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## **China dam forces millions to move**

URL: [http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0710/071015-three\\_gorges.html](http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0710/071015-three_gorges.html)

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**15<sup>th</sup> October, 2007**

## THE ARTICLE

### **China dam forces millions to move**

China's highly controversial Three Gorges dam project has hit the headlines for the wrong reasons again. Chinese state media announced four million more people have to move from their homes near the dam area. This latest setback comes hot on the heels of a warning a few weeks ago that: "If no preventive measures are taken, the project could lead to catastrophe". The new dam evacuees will join the 1.4 million who have already been forced to exit their homes, villages and livelihoods. This now means the nearby city of Chongqing will see its population increase by in excess of five million people over the coming years. The city's deputy mayor Yu Yuanmu stated the relocations were necessary to "protect the ecology of the reservoir area, [which] has a vulnerable environment."

The dam is part of the world's largest hydro-electric power project. It cost a whopping 22 billion dollars to build. The reservoir stretches over 600 kilometres behind the dam itself. It is the safety of the residents in this huge area that the Chinese government is anxious about. The head of construction for the dam, Wang Xiaofeng, warned: "We cannot let our guard down with the ecological and environmental security problems the Three Gorges project has created." The dam still has the potential for enormous environmental damage. In many places, the banks of the mighty Yangtze River are eroding, triggering dangerous landslides. There is also now the huge social cost of a small, already over-populated city like Chongqing having to cope with such huge numbers of new and very poor arrivals.

## WARM-UPS

**1. MOVING:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about moving. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*controversy / hitting the headlines / dams / catastrophe / livelihoods / ecology / hydro-electricity / reservoirs / environmental damage / landslides / coping*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. COSTS/BENEFITS:** Do the benefits of building the Three Gorges dam outweigh the costs? Discuss this with your partner(s). Use the points below:

- China gets cheap, green and clean electricity
- Millions of people get new lives by moving from the countryside into the city
- Whole ecosystems are destroyed, being submerged by the reservoir
- Tens of thousands of jobs are created
- Engineers learn a great deal about hydro-electricity and dam construction
- A huge environmental catastrophe is waiting to happen

**4. THOSE INVOLVED:** Is everyone happy with the dam? What are the thoughts of those involved / affected? Discuss with your partner(s).

- China's president
- a peasant relocated to the city
- a farmer whose land was flooded
- a fish with a bigger place to swim
- a local environmentalist
- the construction company boss
- a city resident
- the average Chinese person

**5. CATASTROPHE:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'catastrophe'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**6. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A think the Three Gorges dam project should be reversed and nature returned as it was. Students B believe after spending \$22 billion, the project should continue. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. A Chinese dam has received negative headlines for the first time. T / F
- b. Four million people have to move from the countryside to the city. T / F
- c. Four million people have already lost their land and livelihoods. T / F
- d. An official said the relocations will help protect the environment. T / F
- e. The dam project cost nearly 2.2 billion dollars to build. T / F
- f. The area flooded to make the dam extends for more than 600km. T / F
- g. The dam is threatening the safety of China's Yangtze River. T / F
- h. The city taking in the evacuees has the infrastructure to cope. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. highly              | a. extends         |
| 2. setback             | b. disaster        |
| 3. hot on the heels of | c. setting off     |
| 4. catastrophe         | d. huge            |
| 5. vulnerable          | e. hitch           |
| 6. whopping            | f. eating away at  |
| 7. stretches           | g. susceptible     |
| 8. eroding             | h. exceedingly     |
| 9. triggering          | i. manage          |
| 10. cope               | j. very soon after |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. hit the                               | a. on the heels of a warning |
| 2. This latest setback comes hot         | b. behind the dam itself     |
| 3. If no preventive                      | c. to catastrophe            |
| 4. the project could lead                | d. are eroding               |
| 5. increase by in                        | e. with such huge numbers    |
| 6. ...stretches over 600 kilometres      | f. measures are taken        |
| 7. We cannot let our guard               | g. excess of five million    |
| 8. the banks of the mighty Yangtze River | h. dangerous landslides      |
| 9. triggering                            | i. headlines                 |
| 10. having to cope                       | j. down                      |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

### China dam forces millions to move

China's \_\_\_\_\_ controversial Three Gorges dam project has hit the headlines for the wrong \_\_\_\_\_ again. Chinese state media announced four million more people have to move from their homes near the dam area. This latest \_\_\_\_\_ comes hot on the heels of a warning a few weeks ago that: "If no preventive \_\_\_\_\_ are taken, the project could lead to catastrophe". The new dam evacuees will join the 1.4 million who have already been forced to exit their homes, villages and \_\_\_\_\_. This now means the nearby city of Chongqing will see its population increase by in \_\_\_\_\_ of five million people over the coming years. The city's deputy mayor Yu Yuanmu stated the \_\_\_\_\_ were necessary to "protect the ecology of the reservoir area, [which] has a \_\_\_\_\_ environment."

The dam is part of the world's largest \_\_\_\_\_ -electric power project. It cost a whopping 22 billion dollars to build. The \_\_\_\_\_ stretches over 600 kilometres behind the dam itself. It is the safety of the \_\_\_\_\_ in this huge area that the Chinese government is anxious about. The head of construction for the dam, Wang Xiaofeng, warned: "We cannot let our \_\_\_\_\_ down with the ecological and environmental security problems the Three Gorges project has created." The dam still has the \_\_\_\_\_ for enormous environmental damage. In many places, the banks of the \_\_\_\_\_ Yangtze River are eroding, triggering dangerous \_\_\_\_\_. There is also now the huge social cost of a small, already over-populated city like Chongqing having to \_\_\_\_\_ with such huge numbers of new and very poor arrivals.

*relocations*

*setback*

*livelihoods*

*reasons*

*vulnerable*

*highly*

*excess*

*measures*

*mighty*

*reservoir*

*cope*

*potential*

*hydro*

*residents*

*landslides*

*guard*

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### China dam forces millions to move

China's highly controversial Three Gorges dam project \_\_\_\_\_ for the wrong reasons again. Chinese \_\_\_\_\_ announced four million more people have to move from their homes near the dam area. This latest setback comes \_\_\_\_\_ of a warning a few weeks ago that: "If no preventive measures are taken, the project could \_\_\_\_\_". The new dam evacuees will join the 1.4 million who have already been forced to exit their homes, \_\_\_\_\_. This now means the nearby city of Chongqing will see its population \_\_\_\_\_ five million people over the coming years. The city's deputy mayor Yu Yuanmu stated the relocations were necessary to "protect the ecology of the reservoir area, [which] \_\_\_\_\_ environment."

The dam \_\_\_\_\_ largest hydro-electric power project. It cost a whopping 22 billion dollars to build. The reservoir stretches over 600 kilometres \_\_\_\_\_. It is the safety of the residents in this huge area that the Chinese government \_\_\_\_\_. The head of construction for the dam, Wang Xiaofeng, warned: "We cannot \_\_\_\_\_ with the ecological and environmental security problems the Three Gorges project has created." The dam still \_\_\_\_\_ enormous environmental damage. In many places, the banks of the mighty Yangtze River \_\_\_\_\_ dangerous landslides. There is also now the huge social cost of a small, already over-populated city like Chongqing \_\_\_\_\_ such huge numbers of new and very poor arrivals.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'wrong' and 'reason'.

wrong	reason

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hit</li><li>• hot</li><li>• lead to</li><li>• exit</li><li>• excess</li><li>• ecology</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• part</li><li>• itself</li><li>• anxious</li><li>• guard</li><li>• mighty</li><li>• cope</li></ul>
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## STUDENT MOVING SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about moving house / city in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2	STUDENT 3
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) Are you surprised at the numbers of people who have to move?
- c) What do you know about the Three Gorges dam?
- d) How would you feel if your government moved you to a new city?
- e) What kind of catastrophe might the dam cause?
- f) Do you think the people who lost their livelihoods received compensation from the Chinese government?
- g) How do you think a medium-sized city can cope with the arrival of five million new residents?
- h) Do you think people living alongside the reservoir would damage the ecology of the area, as the deputy mayor claimed?
- i) Do you think the benefits of building this dam outweigh the costs?



### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Which is more important, the creation of clean and green power or the livelihoods of five million people?
- c) Do you think politicians have the right to flood a huge area of land and forever change its landscape and ecosystems?
- d) Why do politicians care more about projects than people?
- e) Do you think the Chinese government is really anxious about the safety of the people it is relocating?
- f) Is the Chinese government acting responsibly by building projects that reduce carbon emissions?
- g) What will happen to the five million who move to Chongqing?
- h) What questions would you like to ask those who planned and approved the Three Gorges dam project?
- i) Did you like this discussion?

## LANGUAGE

**CORRECT WORD:** Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

### China dam forces millions to move

China's (1) \_\_\_\_ controversial Three Gorges dam project has hit the headlines for the wrong reasons again. Chinese state media announced four million (2) \_\_\_\_ people have to move from their homes near the dam area. This latest setback comes (3) \_\_\_\_ on the heels of a warning a few weeks ago that: "If no preventive measures are taken, the project could lead to catastrophe". The new dam (4) \_\_\_\_ will join the 1.4 million who have already been forced to exit their homes, villages and livelihoods. This now means the nearby city of Chongqing will see its population increase by in excess (5) \_\_\_\_ five million people over the (6) \_\_\_\_ years. The city's deputy mayor Yu Yuanmu stated the relocations were necessary to "protect the ecology of the reservoir area, [which] has a vulnerable environment."

The dam is part of the world's largest (7) \_\_\_\_ -electric power project. It cost a whopping 22 billion dollars to build. The reservoir stretches over 600 kilometres behind the dam itself. It is the safety of the residents in this huge area that the Chinese government (8) \_\_\_\_ anxious about. The head of construction for the dam, Wang Xiaofeng, warned: "We cannot let our guard (9) \_\_\_\_ with the ecological and environmental security problems the Three Gorges project has created." The dam still has the potential (10) \_\_\_\_ enormous environmental damage. In many places, the (11) \_\_\_\_ of the mighty Yangtze River are eroding, triggering dangerous landslides. There is also now the huge social cost of a small, already over-populated city like Chongqing (12) \_\_\_\_ to cope with such huge numbers of new and very poor arrivals.

- |     |               |                |              |                |
|-----|---------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1.  | (a) high      | (b) heightened | (c) heights  | (d) highly     |
| 2.  | (a) more      | (b) farther    | (c) again    | (d) mostly     |
| 3.  | (a) tepid     | (b) boiling    | (c) hot      | (d) warm       |
| 4.  | (a) evacuates | (b) evacuees   | (c) evacuate | (d) evacuation |
| 5.  | (a) in        | (b) of         | (c) out      | (d) down       |
| 6.  | (a) arriving  | (b) going      | (c) coming   | (d) reaching   |
| 7.  | (a) hydrogen  | (b) hydraulic  | (c) hydrant  | (d) hydro      |
| 8.  | (a) is        | (b) being      | (c) are      | (d) very       |
| 9.  | (a) down      | (b) up         | (c) security | (d) man        |
| 10. | (a) to        | (b) by         | (c) for      | (d) with       |
| 11. | (a) bonkers   | (b) bankers    | (c) bunkers  | (d) banks      |
| 12. | (a) have      | (b) having     | (c) has      | (d) had        |



## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information about the Three Gorges dam. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. POWER:** Make a poster about different power projects taking place around the world. What are their costs and benefits? Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all include similar things?

**4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE:** Write a magazine article about whether projects or people are more important. Include imaginary interviews with an environmentalist and a construction boss.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to the Chinese leaders. Ask them three questions about the safety of the dam and its negative impact on the environment. Give them three pieces of advice on how to improve the situation. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. F      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. T      g. T      h. F

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. highly              | a. exceedingly     |
| 2. setback             | b. hitch           |
| 3. hot on the heels of | c. very soon after |
| 4. catastrophe         | d. disaster        |
| 5. vulnerable          | e. susceptible     |
| 6. whopping            | f. huge            |
| 7. stretches           | g. extends         |
| 8. eroding             | h. eating away at  |
| 9. triggering          | i. setting off     |
| 10. cope               | j. manage          |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. hit the                               | a. headlines                 |
| 2. This latest setback comes hot         | b. on the heels of a warning |
| 3. If no preventive                      | c. measures are taken        |
| 4. the project could lead                | d. to catastrophe            |
| 5. increase by in                        | e. excess of five million    |
| 6. ...stretches over 600 kilometres      | f. behind the dam itself     |
| 7. We cannot let our guard               | g. down                      |
| 8. the banks of the mighty Yangtze River | h. are eroding               |
| 9. triggering                            | i. dangerous landslides      |
| 10. having to cope                       | j. with such huge numbers    |

### GAP FILL:

#### China dam forces millions to move

China's **highly** controversial Three Gorges dam project has hit the headlines for the wrong **reasons** again. Chinese state media announced four million more people have to move from their homes near the dam area. This latest **setback** comes hot on the heels of a warning a few weeks ago that: "If no preventive **measures** are taken, the project could lead to catastrophe". The new dam evacuees will join the 1.4 million who have already been forced to exit their homes, villages and **livelihoods**. This now means the nearby city of Chongqing will see its population increase by in **excess** of five million people over the coming years. The city's deputy mayor Yu Yuanmu stated the **relocations** were necessary to "protect the ecology of the reservoir area, [which] has a **vulnerable** environment."

The dam is part of the world's largest **hydro**-electric power project. It cost a whopping 22 billion dollars to build. The **reservoir** stretches over 600 kilometres behind the dam itself. It is the safety of the **residents** in this huge area that the Chinese government is anxious about. The head of construction for the dam, Wang Xiaofeng, warned: "We cannot let our **guard** down with the ecological and environmental security problems the Three Gorges project has created." The dam still has the **potential** for enormous environmental damage. In many places, the banks of the **mighty** Yangtze River are eroding, triggering dangerous **landslides**. There is also now the huge social cost of a small, already over-populated city like Chongqing having to **cope** with such huge numbers of new and very poor arrivals.

### LANGUAGE WORK

1 - d    2 - a    3 - c    4 - b    5 - b    6 - c    7 - d    8 - a    9 - a    10 - c    11 - d    12 - b