



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

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



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24 October 2016 – 31 October 2016

UN calls for effective means to resolve Afghan water dispute for economic growth, avoiding conflict

A new United Nations report has underscored the need for more “effective and transparent” means of resolving high stakes water-rights disputes in Afghanistan resulting from the demand for water to support agricultural development in the conflict-plagued country.

“As this report clearly outlines, the stakes involved in water disputes are high,” the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for the country Tadamichi Yamamoto, said in a statement on Sunday.

“Resolving these disputes peacefully is of critical importance,” added Yamamoto, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Outlining the importance of water to the country’s economy, the UNAMA report, titled *Water Rights: An Assessment of Afghanistan’s Legal Framework Governing Water for Agriculture* report, notes that formal and informal means are used to resolve water-related disputes in the country, including the 2009 Water Law, along with traditional customs and practices associated with the longstanding authority and community respect for water masters, or mirabs.

One key finding is that water users continue to rely predominately on local water masters to resolve disputes, largely due to gaps in the Water Law’s scope and associated administrative structure.

Michael Hartmann, Director of UNAMA’s Rule of Law Unit, stated that this finding “confirms that the challenge is not with the law as written but, rather, with the law as implemented,” and that “UNAMA will continue to assist in achieving broader implementation of the Water Law.”

Almost 80 per cent of Afghans derive their livelihood from the agricultural sector. Many rural communities depend on reliable access to water sources to grow the crops and nourish the livestock on which their lives and livelihoods depend.

The report documents the results of a field study designed to assess the effectiveness of dispute-resolution mechanisms, and also provides practical recommendations to facilitate the resolution of disputes without escalation to violence.

The recommendations include:

The Water Law’s administrative structure should be fully implemented in all water basins by establishing the councils, sub-councils, and user associations the law anticipated;

The Supreme Council of Water Affairs Management, which the Water Law established to improve coordination and implementation of water resource programs, should utilize its authority to streamline the management of water resources among the responsible ministries and departments;

The process for dispute resolution with the possibility of judicial review thereafter should likewise be streamlined so that administrative decisions may be implemented without interfering with crop growth or harvesting. Temporary orders or forms of relief should be fashioned to ensure that crops are not lost due to delays in resolving water rights;

To ensure adequate remedies for those whose water rights have been violated, administrative or judicial officials should award financial compensation for direct and consequential damages, including fair market value of any crops lost, resulting from the violation;

To promote greater transparency, the traditional practices and customs relating to water rights, such as the Taximot Hakobe Ab, should be made publicly available to all water users through provincial and district libraries or the Internet, along with copies of formal and informal decisions made by administrative bodies, courts, and mirabs.

24/10/2016 online at: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/10/24/foreign/un-calls-for-effective-means-to-resolve-afghan-water-dispute-for-economic-growth-avoiding-conflict/>?

Only trade will ensure food and water security

Five water wells are being built by the Emirates Red Crescent in Yemen's Al Mukalla governorate.

The Red Crescent started work on the wells on Monday, reported Wam, the state news agency. The construction started after the completion of work to connect wells and pumps.

The project is part of the organization's efforts to provide clean water to Yemenis and support infrastructure in the Hadramaut coastal region.

Expected to benefit more than 200,000 people, the wells are one of the Red Crescent's vital projects to meet the growing water needs in the eastern regions of Al Mukalla.

Earlier this month, the Red Crescent provided Dh50.5 million in funding for health projects in Yemen, for new hospital equipment and vaccinations for women and children.

The equipment would be provided to 20 hospitals across nine governorates, while about 700,000 women and children will be vaccinated against measles and polio.

24/10/2016 online at: <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/emirates-red-crescent-building-water-wells-in-yemen?>

Israel allows Palestinian villages 2 hours of water a week

Areas in the occupied West Bank have suffered from severe shortages in water supplies due to the illegal Israeli occupation, Al Jazeera reported. Every summer, Israel implements a cut in water supplies to preserve water.

This year, however, the amount of water cut in the West Bank has been unexpectedly high. In early June, Israeli water company Mekorot informed the Palestinian Water Authority that water supplies would be cut by 50 per cent. The water cuts persist today, despite the fact that summer officially ended over a month ago.

Villages all over the West Bank have been victim to the water cuts. Some in Salfit, Jenin and Hebron have endured having no access to water for as long as 40 days. Palestinians living in remote areas have been disproportionately disadvantaged. Not only is access to water harder, but delivery of the water is a lot more difficult, which makes it expensive for consumers.

While Mekorot denies it is targeting Palestinians with the water cuts, Israelis living in the illegal West Bank settlements are exempt from the effects of the water shortages. Settlements have access to extravagant gardens, parks and swimming pools, but Palestinians are forced to use water strategically as insecurity looms over them.

The lack of water has caused a significant amount of stress to West Bank residents. Clashes between Palestinian protestors and Israeli forces have also been reported as a result of the water crisis.

25/10/2016 online at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20161025-israel-allows-palestinian-villages-2-hours-of-wat>

Egypt decreases areas for rice cultivation amid fears of water scarcity

Egypt is planning to dramatically decrease the amount of land allocated to rice production next year, amid ongoing concerns over water scarcity, the Irrigation Ministry announced on Sunday.

The amount of land used for rice will decrease by 34.6 percent, according to the Ministry, and will be limited to six governorates. This amounts to just over 704,000 feddans for 2017, in comparison to over a million feddans in 2016.

The cultivation of rice requires more water than many other crops, an average of 9,500 to 11,000 cubic meters of water per hectare.

There will be penalties introduced for the planting of rice on any non-authorized land or in governorates outside Beheira, Kafr al-Sheikh, Daqahlia, Damietta, Port Said and Sharqiya, the Ministry said.

Rice prices have increased dramatically in recent months, as supplies have dwindled and the value of the pound has dropped. In March, traders reported prices had increased by as much as 20 percent, blaming the Supply Ministry for not planning ahead.

Egypt has historically produced a surplus of rice, but exports were banned in August following predictions of shortages. The export ban was lifted again in October amid a surplus of the grain. But despite this surplus, Supply Ministry budget cuts resulted in a failure to replenish stocks. In response, many traders withheld their crop, upping prices and resulting in market shortages.

There have been water shortages in Egypt over the past few years, particularly in the summer months in Upper Egypt, the Nile Delta and parts of Giza. From an ample 2,526 cubic meters a year per person in 1947, Egypt's annual water supply per person dropped to 663 cubic meters in 2013, placing the country below the United Nations' water poverty threshold. The UN predicts Egypt will reach a state of absolute water crisis by 2025, with the amount of annual water supply per person predicted to decrease to 500 cubic meters.

Professor of Agricultural Economy at Cairo University, Gamal Mohamed Sayam, told Mada Masr the Ministry's stipulations are necessary. "Actually, from an economic perspective, considering the scarcity of water, it's the right decision. It's already late," he said, adding, "Exporting rice is like exporting water, which is ridiculous in Egypt's case. The country is going to face the effects of the Ethiopian dam."

Irrigation Minister Mohamed Abdel Aty warned during a parliamentary committee meeting in May that Egypt's annual water supply of 55.5 billion cubic meters a year is not sufficient to cover public demand for drinking water as well as demands from industry, agriculture and electricity plants.

Despite the shortages, critics cite governmental mismanagement of Egypt's water supplies, particularly in rural areas and following a number of large state-led development projects in the desert. There have also been reports that rice traders are hoarding their crop to force prices up.

25/10/2016 online at: <http://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/10/25/news/economy/egypt-decreases-areas-for-rice-cultivation-amid-fears-of-water-scarcity/>

NWRN to suggest national water policy

The National Water Research Network (NWRN) will consolidate the existing water research work, validate water research data and suggest for national water policy in Pakistan. According to a press release issued here on Tuesday, it was informed in the meeting of National Water Research Network (NWRN) held at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) Jamshoro. The Vice Chancellor Mehran University Dr. Muhammad

Aslam Uqaili said that universities were not only to produce the graduates but to work on the application of knowledge through applied research.

He briefed the participants regarding the establishment of NWRN and also shared aims and objectives of the U.S-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Water (USPCAS-W) established in Mehran University with the support of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).—APP

26/10/2016 online at: <http://pakobserver.net/nwrn-to-suggest-national-water-policy/>

UAE participates in Arab water under occupation conference in Cairo

Participating in the 'Arab Water Under Occupation' conference, being held under the patronage of Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, at the organisation's secretariat-general in Cairo, Egypt.

Juma Mubarak Al Junaibi, UAE Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt and Permanent Representative to the Arab League is leading the UAE delegation at the conference.

Mr. Gheit opened the conference, which is attended by Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Jarwan, Speaker of the Arab Parliament, Arab ministers of water, representatives of the member countries and water experts from International organisations.

The conference will include four main topics in addition to the opening session, they are water situation in areas under occupation; water rights in the occupied Arab territories and the role of international and humanitarian laws to protect water; Israeli violations of Palestinian water and the challenges of the Palestinian Water Security; Arab Plan of Action to ensure the restoration of fair water rights in the Arab territories under occupation.

27/10/2016 online at: <http://www.wam.ae/en/news/arab/1395301891818.html?>

Residents of Medina neighborhood protest against water shortage

Residents of King Fahd neighborhood in Medina are using water department washrooms as a way to protest the constant water shortages in their area. The residents said they complained many times about the water shortage lasting more than five months, but have not received any response from the water department yet.

Saeed Salem, a resident, visited the office of an official at the water department to complain that there was no water in his house for three months. He said he could not afford to buy water from water trucks because it drained his budget.

Muhammad Qasim, another resident, said he suffered water shortages for more than five months, and when he and many others complained to officials they started pumping water, but it was a weak flow and only lasted a few hours. Abdul Kareem Al-Mutairi said he was following up with the water problem and had filed many complaints, but the officials did not respond.

28/10/2016 online at: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/160566-Residents-of-Medina-Neighbourhood-protest-against-water-shortage>

11 mineral water brands declared unsafe to drink

The Pakistan Council of Research on Water Resources (PCRWR) on Thursday declared 11 brands of mineral water unsafe for drinking due to chemical contamination. These brands include Premier Fresh, Well Care, National, Siiz Cool, Blue Plus, New ARBO, Cottage Foods Drink Water, Reliable, Pacific Pure, OAS Water and Aqua National.

Out of those unsafe brands, 40 brands i.e. Well Care, Siiz Cool, Pacific Pure and Aqua National have comparatively high levels of Arsenic ranging from 15-60 ppb than Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) water quality standard for arsenic (10 ppb). The excessive level of arsenic can cause various types of skin diseases, diabetes, kidney diseases, hypertension, heart diseases birth defects, black foot diseases and multiple types of cancers etc.

The 8 brands including Premier Fresh, Well Care, National, Blue Plus, New ARBO, Reliable, Pacific Pure and OAS Water, were found unsafe due to the presence of higher levels of Sodium ranging from 60-115 ppb than PSQCA water quality standard for sodium (50 ppb) and one brand (Cottage Foods Drink Water) was found unsafe due to the presence of higher level of Potassium.

The poor quality of drinking water has forced a large cross-section of citizens to buy bottled water. As a consequence of this expanding market a mushroom growth of bottled water industry in the country is witnessed during the last few years. However, many of the mineral/Bottled water companies were found selling contaminated water.

To monitor and improve the quality of bottled water, the government of Pakistan through Ministry of Science and Technology designated the task to PCRWR for quarterly monitoring of bottled/mineral water brands and publicize the results.

According to the monitoring report for the quarter from July to September, 2016, 109 samples of Mineral/Bottled water brands have been collected from Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gilgit, Muzaffarabad, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Sargodha, Multan, Lahore, Bahawalpur, Karachi, Tando Jam and Peshawar. Comparison of analytical findings with permissible limits of Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) revealed that 11 brands were unsafe to drink.

29/10/2016 online at: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/160798-11-mineral-water-brands-declared-unsafe-to-drink?>

Sea water desalination plant in Djerba to be operational by summer 2017, (Secretary of State for Water Resources)

The construction works of the sea water desalination plant in the island of Djerba are expected to end before summer 2017 to meet the needs of the Governorate of Medenine in drinking water, said Secretary of State for Water Resources and Fisheries Abdallah Rebhi.

The region of Medenine is exposed to water deficit estimated at 460 liters per second in the summer of 2017, according to the local chapter of SONEDE.

The region has already taken delivery of a first batch of equipment for the implementation of this desalination plant with a production capacity of 50,000 cubic meters (m³) per day, which could reach 75 000 m³.

These involve 2,700-meter channels with 1.5 meters in diameter channels and a second delivery is expected in late November 2016. Other equipment (pumps, motors) will be imported by Tunisia before the end of this year. The plant will reduce the salinity of sea from 40grammes of salt per litre to only 0.5 gramme/ l, a rate very close to that of mineral waters.

The Ministry of Agriculture and SONEDE have agreed on a programme to meet the needs of residents during the summer 2017. This program provides, among other actions, for the installation of pipes and water tanks and also the acceleration the rate of implementation of blocked projects to reduce the water deficit.

29/10/2016 online at: <http://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Regions/8370397-sea-water-desalination-plant-in-djerba?>

Water shortage: Dry weather threatens wheat production

Pakistan is likely to achieve its wheat production target for the Rabi 2016-17 sowing season as it is the only cash crop on which farmers can heavily bank on in order to sustain their livelihood, farmer lobbies say.

However, the supply of water for irrigation is a primary concern in the wake of dry weather prediction for coming months. It is feared that water supply could be 20% lower than the previous year.

“If we analyse the agriculture sector’s performance over the past three years, it will be evident that rice, cotton and sugarcane growers have borne hefty losses,” said Ibrahim Mughal, chairman of the Agri Forum Pakistan, while talking to The Express Tribune.

“Farmers don’t have any choice but to go for wheat cultivation in order to earn their livelihood. Subsidy on inputs such as fertiliser and lower diesel prices are some of the incentives that encourage farmers to opt for the staple wheat crop.”

The Federal Committee on Agriculture has set the wheat production target for the 2016-17 season at 26.01 million tons compared to 25.50 million tons in the previous year.

This year, wheat has been planted on a slightly lower area totalling 22.53 million acres, down 1.43% from last year’s 22.85 million acres.

Of this, the crop in Punjab has been sown over 16.5 million acres and in Sindh it covers 3.5 million acres. The remaining area has been cultivated in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

While the Meteorological Department has forecast less rainfall and estimated availability of 30.34 million acre feet (MAF) of water against average consumption of 36.3 MAF, Food Security and Research Minister Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan claims the shortfall will not impact the wheat crop.

The farmers, however, think otherwise. “We may face water shortage in the current Rabi season, which could make things worse for the farmers,” said Kisan Board Pakistan representative Haji Ramazan.

“We are still coping with load-shedding in rural areas; this means farmers may not get the required water. Our only hope is rain and if weather remains dry things could further deteriorate.”

In order to shield farmers from shocks and ensure a steady income source, the government announces wheat support price every year.

Last year, the support price was Rs1,300 per 40 kg and this year it is likely to remain the same. International wheat prices stand at around Rs1,125 per 40 kg.

30/10/2016 online at: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1214555/water-shortage-dry-weather-threatens-wheat-production/>

Funding for water reservoirs

Contrary to what we have been hearing for the last several years, President of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Takehiko Nakao, during a news conference in Islamabad, declined to make any commitment for funding of the Diamer-Bhasha dam, which is vital for socio-economic development of Pakistan. He told newsmen that the project needs huge funding and his bank could consider joining other partners for the purpose at a later stage.

Pakistan has been discussing possibility of funding of Diamer-Bhasha dam with the ADB since 2011 when its Director Energy Division Rune Stroem, during a meeting with then Minister for Water and Power Syed Naveed Qamar, said the Bank accords highest priority to the project and agreed to organise Road Shows in three different countries with donors, equipment suppliers and other concerned for co-financing the project. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar too has been expressing optimism about financial closure of both Diamer and Dassu dams but regrettably no concrete achievement has so far been made and the projects are still a pipe dream. Neither previous PPP Government nor the incumbent one succeeded in completing the land acquisition process despite repeated claims about successes on this account and also could not line up the funding, which is fundamental requirement for physical initiation of work. This is despite the fact that Finance Minister has been assuring that the country would start work simultaneously on the two projects with or without foreign funding in view of their critical significance to the energy and water security of the country. According to a World

Bank survey, Pakistan is at number 17 in the list of countries facing water scarcities and water shortage. We are already facing drought conditions besides the phenomenon of glacier melting in our northern areas. There is also urgency to build new water reservoirs on priority basis in view of threats being hurled by India to block Pakistan's share of water under the Indus Basin Treaty. Therefore, authorities concerned should abandon lethargic attitude and address the issue on priority basis.

30/10/2016 online at: <http://pakobserver.net/funding-for-water-reservoirs/>?

Water war

The apprehension that India might start a water war with Pakistan has been in the news for some time. The perennial unfriendly relations with India which have now developed into belligerency give credence to this fear.

Pakistan has decided to go to the World Bank to arbitrate our complaint against the construction of two objectionable downstream projects by India on the Jhelum river (Dawn Oct 24). This river belongs to Pakistan under the Indus Water Treaty. These Indian projects are called run-of-the-river hydro projects which are not supposed to reduce downstream flow of the river to the lower riparian country, Pakistan.

The jurisdiction of the World Bank has been invoked under the Treaty which the Bank had sponsored to distribute the rivers between Pakistan and India. Indus, Chenab and Jhelum came to Pakistan and the rest to India.

As a layman I feel that the bone of contention will be whether these Indian projects have in any way reduced the flow of the downstream water to Pakistan. If there is no substantial difference, we might have a weak case. I hope among other points our team will be able to produce the deficiency record. One is concerned because Pakistan doesn't have a good record of winning cases in international fora. If unfortunately we lose, we lose our reputation and India might press its claim to even scrap the Indus Water Treaty which has so far stood all the disputes/wars with India.

31/10/2016 online at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1293254/water-war?>

UAE takes part in South Korea's International Water Week

A UAE delegation has participated in the activities of the International Water Week held earlier this month in Daegu, Republic of Korea.

The delegation, which included representatives from the Ministry of Energy and the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, EAD, was led by Dr. Mohamed Yousef Al Madfaei, Executive Director of the Integrated Environment Policy and Planning Sector at EAD.

On the sidelines of the event, the delegation took part in a round table talk with industry leaders and a preparatory meeting to discuss efforts between the UAE and South Korea in the water resources sector.

During the meeting, officials from both sides discussed aspects of cooperation and joint ventures in order to put into effect a Memorandum of Understanding, MoU, that was signed by the governments of the two counties in 2015. The MoU will see the two sides share experiences and knowledge in the fields of innovation and water technologies, as well as support developmental policies and strategies for the sustainable management of water resources.

31/10/2016 online at: <http://www.wam.ae/en/news/emirates/1395301986637.html?>