

Water distribution programme to remain unchanged - Abu Saud

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AMMAN - Despite the scarcity of water resources due to the growing population and lack of rainfall, the Kingdom's water distribution programme will remain the same as last year, Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud said on Tuesday following the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Water demand, which stood at 170 million cubic metres (mcm) last summer, is expected to exceed 180mcm this year, according to the ministry.

Abu Saud, who briefed the Council of Ministers on the Kingdom's water situation, said the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the International Finance Corporation credit committees approved a request by the Turkish company GAMA, which won the JD702 million Disi Water Conveyance Project bid in September last year, to finance the project.

Rejecting recent media scepticism over GAMA's financial situation, Abu Saud noted that during negotiations with the company, the US-based General Electric Company bought 50 per cent of the company's shares, a move seen by the government as positive reflection of GAMA's standing.

"Work on the Disi Water Conveyance Project, projected to provide the capital with 100mcm of water annually, will start in June this year," Abu Saud told reporters.

The project, considered central to the country's efforts to address its annual 500mcm water deficit, has faced several obstacles since the first tender was floated in 2001.

Referring to the Red-Dead Canal Project, Abu Saud said implementation of the multimillion-dollar project's feasibility study and environmental assessment is scheduled to begin on May 25.

"A meeting will be held in Amman next week with the participation of representatives from the World Bank where the winning companies will be authorised to implement the studies," he added.

During yesterday's meeting, the Cabinet took several decisions, including the appointment of Josephine Mushahwar as director of the Government Media and Communications Department at the Prime Ministry, Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications Nasser Judeh said.

The Cabinet also decided to raise public sector engineers' allowances, and endorsed the public assembly and the financial leasing laws, Judeh added.