, France, Canada, Italy and Japan, and is likely to be put before a G20 meeting in July.*

Background

- The Group of 7 (G7) is an informal group of seven countries — the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom, the heads of which hold an annual summit with European Union and other invitees.
- Together the member countries represent 40% of global GDP and 10% of the world’s population. Unlike other bodies such as NATO, the G7 has no legal existence, permanent secretariat or official members. It also has no binding impact on policy and all decisions and commitments made at G7 meetings need to be ratified independently by governing bodies of member states.
- The G7 draws its roots from a meeting between the current G7 members, excluding Canada, that took place in 1975. At the time, the global economy was in a state of recession due to the OPEC oil embargo.
- As the energy crisis was escalating, US Treasury Secretary George Schultz decided that it would be beneficial for the large players on the world stage to coordinate with each other on macroeconomic initiatives.
- After this first summit, the countries agreed to meet annually and a year later, Canada was invited into the group which marked the official formation of the G7 as we know it.
- The President of the European Commission was asked to join the meetings in 1977 and following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and a subsequent thaw in relations between the East and West, Russia was also invited to join the group in 1998.
- Thereafter the group was named the G8 until 2014, when Russia was expelled for its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.
- The presidency of G7 meetings is held by each of the seven countries in turn, each year. The country holding the presidency is responsible for organising and hosting the meeting. The UK holds the G7 presidency for 2021 and has organised the conference for this Saturday at the Carbis Bay Hotel in Cornwall.
- Formal meetings will start on Saturday morning, with guest countries arriving in the afternoon. This year, India, South Korea and Australia have been invited to attend the G7 summit as participating guests. At the end of the summit, the UK will publish a document called a communique which will outline what has been agreed upon during the meeting.



Agenda

- The G7 summit provides a forum for member countries to discuss shared values and concerns.
- While it initially focused on international economic policy, in the 1980s, the G7 extended its mandate to include issues related to foreign policy and security as well.
- In recent years, G7 leaders have met to formulate common responses to challenges encompassing counterterrorism, development, education, health, human rights and climate change.

Key developments

- The G7 Summit has been the birthplace for several global initiatives. In 1997, the G7 countries agreed to provide \$300 million to the effort to contain the effects of the reactor meltdown in Chernobyl.
- Then, at the 2002 summit, members decided to launch a coordinated response to fight the threat of AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.
- Their efforts led to the formation of the Global Fund, an innovative financing mechanism that has disbursed more than \$45 billion in aid and, according to its website, has saved the lives of over 38 million people. More recently, the Global Apollo Program was launched out of the 2015 G7 summit meeting.
- Designed to tackle climate change through clean energy research and development, the Apollo Program was conceived by the UK but failed to generate traction until the other G7 countries agreed to support it. The programme calls for developed nations to commit to spending 0.02% of their GDP on tackling climate change from 2015 to 2025; an amount that would total USD 150 billion over a 10-year period.
- Despite its achievements, the G7 has also come under significant criticism and has been involved in a number of controversies.
- Until the mid-1980s, G7 meetings were held discreetly and informally. However, after discussions at a G7 summit in 1985, member countries subsequently signed the Plaza Accords, an agreement that had major ramifications for global currency markets.
- Their actions caused strong international backlash, with other nations upset by the fact that a meeting between a small group of countries could have such a disproportionate effect on the world economy.
- Following that backlash, the G7 began to announce the agenda for their meetings in advance so that markets could prepare themselves for potential changes in global macroeconomic policy. However, several countries and individuals still perceive the G7 as an exclusive, closed group that blatantly exercises their power over other nations.
- As a result, virtually every summit since 2000 has been met with protests and demonstrations in the country in which it has been held.
- The election of Donald Trump in 2016 also caused some friction between the G7 member nations. Ahead of the G7 summit in Sicily in 2017, Trump refused to recommit the US to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and criticised Germany for its trade surplus, threatening to block the US import of German cars.
- In response, German Chancellor Angela Merkel questioned the cohesiveness of the G7, saying that for the first time since the Second World War, Europe “must take fate into our own hands.”
- At that year’s G7 summit, member countries took the unusual step of excluding the US from their final communique, stating that the US was still considering its role in the Paris Agreement.
- After the 2018 summit, Trump once again caused controversy by tweeting his refusal to endorse the official G7 statement because he had been offended by comments made by Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau during a news conference.
- That year, Trump also asked that Russia be reinstated into the group, a suggestion that was rejected by the other nations. In 2020, the G7 summit was cancelled for the first time as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

India



- The G7 has been criticised for being outdated and ineffective in recent decades due to its exclusion of two of the world's largest economies in India and China.
- Several think tanks have called for India's inclusion into the group; however, some argue against it, pointing to India's much lower GDP per capita relative to other states.
- While not being an official member of the group, India has been invited to the 2021 G7 summit as a special guest, making this year the second time that Prime Minister Modi has been asked to participate in discussions. India will be particularly interested in the talks related to global vaccine delivery as both a major manufacturer and consumer of vaccines.

What is on the agenda this year?

- The G7 comprises the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan. The UK currently holds the presidency and has invited India, along with Australia, South Korea and South Africa, as guest countries for the Summit, which will witness a hybrid of physical and virtual participation.
- The theme is 'Build Back Better', and the UK has outlined four priority areas for its presidency: leading the global recovery from coronavirus while strengthening resilience against future pandemics; promoting future prosperity by championing free and fair trade; tackling climate change and preserving the planet's biodiversity; and championing shared values and open societies.
- The leaders are expected to exchange views on the way forward on global recovery from the pandemic with a focus on health and climate change.

How often has India attended it?

- Since 2014, this is the second time the Prime Minister will be participating in a G7 meeting. India had been invited by the G7 French presidency in 2019 to the Biarritz Summit as a "Goodwill Partner" and Prime Minister Modi participated in the sessions on 'Climate, Biodiversity and Oceans' and 'Digital Transformation'.
- During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's tenure, India attended the G8 Summit five times. In March 2014, Russia was indefinitely suspended following the annexation of Crimea, reducing G8 to G7.
- While the UK has invited India this year, the US under President Donald Trump had extended an invitation in May last year. Calling the G7 a "very outdated group", Trump had said he would like to include India, Australia, South Korea and Russia in the grouping of the largest advanced economies.
- Trump had suggested that G7 be called "G10 or G11", and proposed that the grouping meet in September or November '2020. But, due to the pandemic and the US election outcome, that did not happen.
- This year, after the UK's invitation, Modi was expected to travel to the UK, but cancelled the visit due to the pandemic situation in the country.

What should one watch out for?

- This will be President Biden's first visit to Europe, where he will signal his key message "America is back". He met British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Queen Elizabeth II and other allies at the Summit. He will continue on to a NATO conclave in Brussels on June 14, before his conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva two days later.
- Biden earlier held the first summit of leaders of the "Quad" — Australia, India, Japan and the US. This was aimed at increasing vaccine production and aligning their positions toward Beijing.
- Ahead of G7, Biden announced a major initiative to vaccinate the world against Covid-19: the US would donate 500 million Pfizer-BioNTech doses, with "no strings attached." The Summit is also expected to announce one billion doses of Covid vaccines to poor and middle-income countries on Friday as part of a campaign to "vaccinate the world" by the end of 2022.

What happened at the Biden-Johnson meeting?



- The two leaders signed a new version of the 80-year-old Atlantic Charter, as they confront Russia and China.
- The new charter will focus on cyberattacks, Covid-19 and its impact on the global economy, and climate change.
- This signals the importance given to global partnerships, a shift from Trump's America First policy.

Why is the Biden-Putin meeting important?

- US-Russia relations are going through a rough patch. Interestingly, the venue of the Biden-Putin meeting — Geneva — is where then US President Ronald Reagan held his first meeting with Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985.
- But today, the two sides don't see eye to eye. While Washington's intelligence apparatus believes that Putin authorised operations in 2020 directly aimed at manipulating the elections and hurting Biden's chances of becoming the President, the Biden administration has put sanctions against Russia for a hack and jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.
- The key element that is prompting Washington to engage with Moscow is to contain the damage in their bilateral ties, as the US wants to focus on its strategic rival, China.

What's in it for India?

- India has long called for reforming global institutions and groupings to reflect modern-day geopolitical realities.
- Trump's offer to expand G7 fitted into New Delhi's idea of being part of the global high table. With an assertive China round the corner, the US is calling all like-minded countries to partner in dealing with Beijing. If Biden and Johnson want to work towards constituting a global alliance of 10-11 countries, it will be an important signal.
- As India faces a massive shortage of vaccines, New Delhi will be watching the allocation to be announced by the US President.
- Last week, the US had said that it will distribute vaccines to India as part of its "strategy for global vaccine sharing", days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met key officials in the administration in Washington DC.
- While Biden made the announcement, Vice President Kamala Harris had called up Modi about Washington's plans to make vaccines available to other countries, including India. A US statement said the Biden-Harris administration will begin sharing the "first 25 million doses" to the countries as part of the framework for sharing at least 80 million vaccines globally by the end of June.
- This means India is likely to get vaccines from the US — both directly as well as through COVAX. Initial estimates suggest India will get about 2 to 3 million vaccines in the first tranche.
- Washington's rapprochement with Moscow will leave New Delhi extremely relieved as the US can then focus on China. While that is easier said than done, weaning Russia away from Beijing could be a game-changer in current geopolitics.