

## **Work on Disi project to start in June**

By Hana Namrouqa

AMMAN - Work will start in June on the multimillion Disi Water Conveyance Project, projected to provide the capital with 100 million cubic metres (mcm) of water annually.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud announced new amendments and details on the project Sunday during a meeting with ministry officials and representatives from GAMA, the Turkish company implementing the Disi project, and the media.

“The scheme’s implementation period has been reduced from four years to three-and-a-half, which will help transfer much-needed water to Amman as soon as possible,” Abu Saud said yesterday. He noted that the measure will help convey water to the capital six months earlier than planned.

The ministry signed the implementation agreement with GAMA on April 7, the minister said, adding that the project will be ready three-and-a-half years after construction work begins.

Abu Saud also announced that the Turkish company presented new amendments to the project’s details, including the total construction cost and the price of water.

The project’s implementation was scheduled for July 2007, but due to certain conditions, it will be put into force on May 1.

Prices of steel and energy increased sharply during this 10-month delay; in addition there was fluctuation in the exchange rates of the dollar against the euro, the minister said.

“Therefore, GAMA presented new modifications on the price of water and the estimated total cost of the project. After studying the feasibility of the new changes, the government has approved them,” Abu Saud noted.

Under the modifications, the estimated cost of the project rose by 12.8 per cent, increasing from JD622 million to JD702 million, he said, explaining that in addition to the hike in steel and energy prices, the cost of establishing the energy infrastructure by the National Electrical Power Company also went up.

The price of water also went up from 850 fils per cubic metre to 872.5 fils the minister said, adding that this is still much lower than the second lowest offered price, which stood at 950 fils per cubic metre.

Currently, the price of water for household purposes starts at 560 fils per cubic metre, and increases proportionately to the quantity of water consumed to reach 850 fils as the upper limit.

The Disi project, to be established on a BOT basis, is one of six strategic plans initiated by the ministry to address the country’s water deficit, which currently stands at 500mcm annually.

At yesterday’s meeting, the director of the Disi project, Othman Kurdi, reviewed the construction phases, which include digging 55 underground wells in the Disi aquifer at a depth of 500 metres.

“The water will be transferred to Amman via a 325-kilometre pipeline, which will pass through several water stations, from Maan-Tafileh-Karak-Madaba and finally to Amman,” Kurdi told The Jordan Times yesterday.

He added that the pipeline can also be extended to Zarqa in case of an emergency in any of the water stations, noting that by the beginning of May, funds for the project will be secured.

Meanwhile, GAMA Managing Director Arif Ozozan said the project seeks to supply Amman with much-needed water and alleviate the capital’s water shortage, create job opportunities and promote private sector participation in the country’s development process.

“Now that we have signed the project’s main agreement, we will work on reducing the implementation period of the scheme,” Ozozan said.

He added that the Disi Water Company, which was established two months ago, will be responsible for managing the project.

The company will generate job opportunities for the local community as well as train some ministry personnel in this field.