

Dubai inaugurates first phase of mega solar energy project

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An image taken from Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest skyscraper, on May 21, 2013 shows construction in Dubai

Dubai inaugurated the first phase of a solar energy park on Tuesday as the Gulf emirate seeks to diversify its energy sources, official Emirati news agency WAM reported.

The park, named the "Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum Park" after the emirate's ruler, will produce 1,000 megawatts of electricity when

completed, and will cost 12 billion dirhams (\$3.3 billion), WAM said.

The first plant of the [solar energy](#) megaproject is 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the city of Dubai and can produce 10 megawatts of energy on its own.

Said Mohammed al-Tayer, deputy head of the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority and vice chief of its Supreme Energy Council, said the project was "one of a kind in the region," adding that it would be a major boost to the Gulf state's mega-projects.

The supreme energy council is trying to reduce Dubai's reliance on oil and gas. Dubai aims to produce one percent of its energy needs using solar power by 2020, and five percent by 2030, local press has reported.

Dubai is a major electricity consumer, in spite of its population of just two million, partly because of the extreme heat from June to September, which sees an increased use in air conditioning.

The United Arab Emirates, made up of seven states including Dubai, hold a fifth of the world's oil reserves with 97.8 billion barrels, of which 95 percent is owned by the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

The federation also has gas reserves of six trillion square metres, but Dubai holds only about two percent of this.

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