

## **Proposed Diversion of Brahmaputra River by China**

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Fresh water is getting scarce according to a UNESCO study. The average supply of water is expected to drop by one-third within 20 years.

UNESCO points out that up to 7 billion of people could face water shortages by 2020 and global warming may put 50 countries with severe water shortages. South Asia is one of the regions to be adversely affected.

Unilateral water diversion or withdrawal of water from trans-boundary rivers has been the long-standing policy of India. India bothered little the concerns of lower riparian country, such as Bangladesh in diverting waters from trans-boundary rivers.

The water dispute with India is as old as the birth of Bangladesh. It started with India's ill-conceived Farakka Barrage on the Ganges, (11 miles from Bangladesh's border) to divert water in the Hoogly river for flushing silt from the river, not for agriculture.

India's pre-occupation has been how to divert water from trans-boundary rivers without consultation or sharing information from Bangladesh.

### ***.China's proposed diversion of water from the Tibetan plateau:***

The Tibetan plateau is the 'Principal Asian watershed and source of ten major rivers. It is roughly estimated that 10-20% of Himalayan region is covered by glaciers ice while an addition area ranging from 30- 40% has seasonal snow cover Himalayan glaciers covers around 100,000 sq kms and store about 12,000 cubic kms of fresh water .The most incredible water tank in the world.

Tibet water travel to eleven countries and are said to bring fresh water to over 85% of Asian population, approximately 50% of world's population. Four of the world ten rivers the Brahmaputra, Indus, Yangtze, and Mekong have their head water on the Tibetan plateau.

The other major Rivers which originate from Tibet are Sutlej, Karnali, Arun, Huang ho(yellow river) , Salween rivers .South Asia is mainly concerned with Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej, Arun, Karnali, whose water is life line for more than one billion people living downstream.

According to an Indian Professor of Strategic Studies at Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, Brahma Chellaney, China's intensive farming need waters and it is increasingly turning its attention to water reserves of Tibetan plateau. China is presently toying with massive inter-basin and inter-river water transfer projects.

According to a report by the same India writer, China attempts to redirect the southward flow of waters from the Tibetan plateau, starting point of many rivers, such as Indus, the Mekong, the Yangtze, the Yellow, the Salween, the Brahmaputra, the Karnali and the Sutlej Rivers.

Indian writer has disclosed two Chinese projects that would likely to affect adversely India. One is the proposed Great South-North Water Transfer project diverting Tibetan waters and the first phase calls for building 300-kilometres of tunnels and channels to draw waters from the Jingsha, Yalong and Dadu rivers on the eastern rim of the Tibetan plateau.

The Brahmaputra River is considered to be the highest river on earth with an average altitude of 4,000 meters. It runs 2,057 kilometers in Tibet before flowing into India, where it becomes the Brahmaputra. One of its interesting characteristics is the 'SHARP U-TURN' it takes at the proximity of Mt. Namcha Barwa (7,782 meters) near the Indian border.

The second phase of the project is more damaging because it proposes to re-route Tsangpo/Brahmaputra waters northward before the river enters India.

Although Chinese government claimed that the project is still at a conceptual stage, it is reported in foreign media that work of the project has already begun with the target to finish it in next five to seven years.

The Tsangpo/Brahmaputra project is part of China's long-term river interlinking project to divert water from south to north. China wants to build the dam as water flow of Yellow River declined due to huge water demand of the people of both sides of the river.

### ***Victim of India's own policy:***

The Brahmaputra/ Tsangpo river has always been considered as the source of fresh water for both India and Bangladesh and it divides into hundreds of channels in Bangladesh to form a vast delta which flows into the Bay of Bengal.

Now India has awakened up of its rights when China wants to divert waters from Tsangpo/Brahmaputra river. China is reportedly doing the same thing with India as India did with its trans-boundary rivers in relation to Bangladesh.

Furthermore several Chinese projects in west-central Tibet have a bearing on river-water flows into India but China refuses to share information with India. The same tactics India adopted with Bangladesh are likely now to bite India.

China does not find it necessary to consult, discuss and sit down with India in the proposed diversion of waters from Tibetan Plateau. There cannot be one rule for India and China and another for India and Bangladesh.

### ***Water-related conflicts:***

The increased demand of fresh water has prompted the construction of dams and barrages on numerous trans-boundary rivers and it is reported that 60% of the world's largest rivers has been interrupted by the artificial structures. Many of them have concluded agreements with riparian countries and about 200 treaties are now in existence for the management of water resources of trans-boundary rivers.

Water experts believe that water disputes on intra-state and inter-state level may increase in future. It is the potential inter-state conflict over river-water resources that may be of greater concern.