Zimbabwe, Zambia get $275m for urgent Kariba Dam repair

HARARE: Zimbabwe and Zambia have secured $275 million in loans and grants for urgent repairs to the gigantic power-generating Kariba Dam on the border between the two countries, the World Bank announced Wednesday, 17 December.

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The move comes after warnings earlier this year that cracks in the manmade wall standing 128 metres (420 feet) high could result in a disastrous collapse and flooding in four countries.

The European Union will provide the largest chunk of $100 million, while the World Bank and the African Development Bank will each chip in with $75 million in loans. Sweden is giving a $25 million grant.

The repairs will cost $300 million (240 million euros), and the two countries will pay the difference, said the bank.

Kariba Dam is one of the world's largest, generating more than 1,300 megawatts of hydropower for the two countries.

Dam officials and the two governments early this year raised the alarm over the cracks in the wall, saying it needed to be repaired within three years to prevent it from collapsing.

World Bank representative Kundhavi Kadiresan described the repairs as "very important" to ensure the safety and reliability of the dam.

She said "very urgent action" was needed "to avoid a potential emergency situation that would have resulted in a devastating situation in the entire Zambezi river basin and loss of human life."

Should the dam wall collapse, flooding from the Zambezi River could hit parts of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, affecting millions of people. Zimbabwe's Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa also cautioned on the dangers of not fixing the dam.

"We must maintain the safety of the dam wall, otherwise anything that could happen to it will have very ghastly consequences," he said at a joint news conference with the World Bank. The dam, built in 1955, is situated in the Kariba Gorge of the Zambezi River basin.

Source: AFP

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Source: AFP