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Israel Halts Sea of Galilee Pumping, Ramps Up Desal Capacity

TEL AVIV, Israel (OOSKAnews)

Hammered by a lingering drought and dwindling water resources, Israel has stepped up efforts to shore up water supplies, including tapping new sources and planning a desalination plant.

It has stopped pumping water from the Sea of Galilee, its primary fresh water reservoir, as the water in the lake has dropped to a critical level.

The water level has dropped to 38.1 centimeters above the “black line.” Pumping beyond this level is strictly prohibited as the lake is likely to suffer irreparable damage.

Pumping operations were officially halted on January 19. New reports suggest that water sources that flow into the Sea of Galilee, which is also known as the Lake Kinneret, are also at their lowest level ever.

Now, water is being pumped from some underground aquifers, but reports suggest that these aquifers have not only dropped to dangerously low levels, but some, like the coastal aquifer, have seen a drop in water quality as well.

A recent report by the Israel Water Authority’s hydrology department found that while parts of the coastal aquifer have deposits of good quality water in higher depths, in many of the segments closer to the surface, the water quality is poor. The coastal aquifer is one of the two main underground water sources in the country.

Most of the problems are due to the scarce rainfall that the country has received over the past few years. The country is in the fifth consecutive year of drought, and rainfall so far this year has also been only 50 percent of the seasonal average.

In fact, Israel is experiencing its driest winter since rainfall measurements were first recorded over 80 years ago. The country went into the current winter season with a big water deficit, with the previous four years also bringing below-average rainfall.

But some problems are also due to what local experts say is the water authority’s ineptitude and lack of foresight. They say the authority has not built enough storage capacity.

Others, like local environmental NGO Zalul, say the country is wasting millions of cubic meters of treated sewage water and pumping it into the sea rather than diverting it for use in agriculture or gardening. The Water Authority has been unable to find a suit-
sometime this year. The cost of the plant is estimated to be some $377 million USD.

Israel’s national water company, Mekorot was quoted as saying in local news reports last week that it planned to build a 100 million cubic meter desalination plant in the southern town of Ashdod.

The company supplies 80 percent of Israel’s drinking water and 70 percent of its entire water supply.

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The Egyptian government has allocated an additional $1.2 billion USD for completion of drinking water and sewage treatment plants during the fiscal year 2008-2009, said Minister of Housing and Urban Development Ahmed al Maghrabi.

“The additional allocations will be spent on completion of 38 integrated drinking water treatment projects and completion of 38 pipelines networks in different governorates,” Maghrabi said.

“The investments will be also used in building 88 compact drinking water treatment plants,” he added. These projects are expected to add 3.4 million cubic meters to the daily production of potable water in Egypt, which currently stands at 24.3 million cubic meters per day.

“The additional funds will be spent on building 96 integrated sewage treatment projects, (and) completion of 39 sewage pipeline networks in different governorates,” he said.

These projects are expected to increase the daily sewage treatment capacity -- currently at 14.3 million cubic meters -- by 2.3 million cubic meters.

With the global financial crisis hitting developing economies, including Egypt, the government’s decision to increase allocations for water and sanitary sewer projects falls within its efforts to invest heavily in infrastructure projects in order to keep the economy afloat.

“Increasing investment in infrastructure projects will eventually lead to a boom in the construction sector in Egypt at a time when the economy has started to feel the pinch of the global financial crisis. Increasing investments [in infrastructure projects] comes within the set of policies adopted by the government to deal with the crisis,” Maghrabi said.

The government originally decided to allocate $754 million USD for drinking water projects in the 2008-2009 fiscal year with the aim of increasing the per capita share of drinking water to 307 liters per day, up from 305 liters per day during the past fiscal year.

The government also plans to increase the length of water pipeline networks to 32,000 kilometers by the end of the current fiscal year, up from 30,500 kilometers in the previous fiscal year.

In its 2008-2009 plan, the government allocated $1.6 billion USD for sanitation projects. The government’s allocations for sewage treatment projects have increased year after year: $924 million USD in 2006-2007 and $1.1 billion USD in 2007-2008.

Also, 150 kilometers of sewage networks will have been built by the end of the current fiscal year.

Having started an ambitious privatization program in the past few years, the government has allocated $943 million USD generated from the sale of state-owned assets.

With potable water and sanitation projects at the top of its agenda, the government originally earmarked around $6.6 billion USD in the current five-year plan (2007-2012) for this sector.

However, following a series of demonstrations in various governorates over the past few years over the serious lack of drinking water, the government has embarked on a wide-scale plan to provide water supply for the most deprived areas, especially rural areas.

An urgent plan aimed at building a large number of drinking water projects was completed at the end of last year. The plan has added around 4 million cubic meters to the daily water production in Egypt. This represents a 20 percent increase in the total amount produced before the beginning of the plan.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is implementing potable water and sanitation projects according to previously set schedules, as President Hosni Mubarak has ordered the ministry to accelerate these projects throughout the country to put an end to recurrent complaints about water shortages in many areas.

Ministry officials say that the ministry managed to provide drinking water supply to all the cities and villages in the entire country, except for a number of small villages which will enjoy better water supply in the near future.

The percentage of potable water coverage has reached 99.5 percent...
of the country’s population, according to Maghrabi.

In parallel with the government plan to complete unfinished potable water and sewage projects, the ministry’s plan also focuses on renovation and replacement of old water networks in order to minimize the amount of wasted water and provide adequate water supply to households.

“As for sewage treatment stations, we have completed the implementation of sewage treatment plants in [main] cities, and our focus now is to finish them in rural areas,” al Maghrabi pointed out.

Although the government last year announced the postponement of issuing invitations for the implementation of Public-Private-Partnership potable water projects, sewage treatment stations, however, remain open for the private sector to implement through the PPP scheme, as the implementation of these stations needs around $20 billion USD, which is currently far beyond the capabilities of the state’s budget.

Ghana Launches Draft Policy for River Basins

ACCRA, Ghana (OOSKAnews)

Ghana is working on a new policy to manage and conserve some of its endangered river basins. Its Water Resources Commission has formulated a draft policy document outlining a national vision on buffer zones.

The policy is being drafted as part of plans to manage the country’s river basins in an integrated manner. The commission, which released the draft policy document last week in the national capital, Accra, said the policy would ensure that all designated buffer zones along rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs or other surface water bodies would be adequately vegetated and sustainably managed.

A commission statement said the policy had become necessary because even though the vegetation alongside water bodies in Ghana provided a wide range of socio-economic and biophysical functions, human activities had degraded the vegetative cover at headwaters and along the banks of many river systems and other surface water bodies.

The policy would also seek to promote efficient and sustainable use of buffer zone resources to address food security and income generation for local communities. A number of communities across the country have been struggling with severe shortages of safe drinking water and basic sanitation facilities.

The draft policy aims at restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity, as well as providing socio-economic benefits to local communities in fulfillment of Ghana’s overall water, environment and land use policies, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

“Poor and unrestrained practices such as uncontrolled logging and mining, human settlements, urbanization, livestock rearing and poor agricultural practices are jeopardizing the physical quality of the environment,” the commission statement said.

The hydrological and ecological support systems and the livelihoods of local inhabitants around these water bodies are also affected, it added.

Ghana has been making efforts to develop and manage its river basins, including the Densu River, which serves as one of the main water sources for Accra. The government plans also aim at improving delivery of water to consumers.

The country is well-endowed with water resources and is drained by a large number of streams and rivers, as well as a number of coastal lagoons.

The Volta River system basin, consisting of the Oti, Daka, Pru, Sene and Afram rivers as well as the White and Black Volta rivers, covers 70 percent of the total area of the country.

The southwestern river system watershed comprising the Bia, Tano, Ankobra and Pra rivers covers 22 percent of the total area, while the coastal river system watershed, comprising the Ochi-Nawuka, Ochi Amissah, Ayensu, Densu and Tordzie rivers, covers the remaining 8 percent of the country.

But several river basins have experienced land and water degradation, with reports of waste being dumped within the river channel area. When it rains, the waste find its way to the river, and ultimately gets into the water system.

Experts have urged creation of buffer zone “by-laws” that would put in place some restrictions on or altogether stop mining, logging, construction and other human activities on riverbanks.

In September last year, Ghana announced plans for a project to develop and manage its river basins.

The pilot project was to focus on the Densu River basin as well as the White Volta. The plan for the basin was supposed to help prevent pollution and land degradation, and also included creation of a buffer zone to protect existing trees.

It had also envisioned planting new trees within the basin to help it withstand floods. Under the plan, buffer zones would be used to
remove farmers who used chemicals that polluted the water.

The Densu basin has an area of 2,490 square kilometers and spans 10 district assemblies. There are reportedly 200 settlements in the basin and the total population is approaching 600,000, equivalent to 240 persons per square kilometer.

The two pilot projects last year were selected to test capacity building, participatory approaches and public awareness strategies.

The main aim in undertaking such an initiative was to transfer knowledge to the local community on regulatory measures and to start targeted initiatives to conserve and manage catchment areas with the river basin as the unit for planning.

The country’s National Water Policy, which was launched early last year, also focuses on strategic areas of water resources management, including urban water supply and community water and sanitation.

Finance & Funding

Germany to Fund Second Phase of Irbid Wastewater Project

A financial agreement for the Wastewater Greater Irbid-Phase II project was signed on January 15. Germany has contributed a total of $60.5 million USD to the project through the German Development Cooperation Bank (KfW), according to a statement from Jordan’s Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

Planning and International Cooperation Minister Suhair Al-Ali was quoted as saying in local news reports that the project’s key objectives include providing proper sewage disposal for the city of Irbid and to enhance the area’s health and environment.

Irbid is the country’s third largest city and the commercial and administrative center for its northern governorates.

Almost 100 percent of the population in the Greater Irbid Area is served by a water supply system with household connections, but only about 25 percent of the population, mostly living in the center of Irbid and in parts of Aydun, has access to a conventional sewerage system.

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VWS Envig Wins Desal Tender in Western Cape

JOHANNESBURG South Africa (OOSKAnews)

Specialized water treatment company VWS Envig earlier this month won a tender to supply a 2,400 cubic meters per day capacity desalination plant to Transnet.

Thys Els, VWS Envig’s project manager, said the desalination plant is currently in the design phase. Once complete, it can be upgraded to a capacity of 3,600 cubic meters per day.

The project is being carried out in two phases, starting with the design and then the supply phase. The supply phase will be undertaken only after stakeholders are satisfied with the company’s work in the first stage.

The Transnet project, which was tendered by Hatch, is comprehensive. It includes design, manufacture, installation and commissioning of a reverse osmosis desalination plant for use at Transnet’s iron ore terminal in the Port of Saldanha, South Africa’s only iron ore-handling port.

VWS Envig’s Els said the plant will process seawater to potable standards so that it can be used for dust suppression in the iron ore terminal.
“Currently the terminal is using municipal water for this purpose,” Els added.

According to the terms of the tender, VWS Envig is expected to construct the plant’s seawater intake system, seawater reverse osmosis units, clean in place (CIP) system, an energy recovery system, and a storage tank.

According to the VWS Envig Managing Director Gunter Rencken, this development comes on the backdrop of successes by the company in 2008, including acquisition of Aqua Services & Engineering (ASE) in Namibia.

In a related development, VWS Envig acquired Biothane technology company, which specializes in the development of anaerobic technology for the biological treatment of wastewater.

“The acquisition of Biothane allows us at VWS Envig to offer specialized solutions for the treatment of industrial wastewater streams with high concentrations of organic compounds,” said Rencken.

Lebanon’s Al Dar Awarded Kuwait Wastewater Expansion Contract

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait (OOSKAnews)

Lebanon’s Al Dar Consulting has been awarded the consultancy contract for the expansion of Kuwait’s Umm Al Hayman wastewater treatment plant.

The contract, awarded by Kuwait’s Public Works Ministry, includes study, design and construction supervision for the project. Kuwait plans to expand Umm Al Hayman plant to increase wastewater treatment capacity to 300,000 cubic meters per day, a giant leap forward from its current capacity of 27,000 cubic meters per day.

Al Dar’s main task will be to determine the size of the new plant. The expansion is needed, as the ministry plans to close the existing capacity at Rigga wastewater plant.

Rigga, with a capacity of 180,000 cubic meters per day, will be decommissioned and converted to a data monitoring center. Rigga’s new function will be used to check and evaluate a portion of the treated wastewater.

The Ministry of Electricity & Water in Kuwait said a tender for installation of a water distillation unit has been issued, with a deadline of March 15.

The tender is for Al-Zour South power and water plant. The ministry has already prequalified 11 companies for the project, among them Vivendi Water Systems, Aquatech, Thermax, Termomeccanica Ecologia, Doosan Heavy Industries & Construction, Ionics Italia, Unidero, Idroconsulting, Metito Overseas, and others.

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The contract is for design, supply and installation of the distillation unit at Al-Zour South plant.

Kenya Implements Water Projects Through Micro-Finance

NAIROBI, Kenya (OOSKAnews)

The Kenyan government has scaled up implementation of community water projects funded through a World Bank micro-finance program.

A partnership between the government and local micro-finance bank, K-Rep Bank, was developed two years ago to seek ways to raise funds to support development of water projects for low-income populations in Kenyan towns.

Faced with inadequate funding from established mainstream financial institutions, community water programs can now access loans in the country’s leading micro finance bank without collateral.

The program is funded by the World Bank through its Global Partnership for Output-Based Aid (GPOBA).

According to Jacqueline Musyoki, CEO of the Water Services Trust Fund, the water sector in Kenya continues to attract little investment and financing from the public and private sector.

“The government has formulated policies that (seek) an innovative approach to raising funds to develop the water sector. We intend to scale back on sourcing money from mainstream financial institutions that are reluctant to provide loans for development of community water projects,” Musyoki said.

She said established banks in the country place stringent requirements before agreeing to provide loans to organized grassroots communities seeking to develop small-scale water programs.

Community water projects in Kenya lack a solid finance base and other assets that most banks demand as collateral before lending money, she added.

“Commercial banks in Kenya consider community water projects a risky venture that will likely generate dismal returns on their investments. This has hampered expansion of water supply services to the urban and rural poor,” said Musyoki.

Under the World Bank-funded micro-finance program, communities in low-income urban settlements can apply for financing from K-Rep Bank to expand and rehabilitate water supply infrastructure.

The Water Services Trust Fund is providing technical assistance with proposal writing to communities seeking to apply for the loans, said Musyoka.
She says that this program started on a pilot basis and involved 30 community water projects in Nairobi. It will later expand to rural towns.

The funding program hinges on development of a commercially viable loan application. Communities are required to raise 20 percent of the total cost of water supply infrastructure they intend to develop.

K-Rep Bank advances 40 percent of the total cost of the project and the World Bank provides a subsidy of 40 percent.

Musyoki said the government is exploring additional credit-based finance products to replenish existing financing programs in the water sector.

The government will strengthen surveillance and monitoring of donor-funded water projects to minimize graft and mismanagement, she added.

“The government is keen on transforming the water sector into a financially sound and stable industry through strengthening governance structures and reducing corruption that has eroded donor and investor confidence,” she said.

Huta Group Wins $54 Million USD Drinking Water Supply Deal

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia (OOSKAnews)

Saudi Arabia’s Huta Marine has bagged a $52 million USD project for drinking water supply and construction of a 10,000 cubic meter per day reverse osmosis plant at King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), the largest private finance initiative in the kingdom.

The 10-year contract is on a build-own-operate (BOO) basis and covers construction of the reverse osmosis plant, pumping station and a 10,000 cubic meter steel holding tank to provide water in KAEC.

According to local news reports, Economic City developer Emaar has the option to increase production to 20,000 cubic meters per day after the first two years of operation.

Emaar is also working to arrange another reverse osmosis plant with a capacity of 70,000 cubic meters per day. This plant is expected to be operational within two to three years.

This is among the few cases in which large-scale projects involving construction of water infrastructure, including water treatment plants, have been awarded to local companies in Saudi Arabia.

Most of the projects have been won by leading overseas companies through their local presence.

Emaar’s board member and chief executive officer, Fahad Bin Abdul Mohsen Al Rasheed, was quoted as saying that the contract with Huta Marine highlighted Emaar’s commitment to engage established Saudi firms in the development of KAEC.

“One of the largest contractors in the kingdom, Huta group has undertaken a wide range of large-scale construction projects regionally and internationally, and their extensive expertise will enable implementation of a world-class infrastructure for KAEC,” he said.

Al Rasheed and Huta Group chairman Saleh Bin Laden recently signed the agreement for the contract in Jeddah.

The Huta Group has already won several contracts worth millions of dollars for projects in the KAEC, including bridges and water canals.

Saudi Arabia had unveiled plans in 2005 to build the $26.6 billion USD Economic City.

The project has six distinct components – a modern seaport, industrial district, financial island, education zone, resorts and a residential area.

The city, along with other five economic cities, is also part of an ambitious “10×10” program, planned by Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, to place Saudi Arabia among the world’s top 10 competitive investment destinations by the year 2010.

Dutch Water Sector to Provide Assistance to UAE, Oman

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (OOSKAnews)

A high-level Dutch political and business delegation led by Crown Prince Willem Alexander made official visits to Gulf Cooperation Council countries last week.

During the trip, several major new agreements have been signed with parties in Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

The role of water use in Abu Dhabi has been one of the focuses of
the Dutch delegation. Abu Dhabi’s water use is expected to double in the next 20 years, from 560 million cubic meters to 1.2 billion cubic meters in the domestic sector alone.

During the prince’s visit, the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi (EAD) and the embassy of the Netherlands organized a conference on water and sustainable development.

Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade Frank Heemskerk also attended the conference.

The UAE’s first Water Master Plan will be announced later this month. It will involve restructuring and privatization of water services, using more renewable resources and developing more sustainable desalination technologies, according to Rashid Ahmed bin Fahad, UAE Minister of Environment and Water.

The Dutch delegation’s aim was to win over the United Arab Emirates for possible future cooperation. Several agreements have been signed between the parties regarding cooperation and technical assistance in the next few years.

Earlier, the delegation had travelled to Oman. The Netherlands is keen to expand its economic cooperation in Oman’s wastewater management sector. Heemskerk said at a seminar on “Forming a Sustainable Water Chain in a Dense Coastal Zone,” organized by the Netherlands Gulf Region Water Platform (NGWP).

The Dutch minister has expressed a desire for a bigger share in Oman’s wastewater management projects. He was upbeat that a number of Dutch companies that are exploring opportunities for possible partnerships in the sultanate will be successful.

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**ENVIRONMENT & WASTE**

**Al Serw City Drinking Water Contaminated**

CAIRO, Egypt (OOSKAnews)

The Local Council of Al Serw, a city in the Mediterranean governorate of Damietta in northern Egypt, has sent a memorandum to the Ministry of Housing over the bad quality of drinking water produced in the city.

The members of the council accused water company officials of ignoring the issue of contaminated water in the city.

“Water officials paid special attention to water problems in other cities, while they ignored our regular complaints about the bad quality of potable water in al Serw,” the council said.

“The city is home to hundreds of thousands of people who are paying their bills on a regular basis, so they should receive better treatment from water officials in the governorate,” the document added.

The memorandum said water officials had approved the upgrading of several potable water treatment plants in other cities and even replaced some of them with new ones, while al Serw’s complaints fell on deaf ears.

The city is being provided with water via two compact drinking water stations. The first one is Austrian-made and was installed in 1978, and the other one is Egyptian-made and was installed in 1991. The production of each station is around 30 liters per second.

Residents frequently complain about the bad quality and scarcity of water.

“The expiry dates of both stations have passed, and their efficiency declined by 50 percent,” said Akram al Banna, head of the council. “The production of both stations can hardly suffice (to supply) one of the many districts of the city,” he said.

“People are always complaining about the insufficient water, the presence of strange materials in the potable water and its nasty smell as well.”

A governmental report issued last year on drinking water pollution has warned that the citizens of Damietta and eight other Egyptian governorates are drinking water contaminated with sewage.

The report, which was prepared by a number of governmental agencies and parliamentary committees, noted that the Damietta is one of the governorates most susceptible to water pollution.

It is also grappling with a severe lack of functional sanitary sewer facilities, according to officials.

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**Water on Zambia-Tanzania Border Contaminated**

LUSAKA, Zambia (OOSKAnews)

Zambians living along the border with Tanzania are drinking contaminated water from Tanzania.

However, the Zambian government said the situation will soon be brought under control.

The government is working on a project to start pumping water from a clean and environmentally safe source within Zambia for the residents along the border to drink.
Northern Province Minister Charles Shawa said people in the area were being supplied with contaminated water from neighboring Tanzania.

“The source of water in Tanzania and the area where the water is coming from is contaminated because we have evidence that they through rubbish in that water body. So we do not want this situation to continue,” Shawa said.

Water engineers have already been sent to the water body in Tanzania to assess the extent of the contamination and report back to the Zambian government.

Shawa said the government will start providing clean and safe water from a local source this year.

The government is working to dam a small stream in the area that has clean water.

As a result of bad water, several cases of water-borne diseases including cholera are being reported in the district, amid fears that the diseases will spread throughout the district.

Shawa said the situation is being handled by a medical team that has been sent to the area.

The provincial administration has made an appeal to the Ministry of Local Government and Housing to inject some funds to improve water and sewerage services in the province, he said.

In addition to the damming of the stream to provide clean water to the area, Shawa said negotiations are under way with the Chambeshi Water and Sewerage Company to extend its services to Nakonde.

According to Liberian Agriculture Minister Chris Toe, who led an inter-governmental and international non-governmental delegation to assess the damage of the insects, said 50 percent of water sources have been polluted by the army worm feces.

“Because of the situation, the government has been meeting with international NGOs in water and sanitation to seek remedies for the water problems created in those villages and towns since last week,” Toe said.

He said, “Villagers in the affected towns have been advised to stop fetching water from wells and creeks as drinking water sources.”

International organizations are now mobilizing necessary resources to start the chlorination of water wells and creeks, he said.

Additionally, Toe told OOSKAnews that during the assessment of the affected towns, it was discovered that most of the hand pumps constructed by the international NGOs have been destroyed by the insects.

“Another issue that we are looking at is the construction of new hand pumps and building new wells, because we may find it difficult to fully chlorinate those water sources … but we are heavily relying on international NGOs to help the government in this regard as the government cannot single-handedly carry out the exercise,” he said.

He said the army worms are as long as 2.5 to 3.8 centimeters in length and are harmful to water sources and food crops.

Aid workers on the ground informed OOSKAnews by telephone that there is an acute shortage of water and estimated that some 60,000 inhabitants are without safe drinking water.

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He said if urgent action is not taken to address the infestation by insecticide spraying, more people could be without water as many rural dwellers rely on hand pumps, creeks and water wells for drinking water.

Toe said spraying of towns and chlorination of water sources would start by the end of the month.

Invasive Insects Pollute 50 Percent of Water Sources in Central Liberia

MONROVIA, Liberia (OOSKAnews)

An invasive caterpillar species commonly known as army worms have polluted water wells and creeks in over 20 villages in central, western and northern Liberia, leading to a shortage of safe drinking water.
Sharjah Draft Law Aims to Protect Groundwater

SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates (OOSKAnews)

Sharjah has issued a draft law under which no wells can be dug without approval of the Sharjah Electricity and Water Authority (SEWA). It also calls for protection of groundwater resources from pollution and waste.

The draft law lists the particular areas in which digging of wells will be allowed and states that the digging process itself will be under the jurisdiction of SEWA's technical affairs committee. It says even the cleaning and shutting down of wells will be carried out under the supervision of the SEWA committee.

The draft law comes at a time when available groundwater resources in Sharjah are being depleted. The groundwater level in Sharjah has dropped by 40 percent over the years, largely due to haphazard digging of wells in different parts of the emirate.

The draft law is an attempt to protect water resources by regulating use.

The draft, which was issued by SEWA in coordination with the Sharjah Municipality and Town Planning Department, has been referred to the Sharjah Consultative Council for preliminary approval and then will be referred to the ruler of the emirate for approval.

SEWA Director General Al Waleed Bin Khadem was quoted in local news reports as saying the emirate has 8,092 wells, of which 5,442 are “productive.”

“Eighty percent of these wells were dug randomly by farmers,” he said.

SEWA had also discovered recently that many drinking water companies were bottling groundwater and farmers were digging a number of wells for irrigation. The draft law has stipulated that for digging of wells, first priority will be given to human and animal needs followed by construction, agriculture and commercial requirements.

The law will not allow companies that engage in activities that threaten groundwater resources and cause pollution.

The draft law also makes it mandatory for SEWA and other concerned authorities to make efforts to curb ground water waste. This can be done by regular inspections and ensuring that regulations are being followed.

The draft law lists the types of violations and penalties ranging from fines to closing of firms. It also defines powers and functions of the authorities concerned.

The emirate had been working on a long-term strategic plan for the rational use of groundwater resources and had even used a satellite project to find groundwater.

ZINWA Workers Go on Strike

HARARE, Zimbabwe (OOSKAnews)

Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) workers have gone on strike, a situation likely to worsen the cholera outbreak which has so far claimed more than 2,500 people.

ZINWA is the national water authority responsible for provision of water and maintenance of facilities throughout the country.

The water workers are protesting poor working conditions and pay.

ZINWA workers told the media last week that on top of poor pay the organization had deliberately exposed them to diseases by forcing them to work without any protective clothing.

They said their employer refused to supply them with protective clothing when repairing burst water and sewer pipes.

“They have repeatedly told management to supply us with protective clothing but it seems our calls are falling on deaf ears,” said one of the employees.

The workers said that they also did not have the proper tools to carry out maintenance work. Authorities at ZINWA said they were working on addressing the worker’s grievances.

“The problem is being attended to,” said ZINWA national spokesperson, Tsungirirai Shoriwa, in a terse response.

Some parts of Harare have gone without water for years. Other residential areas such as Glen Norah, Glen View, Budiriro, Bellevdere and some parts of the central business district have gone for two weeks without water after a main pipe burst.

The water crisis has also affected operations at the Budiriro Polyclinic, which is a main referral center for the cholera outbreak.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has intervened in the affected areas by supplying water to residents in Budiriro, Glen View and Glen Norah.
However, the supplies were not enough to meet the needs of all residents and this has led some residents to dig open wells.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) this week restored clean water supplies to the sprawling Chitungwiza suburb, about 30 kilometers outside Harare. Residents of Chitungwiza sued the government in November, saying they had been without running water for 13 months, causing the cholera outbreak.

The cholera outbreak that has devastated the rest of Zimbabwe started in the suburb.

“Every day, we are seeing real progress,” said Farid Abdulkadir, who is the ICRC's national disaster management coordinator for southern Africa.

Residents of Chitungwiza sued the government in November, saying they had been without running water for 13 months, causing the cholera outbreak.

The lawsuit filed with the High Court described “large pools of raw sewage” in the streets of Chitungwiza.

Zimbabwe’s first cholera cases were reported in Chitungwiza in August. As of Wednesday, the U.N. said, 48,623 cholera cases and 2,755 deaths had been recorded across the country.

Supply

Reservoir Planned to Augment Supply, Cut Water Loss in Zarqa

AMMAN, Jordan (OOSKAnews)

Jordanian authorities have developed a plan to set up a 14,000 cubic meter water reservoir in Al Batrawi District to improve water supply and reduce losses in Zarqa governorate.

The proposed reservoir is part of an $11 million USD deal signed between Jordan and Japan to complete the third stage of a project to develop water supply and management in Zarqa.

The project, which is being jointly implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Jordan Water Authority (JWA), aims to renovate existing pipe and pumping stations in Zarqa.

The city of Zarqa, about 30 kilometers east of Amman, has faced chronic water shortages, with local authorities even resorting to water rationing. The sewage system in the city has crumbled and lack of water is putting extra pressure on the sanitation system.

“This agreement aims at addressing challenges facing the water sector in the country and improving the water situation, especially since Jordan is categorized among the poorest countries in the world in terms of water availability,” JWA Secretary General Munir Oweis said in a press release on January 20, 2009.

As part of the project agreement, secondary water pipelines in Al Batrawi will be also installed, with work on the third phase of the initiative expected to be completed by the end of 2009.

The first phase of the project included construction and rehabilitation of water networks in Ruseifa-Oujan. It was financed by a $14.2 million USD Japanese grant, while the second phase of the initiative received two Japanese grants worth $10 million USD.

The proposed new reservoir will be used to collect water from the Khaw Water Station. With the use of an existing 3,000 cubic meter tank that stores water from Khaw, pressure on the governorate’s water network will be reduced.

Director of Zarqa Water Management Directorate Nabil Zu‘bi was quoted as saying that the two water tanks will help with water distribution by reducing pressure by 80 percent, which in turn will help reduce pumping and operational costs and prevent water pipe breakage.

The water directorate serves over 135,000 people in Zarqa governorate and plans to rehabilitate the area’s water network to help reduce water losses, which currently stand at 49 percent, he said.

Mali Conducts Study on Regional Access to Water Supply

BAMAKO, Mali (OOSKAnews)

The government of Mali and international non-governmental organization WaterAid have commissioned a study of the design and implementation of technical units for access to drinking water, hygiene and sanitation in the landlocked West African nation.

National representative of WaterAid Mali Fatoumata Haïdara said in a statement that the study, which the organization is funding, would lead the state to gradually transfer water management from local government officials to rural communities, stimulating economic and social development.

The study aims to strengthen the capacity of municipalities to promote access to drinking water, hygiene and sanitation in Mali’s rural communities.

Foreign donors are keen to support all efforts and programs toward decentraliza-
tion in the management of water services, hygiene and sanitation, Haidara said.

At the launch of the study earlier this month in Bamako, WaterAid presented 15 laptops, 15 printers, solar panels and 100 Yamaha motorcycles to assist with the study.

The study will be completed within four months, the Malian government said.

Mali is one of the world’s poorest nations. It is continuously affected by drought. The country faces a water deficit, with more than 5,780 villages without modern equipment at water points.

According to the government more than 3.1 million of the country’s 11.5 million people lack adequate access to drinking water.

Malawi-UNICEF-Dutch Partnership to Increase Water Coverage
LILONGWE, Malawi (OOSKAnews)

A partnership involving Malawi, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Netherlands will drill 360 boreholes in 12 districts this year at a cost of $2 million USD, in order to increase water coverage and prevent water-borne diseases.

The Government of Netherlands-UNICEF Partnership dates back to 2006, when it made an agreement with the Malawian government to improve progress toward achieving the target of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number seven, to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe water supply.

The total budget for the program is $29.1 million USD. The government of Malawi will contribute $16.9 million USD.

According to Project Officer Joseph Kanzombo, the government wants to increase water coverage from the present 66 percent to 80 percent.

He said the districts that will benefit from the program include Likoma, Chitipa, Mzimba and NkataBay in Northern Malawi, Kasungu, Dowa, Mchinji, Salima and Lilongwe in Central Malawi as well as Mwanza and Blantyre in Southern Malawi.

“We have already tendered these 360 boreholes and soon we shall shortlist contractors,” he said.

The estimated direct economic benefits from the program are $3 to $4 million USD per year in addition to indirect economic benefits and significant gains in people’s health, dignity and quality of life.

The plan is for 700,000 users to have access to safe drinking water within 500 meters of their homes.
The project also plans to rehabilitate 240,000 drinking water sources including boreholes.

The project officer said the project will finish in 2012. Some 255 boreholes have already been drilled, he said.

By 2012, 300 schools and 100 health centers will also have boreholes, he said.

“We want to retain girls in schools because in the past they were unable to go to school during menstruation periods because toilets were not user friendly (without water). This means education standards will be enhanced,” he said.

LOCAL PRESS REPORTS

MEDIA BRIEFS FROM THE REGION

SAFEGE WINS $14.2 MILLION USD STUDY CONTRACT

ALGIERS

France’s Safeg has won a $14.2 million USD contract to study use of water in the northern Sahara, the National Office of Irrigation and Drainage said.

Safeg has promised to complete the study of the Djelfa I and Grand Occidental Erg fields and the transfer of water from Oued Djedi, within 31 months.

Algerian Minister of Water Resources Abdelmalek Sellal estimated the volume of water in the Saharan aquifers at 60,000 billion cubic meters, of which 40,000 billion cubic meters is in Algeria.

Source: Ennahar (Algeria)

UTILITY EMPLOYEES PROSECUTED FOR CORRUPTION

MANAMA

Several employees of the Electricity and Water Authority (EWA) are being prosecuted for alleged corruption, Works Minister Fahmi Al Jowder said.

Jowder said eight or nine employees had been referred to the Public Prosecution.

He was addressing parliament members who were discussing a probe committee to report on the EWA’s failure to meet its obligations.

Jowder called on parliament members to report corrupt EWA employees.

“We won’t stop here and if MPs have names they want to be investigated, then we are willing to do so without any hesitation or delay,” he said.

“I don’t accept the presence of any corrupt employee, whether at the ministry or the authority.”

Source: Gulf Daily News (Bahrain)
Iran to Complete Five Dams by March

TEHRAN

Iran will complete five large dams by late March.

Among them is Alborz embankment dam, in Mazandaran province, which is being built by Mazanaran Regional Water Co., which is also constructing the Galvard dam and that project is just over a quarter completed.

The country is pushing ahead with its dam building program despite limited supplies of materials over the past year, according to the Ministry of Energy and Water Affairs.

There are a total of 94 major projects under construction.

Limited funding was also an issue, but the government has increased credits to the water sector, the ministry said.

The government has given $109.9 million USD for the Khoda-Afarin hydropower plan and $51.7 million USD for the Qiz Qalasi hydropower plant.

Source: International Water Power & Dam Construction

Soreq Desal Plant Tender Published

TEL AVIV

Israel’s inter-ministerial seawater desalination tender committee has published the build-operate-transfer (BOT) tender for the Soreq desalination plant. The four consortia that participated in the prequalification stage were invited to bid.

The tender is estimated at $377 million-$503 million USD.

The Soreq facility will be the largest desalination plant in Israel, and one of the largest in the world.

For the first time, bidders will have to submit environmental impact statements, and must demonstrate use of recycled materials, energy efficiency, reduced use of chemicals, efficiency in use of land resources, and limits on noise.

Source: Globes Online (Israel)

Millennium Challenge Corporation Program Provides Equipment

BIREEN

The Local Governance Development Program, supported by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has provided tractors, bulldozers, sewage trucks and street sweepers, to help municipalities in Jordan address sanitation issues.

Some $2 million USD worth of equipment was given to Bireen, Madaba, Al Shafa, Burgash, Al Hassa, Shobak, Al Kura, Fuheis and Jerash municipalities on January 19.

“If it were not for this project, I as a mayor would not have been able to meet my citizens’ demands,” said Bireen Mayor Mohammad Ghoweiri.

“This initiative is in line with our desire to improve local governments,” said Minister of Municipal Affairs Shihadeh Abu Hdeib.

“Partnership between municipalities and NGOs, the private sector and local communities is important in order to meet challenges and prioritize resources,” Abu Hdeib said.

Source: Jordan Times
Water the Main Challenge in the Arab World

KUWAIT CITY

Water issues are the main challenge for countries in the Arab world, former Moroccan Environment Minister Mohammed Elyazghi said at the Private Sector and Civil Society forum on water resources, environment and climate change in Kuwait.

Elyazghi cited a report from the Arab League report that said global warming posed a threat to Arab countries.

The region faces water shortages which, coupled with population growth and poor irrigation methods have negatively affected agricultural production, he said.

He called on Arab states to implement strategies for water use and water recycling, as well as seawater desalination.

At the forum, Sudanese Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources and Deputy Chairman of the Arab Water Union Kamal Ali Mohammad called for integration of water, agriculture, economy, environment and energy.

Mohammed proposed the expansion of storage of river water and use of underground water to increase agricultural land and animal resources. He said wasting freshwater and improper use of rainwater will increase drought.

He urged the private sector to contribute to preserving water resources.

Source: Arab Times (Kuwait)

Plateau State to Build More Dams

LAGOS

The government of Nigeria’s Plateau state has announced plans to build four new dams and reactivate two others, to improve potable water supply.

Commissioner for Water Resources and Rural Development Malam Idi Waziri said Riyom and Dengi local government areas would each get a dam.

The other two dams will be constructed in Langtang-South, because of the area’s “peculiar water problems,” he said. Existing dams in Shendam and Langtang-North will be reactivated to meet growing demand for water, he added.

The Mangu Regional Water program, which is being carried out by both the Plateau state and the federal governments, was under way.

The project involved digging boreholes and hand-dug wells in all 17 local government areas in the state.

Source: This Day (Nigeria)

Contractor Fails to Complete Seven Water Projects in Edo State

ABUJA

Contractor Henry Ojiek-homon was paid $3.2 million USD for seven water projects in Edo state that were never completed.

The projects were part of a $5.9 million USD contract awarded by the state Urban Water Board.

A report presented to Governor Adams Oshiomhole by the Assets and Verification Committee found that Ojiek-homon, whose contract worth was $4.7 million USD, had purportedly executed three of the seven projects in one day and the rest at another time.

Committee member Oseni Elamah noted, “What is interesting is that we tried to find out who executed these projects. We have inspection reports for the project sites visited and of course the work they did by contract. We curiously observed one contractor alone handled seven of these jobs through various companies.”

“We also reviewed the various contracts involved. The general finding is that most of the jobs were either not executed and where they were pretending to execute them, they were just shoddy jobs. None of these contracts has a payment mobilization less than 83 percent,” he added.

The committee recommended that a detailed investigation be launched of the urban water board activities and officials.

Source: Vanguard (Nigeria)
Viper Networks in Deal to Bring Environmentally Friendly Projects to the Kingdom

RIYADH

Viper Networks has entered into an agreement with Saudi Arabia to form a new entity, Saudi Nossan Viper Green Key (SNVG), that will develop and bring environmentally-friendly products and services to the Saudi market.

SNVG will work on waste management, sewer treatment, recycling, and environmental awareness programs in the kingdom.

“We are extremely pleased to partner with such respected and accomplished businessmen to form SNVG,” said Viper Networks CEO Farid Shouekani.

He added, “SNVG’s first initiative is to address the serious problems of waste management in the Middle East and Asia, starting with the construction of a large-scale Green Key plant installation in western Saudi Arabia.”

Source: Business Intelligence Middle East (United Arab Emirates)

$4.8 Million USD for Water Supply in Mpumalanga

JOHANNESBURG

The provincial government will spend some $4.8 million USD to address water supply problems following a cholera outbreak in Mpumalanga.

Provincial government spokesperson Ntime Skosana said the funds were in line with the regional water project, Water for All.

There have been a total of 19 cholera deaths and 49 other cases of the water-borne disease in Mpumalanga province since December 31.

Up to $245,000 USD will be spent on installation of mobile plants in Umjindi municipality, Skosana said, and about $1.2 million USD will be spent on provision of a mobile batch plant to purify water in Delmas.

Some of the funds will go toward eradicating water service backlogs in Dr. J.S. Moroka, Albert Luthuli, Thembisile and Emakhazeni municipalities, he said.

Five more plants will be repaired in Caroline, he added.

Source: Sapa (South Africa)

Johannesburg Water, University to Collaborate on Water, Sanitation

JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg Water and the University of Johannesburg have signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on water and sanitation research and development projects.

The collaboration is aimed at developing new knowledge and technology in water nanotechnology, water purification, wastewater treatment and water analysis.

“We believe that the key to the successful development of new and novel technologies lies in forging science and technology partnerships and the collective will to increase a skilled workforce to enhance competitiveness in the future,” said Johannesburg Water Acting Chief Executive Officer Jones Mnisi.

He said such partnerships are critical for Johannesburg to improve business efficiencies, reduce the cost of service delivery and become more responsive to the needs of customers.

Under the MoU, the university will provide workplace learning opportunities for city workers and students and will develop interventions to address the shortage of scientists and engineers.

For its part, Johannesburg University “want(s) to pursue our goal to be engaged in Johannesburg and sustain a relationship with our stakeholders including community and businesses,” said Vice Chancellor Professor Derek van der Merwe.

Van der Merwe said the university wants to focus on Gauteng City Region to provide safe and secure water.

Source: BuaNews (South Africa)
China Funds More Sudan Water Projects

KHARTOUM

Some $500 million USD in loans from China are being used to fund drinking water projects in Sudan, according to Mohamed Hassan Mahmoud Ammar, general director of the National Water Corporation.

Ammar said China leads the world in its openness to provide financial support and equipment for water projects in Sudan.

He said Sudan has received four loans from China for water equipment including pumps and networks.

China will extend a fifth loan of $40 million USD, he added. He said talks are under way between officials at the Ministry of Finance and National Economy and the Chinese for water projects at Al-Matama, Abu-Hamad, Dongola, Medani, Kosti, Rabak, Al-Gadarif, Al-Fashir, Sinnar and Senjah towns.

The project to dig 300 wells in Darfur and 161 other ones in the eastern states of Sudan will also be financed by a Chinese loan, Ammar said.

Source: Sudanese News Agency

Turkey Forms Two New State Ministries

ANKARA

Turkey will form two new state ministries by this April, according to officials in the Prime Minister’s office.

The planned ministries, the Water Sources Ministry and the Local Administrations Ministry, will be formed soon after local elections in March.

The move aims to narrow the responsibility of the Energy and Natural Sources Ministry by giving the new Water Sources Ministry authority over use and management of all water sources.

The Local Administrations Ministry will take over some responsibility from the Interior Ministry.

Source: Hurriyet (Turkey)

Turkey Seeks New Loans From IMF

ISTANBUL

Turkey is seeking loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for water supply and roads, to spur economic growth ahead of local elections in March.

In return for the loans, the IMF is asking for budget cuts.

Turkey’s budget deficit before interest payments more than tripled in December 2008 to reach $4.2 billion USD, according to the Finance Ministry said.

An IMF deal would increase confidence in the country’s economic outlook for business leaders and financial markets.

Source: Hurriyet (Turkey)

CH2M HILL Completes Services for SEWA

DENVER, CO

Engineering, procurement, construction, and operations firm CH2M HILL, has delivered design, construction, and commissioning services to the Sharjah Electricity and Water Authority (SEWA) for two seawater reverse osmosis (SWRO) desalination plants, the company announced.

The company is constructing a third desalination plant for SEWA, which is expected to come online by mid-2009.

“The Emirate of Sharjah needs additional water supplies,” said Felix Wang, commissioning manager and process engineer for CH2M HILL.

“Salty water comes from the taps in some areas, such as Khor Fakkan. The new desalination plants will serve a critical need in the existing distribution network.”
The three plants, for which CH2M HILL has been the single-source of responsibility for engineer-procure-construct services, will provide more than 60,000 cubic meters per day of high-quality desalinated water.

The Layyah and Khor Fakkan facilities began exporting desalinated water in October 2008.

The Layyah plant is located on the Persian Gulf, about 15 kilometers northeast of Dubai, while the Khor Fakkan and Kalba plants are located on the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates.

$5.4 Million USD in Fines for Sewage Dumping

DUBAI

Dubai has issued some $5.4 million USD in fines for companies whose tanker drivers dump sewage water in residential areas.

Khaled Sulaitain, head of the field team in Dubai Municipality’s Environment Department, said 200 offenses have been pursued in the past three months.

Many of the offenses involve tanker drivers dumping raw sewage into residential areas such as Al Quoz or in rainwater collection drains instead of desalination plants, Sulaitain said.

Source: Khaleej Times (United Arab Emirates)

Industrial Pump Sales Expected to Be Flat in 2009

NORTHFIELD, IL

Industrial pump sales overall are expected to be flat in 2009 at the $32.5 billion USD level reached in 2008, the McIlvaine Company forecasts in its report, Pumps World Markets.

Within the overall market, pump sales for the municipal wastewater and municipal water markets are expected to grow by 2.5 percent and 2 percent, respectively.

Sales growth will vary by region, the report pointed out. Asia sales are predicted to increase 2.8 percent to $13.2 billion USD in 2009, while Europe will decrease 1.7 percent to $8.9 billion USD.

Increased investment in municipal wastewater treatment facilities in the United States, China, and other countries will lead to higher revenues starting in 2010, it said.

The report noted that in the pump market, replacement parts and service are significant revenue producers. Municipal wastewater and drinking water sectors are not sensitive to short-term economic conditions, it added.

Source: McIlvaine Company

Yemen, World Bank Hold Talks on Water Project

SANA’A

Yemen and the World Bank were starting talks in Cairo on January 26 on the bank’s grant to finance $90 million USD of a $290 million USD water project.

The Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany will also extend financial support for the project, said Deputy Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Abdullah Hassan al-Shatir, who headed Yemen’s delegation for the talks with the bank.

The project aims to provide water services throughout the country using modern irrigation devices and supporting local water institutions with related projects.

Source: Saba (Yemen)
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