Waterfall walls that make images
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WASHINGTON: Engineers and architects at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are developing a building with waterfall walls capable of displaying images and words.

The interactive "digital water pavilion", to be unveiled at the International Expo Zaragoza 2008 in Spain, will feature an exhibition area, cafe and various public spaces — all enclosed within curtains of recycled water, Carlo Ratti, head of MIT's SENSEable City Laboratory, said.

He said the pavilion would showcase the potential of "digital water", adding, this would be the first time this idea has been implemented in architecture. Since recycled water is sometimes cheap and plentiful, water walls could conceivably be created on a larger scale in the future, he said.

According to LiveScience, the effect is created by a row of valves spaced along a pipe suspended in the air. A computer controls the opening and closing of the valves, which produces a curtain of falling water similar to a waterfall, with gaps at specified locations.

The entire surface becomes a liquid display that continuously scrolls downward, and the resulting pattern of air and water droplets resembles the digital pixels used to create images on computer monitors and other displays.

"To understand the concept of digital water, imagine something like an inkjet printer on a large scale, which controls droplets falling water," Ratti said. Ratti said the water curtains would also be equipped with motion sensors.

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