SITE VISIT
POWER HOUSE
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BIG 5
SPECIAL PREVIEW
What the industry can look forward to

BAHRAIN
TOPICAL ISLAND
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JUDGMENT TIME
MEP AWARDS 2013
BUILD-UP

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NOVEMBER 2013 VOLUME 8 ISSUE 11

CONTENTS

04 NEWS
HLS wins $109.7m Al Habtoor City contract with Drake & Scull

08 NEWS UPDATE
Jeddah introduces new rules on computer-generated design

16 COMMENT
Oscar Wendel considers personality mix in organisations

20 ANALYSIS
A look at the future value of built assets in the GCC’s hotspots

68 PRODUCT FOCUS
Check out the latest MEP related products in the market

72 THE LAST WORD
Eaton’s Frank Ackland on the art of acquisition

40

MEP AWARDS 2013
All the judges and nominees for this year’s gongs revealed.

50

BAHRAIN FOCUS
What does the little island in the Gulf have to offer the regional industry?

24

BIG INTERVIEW
Former president of ASHRAE’s Oryx Chapter in Qatar, Hassan Sultan, explains how he and his colleagues built a success story from scratch.

56

BIG 5
Event organiser and show exhibitors show off what they have in store.

32

SITE VISIT
Michael Fahy gets on site at Siemens’ headquarters building in Abu Dhabi’s Masdar City and finds a suitably sustainable home for a giant of the industry.

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November 2013 | MEP Middle East 1
THE BIG INTERVIEW

SOCIAL Engineering

Hassan Sultan, former president of ASHRAE’s Qatar Oryx chapter, on his role in bringing the country’s mechanical engineers together and how the society is helping to shape the built environment of the burgeoning Gulf state

If ever an institution reflected the lightning growth of Qatar’s construction industry and the process of internationalisation which has attended it, the Oryx chapter of the American Society for Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) is surely it. Officially founded in 2008, the Qatari branch of the venerable sustainability-focused U.S. mechanical engineering body has grown from a modest collective of 46 at its inception to a heaving mass of more than 300 just five years later.

Present at the chapter’s birth and a driving force behind its rapid maturation, former president and MZ Consultant’s head of mechanical department Hassan Sultan says the Oryx branch was a logical consequence of Qatar’s hyper-evolving construction industry and the cosmopolitan demographic drawn to it.

“ASHRAE started in the region a long time ago in Lebanon,” says Sultan. “But when engineers moved from there to the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), such as Qatar, many had the idea to start up ASHRAE chapters in these countries. However, it was not only Lebanese engineers with this idea, but engineers from the U.S., Europe and elsewhere who were members of ASHRAE in their home countries. As more of these people came to the GCC in the 90s, chapters started to be established in some of the GCC states in the years after.”

Sultan, who originally hails from Lebanon and who arrived in Qatar in 2003, was one such expatriate engineer keen to see ASHRAE’s footprint extended further in the Middle East. He, along with a selection of colleagues from the Qatari mechanical engineering fraternity, was well aware of the benefits an ASHRAE chapter could bring to the country’s nascent construction industry.

“We knew the importance of having an ASHRAE chapter in Qatar and how it would benefit from its individual members and their companies, and other societies,” Sultan says. “We knew that ASHRAE would provide us with a website and access to its standards, guidelines and publications, as well as provide us with technical conferences and seminars. It would also assist us with any query or any technical question.”

2008
Year ASHRAE Oryx Chapter was founded