

'Jordan must expedite implementation of renewable energy projects'

AMMAN - Jordan must expedite implementation of renewable energy projects in light of surging oil prices due to regional turmoil, sector experts said Wednesday.

The Kingdom, which imports about 96 per cent of its energy needs at a total annual cost of about \$3 billion, is facing mounting challenges that necessitate attracting investments in the renewable energy sector, they noted.

“The rise in oil prices places burdens on the Jordanian economy, therefore, investment in renewable energy is essential,” Laith Al Qasem, director of the USAID-funded Economic Development Programme, said in a press conference Wednesday.

He noted that investments worldwide are yielding substantive revenues, highlighting the potentials of this vital sector.

In Jordan, investment in this sector is crucial to secure alternative energy sources, protect scarce water resources, and lessen the extent of the country’s dependence on imported energy, he added,

Karim Kawar, chairman of the EDAMA initiative, agreed, stressing that Jordan has potential for utilising renewable energy, especially solar power, to generate electricity.

“What is needed is to speed up the implementation of the country’s energy strategy in light of regional developments and current conditions in the country,” he said.

The strategy calls for renewable energy to account for 7 per cent of the Kingdom’s energy mix by 2015 and 10 per cent by 2020. Renewable sources currently account for less than 1 per cent of energy consumed in the country, according to official figures.

Ruba Jaradat, who represented USAID Jordan at the conference, said finding alternative sources of energy is vital for the Jordanian economy and citizens.

She noted that USAID has been actively involved in promoting this sector on all fronts in the Kingdom, whether by supporting research and development and training activities, or awareness campaigns.

Stressing the need for providing incentives to investors, Kawar called on the government to directly support the sector and implement projects.

He stressed that the private sector is a basic partner in the implementation of renewable energy projects, noting that it is a strategic option for Jordan to utilise alternative sources of energy.