Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili and other officials at the unveiling of the science festival mascot in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. — *KT photos by Shoaib Anwer*

Science fest in Capital from Nov 18 to 26

Interactive event is aimed at educating youth and instilling interest in science and technology

Olivia Olarte

ABU DHABI — Science is fun, entertaining and interesting. This is the key concept of the inaugural Abu Dhabi Science Festival, a first of its kind event ever to be held in the UAE between November 18 and 26.

Aimed at educating, engaging and inspiring the curiosity of young people in science and technology, the nine-day festival promises to be an interactive event featuring hands-on exhibits, fun experiments, workshops and spectacular shows in robotics, aeronautics, physics, biology, chemistry and archaeology.

"The objective of the Science Festival is to inspire the youth to start liking science," stated Ahmed Al Calily, director general of Technology Development Committee (TDC), the organiser of the event. TDC is an Abu Dhabi entity charged with supporting the elevation of the emirate to a world-class centre for science, technology and innovation (STI).

Historically, science has always been perceived as boring and only for the 'nerds', but 'there are dramatic ways to change perception,' said Dr Simon Gage, director of the Edinburgh (Scotland) International Science Festival (EISF), the first and one of the largest science festivals in the world.

For the Abu Dhabi show, EISF will be sharing its expertise by training hundreds of university students from the emirate who volunteered to be the 'Science Communicators.'

The Science Communicators will be presenting the science shows and experiments and will respond to queries from the festival visitors.

The whole day event will see participation from over 15,000 students from Grades 1 to 9 (aged between five and 15) from 174 schools from Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and the Western Region of which 110 will be public and 64 private schools.

A visitor experimenting with chemicals to make a perfume.

Parents and teachers will also participate in the event. Speaking at the launch of the Science Festival on Sunday, Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, director — general of the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) underscored the importance and benefits of presenting science in an interesting way to attract and motivate students to get into the sector.

"Only 20 per cent of local students are joining the engineering field due to obstacles they face in science. We want them to join the science field, we want them to like science," he stressed. He noted the ADEC strategy of implementing the new school model (NSM) which will deviate students from rote learning into becoming more creative, critical and analytical thinkers.

"For us this is a very important event because it promotes the NSM, it also promotes the discovery and practice of science that would motivate students in that direction," Dr Al Khaili said.

The Science Festival will be held at different locations in Abu Dhabi — the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) as the main venue, the Abu Dhabi Corniche, as well as other select public locations around the Capital. Entrance to the festival will be free of charge. — *olivia@khaleejtimes.com*