

ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

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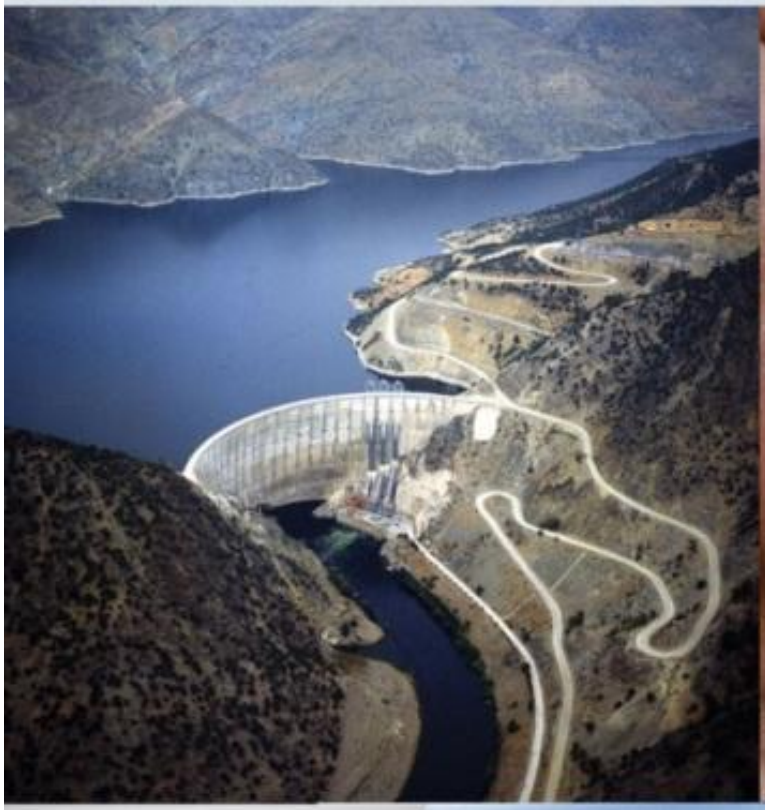



Issue 154

ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

10 November 2013 – 17 November 2013

- Turkey's approach toward Iraq's Shiites will reduce sectarianism
- Shiite leader asks Turkey to give Iraq more water
- Turkish FM talks water with Shiite leaders in Iraq
- Turkey FM fails to convince Iraqi cleric over water supply cut
- Water shortage observed in six provinces of Iran
- Environmental problems linked with ethnic problems in Iran
- Dead in the Water Peace Talks
- Sewage swamps Gaza streets as Egypt tunnel closures cut off power
- National Water Carrier Park Project Wins Award
- In Israel, water where there was none
- Palestinian Authority owes Israeli energy company £175 million
- Explainer: What do the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks mean?
- United Nations Climate Change Conference kicks off in Warsaw
- Water under pressure
- Water diplomacy can ease down conflicts by widening the scope of parties involved
- Stockholm Water Institute to Host Unesco Transboundary Center
- How do we balance needs of energy, water, and climate?
- Report on Nile River Basin bolsters Egypt
- Egypt farmers fear water supply threat from Ethiopia dam
- Dubai Municipality addressed the 4th Waste Management Middle East Forum
- Vietnam Doubts Sustainability of Second Lao Dam Project on Mekong
- Indonesia plans $35 bln in infrastructure projects, some to begin in 2014
- A Jolt to Complacency on Food Supply
- Brazil warns Amazon annual deforestation 'up 28 percent'

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❖ Turkey's approach toward Iraq's Shiites will reduce sectarianism

For the first time in modern Turkish history, a high-ranking Turkish official, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, visited the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, in Iraq. In a symbolic gesture during the holy month of Muharram, Davutoglu wore a black shirt, green scarf and tie — signs of mourning for Imam Hussein, the third Shiite imam whose martyrdom was being celebrated during his visit. He arrived in Najaf on the morning of Nov. 11, after spending time in Baghdad on Nov. 10.

While in Najaf, Davutoglu met for almost an hour with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. He described Sistani as the "safety valve" of Iraq, calling him a "global peace man" who stands against sectarian sedition in Iraq and the region. He also said that he brought the salutations of the 76 million people of Turkey to Sistani and Iraqis. Referencing the Muharram commemoration of Hussein, Davutoglu asserted that Najaf and Karbala were in the hearts of all Turkish Muslims and that the principles of mankind's compassion espoused by the imam belong not only to all Muslims, but to all humanity. He also expressed his hope that such a tragedy as at Karbala, where Hussein was martyred, never be repeated. Sistani welcomed Davutoglu, thanked him for his sentiments and sent his salutations to the Turkish people and their government.

Davutoglu had previously announced that his visits to Najaf and Karbala were not for political purposes and that he would not discuss political issues with Shiite spiritual leaders. Once in Iraq, however, most of his discussions with Shiite leaders focused on political and even economic issues, in detail.

A source present at the meeting between Davutoglu and Sistani reported that after a brief general discussion about the regional sectarian crisis, for which both shared mutual understanding and agreement, Sistani turned the discussion to the pressing economic issues facing Iraq. He registered his disapproval that Turkey continues to press ahead with construction of a series of dams on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers that is reducing water flows into Iraq. This issue has created a major problem for the Iraqi economy as well as the country's environment that must be resolved through cooperation between Iraq and Turkey, according to Sistani.

Davutoglu tried to explain Ankara's official position on the water issue, indicating that Turkey was is willing to provide a guaranteed water allocation to Iraq during times of scarcity. To Davutoglu's

surprise, according to the source, Sistani rejected such an approach and expressed his desire for UN arbitration to resolve the long-standing water issue. An adviser in Sistani's office told *Al-Monitor* that the grand ayatollah is looking for a sustainable solution that guarantees the two countries interests and is based on international conventions. Turkey began constructing the Ilisu Dam in 2006 as one among 22 dams for the Southeastern Anatolia Project on the Tigris River some 65 kilometers upstream from the Iraqi border. It will reduce 40% of the water flowing into Iraq.

Sistani's demand that Turkey cease holding back water was widely welcomed by Iraq's media. Reports drew attention to the Iraqi government having remained largely silent on this issue, although it is one of the most important policy differences between the two countries. In short, Sistani did more to draw attention to the issue than has the government.

Davutoglu also had a meeting with the Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in Najaf. They discussed the regional sectarian crisis and stressed that Iraq and Turkey must work cooperatively to confront terrorist groups taking advantage of the volatile situation in Syria. Davutoglu described Iraq as representing the Middle East and thus having a crucial role to play in the region. Both men were cautious to avoid discussing the Syria issue directly, as this could have potentially led to conflict over their differing objectives there.

Before moving on to Karbala, Davutoglu visited the holy shrine of Imam Ali, the first Shiite imam, and Imam Hussein's shrine, where he briefly participated in a ceremony of mourning. The day before, while in Baghdad, Davutoglu had visited the al-Kadhimiya Mosque and met Saleh al-Haidari, head of Iraq's charitable Shiite Endowment. In addition, he talked with a few other Shiite politician-clerics, among them Ammar al-Hakim, head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. It is thought that Turkey's extending its hand to Iraqi Shiites might help lead to its playing a significant role in soothing sectarian crises in the region and garner Ankara the role of mediator, as it already has good relations with Sunni parties in Iraq.

"Turkey's approach toward Iraq's Shiites will reduce sectarianism", 11/11/2013, online at: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/turkey-approach-iraq-shiites-sectarianism.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Shiite leader asks Turkey to give Iraq more water

The sensitive question of water usage on the Euphrates and Tigris dominates discussion between FM Davutoğlu and Iraqi Shiite spiritual leader Ali al-Sistani, with the latter regarding Ankara's position with suspicion

Turkey and Iraq should apply for U.N. arbitration to resolve a long-standing water problem, according to Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, a spiritual leader for Shiites in Iraq and the wider region, as well as a major political force.

Al-Sistani made the suggestion yesterday at a meeting with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğluas part of the Turkish minister's two-day trip to Iraq.

"Al-Sistani complained about Turkey's cutting of the flow of water into Iraq and Turkey's construction of dams on these rivers," a source familiar with the talks told the Hürriyet Daily News.

The rivers in question, the Euphrates and Tigris, both begin in Turkey and pass through Syria and Iraq before emptying into the Persian Gulf in Basra. Al-Sistani said Iraqis were suffering from water shortages and that the issue should be resolved through bilateral mechanisms and, if subsequently necessary, through U.N. arbitration.

Davutoğlu explained Turkey's position with regard to water allowance to neighboring countries, but al-Sistani was unconvinced, according to the source. Davutoğlu earlier said he would not discuss political issues with al-Sistani but most of their conversation reportedly focused on political issues. The two men also discussed ways to avoid a sectarian clash between Sunnis and Shiites in the Middle East.

In his statement after the meeting with al-Sistani, Davutoğlu expressed his happiness for being in Najaf, one of the Shiite holy towns, during the sacred month of Muharrem.

Davutoğlu described his meetings with both al-Sistani and al-Sadr as "productive," in regards to eliminating concerns over a regional sectarian conflict.

Black shirt, green tie

In a highly symbolic move to demonstrate his mourning for the killing of Imam Hussein, which is commemorated by Shiites during Muharrem, Davutoğlu wore a black shirt and a green tie. Davutoğlu visited another prominent Shiite cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, in Najaf before proceeding to another Shiite holy town, Karbala.

'Difference of views on Syria not major'

Discussions about Turkey's alleged support for radical groups in Syria were not raised in talks with either Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki or his Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, Davutoğlu said, dismissing claims to the contrary.

Iraqi reporters who raised the issue were actually influenced by reports in international media, Davutoğlu said.

Underlining the intense speculation over the issue, he said there were also findings indicating use of Iraqi territory by radical groups in order to pass to Syria.
According to Davutoğlu, the difference of views between Ankara and Baghdad over the Syria crisis is not major, noting that the two capitals would continue dialogue.

"Shiite leader asks Turkey to give Iraq more water", 12/11/2013, online at: http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/shiite-leader-asks-turkey-to-give-iraq-more-water.aspx?pageID=238&nID=57753&NewsCatID=338

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Turkish FM talks water with Shiite leaders in Iraq

Ahmet Davutoglu met with Shi'ite clerics Ayatollah Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr during his visit to Iraq.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu became the first high-ranking Turkish official to visit the shrine of the slain grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), Hussein, in the Iraqi city of Karbala for the sacred day of Ashura.

He also spent time in Najaf, where he met with Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. After meeting with Sistani for almost an hour, Davutoglu described him as Iraq's "safety valve" and a "global peace man". During the meeting, he stressed that the tragic death of Hussein almost 1,400 years ago was not only heartbreaking for Shi'ites, but for all Muslims all over the world.

Sistani also called for more cooperation between Iraq and Turkey, especially over the sharing of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. A total of 22 dams that have been built in Turkey threatens to reduce Iraq's water supply by 40%. Davutoglu proposed a plan stating an Iraqi water allocation in times of drought, but Sistani suggested UN arbitration to solve the issue. Muqtada al-Sadr also called for more cooperation, as the two discussed tackling the issue of sectarianism in the Muslim world.

Davutoglu also visited the shrine of Ali, the son-in-law and companion of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) who was also the father of Hussein.

"Turkish FM talks water with Shiite leaders in Iraq", 14/11/2013, online at: http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=122884

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Turkey FM fails to convince Iraqi cleric over water supply cut

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has failed to convince Iraq's senior Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani over his country's measure to cut water supply to Iraqis.

During a meeting held in the Iraqi city of Najaf on Monday, al-Sistani complained about Ankara's effort to cut the flow of water into the Arab country as well as Turkey's construction of dams on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, Turkey's *Hurriyet Daily News* reported.

According to a source familiar with the talks, which focused on sensitive question of water usage on the rivers, "Al-Sistani complained about Turkey's cutting of the flow of water into Iraq and Turkey's construction of dams on these rivers."

The top Shia cleric also expressed concern over water shortage in Iraq, saying the issue should be resolved through bilateral mechanisms with the mediation of the United Nations, the source said. Davutoglu, for his part, explained Turkey's position regarding water allowance to neighboring countries, but he could not convince al-Sistani, the source stated.

In February, a research showed a substantial decrease in the volume of groundwater reserves in the Tigris and Euphrates river basins.

The New York Times published a report about the research carried out by NASA and the University of California, Irvine on the Middle Eastern river system.

"Scientists… found during a seven-year period beginning in 2003 that parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran along the Tigris and Euphrates river basins lost 117 million acre feet (144 cubic kilometers) of total stored freshwater," NASA and the University of California, Irvine said in a joint press release.

The researchers said about 60 percent of the loss is due to "pumping of groundwater from underground reservoirs."

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Jay Famiglietti, the principal investigator of the study and a hydrologist and professor at the University of California, Irvine, stated that the decline rate intensified especially after a drought in 2007.

"The rate was especially striking after the 2007 drought. Meanwhile, demand for freshwater continues to rise, and the region does not coordinate its water management because of different interpretations of international laws."

"Turkey FM fails to convince Iraqi cleric over water supply cut", 12/11/2013, online at: http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/11/12/334345/iraqi-cleric-unconvinced-over-water-cut/

BACK TO TOP

❖ Water shortage observed in six provinces of Iran

The water shortage has reached a critical level in Tabriz, Isfahan, Khuzestan, Qum, Mashhad and Hamadan provinces, Advisor of Iran's Energy Minister Hamidrza Janbaz said on Nov.17, MEHR agency reported.

According to Janbaz, currently a special program is being worked out in order to solve the water shortage problem in next three years.

"A drought is being observed in the country for nearly 13 years. The demand for water increases with the population growth," Janbaz said.

In July Iran's water supply company warned in a special statement about the water shortage in several cities of the country and imposing quotas for fresh water.

Iran is located in an arid zone and the country has repeatedly faced with drought in recent 40 years.

The drought of 1992-2002 caused a major blow on agriculture. There were imposed quotas for fresh water in several cities including Tehran.

"Water shortage observed in six provinces of Iran", 17/11/2013, online at: http://en.trend.az/regions/iran/2212052.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Environmental problems linked with ethnic problems in Iran

Some big projects have been developed in Iran in order to meet the water needs of certain regions in the country, which has severe problems regarding water resources.

It was announced that as the primary project to meet the water need, a pipeline would be built to transport water from the Caspian Sea to Qom, Isfahan and Kashan, which are located in the hinterlands of Iran. Even though the project was criticized both by certain groups in Iran and others from abroad, those criticisms were generally limited to environmental and technical concerns.

However, in the Lake Urmia basin, where Iran has faced major problems regarding the management of water resources, Iran was criticized both in environmental terms and also in ethnic terms. Azeris in the region accuse Iran of forcing the inhabitants of the region to migrate by sitting back and watching the lake dry up on purpose. Iran's inappropriate water resources development policies, which damage the environment, are seen as the main reason for Lake Urmia drying up. Dams constructed on 13 rivers feeding the lake and the irrigation systems linked to the dams prevent the lake from being fed. As a result, the water level of the lake has fallen.

Another factor which should be taken into account is the drought that has been prevailing in the basin for many years. It is observed that the surface area of the lake has declined from 6,100 square kilometers to 2,300 square kilometers. Salt, which is found in the dust from the dried up lake bed, leads the inhabitants of the region to abandon their agricultural lands and the rural population to leave their land as they lose their source of income. The fact that the majority of the settled rural population in the basin, where approximately 6.5 million people live, is composed of ethnic Azeris makes the existing problem more complicated. It is expected that all the people living in the region are affected by the accumulation of 8 billion tons of salt in the lake bed.

The first protest regarding this problem, which started to attract attention in the 1990s, was staged in 2009. The protest was perceived as a direct threat, and those who took part in the protest were condemned to various punishments. Similar protests took place in the following years, and many people were prosecuted by the Iranian government. The fact that Iran dealt directly with the protests regarding the environment as a security problem may stem from the fact that the people who live in the region are Azeris. On the other hand, water that will be transported from the Aras River with the

aim of saving the lake carries the potential to cause problems between Iran and Azerbaijan, which is another nation.

In addition to these developments in the northwest of the country, it seems that a new problem has emerged. Iran plans to divert some water from the Karoun River, which flows into the Tigris through Khuzestan province in southern Iran, towards the Zenda Rud River in Isfahan. However, the people in the region who cannot benefit from the prosperity oil provides despite the area being one of oil production in Iran, consider the project a second blow. Arabs in the region assert that the project is aimed at destroying the economic structure of the region, which is ethnically populated by Arabs, and to change the demographic structure of the region in this way. Despite the Pan-Arab policies of Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war against this region, the Khuzestan Arab population, who fought along with Iran, are still under the suspicion of the Iranian regime. Iran considers the people in the region to be a mass that could easily be used by the Western powers and Islamic movements. Plans to change the demographic structure by replacing the Arabs residing in the region with people of Persian origin come to the fore from time to time. In 2011, eight Iranian Arabs in the region were executed for participating in the protests. Considering that perception is more important than reality, it seems likely that it's only possible to prevent a new fracture in Iran's fragile ethnic component by convincing the people that the project is not aimed at displacing Arabs in the region.

"Environmental problems linked with ethnic problems in Iran", 17/11/2013, online at: http://www.todayszaman.com/news-331514-environmental-problems-linked-with-ethnic-problems-in-iran.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Dead in the Water Peace Talks

Dead in the Water Peace Talks

by Stephen Lendman

Call it the curse of Zionism. Traditional Jews deplore it. True Torah Jews Against Zionism (TTAZ) say it:

• advocates "a political and military end to the Jewish exile;"

• fosters "pseudo-Judaism" based on secular nationalism;

• coercively seeks "armed materialism" in place of "a Divine and Torah centered understanding;"

• endangers all Jews worldwide;

• wants to disassociate Jews and traditional Judaism from ideological Zionism; and

• calls Israel a "Zionist State," not a Jewish one.

Jews and Arabs once coexisted peacefully. Zionism changed things. Believing it protects Jews is "probably the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the Jewish people," TTAZ says.

"(H)atred of Jews and (claimed unique) Jewish suffering is the oxygen of the Zionist movement."

It needs hatred. It manufactures it. Inciting it is longstanding policy. So is manipulating it advantageously. It's to justify Zionism's existence.

It's the enemy of Jews and non-Jews alike. It's a curse. It's a hugely destructive cancer system. It perpetuates myths. Reality exposes its dark side.

Calling Palestine "a land without people for a people without land" is a longstanding Big Lie. It's right out a PR wizzard's playbook.

Other notions turn truth on its head. Israel didn't make the desert bloom. It's not a democracy. It's militantly polar opposite. It's worse than apartheid South Africa.

Regional Arab states aren't hostile. Israel's only enemies are ones it invents. It needs pretexts to justify over-the-top viciousness.

It blames Palestinians and other victims for its crimes. It deplores peace. It thrives on violence and conflict.

Israel is its own worst enemy. It risks perishing on the sword it brandishes. It mindlessly pursues destructive policies. It makes more enemies than friends.

America and Israel are the world's two most hated countries. It's for good reason. Hegemonic nations aren't loved. They're deplored.

They believe unchallenged dominance is the be-all-and-end-all. War is the strategy of choice.

Resource control is sought. So is turning ordinary people into serfs. Rule of law principles don't matter. Democracy is a convenient illusion.

Human and civil rights are old-fashioned. Police state harshness is official policy. So is anything goes.

Previous articles discussed so-called Israeli/Palestinian peace talks. They've been stillborn on arrival for decades.

They represent the greatest hoax in modern times. They're fake. They're more sham than real.

They have no legitimacy whatever. Grand illusion masks Israeli/Washington intolerance of peace. Both nations deplore it.

Israel doesn't negotiate. It's all take and no give. It demands unconditional Palestinian surrender.

Most often it gets what it wants. Imagine talking peace while waging war. Imagine claiming one thing while doing another. Imagine repeated Big Lies.

Longstanding Israeli policy includes state-sponsored terror, militarized occupation, multiple daily community incursions, mass arrests, imprisonments, torture, targeted assassinations, land theft, bulldozed homes, ethnic cleansing, and slow-motion genocide.

Imagine all of the above and then some being longstanding Israeli policy. Imagine a nation based on conquest and dominance. Imagine one institutionalizing racism.

Imagine one considering Arabs subhuman. Imagine a bloody impasse with no end. Imagine blind destructiveness and hate.

Imagine suffocating an entire people out of existence. Imagine exploiting, persecuting, impoverishing and slaughtering them. Imagine fantasy substituting for reality.

On November 13, CNN headlined "Palestinian negotiating team resigns."

Palestinian UN mission spokesman Rabii Hantouli said:

"The team resigned due to the Israeli illegal practices, especially settlement activities."

Negotiator Mohammed Shtayyeh added:

Resigning was in response to "increasing settlement building and the absence of any hope of

achieving results."

"Abbas has not accepted our resignation." Israel bears full "responsib(ility) for the failure of negotiations."

According to chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat:

"It is time for the international community and the Quartet members to stop treating Israel as a government above the laws of man and hold (it) accountable."

An unnamed PLO official said talks are suspended in practice. Further ones aren't scheduled.

Abbas said he'll keep negotiating. "Either we can convince (the team) to returnâ€¦or we form a new delegation," he said.

He lost credibility long ago. So did Erakat. He's a longstanding blowhard. He says one thing. He does another. He resigned many times before. He threatened to do it other times.

In 1991, he was deputy head of Palestine's Madrid Conference delegation. He was involved in follow-up talks.

He was chief Oslo negotiator. He and others involved betrayed their own people. He unconditionally surrendered to Israeli demands. Palestinians got nothing in return.

Two decades later, Israel's settler population tripled. Erakat has no credibility. Al Jazeera's 2011 Palestine Papers exposed more duplicity.

He accepted all East Jerusalem settlements except one. He abandoned diaspora Palestinians right of return beyond tokenism.

He agreed to numerous other Israeli demands. He collaborated against his own people. He did it

secretly. He did it unapologetically.

Abbas was very much involved. Both men and others are traitors. They can't be trusted. They're on the wrong side of history.

Since Oslo, Palestinians got nothing in return for renouncing armed struggle, recognizing Israel's right to exist, enforcing occupation harshness, letting settlements expand, and leaving major unresolved issues for later final status talks.

They include Palestinian self-determination, the right to return, the future of settlements, borders, water and other resource rights, and recognition of East Jerusalem as Palestine's exclusive capital.

Expect sham peace talks to continue. Expect Israel to concede nothing. Expect occupation harshness to persist. Expect unlimited settlement expansions.

A previous article discussed longstanding Israeli plans to Judaize Palestine. Netanyahu disingenuously told Housing Minister Uri Ariel to "reconsider" plans for 24,000 new units.

He said one thing. He meant another. A day later, the Jerusalem Post headlined "Netanyahu vows to build 'thousands more homes' in settlements."

A day after allegedly announcing one thing, he said:

"In recent months, we built thousands of homes in Judea and Samaria, and in the coming months we plan to build thousands more."

"It was never easy, but we did it responsibly despite international pressure." At the same time, he added:

"(T)here's no point in creating friction with the international community. (T)here's no point in wasting resources, energy and political capital on something that won't have a real result. That hurts

settlements."

Labor opposition leader Shelly Yacimovich expects unlimited settlement expansions while Netanyahu "pretend(s) to negotiate with the Palestinians."

Peace Now said expanding settlements during peace talks "empty (them) from any meaning and simply make (them) absurd.

A Palestinian Foreign Ministry statement is less than meets the eye. It called Netanyahu's statements "misleading. He makes statements to the media that the plans are frozen, but on the ground building goes on."

They've gone on for decades. They accelerated during Abbas' tenure. He pretends to care. He quietly lets what demands strong opposition continue.

His public statements or ones made for him have no credibility. He's complicit with Israel's worst policies. His security forces enforce them. He's the enemy of all Palestinians. Why they put up with him, they'll have to explain.

A Final Comment

Henry Siegman teaches Oriental and African studies at the University of London. He heads the US/Middle East Project. It's a Council on Foreign Relations initiative.

He's no friend of Palestine. He supports what's good for America and Israel. He endorsed Kerry's no peace/peace process. At the same time, he strongly criticized Netanyahu.

On November 12, he headlined "Netanyahu is destroying Kerry's peace process - and the State of Israel," saying:

"(I)rreversible facts on the ground" prevent Kerry's peace process from succeeding. (F)ailure is

foreordained."

It isn't "because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict uniquely defies solution." It's because Netanyahu's "strategic goal," like most previous Israeli leaders, "continues to be permanent control of all of Palestine."

He'll be remembered for having opposed all previous peace initiatives. Current talks perpetuate "the illusion" of his commitment to a two-state solution.

He's Judaizing Palestine. He's committed to "driv(ing) the settlement project to its intended conclusion."

He's uncompromisingly hardline. He's "determin(ed) never to allow an 'independent, viable, sovereign' Palestinian state."

"It most certainly cannot happen within the framework of a peace process based on (a) lie (and) pretense that the US believes him."

He demands what no Palestinian leader could accept. He insists that Israel maintain total West Bank/East Jerusalem control. He wants Palestine stripped of "every vestige of sovereignty."

His intransigence reflects his intent to blame Palestinians for failure he's "methodically orchestrating."

Ongoing talks are doomed. This time isn't just "another setback in the long history of" failure.

Netanyahu seeks a Greater Israel. He's making it "no longer recognizable. It's more "anachronistic ethnocracy" than democracy.

He's creating "disaster." He's relying on military superiority to enforce policy. Palestinian resistance is certain to grow.

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"(U)pheaval and suffering" will harm both sides. Anti-Israeli sentiment will increase. Millions of Palestinians won't be denied. They deserve rights equal to Jews.

Netanyahu's waging a losing battle. Pyrrhic victories mask longer term defeat. He's blind to reality. So are most Israelis willing to put up with him.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen [at] sbcglobal.net.

His new book is titled "Banker Occupation: Waging Financial War on Humanity."

http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanII.html

“Dead in the Water Peace Talks”, 14/11/2013, online at: http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2013/11/14/18746411.php

BACK TO TOP

❖ Sewage swamps Gaza streets as Egypt tunnel closures cut off power

Reuters) - Children waded through sewage submerging the streets of a central Gaza neighborhood on Thursday, a day after one of the blockaded Palestinian enclave's largest waste water treatment plants stopped for lack of fuel.

Fetid muck, which bubbles up from manholes and overflows from the idle plant when waste goes untreated, could soon spill into the homes of tens of thousands more residents in downtown Gaza City, officials and residents said.

Egypt's months-long crackdown on cross-border smuggling tunnels that used to bring fuel in cheaply has already forced Gaza's only power plant to stop, meaning two weeks of daily 12-hour blackouts for the territory's 1.8 million residents.

"This is the start of a catastrophe and unless the world listens to our cries, a real disaster may hit Gaza and its people," Gaza municipality's Sa'ad El-Deen Al-Tbash said.

"This is a humanitarian, not a political issue. Gaza's children did nothing to deserve being stuck in sewage," he told Reuters.

Gazan municipality officials said the treatment plant served 120,000 residents. They warned that other waste water facilities may soon run out of petrol to fuel generators.

Along one street, passersby covered their noses, and some residents driving donkey carts helped those slogging through pools of waste.

Egypt's closure of most of the estimated 1,200 tunnels run by the Islamist Hamas group has virtually stopped Egyptian fuel coming into Gaza, forcing Palestinians to buy Israeli imported petrol at double the price - 6.7 shekels ($1.9) a liter.

Egypt's military backed government fear the tunnels are used to take weapons into the Sinai Peninsula, and accuse Hamas of backing the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which was ousted by the security forces in July.

Israel has imposed its own blockade on Gaza, allowing in fuel and a restricted list of imports since Hamas took control in 2007. Hamas has spurned Western calls to recognize Israel and renounce violence.

MIXING FUEL

Unable to buy the expensive Israeli petrol, some Gaza taxi drivers have looked for alternatives in their kitchens, using gas from domestic tanks or mixing cooking oil with diesel.

"I can't fill my car with Israeli petrol ... I couldn't make a living if I did," said a Gaza taxi driver who installed a bottle of cooking gas in his vehicle.

He asked not to give his name to avoid hefty police fines for using the fuels, which are deemed a health hazard.

Despite the risks, the practice is widespread.

"Passing through some Gaza streets, it smells like a big pot of french fries," quipped one Gaza Facebook user.

Gaza economist Maher Al-Tabbaa' said the shortages of fuel and power meant that many businesses could not afford to run a generator, which costs about 100 shekels ($28.5) an hour.

"The continuing stoppage of the Gaza power plant for 18 hours a day foreshadows a real catastrophe that might affect the basic food security of the people as well as the health and education sectors," Tabbaa' said.

The fuel shortage is affecting life at every level.

Residents have taken to planning their social lives around the power cuts. Many make sure not to leave homes in the evening without a torch.

"The first question someone asks when invited over by a friend is 'will there be electricity? I don't want to climb the stairs'," said Ali Mohammed, an electrician.

"I blame the whole world," he said.

"Sewage swamps Gaza streets as Egypt tunnel closures cut off power", 14/11/2013, online at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/14/us-palestinians-gaza-power-idUSBRE9AD0P620131114?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=b2853e7501-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-b2853e7501-250657169

BACK TO TOP

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❖ National Water Carrier Park Project Wins Award

The National Water Carrier Park Project was awarded the 2013 Landscape Architecture Prize by the Association of Landscape Architects. The award was presented this week, at the Association's annual convention, to Roni Yeger-Shalita, who initiated the National Water Carrier Park project together with architects Orna Ben Zioni and Beeri Ben Shalom.

The reasons cited by the judges for awarding the prize were "for a project that developed from a student project to an actual project, thanks to exceptional vision and determination in advancing it, a project of great national importance and potential for improving the local quality of life for many communities."

The National Water Carrier Park aims to connect rehabilitated river areas and parks in Israel's central region, forming a wide nature strip crossing 9 local authorities, 6 regional councils and 3 municipalities. This ambitious project aims to help retain the contiguity of open spaces in Israel.

The idea for the project was conceived as the final assignment of landscape architect Roni Yeger-Shalita in her studies at the Technion, and she prepared a master plan together with the office of landscape architects Orna Ben Zioni and Beeri Ben Shalom.

According to KKL-JNF Chairman Efi Stenzler, "there is great potential in this land strip, which is presently characterized by hazards and neglect. The National Water Carrier Park Project will become an artery of life in the region and answer the growing need for open spaces for leisure and recreation, in addition to water supply. KKL-JNF is also planning to develop a cycling trail along its length."

"National Water Carrier Park Project Wins Award", 17/11/2013, online at: **http://www.jpost.com/Green-Israel/At-the-UN-Climate-Change-Conference%E2%80%93COP16/National-Water-Carrier-Park-Project-Wins-Award-331974**

BACK TO TOP

❖ In Israel, water where there was none

Necessity and ingenuity made Israelis leaders in water technology. Now, seeing vast global potential, they are teaming up with Mass. Innovators

TIR FOREST, Israel — On the chalky lower slopes of the Hebron Hills, in the midst of the scorched Israeli desert, there is an expanse known as "Green land," where grapes grow lush on the vine, fruit orchards flourish, and a man-made forest of more than 4 million trees rises toward the sky.

Called Yatir, the forest and the vineyards it surrounds are potent symbols of Israel's battle with nature. With science, technology, and, yes, a good amount of chutzpah, the arid country has figured out what few other desert regions have: how to squeeze enough water from a parched landscape to sustain a nation.

"This is the main war in Israel," said Ya'acov Ben Dor, managing director at Yatir Winery, which uses 13.2 million gallons of water a year in an area that gets less rainfall than most parts of Texas, "the war against the desert."

Israel, hoping to build on its home-grown success, is now turning to Massachusetts as an ally in this contest between nature and technology as rising temperatures, spreading deserts, growing populations, and pollution make water an increasingly precious commodity around the world.

Attracted by the state's technical know-how, innovative culture, and access to world markets, Israeli companies are investing, relocating, and seeking partnerships in Massachusetts to further advance their technologies and build a US platform from which to launch their global ambitions.

In Massachusetts, state officials and entrepreneurs see collaboration with Israel as an opportunity to build another world-class technology sector, one that will create potable water from the ocean; nurture crops with treated sewage; manage water quality with software; and mine for water in much the same way precious gems are unearthed.

The payoff could be huge. The global water industry today generates revenues of up to $600 billion a year, according to Boston market intelligence firm Lux Research Inc., and is projected to grow to $700 billion by the end of the decade.

"We've done it in IT. We've done it in biotech. We can do it in water," said Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the state's secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. "In terms of growing [an industry] we do it better than anybody else."

The challenges, however, are many. Massachusetts has several dozen water technology firms that make filters, control systems, and other equipment, but until recently the sector was so disjointed it could hardly be described as a cluster — the dense concentration of businesses in a single industry, such as technology in Kendall Square and Silicon Valley.

As the sector tries to come together, it still must overcome fierce competition from established water industry hubs in places such as Singapore.

Finally, with plentiful rain and abundant streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds, Massachusetts lacks the sense of urgency driving innovation in Israel.

But the need for clean, fresh water is growing around the world, so much that analysts predict the search for water in the 21st century will become as vital — and lucrative — as the quest for oil in the 20th.

If water consumption continues to grow at its current pace, according to a studyby the global consulting firm McKinsey & Co., demand will outstrip available resources by 40 percent within the next 20 years.

"Israel has invented for its own sake," Governor Deval Patrick said in an interview. "We can invent for the world's sake."

'Farmers without water'

It was nothing like the historic monuments that usually inspire visitors, yet the collection of white pipes, black tanks, and a control box beneath a metal canopy caught the imagination of Alicia Barton during a trade mission to Israel in December. The system recovers water from sewage in a single process that is more efficient, less energy-intensive, and less costly than existing technologies, which need several stages to treat wastewater.

This, thought Barton, chief executive of the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, could be part of the state's future. "We know that we have companies that can build those technologies," she said.
The installation, at a wastewater treatment plant near Tel Aviv, is a pilot project of Desalitech, an Israeli company that recently opened its US headquarters in Newton. Desalitech, viewed by industry analysts as an up-and-coming water technology firm, has developed very efficient processes for treating sewage and industrial wastewater and removing salt from sea water.
Israel's preoccupation with water has spanned thousands of years, as evidenced by the stone ruins of aqueducts and cisterns dating back to the Roman Empire and earlier. One underground aqueduct, today a tourist attraction, was ordered built in 701 BCE to protect the water supply of the City of David, Jerusalem's birthplace.
Some 2,700 years later, Israel has succeeded in forcing the desert to recede. Since independence in 1948, cultivated agricultural land has nearly doubled while forested land has increased more than twentyfold, to nearly 274,000 acres from about 13,000, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics. Satellite images show a nation that is now largely green.

The transformation began in the 1950s with the construction of Israel's National Water Carrier, a pipeline that transports water south from the Sea of Galilee — Israel's main source of fresh surface water — into the Negev Desert. Around the same time, an engineer named Simcha Blass was developing a system of spiral plastic tubing that would revolutionize agriculture by nourishing plants drop-by-drop.

He turned to farmers at Kibbutz Hatzerim to prove his invention's usefulness, forming a partnership with them that spawned Netafim Ltd., today the world's leading maker of drip irrigation systems. Go anywhere in Israel, and Netafim's products snake around trees lining city sidewalks, water orchid farms, and feed landscaping at local parks.
"We say necessity is the mother of all invention, and in our case this is true," said Naty Barak, chief sustainability officer at Netafim. "We were farmers without water in a desert."

Six wastewater treatment plants stretch the country's resources even further. They clean sewage, which is then sent to one of nine facilities that disinfect the wastewater, making it sanitary enough to irrigate crops. Nearly 95 billion gallons of water — roughly 75 percent of Israel's sewage — is reclaimed this way each year.

But perhaps no technology has done more to satisfy Israel's thirst than desalination. Five massive plants dot the country's coastline, sucking billions of gallons of water from the Mediterranean each year.

"No country that is close to the sea shouldn't have water," said Ron Yachini, vice president of business development at IDE Technologies Ltd., the company that built three of Israel's largest desalination plants.

Drinking from the sea

In Caesarea, nearly 40 miles north of Tel Aviv, visitors stroll the sandy beach, their eyes trained on the ruins of a Roman aqueduct. In the distance looms a marvel of the modern era, its silvery pipes glowing pink in the sunset as they plunge into the sea.

Called Hadera, this is one of Israel's largest desalination plants, where more than 53,000 filtering membranes hum as they strain salt from water. In the course of a year, this plant, built for about $400 million by IDE Technologies, produces 33.5 billion gallons of drinking water, about 10 percent of Israel's domestic water consumption.

In a back corner, a spigot lets visitors sample a cup of the Mediterranean, turned sweet and fresh.

Israelis began drinking from the sea in 1965, when a desalination plant in Eilat on the Red Sea used an energy-intensive distillation process. Over the next several years, Israeli firms developed and advanced a much more efficient process using reverse osmosis, a filtration-like technology.

Since the 1970s, the cost of removing salt from sea water has plunged from about $2.50 per cubic meter of water, or 264 gallons, to as little as 50 cents, according to academic research in Israel. Still, the cost of water is not cheap: Israelis pay an average of $11 per 1,000 gallons of water, compared with Bostonians who pay less than $6 on average.

Israel, however, is confident that new advancements in desalination will push costs even lower, and by 2020, become capable of supplying all the nation's domestic water consumption. But in a country where water remains the most valuable commodity, innovations to make the most of it never stop.

Drip-irrigation and related systems — many pioneered by Netafim — today nourish about 75 percent of Israel's agricultural land and 5 percent of the world's irrigated crops. From the original coil of

plastic tubing that regulated the drip-drip-drip, Netafim has transformed the main component of the technology into an inch-long rectangle with a labyrinth of tiny channels to deliver the precious drops even more precisely.

Drink a glass of Robert Mondavi or Gallo wine, and you're sipping a product that Netafim helped grow.

Or guzzle a Coke, another product an Israeli company has helped get to market. Blue I Water Technologies, a 10-year-old firm east of Tel Aviv, makes testing technology that Coca-Cola Co. uses to assure the quality of the water in its soft drinks.

In Lod, also near Tel Aviv, bacteria-filled petri dishes are scattered across a counter inside the lab of TACount, a start-up trying to reduce the time it takes to test water contamination. Nearby, machinery analyzed a water sample for E. coli and other contaminants in just five minutes — instead of several days that some testing methods require.

TACount chief executive Charles Gast recalled the 2010 rupture of a Massachusetts Water Resources Authority pipe that forced nearly 2 million people to boil water while authorities waited for tests to determine if it was safe to drink. If it had been available then, Gast said, TACount's process "could have prevented the boil water notice over that weekend."

Despite so much progress, water is still on every Israeli's mind. Regular news reports and a Twitter feed provide updates on the levels of the Sea of Galilee. Many older Israelis still recall the government campaign decades ago that urged people to "save water, shower with a friend."

Conservation-minded citizens, meanwhile, wonder if such a scarce resource should be exploited through technology to transform a desert ecosystem into an unnatural oasis.

Neighboring countries, such as Jordan and Syria, have similar concerns, questioning whether Israel takes a disproportionate share of common resources, such as the Jordan River, which feeds the Sea of Galilee. Such tensions have erupted in violence in the past, including the Six Day War of 1967, which was fought in part over water supplies.

But as those debates rage at home, water technology companies are looking beyond Israel, seeking opportunities in the growing need for water as the global population increases. In the 20th century, noted Dominic Waughray, head of environmental initiatives at the World Economic Forum, global population quadrupled, but water use grew by a factor of nine.

"We have this success story of a rising middle class — people getting richer, using more paints, more cosmetics, and having more appliances," Waughray said. "The faster our economy grows, the thirstier it is."

Mass. collaboration

On the eighth floor of a high-rise sandwiched between a mall and a car dealership, Booky Oren sits amid the paraphernalia of more than a decade as a top executive in Israel's water industry — a painting of a breaking wave, a commemorative photo of a desalination plant, a framed newspaper article. Here, the bespectacled 54-year-old now plays matchmaker for Israeli water technology start-ups looking for international partners.

Oren is a former executive chairman of Israel's national water utility and onetime leader of the World Bank's task force on innovation in the sector. When he talks water, others drink it in. For years, he has focused on one problem: launching Israel's water technology industry onto the global stage. Massachusetts, he believes, can provide the platform.

In 2011, while Patrick was giving a talk during a trade mission, Oren listened as the governor expounded on how Massachusetts' commitment to innovation and education has spawned industries such as life sciences and clean technology. When the governor finished, Oren asked, What about a water industry?
"And I said, well what about it?" Patrick recalled.

Oren argued that Massachusetts and Israel would be natural partners in such an endeavor because of their track records of nurturing innovation in other industries such as technology, life sciences, and alternative energy. The governor soon turned to his new environmental secretary, Rick Sullivan, who had been on the job about a week and a half, and said, "Make it happen."

Two years later, Massachusetts has begun to attract Israeli water firms to complement a $4 billion cluster of home-grown water technology companies and global firms with local offices. The sector includes engineering and consulting operations, investment firms, and research operations, including Siemens Water Technologies in Lowell, which offers water treatment services; and CDM Smith Inc., a global consulting, engineering, and construction firm based in Cambridge.

Desalitech, the Israeli desalination company that moved to Massachusetts, recently landed a contract with the Los Angeles County sanitation districts to launch a pilot project to treat sewage. The company has already installed a water purification system in Massachusetts to water the greens of the Kittansett Club golf course in Marion. Desalitech chief executive Nadav Efraty said the system began operating last month.

"If Massachusetts wants to be a player, they need to be a test bed for young companies and they need to invest," Efraty said. If that happens, he added, "endless companies are going to stream here."

To ensure that outcome, state and water sector leaders have spent the past months building the foundations of a new industry group, the New England Water Innovation Network, which will connect firms with laboratories and facilities, such as the Deer Island Sewage Treatment Plant, that can be used to test, prove, and commercialize new products. The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and Israel's Office of the Chief Scientist plan to award tens of thousands of dollars in grants to Israeli-Massachusetts water industry collaborations.

If this nascent partnership can combine Israel's innate understanding of water issues with Massachusetts' technological nimbleness and market savvy, it could dominate the global industry, many sector leaders believe.

Consider again, the Yatir Forest, on the edge of the unforgiving Negev Desert. When Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, floated the idea of a man-made forest in the dry expanse, many Israeli scientists scoffed at the idea. So Ben-Gurion found others to research techniques for planting and nurturing seedlings; Yatir's first trees were planted in the mid-1960s.

Today, the once-barren land is also alive with farms, fulfilling Ben-Gurion's vision, as the Bible says, of making the desert "blossom as a rose." Fruit trees, heavy with nectarines, peaches, and olives, stretch toward the horizon. Strawberries grow plump in row after row of bushes. Tomatoes and grapes ripen on their vines.

It has become the modern version of the land of milk and honey, much of it nurtured, drop-by-drop, from water reclaimed from Tel Aviv's sewage.

Globe reporter Erin Ailworth reported this story as part of the International Center for Journalists "Bringing Home the World" program, which funded her trip to Israel. She can be reached at erin .ailworth@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter @ailworth.

"In Israel, water where there was none", 17/11/2013, online at: http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2013/11/17/can-mass-find-new-tech-sector-israel-desert/6QBRXoVnvqTKTOcHXj1MRO/story.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Palestinian Authority owes Israeli energy company £175 million

Israeli Energy and Water Minister, Silvan Shalom, met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss the Palestinian Authority's debts to the Israeli National Electricity Company.

Israeli newspaper Maariv said that the debts were nearly NIS 1billion (£175million). The meeting comes one week after an official warning to the Palestinian Authority by the Israeli National Electricity Company over its debts.

According to the newspaper, the level of debts is unprecedented. It said that most of the debts are owed by Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank through the Jerusalem Company for Distributing Energy.

Former Israeli Financial Minister, Yuval Steinitz, previously decided to stop transferring Palestinian tax revenues to the Palestinians Authority. In the wake of the UN recognition of Palestine as a non-member state in last November, he said this money should go to Israeli energy companies.

Netanyahu continued the block on the tax money although Palestinians agreed to go ahead with peace talks through American mediation.

"Palestinian Authority owes Israeli energy company £175 million", 11/11/2013, online at: http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/8270-palestinian-authority-owes-israeli-energy-company-p175-million

BACK TO TOP

❖ Explainer: What do the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks mean?

The talks are due to last up until the middle of next year so let's have a look at the progress so far.

ON 29 JULY this year, direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians began, with the aim of finally reaching an agreement that would end the long-running conflict.

This is not the first time direct talks have taken place to try to resolve the conflict but United States Secretary of State John Kerry, who has been driving the talks, is pushing for a solid and permanent agreement this time.

It's a complex topic and many people are wondering how significant these talks really are and what it all means, so we though we would take you through it.

How did the talks get started?

In mid-July this year, United States Secretary of State John Kerry consulted, from his base in Jordan, with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

The Palestinians were demanding a publicly declared freeze to all Israeli settlement construction in the occupied territories as a condition to resume peace talks, with the last round of direct talks collapsing in 2010. With the settlements being one of the most contentious issues in the conflict, the Israelis rejected this.

Kerry's bid was also complicated by new European Union guidelines that will block all funding of Jewish settlements in Palestine from next year.

However on 18 July, a Palestinian official said leaders would vote on a plan under which peace talks with Israel would not depend on a settlement ban.
At the end of his sixth visit to the Middle East in as many months, Kerry announced an agreement had been reached on a basis for resuming final status negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis.

What are the main issues?

Essentially, the Palestinians want an end to the Israeli occupation of territories and the establishment of an independent state with defined borders, though both sides disagreeing on where the border should be drawn. However this long-fought conflict does not centre around just one topic that both sides feel strongly about but a number of arguments that have developed over the years.

Theses are some of the most contentious issues:

Settlements in the West Bank

The building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank has been described by many international nations as an obstacle to the peace process.

The UN and EU have also both said the settlements are illegal under international law.

This has been happening since the 1990s with Israeli settlers taking over more land in the region as the years went on, creating tension between them and the Palestinians – particularly the farmers.
An aerial view over West Bank showing a Palestinian village, left, and a Jewish settlement, right (Image: Lefteris Pitarakis/AP/PA).

However Israel disputes claims the settlements are illegal, especially those built when there was no diplomatic agreement, and settlers believe they have a right to live on the land. Israel has also maintained that the settlements in the West Bank are a necessary buffer against future aggression.

Control of Jerusalem

The Jerusalem border is a particularly contentious issue as the two sides assert a claim over the city which has religious and historical significance for both.

Palestinians have concerns about the welfare of holy places that are currently under Israeli control while the Israelis are worried about the security of Jews living in neighbourhoods that would be placed under Palestinian control if they gave it up.
At Clinton's Camp David summit, the US put forward a plan which would see the Arab parts of the city given to the proposed new Palestinian state while the Jewish parts would be retained by Israel

and all archaeological work under the Temple Mount would be jointly controlled. This was accepted by both sides but then the talks fell apart.

Right of return for Palestinian refugees

Large numbers of Palestinians fled their homes and livelihoods or were expelled during the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948 and the 1967 Six-Day War.

In 2010, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East(UNRWA) estimated that the number, which includes descendants of the original refugees, had reached 4.7 million.

While Palestinian negotiators have always stressed the importance of the refugees' right of return to Israel, the Israelis have insisted that allowing some five million people to return would not be sustainable.

Security

Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians and military forces in the form of suicide bombs or rocket attacks is considered by the US and the EU as terrorism, with the most prominent groups, such as Hamas, seeing the conflict as a religious jihad.

Support for suicide bombing by these groups is high among Palestinians. However the incidence of these attacks has dropped considerably since the construction in 2003 of a security barrier between Israel and the West Bank.

The rocket attacks from Palestinian territories into Israel are a great cause of concern for defence officials. In 2006 alone, 1,726 launches by Palestinian groups were recorded by the Israeli government and this was the year after its forces disengaged from the Gaza Strip.

This has often resulted in military responses from the Israeli side with targeted attacks on suspected terrorist leaders which have also led to civilian deaths.

As for the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, while many Palestinians claim entitlement to this area, as well as the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, the Israelis argue that giving up this land would create serious security risks.

Water

Israel gets a lot of its water from large underground aqaufiers that continue under the 'Green Line' border between Israel and territories that include the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Golan Heights and so are shared water sources.
Though there has been criticism leveled at Israel for consuming most of the water, it has been pointed out it also contributes a large proportion of the West Bank's water supply and this was solidified in the 1995 Oslo II Accord agreement.

UN reports found that Palestinian water resources have been confiscated or destroyed as Israeli settlements move in and there are strict development restrictions on Palestinians that mean authorities often do not allow farmers to drill new irrigation wells.

The UN has estimated that as the population of Gaza grows and its economy is constricted, people living there will find it increasingly difficult to access enough drinking water.

Previous talks

Talks have stuttered and started for decades in the elusive bid to reach a final peace deal between the Arab world and Israel.

The first direct talks were hosted by then US president Bill Clinton at Camp David in 2000. Palestinian president Yassar Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak both attended but the negotiations collapsed over issues of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. This also sparked a new Palestinian uprising, or intifada.

Negotiations were formally restarted in November 2007 with now Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli premier Ehud Olmert at Annapolis, Maryland.

However in December 2008, Israel began a 22-day military offensive in the Gaza Strip which prompted the Palestinians to suspend talks.

Three years later, Barack Obama launched a new round of direct talks, hosted by Hillary Clinton at a White House summit with Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

They collapsed completely in September 2010 when Israel refused to keep in place a freeze on settlement building in Palestinian territories. Since then, while there has been quiet dialogue between the two sides, direct talks have been put on ice.

What kind of progress has been made in this round of talks?

As a 'goodwill' gesture in July, following an agreement to resume direct talks, Israel announced it would release 104 Palestinian prisoners who had been detained since before the 1993 Oslo I Accord. There was an angry response to this from the Israeli families of their victims, who had been killed in attacks.

It was suggested by critics that a subsequent announcements of new Israeli settlements was an attempt to appease Israeli citizens and these new settlements were condemned by the international community.

The talks themselves are supposed to be kept secret though some leaks have made their way into the press.

While Palestine's Abbas initially said he wanted a final resolution that would see the withdrawal of all Israelis – both civilian and soldiers – from territories, he has rolled back on this slightly during the course of the negotiations.

He has also commented that the right of return for Palestinian refugees will probably have to be waived if they are to come to a final agreement this time.

The issue of water resources has been discussed but both sides were tight-lipped about progress on this issue.
In September, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad called for a third intifada, and this week, the US's John Kerry warned that there is a real danger of this if talks collapse again.

Talks broke down temporarily on Tuesday over the issue of settlement construction and the Palestinians threatened to leave. However Kerry managed to get things back on track again, telling reporters that there has been some "clarity" on some of the points discussed.

Also this week, Israeli negotiators sought to have the separation barrier that cuts through the West Bank serve as the border of a future Palestinian state. This is contrary to the Palestinian proposal that the 1967 lines that existed before the Six-Day War and Israel's occupation of Gaza serve as the border.

Another spanner in the works was the results of tests that suggested Yasser Arafat was killed by polonium poisoning, with the Palestinians asserting that Israel is the "only suspect" in his 'assassination'.

Will these talks make any difference?

Talks among the Israelis and Palestinians have always been volatile and can break down over any or all of the sticking points at a moment's notice.

Intervention from the US has kept negotiations ticking along so far but there has been skepticism about the likelihood of a final agreement that will make any real difference this time.

The talks are scheduled to last up to nine months with a view to reaching a final agreement and a resolution of the conflict by the middle of next year so while the talks themselves mean progress, there is still a long road ahead.

"Explainer: What do the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks mean?", 10/11/2013, online at: http://www.thejournal.ie/israeli-palestinian-peace-talks-1164364-Nov2013/

BACK TO TOP

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❖ United Nations Climate Change Conference kicks off in Warsaw

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its report, "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis," in the first week of October.

The report states that the evidence for warming of the global climate system is unequivocal, especially since the 1950s, and accordingly, it is extremely likely that human influence is the dominant cause of observed warming since then. According to the report, water shortages and the number of people affected by these shortages due to the new climate conditions will increase. Rising water demand, especially in the semi-arid and arid climate zones, should be met by keeping records of the vulnerabilities caused by current climate change and through adapting the management of water resources to these new conditions.

Following the report, the UN Climate Change Conference was organized and began in Warsaw on Nov. 11. It will conclude on Nov. 22. The leaders participating in the conference, in which expectations are not high, are discussing how they can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2015. According to statistics from the World Bank, the global CO2 emission rate of developed countries, out of the world's total emissions, dropped in 1990-2012 from 69 percent to 41 percent, while the share of CO2 emissions from developing countries increased in the same period from 31 to 59 percent.

As scientists point out, the average global temperature has increased by around 0.8 degrees Celsius since the Industrial Revolution, and it is stated that this will increase to 2 degrees Celsius if carbon emissions are reduced or 6 degrees Celsius if measures are not taken. In order to keep the average global temperature increase under 2 degrees Celsius, the researchers also state that global CO2 emissions, which are set to be 50 gigatons per year by 2050, should be halved. Besides, the report notes that the global sea level has risen by 20 centimeters in the last century and that the rate of rise will further increase in coming years. It is expected to reach 45-82 centimeters in 2080-2100 if no further action is taken to curb emissions. If carbon emissions are curbed, the level is expected to stop at 26-55 centimeters.

The sea-level rise could inundate island states such as Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau and Kiribati. The representatives of more than 190 countries at the conference, which concentrates on

climate security for future generations, aim to fight against climate change more effectively and look to lay a foundation for a global agreement to be reached in time for the 2015 talks in Paris. Some scientists also argue that, in the agreement, each state should have the authority to set its own goals regarding CO2 emissions, since each state has different priorities.

Furthermore, the states are expected to create institutional support, offering financial and technological services, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) within the scope of the agreement.

Another important issue in the conference is that while the world's greatest producers of emissions, China, the US, the European Union and Russia, contribute to global climate change, smaller and poorer countries, particularly small island states which do not play a large role in climate change, are severely affected by it.

It is claimed that the agreement, which is expected to enter into force in 2020 and is the main goal of the conference, will not be concluded in Warsaw, but that Warsaw will be a phase in which new rules will be agreed on. In addition, it is stated that the process might be accelerated after the typhoon that recently hit the Philippines.

"United Nations Climate Change Conference kicks off in Warsaw", 17/11/2013, online at: http://www.todayszaman.com/news-331499-united-nations-climate-change-conference-kicks-off-in-warsaw.html

BACK TO TOP

❖ Water under pressure

We ask why the source of life has become a source of tension and whether water diplomacy will offer a solution.

Water is under pressure, and disputes over the precious resource are fuelling tensions in regions across the world.

"We never know the worth of water until the well is dry," a 17th century scholar once said. Those words strike a chord in the modern world, raising concerns about the risks and challenges of potential conflicts.

An international conference is taking place at The Hague in the Netherlands to discuss issues around water security and peace.

The two-day event, which began on Thursday, sees analysts, negotiators and scientists gathered to discuss ways to avoid future conflicts over water.

Delegates there are promoting a new catchphrase: water diplomacy.

They are emphasising the need for cooperation, negotiation and arbitration to address recurring conflicts, and to head off the risks of potential wars over water.

The United Nations estimates that 783 million people, or 11 percent of the world's population, do not have access to clean water.

And what fresh water there is, is coming under increasing pressure from population growth, pollution and global warming.

Conflicts over water generally fall into two categories.

The first is simply a fight between two groups over water itself for consumption, sanitation and commerce.

The second conflict is that which arises from the way we deal with water scarcity, for instance, the impact a new dam might have on a community downstream, or the privatisation of water - a trend that has taken root in some South American countries - where it is being sold as a commodity, like oil.

Disputes over water are common around the world.

Already, the construction of the Belo Monte Dam in Brazil, expected to be the world's third-largest, has angered indigenous people in the Amazon Basin.

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And a series of dams have reduced water flow from the Tigris and the Euphrates, causing tension between Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Syria and Iraq have previously fought minor skirmishes over the Euphrates River.

Five regions in central Asia are also competing for water from two sources, the Syr Daria and Amu Daria Rivers

Some 95 percent of Egypt's population depends on the Nile River for its water supply, but the Nile runs through 10 countries, and those in the Nile basin want a greater share of the river's water supply.

Ethiopia is also building a dam on the Blue Nile, one of the main sources of the Nile River, and the biggest dam construction project in Africa, which has become a cause for concern.

Water rights are a major part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the only water resource for the Palestinians is completely controlled by Israel.

So, why has water, the source of life, become a source of tension?

And as populations grow and supplies decline, what can be done to safeguard the world's most precious resource?

To discuss this, Inside Story, with presenter Sue Turton, is joined by: Patrick Huntjens, the head of Water Diplomacy at The Hague Institute for Global Justice, which organised this week's conference; Hakan Tropp, the managing director of the Knowledge Services department at the Stockholm International Water Institute; and Aaron Wolf, the director of the Water Conflict Management Programme at Oregon State University.

"Water security is a major issue on the international agenda. But in practice we can see that cooperation over water is very difficult. So in this conference we are trying to question how we can improve existing tools and methods for solving water conflicts and water prevention, and what diplomatic tools are needed to address recurring conflicts."

Patrick Huntjens, The Hague Institute for Global Justice

"Water under pressure", 15/11/2013, online at: http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2013/11/water-under-pressure-20131115951196101 72.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Water diplomacy can ease down conflicts by widening the scope of parties involved

By looking at a watershed as a whole - beyond national borders - water diplomacy can be a game changer in water-related conflicts. Knowledge about the often complex hydrology of a whole river basin in combination with mediation, can lead to a better understanding of water as a resource and the often competing interest between parties.

This was repeatedly heard during the opening plenary of the Water Security and Peace Conference in the Peace Palace in The Hague on 14 and 15 November 2013. The conference is one of this year's events to mark the centennial anniversary of the Peace Palace.

The conference is organized by the Water Diplomacy Consortium consisting of five partners: The Hague Institute for Global Justice, UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, UPEACE Centre The Hague, Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations and the Water Governance Centre.

Avoid water-related conflicts

Water diplomacy is often seen as a way to solve existing water-related conflicts on national levels. The inter-state water conflicts between Egypt and Ethiopia (Nile river), Israel and Palestinian territories (Jordan river) and India and Pakistan (Indus river) are well known examples. However, water diplomacy can also be a tool to avoid water-related conflicts. This can include early warning of potential conflict, conflict prevention through better water governance and water management, Track-II facilitation, more formal mediation and arbitration.

Chair Henk van Schaik of UN Mandated University for Peace (Upeace) started the conference mentioning the importance of diplomacy for water management.

"For open access to water it is important to prevent conflicts over water resources. It is better to cooperate and jointly maintain a water resource, instead of fighting over disputes", Van Schaik said.

Key in preventing and solving conflicts is objective fact-finding and trust-building between stakeholders.

Professor David Grey of the Oxford University stated that in most areas there is enough rainfall to meet the fresh water demand. What is the problem, he asked rhetorical. "Certain areas have only a few heavy rain showers per year. So if such a shower holds off, it can have an immediate impact on the availability of fresh water." According to Grey one third of the world population lives in river basins at risk. "Often the hydrology is complex, little data is available, the governance is poor and the infrastructure is poor. Many countries cannot manage their rivers."

Nevertheless Grey was optimistic. "I see more trained - mostly here in the Netherlands - water managers trying to start a dialogue between countries. For instance Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia talk on sharing the water of the Nile river. Doing so they have to argue, share data and align their interests. That is hopeful."

Average water storage capacity

Director Pavel Kabat of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) talked about the global perspective of water scarcity, with salt intrusion and groundwater depletion as hidden challenges. He had calculated that in North America the average water storage capacity is 6,150 m3/year/inhabitant. In Ethiopia this is only 43 m3. According to Kabat it would cost Ethiopia 46 billion USD to create a similar water storage capacity as in North America.

Professor Shafiqul Islam of Tufts University (USA) warned the audience that water resource management is not only about science and technology. "It has also to do with the right to water. The allocation of the water resources to the users has to be negotiated. Science can help to develop the necessary tools to do this more efficient."

Islam emphasized the importance of flexibility. "No one knows how much water is really available next year. In the case of Jordan, for instance, it has been suggested to allocate a fixed amount of fresh water to this country, while the surrounding countries receive less in the case there is less rainfall."

The opening plenary made clear that negotiations on water rights is a continuous process that never ends. Inevitably these negotiations get more intense as water demand increases in coming decades.

Pavel Kabat forecasted an increase of fresh water use from 4000 km3/year in 2000 to 5250 km3/y in 2020. He excepted a sharply increase especially in Asia because of population growth.

In three working groups the participating water experts and diplomats will talk about (1) a better understanding of water diplomacy capabilities, (2) initiating an international hub of experts to better resolve water related conflicts and (3) formulate an agenda on water diplomacy capability development.

A second news item on the outcome of this conference will be published on this website later this week.

"Water diplomacy can ease down conflicts by widening the scope of parties involved", 15/11/2013, online at: http://www.dutchwatersector.com/news-events/news/8461-water-diplomacy-can-ease-down-conflicts-by-widening-the-scope-of-parties-involved.html

BACK TO TOP

❖ Stockholm Water Institute to Host Unesco Transboundary Center

The Stockholm International Water Institute agreed to host the first Unesco center with a focus on defusing transboundary water disputes that could potentially lead to war.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization decided to set up the research center in Sweden, to be run by SIWI in collaboration with Uppsala University and the University of Gothenburg, to increase cooperation and assist "in regions where conflict over shared waters is strong."

SIWI organizes World Water Week annually in Sweden's capital and will with the "one of a kind" center now highlight cross-border waters. The center will "concentrate on how to establish and develop effective water partnerships despite contexts of political conflict," SIWI said.

Climate change, population pressures and water demands from agriculture to energy raise the risk of violence, according to the UN. The majority of countries "share water resources in some form such as rivers and lakes," SIWI said. "Cooperation with other states on this vital resource is essential."

"Stockholm Water Institute to Host Unesco Transboundary Center", 15/11/2013, online at: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-11-15/stockholm-water-institute-to-host-unesco-transboundary-center.html

BACK TO TOP

❖ How do we balance needs of energy, water, and climate?

MIT study underscores need to examine trade-offs before choosing energy technologies.

In deciding how best to meet the world's growing needs for energy, the answers depend crucially on how the question is framed. Looking for the most cost-effective path provides one set of answers; including the need to curtail greenhouse-gas emissions gives a different picture. Adding the need to address looming shortages of fresh water, it turns out, leads to a very different set of choices.

That's one conclusion of a new study led by Mort Webster, an associate professor of engineering systems at MIT, published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*. The study, he says, makes clear that it is crucial to examine these needs together before making decisions about investments in new energy infrastructure, where choices made today could continue to affect the water and energy landscape for decades to come.

The intersection of these issues is particularly critical because of the strong contribution of the electricity-generation industry to overall greenhouse-gas emissions, and the strong dependence of most present-day generating systems on abundant supplies of water. Furthermore, while power plants are a strong contributor to climate change, one expected result of that climate change is a significant change of rainfall patterns, likely leading to regional droughts and water shortages.

Surprisingly, Webster says, this nexus is a virtually unexplored area of research. "When we started this work," he says, "we assumed that the basic work had been done, and we were going to do something more sophisticated. But then we realized nobody had done the simple, dumb thing" — that is, looking at the fundamental question of whether assessing the three issues in tandem would produce the same set of decisions as looking at them in isolation.

The answer, they found, was a resounding no. "Would you build the same things, the same mix of technologies, to get low carbon emissions and to get low water use?" Webster asks. "No, you wouldn't."

In order to balance dwindling water resources against the growing need for electricity, a quite different set of choices would need to be made, he says — and some of those choices may require extensive research in areas that currently receive little attention, such as the development of power-plant cooling systems that use far less water, or none at all.

Even where the needed technologies do exist, decisions on which to use for electricity production are strongly affected by projections of future costs and regulations on carbon emissions, as well as future limits on water availability. For example, solar power is not currently cost-competitive with other sources of electricity in most locations — but when balanced against the need to reduce emissions and water consumption, it may end up as the best choice, he says.

"You need to use different cooling systems, and potentially more wind and solar energy, when you include water use than if the choice is just driven by carbon dioxide emissions alone," Webster says.

His study focused on electricity generation in the year 2050 under three different scenarios: purely cost-based choices; with a requirement for a 75 percent reduction in carbon emissions; or with a combined requirement for emissions reduction and a 50 percent reduction in water use.

To deal with the large uncertainties in many projections, Webster and his co-authors used a mathematical simulation in which they tried 1,000 different possibilities for each of the three scenarios, varying each of the variables randomly within the projected range of uncertainty. Some conclusions showed up across hundreds of simulations, despite the uncertainties.

Based on cost alone, coal would generate about half of the electricity, whereas under the emissions-limited scenario that would drop to about one-fifth, and under the combined limitations, it would drop to essentially zero. While nuclear power would make up about 40 percent of the mix under the emissions-limited scenario, it plays almost no role at all in either the cost-alone or the emissions-plus-water scenarios.

"We're really targeting not just policymakers, but also the research community," Webster says. Researchers "have thought a lot about how do we develop these low-carbon technologies, but they've

given much less thought to how to do so with low amounts of water," he says.

While there has been some study of the potential for air-cooling systems for power plants, so far no such plants have been built, and research on them has been limited, Webster says.

Now that they have completed this initial study, Webster and his team will look at more detailed scenarios about "how to get from here to there." While this study looked at the mix of technologies needed in 2050, in future research they will examine the steps needed along the way to reach that point.

"What should we be doing in the next 10 years?" he asks. "We have to look at the implications all together."

In addition to Webster, the work was carried out by graduate student Pearl Donohoo and recent graduate Bryan Pelmintier, of the MIT Engineering Systems Division. The work was supported by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the Martin Family Foundation.

"How do we balance needs of energy, water, and climate?", 15/11/2013, online at: http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2013/balancing-needs-of-energy-water-and-climate-1115.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Report on Nile River Basin bolsters Egypt

A recent study, if taken into consideration, may tip the balances of the ongoing negotiations between the Nile Basin countries. According to the data gathered, it proves that Egypt would not receive its share from the Nile Basin dam water. The project evaluation and follow-up for the water sector in North African countries, funded by the African Water Facility, completed five reports on the state of water in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Mauritania to be presented at the next African summit. It also served the purpose of putting forth shared policies to face the scarcity of water in some African countries that suffer from severe shortages.

The report on Egypt consisted of a detailed study on the state of water in the Nile Basin as well as all water resources in every Nile Basin country, be it rainwater, groundwater or surface water. It specified the shares allotted to each country according to all real water resources, not any single one. This has bolstered Egypt's position in the ongoing negotiations with Nile Basin countries, especially since the latter use many times the amount of water Egypt does in their pastures and forests alongside a great deal of waste in ponds and swamps, an allegation to which they do not admit.

Al-Monitor received the data included in the study of the state of water in the Nile Basin prepared by Khaled Abu Zeid, the regional director of the water-sector evaluation and follow-up project in North African countries at the Center for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe, led by a team of researchers. The study is still in its final stages, leading up to a presentation at the next African summit. The study laid out two groups of data for rainwater, the first dealing specifically with the Nile Basin, and the second dealing with rainwater within the borders of Nile Basin countries (looking more broadly at the Nile Basin as well as the basins and valleys of other rivers in these countries).

According to the data collected in the study, the total rainwater falling in the Nile Basin is 1,600 billion cubic meters per year. Meanwhile, the total rainwater falling on Nile Basin countries both within and outside of the basin itself is 7,000 billion cubic meters annually.

The data from the first group in the study specified the total amount of rainwater that falls in each Nile Basin country individually. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) heads the list with a total of 3,845 billion cubic meters of rainwater annually. Ethiopia registers 886 million cubic meters,

Burundi sees 34 billion, Eritrea 31 billion, Kenya 366 billion, Rwanda 28 billion, Sudan 342 billion, South Sudan 600 billion, Tanzania 640 billion, Uganda 223 billion and Egypt records 6 billion.

The second group's data in the study looks at the total share for each country of rainwater within the Nile Basin itself. Egypt comes in last place with an incredibly low share compared to the rest of the countries, with less than 2 billion cubic meters annually while Ethiopia receives an annual rainwater share of 419 billion cubic meters from the Nile Basin. Burundi receives 17 billion cubic meters, the DRC 27 billion, Eritrea 8 billion, Kenya 54 billion, Rwanda 22 billion, Sudan 236 billion, South Sudan 600 billion, Tanzania 65 billion and Uganda 210 billion.

Speaking to *Al-Monitor*, Abu Zeid said, "This data reflects the true uses in Nile Basin countries both in and outside of the basin itself. The overwhelming majority of this rainfall in the upper Nile, known as 'green water,' contributes directly and greatly to rainwater agriculture, which is a primary resource of food in the form of grains and other agricultural products such as vegetables and bananas and pineapple, for which these countries are known in addition to tea and coffee. This rain also irrigates wide swaths of pastureland in the Upper Nile countries, where the number of heads of cattle exceeds the human population in certain [areas]. The animal stock in Ethiopia and Sudan alone represents about two-thirds of the total in all of the African continent, consuming 150 billion cubic meters of [of water] each year. This is around three times Egypt's share of Nile water, estimated at 55.5 billion cubic meters per year, used for all purposes, be they domestic, agricultural, industrial or others. This green water is also [consumed by] the coverage of forests spread throughout Upper Nile countries, which Egypt and Sudan are lacking. Both of them, but especially Egypt, depend on Nile water itself, which is called 'blue water,' to fulfill its water needs."

Abu Zeid added that the truth of the matter seems clear in that the different uses of water among Upper Nile countries far exceeds that used in Egypt, which has the least total renewable water resources in the Nile Basin. The share for each individual per year of these resources is less than that in the rest of the Nile Basin countries. In Egypt, each individual is allotted 600 cubic meters annually, making it the only Nile Basin country to fall below the recognized water-poverty limit of 1,000 cubic meters per individual annually.

According to this study, saying that Egypt has allotted itself a share of the Nile waters is a fabrication and not based in truth. It is illogical that some feel that the Nile Basin water is the sole source behind

the Aswan Dam. This completely ignores the water that comes in and out of the different tributaries of the river and its lakes in the Upper Nile, such as Lakes Albert, Edward, Semliki, the Blue Nile, Atbarah, Sobat, Tana, Victoria, Kiyoga, Mrawi, Snar, Jebel Aulia, Bahr al Jabal, Bahr al-Ghazal, the South Sudan dam swamps and the Mashar swamps in Ethiopia. This particularly ignores the rainwater used directly within the Nile Basin for agriculture, pastures and forests. The Upper Nile countries other than Egypt have other water sources outside the Nile Basin, according to Abu Zeid.

Hani Rasalan, the head of the Sudan and Nile Basin Studies program at the Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, confirmed to *Al-Monitor* that talk of the real shares received by Nile headwaters countries of green water falling in the basin is nothing new. These countries, particularly Ethiopia, have been persistent in ignoring this reality, while rhetoric has been limited to shares of blue water that make up not even 5% of all of the Nile Basin water flowing through the river itself.

Behind the current crises to divide up the shares of blue water alone without taking into consideration the total shares of green water, according to Rasalan, is a strategic goal headed by Ethiopia to strengthen outside forces to control water in the Blue Nile and to encroach on Egypt's resources and exert its hegemony. This is a longstanding Ethiopian dream, as proven by the position of the Addis Ababa government in refusing to cooperate with Egypt in building the dam, decreasing its portion of the reservoir and generating however much electricity they want. This was also clear in Ethiopia's attempts to draw in neighboring countries to support its position in exchange for electricity at its production cost, proving that the goal behind constructing the Renaissance Dam is not economic or for development purposes, but political, as Rasalan put it.

Former Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohammed Nassradin Aalam explained to *Al-Monitor* that Egypt had in fact previously taken steps to talk with headwater countries about Nile Basin water resources as a whole and not just the Nile River. The headwater countries, however, vanquished the two estuary countries, Sudan and Egypt, through strength in numbers. Aalam pointed out that the rest of the headwater countries, with the exception of Uganda, have other rivers with many times the amount of water Egypt receives and that they are requesting be redistributed.

The crisis revolving around the division of water shares from the Nile Basin is still a thorny issue in Africa. The majority of studies on the water situation in the basin show that more than 90% of its water is wasted in ponds and swamps, and that the crisis is a matter of mismanagement and lack of

organization rather than a real shortage. This is what gives the Nile Basin countries the responsibility to stop the conflict over these shares and to work on projects to tap these wasted water resources.

"Report on Nile River Basin bolsters Egypt", 14/11/2013, online at: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/nile-water-egypt-report.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Egypt farmers fear water supply threat from Ethiopia dam

EZBET RABIE, Egypt: With an economy already in tatters, Egypt's farmers fear the building of an upstream Nile dam in Ethiopia could lead to water shortages and crop failures with catastrophic effects on their livelihood.

"We don't want this dam," says Saeed Al-Simari, standing on his modest land in Egypt's fertile Nile Delta region.

"We want to plant our land, we need water. It's hard enough with the water we have, imagine when we don't have anymore," said Simari.

"We are very worried about our crops," he told AFP.

Ethiopia is pressing ahead with construction of a $4.2 billion (3.2 billion euro) Grand Renaissance Dam, set to become Africa's biggest hydroelectric dam when completed.

The announcement of the project caused a national outcry in Egypt, with politicians, media and farmers warning that the dam could pose a national security threat.

Water experts in Egypt say there is already a water deficit in the country due to the exploding population.

"The average person uses 620 to 640 cubic meters (21,000 to 22,600 cubic feet) per year. With the water poverty level defined at 1,000 cubic meters, we are already below the water poverty level," says Alaa Al-Zawahry, a dam expert and member of a government commission tasked with studying the downstream impact of Ethiopia's dam.

Egypt, which fears the project may diminish its water supply, says its "historic rights" to the Nile are guaranteed by two treaties from 1929 and 1959 that allow it 87 percent of the Nile's flow and give it veto power over upstream projects.

But a new deal was signed in 2010 by other Nile Basin countries, including Ethiopia, allowing them to work on river projects without Cairo's prior agreement.

In May, Ethiopia began diverting the Blue Nile a short distance from its natural course for the construction of the dam, but has assured its neighbors downstream that water levels would not be affected.

But Egyptians fear a doomsday scenario in which water shortages would lead to crop failures and electricity cuts.

A study by international experts on the dam's impact on the river has been submitted to Egypt and Sudan, which also relies on Nile resources and supports Ethiopia's hydro-electric project.

Egypt has dismissed the study's findings, which minimise the dam's impact, and has called for further assessments.

The first phase of the Grand Renaissance Dam is expected to be complete in 2016 and will generate 700 megawatts of electricity. When the entire project is complete it will have a capacity of 6,000 megawatts.

The filling of the dam is expected to take around five years and this according to experts will be the most taxing phase for Egypt.

Egypt's Aswan Dam — which controls annual floods and provides water for irrigation — has a strategic reserve of 70 billion cubic meters, which will drop by 15 billion each year of the filling phase of the Renaissance Dam, says Zawahry.

After five years, "there will be an electricity shortage and the strategic reserve will be used up," he told AFP.

Ethiopia, for whom the dam promises a much-needed source of energy, has pledged to maintain dialogue with Egypt to resolve any problem.

Zawahry says constant coordination between both countries is crucial.

"There will always be a conflict between Ethiopia wanting to produce more electricity and Egypt receiving the water it needs," he said.

But it is difficult to accurately predict the exact impact of the Renaissance Dam.

"It's all a question of probability," said Zawahry, with many variables playing a part.

"On the Nile, from Ethiopia to Aswan, there are several dams but they are small and their effects are small. But if there will now be a 74 billion cubic meter dam, the management of both dams has to be very well coordinated," he said.

The water ministers of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia are to hold talks soon to discuss the progress of the dam, Egyptian officials have said.

"We have heard many encouraging statements from the Ethiopian side saying that the dam will not affect Egypt. The mood is positive," said Khaled Wassef, spokesman for the ministry of water resources and irrigation in Egypt.

"We need the full information on issues like how long exactly will it take to fill the dam, the way it will be managed," Wassef told AFP.

But on the fields, the farmers are less optimistic.

They say water shortages will force them to use underground wells rather than Nile water, which is richer in nutrients thanks to the silt deposits.

"Egypt farmers fear water supply threat from Ethiopia dam", 13/11/2013, online at: http://www.arabnews.com/news/476316

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Dubai Municipality addressed the 4th Waste Management Middle East Forum

Dubai Municipality *presented at the 4th Waste Management Middle East Forum held at the* ***Habtoor Grand Beach Resort & Spa*** *; Dubai - UAE.*

4th Annual Waste Management Middle East Forum organized by Fleming Gulf Conferences got off to a good start today at the**Habtoor Grand Beach Resort & Spa** ; Dubai - UAE, which saw global waste management professionals gathering at the forum to discuss the latest developments. The summit supported by **Dubai Municipality** , saw speakers from organizations like Center of Waste Management - Abu Dhabi, Ministry of Environment - Oman, MAG Group International, United Nations Environment Programme, Bee'ah and Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority. **Dubai Municipality** over the years has taken numerous initiatives to effectively curb waste generation and using waste as a resource. Eng. Abdulmajeed Saifee; Director of Waste Management Department - **Dubai Municipality** ; spoke about the various initiatives by **Dubai Municipality** and effective practices for waste and resource management.

Eng. Hani Hossni, Strategy & Business Development acting Executive Director at the Center of Waste Management - Abu Dhabi presented on hazardous waste management in Abu Dhabi with focus on segregation & packaging of hazardous waste. Speaking of the measures being taken for the same he said, "The Center of Waste Management has mandatory requirements of packaging in proper leak proof containers and or package (for solids like asbestos containing material etc.) and labeling which are given in the Approved Technical Guidelines. These have been developed based on international best practices including EU, USEPA and UN requirements." Dr. Udayan Banerjee, Environment, Health & Safety Specialist at the Center of Waste Management - Abu Dhabi followed Hossni and spoke about the waste sector policy & regulatory framework in Abu Dhabi. With increased awareness of companies towards sustainable and recycling practices its important to adhere to various compliances; Banerjee briefly addressed topics on these policies.
Oleg Zhokhov, Chairman at MAG Group International presented on waste management practices for the present and future. MAG Group International, an umbrella brand for over 70 Russian companies is a gold sponsor at the summit. The company has started its operations in Dubai - UAE based on its

huge experience in the Russian industry. Zhokov said, "MAG has now entered Dubai and intends to make its mark in the Emirate. Dubai is famous as a luxurious destination and we are keen on the city as we look forward to setting up a model in the area of waste management that also spells luxury - a service that would remove from this industry the negative connotation that goes with the very mention of the word waste. With this development, Dubai would become a role model in scientific waste management - one that could be adopted in other parts of the world based on its exemplary performance and success."

Post lunch session saw presentations by Matthias Kern, Senior Programme Officer - United Nations Environment Programme; Engr. Geoffrey A Piggott, Regional Manager (MENA) - Keppel Integrated Engineering; Dr. Hassan A. Arafat, Associate Professor, Water and Environmental Engineering Program - Masdar Institute of Science & Technology and Mike Summersgill, President - The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM).

The forum is being sponsored by MAG Group International, Bee'ah, Keppel Integrated Engineering, Enerkem, MBM Group, Metso, Outotec, Al Serkal Group, LavaJet and Barloworld Logistics. The forum attracted professionals from in and around the region and provided an opportunity for the delegates to witness the latest technological developments and product range from global companies.

Presentation for day two of the summit will see industry experts like Daker El Rabaya, Director of Waste Process - Bee'ah; Jens Ole Simonsen, Head of Product Management - Metso Recycling; Tim Cesarek, Senior Vice President, Business Development - Enerkem; Christoph Guby , Senior Product Engineer - Energy - Outotec and Mahboob Ahsan Mian, Environment Section Leader - Adma Opco.

The forum has created an avenue to exchange view points concerning the future and simultaneously aim to benefit from the experience of other countries.

"Dubai Municipality addressed the 4th Waste Management Middle East Forum", 11/11/2013, online at: http://www.zawya.com/story/Dubai_Municipality_addressed_the_4th_Waste_Management_Middle_East_Forum-ZAWYA20131111132535/

BACK TO TOP

❖ Vietnam Doubts Sustainability of Second Lao Dam Project on Mekong

Vietnam has joined Cambodia in questioning the sustainability of the planned Don Sahong dam project on the Mekong River in southern Laos, saying more environmental impact studies are needed before the scheme moves forward.

Le Duc Trung, director general of the Vietnam National Mekong Committee under the Ministry of Natural Resources, and who recently visited the site where the dam will be built some two kilometers (1.6 miles) upstream from the Cambodian border, said Tuesday that his government "still has a lot of questions" about the project.

The official said Vietnam, which lies downstream from the proposed dam site, remains unclear about how the project will affect the river's fish stocks and other important ecosystems, and how that could in turn impinge upon the food security of riparian communities.

"The questions involve the [needs of the] specific habitat," the official said, speaking at a press conference in Pakse district, Champasak province after touring the site in the Siphandone area of Laos, where the Mekong splits into multiple channels, one of which will be bridged by the dam.

"[What] physical characteristics [of the area] will be altered in order to maintain fish migration when the Hou Sahong [channel] is completely dammed?" he asked.

The official said that "more studies should be carried out" before Laos can build the 260-megawatt hydropower project.

Ready to proceed

Landlocked Laos, which hopes to become the battery of Southeast Asia by selling electricity to its neighbors, has indicated that it is ready to proceed with the project, regardless of mounting criticism from environmental watchdogs, nongovernmental organizations, and local communities.

In September, Laos told a regional body overseeing development of the Mekong River that dam construction is expected to begin in November, although preliminary groundwork around the dam site has gone on for months.

Earlier this week, Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines Viraponh Viravong told reporters who were taken on a tour of the dam site that local villagers are not allowed to fish in the area, saying the volume of fish there has decreased.

The ban eliminates a major source of income and food security for local residents, who have been assured that those who can no longer fish for a living because of the dam will be provided with alternative jobs.

Environmental groups, including U.S.-based International Rivers, have warned that the project "spells disaster" for fish migration on the Mekong and threatens regional food security.

They said the dam will block the only section of the Mekong River where fish can pass in large numbers during the dry season.

Officials and experts working on the dam have claimed that much of the criticism of the project stems from misinformation and outdated reports.

Dams scrapped

Vietnam recently cancelled its own plans to build two dams on the Dong Nai River, which International Rivers said would have threatened a United Nations-recognized "Biosphere Reserve Zone."

Hanoi shelved the plans in response to pressure from local environmental groups.

A study by Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment had reported that the Dong Nai 6 and Dong Nai 6A dams would destroy more than 327 hectares (808 acres) of forests, 128

of which are located in Cat Tien National Park.

In May, UNESCO refused to recognize Cat Tien National Park as a Natural World Heritage site due to threats from hydropower plants and the animal trade, advising that the park apply stricter and more effective protection and management measures.

In October, Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai axed the two projects.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung called for all hydropower projects across the country to undergo thorough examinations in order to increase dam safety, and in May the government scrapped plans to build 338 hydropower plants because they didn't meet environmental standards.

Neighborly relations

Last month following the decision to cancel the Dong Nai dams, International Rivers praised Vietnam for "taking measures to try and prevent impacts from dams built in neighboring countries, particularly those planned for the Mekong mainstream."

It cited the Deputy Prime Minister's efforts to convince Mekong countries to ratify a convention which would provide a mechanism to prevent dams from being built that could have large-scale trans-boundary impacts.

But International Rivers said that while Vietnam is making a concerted effort to evaluate the impact and safety of existing and planned dams in the country, "Laos is plowing ahead with plans to dramatically alter the Mekong mainstream, with no concern for the impacts on its neighbors, much less their input on the projects."

It said Laos' plans for the Don Sahong would "[put] the world's largest inland fishery in jeopardy and [threaten] to push Vietnam and Cambodia closer to a food crisis."

Commission challenges

The dam has prompted a formal complaint against Laos from downstream Cambodia to the Mekong River Commission (MRC), a four-nation body that oversees development along the key regional waterway.

Environmental groups have said Laos is avoiding MRC requirements to consult its neighbors before building the dam by claiming it is not on the Mekong mainstream.

Laos is also building the first dam on the mainstream Lower Mekong, the Xayaburi, which environmental groups have said poses a similar devastating threat to regional food security.

"Vietnam Doubts Sustainability of Second Lao Dam Project on Mekong", 16/11/2013, online at: http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/dam-11152013181814.html

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Indonesia plans $35 bln in infrastructure projects, some to begin in 2014

Nov 13 (Reuters) - Indonesia announced plans on Wednesday for $35 billion in new infrastructure projects from next year in a bid to tackle one of the biggest deterrents to investment in Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

Of the 56 planned projects, 32 are meant to be partnerships between the private and public sector, which Indonesia calls 'PPP' ventures.

"We want the PPP scheme to dominate the development projects," chief economic minister Hatta Rajasa told reporters, adding that there would have to be incentives to attract private investors.

Indonesia has attracted record applications for foreign investment in recent years, but the level has started to slow in the face of a weaker global economy and some severe infrastructure bottlenecks.

Economists say the government has to urgently address problems such as congested ports and crumbling roads if it is to have any hope of competing for investment with other fast-growing Asian nations.

On Nov. 6, Indonesian officials said they planned soon to remove or reduce barriers to foreign investment in a number of key sectors, including airports and ports.

The list released on Wednesday of 56 projects shows a spread across the world's largest archipelago, but many are on the islands of Java and Sumatra. Several are in the sprawling eastern island of Sulawesi and on resource-rich Kalimantan, on the island of Borneo.

NEW RAILWAY LINES

Among the projects, which will start between 2014-2017, are eight seaports, two airports, eight railways, five power plants and 11 water supply and waste treatment, of some will be done by PPPs. There are also railways and number of highways, including toll roads in Sumatra, one of the world's largest islands.

No new railway line has been built in Indonesia since the end of Dutch colonial rule nearly 70 years ago.

The government said the first 15 projects will start next year, including a port at Kuala Tanjung in North Sumatra to boost coal and palm oil exports, a $447 million upgrade to Jakarta's barely

functioning sewerage system and developing a new airport in West Java, between Jakarta and Bandung, to lift some of the burden on the capital's overcrowded main airport.

"These infrastructure projects are crucial to sustain Indonesia's long-term growth," said Andy Ferdinand, head of research at Batavia Prosperindo Sekuritas in Jakarta.

But in the shorter term, spending on the investments will not be enough to reverse a slowdown in the economic growth rate due to slackening domestic demand and weak exports deficit, he added.

"Indonesia plans $35 bln in infrastructure projects, some to begin in 2014", 13/11/2013, online at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/13/indonesia-economy-infrastructure-idUSL4N0IY1N120131113?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=ba592e8880-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-ba592e8880-250657169

BACK TO TOP

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❖ A Jolt to Complacency on Food Supply

For a look at what climate change could do to the world's food supply, consider what the weather did to the American Corn Belt last year.

At the beginning of 2012, the Agriculture Department projected the largest corn crop in the country's history. But then a savage heat wave and drought struck over the summer. Plants withered, prices spiked, and the final harvest came in 27 percent below the forecast.

The situation bore a striking resemblance to what happened in Europe in 2003, after a heat wave cut agricultural production for some crops by as much as 30 percent and sent prices soaring.

Several researchers concluded that the European heat wave was made more likely by human-caused climate change; scientists are still arguing over the 2012 heat blast in the United States. Whatever their origin, heat waves like these give us a taste of what could be in store in a future with global warming.

Among those who are getting nervous are the people who spend their lives thinking about where our food will come from.

"The negative impacts of global climate change on agriculture are only expected to get worse," said a reportearlier this year from researchers at the London School of Economics and a Washington think tank, the Information Technology and & Innovation Foundation. The report cited a need for "more resilient crops and agricultural production systems than we currently possess in today's world."

This may be the greatest single fear about global warming: that climate change could so destabilize the world's food system as to lead to rising hunger or even mass starvation. Two weeks ago, a leaked draft of a report by the United Nations climate committee, known as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, suggested that the group's concerns have grown, and that the report, scheduled for release in March in Yokohama, Japan, is likely to contain a sharp warning about risks to the food supply.

The tone is strikingly different from that of a report from the same group in 2007, which discussed some risks, but saw global warming as likely to benefit agriculture in many important growing regions.

In the years since, new scientific research has checked those assumptions.

For one, a group of young scientists has pioneered more sophisticated ways of analyzing the relationship between agriculture and climate. People like David Lobell at Stanford and Wolfram Schlenker at Columbia have used elaborate statistical techniques to get a detailed picture of what heat does to crop yields. Their work suggests that rising heat stress in some major growing areas is already putting a drag on production, and raises the possibility of much more serious effects as global warming continues.

Scientists had long hoped that the effect of heat and water stress on crops might be offset by the very thing driving global warming: the sharp increase of carbon dioxide in the air. The gas is the main food supply for plants, and a large body of evidence suggested that the ongoing rise could boost crop yields.

But a lot of that evidence came from tests in artificial environments like greenhouses. Younger scientists, who insisted on testing crops in open-air conditions more closely resembling the real world, found that the bump in yield, while certainly real, was not as high as expected. And it may not be high enough to offset other stresses from global warming.

None of this work can be called definitive — experts say we need more studies, in more types of crops, under a wider variety of growing conditions. Because the body of science is so incomplete, our forecasts of future food supply are primitive, and that means the Yokohama report will certainly not be the last word.

The scientists writing the intergovernmental panel's report appear to have taken the recent science seriously. The draft suggests they intend to serve notice on world leaders that the risks could be substantial.

Those political leaders have tended to take the security of the food supply for granted, until a crisis hits.

The biggest food scare of this young century occurred in 2007 and 2008. Several years of lagging agricultural production, caused in part by weather extremes, collided with rising demand. Prices for major grains more than doubled, entire countries slammed the door on food exports, panic buying ensued in many markets, and food riots broke out in more than 30 countries.

Rich countries tripped over one another to help poor countries and their small farmers, pledging $22 billion. But a recent report by the Group of 8 industrialized nations found that only 74 percent of the money has been disbursed, and some aid groups say the food supply is once again falling on the world's priority list.

The good news is that agriculture has a tremendous capacity to adapt to new conditions, including a warming climate. Crops can be planted earlier, and new varieties that are more resistant to climate stress can be developed.

But experts say the research needed to make all this happen is getting short shrift.

"Our past successes in agriculture have lulled many of those in decision-making positions into a false sense of security," said L. Val Giddings, a fellow with the Washington think tank and a co-author of its report. "It's been so long since any of them were actually hungry."

CLIMATE UPDATE In its report in September on the physical science of climate change, the intergovernmental panel had embraced the idea of a global carbon budget, limiting emissions to no more than a trillion tons of carbon — a limit that will be approached within a few decades. On Monday, the panel issued several corrections to its calculations, as it often does with reports undergoing final review.

The most important change is that human emissions of carbon from 1870 to 2011 are now calculated at about 515 billion tons, instead of 531 billion tons. The new figure does not alter the panel's argument that more than half the carbon budget has already been exhausted, but it does create slightly more room for future emissions.

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"A Jolt to Complacency on Food Supply", 12/11/2013, online at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/12/science/earth/warning-on-global-food-supply.html?_r=1&utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=28e1ca99f9-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-28e1ca99f9-250657169&

BACK TO TOP

❖ Brazil warns Amazon annual deforestation 'up 28 percent'

Deforestation in the Amazon has increased by almost a third in the last year, the Brazilian government has revealed. The figure is a stark reversal on the decline in deforestation witnessed in recent years.

Brazil's government reported Thursday that the annual destruction of its Amazon rainforest jumped by 28 percent over the past year.

"We confirm a 28-percent increase in the rate of deforestation, reaching 5,843 square kilometers (2256 square miles)," Environment Minister Izabella Teixeira told a press conference. That equates to an area the size of the US state of Delaware cleared within one year. Teixeira cited provisional statistics from satellite data gathered from August 2012 to July 2013.

That compared to 4,571 square kilometers cleared the previous year, when monitors recorded the lowest level of Amazon felling since Brazil began tracking deforestation in 1988.

While large in percentage terms, however, four straight years of decline mean the figure remains the second-lowest amount of jungle destroyed.

Teixeira listed extensive farming and soybean production in the northern state of Para and the central western state of Mato Grosso as key factors behind the rise, noting 37 and 52 percent increases respectively.

Activists, meanwhile, have listed an apparent loosening of the nation's environmental laws as an additional cause for the latest figures, something which Teixeira dismissed.

"The Brazilian government does not tolerate and does not accept any rise in illegal deforestation," the minister said.

Activists blame law changes

A bill revising the Forest Code law, passed in Congress last year, was also criticized by environmentalists for easing restrictions for landowners with smaller properties. Among other things it allowed them to clear land closer to riverbanks. The changes also got rid of penalties for those who illegally clear-felled land, provided they signed an agreement to replant trees.

The government's push for big infrastructure projects such as dams, roads and railways has also been listed as a factor in increased deforestation.

"The government can't be surprised by this increase in deforestation, given that their own action is what's pushing it," said Paulo Adario, coordinator of Greenpeace's Amazon campaign.

"The change in the Forest Code and the resulting amnesty for those who illegally felled the forest sent the message that such crimes have no consequences."

Brazil tracks the amount of land cleared annually as part of its efforts to protect the rainforest. Scientists consider the Amazon forest, which produces oxygen and fresh water, as a crucial natural buffer against global warming.

"Brazil warns Amazon annual deforestation 'up 28 percent'", 15/11/2013, online at: http://www.dw.de/brazil-warns-amazon-annual-deforestation-up-28-percent/a-17229112?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=2bba474607-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-2bba474607-250657169

BACK TO TOP

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