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Dubai Invests for the Future

DUBAI



No. 19

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INTRO

The Dubai MINDSET

IN MARCH, Dubai Future Foundation, DFF, launched the third edition of *Future Opportunities Report: The Global 50*, which highlights the major opportunities, transformations, and trends shaping the future of governments, economies, sectors, and humanity. For this, with future initiatives already in development or place, it serves as a form of fellow collaboration. While there is no single right or perfect framework for foresight, lacking a guide means abandoning control over the future. It is an interesting read, and it shows how Dubai prepares itself and the world for the future.

The Global 50 initiative pivots Dubai as a global thought leader, advocating using emerging technologies for a happier and healthier world. The report, produced in collaboration with 25 international experts and many DFF partners, provides business, government, and civil society with a starting point and a framework to guide thinking and decision-making. The over 300-page report outlines 50 opportunities categorised into five main categories: health reimagined, nature restored, societies empowered, systems optimised, and transformational innovations. The opportunities were identified based on four assumptions: lives will be longer and healthier, climate change will persist, inequalities will continue, and technology will continue to advance.

“Since opportunities are born from challenges, there is no alternative to continually moving forward and making progress, fueled by optimism and hope for a brighter future. This is what drives us to develop new ideas about how to live together, care for our planet, grow our economy, and enhance our quality of life,” says **Mohammad Al Gergawi**, Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Managing Director of Dubai Future Foundation, commenting on one of Dubai's latest initiatives. “The next 50 years will see a sea of changes. These changes will affect every human being in the world,” he says, emphasising the need for international thinking and global collaboration to adapt and prepare for the changes.

The 2022 edition of *The Global 50* described five key uncertainties, and the 2023 edition outlined their implication for future growth, prosperity, and wellbeing. In this 2024 edition, the Dubai Future Foundation has updated the uncertainties by outlining their two extremes. For each extreme, the report suggests some signals to watch out for to estimate whether you are already well equipped to face the uncertainty on your path towards your future vision or if you might require new capacities or solutions.

The Global 50 report, in its third edition, seeks to explore and capitalise on future opportunities to refine

work methodologies and lifestyles, offering insights and best practices to governments, businesses, and civil society worldwide. The report also identifies significant challenges that may disrupt global advancement, preparing us to face them effectively. Additionally, the report outlines the ten megatrends, applicable over a shorter period, shaping current and future transformations and their impact on worldwide development. The megatrends can inspire decision-makers and coming professionals to think further about and picture potential opportunities for future growth, prosperity, and wellbeing in their respective sectors or future strategic objectives.

The first megatrend is the material revolution, followed by boundless multidimensional data, technological vulnerabilities, energy boundaries, saving ecosystems, borderless world-fluid economies, digital realities, life with autonomous robots and automation, and advanced health and nutrition. The report presents a mix of current facts, future forecasts, and three potential areas of opportunity for each megatrend.

Dubai is striving to tick all the boxes in its ongoing efforts to shape the future. Change has to come from somewhere. The impact is about whether the change happened.



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.

Dubai Economic Agenda Is to DOUBLE THE SIZE OF THE ECONOMY OVER THE NEXT DECADE

DUBAI BUSINESS Events is Dubai's official convention bureau. As a division of the Dubai Department for Economy and Tourism, its primary goal is to establish Dubai as a premier business event destination by promoting it and attracting international meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions to help Dubai grow its economic development and knowledge creation.

The UAE Centennial 2071 sets a course for the United Arab Emirates to be the world's leading country by 2071. It will invest in and build around the four core aspects of education, economy, government development, and community cohesion to foster an environment for exponential growth. It is a highly ambitious plan, but Dubai is conscientiously working towards achieving it. Sheikh **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum** is Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. He said the project is a seed that the UAE has planted so that future generations will reap the benefits.

Dubai has grown significantly since 1971, when the seven emirates formed the United Arab Emirates. Today, Dubai is a metropolis of almost four million inhabitants, and the last two years, in particular, have seen significant growth. The goal for 2040 is to approach six million inhabitants and develop the infrastructure to cater to the increased population and continued tourism growth.

"The number of visitors to Dubai grew by 92 per cent between 2021 and 2022, perhaps not surprisingly after the worst of Covid was over and people wanted to travel again. But 92 per cent is still a dramatic increase," says **Karina Lance**, Associate Vice President of Dubai Business Events.

In 2003, Dubai joined the Best Cities Global Alliance, along with Cape Town and Singapore. However, Dubai's significant development as a convention city began in 2008, with Karina Lance starting the following year. Then, they developed the whole division. In November 2021, the merger of what was known as the Department of Tourism and

Commerce Marketing, DTCM, with the Department of Economic Development was announced.

"When the announcement was made in November 2022, several forward-looking key points were linked to why we were merging. One of those points was that we would secure 400 events annually by 2025. So, we already had an ambitious strategy and planned what needed to be done to achieve that goal. And then, in early 2023, the D33 strategy was released by the government."

A key goal of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 is to double the size of Dubai's economy over the next decade and to consolidate its position among the top three global cities. The agenda includes 100 transformational projects.

The first package of transformational projects for the next decade includes doubling the size of Dubai's foreign trade, adding 400 cities to its foreign trade map, and launching Dubai's green and sustainable manufacturing plan. Additional projects include launching Dubai's Future

Economic Corridors 2033 with Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia and a scale-up programme for 30 companies to become global unicorns in new economic sectors. They are also integrating 65,000 young Emiratis into the job market and launching the Dubai Traders project to empower the new generation of traders in critical sectors.

Other projects to be implemented include launching Dubai's unified licence as a unique commercial iden-

we're looking at, different pillars, and one of them was how we're restructuring the department to address the different segments and how we want to reach the goal of doubling the economy within ten years."

As part of the strategy, Dubai Business Events, DBE, had an obvious target for the number of events. The first milestone was set at 400 events by 2025. Then, the convention bureau had an equally clear target for the number of delegates.

are close to markets that are doing extremely well. We have future markets like Africa and Asia right next to us. Today, we have more than 150,000 hotel rooms and very high-class meeting facilities in many facilities, and Dubai is easy to fly to because Emirates is a huge airline. We also have about 300 ambassadors and local hosts whom planners can meet to talk about their opportunities. We have a growing and trained pool of ambassadors.

"The other challenge is our neighbouring destinations that also have a lot of money to invest but don't necessarily have the same level of infrastructure and know-how. We are also seen as a convention agency leading the development in our region.

"Our recruitment plan until 2026 is confirmed, and we will strengthen both our Capacity Building/Association Reach and International Sales & Bid Factory divisions by an additional eleven positions. It includes building our Dubai Association Centre team and developing two new subdivisions, one focusing on Association Impact Development and the other on corporate event incubator development. In terms of operating budget, it has increased by 15 per cent for 2024."

Karina Lance says Dubai Business Events has the resources to do what it wants to continue to develop its work and, therefore, Dubai. The only challenge is finding the right people. Otherwise, it will be complicated to handle everything that needs to be done and not to overburden the people already working at the convention bureau.

There is also a comprehensive plan to develop the Dubai Association Centre, DAC, in two ways. The first is that the DAC currently has over 70 registered associations. The convention bureau wants to increase this number. Still, they want to ensure

“With D33, which aims to double the economy’s economic impact, business events are a key part of that strategy”

tity for all companies all over Dubai, launching 'Sandbox Dubai' to allow testing and commercialisation of new technologies, making the emirate a central innovation hub and launching a programme to attract the world's best universities. In addition, the plan is to make Dubai a global pioneering hub for higher education, developing a Small and Medium Enterprises scale-up programme by identifying 400 high-potential companies, supporting their capacity building, and supporting them to grow globally.

"With D33, which aims to double the economy's economic impact, business events are a key part of that strategy. Hence, we developed the new strategy we finalised early last year. As part of the new strategy, there are a lot of different things that

"When we present any goal, our ambition is always to do it even faster. We are on the right track. We developed ideas on how to structure the agency in the future, and it is now divided into two pillars. The first one is called the *International Sales and Bid Factory*, which is basically the team that will deliver the bids in all three segments. This includes incentive trips for companies and associations. The same team is responsible for our international sales because they depend greatly on their global network. That is the proactive sales aspect of the business. The second pillar is the *Capacity Development and Association Legacy Development*.

"When I look at the challenges ahead, as long as the economy is booming, we are doing very well. We

“The other challenge is our neighbouring destinations that also have a lot of money to invest but don’t necessarily have the same level of infrastructure and know-how”

that these 70+ members are given opportunities to develop, either with their regional congress or with help to organise a world congress in Dubai. They need to go further.

To recruit more associations, Karina Lance and DBE want to organise a series of 'going global roadshows', which are also planned for this year. One of the meetings will be organised in the US. It will be in Washington and Montreal, Canada. Today, there is a direct flight with Emirates to Montreal. Emirates had only one direct route to Toronto in Canada for a very long time, which was not even daily. Now, Emirates has a partnership with Air Canada and a direct flight to Montreal, where several international associations exist.

Dubai Business Events also focuses on Europe, and in the second week of June, DBE will be in London and Brussels. Moreover, DBE plans to grow in the Asian market, starting with Singapore in the first week of November and possibly followed by Hong Kong and Indonesia. Indonesia is currently a booming market for incentive travel for Dubai.

So, what is the strategy for working with the most crucial meeting organisations in the world? Karina Lance talks about the partnership

with the *American Society of Association Executives*, ASAE, in the US market. Dubai Business Events attend ASAE's annual trade show, and the collaboration includes identifying potential organisations to target.

"As part of that, we have the Global Association Hubs Partnership, an alliance different from the Best Cities Global Cities, with Washington, Brussels and Singapore. Then, when we go to Europe, we partner with ESAE, the European version of ASAE. We also rely a lot on Brussels for any advice they might have. And, of course, we have our partnership with ICCA, although it is more on the event side.

"We haven't yet identified who our best partner in Asia would be. We have an ongoing conversation with the Singapore Tourism Board, as they are also part of the Best Cities Global Alliance. When you start working on a new partnership, the fruit of that partnership will not come the next day. These are relationships that you cultivate over the years. We are also considering approaching a developed cooperation with PCMA and Destinations International. We are beginning a good continued development."

New Environment Authority PLANS TO DOUBLE GREEN SPACES

DUBAI HAS announced a new environment authority to double the number of green spaces and become a top-10 ranked city in leading sustainability indices by 2033. Sheikh **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, issued directives to establish the Dubai Environment and Climate Change Authority to promote sustainable practices across sectors further, preserve biodiversity, and expand natural reserves and green spaces in the emirate. The initiative aims to create a solid foundation for the green economy to flourish and enhance Dubai's role in the global movement to combat climate change.

Sheikh Mohammed also issued directives to appoint **Ahmed Mohammed bin Thani** as the Director-General of the newly launched entity. Sheikh **Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council emphasised Dubai's commitment to becoming one of the world's most environmentally resilient cities and setting an example for sustainable urban development. The newly established authority is aligned with the UAE's objective to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

By profoundly integrating economic, social, and environmental sustainability principles into its growth strategies, Dubai seeks to be at the global forefront of sustainable

urban development. Sheikh Hamdan underscored the city's dedication to harmonising rapid economic growth with environmental sustainability and resilience to future challenges.

With this approach, Dubai aspires to set a benchmark for cities worldwide, demonstrating how sustainable practices can drive prosperity, enhance the quality of life, and contribute to the global effort against climate change. Moreover, Sheikh Hamdan said the newly launched authority will enhance Dubai's future preparedness by ensuring the highest sustainable development and biodiversity preservation standards.

The new entity will implement strategic programmes to bolster the sustainability of natural resources in Dubai, optimise the use of local resources, conserve the emirate's biodiversity, accelerate the development of the green economy, and reduce the carbon footprint.

The authority will also assist decision-makers in creating development policies, planning processes, and strategic performance metrics to ensure biodiversity protection, climate change mitigation, and enhanced food security.

The Environment and Climate Change Authority seeks to further the emirate's environmental goals by expanding its green cover by 100 per cent and increasing the area of protected areas and natural reserves by 60 per cent by 2040. Furthermore,

it will prioritise the conservation of water resources and the adoption of sustainable waste management policies.

Addressing climate change and ensuring food security will be among the authority's priorities. The authority will introduce resilient plans for the emirate's infrastructure and services that integrate the principles of eco-friendliness and sustainability. These initiatives aim to safeguard the community against the adverse effects of accidents, disasters, and natural calamities.

The authority's focus areas extend to initiatives and policies geared towards achieving strategic environmental objectives, including a 100 per cent shift to clean energy by 2050 and a 90 per cent enhancement in air quality according to WHO guidelines by 2033.

Aligned with the objectives of the Economic Agenda D33, the establishment of the Dubai Environment and Climate Change Authority seeks to raise the contribution of the circular and green economy to the emirate's GDP. The authority will further promote green finance initiatives and incentivise the financial sector and banks to prioritise and support green projects in collaboration with key financial and economic organisations.



Dubai's Metaverse Strategy Aims to Make It **ONE OF THE WORLD'S TOP TEN METAVERSE ECONOMIES**

ACCORDING TO *Coin Telegraph* magazine, **Dr Marwan Alzarouni** is one of the 100 most influential people in the world in blockchain technology. He is the CEO of the Dubai Blockchain Centre and Strategic Advisor at the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism. He is recognised as an influential blockchain technology authority and has significantly contributed to the sector's growth and innovation. Dr Marwan Alzarouni is known for his expertise in emerging technologies such as metaverse, artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency. His extensive career spans over two decades, during which he has been actively involved in developing projects related to information security, digital forensics and artificial intelligence.

Currently, he leads the Digital Asset Task Force, DATF, a research

and advisory group that reports to the Dubai Future Council for Blockchain. The task force aims to conduct a comprehensive study to provide clear guidance on how digital assets can be encouraged and regulated. The council establishes Dubai as a global blockchain capital. It offers a platform for policymakers from various local and international government and private sector entities to explore futuristic, blockchain-based solutions.

Dubai's metaverse strategy aims to make it one of the world's top ten metaverse economies and a global hub for the metaverse community. The plan seeks to build on Dubai's success in attracting more than 1,000 new companies in the blockchain and metaverse fields. It also supports Dubai's ambition to create more than 40,000 new virtual jobs by 2030. A hub for startups, the Dubai Centre

for Artificial Intelligence will inspire the country’s government agencies and develop future services to keep pace with rapid technological developments. By 2025, generative AI will account for ten per cent of all data produced.

“We are ecosystem builders. Our goal is to create, buy, and develop health technologies, among others, and amplify and drive the adoption of

unprecedented transaction ecosystem. No technology could offer the same robustness and reliability of a single source of truth that the blockchain could offer. So, this is what we started with in the financial sector,” says Marwan Alzarouni.

“We realised that even in the education sector, there is a huge impact on record keeping and authorisation. With the traditional systems,

make the project sustainable. In the initial stage, education was one of the biggest obstacles. People needed to understand the value. And that’s why they were keen to understand this technology’s value. The second thing, which is during the actual implementation, is finding the right partner; it was extremely important because if you have the wrong stakeholders and they don’t get value from the system, and the system itself doesn’t allow people to come in and go out of it freely, then you’re going to have a project that can go sideways and not deliver what it’s made to give.

“Also, regarding expansion and survivability, we discovered that choosing the right platform can make the difference between surviving and thriving versus just going under. You need people invested in the project to survive and keep going. You need people who are getting value from it and not just trying to keep it going. We’ve seen some projects, particularly in logistics, that didn’t survive because they first concentrated power in certain players and then didn’t offer a good level of integrity or competitiveness, and those projects died. But those projects that were designed from the outset and in the implementation phase to be well-informed and easy for people to get in and get out, in the spirit of the blockchain, of course, are the ones that not only survive but drive the value from it and really took away a lot of the bureaucracy, took away a lot of the pain points that blockchain-less projects had before.”

In terms of metaverse, the idea is that people need to learn more about how metaverse technology will drive the future. What is the added value of this?

“What we started with was actually to go to the market. Gaming is still number one. The easiest way

“Meetings and events are the best way to find the best talent”

these technologies where they make sense. This was launched as the Dubai Blockchain Strategy in 2016. The aim was to find applicable use cases. So, whether it was healthcare, education, logistics, proptech, or fintech, these are the areas in which we saw the most value. We didn’t want to have an overall strategy for blockchain but also to have certain verticals that we would get more out of. So those were the ones we started with. We realised that fintech is where most of the value is already aligned. Because when we identified the value of the blockchain, it was about three things. One of them was a medium of exchange. The second was automating transactions through something called smart contracts. The third was record keeping and authorisation. It can be centralised, decentralised or a mixture of both. In the financial sector, all three boxes are ticked. Medium of exchange, so you can exchange without relying on a third party, has a single source of truth. So, it’s an

you have all these pain points when moving from one school to another or from school to university, where you must certify all the documentation. There were a lot of scams, fake certificates and things like that. In contrast, now, people can move seamlessly from one institution to another by having a system where each university and each school can verify credentials for someone else, using completely digital methods based on blockchain technology for the request and authorisation. One of the other side effects, but an advantage built into the blockchain, is that it doesn’t have to be audited, so it’s self-auditing because you can’t put a transaction into the blockchain unless it’s on a new, digital website. The other thing that we didn’t foresee but is now super obvious is reliable statistics.”

According to Marwan Alzarouni, there are three periods for implementing any technology in terms of its life cycle. Before you start a project, expand it during the project and

“No technology could offer the same robustness and reliability of a single source of truth that the blockchain could offer”

to market with metaverse is gaming because we see builders building mostly in entertainment and gaming. We have seen projects here in Dubai and elsewhere; everything is digital. So, you must first digitise your register for blockchain, metaverse, and all these technologies if it’s difficult to deal with paper and then go from paper to digital and then digital to accurate and up-to-date data and then from there to metaverse. But if all your data is digitised, visualised, and ready for gamification, it’s much easier to go to market with it.”

One of the metaverse applications is to use AR, that is, augmented virtual reality. In terms of maintenance, for example, for things like precious equipment, the aerospace industry, the space industry or any very advanced, very high-tech type of industry. One of the use cases launched from Dubai is an aircraft engine maintenance use case that involves multiple people. For example, if you have engine maintenance, one person marks all the areas that need to be changed or parts that need to be changed, and you have a paper checklist. And then, instead of one person manually marking the things, another person comes in and fixes them, and then a third inspector

comes in and checks their work and ensures that everything is done through another checklist.

“Three people, eight hours total, whereas with AR, the whole eight-hour life cycle of fixing the engine is about 45 minutes. One person does it because you don’t need an auditor; number one, you have a CCTV recording. I overlay his interactive glasses to see the parts I need to change. Not only that, but you can also see how many turns he used to turn it for a particular bolt or something. You will see all the markings instead of someone writing and someone else erasing them after doing the job. It will be completely virtual, a catalogue of how to fix something if you have forgotten how to fix it. If you make an error, you get live feedback on your headset that you didn’t tighten or used the wrong part.

“You not only speed up the process but also provide self-auditing by designing a perfect record because it’s captured by video and improved during the maintenance. And this is where we see the biggest value of this kind of technology. It’s different from how people perceive it, and we should have a metaverse to meet people for a meeting, for example, or meeting representatives. It’s nice to have, but the

value is in the things that will make us much safer and speed up the work.”

The Dubai Metaverse Strategy seeks to build on Dubai’s achievement of attracting more than 1,000 companies in the fields of blockchain and metaverse. It also promotes Dubai’s ambitions to support over 40,000 virtual jobs by 2030. Further, it will boost the economy and support the UAE government’s vision of increasing the number of blockchain companies by five times the present number. Is this possible?

“Yes, it is. And we are aiming even higher in terms of gaming as well. The figure is a bit on the low side. There will be many more jobs. But the idea is that we are still determining where this will come in and where we will see the huge peak of development. As you have seen with AI, there has been prolonged development. We were one of the first countries in the world to have an AI Minister. And we did it very early on. When it takes off, we will reap the benefits of that.

“There is an AI centre here, the Dubai Centre for Artificial Intelligence. We have many other initiatives within government departments to capitalise on AI technologies. We are positioning the same for the metaverse. It will take off. It shows

the way to where things are going. And this road is, there's no doubt about it, the road to the future."

Answering the question of where Dubai will find all the people working in the blockchain companies, Marwan Alzarouni replies that it is probably and with the most significant possibility in Dubai. For example, from mid-April to mid-May, there will be a huge number of events and meetups

kind of setting to understand what's next to align with how this industry is going to move forward including blockchain, metaverse, web3, cryptocurrencies and everything that comes with it. Another initiative is the Dubai Economic Agenda 2033, which will create 65,000 jobs for young Emiratis. Much of this will be in the digital space with fintech, proptech, sustainable manufacturing and healthcare.

start businesses. They want to meet new people. They always fear missing events, to the point where we have people who come in for one particular event, and just after they land, they go to two or three other events that they never even planned to go to and didn't even know existed. They love it. They loved the spontaneity of it all, too.

"Meetings and events are the best way to find the best talent because you get to meet a lot of people at the same time, and people in the same industry doing amazing things that you didn't even know about. We already have the best talent here, and we keep getting more talent coming to Dubai and choosing to stay here."

Marwan Alzarouni also mentions digital nomads. We have seen Dubai position itself as a hub for digital nomads who use the infrastructure here to work from hotels and flexible office places like We Work and In 5, home to hundreds of techpreneur startups.

"They are working in a regular office or from a coffee shop, improving the economy, doing amazing projects with very high values. They love to meet other like-minded people, creating these hubs for them. Meetings and events are crucial for creating this melting pot and collision space for these people; young women and men will meet each other and create the future when they meet."

in Dubai, and people from all over the world come for esports, the carnival, gaming, B2B gaming events, school events and universities, hackathons, hacker houses, meetups, a lot of other industry-specific events.

"In April, we have one of the biggest events in the world regarding Web3 coming to Dubai, called Token 2049. We have many other side events that will take place in Dubai, including 100-plus side events, some specific to certain industries. Some of them are dinners and meetings. Some of them are challenges for developers. All this will consolidate Dubai's position as a world leader in this field and as a trendsetter and attract many talents."

A few weeks before our interview, Dr Marwan Alzarouni came back from the Satoshi Roundtable, which is the gathering of all the world trading and cryptocurrency funds, founders and change makers in a very informal

"Healthcare education will see the most change. With AI, we will see a massive momentum shift in how people learn how health is changing and how health testing will evolve. AI will significantly impact these industries, but metaverse and virtual reality will also have an effect. There will be much more development, which depends on the advances in AI."

Meetings and business events are necessary to share knowledge and maintain and expand your network. Events create meetings, and meetings develop events. The question is, how important are business events for Dubai's key sectors?

"They are extremely important. These meetings provide many of the most important contacts and understanding of how the industry is developing. Dubai is doubling down on meetings and events to create value for everyone who comes to Dubai. They want to stay here; they want to



STREET LIGHTING PLAN

PHOTO: iStock.com/Ballun

RTA Earmarks AED278 Million FOR A STATE-OF-THE-ART STREET LIGHTING PROJECT

THE LIGHTING project will use energy-efficient LED technology to bolster road safety and security across 40 districts. Dubai's Road and Transport Authority, RTA, has announced that it has recently awarded a contract worth AED 278 million (EUR73 million/USD68 million) for a comprehensive street lighting project covering 40 districts and streets as part of the ambitious Street Lighting Plan 2023-2026.

"The main goal of this plan is to improve traffic safety and security for all road users, including vehicles and pedestrians. The initiative is designed to contribute to residents'

and visitors' wellbeing and satisfaction in the targeted areas," says **Mattar Al Tayer**, Director-General and Chairman of RTA's Board of Executive Directors.

The selection of areas for this project has been meticulous, considering factors such as traffic safety and security standards, traffic volumes and the pace of urban growth. The Street Lighting Plan employs the latest smart and sustainable lighting technologies for the United Arab Emirates' climatic conditions.

Mattar Al Tayer emphasises the commitment to energy conservation practices: "We have utilised the latest

smart and sustainable lighting technologies that are specially designed for the UAE's climatic conditions. These innovative lighting systems use energy-efficient LED technology, providing a 55 per cent reduction in energy consumption and a 173 per cent increase in lifespan."



The Dubai Association Centre OPENED THE DOOR TO THE WHOLE REGION

WHEN THE Dubai Association Centre opened in 2014, it opened the door to the entire region to associations worldwide. MCI, a leading global engagement marketing agency specialising in associations and business events and a strategic partner of the DAC, shared the original concept of an “association hub” with Dubai’s authorities.

“We opened the MCI office in Dubai back in 2007. At that time, the world of associations was not very well understood in the Middle East. There were business groups, but they didn’t have a legal structure for associations. We started our work simultaneously in Dubai and Abu Dhabi with a white paper, benchmarking global association hubs to outline the opportunity,” says **Nikki Walker**, Global Vice President of Associations and Communities.

It was followed by a business plan in which MCI proposed setting up a centre for associations and creating a licencing process in Dubai so associations could register and operate legally in the emirate.

“This, as we saw it, would be a good way to attract more international associations to the region beyond just bringing their congresses to Dubai.

At that time, Dubai focused mainly on meetings. They wanted to bring congresses here but were not focused on the organisations behind the congresses.

“Our business plan presented the concept to the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Economy and Tourism and the World Trade Centre, who became the three founding partners of the Dubai Association Centre. The initial steps to explore the legislation and licensing procedures started in late 2011. I relocated from MCI’s global Association HQ hub in Brussels to help move the concept forward and spearhead our role as strategic partners to the DAC.”

Meanwhile, MCI’s association management business was thriving in Dubai. They brought their business model from Brussels to help global associations understand, penetrate and grow across the region by providing local knowledge, insights and expertise. The flexible outsourcing model offers associations the requisite staff capabilities and know-how, the local infrastructure, and all the operational components to grow their organisation. MCI has partnered with and continues to partner with many international associations,

particularly US-based organisations, to build their market across the Middle East.

The Dubai Association Centre was officially launched ten years ago to help raise the professionalisation of association life in the region, similar to how associations have developed in Europe and the US. Today, some 100 associations are licensed under the DAC, a mix of local, international, US-based, and European associations from energy, medicine, and law to hospitality, retail, and manufacturing. The DAC registration and licence provide associations with shared office space and a work visa; they must hire and manage the staff.

According to Nikki Walker, associations often hire a single person who is either a generalist, a specialist in the industry, a salesperson, or a meeting planner and then try to get that person to do everything. The association can also choose to work with MCI as a strategic partner of the DAC, wherein MCI provides all the staff and expertise and deals with HR issues and staff training.

“Of course, working for so many associations gives us reference points. We have our own best practices. We know what works and what doesn’t.

But one of the most important things about taking an international organisation to a region like the Middle East and operating from Dubai is realising that it's not a copy-paste model.

"Just because something works in the US or Europe doesn't mean you can take it to this region, Asia-Pacific or Latin America and copy the same pricing structure or the same certi-

It becomes a requirement for someone to have a qualified, certified professional employee to run their business. Much of MCI's work is with individual member associations focusing on the individual and the profession. For example, a marketer who wants to improve their career, knowledge and understanding becomes a member of a European or

when it comes to revenue generation because the pandemic took away a lot of the bread-and-butter revenue that came from meetings so associations have had to reinvent a little bit their model. Additionally, MCI has found, particularly in healthcare, that the pharmaceutical companies, who previously relied on physical, face-to-face association meetings to meet their doctors in a "social and learning environment", started working more directly with doctors and holding virtual meetings.

"In MCI, we manage this on behalf of pharmaceutical companies. They need to invest in association support, sponsorship, and partnerships with associations at the same level of financial budgeting as in 2019 and before. They are more selective. So, it means there is competition. If there is a limited pharmaceutical pot of money and three associations are trying to get it, then all three feel the new conditions.

"Revenue and product diversification are important, as well as finding long-term corporate partnerships rather than just a transactional relationship that might be three days of an event. Associations need to engage in dialogue, not just what we, the association, can do for your company, the sponsor, in those three days, but what can we do for the other 362 days of the year."

Nikki Walker also points to issues like mergers between associations, which she sees as much more complicated than they are in companies. You have two lots of volunteer leaders. If you have paid staff, that's one thing, but that's not always the case in associations. Who will keep the position of executive director? There are also two sets of boards, two sets of committees, and that whole infrastructure. So, mergers are very complicated.

fications. It has to be relevant to the local region, and the marketing has to be meaningful to the audience that you are targeting."

One of the significant areas where MCI helps organisations is how to approach this market, build relationships with universities and partners, find training partners, and help them establish their certification programmes. The region has a massive demand for professional development, certifications, standards, and knowledge from US or European associations.

For example, MCI partnered with the Project Management Institute, PMI, for over twenty years worldwide, starting in Brussels, then Singapore, Dubai, and Latin America. Their Project Management Professional, PMP, certification is now recognised by the government in Dubai, so when there are government tenders, a PMP is required to manage the process. It is ideal for any certification, whether employer- or government-driven.

US marketing association. Then, MCI helps these associations understand what they must do in different markets to adapt their marketing and communications, such as pricing different products and using the World Bank purchasing power parity.

Nikki Walker says some organisations may be reluctant, but most understand that purchasing parity differs worldwide. Once you explain it and its logic, the organisations understand its connection. In the Middle East, many local associations are also very small and run voluntarily. They started with the idea of a conference and only a little else. Therefore, MCI often connects international associations with local associations to strengthen a local conference by bringing some of the global programming content and speakers.

When asked what she sees as the most significant challenges right now, Nikki Walker believes that associations pretty much everywhere in the world and of all sizes are challenged

“One of the most important things about taking an international organisation to a region like the Middle East and operating from Dubai is realising that it’s not a copy-paste model”

"It is more common that associations bring their combined expertise to organise a joint event. We don't see such a trend right now because everyone is trying to stick to their territory to have their revenue stream. It is important to reinvent the meeting to become more of an experience that motivates people. If travel is involved, participants must justify the money, time, inconvenience, sustainability, carbon neutrality, and the whole reflection on whether they should travel. All these points are much more considered by the delegates today. The organiser, the association, really has to reflect; if you travel all this way to come to our meeting, how will we make our particular meeting so special that it's worth your effort?"

What is Nikki Walker's vision for developing this region in the next five or ten years from an MCI perspective?

"The region is a growth region. Within MCI, we include India, the Middle East and Africa in this region. That's how we internally at MCI are structured. We have North and South America, Europe, India, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific. Why do we do that? Because there is an incredibly strong connection between the Indian continent, India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh and the Gulf countries. We see how the UAE has grown rapidly. They bring the brains, certifications, and standards from the West and the labour from the East, and it's a very good combination."

From the point of view of industry organisations, continues Nikki Walker, a large part of the market in this region for training and certifications is also in India and Pakistan, where people build their credentials and then secure work in places like Qatar, Bahrain, and the UAE. Of course, they earn more money and then raise standards at home. It is a very fast-growing region. However, from MCI's point of view, it will be smaller than the association market in North America.

"I've been here since 2011, and it's also fascinating to see the transformation that's going on in Saudi Arabia, how it's happening and how they're opening up to international standards and ways of working. The region will continue to grow. I think the West is often a bit nervous because they tend to see the region as unstable, but frankly, in the last few years, it's felt like one of the most stable places. I mean the UAE, in particular. Okay, it's a small country. We're

talking about ten million people, four million here in Dubai.

"But when people have asked me over the years, what is Dubai like? It's like living and working in a company. The Sheikh is like a CEO. He runs Dubai like a business. He is a visionary leader who makes things happen. Decisions are made, money is invested, and things happen. It is safe and secure, and we are taken care of. Working in an environment where people understand the rules is straightforward, instead of an environment where we keep challenging the rules. I have never felt that the region is not a safe place or is not a stable place. And especially here, it's a melting pot of nationalities. It's fascinating. You are exposed to all the cultures of the world."



The Majlis **DIALOGUE**

LAST YEAR, when negotiations were slow at the *28th UN Climate Change Conference, COP28*, in Dubai, Sultan **Al Jaber**, the chair of the climate meeting, decided to take all the ministers, heads of delegation and negotiators to a different setting.

“I have asked them to join me in a Majlis. I want to gather the delegates in a room, in a circle, where we can talk openly and have a person-to-person conversation. That’s exactly what we do here in the UAE when we have questions or problems we must address.”

Sultan Al Jaber’s aim was that every person should be included, and no one should be undervalued or underestimated. The delegates should attend the meeting with an open, understanding and flexible mind while listening. No delegates were allowed to bring a prepared speech to the Majlis. “Sultan Al Jaber invited an old tradition. This is how we do it in the United Arab Emirates when there are problems and issues to be resolved,” says **Mohammed Al Jasmi**, Creative Supervisor of the Sheikh Muhammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Centre for Cultural Understanding.

“Traditionally, it is also about learning the values of being an Emirati. For example, how would you treat the older people in the Majlis? How would you speak with them? And when you enter a Majlis, who would you go first and shake hands with? How would you shake hands with the oldest person there?”

The Emirati Majlis, meaning council or assembly, are ‘sitting places’ where people come together to discuss shared interests, resolve problems, discuss daily affairs, local

events and issues, exchange news and stories, receive guests, socialise, be entertained, etcetera. It is typically a large space with carpets on the floor and cushions against the wall. There is usually a stove or fire to prepare coffee and other hot beverages. In the UAE and the Arab world, a Majlis serves an important role both in the home and for business meetings.

“Through observing elders in the Majlis, young people learn the manners and ethics of their community, dialogue and listening skills, and respect for the opinion of others,” says Mohammed Al Jasmi.

The Majalis, the plural form of Majlis, have long received great attention from the people of the UAE due to their significance in achieving interaction and communication among society’s members, especially between the ruler, the leader of the tribe, and the community.

Women have their own Majlis, although some prominent women attend other Majlis, particularly academic or literary. Majlis also play an essential role in transferring oral heritage, including folk stories, folk songs and traditional Nabati poetry.

“Majlis is a part of our Emirati way of meeting tradition. It’s not just a room. It can be anywhere, for example, in front of my house. I put a carpet there, we sit on it, and it becomes our Majlis.”

In Dubai, The Community Development Authority, CDA, is responsible for setting up and developing frameworks for social development in Dubai. Their role is to strengthen the role of Majlis, which is currently established in several

neighbourhoods in Dubai, as a direct line of communication with residents and to find out their views, feedback and demands. CDA also works with concerned official authorities to find solutions to different social issues residents face.

Furthermore, CDA utilises these Majlis to raise awareness and educate community members through organising periodic lectures and meetings to promote social development, strengthen national identity, and bridge the gap between generations. The Community Development Authority also offers the Majlis headquarters to residents to hold various social events, such as marriage contract ceremonies, wedding parties, and funerals, to promote a sense of affiliation and strengthen relationships among different groups in the community during such social events.

The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, and Qatar were able to include the Majlis on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity through a joint international report that these countries submitted because it enjoys these social values and is considered a significant aspect of heritage. It has been integral to these peoples’ human heritage since December 2015.

Business event delegates visiting Dubai for any meeting can learn more about Emirati culture and traditions through shared experience by visiting the traditional Majlis of Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding. You will find the houses in Dubai’s historical Al Fahidi neighbourhood.

Al Shindagha Museum HOSTS THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS GENERAL CONFERENCE IN 2025

LOCATED ALONG the historically significant Dubai Creek, the Al Shindagha Museum, a multi-building village, tells the story of Dubai's past and traditions. The museum's multi-media exhibition 'Dubai Creek: Birth of a City' uses the latest technology to experience the region's dramatic development over the centuries. The exhibition uses interactive videos, touch screens, photos and old artefacts to show how Emirati families lived along the waterfront and how maritime trade affected their livelihoods. Al Shindagha is one of Dubai's oldest neighbourhoods, currently undergoing a welcome revival. Visitors who venture off the beaten track can discover several historical gems, including the official residence of Sheikh **Saeed Al Maktoum**, built in 1896. Saeed Al Maktoum was a former

ruler of Dubai and the grandfather of the current ruler. It is also home to the Al Shindagha Museum, where you can learn details about the city's past as a maritime city. The Sarug Al-Hadid Archaeological Museum displays Iron Age artefacts recently found during an excavation in the Dubai desert. Several other museums and cultural experiences await around every corner in the district, so take your time to explore this different part of the city. The Perfume House is in the former house of **Sheikh Rashid's** sister, **Sheika Shaikha**. A prolific perfumer, she would create scents, bury them in her private courtyard for fermentation and preserve them beneath her bed. We spent hours here and felt like aspiring professional perfumers the more scents we got into our noses.



PHOTO The Cool-Box Studio team and Martin Pfeiffer

“Dubai has always been a hub
for traders and those pursuing
a better life”

A short stroll takes you to The House of Poetry, a centre for researching and documenting Arabic poetry to promote the art form world-wide. The house, with a large exhibition area, is a focal point for studies and research related to Arabic poetry in general, with particular attention accorded to the propagation of Nabati poetry, an indigenous form of verse unique to the Gulf region. The centre hosts poetry-related activities, including competitions, awards, reading sessions, workshops, conferences, forums, and seminars.

Once home to the region’s most important pearl diving harbour, Dubai Bay’s importance is still evident today, with fishermen and traders still steering their traditional dhow boats across the calm waters. The neighbourhood is home to several of Dubai’s true cultural treasures. Visit the Al Fahidi Fort, which was built in 1781 and is the oldest building in the city.

Also, visit the XVA Art Gallery, which displays contemporary Arabic art, and the Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU), where you can book guided tours and learn about Emirati traditions. At the SMCCU, you can share a traditional lunch with people from all over the

world in a Majlis setting and ask all the questions you’ve ever thought about what makes Emirati traditions different from yours, no matter where you’re from. There are no wrong questions here; the answers are open and honest.

Sheikh **Mohammed bin Rashid**, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, who was born and spent the first decade of his life in the neighbourhood, opened the newly renovated museum, saying: “Our museums serve as cultural beacons that embody our heritage. We want the world to know Dubai’s story and its history. Dubai has always been a hub for traders and those pursuing a better life, and it will continue to thrive as a centre of global civilisations on both cultural and humanitarian fronts.”

The museum’s inauguration comes as Dubai prepares to host the *International Council of Museums General Conference* in 2025. The conference’s theme will be “The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities.” Al Shindagha hopes to draw more than one million visitors by that date. In addition to its core exhibitions, the museum will host workshops and educational programmes, catering to school and university students, alongside special seasonal five-day camping trips in summer and winter.

The project takes an innovative approach to its curatorial journey by grouping clusters of 80 of the area’s 162 historic houses into 22 pavilions, each dedicated to a different subject. This approach allows the museum to deeply explore each aspect of Dubai’s history. Each pavilion is themed around different aspects of the emirate’s history, broadly spanning governance, society, living off land and sea, creativity, and wellbeing. In addition to the emirate’s remarkable journey under Al Maktoums’ rule, each pavilion immerses guests in different aspects of Emirati heritage and culture, going back to the 1800s, from poetry to perfume and pearl diving to pottery.

If you are coming to Dubai for a meeting or a business event, you should arrive a day or two earlier and start your knowledge and education trip at Al Shindagha Museum. It will give you a much deeper understanding of where you are and the culture-shaping Dubai today. Furthermore, there are plenty of cafés and restaurants in the neighbourhood where you can explore traditional food and beverages.

PHOTO iStock.com/Wirestock

Not Just a Library **NOT JUST A BUILDING**

HOW OFTEN do you start a library visit with lunch? We did, in the spectacularly-built Mohammed Bin Rashid Library on the Creek in Dubai. Entering the building, you immediately realise that this is something you have never experienced before, despite visits to many libraries in many cities and countries during over 40 years in our profession.

We took the lift to the exhibition floor at the top of the building, hoping it would be a relaxed environment with beautiful books and art. We were right. There were magical books from the past, and collectibles worth travelling to see for themselves, and the presentation of all the items was mesmerising. Mohammed Bin Rashid Library is a knowledge centre that every self-respecting city should create as part of its future. Books provide the knowledge and insights needed to develop Dubai’s future vision for 2071. Built in the shape of a rehl, the traditional wooden bookrest used to hold the Quran, the building overlooks Dubai Creek. The seven-story structure houses Dubai’s most ambitious cultural initiative, establishing a lighthouse of knowledge, culture and creativity to grow a collection by acquiring millions of books worldwide.

Founded by law in 2016, during the National Year of Reading, the collection of books is the vision of His Highness Sheikh **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**. Supporting

Dubai and UAE’s goals to develop a knowledge society, the library follows several important initiatives to promote and encourage reading, literacy, and Arabic literature.

The initiative’s primary objective is to stimulate a passion for knowledge among all people in the United Arab Emirates, particularly young people. The library actively supports and encourages reading, research, creativity, and entrepreneurship by providing free access to an outstanding range of books and other knowledge resources, quality information services, and event space.

The library plays an important and increasing role in preserving Arabic literature, culture, and heritage, ensuring public access to modern and rare old Arabic literary works, and helping to encourage and support young Arabic writers via the Arabic language publishing programme.

The Mohammed Bin Rashid Library has ten main collections: The General Library, Young Adult Library, Children’s Library, Information Centre, Map and Atlas Library, Media and Arts Library, Business Library, Emirates Library, Periodicals Library, and Special Collections Library. In addition to physical collections, the library provides access to a wide variety of ebooks and other digital media. The Audiobook library is a resource for everyone but is especially useful to the visually impaired or those with reading difficulties. In addition, they are

developing a range of Braille books. The library continually develops its collections, resources, programmes, and event calendars to share more books, knowledge, and information with the community.

In March, the Mohammed Bin Rashid Library participated in Turkey’s International Library and Technology Festival titled *The Key to the Digital Future: Artificial Intelligence-Based Smart Libraries*. Experts, innovators, and specialists from public libraries worldwide attended the festival.

Through its participation, the library aimed to nurture academic and practical cooperation with libraries, information centres, and archives globally. It also aimed to create opportunities to exchange technical information and closely link it to library science. In addition, it aimed to communicate directly with institutions related to public libraries to discuss cooperation.

The Mohammed Bin Rashid Library showcased its latest technologies and innovations during the event. In a video, it highlighted the artificial intelligence and virtual reality technologies integrated into its advanced technological system, as well as its key innovative services that stimulate readers’ experience and facilitate access to cultural content in an unprecedented way.



Dubai World Trade Centre A POWERFUL HUB FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

THE MIDDLE EAST region's leading venue hosted 301 exhibitions and events in 2023, an increase of 23 per cent over the previous year. The exhibitions attracted nearly 54,000 companies, 78 per cent of which were international. Last year, the World Trade Centre welcomed 2.5 million visitors in 2023.

Dubai World Trade Centre added 33 new events to its calendar, attracting almost 95,000 participants. Its flagship shows, led by Gitex Global and Gulfood, saw a 42 per cent growth in attendees and contributed to one-third of all meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions attendees. The DWTC-owned Dubai Exhibition Centre, DEC, at Expo City Dubai hosted over 220,000 participants, headlined by the prestigious Blue Zone at *COP28*.

"Dubai and DWTC have established leadership in the business events industry. Our work is shaped by the government's visionary Economic Agenda, D33, which sets ambitious economic goals for the city. We're working to further cement Dubai's status as a global business events hub and preferred destination for doing business," says **Mahir Abdulkarim Julfar**, Executive Vice President of Dubai World Trade Centre.

Exhibitions, 107 fairs, international congresses, and industry conferences led the way. These events together attracted almost 1.6 million

participants, representing a significant increase of 33 per cent compared to the previous year. Of these, over 722,000 were international attendees, representing a 60 per cent growth compared to last year. These industry-leading events and fairs were attended by 53,789 exhibiting companies, an increase of 45 per cent from the previous year. A complete 78 per cent of exhibiting companies were international (41,864). The sharp increase in international business participants supports the ambitions of Dubai's Economic Agenda, which calls for Dubai to be one of the top three global economic cities by 2033.

The diversity of DWTC's events calendar is further enhanced by the consumer and leisure events portfolio, which grew last year to 35 entertainment, live, and leisure events that attracted over 850,000 visitors.

Dubai World Trade Centre grew its presence globally as well, with its wholly owned events company Kaoun International organising events internationally, including the debut editions of GITEX Africa, the largest tech and startup show in Africa, attracting attendees from 128 countries, including representatives from 46 African nations; and the *Saudi Food Show 2023* the largest and most global F&B showcase in Saudi Arabia. DXB Live, DWTC's experiential agency, recorded its best year to date at over

500 events, locally and internationally. The agency doubled its business in 2023 and expanded its services to new markets, including Europe, the USA, Asia, and the Middle East. DWTC also owns and operates the Dubai Exhibition Centre, DEC, at Expo City, which hosted several events last year, including the *COP28* climate conference.

"Our state-of-the-art venue, Dubai Exhibition Centre, was constructed for the international mega-event *Expo 2020*, and we are now building on that legacy by hosting significant national and international events at DEC. The venue encompasses an expansive area of 58,000 square metres, providing an impressive new event space in Dubai," says Mahir Abdulkarim Julfar.

Situated in Expo City Dubai, with an on-site Metro station, the Dubai Exhibition Centre is only 20 minutes from Al Maktoum International Airport. Adjacent to DEC are Expo Village Residences, which are also owned and managed by DWTC. The residences consist of 2,273 apartments offering a wide range of furnished and unfurnished options for short- and long-term stays and offering spacious and open-plan layouts. They are within walking distance of Expo City Dubai's main attractions and are surrounded by Expo Park's 37,000 square metres of lush greenery.

“We’re working to further cement Dubai’s status as a global business events hub”

“DEC was selected as the venue to host *COP28* last year. We were proud to play a role in the UAE’s hosting of COP and to be a part of the climate conference’s success. We plan to expand some existing events to the Dubai Exhibition Centre at Expo City Dubai. This strategic move will accommodate the remarkable growth of the existing and new events organised in Dubai for the first time,” says Mahir Abdulkarim Julfar.

The Dubai World Trade Centre is also deeply committed to sustainability. DWTC serves as a global hub, bringing together individuals worldwide to participate in world-class events that promote innovation and progress.

“We value and recognise the importance of our events’ social connections and cultural exchanges. Our commitment to sustainability aims to preserve these special experiences by hosting events that are not only socially effective but also environmentally responsible.”

As the business events industry continues to grow, it is increasingly essential for organisations like DWTC to spearhead initiatives to create a greener and more sustainable future.

DWTC’s sustainability goals rest on three pillars: first, to align with

the visions and strategies outlined by local and federal governments. Second, to set the standard for sustainability in the global business events industry and lead by example. Third, businesses should actively support environmental goals to meet public expectations. Pillars form the basis for viable initiatives that include reducing energy consumption, conserving essential resources and minimising waste in various dimensions of DWTC’s operations.

“Our commitment to sustainability has been recognised through our certification by the Green Globe, a leading international standard for sustainable travel and tourism. Sustainability means balancing economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility. The Dubai government’s commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UAE’s Net Zero 2050 strategy, as well as initiatives such as the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, the Smart Dubai Initiative, the Dubai Integrated Energy Strategy 2030 and the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050, offer many opportunities for businesses and industries to align themselves with sustainable endeavours. We believe that a sustainable business model not only protects the future

of our planet but also creates lasting value for our stakeholders.”

The Dubai World Trade Centre has facilitated global business since 1979 and is home to the region’s leading purpose-built convention and exhibition centre. The venue offers a platform to unite people, products, innovation and ideas worldwide through a dynamic calendar of international trade exhibitions and its roster of industry-leading mega-events. As a free zone complemented by award-winning commercial properties, DWTC plays an essential role in the growth story of Dubai and the region. Since its opening, the centre has hosted over 6,000 events, with an estimated economic output of AED 248 billion (EUR65 billion/USD68 billion) and attracted over 38 million business event visitors to Dubai.



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New 1.6 Km-Long AL KHALEEJ STREET TUNNEL

THE NEW 1,650-metre, six-lane tunnel will span from the end of Dubai's Infinity Bridge in Deira ramp to the intersection of Al Khaleej and Cairo Streets. The tunnel is a vital component of the Al Shindagha Corridor Improvement Project, a large-scale initiative by RTA that spans 13 kilometres. It involves enhancing Sheikh Rashid Road, Al Mina Street, Al Khaleej Street, and Cairo Street and upgrading 15 intersections.

According to **Mattar Al Tayer**, director general and chairman of RTA's board of executive directors, the project serves about one million residents. It aims to reduce travel times from 104 minutes to 16 minutes by 2030. The upcoming tunnel will feature three lanes in each direction, handling up to 12,000 vehicles per hour, significantly easing traffic flow. It aims to provide a smoother commute from Infinity Bridge towards Deira and vice versa. The project also includes converting the intersection of Cairo and Al Wuheida Streets from a roundabout to traffic signals, improving Cairo Street, and linking the bridge ramp from Dubai Islands to the new tunnel. Moreover, the

new phase will serve the residents of Abu Hail, Al Wuheida and Al Mamzar along with development projects like Dubai Islands, Dubai Waterfront, Waterfront Market and Hamriya Port.

In addition to the Al Khaleej Street Tunnel, the RTA is enhancing Sheikh Rashid Street with a 4.8 km project. This project includes the construction of three bridges totalling 3.1 km in length to support more than 19,400 vehicles per hour. The bridges are designed to improve traffic flow across significant intersections. The first bridge is 1.3 km long and accommodates up to 10,800 vehicles per hour. The second, at 780 m, supports 5,400 cars per hour, and the third, at 985 m, facilitates 3,200 vehicles per hour.

Furthermore, the project extends to upgrading 4.8 km of roadways along several streets, constructing two pedestrian bridges, and enhancing infrastructure such as street lighting, drainage, and irrigation systems.

The RTA has completed multiple phases of the larger Al Shindagha Corridor Improvement Project, including opening several bridges and intersections along Sheikh Rashid Road and connecting roads. They

have also completed bridge constructions to the Dubai Islands and along Al Khaleej Street.

Additionally, improvements at the Falcon Intersection have been finished, featuring two major bridges on Al Khaleej Street and supporting infrastructure to accommodate over 24,000 vehicles per hour. The ongoing work includes further tunnels and intersections as part of this expansive project.

Dewa's Innovation Centre LEADS THE WAY IN CLEAN ENERGY

DUBAI HAS developed several practices and techniques to enhance the efficiency of the energy sector, rationalise consumption, and find alternative solutions to conventional energy.

Dubai Electricity and Water Authority's, Dewa's, innovation centre at the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park is a global hub for renewable and clean energy innovation expected to shape sustainable energy's international future. It is also the largest single-site solar park in the world. The solar park is planned to produce 5,000 MW by 2030 and invest AED50 billion (EUR12,7 billion/USD13,6). Once completed, the park will save over 6.5 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

An eye-catcher of the solar park is its twisting solar power tower designed as a spire, based on the principles of 'divine geometry' seen in Islamic Art. A solar power tower is a system that converts energy from the sun, in the form of sunlight, into electricity that people can use by using a large-scale solar set-up. Dewa marked a breakthrough by entering the *Guinness World Records* for breaking the world record for the largest Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) project, with the tallest CSP tower at 263.126 metres.

Through the centre, Dewa aims to support innovation and creativity in clean and renewable energy, promote

sustainability, develop Emirati talent and enhance the country's competitive advantage. One long-term goal is to make Dubai a global centre for clean energy and the green economy.

The centre is a landmark and a destination for people who wish to learn about the latest innovations in clean and renewable energy technologies. Last year, it received visitors from 57 countries and hosted four professional training courses, of which more than 90 participants graduated with accredited certificates.

The innovation centre's research on solar power supports the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050, which aims to diversify the energy mix and provide 100 per cent of Dubai's total power capacity from clean energy sources by 2050. This target has also been broken down into subtargets. By 2030, they should reach 25 per cent, and this 25 per cent will be achieved through the 5,000 megawatts produced from the solar park.

"We have Photovoltaic solar panel technology that have been used in all our phases. PV solar panels convert sunlight into electricity. They contain semiconductor materials that absorb sunlight and convert it to electricity, the most commonly used of which is silicon. Currently, silicon is being implemented in all phases except phases one and two, where we used a different type of

PV panel known as Cadmium Telluride solar panels," says **Dr Aaesha Alnuaimi**, Director of the innovation centre, with over ten years of extensive experience in solar energy and sustainability. She holds a PhD and an MSc in Microsystems Engineering with honours from Khalifa University and Masdar Institute, collaborating with the US Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT.

The innovation centre serves as a hub for knowledge exchange and houses an auditorium for events, conferences, and training programmes on solar power, renewable energy, and other green initiatives. The centre is an educational platform and is building strong collaborations with universities, startups, schools, and local and international organisations for research and knowledge exchange. It also organises exhibitions.

"For example, our visitors can explore the latest innovations in clean energy technologies, watch pioneering shows using drones and hologram technology, and try several interactive experiences. One of the exhibitions focuses on Dewa's journey and key historical inventions and innovations in electricity."

The centre supports the next generation of innovators in clean energy technologies while focusing on developing national capabilities. Aaesha Alnuaimi explains that, for example, they have a Clean Tech

Youth Programme, an annual programme for university students who want to learn more about clean and renewable energy.

“We have organised competitions like the *Clean Tech Hackathon* to allow students to develop new ideas and compete in multiple challenges. We also have an exchange and knowledge-sharing platform like Clean Tech Connect, which is an open platform for people to meet experts

successes in clean energy technologies, exchange knowledge, and raise community awareness about the latest developments and innovations in this field. Since its launch until the end of last year, the programme held 15 seminars and panel discussions attended by over 1,500 participants.

The Shams Dubai is DEWA’s smart initiative to encourage building owners to install photovoltaic solar panels to generate electricity from

Aesha Alnuaimi says solar cells are becoming more efficient due to breakthroughs in materials science and engineering. The potential application of perovskites and quantum dots is expected to surpass traditional silicon’s performance barriers. Advances are also anticipated in other solar technologies and the emerging field of green hydrogen, often cited as the fuel of the future. However, challenges remain in developing scalable energy storage solutions to address the intermittency of renewable energy. Promising technologies like solid-state and flow batteries require significant innovations in cost reduction and energy density improvements. Additionally, infrastructure development must keep pace with technological advancements to ensure the efficient integration of these new energy sources into the existing grid.

“Efficient energy storage systems combined with solar energy will be developed. Electrification is also essential because electric cars were not used very effectively five years ago, but now they are becoming increasingly common. So, in the next ten years, we will definitely see more progress in electrification and even hydrogen cars.

“Dubai Clean Energy strategy started with a target of seven per cent by 2020. We surpassed that target by reaching nine per cent in 2020. Now, we have a target of 25 per cent by 2030, and currently, over 16 per cent is powered by solar energy. We have an ambitious goal, but we strive to always exceed our targets to accelerate the transition to a sustainable and green future. We are creating energy resources to reach 100 per cent clean energy by 2050.”

solar power. Shams Dubai supports the Smart Dubai initiative to transform Dubai into the smartest city in the world. DEWA is committed to high technical standards in its electricity grid. The solar equipment that will be part of the installation requires certification to make sure it complies with the standards that DEWA has developed based on international quality and safety standards.

“Moreover, Dewa’s new headquarters, called Al-Sheraa, is under construction and will be the world’s largest and smartest zero-emission government building when completed. The power for the building will be generated by what is currently the world’s most giant photovoltaic sail to be integrated into a building, generating 4.2 MWP of electrical power. Therefore. This structure has been named Al Sheraa, meaning ‘The Sail’.”

Regarding developments in the next ten years in terms of innovation and technology in solar research,

in the field and professionals who have achieved great success in clean and renewable energy. It is based on symposia, seminars, and webinars we regularly organise for knowledge sharing. Moreover, we organised the first *Technical Solar Conference* in the MENA region last year. It was the largest solar conference for scientists and engineers who came to discuss and present their latest research and development in the field of solar energy. We have different initiatives that are meant to develop students’ skills.”

The innovation centre also focuses on many other initiatives. One of them is the Green Building certification. The centre is a platinum-certified building, and it has achieved 101 out of 110 points under this certification, the highest score for a new government building in the world.

Another initiative is the Clean Tech Connect Programme, providing an opportunity for people specialising in clean energy to present their



PHOTO: Stay by Yannick Alleno

Michelin Guide Dubai: 14 RESTAURANTS TO KEEP AN EYE ON

NINE RESTAURANTS were awarded one Michelin star, and Il Ristorante Niko Romito and Stay by Yannick Alleno were awarded two stars, in 2022. In 2023, three more Michelin-star restaurants were awarded, and Tresind Studio was upgraded from one star to two.

2022 was the first year that the *Michelin Guide* handed out awards in the United Arab Emirates, a landmark moment for restaurants in Dubai, which is now recognised as one of the best food cities in the world, alongside the likes of London, Paris, New York, Tokyo and beyond. Some of those Michelin stars were awarded to restaurants run by chefs well-recognised by the guide in the past. French chef **Yannick Alleno** can add two more stars to his extensive collection for his restaurant Stay, situated at One & Only the Palm, West Crescent,

Palm Jumeirah, Dubai. Also, legendary Italian chef **Massimo Bottura** received recognition for his work at Torno Subito, W Dubai, The Palm, Jumeirah, Dubai.

With only 20 guests for each dinner service, Tresind Studio is a remarkably intimate affair. Chefs curate an extraordinary, immersive chef’s table experience. Head chef **Himanshu Saini** is a rising star of Indian cuisine, and his dishes transform traditional Indian dishes into modern plates. Tresind Studio was awarded one Michelin star in 2022 and a second the year after. The studio is at Nakheel Mall, The Palm, Jumeirah, Dubai. **Niko Romito’s** restaurant at the Bulgari Resort in Dubai is a lesson in world-class fine dining, courtesy of a master. Michelin stars awarded 2022. Situated at the Bulgari Hotel, Jumeira Bay Island, Jumeirah, Dubai.

Brand new for 2023, Dinner by Heston Blumenthal is one of the flagship restaurants at Atlantis, The Royal Hotel. Here, **Heston Blumenthal** recreates much of what made him famous and wealthy in London. Michelin star awarded: 2023, situated at Atlantis The Royal, Crescent Road, Palm Jumeirah.

There are also Michelin-starred restaurants: Moonrise, 11 Woodfire, Al Muntaha at Burj Al Arab, Armani Restaurant, Hakkasan Dubai, Hoseki, Ossiano, and Tasca by Jose Avillez. Moreover, there are restaurants with Michelin-starred chefs like Hell’s Kitchen Bread Street Kitchen and **Gordon Ramsay**, who has three stars in one of his other restaurants. And, of course, there are also restaurants with Michelin Green Stars and 17 restaurants with Bib Gourmands in Dubai.



PHOTO MBRSC

UAE National SPACE PROGRAMME IS EVOLVING

THE UNITED Arab Emirates’ national space programme is developing glacially, showing significant progress and ambitious projects to increase humanity’s understanding of space.

As of 2024, the United Arab Emirates, UAE, has made significant progress by announcing its participation in developing a module on NASA’s Lunar Space Station Gateway in collaboration with the United States, Japan, Canada and the European Union. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre, MBRSC, is leading the development of the Emirates Airlock, which will serve as a critical component of the space station and send the first Emirati astronaut into lunar orbit.

“The space centre is also working on MBZ-SAT, the second satellite developed entirely by a team of Emirati engineers after Khalifa Sat. With its significant technological advances, MBZ-SAT will provide highly advanced services and is one of the world’s most advanced satellites. The MBZ-SAT

project, the fourth Earth observation satellite, is unique in that it will rapidly provide high-precision data to end users, allowing them to develop advanced solutions and applications and provide them to decision-makers promptly,” says **Adnan Al-Rais**, Deputy Director General of the Space Operations and Exploration Sector MBRSC.

The UAE has also made significant progress in expanding its astronaut cadre with the second round of the UAE Astronaut Programme; **Nora Al Matrooshi** and **Mohammad Al Mulla** recently graduated from the 2021 NASA Astronaut Candidate Class training programme. The milestone marks the culmination of over two years of extensive training, which began in January 2022 and makes them fully qualified astronauts ready for future space missions.

The development illustrates the UAE’s growing influence and involvement in space exploration. It underlines the country’s role in the

international space endeavour and its commitment to contribute valuable scientific knowledge and technology. When considering the development of the UAE's space programme, several strategic issues stand out:

Strategies are being implemented to promote innovation and technological development across the space sector. The critical goal is to encourage research, development,

the development of MBZ-SAT, which, when launched, will be the most advanced commercial satellite in the region in terms of high-resolution satellite imagery.

The centre has also started work on the HCT-Sat 1 project, an Earth observation CubeSat, in collaboration with the Higher Colleges of Technology.

first Emirati astronaut into lunar orbit as part of the project. The UAE is contributing to the development of Emirates Airlock, which aims to strengthen the country's global presence in space science and technology. The UAE will develop the Emirates Airlock, the crew and science airlock module of the first human space station in lunar orbit. The Emirates Airlock will allow astronauts to enter and exit the Gateway to conduct spacewalks, enable crew and scientific research transfers to and from the space station, and serve as an additional docking port for arriving spacecraft. As part of the Emirates Lunar Mission, a new lunar robot, Rashid 2, is also being developed to take the UAE to the lunar surface.

The UAE's vision for space development is based on its desire to be at the forefront of space exploration and technology, to contribute significantly to the global understanding of space, and to promote a knowledge-based economy. The nation wants to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers and space explorers by pushing the limits of human knowledge and technological capabilities.

"Through ambitious projects like the Hope Probe, the Emirates Lunar Mission and participation in the Gateway Lunar Space Station, the UAE wants to expand humanity's presence in space, improve our understanding of the universe and develop technologies that can benefit life on Earth. This vision emphasises scientific and technological progress and the importance of international cooperation, sustainability and peaceful use of outer space," says Adnan Al-Rais.

"Strategies are being implemented to promote innovation and technological development across the space sector"

and collaboration with international space organisations and private sector partners.

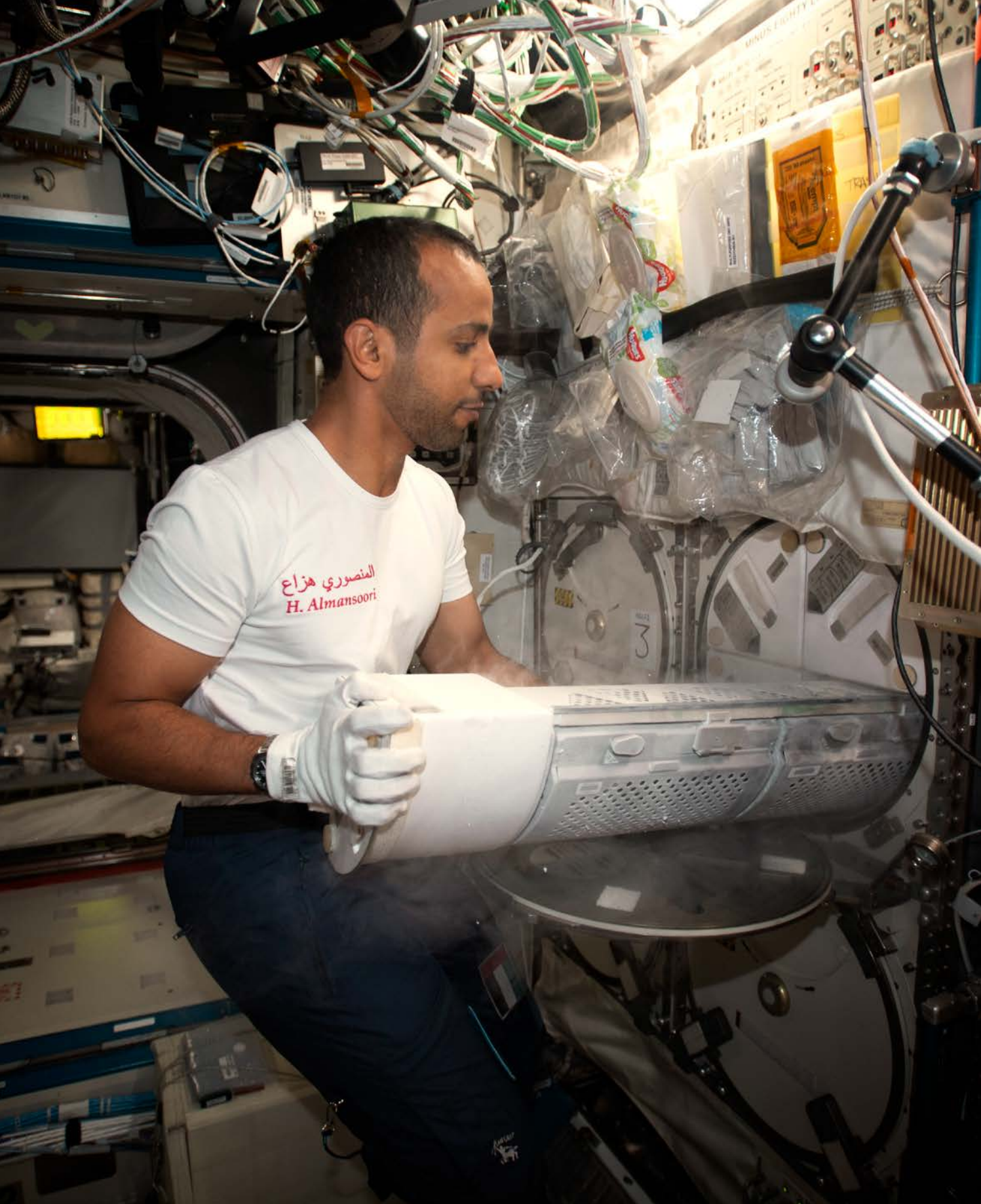
Developing training programmes, offering competitive opportunities and creating an appealing work environment are vital to building a skilled workforce. Therefore, the best talent must be attracted to the aerospace sector. Addressing these issues is critical to the continued success and development of the UAE's space exploration efforts.

The UAE's three main focuses in terms of its space programmes as a whole are:

Satellite development The UAE has made significant progress in satellite technology, with the development and operation of Earth observation satellites such as DubaiSat-1, DubaiSat-2 and KhalifaSat, the first satellite built entirely by Emirat. Currently, the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre is focusing on

Human spaceflight The UAE's astronaut programme is an integral part of the UAE's space endeavours, with four astronauts in the programme and two who have completed missions to the International Space Station (ISS), including the first Zayed's Ambition mission conducted by **Hazzaa Al Mansoori** and the most extended Arab space mission in history conducted by **HE Dr Sultan Saif Al Neyadi**. The astronauts from the programme's second round, Nora Al Matrooshi and Mohammad Al Mulla, recently graduated from the 2021 NASA Astronaut Candidate Class training programme and received their astronaut pins, establishing them as fully qualified astronauts ready for future space missions.

Lunar Exploration The UAE is developing a module on NASA's Gateway Lunar Space Station with the United States, Japan, Canada, and the European Union, and it is sending the



Grand Hyatt Dubai Congress and Exhibition Hotel

THE LARGEST CONVENTION CENTRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

EVEN FROM a distance, it is a spectacular hotel and meeting complex. Taxis stream up the ramp towards the hotel entrance, one of Dubai's largest conference hotels. We arrive at the Grand Hyatt during an international conference with a large exhibition for almost 3,000 delegates. It feels like stepping into a Hollywood film set. There are people from all over the world because it's an AI event, and all the major high-tech companies are here.

Nikil Satwani, Sales & Marketing Manager, shows us around the fully booked hotel. All the tables in the seven restaurants are busy with people networking and doing business. The noise level is high, the atmosphere is full of energy, and we cannot count the number of languages spoken. Today, Dubai is the world's epicentre of AI, AI research, and AI development.

Grand Hyatt Dubai has 710 rooms, including 38 suites ranging from 39 to 264 square metres. With over 11,500 square metres of meeting space equipped with the latest communications technology, the hotel hosts one of the largest and most versatile convention centres in the Middle East.

The newest addition to Grand Hyatt Dubai's facilities is a state-of-the-art conference and exhibition centre that provides an additional 5,000 square metres of event space and has a ceiling height of 12 metres. The hotel's event spaces offer flexible and advanced facilities for business events programmes ranging from 20 to 2,500 guests. There are two ballrooms: the largest in Dubai, with LED video walls and multiple ambient lighting, and a smaller ballroom on the same level.

The conference rooms at Grand Hyatt Dubai are equipped with

state-of-the-art digital technology. The Business Centre offers fast communication and secretarial services. The facility's flexibility allows organisers to realise virtually any event set-up imaginable.

There is also a VIP Majlis for up to 20 people for the most important meetings. Of course, it has a separate entrance and bathroom. One of the most striking details of this VIP room is a golden chandelier, which gives guests an unforgettable impression from the moment they enter. Whether it's the range of impressive spaces or the strategic location, this venue is one of the top choices for organising business events in Dubai.



PHOTO: Corné Clemens/Cornelemens.nl Fotografie

The World's Largest Indoor VERTICAL FARM SAVES 250 MILLION LITRES OF WATER EVERY YEAR

LONG-TERM food security and self-sufficiency are vital to any country's economic growth, and the UAE is no exception. Bustanica, Emirates flight catering unit, is the world's biggest vertical farm, producing over a million kilos of leafy greens annually with 95 per cent less water than conventional farming and saving 250 million litres. Also, Bustanica, which means 'your garden' or 'orchid' in Arabic, grows fresh produce without pesticides, herbicides, or chemicals.

Vertical farming has a significantly smaller carbon footprint than traditional agriculture. This method grows plants using mineral nutrient solutions in water and without soil. They are grown in a fully controlled environment, and everything from temperature, humidity, lighting, water, and nutrients is precisely monitored, maximising growth and yield. The new farm aligns with the UAE's National Food Strategy 2051 agenda for reliable year-round crop production and a stable supply chain independent of weather and attacks by pests or fungus.

The vertical farm will secure the flight catering supply chain and reduce its carbon footprint by bringing production closer to consumption and reducing the food journey

from farm to fork. The hydroponic farm near Al Maktoum International Airport produces and harvests over a million kilograms of leafy greens annually, or about 3,000 kilograms per day. Saving 95 per cent of water in production also contributes to the UAE Water Security Strategy 2036.

Emirates Flight Catering is one of the largest catering companies in the region and across the Middle East; it supplies food to over 130 airlines and produces over 250,000 meals per day. With this capacity and delivery volume, the catering unit began looking at how to source better the raw materials they needed. They started looking at chicken from Brazil and beef from New Zealand because Dubai is a country where over 80 per cent of its food is imported, and they know that leafy vegetables prefer to be kept from being transported.

"Therefore, many airlines get complaints about their salads. But salad and spices are a speciality in airline kitchens. The salad can take seven days to reach the catering kitchen, perhaps from California. Then, it undergoes washing and disinfection to remove the chemicals before being chopped and packaged, degrading the leaves' quality. When the salad is served on the plane, it may take 12 to

18 hours before it can be eaten," says **Firas Al Soufi**, manager of Emirates Bustanica.

The idea for Bustanica was conceived as recently as 2016. The initiative is a joint venture with Crop One Holding, a US-based company with over a decade of experience in research and development. Bustanica will grow fresh produce using machine learning, artificial intelligence, advanced methods, and a specialised in-house team of agronomy experts, engineers, horticulturists, and plant scientists.

"We are also investing in R&D on herbs and leaves. For example, we tried growing strawberries for three months, which was a great success; the strawberries did not get white shoulders. When looking at vertical farming, two things are crucial: the expected yield per cycle or per harvest and the time it takes to reach the harvest.

"We are a 100 per cent soilless facility. We are hydroponic. Our product is ready to eat, so it doesn't need to be washed and disinfected, which gives flavour, crispness, nutrients and sustainability. Because when you wash the leafy greens, you can't dry them 100 per cent, no matter what you do. If you don't, you can expect a

long shelf life, which for us is 14 days right now, which is acceptable.”

Within the facility, Bustanica has chosen to work with isolation and separation. On three floors and across 10,000 square metres, they have 27 courtyards, nine on each floor. Each rack is 100 per cent separated from the others, which means fault at the rack level does not affect the other rack in the courtyard.

“**Bustanica is beyond organic because the plants are 100 per cent ready to eat ... We can harvest within 28 days, while traditional farming requires 40 days**”

“Imagine how much control we have over the crops. That’s why we can promise security for our yield. Security for the volume. We need price certainty because we know how much it costs. Before signing the contract with Emirates, we knew how much we could deliver daily for each leaf throughout the year because the climate does not control us.”

Firas Al Soufi states that they are governed by the controlled environment they create. Each room is also 100 per cent isolated in terms of temperature, humidity, and day-and-night cycles. When we meet him inside the facility, it is daylight for the green leaves. But when the lights go off, it becomes a night cycle for them. “We control the cycle, the nutrients, and the water within each rack level, even if it’s not at the room level. That way, we will be 20 per cent faster than conventional farming. We can harvest within 28 days, while traditional farming requires 40 days.

“We highlight that Bustanica is beyond organic because the plants are 100 per cent ready to eat. If you taste today and next year, it’s the same flavour. The plants contain nutrients because our team knows when to harvest them. Only a few people think soil generates bacteria and foreign objects on the leaves. We want the produce to be ready to eat, favouring hydroponics.”

Firas Al Soufi says they are looking at new technologies like nanobubbles to eliminate or increase yields. Ultimately, the most important thing for any farm, business, or manufacturing company is that it is a producing unit or facility.

Representatives of the UN have taken notice of what Bustanica is doing and visited the facility during *COP28* last year. They stated that they see great potential in this project for the rest of the world and the world’s food supply.

“There is potential in how we can do things better. Automation, for me, is a potential that helps us grow. We see new varieties and new things to grow as potential. We expect to be able to diversify our product portfolio as it will support the airline business as well as hotels, restaurants and retail where we are available. Packaging is also something we are looking at. We are the only ready-to-eat chain in the Middle East. And I think that’s

also true in some parts of Europe. Even the strawberries we grew were ready to eat.”

Firas Al Soufi’s vision for the next ten years is for people to realise that we are losing more and more arable land worldwide. Today, there are almost eight billion people, and by 2050, according to UN research, there are expected to be nearly ten billion, so you have to plan food for ten billion people.

“Now, we can cover the needs of conventional agriculture, but we should not only look at leafy greens, vegetables, fruits, livestock, poultry, and all other verticals because we cannot continue to do what we used to do. These technologies, which save water, create new jobs and harvest these as we do volumes, are always the future of agriculture.

“We incorporated our salads and became a partner of *COP28* during the 12 days the climate meeting was held in Dubai. Ultimately, we must work together to make people understand this is the future. It can’t be the only thing because technology constantly evolves, and we keep looking at all aspects, whether software, hardware, new technologies or drones. Now, we are discussing a drone company with small drones that can control microclimates and health plans. All this is developing daily.”



PHOTO iStock.com/DanHart

RTA Experiences Eight PER CENT GROWTH IN TAXI RIDERSHIP

THROUGHOUT 2023, Dubai’s Roads and Transport Authority, RTA, experienced significant success with its taxi services, including increased ridership and the use of its e-hail taxi service. Dubai’s taxi sector experienced substantial growth in 2023, clocking about 114 million trips and lifting around 198.4 million passengers annually. This annual trip count is the highest recorded over the past 15 years.

“The annual growth rate in taxi trips from 2022 to 2023 was as much as eight per cent, underscoring the sector’s key role in Dubai’s public transport network. October 2023 saw an unprecedented surge, with taxi

trips hitting ten million. Known for their vast coverage, Dubai taxis traverse over 500 kilometres on average every 24 hours,” says **Adel Shakri**, Director of Planning and Business Development, Public Transport Agency, at RTA.

Last year, 1,160 taxis were deployed to increase the size of the city’s taxi fleet, raising the total to approximately 12,532 vehicles. Notably, 10,388 of these taxis are environmentally friendly, comprising a mix of hybrid and electric cars, accounting for 83 per cent of the entire fleet. These taxis are operated by 27,900 drivers working in two shifts. The e-hail taxi service Hala Taxi reported

a significant uptick, with 39.8 million trips made in 2023, marking a 27 per cent growth from 2022. This surge underscores the extensive and rapid shift in consumer behaviour, from traditional street hails to electronic bookings, over the year.

Furthermore, the efficiency of Hala’s service saw notable improvement, with the average Actual Arrival Time for electronically booked taxis reaching customers in Dubai dropping to 3.6 minutes in 2023, an improvement from the 3.9 minutes recorded in 2022.



PHOTO Dnata

Dnata LOGISTIC EFFICIENCY IS WHAT MATTERS

DNATA, Dubai National Air Travel Agency, is one of the world's largest airline service providers. Its main activities are cargo and ground services, catering, and travel services. Emirates and Dnata are independent entities and do not form a group as defined by International Financial Reporting Standards. However, they are under joint management.

Dnata, headquartered in Dubai, started its operations back in 1959. Today, it has over 46,000 employees in 38 countries on six continents. They work at 136 airports and serve over 300 airlines. They manage ground handling at 86 airports, cargo at 48 airports and catering at 64 airports. In 2022–2023, Dnata's customer-facing team handled over 710,000 aircraft movements, moved over 2.7 million tonnes of cargo, delivered 111.4 million meals and recorded a total transaction value,

TTV, for travel services of USD1.9 billion (EUR1.8 billion/AED7.0 billion). In 2024, it expects to prepare more than 117 million meals, which continues to grow.

As recently as April this year, the company won a multi-year catering contract with Etihad Airways in Boston. In March, Dnata also became the first ground-handling provider to receive IATA's CEIV certification for safely handling lithium batteries at eleven stations globally.

In recent years, the company has significantly invested in training and process improvements to enhance safety and efficiency in handling dangerous goods. In 2021, it became the first global air service provider to adopt the IATA Dangerous Goods Autocheck, a platform for authorising dangerous goods transport. In December 2023, Dnata was further accredited with IATA's corporate

certification for competency-based training and assessment, CBTA, for hazardous goods.

Guillaume Crozier, Senior Vice President of UAE Cargo and Global Cargo Strategy, started his career with Emirates Group in 2011. He has been in his current role since 2021 and is also a board member of Dnata Logistics and Wallenborn Middle East Logistics. In this role, he leads the strategic direction, growth and transformation of the cargo business in the UAE and globally, oversee-

a long-term vision. Because this is the core business and because of the shareholder and leadership structure, we have a very stable and consistent way forward, which helps us to invest and improve these capabilities. The customers see it, the customers like it, and when it comes to efficiency, efficiency is what matters. We offer fast, reliable and safe services. We offer a functioning Multimodal product, so from airport to airport or port to airport, that is the kind of traditional air freight or sea freight that

“We want to keep improving our throughput efficiency and increase the customer experience regarding traceability, visibility, and optimisation. It is all about optimising the organisation. You need the technology to help visualise what’s happening in your business as accurately as possible.

“We are excited to see the outstanding results our drone technology has brought to our freight operations. These drones’ accuracy and reliability have exceeded our expectations, transforming our efficiency. These advances directly impact our airline customers, who can benefit from increased accuracy, shorter waiting times, and smoother logistics operations. The deployment of autonomous drones in our operations reflects our commitment to delivering first-class services through the latest technology.”

Guillaume Crozier explains that if you use drones, it takes much less time to complete inventories. Also, in terms of data entry, you have a picture of your shipment, every position is tracked, and you can experience the results of your inventory much better. Ultimately, you can share that information with your customer as part of your offer and value proposition.

“The challenge is to make this happen because you must keep doing what you are doing; we are stakeholders in the supply chain. You can’t do your things in isolation. If everything is not connected, it will not work. It is, therefore, essential to have close relationships with the actors in the supply chain, discuss the plan for the future, communicate about the innovation, do a proof of concept and make sure that what you are delivering is what the customer wants.

“I want to add one point: data. If I want to be even more specific about the transformation challenge, it is

“The challenge is to make this happen because you must keep doing what you are doing; we are stakeholders in the supply chain”

ing a team of over 3,000 employees and managing multiple stakeholder relationships. Moreover, he is a board member of Dnata Logistics and Wallenborn Middle East Logistics, two leading freight forwarding and transport companies in the region.

“I actively utilise the latest technologies and innovations to improve freight operations’ efficiency, quality and sustainability. I am passionate about delivering excellence, customer satisfaction and value to the freight industry, and I am always looking for new opportunities to learn, collaborate and innovate. I share the Dnata family’s vision to make travelling and trading easier, faster and safer for everyone.

“A crucial point for me is sustainability, especially focusing on

Dubai has mastered and continues to invest in.

“We have now connected the dots to create reliable sea-air products. Nowadays, we talk about sea air as an option to build the best logistics solution from start to finish. Dubai leads the way, and the connection between Jebel Ali and Dubai World Central Airport has improved. Transit time is as short as possible, and we continue to work with authorities, police, Dubai Trade, and Dubai Customs to make the experience seamless. That is also a strong advantage of Dubai, as we work together.”

According to Guillaume Crozier, the most significant challenge Dnata faces today is that the industry, especially the air cargo logistics industry, is changing.

“A strategy is good to create, but the best part of the strategy is the execution”

data. Because the big picture I’ve set up is understood, but on the flip side, it is what data model you need. What is a kilo? What is a piece? Again, all of that must be established in any industry, including data governance, recording, and connectivity. We have excellent data architecture, technology, and resource capabilities. And that helped us lead the way to make this happen.

“A strategy is good to create, but the best part of the strategy is the execution. So, making things happen is what I see and what we do. You have to be persistent and clear about your vision. All this has to be done sustainably. When I say sustainable, I mean robust and long-term from a process perspective. But of course, I also include the environmental aspect here.”

Sustainability and reducing Dnata’s emissions are also fundamental issues for Guillaume Crozier. The company’s environmental programme focuses on the areas where they can make an impact: reducing emissions, consuming responsibly, and preserving wildlife and habitats. These three pillars are the priorities of Dnata’s environmental framework. The company endeavours to deliver results in these focus areas in its

operations and through its products and services to help its customers and partners achieve their sustainable goals.

“In the case of my business, for example, we have already implemented a recycling system that allows us to recycle the condensation from the AC system in our warehouse. So, this is all collected, filtered and reinjected into our pipeline, five thousand litres per day that we save, which is fantastic.

“We are also looking at key issues in a more circular economy. We accept plastic, we accept wood and wooden pallets. So, it is about reusing these raw materials as much as possible. First, reuse is very pragmatic. What you cannot reuse is injecting into the circular economy for the supplier to rebuild wooden pallets or plastic pallets that you can use in your intra-logistic day-to-day. That is happening right now, and we are focusing on it. We are looking at solar panels, and they are in the pipeline.”

Based on a global freight strategy, Dnata wants its new facility to be certified as a sustainable green building and meet new standards. So, it is aiming for BREEAM or LEED certification.

“We have the Dnata Cargo City building in the UK. And we are

certified. We focus more on the UK, and LEED will be more international and American. And that’s what we follow. It gives us a clear framework regarding quality and helps us discipline ourselves and our staff. It also keeps a strong principle with independent auditors who can come and help us improve.”



Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab IMAGE Jumeirah Hotels

Nine Hotel Openings TO LOOK FORWARD TO 2024

Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab A third oceanic-themed hotel, alongside Burj Al Arab and Jumeirah Beach Hotel, is completing Jumeirah's nautical hotel trilogy. The five-star hotel will boast 386 rooms and suites, four penthouses, and 83 apartment suites, alongside state-of-the-art amenities. Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab is a place to unwind and find your inner zen with extraordinary wellness and leisure facilities across a sprawling 3,500-square-metre, three-storey spa. There is also a collection of pools, including a large circular pool, a family infinity pool and a private VIP adult pool. The new resort is a dream for foodies, with ten restaurants and bars designed by globally renowned restaurant designers.

One & Only One Za'abeel The project is highlighted by The Link at One Za'abeel, a panoramic sky concourse featuring world-class restaurants, celebrity chef outlets, a statement swimming pool, wellness facilities and entertainment. Designed by the internationally acclaimed Denniston Architects, the 229 rooms and suites promise to be the epitome of contemporary comfort. The culinary line-up has already revealed some

of the biggest names in the business, including **Anne-Sophie Pic**, whose restaurants make her the most Michelin-lauded female chef in the world; **Paco Morales**, who is known for his innovative take on Andalusian cuisine; and best chef **Dabiz Muñoz** will open Street XO. Then there's a trio of One & Only homegrown concepts, which includes Tapasake, a sleek poolside restaurant adjacent to the UAE's longest infinity pool, which also exists at One & Only Resorts in the Maldives and Montenegro.

The Lana (previously Dorchester Dubai) Those who live or work around the Business Bay area will probably recognise the shape of The Lana perched on the waterfront of the Dubai Canal. The striking 30-storey tower houses 225 ultra-luxury guest rooms, 69 of them suites, which will ooze contemporary-chic with triple height ceilings, plush furnishings in gold, beige and olive and deep-soaking bathtubs and a large rooftop pool. The Lana is a foodie playground with eight new concepts, including a rooftop restaurant, a patisserie, a modern Mediterranean restaurant, and a destination dining concept serving Basque cuisine.

**“Construction is on track for the tower,
a mega project in Dubai Marina, which,
once complete, will become the
world’s tallest hotel”**

Siro The hotel is a first-of-its-kind immersive lifestyle hotel centred on fitness and recovery. Guests can embark on tailored programs and treatments across five experience pillars: fitness, nutrition, sleep, recovery and mindfulness. A beautiful hotel environment and Dubai skyline views backdrop the hotel. As part of Team Siro, British-Somali professional boxer and humanitarian **Ramla Ali** and British Olympic swimmer **Adam Peaty** will each play an advisory role in developing Siro by advising on its training programs.

Five Luxe The location is a prime residential plot on the JBR beachfront, between the Ritz-Carlton Dubai and Rixos Premium JBR. As well as all the best bits of the Palm Jumeirah property, the iconic social pool, a firm focus on culinary and a sparkling beach club, there will be some exclusive additions specifically for the new address. The hotel boasts 222 luxury rooms and suites and 277 opulent residences, with some seriously plush suites for guests to splash out on, including the Writer Suite, Musician Suite and regal Royal Suite. In true Five style, you can expect a best-in-class culinary offering, with various restaurants and nightlife venues all designed to wow guests.

Mama Shelter in Dubai’s Business Bay offers its hospitality and edgy style, emphasising comfort and cutting-edge design elements by Mama’s Design Studio. The hotel houses 197 rooms and is a resort within the city with highlights, including two all-day restaurants, the brick-oven pizzeria, a speakeasy lounge, and different cocktail bars. The outdoor terrace boasts four pools and an outdoor cinema.

Mandarin Oriental Hotel The currently under-construction Wasl Tower will be home to a 257-room hotel, which will occupy floors 16 to 38 of the 64-storey tower and is forecast to open in late 2024. Among the planned facilities for residents and guests, guests can look forward to a lively rooftop sky bar, poolside bar and restaurant, lobby lounge and an oriental cake shop. A signature dining experience headed up by a famous face in the culinary world will complete the F&B offering.

Six Senses the Palm Although it will be a while until Six Senses the Palm, Dubai welcomes guests, construction began in 2022, and the first guests should be able to check in in 2024; when the resort does open on the Palm’s West Crescent, it will have 60 hotel keys and 162 luxury branded

residences. Expect an array of sustainably-driven restaurants and bars, plus impressive sports and leisure facilities such as a gym, squash court, pools and a private beach. There will also be a signature Six Senses Spa, plus a library, kids club and an interesting-sounding longevity centre.

Ciel Tower Construction is on track for the tower, a mega project in Dubai Marina, which, once complete, will become the world’s tallest hotel. This claim currently belongs to Gevora Hotel on Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai. The hotel will soar 365 metres into the sky, comprising 1,209 luxury suites and serviced residences across 82 floors. Speciality dining outlets include a signature restaurant, a sunset lounge on the 74th floor, a bar on the 76th floor, and a spa and health club on the 61st floor. Guests will find the observatory and lounge on floor 81 and a signature rooftop sky terrace on the 82nd floor featuring an infinity pool and bar.





IMAGE: Railbus Inc.

Dubai Exploring MAJOR FUTURISTIC SOLAR-POWERED TRANSPORT SYSTEM

DUBAI IS ON the brink of a transportation revolution as it ventures into the realm of futuristic, solar-powered transit systems. Partnering with innovative trailblazers, Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority, RTA, has embarked on a ground-breaking journey toward developing next-generation transport networks.

Railbus, renowned for spearheading the creation of the world's premier 100 per cent solar-powered mass transit system, has sealed a momentous Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, with Dubai's RTA. This collaboration signifies a pivotal stride in overhauling urban mobility, emphasising a mutual dedication to sustainable transportation solutions.

The memorandum between Railbus and RTA heralds a new era of cooperation in advancing cutting-edge, environmentally friendly transportation technologies throughout Dubai. Railbus's innovative solar-powered system represents a paradigm shift in public transit, presenting a clean, efficient,

and economically viable alternative to conventional transportation modalities.

Rawan Kamal, Partners Relations Manager at Railbus, is welcoming the partnership, framing it as a monumental progression towards a clean, renewable energy future, lauds RTA's forward-thinking approach and highlights the potential for sustainable urban development inherent in the collaboration.

Abdul Mohsen Kalbat, CEO of RTA's Rail Agency, underscored the alignment between the partnership and RTA's mission to embrace innovative solutions for enhancing Dubai's quality of life and emphasised the anticipation surrounding how Railbus's solar-powered transportation system could bolster the city's sustainability and mobility objectives.

The historic partnership's key facets include focusing on mobility innovation and leveraging Railbus's expertise to elevate Dubai's public transit infrastructure. Furthermore, the collaboration aligns with Dubai's

overarching vision for environmental sustainability, striving to curtail carbon emissions within the transportation sector. Pilot projects are slated to be initiated to showcase the efficacy and benefits of Railbus's system within Dubai's existing urban landscape.

The partnership heralds a promising future where sustainability and innovation converge to redefine urban transportation paradigms in Dubai. The city aims to set a global benchmark for eco-friendly, forward-thinking mobility solutions through concerted efforts and visionary initiatives.



Museum of the Future

AN INCUBATOR FOR VISIONARIES

WE HAVE OFTEN passed by The Museum of the Future in Dubai's financial district. Since its opening in February 2022, the building has been a global landmark and a sought-after venue for business events. The museum's architect is South African **Shaun Killa**, Killa Design, known for always focusing on sustainability in his projects.

The 77-metre-high building is covered in Arabic calligraphy and is supported not by the traditional columns but by a steel diagrid, with a facade of 1,024 steel panels. Over 30 per cent of the museum's energy comes from pure solar energy via solar cells.

The pillar-less construction is an architectural icon and a significant addition to the world's science, architecture, and art development. The Museum of the Future has been described as one of the most beautiful buildings on Earth, and we couldn't agree more. What's also exciting is that it feels much bigger inside than you might think when you see it from the outside.

The inscriptions on the exterior make us want to learn how to write Arabic letters; they look like art. The

calligraphy fonts, created by the Emirati artist Mattar bin Lahej, embody the building's overall vision of knowledge. They consist of three quotes by Sheikh **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**:

"We may not live for hundreds of years, but the products of our creativity can leave a legacy long after we are gone."

"The future belongs to those who can imagine it, design it and implement it. It is not something you await, but rather create."

"Innovation is not an intellectual luxury. It is the secret behind the evolution and rejuvenation of nations and peoples."

One of the museum's goals is to be a centre of bold ideas and boundless ambition, where visions, experiences and concepts have been designed and launched to accelerate research-based scientific development in the Arab world. Furthermore, the museum embodies humanity's boundless creativity, innovation and

imagination. Its forums, talks and exhibitions aim to highlight, discuss and explore humanity's latest discoveries and those yet to be made.

The idea is also to play a supportive and motivating role in the region and the world by investing in creative minds, ideas, projects, initiatives, studies, and research that add value to knowledge and science. The museum is an incubator for visionaries, talents, and futurists at both regional and global levels and serves as an all-encompassing laboratory for future cities, technologies, and concepts. The experience is entertaining as well as educational.

The museum's elevator is a distinctive feature and an immersive experience. Its innovative design reflects the idea of commercial space travel and introduces visitors to the exciting concept of visiting space in the near future. It can't be described as anything other than quite a lift-off with an Airbus 380, and it feels like the rocket you are in is being pushed out of the museum and into space.

Large event spaces and a 420-seat auditorium on the premises make the house feel spacious and include a

“The Museum of the Future is like a time machine that shows what life could be like in 2071”

state-of-the-art open area for about 1,000 people. Moreover, an interactive auditorium for congresses, conferences, lectures, and workshops accommodates over 300 people. The museum's seven-floor storeys use artificial intelligence and human-machine interaction technologies. The technology helps create interactive experiences that challenge the audience to question the future of people, cities, societies, and life on Earth and in outer space.

The Museum of the Future is like a time machine that shows what life could be like in 2071. It is also a platform to showcase and test innovations from the world's 39 leading technology companies and a venue for partnerships with universities, international research institutes, advanced research courses and specialised workshops. In addition, there are five thematic exhibitions to explore:

- The Orbital Space Station Hope, Oss Hope, is your gateway to the future of space, 600 kilometres above Earth. Here, you can imagine a world where people don't just live and work on Earth but in space. This exhibition takes you into a whole new world and

challenges your imagination. It is like being in a vision coming to life.

- The Heal Institute is where you learn about nature. A large screen shows the DNA of the Amazon; the forest is a digital recreation of a rainforest in Leticia, Colombia, with footage filmed in the rainforest. The rainforest ecosystem simulator helps guests better understand nature and their responsibility towards it. The institute also has a DNA library of over 2,400 species, introducing biodiversity like never before.
- Al Waha is a futuristic spa allowing visitors to explore themselves in a world stimulating their senses. Visitors embark on an intimate journey in an environment where health and wellbeing are at the centre and where they can easily disconnect from technology. The environment helps people meditate, reconnect with themselves, and restore their natural balance.
- *Tomorrow today*. The exhibition explores the contrasting ways technology can shape the future by helping solve societal and environmental challenges. It features concepts, prototypes and current

products focusing on five areas: waste management, environment, food security, agriculture and urban planning.

- Designed for children under ten, *Future Heroes* encourages young minds to make discoveries about themselves and the world around them. The *Future Heroes* floor features a range of educational and fun activities that focus on future-proof skills such as curiosity, creativity, confidence, communication and cooperation.

Not surprisingly, the Museum of the Future is a popular venue for business events, so bookings for different types of meetings should be made well in advance.

Expo 2020

FROM A SIX-MONTH EVENT TO A SIX-CENTURY DESTINATION

THE MARKETING and communications expert **Sholto Douglas-Home** has ample experience in tourism, property, and media. He was the Chief sales, marketing, and communications officer for *Expo 2020 Dubai*, the first world exhibition in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, which attracted over 24 million visitors.

He is now working on developing Expo City Dubai, the *World Expo's* legacy city and an innovation-driven, people-centric city of the future committed to maximising its positive social, environmental and economic impact.

Before joining *Expo 2020 Dubai*, Sholto Douglas-Home focused on leading high-profile brands through awareness and international adaptation challenges, guiding marketing teams through martech and data transformation projects and managing diverse and internationally dispersed teams.

From 2008 to 2020, Sholto Douglas-Home gained extensive operational experience at the board level for Hays plc (an FTSE 250 global staffing company with operations in 33 countries). Before joining Hays, he held worldwide marketing and communications roles at Reuters, a news and financial information company, and senior marketing roles at the telecoms giant BT Group in London.

While at BT, he was seconded as sales and marketing director at the New Millennium Experience Company, the UK government organisation responsible for the country's millennium celebrations, including the Millennium Dome in Greenwich.

At *Dubai Expo 2020*, he brought together the sales, marketing, communications, and creative studio departments to ensure the team was as efficient, collaborative, and coordinated as possible to deliver millions of visitors through the gates. His main challenge is transforming the Expo from a six-month event that took almost eight years to create into a city that will live for centuries.

Millions of people came to *Expo 2020*, creating a powerful brand and putting Dubai and the UAE on the world stage when hosting global mega-events. A royal decree which announced and formalised the creation of Expo City, Dubai also set out how it would build on the legacy and success of the *World Expo* to further enhance Dubai's position as a destination for global events. The next big step was the UN climate conference, *COP28*, which Expo City hosted in November-December 2023.

"There are several threads to our growth. We're continuing this sequence of major events from Expo to *COP28* while, at the same time, we

are building a whole new city. Cities are where people live. They play, they work. The city protects them; it also provides employment and entertains them. Our lives are built in cities, so we are creating our culture, values and personality. We must keep the flag flying regarding events, but we're also building a destination for businesses, residents and visitors essential to Dubai's 2040 Urban Master Plan.

"At Expo City, we offer offices, leisure facilities, F&B options, event venues, and fitness grounds, as well as an array of attractions, entertainment, and cultural experiences. We're also building villas, townhouses and apartments, with the first residents set to move into their homes in early 2026. We have gone from running a six-month event to creating a destination for the next six centuries."

Located midway between Abu Dhabi and Dubai and connected to three major highways, it takes around 15 minutes to Dubai Marina, 45 minutes to Dubai International Airport, and around 90 minutes to Abu Dhabi. The Expo is next to Al Maktoum International Airport, key to Emirates Airline's long-term plans.

The entire Expo site is twice the size of Monaco, the second smallest country in the world, and there is also potential for more growth. Sholto



“Expo City is a forward-looking blueprint for a future city, much more than a memory of the World Expo”

Douglas-Home views the Expo City as a forward-looking blueprint for a future city, much more than a memory of the *World Expo*.

“We are responsible for retaining momentum on some of *Expo 2020*’s fundamental principles, such as sustainability. For starters, the city retained 80 per cent of the Expo’s built environment, and we were determined to remain true to our sustainable principles. We know that 60 per cent of the world’s carbon emissions come from cities, and our decarbonisation roadmap takes a ‘reduce, remove, offset’ approach to achieve net zero by 2050. In a nutshell, we aspire to raise the bar on responsible urban development.”

While cities housing hundreds of years-old buildings, such as London or Paris, will find it challenging to decarbonise to any great extent, Expo City feels it has an opportunity to demonstrate how cities can significantly contribute to tackling climate change.

“In our case, we can position ourselves and talk about ourselves as a model of sustainable urban life. So, we are that example if mayors or architects worldwide want to see how to build a city according to sustainable, 15-minute planning principles.

We are also learning, applying technologies and investigating innovations that help place us at the forefront of sustainable cities.”

Expo 2020 Dubai brought the world together, hosting 192 countries and welcoming world leaders, global thought leaders, sports stars, entertainers, grandparents and schoolchildren. *COP28* was another unifying force, bringing together world leaders, leading sustainability champions, and environmentalists.

Indeed, events and entertainment continue to be a major part of Expo City’s DNA. From the four-day Untold music festival to Winter City and Hai Ramadan celebrations to Spinney’s Dubai 92 Cycle Challenge and the Wings for Life World Run, there is plenty for visitors and residents to participate in.

Following *COP28*, the city is considered a go-to destination for the business events industry, with many versatile indoor and outdoor venues and the Dubai Exhibition Centre at its doorstep. Even more than that, people and organisations view Dubai and the UAE as a place to acquire knowledge and make a difference.

Sholto Douglas-Home says Expo City is responsible for building on the legacy of the *World Expo* and

of *COP28*, where global talents can bring their ideas and innovative ideas will be nurtured and supported.

“One of the ways we can do that is to foster a community with purpose. We offer office space to organisations, NGOs, and sustainability champions. For example, **Dr Jane Goodall**’s Roots & Shoots programme, a global environmental, animal welfare and humanitarian youth outreach initiative, will establish its first permanent office in the region at Terra, The Sustainability Pavilion, working with Expo City to promote youth learning opportunities around sustainability and the environment.

“In another example, Siemens, one of our *Expo 2020* partners and now a tenant of Expo City, has implemented its smart metre technology throughout our buildings. It gives tenants information about their water and energy consumption, helping them and our city as efficiently as possible.

“The UAE has a vision and a determination to achieve what others may see as impossible. It did this with the *World Expo* and will continue to do so with a sense of confidence and a clear strategy. There is no fear of failure.”



PHOTO Sara Appelgren

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Mastering the Art OF LONG-TIME PERSPECTIVE

BUSINESS LEADERS often work hard to develop new strategies for the business and its future development. “We are here, but we are going there. It may take five or ten years, but we are going there.” The problem is that despite high ambitions and much time spent on strategy work, strategies are rarely put into action in everyday work. Empirical studies indicate that only 7–10 per cent of all companies’ strategies are implemented.

A wise man once said: Be stubborn on the long-term vision but flexible on the details. The legendary swordsman **Miyamoto Musashi** understood the Agile Mindset 350 years ago. Here is an excerpt from his *Book of Five Rings*: “Perception is strong, and sight is weak. In strategy, it is important to see distant things as if they were close and to take a distanced view of close things.”

Many people in Dubai have the will to be part of the journey towards Vision 2071. At the same time, they understand that more pandemics, wars, and other problems may require the world’s attention. Still, the strategy, the will, and the growing expertise create the conditions for the road to 2071 not to feel long.

When I came to Dubai for the first time in 1997, I felt that here we see the beginning of a new world where leaders can lift their eyes from quarterly reports (the short-term profit perspective of the West) to not only think about the next three years but also create scenarios for not only our children or grandchildren but entirely new conditions for a better life for many more. When the UAE was formed in 1971, the foundations for a centennial perspective were already in place. What kind of world do we want to be possible in a hundred years? Where did that perspective go in the West? Is the political system making it impossible to think beyond the next election in the West because you need to know whether you will be reelected?

At a time when we are discussing sustainability, legacy and ecosystems as essential factors for the world’s development, and where we often hear about sportwashing and a lot of other washing effects that are said to hide what it is really about, Dubai appears to be a place where most things can withstand the attention as if it is possible to get into the depths. At least, we have written about the depths in this report. We got to see

the Emirates Bustanica, an idea the UN should quickly get all member states to realise in many places worldwide. We visited the Solar Cell Park in Dubai, which shows how to make the future’s energy supply better and cleaner. Here, the world can make study visits and check out the innovation work and, not least, the obvious right of women to not only be half of the population but also to do half of the work required to create a better world. Dubai is Mastering the Art of a Long-Time Perspective.

The background of the advertisement is a photograph of the Alif sculpture in Dubai, a large, metallic, ring-shaped structure covered in intricate Arabic calligraphy. Four business professionals (two women and two men) are walking in the foreground, dressed in professional attire. The Dubai skyline is visible in the background under a clear blue sky.

دبي
Business Events

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