

Protection of environment around Three Gorges Dam

(Xinhua)

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BEIJING -- The Chinese government has decided to take effective measures to curb environmental deterioration in the Three Gorges Project areas by 2020, according to a Cabinet meeting held Wednesday.

The government will properly handle the negative effects brought by the project to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River and improve the long-term mechanisms for geological disaster prevention, according to a statement released after an executive meeting of the State Council presided over by Premier Wen Jiabao.

The government will also increase efforts to preserve the ecological environment and promote biological diversity in the areas impacted by the world's largest hydro-power complex, according to the statement.

The main body of the Three Gorges Dam, which is located in the town of Sandouping in central China's Hubei province, was completed in May 2006 after 17 years of construction. The project generated more than 440 billion kwh of electricity by the end of 2010. It began operation in 2003.

The project has played a significant role in flood prevention, power generation, shipping and water resources use, the statement said. While at the same time, efforts were needed to address some problems concerning the well being of relocated residents, environmental protection, and geological disaster prevention -- all of which should be solved urgently.

The statement also pointed out the project's impact on shipping and irrigation and water supply in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

At the meeting, the government vowed to stick to the principle of putting people first and promoting sustainable development in post-construction work.

It stressed the need to curb water pollution in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, which affects eight provinces with an area of 633,000 square-kilometers. The area is also the nation's most densely populated, which means significant environmental pressure.

According to the statement, efforts should be made to increase oversight and control of the water pollution to ensure the safety of the drinking water.

During the meeting, the government also pledged to raise the standard of living for relocated residents through economic restructuring and improvements in the areas' infrastructures, and ensure the social security system covers all urban and rural residents by 2020.

Approximately 1.24 million residents in Chongqing Municipality and Hubei province were relocated to make way for construction of the project.

The Three Gorges Project was launched in 1993 with a budget equivalent to \$22.5 billion.

It is a multi-functional water control system, consisting of a dam, a five-tier ship dock and 26 hydropower turbo-generators.

By 2012, six more hydropower turbo-generators will be installed.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2011-05/19/content_12540937.htm