

# Big splash in the water tech sector

Major initiatives unveiled include tender for second desalination plant

By RACHEL AU-YONG

SINGAPORE International Water Week is making a big splash in the fast-growing water technology sector.

Several major initiatives were unveiled yesterday, including plans by consumer giant Procter & Gamble (P&G) to build a multi-million-dollar plant here to make water purification packets to help millions of needy people worldwide get fresh water.

Also, national water agency PUB put out to tender the building of Singapore's second water desalination plant. When completed by 2013, the larger plant will add 318,500 cubic metres of water a day

to the nation's water supply.

Another key project is from Global Water Intelligence (GWI), an information service, which plans to set up a centre in Singapore to keep the burgeoning global water industry updated with vital data.

And five firms have been awarded a total of \$6 million in research funds by a government agency to boost Singapore's status as a top water technology centre.

Hundreds of policymakers, industry leaders and other key players have gathered here this week for the event, which includes a vast range of activities.

Singapore aims to become a "global hydro hub", drawing the biggest water companies here and pumping funds into water research. The environment and water sector is set to add \$1.7 billion to economic output here and employ 11,000, mostly in skilled jobs, by 2015.

PUB said the new desalination plant will use a filtration method known as re-



PUB put out to tender the building of Singapore's second water desalination plant. The island's first such plant, located on Jurong Island, is operated by PowerSeraya. ST FILE PHOTO

verse osmosis to remove salt and other impurities from water.

Desalination - also known as Singapore's Fourth National Tap, along with catchment areas, water bought from Malaysia and Newater plants - is playing a bigger role here. Singapore plans to lift desalinated water capacity 10-fold to meet at least 30 per cent of demand by 2060. Water demand is expected to double to 3.4 billion cubic metres by then.

The tender will close on Sept 30 and is set to be awarded early next year. The successful bidder will enter into a 25-year water purchase deal to supply desalinated water to PUB, starting from mid-2013.

Looking further afield, P&G says PUR

water packets to be made at its planned new Tuas plant, will provide 200 million purification packets a year to adults and children worldwide - able to produce up to two billion litres of fresh water.

The "multi-million-dollar, non-profit investment" will employ nearly 50 Singapore staff, said P&G associate director for Asean external relations Anthony Rose.

The sachets have been used in disaster relief work, such as Haiti's recent earthquake, and in places lacking fresh water.

Singapore was chosen for the plant - due to start operations in 2012 - given its "advanced technological base", as making the sachets requires precision, said the head of P&G's Children's Safe Drink-

ing Water Programme, Dr Greg Allgood.

The GWI information office will be set up at PUB's WaterHub at Toh Guan Road East. "We have been watching the opportunity in the water sector drift eastwards, and the global financial crisis has accelerated this," said managing director Christopher Gasson in a statement yesterday.

The WaterHub is home to other renowned water-related organisations and research institutes such as the International Water Association, Optiqua Technologies and Nitto Denko.

The latest research grants were awarded by the Environment and Water Industry Programme Office, a division of PUB. The recipients - two local firms and three international firms with a strong presence here - had responded to a call for proposals on industry-led research.

One of the firms, industrial giant Siemens, will be developing a low-cost membrane which relies on the heat energy produced by waste matter to aid in the water distillation and filtration process.

The other successful firms are local firms Ultra-Flo and Natflow, as well as OptoTech and DHI Water & Environment. The latter won two grants.

Ultra-Flo will focus on affordable drinking water production by developing an energy-saving, efficient desalting membrane. Natflow aims to channel waste energy from a building's cooling and heating to desalinate wastewater.

PUB will also team up with international manufacturer ITT Corp to establish a joint research programme to develop energy-efficient water and wastewater treatment solutions, in a memorandum of understanding signed yesterday.

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