

'Flood control capacity of China's Three Gorges dam limited'

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BEIJING: A top Chinese official has admitted that flood control capacity of Three Gorges dam was limited, modifying previous claims that it would be able to avert the periodic flooding by the longest and most aggressive Yangtze River.

The flood control capacity of Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower project is designed to be limited, Zhao Yunfa, deputy director of the China Three Gorges Corp's cascade dispatch centre was quoted as saying by the state run 'China Daily'.

"The dam's flood-control capacity is not unlimited it has a capacity of 22.1 billion cu m and protects, by design, a limited area any flood with water flow exceeding 122,000 cu m per second would put the dam's own safety at risk," he said.

Zhao's explanation came amid growing concern over the controversial dam, which officials hope would play a pillar role in flood control and clean power generation, the newspaper today said.

The death toll according to reports crossed 1000 in this year's floods so far, regarded as the worst since 1998 during which 4150 people were killed.

The billion dollar dam which was approved by the Chinese Communist Party's founder leader, Chairman Mao was built after great deal of debate and sacrifices to tame the Yangtze River.

Critics of the dam, which was constructed after evacuating 1.4 million people from several cities and villages, warned from the beginning that it would result in heavy damage to environment and cause extensive landslides and severe soil erosion downstream.

China this season witnessed extensive landslides burying in some cases villages along with its residents.

In the past few days, members of the public have been hotly debating online posts comparing four reports of the dam's flood-control capacity.

The Daily said in its report that in June 2003, it was claimed that the dam "could fend off the worst flood in 10,000 years".

Four years later, changed that number to "the worst flood in 1,000 years". In October 2008, the number was again modified to "the worst flood in 100 years".

On Tuesday, a report on State broadcaster China Central Television's website was titled "The Three Gorges Dam's capacity to store floodwater is limited", it said highlighting the previous claims of the officials.

China Three Gorges Corp's Chairman Cao Guangjing in his recent interview to the 'Daily' said he can "absolutely guarantee" that the dam is capable of withstanding "the worst flood in 100 years" asserting that the dam's flood-control facilities are "complete and need no adjustment".

Liu Ning, vice-minister of water resources, earlier praised the dam, which was completed in October 2008, as "instrumental" in China's flood control efforts.

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-07-23/news/27587793_1_flood-control-china-s-three-gorges-worst-flood