

Damming of Brahmaputra in China could trigger catastrophe

Regional government's in India's northeast Wednesday warned of a catastrophe if Beijing went ahead in damming the Brahmaputra river and diverting water into China's arid northwest provinces.

'Large scale diversion of water would adversely hit the state's economy and could even lead to environmental problems and affecting the surface water table in the northeast,' Chief Minister of Assam Tarun Gogoi told IANS.

The warning follows media reports that Beijing was planning constructing a dam and diverting water to its parched northwest and northeast territories, which includes the Gobi desert, from the mighty Brahmaputra River.

The 2,906 km long Brahmaputra is one of Asia's largest rivers that traverse its first stretch of 1,625 km in China's Tibet region, the next 918 km in India and the remaining 363 km through neighbouring Bangladesh before converging into the Bay of Bengal.

'Damming the Brahmaputra in China would have cascading effect in the northeast and could lead to a natural calamity here. We have sought Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's intervention to persuade Beijing not to go ahead with their plans,' said an Arunachal Pradesh government spokesman.

The Assam government asking [New Delhi](#) for urgent intervention made similar appeals.

'We have decided to form an expert committee to study the impact of such a move by Beijing,' the chief minister said.

According to media reports, China was planning to divert 200 billion cubic metres of water to feed the Yellow River in an attempt at easing acute water shortage in Shaanxi, Hebei, Beijing and Tianjin.

The Brahmaputra is the lifeline for a vast majority of the people in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Bangladesh - most of the people depend on the river for irrigating their agricultural fields, fishing, and transportation of goods.

Agriculture forms the backbone of the economies in both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh with nearly 80 percent of the 27 million people in the two states eking out a living through agriculture.

'We are worried as many areas in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and even Bangladesh would go dry if the Chinese went ahead with their plans. This move would severely affect water flow to the region which in turn would adversely affect agriculture,' said H. Nath, an agriculture scientist.

An Indian external affairs ministry has been quoted as saying that New Delhi would take up the issue during Chinese President Hu Jintao's proposed visit to Delhi next month.

There has been no official reaction from Beijing to India's concern about damming the Brahmaputra River.

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