

# Saudi Arabia electricity demand rising

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Riyadh: A Saudi expert in the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes has said that Saudi Arabia will need ten years in order to benefit from its proposed nuclear power station.

Dr Ebrahim Babli, adviser of the strategic team for alternative and renewable energy at the Riyadh-based King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), said that Saudi Arabia needs ten years to benefit from its nuclear power station if it started its construction now.

Speaking at a conference on desalination in the Arab world, which ended its deliberations in Riyadh yesterday, Dr Babil said domestic demand for electricity will reach 120 gigabytes by 2032, with an annual increase of five per cent.

Saudi Arabia has been working to introduce new sources of energy like nuclear, solar and others to meet its growing demand for energy.

Earlier, Dr Hashim Yamani, President of King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy (Kacare), said huge domestic consumption would hinder Saudi Arabia's capability to meet the global demand for oil, and that this would require a search for alternative and renewable sources of energy.

He expected the kingdom to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels by 2050 and increase its oil exports.

He pointed out that the kingdom has several scenarios to meet its increasing demand for energy, and they include reducing dependence on fossil fuels, limiting the use of renewable energy or creating a mixture of fossil fuel and renewable energy and nuclear energy.

"If it depends upon fossil fuel, the kingdom will face a gradual decline in its capacity to export oil and this will have a clear impact on the global economy and energy market," Yamani pointed out.

Earlier in February, Saudi Arabia signed its first agreement to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The agreement, which means Saudi Arabia has joined the countries seeking to promote nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, was signed with French firms.

## **SEC awards two deals**

Saudi Electricity Co (SEC), the state-controlled power producer, advanced the most in more than a month after it awarded two contracts valued at 1.9 billion riyals to Alfanar Construction Co.

The shares advanced 5 per cent, the most since March 5, to 13.7 riyals in Riyadh, paring the drop for the year to 2.5 per cent.

The contracts are to reinforce a power plant and build railway substations.

Alfanar will add 280 megawatts to a power plant extension in Hail, the Riyadh-based contractor said in an e-mailed statement yesterday. Operations start in August 2012.