

## **EMKE Group Unveils Dh1.5b Expansion Plan in Abu Dhabi**

EMKE Group, one of the largest retail chains in the Gulf region, has finalised its plans to expand its customer reach across Abu Dhabi by investing Dh1.5 billion in the next 18-months.

The next phase of expansion involves opening of seven new shopping malls and hypermarkets in the emirate of Abu Dhabi alone — a plan which will be completed by the end of 2010,

In an interview with Khaleej Times, Yusuffali MA, Managing Director of Abu Dhabi-based EMKE Group, who is also on the board of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that he had strong faith in the economic vision of Abu Dhabi government and does not see any need to slow down or rethink on the group's expansion plans.

He termed the current market turmoil as a temporary economic phenomena. "A strong group like us will become ever more stronger during these tough times," he said.

The group recently opened Lulu Express Supermarket and Mazyad Mall in Mohammed Bbin Zayed City in Abu Dhabi.

According to GRC, a market research consultancy, Lulu Hypermarket has 32 per cent market share in GCC region's organised grocery retail sector. In the UAE, the group has 43 per cent market share with a \$2.1 billion sales turnover at the end of 2008.

"We are also looking for new locations to expand our Lulu Express concept, especially in upcoming residential suburbs," Yusuffali said.

The group, which already has strong market presence in the capital, operates popular shopping malls Khalidiya Mall, Al Wahda Mall, Al Raha Mall and Madinat Zayed Shopping Center. "Burjeeel Mall in Abu Dhabi, is a new shopping mall that will be added to our portfolio very soon," he said.

He said that 45 per cent work is completed on the Central Fish & Vegetable Market, a shopping mall project, which is group's most ambitious project in Abu Dhabi.

The project is being developed in association with Mubadala Development Company, and includes about 200-fish, meat and vegetables shops on the ground floor, while the upper floors will house more than 200 branded stores and boutiques.

He said that the unique point of the shopping mall will be specialty seafood restaurants representing tastes and cuisines from around the world.

Located on the new airport road the shopping centre will have easy access and parking facility for more than 3,000 cars.

Elaborating further, Yusuffali said that his group is now renovating and expanding the prestigious Madinat Zayed Shopping Centre and Gold Souk in the city centre to add another 300,000 square feet of retail space, which will bring in a new hypermarket apart from food courts, restaurants, family

entertainment centres and branded stores.

“Now our focus will be on expanding to the Western and Eastern regions of Abu Dhabi as we believe that these regions are going to see a lot of development and we should be closer to the residents there rather than they coming to us,” Yusuffali said.

Other projects to be completed and launched this year include hypermarkets and shopping malls in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Dubai, RAK, Doha, Al Khobar, Jeddah, Riyadh, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, he added.