

Floating Desal Plant to Ease Water Crunch in Jeddah

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JEDDAH, 19 April 2008 — Jeddah's water shortage problem would be solved temporarily when a floating desalination plant arrives at its shores within 10 days, Al-Madinah Arabic daily said yesterday quoting the project's executive president.

Abdullah Ahmed Bajunaid, CEO of Bawarij International, said the plant would have a capacity to supply 50,000 cubic meters of water daily. The plant has already arrived in the Red Sea and is on its way to Jeddah.

Bajunaid said a second floating desal plant would arrive at Jeddah shores within 40 days. The two ships, said to be the largest floating desal plants, were built in a record time of seven months.

"Generally it takes about two years to build such a well-equipped ship," he told the Arabic daily.

In a previous statement, Water and Electricity Minister Abdullah Al-Hussayen disclosed his ministry's plan to establish floating plants to solve Jeddah's water problem.

The project will ensure adequate supply for neighborhoods in eastern Jeddah and the area extending between Al-Rihaily and Asfan in the north, and Old Makkah Road in the south.

Al-Hussayen said Jeddah's water problem would be solved with the supply of 1.3 million cubic meters of water from a new desalt plant in Shuaiba, which will be completed by the end of this year.

"The new plant (Shuaiba-3) will supply about 550,000 cubic meters of water to Jeddah," he said, adding that the per capita water share in the city would increase to 350 liters daily.

The ministry signed an SR9.1-billion contract in November 2005 with a consortium of Saudi and Malaysian companies to set up the Shuaiba-3 desal plant, the first independent water and power project (IWPP) in the country.

Al-Hussayen, who supervised the signing of IWPP agreements in Riyadh, then said Shuaiba-3 would supply 194 million gallons of water daily as well as 900 megawatts of electricity. Work on the project started on Jan. 21, 2006 and its first unit will begin production Oct. 13, 2008.

Al-Hussayen said the Kingdom would require nearly SR350 billion in investment for water and sewage projects and SR340 billion for electricity projects during the next 20 years. He said the water and electricity sectors in the Kingdom were growing at the rate of seven percent.

The government has established a national water company with a capital of SR22 billion. It will provide all services related to ground water sector, distribution of drinking water, and



A floating desalination plant, above, is en route to Jeddah to boost water and power supplies. (Al-Madinah)

collection and treatment of sewage water on a commercial basis.

The ministry has signed four legal, manpower, strategic and technical consultation agreements in order to study privatization of the sector.

“At present the ministry, with the help of consultants, is conducting a survey of assets in Riyadh, Madinah, Jeddah, Dammam and Alkhobar,” Al-Hussayen said.

He said the five cities, which are targeted for privatization in the first phase, account for 50 percent of water and sewage services in the country. “We’ll start the privatization process from Riyadh and it will be followed by other cities,” he added.

He said the new water company would bring about qualitative changes in water production and distribution in the country. Saudi Arabia is the world’s largest producer of desalinated water.