

Campaign calls on ministries to lead way in saving water, energy

Majid Al Mansouri, Secretary-General of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), said, "In the United Arab Emirates, we face a major challenge in the demand for energy and water.

- By Emmanuelle Landais, Staff Reporter
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Dubai: Five federal ministries are being called to take the lead in reducing energy and water consumption in the UAE in the latest environmental drive launched by the 'Heroes of the UAE' campaign.

Sponsored by Applied Materials, the campaign team from the Emirates Wildlife Society in association with the World Wide Fund for Nature (EWS-WWF) will work closely with government entities and technical consultants to assess their energy and water usage to develop not only technological but behavioural solutions to conserve energy and water, reduce carbon footprint and save money.

Majid Al Mansouri, Secretary-General of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), said, "In the United Arab Emirates, we face a major challenge in the demand for energy and water. 'Heroes of the UAE' aims to help households, schools, businesses and government in the UAE to conserve energy and water and help reduce our high ecological footprint and tackle climate change." *Gulf News* was among the first organisations to launch a Go Green campaign to raise awareness on the environment and the need to protect it. The newspaper had distributed jute bags to its subscribers.

According to Razan Al Mubarak, Managing-Director of EWS-WWF, the carbon footprint of specific premises can be reduced by at least 20 per cent. According to EAD there is also a risk of an energy and water crunch; the Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Company predicts that at current levels of growth in demand for energy and water, there will be possible challenges to meet demand beyond 2012 due to fuel (especially gas) shortages.

In line with reducing these impacts, many initiatives have emerged nationwide from grassroots school programmes to corporate social responsibility.

Effective steps

In Abu Dhabi the five-year Al Madaris Al Mustadama initiative will help 50 schools in the emirate carry out "green audits" and take effective steps to reduce their ecological footprint.

Ajman recently banned the production of non-biodegradable plastic bags from June 1. This makes it the first emirate in the UAE to issue a decree in compliance with the Ministry of Environment and Water's campaign to ban such products nationwide by 2013. At least two billion plastic bags were made in the UAE in 2008.

The ministry is visiting all malls and schools to spread the message amongst residents and schoolchildren. No legislation has been passed yet, but the ministry will implement laws after a three-year awareness campaign.

On a social level, more than 281 entries were received in the 'Go Green' photography competition from Canon Middle East, held as part of an ongoing programme to support photography in the region and to raise environmental awareness through the power of images.

Most interactive of all, the Green Paper project, created by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Centre for Leadership Development (MBRCLD), is calling on newspaper subscribers to recycle their newspapers and reduce publishers' cost.

Newspapers placed in a bag distributed to readers will be collected every two weeks and coupons will be given to spend in shops and entertainment venues.

Participation: Good cause

Launched in February 2009, 'Heroes of the UAE' is a national campaign developed jointly by EWS-WWF and EAD. Individuals and schools can get involved in the campaign's activities by visiting www.heroesoftheuae.ae.

Do you think people could change the habit of wasting water and energy? Does awareness play a big role in changing people's behaviour?

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