



Gallo Images/ Getty Images

## On top of the tip

The Dubai Recycling Park project is an initiative by the National Projects Holding Co. of Kuwait. The Park, located in the Dubai Industrial City, will service the waste generated by the city's 550 industrial plants. **Alistair Crichton** spoke to the DRP's **Musaed Al-Saleh**.

### As a Kuwaiti, how did you get involved in the Dubai Recycling Park?

If you really want to do a project and there hasn't been one like it in the past, Dubai is the best place to start. From my side, the whole idea started because it is quite disturbing how we have started to have some sort of a disposable conscience. We just let things go by. From the Dubai side, when we pitched the idea to Dubai Industrial City, they more than

welcomed the idea. I hope down the road we will be able to tackle more of Dubai rather than just the Dubai Industrial City. But the fact that we are going to service the waste generated from Dubai Industrial City is great stuff in itself.

### What sort of volumes of what kind of waste?

In terms of volumes we are looking at about 200,000 tons a year of waste and in Dubai it's all mixed up. Ten-15 per-

cent is actually recyclable waste and then you have about 20-25 percent organic waste, which is going to eventually become fertilizer. So all in all roughly 35 percent is going to be recyclable but the remaining 60-70 percent will be treated. So by the time it goes to the landfill, there will be less of it, plus it will be treated and it won't be as harmful. Other than having a mechanical, biological treatment facility that will do this, we will also have a sorting facility

and our own collection set up for paper and plastic recycling. This is primarily focused on Dubai Industrial City until we get permission to have more facilities in Dubai. I mean, hopefully we will be able to prove it in the city and be given access outside of the emirate.

**Those figures sound impressive and also quite scary. If you are talking about this being waste from Dubai Industrial City alone, that's 200,000 tons of waste that isn't even being produced yet. What is happening to the waste that Dubai is producing at the moment?**

Dubai is producing slightly over 12 million tons a year. This figure is going to grow considerably to roughly 46 million tons in five years' time, that is, by 2012. So it is quite a big figure but quite a few steps have been taken in terms of our project and other initiatives in the pipeline. Environmental policies are not going to change overnight but we see it in our meetings with different entities, from the municipality to the government, taking steps forward. But to put it in perspective, by 2012, that's roughly 40-45 percent of the total waste in the GCC today. So in five years' time Dubai will have roughly 40-45 percent of what was in 2006 and the beginning of 2007.

### Where is it going at the moment? Is it just landfill? What's happening to it?

It is primarily landfill. There is a basic incineration plant but the majority is landfill.

**I know that GCC cities are in the top in terms of how much rubbish per capita they generate every year but I didn't realize the figures would be that high.**

To add just one point: the UAE represents 20 percent of all the waste in the GCC and Saudi Arabia represents 60 percent, but the UAE is actually taking action. They recognize that they have a problem and they are trying to solve it. That's a breath of fresh air that someone

in the region is actually trying to solve this problem.

**GCC states, the UAE in particular, are often criticized for not thinking ahead. Do you think this project, tied in with the industrial city, represents a sea change?**

To me, honestly, definitely it does. Dubai is planning to set up a whole industrial city and before even constructing it they have already signed the agreement to handle the waste. This is a huge step. Dubai may have been criticized in the past and no one is perfect but one really has to give credit to the fact that they are taking action. We don't see this kind of action anywhere else in the region.

**Aren't these kinds of projects ones that only the very rich GCC states can take on? What is the economic cost of a project like this? How will it be self-sustaining?**

It will only become self-sustaining once they change certain policies and it's not a huge fee once they change the policy. So

'There has to be some sort of penalty if you don't recycle, some sort of tax'

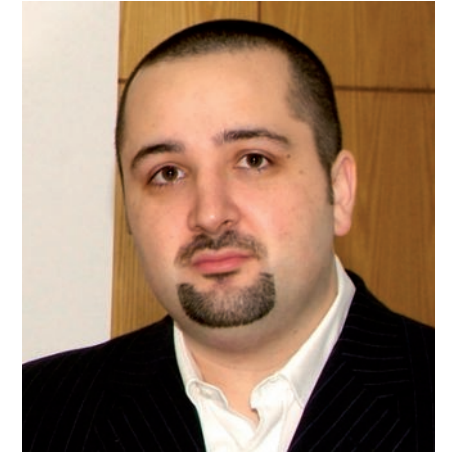
it's not difficult, but it is difficult if the policies are not in place, environmental policies, that is.

**What would you like to see changed in terms of environmental protection and environmental policies in the UAE itself?**

There has to be some sort of penalty if you don't recycle. There has to be an incentive for you to do so, some sort of taxation on the waste you produce. If you look at the city of Geneva, the funds from the plastic bags you buy go to pay the company that is recycling. You have to come up with unique set-ups to encourage this, but the country itself has to take the first step.

**What you are doing is obviously tied in with massive industrial development, though the UAE is not quite as heavily industrialized as Europe. Should the initiative not be more consumer-led?**

Yes, definitely. I would love to be able to match the way recycling is done out-



**MUSAED AL-SALEH**

The Dubai Recycling Park project is an initiative by the National Projects Holding Co. (NPHC) of Kuwait. In October 2006 Dubai Interests, a subsidiary of NPHC, signed an agreement with the Dubai Industrial City (DIC), a subsidiary of Dubai Holding, to establish the Dubai Recycling Park within the DIC. The Dubai Recycling Park (DRP) will be established on a site measuring 1,500,000 square feet in DIC. DRP will set up an integrated recycling park made up of various recycling plants, to service the waste generated by the DIC. Remondis Co. of Germany is currently finalizing the feasibility study and master plan of DRP. The agreement is for a 49-year period. DIC plans to have up to 550 different types of Industrial plants within its development. The construction of phase 1 of DIC is currently underway, while the total size of the development is about 55 million square meters.



Cello Images/ Getty Images

side of the city. But at this stage we are confined to Dubai Industrial City and a few strategic zones. But I agree with you.

**What makes you qualified to be the person who is leading this drive?**

I am by no means an expert on this. It's a luxury to have a partner who is number one in general in terms of environmental services. So whenever you enter an industry that you are not necessarily the best in, to land yourself with someone who is, that's what we have done. But in terms of the initiative or in terms of the drive, it's primarily from living abroad and coming back to this region and seeing that the changes are so small. The smallest effort can effect a huge change. I think all the governments in the region could do it if they found the right entry point. I think we are on our way to doing this with Dubai.

**So would you say you are approaching this project more personally, more**

**'I asked to buy a hybrid car. They said they are not even willing to import it when the gas is so cheap'**

**as a businessman or more as an environmentalist?**

On the environment side, it is important to show shareholders that this can be profitable. But from a personal perspective you see a lot of companies here in the region are now talking about, for instance, corporate social responsibility and most of them are really coming out in the press and giving a check to different organizations, different funds. The other day a bank came out and gave out \$50,000 for some sort of charity but the

next day the same bank is financing different projects that are harming the environment. From our side we are trying to be involved not only in terms of the activities but also in terms of the business and I sincerely tell you there is a learning curve for us. And we are trying to quicken this learning curve within our company and within the community outside.

**It's fair to say that the Gulf states have a pretty bad reputation when it comes to the environment. What can be done?**

I think there has to be a lot of education, a lot of awareness. I mean, we had this conference that was well publicized, maybe in Dubai but not elsewhere. To give you an example, a few weeks ago I went to the Toyota dealership in Kuwait and asked to buy a hybrid car. They said they are not actually willing to even import the car for us and the culture here is why do you even need it when the gas is so cheap? When we told them it is from the environmental perspective



All rights reserved

he was oblivious to what I was talking about. So I think education and awareness is much needed here. I am not taking any particular country ... but whether you want to agree with global warming or disagree with it, whether it is scientifically proven or not that humans are contributing to global warming. That's beside the point. I mean, one should look at it from an ethical perspective, from a moral perspective and not from a selfish perspective. So it's a difficult fight but we will get there.

**I am quite staggered by the complete lack of solar power in the Gulf. In Mediterranean countries every house has its hot water provided by solar. Solar is everywhere. Why is there such reluctance here for solar power?**

It's a logical transition for everybody to convert to solar. Some people argue that it's not, that the initial investment is a

**'We don't want global warming to be treated as a fad ... we're in a crisis, but people don't realize it'**

lot, although I disagree with that. The initial investment to set it up is, I think, quite inexpensive. The unfortunate truth is that it's so easy to keep pumping gas and burning it for energy. It's that psychology, that way of thinking.

**You mentioned global warming. Is that something that scientists in the Middle East have started accepting?**

Some have and there are a lot of skeptics, but in terms of why we did that conference, we said it's an inaugural meeting, meaning it will be every single year. We don't want it to be [treated as] a sort of a fad or a fashion that disappears. It may be at the top of the agenda this year, but next year it might not be. We are in a crisis, but a lot of people don't realize it. Global warming is on the increase. Dubai has a successful lobby group called the Emirates Environment Group that has lobbied for policy change and has had influence. So it is happening. We may not be at the pace that other people want but it is happening.

**Elsewhere and to some, it makes business sense to be green. Will this trend come to the Middle East any time soon?**

It will; it should. Not necessarily at the pace that one wants. Here I am sitting in



ArabianEye

the office and we are using energy-efficient light bulbs and they are not even on. We have cut down on electricity. You can save on the simplest things in terms of operational expenses. But in terms of investments, certain policies have to be in place to speed up this process because a businessman wants to be profitable. To be able to combat global warming there have to be many different centers to make it profitable. Businessmen or big corporations will not get involved in renewable energy projects that are environment-friendly if they are not profitable.

**One thing I would like to ask you, separate from this issue, is your involvement with Shakespeare productions in Arabic. What got you involved in that?**

I lived in Kuwait for 15 years and the art side is completely neglected there. People have to realize that it is really important not to neglect art. The arts build healthier communities and that is

**‘Businessmen will not get involved in renewable energy projects if they are not profitable’**

only one perspective. The other perspective is that this was an opportunity for fellow Kuwaitis to perform at the highest level in terms of Shakespeare at the Royal Shakespeare Company. And for us I was very excited to have a small part in helping and helping fellow Kuwaitis achieve this and enjoying the success. The side benefits are tremendous, when we attended in terms of cultural exchange. It was well received in all parts of the world – I mean, in *The New York Times* and *Her-*

*ald Tribune*. I hope they can have it in the region.

**Is that something you are going to repeat yourself?**

From our perspective we would like to look at more and different initiatives to be part of and not repeat the same initiatives. But I think you won't have any trouble finding sponsors and funding for the region.

**So as a Kuwaiti are you looking at what Abu Dhabi is doing in terms of cultural developments with envy or do you think they are going the right way?**

I take my hat off to them for what they are doing there. One shouldn't replicate but I don't think we would be in a position to even come close to doing what they are doing. The decision has been taken at the top and the funding is available all through the region but the decision has been taken and they are moving forward. It's impressive what they are doing. I wish they were in Kuwait! ■