

Experts Underscore Solar Technology's Potential to Make Airports Energy-efficient

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DUBAI -- The UAE needs to adopt solar energy as one of the green solutions for making its rapidly growing airports energy-efficient, experts said at the Airport Show 2009 in Dubai on Wednesday.

Speaking at a session on Green Development: Challenges and Opportunities, experts said that countries like the UAE that have high potential of tapping solar energy were not utilising it for making their airports energy-efficient. Though the UAE has come up with a lot of green building initiatives, they noted, the country is yet to implement many of them at its airports.

"Many countries are tapping solar energy because fossil fuel is expensive for them," said Emanuel Fleuti, head of environmental services, Unique (formerly Zurich Airport Authority).

"Fossil fuel is currently in plenty and cheap here in the UAE. But the question is...is the UAE ready in realising that there will be an end to it? If they don't want to switch to solar energy at this point of time, they should at least have the provisions made during the planning and design stages itself so that they can do it at any later stage in the future," he told *Khaleej Times* on the sidelines of the session.

He noted that the focus of the ongoing investment programmes has been on expanding infrastructure, including the building. "The UAE has a high potential of solar radiation. The current parking system in many terminals here is single level parking. That means you have a large area with the potential to install solar panels."

Noting that some of the best airports in the world have the simplest buildings, Colin Spear, Assistant Director of Airport Development, International Air Transport Association, said, passenger terminals should have simple, functional, cost-effective and energy-efficient buildings.

"Some airport terminals look fabulous, but they may not be energy-efficient and functional (in all aspects)."

Supporting this, Fleuti said, "A lot of glass means a lot of cleaning...and that means a lot of cleaning agents... and that also means a lot of waste produced."

Alain David, consultant, Insulation Group, Alghanim Industries, said green building initiatives can save about 30 per cent of power consumption. "Big always need not necessarily be beautiful, and efficient. Masdar's green building policies could be adopted at airports as well," he said.

They added that the solar system should be adopted after considering the size of the area being used and the level of exposure to sunlight.

(Zawya)