

Oman: Green buildings can cut operating costs

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MUSCAT -- On the second day of the Muscat Green Days Conference, under way at the Grand Hyatt Muscat, delegates took part in a workshop on 'LEED -- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design', presented by Mario Seneviratne, Managing Director of Green Technologies FZCO and LEED Faculty Member, and Mentor of the US Green Building Council.

"The two days' event aims to bring more awareness about sustainability and green building issues," said Boris Ritter, General Manager of Sesam Consultants, who is organising the event in co-operation with the German University of Technology in Oman.

"Green buildings generate more money and lower the operating costs by around 30 per cent," said Seneviratne during the LEED workshop. Mario Seneviratne who is by profession a mechanical engineer holds LEED workshops in different locations, between Cairo and Shanghai and now for the first time in Muscat.

Globally more than 54,600 buildings pursuing LEED certification and over 13,000 buildings are already certified, thus making LEED one of the most widely used rating systems.

LEED gives building owners and operators, the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings' performance. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognising performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

"Zero consumption of energy is the main goal, however this is a huge journey," said Seneviratne. Green Buildings can reduce the consumption of electricity by 40 per cent, reduce water by 40 per cent, CO2 emissions by 33 per cent and solid waste by 70 per cent. In Oman already 14 buildings are in the process of becoming certified LEED green buildings, among them the Oman Botanic Garden, Jebel Al Akhdar Hotel, Khasab Hotel, Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport.

LEED addresses green building design and construction, green building operations and maintenance, green homes design and construction, green neighborhood development. LEED is an addition to the construction process and can include access to public transportation. "If no public transportation is available shuttle buses or bus services to public places need to be introduced."

Green Buildings need to be integrated into the urban planning. "Green Buildings need to be considered in the context of the whole environment. Sometimes green buildings are just decorated with greenery," stressed Professor Nikolaus Knebel, Head of the Department of Urban Planning and Architectural Design at GUTech.

For the construction of a LEED certified school it is for example necessary to conduct an environmental

assessment at the beginning and to ensure that the site is not environmentally contaminated. For a LEED building it is also necessary to have ten basic services, such as a bank and a supermarket within half a mile so that they are easily accessible and in walking distance.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design -- LEED is an internationally recognised green building certification system. LEED is used in as many as 115 countries around the world.

Architects, engineers and employees from ministries, Muscat Municipality, Atkins International as well as professors from the German University of Technology in Oman attended the one-day LEED workshop at the Grand Hyatt Muscat. Further Green Conferences will be held in Doha and in Dubai this year.

By Staff Reporter

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