

China Says Construction Of Xiluodu Dam Now Stopped

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China's environmental watchdog said the China Three Gorges Project Corporation will delay construction of the Xiluodu dam to comply with environment protection efforts.

A statement issued by the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) said the company will halt the five billion dollar dam and two other power projects until environmental assessment reports are approved.

SEPA ordered a halt to 30 large scale construction projects nationwide on January 18 for failing to file environmental impact statements.

As of late January, the Three Gorges Corporation, one of China's biggest dam constructors, had not complied, SEPA said.

But now company officials have been in touch to make it known they "have a more accurate, more comprehensive and better understanding of the environmental assessment law".

"Construction on the preliminary projects attached to the Xiluodu hydroelectric dam ... will wait until after an environment assessment report on the preliminary project is made and approved," Pan Yue, SEPA vice director said on the agency's website.

Separate assessments also need to be made and approved for other projects linked to the dam, including an impact report on endangered fish habitat in a state sanctioned nature reserve along sections of the Yangtze River, he said.

The company would also halt construction on the Three Gorges Underground Power Plant and the Three Gorges Project Electrical Power Supply Plant until impact reports are made, he added.

The crackdown on the projects was seen as a major effort by SEPA to increase its power and turn around some 25 years of spectacular economic growth in China that has largely come with scant environmental regulation.

The agency has also threatened to shut down scores of coal-fired power plants whose emissions do not comply with air quality requirements.



A ship passes through the five-stair-canal of the Three Gorges Dam in Yichang. China's environmental watchdog said the China Three Gorges Project Corporation will delay construction of the Xiluodu dam to comply with environment protection efforts. (AFP/File/Str).

China's air and water quality remain some of the worse in the world.

The crackdown has emerged as the central government tries to rein in growth and curb investment, especially in the power sector.

The Three Gorges company, a ministry-level state-owned corporation, was the builder of the world's largest hydroelectric project, the Three Gorges Dam, on the middle reaches of the Yangtze.

It has plans to build four huge dams, including the Xiluodu, in some of China's most scenic and spectacular mountain gorges on the upper reaches of the river.

Company officials refused to comment Wednesday.

"Concerning issues related to the project, you have to ask Three Gorges Project Corp., I am not clear about the specifics," Wang Fujun, head of the construction department of the Xiluodu Hydroelectric Project, told AFP.

China's enormous need for clean and renewable energy appeared to indicate that the multi-billion dollar dam projects would go ahead after the environmental studies are made, observers said.

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