

Multi-million dollar plan to pump water to Jordan's capital

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Jordan on Sunday announced that a multi-million dollar project would begin in June to supply the capital with water from an ancient southern aquifer 325 kilometres (200 miles) away.

"The capital will get water from the aquifer for the coming 100 years," Water Minister Raed Abu Soud told reporters, adding that the project in the desert kingdom was expected to be completed within three and a half years.

Abu Soud said a Turkish firm has been contracted to extract 100 million cubic metres (3.5 billion cubic feet) of water each year from the 300,000-year-old Disi aquifer, which lies 325 kilometres (200 miles) south of Amman.

The plan includes digging 55 wells to pump water from Disi to Amman, where daily consumption per capita stands at 160 litres (42 gallons).

Jordan, one of the ten most water-impooverished countries in the world, depends mainly on rain to meet its needs.

"GAMA Energy will carry out the project, which costs 702 million dinars (990 million dollars), on a build, operate and transfer basis under a 25-year-concession agreement," the minister said.

Demand is constantly increasing throughout the kingdom which has a population of nearly six million and which is growing by almost 3.5 percent annually. It has also seen an influx of around 750,000 Iraqi refugees since the US-led invasion in 2003.

In the past two years, the country, where 92 percent of the land is desert, has faced an annual deficit of more than 500 million cubic metres (17.5 billion cubic feet), of water, almost half of what it needs every year.

According to the water ministry, the kingdom needs 1.600 billion cubic metres (56 billion cubic feet) of water to meet its needs in 2015.