

Saudi cloud seeding programme under way

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Riyadh: The Saudi National Centre for Meteorology and Environment Protection is currently implementing an ambitious project to induce artificial rains by seeding moisture-heavy clouds in the southern Asir province.

Saleh Al Shahri, director general of the centre, told *Gulf News* that the successful experiment was launched early last month in the western and southern parts of the kingdom as part of a major drive to tackle water woes in various regions of the desert Kingdom.

Saudi Arabia, which receives nearly 100 millimetres of rainfall annually, relies mainly on desalinated water and is the largest producer of desalinated water in the world.

"The project was implemented with the support of 10 cloud-seeding planes, including eight King Air and two Shayan, in addition to a highly advanced weather radar network based on weather physiology research," he said adding an advanced mobile radar system was also employed in implementing the project to inject and sprinkle materials to induce rainfall.

"Telecommunications network, satellites, IT and Internet were also made use of in inducing rainfall," he said.

Viable alternative

The project was also tapping vast human resources in various specialisations as well as members of the Scientific Committee for the Project, which is comprised of experts, academics and scientists from various government departments and Saudi universities.

According to Saleh Al Shahri, the project seems to be a viable alternative in a desert country like Saudi Arabia, which is one of the driest countries in the world with extremely sparse rainfall.

"Asir was chosen for the experimental implementation of the project as it is the only province, which receives regular rainfall and has terraced farms and green forests.