



## **‘Green’ construction issues to come under spotlight in Bahrain in May**

The opportunities, benefits and challenges of incorporating ‘green’ elements into construction projects in the Gulf will be discussed at a high level Forum attended by leading local, regional and international experts in Bahrain in May.

The Green Building Forum on May 5 will be opened by Shaikh Ibrahim bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Housing for Bahrain.

Buyelwa Sonjica, Minister for Water and Environmental Affairs in South Africa, who participated in the UN Copenhagen Climate Summit last December, will deliver a keynote address.

Sir Michael Hopkins, founder of the award-winning UK firm Hopkins Architects, will also be a keynote speaker. His firm has worked on several prestigious eco-related projects in Dubai, including the Dubai World Trade Centre, which is on course for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) ‘Gold’ status, an accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. Hopkins Architects has also worked on the Gate Village in Dubai International Finance Centre, where thick concrete walls with high thermal mass are helping temper the internal environment and reduce solar gain.

The Forum comes at a time when commercial and residential developments in the Gulf are increasingly looking to embrace green building concepts to conserve energy and reduce environmental impact. The US\$22 billion Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, being developed by the Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (ADFEC), is probably the most high profile such project and will be the world’s first carbon-neutral, zero waste city powered completely by renewable energy when it opens in phases from 2010 onwards.

Forum delegates are likely to explore green building potential in other regional markets such as Saudi Arabia, the Middle East’s largest construction market.

New legislation and regulations also require property developers in the region to incorporate into their designs features which can reduce the ecological footprint of a building. Thus, construction-related issues such as the sustainability of building materials used (e g wood, stone, cement, steel or paint) and their environmental impact will come under the spotlight.



Panel sessions will feature diverse topics such as: Copenhagen: its relevance to the Gulf Region; Government Regulations and Green Codes of Conduct; Green Building in the Gulf; Design & Construction Sympathetic to the Environment; Challenges for the Construction Industry and Sustainable Building Materials; Smart Buildings; Domestic Renewable Energy Power; Carbon Trading or Zero Emissions – the options facing the Global Community; Innovation in Building; Recycling Waste; and Green Building Training and Education.

Ahmed Suleiman, Partner at UK-based international event consultancy North Star Associates, which is organising the Green Building Forum in association with Bahrain-based Hilal Conferences & Exhibitions (HCE), says interest in the Forum is symbolic of not only increased regional awareness of construction-related environment issues but also a hunger for more knowledge on the commercial benefits and opportunities of green technologies in construction projects.

“It is hoped that by exchanging information in a high level intellectual summit, long-standing concerns from the construction sector about green building profitability and pay back periods will be addressed,” says Suleiman. “The Forum will also have an education angle, asking the question whether green building concepts and theories should be integrated into school and university courses.”

The Green Building Forum is supported by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), British Expertise (a London-based trade organisation which supports British companies internationally), UK Trade and Investment, The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The British Council and the Middle East Association.

The Forum will be held in conjunction with the fifth gulfBID exhibition and inaugural gulfINTERIORS show, the leading exhibition for the construction and interiors industry in the Northern Gulf, both of which run from 4 to 6 May 2010 and are organised by HCE. All events will be held at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre.

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