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Bhakra Dam Tilt Renews Focus on India's Ageing Dam Safety

8 June 2026 ·

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Bhakra Dam Tilt Renews Focus on India's Ageing Dam Safety

8 June 2026 · 2 min read · ·

Source: ujjyari.com — Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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HOW

WHY IN NEWS

The main wall of the **Bhakra Dam** in Himachal Pradesh is reportedly **deflecting about 1.77 inches against a permissible limit of about 1.03 inches**, prompting the **Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB)** to commission an emergency structural-safety study by **IIT-Roorkee**. The development has renewed national attention on the safety of India's large and ageing dams, governed by the **Dam Safety Act, 2021**.

ABOUT BHAKRA DAM

ATTRIBUTE	DETAIL
River	Sutlej
Location	Bilaspur district, Himachal Pradesh
Type	Concrete gravity dam
Reservoir	Gobind Sagar
Managed by	Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB)
Significance	One of India's tallest dams; a foundation of the Green Revolution in north India

Bhakra is among India's most important multipurpose dams, providing irrigation to Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan and generating hydropower. A deflection beyond the safe limit, while not an immediate failure, is a signal that warrants careful structural assessment.

WHAT IS BEING DONE

STEP	DETAIL
Emergency study	Commissioned from IIT-Roorkee
Broader assessment	Bhakra and Pong dams under the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)
Oversight	National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) under the Dam Safety Act, 2021

THE DAM SAFETY FRAMEWORK

India has one of the world's largest stocks of dams, and many are ageing past their design life. The **Dam Safety Act, 2021** created a national framework:

BODY	ROLE
National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)	National-level regulator for dam safety
National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS)	Evolves dam-safety policies
State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs)	State-level safety oversight

The Act mandates regular inspection, risk classification, and emergency action plans for specified dams. The **Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)**, supported by the World Bank, funds the repair and strengthening of dams across states.

WHY IT MATTERS

India operates over 6,000 large dams, a significant share of which are decades old. Structural ageing, **sedimentation** that reduces reservoir capacity, and more frequent **extreme rainfall** under climate change together raise the risk of dam distress or failure, with potentially catastrophic downstream consequences. Robust dam safety is therefore both an infrastructure and a disaster-management priority.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Prelims

- **Bhakra Dam:** on the **Sutlej** river; **Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh;** reservoir **Gobind Sagar;** managed by **BBMB**
- Safety study commissioned from **IIT-Roorkee;** broader work under **DRIP** (World Bank-aided)

- **Dam Safety Act, 2021** created the **National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)** and **State Dam Safety Organisations**
- India has **over 6,000 large dams**

Mains Angles

- 1 **GS3 Disaster Management:** Examine the risks posed by India's ageing dams and the adequacy of the Dam Safety Act, 2021.
- 2 **GS3 Infrastructure:** Discuss the role of the NDSA and DRIP in ensuring dam safety, and the challenge of sedimentation and climate-driven extreme rainfall.
- 3 **GS1 Geography:** Analyse the role of multipurpose dams like Bhakra in India's water and power security.

FACTS CORNER

FACT	DETAIL
Dam	Bhakra Dam
River	Sutlej
Location	Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh
Reservoir	Gobind Sagar
Managed by	Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB)
Safety study	IIT-Roorkee
Rehabilitation programme	DRIP (World Bank-aided)
Law	Dam Safety Act, 2021
Regulator	National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)
India's large dams	Over 6,000

Sources: *The Tribune, Ministry of Jal Shakti, PIB*

Source: Bhakra Dam Tilt Renews Focus on India's Ageing Dam Safety — Ujjiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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