

Jeddah Water forum to focus on change and innovation

ROGER HARRISON | ARAB NEWS

JEDDAH: The 5th annual Saudi Water and Power Forum opens in Jeddah today and runs for four days. The annual event, under the banner "Change, Innovation and Sustainable Development," will be opened this evening by Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, governor of the Makkah Region, maintains the profile of water use issues as one of the main challenges facing Saudi Arabia. If true to form, the forum will produce some probing questions and practical strategies for both official and private delegates to the event.

"The conference has definitely come of age as a forum to discuss the challenges and perhaps develop solutions to one of the most pressing issues facing the world, that of access to, and conservation of, water," said Adil Bushnak, chairman of Bushnak Group, which is organizing the forum. He added that water should not be thought of in isolation, but holistically. "Especially in the Kingdom, we need to develop an integrated plan involving water, power and food as all are core elements in the country's development."

The forum stages a first day of seminars and discussions on water and power topics with the day divided into two major sessions. The morning session "Technology

Innovations Centers: Investment Opportunities in Innovative Water & Power Products" reflects the rapidly increasing commitment of the Kingdom to research. The King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology is establishing a new program intended to promote collaborative research with industry.

Called the Technology Innovation Centers (TICs), they address three major areas of operation: Education and training; excellence in research and knowledge transfer to industry in a variety of technical fields.

This seminar is designed to introduce the TICs program to decision-makers within industry, universities and appropriate government agencies. Senior team

members will explain key features of the model being implemented, answer questions on various aspects of the program and seek input for program roll-out.

The afternoon session, "Facilitating Investment and Cooperation in Saudi Arabia's Power & Water Industry" will look at the investment opportunities in the Kingdom in the water and power sectors. In the context of a global financial

downturn, a review of the state of play and trigger off some inventive thinking that will be needed to address the generation of invest-

ment and attractive opportunities for private capital.

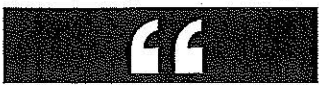
The seminar will look at ways of adapting to the changing business environment in Saudi Arabia and focus on strategies for successful cooperation between government agencies and private investors in the water and power sectors.

In the evening, the Minister for Water and Electricity Abdullah Al-Hussayen will open the exhibition that accompanies the forum.

Monday and Tuesday see the forum discussing issues that will surely produce lively debate. On Monday, sustainable power and water production and the prospects for alternative energy sources for utilities are two of the foci.

The following day (Tuesday) the thorny questions of demand management, tariff policy and consumer relations, water re-use and environmental management and the challenges of privatization come under the microscope.

Wednesday gives delegates the opportunity to tour Jeddah's desalination plants and question managers and staff on the ground and make a first hand evaluation of the current situation in Jeddah and exchange ideas about future development.



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