

AAINews

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Competition at the World Water Day

The World Water Day Competition was organized by the Environment Agency of the UAE Federal Government on March 22, 1997. An announcement in the January 28th newspaper invited entries. These, the newspaper announcement stated, must be innovative or technological developments relating to the following three fields: 1) water saving, 2) appropriate water use, and 3) prevention of water contamination. We, the JICA team of experts, entered a dew pit. Although dew pit technology is not new and is widely known about, there are only a few cases of experimental research with actual equipment. In ancient days, around 4,000 BC, people in Jericho used the technology. In recent years, it has been recommended in the US Army's survival manual, was studied at the Hebrew University in Israel in the early 1970s, and there has been some dew pit research done in Tottori University in 1995.

The style of dew pit that we entered in the competition was the so-called "closed system" (as explained in the chart below). It may be easier to understand what it involves if one calls it a solar powered water desalination unit.

Every year on World Water Day in UAE it was the practice for universities and government offices to make displays illustrating their water-related activities. Starting this year, however, this custom has been replaced by an open competition organized by the Environment Agency with the goal of raising people's awareness on water issues. Surprisingly, it was our dew pit that received the first prize. To tell the truth, I have a mixed feeling about this. For one thing, although people in the Science Department and the Ministry of Water and Electricity are showing a great deal of interest in dew pit technology, only a small number of people in the Department of Agriculture seem interested. We have designed the pit in such a way that any blacksmith in any agricultural village can construct one without difficulty. I cannot help worrying about the over-exploitation of underground water resources and farm land in Abu Dhabi. The country seems to be indifferent about water issues. At the same time, I am happy that our work drew the attention of certain environmentally conscious people.

(Reported by Shoji in UAE)

