

## TURNKEY EXPERT

# Niche leadership

AES Arabia's Asad Iqbal Khan speaks to *Infrastructure Middle East* about water saving trends in the energy industry

**A**sad Iqbal Khan, Manager – Business Development, AES Arabia believes that the region's energy sector understands water security concerns better than any other industrial sector.

"Whether it is power, oil & gas or petrochemicals, the energy industry in the Middle East is highly conscious of the fact that water is scarce in the region. There are strict regulations in Saudi Aramco, Sabic and Ma'aden about water reuse. Wastewater or brine has to be treated before being recycled or disposed."

He should know because AES Arabia is among a handful of regional leaders focusing on industrial water treatment in the energy industry. The Riyadh-based company provides turnkey water and wastewater solutions for power, oil and gas, mining and petrochemicals sectors. Key clients include the likes of Saudi Aramco, Sabic, Gasco, Total, ExxonMobil and PDO.

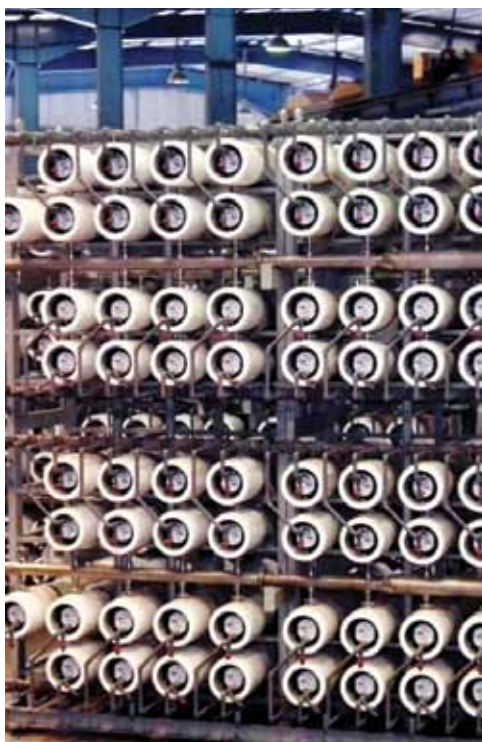
"We design, engineer, manufacture, install and commission the whole plant ourselves," said Khan. "We work mainly with the Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) contractors and the end users."

Khan pointed out that there are different solutions for enabling efficient water use and savings in the energy sector, ranging from wastewater treatment to RO polishing to Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD).

He continued: "We recently worked on a project where all the process water from different sources like phenol washing or phosphate washing is treated. The water coming into the process is desalinated water; at the other end of the process, we are taking waste stream and treating it in order to recycle the water back into the process. This eventually contributes to water conservation."



**Asad Iqbal Khan** Manager – Business Development, AES Arabia



**Industrial water treatment** AES Arabia focuses primarily on energy and mining sectors

Khan added that the number of cycles of reuse depends on the application and the nature of contaminants in the water.

AES Arabia has also carried out a successful implementation of a ZLD pilot project in Saudi Arabia. ZLD enables greater permeate recovery, while reducing brine volume and the associated disposal cost.

Another area that AES Arabia is looking at is solar-powered desalination.

"King Abdullah Centre for Science and Technology (KACST) is planning to build a solar desalination pilot project," said Khan. "In the UAE, Masdar has already awarded contracts to set up pilot projects for desalination powered by renewable energy."

On the business front, Khan is confident that energy sector will continue to show a positive uptrend on the projects front.

"Our markets are doing well," he said. "In the past three years, I haven't seen any project cancelled or put on hold in the energy sector. In the oil & gas industry itself, there is a lot of project activity in the UAE and Saudi Arabia."

However, AES Arabia is working towards expanding its footprint in the Middle East in general. Khan said: "In the MENA region, we are focussing on Algeria and Iraq. We have executed a couple projects for Sonatrach in Algeria, and are working on projects in Iraq with ExxonMobil."

Within the GCC, the company is planning to expand in Qatar and open a sales and service office in the UAE.

So given the positive environment on the projects front, is the region's industrial water treatment market for the energy industry attracting new entrants? Is competition on the rise?

"This is a semi-niche market, and while there is competition, there aren't too many players," said Khan. "It is not an easy market to crack because you have to follow stringent standards, specifications; you need to have the technology and the approvals." ●