

## FEATURE

# Baihetan Hydropower Station

China's opened a new hydropower dam, a major milestone for 4 reasons



*© Associated Press In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, water is released from the dam of Baihetan hydropower station in Ningnan county, in southwestern China's Sichuan province on June 27, 2021.*

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[China's opened a new hydropower dam, a major milestone for 4 reasons \(msn.com\)](#)

Monday, [China](#) officially began partial operation of a massive new hydroelectric dam, the [Baihetan \(白鹤滩\) Hydropower Station](#), says [The Associated Press](#). Construction has taken four years and about \$34 billion, per [NDTV](#).

- Located in southwest China along a tributary of the Yangtze River, the new hydropower station is a major milestone.

China's new hydropower dam is the second-largest in the world

Over 900 feet tall, the Baihetan dam has 16 units that can each generate 1 million kilowatts of energy. This energy-generating capacity makes it the second-largest in the world. The [Baihetan Hydropower Station](#) will produce more than 15 times the energy produced from the Hoover Dam, reports [Global Times](#).

- Essentially, in one hour, one unit will generate enough energy to supply electricity to an ordinary Chinese family for 400 years, reports [Global Times](#).

- At full capacity, the Baihetan dam will supply enough electricity to meet the power needs of 500,000 people for a year — every single day, reports [NDTV](#).

The largest hydropower dam in the world is also along China's Yangtze River. This dam — the [Three Gorges Dam](#) — began operations in 2003, according to the [AP](#).

The dam is part of China's effort to reduce carbon emissions

China has committed to carbon neutrality by 2060, but increasing energy demands have kept the country reliant on fossil fuels. The Baihetan hydroelectric station is a major step to expand China's use of alternative power sources, according to the [AP](#).

- In conjunction with expanding capacity, China is also developing new technology to allow transmission of hydroelectric power from southwestern dams to eastern cities, like Shanghai, the [AP](#) reports.

- When fully operational, the Baihetan dam will eliminate the need to burn 20 million tons of coal annually, thereby cutting China's carbon emissions, says the [AP](#).

For the Chinese government, the new dam is a major symbol

The Baihetan hydropower station was unveiled only three days before the 100th anniversary of the [Chinese Communist Party](#), says the AP. In celebration of this centenary, the Chinese government has unveiled a number of major construction projects.

- The construction “[miracles](#)” are intended as symbols for the party's commitment to strengthening and developing China, says Global Times.

The new dam may cause damage and international water disputes

However, the new hydropower station does have concerning implications for the region. Environmental groups have criticized the dam for displacing hundreds of thousands of local communities, says [NDTV](#).

- Large-scale dams, like Baihetan, also disrupt river ecology and threaten fish or other local species, says the [AP](#).

According to [NDTV](#), China's neighbors — such as India and Vietnam, who also rely on water from Yangtze tributaries — have growing concerns. These countries are concerned that China expanding its control over substantial portions of the water supply will create negative consequences for downstream countries.

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