

Conferences Highlight Indian, North African E&P Efforts

Two conferences held recently highlighted the challenges and opportunities unique to E&P activities in two important oil and gas regions, India and North Africa.

SPE Oil and Gas India Conference and Exhibition (OGIC)

The SPE OGIC, held in January in Mumbai, had an overarching theme of “E&P Business: Excellence Out of Turbulence.” The event, which marked the first conference organized by SPE in India, brought together more than 1,200 industry leaders representing 167 companies from 30 countries to discuss new means of managing risks at times when oil prices undergo wide fluctuations.

To open the conference, Murli Deora, the Government of India’s Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, sent a message that included his best wishes for the conference’s success and emphasized its importance to the region. “We need to deploy our best brains to find technologies which can bring [oil and gas] resources to the realm of affordability and sustainability and at a scale which would aid in furthering the region’s economic activities,” Deora said. “There is no single solution. There is no single company, nation, or technology that can meet our energy challenges, all on their own. Sustainable energy solutions would require increasing collective attention and efforts.”

Following the inauguration of the event, a VIP tour of the venue and exhibition space took place, which included dignitaries R.S. Sharma, chairman and managing director of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC); Sudhir Vasudeva, OGIC chairperson; and 2010 SPE President Behrooz Fattahi. Several

of the 30 companies exhibiting at the conference launched new products, including new rotary steerable systems designed to create smoother wellbores and new multiphase-flow measurement devices that do not require separation of fluids.

An executive plenary session followed, in which panelists including N. M. Borah of Oil India, Derek Fisher of BG India, A. K. Balyan of ONGC, and James McCallum of Senergy shared their regional and international insights on how oil and gas companies are committed to exploring more efficient methods and integrating advanced technologies to enhance their operations and improve productivity.

The first day also included several technical sessions that explored E&P topics such as well simulation, unconventional-resource extraction, reservoir characterization, facility engineering, and drilling challenges. The day closed with a special session titled “Management of Mega Projects,” which addressed the optimum ways to design and manage mega E&P projects, to reduce their intensive capital investments, and the best strategic approaches to improve a project’s overall management process.

A highlight of the second day of the conference was a discussion on the ongoing challenges of staff recruitment and retention. A special session with representation from Shell Technology India, Global Energy Talent, Weatherford, and ONGC involved discussions and debates on how the industry can best tackle change management and attract future generations of skilled local talent. “It is elemental that we find an effective means of fostering and retaining skilled and experienced people if we are to sustain industry growth,” said conference Cochair John

Hoppe of Shell. “Past experiences have taught us that investing in developing the skills of our junior workforce always pays off in the long run, and it is vital we learn from the mistakes our industry made during the redundancies of the 1980s and 1990s.”

The conference also included an Education Day, which involved 200 students from eight schools in India. ONGC and Shell supported this program by appointing some of their young executives to provide the students with industry training in the form of lectures and presentations throughout the day.

During the second afternoon of OGIC, a panel session titled “Innovation and Technologies” was held, in which industry experts and researchers gathered to highlight how different factors such as size, complexity, cost, resources, and the value of new technologies affect the E&P strategies deployed by different organizations.

SPE North Africa Technical Conference and Exhibition (NATC)

SPE’s second North Africa Technical Conference and Exhibition (NATC) was held in February in Cairo under the patronage of H.E Sameh Fahmy, Egypt’s Minister of Petroleum. This year’s event highlighted the rapidly developing upstream oil and gas market and addressed the technologies that will be needed to meet the increasing demand for energy, particularly in North Africa.

Following the inauguration of the event, an executive plenary session was held, titled “Energy Management in a Challenging Economy,” a particularly pertinent theme of the conference. The session included speakers Aly Mira, deputy chief executive officer of Egyptian

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General Petroleum Corporation; Ahmad Atallah, chairman of Shell Companies, Egypt; William Coates, worldwide vice president for Marketing, Schlumberger; and Thomas Voytovich, regional vice president and general manager, Apache Egypt. The speakers' comments incorporated both a regional and international focus on the oil and gas industry's commitment to explore more efficient production methods and advanced technologies needed to meet the current economic challenges.

In its technical program, NATC offered 24 sessions covering strategic oil and gas topics including reservoir management, production enhancement, water management, reserves assessment, deep-drilling challenges, and health and safety issues. Four panel sessions were also presented, titled "Emerging Industry Partnership Landscape," "Learning From Economic Cycles—Industry Adapting," "Deepwater E&P Challenges (Economic and Technology)," and "Gas Value Chain."

A highlight of the conference was a program for professionals aged 35 years or younger called, "Young Professionals, Up to the Challenge." The workshop was aimed at gearing the more than 45 young professionals in attendance with the skills they will need to succeed in the current turbulent job market, with an eye on their future career trajectories as well. Among the topics discussed:

- The linked future of oil and renewable energy sources and how this impacts decisions on career paths
- How to ignite creativity and decision-making skills
- How to manage change such that challenges can be turned into successes
- Effective time management skills that will help balance work and life responsibilities and aid in stress management

Despite the industry's downturn and the impact of the global recession, the 2010 NATC saw record attendance with strong international representation. More than 1100 attendees representing 183 companies and 33 countries attended, a four-fold increase from the previous conference's attendance. The exhibition space was also much larger from 2008, with 30 companies participating this year. **JPT**



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