

Qatar sets 2010 deadline for zero gas flaring

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QATAR has become the first Gulf country to join the World Bank-led efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from gas flaring.

The energy-rich country has also set a deadline of 2010 to achieve zero gas flaring, according to Deputy Premier and Energy Minister HE Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah.

"Qatar is committed to achieving its zero-flaring target and I believe that by joining the World Bank's Global Gas Flaring Reduction (GGFR), we would be able to achieve our goals and thereby maintain and preserve our environment for our people and our future generations," al-Attiyah said after signing a pact with the Breton Wood's institution.

Asked about the timeframe for achieving zero gas-flaring, which is the process of releasing a significant portion of associated gas that comes with oil extraction, al-Attiyah said that Qatar expected to achieve the feat by 2010.

Lauding Qatar's initiatives, World Bank director (Oil, Gas, Mining and Chemicals Department) Somit Varma said he expected other Gulf countries to follow Doha's initiatives.

"Limiting the environmentally harmful waste of gas in the oil-rich Middle East is critical to our goal of reducing global carbon dioxide emissions and instead using associated gas for productive purposes," he added.

He said the World Bank could extend finance to such partners who joined the GGFR initiatives. Globally, GGFR has 25 partners, including international oil companies and countries that have gas flaring. Some of the members include the US, Norway, Canada, France and Opec Secretariat as well as oil majors like BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ENI, ExxonMobil, Marathon Oil, Shell, StatoilHydro and Total.

Besides Qatar, the only Middle Eastern country which is part of the gas flaring reduction initiative is Iraq.

World Bank's GGFR programme manager Bent Svenson said he expected Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia to be part of the GGFR partnership, whose estimates show that globally at least 150bn cubic metres (bcm) of gas is flared or wasted every year, adding about 400mn tonnes of greenhouse gases in annual emission.

The Middle East and North Africa region accounts for about 45bcm, which makes it the second flaring region in the world after Russia (about 60bcm) and the Caspian (about 35bcm). The amount of gas flared in the Middle East alone could feed a 20mn tonne liquefied natural gas plant. Asked whether the World Bank would make it mandatory for countries to join GGFR for availing of its financing, Varma said there was no stipulation now and it was voluntary on the partners to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions.

{By Santhosh V Perumal- **Gulf Times**}