

Hydropower station construction underway in upper Yangtze

Construction of a large hydropower station on the upper section of the Yangtze River, the Suwalong project, is going smoothly, local authorities said Tuesday.

On Tuesday, the sluice gate on the Jinsha River was closed in preparation for further building work.

The Suwalong project is located at the junction of Mangkam County of Tibet Autonomous Region and Batang County of Sichuan Province, in southwest China. It will be the largest power station in Tibet upon completion.

With a total cost of nearly 18 billion yuan (2.77 billion U.S. dollars), the station is undertaken by China Huadian Corp.

A total of 1,462 people need to be relocated for the project, and 631 of them have moved, said Hu Guiliang, chairman of Huadian Jinsha River Upstream Hydropower Development Co., Ltd.

The power station has a designed capacity of 1.2 million kilowatts and will be able to generate about 5.4 billion kwh of electricity per year.

A 112-meter-high dam will be built to form a reservoir that can store about 674 million cubic meters of water. Generators are expected to start operations in 2021.

Suwalong project is a major project to send electricity from the west to eastern areas in China, said Wang Zhengtao, director of Qamdo City resources development and relocation bureau.

It will make the energy structure greener, reduce pollution and raise incomes for local residents, Wang said.

Located in an arid valley, the land along the upper section of Jinsha River has a fragile ecology so the Chinese government requires a thorough environmental impact assessment of a hydropower station.

It takes around 10 years to conduct surveys, map out designs and assess environmental impacts of the Suwalong project, the first hydropower station on the upper section of Jinsha River.

Construction of further hydropower stations will not be allowed within 12 km of river around the Suwalong station. Facilities will be installed to let fish pass and a fish breeding center has been set up to increase the fish reserve in the river.

Hu said that the company has also reached an agreement with government to improve local employment. "We asked our construction firms to hire at least

40 percent of labor force from within the region,” said Hu.

Duan Shichang, Party secretary of Surdeshod Township, pointed out that residents in two villages of the township earned more than 14 million yuan from employment by the project last year.