



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

Events-News-Politics-Projects-Environment-ClimateChange-Neighbourhoods-Cooperation-Disputes-Scarcity and more



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

07 March –13 April 2014

- ❖ **Iraq insurgents use water as weapon after seizing dam**
- ❖ **Iraq Anti-government Fighters Block Euphrates**
- ❖ **Iraq's ruling bloc backs PM in 'fight against terror'**
- ❖ **Minister of Water Resources: Four gates of Fallujah Dam opened by insurgents in Fallujah**
- ❖ **Iraqi army to retake Fallujah dam: MP**
- ❖ **Asharq Al Awsat - Iraqi government forces say ISIS water supply sabotage foiled**
- ❖ **Nusayif calls UN, International Organizations to interfere in water crisis in Iraq**
- ❖ **Iran's Water Crisis Threatens its Future**
- ❖ **Dying Lake Urmia reflects a broader problem in Iran**
- ❖ **Cyprus opens sewage plant in rare cross-communal effort**
- ❖ **Tens of thousands of Palestinians without water for over a month**
- ❖ **Israel demolishes wells in Hebron**
- ❖ **Are Palestine peace talks dead in the water?**
- ❖ **EXCLUSIVE: Contrary to Claims, Palestinian Water Supply Vastly Improved Due to Israeli Support**
- ❖ **Passover, Water, and the Generosity of Israel**
- ❖ **Israel's IDE in Japan Talks to Build Floating Desalination Plant**
- ❖ **Lebanon works to preclude water shortage crisis**
- ❖ **Egyptian Officials Fear Economic, Environmental Loss From Ethiopian Dam Project**
- ❖ **Ethiopia Stepping Up Efforts To Show Dam's Benefits To Downstream Countries**
- ❖ **Church mediates Egypt-Ethiopia dispute over Renaissance Dam**
- ❖ **Egypt presidential hopeful sees Ethiopia, Twitter as potential enemies**
- ❖ **South Sudan conflict and Egypt's hydro politics**
- ❖ **Vision 2025 doesn't mention construction of Kalabagh Dam**

-
- ❖ **Mekong hydropower dams: Laos considering, Vietnam needs “quick reactions”**
 - ❖ **Mekong Summit Struggles to Halt Devastating Dams**
 - ❖ **Experts renew quake fears over Xayaburi dam on Mekong River in Laos**
 - ❖ **Hydroelectric dams are doing more harm than good to emerging economies**
 - ❖ **California drought puzzle: store or conserve more water?**
 - ❖ **Excessive benzene found in NW China tap water**

❖ Iraq insurgents use water as weapon after seizing dam

(Reuters) - Insurgents in Iraq have added water to their arsenal of weapons after seizing control of a dam in the west of the country that enables them to flood certain areas and prevent security forces from advancing against them.

The dam helps distribute water from the Euphrates river on its course through the western province of Anbar, and is located some 5 km south of the city of Falluja, which was overrun by militants early this year.

Iraqi troops have since been surrounding Falluja and shelling the city in an effort to dislodge anti-government tribes and insurgent factions including the Islamic State in [Iraq](#) and the Levant (ISIL).

In February, ISIL took control of the Nuaimiya area where the dam is located, and began fortifying their positions with concrete blast walls and sand bags, according to anti-government tribesmen who said no other groups were involved in the takeover.

The militants closed all eight of the dam's 10 gates one week ago, flooding land upstream and reducing water levels in Iraq's southern provinces, through which the Euphrates flows before emptying into the Gulf.

Anti-government tribal fighters said ISIL's tactic was to flood the area around the city to force troops to retreat and lift the siege on Falluja.

"Using water as a weapon in a fight to make people thirsty is a heinous crime," said Oun Dhiyab, a government adviser to the water ministry. "Closing the dam and messing with Euphrates water will have dire consequences."

By Thursday, militants had re-opened five of the dam's gates to relieve some pressure, fearing their strategy would backfire by flooding their own stronghold of Falluja, some 70 km (44 miles) west of Baghdad.

Iraqi security officials said flooding around the city had already forced many families to leave their homes and prevented troops from deploying or operating properly there in order to stop militants encroaching on the capital.

"They (ISIL) want to use the flood waters to make it difficult for the security forces to deploy in those areas and this is their chance to move the battle outside Falluja," said an anti-government tribal leader inside the city.

The Falluja dam is also key to a number of irrigation projects in the desert province of Anbar, which shares a border with [Syria](#).

In his weekly televised address, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who held off a full-on ground assault on Falluja, vowed to exact revenge from the militants for interfering with the water supply.

"The murderers took advantage of the government policy of utmost restraint in Falluja ... But it seems the situation has become more complicated and necessitates confrontation," Maliki said.

POWER SHORTAGES

Two army officers in Ramadi and Falluja said preparations were underway to launch a quick attack to regain control of the Falluja dam.

"We are carrying out aerial surveillance to spot militant positions near the dam," said one army officer whose regiment received orders to prepare for mobilising from Taji, to the north of Baghdad, to Falluja.

"A military operation could start very soon".

Iraq is a patchwork of desert and arable land. Its inhabitable areas are fed by the Tigris from [Turkey](#), the Euphrates from Turkey and [Syria](#), and a network of smaller rivers from [Iran](#).

The decline of water levels in the Euphrates has also led to electricity shortages in towns south of Baghdad, which rely on steam-powered generators that depend entirely on water levels.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Electricity said the power supply from Mussayab power station had decreased to 90 megawatts from 170 megawatts.

Government officials and advisers warned that ongoing closure of the dam could affect irrigation of farms in many southern provinces that depend on the Euphrates, including Hilla, Kerbala, Najaf and Diwaniya.

"Iraq is close to national elections and it seems they want to force the government into a corner," said one senior security official on condition of anonymity.

"Iraq insurgents use water as weapon after seizing dam", 11/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/11/us-iraq-security-idUSBREA3A0Q020140411>

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Iraq Anti-government Fighters Block Euphrates

Fighters in Iraq have added water to their arsenal of weapons after seizing control of a dam in the west of the country that enables them to flood certain areas and prevent government security forces from advancing against them.

The dam helps distribute water from the Euphrates River on its course through the western province of Anbar, and is located some 3 miles south of the city of Fallujah, which was overrun by anti-government fighters early this year.

Iraqi troops have since been surrounding Fallujah and shelling the city in an effort to [dislodge anti-government groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL\)](#).

Iraq is a patchwork of desert and arable land. Its inhabitable areas are fed by the Tigris from Turkey, the Euphrates from Turkey and Syria, and a network of smaller rivers from Iran.

The decline of water levels in the Euphrates has also led to electricity shortages in towns south of Baghdad, which rely on steam-powered generators that depend entirely on water levels.

A spokesman for the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity said the power supply from Mussayab power station had decreased to 90 megawatts from 170 megawatts.

Government officials and advisers warned that ongoing closure of the dam could affect irrigation of farms in many southern provinces that depend on the Euphrates, including Hilla, Kerbala, Najaf and Diwaniya.

"Iraq is close to national elections, and it seems they want to force the government into a corner," said one senior security official on condition of anonymity.

In February, ISIL took control of the Nuaimiya area where the dam is located and began fortifying their positions with concrete blast walls and sand bags, according to anti-government tribal groups who said ISIL claimed the dam on its own.

The ISIL closed all eight of the dam's 10 gates one week ago, flooding land upstream and reducing water levels in Iraq's southern provinces, through which the Euphrates flows before emptying into the Persian Gulf.

Anti-government fighters said ISIL's tactic was to flood the area around the city to force troops to retreat and lift the siege on Fallujah.

"Using water as a weapon in a fight to make people thirsty is a heinous crime," said Oun Dhiyab, a government adviser to the water ministry. "Closing the dam and messing with Euphrates water will have dire consequences."

By Thursday, anti-government fighters had re-opened five of the dam's gates to relieve some pressure, fearing their strategy would backfire by flooding their own stronghold of Fallujah, some 44 miles west of Baghdad.

Iraqi security officials said flooding around the city had already forced many families to leave their homes and prevented troops from deploying or operating properly there in order to stop fighters encroaching on the capital.

"(The fighters) want to use the flood waters to make it difficult for the security forces to deploy in those areas, and this is their chance to move the battle outside Fallujah," said an anti-government leader inside the city.

The Fallujah dam is also key to a number of irrigation projects in the desert province of Anbar, which shares a border with Syria.

In his weekly televised address, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who held off a full-on ground assault on Fallujah, vowed to exact revenge from the opposition for interfering with the water supply.

"The murderers took advantage of the government policy of utmost restraint in Fallujah ... But it seems the situation has become more complicated and necessitates confrontation," Maliki said.

Two army officers in Ramadi and Fallujah said preparations were underway to launch a quick attack to regain control of the Fallujah dam.

"We are carrying out aerial surveillance to spot militant positions near the dam," said one army officer whose regiment received orders to prepare for mobilizing from Taji, to the north of Baghdad, to Fallujah.

"A military operation could start very soon."

"Iraq Anti-government Fighters Block Euphrates", 11/04/2014, online at:
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/4/11/iraq-dam-fighters.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Iraq's ruling bloc backs PM in 'fight against terror'

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's ruling parliamentary bloc this week mandated him to "use all means necessary to fight terrorism" in Iraq's western Anbar province, a bloc member said Friday.

"At a Wednesday meeting, the coalition – and all its component parts – voiced its support for the prime minister in his fight against terrorism," Abbas al-Bayati told Anadolu Agency.

Al-Maliki's Shiite State of the Law coalition includes Iraq's five main Shiite political forces.

One MP told AA earlier this week that the Iraqi air force would soon be deployed to retake Anbar's Fallujah dam after it was captured by armed groups who cut off water supplies to several parts of the country.

Iraqi government troops, meanwhile, have been pursuing rebels from the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) group – who the government says are linked to Al-Qaeda – since last December, when ISIL fighters seized Fallujah, a key city in Anbar, and other parts of the province.

"The coalition has informed al-Maliki of its support for upcoming government operations aimed at resisting the ISIL and retaking the Fallujah dam," al-Bayati said.

The Iraqi military had earlier declared its intention to launch ground operations in the city, but the date for the planned operation has yet to be announced.

Since the offensive began last December, hundreds have been killed and injured in Fallujah and Ramadi, Anbar's two main cities, according to government officials.

"Iraq's ruling bloc backs PM in 'fight against terror'", 12/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.worldbulletin.net/world/133563/palestine-joins-geneva-conventions>

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Minister of Water Resources: Four gates of Fallujah Dam opened by insurgents in Fallujah**

BAGHDAD - The Minister of Water Resources, Muhannad al-Saadi declared that four gates of Fallujah's dam by terrorists.

Saadi warned, in a statement for the [Ministry of Water Resources](#) today "continued control of insurgents on Fallujah dam and sabotage the shoulders of the channel will lead to negative results affect the water size on central and southern governorates.

He noted " this requires full control over the dam and operate it by specialists in the [Ministry of Water Resources](#) .

It is mentioned that the terrorists of ISIS have cut off the Euphrates River from areas in central and southern Iraq and swamped other areas west of Baghdad because of their control of the Tharthar Dam north of Fallujah.

The Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Nouri al-Maliki confirmed in a statement the need to use extreme force to save the lives of the people of central and southern regions after ISIS cut off water.

“Minister of Water Resources: Four gates of Fallujah Dam opened by insurgents in Fallujah”, 08/04/2014, online at: http://www.zawya.com/story/Four_gates_of_Fallujah_Dam_opened_by_insurgents_in_Fallujah-ZAWYA20140409081654/

BACK TO TOP

❖ Iraqi army to retake Fallujah dam: MP

BAGHDAD – Iraq will deploy its air force to retake the Fallujah dam after it was captured by armed groups who cut off water supplies to several parts of the country, an MP said Wednesday.

"Security forces might launch an operation – tonight or within the next few days – to reopen the Fallujah dam, seized by the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) group, which cut off [water] supplies to much of the southern and central provinces," Hassan al-Sanid, head of parliament's security committee, told Anadolu Agency.

"The operation will employ aircraft to conduct limited strikes on ISIL hideouts," he added.

"The ISIL hopes to flood Fallujah with water during the [annual] inundation of the Euphrates River... and cut off water to the southern and central provinces," al-Sanid asserted.

Iraqi government troops have been pursuing ISIL militants – who the government says are linked to Al-Qaeda – since December, when the group seized control of parts of Iraq's western Anbar province, of which Fallujah is a major city.

The Iraqi military had earlier declared its intention to launch ground operations in the city, but the date for the planned operation has yet to be announced.

Hundreds have been killed and injured in Fallujah and Ramadi – Anbar's two main cities – since the offensive began, according to government officials.

"Iraqi army to retake Fallujah dam: MP", 09/04/2014, online at: <http://www.turkishpress.com/news/399926/>

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Asharq Al Awsat - Iraqi government forces say ISIS water supply sabotage foiled**

Baghdad, *Asharq Al-Awsat*—A pro-government Iraqi militia leader said on Tuesday that government forces had thwarted attempts by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to sabotage the country’s water distribution system.

The Leader of the Sons of Iraq Council, Mohammad Al-Hayis, said government troops and allied tribal fighters forced ISIS to reopen the Nuaimiyah Dam on the Euphrates, restoring water supplies to a number of villages in central and southern governorates

Hayis told *Asharq Al-Awsat*: “The terrorists . . . realized after closing the dam gates—which resulted in a rise in water levels behind the dam—that if the closure continued, they will be besieged twice, once by the armed forces, and the second by rising water, and if they had to withdraw, they would drown, which in turn forced them to reopen the floodgates.”

Hayis added: “ISIS has two objectives: on the one hand, they want to drown the areas surrounding Fallujah, but the sudden attack by the army foiled that plan; on the other hand, they want to cut off water supply to the central and southern governorates in order to give their war a sectarian dimension.”

Iraqi Minister of Water Resources Mohannad Al-Saadi announced the reopening of the four floodgates of the Fallujah Dam on Monday. Saadi issued a statement which said: “Continuing to have the Fallujah Dam under the control of the armed men, and damaging the body of the dam and the banks of the canal, would lead to negative effects on water resources in the central and southern governorates.”

Meanwhile, Iraqi parliamentary speaker Osama Al-Nujaifi condemned the actions of ISIS. A statement issued by Nujaifi’s office on Monday said: “We find this act which is directed at the Iraqi people abhorrent and strongly condemn it, and we call on our people in Anbar to confront this destructive act and resist all terrorist attacks which target the unity of our people and their security, stability and safety.”

Nujaifi also called on Baghdad and the Iraqi security forces to exercise restraint in their attempts to retake areas of Anbar province seized by insurgents at the end of last year, saying: “We renew our

rejection of the heinous acts committed against our people in Fallujah under the pretext of fighting terrorism and pursuing terrorists. We call for an end to causing more harm to them and to adopt a professional approach in pursuing anyone who is proven to be involved in terrorism.”

Hamid Al-Mutlaq, member of the parliamentary Wataniya bloc for the Anbar Governorate, told *Asharq Al-Awsat* that the incident proved the government had failed to resolve the endemic security crisis

He said: “What happened proved the weakness of the government and its failure to protect people and provide them with stability . . . the government is now condemning the action like all others, while it is actually responsible for providing people with protection from gangs, terrorists and militias, because we look at terrorism as one issue regardless of its sources.”

In a related issue, the Iraqi authorities say 44 ISIS members were killed in two military operations on Tuesday.

Interior Ministry spokesman Saad Maan told the French news agency AFP that “a unit from the 17th Brigade laid an ambush for ISIS members planning to attack a military post in Duwailabiyah south of Baghdad, and killed all 25 of them.”

The spokesman also said “a rapid intervention squad supported by the air and artillery forces attacked two ISIS positions in Fallujah, killing 19 and injuring 27 . . . the bombardment targeted the two positions during a meeting of senior ISIS leaders in Fallujah. The attack also destroyed five vehicles and a large storage place of explosives and weapons.”

“Asharq Al Awsat - Iraqi government forces say ISIS water supply sabotage foiled”, 10/04/2014, online at: <http://www.ncciraq.org/en/breaking/item/4610-asharq-al-awsat-iraqi-government-forces-say-isis-water-supply-sabotage-foiled>

BACK TO TOP

❖ **Nusayif calls UN, International Organizations to interfere in water crisis in Iraq**

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) MP< Aliya Nusayif, of the Hurra Iraqiya Alliance called the United Nations and the International Organizations to interfere in the water crisis in Iraq.

She stated in a press statement received by IraqiNews.com “Some of the media outlets deliberately do not refer to the crises in Iraq and we expect that this is an attempt by some foreign sides to target Iraq where terrorism does not exclude any country in its activities.”

“The UN and the International Organizations must not be silenced due to the terrorist action by the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant by blocking the water from reaching the southern provinces in Iraq,” she added.

She stressed the necessity of “Forming an operations unit by the UN that comprises international experts to be acquainted with the situation and to settle this crisis.”

“Nusayif calls UN, International Organizations to interfere in water crisis in Iraq”, 08/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/nusayif-calls-un-international-organizations-to-interfere-in-water-crisis-in-iraq/#axzz2yn91us00>

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Iran's Water Crisis Threatens its Future

WASHINGTON — A looming water crisis in Iran has officials warning of water rationing for the capital Tehran. The Mehr news agency quotes Khosro Erteghaei, the head of Tehran's regional water company as saying water levels at the four reservoirs that serve Tehran are at a critical level. He warns that if residents of Tehran and nearby provinces do not reduce their consumption “we will have a problem.”

Officials say if water consumption is not cut back they will consider options such as scheduling water outages for high consuming households, and lowering water pressure in Tehran's pipeline network that serves an estimated 22 million people.

It's not only Tehran that is facing a water crisis.

The deputy head of Iran's water and sewage company recently warned that “500 cities in Iran are facing a water crisis.” In early February, Iran's energy minister Hamid Chitchian said the country's water supply has dropped by 20-percent over the past year.

The crisis is also affecting Iran's lakes and rivers. Rivers in central Iran near Isfahan and Ahvaz close to the Persian Gulf have dried up. Hamoun Lake near the Afghan border is now a dustbowl. Lake Urmia, one of the largest salt-water lakes in the world has dropped about 200-meters, and winds blowing dry salt from the lake bed could contaminate nearby agriculture, threatening the livelihoods of an estimated three million people who live nearby.

UN officials say dust from dried up rivers and lakes is already contributing to air pollution levels in Iranian cities, four of which are classified belonging to the 10 most polluted cities in the world. The government's response has not been welcomed by the public. In March officials decided to raise water prices by 20-percent.

Experts blame climate change, desertification, poor water management and Iran's propensity to build dams for the problem. The private intelligence company Stratfor noted in a recent report that Iran's rainfall rate is also only about one-third to one-fourth of the global average.

Stratfor says more than 70 percent of Iran’s precipitation evaporates and that 50 percent of Iran’s water supply also comes from fast-shrinking underground water supplies which have been poorly managed.

As the crisis grows so do the dangers of social unrest.

Last year *Al Monitor*, a web site focusing on the Middle east, reported that hundreds of farmers in Isfahan province destroyed a pipeline in clashes with police that was carrying water away from a nearby river to the town of Yazd. And former Agriculture minister Issa Kalantari last year told the *Ghanoon* newspaper that Iran’s water crisis is more of a threat to the country than “Israel, America or political infighting” among Iran’s political classes.

“Iran’s Water Crisis Threatens its Future”, 06/04/2014, online at: <http://www.isidewith.com/news/article/irans-water-crisis-threatens-its-future>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Dying Lake Urmia reflects a broader problem in Iran

In the words of a former agriculture minister, water shortages are making Iran an ‘uninhabitable desert.’

LAKE URMIA, Iran — An eerie and forlorn tableau greets visitors to the arid shores of this once-vast lake in Iran’s far northwest. Rusting ships sit wedged in deep black mud. Stray dogs nibble on rotting planks from long-discarded beach chairs and derelict bungalows.

Lake Urmia, long counted among the world’s largest saltwater lakes — almost 90 miles in length and stretching 34 miles at its widest point — is today a pitiful shadow of its former self.

Vast expanses of the onetime holiday haven have been transformed into stretches of sunbaked mud so solid that “pickup trucks and tractors can drive on it for miles,” saidHojjat Jabbari, a scientist working in the environmental department in Urmia.

In the last two decades, experts say, a toxic combination of wasteful irrigation practices, the damming of feeder rivers, prolonged drought and a warming climate has accelerated the decline of the storied lake, noted in the historical accounts of various civilizations dating back millennia.

Today, according to experts at Iran’s environmental agency, the lake, in a broad plain flanked by steep mountains, contains only 5% of the amount of water it did just 20 years ago.

The decline is part of a broader problem facing the Islamic Republic, much of which is already desert.

Some analysts suggest that water rationing may have to be imposed in Tehran, the densely populated capital and metropolitan area home to more than 12 million people.

In January, the centrist Iranian newspaper Shahrvand reported that 517 of more than 700 cities and towns in Iran were “on the verge of a water crisis” that could result in drinking water shortages, especially during the parched summer.

In recent years, several large Iranian rivers have dried up, as has Iran’s third-largest lake, Hamoun, in the southeast.

“Iran is becoming an uninhabitable desert, and do not think it will happen in the future — it is happening already,” Iran’s former agriculture minister, Isa Kalantari, said in remarks published last year in local media.

With economic and security concerns dominating official discourse, environmental awareness has been slow to take hold in Iran. The Islamic Republic finished 83rd among 178 nations ranked

recently on the Environmental Performance Index, which tracks various indicators of environmental, public health and ecosystem vitality. Severe air pollution in Tehran and other cities regularly forces the closure of schools and offices.

Experts say future water shortages are likely to be felt most keenly by Iran’s agricultural sector, which accounts for about 13% of the nation’s economic output and almost one-quarter of its employment. Environmentalists have warned that toxic salts leaching from Lake Urmia’s desiccated shores could taint nearby farmland.

In some instances, water policies and the effects of shortages have fueled public protests, a development authorities eye with dismay. Demonstrators clashed with police in Varzaneh in Esfahan province, in central Iran, during more than a month of protests last year against the government’s diversion of water to other regions.

In 2011, police arrested dozens who rallied to save Lake Urmia, a source of pride among many of the 3 million people who live nearby, many of them ethnic Azeris. Officials said the protesters were detained for demonstrating without a permit, but some activists suspected hostility toward the Azeri population.

Two decades ago, Lake Urmia was still a popular destination for vacationers. Tourists marveled at the flocks of flamingos, pelicans and other bird life that gathered on its shores. Bathers immersed themselves in the saline waters and smeared their bodies with its legendary black mud, said to help heal stiff joints. Some called it Iran’s version of the Dead Sea.

“I remember how my late grandmother told us that nobody was in danger of drowning as you couldn’t sink in the salty water,” recalled Ameneh Saeedi, 33, a secretary in Tehran, who vacationed at the lake regularly with her family. “We used to stay up until the small hours laughing and swimming.”

Today vehicles can reach many of the lake’s more than 100 small islands that were once a signature feature, havens for wildlife and humans on holiday.

Environmentalists are divided as to whether Lake Urmia’s fate can be reversed. Mohammad Darvish, an official with the national environmental agency, remains optimistic.

“It may takes 10 years, but the salty lake can be saved,” he said in an interview. “If the rain and snowfalls are managed well, we can direct enough water to the lake to be revived.”

However, the cash-strapped central government has shown no sign of embarking on a massive, costly campaign to restore the lake to its former glory. Many Iranians seem resigned to its demise.

For some, Lake Urmia’s death march serves as a dark allegory for the bleak future facing a generation of young, well-educated Iranians with few viable career prospects. A recent theatrical production in Tehran, “In the Salty Land,” compares the “dying salty lake” to fading hope that Iran’s moribund economy will rebound, despite vows of better times to come from President [Hassan Rouhani](#), who was elected last year.

Gazing out at the blackened basin of Lake Urmia from its gloomy shores, it’s difficult to envision a rebirth anytime soon. The pelicans and other birds that used to enliven the scenery have moved on to more hospitable homes, leaving behind a forbidding landscape and ghostly quiet.

“The migratory birds are taking refuge in the wetlands for now,” said Jabbari, the local scientist, who still harbors hope that the shriveled Urmia may one day recover its vitality. “They’re gliding over the dying lake less and less these days.”

“Dying Lake Urmia reflects a broader problem in Iran”, 07/04/2014, online at: <http://slinkingtowardretirement.com/?p=184664>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Cyprus opens sewage plant in rare cross-communal effort

The mayors of north and south Nicosia opened a new sewage plant for Europe's last divided capital on April 8, renewing a rare joint infrastructure project between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

The high-tech plant, which can handle up to 30,000 cubic meters (1.1 million cubic feet) of waste water a day and serve 270,000 people, around a quarter of the island's population, has been a decade in the planning and under construction for five years.

It has cost 29 million euros (\$40 million), one third of which was provided by the European Union, of which GreekCyprus has been a member since 2004.

EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle said the plant's opening showed "local leaders have put the needs of their community first."

Olivier Adam of the United Nations Development Program, said the plant was a "symbol that there is a desire to work together."

The Greek Cypriot representative on the committee overseeing the project, Charalambos Palantzis, said he was "proud of this unique cooperation."

His Turkish Cypriot counterpart, Faiz Özkaynak, said "it should be used as an example in other fields." Nicosia has had a waste water treatment plant serving both sides of the city since the 1980s, a rare instance of joint infrastructure on an island where telephone, electricity and road networks are strictly separated between north and south. The new plant was built in Turkish Cypriot north Nicosia on the same site as the old plant, which had become obsolete.

Both sides of the Mediterranean island suffer from chronic water shortages. The Turkish Cypriots have turned to Turkey, which is building an undersea pipeline to supply water. The Greek Cypriots

have built five desalination plants to meet the demand from agriculture and tourism as well as domestic consumers.

“Cyprus opens sewage plant in rare cross-communal effort”, 09/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/cyprus-opens-sewage-plant-in-rare-cross-communal-effort.aspx?pageID=238&nID=64770&NewsCatID=351>

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Tens of thousands of Palestinians without water for over a month

Some 55,000 Palestinians in the Shuafat refugee camp and the neighbourhoods of Ras El-Khaimah, Ras Shehadeh, Al-Awqaf and Daheyet As-Salam in East Jerusalem have had no water for over a month after the Israeli Gihon water company cut off the water supply without notice.

Coordinator of the National Committee to Resist Judaisation Khader Dibs told the *Saffa* news site today that the water crisis is worsening by the day and could lead to the spread of diseases and that the residents are forced to buy water tanks to meet their needs.

"The Israeli government practices organised terrorism against the Palestinian people in general and against Jerusalemites in particular to force them to leave the city for settlers and since Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to power he has been exercising racism, murder and destruction of the Palestinians rights," Dibs said.

Dibs pointed out that the Israeli government is obliged to provide water to the camps' residents according to an agreement signed with UNRWA but Israel has been evading its obligations.

He said residents had petitioned the Israeli High Court in Jerusalem which ordered the Jerusalem municipality and Gihon Company to resolve the crisis within 60 days. "We will not be intimidated by the occupation's practices and we will not leave our homes to strangers. We have many choices to gain our rights and end our people's suffering," Dibs said.

A member of Shuafat's People Committee, Abdul Karim Shlodi, told *Saffa* that the residents will resort to the international courts if necessary to deal with their suffering and pointed out that the Association for Civil Rights is pursuing the case in the Israeli courts.

Shlodi demanded the UN Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) assume its role and end their suffering.

The Israeli Knesset ordered the Israeli Ministry of Water and Gihon Company in March to resolve the water problem and to provide water tanks to the affected residents until the water crisis is fully resolved.

Chairman of Ras Khamis neighbourhood Development Committee Jameel Sandooqa demanded at the time Gihon Company to return the water supply to the neighbourhoods' residents .

“Tens of thousands of Palestinians without water for over a month”, 10/04/2014, online at:
<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/10829-tens-of-thousands-of-palestinians-without-water-for-over-a-month>

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Israel demolishes wells in Hebron

Israeli occupation forces this morning demolished a number of water wells and agriculture infrastructure in Hebron, handed over demolition orders to owners of two residential houses in Bethlehem.

Local Palestinian sources said that the Israeli forces invaded the Palestinian neighbourhood of Abulhawa in Hebron.

The sources said that the Israeli forces demolished water wells used to irrigate farms, as well as agriculture infrastructure owned by Al-Duwaik, Al-Yazouri and Abu-Hamdiyeh families.

Meanwhile, Palestinians sources in Bethlehem said the Israeli occupation authorities handed over two demolition orders to the owners of two houses which are under construction.

According to the sources, the Israeli occupation is to demolish the houses because they are being built without construction licences. The houses are owned by Nidal Shokeerat and Mohanad Hajafleh.

“Israel demolishes wells in Hebron”, 08/04/2014, online at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/10785-israel-demolishes-wells-in-hebron>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Are Palestine peace talks dead in the water?

London: John Kerry's Middle East peace push has turned into mission impossible as Netanyahu's determination to hang on to power at all cost, combined with serious splits in the Palestinian camp, threaten to wreck the peace process by the end of the month.

A year before his appointment by President Barack Obama as special envoy for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Martin Indyk gave an interview sharing his assessment that the prospects of a deal between Israelis and Palestinians was bleak.

"In my experience," said the Australian-born Jewish diplomat, who served twice as US ambassador to Israel, "it takes three to tango in the Middle East an Israeli leader and an Arab leader who are ready to take risks, and an American president who is willing to invest his time and prestige to convince them that he will support them if they take the risks."

He added: "There is plenty of blame to go around." After a week of diplomatic drama that saw US secretary of state John Kerry shuttling to and from the Middle East, the process once again looks broken. The brief and illusory promise of a breakthrough last Monday was, as so often before, followed in quick order by accusations of sabotage and bad faith, and dire warnings about the consequences of failure.

In truth the details of that floated deal seemed more like the plot of an airport thriller, a fact that should perhaps have been instructive to its architects. Jonathan Pollard, convicted of spying for Israel and serving the 29th year of a life sentence in a US jail, would be released in exchange for up to 400 prisoners, including a group Israel had committed to release at the start of the latest round of peace talks. In return the Palestinian side would agree to an extension of talks into 2015. But even at the moment US and Israeli officials were talking up the deal in Occupied Jerusalem, in Ramallah there was not only no enthusiasm for the proposal, but outright rejection.

A day later Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority's president, said what the Palestinian side had long made clear it might do if Israel failed to fulfil its commitment to free the prisoners by the month's end: it returned to its campaign for recognition as a state by UN institutions, a campaign it had suspended in exchange for the promise of the prisoner release last year.

To a backdrop of angry public warnings by the US ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, that America “will oppose any attempt to upgrade the status of the Palestinians everywhere in the UN”, and threats of US disengagement from the whole peace process, behind the scenes Indyk was scrambling to rescue the strategy. The current crisis has surprised few close observers. “It’s a process leading nowhere,” Khalil Shikaki, a respected political scientist, told the New York Times. “The basic compromises that this Israeli government is willing to endorse are unacceptable to the majority of the Palestinians. There is no chance.”

If there is no real mystery over why the talks are imploding, there remains the question of what Netanyahu really wants. Pondering this last month, Eitan Haber, the veteran Israeli journalist and former press secretary to Rabin, suggested Netanyahu’s resistance to progress towards a deal was driven as much by desire for his own political survival as by ideological objections. “The most important condition for Bibi today,” wrote Haber in the newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth, “is that the move towards peace does not mean his political suicide. Bibi wants, craves, yearns to remain prime minister.”

But there is more to it than that. Netanyahu’s electoral compact with Israel’s political centre during his second term has been based precisely on maintaining the status quo in the supposed service of stability and security. On the Palestinian side, at least, the key objections are easier to fathom.

A statement that was released by the PLO’s negotiation office said: “In July 2013, the PLO took the difficult decision to postpone accession to multilateral treaties and conventions in exchange for the release of 104 pre-Oslo prisoners in four stages. The release of prisoners was not formally linked to the negotiations process. The fourth and final release of 30 prisoners was set to take place on 29 March 2014. “As Israeli officials indicated that Israel would not go through with the release, the PLO requested that the US administration ensure that Israel fulfil its commitment.

“Since Israel failed to release the last group of prisoners, the state of Palestine is no longer obliged to postpone its rights to accede to multilateral treaties and conventions.” Palestinian officials have also threatened that their next move could be an application to the international criminal court to pursue Israel for alleged war crimes.

“Are Palestine peace talks dead in the water?”, 06/04/2014, online at: <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/palestinian-territories/are-palestine-peace-talks-dead-in-the-water-1.1315680>

BACK TO TOP

❖ **EXCLUSIVE: Contrary to Claims, Palestinian Water Supply Vastly Improved Due to Israeli Support**

One of the harshest attacks against Israel made in increasingly mainstream circles in recent months is that the Israeli presence in the West Bank has resulted in “Water Apartheid” — a systematic deprivation of the Palestinians’ water rights. Most famously, it was raised in February by Martin Schultz, president of the European parliament, in a speech to the Israeli Knesset in mid-February, **triggering a walkout** by a number of Members of Knesset. “One of the questions these young people asked me which I found most moving – although I could not check the exact figures,” **Shultz asked**, “was this: how can it be that an Israeli is allowed to use 70 litres of water per day, but a Palestinian only 17?”

A new report, however, suggests that claims of “water apartheid” look much more like a water libel. In an exclusive exposé in the April issue of The Tower Magazine, Akiva Bigman **explores in depth** the usage of water in the Palestinian Authority and the dramatic extent to which Palestinians have benefited from Israeli involvement. He concludes:

When one examines the relevant data, it becomes clear that, under Israeli rule, the Palestinian water supply has become larger, more technologically sophisticated, of higher quality, and much easier to access; almost entirely due to Israeli efforts.

According to Bigman, Palestinian per capita water consumption has increased dramatically in recent years, due almost exclusively to Israeli investment in Palestinian infrastructure, purification, and distribution. This, despite the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars donated to the PA for water investment have mostly been diverted to corruption. For example, Bigman notes, of \$130 million contributed for improving sewage treatment, only \$7.2 million have been spent for that purpose.

Claims of Israeli efforts to sabotage basic necessities of life have long been central to the **conspiracy theories** that run rampant in the Palestinian Authority and around the Arab world.

“EXCLUSIVE: Contrary to Claims, Palestinian Water Supply Vastly Improved Due to Israeli Support”, 04/06/2014, online at: <http://www.thetower.org/0110-exclusive-contrary-to-claims-palestinian-water-supply-vastly-improved-due-to-israeli-support/>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Passover, Water, and the Generosity of Israel

In a few days, Jews around the world will gather at their seder tables to celebrate the Passover feast and retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Not long after the Red Sea parted, the Bible tells us that, with the help of the Almighty, Moses brought forth water from a rock to quench the thirst of the ancient Hebrews. For those who made it to the Promised Land, and the future nation of Israel, the trials encountered during their trek through the wilderness far outnumbered the occasional water crisis.

More than three thousand years later, today's people of Israel have mastered how to live in harsh desert conditions and now share their technology with the rest of the world. As a result, partnerships have been created in states across the U.S., and in countries with needs as diverse as Rwanda, Cambodia, and Vietnam. These partnerships help transform formerly arid environments into agricultural food centers, produce solar energy power as an alternative to expensive and polluting fossil-fuels, and bring life-saving water to communities in need of fresh supply. To better prepare for the future, last month California Governor Jerry Brown welcomed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Mountain View, California, to sign an agreement to “boost economic, cultural and academic cooperation between California and Israel, with an emphasis on water conservation, alternative energy, cybersecurity, health and biotechnology, education and agricultural technology.”

Israel's smart, sustainable water solutions make the most of living off a land where little rain falls. I am proud to say that much of the science that has reshaped the former wilderness has been at the hand of Jewish National Fund (JNF) and its partners around the world.

I often remark that a single drop of water is too precious a commodity to use only once. JNF has been at the forefront of water management and conservation in Israel, increasing the country's total water supply by 12% and helping Israel become a world leader in water recycling and reuse. More than 77% of the recycled sewage water in Israel is reused, the highest amount in the world. Spain comes in at a distant second at 17%. The United States figures are well under 10%, with most of its recycled wastewater disposed of in streams, seas, or the gutter rather than being reused. JNF's network of

more than 250 recycled water reservoirs provide almost half of the water used for agriculture, saving enough freshwater to meet the drinking needs of 4.4 million Israelis a year.

Today, with the growing threat of climate change, chronic drought and the lack of plentiful water supply for much of the world, the picture is rather daunting. Eighty countries have water issues that threaten health, food production, and economic well-being, while more than 2 billion people have no access to clean drinking water. Population growth of some 80 million people each year further depletes ground and surface water supplies. In Texas, where severe drought has brought parts of the state to its knees, the population is expected to double in the next 50 years with a projected increase in demand for water rising by 22%, while at the same time its groundwater supplies are expected to fall by 30%.

JNF and Israel have become synonymous with successful initiatives that address water quality, trans-boundary challenges, recycling, developing alternative water sources, by using drip irrigation, conservation education, desalination, and stream and aquifer restoration. Happily, Israel is willing to share its technology and research with other nations to truly make the world a better place.

As we prepare to break matzo, pour the four cups of wine, and read of our ancestors departure from slavery in Egypt and of their return to Israel, I wish all those celebrating a very healthy and happy Passover.

“Passover, Water, and the Generosity of Israel”, 11/04/2014, online at: <http://www.algemeiner.com/2014/04/11/passover-water-and-the-generosity-of-israel/>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Israel's IDE in Japan Talks to Build Floating Desalination Plant

Israel's IDE Technologies Ltd. is in talks with Japan's shipbuilders and government to design and build off-shore desalination plants, seeking to tap rising demand for alternate sources of short-term freshwater supply.

The maker of land-based desalination equipment wants to start delivering floating platforms to clients within three years, Udi Tirosh, a business development director at the Kadima-based company, said in an interview. IDE's ship-based designs could supply water for a city of 850,000 people and Japan's shipbuilders are among potential partners, he said.

The market for floating desalination plants may develop within a decade to as much as 400 billion yen (\$3.9 billion) in annual sales as freshwater shortages and tighter environmental rules for land-based plants boost demand, according to a March 28 report by Deloitte Tohmatsu Consulting Co. IDE is in talks with companies from different countries, though the ones involving Japan are most progressed, Tirosh said.

"We're in early stages on the commercial side," Tirosh said in phone interview on April 7, declining to specify which Japanese companies are in talks with IDE. "We're advanced in the technical side."

Japan's major shipbuilders include IHI Corp. (7013), Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (7011) Ltd. and Kawasaki Heavy Industries (7012) Ltd.

The Deloitte report was ordered by Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, which supports the talks between IDE and domestic shipbuilders.

'Quite Big'

"We intend to coordinate a business match between IDE and any Japanese company interested in the desalination ship project," Naoto Nakagawa, a deputy director at the ministry's maritime bureau, said by e-mail. "From the research we've seen the market for desalination ships is quite big."

As China and South Korea push ahead of Japan in the mass shipbuilding markets, Asia's second-largest economy is looking at new niches. Japanese shipmakers last year unveiled plans to build a new kind of floating structure labeled a "megafloat," which may be used as an off-shore base for oil exploration.

Some examples of floating desalination plants exist today, such as in Saudi Arabia, though the technology up to now has been too expensive to implement widely, Tirosh said.

The global desalination market is forecast to more than double from last year's \$6 billion, or 6 million cubic meters per day, to \$15 billion by 2018, as the world population grows and water gets more scarce, Deloitte said in the report.

Water Tables

While floating desalination plants will not replace all conventional, land-based ones, they can become an alternative that does not saddle a country with the burden of maintenance once local water tables improve, Tirosh said.

The use of floating technology is spreading. Turkey's Karadeniz Holding AS runs a fleet of seven "Powerships"™ that carry thermal power plants, while Russia's Rosatom Corp. is building a prototype ship housing a nuclear generator.

IDE plans to create a fleet of ships that could service clients all over the world, with current designs for vessels drafted to produce about 50,000 cubic meters a day to 120,000 cubic meters a day, Tirosh said.

"The idea is to develop with our partners a multi-year, multi-vessel plan that would eventually supply significant capacity in various places in the world," Tirosh said.

IDE Technologies ranks just below the world's top three suppliers Veolia Environment SA, General Electric Co. and Doosan Heavy (034020) Industries & Construction Co. in the global desalination market by capacity, Deloitte said. IDE is jointly owned by Israel Chemicals (ICL) Ltd. and the Delek Group. (DLEKG)

"Israel's IDE in Japan Talks to Build Floating Desalination Plant", 09/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2014-04-09/israel-s-ide-in-japan-talks-to-build-floating-desalination-plant>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Lebanon works to preclude water shortage crisis

As the possibility of drought looms in the Middle East, Lebanon is preparing to launch a campaign to encourage water conservation and more efficient water usage.

Low levels of rainfall coupled with the strain the influx of Syrian refugees has placed on Lebanon's resources has prompted the Ministry of Energy and Water to put in place a national water strategy to preclude a crisis, said ministry water resources advisor Abdo Tayyar.

Tayyar spoke with Al-Shorfa about the ministry's plan to prevent water shortages during the hot summer months.

Al-Shorfa: First of all, can you tell us about the overall rate of rainfall this year?

Abdo Tayyar: Lebanon has so far recorded 442 millimetres out of an annual average of 840 millimetres of rainfall, and we are expecting another 30 millimetres during the month of April. That said, we are expecting water shortages. According to the national water resources strategy, Lebanon requires 1.5 billion cubic metres of water every year, which usually comes from rainfall and snow as well as from surface and groundwater wells. However, we have fallen short this year. What is available is half what we need -- our water deficit is estimated at 728 million cubic metres.

Al-Shorfa: How will Lebanon face the water shortage crisis, which has already begun?

Tayyar: As the Ministry of Energy and Water, we see water resources as being at somewhat acceptable levels this summer. Groundwater will be pumped at a rate of 600 million cubic metres and we are in the process of launching a national campaign to rationalise water consumption which targets citizens, farmers, industrialists and tourists.

The campaign will include media statements, billboards and text messages in an attempt to raise awareness among citizens and sectors that consume water on how to use water, as well as cautioning against the wrong kind of consumer behaviour. The campaign will be launched under the slogan, "A plan to counter the effects of water scarcity", and it will not be for this year alone but for the medium and long term.

Al-Shorfa: Is this one campaign enough? How will you make up for water shortages?

Tayyar: In addition to our focus on the rationalisation and more efficient management of water consumption -- in a way that encourages citizens to reduce their consumption by 20 to 30% -- we will be pumping in larger quantities of groundwater, at 500 to 600 million cubic metres.

The ministry also is working to develop a legal framework that limits water consumption in certain industries, and to deepen wells. We are working as well on seven water wells in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, which are expected to be operational in a month.

We are aware that we must exercise caution in the summer and be prepared for water shortages, so we put in place a new plan and we also created a crisis cell that will include water authority and ministry representatives as well as experts and representatives from donor international humanitarian organisations. The cell will confront the effects of the water crisis, which has been compounded by the Syrian refugee crisis. There are 1.5 million Syrian refugees who consume 176 million cubic metres of water on average and we must provide these quantities for them.

Al-Shorfa: What about dams?

Tayyar: There are seven dams under construction which will be completed by next year.

Al-Shorfa: How do you think citizens will respond to the awareness campaign?

Tayyar: Citizens will feel the impact of the crisis when they are forced to buy water in order to meet their needs and then they will abide by the guidelines.

Al-Shorfa: Why not use a meter system for paying for water?

Tayyar: This is a system that requires certain procedures. We have implemented it in pilot areas in Keserwan and Sidon as we await its introduction to all areas. Through such procedures and campaigns, we hope that rationalising water consumption will become a national culture.

Al-Shorfa: Is there a solution in storing run-off rainwater?

Tayyar: Working alongside the UN Development Programme we established the Lebanese Centre for Water Management and Conservation [in 2011], to create ponds and lakes in agricultural areas.

Also, some people store rainwater in tanks. We are now thinking through underground storage by building wells which would store additional rainwater in certain areas and under certain conditions.

Pending research findings, refineries operating along coastal areas and in the Bekaa valley are treating wastewater, which is then used in irrigation and certain industries. Overall, we are conducting several studies on this type of treatment as well as other medium to long term solutions in order to put an end to the water crisis.

“Lebanon works to preclude water shortage crisis”, 10/04/2014, online at: http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/features/2014/04/10/feature-02

BACK TO TOP

❖ Egyptian Officials Fear Economic, Environmental Loss From Ethiopian Dam Project

The Ethiopian government has been on a public relations offensive to persuade its Egyptian and Sudanese neighbors that a \$4.2 billion mega-dam project on the Nile river will be helpful, not harmful. Officials in Egypt and international experts disagree, fearing a massive environmental and economic fallout.

“The Egyptian government is expected to stop threatening Ethiopia of breaching international principles and realize the benefits the dam provides to the Egyptian people,” said Ambassador Dina Mufti, spokesman for Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry, according to a [report on InDepthAfrica.com](#).

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project is intended to be the largest hydro-electric power plant on the continent, generating 6,000 megawatts of power.

Located about 550 miles from Addis Ababa, in a region where temperatures can reach 118 degrees, the construction site is currently taking up almost 700 square miles of space -- an area more than four times the size of Cairo.

It was originally announced in 2011, with plans to be completed by 2017. Though international groups have asked Ethiopian officials to thoroughly examine the ramifications of the project on the surrounding environment, nothing substantial has been produced.

In May of last year, Ethiopian workers successfully diverted part of the Blue Nile. In February, project leader Samegnew Bekele said that the project was 30 percent complete, which caused Egyptian officials to demand that Ethiopia submit its plans to an international institution for assessment, according to a report in [Al-Ahram](#).

The environmental advocacy agency reported in January that the project has been poorly planned, is causing great concern for water security experts and engineers, and will displace 20,000 people in Ethiopia.

“This is not just about Egypt and Sudan. International rivers are governed by laws and conventions, in accordance with which any action that affects water quotas requires advanced notice and guarantees against possible harm,” said Mohamed Allam, former minister of irrigation and water resources in Egypt, [to InternationalRivers.org](#).

The Nile is the world's longest river, stretching north about 4,160 miles through 11 countries. The Blue Nile runs through Ethiopia, joining the White Nile in Sudan before passing into Egypt.

When complete, the dam will include a reservoir capable of holding 2.6 trillion cubic feet of water, roughly equivalent to the annual flow of the Nile at the Sudanese-Egyptian border.

“It's a matter of life or death, a national security issue that can never be compromised on,” said Egyptian foreign ministry spokesman Badr Abdelatty [to the BBC](#) last month.

“The fact that we have been under the yoke of poverty for so long while nature has endowed us with a precious gift like the Nile has always infuriated and made us ashamed in equal measures,” reads an op-ed from Addis Ababa-based publication The Reporter, [published on All Africa](#). “All this sadness and frustration, however, is now giving way to determination and optimism with the laying of the cornerstone of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam some three years ago.”

“Egyptian Officials Fear Economic, Environmental Loss From Ethiopian Dam Project”, 08/04/2014, online at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/egyptian-officials-fear-economic-environmental-loss-ethiopian-dam-project-1568889>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Ethiopia Stepping Up Efforts To Show Dam’s Benefits To Downstream Countries

The Ethiopian government will consolidate diplomatic efforts to create awareness among downstream countries — Sudan and Egypt — that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) it is constructing will benefit all downstream countries.

The dam is on a stretch of the Blue Nile that runs through Ethiopia.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman ambassador Dina Mufti told the Ethiopian news Agency (ENA) on Monday that efforts to make clear that the dam would ensure the benefits of downstream countries would be further strengthened.

He urged the Egyptian government to refrain from the confused stand it had been reflecting and respect the voice of the Ethiopian people.

“The Egyptian government is expected to stop threatening Ethiopia of breaching international principles and realise the benefits the dam provides to the Egyptian people,” he said.

Mufti vowed the construction of the dam — which would be the largest hydro-electric power plant in Africa when completed with capacity to generate 6,000 megawatts of power — would not be suspended as Ethiopia has full rights to utilise the river’s potential.

The Ethiopian Diaspora had pledged to extend all-round support for the work, he added.

“Ethiopia Stepping Up Efforts To Show Dam’s Benefits To Downstream Countries”, 08/04/2014, online at: <http://indepthafrica.com/ethiopia-stepping-up-efforts-to-show-dams-benefits-to-downstream-countries/>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Church mediates Egypt-Ethiopia dispute over Renaissance Dam

In an exclusive interview with *Azzaman*, Hisham Geneina, head of Egypt's Central Auditing Organization, denied reports that the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) would support him in the presidential elections, and stressed that he was not affiliated with any particular movement and he is not considering running for president.

Hisham Kamal, a member of the National Alliance to Support Legitimacy (NASL) and spokesman for the [Salafist Call](#), denied allegations that the alliance intends to support Geneina or any other political figure, because it does not trust in the situation on the scene and is still committed to acting on the basis of legitimacy.

On the news that the Brotherhood might support Geneina in the upcoming presidential elections, Kamal said that these were mere rumors that might have originated from the intelligence services or the Ministry of Interior. He noted that there had been previous attempts to impose conditions on the alliance for a so-called reconciliation. Yet, he said, the alliance has refused to comply with these conditions and would not accept any future reconciliation unless it were based on legitimacy, and was accompanied by the trial of those who killed peaceful demonstrators and the restoration of rights.

Additionally, political activists have started to collect signatures supporting the candidacy of Geneina to the post of president in several provinces. Maj. Gen. Adel al-Qala, head of the Egyptian Arab Socialist Party, described the Brotherhood's moves in this regard as an attempt to confuse the political scene. On the other hand, sources tied to the campaign of Field Marshal Gen. [Abdel Fattah al-Sisi](#) revealed that Sisi would probably accept the invitation of the Orthodox Church to attend the Mass celebrating the Resurrection on April 19, while sources tied to the campaign of Hamdeen Sabahi said he would also accept the invitation of the church to attend these celebrations. Observers in Cairo described that as an attempt by the candidates to win the votes of Copts. Informed sources said Sisi would more likely get the majority of votes of the Copts as a result of his support for the June 30 Revolution. In the same context, a number of political forces called for the adoption of an electoral code of conduct to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

George Isaac, a political activist, said the climate that currently prevails in the country requires an electoral code of conduct and the enforcement of the law to ensure integrity and impartiality of the elections.

He added that the most prominent article in this code of conduct should be to ban the use of the state's apparatuses to publicize a candidate at the expense of another. He stressed that every citizen has the right to run in the elections without anyone delving into the details of his personal life. Safwat el-Nahas, secretary-general of the Egyptian Patriotic Movement, said it would be better if all candidates, campaigns and supporters commit to the electoral code of conduct in terms of publicity or any other electoral matter for the benefit of Egypt and for the success of the electoral process. Amr Ali, a member of the Free Egyptians Party, described the idea of the electoral code of conduct as mere ink on paper, given the political atmosphere in the country and the prevailing turmoil, which does not allow its implementation.

He pointed out that the application of the electoral code of conduct would be possible after a high level of political awareness was reached.

On another note, Patriarch Abune Mathias of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church will arrive and spend five days in Cairo late this month, at the invitation of Pope Tawadros II, pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church, to visit the Egyptian church, after Mathias was elected head of Ethiopia's church.

Sources within the church told *Azzaman* that Tawadros will try to persuade Mathias that the Ethiopian church assume a role in resolving the crisis between Egypt and Ethiopia over the [Renaissance Dam](#), given the historical relations between the two churches. Tawadros will be asking the patriarch for the church to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government to make concessions to preserve the historical relations between the two peoples.

In the same context, a conference titled "The Nile is a Cooperation not a Clash" was held on April 5 by the Arab Healthy Water Association. During the conference, international water-law experts offered an integrated vision of the dangers that would emanate from the Renaissance Dam and the ways to prevent them.

Maghawri Shehata, an international water expert and president of the conference, told *Azzaman* that the experts taking part in the conference will clarify the reality of the water situation, the water crises and shortages in Egypt's share of the Nile's waters.

Shehata noted that for the first time, the conference would discuss the report of the tripartite technical committee on the assessment of the environmental and technical impact of the dam on the two downstream countries, and on the danger of Ethiopian plans to build a series of dams on the security of Egypt's water. This issue will be discussed by Mohamed Nasr Allam, former Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, in a working paper — which will be submitted to the conference — in a technical and neutral way, so that facts will be clarified without exaggeration or underestimation.

He added that in a study conducted by Mufid Shehab, head of the Egyptian branch of the International Law Association, the conference would present the legal aspects and the chronology of the issue. He will also talk about how Egypt can apply its legal rights to use the waters generated by the Renaissance Dam and to secure its share of water in general, according to the documents, conventions and treaties that Egypt has signed, and under the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses.

He noted that the conference would be discussing a study on the political dimensions of [Egypt's water security](#) within the framework of Egypt's water policy in the Horn of Africa. The study will be presented by Mohammad Salman Taya, a professor in the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University.

He added that the conference aims at finding solutions to ensure a win-win situation — namely to ensure Ethiopia has the power and Egypt the water — by developing a map that would allow the upstream and downstream countries to reap the benefits of the Renaissance Dam. He pointed out that the conference will prepare a report that consists of the suggested solutions to the crisis of the Renaissance Dam and will submit it to the relevant authorities and institutions, most notably the presidential and governmental institutions.

On the other hand, the statements on the Renaissance Dam issue and water crisis, which were made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs [Nabil Fahmy](#) and the Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation

Mohammed Abdel Matlab, have sparked angry reactions. National and political forces have demanded that the minister of foreign affairs stop making statements such as the one in which he revealed that Egypt was ready to take part in the financing of the Renaissance Dam. Nader Nouredin, a professor of water resources and agricultural land at the University of Cairo, described the statements made by Fahmy that Egypt offered to finance the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam as catastrophic. Nouredin said that Fahmy's statements are dangerous and wrong, and his remarks are incomplete and unclear. They may be exploited in a bad way by Ethiopia, since Ethiopia has refused Egyptian participation in financing construction of the dam, which has a 14 billion cubic-meter capacity and other specifications that guarantee the sharing of Nile water by Egypt and Sudan.

In the meantime, political forces condemned the statements of Matlab in which he said that the water reserve in the Aswan Dam will serve Egypt for two more years. They stressed that these statements would harm Egypt's negotiating position. Sovereign sources revealed that high-level parties have asked Matlab to stop making such statements without first referring to the intelligence services or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which are currently managing the [Renaissance Dam](#) file.

“Church mediates Egypt-Ethiopia dispute over Renaissance Dam”, 08/04/2014, online at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/04/egypt-ethiopia-church-mediation-renaissance-dam.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Egypt presidential hopeful sees Ethiopia, Twitter as potential enemies

Mortada Mansour, one of three candidates running for the presidential election in Egypt, said he would wage war against Ethiopia if it continues building a Nile river dam and threatened to shut down social media websites, the state-run Al Ahram Online **reported**.

During an interview on the privately-owned al-Hayah TV channel, Mansour addressed Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam, a thorny subject between Cairo and Addis Ababa.

Although stressing he would seek international assistance to resolve the dispute between the two states, he warned that he would be willing to go to war to protect Egypt's share of Nile water, Al Ahram Online reported.

"Nile water is the source of life in Egypt and I will not allow anyone to diminish our share of it," he said.

Egypt relies heavily on the Nile for its water and images of the construction of the Renaissance Dam released last May led to public anxiety in the country of 80 million.

Domestic Policy

On the domestic front, Mansour said he would ban social media websites if they posed a threat to national security.

"If I think Twitter and Facebook could lead to the fall of the state, then yes [I would ban them]," said the controversial lawyer and harsh critic of activists who led Egypt's 2011 uprising.

The former judge and current head of Egypt's Zamalek football club has called for a suspension on protests, sit-ins and strikes for a period of one year to help the country get back on its feet both at the economic and political levels.

He said if elected president he would also reject the \$1.3 billion annual U.S. aid in order to make Egyptians "start working and producing," adding that the aid was meant to support the Camp David peace accord with Israel.

That accord, he said, no longer holds today.

“Israel does not respect the treaty anymore. Weapons have been smuggled lately from Israel into the Egyptian border, which contradicts with articles in the agreement,” he said.

Mansour announced his presidential bid on Sunday, joining former army general Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in the race for the top political post in the country.

Hamdeen Sabahim, a leftist political figure, is also running in the election.

“Egypt presidential hopeful sees Ethiopia, Twitter as potential enemies”, 09/04/2014, online at:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/04/08/Egypt-s-Mansour-says-would-ban-Twitter-Facebook-if-need-be.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ South Sudan conflict and Egypt's hydro politics

April 9, 2014- The recent media hype regarding military cooperation between South Sudan and Egypt grab the attention of those who closely follow developments in the region.

This is mainly because of the central role South Sudan is playing in the region's peace and security and Egypt's vested interest in relation to Nile water vis-a-vis the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

South Sudan's relative peace and stability only lasts for three years after it gained its independence in July 2011. The newest nation's peace thrown in to abyss in December 2013, after the country's president first sacked his entire cabinet and second tried to imprison his political rivals alleging them of conspiring for Coup d'état. He also relieved around 170 army generals from active duty. Some of the officials were jailed while the main opponent, former vice president Dr. Reik Machar, escaped and waged a rebellion. The war continued along with mediation effort sponsored by the Inter Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and other partners like Norway, the UK, US, China, the AU, EU and the UN. The mediation effort leaves much to be desired as far as bringing peace and order in South Sudan is concerned.

South Sudan is a country endowed with resources such as oil, water, fertile land, livestock, wetland and wildlife. Among these resources, rarely discussed, however, is that right to water and sharing the resource to the benefit of the society. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between Sudan and South Sudan did not include an agreement on South Sudan's rights to the Nile water after independence even though both parties rely on the Nile as their principal water source. South Sudan's independence from Sudan in July 2011, however, directly impacts the water scarce Nile basin's legal framework.

Initially, South Sudan's independence, for Egypt, presented great opportunity; namely the prospect of resuming the longstanding plan to increase the Nile flows by means of river engineering in South Sudanese wetland, as envisaged by the 1959 agreement, which Egypt hopes South Sudan would accept.

On the contrary, until the aftermath of the December 15, 2013 conflict, it was very much likely for South Sudan to align itself with the upstream Nile riparian states that have always contested the 1929

and 1959 colonial agreements as valid and acceptable. Even, the country declared its intension to sign the new Comprehensive Framework Agreement. This position made Egypt nervous.

Geo-political developments following the crisis in South Sudan gives an opportunity for Egypt as the countries in the IGAD Sub region witness presumable different positions as to how the crisis should be approached and solved.

Some regional and international players also involved overtly or covertly in the conflict to exploit the opportunity for their own political and economic advantages. Uganda said based on the bilateral military pact it has and with the invitation of the government of South Sudan it intervened militarily and backs president Kirr while other IGAD members prefer to advance only with the mediation effort. As the issue of South Sudan goes complicated, time will tell which approach prevails. Be this as it may, nevertheless, the government of President Kiir is trying every avenue to galvanize any political, diplomatic as well as military support to defeat its arch-enemy and its main ethnic rival, a rebellion led by former vice president Dr. Reik Machar. The president was not as pleased as expected by the second group of country's approach to the conflict. He expressed his discontent through various means. He is also trying to play different cards to arm twist countries that are not directly support his "coup" version of the crisis, condemn the "unconstitutional change of government" and throw their support even by putting their arm-boots into the country, like Uganda did.

One such country is Ethiopia and the card against it is rapprochement with Egypt. This approach for Egypt, otherwise, gives an opportunity to influence the government of Khartoum on various issues.

For Egypt, South Sudan's conflict represents a greater opportunity. On the one hand, Egypt is more interested in preserving the waters of the Suud, the immense wetland that dominates South Sudanese territories crossed by the Nile.

As the White Nile makes its journey from its source in the equatorial Africa, it forms the Suud Wetlands in Southern Sudan, which stretches for 450 Kms. Historically the Suud has been vital to the pastoral economy and livelihoods of South Sudanese. Historical accounts documented that Britain, which was the colonial power ruling Sudan jointly with Egypt, proposed building the Jonglei canal in the 1930s that would deliver around 7bn m³ of water annually, seeking to provide the Egyptian

people with increased water for agricultural use. According to these accounts, a second phase for the project was also planned, which would completely dry up the wetlands.

The canal project never materialized under the British rule, but was resurrected in the 1970s by the Nimeri Military regime of Khartoum. The Nimeri government sought to share the increased Nile flow with Egypt and claimed that the canal would facilitate national development in the South. Work proceeded until the civil war resumed in South Sudan in 1983 and SPLA missiles destroy the canal project.

After South Sudan's independence, by agreeing to share the water that the Jonglie canal would transport equally with South Sudan, Egypt was hopeful that this hydro-diplomacy would cement its ability to exert influence in the new nation. However, this strategy seemed failed as South Sudan was attracted towards the upstream countries that have always contested the colonial water agreement.

Why renewed interest on cooperation with South Sudan?

Egypt renewed its interest to forge cooperation with South Sudan at a time of shifting alliances and changing geo-political balance in the region.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project became inescapably a reality for Egypt to contest. Khartoum, the other signatory of the 1959 agreement, gives its diplomatic backing to the construction of the GERD after the study of the International Panel of Experts (IPOEs) report concluded the Dam would not cause significant harm to the downstream countries (Egypt, South Sudan and Sudan).

Since December 15, 2013, South Sudan has lost its peace and different actors in the country compete for power. It also lost its strength to endorse the Comprehensive Framework Agreement. By backing whom who has the means of coercion, through its special need of military cooperation, Egypt gambits on the one hand to proceed with harnessing what it sees as alternative source of water, the Suud Wetland and on the other hand, exert its influence on Addis Ababa as well as Khartoum. President Kirr might also seal a deal with Egypt to save his government from collapsing.

Until recently, Khartoum and Juba were at loggerheads over alleging one another of supporting groups who oppose central governments in their respected territories. The Nuba Mountains and South Kordofan conflicts are serious threats for Khartoum along with the contested area of Abiye and the disruption of the oil revenue that flows from Juba through its port. The resurrection of the recently resolved conflict in eastern Sudan via Eritrea's manipulation might also be another fear for Sudan. These are the weakest links of Khartoum to think of whatever decision it takes in relation to South Sudan. South Sudan knows this very well and so does Egypt. Hence, Egypt sees an opportunity in South Sudan conflict to arm twist the decision of Khartoum while cooperating militarily with Juba, and this includes Khartoum's GERD position.

The recently publicized military agreement between South Sudan and Egypt also presents a real danger to Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam. To think of the worst and as it is repeatedly pronounced by Egyptian scholars and politicians, South Sudan and Sudan are the best launching pads for Egypt to disrupt the stability of Ethiopia and sabotage its peace and development. Sudan, as it has shifted its alliance vividly, became a disappointment to Egypt to use it as a play ground, while South Sudan seems offers the best opportunity for this destabilizing act.

The way forward?

As a sovereign nation, South Sudan has every right, offered to it by international law, to be party to any cooperation agreements with another country. Hence, the military cooperation agreement between South Sudan and Egypt can be seen in light of this international norm.

However, for Ethiopia, such an agreement should be a red light to be crossed as it would present a real and present danger. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a national project, one of Ethiopia's greatest achievements, but seen by Egypt as a cause for its embarrassment. The Project as well as the national development endeavors should be protected at any cost and South Sudan should clearly be told not to play dangerous games against the survival of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia, time and again, accuses Egypt as it works tirelessly to destabilize its peace and security through various means, one of which is through proxy conflicts. There are also reports that implicate Egypt supporting extremist groups like Al-Shabab in Somalia and spreading terrorism in the Horn of

Africa region to weaken Addis Ababa and halt construction of the Dam. Eritrea is another front for Egypt for its ploy against Ethiopia. According to media reports, Egypt also offered its interest to mediate the conflict in South Sudan, the old tactic it has used for Somalia since 1991 in organizing proliferation of initiatives to counter Ethiopia's effort. Egypt's intention to involve in South Sudan will give the conflict a regional nature that will have a dangerous spillover effect on the preservation of international peace, as Ethiopia will not see it as an easy matter. This is what Egypt really wants; hence it seeks the intervention of the collective body of the international community, aka, the United Nations in regard to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam vis-a vis South Sudan conflict.

Everything, in this regard, needs great caution from Ethiopia and the IGAD countries. IGAD decided to deploy Monitoring and Stabilization Force in South Sudan and facilitate "progressive withdrawal of allied forces from the theater of the war." Simultaneously, the organization intensifies its effort to find political solution for the conflict. South Sudan along with Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan should see the Nile water as a bond for stability and development in the region and work together for mutual benefit. The government of President Kirr should not be a victim for short sighted political benefits vis-a-vis Egypt's hegemonic policy against the Nile water, and should refrain from opening a space for destabilizing forces that would have a spillover effect to regional peace, stability and development. Whether Egypt's intention is to harness the Suud Wetlands or deter Ethiopia; South Sudan would not be beneficial either way.

"South Sudan conflict and Egypt's hydro politics", 09/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article50596>

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Vision 2025 doesn't mention construction of Kalabagh Dam

LAHORE-Chairman IEP Lahore Centre Engineer Captain Syed Khalid Sajjad criticizing the vision 2025, has said that the govt did not enlist Kalabagh Dam in its long-term projects despite details of all other hydal power projects.

He said that KBD is the cheapest and easiest power project among all dams included in vision 2025. He said that it was high time for the government to put all political considerations aside for the sake of national interests and our future generations.

He said that Tharparker Tragedy is an eye-opener for not the Federal and the Provincial governments alone but for the whole nation as well because such drought-like situation could erupt in any part of the country in the face of fast depleting water resources and a ballooning population.

He said that the future generations would not forgive us on our failure to take immediate measures to overcome water challenge that was not only posing a grave threat to our food security but fast turning huge tacks of land into barren areas.”

While expressing grave concern over deaths in Tharparkar, the Khalid Sajjad called for long term planning to overcome water shortage. Had a little attention towards building on new dams been given in the past, the situation today would have been quite different, he added.

We are throwing water worth billion of dollars into the sea instead of paving the way for construction of dams.

The country's food security is under threat due to fast depleting water resources but wav we are throwing water worth billions of dollars into the sea instead of paving the way for construction of dams is deplorable. All countries the world give preference to the national interest on politics but in Pakistan, the situation remained the other way round in the past. The dams would not only save the country from natural calamities but would also ensure our food security due to availability of water. Now the situation has reached the point that neither cheap electricity is available nor ample water to irrigate huge arable lands. It all was a result of past rulers lethargic attitude towards issues on national importance. Khalid Sajjad said that Kalabagh Dam is the only project in Pakistan that can not only make power affordable for the masses, trade and industry but it would also help irrigate huge lands that are turning barren only because of an acute water shortage. It is also the only project that can make the economy competitive and sustainable.

The dam will wipe out loadshedding and increase industrial output while its contribution to value addition in agricultural output could go up to \$10 billion a year.

“ Vision 2025 doesn’t mention construction of Kalabagh Dam”, 07/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/07-Apr-2014/vision-2025-doesn-t-mention-construction-of-kalabagh-dam>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Mekong hydropower dams: Laos considering, Vietnam needs “quick reactions”

The comment was made by Nguyen Viet Dung, Deputy Director of PanNature, a Vietnamese not-for-profit organization dedicated to protecting and conserving diversity of life and improving human well-being.

Dung believes that what needs to be done immediately is to provide reports on the possible impacts of the hydropower dams on the Mekong’s lower course. The reports, with convincing arguments and figures, need to be provided to Laos as soon as possible, so that the country can fully consider the pros and cons of its proposed hydropower plant project.

Quick, quicker

The second summit of the International Mekong River Commission has ended with a satisfactory outcome. Vietnam suggested setting up a research team, with the presence of representatives of Laos and Cambodia, which would be charged with analyzing the possible impacts of the hydropower plants on Mekong.

Vietnam, at the summit, proposed that Laos waits for Vietnam’s research work to reach a conclusion before it decides whether to move ahead with its project. The research is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ha Kim Ngoc said that Laos has promised to thoroughly consider the possible negative impacts shown by Vietnam and Cambodia.

Dung, applauding Lao goodwill, has urged Vietnamese scientists to carry out the research and make public the result of the research to confirm the dangers to the people in the Mekong’s lower course.

“This would be really a big challenge for Vietnamese researchers, who need to clarify what are the impacts to be caused by hydropower dams and what are the impacts to be caused by other factors,” Dung commented.

“Only by clarifying the issues, will Vietnam be able to convince Laos and involved parties,” he said.

How to make the research outcome recognized?

However, worries still exist. A scientist said the next question is whether the conclusions reached by the research team will be accepted by Laos and the involved parties. And even if they agree on the conclusions of the researchers, will they be cooperative and adjust their plans accordingly?

Dung, agreeing with the opinion, stressed that the research must be conducted with the active participation of representatives from Laos, Cambodia and Thailand as well.

Recent surveys have all shown that Mekong's basin is one of the five largest river basins in the world to be witnessing the sharpest decline in flow. The annual flow of the Mekong in the lower course has declined by 10 percent over the last 30 years.

The Mekong river section running across Vientiane in Laos has become so depleted that people can cross the river on foot in the dry season. In the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, salt water has invaded the Tan Chau area of An Giang Province, something which never happened in the past.

Mekong has been playing a very important role in Vietnam's socio-economic development. The Mekong Delta, with an area of 40,000 square kilometers, is home to 20 million people. Its products make up 27 percent of Vietnam's GDP, and it provides 90 percent of the nation's rice exports and 60 percent of its seafood export turnover

"Mekong hydropower dams: Laos considering, Vietnam needs "quick reactions"", 13/04/2014, online at:
<http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/environment/99672/mekong-hydropower-dams--laos-considering--vietnam-needs--quick-reactions-.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Mekong Summit Struggles to Halt Devastating Dams

Laos remains determined to move forward with dam construction that threatens the environment and food security.

With its extraordinary diversity, the mighty Mekong has long enchanted explorers and travellers. Not only do its currents carry life-giving sediment and nutrients, its waters have provided a living for countless generations.

But for how much longer? How much time is left before the Mekong changes forever? A massive dam-building program is unfolding that will unleash a cascade of 11 dams that will forever lock the river into a series of silent and stagnant reservoirs behind hydraulic walls.

In a clash between a Lao government trying to sell electricity to its energy-hungry neighbors and earn hard currency, and the need to protect and preserve the river's ecological riches and fisheries, conservation and food security is clearly losing. Construction on the Xayaburi Dam, the first on the Lower Mekong, got underway in 2012. Construction on a second dam, the Don Sahong, will start at the end of 2014. Work is moving forward faster than the completion of scientific studies needed to provide the evidence of "significant harm."

This year is likely to be particularly critical for the future of Southeast Asia's most important river, which originates from the Tibetan plateau and passes through six countries as it meanders its way to the delta in Vietnam.

The stakes are high. The endangered Irrawaddy Dolphin may be doomed if the dams go ahead according to the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The WWF is equally concerned about the threat to fisheries and the food security of more than 60 million people living in four Mekong countries.

Not surprisingly, then, activists were hopeful that the second Mekong River Commission (MRC) summit would put the issue of dam construction at the top of its agenda. "It is critical that the dangers of mainstream dam building take center stage," said Ame Trandem, Southeast Asia Program Director

for International Rivers. With the summit wrapping up on the weekend, they have been left disappointed.

Certainly, the MRC summit offered a façade of celebratory unity, with three prime ministers of the four member states – Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam – in attendance. Behind this, though, lurked a distinct sense of MRC malaise, a lack of leadership and a papering over the deep divisions over dam-building.

MRC donor nations have expressed concern, calling for decisions on hydropower to be made based on “scientific knowledge regarding trans-boundary impacts on resources and ecosystems.”

Trandem argues that the unilateral decision of the Lao government to build the Xayaburi Dam without MRC approval and push ahead with the Don Sahong Dam are clear examples of disregarding science with a build first and study later mentality. The 1995 Mekong Treaty provides a legal basis for neighboring countries to demand that Laos halt construction if significant harm can be demonstrated.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam are calling on the Lao and Thai governments to freeze the dam construction. Vietnam Rivers Network representative Lam Thi Thu Suu told The Diplomat that “although the Xayaburi dam is around 30 percent built, it does not mean we cannot stop it.”

In a move designed to remind Thailand that its investment could run up against serious opposition from Vietnam, and that it appears to run contrary to the spirit of the 1995 Mekong Treaty (Thailand being one of the four signatories), the Vietnam Rivers Network has dispatched a letter to Siam Commercial Bank asking it to cancel its investment in the Xayaburi project. The letter reads, in part, “the bank needs to reconsider their risk assessments, to give more importance to sustainable development, and to the government of Viet Nam, where your bank is currently trying to expand its business.” Similar letters have been sent to other Thai banks involved in Xayaburi

The MRC Role

The Xayaburi dam has become an important test case for the MRC's credibility in managing conflict over water resources, based on its special mandate to conduct a six-month regional consultation with all stakeholders under the hitherto unused procedure known as the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement.

MRC can only decide issues by consensus. The four member states were split down the middle with Cambodia and Vietnam strongly opposed to the Xayaburi Dam. With no consensus, but with backing from Thailand, Laos terminated the consultation and went ahead with construction of the dam, without waiting for the additional impact studies everybody agreed were necessary.

Cambodia's National Mekong chairman Te Navuth commented "It has been very difficult talking with the Lao delegation. They don't listen to our concerns."

The MRC secretariat and CEO Hans Gutmann have been criticized for their weakness in implementing the consultation process, and for allowing the Lao government to launch the dam with a host of unresolved issues on trans-boundary impacts.

Gutmann conceded in a speech to the pre-summit conference that the MRC is primarily a talking shop. "We have meetings, meetings, meetings and more meetings. We meet too often and too much, but there is no alternative." Moreover, the 1995 Treaty lacks sanctions to deal with violations of the Mekong agreement, nor do other member states have any power of veto.

Several donor countries, development partners and NGOs are lobbying for changes in the 1995 Mekong Agreement and for reform of the MRC.

A Dire Threat To Vietnam

"If all the Mekong dams go ahead, the impact will be fully felt in about 15-20 years," predicts wetlands specialist Nguyen Thien.

The delta accounts for roughly 50 percent of Vietnam’s total food production. Nguyen paints a grim scenario of the future, with the ecosystem devastated by dams and exacerbated by climate change. “The delta will lose its capacity to produce rice for export. Vietnam will probably still be able to feed its own people but will probably not able to export rice to feed anybody else. This will have implications for food buying countries and the price of food will be more expensive for all.”

In Cambodia, the director of fisheries has also sounded the alarm. Nao Thuok considered the threat posed by the dams to Cambodian fisheries, which provides 80 percent of the country’s protein, would be so bad that “For Cambodia this is a national security issue to protect our food security.”

Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tang Dung told the summit, “Never has the Mekong River Basin faced so many challenges.” In 2013, a very worried Vietnamese government took the initiative to launch a major scientific study of the hydropower impact on the Mekong, and in particular the delta. The study was supported by both U.S. and Danish research groups.

In a press conference after the summit, Vietnamese Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Minh Quang urged Laos to stop the dam projects until “the environmental assessments of hydropower plants on the mainstream of the river jointly conducted by the three countries are completed in December 2015.”

However the Lao government insists it will continue with construction of the dams, and will not wait for the outcome of the Vietnam-based research expected in December 2015. It appears unlikely the Lao government, the poorest member of the MRC, will listen to the downstream countries without some kind of financial deal to compensate for the loss of revenue from the dams.

At the summit, Vietnam hinted that a financial deal was being considered, with a senior foreign ministry official telling The Diplomat, “We have discussed with Japan and with the U.S. compensation for Lao for not building dams.”

Unless an alternative deal is hatched before the end of the year, 2014 will surely be remembered as a tragic turning point for Southeast Asia’s most important river, and for the slow death of regional fisheries and agriculture.

“Mekong Summit Struggles to Halt Devastating Dams”, 09/04/2014, online at:
<http://strategicstudyindia.blogspot.com.tr/2014/04/mekong-summit-struggles-to-halt.html>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Experts renew quake fears over Xayaburi dam on Mekong River in Laos

Earthquake experts have renewed concerns about the potential for a seismic disaster hitting the massive Xayaburi dam, which is well under construction on the Mekong River in a quake-prone location in Laos.

Geologist Dr Punya Charusiri of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok said: "The Xayaburi dam poses a potential danger because there are active faults close to the dam site."

Dr Punya said there was a 30 per cent chance of a medium-sized earthquake hitting the dam site in the next 30 years, and a 10 per cent chance of a powerful earthquake of up to magnitude 7. He said: "If the fault at the dam site becomes active ... there is no chance for seismic engineering to take care of that."

He also said construction should "never have started" at such a site without further research into its seismic risk, although the dam's builders say it already complies with all earthquake safety rules.

There have been a series of earthquakes near the project site in recent years, and Dr Punya's warning comes after Phnom Penh expressed concerns about the earthquake risk at Xayaburi to the Laotian government in 2011.

In 2011, two quakes hit 48 kilometres from the dam site, one of 5.4 magnitude and one of 4.6. A month later a quake of 3.9 occurred 60 kilometres from the site. In 2007, a 6.3-magnitude quake hit the Xayaburi area.

Further away, in northern Myanmar, a 6.9 magnitude quake on March 24, 2011 killed 151 people.

Dr Punya said the quakes near Xayaburi occurred on what were thought to have been inactive faults, "an unusual development and one that causes additional concern".

The dam is being built by Swiss-based Poyry Energy and Thai company CH. Karnchang. They insist the dam will be safe.

Poyry Energy's general manager, Dr Martin Wieland, said seismic hazards at Xayaburi had been thoroughly studied and all aspects of the dam's construction were in accordance with seismic design guidelines prepared by the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD).

However, researchers at Chulalongkorn University used remote sensing techniques to identify two active faults nearby, one 60 kilometres from the site and one 20 to 40 kilometres away.

Dr Punya said: "The company should never have started construction of the dam on a fault, before the research into the seismic danger had been completed."

The government of Laos officially launched the Xayaburi dam project in November 2012, despite protests from the downstream nations of Cambodia and Vietnam, scientists and a host of NGOs. Critics fear the dam's environmental impact, as well as the risk posed to food production by massively reducing fisheries and the loss of sediment that would affect soil fertility and agriculture.

Te Navuth, secretary general of Cambodia's National Mekong Committee, said: "An independent and specialised research team must assess the risk of earthquakes and dam safety."

The Mekong River Commission, an advisory body with representatives from nations along the river, made several requests for information on dam safety management before the Laotian government last month released a "probabilistic seismic hazard assessment". Thirty per cent of the dam has already been built.

The US\$3.5 billion hydropower project, which will sell energy to Thailand, is scheduled for completion in 2019.

Poyry Energy's Asia director, Knut Sierotzki, recently said "all relevant guidelines from ICOLD were followed by the design engineer to ensure the safety of such a large hydraulic structure".

Critics say the ICOLD is not an independent research body, but a forum for the dam engineering lobby largely funded by hydropower companies. Poyry's Dr Wieland is also chairman of the committee on seismic aspects of dam design for the ICOLD.

Last week the Vietnam Rivers Network, a group of NGOs based in Vietnam, called for the immediate suspension of the Xayaburi dam project, citing risks to fisheries, food security and livelihood.

“Experts renew quake fears over Xayaburi dam on Mekong River in Laos”, 08/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1469903/experts-renew-quake-fears-over-xayaburi-dam-mekong-river-laos>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Hydroelectric dams are doing more harm than good to emerging economies

Large dams in developing countries are not economically viable. Instead of obtaining hoped-for riches, developing countries risk drowning their fragile economies in debt owing to the ill-advised construction of large dams.

New research undertaken at Oxford University, investigating 245 large dams built since 1934, reveals the dismal track record of such megaprojects. With an average cost overrun of over 90%, large dams have one of the highest cost overruns among all infrastructure asset classes. This result is before accounting for negative impacts on human society and environment, and without including the effects of inflation and debt servicing.

What's worse, planners do not seem to learn. Forecasts are likely to be as wrong as they were between 1934-2007. Dam budgets today are as wrong as at any time during the 70 years for which data exist.

Nearly half the dams we studied suffered a cost overrun so large as to be considered stranded. That is, the capital sunk upfront could not be recovered. For example, Brazil's Itaipu dam, built in the 1970s, suffered a 240% cost overrun that impaired the nation's public finances for three decades. Despite producing much-needed electricity, it is likely Itaipu will never pay back the costs incurred to build it. Yet Brazil is currently building the controversial Belo Monte hydroelectric project, which studiessuggest may be non-viable even before opening. China, Indonesia, Pakistan and other nations show similar amnesiac behaviour regarding the building of dams.

The costs of large dams and similar failed mega projects have caused an explosive growth of debt in developing countries. For example, the actual cost of Tarbela dam, most of which was borrowed from external sources, amounted to 23% of the increase in Pakistan's external public debt stock between 1968-1984.

Similarly, for the Chivor hydroelectric project in Colombia, the planners predicted that there would be no changes in the exchange rate between the Colombian peso and the US dollar during the construction period (1970-77). In fact, the Colombian currency depreciated nearly 90% against the dollar. Since over half the project's costs covered imported inputs, this depreciation caused a 32% cost overrun.

Countries with a higher per capita income and better macroeconomic climate typically build dams more quickly with lower cost overruns. This suggests that developing countries, in particular, despite seemingly being most in need of complex facilities such as large dams, ought to stay away from bites bigger than they can chew.

A 90% complete dam is as valueless as a dam not built at all. This typically escalates politicians' desire to throw good money after bad and try to complete a dam long after it has become clear that the investment is a dud.

Costs aside, mega dams also take an inordinately long time to build – 8.6 years on average and often more than 10 years. Our research shows that these long time horizons leave dam projects particularly ineffective in resolving urgent energy crises and especially vulnerable to currency volatility, hyperinflation, political tensions and swings in water availability.

Some combination of these factors constitutes the typical dam disaster. For example, owing to incorrect estimates of water availability, Kainji Dam in Nigeria has fallen short of its hydroelectricity production targets by as much as 70%. Volatile swings in water flow have threatened the dam's safety in times of flood and impaired its hydropower and irrigation benefits during drought.

Despite forgoing large dams, developing countries can still take advantage of their water resources. Our research shows that smaller, more flexible hydroelectric projects that can be built quicker, and are more easily adapted to social and environmental concerns, are preferable to high-risk mega dams.

Norway is an excellent model of how a flexible approach can yield substantial payoffs. With 99% of its electricity produced from water, hydropower is highly successful in the country. Pressure groups and political parties began to question large dams on environmental grounds at the turn of the century. The government responded with a plan to encourage small hydro development, defined as plants with an installed capacity of 10 megawatts or less, typically using low head and run-of-the-river technologies. Today, some 1,000 such plants exist in Norway and more are on the way.

Norway nurtured homegrown competitive and technologically innovative industries in hydropower planning, design, construction, turbine manufacturing and management. Instead of slowing down under criticism, Norwegian hydropower shifted and accelerated development.

This experience has yet to inform such emerging economies as Brazil, China, Indonesia and Pakistan. China needs the biggest rethink, with its plans to almost double its current hydropower capacity of

250,000 megawatts through a huge dam-building effort. Rather than drowning their economies in debt from megadams, developing countries should think of more agile alternatives.

“Hydroelectric dams are doing more harm than good to emerging economies”, 07/04/2014, online at:
<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/hydroelectric-dams-emerging-economies-oxford-research>

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ California drought puzzle: store or conserve more water?

There was a time not long ago when much of civilized society considered each drop of river water that reached the ocean a wasted resource.

That was before environmentalists pointed out the benefits of the outflow to fish, wildlife and the ocean ecosystem, setting off an ongoing tug-of-war between fishermen and farmers in California that has reached a critical stage this year as the state struggles through a drought.

One thing that's become clear amid the fallow cropland and rationing is that there is not enough water storage in California to sustain all the competing interests. The dilemma has again put a spotlight on the precious water that gets away.

In an average year, rain and snowmelt in California generate about 71 million acre-feet of water, some of which is captured in reservoirs or groundwater basins. An acre-foot is the amount needed to cover an acre with a foot of water, enough to supply an average household for a year.

About 32 percent of the 71 million acre-feet is used for agriculture and 10 percent for urban areas, according to the state Department of Water Resources' chief hydrologist, [Maury Roos](#).

About 35 percent of the total is reserved by law to help river ecosystems, wetlands and fisheries, and to maintain a healthy flow of water in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

That leaves about 21 percent of the total to flow out into the ocean without being used for anything, according to Roos' calculations.

"That is the segment we can capture more of," Roos said. "If we could store more of that, we would have a larger water supply."

Trouble is, nobody in California can agree on how, or even whether, to capture it.

Storage, conservation

Everybody agrees that something must be done to quench California's ever increasing thirst. The question is whether the state should spend billions of dollars capturing the water behind dams and distributing it through new pipelines or spend a little less money by maximizing usage through conservation.

A laundry list of proposals, including water recycling, groundwater storage and even cloud seeding, are listed in a working draft of the California Water Plan, a comprehensive blueprint for future management of the resource.

It is nevertheless Gov. [Jerry Brown](#)'s proposal to build twin water tunnels to bypass the delta and take water south that is getting all the attention. The project, which is part of the Delta Conservation Plan, would include restoration of marsh habitat in the delta.

[Jason Peltier](#), the deputy general manager for the Westlands Water District, said farmers generally support the tunnels because the project would free up more water for agriculture.

"Most years there is plenty of water in the system that we can't get to because of operating restrictions," Peltier said. "We've seen over the last 20 years layer upon layer of regulatory restrictions that have taken away water for humans and allocated it for the environment."

Problem is, the tunnels could cost anywhere from \$25 billion to \$67 billion, according to recent estimates.

California's reservoirs

In a typical wet year, California captures about 10 million acre-feet of water in its reservoirs, about 80 percent of which is held in the state water department's two biggest reservoirs behind Shasta and Oroville dams.

That's well below the 43 million acre-feet capacity of the 1,200 reservoirs under the jurisdiction of the state water department. The reason, said Roos, is that the department is required to release water for fish and wetlands management and must also leave space during winters to avoid flood-causing overflows.

Yet, agricultural interests support expanding California's reservoir capacity by adding 18.5 feet to Shasta Dam and building Sites Dam, near the town of Maxwell (Colusa County), and Temperance Flat Dam, near Millerton (Madera County) on the San Joaquin River.

These proposals, like the tunnels plan, are expensive. The Shasta dam and Sites proposals together would cost about \$3.5 billion and add about 2.6 million acre-feet of water to the system, just enough to "take you through one dry year," Roos said.

Meanwhile, environmental groups mostly oppose the tunnels and water storage projects. The existing dams and conveyance system, they say, cut off the historic salmon and steelhead trout runs and have imperiled other fish populations, like the delta smelt. Instead, they are pushing for water conservation, treatment and recycling plants.

Jon Rosenfield, a conservation biologist for the Bay Institute, said water bond money would be better spent replacing thousands of old leaking water mains around the state, implementing tiered water rates and building storm-water capture and water recycling systems.

"It simply doesn't make sense for us to be flushing toilets with pristine water transported miles from the Sierra Nevada," Rosenfield said. "The notion that it just gets used once and then it is gone is crazy."

Recycling success

Conservationists point to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California as the model for a successful recycling program. The district has built over the past two decades a wastewater treatment and reclamation system that cleans dirty household water and then filters it into the groundwater for reuse later on.

Tom Stokely, the water policy analyst for the California Water Impact Network, said Los Angeles County now uses less water than it did 30 years ago despite having at least a million more residents.

"It's really up to the Legislature and the individual water districts to take this up, but if they use up all their borrowing on the twin tunnels there won't be money left over for these things," said Stokely, adding that statewide recycling and conservation programs could save 2 million acre-feet of water a year. "We see it as an either-or scenario. Do we have a sustainable water future or do we spend all our resources on costly tunnels and water storage projects?"

None of the various ideas would solve California's water shortage problems, which are more severe than most people realize, according to regulators.

Capturing more water

California would need six times more water storage than it now has to make it through a worst-case-scenario drought, Roos said. That amounts to an additional 18 million acre-feet of storage. Water analysts at UC Davis estimate that all of the dam proposals together would only add 4 million or 5 million acre-feet, at a cost of \$6 billion to \$8 billion.

Meanwhile, demand just keeps growing as more people move into the state. It is a situation that can only get more dire as the world warms up, snow in the mountains decreases and droughts become more common.

Ultimately, Californians will have to come to grips with the fact that, no matter what gets done, the state will never be drought proof, said [Jay Lund](#), the director of the Center for Watershed Sciences at UC Davis.

"I think there will be some ability to improve, mostly in terms of giving incentives to store groundwater in wet years and to move water from north to south - efficiencies like that - but you can't make it rain," Lund said. "In the end, we will still be living in a semi-arid climate, and we will still have droughts. Most of what we can do is make it easier to prepare for the next drought."

"California drought puzzle: store or conserve more water?", 06/04/2014, online at:

<http://www.sfgate.com/science/article/California-drought-puzzle-store-or-conserve-more-5381238.php#page-2>

BACK TO TOP

❖ Excessive benzene found in NW China tap water

Citizen buy bottled water at a supermarket in Lanzhou, capital of northwest China's Gansu Province, April 11, 2014. Tap water in downtown Lanzhou has been found to contain excessive levels of benzene, provincial authorities said on Friday. Tests carried out in the early hours of Friday showed that tap water contained 200 micrograms of benzene per liter, far exceeding the national limit of 10 micrograms per liter, according to the city's environmental protection office. (Xinhua/Guo Gang)

LANZHOU, April 11 (Xinhua) -- Excessive levels of benzene in tap water have affected more than 2.4 million people in downtown Lanzhou in northwest China's Gansu Province, provincial authorities said on Friday.

Tests at a water plant at 8:30 a.m. on Friday showed tap water contained 160 micrograms of benzene per liter, far in excess of the 10 micrograms per liter national limit, according to the city's environmental protection office.

The city government warned citizens not to drink tap water for the next 24 hours. Benzene is a colorless carcinogen used to manufacture plastics.

Tests from Thursday evening to early Friday morning found between 118 micrograms and 200 micrograms of benzene per liter at the water plant, according to Veolia Water, a Sino-French joint venture and the sole water supplier for urban Lanzhou, the provincial capital.

The levels at the plant fell to 78 micrograms of benzene per liter on Friday afternoon, according to a statement from the Gansu provincial government's information office.

Meanwhile, the tap water at some urban households was also found to contain as much as 78 micrograms of benzene per liter, according to the statement.

Veolia Water began using activated carbon at 3 a.m. on Friday to absorb the organic matter and dilute the pollution.

An initial investigation found problems in a 3 km channel that links the plant that preprocesses the water and the plant that supplies water to Lanzhou. Closure of the channel will cut the city's water supply by half, said Tian Hong, head of Lanzhou's water quality monitoring station.

Fire engines and water sprinklers will be used to carry water to affected areas.

The local government is investigating the source of the contamination, and sources with Veolia told Xinhua that they believe the benzene came from chemical waste, but refused to single out any particular plant.

They denied any possibility that the Yellow River, the original source of the water, was polluted. Gansu publicity department reaffirmed on Friday afternoon that the Yellow River, which runs through the city, is not contaminated.

Lanzhou residents panicked upon hearing the news, rushing to supermarkets or community grocery stores to stock up on bottled water.

At Hualian Supermarket, one of the largest in downtown Lanzhou, many trolleys or baskets full of cases of bottled water were seen. Latecomers gathered in front of empty shelves, waiting for resupply.

"I had no idea what benzene was, but my family are all scared. My husband called to ask me to buy as much bottled water as I can," a shopper told Xinhua.

The booking line for Lanzhou Huanghe Origin Food and Drinks Co. Ltd., the biggest barrelled water provider in the city, was busy on Friday as mounting orders came.

The company normally sells 15,000 barrels of water a day. It has already started using its 50,000 barrel reserve to meet the rising demand, said Yu Cunyuan, the company's general manager.

Chen Baohua, a professor with Lanzhou University's College of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, warned local residents not to touch or drink the contaminated water as excessive inhalation of and contact with benzene would damage the human hematopoietic system, which is responsible for production of blood.

This is the second incident of its kind in Lanzhou in two months. On March 6, residents reported a strange odor when they turned on their taps, which was later confirmed to be a high concentration of ammonia, but still within the limits of the national standard.

“Excessive benzene found in NW China tap water”, 11/04/2014, online at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-04/11/c_133255669.htm?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=ede331b06d-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-ed331b06d-250657169

BACK TO TOP

WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR