

RAK Composites positions itself as global leader

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DUBAI -RAK Composites, a division of RAK Ceramics, is positioning itself to be a global leader in the production of advanced composite materials for the marine industry. Plans are afoot to manufacture one 32-foot powerboat a week at its manufacturing plant in Ras Al Khaimah, which is currently under construction, and within two or three years to market the powerboats globally.

"Composites are a new concept for the world," said Bertrand Cardis, engineer and director of Decision, the Swiss-company that has tied up with RAK Ceramics in an 80/20 joint venture. Speaking to Khaleej Times, he said the first boat mould was being manufactured in Italy, and would be shipped to Ras Al Khaimah. The first boat is expected to come off the production line by the end of Ramadan. After this, production of the powerboats would start in earnest, he said.

Cardis is certainly practised in the art of boatbuilding. He designed and built last year's winning boat in the America's Cup for Alinghi for whom he was worked for eight years.

Composite materials include glass fibre, polyester fibre and resin. "They are light, stiff, durable and non-corrosive", said Cardis, adding: "We will be producing two or three types of boats, a closed boat and a taxi boat." He also said: "First we will produce for the local market and then in two or three years we may go global." The composite materials will be sourced locally.

The open powerboats will range in price from Dh540,000 to Dh750,000, for those with the more luxurious interiors.

RAK Composites was incorporated in November 2007 with a paid up capital of Dh15 million. The RAK Government is financing the manufacturing plant for an undisclosed sum. As well as focusing on the manufacture of yachts, RAK Composites will also produce civil engineering structures, "with a vision of becoming one of the global leaders in advanced composite structures," according to a statement from RAK Composites.

It has also launched a sales arm, called "aQuatech Yachts", responsible for creating sales and marketing leads for its Swiss-partner, Decision.