

Building 'shouldn't abuse environment'

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Dubai: Turning a building into an energy efficient one should not be seen as a charitable act but as a solution to climate change, experts said on Wednesday at a green buildings conference.

Emissions from buildings have grown exponentially over the last two decades compared to industry and transportation, said Parasu Raman, founding vice-chairman of the World Green Building Council.

"Why haven't we achieved in buildings what we've achieved in other sectors?... at the end of the day the construction industry is like a capital market and it's there for profit, but it doesn't mean it should be abusing the environment," said Raman.

Green buildings on average can provide savings of up to 40 per cent in energy and water consumption and reduce waste production by 40 per cent.

"Other industries got sanitised and controlled but not the building industry... It is a fragmented industry so it did not respond to the call with as much speed," said Raman.

So far though there are around 50 registered green buildings in the UAE since the initial existing three, when His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, announced all buildings should be compliant to sustainable standards from January 2008.

Water consumption

Peter Menche, from GTZ, a sustainable development company based in Abu Dhabi, highlighted the crucial need for water consumption to be more efficient as a whole, especially in Abu Dhabi city.

"Development is speeding up and that means water is needed and the recycling and reuse of water needs to be looked into otherwise the emirates will run into a crisis situation. I'm confident the government is doing all that needs to be done," said Menche.

He estimated that by 2032 with continuous development, the UAE's capital city could have a population of more than 4.5 million people.

Due to the climate in this region a building code for green buildings here based on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) ratings scheme has been drawn up to accommodate contractors.

Jeff Willis, director of ARUP Middle East and coordinator of the technical committee of the Emirates Green Building Council, said the original point system was adapted, and has since been adopted by the US LEED system to facilitate construction in the many climates in the US.