

Call for green building code

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DOHA: Experts attending the recently held Qatar Today Round Table (QTRT) discussions agreed on the urgent need to push for a green building code, if only to cushion the environmental impact of the construction boom in Qatar.

Panelists in the latest edition of QTRT, hosted by Techno Q and Philips Lighting, recommended that contractors, designers, educational and financial institutions and government bodies work towards minimising the environmental damage caused by indiscriminate construction activity.

The panelists, during the vibrant exchange of views, agreed that while the building industry was a major contributor to the country's economy, it could have a negative impact on the environment if nothing was done to introduce environment-friendly measures like a green building code.

"If we ask ourselves whether we have a sustainable industry, the answer is no, but it is encouraging to note that steps are being taken. At the micro level of each building, design is a thought process comprising three factors -- efficiency, comfort and performance," said Ashok Vishwanathan, Business Development Manager of Philips Lighting.

For his part, Zeyad Al Jaidah, Managing Director of Techno Q, said lighting consumes 19 percent of electricity in the world, and the Middle East could save 40 percent or some 2.5bn euros in energy costs -- equivalent to the yearly output of 12 power plants and 17.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide -- if efficient fluorescent lighting was used.

"Efficient fluorescent lighting uses less energy and indirectly produces less carbon dioxide, reduces maintenance costs and the lamps have longer life. A green switch is really effortless and could have a big impact on our environment," Al Jaidah said.

Issa Al Mohannadi of Doha Land and **Qatar Foundation** said they had been engaged in the last four to five months in launching the Green Building Council, which has been formulating a healthy building code while working with government with regard to regulations.

"We urgently need a carrot and stick approach. At the local level, for instance, the initiatives taken by the Supreme Council of Environmental Research, which has looked at the industries and their impact on the environment, now need to dovetail with Urban Planning to integrate and deepen the model of a good and sound checking," Issa Al Mohannadi said.

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