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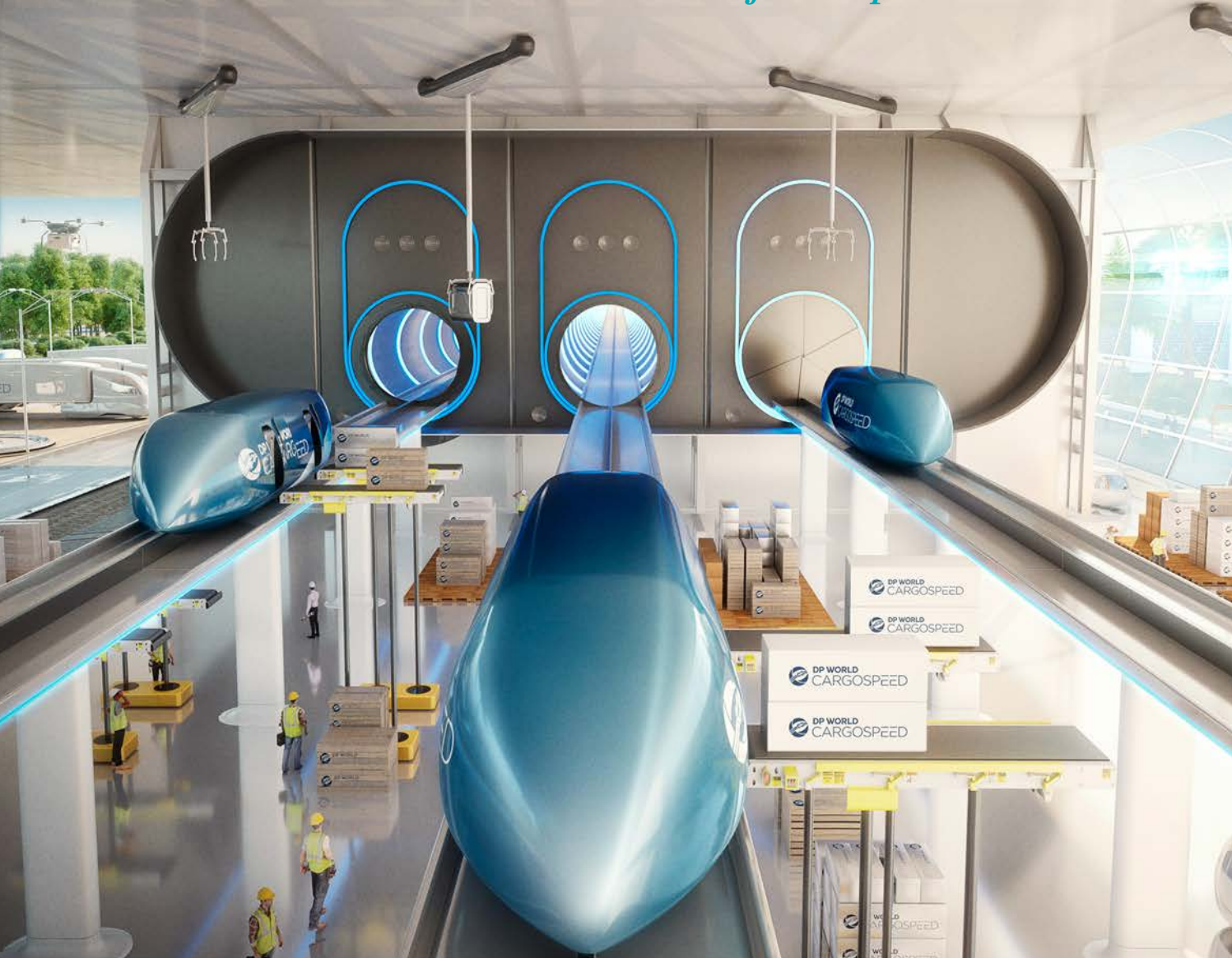
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FOR THE MEETINGS AND EVENTS INDUSTRY

DUBAI

The Pulse of Development



No. 11

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The Pulse OF DEVELOPMENT

DUBAI AIMS to become the world's smartest city with billions of dirhams being pumped in by the public and private sectors. A newly-released report by the University of Glasgow has rated Dubai among the world's smartest cities, ahead of Los Angeles, Tokyo, Vienna, Seoul, Brussels and many other global cities. It rated Dubai the world's 14th smartest city.

My first visit to Dubai was in 1996. What I have learned from the people I have talked to during the years is that their vision is sharp, their goals are clear, and their resources are huge. Furthermore, their will is strong, and the people are ready to face the challenges ahead. For 23 years I have heard that the mission for Dubai is to become an international, pioneering hub of excellence and creativity. I have also learned that the leadership of Dubai are striving to make it the world's premier trade, tourism and services destination in the twenty-first century.

I have had many meetings with the confident people of Dubai. They have always believed that they can reach their ambitious goals thanks to their dedicated leadership and by

providing the necessary infrastructure and environment. But that is not enough. They also want Dubai to lead in dynamic growth, safety and security without neglecting the essential element of trust. A trust which they are keen to maintain throughout the local, regional and international business communities.

In the book *My Vision – Challenges in the Race for Excellence* His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai writes: "I know the road to development and modernization is difficult. I know that it is long, and I also know that the next stages will be even tougher and longer. But I have faith in God, I believe in my people, in the vision of our leadership and the future of our nation. I am confident we will realise our goals. Our vision is clear, our road is paved, and the clock is ticking. There is no more time for hesitation or half-baked goals or solutions. Development is an ongoing process, and the race for excellence has no finish line."

There is a strong focus on the development of the country's youth,

a development for survival. There are also several other areas in focus for developing Dubai. One example is that the Dubai government will celebrate the last piece of paper issued by any government entity at the end of December 2021. No government entity will be allowed to print paper and will not issue any paper document in any government transactions. The Paperless Strategy is one of the strategies to fully transform Dubai into a digital city. There will be several significant technical changes gradually rolled out over the next few years including increasing automation in government departments, using digital IDs, signatures, and certificates as well as making secure data available via dedicated platforms.

Dubai is also pushing sustainability. Everything built is compliant with the very latest environmental standards. The goal is to become the city with the smallest carbon footprint in the world by 2050.



PHOTO Magnus Malmberg

Swedish-Indonesian **ATTI SOENARSO** has worked as a journalist for close to 40 years. She has worked for Scandinavia's largest daily newspaper, was TV4's first travel editor, has written for many Swedish travel magazines and has had several international clients. She has travelled the length and breadth of the world and written about destinations, people and meetings.

The Evolution OF EVOLVIN' WOMEN

FROM GERMANY to Taiwan via Bangladesh and New Zealand, the presence of female heads of state reflects a much wider societal shift in recent decades of women increasingly taking up positions of influence in boardrooms, in meeting rooms, in political chambers and across the full spectrum of social, economic and political life, redressing the significant gender imbalances of the past. Whilst this movement towards a more balanced gender representation in all walks of life is making progress across every continent, there is one where in a number of its countries the progress is notably slower – that continent is Africa.

Empowering women to overcome the barriers to being more upwardly mobile in the job market in a number of these African countries and also to help make a difference to those countries in their turn is a Dubai-based start-up, Evolvin' Women, founded by Assia Riccio. The social enterprise fuses the goals of the public and private sectors by enabling organisations in Dubai to offer skill development placements to unemployed women from rural areas of Africa where political, economic or social circumstances have prohibited or limited their access to professional development and full-time job opportunities. Despite being a relatively recent initiative, Evolvin' Women has already helped women from Ghana to

Rwanda and South Africa transform their lives and that of others around them, garnering huge levels of international interest as it does so.

"I always wanted to start a social enterprise as I come from a family of people who were always working with and helping the community, so I've always wanted to do something and continue that legacy, but it had to be something sustainable," says Assia Riccio, Founder of Evolvin' Women.

"I therefore moved from operations in hotels to training to better understand training. Then I worked in recruitment and opened a training company, because I really wanted to understand the business model and see if I could actually replace people looking for jobs and training with women who were unemployed and had several challenges."

"From this I was looking for countries where, first of all, there was a very high rate of unemployment for women and when you look at Africa you have countries where it is 60 per cent and more. In December 2016, I set up the legal side of the company and between January and May 2017 I ran lots of different pilots to see which ones would have a better social impact. One that worked really well was when I went to Africa and together with local partners, trained a group of women. I did a seminar and we brought some of the women here to Dubai. They stayed here, gained

skills and went back to Ghana where they got jobs, even though they were unemployed when we met them."

"When I came back from Africa people started noticing us and things have picked up very quickly," says Assia Riccio. "You have so many big companies who spend so much money in these countries but have very little to show for it, whereas I am just one person going there but with a 100 per cent success rate with the programme, so people were asking what I was doing that is actually different from these big companies."

Not only were companies local to Dubai recognising that something different was happening with the instant success being achieved by Evolvin' Women, but, with the influential assistance of the Dubai Chamber in building their local and international networks, an awareness of both the programme and its ambitions was quickly coming to the attention of international organisations too.

"Within two months of coming back from Ghana we became the first micro-enterprise with less than ten employees in the Middle East to become signatory to the UN Global Compact, not only here but also in the US, which was an incredible deal for us. We were then invited to sit on the UN Task Force for Women here in Dubai, which was again a big deal. As we are part of the Dubai Business Women Council I also wanted

to approach governments, but first wanted to know how to connect with the Chamber in their country. That's how the Dubai Chamber started to connect me to the guys they have in Kenya and South Africa and I just started to initiate these conversations, so we are now launching in South Africa and very soon in Namibia and Kenya too."

"We got into the Dubai Chamber's

Dubai, but also to their whole time as they develop themselves in the city and, perhaps most importantly, to the take-off they can also offer to their communities back home as well as to other women living in those communities.

"We work on community goals and when the women come to Dubai, we have mentors, selectively chosen hospitality professionals who actu-

can today look forward to a much brighter future for themselves and their families.

"We've trained 32 women in total overall, one of whom is a single mother who was unemployed and is going back in August. She was doing an internship that wasn't working out for her, so she went through the training and came to Dubai, mentoring, coaching and everything else. From a job that had paid her USD 100 monthly before she came, she went back to a job that gives her USD 400 monthly and she's now also in a supervisor position."

"In terms of social impact we measured the amount of hours she has done training face-to-face and online, all the certificates she has received from the online and face-to-face training, we looked at the economic empowerment, the sustainable development goals (SDG) and how much she has gained, the total household expenditure and income before and after the programme, and whether she had a bank account and if she has one after the programme. These are all the indicators we use from the SDGs and we measure all her competencies from the Accenture platform – so we look at her self-confidence and communication, we measure education, economic empowerment and gender equality. Another one that we measure is the diversity within the organisation. We monitor everything and from the hotel that works with us we get a CSR report at the end of the two years with all of the development of the women."

The goal of developing the women in such a detailed and dedicated way also means developing Evolvin' Women in parallel to be able to maintain and manage the supply of women coming through and to ensure that the programme can continue to adapt

“Dubai has created an incredible ecosystem for entrepreneurs”

Market Access programme because they really started to understand what I was trying to do and we got Accenture on board, which was incredible, because basically we have a 27-month programme," says Assia Riccio. "For the first three months we do all the training through Accenture, who have an online training platform, to prepare the women to actually get a job in Dubai. They get a job and a visa within those three months and then they come to Dubai, work in hotels and they learn customer service, which is something they can use and a skill they can transfer to any kind of job."

"One of the other companies I wanted to talk to was Emirates Airline, because of course the girls fly in," says Assia Riccio. "Again, the Market Access programme introduced me to someone from Emirates Airline, so they built a value proposition for me and things just took off from there."

For the women accepted to participate in the Evolvin' Women programme, the take-off isn't limited to just the Emirates Airline arrival to

ally work in the industry and all of whom are academic in that they teach hospitality, who follow their progress every month. We also follow their progress every month, because we want them to keep the focus on going back, which is how we measure our social impact. Many of the women are single mothers and have children, so they have not only their child to go back to, but they also have a community to go back to, so what we are currently developing is the first Evolvin' Communities Hub, which is literally a physical space where they can go back and train other people in rural areas on sustainable tourism activities. One of the reasons that we want to build the hub is for them to be able to not only volunteer there, but also to be able to become an advocate for what we are doing."

Despite the social enterprise still being in its infancy, through its work Evolvin' Women has already managed to yield significant results. It has elevated the prospects of a number of women originally from challenging circumstances in Africa, but who

“Much of Evolvin' Women's early successes can also be attributed to the strength and connectedness of Dubai's business environment”

and improve to offer the women even more opportunities.

"We have a two-year and a five-year plan at the moment. The next two years is going to be about enrolling at least 100 women in the programme and the Dubai Chamber is hopefully going to help us get into Expo 2020, because that would be an incredible showcase for the women if they could, for example, be at the Ghana or the Kenyan booths. If we can show the prototype of the hub and everything we are doing there, and they will be doing it and running the hub by then, it's theirs, it would be an incredible showcase for them."

"Another thing that we're looking at over the next five years is to not only expand into other countries, but to get an accreditation from an institution. I would love to be able to go to the women and say that if they complete the programme, they can access a degree programme when they go back home, or they can validate the time spent here to go into higher education."

"This is all for the women to get more value when they go back, so I'm talking to two universities in Ghana to ask what we can do. In Namibia I'm talking to a university and exploring whether I can get a partnership

with them where they do their CSR by selecting women from rural areas, bring them to the university and train them for a year, let's say in the culinary arts, so they have a diploma, and then they come on my programme. With that, not only do they have higher education, but with these skills they can also get a better job here in Dubai. We're trying to link everything, but the vision keeps adapting as there are so many angles."

As a young but multifaceted vision that continues to evolve, much of Evolvin' Women's early successes can also be attributed to the strength and connectedness of Dubai's business environment, one that not only embraces positive visions such as this one, but also facilitates and nurtures their growth like nowhere else in the world today.

"As a city Dubai is an incubator, an accelerator and it has an ecosystem that might not work in another country because of the mindset that works here, which is precisely why I'm doing what I'm doing here," says Assia Riccio. "Dubai has created an incredible ecosystem for entrepreneurs, supported by both the private and public sectors coming together in this ecosystem where people are now looking for social entrepreneurs

to support. They give you the professional support that is needed more than the money to do it. We have a legal firm, which I would never have been able to afford anywhere else, and we became their social responsibility, without which we would never have been able to sign an MoU with the Ghana Tourism Authority."

"The real beauty about Dubai is that you have the ability to communicate with government in such an open and facilitated way. I would have never been able to access UN Women or UN Global Compact in Europe, but in Dubai it became possible and it happened. The other thing about Dubai is that it is physically so well connected too, so it's a very good location to fly to Africa, India and all the countries that I would like to work in. Location wise it was perfect for what I wanted to do, access to the market was perfect and there is also the public and private sectors working with entrepreneurs in an unbelievable ecosystem that they have put together."



Dubai Chamber Is Focussing ON CHANGING THE ECONOMY TO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

BEHIND THE SUCCESS of the planet's most vibrant economic centres can always be found a dynamic and fervent Chamber of Commerce. Despite its relative newcomer status amongst the long-established Chambers to be found around the world, Dubai has in its short life made a huge impact on the business landscape of both the city and the wider region.

"We started in 1965, even before this country was put together, as a local organisation with just a handful of staff and we were only 400 members," says Hamad Buamim, President & CEO of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Since that time Dubai has really grown a lot and, today, we are touching 220,000 members. I have just come from Paris and their Chamber has been in existence for more than 200 years. They have close to 500,000 members, but they have been in existence four times longer than we have. Our numbers make us today not only one of the biggest Chambers in the region, but one of the top in the world."

"Our Chamber has close to 250 employees in Dubai, serving the business community and more than 50 per cent who are international, so we speak more than 30 languages as we believe that to be able to represent business you need to walk in their

shoes and understand their needs and requirements. We are really a diverse group representing business and what Dubai is all about, having the ability to speak the languages and to communicate with the different areas we are from."

Equipped with such a diverse range of skills and languages, the scope of the Dubai Chamber has not remained confined to that of the city or even the region. Initiatives in recent years have taken them far beyond their immediate business focus to cultivate new connections with markets of targeted interest to Dubai and its future commercial growth.

"What we have done in the past five years and especially after the economic crisis hit is to position Dubai as a gateway for the region. In our role we have definitely emphasised that our market is not only Dubai, the UAE and the Gulf, but that it's way beyond that. This is why we started a number of initiatives, one of which was to establish a Dubai Chamber elsewhere, which we call 'International Offices.' We started in Addis Ababa, East Africa, to emphasise the importance of Africa as a major target for us, then expanded into Nairobi, Maputo and Accra. We've benefitted a lot from these offices in Africa."

"In the same year we also established a presence in Baku, Azerbaijan because of our interest in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and up to today we see a lot of business growth between both cities because of our presence there. We then expanded further, with a presence in China because we wanted to grow our relationship with them and to focus a lot on the areas of innovation that the Chinese are good at. India is also a big and important market, so we recently established our presence there and then we started looking for the interests of our members in South America with Sao Paulo, then expanded with Panama in Central America and, as we speak, we are now establishing in Buenos Aires, Argentina."

"A lot of the markets that we're aiming for are really emerging markets as one thing we do differently to others is that we internationalise our business. In all of these markets what I really have is a Dubai Chamber fully-fledged office and we always hire locally with local expertise, so we have more nationalities coming to Dubai Chamber HQ."

With extensive business growth taking place at a rapid pace, the major issue of sustainability, both economically and environmentally, has not

escaped the scrutiny of the Dubai Chamber as they continue to plot and execute their course for successful business expansion.

“The sustainability of the Dubai economy is not only a question of the growth of businesses or population or the economy, but it’s really the ability to sustain all of that. A lot of that has really been driven by the growth of the markets that we are in, as one of

that can address this issue from the market place, the work place, the community and the environment, and again lead it from the private sector to the public sector.”

“Today the Centre for Responsible Business is a key tool for us that really supports a lot of the areas of raising awareness, sharing best practice, supporting business through practical advice and tools, and we also

ability to connect with and nurture the future drivers of growth before they have taken root in the economic system, as well as creating the broader economic conditions for this to happen. From Silicon Valley in the USA to Silicon Alley in London and to start-up hubs popping up all across the world, key economic centres are embracing new forms of economic growth, including disruptive ones. Here again, the Dubai Chamber has already forged well ahead in ensuring Dubai is a major destination for this too.

“One thing we are working hard on with our partners is in changing the perception of Dubai as an expensive city, as we want it to be an affordable city to visit, to do business in and to live in, as this will hopefully support us in attracting talent for this next phase of growth. We are focussing on changing the economy to a knowledge-based economy and the issue of innovation is very important for the economy, its growth, the government and business altogether. All of these things require the business environment to be attractive and competitive, and we work very hard to keep it that way.”

“A lot of things really need to be developed for the regions that we are in as solutions, whether it is in response to a challenge or developed as an opportunity, and for this start-ups are a big area. We just came back from France where we had a big delegation and we visited Station F, the biggest start-up hub. In Dubai we are looking to learn from what’s happening there and work with our partners, especially in the tourism department. A lot of the start-ups are really about bringing young people with great ideas and trying to create solutions with them. You need all the big players and corporate partners to buy in, because there is already a lot of

“Dubai has a great environment as a testing lab”

the major advantages of Dubai is that we are well located in the centre of the emerging world that requires tens or even hundreds of years to catch up with the rest of the world. This is where the business community has the advantage of being established in Dubai and benefitting from the infrastructure we have in terms of connectivity, relationships and the business environments built on that.”

“There is also sustainability from the environmental angle and again as a Chamber we raised this issue way before others,” says Hamad Buamim. “Around 2004–2005 we established the ‘Centre for Responsible Business’, because we wanted the business community, on a voluntary basis and without government regulations, to start to adapt best practices that existed back then elsewhere in the world. We really benefitted from the existence of multinationals, because we realised that a lot of them have these practices in different parts of the developed world and we looked at how we could bring them here. Through the Dubai Chamber we were able to put together a local framework

collaborate with the government to both advocate certain policies and communicate what’s important in dealing with this issue. As a result, we now also have the Sustainability Network, with more than fifty companies in it, who are doing a great job of raising the awareness of this subject and sharing best practice, which is very important for the area of sustainability.”

“Furthermore, a number of years back we established a form of recognition for some of our members called the Dubai Chamber CSR Label, which the whole country has adapted and taken on. When we talk about CSR we’re not talking about charity. We actually avoided the issue of philanthropy in our practice and we ask how it is possible to be a sustainable organisation contributing to society aside from just giving back money, but more about doing everything else, starting with your own employees and caring about the marketplace and other related areas.”

Another dimension to remaining sustainable, particularly in the years and decades ahead, will be the

“We started a number of initiatives, one of which was to establish a Dubai Chamber elsewhere”

innovation happening at the smaller level of SMEs, so we really want to build the ecosystem around that.”

“We’re still at the early stage and the next phase will be about how to get a lot of the start-ups aligned with the aspirations of this country in, for example, areas of innovation, sustainability and mobility. Dubai has a great environment as a testing lab so we want to bring a lot of international players to that who can hopefully be connected with the right corporate partners that will be able to take on their ideas. We have an interesting concept that we have been using called ‘Market Access’, where we connect some of those SMEs at the early stage of their solutions with partners. We also connect students and a number of incubators that exist in Dubai, acting as a facilitator, and going forward we will also try to attract venture capitalists. We’re already in dialogue with a number of them to let them see what exists here and facilitate dialogue in a more systematic approach.”

“When you look at all the areas of innovation and bringing solutions, these are still areas of potential growth for years to come. We hope that between now and Expo 2020 the whole business model of Dubai will

be developing, changing and evolving into new areas where we believe that the next phase of growth and development is really more about creating that value.”

With Expo 2020 looming on the very near horizon – offering the world a window on Dubai, as well as the chance for Dubai to showcase the best of its business environment – the Dubai Chamber has been working closely with the expo organisers to make the most of this pivotal moment in the city’s history and to help take it forward through its next stages of economic development.

“We are a very close partner with Expo 2020 and got involved with them at the stage of promoting Dubai to win it. We continue to work closely with them to get countries to sign up to being a part of it, as for a number of countries, especially developed ones, this decision is from the private sector. Our own private sectors are also a very important element of Expo and we raise the awareness of what the private sector can gain from Expo and especially how SMEs can play their part in building Expo and being part of the legacy. Expo 2020 highlights the three pillars of sustainability, mobility and opportunity; we see these pillars not only for the

six months of Expo, but for the years to come afterwards and particularly for SMEs, as this is the transformation that we want the UAE and Dubai economy to be about, to a knowledge-based, innovative economy.”

“We are a facilitator and will continue to represent business, protect their interests and promote Dubai,” says Hamad Buamim. “One thing that I’m proud that Dubai is known for internationally is that it is a platform to test new ideas, it only happens here. We are evolving into a new era and it’s a major transition, but frankly it’s a great transition, as it will open up more opportunities. Today anybody can make it here and this is why Dubai is such a great place.”

Sculpting THE FUTURE

“**THE BIRTHDAY** of a new world is at hand,” wrote Thomas Paine back in 1776 in response to the American Declaration of Independence, and it indeed came to pass that since this birthday the United States would go on to lead the world in the many sectors that have come to define today’s global economy.

Fast-forward just under two centuries to 1971, however, and the formation of the United Arab Emirates has turned out to be another significant birthday heralding the onset of an entirely new world evolving out of the midst of the fourth industrial revolution. Knowledge-based, technologically-driven, AI-focussed and sustainably-orientated, the UAE and Dubai in particular are taking huge strides in understanding, embracing and sculpting a future that integrates everything positive that technology can offer to create more connected, more productive and more sustainable communities and societies.

To expedite this journey to the future Dubai has established the Dubai Future Foundation, an organisation that brings together the most innovative minds on the planet to explore and discover solutions to the pressing challenges of both today and tomorrow. The Foundation has forged strategic alliances with international universities and corporate entities, all of which is helping position Dubai and the UAE as a key global centre for future technologies.

One of the many initiatives helping bolster the city’s growing status is ‘Area 2071’, a “physical (Emirates Towers) and digital space and

ecosystem purposefully designed to deeply connect corporates, governments, start-ups, investors, the youth and the public in order to co-create the future.” The initiative is named to reflect the centennial year of the UAE by when it is aiming to become the world’s leading nation. To facilitate this, Area 2071 offers more than 80 workshops and events for its ecosystem partners, supported by four leading regional venture capitalists and two global accelerator programmes. The most recent ‘Country in Residence’ programme and the second run of the ‘Techstars’ initiative have further boosted the ecosystem and Dubai’s journey to the future.

“The Country in Residence programme serves as a global strategic platform for the UAE and participating countries to strengthen the Foundation’s efforts towards building effective collaborations that ultimately accelerates the pace of innovation, enables the adoption of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and embraces knowledge sharing through the export and import of global knowledge and innovation,” says His Excellency Khalfan Belhoul, CEO of Dubai Future Foundation.

Providing business, diplomatic and cultural delegations and investors exclusive access to UAE-based opportunities, the programme additionally provides representatives from participating countries the opportunity to connect with government entities, international organisations, private sectors, start-ups, business leaders, scientists and experts in the region.

“Dubai is a pioneer in launching innovative models of government and private sector collaborations that work towards positioning the Emirate and the rest of the UAE as a hub for innovation and a role model for future governments.”

Alongside and complementary to the Country in Residence programme is the recently launched second programme of Techstars Dubai, attracting a select group of the world’s leading tech entrepreneurs to the city to develop their product in an Area 2071 environment dedicated to intellectual stimulation and creativity.

“After an extensive worldwide recruitment process and a record number of applicants, ten global companies were chosen to participate in the programme for 2019,” says Vijay Tirathrai, Managing Director of Techstars Dubai. “All ten selected start-ups will go through an intensive 13-week acceleration process centred around mentorship, curated workshops and supported by the Techstars ‘power of the network.’”

“Part of our mandate to become a global hub for talent, Area 2071’s partnership with Techstars and GINCO Investments is seen as a testament to our vision to co-design the future for Dubai,” says Abdulaziz Khalid Al Jaziri, Deputy CEO at Dubai Future Foundation. “We are proud to host the second cohort of Techstars MENA at Area 2071 for the second year in a row and look forward to welcoming the ten selected global companies to our space.”

Initiatives such as these have already firmly established Area 2071



PHOTO Atlantis The Palm, Dubai

as a serious force for progress, yet there is much else taking place in the Future Foundation to build Dubai's full credentials as the city of the future. One such activity is a push to build the technological skills base of Arabs in the region and beyond, with a significant emphasis put on coding, something identified by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum as the 'language of the future.'

creates opportunities for future generations," says Sheikh Mohammed. "New technologies are the fastest way to create new opportunities for our youth."

"Attracting talent and creating future opportunities for those with potential is a well-established approach in Dubai that embodies the visions and directives of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed in making UAE a destination and a hub for attracting

Internet of Things (IoT). The course aimed to raise awareness on global future trends in key sectors such as renewable energy, water, transportation, education, health, technology, and space – sectors that also coincide with the pillars of the National Strategy for Innovation to again position the UAE as one of the world's most innovative countries.

"The Dubai Future Academy's programmes embody the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed, who has called for leaders to hone their skills and be prepared for the challenges of the future," says Maha Khamis Al Mezaina, Project Manager at Dubai Future Foundation. "This programme is conducted by international experts and aims to train leaders from government institutions and private companies and prepare them for the challenges of tomorrow."

Tackling these challenges of tomorrow head-on has already seen some vanguard innovation emanate from Dubai. Embedding disruptive innovation into government practice to put Dubai ten years ahead of other governments around the world is one such outcome; the use of blockchain technology in the financial sector is continually being driven forward; and having the ability to now create the office of the future through 3D printing is just another world-leading achievement in an increasingly long roster. Yet with the current rate of change in engineering innovation of the global automotive industry it is perhaps Dubai's ambition to be the world's leading city in autonomous transport that is currently capturing the global headlines, and for good reason.

In 2016, Sheikh Mohammed launched the 'Dubai Autonomous Transportation Strategy', setting out to transform 25 per cent of the total transportation in Dubai to autonomous mode by 2030, by when most of

“Our goal is to make the UAE a global source of the future for various sectors”

To address the current shortage of Arab coders a 'One Million Arab Coders' initiative was launched at the end of 2017 to train one million Arab coders over the succeeding three years and that now offers free exceptional programmes for individuals interested to develop their digital skills. It aims to empower one million young Arabs with the essential future skills required for the labour market by learning this language of the future.

In the first year of the initiative more than 375,000 individuals registered and over 22,000 people from 150 countries around the world completed the programme. About 3,600 tutors from large companies around the world are currently involved in the initiative, which features 1.5 million training hours.

Already reaping dividends, the end of 2018 saw the first batch of coding graduates attend their award ceremony and be recognised for their achievements by the city's leadership.

"Coding is the language of the future, and one of its key tools; it

potential from Arab countries and all over the globe," said Sheikh Hamdan, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai in a subsequent address to the graduates.

Ensuring that the potential recognised in the new batch of coders can be nurtured in other facets of Dubai's society in the years ahead, the Future Foundation has also established the Dubai Future Academy, a facility providing leadership skills, networking and innovation to offer better opportunities and improved job opportunities across a range of disciplines and, moreover, for its participants to be empowered to shape their future.

One such example of the courses on offer was one organised in partnership with THNK Creative School of Leadership in affiliation with Stanford University and focussed on Future Design, whereby executives from both the public and private sectors were trained and prepared to adapt to the technologies of the future, such as robotics, artificial intelligence, Blockchain, and the

“Dubai is a pioneer in launching innovative models of government and private sector collaborations”

the rest of the world will still be discussing the rules and regulations for introducing it. Founded on the four key pillars of the individual, technology, legislative infrastructure and the physical infrastructure required to operate an autonomous transport system, the strategy estimates that by providing a quarter of all transport as autonomous it can save AED 22 billion in annual economic costs. These savings will be delivered through reduced overall transportation costs, reduced levels of environmental pollution and major returns from the efficiency of the transportation sector, as well as reduced levels of traffic accidents and increased productivity of those able to work during autonomous transport journeys.

"Dubai is leading the cities of the world by taking a big leap in the adoption of artificial intelligence to serve humanity and establish a global model of the city of the future as we aim to become the world's largest laboratory for technology and research and development (R&D)," says Sheikh Mohammed. "We put forward clear and precise goals for the Dubai Autonomous Transportation Strategy, making it one of the main pillars to achieve a sustainable economy for the emirate. Twenty-five per cent of

Dubai's transportation will be autonomous by 2030 to make people's lives easier, increase the productivity of individuals and preserve our natural resources and environment."

Fuelling the aims of the strategy since its launch has been the Dubai World Autonomous Transportation Challenge, an initiative to encourage the world's most innovative international companies, academic institutions and centres of research and development to test the latest advances in this technology by providing transportation solutions and scenarios that are realistic and tailored specifically for the streets of Dubai. Not long after the launch of the strategy Dubai was already testing electric taxi drones in its airspace that could in the coming years carry two passengers on trips of up to 30 minutes. And in 2018 a further global challenge was launched to address first- and last-mile connection in order to address how to connect people with public transport infrastructure, with awards to be made later in 2019 for successful companies to take their ideas forward.

On top of all this, the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) has earlier this year also been testing two six-seater autonomous pods designed

to travel short distances in dedicated lanes and that will travel on pre-programmed routes in the first few years, but will eventually become accessible for pick up from home using a mobile telephone application.

And as if all of this innovation wasn't enough, there is also Hyper-loop One to come on stream, which will cut the journey time from Dubai to Abu Dhabi from two hours to just twelve minutes, and the RTA is also currently working with Uber on a new passenger service called 'Uber Elevate', which is for vertical take-off and landing vehicles and is currently slated for a 2020 launch.

Whilst autonomous transport may be blazing a trail for what the future of Dubai will look like and will be showcasing for other cities to follow, it is also clear that other sectors will be following this lead in a future that is being sculpted in Dubai rather than just forecast.

"Our goal is to make the UAE a global source of the future for various sectors, including smart cities, clean energy, autonomous transportation, sustainable infrastructure and legislation for the future," says Sheikh Mohammed.



PHOTO: ARI SOENARSO

Hyperloop IS THE BROADBAND OF TRANSPORT OF THE FUTURE

FOR A CITY that has in recent decades been developing at a pace unrivalled anywhere else on the planet, Dubai has at the same time ensured that its citizens are able to arrive at and navigate the city at an equally impressive speed. Dubai International Airport has become one of the world's busiest, its highway network allows for rapid movement throughout the city, and the autonomous metro system is clean, fast, efficient and still growing.

Not wishing to rest easy on its aspirations for mobility, however, the city has also been exploring the use of vanguard forms of personal rapid transport, such as drone taxis as well as one that has the potential to truly change the complexion of not just the city, but the entire region: Hyperloop.

"The Hyperloop project was on the global stage when we launched the global challenge in February 2017 and had a number of events in Amsterdam, Washington DC and one in India," says Harj Dhaliwal, Virgin Hyperloop One Managing Director for Middle East and India Field Operations. "Dubai and the GCC was already a key focus for us anyway, so

we didn't have to have a specific event here. From there we started to get a feel for where the key corridors were and the routes where there is a real high density of travel between two nodes on a distance of 50 to 300 kilometres. We started to look at this very carefully and started to reach out."

"We had also joined the Future Accelerators Programme in the Future Foundation that was started by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, being invited as a start-up," says Harj Dhaliwal. "We were supported and encouraged to really connect and network into the fabric of Dubai and we were given a platform, one that we've used extremely well to our advantage with their support."

The mode of transport that Virgin Hyperloop One have been encouraged to evolve in Dubai is one that will be fully autonomous, able to move both freight and people at speeds of more than 1,000 kilometres per hour, driven by electric propulsion and magnetically levitated. As an on-demand system and direct from origin to destination it will also make timetables redundant and together

**“We can all sit here and dream,
but my role is to make this happen”**

with existing technologies has the potential to make fully automated high-speed end-to-end trips a genuine prospect in the near future. But that is just one part of a much bigger picture.

“What it starts to do is to create opportunity and for people it can be a misnomer that this is just about speed and getting from A to B quickly, that’s the sexy part of it, but the real drive behind it is the wider benefits,” says Harj Dhaliwal. “What we mean by that is the ability to create opportunity and to link a region so that it starts acting as one mega-region. For us it’s looking at creating an ecosystem, being able to not have distance as a barrier, being able to connect states or these cities and make them start to work, communicate, put the infrastructure backbone together.”

“What we do is look at connectivity between point to point, which can be anywhere from 50–800 km, so you’re almost up to short haul/medium haul aircraft arena,” says Harj Dhaliwal. “It’s then also about making sure that the Hyperloop fits with all other modes.

In terms of the Hyperloop being a viable prospect both within a city and/or state as well as working alongside other modes of transport that

could complement its vanguard qualities, finding the right environment for this, technologically, politically and in terms of business innovation, was paramount, which is where the city of Dubai proved to be in a league all of its own.

“If you look at this environment, Dubai is the best place in the world where innovation support platforms for you to connect and network with government are so well embedded and supported, and this is why we’ve committed to Dubai and this will be our regional headquarters,” says Harj Dhaliwal. “In Dubai we engaged at the federal level, we engaged with the government and we then started to engage with the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA). For us it couldn’t happen in a better place with the commitment to the vision and the technologies of companies like ours.”

“Hyperloop is the broadband of transport of the future. That’s the way we see it and if you look at it from that aspect and that connectivity, once you have a system like Hyperloop you’re almost doing away with the barrier of time, so places will be virtually connected,” says Harj Dhaliwal.

“The ultimate panacea, with all the technology we have around us such as autonomous cars, will be a

seamless end-to-end journey. Think of an autonomous car taking you to a Hyperloop pod, travelling 500 kilometres in it and then exiting and being taken to your final destination some 600 kilometres away. We can all sit here and dream, but my role is to make this happen.”

Hyperloop is a new mode of transportation that moves freight and people quickly, safely, on-demand and direct from origin to destination. Passengers or cargo are loaded into the hyperloop vehicle and accelerate gradually via electric propulsion through a low-pressure tube. The vehicle floats above the track using magnetic levitation and glides at airline speeds for long distances due to ultra-low aerodynamic drag. Virgin Hyperloop One systems will be built on columns or tunneled below ground to avoid dangerous grade crossings and wildlife. It’s fully autonomous and enclosed, eliminating pilot error and weather hazards. It’s safe and clean, with no direct carbon emissions.





PHOTO: ANTI SOENARSO

The Incredible Power OF KNOWLEDGE

AMERICAN STATESMAN and polymath Benjamin Franklin once presciently commented that “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” In today’s globally competitive economy the tussle for top talent fully bears out this view, with academic institutions, research facilities and corporations alike all investing heavily and resourcing shrewdly to ensure they scoop the very best minds on the planet.

As a key global player in attracting the best talent for its leading economic sectors, Dubai has gone a step further as a city – openly courting the best of brainpower and committed to the furthering of knowledge by establishing the Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation. The Knowledge Foundation’s declared aim of being at the heart of the world’s leading international city and knowledge-based economy built on pillars of education, entrepreneurship, and research and development have in its short life transformed the outlook of knowledge in Dubai as well as in the wider region.

“More than ten years ago nobody talked about knowledge in this region and Sheikh Mohammed himself told

me that it was painful that the region wasn’t talking about it,” says His Excellency Jamal bin Huwaireb, CEO of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation. “In 2007, Sheikh Mohammed therefore announced the Knowledge Foundation at the World Economic Forum in Jordan, since when it started out with a lot of initiatives and partners, publishing a lot of material and carrying out a lot of activity.”

“When Sheikh Mohammed started the Knowledge Foundation it was for the Arab and Islamic world, to help the region to change, so he was not only looking out for the UAE but the region beyond it too. We started meeting international foundations and international universities, and we started working closely with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNESCO and other arms. The idea behind it that day was huge, and it will still need another ten years to achieve something.”

Whilst there will undoubtedly be a lot to emerge from the Knowledge Foundation over the coming decade, there was already a seminal breakthrough in 2017. This was when it produced the world’s first Global Knowledge Index covering 131

countries and based on an unprecedented seven elements of measurement, all with variables running into a total of hundreds of assessment criteria.

“Every country in the world needs the Global Knowledge Index and people had been waiting for this kind of index since 2012, but no one wanted to do it. There is Human Capital and there is a Development Index that announce their results but without any proper explanation, and most other indices use only two or three elements. We use seven, which is a lot of effort. We travel all over the world collecting data and consulting with international people who work with the index. We also go to many countries, from Finland to Singapore, to talk about the Global Knowledge Index.”

“In terms of the idea, there are a lot of gaps worldwide and if you think about it, if I wanted to compare Sweden to Gambia, or Egypt to the UK or Germany, how would I know how to bring Gambia close to Sweden or understand the difference between the UK and Germany with Egypt, and where is the information? We started to compare all of this and we would go to Egypt, for example, and do one

week there called ‘Knowledge Week.’ We study with all the universities and ministers, do workshops with them and discuss why other countries are more advanced, what the gaps are and how to fill them. And this is not solely about money, it’s about decisions. The index that we produce now shows you how to change, to look at why some countries are higher or lower, to see why Switzerland is number one and

because of the Sheikh Mohammed Knowledge Award of USD 1 million. It’s really what we call the Davos of Knowledge.”

“The Knowledge Award was announced by Sheikh Mohammed and the first award was in 2014 to Jim Wales and Sir Tim Berners Lee. Since then we’ve had both regionally important recipients and also globally, such as Melinda Gates two

humanity by expanding knowledge, and encourage young people to contribute to positive knowledge.”

Already taking on the mantle of expanding knowledge and encouraging young people are a number of initiatives undertaken by the Knowledge Foundation, such as Bil Arabi and The Literacy Challenge, specifically aimed at advancing the Arabic language and its place in the global scientific dialogue, as well as raising the number of literate Arabs in the wider Arabic-speaking region. The Knowledge Foundation has also brought all of its initiatives together on a single platform by creating an app, Knowledge4All, that can be downloaded and offers instant access to all of the latest news and developments.

“When I started in 2013 I saw a lot of initiatives for the Arabic language, but I found out that they would never actually help the Arabic language, so Sheikh Mohammed called the right people together to do an Arabic science dictionary, so at least people can know what the Arabic words for the English science words are. We still needed more and more, however, so I suggested that we do the first initiative just for youth and just in social media. It’s called ‘Talk – Use Your Language’ (Bil Arabi) and in its first year, 2013, it had 17 million hits. Last year it had 2.2 billion hits and this year there will be more than 3 billion. First of all, bring people their language, then get them involved in their language and then tell them to please help their language. The more Arabic scientists there are will mean the language becoming more of a science language.”

“The idea with the Sheikh Mohammed Literary Challenge is to help 30 million children in the region by 2030, because there are more than 30 million children in the Arabic world without education and they cannot

“More than ten years ago nobody talked about knowledge in this region”

what they are doing. Without this you cannot know how to do it and without the index showing you what is the difference between you and others then you cannot be anywhere. This is again about making decisions.”

One of the decisions that the Knowledge Foundation has itself made to showcase its progress was to hold an annual Knowledge Summit, an event that started life as a conference in 2014 but due to its outstanding maiden success was launched as a Summit from 2015 and today attracts leading luminaries in the arena of knowledge from the UAE, the wider region and internationally. The annual event highlights the importance of knowledge to securing a sustainable future and to the transformation to knowledge-based societies, as well as helps influence national and regional policy towards these ends.

“If you go anywhere in the world today you won’t see anything like the Knowledge Summit and this is not just because of the speakers, but also

years ago. Originally it was a bit informal, but two years ago there was a decree establishing a Knowledge Award Board of Trustees along with advisors and juries to make it much more structured. On the Board of Trustees are major universities, such as Oxford, and there are also institutions like the National Geographic, all represented in a much more transparent ways than with Nobel.”

“Our system is that people can nominate themselves, individuals or organisations, present their case for why they should receive the award, which is considered by the advisors who give it to special juries, with the recommendations going to the trustees who make a final shortlist. This then goes to Sheikh Mohammed, who decides who will get the award. Rather than the money it is the prestige of winning this award that is important, as successful laureates can belong to the Knowledge Summit and from next year on we will have them speak at workshops around the world, on why they were inspired to benefit

“Forty-six years ago, the level of illiteracy here was 99 per cent; today it is less than one per cent”

use a computer because they cannot read or write. To achieve this, we have been working with both UNESCO and the UNDP.”

Working together with such high profile, international bodies has also brought recognition to the wider work carried out at the Knowledge Foundation. For all of its ambitions and stellar achievements throughout its short existence the UNDP, as one of its working partners, honoured the Knowledge Foundation by awarding Jamal bin Huwareb a formal ‘Knowledge Partner’ at its New York General Assembly meeting in late 2018, the first time any Arab organisation had received such an accolade. Further recognition came around the same time when the Richtopia ‘Top 100 Leaders from Multilateral Organisations’ recognised Jamal bin Huwareb as the number one leader in the world for 2018.

With significant effort and investment being ploughed into the advancement of knowledge, it is worthwhile evolving Benjamin Franklin’s observation on the merits of this by further levying what Russian playwright Anton Chekhov noted, that “knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice.” A cursory analysis of the outcomes achieved

in Dubai to date highlight that it is clearly putting all of its knowledge into firm practice and the results, in both physical infrastructure and societal structure, are an irrefutable demonstration of how knowledge put into practice can transform the lives of its citizens, as well as society itself.

“Forty-six years ago, the level of illiteracy here was 99 per cent; today it is less than one per cent and that is only with the older people. Today 100 per cent of the younger people are literate.”

“We now have many libraries in the UAE and each Emirate has a different library, such as in Dubai where we have eight small neighbourhood libraries and we are finishing the Sheikh Mohammed Library, which when it opens by the end of next year will be fully automatic and be the largest in the Arab world. You will be able to go to a desk, sit down, order your book and it will be delivered to you, as all of the books will be stored underground and ordered by using your password. In addition to this we also have the Dubai Digital Library, which is now 2.2 million registered items. It is currently very cheap, and a lot of the books can be downloaded for free, but we will soon be announcing that it is free for all UAE citizens.”

“Today we are also working closely with universities in Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, with the Japanese Institute and the Nobel Foundation. Any company or any organisation in the world needs advice in knowledge and in this region or internationally we can help them. We can also connect them to the right people because we are so well-connected worldwide, and we can connect people in this field. So, we call ourselves ‘knowledge experts’ and we want to work with all the companies and foundations working in this field.”

From a country that barely half a century ago was almost entirely illiterate, Dubai’s investment in knowledge has created a society where today Alia Al Mansoori, a 16-year-old teenage girl, is sending genetic experiments into space and aspiring to one day be an astronaut and one of the first Emiratis in orbit with the help of the UAE Space Agency. Dubai’s investment in knowledge has without question certainly paid considerable interest, with a lot more yet to come.



Expo 2020 Dubai SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY TO THE FORE

SOARING HIGH above the rooftops of old Paris, the Eiffel Tower is recognised around the world as the iconic symbol of the City of Light. Film, music, clothing, sporting clubs and even global sales of the revered French baguette have all been boosted by its instant recognisability and captivating charm.

The unmistakable landmark is also an enduring testament to the power of what can happen when people from around the world come together, having been erected to celebrate the Exposition Universelle of 1889 that was hosted in the city. More than 130 years after Paris created such a lasting legacy through a major event, Dubai is now aiming to have the same effect when it takes on the role of host city for Expo 2020 and opens its doors to the world for what is shaping up to perhaps be the best Expo yet.

As a latecomer to and underdog in the bidding process, Dubai managed to eclipse its challengers and scoop the award back in 2013, which was a major moment of national pride for the UAE and seen as a result of the leadership's efforts in making the country a world leader in economic and social progress and realising its far-reaching vision. It also gave the country more prominence on the global stage and galvanised its collective effort to achieve the goal of hosting an exceptional World Expo.

To help achieve this goal a theme of 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future' was established, designed to encourage participants and visitors to share ideas and work together in new ways, to spark innovation and progress that will help build a better future for generations to come. This better future focuses on the three key sub-themes for the Expo: opportunity, mobility and, most significantly given the times we live in today, sustainability.

Stretching over an enormous 438-hectare site and preparing the ground for pavilions from 190 countries from around the world, Expo 2020 Dubai has ample opportunity to showcase its thematic areas and their relevance and importance to the world of today, but in advance of all this going live there is still the not insignificant job of finishing off what will become an entirely new zone in the post-Expo city.

"This is a very complex project as we are building a city [here] and we expect to reach around 37,000 workers, and then there's the equipment, the laydown areas, the access roads, the food and the waste management," says Ahmed Al Khatib, senior vice-president for real estate at Expo 2020. "It will become more and more challenging as the countries start coming in, but we are taking all measures to make sure this is a

very smooth and easy experience. The infrastructure and the power in any development are the most critical items and we are finishing them ahead of time."

Getting the ground works completed early is offering more time for the pavilions to come on stream, with Expo 2020 Dubai being the first time that a policy of 'one country, one pavilion' is in effect and also that the pavilions are being arranged according to their chosen sub-theme rather than by the usual geographical layout – nurturing greater symbiosis in collaboration, creation and innovation in achieving solutions for the challenges of the future.

Holding an important position at Expo 2020 Dubai and the fulcrum of all of the innovation that will permeate the entire new city zone is the Sustainability Pavilion, which has been developed using the latest green building technologies and sets the highest standards for efficient use and reuse of energy and water, making it a place where visitors will be able to uncover the (often hidden) impacts of the daily choices that they make relating to consumption and take the opportunity to reflect on how they can change these.

"The Sustainability Pavilion takes visitors on an emotional and spectacular journey that reveals the wonders of the Earth, highlights the madness

of our destructive behaviours and showcases innovative responses to environmental challenges around the globe,” says John Bull, Director, Sustainability Pavilion, Legacy Development and Impact, Expo 2020 Dubai. “It encourages us all to reconnect with the natural world, empowering self-reflection and aims to motivate every participant to become a change-maker in creating a more sustainable future.”

“The three key sub-themes for the Expo: opportunity, mobility and, most significantly given the times we live in today, sustainability”

“Our sustainability KPIs are very high and very challenging, and the Sustainability Pavilion defines the model from all perspectives,” says Ahmed Al Khatib. “From power generation, to water generation, to harvesting humidity from the air, it will be a benchmark for future sustainability practices.”

Alongside KPIs such as diverting 85 per cent of waste from landfill, reducing water consumption by 40 per cent in Expo buildings and achieving LEED Gold Certificate ratings or higher in the buildings that will remain after the Expo, as a benchmark for future practice the Sustainability Pavilion has a number of other striking features: its 130-metre wide canopy will use energy from the sun to generate electricity during the day/collect water from the air at night; the more than 2,800 solar panels on it are designed to produce four Gigawatt hours per year of electricity; the greywater recycling

system installed will ensure reusable water is available; building technology engaged will generate enough energy to charge more than 900,000 mobile phones; almost ten tonnes of reclaimed wood will be used to cover the auditorium walls; and alongside a host of further features its grounds will feature technology, innovative irrigation techniques and local plants that reduce the amount of water needed by 75 per cent.

Not only is sustainability at the heart of the pavilion and the seed of many other pavilions throughout Expo 2020 Dubai, but there are also a number of other initiatives in place to promote greater levels of sustainability. One of these is the Global Best Practice Programme, which highlights initiatives that localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and can be adapted, replicated, and scaled to achieve an enhanced global impact. Another initiative to boost sustainability is Expo Live, a USD 100 million innovation and partnership programme that awards grants to fund, accelerate and promote creative solutions that improve lives while preserving our world.

Whilst the six-month duration of Expo 2020 Dubai will generate many solutions to help deliver a more sustainable and more efficient world, it will also bring direct economic benefit to Dubai, with economic activity estimated by an EY report to equal

some 1.5 per cent of UAE’s GDP. Yet, much greater economic benefit will come through another key pillar of what is set to make Expo 2020 Dubai extraordinary, and that is its exceptional focus on legacy. Economically, the same EY report suggests that Expo 2020 Dubai and its legacy will boost domestic economic activity by AED 122.6 billion between 2013 and 2031, supporting more than 900,000 full-time equivalent job-years, helping put the UAE firmly on track towards its goal of creating a sustainable, resilient and diversified economy, a key outcome of UAE Vision 2021, a set of national priorities to mark the country’s Golden Jubilee.

“This independent report demonstrates that Expo 2020 Dubai is a critical long-term investment in the future of the UAE, which will contribute more than AED 120 billion to the economy between 2013 and 2031,” says Najeeb Mohammed Al-Ali, Executive Director of the Dubai Expo 2020 Bureau. “Not only will the event encourage millions around the world to visit the UAE in 2020, it will also stimulate travel and tourism and support economic diversification for years after the Expo, leaving a sustainable economic legacy that will help to ensure the UAE remains a leading destination for business, leisure and investment.”

Supporting this legacy is also the forward-thinking approach that has been adopted for the Expo 2020 Dubai site right from the outset, as 80 per cent of the buildings on site will be either re-purposed or re-used, and the site itself will become Dubai’s latest neighbourhood branded as ‘District 2020’, a carefully planned area to support the UAE’s future vision by supporting sustainable, diversified economic development, moving towards an innovation-driven economy and creating a business





environment that directly encourages key growth industries.

"My team and I spent a lot of time trying to build a vision for the city after Expo 2020 Dubai and we did that," says Marjan Faraidooni, senior vice-president for legacy development at Expo 2020. "We have a strategy, we know the type of industries we want to bring in, we know that we need to bring technology compa-

and educational mission and serve as an example of sustainable practice and design to spread the sustainable living message to locals and tourists, again linking to the UAE government's strategy to be a global leader in sustainability. Alongside the Exploratorium the Conference and Exhibition Campus for the Expo duration will become a new major event and exhibition space for the city and the

commit to establishing global logistics and digital hubs at District 2020, with more scheduled to follow suit.

Further attributes that elevate the legacy of the Expo 2020 Dubai site are its connectedness, as it is connected to four major UAE highways and only 20 minutes from Jebel Ali Port, the largest marine terminal in the Middle East. It is also close to the Al Maktoum International Airport, which is set to become the largest in the world, and within 45 minutes of two additional international airports. The Route 2020 Dubai Metro link is being extended to the door of District 2020.

Prolonging the spirit of the world coming together in Dubai will be the state-of-the-art Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC) which will sit at the heart of District 2020 and is the fruit of the conversion of the Expo conference and exhibition campus. This is set to be a pivotal hub for the entire region's meetings and events industry, furthering Dubai's reputation as the go-to place for major conferences in the region and beyond and driving business growth.

The year 2021 will be the 50th anniversary of the formation of the UAE. In closing a successful Expo and then later in the year unveiling a new and cutting-edge district of the city that will be a template for other cities around the world, Dubai will certainly be celebrating this landmark in style.

"The fulcrum of all of the innovation that will permeate the entire new city zone is the Sustainability Pavilion"

nies because that's how the world is progressing, but we also know that there's something special about the site, that it did host a mega event that was important for the history of our nation, so we also wanted to retain some of the elements that made it special."

"The challenge was also how to create buildings that suit the future real estate market," says Al Khatib. "So, we looked at maximising efficiency, we looked at how to make our designs as modular as possible so we can expand the buildings based on market demand. [The result was that] more than 80 per cent of whatever we construct for the Expo will remain as a legacy."

One of the key structures to remain once Expo 2020 Dubai has closed its doors to the public will be the Sustainability Pavilion that will be developed into an Exploratorium. This is a science and education centre for children and adults which will continue its immersive

Mobility Pavilion will be converted into high-end office accommodation.

Around these converted buildings, District 2020 is being designed to be a destination to 'Connect, Create and Innovate', bringing together original thinkers, innovators and pioneers, and enabling them to share ideas, learn from each other and unlock inspiration. The area is setting out to create a vibrant and inclusive community that celebrates diversity and carries the spirit of Expo 2020 Dubai for generations to come, one that houses flexible offices and collaborative workspaces, adaptable to future work trends, as well as residential communities, social and cultural attractions, parks and business and leisure amenities.

The new city zone is also set to be embedded with 5G technology, the latest smart infrastructure and cutting-edge digital connectivity to create a sustainable and connected city, all of which has already attracted the likes of Siemens and Accenture to



New UAE Ministry of Possibilities: **IMPOSSIBLE IS NOT IN OUR VOCABULARY**

IN 2016, the UAE created Ministries of Happiness, Tolerance and Youth. Now the Government has announced the formation of a new government branch, the Ministry of Possibilities. Describing the newly established authority as “unconventional”, Sheikh Mohammed said the ministry will not be overseen by a specific minister but instead by a committee of Cabinet members. The ministry will be tasked with tackling issues of particular national importance, efficiently and quickly.

“We’ve launched a new government branch today. The Ministry of Possibilities. An unconventional ministry. A ministry with no minister. Its crew are the council of ministers, and it works on important national issues,” he announced on Twitter.

“The Ministry of Possibilities will start working on many projects, which include services to the people, and electronic platforms that will ease government spending and reduce waiting times from 60 days to 6 minutes. We will start a platform to

discover young talent from all around the country,” Sheikh Mohammed posted.

He also said the “future holds many challenges” that require new ways of approaching government, and that, in the UAE, “impossible is not in our vocabulary.”

Sheikh Mohammed said the UAE was a country born out of unorthodox ideas, with ambitions for the future that are far from traditional. He also issued directives to start working on the first phase of a number of national programmes in the form of four departments. These include the departments of Anticipatory services, Behavioural rewards, UAE talent and Government procurement. The ministry will oversee key functions that require quick, bold and effective decisions, a statement said.

“Its roles include applying design-thinking and experimentation to develop proactive and disruptive solutions to tackle critical issues, bringing together federal and local government teams and the private

sector. The future holds many challenges that require new ways of approaching government.”

Furthermore, Sheikh Mohammed said: “The reality we are experiencing in the UAE today is a product of unconventional leadership. We need modern systems to make our unconventional ambitions a reality. The future brings challenges that require constant government restructuring. The word impossible does not exist in our dictionary. It is not part of our vision and will never be part of our future.”

The ministry will begin working on several projects, including providing proactive services to the public, building an electronic platform to facilitate government purchases and shortening its time from 60 days to six minutes, Sheikh Mohammed explained. It will also establish “specialised systems to discover talents in every child in the UAE,” he said.

The ministry will be located in Area 2071 in Emirates Towers in

“We need modern systems to make our unconventional ambitions a reality”

Dubai, and the four departments will focus on the following issues:

Anticipatory services: Working with a specialised team drawn from various government entities and experts in data analysis and data privacy, the department will develop a system for anticipating the needs of the public and delivering services to them before they are requested. The department will conduct research to assess the current state of government service delivery and identify areas of improvement. It will also work on developing ways to embed anticipatory services in all areas of government.

Behavioural rewards: The Ministry of Possibilities will oversee the department of Behavioural rewards in the first phase.

The department will bring together a team from different ministries and public entities to develop an approach for incentivising positive behaviour through a point-based “rewards” system. Individuals will be able to collect points that can be used in payments for government services. The department will also develop a list of positive behaviours with a measurement system that will calculate points and rewards. It will launch initiatives to reinforce positive

behaviour in society and develop a framework to enable government entities to contribute to the list in line with the policies.

Developing Emirati talent: The department will develop tools to identify talent of all ages and from all social segments and create innovative channels to enable citizens to develop their skills and talent for the service of their country. It will create a framework for talent development and analysis, create an evaluation mechanism and collaborate with companies to provide necessary support.

Government procurement: It aims to develop a radically new approach for government procurement that will make procurement faster and more accessible, especially for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The department aims to create an easy-to-use government procurement platform based on the latest developments in digital markets that will help promote SMEs and improve government cost effectiveness. The platform will also update government procurement policies to speed up transactions and improve efficiency.



Dubai Expands Plan FOR PHASE 4 OF GIANT SOLAR PARK

DUBAI ELECTRICITY and Water Authority (DEWA) has signed an amendment to the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the consortium led by Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power for the fourth phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park. The amendment includes adding 250 MW of photovoltaic solar panels, at the cost of 2.4 US cents per kilowatt hour, the world's lowest.

With this addition, the total capacity of the fourth phase of the solar park will rise from 700 MW to 950 MW. Following the amendment, the entire investment for the ambitious project has reached AED 16 billion. This achievement is part of DEWA's efforts to achieve the objectives of the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050.

“The capacity expansion of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park's further consolidates the UAE's leadership in the field of sustainable development and provides another impetus to our clean energy strategy,” says Sheikh Hamdan, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai.

“The UAE's leaders accord this sector high priority in their vision for the nation's future. Furthermore, being at the forefront of technological advancement in this sector is critical to Dubai's aspiration of becoming one of the leading cities of the world. We see this project being a special model for large clean energy projects elsewhere in the world.”

“This ambitious initiative also adds a new facet to our cooperation with two of our strongest partners, Saudi Arabia and China. The project brings together a distinctive combination of advanced knowledge and expertise to create the largest single-site solar park in the world,” says Sheikh Hamdan.

The project will use three technologies to produce clean energy: 600 MW from a parabolic basin complex, 100 MW from a solar tower and 250 MW from photovoltaic panels.

The fourth phase is the largest investment project in the world using Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) on a single site and is based on the Independent Power Producer (IPP) model. This project has already achieved

many world records. It achieved the lowest Levelised Cost of Electricity (LCOE) of USD 7.3 cents per kilowatt hour (kW/h) for the CSP technology, the lowest worldwide. The project will have the world's tallest solar tower at 260 metres, and the largest thermal energy storage capacity in the world of 15 hours, which allows for energy generation round the clock.

Noor Energy 1 was launched in a partnership between DEWA, ACWA Power and China's Silk Road Fund to build the 4th phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park.

The solar park is one of the most important projects supporting the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050 with a total capacity of 5,000 MW by 2030 and investments worth AED 50 billion. Through its projects, the park will contribute to accelerating Dubai's shift towards solar energy. The 13 MW photovoltaic first phase became operational in 2013. The 200 MW photovoltaic second phase of the solar park was launched in March 2017. The 800 MW photovoltaic third phase will be operational by 2020.



PHOTO: Attri Soenarso

Today's Events, TOMORROW'S REWARDS

IN BECOMING the economic heart of a state still so youthful that it has yet to register its fiftieth anniversary, over recent decades Dubai's pace of development has been unmatched anywhere else on the planet. From a formerly humble trading port whose first airport in the 1950s was a runway built on salt flats and its first hotel, the Airlines Hotel, opened in 1959 to service it, the city's growth trajectory since has been a truly vertiginous one.

Arriving in Dubai today tends to mean approaching a cityscape with more high-rises nudging above 660 million than any other city on earth, with the world's highest man-made structure, the Burj Khalifa, soaring well above the rest of those on a modern megacity architectural roster. It also generally means arriving on Emirates Airlines, one of the world's best and the airline with the most A380s, to Dubai International Airport, one of the world's busiest. And yet whilst all of this may already be a far cry from its humble beginnings back in the 1950s, with its ever-grander ambitions Dubai clearly

recognises that in many senses it still has an enormous part of its journey as an emergent world city still to come, with much change lying ahead.

"I've been here five years and there is a physical transformation that happens every day around us," says Steen Jakobsen, Assistant Vice President of Dubai Business Events, the city's official convention bureau.

"When you are a resident sometimes it can be hard to notice, because you see the cranes and the construction around you, whereas if you are a visitor coming on a regular basis then you really see the difference in how the city landscape is changing. There is a physical transformation that the city has gone through over the last five decades and will continue to go through, because that development is part of Dubai's DNA."

"The continued diversification of the economy is also noticeable, with the knowledge economy having gained much more focus," says Steen Jakobsen. "Initiatives for this are being put in place so there are actions being put behind the words."

Central to the next phase of growth as well as to the entire political, economic and social life of Dubai will be the city's emphasis on this transformation to a 'knowledge-based economy', one that will equip it with the talent and resources to provide solutions to some of the world's most pressing issues: future energy sources, food production, future transportation, informatics,

the accelerators and the platforms for knowledge to be exchanged, new ideas to happen and innovation and business partnerships to arise. There's much more of an understanding, recognition, appreciation and use of business events to drive the transformation forward."

"We have aligned our strategy in terms of the events that we pursue quite tightly with what the over-

we are strong within those sectors," says Steen Jakobsen. "It's also easier to obtain the necessary local support for those events if they fall within the priority sectors. International associations are also more likely to come here because they know that Dubai and the UAE has something to contribute. That alignment has been very important for us in our work."

Working to consolidate this alignment and ensure that international associations not only benefit from the city's contributions to specific events, Dubai has been utilising its collective strengths to elevate its status as a global association hub, efforts that in turn have helped further boost the city's business event landscape.

"The Dubai Association Centre set up some years back is an initiative between the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, ourselves and Dubai World Trade Centre, all founding partners and each playing an equal role," says Steen Jakobsen. "Those associations that we target and get to set up here – and we now have more than 60 associations – fall within the main industries and key sectors for Dubai, simply to help grow these sectors. We have very ambitious targets of growing Dubai to become a major association hub just like Brussels, Washington and Singapore, partners that we work very closely with."

"We know there is still a lot of work ahead of us to get to where we want to be," says Steen Jakobsen. "We've seen a very positive beginning and with that comes a lot of meetings and conferences. If we manage to attract associations within the key sectors that we want for Dubai, the meetings and events within these sectors will more or less come automatically."

With so much development still in the pipeline and so many business events taking place at any given time

"We have very ambitious targets of growing Dubai to become a major association hub"

and much else besides. At the same time Dubai also continues to build on its traditional trading foundations, indeed seeing coherent commercial synergies between the two.

"Dubai has always been a trade hub and will continue to be so; it's about adding on to what we already have as an established trade hub and add the knowledge component to it," says Steen Jakobsen.

Whilst the focus of nurturing and enhancing the knowledge economy for Dubai is clearly being bolstered by both governmental and organisational commitments and action, the positive impact of bringing business events to the city to enhance the knowledge economy has also not gone unnoticed.

"In terms of business events I can see with the partners that we have in the wider community – within both the government and corporate sectors – how they recognise and understand what business events can do in the transformation of the UAE into a knowledge economy," says Steen Jakobsen. "Events act as

all strategic focus is and priority industry sectors are for the UAE," says Steen Jakobsen. "In the UAE National Innovation Strategy that came out a few years ago seven sectors are identified in it and those are also the seven sectors (renewable energy, transport, education, health, technology, water and space) that we focus on when we do our initial research to identify events that we can bring in. In addition there are then some newer and more emerging sectors where Dubai is currently taking a lead when it comes to hosting business events, areas such as blockchain, 3D-printing, driverless transportation and fintech. In some of those cutting-edge areas and future sectors you'll see that there is no place where there are so many events happening as there are in Dubai. The city is really taking a leading role when it comes to events in those new areas, because it's an agenda that Dubai is really keen on being a part of."

"We also see that we're more successful bringing in events that are within key industry sectors because

"It's a very fast-paced city where action is put behind the words, the visions and the strategy, it's where things actually happen"

to help propel change, a key challenge for Dubai will be to build on its progressive image as a destination so that the momentum of previous decades can be maintained and the city continues to attract the talent and skills base needed for the decades to come.

"I'm personally just as excited as I was five years ago and those who have been in Dubai for much longer than I will know that it's a very fast-paced city where action is put behind the words, the visions and the strategy – it's where things actually happen," says Steen Jakobsen.

"All the focus on growing into a knowledge economy really interests me – I find that fascinating being in a place like Dubai where it is really happening," says Steen Jakobsen. "We see it around us every day; Dubai and the UAE is still a relatively new player in that field compared to some of the other capitals around the world but the pace that it's happening with here is quite phenomenal and to see that happen can only make you more excited about what is ahead."

As a global pace setter in most major economic sectors of today, Dubai has already fully transformed itself once and with its next shift into a more knowledge-based economy

the next transformation will offer a new perception of Dubai against other leading global cities in this field.

"In the future you'll see Dubai play a leading role in some of those sectors I previously mentioned like artificial intelligence, 3D-printing and blockchain," says Steen Jakobsen. "When you see things that will be discovered in Dubai, developed in Dubai and produced in Dubai, you'll see Dubai become a place that will be contributing even more on a global level with more discoveries and new innovation."

In preparation for Dubai taking on this leading role in sectors of tomorrow and becoming the key global city with a knowledge-based economy, Dubai Business Events is also adapting and positioning itself for their own new expectations and roles in making all of this become a reality.

"There are a couple of things in the pipeline for our organisation," says Steen Jakobsen. "In the last five years we've really been busy in positioning Dubai as a tourism destination and getting that messaging and that promotion right. We've got that in place now, so our focus in leading up to our new strategy, which is the 2022–2025 Tourism Strategy, is to put much

more focus on the wider business marketing of Dubai."

To deliver this on-going success needed for Dubai will mean continually reimagining the best versions of the future and then putting the framework in place to make it happen. As His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai has himself put it: "In the race for excellence there is no finish line."

"What's important for Dubai is to always look at what's the next level, what's the next big thing, something that other places and other cities in the world are only talking about but that is actually being done here," says Steen Jakobsen.

"Years ago Dubai said it wanted to position itself in having a very large global event in the city and so obviously the focus was on Expo 2020 Dubai, winning it and now seeing it come to life. I have no doubt that this will continue, because it is in the DNA of Dubai and our leaders to be so visionary and knowing how important it is to always keep the bar incredibly high."



PHOTO: Showkat Rather, International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA)

New Business Incubator LAUNCHED IN DUBAI

DUBAI IS STEPPING up efforts to promote the development of its small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) community, creating a new incubator to further strengthen the sector.

Dubai SME, the agency charged with building capacity in the SME sector, launched the Co-working Popup, an incubator that provides business development programmes and space for entrepreneurs to establish their creative enterprises and for start-ups to incubate their businesses.

The Co-working Popup also offers training, advisory and mentoring services, which Abdul Baset Al Janahi, Dubai SME's CEO, explained was part of a broader strategy to provide an innovative entrepreneurship support platform and "contribute towards sustainable development and achieving a knowledge economy based on the concepts of creativity and innovation."

The incubator is one of the first to be rolled out under new regulations governing the licensing of business accelerators and incubators that came into force in March. The rules mandate that incubators be licensed through Dubai SME following an assessment and feasibility study and added detail to the terms of operation for accelerators and incubators.

These include providing workspace for entrepreneurs that are in keeping with the main activity for which the incubator is licensed; offering consultancy and guidance on project development; and making support available to implement innovations and apply the latest technology in product development.

While SMEs' contribution to the Dubai economy is increasing, the sector is not yet as prominent in the emirate as in the national economy overall, with smaller businesses representing 86 per cent of the private workforce in the UAE, and contributing 60 per cent to national GDP.

In terms of size, SMEs account for around 95 per cent of all businesses operating in Dubai, with up to 70 per cent of these considered micro-businesses. The latter, defined as having under ten staff members and a turnover of no more than AED 9 million if in the trading sector, and a workforce of no more than 20 and turnover of less than AED 10 million if in services, though numerous, still only represent some ten per cent of total employment in Dubai, a little more than half that of SMEs, says a report released by the Dubai Statistics Centre in mid-July.

Facilitating the growth of these firms by offering incubation and other services is seen as key to making the most of their economic potential. To this end, the new regulations for incubators represent a first step towards the creation of an incubator network to further develop best practices in investment and innovation support.

While much of the focus of SME incubation is on tech start-ups, agencies are also looking to support other areas of economic activity, including agriculture.

Last July, Dubai SME, the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Establishment for SME

Development signed a memorandum of understanding setting out plans to cooperate to support small-scale agricultural enterprises. The programme will target SMEs operating or entering the agricultural, livestock breeding, fisheries and beekeeping segments, with a mix of technical, educational and funding support on offer.

Under the agreement, Dubai SME will provide counselling and guidance to local entrepreneurs to introduce them to the legal requirements and dynamics of the labour market, while those small businesses buying into the scheme will also benefit from assistance with administrative services and be eligible for low-cost lending support and exemption from licensing requirements.

Meanwhile, the ministry is to offer technical support services to entrepreneurs working with Dubai SME through the programme, including running awareness and capacity-building courses, hands-on presentations and workshops.

Moves like these are in line with broader targets for the sector as the UAE looks to boost agricultural production, with one of the goals of the national Industry 4.0 strategy being to ensure water and food security through the deployment of bioengineering sciences and advanced renewable energy technologies.



Smart Dubai LAUNCHES SECOND PHASE OF ITS PAPERLESS STRATEGY

DUBAI IS PREPARING to celebrate its last paper transaction in December 2021. Smart Dubai officials calculated that if they eliminated the amount of time people spent travelling and then waiting in line to process paper transactions that could be done at home digitally in just a few seconds, they would save each resident around 40 hours per year.

There will be several major technical changes gradually rolled out over the next few years including increasing automation in government departments, using digital IDs, signatures, and certificates as well as making secure data available via dedicated platforms.

A spokesman for Smart Dubai says that the entire journey from supplier to customer will eventually be paperless and digitised.

“There are three pillars to this strategy,” he explains. “Firstly technology. We need to implement the right technology that can facilitate all types of transactions. Some may require AI, some may require blockchain, some may require simple digital technology but that will vary from transaction to transaction.”

“The second pillar is the legislative part where we are working with the supreme legislative council of Dubai to amend the laws to accept digital transactions where hard paper

is not needed to prove one’s identity, purchase, or ownership, etc.”

“The third pillar is the most important aspect and that is about managing the cultural shift. For anyone over 20 it’s hard for them to accept anything that is not on paper to be real because a print-out seems more legitimate. We need to change that perception.”

Smart Dubai is now working with nine government entities in the second phase this year in their endeavor to go paperless.

In the first phase, Dubai Paperless Strategy saw six government entities reduce paper use by 57 per cent, exceeding their initial target set for 50 per cent digital transformation of transactions.

“We have completed the first phase with Dewa, RTA, Dubai Economy, Land Department, Dubai Police and Dubai Tourism. We are working with nine entities in the next phase this year. There were eight entities and then one more was added,” says Wesam Lootah, CEO, Smart Dubai Government Establishment. In February last year, Dubai launched the paperless strategy with the aim of making the emirate fully digital by 2020.

“Dubai government will celebrate the last piece of paper issued by any government entity in the end

of December 2021. No government entity will be allowed to print paper. We will not issue any paper document in any government transactions,” Wesam Lootah said during his keynote address at the IDC CIO Summit 2019.

Dubai aims to become the world’s smartest city with billions of dirhams being pumped in by the public and private sectors. A newly-released report by University of Glasgow has rated Dubai among the world’s smartest cities, ahead of Los Angeles, Tokyo, Vienna, Seoul, Brussels and a number of other global cities. It rated Dubai world’s 14th smartest city.

Based on a comprehensive webometric study, in total 27 cities made it onto the list of the world’s leading smart cities, led by London, Singapore and Barcelona.

“Our aim is to consolidate 124 apps into one digital platform and also transform the way government offers services,” says Wesam Lootah. “By fully transforming Dubai into a digital city, the emirate can save one Dirham billion in funds, 125 million work hours per annum and one billion papers.”



Dubai Exhibition Centre A MEETING HUB FOR EXPO 2020

A NEW SPECTACULAR exhibition centre will be one of the meeting hubs for Expo 2020 and a major legacy asset for UAE. A new 3D animated fly-through shows a world-class venue comprising 45,000 square metres of space spread across two campuses, housing a theatre, auditorium, several multi-purpose halls, four suites and 24 meeting rooms, and customisable to all event needs, including large indoor concerts. Bookings are flowing in as Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC) offers opportunities at the heart of the Arab world's first World Expo.

The Dubai Exhibition Centre opens for business on 20 October 2020, offering Expo 2020 Dubai participants, partners, government entities, industry associations and event organisers access to a global stage for the six-month duration of the world's largest meeting of minds and building on the already thriving exhibition and conferences sector in the UAE.

Co-located at the Expo 2020 site, the DEC forms a vital part of Expo 2020's legacy, where it will continue to serve District 2020, the integrated urban development that will repurpose more than 80 per cent of Expo's built environment.

A crucial driver of growth in the business services sector, the DEC's operation and expansion will attract both domestic and international visitors and encourage a sustainable, resilient and diversified economy in line with UAE Vision 2021, a set of

national priorities to mark the country's Golden Jubilee.

"The Dubai Exhibition Centre will be a venue that will play a pivotal role during Expo 2020. But the impact of such a phenomenal space will stretch well beyond the six months of the Expo, boosting the region's meetings and events industry, furthering the UAE's reputation as a destination for major conferences, and fuelling growth in Dubai's knowledge-based economy for many years to come," says Ahmed Al Khatib, Chief Delivery Officer, Expo 2020 Dubai.

By choosing the DEC as a host venue, the business events and all other meeting organisers will have the opportunity to engage audiences at the heart of the Arab world's largest mega event, set to draw 25 million visits.

"There will be no place on the planet offering more exceptional business networking opportunities than Expo 2020 Dubai, and the DEC will be right at its heart. Bookings are already going well and this latest 3D animated fly-through, which gives a taster of the high-tech facilities on offer, has already sparked keen interest among the 190 countries participating in Expo 2020," says Shaun Vorster, Vice President, Strategy and Business Integration, Programming at Expo 2020 Dubai.

Featuring the latest technology, onsite-catering facilities, and best-in-class audio, visual and

telecommunication facilities, the DEC is set to become a hub for Expo 2020's more than 200 participants, including nations, global multilateral organisations, businesses, educational institutions, and millions of visitors. More than that, this multi-purpose venue will be used by the wider community as a special location for summits, business festivals, seminars, weddings, gala dinners and live performances.

The DEC will be in close proximity to Al Maktoum International Airport and accessible from Dubai International Airport, Abu Dhabi International Airport, as well as the Dubai and Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminals. Access to the DEC will also be directly available via the dedicated Route 2020 metro line and four major highways, making it easily reachable by land, air and sea.

Expo 2020 Dubai will be the first World Expo in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region. With 25 million visits expected between October 2020 and April 2021, approximately 70 per cent of visitors are projected to come from outside the UAE, the largest proportion of international visitors in the 168-year history of World Expos.



Emirates Unveils WORLD'S FIRST INTEGRATED BIOMETRIC PATH

EMIRATES is gearing up to launch the world's first biometric path which will offer its customers a smooth and truly seamless airport journey at the airline's hub in Dubai International airport.

Utilising the latest biometric technology – a mix of facial and iris recognition, Emirates passengers can soon check in for their flight, complete immigration formalities, enter the Emirates Lounge, and board their flights, simply by strolling through the airport.

The latest biometric equipment has already been installed at Emirates Terminal 3, Dubai International airport. This equipment can be found at select check-in counters, at the Emirates Lounge in Concourse B for premium passengers, and at select boarding gates. Areas where biometric equipment are installed will be clearly marked.

Trials for the Smart Tunnel, a project by the General Directorate of

Residence and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai (GDRFA) in collaboration with Emirates, was launched in October. It is a world-first for passport control, where passengers simply walk through a tunnel and are “cleared” by immigration authorities without human intervention or the need for a physical passport stamp.

Once its internal tests are completed, Emirates will shortly launch trials for biometric processing at the other key customer points at the airport – check-in, lounge, and boarding gate – and subsequently at transit counters/gates, and for its chauffeur drive services. All biometric data will be stored with GDRFA, and customers invited to participate in the trials will be asked for their consent.

Adel Al Redha, Emirates' Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer says: “Guided by our chairman His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Emirates continuously innovates and

“Emirates’ biometric path will improve customer experience and customer flow through the airport”

strives to improve our day-to-day business. After extensive research and evaluation of numerous technologies and new approaches to enhance our passenger journey, we are now satisfied with the preliminary work we have carried out and are ready to commence live trials of the world’s first biometric path at Emirates Terminal 3.”

“These ground-breaking initiatives are a result of close collaboration with our stakeholders – particularly GDRFA who have been instrumental in the programme to bring the biometric path to fruition. The recent launch of the Smart Tunnel trial by GDRFA is a great achievement and clearly demonstrates the unique and collaborative nature of innovation at Dubai airport. All systems will eventually be linked with each other resulting in better service to our customers and a happier journey whether arriving, departing or transiting in Dubai. This is very much in line with Emirates’ ‘Fly Better’ brand promise. We will soon invite customers to participate in the trials for our biometric path, and we look forward to their feedback.”

Major General Mohammed Ahmed Almarri, Dubai General Directorate

of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) says: “We are pleased to roll-out these new initiatives at Terminal 3 in collaboration with Emirates and our airport stakeholders. The Smart Tunnel tests are running smoothly, and we are now preparing to mobilise the other biometric systems at the other areas in T3. All these initiatives are in line with the government’s vision to be a world leader in innovation and public services. It will ultimately improve the traveller experience at the airport and enhance the efficiency of our operations.”

Emirates’ biometric path will improve customer experience and customer flow through the airport with less document checks and less queuing. Eventually, the “live” passenger tracking capability will also improve security and the airline’s ability to deliver even better and more personalised services. For instance, enabling the Emirates airport team to locate and assist ‘late’ customers who would otherwise miss their flights.

The airline’s biometric path will cover departures, arrivals, transit, chauffeur drive connections, and lounge access in Dubai. Initially focused on First and Business class

travelers, Emirates intends to speedily extend the biometric path to Economy class travelers in Dubai, and in the future potentially to other airports outside of Dubai, and also for its own dedicated crew check in facility.



PHOTO Sara Appelgren

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Dubai Is a Launchpad FOR INNOVATION

WITH AN ESTIMATED contribution of over 47 per cent to the UAE’s annual GDP, as revealed by Dubai Statistics Centre, early-stage startups make up nearly 50 per cent of all companies registered in Dubai, validating the Emirate’s appeal as a global centre for entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, and innovation.

The country is today considered the number one environment for innovation in the Arab World, according to the Global Innovation Index, and has succeeded in expanding its homegrown SMES, as well as in attracting international talent.

Initiatives such as the STEP Conference and GITEX Technology Week also provide digital natives, startups in pre-seeding stages, and entrepreneurs with a platform to showcase their innovative concepts, engage with investors, gain exposure, and participate in mentorship sessions. With the myriad of opportunities available for startups and entrepreneurs, Dubai serves as a launchpad for the most scalable, diverse, and successful startups of our time.

2018 was a spectacular year for the startup industry, and 2019 promises to be no less exciting, with new technologies to adopt, and new frontiers

to explore. The year ahead will provide entrepreneurs with opportunities to unleash their innovative capabilities like never before.

The launch of ministers for Tolerance, Happiness and Youth in 2016 were bold steps into tackling some of the most critical questions in our time. Now in 2019 this is followed by the first Ministry of Possibilities – maybe the first ministry in the world with no minister, but all the ministers in the Government. Is this what other countries should also do?

Expo 2020 Dubai, which opens in October 2020, will be the first ever World Expo where almost everything from the exhibition will be used – after the Expo closes in April 2021 – as a new part of the city.

Moreover, this will be the first project among the biggest events in history that will strive for 100 per cent sustainability. The goal is to receive 25 million visitors. Expo 2020 will be an accelerator for the future. Moreover, it will bring us into the future.

Another story of the future makes me want to live long enough to have the possibility to take the first full trip Dubai to Abu Dhabi with the Hyperloop. I’m going 150 kilometres in 12 minutes, the speed is 1,200 kilometres per hour. Today, the flights

between the cities are 20 minutes. The first part, ten kilometres, will be ready within one year.

Dubai has a strong vision, lots of missions and the passion for building the future – and trust is the keyword.

We will be at the Expo when it opens in October next year. Most probably, we will get back at least once before the Expo closes in April 2021 as we are keen to get a glimpse into the future. Like taking a ride with the Hyperloop to feel the next step of world-class transportation. Let’s have a meeting during Expo 2020 discussing the possibilities in Dubai.



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