



# 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**  
*21 March 2017 – 27 March 2017*

**Fighting puts Syria IS-held dam at 'risk of collapse'**

Fighting at a dam in Syria held by the Islamic State group has put the water barrier at risk of a catastrophic collapse, a technical source said.

The ongoing clashes at Tabqa dam have damaged its power station, forcing a halt to operations on Sunday, risking dangerous rising water levels.

A Kurdish-Arab alliance known as the Syrian Democratic Forces [SDF] is battling to take Tabqa dam and nearby Tabqa town from IS before advancing on the group's de facto Syrian capital Raqqa.

"The dam is designed to hold a certain amount of water and if its floodgates are closed this will increase the water levels and could exceed the pressure the dam can withstand," civil engineer, Mounir Suwaid, told The New Arab.

"The dam has a spillway to get rid of excess water but it cannot discharge all of it," Suwaid said.

He played down the danger that the dam would collapse because of excess water levels, however, he added that the continued air raids could weaken the dam and lead to a disaster.

"The biggest danger lies in the repeated airstrikes and shelling near the dam, which could crack the dam's structure," the engineer said.

IS ordered residents to evacuate the Syrian city of Raqqa on Sunday following reports on its propaganda agency Amaq that the dam "is threatened with collapse at any moment because of American strikes and a large rise in water levels."

Civilians began fleeing midday; according to the activist-run Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently.

Local activist Abo Sham warned that two million people were at risk of losing their lives and homes if the dam collapsed.

"The SDF has been shelling around the dam for around a month and in recent days the offensive has escalated," Abo Sham wrote on Facebook.

"The dam has cracks in it because of a lack of maintenance, its old age and IS' inability to manage it. If its floodgates close it will surely collapse," he added.

Earlier this month, the UN's humanitarian coordination agency OCHA said water levels in the Euphrates had risen 10 meters since late January, in part from heavy rainfall and snow.

But it warned that damage to the dam "could lead to massive scale flooding across Raqqa and as far away as Deir Az-Zour" province to the southeast.

Any further rises in the water level or damage to the Tabqa dam "would have catastrophic humanitarian implications in all areas downstream," the UN warned.

26/03/2017 online at: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/3/26/fighting-puts-syria-is-held-dam-at-risk-of-collapse>

### **Has Iran mismanaged its way into a water crisis?**

Khuzestan Province, in south-east Iran, is known for its enormous oil and gas reserves, which play a vital role in country's oil industry. The oil-rich province is commonly referred to as the region that makes the money that the entire country needs. In recent years, Ahvaz, the capital of Khuzestan has earned a new title as one of the world's most polluted cities. In fact, Ahvaz has the highest particle pollution levels in Iran.

On 7 February, a strong sandstorm hit Ahvaz, shutting down schools and government offices. The storm, which lasted for a week, caused power cuts in the province and temporarily reduced Iran's average oil production of 3.8 million barrels per day (bpd) to 3.1 million.

Iranian authorities have placed the blame on neighboring countries, saying that Iraq and Saudi Arabia caused the sandstorm by failing to tackle desertification in their respective territories.

In an interview with domestic media, Iran's vice-president and environment minister, Masoumeh Ebtekar, downplayed Iran's role in the current environmental crisis in Khuzestan by claiming: "Environmental issues in Iraq and Saudi Arabia account for 65 percent of the sandstorms in Iran."

However, environmental experts and water resource managers have a different viewpoint.

"Lagoons and rivers have dried up due to Iran's dam policy," she added.

"Several wetlands across the country have been turned into wastelands. The Hoor Al-Azim wetland was once a water resource in Khuzestan, but it is now depleted and has become a sand resource for the sandstorms hitting the province."

The water crisis is not unknown to the Iranian authorities. In December 2016, Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian declared that the country's water resources had reached critical levels. According to a report by the United Nations Development Program, by 2025, the level of Iran's per capita water resources will fall to about one-third of its level in 1990.

In response, the government has mainly focused on plans to keep the water flowing in the pipelines of the capital Tehran and big cities such as Isfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad and Tabriz. However, water shortages and water rationing is common in smaller cities in central Iran and on the Iranian coast of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

#### **Dams in arid lands**

Hamoun, Uroumieh, Bakhtegan, Parishan and Tashk are Iranian lakes and lagoons that have shrunk by somewhere between 80 and 100 per cent over the last decade. Zaiandehrood,

meaning the river that gives life, has also dried up in the historic city of Isfahan. Before dying, the Zaiandehrood was the biggest river in the central Iranian plateau.

Drought and climate change are not the only reasons for the environmental disaster occurring in this arid country. Poor management of water resources has also caused irreversible damage to Iran, a country with about 250mm of rain a year – less than a third of the global average.

A University of Malaya study, conducted by Iranian researchers, pointed out: “The environmental effects are not considered fully and completely for the most dams have been constructed in Iran.”

According to this research, the construction of the Sivand Dam, built in 2007 in Fars Province, has been a disaster “destroying thousands of acres of grassland” in central Iran. As a direct result of the dam, Bakhtegan – Iran’s second largest lake – dried up, turning the lake into a graveyard of migrating flamingos.

And Sivand is not the only dam in Iran that has had a negative environmental impact. Iran ranks third in dam building internationally, after China and Turkey.

This political rhetoric has been the main inspiration for constructing over 600 large, middle and small size dams in Iran since the 1979 revolution. However, not only has this policy not been a solution to the country’s water crisis, but it has also accelerated desertification.

“The authorities in Iran never talk about the submergence of land in the upstream of dams, disruption to animal life, causing serious geological damage, and the drowning of historical sites behind the dams,” Pour Achraf explained.

“Recent studies in Iran have also shown that dam construction has a direct role in inundating upstream forests and decreasing downstream timberlands which eventually leads to desertification.”

Through the last two decades, desertification has severely affected Kerman Province, also in south-east Iran. Farmers have been forced to abandon over 8,330 villages in the province due to desertification, drought and water mismanagement. Many of them are now struggling to make a living in nearby cities

Hojat Abad is a village in the Takab region of Kerman Province, about 1,100 kilometres from Tehran. Two decades ago, its farmers could grow rice, watermelons and cucumbers on their agricultural lands. Nowadays, dying palm trees are the only plants remaining in the village.

“Today you can only see dusty sands in the village, but once it was all green,” said Ali Vakili, 47, one of the few remaining residents of Hojat Abad. “When our qanat [traditional system of water supply in Iran] dried up, all the farms were covered by sand and people started to leave their ancestral houses.”

The fantasy of diverting water

Ambitious water transfer projects have also deepened Iran's water crisis. Two major projects in Iran aim to transfer desalinated water from the Caspian Sea to the central Semnan Province and to move water from the Oman Sea in the south of the country to Iran's central plateau.

“Long distance water transfer is not a sustainable solution for the water crisis as long as the main causes of the crisis are not dealt with,” stresses Hamid Norouzi, an Iranian professor at New York City College of Technology.

“Wherever you touch the environment, it will have negative impacts. Inter-basin water transfer plans manipulate the environment enormously and such projects will eventually show their negative impacts.”

According to Norouzi, the long-term effects of water transfer projects can vary from damaging the ecosystem of donor regions to the displacement of communities.

Despite the objections of water management experts and environmental activists, the President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, dedicated a budget of US\$400m to launch the Caspian Sea project on March 2016. Rouhani introduced the project under pressure from Iran's most powerful security, military, political and economical organization, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which later became the main contractor for the project.

As a result, the Zaiandehrood River dried in Isfahan and the Karoun River lost half of its flow rate in Khuzestan. Nevertheless, authorities still persist in making use of dated and ill-fitted water management techniques to control the water crisis in Iran.

In Norouzi's opinion, a comprehensive plan, that takes into account all aspects of the water crisis, is required. “Iran needs a plan that makes functioning dams operate better, that finds a way to reuse water, a plan that considers urbanisation and growth of population in Iran and even looks into matters like changing crops in the agriculture section,” Norouzi said.

“Building a dam or implementing a water transfer plan without considering all of the environmental aspects of such projects will not solve the issue.”

22/03/2017 online at: [https://www.equaltimes.org/has-iran-mismanaged-its-way-into-a?lang=en#.WNjTKG\\_yjcs](https://www.equaltimes.org/has-iran-mismanaged-its-way-into-a?lang=en#.WNjTKG_yjcs)

### **Iran to divert water from Gulf of Oman inwards**

Iran says it is implementing a landmark project to divert water from the Gulf of Oman to its central plateau - a project that could not only address the country's surging water crisis but could also help push ahead relevant economic plans in host regions.

Alireza Razm-Hosseini, the governor general of Iran's southern province of Kerman, told the domestic media that the project - which involved digging a tunnel - was being implemented by Khatam-ul-Anbia Construction Headquarters (KACH) since December 2015.

Razm-Hosseini emphasized that that the government of President Hassan Rouhani had allocated the required funds for the project - already described as the biggest water transfer project in the Middle East.

He told a meeting held to evaluate the progress of the project - in which Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri was also present - that addressing the water crisis in Kerman was a key concern of the government, Iran's IRNA news agency reported.

Razm-Hosseini said that water would be desalinated at an entry point in Iran's shores before being transferred inland.

He further described Kerman as one of the most arid provinces of Iran with an average rainfall of only about 129 millimeters per year and an annual water shortage level of 800 million cubic meters.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official said that Kerman mostly used water from underground resources for irrigation - what he said already was a serious threat to the province's environment.

Razm-Hosseini said the depletion of underground water resources had already led to the evacuation of many villages.

He added that the government had devised serious plans to prevent further depletion of underground water resources by encouraging growing agricultural products that consume less water such as saffron and barberry. Razm-Hosseini also emphasized that irrigation methods of wheat and corn farms in Kerman had also been renovated to increase efficiency.

Iran's Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian had earlier announced that Iran is in a critical situation in terms of its water resources.

To the same effect, Iran's Energy Ministry - which is in charge of regulating the water sector - had earlier warned that above 500 cities of the country are struggling with the shortage of drinking water.

Officials blame Iran's water crisis on the changing climate and frequent droughts. However, they have also warned that reckless consumption is already deteriorating the situation.

23/03/2017 online at: <http://www.payvand.com/news/17/mar/1112.html>

### **US author says Israel is 'the model' for dealing with water crisis**

Seth Siegel, a successful New York City-based businessman, has written a book portraying Israel as a water conservation superpower and claims Israelis know very little about it.

"Israelis have a way of always thinking that their country is not good enough," Siegel told Channel 2 News. "But I think it's also unfair of Israelis to only see the worst in themselves."

In his book, Siegel argues that Israel was one of the very first nations in the world to foresee a potential water crisis and take action to prevent it. "For one reason or another, beginning in

the 1930s, before there was even a state, Israel started thinking about water in a way just about no one else in the world was," he said.

"Not enough Israelis know about the great victory Israel has won over nature, supplying their country with all the water that they need to live a good quality life," Siegel added.

24/03/2017 online at: <http://www.jerusalemonline.com/news/in-israel/health-and-environment/us-author-says-israel-is-the-model-for-dealing-with-water-crisis-27431>

### **At AIPAC, Dershowitz pulls water out of thin air**

Harvard Law professor and Israel advocate Alan Dershowitz took the stage at AIPAC's annual policy conference Sunday to showcase a new Israeli technology that can seemingly create water out of thin air.

He touted the innovation, which could provide humanitarian aid to remote parts of a world in which two-thirds suffer from water scarcity, as an instrument to combat the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel.

"There is no weapon more powerful in the fight against BDS than for Israel to develop technologies that the world cannot live without," the BDS critic told the crowd of nearly 18,000. "You cannot boycott products that you can't live without."

Standing onstage inside the Washington Convention Center, Dershowitz and AIPAC National Managing Director Elliot Brandt unveiled the technology from the Israeli company Water Gen — a contraption that is able to pull water from the air and purify it.

The device, they said, can produce 15-20 liters of drinkable water a day without the environmental costs of bottled water.

Brandt noted Seth Segal's 2015 book "Let There Be Water: Israel's Solution for a Water-Starved World," which detailed the "Zionist dream to overcome water scarcity."

"Let's remember that Theodor Herzl talked about — the pioneers of Israel will be people who helped develop water," Dershowitz amended. "And Yitzhak Rabin: originally he didn't want to be a soldier, he wanted to be a water engineer."

Roughly 1.2 billion people — almost one-fifth of the world's population — live in areas of water scarcity, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Dershowitz said the water-making innovation could be deployed to areas that lacked access to potable water.

He mentioned not only parts of the developing world like Haiti, but also New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and Flint, Michigan during its most recent water crisis, in which drinking water was contaminated by high levels of lead.

26/03/2017 online at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/at-aipac-dershowitz-pulls-water-out-of-thin-air/>

## **Failed Plan to Reconstruct Gaza Fuels Water, Sanitation Crisis**

The United Nations-backed strategy for the reconstruction of Gaza following the 2014 offensive by Israel has been dubbed a failure by the international charity Oxfam. An investigation released Wednesday revealed that the strategy “is failing to meet the needs of 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza” and instead is worsening Gaza’s already dire water and sanitation crisis.

The Oxfam report, titled “Treading Water” and released on World Water Day, analyzed the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism or GRM, which was designed to help with urgent reconstruction of areas devastated by the 2014 war by allowing the entry of building materials into the strip.

Under the GRM, almost 3,000 items needed to build infrastructure for water and sanitation in Gaza are still awaiting approval. Only 16 percent of items that have been submitted for GRM approval for water and sanitation projects have made it past the Israeli-imposed blockade.

As part of the GRM, Israeli authorities can reject or delay projects and specific items entering Gaza based on their claimed security concerns. Around 70 percent of materials needed to build water and sanitation infrastructure are estimated to be classed as “dual-use” items. Most of these essential “dual-use” items wait between 61 to 100 days before their approval is decided.

Oxfam Country Director Chris Eijkemans said that for Palestinians living in the territory under tight Israeli control, just 4 percent of freshwater is safe to drink amid a “staggering escalation of the water crisis.”

“The UN-brokered system is unaccountable, fundamentally flawed and gives the appearance of legitimizing Israel’s illegal blockade on Gaza,” Oxfam wrote in a press release. “The system is ultimately failing to meet immense needs, address Gaza’s de-development and enable construction of vital water infrastructure.”

The Oxfam report said that while Gaza has a system of piped domestic water, it is subject to breakage and leakage and is not fit for drinking. Instead, many rely on water for drinking and cooking that is bought from water trucks. Some 40,000 people were estimated to lack access to municipal water networks and 95 percent of Palestinians in Gaza rely on desalinated sea water.

Overall, the GRM has failed to overcome the harsh restrictions of Israel's blockade on the occupied Palestinian territories, undermining Palestinians' human rights to water.

“What was an imperfect, supposedly temporary measure has become entrenched within the bureaucracy of the 10-year blockade, funded and backed by the international community and providing an appearance of legitimacy to Israel’s ongoing control over the Gaza Strip,” said Oxfam's Eijkemans.

The investigation on the water crisis comes after the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia released a damning report on Israel's "apartheid regime that dominates the Palestinian people as a whole." The U.N. pulled the report amid Israeli outrage, while the Jordanian chief of the body, Rima Khalef, resigned in protest.

In 2012, the U.N. Relief and Works Agency warned that Gaza could become unliveable by 2020 if urgent action was not taken to keep pace with local needs and prevent "irreversible" damage to aquifers.

22/03/2017 online at: <http://www.telesur.tv/english/news/Failed-Plan-to-Reconstruct-Gaza-Fuels-Water-Sanitation-Crisis-20170322-0013.html>

### **Jordan, France sign 10-mln-Euro agreement for water sector**

Minister of Water and Irrigation, Hazem al- Nasser, Monday, said that his ministry is now focused on reducing energy consumption in all water facilities by maximizing dependency on renewable energy.

Welcoming a French delegation headed by Minister of State for Development and Francophonie, Jean-Marie Le Guen, Al-Nasser, said water sector strategy in Jordan aimed at reducing energy consumption as it represents a growing burden and a big challenge to the financial budget of his ministry.

He added that the water strategy aimed to cut water loss to about 30 percent by 2025 as to increase the daily per capita share of potable water.

At the meeting attended by officials from both sides, the two ministers signed a 10 million Euro agreement to carry out a project to boost resilience of the water sector in the northern regions, which will be implemented by the Action Against Hunger, which is a global NGO committed to ending world hunger.

The organization aims to support the Jordan Response Platform to the Syria Crisis, he explained.

The French minister said his country supports the Red Sea-Dead Sea project as a strategic venture, which is important to increase water supply in the Kingdom. He also said he was satisfied with the Jordanian-French partnership through joint efforts from both sides.

21/03/2017 online at:

[https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/story/Jordan\\_France\\_sign\\_10mlnEuro\\_agreement\\_for\\_water\\_sector-ZAWYA20170321045531/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/story/Jordan_France_sign_10mlnEuro_agreement_for_water_sector-ZAWYA20170321045531/)

### **Jordan, South Korea sign water cooperation agreement**

Minister of Water and Irrigation, Hazem Al Nasser and South Korean Minister of Environment, Infrastructure and Transportation Kang Huyen, on Monday, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation between the two sides.

The MoU will cover the fields of water management and distribution, desalination, network management, reducing loss, exchange of technologies on water and increase the capacity of workers in this field.

Al Nasser gave a briefing on challenges Jordan has to face, especially water scarcity due to the Syrian refugee crisis, calling for concentrating the support on countries with water scarcity and refugee-hosting countries.

The Korean minister expressed his country's appreciation for Jordan's humanitarian role, led by His Majesty King Abdullah, as well as the Jordanian government procedures, especially in the water sector, development, construction and humanitarian efforts towards the refugees.

South Korea has considerable experience in the field of water management and makes great efforts with international organizations such as UNESCO to solve water problems on a global level, which may help Jordan with water scarcity.

23/03/2017 online at: <http://menafn.com/1095337780/Jordan-South-Korea-sign-water-cooperation-agreement>

### **Saudi Arabia expands water desalination production capacity**

Saudi Arabia owns the world's biggest water desalination plant of Ras Al-Khair on the Arabian Gulf. The 27 billion riyal (\$7.2 billion) production facility produces 1.025 million cubic meters of drinking water a day.

The kingdom's demand on drinking water grows by 8.8 per cent annually, according to official statistics. It leads the world in the consumption of desalinated water.

Saudi Arabia suffers a full dependence on desalinated water for drinking purposes, which has led to a notable hike in the desalinated water price per liters, exceeding the gasoline liters price in the domestic market.

The kingdom consumes about eight million cubic meters of water a day with a daily consumption of 265 liters per capita, which is double the individual daily consumption in the European Union.

21/03/2017 online at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170321-saudi-arabia-expands-water-desalination-production-capacity/>

### **81.5% of total water resources in Egypt consumed in agriculture: CAPMAS**

The agriculture sector remains the largest consumer of water in Egypt, as it acquired 62.15 billion cubic meters in 2015/2016. The sector accounts for 81.5% of the total use, according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS).

In the second ranking comes the drinking and health usage sector, which consumed 10.4 billion cubic meters in 2015/2016, compared to 10.35 billion cubic meters in 2014/2015—an increase of 0.5%.

CAPMAS released a report on the occasion of World Water Day. It pointed out that the Nile River is the main source of water in Egypt, where its share reached 55.5 billion cubic meters—representing 72.8% of the total renewable water resources. Rainwater, floods, and groundwater, as well as agricultural drainage water that has been recycled and desalinated seawater, collectively add up to about 20.75 billion cubic meters in 2015/2016, compared to 20.9 billion cubic meters in 2014/2015—a decrease of 0.7%.

The report added that the total amount of produced pure water reached 9.30 billion cubic meters in 2015/2016, compared to 8.89 billion cubic meters in 2014/2015—marking an increase of 4.6%.

The amount of consumed pure water reached 5.8 billion cubic meters in 2015/2016, compared to 6.1 billion cubic meters in 2014/2015—a decrease of 4.9%.

CAPMAS noted that the amount of network losses of clean water in 2015/2016 reached 37.6% due to worn-out pipelines, as well as outdated network distribution and pipe leakage.

Total generated electric power from hydropower reached 13,822 GWH in 2014/2015, compared to 13,352 GWH in 2013/2014—an increase of 3.4%.

The World Water Day is celebrated on 22 March of every year, based on the United Nations General Assembly adoption since 1992.

The theme of the celebration this year is “Why Waste Water?”

22/03/2017 online at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/03/22/81-5-total-water-resources-egypt-consumed-agriculture-capmas/>

### **Expert calls for sustained cooperation on Nile water use**

Innocent Ntabana, Executive Director of Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), an intergovernmental organization, told reporters that River Nile, the longest in the world, is a key resource among the ten member countries in its basin, while noting that if mismanaged conflict may occur.

NBI brings together ten countries in the Nile basin including Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, while Eritrea participates as an observer. The main aim of NBI is to foster cooperation among member countries on the utilization of the Nile.

NBI figures show that there are 250 million inhabitants within the Nile Basin while 450 million live within the member countries. Projection figures indicate that there would be over 1 billion people in the member countries by 2050.

Ntabana said with this population pressure many countries will look at the Nile for survival while some have started constructing infrastructure on the 6,700-km river.

He said as countries plan these infrastructures, they have to put into considerations the interest of other countries.

A recent decision by Ethiopia to construct a power dam on the Nile caused a row with Egypt that protested over concerns of reduction in water volumes. The Nile is the life line of Egypt where the river pours into the Mediterranean Sea.

Riparian countries now have a new framework agreement that seeks to replace colonial agreements on sharing and usage of the Nile. The colonial agreements grant Egypt bigger quotas of the Nile waters.

Egypt declined to be part of the new framework partly over fears that the volume of water flow would be affected if several projects are to be constructed on the river.

Ntabana said that there are ongoing talks to bring Egypt back.

Early this month, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni called for a summit to discuss the deadlock on the new agreement.

Museveni who was speaking during the visit of Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said the deadlock has dragged on for long and needs to be concluded.

25/03/2017 online at: <https://www.newsghana.com.gh/expert-calls-for-sustained-cooperation-on-nile-water-use/>

### **Egypt participates in Nile Basin Initiative talks in Entebbe**

The Nile Basin Initiative's council of ministers commenced on Monday a meeting in Uganda's Entebbe with the participation of Egypt's Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohamed Abdel-Ati to discuss concerns over the Cooperative Framework Agreement, state news agency MENA reported.

Deputy Foreign Minister for African Affairs Mohamed Idriss said that Egyptian participation in the current round of talks reflect's Cairo's keenness to achieve a fair distribution of benefits to all Nile basin countries, adding that the Nile River should be a source of of cooperation and development rather than dispute on the continent.

The first phase of meetings, which began earlier this month in Sudan's capital Khartoum, included "long discussions wherein Egypt presented all its concerns regarding the Nile Basin Initiative and the Entebbe agreement," Abdel-Ati was quoted as saying by MENA.

The Cooperative Framework Agreement, more commonly known as the Entebbe Agreement, has been signed by six Nile Basin countries: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Egypt and Sudan have declined to sign the treaty, which sets out principles and obligations of member states regarding use of the basin's water resources, citing concerns about its reallocation of Nile water quotas and other provisions.

Historic water-sharing pacts between Egypt and Sudan divide the Nile waters between the two countries.

The Egyptian minister said earlier that the Entebbe meetings will cover the results of the Khartoum meetings and Egypt's concerns as well as look at "solutions and alternatives that guarantee collective benefit and prevent harm."

The Nile Basin Initiative has ten permanent members -- Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Eritrea has observer status.

The under-construction Grand Ethiopian Dam, which when complete will be Africa's biggest hydroelectric dam, has been a source of concern for Egypt in recent years, with some experts arguing that filling and operating the dam will reduce the water that flows downstream to Egypt.

27/03/2017 online at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/261726/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-participates-in-Nile-Basin-Initiative-talks-.aspx>

### **India yet to decide on water talks with Pakistan proposed by World Bank**

New Delhi is yet to take a call on the World Bank's proposal for a meeting between the water secretaries of India and Pakistan in Washington next month to resolve differences over the Kishanganga and Ratle hydropower projects.

Pakistan's water and power minister Khawaja Asif told a news conference in Islamabad on Monday that Indian and Pakistani officials are set to meet in Washington during April 11-13 for talks brokered by the World Bank.

Asif was speaking on the margins of a meeting between the Indus water commissioners, which concluded on Tuesday.

An Indian government source told Hindustan Times, "As of now, we have not decided anything. We will take a call after the 10-member team headed by Indus water commissioner PK Saxena returns from Islamabad."

The World Bank, which brokered the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 and has a key role in helping resolve differences, said it is prepared to facilitate the meeting.

"We continue to work with both countries to resolve the issue in an amicable manner and in line with the spirit of the treaty. We would hope that the two countries will come to an agreement soon," said Alexander Anthony Ferguson, World Bank's senior manager communications (South Asia).

Both countries are involved in a dispute over the 330MW Kishanganga project and the 850MW Ratle project being built on the Jhelum and Chenab rivers. Objecting to the design of the Kishenganga project, Pakistan said it flouted provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty and would result in a 40% reduction of water flow.

Pakistan also wants the storage capacity of the Ratle project to be reduced from 24 million cubic meters to 8 million cubic meters. Both sides took up these issues with the World Bank.

New Delhi took strong exception to the World Bank's decision to set up a court of arbitration, as desired by Pakistan, and to also appoint a neutral expert, as wanted by India, over the two projects. It said proceeding with both steps simultaneously was "legally untenable".

The World Bank then paused the separate processes to allow the two countries to consider alternative ways to resolve their disagreements.

A government official said, "India's stand on the issue is very clear. We will not be party to a court of arbitration process on Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects, a demand by Islamabad that has been accepted by the World Bank."

Pakistan's water and power minister Asif also said the US and the World Bank had intervened to arrange the meeting in Washington.

"The US has intervened at the highest level to help both countries resolve the issue. There will be secretary-level talks on the Ratle and Kishanganga hydropower projects in Washington on April 11, 12 and 13," he said.

Asif said Pakistan is happy that India had agreed to resume talks between the Indus waters commissioners. "We welcome this decision and the visit of the Indian delegation," he said.

Pakistan wants India to share the design of the Pakul Dal, Miyar and Lower Kalnai projects, he said, adding that "if they hurt Pakistan's interests, then objections will be raised at the appropriate forum".

Asif refused to speculate whether the water talks could lead to the resumption of bilateral dialogue, which was stalled after a series of terror attacks last year that were blamed by India on Pakistan-based militants.

The water secretaries of India and Pakistan last met in July 2016 in New Delhi but the discussions were inconclusive.

25/03/2017 online at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-yet-to-decide-on-water-talks-with-pakistan-proposed-by-world-bank/story-ZgMJx9HOyV2xWAZpEV6zxJ.html>

### **27m Pakistanis deprived of clean water, 40m defecate openly: report**

More than 27 million Pakistanis do not have access to clean water whereas 40 million are defecating openly due to lack of proper toilets.

According to a report issued by World Resources Institute, Pakistan is on 36th number in the list of 180 countries who is facing severe pressures over providing basic necessities of life including clean water.

Ministry of Climate Change spokesman Saleem Sheikh said that the report has stated that Pakistan is facing dearth of water which can be turned into famine in near future. He said the only way to avert drought is timely preservation and right use of water.

The report further mentioned that 60 years ago, 50lac liter per person water was available in Pakistan but now the quantity has decreased by five times.

More than 39,000 children below age five fall prey to Cholera every year due to dirty water and inadequate cleanliness situation in Pakistan.

27/03/2017 online at: <http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/380921-27m-Pakistanis-deprived-of-clean-water-40m-defeca>