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Six new schools to meet needs of growing population

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Last Updated: July 04, 2010 10:56PM UAE / July 4, 2010 6:56PM GMT

ABU DHABI // Six new schools will be built in Khalifa City B and Mohammed bin Zayed City to cope with the anticipated growth in population over the next decade.

Abu Dhabi Education Council (Adec) officials on Saturday said they had set aside plots of land for each of the schools. They said they expected all the schools to be completed by August 2013.

"Adec research in the private school sector has shown that the demand for school places is expected to grow by five per cent annually over the next few years," said Dr Mugheer al Khaili, Adec's director general.

"In accordance with Adec's 10-year strategic plan, it is of the highest priority for us to increase both quality and access to private schools in the emirate."

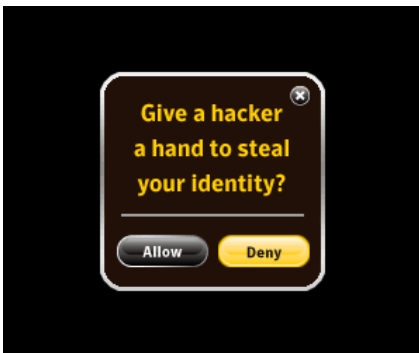
One school will follow an English curriculum, one an American and one a Filipino. The other three will follow Adec's curriculum.

"The population is growing day by day in Khalifa," said Asim Dar, 24, who lives in the area.

"There are lots of government offices that are moving into Khalifa City, and there are also residents moving in from Abu Dhabi, where the rent is high.

"They should develop schools and hospitals as well for the common need, because this is becoming a developed area."

He said he was concerned that three years was a long time to wait, given the sharp increase in demand.



Sheepa Bipin Kumar, 36, an Indian homemaker, said she had trouble finding a suitable school in the Khalifa City area for her two children.

"Most of them were Arabic schools and my children go to an Indian school," she said.

In April, Adec announced the closure of six villa schools in the capital, which had taught a total of 2,300 pupils.

One of the facilities, which followed a Filipino curriculum, is to reopen in the Muroor area for the new academic year. However, some of the pupils may have to commute to a new facility in Bani Yas.

A statement from the council said the plan for the six new schools was part of a larger initiative to encourage low-fee private schools.

However, the news angered some parents living inside the city.

"Most of the people live in the city, and Khalifa is far from the city," said Meliza Frias, a 44-year-old Filipina.

"There is a need for more schools in the city. Most Filipinos depend on the school buses and they don't like that the students need to travel one hour just to get to school."

Adec said the new schools were aimed at coping with the "expected population growth within Khalifa B", rather than that of the city.

Developers are being invited to submit tenders for the school projects. Prequalification applications are available until July 12 at Adec's headquarters.

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