

# Al Zorah now half the size

## Repositioned as a premium tourist destination for Ajman

By

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Master-planned as a “coastal city” in late 2007, the Dh220-billion Al Zorah project is now half its original size in land area and has been repositioned as a premier tourism destination for Ajman with almost 2,000 hotel rooms when completed.

The decision for repositioning was taken after the three consultants appointed by Al Zorah Development Company advised focusing on the tourism sector than just on the real estate side. Renamed as Al Zorah Resorts, 70 per cent of the total area in the project will be devoted for hotels.

Al Zorah Development is a joint venture between the government of Ajman and DIFC-registered Solidere International.

“The first phase of the project will have four hotels with 700 rooms. Contracts worth Dh1.2 billion have already been issued... we expect phase one to be completed by 2014,” Imad Dana, Chief Executive Officer, Al Zorah Development Company, said.

The first phase comprises an upscale 160-room 5-star resort; a 300-room midscale 5-star hotel; a 180-room Tourist Village and a 50-room Beachside Village. The company is currently engaged in talks with a number of international hotel operators and will decide on an operator by early next year.

According to the company, the new master plan includes five districts - City Centre, comprising hotels, offices, retail centres, marinas and a public square; Parkland Resorts, a community of six beachfront hotels, creek side residences complemented by a 1.6 km stretch of sandy beach and three-kilometre lagoon frontage; Golf Course - a 18 hole championship course; Gateway, a high-rise mixed-use community and Corniche Village with villas and townhouses that overlook the sea.

Sheikh Rashid bin Humeid Al Nuaimi, Chairman, Al Zorah Development Company, said: “Al Zorah Resorts is developed to catalyze the economy of Ajman with a focus on driving tourism and hospitality sectors that will contribute to the emirate’s all-round growth.”

Dr Nassar Chammaa, Chairman, Solidere International, admitted the company had to take a step backward and reassess the project due the global financial conditions. However, it has enough cash to fund the phase one.

“We have a strong balance sheet and cash to fund our phase one without resorting to any bank finance.”

However, the land size of the project has been reduced by half and will cover an area of 5.4 million square metres. The company’s paid-up capital has been reduced to Dh2 billion from Dh4 billion.

“We have reduced the land area by half... we had reclaimed islands, which we have now cancelled. Our concentration is on the beach front and marinas.”

When asked how they plan to fund the other phases, Dana said: “Once we create the buzz and start phase one, investors will have opportunities... I believe they will come because they will make money with us.”

In 2008, the developer said it had achieved land sales worth Dh10 billion.

“We consolidated all the buyers in and around the City Center... we converted their money into 100 per cent payment so they did not have to pay anything more,” Dana revealed.