

# A'am al-Bina'a

**"The year of 2008 will be a year of reconstruction for Iraq"**  
-- Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki



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## Sulaymaniyah City is 'growing children'

The contractor has barely started turning dirt for the Shalaw School in this small district of Sulaymaniyah City, but that in itself is a major accomplishment. Since the original site for the project is a former land-fill and unsuitable for construction, a new location had to be found.

"This project was on hold for almost a year," said Ric Wiedmaier, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers engineer in the Sulaymaniyah office. "Governor Dana backed us to find another site for the school, which is a garden area."

There is a rule in the Sulaymaniyah province that a garden area is never used for anything but a garden. "But the governor decided growing children in this school is more important than growing flowers, and pushed it through. Without him, we would have lost this project," Wiedmaier said, "and these people would have lost that hope...These kids are so stoked to get this new school, there was no way we could not make this happen



**In the Qirga District of Sulaymaniyah City, villagers have visited everyday since construction began to ask the contractor when their new school will be ready. The school was turned over to the Government of Iraq the first week of October.**

for this village."

The Shalaw School is designed to accommodate 1,000 students a day, in two shifts of 500 each.

In the nearby district of Qirga, another school is close to completion and the villagers wait patiently.

"The people of the village are coming to me every day--since the first day--to ask when is their new school ready," said the foreman for the Iraqi construction contractor. "I tell them, 'soon, soon' and they are excited and proud." He said currently the 400 children go to school in a small building down the gravel road from their new, long-awaited school.

The bright, airy 12-classroom primary school gives these children--and an additional 800 -- a spacious 1,800 square-meters, a multipurpose hall, play yard and a garden area offering them the experience of planting. It will provide local employment to 24 teachers and 14 staff members, as well as 100 other workers during the school term. When asked if the school will be ready for the children in October, the foreman said, "The building is ready. I hope the deputy general will bring desks for the children...and blackboards for the teachers."



**The bright and airy 12-classroom Qirga School will accommodate approximately 1,200 students. Currently 400 students go to school in a small, 200-square-meter building down the road from their new, long-awaited school.**

## U.S. Soldiers, Iraqi government join forces to provide clean drinking water for Abdul Razaq

U.S. Soldiers gathered with local Iraqi leaders in Abdul Razaq to participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony of the village's water purification unit Sept. 30.

U.S. Army Col. Mark Barbosa met with Iraqi government, military and tribal leaders to celebrate the combined effort between Iraqi and Coalition Forces to improve clean water production.

In the past two months, the brigade has worked with Dhi Qar officials to refurbish two reverse osmosis water purification units within the province.

Barbosa and the local dignitaries were given a short demonstration of the facility along with its basic features. The unit, which has an overhead delivery system to rapidly fill water trucks, is capable of producing 700 gallons of clean water per hour.

Resan Meqdad, the mayor of nearby Ur who initiated the project with U.S. Army, said the assistance was sorely needed. He recalled how, previously, many children drank directly from canals resulting in a number of health problems.

"The water system here was so bad," said Meqdad. "People could not get fresh water for drinking . . . it could not be used for consumption."

Meqdad said the U.S. Soldiers' work on the water pu-



**Iraqi children fill buckets with water Sept. 30 in Abdul Razaq, Iraq. Abdul Razaq is a village near the city of Ur.**

rifcation systems was greatly appreciated. "We are so happy and this will give (citizens) more high spirits," he said. "We hope this project can lead to more advanced, bigger projects."

The purification unit is one in a series of U.S. Army initiatives designed to build Iraqi civil capacity while also contributing to overall security.

"Our goal is to build viable systems that add value to the local communities and strengthen the Iraqi governing systems so we can eventually leave," Barbosa said.

## Coalition forces donate \$8.5 million to Northern provinces for relief

Coalition forces announced an \$8.5 million drought relief package Oct. 8, as a gift for Eid to the people of Salah Ad Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and Ninawa provinces to provide emergency relief to these drought-affected areas.

The ongoing drought is the worst in 100 years. The emergency funds provide farmers with agriculture technologies and seed to prevent the complete loss of another growing season.

Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, commander of Multi-National Division-North, presented the gifts to each province at an event at the

Tikrit University Agriculture Center campus in Salah ad-Din. The deputy Minister of Agriculture and the governors of Salah ad-Din, Diyala, Ninawa and Kirkuk attended along with their Director Generals of Agriculture.

Droughts like this have caused major societal changes in the past to include mass migration to cities, widespread insurgency and major changes in government. These worsening conditions can be prevented by a coordinated and successful response, said Steven Donnelly, a certified urban planner with the Salah ad Din Provincial

Reconstruction Team's Infrastructure and Urban Plans section.

Iraq is already struggling with a disrupted, but not defeated insurgency. "Mitigating the drought is critical to maintaining the security gains achieved in the last year", said Lt. Col. Carson Mayo, MND-N Civil Affairs chief.

According to Donnelly, solutions are still needed to address the crop loss, loss of food and income, short-term emergency drinking, irrigation and livestock watering, restarting agriculture and accelerating medium and long-term capital projects to completion.





Some farms in the Jurf as-Sahkr area, such as the one pictured above, use the drip irrigation method to keep their crops irrigated.

## ***PRT assesses farms in Jurf as-Sahkr***

Coalition forces met with members of the Jurf as-Sahkr Agricultural Union to discuss concerns and current projects at the Jurf as-Sahkr Town Hall Sept. 18.

U.S. Army Soldiers recently provided the Ag Union with \$92,500 worth of fertilizer and \$98,200 worth of assorted seeds and insecticides. "The Ag Union is selling the fertilizer, seeds and insecticides at half market cost locally to boost the Jurf agriculture economy and provide the Ag Union with an income source with which to purchase more supplies to support local agriculture," said U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Joshua M. Fink.

U.S. Army Soldiers and Dr. Fouad, with the Provincial Reconstruction Team, met with Sheikh Eid, the chairman of the Jurf as-Sahkr Ag Union, and other members of the union to assess the ongoing agricultural needs in Jurf as-Sahkr.

"This (meeting) allowed for the Ag Union to voice its issues in re-establishing irrigation in the Jurf region, which was the top priority for the farmers association," said Fink. "They also discussed PRT's plan for a centralized market that is being built in a different (area of operation), which should stabilize the prices on agricultural goods."

Fouad addressed issues on canal cleaning, which is a high priority for the members of the Ag Union since nearly 5,000 farmers in Jurf rely on the canals for irrigation.

"Many farmers lost their crops after the 2003 invasion due to (al-Qaeda in Iraq) destroying the infrastructure," said Fink. "Some have started farming again but face many obstacles, such as poor irrigation due to unclean

canals and lack of fertilizer. Many farms are doing well close to the river; however, it is still evident that much farmland has been untouched further west of the river where clogged canals have stopped the water supply."

The Government of Iraq recently cleaned the main canal, which is 55-km long and runs through Jurf as-Sahkr. This should provide much-needed relief to farmers who do not live close to the river, Fink said.

During the meeting, the PRT discussed plans for a centralized market aimed at stabilizing the agricultural economy and the Jurf Feed Mill Factory project, which is currently in the planning stages as well as details on a project to supply Jurf with 50 water pumps.

Following the meeting, the members toured a drip irrigation farm and a water well, to gain a full understanding of the unconventional crop irrigation system.



Dr. Fouad, with the Provincial Reconstruction Team, and Sheikh Eid check out a drip irrigation farm near Jurf as-Sahkr Sept. 18.



# Prayers raised again in Samarra shrine

After two years of silence caused by sectarian violence, prayers of Shia worshippers were echoed Oct. 1, 2008 in Samarra's Maqam Ghaybat Shrine; co-located with the ancient al-Askari Shrine.

Shia faithful gathered in the morning to pray and commemorate the end of Ramadan.

"Hundreds of people were at the mosque for the Eid celebration," said Maj. Gen. Rasheed Flahe Mohammed, Samarra Operation Center commander. "Today we are celebrating in the mosque. We are very happy."

The Samarra Operation Command's comprehensive security strategy has bolstered the confidence and courage of the citizens of Samarra. Elements from the National Police, Iraqi Army and local Sunni Sons of Iraq have provided security contributions.

"After five years, Samarra achieved a lot of services. Thanks go to the Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, Sons of Iraq and support of Coalition Forces," said Mahmood Khalaf Ahmed, Samarra Mayor.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. J.P. McGee said, "A year ago the city was in the grips of terrorists, and we as a team set out to destroy the foundation of fear that paralyzed any progress in the city. Because of the active support of the population and the close cooperation of ISF, what we have been able to do as Coalition forces is to shift our focus from fighting the insurgents to helping rebuild."

McGee said Samarra citizens said Ramadan festivities have not been seen since 2003.

The rebuilding of the Al Askari Shrine or Golden Dome Mosque is vital for the future of Samarra and Iraq, yet the reconstruction of the city is crucial for its citizens.



Samarra Mayor, Mahmood Khalaf Ahmed, talked with reporters Sept. 30, about the opening of the majestic Maqam Ghaybat Shrine, which is co-located with the Al Askari Shrine. This is the first time the shrine has been opened in two years, due to sectarian violence in the area.



The Samarra and Coalition Force leadership hold a joint press conference Sept. 30 about the improved security and economic opportunities in Samarra. Picture left to right, U.S. Army Lt. Col. JP McGee, Mayor Mahmood Khalaf Ahmed, Samarra Operation Center commander Maj. Gen. Rasheed Flahe Mohammed and local Sons of Iraq leader Abu Mohammed Suhail Al Abassi.

"I wish to see more improvement. As you know Samarra had suffered a lot," said Mayor Ahmed. "It is going to take a long time to get Samarra where it was."

To spur reconstruction efforts, Samarra has received more than \$1.5 million in Government of Iraq fund-

ing to pay for schools, market renovation, solar lights, factory repairs and civic building restoration.

The reverberation of morning prayers in one of its sacred mosques coupled with a unified security team will allow for more continued work on Samarra's services and economy.