Yangtze River flow set to exceed level of catastrophic 1998 floods

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WUHAN, July 19 (Xinhua) — The Three Gorges Dam project on the Yangtze River will face its first major flood-control test yet Tuesday as the flow on the river’s upper reaches nears 70,000 cubic meters a second — 20,000 cubic meters more than the flow during the 1998 floods that killed 4,150 people.

Flood waters will peak at 70,000 cubic meters per second at the Three Gorges Dam 8 a.m. Tuesday while the historical record stood at 70,800 cubic meters per second in 1981, said the spokesman of China Three Gorges Corporation Monday afternoon.

As of 2 p.m. the waters had reached 66,500 cubic meters per second, the spokesman said.

After continuous rains, the flow on the upper Three Gorges stretch has more than doubled from Sunday’s 30,000 cubic meters a second and is expected to reach 69,000 cubic meters a second on Monday or Tuesday, the highest level since the project became operational in 2009, said an official of the company.

As of 8 a.m. Monday, the flood peak had reached 58,000 cubic meters a second in the upper Three Gorges, compared with 50,000 cubic meters a second during the 1998 floods, the official said.

The discharge of the Three Gorges Dam was raised to 40,000 cubic meters a second at 10 a.m. and would remain at that level till 3 p.m., when the situation would be reviewed, the official said.

Flooding had been infrequent since 1998 and the flood control work would be intense, said an emergency notice from the Bureau of Hydrographic, Yangtze River Water Resources Commission, on Monday.

Heavy rains had increased the volumes of the Yangtze’s mainstream and branches, especially the upper Jialing and Mintuo rivers, said the notice.

The commission’s Bureau of Hydrography ordered the stations on the Yangtze River system to monitor water levels Monday.
All the 118 hydrological stations of the Yangtze River had realized real-time reports, but the monitoring work should be reinforced in the current situation, said Wang Jun, director of the bureau.

Personnel and equipment should be ready, Wang said.

Flood waters reached 60,000 cubic meters per second Monday with two dams, including the Three Gorges and the Danjiangkou Reservoir, helping to regulate the massive water flow. Water levels had all exceeded a number of historical records at three monitoring stations along the up-stream Yangtze River, including Cuntan Station, Sanhui Station and Luoduxi Station, according to the bureau.

The Beibei (Three) Station in Chongqing Municipality had experienced the most severe flood in the last seven years as the Jiangling River continued to rise, according to the hydrological bureau of the upstream Yangtze River.

The Municipal government had started its emergency flood plan.

More than 16,000 people will be evacuated in Hechuan District which is the most at risk district in Chongqing, said an official of the municipal government.

Nearly 200,000 people had been affected and 16,000 people evacuated over the weekend in the city. The economic loss was estimated to be 180 million yuan (about 26 million U.S. dollars).

The most severe flood since 1847 hit Guang’an City in southwest China’s Sichuan Province Sunday.

As of Sunday morning, the flood had affected more than 250,000 people but no casualties had been reported in the city.

The flood had left 26 dead and 30 missing in Sichuan. More than 8.98 million people had been affected and the economic loss had exceeded five billion yuan.

Continuous rains since July 15 had isolated several towns turning them into islands including Quxian County in Dazhou City, Hanyuan County in Ya’an City and Tongjiang County in Bazhong City.

“Supplies of water, electricity and gas had all been cut. And instant noodles were sold out in the supermarkets,” said Zhuang Hailin, a resident in Quxian County.

Buildings along the riverside had been completed flooded and traffic could not move because of the water, Zhuang said.

“If no supplies come, we will soon run out of food,” she said.
Sichuan Provincial government had allocated five million yuan and disaster relief supplies were on their way to affected areas, said an official of the provincial government.

In the neighboring Shaanxi Province, the death toll reached 19 after eight more died in Ankang City, said an official of Ankang municipal government Monday.

Another 68 people are still missing while another 44 people were buried by landslides in the province.

State Disaster Relief Commission and the Civil Affairs Ministry had launched an emergency flood plan.

A team led by Luo Pingfei, deputy director of State Disaster Relief Commission and vice minister of civil affairs, was heading to the affected areas in Sichuan and Shaanxi.

Since the beginning of July, torrential rains and severe flooding have left 146 people dead and 40 missing and forced the evacuation of more than 1.3 million people in 11 provinces, mostly along the Yangtze River, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

The floods in 1998 killed 4,150 people, and forced more than 18 million people out of their homes and caused economic losses of 255 billion yuan (about 38 billion U.S. dollars).