

THE JORDAN TIMES

Tuesday, January 25, 2011 | Safar 20, 1432 Hijri

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation

500 Fils

Volume 36 | Number 1071A

ENVIRONMENT

Jordan already a victim of global warming — report

Crisis looming if not enough rain falls in coming weeks

By Hana Hamrouge

AMMAN — The Middle East, one of the driest regions in the world, will witness shifting rainfall patterns due to climate change which will result in less freshwater for the region's growing population, according to a new report.

As experts predict effects of climate change to start affecting the region within 50-100 years, the report indicated that Jordan, among other countries including the Palestinian territories and Israel, are already experiencing climatic changes.

In "The Blue Peace: Rethinking Middle East Water" report, which will be officially launched in February in Geneva, experts predicted that changes in climatic

patterns will result in shrinking rivers, desertification, receding groundwater levels and shifting rainfall patterns.

The Blue Peace report, a copy of which was made available to The Jordan Times, said that Jordan is among the countries witnessing desertification due to climate change, with predictions that winter temperatures will rise by 2-3.1°C and summer temperatures will increase by 2.5-3.7°C over the next 50-70 years.

Director of the Jordan Meteorological Department Abdul Halim Abu Hasim said on Monday that climate change is impacting weather patterns in Jordan, despite the lack of sufficient local studies.

Continued on page 7

Jordan already a victim of global warming — report

Continued from page 1

"The year 2010 was the hottest year Jordan has ever witnessed, during which temperatures remained above their annual average and rainfall was lower, compared to previous years," Abu Hasim told The Jordan Times yesterday.

JMD figures indicate that 35 per cent of the rainy season has been achieved in the north, where rainfall average ranges between 400-500mm, while in the central region 17-20 per cent of the season has been achieved and 10-15 per cent in the south.

Abu Hasim noted that the current wet season is the driest since the 1990-1999 winter when the country received only 44 per cent of the long-term annual average of eight billion millimetres of rainfall.

He said that rainfall is expected in February, but underscored that amounts will be insufficient to improve the "weak wet season".

The delay in rainfall accompanied by above-average temperatures during this time of the year will have negative impacts on several sectors, mainly field crops, dam storage, natural pastures and livestock, according to an expert in environment and agriculture.

Sayed Khatari, a professor at the University of Jordan and head of the Jordan Environment Society's scientific committee, said that it is unusual to see December and January pass without receiving sufficient rain.

Field crops such as grains, are in real danger if no rain falls during the coming two weeks, we are possible to suffer from crop failure,"

Khatari told The Jordan Times yesterday.

Storage at the country's major dams is also below the "critical limit", which will negatively impact cultivation in the Jordan Valley, where farmers rely on water from the King Abdul Dam for irrigation, he added.

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation's latest figures indicate that the Kingdom's major dams currently hold 37 per cent of their total capacity of 215.44 million cubic metres.

Khatari noted that underground aquifers will not be nourished this year due to the weak wet season, highlighting that this also reduces green cover and natural pastures, and consequently productivity of the livestock sector.

"The government must consider providing herders with alternatives,

such as imported fodder," he suggested.

The Blue Peace report, issued by the Strategic Foresight Group, said that in order for the Middle East to address the climate change, countries should adopt a new regionally developed climate change models.

These models, as recommended by the report, should take into account the requirements, nature and nuances of the countries in the region, so that they are not dependant on global models.

"The countries in the region are interconnected by the water bodies they share and any climate changes in one will affect the rest," said the report, which redefines water in the Middle East as an instrument for cooperation and suggests 10 recommendations to achieve water security and regional peace.

Ortadoğu'da Su ve Çevre için Bölgesel İş Birliği Uluslar arası Çalıştayı dün Şanlıurfa'da başladı

GAP'ın kalbi su için çarptı



Vali Okutan suyun bütün canlılarda olduğu gibi, insanların günlük yaşamlarındaki yaşamsal değerini daima gözler önüne serdiğini söyledi. Anadolu'nun Medeniyetler beşiği olarak adlandırıldığına dikkat çeken Okutan Nil, Fırat ve Dicle'nin bölge insanı için vazgeçilmez bir yaşam kaynağı olduğunu belirtti.

Ortadoğu'da Su ve Çevre için Bölgesel İş Birliği Uluslar arası Çalıştayı dün Şanlıurfa'da başladı. Yerli ve yabancı katılımcıların iştirak ettiği Su Çalıştayı Şanlıurfa'yı tanıtıcı bir film ile start aldı. Elruba Otel'de düzenlenen Su Çalıştayı'nda suyun önemini anlatan Şanlıurfa Valisi Nuri Okutan, "Tarih boyunca kurulan medeniyetler yaşamlarını devam ettirebilmeleri için su kaynaklarına olan yakınlıkları önemsenmiştir." dedi.



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Çalıştayı Şanlıurfa Valisi Nuri Okutan, Çevre ve Orman Bakanlığı Müsteşarı Prof.Dr.Hasan Zuhuri Sankaya, DSI Genel Müdür Yardımcıları Akif Özkaldı, İsmail Uğur, Şanlıurfa Emniyet Müdürü Sabri Durmuşlar, DSI 15.Bölge Müdürü Sait Umucu, DSI 15.Bölge Müdür Yardımcıları Ömer Kavaflı, Uğur Bütükkhatipoğlu, Tanım II Müdürü Remzi Çubuk, GAP İdaresi Başkanı Sadrettin Karahocagil, GAP İdaresi Şanlıurfa Müdürü Mehmet Açıköz, İsviçre Küresel Su Girişimcileri Yöneticisi Francois Muenzer, Lübnan Eski First Lady'si ve Bakanı Nayla Moawad, Parlamento Üyesi Şaban Dişli, Büyükelçi Mithat Rende, DSI Eski Genel Müdürü Özden Bişen, Lübnan Litani Nehir Otoritesi Selim Catafago, Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sınırışan Sular Daire Başkanı Ece Acarsoy, İsviçre Ortadoğu'dan Sorumlu Büyükelçi Jean- Daniel Rühch, İsviçre Dışişleri Bakanlığında Mr Dag Danfeld katıldı.

(Sedat ATILLA'nın Haberi 11.Sayfada)



THE JORDAN TIMES

Monday, January 24, 2011 | Safar 19, 1432 Hijri

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation

500 Fils

Volume 36 | Number 10717

BLUE PEACE

Water can be an opportunity for peace in region — report

10 recommendations set to achieve water security in 7 Middle East countries

By Hans Namrose

AMMAN — Water in the Middle East can be used as an opportunity for achieving peace and development rather than be treated as a problem and a source of conflict, a new report suggested.

"The Blue Peace: Rethinking Middle East Water" report, which will be officially launched by Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) in February, redefines water in the Middle East as an instrument for cooperation and suggests 10 recommendations to achieve water security and regional peace.

Continued on page 6



Water can be an opportunity for peace in region — report

Continued from page 1

The document treated countries covered by the study, including Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Israel, in distinct circles of cooperation. The first circle includes the northern countries, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, while the second circle includes Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

Authors suggested creating a cooperation council for water resources for the northern countries tasked with standardising measurements of quality and quantity of water resources, combating climate change and drought and promoting research in environment-friendly and energy-efficient water technologies among other tasks.

HRH Prince Hassan, who received on Sunday the report's first copy, said in a ceremony that water is a regional issue that cannot be addressed unless involved countries collaborated.

Prince Hassan joined SFG in its call for turning the water issue into a chance for achieving regional peace instead of a factor of conflicts and wars, and urged the establishment of a regional database centre which provides accurate information on humanitarian, economic and natural topics.

The report, a copy of which was made available to The Jordan Times, recommended implementing an integrated water resources management for small cross-border rivers in the northern countries, highlighting that several small rivers shared by two or more countries are used extensively which results in a strain on water resources and discharge of untreated wastewater into the river by upstream countries.

Rivers like the Yarmouk River between Syria and Jordan, El Khabir River between Syria and Lebanon and the Orontes (Assi) between Lebanon, Syria and Turkey were among rivers that need early action, according to the report.

The report identified the Red-Dead project as one of the long-term options for addressing water shortage and creating regional cooperation, particularly that the project involves Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Red-Dead project, or the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Study Programme, seeks to save the Dead Sea from shrinking. It seeks to pump one billion cubic metres of water annually with the aim of raising water levels and generating drinking water for the three beneficiaries through desalination.

The report also urged

countries to establish joint desalination plants which allow an exchange of information, facilitate the process of funding and provide a strong disincentive to the destruction of water infrastructure in times of conflict.

In addition, the Blue Peace report called on Middle Eastern countries to apply water demand management by modernising irrigation methods, reducing water loss by reusing infrastructure, reducing water pollution, implementing a tariff structure and retrofitting the infrastructure.

Sundeep Waslekar, SFG president and author of the report, said yesterday that the reason behind depletion of water resources is actually a 'depletion of wisdom, pragmatism and peace'.

"The challenge is not addressing the water shortage in the Middle East, but addressing co-existence ...," Waslekar said yesterday.

"Water is so central to life that any two countries in the 21st century with enough sustainable, clean and affordable water will have no motivation to go to war," Waslekar said addressing the audience.

He highlighted that issues of water, environment and climate change will be more important in the Middle East in the near future than geopolitical issues.

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