



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

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ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

20 August – 26 August 2012

- ❖ Dams ‘not built as measures for terror’
- ❖ Water scarcity a top threat to Iraq
- ❖ Iraqi Official Says Water Scarcity a Top Concern in the Region
- ❖ Iraq to stop trade with Turkey over suspending water from it
- ❖ River droughts in Kurdistan have negative effect on tourism, says Garmian tourism
- ❖ Thousands flee Syria, Damascus diarrhea outbreak: U.N
- ❖ Country's Hydropower Production to Up 1,500 MW by Yearend
- ❖ Israel, Germany, Kenya sign commercial fishing pact
- ❖ Lake Kinneret Water Level Suffers Dramatic Drop
- ❖ Israeli innovation could make water drinkable in Africa
- ❖ The Settlement Movement and The Environmental Card
- ❖ Thirsting for Justice
- ❖ Water Theft and Punishment on the Rise in the Middle East
- ❖ Egyptian Health Ministry Blamed for Bottled Water Shortage
- ❖ More Than a Thousand Egyptians Sick After Drinking Dirty Water
- ❖ Egypt Will Tender PPPs by the End of 2012
- ❖ More than a thousand poisoned by Monufiya's polluted water
- ❖ Egypt: Contaminated water causes illness, protests in Nile Delta; officials locked up for hour
- ❖ Hydroclimatic Extremes in the Basin of the Blue Nile
- ❖ Kenyan Environmentalists Oppose Chinese-Funded Ethiopian Dam
- ❖ Sudan to Spend \$51 Million USD for Drinking Water, Irrigation Projects
- ❖ Zenawi's Death Won't Alter Nile Talks, Say Kenyan Officials
- ❖ Tanzania, Malawi Presidents Affirm They Will Seek Peaceful Solution to Lake Dispute
- ❖ South Africa Cabinet Approves 20-Year Plan for Water Sector

- ❖ **Africa: Food and Water Security Tightly Linked - At World Water Week in Stockholm, IFAD to Explore Solutions to Water Scarcity**
- ❖ **India Water Policy 2012: Design for Water Loot**
- ❖ **Uma Bharti goes knocking on lawmakers' doors for support for River Ganges campaign**
- ❖ **Dams, Plan 'B'**
- ❖ **Water Deficit May Cause New War In Asia**
- ❖ **Bangladesh to trial weather index-based crop insurance**
- ❖ **Xayaburi hydro project on schedule, Energy Ministry says**
- ❖ **Xayaburi Construction Restarts, Laos Suspension Claims Denied by Thai Developers**
- ❖ **Gauging the Impact of Warming On Asia's Life-Giving Monsoons**
- ❖ **Scholars Speak on Water Governance in the Middle East and Southeast Asia**
- ❖ **UN calls on nations to adopt drought policies**
- ❖ **Drought Slashes Kazakhstan Grain Output**
- ❖ **Less dependence on Middle East energy to impact geopolitics: national security advisor**
- ❖ **Tajik President's Visit Disrupts Donkey Delivery Service in Kulob**
- ❖ **UN fund could ease route to 2015 global climate deal**
- ❖ **Balkan drought highlights years of farm neglect**
- ❖ **DC officials want tap water at inauguration**

❖ Dams ‘not built as measures for terror’

Dams being built in the southeast province of Şırnak were not constructed as a precaution against terror activity, Forestry and Waterworks Minister Veysel Eroğlu said Aug. 24. The minister stressed the purpose of the 11 planned dams, three of which have already begun to retain water, is to regulate flood waters and produce electricity.

Eroğlu introduced several water projects in a media press conference, including the Çayüstü pond and an irrigation project planned to be built at Dinar district of central Anatolian province of Afyonkarahisar. He also introduced Döğler Emre pond and irrigation project set to be built in the İhsaniye district of the same province and Karağaç pond and irrigation project in İscehisar district. The minister also said forest fires at Mersin, Hatay and Muğla were now under control. These fires were not connected to terror activities Eroğlu said. Three of the 11 dams built in Şırnak have started retaining water, Eroğlu said, adding that these dams were not built as an anti-terror measure. Dams and ponds were being built all across Turkey, he said. “Dam projects were perceived as if they were measures against terror. However, they are built to prevent floods and for producing electricity. Turkey is our land. Just as we built them in Afyonkarahisar, we also build dams and ponds in Şırnak because those living in those regions are also our people.”

“Dams ‘not built as measures for terror’”, 24/08/2012, online at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/dams-not-built-as-measures-for-terror.aspx?pageID=238&nID=28585&NewsCatID=341>

❖ Water scarcity a top threat to Iraq

Amnesty law frustrates security forces catching criminals only to be released later

Sami Al Askari, Adviser to Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki and Iraqi Parliament member, says water scarcity is one of the most serious problems facing the Arab region.

Iraq comes first on the list of countries that suffer from this problem for many reasons.

One of the main reasons is the policy of the riparian countries sharing with Iraq the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, which either originate from the territories of these countries or pass through.

Al Askari talks to *Gulf News* about the issue:

Article continues below

Gulf News: The dryness of river basins water is a problem facing Iraq in the future. No matter how our oil resources grow, there is no substitute for water, which the UN safeguarded for us through protocols of good neighbourliness. But the problem becomes compounded when neighbours do not care about Iraq's suffering in this respect. Did the parliament set a plan for dealing with this problem?

Al Askari: The problem of water scarcity is one of the serious problems facing the Arab region. Iraq comes first on the list of countries that suffer from this problem for many reasons.

One of the main reasons is the policy of the riparian countries sharing with Iraq the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, which originate from the territories of these countries or pass through their territories.

The policy of building dams in Turkey, Syria and Iran without regard to Iraq's interests poses a serious threat to Iraq, especially in light of Turkey's refusal to sign binding agreements ensuring Iraq's right to a fair share of water from the two rivers.

Iraq needs a diplomatic effort, and a clear policy in its relations with these countries to ensure a fair share of water should be the heart of any economic, security or political agreements with these countries.

The international community, through the United Nations, is required to force Iraq's neighbouring countries to conclude agreements to regulate the distribution of water because the problem of water could in the future become one of the factors of instability in this vital region of the world.

Gulf News: What do you think about the proposals made by the Al Sadr movement? There are four proposals for implementing the amnesty law, including a proposal for exonerating the crimes of “terrorism” with exceptions and another “loose” proposal. Is there really an agreement to decide on the amnesty law very soon?

Al Askari: The amnesty law was originally proposed by the Al Sadr bloc in the Iraqi parliament, but the substantive observations on the proposal were the reason behind the delay in its approval. It is in fact not different in its approach from the similar amnesty law passed by the former parliament.

That law led to the release of a large number of terrorists and thieves and also acquitted senior officials involved in cases of financial corruption. The idea of amnesty for criminals sends wrong and dangerous messages to terrorist groups that they can commit as many crimes as they want, and in every parliamentary session the arrested criminals would be released.

This leads to frustration in thesecurity services, which feel that it is useless to pursue terrorists as long as there are politicians ready to pass laws to acquit them. That law in its current drafting, despite some minor amendments, poses a disaster to the security situation. In addition, the law acquits forgers and looters of public money. I do not think the law will be passed during the current legislative session, unless significant amendments are made to it.

Gulf News: The law of provincial elections in 2008 and its application faced many objections from small parties. The law stipulates that every city in Iraq is a constituency, and the electoral process combines both systems of closed and open lists. In other words, each deputy is forced to choose a party list. Some say that the law failed while others say that the big parties swallowed the small parties like whales swallowing small fish. What do you say about that?

Al Askari: On the issue of elections and how to count the votes, there have always been two theories. The first speaks about the need to push for the formation of alliances or large electoral lists to put an end to divisions inside the elected bodies, such as parliament and provincial councils.

This view is adopted by major parties and parliamentary blocs, and supported by some UN experts working in Iraq. The second theory speaks about the need to make room for small parties and emerging entities and ensure that they get seats in the parliament or provincial councils.

Both theories have their supporters and justifications. However, since the major parties and parliamentary blocs dominate the legislative process in parliament, it is normal that the matter will go in the direction that promotes major blocs and deny small parties the opportunity of winning seats in the elected councils.

Gulf News: Iraqi Parliament Speaker Osama Al Nujaifi said a parliamentary committee was formed to verify the procedures of the central bank and identify defects. He underlined complaints about the bank's work, saying that the parliament was examining these complaints.

The question is: If violations are proved, does the parliament have enough power to follow up the issue of sanctions, or will it only prove the defects, and then the issue goes unresolved?

Al Askari: The law of the central bank, its performance and relationship with the executive and legislative authorities, have always been a bone of contention between politicians. The concept of the link between executive institutions with the legislative authority is one of the flaws in the current Iraqi constitution.

This flaw has led the central bank and its head acting as if they are not controlled by the Iraqi government. It explained the bank's independence arbitrarily in a way that made the bank an accounting and controlling body acting away from the administrative procedures that prevent defects in the bank's work.

The conflict between the legislative and executive authorities is a reflection of the political conflict between blocs. This conflict led to the fact that the central bank is working away from any control. It is an independent state within the state of Iraq.

Any attempt by the government, which is responsible for setting and implementing the financial and economic policies, was faced politically by opponents of the prime minister. These attempts were seen as an attempt to control and loot this vital institution, whose independence is stipulated in the law.

Recently, some political parties, especially the speakership of parliament, realised the wrongful conduct of the central bank and how it poses real threats to the financial situation in Iraq. Many people talked about huge financial corruption, money laundering, the financing of terrorist groups, and other charges that need investigation and follow-up.

This situation led the government and parliament to reassess the way of dealing with this vital institution. The parliament, given its legislative role, can only monitor and identify failures, but bringing the corrupt to book and combating corruption is done by executive and judicial bodies.

There is a risk that many issues will be diluted because of political interference and because active political parties in the country are involved in some financial and administrative corruption cases, which the central bank is charged with.

Gulf News: The parliamentary integrity committee announced its intention to open the cases of corruption within the ministries of Interior and Defence after the parliament's recess. These cases

have to do with the Canadian aircraft and the explosives detector (ID). Does this mean that the parties, which will be proved to be involved in corruption, will be held accountable or will they be referred to other bodies? How can punishment be guaranteed in such cases? Do political agreements play a role in hushing such cases?

Al Askari: The parliamentary integrity committee is one of the important committees in the parliament. It is tasked with following up cases of corruption in various state institutions. If it discovers certain corruption cases it refers them to the integrity commission, which is the executive authority tasked with taking legal and administrative procedures on charges of corruption levelled at state employees.

The role of the parliament, represented in the parliamentary integrity committee, is limited to the detection of corruption cases and monitoring the performance of executive authorities. Determination of penalties for violators is an exclusive task of the judiciary. Neither the parliament nor the executive authority has the power to do that task.. The executive authority is just responsible for implementing the judicial rulings once they are issued against those convicted in corruption cases.

Gulf News: What is the story of a request for the allocation of a special budget for the intelligence service from the supplementary budget of the current year? Is it possible that they have not allocated a budget to the Iraqi intelligence service at a time when we are facing a significant growth in terrorist operations in the country?

Al Askari: The supplementary budget seeks to allocate additional funds for various ministries and institutions to ensure the delivery of services and implementation of projects, which the general budget could not provide adequate funds for. These additional funds are also meant to address the needs that emerge after the ratification of the public budget by parliament.

The intelligence service has its own budget, which is approved annually as part of the general budget. The reported allocation of funds from the supplementary budget to the intelligence service comes within the same context of allocating additional funds to education or housing sectors or others.

Anyhow, the parliament refused to approve the supplementary budget as the government has to prepare the 2013 budget and submit it to the parliament in October. This new budget can address the shortage in allocations, which the supplementary budget sought to provide.

Gulf News: Some people say that political deals still obstruct the work of the seven-member accountability and justice commission, which was approved by the parliament and the presidency last month. What do you say about that?

Al Askari: Political deals or quotas, which have become the basis for the construction of various state institutions, have been and will be a factor of obstruction of the Iraqi government's work. As a

temporary constitutional body, the accountability and justice commission is not an exception. Since these institutions need to be approved by the parliament, the approval cannot be made without political compromise and through pleasing the major parliamentary blocs, which insist on the policy of quotas.

Gulf News: Back to the law of political parties, which has been excessively debated since 2007 and has not been passed yet. Some people say major political parties fear that their sources of finance would be revealed, especially as the legislation prevents the misuse of public funds, which many of the existing parties exploit to serve their own interests.

What do you think about this issue, especially as the State of Law Coalition ruled out the endorsement of the law in the coming period, being one of the controversial laws, not to mention the fact that it has not yet been finalised by the legal committee?

Al Askari: I do not think the current parliament is able to pass vital legislation like the Law of Parties. Most political blocs are unwilling to pass this law, contrary to what they say in public and to the media. If passed, this law would restrict the movement of these blocs and parties, especially with regard to foreign finance, upon which major blocs rely, or the exploitation of ministries and state institutions in funding their political and party activities.

The endorsement of the law in a compromising format — as is the case of all-important laws — poses a risk to the ratification of a law that does harm the political situation in Iraq and consolidates a reality that does not meet the aspirations of Iraqis in establishing a real democratic system in the country.

Gulf News: To date, Iraqi citizens do not know the content of the first convention of Arbil, and I do not think they will know it. The question is why is there a blackout regarding this issue?

Al Askari: The convention in Arbil has really turned into a mystery baffling the Iraqis. It seems that the convention has terms, which the signing parties do not want to reveal either because these provisions are inconsistent with the constitution or contradictory to what some parties say to the media. I hold all signing parties responsible. It seems to me that there is a tacit agreement, imposed by the interests, that no party shall reveal the real text of terms that have been agreed upon.

Gulf News: Lastly, when will we see the oil and gas law that will save the prestige of the central government and Iraq as a country?

Al Askari: The oil and gas law is one of the most important laws that has been carried over from the previous parliament for failing to approve it, and the current parliament also finds itself unable to proceed with the approval.

The difficulty lies in understanding the provisions of the constitution and also in the contradiction between some provisions, something which provides fertile ground for difference and conflict, especially between the government of the province and the federal government.

“Water scarcity a top threat to Iraq”, 22/08/2012, online at: <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/iraq/water-scarcity-a-top-threat-to-iraq-1.1064515>

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Iraqi Official Says Water Scarcity a Top Concern in the Region**

Iraq, BAGHDAD ([Gulf News \(United Arab Emirates\)](#)) — Sami Al Askari, Adviser to Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki and Iraqi Parliament member, says water scarcity is one of the most serious problems facing the Arab region. Iraq comes first on the list of countries that suffer from this problem for many reasons. One of the main reasons is the policy of the riparian countries sharing with Iraq the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, which either originate from the territories of these countries or pass through

“Iraqi Official Says Water Scarcity a Top Concern in the Region”, 22/08/2012, online at:
http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/iraqi-official-says-water-scarcity-top-concern-region_23981

BACK TO TOP

❖ Iraq to stop trade with Turkey over suspending water from it

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) -The Trade minister, Khair Allah Babakir Zibari, threatened to stop all the commercial deals with Turkey due to the latter stance over suspending the Iraqi allocation of water.

A statement by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan quoted Zibari, as saying “The Trade Ministry will stop all its deals with Turkey if it insisted on preventing Iraq from getting its water allocation from Tigris and Euphrates rivers,” assuring that “The same stance was taken with Iran where we refused to sign the economical and commercial exchange deal unless Iraq settle the issue of al-Wind river.”

“Iran has build a big dam that prevent the passage of the water to Dokan lack in Sara Rasht area where it will result in big environmental affects and dries the lake up,” he added, stressing that “The Ministry will push Iran and Turkey to grant Iran its water allocations to stop the disaster of dryness.”

He shows surprise over the “Legislative and governmental silence over the policy of the neighboring countries,” assuring that “We will never sign any economical and commercial pacts while this policy if followed.

“Iraq to stop trade with Turkey over suspending water from it”, 22/08/2012, online at:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/iraq-to-stop-trade-with-turkey-over-suspending-water-from-it/>

BACK TO TOP

❖ River droughts in Kurdistan have negative effect on tourism, says Garmian tourism

The general director of tourism in Garmian said the droughts in the Kurdistan Region have had negative effects on the region's tourist areas.

Both Alwan and Qoratu rivers ran dry a couple years ago. According to official sources Iran halts the flow of water entering the region.

Pshtiwan Abdul Karim said: "Iran's government has a private program to store water. The Kurdistan Regional Government is now working to bring water from Sirwan River to Khanaqin via the Balajo channel."

A number of Iranian tourists who entered the region via Parwzkhan crossing said they were aware of drying up Alwan and Qoratu rivers in Garmian.

The tourists wanted to stay in Garmian district but because of the dryness of Qoratu River they did not.

Some 144,000 tourists visited Garmian in 2011 in comparison to 228,000 tourists in the first six months in this year. The majority of the tourists were Arab and Iranian.

"River droughts in Kurdistan have negative effect on tourism, says Garmian tourism", 22/08/2012, online at:

http://www.zawya.com/story/River_droughts_in_Kurdistan_have_negative_effect_on_tourism_says_Garmian_tourism-ZAWYA20120823055259/

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Thousands flee Syria, Damascus diarrhea outbreak: U.N**

(Reuters) - Syrians are pouring across the borders to escape fighting in their homeland and diarrheal disease has broken out in rural areas near Damascus, U.N. aid agencies said on Friday.

More than 170,000 Syrians have been registered in the neighboring countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and [Turkey](#), the U.N. refugee agency said.

Some 3,500 Syrians fleeing the northern areas of Aleppo, Azaz, Idlib and Latakia reached Turkey's Hatay and Kilis provinces between Tuesday and Wednesday, spokesman Adrian Edwards of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

"There has been a further sharp rise in the number of Syrians fleeing to Turkey," Edwards told a news briefing.

"There are now almost 65,000 Syrians in nine camps in Turkey, though not all yet formally registered. To put this in perspective, about 40 percent arrived in August."

Overnight, more than 1,000 Syrians arrived in Jordan, Edwards said. The UNHCR is working to improve the ratio of people to toilets - currently 40 to one - in Za'atri camp which holds nearly 8,000 of some 47,000 refugees registered in Jordan.

The humanitarian situation in [Syria](#) has deteriorated as fighting escalates, cutting off civilians from food supplies, health care and other assistance, aid agencies say.

"Fighting continues in and around other cities in addition to Aleppo, including Homs, Damascus, Deir al-Zor, Idlib and Deraa," said Marianne Gasser, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)'s delegation in Syria.

"Wherever possible, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent helps those trapped in the fighting by evacuating the sick and wounded and by providing emergency aid," she said in a statement.

In recent days, Red Crescent staff distributed aid to 25,000 displaced staying in 62 schools in Damascus, as well as food, mattresses and hygiene kits in cities including Aleppo and Homs.

Some 1.2 million people are uprooted within the country, many staying in schools or other public buildings, UNHCR quoted the U.N. regional humanitarian relief coordinator as saying.

U.N. humanitarian chief Valerie Amos, ending a visit to Syria, said on Thursday up to 2.5 million people needed aid in the country, where President Bashar al-Assad's forces have been fighting rebels seeking his overthrow for 17 months.

CONTAMINATED WATER SUPPLY

There has also been an outbreak of diarrhea among residents in part of the province of Rural Damascus because the water supply has been contaminated by sewage, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said.

"In one pocket of Rural Damascus there are 103 suspected cases of e.coli. Laboratory testing is still going on," Richard Brennan, director of WHO's emergency risk management and humanitarian response department, told Reuters. "It is due to contamination of the water supply."

"We have heard of other pockets (of diarrheal disease) in other areas of Rural Damascus, but have no details," he said.

Sixty-one children under the age of 10 are among the 103 cases discovered by health workers, WHO spokeswoman Fadela Chaib said. Children are particularly vulnerable to diarrheal diseases, which require treatment including hydration and antibiotics.

"We know from Syrian authorities that an estimated 38 hospitals and 149 other clinics have been either substantially damaged or destroyed, which clearly worsens the access to health care," Brennan told a news briefing.

The ICRC said its experts were working on water systems in Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Deir al-Zor and Homs.

"Thousands flee Syria, Damascus diarrhea outbreak: U.N", 17/08/2012, online at:

http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/17/us-syria-crisis-aid-idUSBRE87G0C820120817?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=997a0be493-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

BACK TO TOP

❖ Country's Hydropower Production to Up 1,500 MW by Yearend

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran' hydropower plant capacity has experienced a 5.4% growth in the 1st five months of the current Iranian year (March 20-August 21), energy officials said, adding that the country's production will increase by 1,500 MW in the next 7 months.

Managing Director of the Iranian Water & Power Resources Development Company Mohammad Reza Rezazadeh said the nominal capacity of Iran's hydropower plants stands at 9.246 MW, adding that the country has generated 6.025 Gigawatt hours of hydropower in the 1st five months of current Iranian year.

He went on to say that six new hydropower plants will go on stream by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (to end March 20, 2013), and added that two units of Gotvand Dam power plant as well as four units of Siah Bisheh pumping storage plant with a total capacity of 1,500 MW will be put into operation by March 20.

Iran has recently made huge investment in the energy sector. In October, the Iranian energy minister offered bonds for the construction of new hydroelectric power plants.

The energy ministry offered the public 2.7 trillion rials (about \$243 million) in bonds to fund the completion of its hydroelectric plants.

Also, Iranian Energy Minister Majid Namjou announced early in December that the country had worked out agreements with Russia and Turkey to build joint power plants for power export to other countries.

"At present, we have reached an agreement with the two countries with investment and technical capabilities to build joint power plants to export the generated electricity to the neighboring or other countries," Namjou said.

He continued saying that the Iranian and Turkish sides agreed to build a power plant in Iran so that Ankara can import the generated electricity or transfer it to a third country.

Iran started implementing a subsidy reform plan two years ago. According to official reports, the plan has not only checked the country's annual growth in power demand, but also lowered domestic consumption, thus paving the way for increased power exports to the neighboring countries.

Iran has power swap deals with Armenia, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Afghanistan and the autonomous region of Nakhichevan. The rate of exchanges hit 1,332 megawatts on August 2.

“Country's Hydropower Production to Up 1,500 MW by Yearend”, 22/08/2012, online at:
<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9104254819>

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Israel, Germany, Kenya sign commercial fishing pact

Agreement aims to increase tilapia (St. Peter's fish) population and improve wastewater treatment in Lake Victoria.

Israelis, Germans and Kenyans have teamed up to increase the tilapia (St. Peter's fish) population and improve wastewater treatment in Lake Victoria.

Last week, high-level representatives from the three parties signed a trilateral agreement in Kenya for a project that has been in the works for roughly a year, to upgrade commercial fishery and wastewater purification systems in Africa's largest lake, officials from the Foreign Ministry told The Jerusalem Post on Wednesday.

The Post initially learned about the project in November, when members from all sides of the team made a preliminary visit to the region to begin strategizing solutions for the various goals of the program.

"Lake Victoria has regional influence – it's very important water-wise," Ilan Fluss, director of policy planning and external relations at MASHAV, the Foreign Ministry's Agency for International Development Cooperation, said then. "Lake Victoria is a small lake that is three times the size of the State of Israel."

Present at last week's ceremony from the Israeli side were Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon; Ambassador Avi Granot, head of the Foreign Ministry's African Department; and Ambassador Daniel Carmon, head of MASHAV. German Economic Cooperation and Development Minister Dirk Niebel was accompanied by a delegation of 50 people, including four parliamentarians, Carmon told the Post on Wednesday.

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga presided over the ceremony, and was joined by four members of his cabinet.

The signing event was held at the team's brand-new excellence center for research and development, on the grounds of at the Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology in the lakeside town of Kisumu in western Kenya.

Before the signing, professional work had already begun to increase the commercial strength of tilapia in fish ponds around the lake. In the lake itself, tilapia have been facing fierce competition of a predator of theirs, Nile perch. Two or three projects relating to the fish growth have already begun, and Israeli experts on fisheries have been to the region to help instruct the trainers of the local men and women who work at the lake's fisheries, according to Carmon.

He emphasized that the Kenyans were not simply receiving help, but were active partners in the endeavors.

“The Kenyans, who are also participating, they are not only recipients – it’s a trilateral cooperation,” Carmon said.

Infrastructure for raising tilapia in the ponds around the lake already does exist, but agriculturalists get much higher yields of fish in Israel, he explained.

“We are trying to somehow better the yields of fish in a way so that first of all, the fisherman will get a better income,” Carmon said.

This way, the team can help “industrialize the region so Kenya as a country can have a better tilapia export industry with the technology Israel has,” he said. “Israel has a lot to offer with its experience.”

Carmon also explained that Lake Victoria is suffering from “uncontrolled growth of vegetation that is harming the livelihood of the fish,” causing “an ecological imbalance that has to be corrected.” The hope is that the team will be able to indirectly improve this, he said.

If successful, the team may carry out similar projects in Uganda and Tanzania, both of which also rely on the lake, and representatives have already started talks with Ugandans about the idea.

Wastewater treatment this will be the focus of the second stage of the project, after the fish growth stage is further along, according to Carmon.

“The issue is to better the water quality both around the lake and in the development city of Kisumu,” he said, noting that MASHAV is doing quite a bit of other development work in Kisumu, unrelated to the trilateral project.

Carmon said MASHAV, as a government institution, had a power that NGOs did not have in participating in such an intergovernmental project.

“We are part of something called the government of Israel,” he said. “We come and speak with our friends for the sake of their well-being and their citizens, but it’s also part of a strategic branch that the government of Israel has – which is called MASHAV.”

Not only does the work help improve Israel’s image in Africa, it also strengthens the bond between Israel and Germany – a very important relationship in Carmon’s eyes.

“To have Israel and Germany coming together, hand in hand, helping out a third country – a developing country – on an issue they need [help with], sends a very strong message,” he said.

“Israel, Germany, Kenya sign commercial fishing pact”, 22/08/2012, online at: <http://www.jpost.com/Sci-Tech/Article.aspx?id=282227>

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Lake Kinneret Water Level Suffers Dramatic Drop

The water level in Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) has dropped by 26 inches (66 cm) since mid-May, and is still expected to drop further.

The water level in Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) has dropped by a whopping 26 inches (66 cm) since mid-May, and is expected to drop further.

Despite the abundant winter rains of the past year, evaporation from the hot summer sun and pumping from the lake has taken its toll.

Officials predicted Thursday the water level of the lake could drop by as much as 40 more inches (101 centimeters) until the winter rains begin. That would bring the level to the lower “red line” – the point at which it would be dangerous to pump water from the lake.

The [month of July](#) was especially brutal on water and other natural resources in Israel, with higher-than-normal temperatures in the region. As a result, the water level of the lake dropped by 11 inches (28 centimeters).

As of August 22, the water level of the lake was 211.98 meters below sea level, falling in between the two “red lines” set by Israel's Water Authority.

The two red lines are marked at 208.9 meters and 213.18 meters below sea level respectively, at which it is [recommended not to pump water from the lake](#).

Nearly three years ago, drought brought the level of the lake perilously close to the “black line” – 214.87 meters below sea level – the mark at which water cannot be pumped from the lake without causing severe ecological damage to the water supply.

“Lake Kinneret Water Level Suffers Dramatic Drop”, 23/08/2012, online at:
<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/159200#.UDZC6qAb6sg>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Israeli innovation could make water drinkable in Africa

Many nations find desalination facilities costly to install, but a recent Israeli discovery may spell a more affordable way, using solar energy

In a world where freshwater resources are becoming increasingly limited, [Israel](#) – a country that is two-thirds arid – has become a leader in developing state-of-the-art [desalination technology](#).

However, less-developed nations find that installing desalination facilities is extremely costly, as they use enormous amounts of [electricity](#) and are location-sensitive. But thanks to a recent Israeli discovery, the desalination system may become much more affordable in areas like Africa and the [Middle East](#).

Researchers from the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev and central Arava R&D, have found a way to utilize [solar energy](#) at a fraction of the cost which can be custom-engineered for the desalination process, according to the Foreign Ministry.

The new innovation uses solar energy panels to power the pumps of a desalination unit that generates clean water for crops.

More importantly, the technology utilizes unique nanofiltration membranes that enable farmers to decide which minerals should be retained from the water to feed various types of crops, a method which requires much less energy.

The new system is currently being tested in the Arava Valley, south of the [Dead Sea](#), where the basin is very dry. The results thus far show that farmers can use up to 25% less water and fertilizer than what has usually been needed in that area.

According to Andrea Ghermandi of the Zuckerberg Institute, who is one of the system's creators, the current environment is forcing agricultural systems to become more economical.

"The growing global demand for food and competition for resources among economic sectors compel future agricultural systems to be more efficient in the use of natural resources such as land and water," Ghermandi said.

Rami Messalem, who was also part of the developing team, explained that, "The breakthrough here was to make the system more economical and we've done this using nanofiltration cleverly. Our system is compatible with electricity but is based on the premise that it can be used in poor countries, in places where you don't have an electricity source – as a standalone system."

"Israeli innovation could make water drinkable in Africa", 21/08/2012, online at:
<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4270197,00.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ The Settlement Movement and The Environmental Card

I spent four days talking to about two-dozen settlers earlier this month, in their homes and their places of business in the West Bank, hoping to get insight into how they see their future. Because many of us in America are quick to stigmatize them, I wanted to hear from their own mouths how they feel about annexation, occupation and territorial compromise.

Sadly, I got an earful of triumphalism (they feel they have “won the battle” for Judea and Samaria) as well as hateful views of “Arabs” (most of them refuse to call them “Palestinians”). But there was also a recurrent theme that was entirely unexpected—the claim that Arabs in the West Bank are engaging in “environmental terrorism,” dumping raw sewage into streams, polluting the water supply and refusing for their own shortsighted political reasons to cooperate with Israel to save the earth. Here comes Environmental Zionism.

The threats to the environment in the West Bank are dire. “Most of the rivers that originate in Palestine and cross into Israel are polluted, resulting in cross border pollution that has an impact on both sides. Aquifers, which are also shared, continue to be degraded from excessive pumping and seepage from domestic, agricultural and industrial sewage, causing massive damage to the drinking water consumed by both peoples,” according to David Lehrer and Dr. Clive Lipchin of the *Arava Institute for Environmental Studies*. In another example of the wreck and ruin of the occupation, settlers and Palestinians blame each other.

I begin my four-day tour in Ariel in the northern West Bank—Samaria—which sits right on top of the Mountain Aquifer upon which the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank and the major Israeli population centers depend. The view from the road to Ariel from the West, along the spine of the watershed, is beautiful. The land seems vast and empty. “Look at this,” Ron Jager, a strategic advisor to the Shomron District, enthusiastically exclaims. “There is plenty of room for everybody!”

Miri Maoz-Ovadia of the Yesha Council who lives in Neve Tsuf, about 25 miles to the south of Ariel, is my driver. Neve Tsuf was the site of weekly demonstrations that began in 2009 when the Palestinians of the neighboring village of Nabi Saleh, aided by Israeli activists (Maoz-Ovadia called them “anarchists”) protested the theft of their land along with their spring. (The seizure of this

particular spring sticks in the craw of Palestinian activists—see the [“infographic.”](#)) “It’s a nature preserve,” Maoz-Ovadia insists, “and now we are preserving it. Water doesn’t belong to anyone.”

Actually, it does. Under Oslo II, even though the Mountain Aquifer is supposedly “shared” by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Israel exploits its effective control by extracting up to 80 percent of the water while Palestinians extract some 20 percent. “Over-pumping threatens the long term viability of the groundwater, resulting in the drying up of springs,” [according to Friends of the Earth Middle East](#). (Many settlers tell me that Israel gives more water to Palestinians than is required by Oslo but no one could give me any data to substantiate this claim.)

A few minutes after my conversation with Maoz-Ovadia, I am in the office of Yaakov Anker, a Ph.D. environmental researcher at Ariel University who tells me, “eighty percent of the pollution in the region (Shomron and Ariel) is from Palestinian villages.” He mentions a conference that took place the week before at the university entitled “Environment Without Borders” and complains that virtually no Palestinians came. (Friends of the Earth also refused to attend.) “They won’t cooperate with us even when it is for their own good,” he says. I ask why the conference was held in a settlement, a symbol of occupation, rather than a neutral location, if the Israelis wanted Palestinians to attend. “I am not political,” he says.

Anker is not alone in blaming Palestinians. No one mentions, however, that many Israeli settlements do the same, [as substantiated by Friends of the Earth Middle East](#). And it is not uncommon for Israelis to *hire* Palestinians to dispose of solid or construction waste on public land,” says the official governmental report for the Ariel conference. They don’t have wastewater treatment plants because they are broke; poverty also leads them to co-operate with illegal dumpers in return for payment, [according to the head of a Samaritan regional council, Eliezer Hisdai](#).

Yehudit Tayar of Beit Horon, among others, also blames European donors for enabling Palestinian waste, suggesting that EU support is literally being poured down the drain. Israel’s Environmental Protection Minister Gilad Erdan [goes further and says](#) “donor countries should agree to only continue giving the [Palestinian] villages financial support if they agree to [cooperate with Israel by] connecting to its sewage lines.”

Palestinian activists say the sewage issue is being used as a pretext. “When 60% of West Bank is deemed area C and off-use to Palestinians, when Israel controls where we are allowed to dump our trash, when a well requires IDF permission, which does not come, you better believe people will act out of a rational context, just like we build without permits in Jerusalem where permits are used as a weapon to depopulate our neighborhoods there,” says Ramallah-based Palestinian businessman Sam Bahour.

Where were these newly minted settler environmentalists in the last 20 years when the settlements were being sited for strategic and political reasons, environment be damned? “The very establishment of the settlements was a political act almost completely disconnected from environmental concerns or long-term planning,” [says Haaretz environmental writer Zafrir Rinat](#). “The settlements were built in order to grab land for Jews by establishing many dozens of residential points and small outposts, requiring the extensive - and expensive - dispersion of infrastructures and roads,” he says. “The cost of the race to put facts on the ground by Israeli settlement activity was paid by nature.”

It is hard to imagine a resolution to the environmental disaster in the absence of an end to military occupation and freedom and security for all. Meanwhile, the rhetoric of both sides gets hotter and the environment pays the price.

“The Settlement Movement and The Environmental Card”, 21/08/2012, online at:
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/08/21/the-settlement-movement-and-the-environmental-card.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Thirsting for Justice

At Maryhouse Catholic Worker, in New York City, word arrived, on a hot August day that, due to street construction, the water would be cut off for four hours the following day. The Catholic Worker community serves scores of guests each day, and the water shortage would have to be dealt with practically. Catholic Workers are legend for being practical in their approach toward problem solving, and in this matter a decision was quickly made: fill the bathtubs on each floor with water, post a sign that none of the toilets could be used, and quickly make one hundred or so egg salad sandwiches which could be served to guests at the door since it wouldn't be practical to invite people indoors when there wouldn't be any running water. How could they wash the dishes? What about the women who were accustomed to coming in and taking a shower? And how could you close off the toilets to the usual flow of guests?

I smiled to myself, remembering an invitation I had just received to experiment with using only 6.3 gallons of water, per person, over the course of an entire day. The experiment would be nearly impossible for most U.S. people to fulfill. The invitation came from the Middle East Children's Alliance, who are coordinating the 2012 Thirsting for Justice Summer Challenge, in the US, which calls on supporters worldwide to live on 6.3 gallons in one day, in solidarity with the average allotment of water available to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. A quick look at a chart supplied by the campaign website showed that just by flushing the toilet, washing the dishes and taking a shower an average North American consumer of water would use up far more than the allotted 6.3 gallons! However, I was so jet lagged after having just returned from Afghanistan that I knew I would barely leave my room at Maryhouse Catholic Worker, --no problem foregoing a shower and no need to be troubled over using too much water to wash dishes and, well, if the toilets were closed, there must be another way to "make do."

Truthfully, I've learned plenty about "making do" in Afghanistan where people are familiar with water shortages, especially during harsh winters when the pipes freeze and, if the electricity is "off," and wells are dependent on electricity, people face several days in a row with no water.

But once I'm back in the U.S., my usual levels of consumption kick back into full gear. I might remember to use less water for washing dishes, but I would never fill and haul large plastic basins, in advance of doing dishes, because of lacking tap water. I might take a shower as quickly as possible, but I wouldn't do so by dipping one small bowl of water into a larger bowl and pouring that overhead. As for whether or not I'm over consumptive if I boil water to make myself a cup of tea or instant coffee...well, the question never occurs to me.

For Gazans, practicalities related to water consumption constantly nag people who never will know of the luxuries taken for granted by people who presume upon endless supplies of water. A particular

irony, in Gaza and the surrounding region, is that there actually is enough water available for all...or there could be, if the available reserves of water were shared equitably.

And so my friends at MECA and the Thirsting for Justice Campaign have invited us all to become more sensitive to the plight of Gazans and Palestinians throughout the West Bank, as they try to believe that we are all part of one another, that we all have the same blood and water running through our veins while experience tells them that they are rendered less eligible, less deserving, less equal when it comes to their basic human right to clean water. The Israeli consumption of water to fill swimming pools, power nuclear reactors and match western levels of consumption forbids life-giving availability of water for Gazans and people in the West Bank.

My ideal day for participating in the experiment has come and gone and now I must sign up for another day when my usual patterns of consumption are in full swing. I feel humbled, troubled.

Please visit MECA's website and join me in evaluating myself, on a normal day, in relation to people in Gaza and the West Bank, people who mean us no harm but whose lives are affected every day by the warmaking and war profiteering practices of the Israeli government, an occupying government that relies, every day, on U.S. governmental support. Let's look forward to the withering of any support for war and a time when our tolerance for imperial control over subjugated people will dry up, becoming as bereft of sustenance as, say, the Jordan River is bereft of water....another image for another day of considering practical resistance to water wars.

- Kathy Kelly (Kathy@vcnv.org) is a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org). When in Afghanistan, she and other Voices activists are guests of the Afghan Peace Volunteers (www.ourjourneytosmile.com). She contributed this article to PalestineChronicle.com.

"Thirsting for Justice", 20/08/2012, online at: http://www.palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=19504

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Water Theft and Punishment on the Rise in the Middle East

We've been talking about [chronic water shortages](#) in the Middle East and North Africa for a long time. But now a new and troubling trend is beginning to emerge in the region: municipal, regional and national governments are taking more drastic measures to police water consumption.

Jordan broke out the [big \(security\) guns to prevent its citizens from “stealing”](#) what is actually a part of the commons and most recently, Dubai has threatened to punish water thieves in various neighborhoods throughout the emirate with fines of up to \$2,722.

Water belongs to everyone

The editor of *All That We share: A Field Guide to the Commons*, Jay Walljasper notes that [water belongs to everyone](#).

“Put simply, the water commons means that water is no one’s property; it rightfully belongs to all of humanity and to the earth itself. It is our duty to protect the quality and availability of water for everyone around the planet. This ethic should be the foundation of all decisions made about use of this life-giving resource. Water is not a commodity to be sold or squandered or hoarded,” he wrote.

Even so, it’s not a simple issue to address. Despite Dubai’s prolonged drought and notoriously short supplies of groundwater, more than 40 residents living in the Satwa, Al Quoz and Ras Al Khor neighborhoods of Dubai have been caught drilling for water, which is used to wash cars and for other personal use, according to *Gulf News*.

Perhaps accustomed to having as much water as the desalination plants could produce, Emiratis are not always conscientious of water conservation. Why should they be when their government has long [subsidized water expenses](#) (and energy.)

80,000 Groundwater wells at risk of drying up in the UAE

All of the emirates stopped exporting groundwater in February following a study conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Water that revealed that as many as 80,000 groundwater wells are at risk of drying up completely.

Accordingly, only companies that receive licenses from the Department of Economic Development and approval from the Dubai municipality are lawfully permitted to extract water.

Everyone else may have to pay up to nearly \$3,000 for taking water illegally.

“The water you use should come from authorised channels,” Khalid Suletin, Director of Dubai Municipality’s Environment Emergency Office, told Gulf News.

But as shortages increase and authorized distribution channels short circuit (or favor the rich), we should expect a lot more thefts and stricter efforts to control them.

It is a sad state of affairs when human beings have to have permission for using what is the very essence of life.

“Water Theft and Punishment on the Rise in the Middle East”, 24/08/2012, online at:
<http://www.greenprophet.com/2012/08/water-theft-punishment-middle-east/>

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Egyptian Health Ministry Blamed for Bottled Water Shortage

CAIRO, Egypt (Egypt Independent) — The Chamber of Food Industries is blaming the Health Ministry for a bottled water shortage after the ministry ordered seven companies shut down in June, when they failed tests of their well water. In response to the accusation, the ministry stood by its decision, telling Al-Masry Al-Youm on Tuesday that the companies had violated health standards and tests showed their water was contaminated. There are other companies on the market that help meet consumer needs, the ministry said. However, Mohamed Shokry, the head of the chamber's board, claimed the ministry had recently approved arbitrary standards for the water and wells without reference to the World Health Organization guidelines. He asserts that the clamp down has caused an 8 percent price spike in the past few days because the companies still in operation cannot meet production needs. Shokry said he was awaiting a response to his request for a meeting with Health Minister Mohamed Mostafa Hamed.

“Egyptian Health Ministry Blamed for Bottled Water Shortage”, 22/08/2012, online at:
http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/egyptian-health-ministry-blamed-bottled-water-shortage_23983

BACK TO TOP

❖ More Than a Thousand Egyptians Sick After Drinking Dirty Water

MONUFIYA ([Egypt Independent](#)) — More than 1,000 people in the village of Sansaft, Monufiya, have been poisoned after drinking polluted water. Dozens of intoxicated citizens have been taken to hospitals in Monuf after suffering high fevers, abdominal pain and diarrhea. Mohsen Abdel Razek, deputy manager at Monuf Public Hospital said samples taken from the village's water stations, one of which that is privately-owned, showed the water was polluted. Some villagers, angered by the incident, assaulted the water station's owner, while others blocked the road between their village and Cairo, saying they were trying to attract officials' attention to their water crisis. Police forces moved to the scene after protests escalated. Other angry residents held the Minister of Health and the Governor of Monfufiyya were held hostage in a hospital. Altercations flared between a number of residents and Monuf's local council chairman, who arrived to the village for a field inspection following the incident. Villagers demanded the official provide treatment for the victims after the local health unit and pharmacies were found to be out of medication. The villagers also dismissed former MP Ibrahim Haggag of the Freedom and Justice Party, rejecting his offer for help.

“More Than a Thousand Egyptians Sick After Drinking Dirty Water”, 21/08/2012, online at:
http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/more-thousand-egyptians-sick-after-drinking-dirty-water_23968

BACK TO TOP

❖ Egypt Will Tender PPPs by the End of 2012

CAIRO, Egypt — The Egyptian Ministry of Finance said it would tender a number of public-private-partnership (PPP) projects in the water and wastewater treatment sectors before the end of this year.

“The ministry is currently preparing studies of these projects in cooperation with other ministries and international consultant companies,” Ati Hannoura, head of the ministry's PPP Unit, said last week.

“There is increasing interest from international companies to invest in Egyptian PPP projects, although the country has been going through turbulent times [since January 2011],” Hannoura added.

“Many international companies have been requesting information about the PPP projects portfolio we intend to tender in the coming period. This is really important for us to put the economy back on track.”

Over the past year-and-a-half, the government on its own has only been able to come up with half the funds needed to prepare for tendering the projects.

“We had to count on foreign grants to fund these feasibility studies,” said Hannoura.

The government had to cancel a \$163 million USD wastewater treatment station in the 6th of October area, which was to build under a PPP model, due to lack of funds.

The country now plans to benefit from the newly created Arab Fund for Financing Infrastructure (AFFI), established by the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the European Development Bank.

The AFFI will fund a large number of PPP projects in the Arab world.

The Egyptian government has so far submitted nine projects to be financed by the fund, according to ministry officials.

Bid submissions were delayed last year because of uncertainty in the wake of the January 25 Revolution that toppled the government of former President Hosni Mubarak.

Bidding for two of these projects will be among those tendered in the next few weeks.

“Egypt Will Tender PPPs by the End of 2012”, 21/08/2012, online at: http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/egypt-will-tender-ppps-end-2012_23955

BACK TO TOP

❖ **More than a thousand poisoned by Monufiya's polluted water**

Monufiya Governor Ashraf Hilal has suspended local water station employees and the directors of the local health department after more than 1,000 people in the village of Sansaft were poisoned by contaminated drinking water.

Hilal referred them for investigation Tuesday, according to state-run news agency MENA.

Dozens were taken to hospitals in Monuf after suffering high fevers, abdominal pain and diarrhea.

Mohsen Abdel Razek, deputy manager at Monuf Public Hospital said samples taken from the village's water stations, one of which is privately owned, showed the water was polluted.

Angered by the incident, some villagers assaulted the water station's owner, while others blocked the road between their village and Cairo, saying they were trying to attract officials' attention to their water crisis. Police forces responded after protests escalated.

Others held Health Minister Mohamed Hamed Mostafa and Monufiya Governor Ashraf Helal in a hospital room for an hour after the two men went to visit the sick.

Police helped release the two officials as residents chanted, "We won't leave and we won't let them out." The protesting residents held up bottles of the polluted water and asked the officials to drink it.

Altercations flared between Sansaft villagers and Monuf's local council chairman, who arrived at the village for a field inspection after locals fell sick. The residents demanded the official provide treatment for victims after the local health clinic and pharmacies ran out of medication.

The villagers also dismissed former MP Ibrahim Haggag of the Freedom and Justice Party, rejecting his offer for help.

The government has not commented on the cause of the poisoning, but Mostafa has ordered the Sansaft water stations closed. The Health Ministry put the number of people affected at 56, far less than unofficial estimates.

"More than a thousand poisoned by Monufiya's polluted water", 21/08/2012, online at:
http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/more-thousand-poisoned-monufiya-s-polluted-water?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=d19d986b6a-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Egypt: Contaminated water causes illness, protests in Nile Delta; officials locked up for hour**

CAIRO — Villagers briefly locked the Egyptian health minister and a provincial governor inside a hospital room Tuesday after allegedly contaminated water caused hundreds of residents to fall ill, officials said.

A hospital in the Nile Delta province of Menoufia, 65 kilometers (40 miles) north of Cairo, admitted dozens of people with severe cases of diarrhea, vomiting and high fevers, Health Ministry official Amr Kandil said.

Egypt's state-run news agency MENA said the number of sick people reached more than 400.

During a visit by Health Minister Mohammed Mustafa and Gov. Ashraf Helal to the hospital Tuesday, angry family members held up bottles of brackish-looking water and chanted, “drink it.” Then they locked the two officials in a room.

After an hour, the two were released with police intervention. Mustafa ordered closure of illegal and unlicensed sources of water. Helal suspended government employees responsible for the village's main source of tap water.

Kandil said a medical team collected samples of the water the villagers say is polluted, in order to determine whether it was the cause of the sickness.

Water and food poisoning are common in Egypt, mainly because of poor oversight, deteriorating public services, and mushrooming slums and residential buildings outside government control across the country.

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“Egypt: Contaminated water causes illness, protests in Nile Delta; officials locked up for hour”, 21/08/2012, online at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/egypt-villagers-lock-health-minister-in-hospital-room-after-locals-made-sick-by-bad-water/2012/08/21/702a748e-ebb1-11e1-866f-60a00f604425_story.html

BACK TO TOP

❖ Hydroclimatic Extremes in the Basin of the Blue Nile

Reference

Taye, M.T. and Willems, P. 2012. Temporal variability of hydroclimatic extremes in the Blue Nile basin. *Water Resources Research* **48**: 10.1029/2011WR011466.

Background

The authors write that the upper Blue Nile basin is one of the most important river basins in Africa, because "it contributes about 60% of the Nile's flow at Aswan, Egypt (Yates and Strzepek, 1998; Sutcliffe and Parks, 1999; Conway, 2005) ... and its availability is a matter of survival for Egypt and Sudan." In addition, they say it is the largest and most economically imperative water resource for Ethiopia, which "is planning irrigation and hydropower projects using the Blue Nile River (Tesemma *et al.*, 2010), while all the other riparian countries are working on increasing their share of the water to boost their economic developments."

What was done

In studying this important river and the region that feeds it, in the words of Taye and Willems, "the temporal variability of basin-wide rainfall extremes and river flow extremes from four gauging stations was investigated," and "on the basis of a quantile anomaly analysis method, decadal variations in extreme daily, monthly, and annual quantiles were studied, and the periods of statistical significance were identified."

What was learned

The two Belgian scientists found that, in regard to river flows and rainfall depths, "the 1980s had statistically significant negative anomalies in extremes in comparison with the long-term reference period of 1964-2009, while the 1960s-1970s and the 1990s-2000s had positive anomalies, although less significant." Most important of all, however, they report that "there is neither consistent increasing nor decreasing trend in rainfall and flow extremes of recent years." And, therefore, they say that "anticipated trends due to global warming could not be identified."

What it means

Once again, for another part of the world, and in spite of the oft-repeated "doom-and-gloom" prognostications of climate alarmists, the global warming experienced over the past half-century or so has *not* led to either extreme increases or decreases in rainfall and subsequent river flow in Africa's upper Blue Nile Basin.

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Yates, D.N. and Strzepek, K.M. 1998. Modeling the Nile basin under climatic change. *Journal of Hydrologic Engineering* **3**: 98-108.

“Hydroclimatic Extremes in the Basin of the Blue Nile”, 22/08/2012, online at:
<http://www.co2science.org/articles/V15/N34/C2.php>

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Kenyan Environmentalists Oppose Chinese-Funded Ethiopian Dam

nairoBi, Kenya — Kenyan environmental group Friends of Lake Turkana last week called on the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China to not provide a promised \$500 million USD loan to Ethiopia for the \$1.7 billion USD Gibe III Hydro-electric Dam.

The group, which represent communities that live near the world’s largest permanent desert lake in northwestern Kenya, says the dam on the Omo River in eastern Ethiopia will threaten Lake Turkana. The river supplies the lake with 90 percent of its water intake.

The project is expected to lower the lake’s water lever, which could lead to increased salinity, making it undrinkable for local pastoralist’s animals. There have been growing resource conflicts among pastoralists in the region, and Friends of Lake Turkana believe the completed dam could cause this to increase.

The dam has the potential to negatively affect 200,000 people along the river, and another 300,000 that live near the lake, the NGO warns.

Founder of Friends of Lake Turkana Ikal Angelei said that the survival of the lake is in China’s hands.

“The lake is in the danger of drying unless the Kenyan government and international agencies step in to stop the unsustainable development both within and outside Kenya,” Christian Science Monitor quoted Angelei at a news conference in Nairobi as saying.

“While many would-be financiers have withdrawn ... China still holds [to its] promise,” she added.

The Ethiopian government supports the dam as necessary for providing both much-needed electrical power and irrigation water for both Ethiopia and Kenya. It plans to sell 60 percent of the dam’s electrical output to Kenya through a transmission line.

This transmission line is to be built with World Bank-provided funds. The bank decided not to provide funds directly for the dam due to the controversy surrounding it. However, environmentalists

have called out the World Bank for its \$684 million USD loan for the transmission line, because it can still be seen as support for the overall project, they say.

For the most part Kenya's government has not objected to construction of the dam. However, in August 2011 the Kenyan parliament passed a resolution calling for environmental assessments to be completed before construction.

"The lake needs all the protection it can get against the vagaries of climate change, Gibe III, and the thirsty sugar cane and cotton plantations that Ethiopia is developing along the Omo River," said Angelei.

"Kenyan Environmentalists Oppose Chinese-Funded Ethiopian Dam", 20/08/2012, online at:
http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/kenyan-environmentalists-oppose-chinese-funded-ethiopian-dam_23952

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Sudan to Spend \$51 Million USD for Drinking Water, Irrigation Projects

KHARTOUM, Sudan — The Sudanese government last week unveiled \$51 million USD worth of drinking water and irrigation projects in its eastern Nile Basin region and the state of Khartoum.

These include a \$31 million USD program that will connect rural communities to drinking water systems, dig wells, build small floodwater storage dams, and rehabilitate irrigation pumping stations in Sannar, Qadarif, Blue Nile and Nile River states.

The work will be funded mainly by the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Sudanese government.

Ibrahim Balila, director of the program, said it would help protect al Dandar nature reserve and would also offer training for Sudanese water personnel. It will be completed by 2014.

The government also signed a \$20 million USD loan agreement this week with the Chinese Buchan Group for an irrigation system improvement project in Khartoum state.

It will install irrigation pumping stations for agricultural projects in the eastern part of the state.

“This is one of the most important funds the state has recently attained to achieve its irrigation and development projects,” said Agriculture Minister Azhari Khalafallah.

The government has been intensifying its efforts to secure foreign funding for major water and sanitation projects due to cuts in public spending.

Sudan’s national income has declined significantly since South Sudan became independent from it last year.

During the pre-secession period, 50 percent of the country’s revenue came from oil exports. After South Sudan seceded, oil revenues dropped sharply, and this led to a 7 percent cut in development spending.

In an attempt to overcome its financial limitations, the government last month signed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2013-2016. The agreement will fund basic services like sanitation and drinking water supply.

The total amount expected to be mobilized in support of the UNDAF 2013-2016 is estimated at \$556.95 million USD.

According to Sudanese officials, the government is also seeking to direct UN Development Program funds to infrastructure projects in drinking water, sanitation and agriculture, with a focus on increasing spending for essential services to people in areas affected by conflict.

“Sudan to Spend \$51 Million USD for Drinking Water, Irrigation Projects”, 22/08/2012, online at:
http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/sudan-spend-51-million-usd-drinking-water-irrigation-projects_23974

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Zenawi's Death Won't Alter Nile Talks, Say Kenyan Officials

nairoBi, Kenya — The death of Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi will not alter negotiations on use of Nile water, Kenyan officials said today (August 21).

The 57-year-old Zenawi, who led Ethiopia for two decades, died on August 20 while receiving medical treatment abroad.

In neighboring Kenya, government officials acknowledged that Ethiopia has been a critical player in Nile talks, as riparian states enter the final phase of approving the comprehensive framework agreement (CFA) on water-sharing.

But they dismissed fears Zenawi's death would destabilize ongoing negotiations among Nile Basin countries.

Fred Mwango, head of Transboundary Waters at Kenya's Ministry of Water and Irrigation, said a post-Zenawi regime will not abandon Ethiopia's key role in reaching an agreement on Nile water-sharing.

Ethiopia has used its diplomatic clout to mobilize neighboring countries to re-invigorate Nile talks.

"Ethiopia has always been a strong player in the Nile discourse. The country is the source of Blue Nile and has accrued many benefits after signing the comprehensive framework agreement," Mwango told OOSKAnews.

"The country [Ethiopia] has benefitted more than any other upstream countries from signing the agreement. Look at large dams and irrigation projects that have been initiated there of late," he added, citing diplomatic efforts involving Kenyan and Ethiopian officials to solve disputes over trans-boundary rivers including the Nile and Omo.

"At both political and technical levels, Ethiopian officials have shown commitment to the realization of a binding agreement on use of Nile waters. This commitment will not falter at this juncture when we have made tremendous progress in Nile discussions," Mwango insisted.

Kenya considers Ethiopia a key ally in advancing regional development, peace and stability.

Solomon Maina, head of Multilateral Affairs at Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that as a diplomatic heavyweight, Ethiopia has been instrumental in establishing regional treaties to combat civil unrest, climate change and conflicts over natural resources.

“As we all know, the Horn of Africa remains a powder-keg due to natural and man-made calamities, [and] countries are looking at Ethiopia to lead the fight against recurrent droughts and conflicts,” said Maina.

He stressed that water security was the key to long-term stability in the region, pointed to joint efforts by Kenya and Ethiopia to promote equitable use of shared water sources.

“Zenawi's Death Won't Alter Nile Talks, Say Kenyan Officials”, 21/08/2012, online at:

<http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/zenawi-s-death-won-t-alter-nile-talks-say-kenyan-officials> 23970

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Tanzania, Malawi Presidents Affirm They Will Seek Peaceful Solution to Lake Dispute**

MAPUTO, Mozambique — Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete said on August 18 that he has no intention of going to war with neighboring Malawi over trans-boundary Lake Malawi, also known as Lake Nyasa.

“Citizens of the two countries should be assured that there will be no war between the two countries,” Kikwete was quoted as saying.

He was speaking after meeting Malawian President Joyce Banda in Maputo, Mozambique, where both were attending the Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit.

The two countries have enjoyed good relations over the years, Kikwete added.

Banda said the reassurances from her and Kikwete should end speculations that have generated a lot of anxiety among people in both countries.

The question of rights to the lake and its waters can be solved through dialogue, she added.

On August 6, Tanzania’s online newspaper The Citizen reported that officials had sent a strong warning to Malawi, ordering a halt to all oil and gas exploration in the lake. The government of Malawi maintains that it has the right to carry out these activities because the water body legally belongs to Malawi.

Foreign ministers Ephraim Mganda Chiume of Malawi and Bernard Kamillius Membe of Tanzania agreed during a meeting on August 16 that if they fail to reach a compromise on the lake, they will refer the matter to international bodies, rather than allowing the conflict between them to escalate.

Membe said Tanzania has fought devastating wars in the past, and promised that in this case no bullets would be fired.

Malawi claims ownership of the entire lake, based on an 1890 treaty between former colonial powers Britain and Germany, later affirmed (Malawi says) by the African Union in 2002 and 2007.

However, Tanzania claims half of the lake based on existing international common law; Malawi says this only applies in cases where there is no treaty in place.

Delegations from both sides are meeting again August 20-24 in the northern Malawian border town of Mzuzu. This will be followed by another meeting of the countries' foreign ministers in the Malawian capital, Lilongwe.

“Tanzania, Malawi Presidents Affirm They Will Seek Peaceful Solution to Lake Dispute”, 20/08/2012, online at: <http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/tanzania-malawi-presidents-affirm-they-will-seek-peaceful-solution-lake-dispute>

BACK TO TOP

❖ South Africa Cabinet Approves 20-Year Plan for Water Sector

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — The South African Cabinet last week approved a 20-year water sector management plan outlining the role of water in the country's goals for "equitable, sustainable social and economic growth".

The second draft of National Water Resource Strategy, whose theme is “Moving South Africa into a new era,” is now available for public scrutiny and comments before a final version is implemented.

This version of the plan focuses on the role of the state. It acknowledges that previous policy and legislation on water failed because it failed to link policy formulation to tangible results in water sector management.

“The allocation and reallocation of raw water to historically disadvantaged communities for productive purposes has not progressed as it should,” the plan says.

It also outlines weaknesses in the current water sector financing system and lays out the role of the government and the private sector in scaling up investment in water supply and development.

“Investment in water needs to double if the required outcomes are to be achieved,” it states.

The plan cited a recent study by the Department of Water Affairs that found the capital requirement for the entire water sector over the next 10 years, in real terms, is some \$81 billion USD – leaving a funding gap of \$41 billion USD over the 10-year period.

Under the plan, between 2013 and 2016, water resource management and ownership will be decentralized to catchment management agencies, water services authorities, water boards, and other organizations. The Water Affairs Department will play the role of water sector leader.

The National Planning Commission, which prepared the strategy, said the country currently uses 31 percent of available resources, a rate it says is too high compared to global standards. South Africa could face severe water shortages soon as it approaches a usage rate of 40 percent annually.

Separately last week, Water Minister Edna Molewa warned of “a growing and disturbing trend of service delivery protests with water being a common denominator.”

She told district mayors at a forum in Pretoria that there was a need for “coordinated effort between ourselves as national and local government, human settlements and provinces to look at the entire value chain of water provision -- from source to tap -- in order to identify all the weaknesses within the system and together with all the stakeholders ensure proactive and reactive remedial steps.”

“South Africa Cabinet Approves 20-Year Plan for Water Sector”, 20/08/2012, online at:

http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/south-africa-cabinet-approves-20-year-plan-water-sector_23935

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Africa: Food and Water Security Tightly Linked - At World Water Week in Stockholm, IFAD to Explore Solutions to Water Scarcity**

Rome — Water scarcity affects one in three people on every continent of the globe. The situation is getting worse as needs for water rise along with population growth, urbanization and increases in household and industrial uses. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will join experts from the scientific, business, policy and civic communities in Stockholm from 26-31 August to address how to reverse this impinging problem while ensuring the world's food security.

Organized by the Stockholm International Institute, the annual World Water Week will focus on water and food security this year. The theme comes at a time when the global food security situation is unstable. Fluctuating energy prices, poor harvests, and rising demand from a growing population, have all increased food prices. In the past few months, severe droughts have been reported from the United States to the Sahel region in Africa. These droughts further exacerbate the problem as they reduce global food supply due to reductions in irrigated agricultural production, which represents 40 per cent of the world's food demand.

Nowhere is the link between food and water security more evident than in the Near East and North Africa region, which is home to 5 per cent of the world's population, but only 1 per cent of the global available freshwater resources. Limited water resources restrict the potential for domestic food production in the region, where irrigated agriculture represents 85 per cent of total freshwater withdrawal.

"Along with other stressors including demographic and land use changes, climate change will exacerbate the already precarious high water deficit in the Arab region, and will negatively impact its rainfed agricultural productivity," said Khalida Bouzar, Director of the Near East, North Africa and Europe Division at IFAD. "Water scarcity will become the main constraint to socio-economic development in the region, which is why it is crucial to work on integrated adaptation strategies that incorporate water issues in all sectors including agriculture, industry, urban development, trade, and tourism. Strategies should also contribute to reducing exposure to market volatility through investments in critical infrastructure such as grain storages and water harvesting."

As the region's population is estimated to double over the next 40 years, per capita water availability is expected to fall by more than 50 per cent. In order to meet future water demands, IFAD is exploring non-conventional water resources in the region such as wastewater reuse, recycling of agricultural drainage water and desalination. For example, in Jordan, Syria and Tunisia, incorporating alternative water resources such as brackish water and treated wastewater is being undertaken in forage production. This is being coupled with environmental impact assessments on farms and guidelines for the safe use of marginal water.

During World Water Week, [IFAD will be organizing six events](#) to explore ways to scale up simple technologies such as these, which small farmers worldwide can use to enhance food security. In addition, the events will look at how best to support small farmers to contribute to climate change adaptation by fostering models of efficient water use, and empower neglected or disempowered groups such as marginal farmers and women.

“Africa: Food and Water Security Tightly Linked - At World Water Week in Stockholm, IFAD to Explore Solutions to Water Scarcity”, 23/08/2012, online at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201208231234.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ India Water Policy 2012: Design for Water Loot

"Indians going to bed hungry or, many times, dying hungry while food grains in huge amount do rot in government godowns is a fact known to all. If the designed water policy is implemented and corporate players are allowed to have rightful access to the water resources, the country is to see incidents of thirst deaths of Indians who are unable to afford to a glass of pure water owned by corporate houses."

We know the story of loot in the un-liberated India. British came here to do business. However, instead of doing a fair business, they engaged themselves in unparalleled plunder of India's wealth. Freedom struggle aroused hopes in people's mind that this plunder would stop after independence. But this could not happen.

India became free, but the loot continued rather increasingly day by day. The shape and form of the loot has changed. New avenues are being searched. Along with exploitation of labour, industrial manufacturing and service sector, natural resources have also come under this loot. Coal, minerals, petroleum, gas, water, land, biodiversity, forests are being openly looted. Some of these sources are so perilous that they would end for ever if exploited.

India's Policy Design for Water Loot

Water, which is the most basic thing for life and the nature's cycle, which is naturally available everywhere on earth and which is made available for all by the mother nature is now being treated as a marketable commodity in India. Now, the private property right is to be extended over ground water enabling anybody to extract, buy and sell ground water under this right. Once it happens, any individual or company can have ownership right over any river, lake, pond or underground water and sell this right to any other person or company in lieu of handsome profit. May be, it can also restrict common users and people from using water from sources owned by private owners.

Usually we understand water business by the business of bottled drinking water. But it is not so now. It is on sale for everything, from mining to industries, that requires water. A new water industry is taking shape in the country.

Land has already become a marketable commodity. Land ownership rights gave birth to a system that made corporatisation of land easy. The same way, water is being converted into a tradable commodity. Ownership rights over water will give rise to a new kind of Panidari (system of ownership and trading of water) and clear the way for its corporatisation. A new legal system from top to bottom to facilitate this corporatization is being designed. Many states of India have formulated new water policies and laws. Several of them have already passed them to facilitate loot of water by capitalists and corporate houses.

Water cycle causes rain which every year gives us over and underground water in certain quantities. If measured, a colossal amount of water is made available to us every year by nature. India gets about 4000 billion cubic metre (BCM) rain water annually. After evaporation, 1869 BCM water remains in our rivers and other water sources; and only 1123 BCM water (690 BCM over ground and 433 BCM underground) finally remains usable for us. So, usable water is limited. In India a total of 688 BCM water is needed for agriculture while the drinking and necessary domestic need is about 56 BCM leaving 69 BCM water for other use.

India's large water reserve, limited water availability and increasing demand, all these factors are being used by corporate houses to establish, through the help of World Bank, their control over water and its commercial utilisation.

World Bank's Water Resources Strategy Report discusses in detail various issues related to privatization of water in the world on the basis of Dublin Principle, which includes structural reforms in use of water as a commodity, determination of all other areas of water use, including irrigation, based on cubic metre measurement system adopting singular vision for both over ground and underground water, ending subsidies on water for irrigation. Private-Public Partnership, encouragement of private sector in water management and distribution, water literacy, data bank for water related statistics etc – all these issues are discussed in the strategy report which finally gives directions to the World Bank to take a role in it.

Water Policy 2012

Indian government's water policy-2012 makes it clear that India's policy is completely in accordance with World Bank guidelines. This is a good case of World Bank's direct hand in Indian policy

making. World Bank has also tried for inclusion of water in central list so that a single water policy and accompanying laws could be implemented in the whole country. But it could not be possible, so far, as power of making laws for water related policies are vested with the states. Some states of the country have made their water policies and related laws according to Water Policy-2002. Other states are almost forced to implement such policies as condition for getting loans.

Three major Acts placed as guiding laws for States to implement water policies are:

- 1- Water Resources Regulatory Authority Act.
- 2- Management of Irrigation systems by Farmers Act.
- 3- Ground Water Act.

Water Resources Regulatory Authority is to sell water rights and decide prices of water while the other two acts are to oversee the management of water resources, through water committees and consumers' organizations, and the recovery of cost of water.

A new legal system is also established for corporate houses to manage their Water business – meaning, corporate control over water is almost legalised. Using that system a company will sell water taken from river, ponds, lake or its own tube-wells through cubic measurement system for household use, agricultural use or for industrial use. And to show that all is being done by people and communities directly, Consumer Forums and Water Committees are being organized and these organizations will facilitate maintenance and management of water supply system, and recover the cost from the users and hand it over to the company. So, more likely to that of British tax systems of the colonial days, people and communities are to engage themselves as agents of corporate houses for no benefit but against the rights of their own (of people and the communities) over the natural resources. Initially these projects will be started on PPP model and slowly handed over to private companies.

Rights over Natural Resources Shifting

Now to make further way for the World Bank's intentions, Draft Water Policy – 2012 has come. For making corporatization of underground water easy, an amendment in Indian Easement Act-1882 is

being proposed. Water will be made a national property so that the central government holds all rights lawfully to sell water ownership to individual or companies.

It is believed in India that water is life. In Indian psyche, its importance is related to purity and divinity offered by nature itself. For all forms of life, it is freely available anywhere and everywhere. But now it will not be free. It is now a commodity for sell, some thing which is unthinkable for any Indian!

Corporate houses and World Bank have done this through their intrigues. It is interesting that Indians are still not aware of what is happening on such a sensitive front. Corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and some NGOs of our land are also helping the foreign agencies to fulfil their interest in India's water resources. World Bank's declared aim is to eradicate poverty from the world through development. But, behind this pious aim, World Bank has always worked for strengthening capitalist system and serving the interest of corporate houses. By installing its own persons on the top and then building pressure to formulate national policies to legalise illegal to promote loot of the country that is unethical and unlawful as per the existing laws. This is World Bank's modus operandi. In India, World Bank has also done the same to gain direct access to county's natural resources and make way for corporate powers to loot them. Now it has become clearer that World Bank's strategy and India's changed policies and laws are based on that strategy with regard to water.

Thus in India people's right over a natural resource are being snatched away and handed over to global corporate and commercial players. Not only this, the system is now in place to make loot of people through water exploitation. The water, on which people had right till yesterday, has now gone into the hands of corporates. No person or farmer of the land can now use water without paying the cost. Rather in case of any such free use, the user may be sued and in the court. Water related laws have turned the existing and natural laws upside down.

Ruled by greed!

How much loot of Indian people will take place in this water business is not easy to assess now. But some projections can be made today. Those who take water directly from sources for their domestic use or for agricultural purposes are definitely not to pay the least. Only service charges are taken in places where this system is public. Today, service charges for drinking water are nearly 1.5 (one and

help paisa) paisa per litre. If this charge is raised two times then the cost of 56 BCM water, which is required for drinking purpose, will go to 1 lack 68 thousand crores rupees (1,68000 crores). Besides this, 12 rupee per bottle and 1.5 rupee per litre canned water are being tried. In this way companies will collect more than 200,000 Crores of Rupees annually from the pockets of the common people. Alongside, the 69 BCM water, required for industries and other similar purposes, will again cost rupees 200,000 crores. If fruits and vegetables growing practices increase and it requires more water, the costing would be nearly rupees 100,000 crores further, annually. Thus, total 500,000 Crores of rupees is set to go to the corporates from common man's pocket every year. This calculation may differ depending more upon how much companies are charging from the users. Companies' interest in more and more profit may also influence the use by changing the priorities of using water. More water will go where more profit is at hand.

It seems, the amount of money involved is a good reason for the greedy corporate players and their agent World bank to to influence the whole process of policy making in India to get access to water in the country.

Not only Hungry, Indians to die Thirsty as well

Corporatisation of water may lead to an ironic situation as it squeezes People's right over water and, on the other hand, the same water is to be sold to them. Increase in the rate of water would trouble Indian masses to a great deal.

But India's prime minister and an ex-servant of the World Bank Dr Manmohan Singh is also echoing with WB's dictates that imposing a cost on water use is necessary to check waste of water and its inefficient use. But is it true that three fourth (3/4) of the population who toil hard to earn two square meals are wasting water? Or, those who are affluent make wasteful use of water for a lavish and extravagant living? Is there any example of rich people, using life necessities, make responsible use of these necessities due to their rising cost?

Indians going to bed hungry or, many times, dying hungry while food grains in huge amount do rot in government godowns is a fact known to all. If the designed water policy is implemented and corporate players are allowed to have rightful access to the water resources, the country is to see

incidents of thirst deaths of Indians who are unable to afford to a glass of pure water owned by corporate houses.

“India Water Policy 2012: Design for Water Loot”, 25/08/2012, online at: <http://hotnhitnews.com/Water-Policy-2012-Indias-Water-Loot-Design-Hotnhitnews-India-11225082012.htm>

BACK TO TOP

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❖ **Uma Bharti goes knocking on lawmakers' doors for support for River Ganges campaign**

New Delhi, Aug 23(ANI): Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Uma Bharti visited the homes of several lawmakers here on Thursday to garner support for the clean the River Ganges campaign.

Elated with the support that she got during the first phase of the campaign, Bharti said she would press for the formulation of a law to declare the river an invaluable asset.

Interacting with media here, Bharti said, "We will give water from the holy River Ganges to all lawmakers and presiding officers of both the Upper and Lower Houses of the parliament, and we will urge them to formulate a law to declare the river an invaluable asset."

Recently, Bharti also planned a procession for the cause of a 'pollution free River Ganga' and was campaigning across the country to make the river free of pollutants. (ANI)

"Uma Bharti goes knocking on lawmakers' doors for support for River Ganges campaign", 23/08/2012, online at: <http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/08/23/169-Uma-Bharti-goes-knocking-on-lawmakers-doors-for-support-for-River-Ganges-campaign.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Dams, Plan ‘B’

That we were in desperate need of more dams was self-evident 30 years ago. The only reason we do not have the dams that we knew we needed is the serial incompetence of successive federal and provincial governments. The Bhasha Dam, which has been touted as a panacea for many of our ills in the power sector, has now run into trouble so deep and complex, with donors disappearing with frightening rapidity, that Wapda have come up with ‘Plan B’. Allegedly. It plans to raise the \$3bn to fund further construction by mortgaging its assets – the Tarbela, Mangla and Ghazi Barotha power complexes. Wapda claims that it is determined to complete the project without the help of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or the World Bank (WB). Reading between the lines of the statement by Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Dr Nadeemul Haq one realises that Plan B is at the conceptual rather than the implementation stage – in other words, there is no final ‘Plan B’, merely an acknowledgement that it is about time we had one.

The key question that needs to be asked from the Planning Commission is: why were they sleeping? And why did they not have a contingency Plan-B ready, just in case the original plan failed? Dr Nadeemul Haq tells us that there has been a meeting to discuss the matter and Plan B needs further refinement and Wapda was going to contact ‘financial experts to finalise the financial plan for the project.’ Why, if we may ask, has this not already been done? Note that his words are all couched in the future tense, indicating that Plan B is still at the back-of-an-envelope stage. Further, he did little to encourage confidence in Plan B by saying that mortgaging Wapda assets was ‘not so simple keeping in view the current global sentiments about Pakistan’. In other words who would want to buy futures in a trio of clapped-out dams that any financial analyst worth their salt would consider past their sell-by date anyway? Tenuous as it is, any plan is better than no plan and it is to be finalised within six months. Simply put, we cannot afford that this project fails. But there are a range of ‘if’s’ before it that must be satisfied before it is fully secure.

“Dams, Plan ‘B’”, 20/08/2012, online at: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-127526-Dams-Plan-B>

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Water Deficit May Cause New War In Asia

The Middle East is making preparations for the import of drinking water from South America. That is why it is working hastily to create strategic reserves of drinking water. India and Pakistan may enter into a new conflict over water. Experts warn that the water deficit in Asia may trigger new wars there.

Iran is constantly threatening to overlap the Strait of Hormuz, which is associated, in the first place, with a world oil collapse. Meanwhile, for a number of monarchies of the Persian Gulf area this threat means a lack of fresh water. The greater part of fresh water consumed in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is imported through the Strait of Hormuz. Thus, these countries are drawing up various plans in order not to find themselves in a water blockade. For example, the United Arab Emirates plans to take water from the glacier drains of Patagonia in South America, south of the Rio Negro River and the Limay River. The UAE officials have already visited the glaciers in Chile.

During the first Persian Gulf war the troops of Saddam Hussein delivered a strike on the water treatment plants. There is a danger today that the same thing may occur in case of a conflict in the Strait of Hormuz. Therefore, efforts are currently being made to draft a project for the establishment of a single pipeline network that would link the water-freshening plans and that would replace the water-supply network in case they are damaged. It has also become known that Qatar plans to invest about \$3 billion in the construction of reservoirs, where the water reserve will be kept for one week. The UAE is considering similar plans.

It is clear that an acute water deficit may prove a decisive argument for using arms to quench the thirst of millions of people.

The situation in South and South East Asia is even more acute. As it appears, some countries there are ready to enter into a fight for rivers. India and Pakistan, countries that have already fought against each other 3 times, have found themselves on the verge of a new conflict for water resources. Islamabad accuses Delhi of “water terrorism” over the construction of a hydro-electric power plant

on the trans-border river involving the two countries, saying that India wants to deprive Pakistan of the water meant for irrigation and thus, to undermine its economy.

Meanwhile, China is ready to give India a symmetrical answer. Its hydro-energy projects in Brahmaputra and on other rivers in Tibet are aimed at depriving millions of Indian peasants of water. Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand are facing a similar problem, an expert with Moscow Humanitarian University, Dmitry Kosyakov, said in an interview with the Voice of Russia.

"Conflicts around fresh water in those regions, taking into account the rapid population and economic growth, and also water consumption, are becoming serious factors for the worsening of situation there. As it appears, serious international efforts are needed to promulgate a water right law there."

In conclusion, we would like to mention here that Asia that has achieved impressive prosperity in the past two decades is now one of the world's most dynamic regions. Which means that it will be able to find an adequate answer to the challenge to the security and well-being of the Asian countries.

"Water Deficit May Cause New War In Asia", 24/08/2012, online at: http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_08_24/Water-Deficit-May-Cause-New-War-In-Asia/

❖ Bangladesh to trial weather index-based crop insurance

DHAKA (AlertNet) - Bangladesh is planning to introduce crop insurance based on a weather index to reduce farmers' economic vulnerability to shifting climate patterns and extreme weather events.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is helping the South Asian country develop the new insurance scheme. The bank considers climate change and weather variability as a big challenge for the country's agricultural sector.

Similar insurance products have been launched in East Africa, India and other parts of Asia, but their impact is still being monitored.

In a document submitted to Dhaka, the ADB describes index-based insurance as an innovative tool to boost the ability of rural farm households to adapt to changing climatic conditions.

"The insurance policy will link possible insurance payouts with an index calibrated with the weather needs of the crops being insured," the ADB report says.

Unlike regular crop insurance, policies based on a weather index assess the likelihood of crop failures based on forecasting. Premiums will be higher if crops are projected to be at risk of failure, and lower if they are not.

Bangladesh has some 7.5 million hectares (18.5 million acres) of arable land, according to the World Bank, but this is declining by around 1 percent each year due to river erosion, urbanisation and other pressures from a growing population.

In many low-lying areas, farmers harvest only once a year, leaving their families exposed to hunger if a natural disaster destroys their crop. It has become commonplace for farmers to lose crops to drought, floods and salt intrusion, especially in coastal districts.

The new insurance programme goes beyond the government's existing disaster risk management measures, such as emergency relief and credit provision. It will benefit vulnerable groups least able to protect themselves against weather-related hazards aggravated by climate change, according to the ADB.

The bank also says index insurance avoids the weaknesses of traditional agricultural insurance, such as costly and time-consuming assessments of individual farms, and the risk of farmers making fraudulent claims.

Rezaul Karim, managing director of Sadharan Bima Corporation (SBC), a public insurer, said that, in most countries, crop insurance is economically unviable, and often requires government subsidies. SBC's own crop insurance product, introduced on a pilot basis in 1977, was eventually withdrawn in 1995.

“Our insurance policy had been incurring a 400 percent loss since claims consistently exceeded premiums,” Karim said.

EDUCATION TO REDUCE LOSSES

Following a workshop in July with interested organisations, the ADB is planning a pilot programme for index-based insurance in cooperation with SBC and one or two private insurers. Microfinance institutions, nongovernmental organisations and farmer cooperatives will act as the implementing partners on the ground.

Details, including the amount of land covered and premium levels, are still to be finalised. Karim said the government would subsidise half the cost of the insurance premiums, with the other half borne by farmers.

A controversial feature of the new policy is that it is not designed to cover the losses of individual farmers, but of crops across a specified region.

“If the crop of any area as a whole get destroyed or damaged due to the calamity, then farmers will get the loss covered. If (solely) the crop of any individual farmer is affected, he won't get the (compensation),” Karim said.

The SBC head acknowledged that this could discourage farmers from buying the policy, and may need to be reconsidered. But SBC, the ADB and their partners will monitor the insured areas closely to try and reduce the likelihood of crop losses as well as unjustified claims, he added.

“Farmers will also be educated with the ADB’s financial help so that they understand what to do in which weather pattern to save their crops,” Karim said.

AFFORDABLE PREMIUMS

Ainun Nishat, a climate change expert and vice chancellor of BRAC University, said that where insured risks are high, premiums will also be high - a problem that led to the failure of SBC’s earlier attempts at providing coverage.

“The success of weather index-based crop insurance will depend on the rate of the premium, the party who pays it, and government contributions,” Nishat said.

He recommended that premiums be kept very low so that farmers can afford them.

Atiq Rahman, executive director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, a non-profit institute for sustainable development, welcomed the new scheme.

“Such an insurance policy is necessary to save the farmers from crop loss when climate change has started biting,” he said.

But initiatives like this often fail at the implementation level, he cautioned.

“Before launching the programme, we have to analyse how much farmers can pay as premium and if they will be able to pay on a regular basis, since most of the farmers here are very poor,” he said.

“There should be a sincere approach, and benefits (for) farmers have to be ensured first,” he added.

“Bangladesh to trial weather index-based crop insurance”, 21/08/2012, online at:
http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/bangladesh-to-trial-weather-index-based-crop-insurance/?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=d19d986b6a-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Xayaburi hydro project on schedule, Energy Ministry says**

The Xayaburi hydropower project is on schedule to begin supplying electricity in 2019, as the Laotian government has given no written notice of its cancellation or postponement, said Norkun Sitthiphong, permanent secretary of the Thai Energy Ministry.

The Xayaburi hydropower project is on schedule to begin supplying electricity in 2019, as the Laotian government has given no written notice of its cancellation or postponement, said Norkun Sitthiphong, permanent secretary of the Thai Energy Ministry.

He confirmed this after confusing reports in the past few months over the progress of the project.

Laos said it would update neighbouring countries, which are concerned about environmental impacts along the Mekong River, on the progress of the project and heed their advice. But Vietnamese officials said they had not received any such information.

On August 7, conservationists and residents from eight Thai provinces along the Mekong River lodged a petition with the Administrative Court against the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat), the Energy Ministry and the Cabinet over their involvement with the Xayaburi dam. Much of the 1,285 megawatts of power from the US\$3.8billion (Bt127billion) project will be sold to Thailand, as part of the country's revised Power Development Plan (PDP 2010).

Norkun said yesterday that the ministry had not been notified in writing by the Laotian government of cancellation or postponement of the project. He also expressed confidence that the power feed would begin on schedule, around October 2019.

"The Xayaburi power plant plays a crucial role in Thailand's power development. Aside from reasonable prices, hydropower also helps Thailand reduce its dependence on natural gas for power generation," he said.

He said the power purchase agreement signed by Egat and the developer had been approved by the Mekong River Commission (MRC), as required by the National Energy Policy Council. It was also

screened by the Office of the Attorney General and disclosed to the public. He expects the project developer to clear up any further doubts.

The project is being developed by Xayaburi Power, which is 50 per cent owned by Ch Karnchang, 12.5 per cent by Electricity Generating (Egco Group), 25 per cent by Natee Synergy, 7 per cent by Bangkok Expressway, and 5 per cent by PT Construction and Irrigation. Natee Synergy is a subsidiary owned by PTT International. Ch Karnchang on April 17 signed a \$2.4 billion contract with Xayaburi Power.

Sahust Pratuknukul, president of Egco Group, said construction of the project had kicked off and his company had put in its investment. However, the construction work so far has focused on inland infrastructure such as roads, not yet reaching the Mekong River.

He said he was confident that the project would be ready for commercial operation in 2019 and that Xayaburi Power could clear up any points of concern.

Under the 29-year power purchase contract, Egat will pay a fixed price for electricity. The average price of Bt2.16 per kilowatt-hour throughout the period at the border point of sale is lower than the Bt2.90 per kilowatt-hour for power from a coal-fired plant and Bt4.30 from a gas-fired plant.

On advice from the MRC, the Laotian government in May decided to suspend construction on the Mekong but allowed inland work.

“Xayaburi hydro project on schedule, Energy Ministry says”, 24/08/2012, online at:

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Xayaburi-hydro-project-on-schedule-Energy-Ministry-30189040.html>

BACK TO TOP

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❖ **Xayaburi Construction Restarts, Laos Suspension Claims Denied by Thai Developers**

vientiane, laos — Work has started up again on a controversial \$3.5 billion USD dam across the Mekong River in Laos, the project's Thai developer said yesterday, despite Laotian claims it had been paused after complaints about its ecological footprint.

In December, Laos agreed to shelve the Xayaburi Dam project, and the country said on July 13 that work had stopped after neighbors Cambodia and Vietnam reiterated concerns that the 1,285-megawatt dam would harm migratory fish and the welfare of downstream villages.

"We are still working on the project. We haven't received a formal letter from the Lao government that we should suspend or put the project on hold," Plew Trivisvavet, Chief Executive Officer at Thailand's Ch Karnchang Pcl, was quoted by various news sources on August 16 as saying.

Laos' government made no immediate comment.

If it goes ahead, the Xayaburi Dam will be the first along the main arm of the Mekong in Southeast Asia. The dam is at the core of landlocked Laos' plan to become Southeast Asia's hydropower battery, with Thailand the main energy client.

Activists fear that the dam could lay the groundwork for more dams across the Mekong.

At the start of August, the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia urged Thailand and Laos to scrap the agreement for Thailand to buy power generated by the Xayaburi Dam.

In a letter to Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra dated July 27, the activists asked the two nations to order Ch. Karnchang, the Thai company building the dam, to end construction at the site until a study of the project's impact on the environment was completed.

Another letter was also sent to Lao Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong.

The group said the leaders should await the results of a Mekong River Commission study. The study will scrutinize the trans-boundary impact of the Mekong mainstream dams, including their impact on communities along the river from Laos to Vietnam's Mekong Delta.

Thai villagers from eight Mekong provinces have threatened to take the government to court over the dam.

On July 10, during a trip to the region, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pressed the Laotian government to carry out more studies on the controversial Xayaburi Dam project.

"By proceeding with resettlement and construction on the Xayaburi Dam, Ch. Karnchang has blatantly defied the diplomatic process under way to decide on the future of the Mekong River," said Ame Trandem, Southeast Asia Program Director for International Rivers.

Laos casts Xayaburi as a clean, green energy model that will breathe life into its tiny \$6 billion USD economy and improve the lives of its 6 million people, over a quarter of whom live below the poverty line, many without electricity.

The Bangkok Post reported on August 16 that Ch. Karnchang was also considering new projects in Myanmar and Vietnam.

"Xayaburi Construction Restarts, Laos Suspension Claims Denied by Thai Developers", 17/08/2012, online at: <http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/xayaburi-construction-restarts-laos-suspension-claims-denied-thai-developers> 23

BACK TO TOP

❖ Gauging the Impact of Warming On Asia's Life-Giving Monsoons

In Mongolia, U.S. scientists are studying climate clues in ancient tree rings to help answer a crucial question: How will global warming affect Asia's monsoon rains, which supply water for agriculture and drinking to half the world's population?

by christina larson

Bouncing along bad roads in a jeep through central Mongolia, with bright blue skies and high clouds overhead, we drive for miles through a treeless landscape, passing only dry grasslands dotted with cattle and white yurts. But as we head north — myself, two U.S. scientists, and one Mongolian forestry expert — we begin to notice Siberian pine and larch growing on the northern slopes of rolling hills, but not the southern slopes, and at some elevations, but not others. In water-scarce Mongolia, as my travel companion Neil Pederson of Columbia University's [Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory](#) explained, the precarious growth of trees is limited by temperature and moisture availability; small variations — northern slopes are slightly cooler and wetter — can make all the difference.

Our destination is a 30-square-kilometer lava field in north central Mongolia, where a volcano oozed magma some 7,000 years ago. The pockmarked black surface looks like a moonscape, with only a few scraggly trees and dry deadwood littering the ground. But this is precisely what has brought Pederson and his colleagues to Mongolia since 1995 — the ability to sample long-lived, slowly decaying trees, some dating back more than 1,300 years. By examining ancient tree rings, Pederson and a research partner at West Virginia University, Amy Hessler, can glean information about historic rainfall patterns, as pines grow more in wet years.

By piecing together this data, Pederson and other scientists from Lamont-Doherty hope to shed light on a vital question: How will climate change affect Asia's life-sustaining monsoons, which control the seasonal

Recent evidence suggests monsoons are weakening, whereas climate models predict strengthening. alternation of wet and dry periods over a region home to roughly half the world's population?

Similar expeditions to gather tree-ring samples in more than a dozen countries throughout Asia — including China, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, and Indonesia — fuel an ambitious database at the Earth Observatory called the Monsoon Asia Drought Atlas, which was rolled out with [a 2010 article in Science](#).

The atlas provides researchers and climate modelers a detailed set of past precipitation records across Asia, useful both for mapping the duration and extent of past droughts and weather anomalies, and for providing an analogue against which climate modelers can test their algorithms. Forecasting how

global warming might affect Asia's monsoons — vital to agriculture and drinking water supplies from Pakistan to Japan — is exceedingly complex, in part because so many variables are involved, including rising ocean temperatures, increasing amounts of pollution in the atmosphere, and fluctuating weather phenomena such as El Nino.

Two maps depict severe Asian droughts. In both cases, the droughts were associated with strong El Nino events.

“Most recent evidence suggests that the strength of the monsoon is weakening, whereas climate models tend to predict that it should be strengthening,” says Lamont-Doherty's Kevin Anchukaitis, pinpointing one of the quandaries that climate scientists are now grappling with. “One of our goals [with the atlas] is to try to understand better what controls the strength of the monsoons on longer time scales, so that we can differentiate natural variability from the influence of human activity and greenhouse gases.”

The challenges of forecasting how Asia's monsoon patterns may change reflect a larger problem of understanding future climate change across different parts of the globe.

“We understand much better how global mean variables are going to change than what changes will look like regionally,” says Hai Cheng, a geologist and paleoclimatologist at the University of Minnesota, who is not directly involved in the atlas project. In explaining the utility of long-term historical data sets, he says: “One fundamental test for any climate model is: Can it replicate what happened in the past? If it can't, how can you have confidence in your model to predict the future?”

The quest for long-term proxy records of past precipitation, against which future climate models can be checked, is what has brought the Lamont-Doherty researchers to the Mongolian lava field.

A dead Siberian pine, many hundreds of years old.

“We're looking for trees with minimal bark, lots of weathering, and a bulbous base,” Pederson said, scrambling over black lava to inspect deadwood. Although the scientists won't be able to date tree-ring samples until they're back in the lab, certain visual clues indicate which trees, standing or fallen, might be the oldest and the most promising to examine. Putting on noise-muting headphones, Pederson waves for me to stand back, then wields a chainsaw to cut a cross-section of a dead Siberian pine laying on the ground. Back in the lab, he'll sand it down to a fine grain and examine the rings under a microscope.

Meanwhile Anchukaitis is knocking lightly on a standing tree. “You tell by the sound if it's decayed and hollow inside,” which would make tree rings difficult to recover and study. Judging this larch a good candidate, he uses a tree corer to extract a cylindrical sample approximately the width of a pencil. He slips it into a drinking straw, which doubles as a sheath to store the tree cores in the field.

“If you have a large enough network of tree-ring chronologies, you can see the spatial expression of the past climate [and] the scope of past droughts,” says Anchukaitis.

Mongolia is an important research location, on the outer edges of the monsoon rain belt. But the most populous countries to be affected by changes in monsoon patterns are India and China.

Most climate models forecast that monsoon rains will become heavier as the world warms, in part because of a basic law of physics: As air warms, it is able to retain more moisture. “For each 1 degree C increase in global

‘Livelihoods, water security, and energy security are all tied to the volume and timely arrival of monsoon season,’ says one scientist.

mean temperature, you could expect about a 7-percent increase in water vapor in the air,” explains [William Boos](#), an assistant professor of geology and geophysics at Yale University.

Krishna Kumar Kanikicharla is a scientist at the [Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology](#) and a coordinating lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s working group on Future Regional Climate Change. His laboratory is involved in creating projections for how the South Asian monsoon will be impacted by climate change.

“Assuming a projected 2-degree C temperature rise by mid century, we anticipate that the monsoon winds may decrease, but rainfall will increase, by about 8 to 10 percent in volume,” Kanikicharla said via Skype from Pune, India, which is now experiencing its summer monsoon rains. (Seventy to 80 percent of annual rainfall throughout India falls between the months of June and September.) Meanwhile the duration of the rainy season in India may shorten, from an average of 60 days of heavy rain today, to about 40 to 50 days in the future, Kanikicharla said.

“This means we expect that there will be heavier rainfall on fewer days,” he said, with implications for flood management as well as storing water for future use. “Also, the variability of monsoon rainfall is likely to increase in the future... this could lead to both more floods and more droughts.”

Researcher Kevin Anchukaitis uses a coring device to sample a tree ring in central Mongolia.

In a country where more than half of the population works in agriculture, Kanikicharla was quick to point out how the monsoon rains dictate the rhythms of life: “Livelihoods, water security, and energy security are all tied to volume and timely arrival of monsoon season.”

In the past several years, the monsoons have confounded modeling and actually brought less rain to India and other regions. The total volume of rain is down more than 20 percent in India this year, Kanikicharla said, adding “It’s going to be a tough year for India ... Great uncertainties exist.”

One reason the monsoons are not behaving as predicted may be the vast amounts of pollution and black carbon — from such sources as cooking fires and diesel exhaust — being spewed into the atmosphere from booming economies in China, India, and other parts of Asia. A paper published this summer in *Nature Climate Change* said such pollution higher in the atmosphere can reflect solar radiation back into space, reducing surface warming that would be expected to lead to wetter weather. But the study's authors said many questions remain unanswered, noting that black carbon particles can have other effects — including absorbing heat in the atmosphere — that can influence monsoons.

China is currently experiencing a variety of impacts from the monsoon, ranging from an extended drought in southern China to a heavy monsoon season this year in northern China. Although the three regional monsoon systems — the South Asian monsoon, the East Asian subtropical monsoon, and the Southeast Asian/Pacific tropical monsoon — are shaped partly by land-ocean temperature differences, Weihong Qian, a professor at the Monsoon and Environment Research Group at Peking University, expects climate change to have a somewhat different impact on the monsoons over India and China: “The South Asian monsoon will change only in its intensity, while the rainfall zone of the East Asian monsoon will advance northward.”

Bin Wang, professor of meteorology at the University of Hawaii, was visiting Lanzhou, China this summer to conduct fieldwork. He offered a similar assessment: “In general, recent model results point to a consensus that Asian monsoon rainfall will increase, in particular in East Asian sectors — in northern China and Mongolia and parts of Russia, Korea, and Japan. Also, the monsoon in terms of geographic scope will extend a little bit westward and northward. Moist air will penetrate into land area more than before.”

If so, that might sound like welcome news to shepherds in Mongolia in search of greener pastures. But Wang also cautioned about the extent to which scientists are still fine-tuning models of the monsoon: “Study of the past can help to understand future change,” he said. “But we still have to be careful in evaluating all the different forces acting on the climate system.”

“Gauging the Impact of Warming On Asia’s Life-Giving Monsoons”, 20/08/2012, online at:

http://e360.yale.edu/feature/gauging_impact_of_global_warming_on_asia_monsoon_season/2563/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+YaleEnvironment360+%28Yale+Environment+360%29&utm_content=Google+Reader&utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=d19d986b6a-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Scholars Speak on Water Governance in the Middle East and Southeast Asia

The seminar on “Water Management in the Middle East and Southeast Asia: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities” organized by MEI last month brought together leading experts on water issues. In examining the various water governance policies across both regions, Yemen and Singapore were the focus of discussions by panelists Abdulrahman al-Eryani, former Yemeni Minister of Water and Environment; Dr. Cecilia Tortajada, President of the Third World Center for Water Management in Mexico; and Professor Asit K. Biswas, founder and former President of the Third World Center for Water Management in Mexico.

Sharing his experience as Minister of Water and Environment from 2006 to 2011, **Mr. Abdulrahman al-Eryani** sees the advent of integrated rural development projects in the 1970s as a cause of deteriorating water conditions in Yemen. With new technologies, flood irrigation using groundwater pumped from wells dominated the agricultural scene. Instead of keeping groundwater as a “community-managed resource,” through this system groundwater became an open access resource. Unmitigated groundwater pumping led to a “misuse of resources” with only 30-35 percent efficiency. He cautioned that unsustainable withdrawal rates threaten not only the agricultural sector but also the nation. Sixty percent of all conflicts in Yemen are water-related, and “almost all cities in Yemen are facing a chronic shortage of drinking water.” A possible solution that al-Eryani proposed is the “cooperative management approach,” in which stakeholders such as water user associations become responsible for water resources with appropriate support for self-management and self-regulation at the local level.

Singapore similarly strives to meet ever-increasing per capita water consumption, which has increased from 751/liters per person/day in 1965 to 1531/liters per person/day in 2011. **Dr. Cecilia Tortajada** highlighted that careful management of water resources has always been a priority for the Singapore government. Such management has produced policies that have consistently aimed to increase supply and encourage conservation so as to reduce dependency on foreign water sources. The four national taps in Singapore include water from 1) Johor via the Long-term Water Agreement with Malaysia signed in 1961 and 1962 that enables Singapore to transfer water from Johor at a “price of less than one cent per 1,000 gallons until the years 2011 and 2061, respectively; 2) water catchment areas that have increased from 11 percent of the land in 1965 to 67 percent of the land in

2011; 3) NEWater plants whose capacity amounts to 117 million gallons/day; and 4) a desalination plant that supplies 30 million gallons/day. The “think ahead, think again, and think across philosophy,” according to Tortajada, can be seen in the plans of Singapore’s Public Utilities Board, such as the ABC (Active, Beautiful, Clean) program, which recently developed a network of waterways comprising 17 reservoirs, 32 major rivers, and 7,000 km of canals and drains.

Professor Asit K. Biswas attributed the success of Singapore’s water governance to the state’s effective demand regulation via the water pricing structure. Both the tariff and the water-conservation tax for domestic users increase after the first 40 cubic meters used in a month. Noting that water is an important component of sustainable development, Biswas listed three important factors to consider regarding water sustainability: 1) population numbers; 2) time period; and 3) type and level of governance—which he feels is the most important factor. Biswas believes that the water crisis is “not a scarcity problem,” as water is “not like matter [that] disappears [or] disintegrates.” Despite being polluted, water can be treated and reused. With better management practices, Biswas said that he sees no reason why water can’t be increased in terms of its reuse. According to current studies, every drop of water has already been reused seven times.

“Scholars Speak on Water Governance in the Middle East and Southeast Asia”, online at:

<http://www.mei.nus.edu.sg/blog/scholars-speak-on-water-governance-in-the-middle-east-and-southeast-asia>

BACK TO TOP

❖ **UN calls on nations to adopt drought policies**

GENEVA—The world urgently needs to adopt drought-management policies as farmers from Africa to India struggle with lack of rainfall and the United States endures the worst drought it has experienced in decades, top officials with the U.N. weather agency said Tuesday.

The World Meteorological Organization says the U.S. drought and its ripple effects on global food markets show the need for policies with more water conservation and less consumption. It is summoning ministers and other high-level officials to a March meeting in Geneva where it will call for systematic measures toward less water consumption and more conservation.

U.S. farmers have experienced one of their worst growing seasons in memory. The annual corn harvest, for example, is much farther along than it ordinarily would be and expected to produce the least amount of corn since 2006—despite the most acres of corn planted in more than 70 years—due to unusual triple-digit summer temperatures that disrupted pollination and a severe drought particularly in the middle of the country.

"Climate change is projected to increase the frequency, intensity, and duration of droughts, with impacts on many sectors, in particular food, water, health and energy," WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said. "We need to move away from a piecemeal, crisis-driven approach and develop integrated risk-based national drought policies."

Mannava V.K. Sivakumar, director of WMO's climate prediction and adaptation branch, says only Australia has a national policy toward drought and the advantage of a policy—rather than a disaster management, which some countries have—is that national action is required no matter who is in political power.

Australia's government says its 2004 policy is no longer sufficient to deal with climate change, however, and over the past two years it has tried a pilot program in western parts of the country aimed at shifting from a crisis-oriented approach to risk management.

Sivakumar said the agency is also encouraging more continuing support especially for "the poorest of the poor," small farmers whose daily wages determine whether they and their families will eat on any given day.

Another idea whose time has come, he said, is so-called water harvesting, which is the collection of surface runoff. It is the precipitation often lost among farming regions in semi-arid places with irregular rainfall that can't afford expensive irrigation systems. It also causes soil erosion, but if the rainfall is collected it can be stored for later use.

"Those are the sort of people that need to be addressed," Sivakumar told reporters in Geneva. "One of the major issues is coordination."

The WMO says severe drought developed in parts of East Africa in late 2010 and continued through most of last year, with the worst-affected areas the semi-arid regions of eastern and northern Kenya, western Somalia and some southern border areas of Ethiopia. Elsewhere, it says, the most significant drought of 2011 was in south-central U.S. states and bordering areas of northern Mexico.

In India, there has been insufficient rainfall in half of the country's 624 districts despite the monsoon season that began in early June, and total average seasonal rainfall starting then through August 1 came in below the 90 percent average that is the cut-off line for defining drought.

U.S. officials say about two-thirds of the contiguous United States has been suffering from moderate to exceptional drought this summer, with the extreme dryness and excessive heat killing crops and livestock from the Great Plains to the Midwest.

The U.S. drought monitoring map that produced the figures, WMO officials say, is an example of a tool that most other countries should have but don't.

"UN calls on nations to adopt drought policies", 21/08/2012, online at: http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_21361103/un-calls-nations-adopt-drought-policies

BACK TO TOP

❖ Drought Slashes Kazakhstan Grain Output

ASTANA ([Business New Europe](#)) — A severe drought will slash Kazakhstan's 2012 grain harvest to around half the record 26.9m tonnes gathered in 2011, slashing agricultural revenues at a time when the economy is already anticipating a hit from the global economic downturn. The news is especially worrying for the smaller Central Asian republics, which rely on Kazakh grain imports and have already seen an increase in food prices. Kazakhstan expects to harvest just 12.8m tonnes of grain – well below the average of the last decade – this year after drought damaged crops in the northern grain belt. Worst affected is the northeastern Kostanai region, where just 18% of crops are in good condition, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, although the other main grain producing regions have also seen a high level of crop damage. Kazakhstan does, however, expect to be able to maintain exports at around 12m tonnes in the 2012-13 marketing year, thanks to a surplus left over from the record 2011 harvest.

“Drought Slashes Kazakhstan Grain Output”, 21/08/2012, online at: http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/drought-slashes-kazakhstan-grain-output_23971

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Less dependence on Middle East energy to impact geopolitics: national security advisor**

NEW DELHI: The US' "independence" of West Asia's energy in the coming years would have geopolitical consequences for India, said national security adviser [Shivshankar Menon](#). With the US becoming an energy major in its own right, it is likely to reduce its dependence on oil from West Asia. That will have its own effect on the politics of this region.

Giving the keynote address at the Council for Energy, Environment and Water, Menon said new sources of energy—shale oil, shale gas, and what is known as "tight" oil or "unconventional" oil—have also changed the energy balance in the world. This has its own effect on global energy supplies as well as the geopolitics of energy.

"The Middle East now counts for less sources of energy," he said. In a way, he said, this has made it easier for the world to "afford" the present West Asia crisis. The energy crisis that had been predicted as an accompaniment to the so-called "Arab Spring" and the impasse over Iran's nuclear programme has not happened. Instead, if all energy sources are activated, the world could even look at a 1980s-style energy glut. As the earth comprises more water, the challenge is not of it drying up, but how we can desalinate it for use, he further said.

Therefore, he said, water was more an energy challenge and the world overstates the security case for water.

Going forward, the NSA said, if we rank the instruments of state power, nuclear weapons are the least usable, followed by military power. Instead, access and control of energy, resources, social media, even the ability to carry through sanctions as a result of overwhelming economic power — these are the real tools for modern states.

"Less dependence on Middle East energy to impact geopolitics: national security advisor", 25/08/2012, online at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Less-dependence-on-Middle-East-energy-to-impact-geopolitics-national-security-advisor/articleshow/15653699.cms>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Tajik President's Visit Disrupts Donkey Delivery Service in Kulob

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan — Residents of Kulob, the third largest city in Tajikistan, were asked to stop use donkeys to bring water home during native son President Emomali Rakhmon's visit last week.

Some city residents go without regular water supply for days at a time, and are forced to use donkeys and carts to carry jugs to and from wells. Municipal lawmakers and local activists asked residents to keep their donkeys at home when Rakhmon visited Kulob.

We were told not to appear on the road, not to appear with our donkeys and carts," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty quoted Farishtom Kamolova, a resident of Kulob, as saying. "But is it possible to get along without water in such heat? We don't have water for some days and so we are forced to store it or bring it from far away. "

Zaynura Musoyeva, who also lives in Kulob, noted that residents have had problems with drinking water for some years.

"In winter, we have water, but when it becomes warmer it seems to vanish. We are forced to bring it from other districts, which have water," she said.

The World Bank allocated more than \$3.5 million USD to rehabilitate the water supply system in Kulob two years ago. Chief Engineer of the city's water utility Safar Mardonov emphasized that the problem with drinking water has mostly been resolved, and only some districts are facing problems now.

"Today, demand for drinking water is 39,000 cubic meters [a day]. We supply 50,000 cubic meters of water. In the last few years, there were big losses and irrational use of water, particularly [water] used for watering kitchen gardens. There were problems with pipes. But after the World Bank financing, we repaired everything. Now losses decreased by 20 percent and problems with water supply have been solved to some extent," Mardonov said.

Kulob, which is located in Khatlon province in southwestern Tajikistan, has a population of 150,000. The water and wastewater systems in Kulob were built in the 1970s.

"Tajik President's Visit Disrupts Donkey Delivery Service in Kulob", 21/08/2012, online at:

http://www.ooskanews.com/daily-water-briefing/tajik-president-s-visit-disrupts-donkey-delivery-service-kulob_23953

BACK TO TOP

❖ UN fund could ease route to 2015 global climate deal

LONDON, Aug 20 (Reuters Point Carbon) - Board members of the U.N's Green Climate Fund (GCF) must rise above politics when they meet for the first time later this week to help channel \$100 billion a year towards the world's poorest nations to fight the catastrophic effects of rising temperatures, and to act as a springboard to a global climate deal in 2015.

After a five-month delay board members of the U.N.'s GCF will finally take their seats on Aug. 23 to begin thrashing out details on how the fund will operate, where it will be located and how it will dole out cash.

"The role of the fund is extremely important. It has to show the world it is looking beyond the political bickerings of the UNFCCC," said Farrukh Khan, an alternate member of the board representing Pakistan.

U.N. climate negotiations have for years been marred by a lack of trust, with rich and poor countries trading accusations over broken promises while global greenhouse gas emissions rise.

The creation of the fund was hailed as one success to come out of U.N. climate talks in Cancun in 2010, but disagreements among regional groups of countries about who should sit on its governing panel three times delayed the first board meeting this year.

"We need to build confidence in developed, developing countries and the private sector to show that the Fund is in good hands," Khan said.

At last year's high level climate talks in Durban negotiators agreed to work towards an international pact to cut emissions in both developed and developing countries to be formalised by 2015 and to start no later than 2020.

But progress was limited at an interim meeting in Bonn, Germany in May, with several developing countries accused by richer states of blocking the negotiations and others demanding more cash pledges before they agree to speed work on issues such as designing new types of carbon markets.

A well functioning fund operating by 2014 could help grease the wheels of the global deal, said Abyd Karmali, global head of carbon markets at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, who is a private sector observer at this week's meeting.

"It will be important for there to be significant progress with the fund by then (2014) so it does not become a reason not to have an agreement by 2015," he said.

FUNDING

Rich nations have pledged to give \$30 billion to help developing countries tackle climate change over 2010-2012, but last year's U.N. climate talks failed to make solid progress on sources of finance for the GCF beyond this year, while the global economic crisis has left countries reluctant to commit new cash.

"We are massively concerned about the (funding) gap," said Meera Ghani, senior policy officer for climate finance at green coalition CAN Europe.

"We as NGOs are asking for rich countries to pledge at least \$10-15 billion in new and additional public finance from now until 2015 as part of the overall 2013-15 finance package. If countries don't put any money in there won't be anything to disperse."

Pakistan's Khan said direct sources of funding are unlikely to be discussed in detail at this week's meeting.

"It is not up to the board to decide where the sums for the fund will come from. The job of the board is to create the tools that can be used to galvanise it," he said.

The board will establish rules for who will distribute the cash, and how closely the spending will be monitored.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

One of the key issues for the first meeting will be to select the fund's host country.

"The six candidates have been known for some time; our expectation is that the board may well be in a position to decide on this next week," Karmali said.

Germany, Mexico, Namibia, Poland, South Korea and Switzerland have all made official requests to host the fund.

It is also expected that whichever country plays host to the fund will become one of its first contributors of cash.

"We were hoping countries would have made their pledges before the host country is decided as an argument to support their bid, but so far this has not happened with the exception of some seed money from Germany," Ghani said.

The board, made up of 48 members and alternates from across the globe will have one further meeting before this year's climate talks in Qatar, which is likely to take place in South Korea.

"UN fund could ease route to 2015 global climate deal", 20/08/2012, online at: http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/un-fund-could-ease-route-to-2015-global-climate-deal/?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=d19d986b6a-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

BACK TO TOP

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❖ Balkan drought highlights years of farm neglect

(Reuters) - As crops wilt and die in the Balkans, farmers struck down by a particularly harsh drought this year are ruing the region's failure to upgrade irrigation networks and invest in a long-term agricultural strategy.

Hot, dry weather in eastern and southern Europe has piled pressure on world grain markets already reeling from huge drought damage in the United States.

The toll in Bosnia, where surface soil temperatures in the south have hit 47 degrees Celsius (116 Fahrenheit), is estimated at almost \$1 billion - a huge blow to a country where the farming sector accounts for 20 percent of employment and about 10 percent of economic output.

The cost to neighboring Serbia, where agriculture last year accounted for about 12 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), is around \$2 billion, and up to \$250 million in Croatia, where yields have also been halved.

"It's a disaster," said Zoltan Pinkert, a farmer in the fertile flatlands of Baranja in north-east Croatia. "Everything was top-notch, and then the drought came. We've had less than 10 percent of the rain compared to normal years, and the damage to corn crops is 100 percent."

The region is no stranger to drought and farmers usually get by until the next growing season.

But producers in Bosnia say things have not been so bad since the end of the country's 1992-95 war and are threatening to block major roads and border crossings from early September unless the government pays outstanding subsidies and acts to protect domestic production.

The future looks bleak. Cash-strapped governments in the region, all facing recession, say the money is not there to invest in modern farming methods.

The former Yugoslavia is still plagued by weak governance and a tradition of wholesale change in policy and personnel with each change of government, impeding the creation of a long-term strategy to develop farming.

Bosnia does not have an agriculture ministry at the state level but only at the level of its two autonomous regions - the Muslim-Croat federation and the Serb Republic.

CORN "AS RARE AS GOLD"

Policy-making is hostage to a complex system of power-sharing since the war, based on ethnic quotas, slowing the adoption of myriad laws and regulations needed for the country to catch up with the European mainstream.

This institutional inertia already threatens to deprive Bosnia of its main export market for milk and meat in Croatia when Zagreb joins the EU next year.

Critics argue the problem has been years in the making. "We are paying for the lack of systematic agricultural policy over the past 20 or even 50 years," said Damir Kovacic, agricultural marketing lecturer at Zagreb University. "We're always surprised when the drought hits in the summer," he said.

The World Bank, which in May approved a \$40 million loan to improve the irrigation system in Bosnia, said the countries of the Balkans had huge agricultural potential, but lacked the infrastructure and strategy.

"Former Yugoslavia used to have one of the most advanced irrigation and drainage systems," said Holger Kray, the World Bank's lead officer for agriculture and rural development in Europe and Central Asia.

"Unfortunately, these systems have degraded, eroded," Kray told Reuters by telephone from Washington. "This is not only about functional budgetary shortages but also frequent turnover in the management of these systems."

Mate Brlosic, head of the Croatian Agriculture Chamber, said corn would be "as rare as gold" in Croatia this year.

"The recovery will last several years for vineyards and orchards, and livestock farming will also feel the impact for years, due to lack of cattle food," he told Reuters on Monday.

"We've not had a clear agricultural strategy for 20 years. Regulations change with every change of power."

The difference upgraded farming methods can make is illustrated by a few green fields in Bosnia's breadbasket Kalesija region.

"We have used modern technology to improve the water regime in some fields and switched to a new animal feeding mix," Dzenadin Veispahic, general manager of the privately owned Spreca dairy farm, told Reuters.

Even then, the drought will cost the farm more than \$300,000 this year.

EMERGENCY REMEDIES

"We are on yellow alert regime when it comes to cattle watering," he said, meaning the farm was negotiating with local authorities to tap river water and enlist the help of the fire brigade.

Vladimir Usorac, head of the farmers' association in Bosnia's Serb Republic, said the effects of bad harvests were cumulative. "This is the fourth consecutive year that agriculture has suffered enormous losses because of bad weather, and many producers will not have the means to start the production cycle next year," he said.

Experts estimate it would cost about \$2.5 billion to overhaul irrigation networks in Serbia, the biggest agricultural producer in the former Yugoslavia.

But there is little sign of such a long-term strategy emerging. The focus, instead, is on emergency remedies.

In Serbia, where the corn yield is expected to be half the projected 7 million metric tons, trade officials last week called on the government to ban the export of grain, in particular corn, soybean, sunflower seed and wheat.

Such a move would spell additional uncertainty for regional markets, particularly Bosnia, which have traditionally relied on Serbia in the event of shortages.

Croatian unions want tax on food cut so producers are not priced out of the market, but the government is resisting.

Agriculture Minister Tihomir Jakovina said the Croatian government was considering a partial lifting of fees on the lease of agricultural land and increasing customs fees on exports of grain and corn to avoid shortages.

The only glimmer of hope for Croatia is the EU funds that will become available when it becomes the bloc's 28th member in July next year, money that could be invested in a long-term strategy to revive farming.

Deputy Prime Minister Radimir Cacic has compared the country's approach to agriculture to that of "primitive tribes".

"If there is rain, there will be crops, there will be electricity," he said in the run-up to last year's election. "If there is drought, there'll be nothing. This has to change."

(Additional reporting by Zoran Radosavljevic in Zagreb and Matt Robinson in Belgrade; Editing by Matt Robinson and Pravin Char)

"Balkan drought highlights years of farm neglect", 20/08/2012, online at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/20/us-balkans-drought-idUSBRE87J0MX20120820?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=d19d986b6a-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

BACK TO TOP

❖ **DC officials want tap water at inauguration**

WASHINGTON (AP) - Officials in the District of Columbia are asking Congress to serve tap water instead of bottled water at the presidential inauguration.

The general manager of the district's water authority, George S. Hawkins, made the plea Thursday in a letter to U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, a Democrat from New York. The letter says tap water is a penny a gallon, while bottled water costs 100 times more. Schumer announced this month that New York-based Saratoga Springs Water will supply water for the inauguration.

Bottled water opponents say that in addition to the waste created by disposable bottles, trucking in bottled water also creates pollution.

Hawkins says that if bottled water is served, the authority is willing to provide reusable water bottles to members of Congress.

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“DC officials want tap water at inauguration”, 23/08/2012, online at: <http://www.kswo.com/story/19353924/dc-officials-want-tap-water-at-inauguration>

BACK TO TOP