

NO WATER STORAGE PROJECTS IN TIBET, SAYS CHINA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

China says it is using less than 1% of the Yarlung Zangbo [Brahmaputra] as an upper riparian State. GettyImages/istockcrystalmc

China has built one and is constructing two more run-of-the-river hydro power plants on the Yarlung Zangbo River, which is known as the Brahmaputra in India, a top Chinese official told a group of visiting Indian journalists recently.

“There is no storage involved in these projects,” Yu Xingjun, Consul in the Chinese Water Resources Ministry, said in response to a specific question from *The Hindu*. There have been unverified media reports from time to time that the Chinese government was building some major dam projects on the Yarlung Zangbo in Tibet.

According to him, one 510 MW hydro power plant had been built and two others were under construction. The generating capacity of the two under-construction plant was not immediately available, said Mr. Yu.

The top Chinese official dealing with India on water issues was at pains to emphasise that China was using less than 1% of the Yarlung Zangbo as an upper riparian state. “There is enough water to sustain the lower riparian states. The outbound quality of the water is also excellent,” Mr. Yu claimed. However, the Tibetan people had a basic right to use their water resources.

Information sharing

According to the official, China was sticking to a bilateral agreement with India to supply data on water flow levels at a time of possible floods. As of now, this information sharing on flood information was confined to two rivers — the Yarlung Zangbo and the Sutlej.

Mr. Yu added that, like India, the Chinese government had plans to divert river waters to those provinces that were suffering from scarcity. This was part and parcel of China’s transition from “high speed to high quality development”.

Asked whether a large country like China had issues between provinces when it came to water sharing, he replied in the affirmative. China faced water-sharing issues especially in regard to the Yellow River, Mr. Yu said. “These provinces [along the Yellow River] would like to have more water for themselves.”

There were, he said, seven commissions to manage water basins in China, which were also responsible for allocating individual share for the provinces as well. “They [the commissions] will allocate the quota for every province,” Mr. Yu added.

(This writer was in China at the invitation of the

Chinese Foreign Ministry)

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