

HEALTH INSURANCE LAW PROMULGATED

The new civilian health insurance law, covering all government and municipal employees as well as low income citizens, has been promulgated by Royal Decree.

The law provides that Health Insurance Fund revenues would be made up of employees subscriptions, fees charged for treatment at the Health Ministry hospitals and centres, government contributions, donations, and interest accruing from the Fund's investments.

SECOND PHASE OF WATER RESOURCES PROJECT

The Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) has moved into the second phase of the southern Ghor water resources project with the award of a consultancy contract to Japan's Nippon Koei Company. The first phase began with the award to Italy's Impresit of a contract to build an irrigation system.

The second phase is estimated to cost JD 30 million (\$ 84.7 million). It entails building a diversion weir on the Mujib river, whose water is now completely unused, and a 3,500-metre canal to channel the water to farms in the Jordan valley. A further 4,000 hectares will be irrigated when this phase is complete. Also included is a dam at Tannur, on Wad Hasa. This will impound water for irrigation of the upland plateau to the east of the valley. Nippon Koei's contract runs for four months from 15 February and involves updating studies that have been under way since the mid 1960s, says JVA dams director Dhafir Al-Aalem. The Japanese firm is already providing consultancy services for the JVA's Wadi Al-Arab dam, being built by South Korea's Hanbo General Construction Company.

Second-phase construction will start when international financing is forthcoming, says Al-Aalem. The third phase will include dams at Rumeil, on Wadi Walla, and at Mukheil, on the Mujib river, as well as three check dams to control flooding in smaller wadis.

The first phase includes weirs in six wadis and a pipeline network to farms in the south which will buy drip irrigation systems with loans from the Agricultural Credit Corporation. The work is being financed by the government, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), the Saudi Fund for Development, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Italian government.

Al-Aalem also says Hanbo has received notification to start work on the King Talal dam-raising project.

The dam is being raised by 16 metres and a four-MV hydroelectric power station is being installed. The addition will enable a further 8,200 hectares to be irrigated.

This winter's heavy rains mean 46 million cubic metres of water is being stored in the reservoir behind the King Talal dam. Other, smaller dams are also impounding large volumes of water, Al-Aalem says.