

Knowledge economy gets big boost

Gulf News Interview with Dr. Marco Baccanti

By Mahmood Saberi, Senior Reporter, Gulf News

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Dubai: It is extremely important to create opportunities for research and acquire know-how to develop a knowledge economy, said a senior scientist on the eve of the launch of the region's biggest research complex.

Dubai Biotechnology and Research Park (DuBiotech) recently announced the Nucleotide Laboratory Complex, the biggest in the Middle East, is now operational and ready for companies to move in.



Dr Marco Baccanti, executive director of DuBiotech, said since Dubai is strategically placed, international companies are keen to move into the research park. He said the total cost of the project is \$100 million (Dh367 million).

Speaking to Gulf News from Milan he said one of the joint venture projects is the setting up of the National Reference Lab, an initiative created in partnership with Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings (LabCorp), one of the world's largest and most experienced clinical laboratory companies.

He said it will help in the analysis of clinic samples which were earlier sent abroad.

All four wings of the ground floor level of the complex are already fully booked, and new

companies are now finalising the fit-outs and installation of instruments in their labs.

Collaboration

The complex is located on Emirates Road near the Dubai Autodrome. It comprises 256,000 square feet of leasable area. The ultra-modern complex is designed to house biotech, life sciences and pharmaceutical activities ranging from research and development, diagnostic, analytical and equipment training activities.

"The Nucleotide Lab Complex is the biggest laboratory facility in the Middle East. It represents a major milestone in the

development of DuBiotech. The complex will host some of the world's most talented researchers and business development managers from academic and industrial fields, working in close collaboration under the DuBiotech licence," said the executive director.

He said the complex is an ideal place to encourage life science initiatives. New ideas will be conceptualised and developed into viable businesses.

"This will contribute to creating a knowledge economy in the region," he said.

The cluster will contribute to research which will be applicable in daily life also, said the doctor, who has 20 years experience in managing science parks. He said the well-known science parks are in Britain, Germany, Sweden, Italy and in San Diego, North Carolina and Boston in the US.

"The science parks help bring together people of similar interests to interact with each other," said Dr Baccantio. "For good research work you first should have good laboratory facilities."



According to Dubiotech, the Nucleotide Lab Complex allows partners to carry out laboratory-based research and development, testing and training activities. It will also help conceptualise ideas that stimulate creativity and facilitate peer to peer communications between researchers and industry managers.

The facility comprises four wings and is named A, C, T and G, after the four basic building blocks of nucleic acids, the main components of genetic material.

The Nucleotide Complex's core and shell lab space can accommodate up to 160 laboratory units that are designed to meet Class III of Bio-safety standards and guidelines.



The DuBiotech life sciences cluster grew in 2009 from 46 to 65 business partners, with 19 new companies registering to expand their presence in the Middle East's fast-growing biotechnology market.

DuBiotech also aims to provide the necessary infrastructure for all entities involved in the life sciences research and industrial activities, including the agricultural, environmental, and marine biotechnology sectors. It was launched in 2005 and offers free zone benefits.

Project

Development: Dubai Biotechnology and Research Park (DuBiotech)

Developer: Tecom

Location: Off Emirates Road, near Dubai Autodrome

Cost: Dh367 million (\$100 million)

Completed: Recently

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