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INSIGHT



Chilean entrepreneur Fernando Fischmann at his signature San Alfonso del Mar resort in Algarrobo.

Creator of Giant Pool Eyes New Projects in Dubai

Staff Report

ALGARROBO (CHILE) — The creator of the world's largest swimming pool has a glint in his eye as he talks about his latest idea.

Fernando Fischmann, a Chilean real estate entrepreneur, hopes to build a giant, Palm-shaped lagoon in the middle of the UAE desert.

"I think it would be cheaper to build a lagoon in the shape of a palm, than it would be to build an island in that shape," he said in a recent interview.

Speaking at his eight-hectare, 1-kilometre-long swimming pool in San Alfonso del Mar, a luxury property development in the town of Algarrobo, Chile, Fischmann said he has an office in Dubai to strike up deals in the Middle East. Schön Properties will soon in-

corporate his unique Crystal Lagoons technology — which keeps large quantities of water from turning green with algae — at the Dubai Lagoon project.

A separate plan to build a lagoon on Palm Jebel Ali fell by the wayside when developer Nakheel put that project on hold. "There has been a slow-down in Dubai, but I still think that there's a great deal of demand there," he told *Khaleej Times*.

Fischmann opened his first lagoon two years ago in Algarrobo, 100 kilometres south of the capital Santiago, and he now has more than 60 projects across the world in various stages of development.

Fischmann expects one of them, in Egypt's Sharm el Shaikh resort, to beat his own Guinness Record and become the world's largest swimming pool at 8.8 hectares. Other projects in the Middle

East are based in Morocco, Jordan and Alexandria, Egypt. But it hasn't always been plain sailing for Fischmann.

The science graduate was forced to don an inventor's hat after almost 10 years of experimenting with different technologies and failing to stop pool water from turning green.

"It was a very dark time," he said. "I realised that if I were to succeed, I would need to draw upon my science background to create a new way of keeping the water clear."

Fischmann came up with his now patented "pulse oxidation" technology, which relies upon 40 sensors around the pool to monitor water quality and make subtle adjustments by releasing chemicals as needed.

Although the project cost \$3.5 million, it now has a maintenance bill equivalent to just a quarter of the cost

of maintaining an average-sized golf course. Now, he has been called upon to try and solve the green-water problem at the Burj Dubai fountain. "It uses a swimming pool technology, which is costly to maintain and isn't very effective," he said.

"I don't think we can change it radically now, but we will be able to make an improvement"

Aside from making residential developments look attractive, Fischmann says that his greatest achievement is allowing native Chileans the opportunity to take part in water sports — which have traditionally been off-limits owing to the dangerous ocean currents along the country's long coastline.

"This whole area is a playground," he said, gesturing to the shimmering water in the vast pool behind him.

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