

Masdar to welcome first residents next year

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MOVING IN: Masdar will welcome its first residents as early as next year, Awad said.

Abu Dhabi's \$22 billion Masdar City is set to host its first residents as early as next year, a company executive told *ArabianBusiness.com* on Tuesday.

Speaking at on the sidelines of Cityscape Abu Dhabi, Khaled Awad, director of property development at state-controlled Abu Dhabi Future Energy (Masdar), said although the mega eco city is not due for completion until 2016, the first residents will be moving in by 2009.

The alternative energy project, construction of which began in February, aims to place the UAE at forefront of the future energy industry and enhance its reputation at a time of growing concern over climate change.

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The car-free city will be become the first in the world to have zero carbon footprint and zero waste. The city will host 50,000 residents and 1,500 businesses that must be focused on the development of sustainable energy solutions and technology.

Awad said he expected up to 30,000 further people to commute from Abu Dhabi city to Masdar, which is located about 10 kilometres from the capital.

Masdar City would become the first in the world to offer renewable energy at the same prices as current energy solutions, he said.

"Through significant developments we hope to invest in renewable technology to create price parity between hydrocarbons [oil, gas and coal] and renewable energy like solar power and wind power," Awad said.

"Three billion people around the world currently do not have access to these renewable

energies, so if we make solar power affordable and that will be of huge benefit to the global community."

Awad said the government of Abu Dhabi provided \$15 billion in seed funding for the city, and the rest is to be funded by third party investors. However, the city would also sustain itself by selling the excess power it would create back into the power grid.

He said the city would also have a desalination plant powered by renewable energy, and would capture all available rainfall. All water will never leave the city once it enters, and will be recycled as grey water for plant watering, he added.

Awad said he was "not worried" about current rising construction costs, a factor which is affecting many UAE projects.

"The reality is that this financial model has fluctuations in costs built into it so we don't expect that to have a significant impact on the project," he said.

The plans for Masdar City include narrow streets, squat buildings and no cars. Solar panels will act as awnings to shelter pedestrians from the sun. Transport will be futuristic travel pods that do not consume gasoline. Solar and wind energy will power the city and its water desalination plant.

Masdar City will be built in seven phases, and include educational and research institutes, laboratories and production facilities for new advanced energy products, Al-Jaber said.

According to a UN Development Programme report issued last year, UAE greenhouse gas emissions were 34.1 tonnes per head in 2004, the third highest in the world after Qatar and Kuwait and well above US per capita emissions of 20.6 tonnes.