

The potential of Central Asian states to provide electricity grows each year, but hydropower issues have to be solved together, taking into account the interests of all Central Asian countries, experts say.

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On November 30, a regional round table on hydropower issues of Central Asian countries was held in Dushanbe as part of a [meeting of participants](#) of the CABAR.asia School of [Analytics](#) and [Analytical Journalism](#). Young analysts from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan expressed their countries' positions regarding the launch of the first unit of the Roghun hydropower plant and the overall hydropower situation in the region.



Experts noted that all Central Asian countries, one way or another, but experience the energy crisis. Therefore, the construction and launch of such a large-scale facility as the

Roghun hydropower plant is an important element not only for Tajikistan's national interests, but also for the hydropower potential of neighboring countries.

How Roghun Was Created

According to the researcher from the Strategic Research Center under the President of Tajikistan **Sherali Rizoion**, for the entire period of the Roghun hydropower plant construction, 24 billion somoni (\$2.64 billion) were spent from the state budget.

"Roghun will allow us to become energetically sustainable. In the past 10 years, citizens experienced an acute shortage of electricity, especially during the winter periods," Rizoion added.

He noted that regardless of the anti-Roghun hysteria in the region, the government of Tajikistan has proved it can protect its national interests if there is political will and an understanding of importance of building such large facilities.

"Today, a new geopolitical environment actively forms in Central Asia, and the ongoing processes can fully ensure the integrity of our region," Rizoion concluded.



Sherali Rizoion. Photo: CABAR.asia



Journalist and analyst **Nurali Davlatov** shares his opinion. He believes that the pre-existing political problems associated with the construction of

hydropower plants have already been resolved. It is only the financial issues that remain to be resolved.

“The benefits of the project are obvious. In the future, countries of both Central and South Asia can join Tajikistan. Moreover, it is possible that the West will also be interested in completing this project,” said Davlatov.

“The official authorities [of Uzbekistan] did not explain why it changed position on Roghun construction. However, it was noted that improving relations with neighbors is still a priority,” said Boymat. For a while, Uzbekistan opposed the construction of the Roghun hydropower plant in Tajikistan and the Kambar-Ata hydropower plant in Kyrgyzstan. The situation reached the point of war and conquer threats, says political analyst and Central Asian security expert Zhavlon Boymat. However, after the power shift in Uzbekistan, positive changes in relations between the countries are observed.

As for the Kambar-Ata hydropower plant, the forecasts by analyst and researcher from Bishkek **Amangeldi Zhumabayev** for the coming years are disappointing. He sees the lack of investment attractiveness due to political turbulence in Kyrgyzstan as the main reason for halting the construction. In addition, the low cost of electricity in the country implies a low return on the project.

“Kyrgyzstan will seek and attract investors, but no changes are foreseen in the next 2-3 years in the process of Kambar-Ata hydropower plant’s building,” Zhumabayev said.



Zhavlon Boymat. Photo: CABAR.asia

“There is No Way Back”

The Deputy Director of the Central Asia Institute for Strategic Studies (CAISS) of Kazakhstan, **Farkhod Aminjonov**, believes the development of hydropower in Central Asia should be a priority. According to him, in previous years, the neighboring countries upset the export-import balance of the energy system. Therefore, the launch of the Roghun hydropower plant is the only way out of the energy crisis for Tajikistan.

In 2014, after completing the construction of the [Sangtuda HPP-1](#) and HPP-2, Tajikistan had to export energy to Afghanistan to pay off its debts for Iranian and Russian loans. In addition, an internal shortage of energy still existed in Tajikistan.



Farkhod Aminjonov. Photo: CABAR.asia

Therefore, the experts note that rapid completion of the Roghun hydropower plant's construction is a positive factor in long terms. However, the object should be considered within the framework of the entire region's hydropower system and not just that of one country, Aminjonov said.

“Since the first HPP unit has been launched, there is no way back. In this regard, it is necessary to complete the hydraulic facility's construction as soon as possible and fill it with water while glaciers are melting and there is a water supply,” he noted.

According to him, Uzbekistan involvement to Roghun HPP construction will benefit both countries. In addition, it will contribute to the energy trade resumption between Central Asian countries. However, as Aminjonov noted, the distribution mechanism of water and energy resources must be flexible.

“We cannot calculate how much electricity we need in the long run, but we can say for sure how much is needed for the coming year. Therefore, countries need to review their requirements and conditions annually and only then to develop a trend and a regional mechanism,” concluded Aminjonov.

At the stage of Roghun hydropower plant's construction, the several rounds of negotiations on this project were held in Almaty with the participation of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan government's representatives. This showed the high priority of this issue for Central Asia, says **Meruert Seydumanova**, a political scientist and participant of CABAR.asia School of Analytical Journalism. The international examination of the hydropower plants' construction, in particular from the World Bank, led to Kazakhstan's official agreement for the Kambar-Ata and Roghun hydropower plants' constructions.

"Kazakhstan is interested in strengthening the good-neighborly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. The country [Kazakhstan] is ready to participate in the discussion of hydropower resources in the region, taking into account the interests of upstream and downstream countries," Seydumanova concluded.



Meruert Seydumanova. Photo: CABAR.asia



“There is Enough Water for Everyone”

In 2008, most experts did not believe that the attempts of Tajikistan to build hydropower plant independently would bring results. However, today, many experts see this as a great

potential for providing the region with electricity.

“Our region, due to its specificity, is doomed to joint development. Any initiative carried out in Tajikistan has a positive impact on the whole of Central Asia. As for the regulation of water flow and concerns about its lack, we can say that we will not leave our neighbors without water,” said Sherali Rizoion.

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