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WAM

UAE LEADERS DISCUSS WAYS TO ENHANCE CITIZENS' WELLBEING

President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan met yesterday with His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, at Al Marmoom in Dubai. The leaders discussed a number of topics related to the UAE's ongoing progress and ways to advance the aspirations of the nation and its people.

Dubai sets out plan for inclusive education

Strategy aims to make city among top 10 global education leaders

DUBAI
BY CHANTAL FOUAD
Assistant Editor
HUDA TABREZ
Living in UAE Editor

Dubai's ambitious Education Strategy 2033 sets a bold vision for the future, aiming to position the city among the top 10 global leaders in education. Approved by Shaikh Hamdan Bin Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Min-

ister and Minister of Defence of the UAE, and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, the strategy focuses on creating a world-class, inclusive education system where everyone, regardless of background.

The details of the Education Strategy 2033 were revealed at a press meet yesterday, detailing the progress the city has made in the past decade and setting out the agenda for the next 10 years.

Future goals

Speaking to *Gulf News* on the sidelines of the event, Aisha Meeran, Director General of the Knowledge and Hu-

man Development Authority (KHDA) emphasised the goals of the Dubai Education Strategy 2033, which align with Dubai's broader economic and social agendas.

She highlighted the inclusive nature of the strategy, with a focus on collaboration between parents, educators, and institutions to equip students with skills for leadership and success in Dubai's future.

"We want to make sure that Dubai attracts and retains the best talent and our schools are accessible, regardless of abilities or social and economic background," she said.

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BUSINESS

UAE targets Dh450b investment in hotels over 7 years | P6

WORLD

US debate: Walz, Vance spar over immigration, abortion | P10

SPECIAL REPORTS

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8 Israeli soldiers killed in battle with Hezbollah

MILITANTS DESTROY THREE TANKS ADVANCING TOWARDS LEBANESE VILLAGE

DUBAI
BY STEPHEN N.R.
Senior Associate Editor

Eight Israeli soldiers were killed in fierce battles with Hezbollah militants in southern Lebanon yesterday, marking the first deaths of Israelis since cross-border raids began the previous day.

In a separate incident, Hezbollah operatives destroyed three Israeli tanks as they advanced towards a Lebanese border village.

The ground battles began hours after Iran launched its second missile attack on Israel, prompting PM Benjamin Netanyahu to declare that Iran would pay for its "big mistake." Israeli forces intensified bombardments on Hezbollah's strongholds in southern Beirut. In response to the rising hostilities, the Israeli military ordered evacuations in over 20 areas in southern Lebanon and continued its bombardment of Hezbollah targets.

Israel declares UN chief 'persona non grata'

In a related diplomatic fallout, Israel declared UN chief Antonio Guterres "persona non grata," accusing him of failing to condemn Iran's missile attacks on Israel.

Foreign Minister Israel Katz criticised Guterres as an "anti-Israel Secretary-General" and labelled him a supporter of glob-

al terrorism. However, Guterres later condemned Iran's attack. "As should have been obvious yesterday in the context of the condemnation I expressed," Guterres told an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, "I again strongly condemn yesterday's massive missile attacks by Iran on Israel."

Emergency G7 meeting

As tensions escalated, world leaders convened an emergency G7 meeting, urging both Iran and Israel to de-escalate the situation.

Italy, which holds this year's G7 presidency, was due to host the extraordinary call yesterday. Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani told Parliament time was of the essence to avoid further escalation. "There is still a chance we can avoid a war that could involve the entire Middle East," he said. "We call on regional actors to act responsibly."

"Iran risks setting the entire region on fire, this must be prevented at all costs," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said.

SEE ALSO P9

The Israeli military ordered evacuations in over 20 areas in southern Lebanon and continued its bombardment of Hezbollah targets.

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How Dubai envisions inclusive education for lifelong learning

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, MULTIPLE EDUCATION OPTIONS BEING PLANNED

DUBAI
BY CHANTAL FOUAD
 Assistant Editor
HUDA TABREZ
 Living in UAE Editor

A world-class education system where everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, can find a place to learn and grow. This is the vision of Dubai's Education Strategy 2033, which aims to make it one of the top 10 cities in the world when it comes to education.

On Tuesday, Shaikh Hamdan Bin Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the UAE, and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council, approved a series of new plans aimed at boosting Dubai's leadership in several sectors over the next decade, including education.

What is Dubai's Education Strategy 2033?

The Education Strategy 2033 is designed to transform the education system to ensure high-quality education for all.

The strategy aims to build a system that enables Dubai to realise its aspirations, enhances capacity building, and delivers a higher standard of quality.

Shaikh Hamdan said: "Our strategy for a world-leading education system will foster lifelong learning and equip the next generation of national leaders, grounded in Emirati values and identity, to shape the future."

Special media session

In a special session with the media, Aisha Meeran, Director General of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) laid out the education strategy for the next decade for Dubai. She elaborated on how the strategy aims to set an example for an education system that is suitable for everyone, inclusive of all levels.

Plan for international Dubai university under study

"Since 2007, private schools have increased from 136 to over 220, and the number of children in private education doubled in size. The main aim of the strategy is to enhance the Arabic language. Children are not strong in Arabic, so this is to enhance their proficiency in the Arabic language.

"An international Dubai university is an aim as well, which will be well-known in the



Aisha Meeran, Director-General of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority, explains how Dubai's Education Strategy 2033 will change the education landscape in Dubai.

We want to educate students about work-life balance and the difference between public and private work. Alternative options to university will also be made available, if the student does not necessarily want to go to university or if the student wants to work at an early age."

Aisha Meeran | Director-General of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority

220

private schools in Dubai, up from 136 in 2007. Private school enrolment has doubled

50%

targeted enrolment of international students in universities by 2033, up from 30% at present

world. Instead of going to study abroad, students will have the same level of education in Dubai and it will encourage international students to come to the international Dubai university," she said.

The strategy aims to create a world-class education system, right from the early stages of nurseries and kindergarten, to enable early detection signs of learning challenges as well as talent.

Focus on soft skills

"We want to give them life lessons and soft skills, not just academic knowledge. At an early age, we want to educate students about work-life balance and the difference between public and private work. Alternative options to university will also be made available, if

the student does not necessarily want to go to university or if the student wants to work at an early age," Meeran added.

Constant education

"The idea of constant education is an aim of the system and the media plays an important role in delivering the message of the new system of education. The families are the main influence on children and there are initiatives to educate parents as well.

"Currently, 30 per cent of university students are international students, and the aim is to get to 50 per cent. There will be adjustments and further trainings for teachers to be able to teach the new system," Meeran went on to add.

In the past decade, the education system in Dubai has

EDUCATION STRATEGY 2033 FIVE OBJECTIVES

- High quality, inclusive education, suitable for everyone, regardless of religion, class, or financial ability.
- Educating families about the system of education and asking for their support.
- A world-class education system, with the best schools and universities in the world.
- Encouraging creative/innovative zones. "Education is evolving with new tech such as Artificial Intelligence and the goal is to stay up to date," Aisha said.
- Educating families about healthy early habits such as reading, good nutrition.

grown in leaps and bounds, with the curricula offered increasing from 13 to 17 and schools offering world-class education systems increasing from 35 per cent to 75 per cent. The newly announced education strategy will take this progress even further.

According to Meeran, the strategy's programmes will address questions like how UAE parents can be encouraged to enrol their children, how to enhance the proficiency of the Arabic language, make fees affordable for everyone, place local universities among the top international ones and get more international universities to Dubai.

Sharjah book fair to celebrate Morocco

Themed 'It Starts with a Book,' SIBF to draw elite authors on November 6-17

SHARJAH
BY ASHFAQ AHMED
 Senior Assistant Editor

The Sharjah Book Authority (SBA) announced that the 43rd edition of the Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF 2024) will be held on November 6-17 under the theme, 'It Starts with a Book'.

Morocco will be the guest of honour at this year's book fair. A specially curated programme honouring Morocco will include workshops, book signings, and artistic performances that connect audiences with Moroccan literature and creativity.

Attendees can also look forward to roaming shows that showcase the rich cultural diversity of Morocco alongside cultural forums designed for insightful discussions and the exchange of knowledge.

Who is attending?

SIBF will gather a diverse assembly of local, Arab, and international publishers alongside distinguished authors, intellectuals, and creatives, who will deliberate critical literary, cultural, and intellectual topics, sharing their insights with a global audience.

The theme, 'It Starts with a Book,' embodies Sharjah's unwavering belief in the pivotal role of reading and knowledge as the cornerstones of societal progress.

It underscores that every learning journey begins with a book as a gateway to boundless knowledge. It asserts that books are essential tools for shaping the future, extending an open invitation to engage in the 43rd edition and embracing reading as a fundamental, lifelong pursuit.

SIBF serves as a powerful reminder that the foundations of every great civilisation are laid with books, and the values that shape nations are deeply rooted in literature."

Shaikha Bodour Al Qasimi
 | Chairperson of SBA

SIBF has become a comprehensive platform for a knowledge-based society – bringing together readers, authors, translators, and illustrators to explore the latest trends in the sector and exchange innovative ideas."

Ahmad Al Ameri
 | CEO of SBA

bracing reading as a fundamental, lifelong pursuit.

SIBF's legacy and impact

Shaikha Bodour Al Qasimi, Chairperson of SBA, said: "SIBF serves as a powerful reminder that the foundations of every great civilisation are laid with books, and the values that shape nations are deeply rooted in literature."

Ahmad Al Ameri, CEO of SBA, said: "SIBF has become a comprehensive platform for a knowledge-based society – bringing together readers, authors, translators, and illustrators to explore the latest trends in the sector and exchange innovative ideas."



Sharjah International Book Fair attracts elite authors and participants from around the world.

Dubai boy's start-up wins Dh1m funding

Once a school topper, Ivy League student wants to launch learning app in UAE

DUBAI
BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN
 Chief Reporter

A former Dubai student, a Golden Visa holder, has won \$280,000 (over Dh1 million) in funding for an edtech start-up he co-founded in the US.

Indian expat Rahul Nambiar aims to launch his start-up's app in the UAE. He studied at Cambridge International School in Dubai where he topped the school in the GCSE exams. He is now at the University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy League institution, where he teamed up with another student, Yash Dhir,

We were looking at ways to improve the learning experience for high-school students in the US during the pandemic. Jochi was designed to support students with learning differences like dyslexia and ADHD."



Rahul Nambiar | Former student of Cambridge International School in Dubai and Golden Visa holder, who is now in the US

when they were freshmen and launched Jochi in 2021.

"We were looking at ways to improve the learning experience for high-school students in the US during the pandemic," Rahul, who is also chief technology officer, said. "It was designed to support students with learning differences like dyslexia and ADHD."

In their fourth year, Rahul and Yash were awarded the

University's President's Innovation Prize to continue their work, post-graduation. They are scheduled to receive \$100,000 in grant funding and a \$50,000 living stipend each. The duo also won \$30,000 from the 2024 Venture Lab Startup Challenge.

Jochi will also have a workplace in the Pennovation Centre, the University of Pennsylvania's business incubator.

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You can use your student ID to get travel, shopping deals

HERE ARE SEVEN WAYS TO UNLOCK A RANGE OF DISCOUNTS ACROSS THE BOARD

DUBAI
BY ZAINAB HUSAIN
Features Writer

Balancing academics and personal life as a college student can be overwhelming as a tight budget can limit your options. But if you are a student in the UAE, your student ID and email address can unlock a range of discounts. Here is a guide to where you can use your college ID to get student discounts in the UAE.

When shopping or dining out, check with the restaurant or store first to see if their student discount is available as terms and conditions vary. Many universities also offer exclusive discounts to students at cafes, restaurants and retail outlets. It is a good idea to check your university's website for the latest deals and offers.

1 Get a blue nol card for half-price rides on metro, buses
Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority offers a personal 'blue' nol card that provides a 50 per cent discount on all public transport fares for students. The card is linked to your Emirates ID, allowing you to recover your balance if it is lost.

2 Flight discounts (Emirates and Etihad)
If you are an international student, you can save on flights with Emirates and Etihad Airways. Emirates offers students a 10 per cent discount



From public transportation to electronics, many brands and services offer student deals in collaboration with universities.



Living in UAE: All your queries related to living and working in the UAE answered

on economy class tickets and a 5 per cent discount on business class tickets. Just use the promo code 'STUDENT' when booking. Remember to carry a valid student ID or an acceptance letter when you check-in.

Etihad offers full-time international students aged 18 to 32 a 10 per cent discount on economy class and 5 per cent on business class tickets. Just sign up for the Etihad Guest loyalty programme on etihadguest.com.

3 Student bank accounts with no minimum balance
Many UAE banks such

as Emirates NBD, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank and First Abu Dhabi Bank offer special student accounts with no minimum balance. Some also provide free withdrawals and zero account opening fees. To open an account, you must be at least 18 years old and have an Emirates ID.

4 Get discounts on phones, laptops and tablets
Many popular brands offer student discounts on essential gadgets like laptops, smartphones, and tablets ranging from limited time offers, instalment plans to trade-in options for old devices.

5 Shopping and dining
Popular fashion brands in the UAE also offer students discounts ranging from 10 to 20 per cent on clothing

GET A FAZAA CARD

The Faza Student Card offers discounts on dining, travel, shopping and entertainment from over 1,600 brands across 3,900 locations. However, your university must be part of the Faza programme, and only then can you register using a verification code provided by your institution. The card is provided by the Social Security Fund under the UAE's Ministry of Interior.

and accessories. All you need is your valid student ID. Many food chains and cafes also offer discounts to university students. Some universities have exclusive deals with retail outlets for enrolled students.

6 Get fit for less
Many gyms offer special student discounts and to access these deals, you simply need to register on their websites with your school details.

7 Streaming platforms and software discounts
Students can also enjoy reduced rates on popular streaming services, allowing you to enjoy ad-free music at a lower cost. For students in creative fields, check your favourite media editing software to see if you can get discounts on monthly subscriptions to their suite of applications.

Salik denies claims of dynamic pricing

Motorists advised to rely on official sources for accurate information, updates

DUBAI
BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN
Chief Reporter

Dubai's road toll operator, Salik, has addressed recent inaccurate social media reports about dynamic pricing and tariff exemptions.

A widely circulated social media post suggested that dynamic pricing would see no toll charges between 3am and 5am, Dh4 from 5am to 7am and Dh8 between 7am and 10am. According to the post, the charges would drop to Dh6 from 10am to 3pm, rise back to Dh8 from 3pm to 7pm, then decrease to Dh6 from 7pm to 10pm, and be Dh4 from 10pm to 3am.

The company said in a Dubai Financial Markets (DFM) filing that these claims are false and urged motorists to rely solely on official sources, such as DFM and the official Salik website, for accurate information and updates.

"We wish to clarify that the publications that are being circulated on some social media platforms are inaccurate," the company said.

Salik reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and compliance with disclosure guidelines set by the Securities and Commodities Authority (SCA) and the DFM, assuring that any significant announcements will be shared with the market.

10 toll gates by November

Salik will open two new gates in Business Bay and Al Safa South on Shaikh Zayed Road in November of this year, bringing its total to 10 gates in the city. The addition of these two gates will raise Salik's revenue and profit prospects in 2025 and beyond.

The toll gate in Business Bay is valued at Dh2.26 billion and Al Safa South at Dh469 million. Al Safa South will be linked with the existing Al Safa North gate.

Drivers will be charged only once if they pass through the two gates within an hour in the same direction.



Salik will open two toll gates in Business Bay and Al Safa South on Shaikh Zayed Road in November.

Sheep theft: Man's jail sentence suspended

RAS AL KHAIMAH
BY AGHADDIR ALI
Senior Reporter

A 36-year-old man has had his sentence for allegedly stealing sheep suspended for three years by a court in Ras Al Khaimah after doubts were raised about the theft.

He was initially sentenced to one year in prison and slapped a fine for the crime. The defendant's legal team from Hanan Al Shmeili Law Firm filed a defence against this ruling.

The victim waived his rights and reached a settlement with the defendant, but the court dismissed it for lack of merit, and eventually the initial sentence was also suspended.

Background

The case began when a 40-year-old Arab national reported the theft after learning that three of his sheep were for sale at a livestock market. Investigations revealed that the accused allegedly had a history for similar offences.

The complainant claimed to have lost 30 sheep worth Dh50,000, but only reported the theft after discovering three were missing. The defence said a loss of this magnitude would prompt immediate reporting, indicating the claim lacked credibility.

It also questioned how they recognised the stolen sheep in the market.

Drugs hidden in headlights caught at Sharjah airport

10,934 narcotic tablets were stashed in packages belonging to a passenger

SHARJAH
BY AGHADDIR ALI
Senior Reporter

The Sharjah Ports, Customs and Free Zones Authority announced yesterday that it had foiled an attempt to smuggle 8.7kg of narcotics at Sharjah International Airport.

Customs officers at Sharjah Airport Customs Centre became suspicious of cardboard packages belonging to a passenger and upon closer inspection, they discovered the packages contained 10,934 narcotic tablets, weighing 8.716kg, hidden inside headlights.



The packages contained narcotic tablets, weighing 8.716kg in total.

A case was filed, and the seized materials were handed over to the relevant authorities for legal action.

The Authority commended the inspection officers and staff at the customs centre for their vigilance and firm stance against smugglers attempting to bring prohibited materials through Sharjah customs ports.

Burger cafe in Abu Dhabi shut over food safety violations

Al Reem Island eatery accused of repeated high-risk violations

ABU DHABI
Gulf News Report

The Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA) has issued a decision to administratively close Hit Burger Cafeteria in Al Reem Island, Abu Dhabi.

ADAFSA stated that the food control report regarding the establishment followed repeated high-risk violations that have a direct impact on food safety.

The establishment may resume operations after rectifying its situation and fulfilling all the necessary requirements and removing the causes of the violation.

ADAFSA highlighted that the closure is part of ongoing inspection efforts to strengthen the food safety system in Abu Dhabi. It underscores its supervisory role in ensuring that all establishments comply with food safety requirements.

The authority encourages the public to report any violations in food establishment, such as non-compliance or suspicion of food content, by calling the toll-free number for the Abu Dhabi Government, 800555.

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Admiral Corporation of America partners with Jumbo Electronics Ltd. for distribution.

The partnership will accelerate the availability of Admiral's product portfolio in the UAE and beyond.



Admiral Corporation of America has partnered with Jumbo Electronics Ltd. within the UAE for its home appliances vertical, Admiral Appliances & Electronics Middle East CIS & Africa FZE.

The agreement was signed by Mr. Vishal Saxena, CEO Admiral Appliances and Electronics - MEA, CIS & South Asia, and Mr. Vikas Chadha, CEO Jumbo Electronics Ltd. at Shangri La Hotel, Dubai on 27th

August 2024. As per the agreement Jumbo will distribute Admiral's range of consumer durables.

This partnership strengthens Admiral's presence in the UAE, while supporting Jumbo's ongoing strategy to diversify its portfolio. By joining forces, both groups are poised to offer consumers even greater value and choice in the rapidly expanding home appliances sector.

Nominations invited for Great Arab Minds award

DUBAI
BY KHITAM AL AMIR
Chief News Editor

The Great Arab Minds Award opened entries for its second edition starting yesterday.

Making the announcement on his X account, His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, said: "The Great Arab Minds Award is a seed we plant today for a brighter future. While we are immensely proud of the Arab world's historical achievements, it is just as important to empower the Arab individual in shaping the future."

Dh6 million prize pool

The award's six categories encompass medicine, engineering and technology, economics, natural sciences, architecture and design, and literature and arts. The second edition will honour six winners. The award has prize pool of Dh6 million, with the winner in each category being awarded Dh1 million.

Nominations for both individuals and institutions close on October 2024. Entries can be submitted on <https://greatarabminds.ae/ar/nomination-process/>

Nominations undergo extensive evaluation based on evidenced results, certificates, patents, publications, books, research and projects.

Dubai Government entities win laurels for excellence in services

POLICE, RTA AND MUNICIPALITY EMERGE BIG WINNERS FOR THEIR INITIATIVES

DUBAI
Gulf News Report

Top Dubai Government entities were awarded in the Hamdan Bin Mohammad Program for Government Services, organised by the Dubai Model Centre, yesterday.

Shaikh Hamdan Bin Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the UAE, and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council, attended the ceremony.

"We commend the team behind the programme for their outstanding efforts, which resulted in improvements to 418 government services, savings worth Dh647 million for customers, and a 98 per cent reduction in service access times, within a year," he posted on his X account.

"Congratulations to Dubai Police for winning the Hamdan Flag; the Roads and Transport Authority for winning the Customer Trust award and Dubai Municipality for winning the Pioneering Initiative award for its 'Build in Dubai' initiative."

Shaikh Hamdan reviewed the results of the first phase of the Services 360 Policy.

"We are driving an unprecedented transformation in Dubai's government services, powered by innovation and collaboration," Shaikh Hamdan said. "Through strong partnerships between the public and private sectors, we have generated over Dh1 billion in savings,



■ Shaikh Hamdan awards the Hamdan Flag to Dubai Police in the presence of Dubai Police Chief Lt Gen Abdullah Khalifa Al Marri. Seven government entities had been shortlisted for the award.



reduced service access times by 98 per cent, and achieved customer trust of 91 per cent through their active involvement in improving services."

During the ceremony, Dubai Municipality's 'Build in Dubai' initiative was honoured for its exemplary role in service integration.

Other initiatives that reached the final stage, after evaluation

Dh647m
savings for customers due to improvements in 418 services offered by Dubai Government

of submissions from 26 government entities, included Lost and Found (Dubai Police), Judgment Execution System (Dubai Courts), Smart Case File (Dubai Public Prosecution), Digitised ATA Carnet (Dubai Chambers), Unified Digital Trading Permits Services (Ports, Customs, and

Free Zone Corporation) and Unified Request (GDRFA Dubai).

Seven government entities were shortlisted by the Dubai Model Centre earlier this year for the Hamdan Flag that was won by Dubai Police.

The evaluation focused on five core criteria: achieving results and impact, adopting a whole of government approach, fostering creativity and innovation, promoting a strong service culture, and ensuring sustainability.

Shaikh Hamdan praised the outstanding efforts of Dubai Government departments in boosting customer trust.

Building of Dubai's agri innovation hub begins

DUBAI
Gulf News Report

Construction of new training and research facilities at the International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) in the UAE has begun.

The project, a collaboration between ICBA and Al Rostamani Group with the support of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, is a significant step towards achieving the UAE's goals for food security and climate resilience.

The new training centre is designed to accommodate up to 300 participants with modern multipurpose halls for workshops, seminars, and hands-on training.

The research facilities will also feature an advanced lab for plant tissue culture and an integrated agri-aquaculture system.

Government support

Dr Anna Bint Abdullah Al Dahak, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, who attended the groundbreaking event, said, "We are working to transform traditional agricultural systems into sustainable, climate- and environmentally smart systems that are scalable and resilient."

Dr Tarifa Al Zaabi, ICBA director-general, termed the initiative as a vital step towards addressing global challenges in agriculture and food security, with a focus on knowledge transfer.

Dubai to host AccessAbilities Expo

Forum on Applied Behaviour Analysis for autistic children among highlights

DUBAI
Gulf News Report

The sixth AccessAbilities Expo 2024 to be held at Dubai World Trade Centre on October 7-9 is expected to draw around 250 international exhibitors, brands and rehabilitation centres from 50 countries.

The global platform serves more than 50 million people of determination in the region who can benefit from the latest assistive technologies and explore best practices in their rehabilitation and healthcare.

Among the key events is a workshop organised by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) whose members account for over 80 per cent of the global air traffic, on 'Innovations in Air Travel Acces-



■ The AccessAbilities Expo offers the latest assistive technologies and care for people of determination.

sibility', outlining the newest standards and procedures it adopted for the member airlines to provide accessible travel for people of determination.

The expo will also host a Youth Circle, organised by the

Dubai Youth Council, on 'Accessible Tourism'. The session will cover several topics, including an understanding of the concept of accessible tourism, successful international experiences in the accessible tourism domain, challenges faced by people of determination when travelling and an analysis of gaps in infrastructure and services.

Young people of determination will share their personal experiences in the travel domain and present inspiring stories and practical experiences.

The expo will feature a conference on Applied Behaviour Analysis for autistic children, the first of its kind in the UAE.

Ghassan Suleiman, CEO of AccessAbilities Expo, said: "The expo has been achieving significant milestones by showcasing cutting-edge technologies for the first time in the region's markets, thereby benefiting millions of people with determination and enhancing their quality of life."

RTA to ensure you never miss the bus

Instant updates on bus arrivals and locations planned on smart apps

DUBAI
Gulf News Report

Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) is set to enhance the accuracy of its Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system.

The move aims to provide instant updates on bus arrivals and locations via multiple smart apps, including RTA's S'hail app and third-party Journey Planner platforms.



Courtesy: RTA

■ RTA's alliance with Swiftly has led to a 24 per cent improvement in accuracy of estimated time of arrival.

This platform leverages advanced big data technologies to enhance bus arrival predictions by considering factors such as

real-time traffic, delays, and service disruptions.

Ahmad Bahrozian, CEO of RTA's Public Transport Agency, said: "By utilising big data-based solutions, this collaboration with Swiftly will offer accurate bus arrival predictions, ensuring that passengers know exactly when to reach the bus stop, helping them avoid missing the bus or waiting too long."

Jonathan Simkin, co-founder and CEO of Swiftly, said the partnership has led to a 24 per cent improvement in the accuracy of estimated time of arrival, which means more passengers will catch their bus.

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DUBAI
BY MANOJ NAIR
Business Editor

The launch of Space42 on Tuesday came with yet another major push by the UAE, making a statement in a hugely lucrative and still developing space economy.

Space42 represents the merger of two ADX-listed entities, Yahsat and Bayanat, to create what has been billed as one of the biggest publicly listed space technology companies in the world. After the Space42 ticker made its debut on the ADX, the stock opened at Dh2.38 and has stayed largely at the same level since.

For Ali Al Hashemi, leading Space42's upstream fixed and mobility satellite operations and services is a natural step up from being the CEO of Yahsat, the prime operational role of which was to create the satellite and communications capabilities for UAE's space programme.

In an interview with *Gulf News*, Al Hashemi talks about the rationale behind the creation of Space42 and its future plans.

■ Yahsat had unique capabilities, while Bayanat focused more on AI solutions. Does this mean fewer overlaps in creating the merged entity?

I don't see Yahsat and Bayanat as having been too different. Today, you have a tech sector that's dominated by AI and what AI-enabled applications can do. This integration was about bringing geo-system and communication services together and to empower them with AI.

This is the global trend in the tech sector.

Second, if you think about it, there is also the integration happening in satellite communication, satellite operations and their maintenance. Even if we get into satellite manufacturing in the future, there's a lot of synergies we can get from creating Space42.

■ So, Space42 is about exploring new horizons?

If you look at our history as Yahsat, we have delivered many geostationary Earth observation satellites to the UAE Gov-

“We are fully geared for expansion as Space42”

COMPANY HAS BIG PLANS, EXTENDING BEYOND UAE AND EVEN BEYOND THE PLANET



■ Yahsat has delivered many geostationary Earth observation satellites to the UAE Government.

Space42 represents the merger of two ADX-listed entities, Yahsat and Bayanat, to create what's been billed as one of the biggest publicly listed space technology companies in the world.

Dh5.1b
value of recent Space42 deal, reflecting its financial readiness

ernment. Our immediate priority as Space42 is to bring three or four launches, which will bring around 16 types of applications to the market.

As for the SAR programme, we have already launched the first SAR (synthetic aperture radar) satellite. We will continue to launch around six or seven satellites from four sites as part of our 'Foresight' constellation.

There will also be a continuation of the direct-to-device

strategy in three stages. This year, we will launch a smartphone with satellite capabilities. Next year, we will enable our satellites with text capability for direct-to-mobile devices. This means if you have a smartphone with S band or L band communication, it will be able to talk to our satellite.

Finally, we will be sending the Leo satellite constellation to enable direct-to-mobile devices. (Direct-to-mobile service is a technology that enables ac-

cess to high data content without requiring internet connection.)

■ All these require Space42 to call in more equity? Or even debt?

As Yahsat and Bayanat, we were well funded and with around zero leverage. If needed, we can easily go to 3-4x leverage easily. And if you think about it, we have a contract that we just signed for Dh5.1 billion, and there are many other con-



“The nature of satellite business, of the space industry itself is always about facing disruption. It's in our DNA as Space42 to look at the next big wave.”

Ali Al Hashemi
| CEO of Yahsat Space Services — Space42

tracts too. We are fully geared for expansion — as Space42.

■ As Yahsat, you had looked at stake buys in international satellite focused businesses, even one in the US. Given that the merger with Bayanat has just happened, will overseas deal-making take a back seat?

I don't think the merger will be an obstacle in any way. We'll be fully integrated soon. If any investors are worried about the integration process, I will be telling them there is not even a single issue.

On our table right now is a full list of programmes that we need to do — the SAR satellites, the direct-to-device strategy... If we focus on just these two, it will be a gamechanger for Space42.

Registry to give UAE businesses a headstart

ABU DHABI

ANational Economic Registry (NER) called Growth containing a unified database of businesses and business licences has been launched in the UAE. The Ministry of Economy platform integrates all the procedures and requirements to start and run businesses into a single portal.

The platform provides information on over 2,000 economic activities across the UAE and offers proactive services to a broad spectrum of users, including decision-makers, business owners, investors, and research centres.

It enables users to inquire about any business licence, access investment opportunities, and prepare studies on market trends, supporting business growth and government digital management of economic activities using AI technologies.

Usable information

Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, Minister of Economy, said the NER connects 46 entities in the country, utilising the unified economic number (ERN) to integrate data between federal and local government bodies, furthering the UAE's digital transformation of services and reducing the need for paperwork.

He added that the platform will be regularly updated, enhancing transparency in business performance and supporting the UAE's global credit rating with international classification bodies.

Looking ahead, the Ministry of Economy plans to link the platform with 100 federal and local entities, increase services to 500, and reduce service delivery times over the next two years. — WAM

UAE insurer reined in over capital concerns

DUBAI

ATakaful insurer in the UAE has been prohibited from issuing — or concluding — new motor and health insurance contracts. This will also apply to renewals of such policies, according to a decision by the UAE Central Bank.

But the insurer remains liable for all rights and obligations arising from insurance contracts concluded before the decision of the prohibition.

“This action comes as a result of the insurance company's failure to meet the minimum capital requirement,” said the regulator. “The CBUAE has given the insurer a period of six months to remediate the solvency position and comply with its directions in this regard.”

“The CBUAE, through its supervisory and regulatory mandates, works to ensure that all insurers, their owners and staff abide by the UAE laws, regulations and standards adopted by the CBUAE.” — WAM

Dragon Oil to double output in next 5 years

Company delivering annual production growth ranging from 10% to 13%

DUBAI

Dragon Oil Company, wholly owned by the Government of Dubai, is planning to double its daily production over the next five years to 450,000 bpd from its current level of 210,000 bpd.

Ali Rashid Al Jarwan, CEO of Dragon Oil Company, stated that the company has an ambitious plan to double its production within the next five years as part of a comprehensive strategic vision aimed at leveraging its global position. Al Jarwan noted that the company is delivering an annual production growth

ranging from 10 per cent to 13 per cent.

He noted the significant growth in production over the past seven years, which has increased from 70,000 bpd to 210,000 barrels per day, underscoring the company's strength and ability to expand and invest in oilfields.

On future investments, he explained that the company's budget amounts to \$1.5 billion annually, with \$1 billion allocated for investment and \$500 million for operations.

He pointed out that Dragon Oil, which operates in several key markets, including Egypt, Iraq, and Turkmenistan, is working on expanding in these markets and leveraging its strong partnerships with these countries, which gives the company a competitive edge and enhances its expansions. — WAM

450,000 bpd
Dragon Oil's targeted daily production in five years, up from the current 210,000 bpd

Enoc mulling expansion of its Jebel Ali Oil Refinery, CEO says

Enoc developing mobile fuel stations as cost-effective solution to meet energy needs

ABU DHABI

Saif Humaid Al Falasi, Group CEO, Emirates National Oil Company (Enoc), has revealed plans to expand the company's Jebel Ali Oil Refinery and its network of fuel stations in the country as part of its investment strategy.

In statements to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) on the sidelines of the 26th Water, Energy, Technology and Environment Exhibition (Wetex) 2024 in Dubai, Al Falasi said that Enoc is developing mobile fuel stations, which, he said, are significantly more cost-effective than traditional stations.

Cheaper option

These mobile stations, he explained, cost up to Dh1-2 million each, compared to the cost of traditional stations that can reach up to Dh20-30 million.

“These mobile energy stations provide a flexible solution to meet energy needs in different areas, as their locations can



■ Enoc Link, the world's first 'eLink Station', enables motorists and customers easy access and convenient fuelling services.

be adjusted to match demand and traffic congestion in specific regions,” he added.

He spoke about the digital mobile fuel delivery service for businesses in the UAE, saying that Enoc Link, the world's first 'eLink Station', enables motorists and customers easy access and convenient fuelling services.

Equipped with innovative digital systems, the solar-powered station offers consumers a reliable supply of diesel and biodiesel. — WAM

Mobile energy stations provide a flexible solution to meet energy needs in different areas, as their locations can be adjusted to match demand and traffic congestion in specific regions.”

Saif Humaid Al Falasi
| Group CEO of Enoc

UAE targets 16% tourism GDP with Dh450b push in 7 years

DOUBLING NIGHTS VISITORS SPEND IN UAE TO EIGHT A KEY PART OF THE PLAN

DUBAI
BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN
Chief Reporter

The UAE is setting its sights high for the hospitality and tourism sector, projecting it will account for 16 per cent of the nation's GDP by 2031, a rise from 11.7 per cent in 2023, equating to Dh220 billion.

To realise these goals, the country plans to secure over Dh450 billion in investments within the hotel industry over the next seven years. This strategy includes diversifying offerings by making substantial inroads into wellness and medical tourism and enhancing tourism initiatives in the Northern Emirates, including Sharjah, Fujairah, Ajman, and Ras Al Khaimah.

Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, UAE Minister of Economy, outlined these targets at the Future Hospitality Summit in Dubai and said that the UAE is on track to achieve them.

UAE's safety a key attribute

"In the first half of this year, about 73 million visitors were managed by our airports in the UAE. We have over 1,200 hotels that have hosted millions of people, and our occupancy levels are at 80 per cent, which is among the highest in the world," said Al Marri.

The Minister said the UAE's appeal as a major tourism hub lies in the safety it offers despite tensions in the broader Middle East. "We are in the eye of the storm, but we have the highest safety and security protocols. And everyone knows that about us. Our numbers speak for themselves," he said.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the UAE's travel and tourism industry grew by 26 per cent last year, contributing Dh220 billion to the country's GDP.

Diversifying tourism

"We are focused on significantly increasing the number of hotel keys and expanding our hospitality offerings," said Al Marri.

The UAE also wants to diversify its tourism portfolio by emphasising medical and wellness tourism.

A key objective is to boost the average length of stay for



Attendees at the Future Hospitality Summit in Dubai. Minister Al Marri said the UAE's appeal as a major tourism hub lies in the safety it offers despite tensions in the broader Middle East.

We are in the eye of the storm, but we have the highest safety and security protocols. And everyone knows that about us. Our numbers speak for themselves.

Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri | UAE Minister of Economy



visitors, currently at 3.5 to 3.6 nights, to between 7 and 8 nights per visit.

Breakfast in Fujairah, lunch in Dubai

The Minister said he is also seeking ways to introduce new types of products into UAE's Northern Emirates.

"Each Emirate, from Fujairah to Abu Dhabi, has a different competitive advantage to offer. It can be so that tourists can start their journey with breakfast in Fujairah, and move on to having lunch in Dubai," he said.

When asked if Saudi Arabia's rapidly growing tourism sector

challenges UAE's hospitality sector, the Minister said: "Not at all.

"The UAE has a 60 per cent international and a 40 per cent domestic tourism [consisting of UAE nationals and expatriates] split. We've focused on domestic tourism with campaigns like 'The Coolest Winter in the World', which has run for four consecutive years. We are going to launch another one this year."

He added, "We realised a huge demand for offerings among domestic tourists. Domestic tourism is crucial because it is high-spending, and we are working to balance in-

ternational and domestic tourism at 50-50."

Domestic tourists

Al Marri cited the example of Fujairah's Dibba Bay Oysters, which exports French oysters to different parts of the world.

"This is a domestic tourism aspect that comes in, and we want to double down on offerings such as these. I want to focus on domestic tourism because pre-Covid, we were 70 per cent international and 30 per cent domestic. And when Covid hit, it reversed to 30-70. That's when we adapted many of our offerings to benefit local tourists," said Al Marri.

Increasing the workforce

The tourism industry in the UAE employs around 800,000 people, about 12 per cent of the workforce, said the Minister.

"We are collaborating with the Nafis programme and other initiatives to encourage more UAE nationals to join the tourism sector, offering salary incentives and pension plans," he said.

"Globally, the tourism industry faces challenges in attracting talent, and we're addressing this by working with the UN on education tool kits to make the industry more appealing," said the Minister.

ROOM FOR GROWTH

Dubai adds 2,700 hotel rooms in H1-2024, 10,100 in pipeline

DUBAI
BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN
Chief Reporter

Dubai currently has 151,417 hotel rooms in 825 hotel establishments, and there's "still demand for more rooms," said the CEO of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM), Issam Kazim. The growth potential for more hotel rooms rests "on going to the right locations," he said at the Future Hospitality Summit on Monday.

Moreover, he explained that Dubai is not solely focused on the luxury segment, as it has been perceived in the past. "Today, we know that there are amazing three-star hotels as well that can compete with many five-star properties around the world," stated Kazim.

DCTCM, an entity under the Emirates' Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), said Dubai recorded 10.2 million visitors from January to July 2024, a 3.7 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2023.

DET said the number of hotel rooms in the 5-star category witnessed the highest growth in the past year, with a 35 per cent increase in room supply to over 52,000 rooms.

And according to real estate consultants Cavendish Maxwell, more than 2,700 new hotel rooms were delivered in Dubai in the first half of 2024, with a further 10,100 set to come onto the market by the end of 2025.

Growth in branded residences

Apart from the hotel sector, the Emirate's branded residences sector is experiencing rapid growth. Two hotel groups announced major developments at the Future Hospitality Summit.

On Monday, Accor and The Summary Executive Properties signed a deal for Swissôtel's first standalone Branded Residences project. The waterfront residences will be built on Dubai Islands and open in 2027.

Also, home-grown Rove Hotels has forayed further into the branded residences market with the launch of Rove Home Dubai Marina. In collaboration with the IRTG Group, Rove Hotels unveiled the 600-unit project at the FHS on Monday.

"It will be launched for sale in November and competitively priced. It is designed and targeted towards active professionals and savvy investors," according to chief operating officer Paul Bridger.

Following the rapid sell-out of previous projects, Rove aims to expand its footprint in the residential market by launching 3,000 branded residences over the next five years.

Hotel expansion

The brand also remains committed to its hotel expansion plans. "This is on top of our hotel expansion plans, where we plan to open 10,000 rooms over the next five years," Bridger added. Rove Hotels currently has over 3,000 rooms in Dubai alone.

The COO said Rove Hotels enjoyed a healthy summer in terms of occupancies.

"We are ahead of last year and ahead of our targets. We enjoy occupancy levels averaging at 85 per cent. Moreover, our Q4 forward bookings look stronger compared to last year," he added. Bridger also said the company's latest hotel, Rove JBR, launched in July of this year and performed well over the summer.



Today, we know that there are amazing three-star hotels as well that can compete with many five-star properties around the world."

Issam Kazim | CEO of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing

InterContinental plans to create 6,000 jobs at its hotels in Saudi Arabia

It is in franchise deal for world's tallest hotel in Dubai

DUBAI
BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN
Chief Reporter

The InterContinental Hotel Group is set to hire 6,000 new employees in Saudi Arabia and "several thousand" more in the UAE in the next three or four years as part of an ambitious regional expansion. The British hospitality brand's current workforce stands at 30,000 for the Middle East, Africa and India operations.

In Dubai, an InterContinental brand - Vignette Collection - has aligned with the Ciel property in Dubai Marina, which will also be the world's tallest hotel. The 80-plus-level

luxury hotel will have 1,000 keys and will open in 2025.

"When opening a hotel like Ciel, you typically need about 2,000 staff members to run the property effectively," said Haitham Mattar, the regional managing director at InterContinental Hotel Group.

"In luxury hotels, the staffing requirement can be even higher, with 2-2.5 employees needed per room."

New jobs

Given the company's pipeline of close to 175 hotels in the Middle East, Africa and India, it would lead to thousands of new jobs for the hospitality sector.

"Currently, in my region, India, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt are the key drivers of growth for us," said Mattar. "The [new] hotels are in vari-



An InterContinental brand has aligned with Ciel property in Dubai Marina, which will also be the world's tallest hotel.

ous design, construction, and development stages, across various segments including luxury, mid-market and up-

scale brands." With the expanding hospitality footprint in these markets, particularly in the GCC, the competition

for talent remains fierce. "We continue to face challenges and opportunities in diversity and inclusion," said Mattar.

"We have a target to increase our women general managers by 25 per cent in the next two to three years."

Franchising model

For the Ciel hotel in Dubai, owned by The First Group and managed by The First Group Hospitality, there is a franchise agreement with InterContinental. Royalty fees are a key revenue stream for hotel groups.

According to Mattar, out of the 200 hotels in his region, about 58 are now franchised, and that number continues to grow.

"As markets mature, we're seeing more demand for franchising," he added. "In mature

markets, particularly Dubai, we're seeing much more franchise demand than we did five years ago."

Rising demand

"We also see increasing demand for franchises in Saudi Arabia, indicating that the market is maturing.

"Institutional developers are looking for portfolio deals, which is lucrative for us," he added.

By the end 2024, the group expect to open close to 22 new hotels, including managed and franchised properties. This will elevate the total number of IHG hotels in the region to nearly 220.

"We have another 19 hotels scheduled to open next year, and 2026 will be the biggest in terms of new hotel openings," said Mattar.



Shoppers pass a Huawei Technologies Co. store on Nanjing East Road in Shanghai, China, yesterday. Bloomberg

ON GULFNEWS.COM

Investors rush to ride China stimulus

After the US Fed's jumbo 50 basis point rate cut, China came with a surprise, massive stimulus plan, spanning across both monetary and fiscal policies. Market reaction was brutal, with a 20 per cent gain for Chinese equity indices in just a few sessions.

— Maurice Gravier, Special to Gulf News



Investors need to make some quick moves after China's eye-catching stimulus

What risks will global rate cuts have in 2025?

AN OVERVIEW OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES' MONETARY STRATEGIES

NEW YORK

With the last traces of the global inflation shock fading, the shift towards lower borrowing costs is about to maintain momentum as economies tread towards a new year fraught with unknowns.

Now that the US Federal Reserve has joined rich-world peers with its own initial interest-rate cut, lingering worries about consumer prices are increasingly poised to give way to concerns about growth around the world, according to Bloomberg Economics.

Its aggregate gauge of advanced-economy borrowing costs shows a decline of almost 40 basis points between now and the end of the year, and a further drop totalling more than double that amount by the time 2025 is out.

While the Fed will now take charge of the global easing push, the shift lower is likely to be widespread, with most of the rest of the Group of Seven staying on board, and even holdouts such as Norway and Australia likely to join in, in due course. And while monetary easing is the prevailing theme, some countries are likely to see tightening instead — not least with Japan seen hiking its rate again.

United States

With the Fed's first rate cut in years finally out of the way, investors have turned their focus to what the size and pace of additional reductions could look like in the fourth quarter and beyond.

They anticipate lowering rates by another half point this year, and an additional full percentage point over 2025, according to the median projection released in September.

Europe

With the Euro-area economy showing waning momentum, investors are increasingly betting on the ECB reduce borrowing costs again this month. That would quicken rate cuts from the quarterly pace that policymakers led by President Christine Lagarde adopted for the first two moves of this easing cycle.

England

Voting against a second rate cut in September, the BOE signalled it's not letting the foot off the brake just yet. Officials vowed to take a cautious approach on the way down, stressing that policy has to remain "restrictive for sufficiently



Bloomberg

With the Euro-area economy showing signs of slowing down, investors are increasingly expecting the ECB to cut rates.

While monetary easing is the prevailing theme, some countries are likely to see tightening instead — not least with Japan seen hiking its rate again, and Brazil doing so too.

40 bps projected fall in borrowing costs in advanced economies

long." The economic recovery is losing momentum, while sticky inflation gauges are cooling down. Minimum wage increases could complicate matters if they heat up pay growth next year. A November move is still on the table.

Canada

The Bank of Canada has achieved a major milestone in its fight against inflation — yearly price gains decelerated to the central bank's 2 per cent target in August. Still, Senior Deputy Governor Carolyn Rogers told Bloomberg that while that's welcome news, the bank wants to see more progress on core inflation measures, and said the bank still needs to "stick the landing."

China

The PBOC issued the biggest round of stimulus for the economy last month since the pandemic, including lowering the one-year policy rate by the most ever and promising another cut

in a shorter-term rate that officials increasingly favour.

The move, made amid growing anxiety among the official ranks and malaise among consumers (as well as notable downward revisions of economic growth from Wall Street) is likely not enough to boost growth long-term.

India

The Reserve Bank of India is expected to keep its key rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent in its October 7-9 policy review as inflation will probably climb back again to cross its target 4 per cent in September, after staying below the mark in July and August. While nearly 20 months of high borrowing cost has slowed inflation, Governor Shaktikanta Das wants to see more signs of price gains settling around the central bank's target on a sustainable basis before considering a rate cut.

Russia

The Bank of Russia may return its key rate to the 20 per cent level last reached in an emergency increase following President Vladimir Putin's February 2022 offensive in Ukraine.

After hiking by 100 basis points to 19 per cent in September, Governor Elvira Nabiullina said underlying inflation remains "intolerably high" and held open the prospect of a further increase at the bank's October 25 meeting.

Turkey

Economists and investors are debating the timing of Turkey's first cut after the country's aggressive tightening cycle lifted its rate to 50 per cent from single digits in less than a year. Increasingly more investors are saying a rate cut could come in November, though some think it could be delayed to early next year. — Bloomberg

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HOW N₂O IS FUELLING CLIMATE CHANGE

THE WORLD MISSES YOU, MAHATMA

It's time to deal with nitrous oxide swiftly before humanity becomes a laughing stock

Gandhi's vision of non-violence fades as today's leaders embrace division and conflict



BY ABDULLAH BELHAIF AL NUAIMI
Special to Gulf News



The human race has only one really effective weapon and that is laughter," said Mark Twain. However, it's time to ensure that the armament is not mistaken for nitrous oxide (N₂O), nicknamed 'laughing gas', for making a person a bit giggly.

An odourless, colourless, non-flammable gas, N₂O is often used as an anaesthetic for dental procedures. It is also a greenhouse gas (GHG), having a warming potential in the atmosphere 300 times greater than carbon dioxide (CO₂) and can linger for over 100 years. It contributes to six per cent of human-driven climate change, pollutes the soil, water, and air, and depletes the ozone layer.

Scientists claim that while 60 per cent of global N₂O emissions occur naturally, 40 per cent are attributed to human activities.

Since the beginning of industrialisation, the atmospheric concentration of N₂O has increased by 23 per cent, and emissions continue to surge rapidly. This rise poses a dual threat: exacerbating global warming and depleting the ozone layer.

Causes and effects

For decades, the concentration of N₂O in the atmosphere has increased due to the use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser in agricultural soil globally. The 2020 statistics revealed that 123 metric tonnes of nitrogen was produced as artificial fertiliser, a nearly tenfold increase in 60 years. This stimulates plant growth and generates more N₂O, a chief source of man-made misadventures. Since the 1980s, worldwide emissions in the sector have increased by over 45 per cent.

However, N₂O does not only occur in areas where fertiliser is used. Reactive nitrogen travels from the soil into the ground and surface water.

Aside from affecting the water quality, nitrogen leads to the formation of N₂O, as it travels to other ecosystems through the air and ends up on the ground or in oceans, which is why N₂O emissions from the oceans have increased.

Though primarily attributed to agricultural practices, accounting for about 74 per cent of global N₂O emissions, it is also used to manage livestock manure.

Other than that, transportation, stationary combustion sources (mainly coal plants), industrial activities, including the production of nitric acid, and using N₂O in chemical manu-

facturing, contribute to its emissions. Also, hydrogen production, particularly through processes like steam methane reforming, can result in N₂O outpouring.

India, China, the United States, Brazil, Russia, Pakistan, Australia, and Canada are the top N₂O emitters, because of their rapidly growing populations and increased demands in the food sector.

The way out

Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts to reduce emissions from agriculture, industry, and energy production. Implementing sustainable agricultural practices, improving waste management, and developing cleaner industrial processes are crucial steps towards mitigating the environmental impact of this potent gas.

Researchers suggest that the compound produced by the breakdown of nitrogen in fertilisers and sewage treatment plants should be reduced to avoid thinning the protective ozone layer that blankets the Earth.

Soil management techniques can help decrease the outflow. For example, remote sensing technology can help implement precision agriculture to sense when nitrogen should be applied to fields. Similarly, irrigation methods, including drip and subsurface drip decrease N₂O emissions.

Several regenerative agriculture practices can also handle this issue. Curtailling pesticides encourages a diverse microbial community, which leads to natural fixation. This converts

atmospheric nitrogen, limiting the need for artificial nitrogen fertilisers.

Governments must educate farmers to reduce emissions using nitrogen fertilisers, genetically modified crops, animal waste management, and sustainable farming practices.

Also, nitrogen-fixing cover crops, including clover can reduce the amount of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser.

Wastewater treatment also creates N₂O as a by-product of activated sludge processes to speed up waste decomposition. Low concentrations of ammonia and nitrite in effluent can decrease the emissions. Developing cleaner energy sources for electricity will also be beneficial.

Setting benchmarks

Reports indicate that once the world's top N₂O emitter, Europe has managed a decrease by reducing the use of fossil fuels. Its emissions related to agriculture are declining. Likewise, emissions in Japan and South Korea have also dropped.

However, if global warming is to remain below 2°C, as per the climate targets of the Paris Agreement, anthropogenic N₂O emissions must decline by 20 per cent by 2050.

It's time to deal with N₂O swiftly before humanity becomes a laughingstock.

(Next Thursday, the author will discuss "smart cities".)

■ Dr Abdullah Belhaif Al Nuaimi is Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Emirate of Sharjah.

BY SWATI CHATURVEDI | Special to Gulf News

We have forgotten our greatest Indian, Mahatma Gandhi — our calling card to the world, the reason for our moral exceptionalism on the world stage, and the brand ambassador of non-violence.

Sure, we will celebrate his birthday in the approved "Sarkari" fashion, with our leaders piously paying tribute, and the usual disgusting social media trend that glorifies Nathuram Godse, his murderer, by a bunch of bigots. But that is a sign of the times we live in: Gandhi is all but out, and his murderer Godse is in.

What would Gandhi make of the India whose freedom he fought for all his life? What would he think of Israel and its never-ending war of retribution.

What would Gandhi say about the bulldozers running amok against the weakest Muslim minority, destroying their homes without due process, cheered on by fellow Indians? As a student of history, I know Gandhi would have been publicly dismayed at the violent state attacks on fellow citizens. He would have rushed to shield the victims, likely using his own body as a barrier to shame the oppressors. Sadly, in "#newIndia," they would have pushed Gandhi aside shamelessly and arrested him. That is the reality in India today — no point being hypocritical about it. And the media megaphones might have collectively shrieked that "Gandhi was antinational for daring to block bulldozers."

We actually think Gandhi and his ways are outdated and outmoded, unable to work today. It is difficult for small minds to contemplate a great idea — the moral capital that non-violence confers upon you.

India has embraced "strong leaders" with enthusiasm, though their strength may be optics, smoke, and mirrors. Remember how we treated former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh, a scholar, only because he spoke softly? The man hailed by US President Barack Obama as a "guru" (teacher) among world leaders provoked only derision among the chattering classes in India, who prefer arrogance and chest-thumping.

Is Benjamin Netanyahu, who has locked Israel in a permanent war with the entire neighbourhood, whose army thinks nothing of using rape as a weapon of war and killing babies in hospitals, strong or weak? Is Israel's moral and political capital strong today, or is this actually the beginning of the end? If you have read history, you would know that the British Empire seemed the mightiest before it just toppled over, and a guttering candle flickers the brightest.

The impotence of the UN shows how important moral capital is. As India abstains from voting against Israel, I can say with certainty that Gandhi would have stood steadfast with the Palestinians, without false equivalence. Gandhi, like most oppressed people, had moral clarity and would have seen Bibi's Israel for what it has become.

The truth is that Gandhi was the greatest Indian who ever lived, and today more than ever, India and the world need leadership of the order only Gandhi could provide. The world misses you, Mahatma.

■ Swati Chaturvedi is an award-winning journalist and author.

Letters to the Editor

Embracing sustainable tech

In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday life ("AI's hidden cost and environmental toll of technology", *Gulf News*, October 1). While technological innovations have brought about numerous benefits, it's essential to recognise their toll on our planet.

From the mining of rare earth minerals for electronic devices to the energy consumption of data centres, the environmental impact of technology is substantial. I believe that raising awareness and engaging in dialogue about these issues is crucial. By educating ourselves and others, we can work towards finding innovative solutions.

■ FROM PRIYAN BRUNO
Canada

India secure series win

Congratulations to the new Indian cricket coach and captain, Rohit Sharma, who led

the team to victory in the Kanpur Test against Bangladesh, securing a 2-0 series win. The weather affected the match, causing the loss of over 200

overs in the first three days.

After bowling out Bangladesh for 233 in their first innings, our openers played aggressively, setting new records in Test Cricket by scoring the fastest 50, 100 and 200 runs, giving us a 51-run lead in just 35 overs. Our bowlers then bundled out Bangladesh for 146 runs, setting a winning target of 95 runs in over 40 overs. Young Yashvi Jaiswal's half-century helped us secure victory by seven wickets.

This series win took our team to the top of the ICC Test rankings. Jaiswal was awarded the Man of the Match trophy, and Ravichandran Ashwin was named Man of the Series for the 11th time, equaling the record for most Man of the Series awards with Muttiah Muralitharan.

■ FROM N. MAHADEVAN
India

Toxic work culture

I am writing to express my thoughts and concerns about the current state of our work culture ("Fatal consequences of toxic work culture", *Gulf News*, May 16). It has become increasingly evident to me that our workplaces suffer from a toxic work culture. It is crucial for us to address this issue proactively and collaboratively.

Toxic work culture can manifest in various forms, such as excessive competition, lack of transparent communication, micro-management, and a general lack of empathy and support for employees. These factors can lead to increased stress, burnout, and a decrease in overall morale. It is essential for us to foster an environment where every individual feels valued. This can be achieved through open and honest communi-

cation, promoting a healthy work-life balance, and actively addressing any instances of discrimination or harassment.

Furthermore, providing opportunities for professional development and recognising employees for their hard work can significantly contribute to a positive work culture. I believe that by acknowledging and actively working to improve our work culture, we can create a more harmonious and successful workplace for everyone.

■ FROM SHEETAL S
UAE

■ Editor's note: Is there a news report that you feel strongly about? Something that has to be addressed in the community and requires resolution? Email us on readers@gulfnews.com. You can also post a comment on our Facebook page or tweet to us @GNReaders.

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Biden's legacy



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political party still
needs volunteers



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UNITED NATIONS

UN chief: Sickening cycle of escalation in region must stop

FIGHTING IN 2 BORDER AREAS COMES HOURS AFTER IRAN'S ATTACK ON ISRAEL

UN chief Antonio Guterres called for an end to the "sickening cycle of escalation" in the Middle East, while condemning Iran over its latest missile attack after facing criticism from Israel.

The secretary-general was speaking at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, called after Iran's massive missile barrage at Israel, which has ramped up its offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

'Stop tit-for-tat violence'

"It is high time to stop the sickening cycle of escalation after escalation that is leading the people of the Middle East straight over the cliff," the UN chief said. "This deadly cycle of tit-for-tat violence must stop."

Israel shifted its focus last month from the war in Gaza, which was sparked by the October 7 attacks by Iran-backed Hamas, to securing its northern border with Lebanon.

As the Security Council met, Israeli forces were battling Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, following "targeted ground raids" across the border on Tuesday.

More than 1,000 people have died since last week, in fighting that has included Israeli strikes on Beirut and its south suburbs.

"Since last October, Israel has conducted in Gaza the most deadly and destructive military campaign in my years as secretary-general," Guterres said.

"Simultaneously, armed Palestinian groups have also used violence. Hamas has continued to launch rockets," he said, adding Iran's missile attack did "nothing to support the cause of the Palestinian people or reduce their suffering."

Defying de-escalation calls

The fighting in two border areas came hours after Iran launched its largest direct attack on Israel to date. Hezbollah's primary backer, Iran, said it would escalate its response if Israel retaliates, defying calls for de-escalation.

A day after Israel said its troops had started "targeted ground raids" in southern Lebanon, it reported the first death of a soldier in the Israel-Hezbollah war. The toll later rose to eight.

Israel bombarded Hezbollah's south Beirut stronghold, having dealt a seismic blow last week by killing the group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

Hezbollah said it forced Israeli soldiers to retreat from a village, targeted an Israeli unit with explosives and destroyed three tanks.

The Israeli army said it staged two brief incursions into Lebanon, warning residents to evacuate more than 20 areas.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said an Israeli strike on a Damascus neighbourhood frequented by



■ A woman carries a mattress over her head as she enters Syria from Lebanon via the Jusiye border crossing with Quseir in Syria's central Homs province yesterday. AFP



■ People stand on top of the remains of an Iranian missile in the Negev desert in Israel, yesterday. AFP



■ A woman holds the yellow flag of Hezbollah during a rally celebrating Iran's attack against Israel, in Tehran on Tuesday. AFP

Hezbollah leaders and Iranian Revolutionary Guards killed two.

Iran missile attack

Hours after Israel announced the start of ground operations in Lebanon, Iran fired some 200 missiles including hypersonic weapons, sending frightened Israeli civilians into shelters.

Israel said it intercepted most of them. Two people were wounded by shrapnel and a school building was damaged.

The Israeli military said several Iranian missiles struck inside air force bases without causing casualties or damage.

In Jericho, a Palestinian was killed when "pieces of a rocket fell from the sky and hit him", the city's governor Hussein Hamayel said.

"Iran made a big mistake tonight and will pay for it," Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said. "Whoever attacks us, we attack them."

Iran's armed forces chief of staff, Major General Mohammad Bagheri, threatened to fire "with bigger intensity" if Israel makes good on its pledge.

Iran's attack triggered widespread global alarm, as well as a spike in world oil prices. — AFP

PRIDE AND FEAR IN IRAN AFTER ATTACK

On the streets of Tehran, a small crowd celebrated Iran's missile attack on Israel. Local media carried footage of what Iran said were 200 missiles as they were fired towards Israel on Tuesday evening, while state television played upbeat music over the images and showed crowds of a few hundred people celebrating across the country.

Speaking at a gathering in Palestine Square in central Tehran late Tuesday, Hedyeh Gholizadeh, 29, said she felt "a sense of pride" by Iran's retaliations. "We are ready to accept all the consequences and we are ready to pay the penalty. We have no fear," she said.

However, Israel's vow to avenge the missile attacks, has unsettled some people who fear the country stumbling into a full-blown war through tit-for-tat reactions.

"I am really worried because if Israel wants to take retaliatory measures, it will lead to an expansion of the war," said Mansour Firouzabadi, 45, a nurse in Tehran. "Everyone is worried." — AFP

TRAIN ATTACK

Death toll from Tel Aviv killing spree goes up to seven

JERUSALEM

A man wounded in a shooting and stabbing attack in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv has died, the medical centre where he was being treated said yesterday, bringing the number of fatalities up to seven.

"The injured person came to us in a critical condition, suffering from multi-system damage, and after doctors fought for his life, they had to pronounce him dead a short while ago," a statement from Ichilov medical centre in Tel Aviv said.

On Tuesday, Israeli police said six people were killed and 17 others wounded in the attack, which took place near Tel Aviv's light rail station in Jaffa.

The attack came as Iran fired a barrage of missiles at Israel, sending of thousands of Israelis into shelters.

Police published the two attackers' names yesterday and said they were residents of the Palestinian city of Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

One attacker shot dead

The attackers "began their killing spree when they entered the carriage of the light train that stopped at the station and fired at the passengers," police said yesterday.

The two were armed with an M16 weapon, cartridges and a knife, and continued on foot until police "neutralised" them, it added. One of the attackers was shot dead and the other was seriously wounded, it said.

Overnight, the Israeli security agency and the army arrested several suspects in Hebron and Jerusalem, believed to have aided the two attackers.

Israeli media identified three of the seven victims as Israeli citizens Shahar Goldman, 30, Inbar Segev Vigder, 33, and Revital Bornstein, 24. A fourth was reportedly a Georgian citizen.

Palestinian militants have carried out several attacks on Israelis since October 7, when the Islamist group Hamas attacked southern Israel, sparking war in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian militant attacks have since killed at least 26 Israelis. — AFP

ON GULFNEWS.COM

What to know about Iran's ballistic, cruise missiles

On Tuesday, Israel faced a missile attack from Iran, marking the second direct strike this year. The first occurred on April 17, when Iran launched 300 drones and missiles. Tuesday's attack follows the Israeli killing of Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah and the initiation of an Israeli ground incursion into Lebanon. Here's what to know about Iran's missile range.

— Stephen N. R., Senior Associate Editor



■ An Iranian woman looks at a television displaying the news of Iran's air attack on Israel, in Tehran on Tuesday. AFP

What to know about Iran's ballistic and cruise missiles, and its military capability

Nordic capitals see attacks around Israeli embassies

Blasts, shooting in Denmark and Sweden reported

COPENHAGEN

Police in Denmark and Sweden said yesterday they were probing attacks at or near Israeli embassies in their capitals, which took place as tensions spiralled in the Middle East.

In Denmark, twin blasts were reported overnight in the "immediate proximity" to the Israeli embassy in Copenhagen, Danish police spokesman Jakob Hansen told reporters yesterday morning.

In Sweden, police confirmed that the Israeli em-

bassy in Stockholm had been targeted in a shooting on Tuesday just before 6:00pm.

No injuries were reported in either incident.

"It's too early to say if there is a link" between the blasts and the Israeli embassy, Hansen said.

By midmorning, the area in Copenhagen was cordoned off and police officers were working at the scene, an AFP correspondent observed.

Denmark's intelligence service, PET, said they were monitoring the situation "closely" and assisting police with their investigation.

"We are also in dialogue with the Israeli embassy about security," PET said in a statement. — AFP

Pope opens new debates on future of the Church

VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis launched new consultations yesterday on the future of the Roman Catholic Church, as it faces pressure over women's role and the scourge of clerical child abuse.

The General Assembly of the Synod, comprising 368 religious and lay people — including women — from around 100 countries, will hold closed-door debates on potential reforms at the Vatican until October 27.

The synod had already gathered for a monthlong assembly in October 2023, after a three-year worldwide consultation among Catholics organised by Francis to confront challenges facing the 2,000-year-old Church.

Pope to have final say

The 87-year-old Argentine pontiff will have the final say on any doctrinal changes they recommend.

Last year, the assembly addressed themes as varied as polygamy, the ordination of married men and the fight against the sexual abuse of children by priests.

Although the body resisted pressure to allow the ordination of female priests, calls continue for more visibility and space for women.

No immediate decisions are expected, with the most sensitive issues entrusted to working groups that will deliver their conclusions in June 2025.

Francis launched the Assembly with a mass in St Peter's Square, where he urged for an open mind during discussions.

— AFP



AFP

Pope Francis presides during a mass for the opening of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, at St Peter's Square in the Vatican yesterday.



Republican vice-presidential candidate J.D. Vance (left), and Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz, participate in a debate at the CBS Broadcast Centre on Tuesday.

AFP

Walz and Vance trade barbs over abortion, immigration

BOTH VP PICKS ARE MIDWESTERNERS WHO BRING A POPULIST WORLDVIEW

NEW YORK

Democrat Tim Walz and Republican J.D. Vance opened their vice-presidential debate, sparring over which party standard-bearer is best positioned to be commander-in-chief, looking for the upper hand in early clashes over foreign policy, immigration, and climate change.

Walz, 60, opened with sharp criticism toward Donald Trump, noting that many of the former president's own national security aides — and Vance himself — had previously questioned the Republican presidential candidate's suitability for office.

Vance, 40, repeatedly targeted Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris, suggesting she should have done more in the past four years to address chaos abroad and the economy.

Middle East tensions

Walz was nervous at times, stumbling on responses to tensions in the Middle East and past misstatements. Vance spoke more steadily and appeared more comfortable in the early stages — but also triggered the first muting of microphones, by interjecting to challenge the moderators over the legal status of Haitian immigrants in his state.

FIVE TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DEBATE

Here are five takeaways from the debate between Trump's running mate, J.D. Vance, and Harris's VP pick, Tim Walz:

New faces: Walz had a shaky start, but improved into the debate. Vance, known for his rhetorical prowess, was under pressure to make up for Trump's debate performance last month.

Both candidates tackled policy specifics — the Middle East, climate change, the economy or the fentanyl crisis — which made for a more wonkish debate than the Trump-Harris showdown.

Awkward: Walz was forced to explain claims that he was in Hong Kong for a teaching position in 1989 during the Tiananmen Square protests. "I got there that summer and misspoke on this," the governor said, calling himself a "knucklehead".

Vance, who once labelled Trump as "unfit for our nation's highest office" before becoming a supporter and once said Trump "could be America's Hitler" — was challenged on his remarks.

A proxy battle: The real contest was between Harris and Trump, with their two stand-ins focusing their sharpest attacks on the top-of-the-ticket contest. The Minnesota governor went after Trump for ignoring the advice of scientists and economists.

Vance tore into Harris on immigration and accused her of driving up prices, by allowing millions of migrants into the country.

Fact checks, mic cuts: CBS said it would decline to debunk whoppers live on air, but directed viewers to a blog offering real-time fact-checking. There were a couple of on-air fact-checks of Vance that infuriated him. The candidates' mics were muted briefly as they launched into a rare heated back-and-forth.

A gentler tone: Without the bombastic ex-president, proceedings resembled election debates that used to take place before the Trump era: policy-focused and lacking personal attacks.

— AFP

The debate is likely the last televised face-off of the election and follows last month's lone showdown between the party standard-bearers.

The contest opened with a

sharp exchange over Iran after Tehran fired about 200 ballistic missiles at Israel on Tuesday.

"It's those that were closest to Donald Trump that understand how dangerous he is when the

world is this dangerous," Walz said at the forum hosted by CBS News in New York.

Contentious issues

Both vice-presidential picks are Midwesterners who bring a populist worldview to an election where the state of the economy is a defining issue.

The candidates debated climate change policies in the wake of Hurricane Helene, which has devastated states across the US southeast.

Vance also attacked Harris on immigration, one of the Democratic presidential nominee's biggest political vulnerabilities — and arguing for Trump's pledges to finish building the border wall and for deporting illegal migrants.

"We have a historic immigration crisis because Kamala Harris started and said that she wanted to undo all of Donald Trump's border policies," Vance said.

Walz criticised Vance and Trump over the wave of restrictions to abortion in the wake of the US Supreme Court overturning Roe v Wade's federal protections, raising the cases of women who were denied access to the procedure "one after a failed pregnancy and another after being raped by her stepfather."

— Bloomberg

Britain's Starmer in Brussels for EU 'reset'

BRUSSELS

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer vowed yesterday to put ties with the EU on a "positive footing", as he kicked off a first visit to Brussels, aimed at rebooting relations after the rancour of Brexit.

Starmer has promised a "reset" with the European Union, but since taking power in July has given few details about how to improve on the painstakingly negotiated deals governing ties since the UK quit the bloc.

Pragmatic leadership

"I firmly believe that the British public wants to return to pragmatic, sensible leadership when it comes to dealing with our closest neighbours, to make Brexit work," Starmer said as he headed into talks with European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen.

"We are determined to put this relationship back on a stable, positive footing."

Von der Leyen told Starmer that "in these very uncertain times, like-minded partners like us must cooperate more closely".

Starmer's visit — the first by a British prime minister to the EU headquarters since 2020 — is meant to send a clear signal that the page has turned after his Labour Party ousted the Conservatives from power.

But the British leader, who voted in the 2016 referendum to remain in the EU, has insisted that his reset will not mean reversing Brexit, which remains a politically toxic subject in the UK.

— AFP



AFP

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer looks on during a press conference at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels yesterday.

ON GULFNEWS.COM

Unexploded US bomb goes off

A minor blast at a regional Japanese airport, originated in 1943 as an imperial Japanese navy base, was caused by an unexploded US bomb, officials said on Wednesday, with reports saying the device likely dated from World War II.

— AFP



Unexploded US bomb caused minor blast at Japan airport

Bird flu kills 47 tigers in Vietnam

385 tigers lived in captivity in Vietnam at the end of 2023

HANOI

Forty-seven tigers, three lions and a panther have died in zoos in South Vietnam due to the H5N1 bird flu virus, state media said yesterday.

The deaths occurred in August and September at the private My Quynh safari park in Long An province and the Vuon Xoai zoo in Dong Nai, near Ho Chi Minh City, according to the official Vietnam News Agency (VNA).

According to test results from the National Centre for Animal Health Diagnosis, the animals died "because of H5N1 type A

310

tigers in Vietnam are kept at 16 privately owned farms and zoos

virus", VNA reported. No zoo staff members in close contact with the animals had experienced respiratory symptoms, the VNA report added.

Zoo officials declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV), an NGO that focuses on wildlife conservation, said there were a total of 385 tigers living in captivity in Vietnam at the end of 2023.

About 310 are kept at 16 privately owned farms and zoos, while the rest are in state-owned facilities.

Rise in outbreaks

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that since 2022, there have been increasing reports of deadly outbreaks among mammals that were caused by influenza viruses, including H5N1.

It also says H5N1 infections can range from mild to severe in humans and, in some cases, can even be fatal.

Vietnam notified the WHO about a human fatality from the virus in March.

In 2004, dozens of tigers died from bird flu or were culled at the world's largest breeding farm in Thailand.

— AFP

Milestones and fierce competition await at the showpiece event



DUBAI
BY A.K.S. SATISH
Sports Editor

A revolution in women's cricket is set to kick off as Bangladesh face debutants Scotland in the opening match of the ICC Twenty20 Women's World Cup in the UAE today.

Two-time defending champions Australia will be among the favourites, but the bigger story lies in the ICC's landmark announcement: equal prize money for both men's and women's world champions. This marks a major turning point in the sport, reflecting the growth of women's cricket, bolstered by the rise of franchise leagues and an expanding tournament format. The next T20 World Cup in England will see two additional teams join the competition.

Following the ICC's move, some domestic leagues have revised their pay structures to promote parity.

Battle for global supremacy

On the field, 150 of the world's most exciting players have gathered in the UAE for the ninth edition of the tournament, set across two iconic venues: Sharjah Cricket Stadium and Dubai International Stadium.

Over 18 days, the 10 teams will play 23 matches to decide the world champions. The conditions are favourable for Asian teams, which could challenge Australia's defence of the title, especially as they navigate the "group of death" in Pool A, facing tough competitors like New Zealand, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan.

"There are 10 teams here that deserve to be here and have a real shot at winning this World Cup. We're here to win it, not defend it," said Australia captain Alyssa Healy. "It's a tricky pool, but we're excited for the challenge."

Australia enter the tournament in strong form, having outplayed Bangladesh in similar conditions in Mirpur and sweeping New Zealand at home. They kept their winning momentum going with warm-up victories against the West Indies and England in Dubai.

However, India, despite a recent 2-1 series loss to Australia, will look to repeat their earlier 10-wicket win against the defending champions.

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur remains optimistic, focusing on daily improvement. "A day after a win, you may make small mistakes, but that's part of the game," Kaur said. "We're always learning and growing as a team."

Building on success

South Africa, led by new captain Laura Wolvaardt, aim to build on last year's success and reach the semi-finals. "It's a difficult pool, but we'll take it one game at a time," Wolvaardt noted.

England, ranked second behind Australia, hope to break a two-World Cup drought. Their



ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 kicks off in style, with the ten captains gathering to mark the opening of the event.

SCHEDULE

Date	Teams	Venue	Time
OCTOBER 3:	Bangladesh vs Scotland	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	3:30pm
OCTOBER 3:	Pakistan vs Sri Lanka	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 4:	South Africa vs West Indies	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	3:30pm
OCTOBER 4:	India vs New Zealand	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 5:	Australia vs Sri Lanka	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	3:30pm
OCTOBER 5:	Bangladesh vs England	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 6:	India vs Pakistan	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	3:30pm
OCTOBER 6:	West Indies vs Scotland	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 7:	England vs South Africa	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 8:	Australia vs New Zealand	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 9:	South Africa vs Scotland	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	3:30pm
OCTOBER 9:	India vs Sri Lanka	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 10:	Bangladesh vs West Indies	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 11:	Australia vs Pakistan	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 12:	New Zealand vs Sri Lanka	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	3:30pm
OCTOBER 12:	Bangladesh vs South Africa	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 13:	England vs Scotland	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	3:30pm
OCTOBER 13:	India vs Australia	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 14:	Pakistan vs New Zealand	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 15:	England vs West Indies	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 17:	Semi-final 1	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 18:	Semi-final 2	Sharjah Cricket Stadium	7:30pm
OCTOBER 20:	Final	Dubai International Cricket Stadium	7:30pm

10 teams will compete in the Twenty20 Women's World Cup in UAE

team will feature debutants like pace bowler Freya Kemp, who will partner with Lauren Bell following the retirement of Katherine Sciver-Brunt.

Scotland is eager to make a mark in their debut, leveraging their past experiences in UAE conditions. "We've played some fantastic cricket in the qualifiers, and we just want to do ourselves justice," said Scotland captain Kathryn Bryce.

Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana expressed disappointment over the relocation of the event from her home country but is optimistic of a strong local support in Sharjah.

"I expect a lot of spectators, especially from the local Bangladeshi community, to come out and support us," she said.

Pakistan captain Fatima Sana, one of the youngest captains in the tournament, aims to lead with confidence, backed by strong management. "I'll take brave decisions on the field and just try to stay calm and enjoy myself," Sana said.

Sri Lanka captain Chamari

Athapaththu embraces the underdog tag, focusing on simplicity and execution: "We've been playing good cricket for 16 months, but this is a new format and new conditions, so we'll take it one ball at a time."

Captains' Day

The ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 officially began with a special Captains' Day at Dubai International Stadium, where the 10 captains came together for a panel session hosted by Melanie Jones. Captains like West Indies' Hayley Matthews and New Zealand's Sophie Devine shared insights into their team's preparation and aspirations.

The captains were also photographed at the iconic Dubai Frame, symbolising the blend of modernity and tradition that reflects this World Cup's cultural diversity. The tournament's trophy, first unveiled at the Burj Khalifa, will be awarded to the winning captain in a picture-perfect moment to cap the event.

The ICC Women's T20 World Cup promises 23 thrilling matches across Dubai and Sharjah, showcasing the best of women's cricket and inspiring a new generation of fans.

The opening match, featuring Bangladesh and Scotland, will set the stage for an unforgettable tournament. Fans can purchase tickets online or at the stadiums for as low as Dh5.

COMMENT

Why T20 WC will showcase best of women's cricket

DUBAI
BY SHYAM A. KRISHNA
Senior Associate Editor

A walk along London's St John Woods Road to Lord's Cricket Ground will bring you to the iconic Grace Gate. Further southwest is the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Gate. A bas-relief sculpture of Heyhoe Flint and a plaque on the wall commemorate the driving force behind women's cricket.

English cricket writer Scyld Berry called Heyhoe Flint the W.G. Grace of women's cricket. Such was her influence on the women's game. After an England debut in 1960, Heyhoe Flint captained England in a career spanning two decades. More importantly, she played a pivotal role in launching the inaugural Women's World Cup in 1973 and led England to victory. It became the sport's oldest world championship as the men's World Cup took root only two years later.

Fifty-one years later, as the UAE host the T20 World Cup from today, women's cricket has undergone a dramatic transformation. Heyhoe Flint would have been proud.

Women cricketers are now superstars. Meg Lanning (Australia), Ellyse Perry (Australia), Jhulan Goswami (India), Alyssa Healy (Australia), Nat Sciver-Brunt (England), Harmanpreet Kaur (India), Deandra Dottin (West Indies), Mithali Raj (India), Chamari Athapaththu (Sri Lanka), Marizanne Kapp (South Africa) ... the list goes on. All of them have become household names.

Their rise to stardom owes to the popularity of the game.

If franchise cricket is a measure of the sport's success, women's cricket has certainly arrived. Cricketers now boast of lucrative contracts as women cross their nation's boundaries to ply their trade in leagues in England, Australia and India.

Women's cricket is no longer the poor sibling of the men's sport. The Women's Big Bash League in Australia, the Hundred in England and the Women's Premier League in India have made women professional cricketers. England will offer equal starting salaries for men's and women's cricketers starting next year, which could also rub off on other teams.

Not just that. The Women's T20 World Cup in the UAE will be the first world championship since the International Cricket Conference announced equal prize money for men's and women's tournaments. The winners in Dubai on October 20 will walk away with a purse of \$2.34 million, which is 134 per cent more than Australia's winners' cheque last year.

They deserve every cent of that. For the cricket on display will be top-drawer stuff. If you haven't been following women's cricket, please check out YouTube, and you will find electric fielding, acrobatic catching, express deliveries and soaring sixes in matches that go to the wire.

Close contests, that's the essence of T20 cricket. There will be plenty of that in Dubai and Sharjah. The tournament at its first neutral venue (it was relocated following the turmoil in Bangladesh, the original hosts) offers a new challenge. Most of the 10 teams in the fray haven't played in the UAE, so the heat and humidity will test the players' fitness. So also the pitches, which are unfamiliar to them, except for Scotland.

Twenty20 is an entertaining format. A challenging one too. Which is why there will be last-over and last-ball finishes. Who knows, this could be more thrilling than the last eight editions.

Australia have been dominant with six wins in the tournament that started in 2009. England and the West Indies are the other winners. Who can dislodge Australia from the pedestal? Difficult to say, but England may have the best chance. That wouldn't be easy. Whoever wins, women's cricket will be the winner. That's Heyhoe Flint's legacy.

Battling Alcaraz wins China Open

BEIJING

Carlos Alcaraz roared back from a set down to beat world No 1 Jan-nik Sinner in a thriller and win his first China Open title yesterday.

The four-time Grand Slam champion from Spain edged a captivating final 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) for his fourth ATP crown of the year and 16th overall.

Alcaraz, who is set to return to No 2 in the world behind Sinner, was 3-0 down in the final-set tie break only to fight back and win in three hours, 21 minutes.

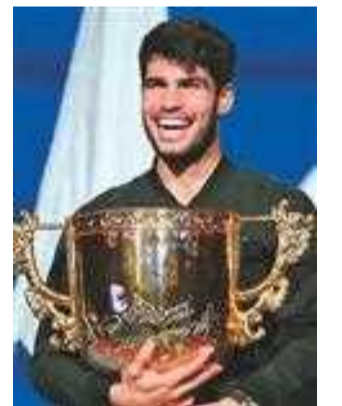
The dramatic triumph ended Sinner's run of 14 victories in a row and saw him deposed as the Beijing champion after an almighty fight. In front of a packed house in Beijing, Alcaraz held his nerves to take the title in a thriller.

Italy's Sinner has admitted to sleepless nights over a doping case that was reignited at the weekend when Wada said it had appealed the decision to clear him.

Sinner has been playing in Beijing under fresh scrutiny. He twice tested positive for a steroid in March but tennis authorities cleared him of wrongdoing and allowed him to keep playing.

In August, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) accepted Sinner's explanation that the drug entered his system unintentionally.

— AFP



Carlos Alcaraz celebrates with the trophy.

Partial stadium closure

MADRID

Atletico Madrid were hit with a partial stadium closure for three matches yesterday after some supporters threw projectiles onto the pitch during the La Liga derby draw against Real Madrid.

The Spanish football federation's disciplinary committee imposed sanctions specifically on the stand of the Metropolitano stadium known as the Fondo Sur, where the trouble occurred.

Some fans threw lighters and other objects at Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who was not hit, leading the referee to suspend the match for around 15 minutes.

The disciplinary committee also fined Atletico €45,000 (\$50,000) for the incidents, which were deemed "very serious" offences.

— AFP



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'Joker: Folie à Deux' sees Joaquin Phoenix and Lady Gaga in fine form, but falters in depth

By **Manjusha Radhakrishnan**
Entertainment Editor

In *Joker: Folie à Deux*, one of the most striking moments occurs when Gotham City's Arkham Asylum is engulfed in flames. Amid the chaos, Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix), awaiting trial for five murders, and his new lover, Harley Quinn (Lady Gaga), waltz together, dreaming of a world where they can be free. Their dance is imperfect, and their song slightly off-key, yet there's something absurdly captivating about their volatile union. It's gloriously desperate and bleak.

This time, the film gives us a glimpse of the softer, more sentimental side of the anarchic clown-for-hire — a disturbed murderer who has ignited an avalanche of copycat crimes and an anti-establishment riot on the streets. For a moment, you might wonder if you've accidentally bought tickets to a dark Bollywood musical, where a pathos-laden verse during a funeral feels oddly appropriate, rather than to a film known for exploring dark, complex themes like system failures creating mentally ill monsters, lack of privilege, child abuse, and gratuitous violence. It takes more than a moment to adjust to this abrupt shift in gears.

CIRCUS-LIKE TRIAL

Set two years after the first film, in which Fleck, in full clown make-up, shot a talk-show host (Robert De Niro) live on television and is incarcerated, the sequel chronicles his circus-like trial, which is being streamed live on television. Arthur, facing a potential death penalty, finds himself at the centre of a salacious, voyeuristic reality-TV spectacle. To add to the confusion, he seems to have found love while



GN Rating

Film: Joker: Folie à Deux
Director: Todd Phillips
Cast: Joaquin Phoenix, Lady Gaga, Zazie Beetz
Stars: ★★★★★
Joker: Folie à Deux is out in UAE cinemas

Review

Joaquin Phoenix and Lady Gaga in *Joker: Folie à Deux*.

holed up in a Celebrity Big Brother-like asylum. It's the dynamic between the power-hungry Quinn and the almost diffident, broken Fleck that had my heart.

Director Todd Phillips skilfully lets a trained singer like Lady Gaga hold the strings to this relationship. She goads and seduces him to embrace the villainous, dark Joker within him and skip his medicines, while Fleck is all

about courting love and discovering her. The *Batman* supervillain isn't the alpha in this chapter. The reversal of that established gender code, where the woman is the one strutting him along, is a joy to watch. Both Lady Gaga and Joaquin Phoenix are diabolical together. But she seems to be the truly unhinged one, despite her claim that she's in the asylum for burning down her father's home

— a crime that's far less severe than Arthur's murderous spree.

But what's disappointing is that the makers don't truly commit to the idea of blending a kooky concept like a musical with a cackling criminal. At first, there's the novelty of seeing a man dancing on the brink of insanity fall in love in a mental asylum, but just like most relationships, the newness wears off quickly, leaving

the viewer wanting more. That's not to say Lady Gaga and Phoenix aren't arresting in their roles, but this bloated sequel does not have the same heft as its award-winning original. Here too, you see the decay and corruption in the judicial and prison systems, but it doesn't hit as hard as the first chapter.

STRUGGLE TO HIT HIGH NOTE

The second chapter, with twice the madness, might be twice as outlandish, but there's no denying that Fleck joyfully prancing to Frank Sinatra's *That's Life* remains one of the most haunting endings for a Hollywood film. How do you top that kind of euphoric on-screen experience of a climax? It's a tall ask, and director Phillips struggles to hit that high note. Which is a shame.

Very often, you may not fall into step with Joker and Harley's fragile and fraught bond, but you'll still watch the train wreck of their relationship with academic interest.

Another interesting segment is the court scenes where Fleck/Joker is on trial. The vicarious fun that everyone seems to be having is reflective of the times we live in. Just like the spectacle of watching Amber Heard squirm as she faced Johnny Depp's lawyers, there's some wicked joy to be had in Joker's quest for justice.

FEELS LIKE A SPECTACLE

But unlike the gripping intensity of the first *Joker*, where every moment felt like it teetered on the edge of chaos, this sequel feels more like a spectacle. It leans heavily into the absurdity of reality TV culture, blurring the line between tragedy and farce. What made the original film so impactful was its ability to tap into societal anxieties and mental illness with a brutal honesty. *Folie à Deux* occasionally skims through those grim themes, but ultimately chooses style/songs over substance. The result is a visually striking, but emotionally diluted film that dances between genres without committing to any. It's a wild, chaotic ride, but it's missing the haunting, bone-deep resonance of its predecessor.

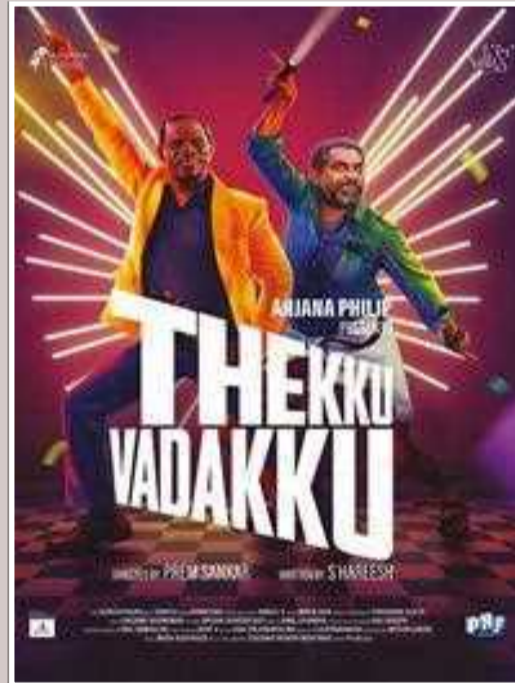
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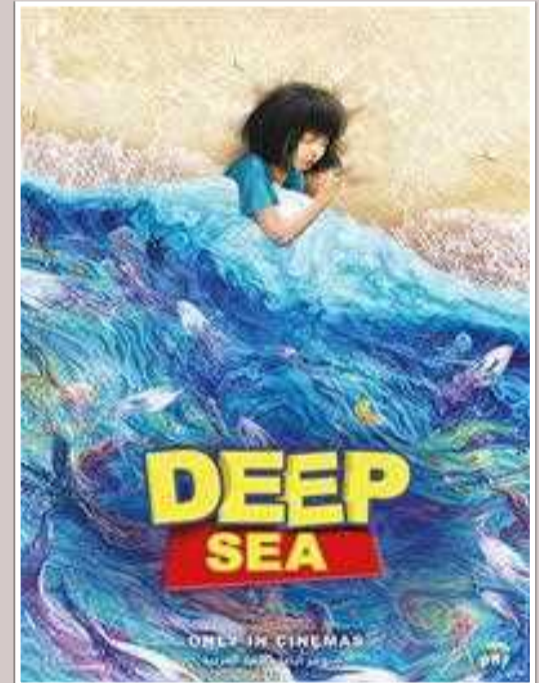
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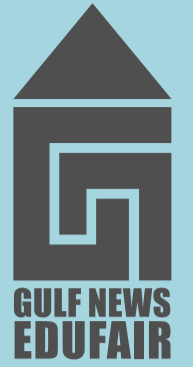
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German Ambassador to the UAE, Alexander Schönfelder highlights milestones in diplomatic, economic, and cultural collaborations while addressing future opportunities for sustainable energy, education, and global challenges



President His Highness Shaikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz during the latter's visit to the UAE in 2022

How would you describe the evolution of diplomatic and economic relations between the UAE and Germany over the past decade, and what are the most significant milestones in this partnership?

Germany and the UAE share excellent diplomatic and economic relations that have flourished for over five decades. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership between our two countries. Numerous high-level visits from both Germany and the UAE underscore the strength of our relationship. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and UAE President His Highness Shaikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan have met several times in recent years, reaffirming their commitment to revitalising our partnership.

In the economic sphere, the UAE has become Germany's largest trading partner in the region, with trade volumes growing significantly. This reflects a deepening economic interdependence, which is crucial for both nations.

A key milestone is the Emirati-German Energy Partnership, established in 2017, and later expanded into the Energy and Climate Partnership in 2022. Additionally, the Hydrogen Task Force, initiated in 2021, reflects our joint commitment to energy security and sustainability. In recent years, we've seen the first shipments of low-carbon ammonia and LNG to Germany, underlining the importance of our cooperation in these areas.

Our partnership extends beyond political and economic aspects, encompassing cultural exchange, university collaboration, tourism, and addressing global challenges such as climate change and sustainability.

● In terms of trade, Germany has long been one of the UAE's top trading partners in Europe. What sectors do you see as having the greatest potential for future growth in trade and investment?

Our trade relations are evolving positively. German products, especially in mechanical engineering, automotive, electrical goods, and chemicals, are well-regarded in the UAE. We see significant potential for further growth in sectors such as renewable energy, sustainability, artificial intelligence, technology, digitisation, smart manufacturing, and

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President His Highness Shaikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan with Ambassador of Germany to the UAE, Alexander Schönfelder

GN ARCHIVES

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healthcare.

Investment relations are also strengthening. The UAE's increasing interest in German markets is exemplified by Masdar's co-investment in the Baltic Eagle offshore wind farm and several other notable initiatives. This not only enhances economic ties but also underscores a shared commitment to sustainable energy development.

● **Sustainability is a major focus for both the UAE and Germany, particularly with the UAE hosting COP28 this year. Could you highlight some of the most impactful collaborations in renewable energy and green technology between the two nations?**

The UAE and Germany are pioneers in sustainability. Through our bilateral climate and energy partnership, we have implemented significant projects, especially in hydrogen. For instance, Fraunhofer ISE, a German research institute, helped draft the UAE's first hydrogen strategy, which was published in 2023.

ADNOC also sent a test shipment of low-carbon ammonia to Germany in 2022. We are currently working on establishing a hydrogen value chain between our countries, including production facilities and logistics, positioning the UAE as a key partner and supplier for Germany.

To facilitate knowledge exchange, both countries regularly hold bilateral Climate and Energy Days, conduct exchange trips, and implement joint projects in a range of sustainability-focused fields.

● **Cultural exchange is an important element of any bilateral relationship. Could you speak to some of the initia-**



We believe fostering strong people-to-people connections will shape the future of our bilateral relationship."

Alexander Schönfelder
Ambassador of Germany to the UAE

tives or programs that have strengthened people-to-people ties between the two countries?

Cultural ties have been a cornerstone of our cooperation. We believe that fostering strong people-to-people connections, particularly among the youth, will shape the future of our bilateral relationship.

There are three international German schools in the UAE, located in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah, with around 1,500 students, including an increasing number of Emirati students. This year, the first German university, the University of Europe (UE), opened its doors in Dubai, offering top-quality German education in fields such as digitization, software engineering, business, and management.

● **Germany's focus on vocational training is often regarded as a model worldwide. How is this expertise being shared with the UAE, particularly in preparing Emiratis for careers in advanced sectors?**

Germany's dual vocational training system is highly regarded and one of our most suc-

cessful exports. We are happy to support the UAE in promoting vocational education and training.

German organisations like GIZ IS and German companies have implemented programs to train young Emiratis for private sector careers. Recently, GIZ IS has managed two Technology and Career Centers, adding vocational preparation to school curricula.

Beyond vocational training, German institutions like AHK and the German-Emirati Institute conduct initiatives to support Emirati students and graduates, such as mentoring programs and internships with leading German companies.

● **Given the geopolitical importance of both the UAE and Germany in their respective regions, how do the two nations collaborate on international issues like peace, security, and humanitarian efforts?**

Germany and the UAE are close strategic partners, maintaining constant dialogue on international issues. Both nations prioritise humanitarian aid, particularly in Gaza, where both Germany and the UAE are among the top donors. Recently, Germany increased its humanitarian aid for Gaza and supported the UN's vaccination program against polio.

● **Looking ahead, what are the key priorities for deepening the UAE-Germany partnership, particularly in light of global challenges like climate change and economic transformation?**

We aim to continue and deepen our trusted partnership in areas of mutual interest, including political and economic cooperation, energy, climate, and cultural exchange. Our strategic partnership and the initiatives we've developed over the years equip us to address both current and future challenges. ■

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Germany and UAE advance innovation

AHK leads the way in fostering economic collaboration, green technology, and emerging sectors between the two countries



SHUTTERSTOCK

Germany and the UAE have enjoyed a long-standing and fruitful relationship since establishing diplomatic ties in 1972. Over the years, their collaboration has spanned trade, investment, and cultural exchange, with both countries consistently strengthening their economic relations.

A central player in this partnership is the German Emirati Joint Council for Industry and Commerce (AHK), which has become a pivotal institution in fostering business ties between the two nations. This article explores how AHK's role has evolved in recent years, highlighting promising sectors for collaboration, sustainability initiatives, and the organisation's efforts to bridge German innovation with UAE's growing emphasis on technology.

Since its formal establishment in 2009, the AHK has acted as a vital bridge between Germany and the UAE's business communities. Initially created to promote trade and investment, AHK has evolved into a multifaceted platform that not only represents the interests of German businesses in the UAE but also facilitates broader economic cooperation. With support from the Federal German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), the organisation complements the German diplomatic missions and helps Ger-

man companies navigate the UAE's dynamic business environment.

The UAE's reputation as a leading business hub with a pro-business regulatory environment has led to an influx of German companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. AHK has capitalised on this by providing essential information and services to German businesses looking to expand into the UAE market. The organisation's access to both governments and local business communities further positions it as a key intermediary, especially during times of global uncertainty.

AHK is well-positioned to lead the way in strengthening the bilateral ties between the two countries

Several sectors stand out for their potential in fostering increased collaboration between Germany and the UAE. Historically, Germany has been a major exporter of machinery, vehicles, and chemical products to the UAE, while the UAE exports oil and petrochemical products to Germany. However, recent developments have opened new avenues for partnership, especially in industries focused on innovation, technology, and sustainability.

The field of renewable energy is particularly promising. Germany's leadership in clean energy technologies aligns with the UAE's strategic goals. Both countries are committed to developing sustainable energy solutions, making this sector a natural fit for

collaboration. In addition, there is growing interest in sectors such as artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and Industry 4.0, where German technology and expertise can complement the UAE's ambitions of becoming a global leader in innovation.

Sustainability has emerged as a priority for both Germany and the UAE, with green technology and renewable energy being key focus areas. AHK has been instrumental in facilitating partnerships between German companies and UAE entities in these areas. For instance, since 2017, AHK has been the implementing partner of the bilateral Energy and Climate Partnership between the German and UAE governments.

This partnership has spearheaded several initiatives, including renewable energy projects, energy-efficient manufacturing technologies, and digitalisation efforts, all aimed at promoting sustainable and net-zero business practices.

As the UAE continues to prioritise innovation and technology, AHK has positioned itself as a crucial player in helping German companies establish partnerships in emerging sectors. Advanced manufacturing, AI, and Industry 4.0 are areas where AHK has facilitated significant collaboration. The UAE's ambition to transform into a regional tech and innovation hub aligns with Germany's strengths in industrial technologies, creating opportunities for cross-border partnerships in cutting-edge fields.

The proactive positioning of the UAE as a global hub for tech and innovation has been particularly attractive to German businesses. This shift is reflected in the growth of the German business community in the UAE, which now comprises around 1,500 companies and approximately 23,000 German citizens residing in the country. Many of these businesses are involved in technology-driven industries, underscoring the UAE's transformation into a regional center for advanced innovation.

Looking ahead, AHK's top priorities will focus on further enhancing economic ties between Germany and the UAE in light of global challenges such as economic recovery and climate change. The UAE's efforts to establish free trade agreements with key global markets are expected to enhance the country's appeal as a business destination, which will further widen German investment.

AHK is well-positioned to lead the way in strengthening the bilateral ties between our two countries. Its evolution from a trade promotion body to a key intermediary for innovation and value creation reflects the broader transformation of bilateral relations. By continuing to foster dialogue, promote green technology, and support emerging sectors, AHK will continue playing a vital role in shaping the future of German-Emirati relations. ■



Karin Zangerl,
Director, Abu Dhabi
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German titans drive sustainable mobility push

Through innovation and strategic local partnerships, these automakers are driving a greener future while meeting the discerning expectations of UAE customers

By Sony Thomas
Special to GN Focus

Luxury has long shaped automotive preferences in the UAE, with German-made cars playing a crucial role. As global focus shifts toward sustainable mobility, the UAE is actively contributing to this transformation, while Germany's iconic brands are actively adapting to meet the demand for eco-friendly solutions without compromising on their signature luxury. Renowned for their advanced engineering and elegant designs, these brands are not only symbols of affluence but also leaders in a mobility revolution, driving the future of transportation with ambitious electrification and sustainability goals.

"At BMW, our goal is to reduce CO2 emissions by 40 per cent per vehicle across the entire value chain by 2030 compared to 2019 levels," notes Karim-Christian Haririan, Managing Director of BMW Group Middle East. With its deep-rooted philosophy of innovation, the Bavarian automaker focuses on a three-pronged approach – electrification, digitisation, and circular economy. "In the UAE, we've been making great strides, particularly when it comes to raising awareness and supporting the country's sustainability efforts," says Haririan.

Much like its fellow German counterparts, BMW has aligned its global sustainability efforts with the UAE's evolving market needs, working closely with local players to introduce infrastructure that supports the transition to electric vehicles (EVs). While global goals are paramount, BMW tailors its strategy for the UAE, addressing the region's need for a robust charging infrastructure. "A strong charging infrastructure is critical," says Haririan. To this end, BMW announced a strategic partnership with Emaar, installing more than 50 charging stations across prime locations in the UAE, thus ensuring that luxury EV owners can access the convenience and infrastructure required for seamless usage.

BMW is also pioneering hydrogen technology, which speaks to the brand's commitment to offering diverse emission-free mobility solutions. BMW will launch its first-ever series production fuel cell electric vehicle in 2028, offering customers a fuel cell-electric powertrain option with zero local emissions. "BMW is now preparing for series production of vehicles with hydrogen drive systems in 2028, through the Group's partnership with Toyota Motor Corporation," says Haririan. "In line with this approach, we're supporting the testing process of the hydrogen refuelling infrastructure here in the region, with two stations having already opened up in the UAE – one in Dubai by ENOC in partnership with DEWA and one in Abu Dhabi through ADNOC."

Meanwhile, Audi, with its commitment to "Vorsprung durch Technik" (progress


50+
Number of
charging
stations
BMW
installed
across the
UAE in
partnership
with Emaar

through technology), also has a bold sustainability strategy tailored to the UAE's luxury market. For Audi, sustainability goes beyond the vehicle – it involves the entire process from design to production. "Audi's global sustainability strategy is rooted in its commitment to electrification and a holistic approach to reducing carbon emissions across the entire value chain," explains Rene Koneberg, Managing Director of Audi Middle East. This global approach seamlessly dovetails with the UAE's own objectives of sustainable development and clean energy initiatives. Audi's local efforts in the UAE are a reflection of this holistic strategy, emphasising the importance of working closely with regional partners to ensure that sustainability goals are met. "From a regulatory perspective, we work in line with and parallel to local authorities to ensure compliance with standards, particularly regarding emissions and safety. Our marketing campaigns also stress localisation, as evident by our partnership with our local brand ambassador, Chef Izu. This creates an additional layer of appeal to consumers in the UAE and beyond," says Koneberg.

With nearly 100 chargers installed across the Middle East, Audi is positioning itself as a leader in the region's electric mobility transition. The brand's Q8 e-tron and upcoming Q6 e-tron models reflect Audi's commitment to providing both cutting-edge technology and sustainability without compromising on the luxury that customers expect.

Audi's bespoke customisation programme, Audi Exclusive, is

also a key driver of its success in the UAE, where exclusivity is paramount. "We ensure that our range, including electric models, aligns with the expectations of discerning customers in the UAE," Koneberg says. The brand's localised approach, including partnerships with local ambassadors and limited-edition vehicles, ensures that Audi remains relevant to its regional clientele while maintaining its global sustainability goals.

For Audi's VW Group stagemate Porsche, the future is equally focused on maintaining its legacy of performance while embracing a more sustainable path. As a brand synonymous with luxury sports cars, Porsche's foray into the electric vehicle market was met with great anticipation, and the introduction of the Taycan all-electric sports car was a resounding success in the UAE.

"Our product strategy could enable us to deliver more than 80 per cent of our new cars fully electrified in 2030 – depending on the demand of our customers and the development of electromobility in the regions of the world," shares Manfred Braunl, Chief Executive Officer of Porsche Middle East. Porsche is ensuring that even its electric vehicles, like the upcoming Macan SUV, embody the brand's hallmark performance and luxury. "Porsche cars stand for luxury and performance, and both of these things resonate with consumers in the UAE. As the Taycan has shown since it was launched in 2019, when we launch all-electric vehicles, they remain a true Porsche. This will continue as we launch more electric

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12


At BMW, our goal is to reduce CO2 emissions by 40% per vehicle across the entire value chain by 2030 compared to 2019 levels."

Karim-Christian Haririan,
Managing Director,
BMW Group Middle East





Making our world more productive

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vehicles, including the Macan SUV due to arrive in the UAE later this year," Brauml adds.

Porsche has also made significant strides in testing its electric models under the UAE's harsh climatic conditions, demonstrating the brand's commitment to delivering vehicles tailored to the region. The brand ensures that its hot weather testing programme for all types of vehicles, including electric vehicles, is done here in the UAE summer. This rigorous testing ensures that Porsche's electric models are not only sustainable but also resilient and high-performing in extreme conditions that the region experiences.

Shared Vision

One of the most significant challenges facing the widespread adoption of electric vehicles in the UAE is the infrastructure needed to support them. All three brands – BMW, Audi, and Porsche – are playing an active role in expanding the EV infrastructure in the UAE, working closely with local governments and private sector partners to ensure that their customers have access to a reliable and extensive charging network.

Audi, for example, has made substantial investments in high-performance chargers across the Middle East, with 13 installed in the UAE alone. "These initiatives ensure that Audi remains aligned with key trends such as electric mobility, digitalisation, and smart technologies, positioning the brand to support the UAE's transition towards more advanced, sustainable transportation solutions," says Koneberg.

BMW echoes this sentiment, with Haririan highlighting the brand's collaboration with EMAAR and the UAE's Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure to expand charging facilities. "We are committed to supporting the UAE's charging infrastructure," he affirms.

Porsche, too, is ensuring that its customers have a seamless electric vehicle experience, with trained staff across its regional centres ready to guide customers through the process of home charging and other EV-related concerns. "We have also installed over 400 Porsche Destination Chargers across our region to date, with even more planned for the coming years," says Brauml.



Porsche cars stand for luxury and performance, and both of these things resonate with consumers in the UAE."

Manfred Brauml,
Chief Executive Officer,
Porsche Middle East


400+
Number of Porsche Destination Chargers installed by automotive brand across the region



Audi's global sustainability strategy is rooted in its commitment to electrification and a holistic approach to reducing carbon emissions across the entire value chain."

Rene Koneberg,
Managing Director,
Audi Middle East

Luxury the core

Germany's leading car brands are not only addressing the practicalities of electric vehicle adoption but also ensuring that luxury remains at the core of their offerings. This delicate balance of sustainability and luxury is crucial in the UAE, where discerning customers expect both. BMW's focus on high-performance electric models, such as the BMW M5 with its M HYBRID drive system, underscores this balance. "The M HYBRID drive system in the new BMW M5 brings a 4.4-litre V8 engine with a classical high-revving character together with an electric motor, whose performance characteristics are tuned specifically for the BMW M5," explains Haririan, a blend that allows customers to enjoy both performance and sustainability.

Similarly, Porsche's hot weather testing programme and its commitment to offering both electric and hybrid models ensure that customers don't have to compromise on the brand's legacy of high-performance sports cars. "We will remain flexible and continue to offer electric vehicles, hybrid electric vehicles and increasingly efficient petrol vehicles into the next decade," Brauml assures. He also highlights the brand's customisation programme that adds to Porsche's luxury allure. "Our Exclusive Manufaktur individualisation programme allows customers an enormous amount of options to make their dream sports car truly unique. This region is

arguably the strongest in the world in terms of customisation, so this ensures owners in this region can specify the car to suit their precise personal preferences," he adds.

Audi's Koneberg also points out that as customer preferences in the UAE evolve, particularly with the growing interest in electric vehicles, his brand remains committed to ensuring that the shift towards electrification does not compromise on luxury. "Recognising the local preference for luxury vehicles and high-performance models, we ensure that our range, including electric models, aligns with the expectations of discerning customers in the UAE. Initiatives like Audi Exclusive, which offers bespoke customisation options, cater to the region's high demand for exclusivity," Koneberg adds.

Green future

Germany's automotive giants – BMW, Audi, and Porsche – are setting the stage for a sustainable, electrified future in the UAE. Through a combination of innovation, strategic partnerships, and a deep understanding of local market preferences, these brands are not only leading the charge toward greener mobility solutions but also ensuring that the luxury experience remains paramount. As the UAE continues its journey towards sustainability, the role of these iconic German brands will be central in shaping the future of luxury and mobility in the region. ■





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SHUTTERSTOCK

Strong axioms for recovery

Germany's indisputable strengths of people, policies, and prudence will see it overcome current challenges and secure a more sustainable future for its economy and society

By Iona Stanley
Special to Gulf News

The German economy began recovering at the start of 2024 after it went through a recession and set off alarm bells. Real GDP declined by 0.2 per cent last year in a structural and cyclical crisis, according to data from the German Federal Statistical Office. However, Deutsche Bundesbank DE is clear it is regaining its footing after two years of weakness and it is clear enough to see why.

"The German economy is extricating itself from a period of economic weakness," Bundesbank President Joachim Nagel said in June, while announcing the German monetary authority's current forecast, silencing critics who only saw gloom and doom.

Parallely, the European Commission sees

German gross domestic product (GDP) growing modestly by 0.1 per cent in 2024, but picking up momentum in ensuing years. They predict real household income and private consumption returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2025, along with the recovery of investment growth and growth in industry and exports.

The viability of the German growth model — hitherto reliant on globalisation and inexpensive energy — is threatened by rising protectionism, increased energy costs, structural challenges and geopolitical factors, factors that draw comment and critique. While these dampen its growth outlook, Germany is easily able to counterbalance them by leveraging its talented workforce, high-tech infrastructure, innovation prowess and new investments. Recovery plans also heed the urgent need to make its economy more resilient and ready for the future.

Almost half of Germany's electricity is currently generated through renewable sources, and more is in store.

Industry impetus for sustainability

Climate change poses undeniably greater threats to this energy-dependent nation, but under the aegis of the government's German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), German industries already lead the global field with energy- and resource-efficient, low-polluting technologies, systems, and products. Almost half the country's electricity is currently generated through renewable sources, and more is in store.

In March, Germany launched a bidding process for subsidies to support energy-intensive firms who switch to green production, in an €4bn funding round: companies in steel, glass, paper and chemicals will win 15-year subsidies for reducing carbon emissions in production.

In April, two projects outlined how German industry can meet sustainability targets without conceding market share: a new definition for Low Emissions Steel Standards (LESS) to make steel production sustainable, and cement plants that capture carbon emissions during production and use it for further processing. Both examples of governmental assistance to help industry in the green transition will set international standards.

Also in April, Hannover Messe 2024, Germany's leading industrial trade fair, emphasised carbon-neutral production and hydrogen fuel cells while focussing on energising sustainable industries.

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The outlook for hidden champions

Small- and mid-sized family companies, the Mittelstand or Hidden Champions, are well-known and widely hailed as the backbone of German economy. While Germany has less than 30 of the world's top 500 companies, it has more than half of its small market leaders, and around 1,500 of the latter power its economy and account for 70 per cent of all German jobs.

A Hidden Champion is typically ranked number one domestically and among the top three internationally despite their small size and low visibility — but this may see some change.

In May, Chinese state agency Xinhua reported that many Hidden Champions are actively pursuing opportunities for industrial collaboration in China. A forum on Sino-German industrial cooperation accentuated this trend, while a report portends their role alongside Chinese counterparts as key to future ties between the two nations. China has been Germany's largest trading partner for eight consecutive years.

A collaboration between India and Germany in 2015 saw the launch of Make in India Mittelstand (MIIM) and the Berlin-based entity continues to encourage German champions to invest and manufacture in India, with support services.

Fundamental solidity and strength

As industry apprehends the impact of broadening its horizons and partnering with outsiders, foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country, including in the Mittelstand, continues to soar. Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI) says Germany attracted €34.8bn worth of international business projects in 2023, not including mergers and acquisitions,

Germany is the birthplace of numerous innovations with practical implementation, and this is central to its positioning and prospects.

in comparison to €25.3bn in 2022, marking an increase of 37.5 per cent. In a starker comparison, FDI decreased by 7.4 per cent in Europe and only rose by 2.6 per cent worldwide.

“Despite the difficult global business climate and negative headlines, Germany continued to attract premium projects from the world's leading companies,” GTAI CEO Robert Hemann stated in May, announcing the data. “The breadth of international projects in 2023, in terms of sector and country of origin, illustrates the fundamental solidity and strength of Germany as a business location.”

The innovation factor

Germany is the birthplace of numerous innovations with practical implementation,

and this is central to its positioning and prospects. In 2023, patent applications received by the German Patent and Trade Mark Office (DPMA) increased by 2.5 per cent, reversing the post-pandemic decline, while the innovation activity of German companies increased by 3.4 per cent.

Many German SMEs are technology-driven and embrace the German practice of tinkering and perfecting, focussing on quality instead of price. Even in small organisational structures, employees who work in assorted disciplines ranging from production to sales and service are involved in innovation processes.

This is evident in the European Commission's European Innovation Scoreboard 2023, which ranks Germany with performance at 117.8 per cent of the EU average, and cites business process innovators and innovation expenditure per employee as its key strengths. Germany also ranks fourth in the 2023 Global Innovation Index published by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

Plans in the pipeline

While its economy remains under strain and continues to face challenges, Germany has enough levers and policies — and the fiscal prudence — to overcome them and secure a sustainable future.

Last month (September 18), Germany pledged to invest about €12bn by 2030 to strengthen the venture capital environment for start-ups and advance innovation, in a joint declaration signed by the German government, development bank KfW, and business associations. “This strengthens the German venture capital market and economic location as a whole,” Chancellor Olaf Scholz said at the Startup Germany Summit. He added it would mobilise private investments in both, start-ups and innovation technologies. ■

BILATERAL BUSINESS WITH THE UAE

In May, German energy firm EnBW Energie Baden-Württemberg (EnBW) signed its first liquefied natural gas (LNG) deal in the Middle East in a 15-year contract with the UAE's oil and gas major, ADNOC. When operational, the delivery of 0.6 million metric tonnes per annum of LNG will be powered by clean and low-carbon energy. The contract builds on the UAE-Germany Energy Security and Industry Accelerator (ESIA) of 2022, which aims to advance cooperation in energy security and decarbonisation between the two countries.

ADNOC is also in talks with Covestro for a takeover proposal that values the German group at nearly 15 billion. The Leverkusen-headquartered firm makes plastics and chemicals for construction and engineering, and is well-positioned for the global energy transition.

In July, Abu Dhabi-headquartered Fertiglobe, a strategic partnership between ADNOC and OCI Global, won the bid to supply renewable ammonia to the EU, at an auction by H2Global, an initiative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). Fertiglobe's bid supports Europe's efforts to diversify its energy sources, and is also in line with ESIA.

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SHUTTERSTOCK

German companies support UAE sustainability goals

As the UAE government strides towards its clean energy targets for 2030 and beyond, collaborations with Germany's leading institutions are instrumental

By Helga Jensen-Forde
Special to GN Focus

With the UAE's achievable sustainability goals set for 2030 and a longer-term ambition to reach net zero for 2050, key players in German technology are playing a pivotal role in helping the region achieve a cleaner future.

Since German companies can provide the latest innovative green technology and state-of-the-art engineering solutions, the collaboration is already proving to be the perfect panacea.

Matthias Fengler, CFO of theion GmbH and Managing Director for theion Middle East, explains, "Germany and the UAE share a strong commitment to sustainability and German companies are playing a vital role in advancing the UAE's sustainability goals. Through collaborations in clean energy, technology, and engineering, German companies bring decades of expertise to support the

UAE's ambitious targets, such as its Net Zero 2050 strategy."

Working together is certainly key to a greener future and the biggest players in German technology can provide invaluable expertise to the region.

"Collaboration is instrumental in advancing the UAE's sustainability goals and Siemens Energy has been at the forefront of these efforts," says Khalid Bin Hadi, Managing Director UAE, Siemens Energy.

"Our partnerships with leading companies and government entities in the UAE, such as the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure (MoEI), the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED), ADNOC, DEWA, as well as a variety of universities, including Khalifa University and Al Ain University, have led to significant advancements in green hydrogen capabilities, renewable energy projects, and grid infrastructure enhancements.

As an energy technology company, our solutions cover the entire energy landscape,



Matthias Fengler
CFO, theion GmbH and
Managing Director,
theion Middle East



Khalid Bin Hadi
Managing Director UAE,
Siemens Energy

from conventional to renewable power, from grid technology to storage, to electrifying complex industrial processes."

According to Hadi, one of the company's flagship initiatives has been the Green Hydrogen Project at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park.

"This partnership with DEWA inaugurated the first industrial-scale green hydrogen project in the Middle East and Africa region in 2021. Siemens Energy electrolysers sit at the heart of this project, converting water into hydrogen and oxygen gas, using clean electricity. We also support a variety of solar energy projects across the country with a mix of technologies that enable reliable, efficient, and stable clean electricity."

The result of partnerships between German companies and UAE entities speaks for itself. Thanks to Siemens Energy's H-class gas turbine, which is one of the largest and most efficient in the UAE, it has lowered green-

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The Green Hydrogen Project at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park is an initiative led by German company Siemens Energy

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house gas emissions from Emirates Global Aluminium power-generation and aluminium-smelting operations at Jebel Ali by 10 per cent. According to Hadi, this is the equivalent of planting more than 17 million trees each year. With harmful NOx emissions being decreased by as much as 58 per cent, it is comparative to removing more than 850,000 cars from the road.

However, this is only one example, with other German companies, including KROHNE, also bringing its products and skills to the UAE. Recently, the global manufacturer, who are headquartered in Duisburg, Germany, opened an office in Expo City, demonstrating their commitment within the region.

“Our new office in Expo City Dubai provides an ideal setting for us to innovate and collaborate on sustainable solutions that directly align with the UAE’s vision for a sustainable future. We are leveraging our expertise in measurement technology to support various industries in their efforts to reduce carbon emissions and improve resource efficiency,” says Jay Gadhavi, General Manager, KROHNE Middle East.

Mega projects

“Our decision to invest in the UAE by opening an office in Expo City Dubai was driven by several strategic factors, including growing demand. We’ve observed a significant increase in demand for our innovative measurement solutions across various industries in the UAE and the mega projects across the broader Middle East region.

This significant investment demonstrates our long-term commitment to the UAE and our belief in its vision for a sustainable future.



Jay Gadhavi
General Manager,
KROHNE Middle East



Dr Martin Soltes
Founder & Managing
Director, EVUM Motors

By establishing this new office, we’re not just responding to current demand but also positioning ourselves to play a pivotal role in the UAE’s ongoing journey towards sustainability and technological advancement.”

Whilst companies from around the world set up various enterprises in the UAE on a daily basis, it seems that German companies are fast becoming one of the leaders when it comes to sustainability. Theion’s Fengler says that Germany has a long-standing tradition in using renewable energies, be it wind, sun or hydropower. Therefore, this could be one of the reasons that success in the field was inevitable.

Fengler says, “One of the first commercial hydroelectric power stations was built in Germany as early as in the 18th century contributing to the industrial growth of the country. The nation’s culturally deep-rooted consciousness about the preservation of nature translates into strong sustainability targets which are realised through a combination of precision engineering excellence and innovation power. This ultimately has led to the leadership of Germany in green technology early on and still drives innovation in fields ranging from renewable energy to sustainable energy storage solutions such as theion’s sulfur-based battery technology.”

With Germany leading the way with its sustainable solutions, experts from the country are contributing in different aspects.

During the recent Future Hospitality Summit World UAE 2024, Dr Martin Šoltés, Founder and Managing Director, EVUM Motors was keen to share his knowledge with the delegates from around the hospitality world.

“Speaking at the Future Hospitality Summit World in the UAE was a unique opportunity for us to share our vision of eco-friendly mobility, work, and energy solutions, where the vehicle becomes a multifunctional tool. We believe this summit was an ideal platform

to contribute to the sustainability of the hospitality industry. Our vehicle offers a sustainable and energy-efficient solution

by combining mobility, clean energy, and work efficiency, which aligns closely with the UAE’s sustainability goals.

We believe that by integrating these elements, we can contribute significantly to the UAE’s vision of reducing carbon emissions, promoting green energy, and fostering more sustainable business operations across various sectors.”

Thanks to the number of leading experts in German innovation working in the region and the commitment and foresight of the UAE government, it can only lead to an auspicious, sustainable, future. Thus, whether it’s through emissions-free mobility, renewable energy projects, smart cities, or eco-friendly engineering solutions, Germany’s leading companies are momentarily paving the way for a greener planet. ■

Germany has a long-standing tradition in using renewable energies, be it wind, sun or hydropower.

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PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK

Lasting legacy in UAE healthcare

For over three decades, German expertise has shaped the UAE's healthcare landscape, driving innovation in medical technologies, services, and partnerships

By Emma Procter
Special to GN focus

As the UAE evolves into a global hub for innovation right across the board, Germany continues to be one of its strongest partners in the development of the country's healthcare ecosystem.

For more than thirty years, German companies and institutions have played a major role in advancements in medical technologies, pharmaceuticals, and services – and as the number of German expats in the UAE grows, so too does the potential for further cross-country collaboration.

The UAE's strategic location and its enthusiastic embracing of new technologies and methods have long made it an attractive market for German small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups looking to expand their reach.

"Germany has been an important partner for the development of UAE's health-

care ecosystem — for a very long time and while we see the number of professionals moving to the UAE growing, corresponding the growing number of German UAE residents, there are other fields where we still see potential," says Oliver Oehms, CEO of the German-Emirati Joint Council for Industry & Commerce (AHK).

"Innovative medical technology providers are slowly starting to explore opportunities in the UAE. Many of those firms are SMEs or even startups, and with growing maturity in the European core markets the UAE provides for a perfect start for taking these technologies abroad."

Ramsey Morad, Regional Senior Vice President MEAR at Merck, a leading German science and technology company, emphasised the importance of this partnership.

"Merck is actively driving progress in healthcare technology and improving health outcomes for people all around the world. Our role in the UAE is shaping the future of local health accessibility."



The UAE's strategic location and its embracing of new methods have long made it an attractive market for German SMEs.

Merck's activities span various therapeutic areas, including diabetes, oncology, and fertility, and have positively impacted over two million patients in 2023 alone. In the UAE, the company has spearheaded public health initiatives and collaborations with local authorities.

One notable example was the nationwide prediabetes screening programme launched in September 2023, titled "Show Type 2 Diabetes the Red Card." This initiative aims to raise awareness about diabetes prevention and aligns with the UAE government's National Wellbeing Strategy 2031. The program has already recorded over 20,000 screenings, providing valuable data to develop long-term evidence-based treatment and care approaches.

The UAE — along with other parts of the world — continues to see increases in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), conditions that are not transmissible from one person to another that are often related to one's lifestyle such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

They can result in long-term health consequences and create a need for long-term treatment and care. In partnership with MOHAP, health authorities and other partners, Merck says it is increasingly looking at ways to not only to treat these conditions, but more importantly, to prevent them.

"One of the ways we're doing this is by looking at how we can use technology to help improve treatment outcomes and enhance patient care. This means we are expanding into genomics programs as well as into the use of AI in identifying people at risk for developing diabetes — a program we are now expanding across the UAE, and potentially in other markets," said Morad.



In terms of the popularity and use of German medical products in the UAE, Kieran Sheridan, Co-founder and Physiotherapist at GulfPhysio — a large online store for sports taping and physiotherapy supplies — says there continues to be demand for German brands like Eucerin, SebaMed, Weleda, and DHU in the retail pharmacy market, adding that “Newer lower cost German generic manufacturer’s such as Hexal also seem to be gaining strength,” he says.

However, as the UAE’s medical market booms, he added a note of caution for German healthcare companies: “The success of German products lies in their design and

wide range of use cases, but it’s blunted by the newer cheaper entrants in the market. For example, German brands such as Sissel and Theraband offer great products, but the UAE seems to be a price sensitive market, so newer, cheaper entrants like Flamingo (from India) and Mueller (from the USA) are doing well.”

That said, as the UAE continues to invest in its healthcare infrastructure, the collaboration with German companies is expected to deepen.

The focus on innovation, research, and development will likely lead to the introduction of advanced medical technologies and treatment options.



The success of German products lies in their design and wide range of use cases.

Initiatives such as the UAE’s National Health Strategy 2021-2025 aim to enhance the quality of healthcare services, promote preventive care, and ensure that the population has access to cutting-edge medical solutions.

Moreover, the growing trend of personalised medicine and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in diagnostics and treatment planning will further transform the healthcare landscape.

German firms, known for their expertise in these areas, are well-positioned to contribute to this evolution.

And their expansion looks set to continue on all healthcare fronts — just last year, Dubai’s well-established German Neuroscience Center announced the opening of its new clinic in Bayview Tower, Business Bay — a third location joining established branches in Jumeirah Lakes Towers and Dubai Healthcare City.

The 6,000 sq.m facility provides specialised care for adults and children affected by neurological disorders, such as epilepsy, Parkinson’s, dementia, multiple sclerosis, and other neurological diseases. It also offers treatments for psychiatric and psychological conditions, including depression, anxiety, and PTSD, as well as couples counselling.

On the opening, Timo Brosig, CEO, German Neuroscience Center, said: “...we are delighted to see that demand for the highest quality out-patient care continues to grow. We have increased our team of internationally trained specialists, now totalling close to 40, and we look forward to expanding further in the future, bringing the latest treatments and technology to the region”. ■

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PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK

Wunderbar prospects for UAE students choosing Germany

Germany is the new frontier for UAE students seeking world-class, affordable higher education

By **Keith J Fernandez**
Special to GN Focus

Germany has quietly climbed to the top of the league table for students seeking a higher education abroad, including those from the UAE. The combination of world-class universities, affordable tuition, and a strong job market make the European nation a compelling alternative to traditional destinations such as the US, UK, Canada and Australia.

"Demand for German higher education has surged," says Varun Jain, Founder and CEO of educational consultants Unihawk. His own agency saw a 20 per cent increase in students going to Germany this year over 2023. "While fewer UAE students currently study in Germany compared to the US or UK, [we see] this number rising by 18-20 per cent, especially for STEM programmes due to Germany's high-quality education and affordability."

Germany has traditionally been an educa-

tion player in the STEM fields of engineering, technology and the sciences.

Clint Khan, a director at DMCC-based overseas careers and immigration firm Y-Axis, says inquiries have risen about 35 per cent for people who want to work and study in Germany. "This trend highlights the growing recognition of Germany as a prime destination for quality and affordable education," he says.

Surging student numbers

A record number of foreign students studied at universities in Germany over the 2023-24 academic year, according to the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), the country's academic exchange service. With between 380,000 and 390,000 international students last year, Germany is now the third most popular study abroad destination after the US and the UK, ranking ahead of Australia. The corresponding figure for the previous year was 367,578 students, itself a 5 per cent increase over 2021.


**20%
increase
seen in
students
going to
Germany
this year
over 2023.**

More than 93,000 international students began university in the 2023 winter semester, according to the country's federal statistics office. In total, around 2.87 million students were enrolled in German universities at all levels over the same period.

A 2022 study by Univibes, a service that helps students get into overseas universities, found that Germany was UAE students' top choice, followed by Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and South Korea. These countries have become more popular as degrees in the US and UK as have become more expensive in the wake of the pandemic, Univibes said.

That accords with a global survey of 1,240 recruitment agents from 66 countries conducted this March. INTO University Partnerships, a British education and recruitment partner, reported that more than four-fifths of agents worldwide (87 per cent) said international students were applying to more universities overall than before, and a similar number (84 per cent) said students were applying to more destination countries than last year.



Cost-conscious choices

Fees were a key consideration for students, with 84 per cent of agents in the Middle East and Africa saying that study abroad discussions over the previous 12 months were increasingly focused on cost.

"Germany offers a unique blend of high-quality education and cost-effectiveness, making it particularly attractive compared to traditional destinations like the US and UK," Khan says. "The absence of tuition fees at public universities and the relatively lower cost of living are significant advantages."

Foreign students are often eligible for scholarships and grants, he adds. DAAD, the world's largest funding organisation for international exchange students and researchers, provides a comprehensive list of bursaries on its website.

Moving to the other factors raising Germany's popularity as an overseas study destination, Khan pointed to global recognition for degrees from German universities. The institutions' strong links with industry give students a competitive edge at a time when workplaces appear to be in a constant state of flux, as new technologies and systems are rapidly onboarded.

Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

International students don't necessarily need to sprechen Deutsch. Many higher educational institutions offering degree programmes in English. The International Programme search tool on the DAAD website lists 224 English-language bachelor's degrees. Narrow the search to include only tuition-free options and the list includes 112 choices. The same database throws up 1,397 English-language master's degrees.

Those that do want to follow degrees in German will need to demonstrate proficiency

at the near-native C1 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages.

The Goethe Institut in the Gulf Region helps students improve their German language skills as part of its Studienkolleg Middle East programme. "Studienkolleg Middle East is tailored to the German education system and encompasses academic subjects, German language proficiency, and cultural acclimatisation. This all-encompassing support helps students clear the Feststellungsprüfung exam, a prerequisite for admission to German universities," says Mara Solovij, an examiner and coordinator with Goethe Institut.

Studienkollegs, also available in Germany, are one-year preparatory programmes for international students whose school qualifications don't match admission requirements for Germany universities. It's a common pathway for students from countries where the school-leaving certificate isn't equivalent to the German Abitur, and students will typically sit the Feststellungsprüfung assessment at the end of the year.

"Though some students find the process challenging, Studienkollegs are designed to ease the transition to German university coursework," Unihawk's Varun Jain says.

Studienkollegs are divided into two types: University and Applied Sciences, with the choice between them depends on the student's field of study. "Families must understand that pursuing nearly free education in Germany requires a [prior] commitment of one to two years, depending on the student's previous curriculum," Jain says.

Classroom to career

At the end of their degree, international students have the skills and qualifications



Varun Jain
Founder and CEO,
Unihawk



Clint Khan
Director, Y-Axis



Mara Solovij
examiner and
coordinator,
Goethe Institut

they need to step into the European job market – even if only temporarily. "For now, graduates from German universities can apply for an 18-month post-study work visa, allowing them to seek employment in the country," Y-Axis' Clint Khan says.

"Industries such as IT, engineering, and research are particularly welcoming to international graduates, providing ample opportunities to gain experience and build a career."

With its ageing population and a critical labour shortage, Germany desperately needs skilled workers. The country now has 700,000 unfilled vacancies and projections indicate a deficit of 7 million skilled workers by 2035, Vice-Chancellor and Economy Minister Robert Habeck said in February.

Foreign workers will be crucial to closing the gap. The government has already implemented several measures, such as shortening the path to citizenship, expediting visa issuance, and recognising foreign qualifications in the job market. Habeck emphasised the need for further measures, including streamlined visa processes, increased language courses, and better digital access to German companies from abroad.

Earlier this year, DAAD President Prof. Dr Joybrato Mukherjee explained how the organisation is this year funding 114 projects at 104 universities in all federal states in order to better pave the way for international students to fill vacancies in Germany more easily.

"The shortage of skilled labour in our country is reaching dramatic proportions. It therefore makes sense to attract international talent to Germany for a longer-term stay after they have successfully completed their studies. German universities want to be a driving force in attracting international skilled workers," he said. ■

More travellers train their sights on Germany

With Germany's incredible natural diversity and numerous connections to the rest of Europe, it's no wonder that rail journeys are becoming more popular with the new breed of sustainability-minded GCC tourists

By Keith J Fernandez
Special to GN Focus

It's flat as far as the eye can see as we pull away from Amsterdam's throbbing city centre. Nursing late-afternoon coffees, we soak up the countryside en route to Berlin, just six hours — but a world of difference — away. The journey between the two European capitals may not be the world's most picturesque, but the gently undulating green plain is a relief to our desert-weary eyes, and we sorely need the quiet downtime of the train. Placid marshes, undulating meadows, river crossings, thick forests ablaze with colour, more animal and bird species than we can count... crossing the Schengen zone by train means we have front row seats to nature's fulsome display, with enough dopamine hits to prevent us from reaching for our phones — onboard Wi-Fi notwithstanding.

Train travel has grown in popularity since the pandemic, partly in response to a trend for slower, more sustainable tourism. And Germany, with its wide diversity of landscapes, far-reaching rail network and unbeatable value tickets, is seeing more passengers climb aboard its trains.

Traveller numbers grew 5.8 per cent to 1.8 billion over the course of 2023, railway operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) reports. Growth continued to rise over the first six months of this year, with the total number of passengers increasing by 4.2 per cent despite a series of strikes at the start of the year. The launch of a month-long €49 public transport pass has spurred regional travel. Approximately 855 million passengers took DB Group's local and regional trains in the first half of 2024 — an increase of about 6 per cent compared with the first six months of 2023.

More tourists are arriving by train, too. Yamina Sofu, Director of the Marketing & Sales Office for GCC at the German National Tourist Board (GNTB), says travellers choosing trains as their mode of transport to reach Germany recorded an average of 5.8 million trips in 2023, citing data from IPK International's 2024 travel trends report. That's a significant 22 per cent increase over 2022.

Embracing sustainability

"Train travel in Germany has steadily gained popularity over the years, primarily due to its extensive and reliable rail network, making it a top choice for intercity and regional travel. This increase in demand is further fuelled by growing sustainability concerns, as more travellers seek environmentally friendly



Hohenzollern castle, ancestral seat of the Prussian king and princes of Hohenzollern



View from the harbour Medienhafen of the buildings Neuer Zollhof by Frank O. Gehry, the Stadttor and the television tower

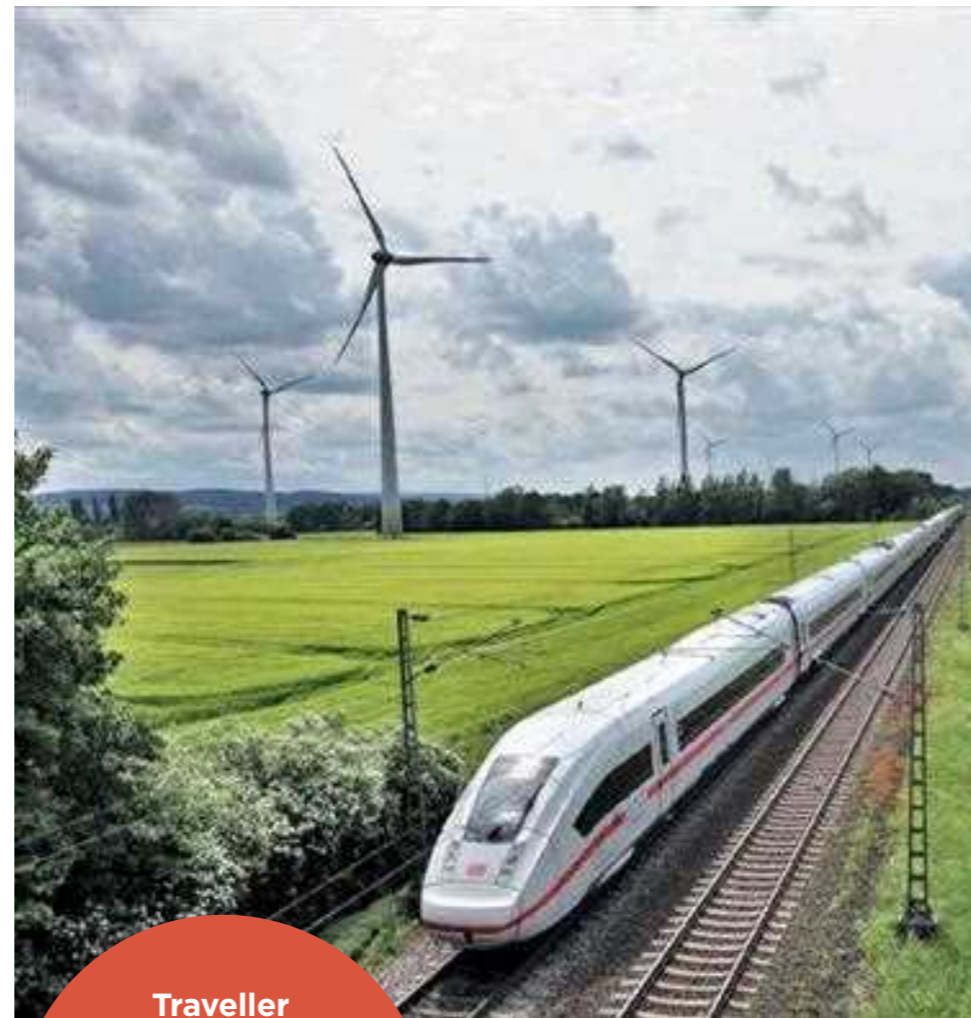


Yamina Sofu
Director, Marketing & Sales Office for GCC, German National Tourist Board

alternatives to road and air travel, which are typically more carbon-intensive," she says.

Besides traditional draws such as luxury, wellness, nature and family attractions, GCC travellers are embracing the shift toward sustainability, Sofu says. "We see travellers choosing eco-friendly accommodations and showing interest in sustainable travel initiatives... We're [also] seeing an interest in longer stays and slow travel. Many GCC travellers are opting for multi-city itineraries, staying in different regions of Germany to experience its diverse culture, history, and natural beauty. This shift aligns well with the sustainable travel movement, where travellers prefer to spend more time in fewer places, deeply engaging with the local culture."

Overall, 24 million travellers crossed Germany's borders by train in 2023, an increase of more than a fifth (21%) compared to 2019. The route we took — between Berlin and Amsterdam — is the most popular, with a 23% increase, or 64,000 more people, over 2022.



Traveller numbers grew 5.8% to 1.8 billion over the course of 2023, railway operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) reports.

Other popular DB routes across the unified travel area include routes across the Alps such as Munich-Zurich, Munich-Verona and Frankfurt-Milan.

Several new launches aim to tap into the appetite for lower-carbon travel. Since last year, European Sleeper, a Belgian-Dutch cooperative, has operated cross-continental trains, including a route taking in Brussels, Amsterdam Bad Bentheim, Berlin and Dresden en route to Prague. Prices start at €49 for a seat and €79 for a couchette in a shared compartment. The company hopes to launch a direct service between Amsterdam and Barcelona by 2026.

Train services extended

Meanwhile, Austrian railway operator ÖBB flagged off its first Nightjet service from Rome to Munich last month. Seats for the 14-hour journey cost €64.90 with sleeper cabins available from €224.90. The company already runs services from Germany to the rest of Europe, including Poland, Italy, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia. Some of these are jointly operated with rail partners.

And last summer, Swedish Railways extended its Euronight Stockholm-Hamburg service to Berlin — a 14-hour trip that also takes in Denmark.

More routes are coming. As of December this year, DB and France's SNCF, will jointly operate a high-speed train between Paris and Berlin. The eight-hour journey will shave an hour off the fastest existing route, which also requires several transfers.

Earlier this year, international operator Eurostar said it was considering new routes across Europe from London, perhaps as early as next year.

Savvy travellers, of course, already know of the Eurail and Interrail passes. With Eurail's \$312 global pass, you can jump on and off most local trains and ferries in 33 European countries, provided you restrict your journey to seven days in a month.

Sofu says tourists from the GCC are particularly keen on international train travel within Europe.

"The recent launch of pan-European rail lines offers travellers a more comfortable and enjoyable way to explore multiple destina-



View of Hohenzollern castle



A trip across the lake Königssee is a visual highlight for tourists



Above & left: Germany offers attractive and convenient options for rail travel



Fireworks light up Heidelberg castle

tions. This trend is particularly appealing to GCC travellers, who often prefer itineraries that combine several stops," she says.

"For families, train travel provides significant advantages, such as more space to move around compared to cars or planes, making the journey less restrictive. With family compartments, kid-friendly amenities, and seamless connections between cities, train travel enhances the accessibility, spaciousness, and enjoyment of exploring Germany's diverse regions."

In 2023, travellers from the GCC spent 1.3 million nights in accommodation establishments with at least ten beds in Germany, official data shows. The country's Federal Statistical Office tracks overnight stays rather than counting visitor numbers to gauge inbound tourism. The figure represents a 15% increase compared to the previous year, underscoring the strong recovery in travel demand from the region.

"The GCC continues to be one of Germany's most important overseas markets, ranking third after the USA and China," Sofu says.

In total, international travellers to Germany clocked 80.9 million overnight stays in 2023. ■

SCHENGEN PRE-APPROVAL FOR UAE NATIONALS IN 2025

UAE nationals will need to apply for pre-approval to enter the European Union's Schengen Zone, including Germany, when the new European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) comes into force next year.

Emirati and nationals of other visa-exempt countries will be able to apply for pre-approval online once the ETIAS portal goes live.

ETIAS will be valid for three years from the date of issue and allows for multiple short stays of up to 90 days over a period of 180 days. Travellers are warned to submit their applications at least 96 hours before departure.

Anyone denied for an ETIAS will still be able to apply for a visitor visa. On the other hand, as with any visa, ETIAS approval does not guarantee entry into Europe, because the final decision is made by the border security at the port of arrival.

Most travellers will need to pay an ETIAS processing fee of €7. Applicants who are under 18 years or over 70 years of age are exempted from paying the fee, as are family members of EU citizens or residents.

"This system is designed to enhance security by pre-screening travellers, ensuring that Europe remains a safe destination," says Yamina Sofu, Director of the Marketing & Sales Office for GCC at the German National Tourist Board (GNTB). "We anticipate that ETIAS will enhance the overall travel experience by providing peace of mind for both travellers and authorities, further reinforcing Europe as a secure and welcoming destination for all."

"We encourage all readers to visit the official ETIAS website for detailed information on the application process and timeline," Sofu adds.

A formal launch date has not been announced, although the system is expected to come into force in the first half of 2025, the EU website says. The launch will follow roughly six months after the new Entry/Exit System (EES), an automated IT system to register non-EU nationals entering or leaving the common travel area. The EES is slated to roll out next month, but recent reports suggest it may be delayed.

The EU has been considering a travel authorisation programme for at least a decade.

The programme is thought to be similar to the US' Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA).



SHUTTERSTOCK

Sharing tradition one bite at a time

German expats in the UAE share their traditions through food, festive customs, and cultural exchanges, creating connections in a vibrant, diverse community

By Krita Coelho
Editor

When you think of Germans living in the UAE, you might picture pretzels and Oktoberfest. But the German expat experience in this desert metropolis is about so much more — it's a rich tapestry of traditions, customs, and delicious food that bridge cultures and build connections.

Oliver Duric, CEO of Lebenslust Lifestyle, is one such expat who has taken it upon himself to share Germany's culinary treasures with the wider UAE community. Running an e-commerce business that imports German food, beverages, and household items, Duric provides fellow Germans with a taste of home, while introducing non-Germans to the diverse world of German delicacies. "German food is somewhat under-represented here," Duric observes. "Even

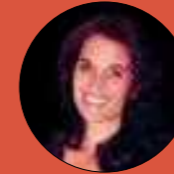
though we mostly cater to German customers, I believe our cuisine has some very unique and delicious items that people from other backgrounds would appreciate." His goal is to expand awareness of German food, a mission supported by the 700-plus products in his store, many of which are still unfamiliar to most people in the UAE.

Stephanie Neuer, owner of SCN Travel & More, a business specialising in crafting unique travel experiences, finds

joy in sharing one of her country's simplest yet most cherished traditions — the Kaffeeklatsch. "It's essentially gathering over coffee and cake, sparking relaxed conversations that bring people together," she says. For Neuer, this custom has become a way to connect with friends and colleagues from different cultures, showing how something as simple as sharing cake can bridge cultural divides. She adds with a grin, "But then again, is this really German?"



Oliver Duric
CEO, Lebenslust
Lifestyle



Stephanie Neuer
Owner, SCN Travel &
More



traditions," he says, noting that these encounters have given him a deeper appreciation of the global curiosity for all things German.

Neuer has a similar experience with what she calls the "multi-culti lunch" at her workplace. She organised a potluck where each colleague brought a dish from their home country and shared the story behind it. "It was fascinating to hear how each meal was tied to personal and cultural history.

It showed me that no matter where we come from, food has the power to connect us," she reflects. The experience gave Neuer a renewed appreciation for German customs while opening her eyes to the beauty of other traditions from around the world.

Living in the UAE has also prompted German expats to rethink how they celebrate key festivals, blending old and new traditions. Duric's Christmas celebrations are a prime example of this. "It's interesting because not everyone celebrates the same way. I like how families develop their own festive identities over time," he shares. For Duric, Christmas remains the highlight of the year, a time when his family comes together after the busy season of shopping and food preparation. "It's a blend of older and newer traditions, with our children having a say in how we celebrate," he says, reflecting how culture evolves even as it is passed down.

Neuer also finds Christmas in the UAE to be a multicultural affair. "Christmas for me is deeply traditional and religious, and it's all about family," she says. While away from her relatives in Germany, Neuer has embraced celebrating with friends from various nationalities. "Our gatherings have turned into a beautiful fusion of cultures. I'll bring Plätzchen (Christmas cookies) and light the Advent wreath, and my friends will add something from their own traditions, making it an international celebration," she smiles, appreciating the shared spirit of the holidays.

And what about Germany's most famous celebration, Oktoberfest? While it's known worldwide, Neuer admits it's not something she personally celebrates.

"I'm not Bavarian and I've never been to Oktoberfest in my life!" she laughs, acknowledging the global appeal of the event but separating it from the deeper traditions that matter most to her.

Ultimately, for German expats like Duric and Neuer, living in the UAE means embracing their roots while opening themselves up to the traditions of others. Whether it's through introducing schnitzel to friends or blending festive

customs, they are creating new cultural connections in a country that celebrates diversity. "What's surprising," Duric reflects, "is how much people here already know about German food — and how eager they are to learn more."

In this vibrant, multicultural landscape, German expats are not only preserving their heritage but enriching it with new influences, one Kaffeeklatsch or multi-culti lunch at a time. ■

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Pulin Parikh, Managing Director,
Dillinger Middle East FZE

members, it covers a wide swathe of geography, extending from the Middle East and Africa outwards towards South Asia and the Far East.

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PORSCHÉ

Tickets on sale for Icons of Porsche festival

Tickets for the 2024 Icons of Porsche festival are now on sale. For the fourth consecutive year, the event that celebrates classic cars, art and culture will be held at 'The Stab' in the Dubai Design District on November 23-24,

2024. This year's festival will again see the region's largest gathering of classic Porsche sports cars assemble over two days.

Both world and regional premiere unveils are planned, as well as displays of Porsche models that span the

seven-decade history of the brand.

For car enthusiasts the festival will again show some of the most spectacular Porsche models from across the Middle East and beyond. Rare models from the Porsche Museum collection in Stuttgart, Ger-

many will make the journey and be on display.

Families and event-goers will be able to experience live music, art installations, pop-up locations from event partners, and food stalls from some of the most recognised restaurant brands in Dubai.

"Our team is working hard to ensure this year's Icons of Porsche is the most memorable yet," says Manfred Braeunl, Chief Executive Officer, Porsche Middle East & Africa FZE.

"We will lift the fan experience to the next level this year: Reacting to the overwhelming number of visitors in 2023, we have increased the event space by 30 per cent. In addition, we have doubled the number of food vendors, as well as increasing visitor facilities and entrance gates to ensure a seamless and exciting festival experience.

"Icons of Porsche tells the 76-year story of the Porsche brand, and celebrates the cars as our 'icons'.

"There will be more exciting announcements regarding event highlights over the coming weeks and months, so I urge everyone to secure their tickets early."

Tickets are available online via iconsofporsche.com. Single day tickets are Dh35 and weekend two-day tickets are Dh50.

Buy your tickets now at
www.iconsofporsche.com



ALBANNA RAED

Engineering excellence fuels industrial shift in Middle East

Albanna Raed Engineering and contracting (ABRE) stands as a premier Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) company, specializing in industrial projects across vital sectors like oil and gas, energy, food facilities, and manufacturing.

With four decades of industry expertise and more than 780 successfully executed, ABRE has built a reputation for excellence, with the current client portfolio including major players in the UAE like ADNOC, DP World, EGA, SNOC, ENOC and many others key players.

At the core of ABRE's continued success is the focus on superior project management and an exceptional quality of execution. "Management is the key," says CEO and Chairman Dr. Khaled Raed. "The more time you spend planning, the less time and cost you spend on execution. It makes perfect sense commercially, yet many contractors underestimate its importance." This meticulous approach ensures that resources are efficiently allocated, manpower is harmoniously synchronized, and



projects—no matter how challenging—are delivered on time and within budget.

In an industry where health and safety regulations are second to none, ABRE's takes safety very seriously. "Working with a company like ADNOC requires the highest attention to detail and stringent safety measures," explains Infraz Hussain Project Manager, Oil & Gas, ABRE. "Their HSE standards have pushed us to continuously refine our safety pro-

ocols, benefiting all of our projects."

ABRE's technical expertise has been stress tested countless times in its handling of sophisticated engineering challenges. A recent example is an ongoing project for DP World's grain terminal in Dubai's Free Zone. "It is really remarkable to see the amount of engineering design and execution going into this project, in particular, the complexity of installing the shiploader atop an existing berth and quay wall" notes

Senior Project Manager, Ajeesh Jannardhanan.

As the Middle East continues to industrialise, with ambitious national visions from countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar, Albanna Raed Engineering and Contracting is poised to play a pivotal role in transforming the region's industrial landscape. Its mission: to be one of the leading EPCM companies driving the industrial evolution in the Middle East.

VOLKSWAGEN MIDDLE EAST

Shaping the future of mobility

Volkswagen's presence in the Middle East has been an integral part of the region's automotive landscape for over half a century. Since the introduction of the iconic Beetle, the brand has steadily grown, offering innovative designs and affordable German engineering to a loyal customer base.

Matthias Ziegler, Managing Director of Volkswagen Middle East, reflects on the brand's journey and its future in the region. "The Middle East is a dynamic market, and our ability to adapt to customer needs has been crucial. We've expanded our offerings and continue to invest in the region, ensuring that our customers experience the very best of Volkswagen, both in terms of product and service."

A key moment for the brand in the region came last week with the launch of the all-new Tiguan. This marks the debut of the third generation of Volkswagen's best-selling SUV, which has sold over 7.6 million units globally since its introduction in 2007. The new model, that launched in the region on 1st October brings a host of exciting innovations designed to meet the needs of today's drivers.

"The Tiguan has always been a favourite in the region," Ziegler notes. "It's a versatile SUV that offers the



space, technology, and comfort our customers expect. The new model builds on that legacy, introducing a range of features that truly elevate the driving experience.

The all-new Tiguan showcases Volkswagen's latest engineering advancements. Built on the Modular Transverse Matrix (MQB evo) platform, the vehicle incorporates high-tech features such as the Digital Cockpit Pro and the IQ. LIGHT HD matrix headlights. The 1.4L TSI engine will be available at launch, with a more powerful 2.0L TSI engine arriving early next year. Drivers will also appreciate the enhanced comfort features, including a pneumatic massage function for the front seats, inspired by Volkswagen's premium models.

"The technology we've introduced in the new Tiguan is cutting-edge," Ziegler explains. "From the advanced infotainment system to the new adaptive chassis control, every element has been designed to offer both comfort and performance. It's a perfect fit for the active lifestyles of our customers in the region."

Volkswagen's commitment to the Middle East extends beyond product innovation. The brand has steadily invested in its infrastructure, ensuring a growing number of showrooms and service centres. This focus on customer experience, combined with a strong digital presence, has allowed Volkswagen Middle East to strengthen its position as a trusted automotive brand.

Volkswagen is dedicated to a sustainable growth throughout the Middle East. "We have laid our foundations, reinforced our position, and created strong and trusted relationships with our customers and retail partners alike," says Ziegler. "Our focus is on becoming the 'top of volume' brand, offering affordable and innovative mobility solutions for our customers."

With the all-new Tiguan arriving in regional dealerships, Volkswagen is set to redefine the SUV segment once again. Designed for both comfort and performance, the Tiguan combines Volkswagen's renowned engineering with advanced technology, offering an elevated driving experience that is sure to resonate with customers in the Middle East.

BERKELEY SERVICES GROUP

A legacy of unmatched service and pioneering solutions

Berkeley Services Group (BSG) has been a pillar of excellence in facilities management since its founding in Dubai in 1984. Over the past four decades, BSG has consistently raised the bar in delivering comprehensive services, from building maintenance and soft services to innovative smart solutions, landscaping, and security. Renowned for its strategic partnerships and tech-driven approach, BSG has emerged as a trusted leader in Integrated Facilities Management (IFM), setting new standards in client-focused management and people-centric service delivery.

In 2007, BSG entered a new chapter when Klüh International, a multinational facilities management powerhouse, integrated Berkeley into its ambitious expansion in the Middle East. With offices in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Klüh International's Advisory Board Chairman, German entrepreneur Josef Klüh, led the company's growth into key sectors such as aviation, healthcare, industrial, and commercial facilities. With its roots stretching back 113 years,



Karl Heinz Otto Mair, CEO, Berkeley Services Group

Klüh International boasts a global presence in Poland, the Netherlands, Turkey, UAE, India, and China, and employs around 59,000+ people globally.

This immense workforce supports its ability to deliver top-tier services to prestigious clients across the world.

The future of facilities management: Leading the way with technology

As the world of facilities management continues to evolve, Berkeley Services stands at the forefront of driving technological transformation in the industry. Their future-forward vision includes embracing digital solutions like IoT-powered tools and predictive maintenance systems, all developed in-house as part of the Klüh Eco System. This innovation ensures not only operational efficiency but also reduces costs for clients while improving overall service quality.

BSG's tech-driven approach enables smarter, more proactive management of facilities, focusing on sustainability and energy efficiency. The integration of cutting-edge technologies empowers clients with real-time data, optimising maintenance schedules, and extending the life cycles of assets. This digital transformation is paving the way for more sustainable, cost-effective solutions in the facilities management industry, ensuring that Berkeley Services remains a leader in the future of smart facilities management.

A message from the CEO

Reflecting on Berkeley's journey and its promising future, Karl Heinz Otto Mair, CEO of Berkeley Services Group, shares, "As we mark 40 years of success, this milestone serves not just as a celebration of our past achievements but as a springboard for future innovation. Our commitment to service excellence and cutting-edge solutions will continue to fuel our growth and ensure we deliver unmatched value to our clients and partners. We are dedicated to setting new benchmarks in the industry, leading the way in sustainability and technology-driven solutions for the years ahead."

With its rich legacy and future-focused approach, Berkeley Services Group remains a beacon of excellence, innovation, and leadership in facilities management, ready to shape the next 40 years with the same pioneering spirit.

ISTA MIDDLE EAST

ista Middle East leading energy efficiency solutions

ista Middle East was founded in 2008 in the UAE and expanded to Qatar in 2022. We are a leading provider of energy sub-metering solutions with over 150,000 installed BTU sub-meters and a monthly service portfolio of more than 50,000 dwellings. We offer comprehensive services, including maintenance, data collection, energy billing, and payment collection.

As retrofit specialists, we have upgraded over 500 buildings in the UAE and successfully handed over 250+ buildings to Empower.

Our expertise extends to district cooling providers, where we supply and install sub-meters and smart valves with wireless remote disconnection, providing turnkey solutions for consultancy, retrofitting, and sub-metering handovers.

With a strong focus on innovation and customer satisfaction, we continue to lead in energy efficiency and sustainability, delivering tailored solutions that meet the evolving needs of our clients.

As an accredited ESCO, we successfully implemented multiple guaranteed savings projects, including a prestig-

ious COP28 project covering various energy conservation measures (ECMs) for water, electricity, HVAC, irrigation, and lighting. Our expertise in large-scale retrofit projects includes replacing thousands of old AC units with modern, smart inverter-type split AC units, achieving 20 to 30 per cent energy savings.

Our Energy MEP offerings include chilled water upgrade works for retail and F&B units, chilled water balancing and flushing, and instrumentation and control optimisation of HVAC systems.

ista Middle East is part of the ista Group. Worldwide we already have over 43 million connected devices in operation and are developing solutions for the intelligent and energy-efficient building of tomorrow.

We employ more than 6,000 people in 20 countries, and our products and services are used worldwide in over 14 million units (apartments and commercial properties) by more than 450,000 customers. The extended ista Group recorded sales of 1,171 million euros in 2023. More information at www.ista.com



LINDE ENGINEERING

Linde Engineering driving decarbonisation globally

As a driving force for decarbonisation, Linde Engineering is fully aimed at carbon management, accelerating the transition to cleaner industry and sustainable sources of energy worldwide.

We support companies and industries on their decarbonisation journey through a combination of innovative technologies, strategic partnerships, and comprehensive services. We provide tailored solutions to optimise energy efficiency and reduce carbon footprints across various sectors, including chemicals, refining, steel, and transportation.

One of the latest projects in the MENA region is to help ensure the CO₂-neutral production of natural gas and oil. For the first time at this scale, the production and utilisation of gas at the site will be CO₂ neutral. To

achieve this, Linde Engineering has collaborated with NextChem, part of Maire Group, to implement an integrated solution based on HISORP® CC to capture and store underground 1.5 million tons of CO₂ per year. The solution provided in this context will achieve CO₂ capture rates of higher than 99 per cent.

In addition to a rich portfolio of engineering innovations and services aimed at carbon management our technologies enable every step in the hydrogen value chain — from source to service. For example, Linde Engineering plays a crucial role in advancing hydrogen mobility, particularly for heavy-duty vehicles, developing fueling technologies, building infrastructure for hydrogen refueling stations, and promoting the adoption of fuel cell vehicles.



GRENKE

Empowering business growth with flexible leasing solutions

In 1978, Wolfgang Grenke identified a growing need among businesses as modern office equipment, like telephone systems, copiers, and computers, became essential but expensive. To address this, grenke introduced flexible leasing options, making these investments more accessible. What began as a small operation in Baden-Baden, Germany, has since evolved into a global success story. Today, grenke operates in 30 countries, employs over 2,100 people, and generates approximately 2.6 billion euros in new business annually, serving over 36,000 retail partners worldwide.

In 2013, grenke expanded to the UAE, offering tailored leasing solutions to local businesses. With three regional branches, grenke provides rental services for a wide range of assets, including IT, medical, gym equipment, sustainable technologies, and small machinery. Leasing starts as low as Dh2,500, supporting businesses in acquiring essential equipment.

Grenke serves a broad range of sectors, including schools, media companies, hospitals, hotels, waste man-

agement, vehicle garages, registration centers, driving schools, recruitment companies, consulting engineering, food producers, oil and gas, and warehouses.

As a non-financial entity in the UAE, grenke offers flexibility to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), helping them keep pace with rapidly advancing technology. Through the Master Lease Agreement, a 12-month framework, businesses can access leasing limits without additional paperwork. This agreement can be activated within couple of working days after submitting the required documents for a credit check, with contracts signed electronically for convenience.

Grenke also supports suppliers through the GO Partner portal, an online platform that allows partners to create quotes, submit requests, and generate contracts easily. This service helps suppliers enhance their offerings and improve customer satisfaction.

With comprehensive leasing solutions, grenke continues to play a crucial role in fostering business growth and innovation across the UAE.



THE UNIVERSITY OF EUROPE

First cohort for bachelor's programme launched

The University of Europe for Applied Sciences in Dubai (UE Dubai), which offers the first German degree in UAE, has launched its first cohort for bachelor's programmes this month. Students can now enroll in two bachelor's degrees: Business and Management Studies, and Digital Business and Data Science. In addition, UE offers a variety of master's programmes, including an MA in Visual and Experience Design, an MSc in Data Science, and MBA programmes with 10 specialisations.

As part of its commitment to sustainability and bridging the gap between academia and industry, UE Dubai is soon launching the Green Genius Challenge in partnership with the renowned German company BSH Middle East. This competition invites high school students to innovate and conceptualise solutions that redefine home appliances, with a focus on energy and water conservation. Winning students will receive two UE Dubai scholarships as well as home appliances from Bosch.



Prof. Dr Maurits van Rooijen, President of UE Dubai, emphasises: "We all know that thinking in 'boxes' is a bad concept indeed and believ-

ing that education and the real world would belong in different compartments is even worse. At UE Dubai we are passionate to ensure we learn by

being as close to that real world as possible. Classroom and workplace are to be interconnected wherever possible."

GOETHE-INSTITUT

Goethe-Institut fosters German language and culture in the Gulf region

The Goethe-Institut Gulf Region plays a crucial role in promoting the German language and culture in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain.

It offers a variety of language courses, cultural events and examinations that facilitate access to Germany and German universities. The institute is an important centre for intercultural exchange and helps to deepen understanding between Germany and the Gulf region.

A special initiative in this context is the Studienkolleg Middle East, which is organised in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut and German universities. This preparatory programme is aimed at international students from the Gulf region who wish to study at a German university. As many German universities require proof of certain language skills and educational standards, the Studienkolleg Middle East helps students to fulfil these requirements.

The programme includes intensive language courses and special preparatory courses in the fields of mathematics, natural sciences and engineering.

The participants of the Studienkolleg are optimally prepared for their studies in Germany, both linguistically and academically.

The Studienkolleg therefore plays a central role for students from the Gulf region who wish to prepare for an academic career in Germany.

In addition to academic preparation, the Studienkolleg Middle East also promotes intercultural dialogue. Students are given the opportunity to learn more about Germany and German culture while at the same time familiarising themselves with the way of life and academic traditions.

The initiative makes a significant contribution to strengthening educational and cultural exchange between Germany and the Gulf region, shaping educational biographies and creating long-term connections.



Dr. Claudia Römmelt, Director-General, Goethe-Institut Gulf Region

MESSE FRANKFURT MIDDLE EAST

Celebrating the UAE-Germany partnership

On the occasion of Germany's National Day, it's important to reflect on the deepening ties between the UAE and Germany, which have become vital pillars of bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade and innovation.

As the CEO of Messe Frankfurt Middle East (MFME), I have witnessed firsthand the significant impact this partnership has had on driving economic growth and collaboration between two dynamic regions.

The UAE and Germany share a common vision of innovation, sustainability, and economic diversification.

Germany's reputation for engineering excellence and technological leadership, combined with the UAE's strategic positioning and ambition to become a global hub for trade and investment, has created a powerful connection that benefits both nations. This relationship extends far beyond trade statistics; it is built on a shared commitment to

cultivating future-ready industries.

At Messe Frankfurt Middle East, we are proud to play a key role in facilitating these connections. Our flagship events, including Intersec, Automechanika Dubai and Beautyworld Middle East, act as powerful platforms that bring together businesses from both regions.

These events serve as a bridge, fostering meaningful dialogue, partnerships, and trade opportunities.

The UAE-Germany partnership is a testament to the power of collaboration, with companies from both countries working together to innovate and expand into new markets.

As we commemorate Germany's National Day, we celebrate not only the strong economic ties but also the shared values of innovation and excellence that underpin this relationship. We look forward to continuing our role in advancing these partnerships and driving further growth for both the UAE and Germany.



Ted Bloom, CEO, Messe Frankfurt Middle East, says the UAE and Germany share a common vision of innovation, sustainability, and economic diversification

AUDI Q7

A luxury SUV that's impossible to ignore

The car is built to stand out on the road and deliver a driving experience that is both versatile and refined

The Audi Q7 redefines what it means to drive a luxury SUV, offering an ideal blend of spaciousness, advanced technology, and dynamic performance. As a true seven-seater, the Q7 provides the flexibility and comfort needed for any journey — whether it's daily commuting, a weekend getaway, or a business trip. With its bold design, innovative features, and powerful engine options, the Q7 is built to stand out on the road and deliver a driving experience that is both versatile and refined.

The Audi Q7's interior combines comfort and functionality, making it versatile for various lifestyles. As a 7-seater, it offers 780 litres of space behind the second row, expanding to 1,908 litres when the rear seats are folded. Whether for family trips or commutes, the Q7 provides ample room for passengers and luggage. Customisation options like premium leather upholstery, ambient lighting, and various trim finishes let owners tailor the interior to their tastes, enhancing comfort and style.

Clean lines and a strong presence define the Q7's exterior, with HD Matrix LED headlights and digital OLED rear lights showcasing Audi's signature look. Design elements like the redesigned spoiler and larger air intakes with honeycomb grilles enhance its appearance. The S-line



and Black Optics packages offer extra customisation for a refined, sportier look.

The Audi Q7 offers engine options to suit different driving styles. The 45 TFSI has a 252 HP four-cylinder engine, while the 55 TFSI features a 340 HP six-cylinder. Both models include advanced suspension, electronically controlled air suspension with adaptive damping, and optional



all-wheel steering, ensuring a balanced and comfortable drive.

For those seeking more power, the Audi SQ7 TFSI is equipped with a V8 engine delivering 507 HP and 770 Nm of torque. This model accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in just 4.1 seconds, with fuel consumption ranging from 12.7 to 11.9 l/100 km. Its advanced suspension setup, featuring torque vectoring and electromechanical active roll stabilisation, ensures improved handling and stability.

The Audi Q7 is a versatile companion, designed to provide a controlled and confident drive on city streets as well as open highways. Its electronically controlled air suspension

adapts to various road conditions, enhancing both stability and comfort. With features like all-wheel steering that enhance maneuverability in tight spaces.

Safety is a priority in the Audi Q7, with advanced driver assistance systems ensuring peace of mind on every journey. Key features include adaptive cruise control, lane assist, and parking assist, all enhancing driver awareness. The Audi pre sense front system detects potential collisions and can initiate emergency braking when needed.

The Audi Q7 is now available at Audi dealerships across the Middle East. To learn more and book a test drive, visit www.audi-me.com/Q7

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THAILAND



Partnering with the UAE for growth

An aerial photograph of Koh Haa island, showing its unique shape, lush green vegetation, and a small bay with several boats. The water is a deep blue-green color.

Let your never-ending stories
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[Koh Haa, KRABI](#)

AMAZING THAILAND

**YOUR STORIES
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OVERVIEW

PAETONGTARN SHINAWATRA, PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND



Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the 31st Prime Minister of Thailand, delivers a speech after the Royal appointment ceremony. Photo: Royal Thai Government.

Thailand forges ahead under new PM

On assuming office in August 2024, Paetongtarn Shinawatra became Thailand's youngest ever Prime Minister, ushering in a new era for the nation. It comes at a pivotal moment, as talks on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) herald new diplomatic and economic opportunities with the UAE.

In the moments after Thailand's parliament selected Paetongtarn Shinawatra to become the nation's next Prime Minister, she described herself as trembling with excitement. "I really hope that I can make people feel confident that we can build opportunities and to improve the quality of life and to empower all Thais," she said, in remarks to assembled reporters.

As leader of the Pheu Thai party and the fourth member of the Shinawatra family to hold the position of prime minister, Paetongtarn brings a sense of duality to the role, representing both a continuation of the country's politics and, simultaneously, a vibrant new dynamism. "The country has to move ahead," she said. "We are determined, together, and we will push the country forward."

Despite having never previously held elected office, Paetongtarn has led Pheu Thai since March 2022 and, as the daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, is steeped in

her family's political legacy. "When I was eight years old, my father entered politics," she said. "Since that day, my life has also been intertwined with politics." Nonetheless, Thailand's new leader is a distinctly modern type of politician. With more than 700,000 Instagram followers, her social media

"WE ARE DETERMINED, TOGETHER, AND WE WILL PUSH THE COUNTRY FORWARD."

PAETONGTARN SHINAWATRA,
PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND

presence dwarfs that of her party. Describing herself as a passionate capitalist, her previous experience includes education in the UK, at the University of Surrey, and a period as deputy-CEO of the family-owned Rende Development, overseeing the launch of two of the country's luxury hotels. Under her

leadership, Pheu Thai has previously made ambitious pledges to nearly double daily minimum wages by 2027, alongside subsidising public transport in Bangkok and expanding healthcare coverage. "I think after eight years the people want better politics, better solutions for the country," Paetongtarn said while campaigning for Thailand's national elections in 2023.

On assuming the country's top job, the new Prime Minister gave a press conference to outline her administration's priorities, including tackling illegal drugs, improving Thailand's universal healthcare system and promoting gender diversity. And above all else: economic stimulus and reform. "The goal is to stimulate the economy, so this intention remains," she said.

Successive governments have placed economic growth at the top of their policy agenda, and Paetongtarn has targeted boosting public spending and consumption as the most viable routes to achieve this. Her first policy statement

to parliament was headlined by plans to restructure household debt, focusing on home and automobile loans, and updates on the progress of the scheme to distribute 10,000 baht – approximately US\$300 – to 45 million Thai adults via a new digital wallet.

The flagship initiative is expected to cost around 450 billion baht in total, and Paetongtarn moved swiftly to confirm that plans for the handout would go ahead – with an adjustment that would see some of the money distributed directly as cash. Designed to provide an immediate financial boost to citizens while laying a base for the nation's digital economy, the scheme has faced some resistance from opposition lawmakers and economists.

Paetongtarn, however, was undeterred: "The government's priority is the vulnerable groups," she said. "The digital wallet scheme will be pushed ahead to increase access to financial sources for the development of villages and communities and career opportuni-

ties.” The Prime Minister did, however, seek to reassure the policy’s detractors by stating that her administration will “study and listen to additional options,” to ensure the plan is implemented in a fiscally responsible manner. The first stage of the handout, targeting state welfare recipients and those with disabilities, was subsequently approved by the cabinet, with payments slated to commence in late September.

Also outlined in the statement were plans designed to boost small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through debt suspension, access to liquidity and shielding from unfair foreign competition; accounting for around 35% of employment and GDP, SMEs are a key driver of the nation’s economy. And further economic measures announced included initiatives to reduce energy and utility costs, bolster agriculture and promote the tourism sector. “It is a significant challenge for the government to urgently restore robust economic growth,” Paetongtarn told parliament. “We must explore new opportunities to boost income at both the national and individual levels, whether through restructuring the economy or developing new engines for growth.”

Crucial to that growth agenda are the ongoing talks with UAE on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement designed to boost bilateral trade flows and investment opportunities. The UAE is Thailand’s biggest trading partner in the Middle East, with exchanges growing 73% to \$US20.8 billion in 2022. The upcoming CEPA would

look to increase that figure by a further 10% in the first year by enhancing economic cooperation and providing UAE investors with greater access to both Thailand’s domestic market and the wider Southeast Asian economy.

“THE PEOPLE WANT BETTER POLITICS, BETTER SOLUTIONS FOR THE COUNTRY.”

PAETONGTARN SHINAWATRA,
PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND

With tourism another key focus of the administration’s economic plans, Thailand will also look to build on the deepening partnership between the countries to attract more UAE visitors. Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai and Shaikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister of the UAE were among the first world leaders to send official congratulations to Paetongtarn on taking office, and the UAE’s contribution to Thailand’s goal of receiving 55 million international arrivals in 2024 will be driven by an increase in direct flights and the introduction of UAE-specific vacation packages. With the Tourism Authority of Thailand calling the UAE “vital” to the sector’s development, efforts are already underway to drive further growth through key markets like the Middle East.



Royal appointment ceremony of Paetongtarn Shinawatra. Photo: Royal Thai Government.

BIO PAETONGTARN SHINAWATRA

1986

Paetongtarn born in Bangkok
Her father, Thaksin, and aunt, Yingluck, are former prime ministers.

2008

Graduated from university
After obtaining a BA in Political Science, studies continued in the UK.

2014

Appointed Deputy CEO Rende
Oversaw a portfolio of hotels at the family-owned hospitality group.

2022

Elected leader of Pheu Thai
Subsequently nominated as one of party’s three prime minister candidates.



Paetongtarn Shinawatra salutes the members of the new cabinet. Photo: Royal Thai Government.

FAST FACTS THAILAND

72 MILLION

Population of Thailand as of 2023, according to the World Bank, the fourth largest in Southeast Asia.

US\$515 BILLION

Thailand’s GDP in 2023 according to World Bank data, making it ASEAN’s second-largest economy.

65.4% OF GDP

Value of goods and services exports to national output, according to the World Bank.

15%

Growth in tourist arrivals from the key UAE market in Q1 2023, according to Tourism Authority Thailand.

US\$300 MILLION

Value of UAE foreign direct investment in Thailand by end of Q3 2022, according to ASEAN Briefing.



Government House of Thailand. Photo: Adobe Stock.



Bangkok, capital of Thailand. Photo: Tourism Authority of Thailand.



Enchanting Thailand

Experience Thailand's unique charm and hospitality. With vibrant culture, rich traditions, and exciting investment opportunities, Thailand is a welcoming paradise for tourists and investors alike.

Thailand beckons with its vibrant charm and the unmatched warmth of its people, characteristics cultivated deeply within its culture. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) emphasizes this unique blend of friendly faces and rich traditions, inviting tourists to a genuinely heartwarming experience that distinguishes Thailand from other destinations.

Looking ahead, TAT has outlined an ambitious vision to harness tourism for robust economic growth, aiming to attract over 55 million visitors by the end of 2024. This goal surpasses the pre-pandemic visitor numbers, reflecting a confident stride towards recovery and expansion. Key to this growth is capitalising on international markets, especially the Middle East, where partnerships in tourism are expected to deepen cultural ties and stimulate economic benefits mutually.

For potential investors, Thailand presents a fertile ground. The focus on enriching health, wellness, and cultural experiences caters not just to casual visitors but also to those looking to invest in a thriving, dynamic sector. With strategic plans to elevate tourism through comprehensive national campaigns and international collaborations, Thailand is shaping up as an enticing destination for both tourists and global investors.



INTERVIEW - THAPANEE KIATPHAIBOOL, GOVERNOR, TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND (TAT)

“Tourism is Thailand’s strongest soft power”

TAT’s Governor, Thapanee Kiatphaibool, reveals how Thailand’s unique culture, warm hospitality, and diverse attractions make it a premier destination for UAE travellers and investors.



Q: What unique experiences and attractions does Thailand offer to tourists that set it apart from other destinations in the region?

Thailand is truly amazing, and what sets it apart is the unique qualities of its people. The warmth of Thai hospitality, reflected in our sincere smiles, distinguishes us from others. Thai people are always ready to assist visitors, keeping a watchful eye on anyone in need. Our genuine desire to help, whether we know you or not, is deeply ingrained in our culture. This genuine care is what makes Thai hospitality so special and different from other places. In addition to our welcoming nature, Thailand boasts a rich cultural heritage and abundant natural resources. While some aspects may be comparable to those of other countries, what truly differentiates Thailand is its people – their warmth, respectfulness, and sense of solidarity. These qualities cannot be replicated elsewhere.

While natural resources and cultural heritage may be similar across different destinations, the mindset and attitude of Thai people towards visitors are

what truly stand out. You can feel the difference when interacting with Thai people – their smiles are genuine, and their willingness to help makes your experience even more enjoyable.

Q: What targets has TAT set to grow Thailand’s tourism sector?

Our goal is ambitious: to attract over 55 million travellers and generate 3.5 trillion baht in tourism revenue. While pre-pandemic numbers in 2019 were strong, with 39.8 million visitors and 3 trillion baht in revenue, this year’s forecast is slightly lower, at around 35 million visitors with similar revenue. Nevertheless, the government has urged us to strive for more. Achieving an additional 500 billion baht is indeed challenging, requiring a mix of retaining existing customers, attracting repeat visitors, and stimulating domestic travel. Engaging and motivating Thai people to explore their own country is essential alongside international efforts. Thailand Vision 2030 will see cooperation among various sectors including tourism, health and wellness, automobile, automobile finance, and the digital economy. Tour-

ism is prioritised as it is a key driver for boosting GDP, with the Government setting the target of tapping into 3.5 trillion baht from both domestic and international sources by the end of 2024. Further, 2025 has been earmarked as a landmark year for tourism, coinciding with the celebration of the King’s Six-Cycle birthday. Events and destinations are being planned well in advance, with a focus not only on major cities but also on secondary cities branded as Licensed STAR or Hidden Gem cities, totalling 55 in number.

Q: How important is the Middle East market to your strategy, considering that 651,000 travellers from the region visited Thailand in 2023?

To achieve our targets, we must maintain a balance between international and domestic markets. In the international arena, we must identify key markets. The government has highlighted the importance of distinguishing between short-haul and long-haul markets and promoting licensed STAR destinations. While these may not align with major markets in terms of total numbers, they are significant. Hence, there is an urgent need to collaborate with Middle Eastern markets. Meetings have been held in Dubai and Riyadh, and plans are underway to establish a new office in Saudi Arabia. Partnering with regional airlines is crucial for success in attracting travellers to Thailand.

Long-term strategies include promoting Thailand as a preferred destination for Middle Eastern travellers and emphasising Thai culture and experiences. Collaboration with partners in the tourism industry, both direct and indirect, is essential. Regarding the UAE specifically, they are very kind individuals. They excel in their work and demonstrate great creativity. By creativity, I mean they possess an innovative mindset, always coming up with new ideas. This happens frequently, perhaps even every month. What we hope for from them is an appreciation of Thailand’s natural beauty and cultural heritage. We aim for a cultural exchange, fostering a bond like sister cities or nations, where two nations share one heart. There is much we can learn from each other, drawing from our respective rich cultural backgrounds. Additionally, I believe there’s potential for collaboration in sectors like investment, business, and technology, benefiting not only the UAE but also offering significant advantages to Thailand.

Q: What opportunities do you see for UAE investors in the tourism sector?

There are opportunities to engage the Middle East market in health and wellness, medical tourism, and entertainment. Hospitals accredited by organizations like JCI

(Joint Commission International) in Thailand have experienced increased demand, particularly from the UAE and affluent Asian countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Laos. The focus is primarily on attracting visitors from the Middle East for medical treatments and tourism.

“OUR GOAL IS AMBITIOUS: TO ATTRACT OVER 55 MILLION TRAVELLERS AND GENERATE 3.5 TRILLION BAHT IN TOURISM REVENUE.”

In the past years, there were plans to promote Phuket, a favoured destination for the Middle East and UAE. Phuket, along with Phang-Nga and Krabi, aims to establish a hub for health and wellness. This initiative, known as the Andaman Health and Wellness Association, seeks to attract global travellers interested in experiencing health and wellness offerings. To achieve this, additional investment is needed to enhance technology and quality standards. Collaborations with UAE, Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East, including the Emaar group from Dubai, are underway. Key stakeholders, such as the Board of Investment (BOI), the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Works, and the Prime Minister, are involved in these efforts.

Q: Why should Gulf News’s UAE readers make Thailand their next holiday destination?

Thailand is a destination that offers everything, especially for investors. Our government is open to negotiating privileges that were previously unavailable. The potential for success has increased significantly. While not guaranteed, the opportunities for success are greater than ever. Tourism is Thailand’s strongest soft power, driven by the hospitality and open mindset of the Thai people. We are prepared to cater to all travellers, offering diverse activities, festivals, and experiences tailored to their interests. Visiting Thailand promises an endless array of stories to share. Our international campaign, “Amazing Thailand: Your Story Never Ends,” emphasizes providing mindful, authentic, unmissable, and unforgettable experiences to all visitors.



FOCUS ON AIRPORTS OF THAILAND PCL

Gateway to Thailand

Airports of Thailand (AOT) is responsible for the management, operation and development of some of the country's leading international airports.



Photo: Airports of Thailand PCL.

Since its opening in 2006 to serve as Bangkok's primary international airport, Suvarnabhumi – dubbed 'a gateway to the golden land' – has grown to become one of Southeast Asia's most important aviation hubs. Serving more than 50 million passengers in 2023, the facility is one of six key sites managed by AOT, a public company majority owned by the Thai Ministry of Finance which acts as Thailand's leading airport business operator.

Under the leadership of President Kerati Kijmanawat, the company has embarked on an ambitious expansion program across all of its sites, which include Bangkok's second international airport, Don Mueang, and facilities in the key cities of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phuket and Hat Yai. The opening of a new satellite terminal at Suvarnabhumi in September 2023 is part of a sweeping plan to more than triple passenger numbers there to 150 million a year.



Photo: Airports of Thailand PCL.

"People want to visit Thailand, and airports shouldn't be bottlenecks," says Kijmanawat. The drive for greater capacity goes hand in hand with AOT's overriding goal to provide passengers with the best possible service. "Our philosophy is that customer satisfaction brings airports success," Kijmanawat continues. "The airport is the first point of the

experience as it shows how Thailand will take care of its visitors."

Non-aeronautical revenues at AOT reached US\$240m for the first quarter of 2024, a 93% increase year-on-year, driven by strong commercial performance at the company's concessions and lounges. To capitalise on this growth, the business remains focused on boosting arrivals. "The key to driving performance for both non-aeronautical and aeronautical revenue is to gather more flights, which also helps the country," Kijmanawat explains. A recent government initiative to allow visa-free travel from five major tourist markets saw an increase in Chinese and Indian arrivals, and AOT is working closely with both the Ministry of Tourism and major carriers in the UAE to encourage more visitors from the Middle East.

As part of its upgrade and investment program, the company has harnessed innovation both to streamline operations and to further its sustainability efforts. Self-service bag drop and check-in options have been instituted to expand customer choice and reduce queues, while the implementation of automated immigration gates have halved processing times to fifteen minutes. Meanwhile, solar panels have been installed on buildings and land at all of AOT's airports, with the goal of being fully powered by renewables within four years. Says Kijmanawat: "We view sustainability as our path to the future."



<https://investor.airportthai.co.th>

Q&A | DR. KERATI KIJMANAWAT
PRESIDENT, AIRPORTS OF THAILAND PCL



Airports of Thailand President Kerati Kijmanawat discusses the company's expansion program, efforts to attract UAE and Middle East visitors, and the importance of sustainability.

Q: What is your vision for Airports of Thailand (AOT) since being appointed president?

The vision for AOT is to become one of the best airport operators in the world. Our mission is to provide the best customer satisfaction in terms of airport service. We have significantly changed the service and capacity we provide to passengers.

Five to ten years ago, there was a lot of congestion at Suvarnabhumi Airport. We wanted passengers' time at the airport to be pleasurable, not a burden, so we focused on providing a fast and reliable service that follows international standards.

We opened the Midfield Satellite-1 Building (SAT-1) last September, increasing capacity by around 40%, and the third runway will open this September, increasing flight capacity from 68 per hour to 94. This will alleviate congestion and give a better customer experience.

During my first year, I initiated expansion projects for all six of our airports, including the regional airports. And we plan to further increase Suvarnabhumi Airport capacity by expanding the east wing – a project costing around one billion baht. However, if we want to become a regional hub for ASEAN, we have to become bigger and faster. The Prime Minister agreed to our plan to build a south terminal of Suvarnabhumi Airport, which will double the current capacity. We expect to see around 150 million passengers a year.

As for Don Mueang International Airport, we are looking at rebuilding the international terminal. The two airports could host up to 200 million passengers per year, serving Bangkok and its vicinity, which would be enough for the next 30 years.

Q: How would you like to communicate your company's values and branding to the UAE and beyond?

Our philosophy is to provide better ser-

vice. If customers are satisfied, they will have a better experience coming to Thailand.

Q: AOT reported strong first-quarter results for 2024. What is your strategy to further enhance the company's performance?

One of the key hurdles to getting more people is visas. The government decided to allow five key countries for Thai tourism to go visa-free. After initiating the program, we saw around a 40% increase in Indian and Chinese tourists.

We are also working aggressively with the airlines by providing incentives to create new routes to Thailand, such as a 90% reduction in parking and landing fees for the first year.

Q: What opportunities will the CEPA between Thailand and UAE create for AOT and for UAE investors?

We strongly support the CEPA agreement. We have worked closely with Emirates and UAE airlines to increase their slots because they are the gateway to the other half of the world. They bring in people not only from the Middle East but from Europe and the US. The agreement brings opportunities for growing together. During discussions with Emirates, they showed interest in opening their second-largest lounge in our SAT-1 Building.

“OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE THE BEST CUSTOMER SATISFACTION.”

Q: How does AOT plan to boost tourism between the UAE and the Middle East in a broader context?

We are working closely with the Tourism Authority of Thailand to make people from the Middle East aware of the country and encourage them to see us as a tourism destination. We participated in the tourism promotion campaign in Berlin, and there were a lot of inquiries about opening new routes to Thailand. In the past, airports acted like landowners, but we have to play a more proactive role in getting new customers.

Q: What is AOT's approach to sustainable aviation?

We view sustainability as our path to the future and a key to our survival. We want to change the source of our electricity from buying from the grid to using renewable energy. We are working with our subsidiary company to build solar farms in all our airports – we want to be free from the grid in the next four years.

FOCUS ON LEBUA HOTELS & RESORTS

Redefining luxury hospitality

From an iconic location in the heart of Bangkok, lebua's flagship destination offers guests an exceptional, elevated hospitality experience amid this vibrant cityscape.

The lebua Hotels & Resorts brand is the epitome of contemporary luxury, embodying the quality and exclusivity demanded by customers with the very highest expectations. Now a rapidly growing international name, lebua is gaining an enviable reputation for operating distinctive hotels in the Asia-Pacific region. In Bangkok, accommodation at lebua at State Tower and Tower Club at lebua – the world's first 'vertical' destination – is beyond opulent, providing guests with the finest suites, breathtaking views, and impeccable service. Each brand offers its own unique charm and is designed to impress the most discerning guests, with generously proportioned suites that offer spectacular city and river views from their balconies high above the city's tourist, shopping and business districts.

Since its inception in 2003, lebua has consistently set new standards of luxury and service and elevating rooftop dining to its ultimate form. Sitting atop the development, The Dome at lebua houses a collection of



lebua at State Tower. Photo: lebua Hotels.

world-class, award-winning restaurants offering panoramic city vistas. This includes Mezzaluna, led by Chef Ryuki Kawasaki, famed for its unique French cuisine infused with Japanese ingredients, and the only restaurant in Thailand to hold two Michelin stars for seven consecutive years. Chef's Table, under the direction of Chef Vincent Thierry, boasts a pedigree of leading multiple restaurants to Miche-

lin star status, including earning three Michelin stars in Hong Kong. Also featured are the rooftop Mediterranean Sirocco restaurant and the elegant Sky Bar, recognized as the world's most awarded rooftop venue.

Unsurprisingly, the company has garnered acclaim from prominent international bodies such as *Condé Nast* and *Elite Traveler Magazine*. Last year alone, lebua won prestigious *World*

Travel Awards for the Leading Luxury Suites Hotel in Asia and the world, as well as for Thailand's Leading Lifestyle Hotel. This dedication to setting and surpassing the highest benchmarks has positioned lebua as a pioneer in the global hospitality arena. Staff are trained to act as guides, sharing insights into the historic and cultural significance of lebua's location in the Bang Rak district, and can provide personalized itineraries that showcase this vibrant area.

At lebua, luxury is defined not by opulent decorations but by the quality of the personalized experiences that ensure guests enjoy an exceptional and memorable visit, whatever the occasion – a concept that is at the heart of the company's aim to make lebua the most beloved brand in hospitality.



Q&A | NARAWADEE BUALERT PRESIDENT AND CEO, LEBUA HOTELS & RESORTS



President and CEO Narawadee Bualert talks about the company's customer-centric philosophy and explains how her focus on creating a personalised experience has established new standards of luxury and service.

Q: Can you share your vision for lebua Hotels & Resorts?

My vision is clear: to redefine the boundaries of luxury hospitality in accommodation and dining. Our goal is to create an emotional connection with our guests at every touchpoint, differentiating the lebua experience from others – showcasing the hospitality that touches the soul. Without any background in hospitality, my passion and fresh ideas drove me to create what is now an iconic destination in Bangkok. Under my leadership, lebua is recognized as the world's first vertical destination, featuring six bars and four restaurants – two

with Michelin stars – all offering unique characteristics and exclusive experiences.

Q: How do you realize this vision in day-to-day operations?

Rule number one for lebua is consistency, coupled with continuous innovation to not only maintain our standards but also to elevate them. Our approach is not merely about serving food and beverages but creating a dining experience that combines simplicity with luxury. We empower our staff to anticipate guest needs and provide care that goes beyond mere obligation, ensuring that every guest feels valued from the moment they step through our doors. This vision is not just a statement on the wall; it is our daily commitment to excellence.

Q: Does your impressive awards success influence your strategy?

Our accolades, including being named the world's best, are the result of efforts from everyone involved, from chefs to dishwashers, doormen, concierges and cleaners. Their roles are crucial; for instance, our restaurants maintain impeccably clean environments, ensuring that no bin is ever full, and bathrooms are pristine, contributing to a holistic guest experience.

Q: What do your guests most appreciate about the lebua experience?

Our goal is to make each visit memorable, with our team going to great lengths to accommodate special requests, demon-

strating professionalism, and attention to detail. We pride ourselves on being part of significant lifetime moments, whether to celebrate anniversaries, propose marriage or close important business deals. For me, it's about curating personalised experiences that exceed expectations and create lasting memories for guests.

“SHOWCASING THAILAND IS MY PASSION, AND CLARITY OF VISION IS CRUCIAL.”

Q: How does lebua's approach challenge the traditional concept of luxury?

Traditional luxury typically emphasises tangible offerings. However, we prioritise establishing deep connections with our customers. We aim to anticipate guests' preferences and endeavour to offer a personal concierge service to every guest. We strive to understand any other personal requirements in advance to ensure their entire journey with us, from pre-arrival to departure, is as memorable as possible. We believe that luxury is not just about products but about creating an atmosphere that touches every sense.

Q: How does lebua Hotels & Resorts plan to attract UAE visitors and investors?

I am eager to form strategic partnerships

with UAE travel agents, and airlines, or to engage in discussions with investment groups. Leveraging our experience and expertise, we can offer customised services tailored to UAE clients. We adhere to halal practices and some members of the lebua team are proficient in Arabic. We are committed to embracing Thai culture while also respecting and incorporating other cultures into our international luxury hospitality brand.

Q: As the founder and president of lebua Hotels & Resorts, what inspired you to create an international luxury brand?

Showcasing Thailand is my passion, and clarity of vision is crucial. It is essential to remain true to your vision, commit to it, and make sensible financial commitments. Success requires a holistic approach: being honest with yourself, defining your vision clearly, and planning strategically. Choosing the right team is vital for any entrepreneur. The adage 'the right person for the right job' is old but effective. My goal is to create the world's best hotel, yet I acknowledge my limitations in areas such as housekeeping, front desk operations, and culinary expertise. Recruiting the right team is just the beginning; retaining them is crucial. This involves respecting them, allowing them to grow within their roles, accepting setbacks, offering support, and making objective judgments.

HOSPITALITY VIEWPOINTS



RAJAN KHURANA
GENERAL MANAGER,
LEBUA HOTELS & RESORTS

Thailand's tourism industry is poised for a powerful resurgence, with a Bangkok landmark leading the way.

Q: What is your view on the tourism sector's outlook?

The industry is gearing up for a powerful resurgence, spearheaded by Bangkok. Tourism generated 1.9 trillion baht in 2023, 15.3% of the national GDP. Forecasts indicate a leap to 3.3 trillion baht by 2033, fuelling job growth in a sector already employing nearly nine million people.

The rise of luxury dining, epitomised by the iconic lebua, is adding a new dimension to Bangkok's powerful allure. Boasting two Michelin 2-starred restaurants, the renowned Sky Bar and a constellation of

other dining and nightlife venues, lebua has become a mecca for discerning travellers.

Q: How important is the UAE to Thailand's tourism sector?

The UAE holds exceptional promise for significantly boosting Thai tourism. UAE travellers, known for their spending power and preference for luxury experiences, are increasingly looking towards Thailand as a favoured destination. The growing number of direct flights makes Thailand more accessible and appealing to Emirati travellers. The UAE is an important market that Thailand will continue to focus on.

Q: How does lebua attract and retain guests?

lebua has become a landmark synonymous with luxury and exceptional experiences. It's more than just a hotel with a stunning river view; it is a destination in its own right.

Beyond the exquisite food and stunning settings, lebua's true magic lies in its unwavering dedication to its guests. In a city brimming with options, lebua has carved a unique niche, proving that genuine hospitality, culinary innovation and sustainable practices are the recipe for lasting success.

FOCUS ON INTERCONTINENTAL PHUKET RESORT

The paradise getaway elevating luxury

Phuket has long been renowned as a dream destination for pristine beaches and world-class amenities – and nowhere embodies that dream better than the InterContinental Phuket Resort. Nestled on a beachfront estate against the stunning backdrop of Kamala Mountain, the resort represents the island's ultimate luxury escape, boasting seven restaurants and bars, five swimming pools and the rejuvenating Sati Spa.

“The option to choose between tropical mountainside or peaceful

beachfront accommodations offers a unique advantage, allowing guests to select the perfect setting for their vacation,” says the resort's general manager, Bjorn Courage. “Our commitment to personalised service, exemplified by our Club InterContinental with butler service, ensures that every guest feels truly special.”

With demand for premium leisure destinations on the rise, UAE visitors make up an increasingly significant portion of Phuket's guests. “We recognise the unique preferences of

UAE travellers and have tailored our offerings to cater to their specific needs and expectations,” says Courage, who also serves as the President of the Phuket Hotel Association. “The UAE is a cornerstone market for the InterContinental Phuket Resort and Phuket as a whole,” Courage adds. “The convenience of direct flights offered by Etihad and Emirates, and straightforward visa procedures, have solidified Phuket's position as an ideal destination for UAE travellers.”



“THE UAE IS A CORNERSTONE MARKET.”

BJORN COURAGE
GENERAL MANAGER,
INTERCONTINENTAL PHUKET RESORT



SUN-KISSED PHUKET PARADISE

The all-new InterContinental® Phuket Resort is where luxury meets legend. A tribute to Thailand's rich heritage and modern contemporary lifestyle the island haven is set on a pristine beachfront estate against the stunning backdrop of Kamala Mountain. With its thoughtfully curated gourmet experiences, wellness rituals, and culturally rich immersions it is the ideal for intimate getaways, alluring beach holidays, and memorable family celebrations.

Visit us: phuket.intercontinental.com



INTERCONTINENTAL.
PHUKET RESORT

FOCUS ON DAIKIN



Photos from left to right: Prime Minister's Industry Award 2023; Naoto Sekida, President of Daikin Industries Thailand. Photos: Daikin Industries (Thailand) Ltd.



A cool approach to global success

With an annual output of more than five million units a year, DIT is a significant player in Thailand's air-conditioning sector and a key contributor to the country's growing export numbers.

Daikin Industries Thailand (DIT) is one of the world's leading manufacturers of air-conditioning units. Daikin deploys advanced technologies to produce high-efficiency residential and commercial solutions, which are distributed via a network that spans five continents. The business has expanded throughout every region in the world over the past two decades, due in no small part to its proprietary production system – PDS – which embraces the Japanese value of 'kaizen,' or the mindset of continuous improvement. DIT has also been the recipient of numerous awards over the years, including the Prime Minister's Industry Award in 2018 and the Good Factory Award from Japan in 2023. Its state-of-the-art R&D centre was designed using green building principles to optimise the energy-efficient use of resources while minimising waste.

The Thai air conditioning market is buoyant: valued at US\$1.63 billion in 2023, it is expected to grow by 5.93% a year until 2029. Export potential is strong, too. Of the units produced by DIT, more than 70% are exported overseas – a figure that is set to accelerate under the planned economic partnership agreement (CEPA) with the UAE. DIT's president, Naoto Sekida, has worked with the company in a variety of roles for more than 35 years, so he understands the value of a motivated workforce. Here, he reflects on Daikin Industries' evolution and shares his vision for the future.

“EXPORTS TO THE UAE ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE BY 25% YEARLY TO ฿148BN.”

NAOTO SEKIDA
PRESIDENT,
DAIKIN INDUSTRIES THAILAND (DIT)

Q: How does Daikin Industries maintain its competitive edge?

Our strategy mainly focuses on being flexible; we must accelerate collaboration both within and outside the company to innovate. The air-conditioning industry faces challenges that will push the industry to grow, especially in the ASEAN region. To remain one step ahead, we are focussing on enhancing our products and capabilities, while maintaining the quality necessary to continue as the number one aircon company in the market.

Q: How are you planning to grow your market share?

We have expanded our network of suppliers and dealers, fostering relationships that enable them to understand the quality of our products and build stronger connections with their customers. As the global leader in the air-conditioning industry, we want to conduct business that not only focuses on profit, but considers the growth of the entire sector, including our partner companies.

Q: How significant is the UAE market for DIT?

Through the upcoming CEPA, Thailand's Minister of Commerce has announced that exports to the UAE are likely to increase by 25% yearly to ฿148 billion, and DIT's air-conditioning units will be among key export products. We understand that the construction market in the UAE was last valued at US\$40bn, and that air conditioning will play an important role in a country that promotes smart, sustainable cities.

Q: How important are sustainability initiatives to your long-term strategy?

In 2018, DIT introduced its Environmental Vision 2050, with the aim of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Our mid-term strategy is to reduce CO2 emissions by 50% by 2030. We believe that promoting environmentally friendly product manufacturing in a global context is crucial for our future growth strategy.

Q: What about CSR initiatives?

Thailand is a tropical country and without air conditioning people will struggle to live comfortably. One of our ongoing CSR initiatives is to donate products to schools and hospitals. Additionally, in 2011 we released 93 patents related to the manufacturing and sales of air conditioners using the R-32 technology to developing countries free of charge.

Q: What is your approach to leadership?

We take good care of our employees while providing them with opportunities to advance their careers. I want to be someone who motivates and uplifts my people by providing opportunities to grow. I was appointed to this role because I proved that I have a strong passion not only for growing the company, but also for bringing our employees along with us to success.

“PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MANUFACTURING IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT IS CRUCIAL.”

Q: What is next for DIT?

Next year will be the final phase of Fusion 25, our strategic plan from 2021 to 2025, and we will then transition immediately to the Fusion 30 plan. These five-year strategies incorporate new values for the environment and contribute to a sustainable society. To achieve this, we focus on strategic innovation, and that includes dealing with the challenges of becoming a carbon-neutral company.



www.daikin.co.th/en

FOCUS ON DELTA ELECTRONICS THAILAND



A talent for innovation

As a leading provider of power and thermal management solutions, Delta Electronics Thailand is perfectly placed to drive the green transition.

With decades of innovation to draw on, Delta Electronics Thailand is facing the future with confidence. The company, listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand since 1995, has consolidated revenues exceeding US\$4 billion and is expanding its regional solutions portfolio to incorporate EV chargers, industrial automation, data centre infrastructure and smart energy management.



Photo: Delta Electronics Thailand.

Thailand's geopolitical stability and size have given businesses plenty of scope to capitalise on the global trend for distributed manufacturing – a role Delta has long performed for global clients. However, the company's relentless focus on R&D, coupled with Thailand's commitment to boosting technical

autonomy, especially in renewable energy, has presented Delta with fresh opportunities for growth. Delta has the expertise to keep pace with the speed of digital developments, enabling it to expand into profitable new areas, including ICT infrastructure and cutting-edge EV technologies.

DELTA HAS THE EXPERTISE NEEDED TO EXPAND INTO PROFITABLE NEW AREAS.

In fact, Delta is tipped to be at the forefront of the transition to renewable energy. For the last 14 years, the firm has been involved in EV manufacturing, supplying power subsystems to leading EV companies. Despite fluctuating fortunes for some automotive companies, the long-term trend towards electrification remains strong. Delta's dedication to strengthening internal resources and forging profitable partnerships is key to its future success.



<https://deltathailand.com>

Q&A | VICTOR CHENG CEO, DELTA ELECTRONICS THAILAND



After more than three decades at Delta Group, Delta Electronics Thailand CEO Victor Cheng reflects on the company's history of innovation and talks about his ambitious vision for the future.

Q: How can Delta Electronics cement its position in the EV sector?

Thailand is a major hub for automotive manufacturing in Southeast Asia, drawing in car makers from Japan, Europe and, to a lesser extent, the US. Our customer base encompasses major brands, and our capacity remains flexible to meet evolving market needs. Our EV product manufacturing capacity has recently doubled with the inauguration of a new plant.

“OUR DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH REFLECTS OUR SERIOUS COMMITMENT TO EARNING POTENTIAL INVESTORS’ TRUST.”

As the automotive industry shifts towards electrification globally, the emergence of EV manufacturing in Thailand and Asia could be the next step, but it depends on decisive actions from industry leaders. Our next focus is on bolstering the capabilities of our staff across various areas, including design services, manufacturing technology and quality control. These enhancements align with our expansion plans to accommodate increased capacity.

Q: Given the technical skills required, what is Delta's strategy for staff acquisition and development?

We have started relocating technical personnel to Thailand for support, but our main goal, long term, is to nurture local talent. We are appointing a technical leader to lead training programs. Currently, we are partnering with seven top universities known for their strong technical programs to recruit students and give them early exposure to our work. Together, these universities produce around 3,000-4,000 graduates annually, from bachelor's

to doctoral degrees.

To bolster this effort, we are offering scholarships, hosting competitions and funding lab equipment. We are also creating a specialised industrial automation lab to train and engage with students, aiming to spark their interest in careers with Delta.

Q: Which other sectors have you identified as offering opportunities for growth, for both Thailand and Delta?

Renewable energy is a focus area due to Thailand's untapped potential. In addition, the global trend towards digitisation, especially in AI and data centres, offers growth opportunities. Delta Thailand plans to invest in expanding ICT infrastructure, especially in data centres, leveraging our position in Southeast Asia.

“DELTA THAILAND PLANS TO INVEST IN EXPANDING ICT INFRASTRUCTURE, ESPECIALLY IN DATA CENTRES.”

Q: What opportunities can Delta offer to investors from the UAE?

Delta Group has offices in Dubai. We are involved in significant data centre projects in the Middle East and are also developing the renewable energy controls and storage solutions here that are crucial in solar-rich regions. Addressing the rising adoption of EVs, we are tackling concerns like charging infrastructure and range anxiety. This includes public and fleet charging stations along highways, with promising business opportunities.

Q: What makes Delta such an attractive proposition for investors?

We embody an engineer-like culture and remain dedicated to meeting targets. We conduct annual ten-year planning exercises, aligning strategies with industry trends. Key trends guiding our planning include electrification for energy-efficient solutions, digitisation shaping industries, and geographical diversification in manufacturing for supply chain resilience. We are expanding into regions like Thailand, Eastern Europe, and North America. To support this expansion, we are implementing smart manufacturing initiatives to optimise our processes. From sensor-based data collection to AI-driven analysis, these strategies enhance efficiency across our operations. Our double-digit growth reflects our serious commitment to earning potential investors' trust.

FOCUS ON TPI PL

The pioneering leader in Thailand's industrial sector

Now in its 46th year, TPIPL is leading the country's construction and petrochemical industry by prioritizing profitable and sustainable innovation.

TPI Polene Plc (TPIPL) is the flagship of the TPI Polene Group, whose diverse interests encompass construction and building materials, renewable energy, and bio-organics/agri-pharma. The group has a long history of notable achievements, including the first fully integrated petrochemical complex in Southeast Asia, and is now the second-largest producer of cement and building products in Thailand.

Innovation and green technologies underpin every part of TPIPL's operation and are key to its competitiveness. Rather than relying on bolt-on acquisitions, TPIPL maintains a comprehensive in-house R&D function that supports its growth and expansion in the reach of its products while adhering to its ambitious sustainability goals: TPIPL aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2043, while the power subsidiary will reach this milestone in 2037, ahead of Thailand's 2050 target.

Nowhere is this commitment to sustainable innovation more evident than in having a long list of many firsts and/or salient attributes, such as being the largest privately owned WTE-MSW power plant in the region; achieving 25% MSW substitution in its calciner while peers rely on industrial waste; and producing a high-value-added specialty polymer—also one of a kind in the SEA region. Another potential milestone is the implementation of the visionary PAFI (Prototype City of Advanced Futuristic Industries) project in Southern Thailand. PAFI will embody the Group's pioneering spirit, helping to fuel the next phase of Thailand's industrial development while advancing its long-term goal of achieving carbon neutrality.

“INNOVATION UNDERPINS EVERY PART OF TPI PL'S OPERATION.”

Q: How is TPI leveraging innovation to gain a competitive advantage?

Dr. Porakrit: Unlike the Middle East, Thailand lacks



PAKKAPOL LEOPAIRUT
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE, TPI POLENE POWER PLC

the advantage of abundant petroleum resources or the market size of China or India. Our strength lies in knowledge-based industries and our unique advantage is our ability to add significant value to products, enabling us to command a higher margin compared to our peers. Staying ahead in the industry demands agility and diligence but by consistently innovating and emphasizing sustainability, we ensure our position as a frontrunner.

Q: What will be the focus of the PAFI project?

Mr. Pakkapol: Our PAFI project will promote highly innovative industries other than petrochemical and those dependent on fossil fuels. PAFI symbolizes the future, not just for our company but for Thailand as a whole.

Q: How does the company plan to accelerate exports and attract investment?

Dr. Porakrit: The signing of the Single Euro Pay-



PORAKRIT LEOPHAIRATANA, PhD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, TPI POLENE PLC

ments Area (SEPA) agreement between Thailand and the UAE presents a potential for new business opportunities, especially as we are actively seeking joint venture partners and collaborators for the PAFI project. TPIPL also has a diverse portfolio looking for export markets. We would like to introduce our fiberboard cement, solar films and EVA encapsulant into the UAE, as well as cement suitable for marine structures.

Q: How will TPI drive growth while managing risk over the next few years?

Mr. Pakkapol: With a capex-heavy project like PAFI and long learning curve managing leverage is crucial; the right proportion between debt and equity, matching cashflow stream to debt repayment schedules. Striking a balance is essential to ensure we have adequate cash flow while remaining able to execute our project completion targets.

WE BUILD THE FUTURE

TPI Polene excels as Thailand's third-largest cement manufacturer and top LDPE/EVA resin producer, renowned for cutting-edge technology, environmental standards, and a dominant position in multiple industrial sectors.



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FOCUS ON NATIONAL TELECOM

Gearing up for a smarter future

State-owned telecoms provider National Telecom is focusing firmly on the future with a growth strategy designed to anchor the government's ambitious nationwide digitalization campaign.



“THAILAND IS WELL-POSITIONED TO BECOME A DIGITAL HUB IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.”

COL. SANPACHAI HUWANANDANA, PH.D.
CEO, NATIONAL TELECOM

In a fast-moving market, National Telecom (NT) is developing the digital services and solutions needed to keep pace with the government's ambitious public policies – including advancing their smart cities, health, agriculture and business initiatives. As such, the

company has prioritized the creation of a digital hub using state-of-the-art data centres to offer full-featured cloud services and smart solutions to government agencies. The Thai government is supporting these efforts through a 'Broadband Village' project, designed to rollout nationwide broadband connectivity. This cloud-first policy means there is a push to urgently migrate on-premise services to cloud solutions. In response, NT is aiming to host circa 500,000 virtual machines normalised over the next five years – a seven-fold increase on its current capacity.

“As a telecommunications company transitioning into digital services, we are capitalising on the growing cloud market in Thailand, which is expanding by 30% annually,” explains CEO Colonel Sanpachai Huvanandana. “We aim to be a leading player in hosting data centres, supported by our robust infrastructure, with extensive connectivity that ensures seamless data flow across continents.” In fact, the company is perfectly placed to foster a competitive telecoms environment, providing services that allow other operators to

use its infrastructure without additional investment, facilitating easier entry into the broadband market.



Photo: National Telecom

NT's recent collaboration on the high-profile Pattaya Smart City project is already enhancing daily life for residents and tourists alike. But Thailand's imminent CEPA agreement with the UAE will offer additional opportunities for overseas investors looking to invest in satellite services, submarine cable systems or digital infrastructure. “We are seeking partnerships for new data centre construction and operation,” says Col. Huvanandana. “To support hyper-scale operations, we need at least 50 megawatts of power and land over 100 acres, which makes partnering

essential.” For Thailand to fully leverage its cloud potential, however, digitalisation of government services is essential: migrating services online, managing the migration process, and optimizing cloud services with AI technology. By collaborating with partners at every stage – from SaaS to IaaS – NT aims to tap into the extensive opportunities in Thailand's burgeoning cloud market.

It is the ideal time for expansion. “The telecom sector is nearing saturation in terms of mobile subscriptions, but data usage is surging,” says Col. Huvanandana. “With a population of nearly 60 million, Thailand is well-positioned to become a digital hub in Southeast Asia.”



www.ntplc.co.th

FOCUS ON YLG BULLION

The future is golden

From its roots as a gem and jewelry exporter, YLG is now one of Thailand's leading gold futures trading companies.

By prioritising transparency, innovation and regulatory adherence, the company has grown at pace, quickly consolidating its market position in Thailand, at the same time establishing a trading presence in prestigious overseas locations including Singapore and Dubai. Recognising the importance of innovation, YLG has developed seven trading platforms tailored to meet the evolving needs of gold dealers.

The impact of the new Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE is likely to accelerate import-export activities between Thailand and UAE, fostering a more open relationship with the Middle East, especially in rapidly expanding sectors such as gold trading. The newly formed Thailand Gold Forum – an association that leverages the experience of the country's major gold traders – is already collaborating on self-regulation to help grow the sector and increase investor access.

“Exposure to different Southeast Asian countries, such as Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia, has been

“OUR COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH COVERS EVERY ASPECT OF GOLD-RELATED SERVICES.”

PAWAN NAWAWATTANASUB
PRESIDENT AND CEO, YLG BULLION

enlightening, allowing us to learn and adapt,” comments President and CEO Pawan Nawawattanasub. “Thailand stands out as the only country where bullion, trading, and futures are within a unified group, unlike other countries where these activities are typically managed by separate entities.”



www.ylgbullion.co.th/en

Q&A | PAWAN NAWAWATTANASUB PRESIDENT AND CEO, YLG BULLION



Q: What is your long-term vision for YLG Bullion?

When the stock exchange in Thailand introduced gold futures, YLG became one of five key players leading the way. Recently, we were invited by the MCC to establish a company in Dubai, which has now been successfully set up. I anticipate significant milestones in the coming years as we expand our presence.

Q: How do you successfully navigate international markets?

The most crucial aspect is financial strength, as this business demands substantial capacity. Fortunately, YLG excels in this area, ensuring prompt availability of gold when customers need it and immediate access to funds when it is time to sell. Regulatory environments vary significantly among coun-

tries. Our SEC membership has provided valuable insights, guiding us in operating transparently and building trust.

Q: Why should UAE investors should look to Thailand?

One positive aspect of Thai businesses is their adaptability. When it comes to launching initiatives to protect and foster business growth, we unite. The Thailand Gold Forum exemplifies this collaboration. Through shared experiences and coordinated efforts, we address market gaps and customer concerns, working with associates to enhance sales, implement self-regulation, and monitor our progress. This instils confidence in those looking to invest.

Q: How do you personalise services to your clients?

I am the driving force behind new innovations because I am the one serving clients and have a deep understanding of their needs. Customisation is crucial and we offer apps tailored to customers' needs. One app caters specifically to retail customers. Another facilitates trading in different currencies, so customers can trade and hold the currency relevant to their transactions. Our comprehensive approach covers every aspect of gold-related services.

FOCUS ON BERLI JUCKER PCL

142 years of impact: The leading conglomerate taking Thai products to the world

Under President, CEO and Director Thapanee Techajareonvikul's leadership, Berli Jucker aligns its 142-year legacy with a new US\$200 million sustainability-linked financing initiative for growth.

The story of Berli Jucker (BJC)'s success is one of adaptability and resilience. Originally engaged in a variety of commercial activities including rice milling, mining, timber and logistics, the business grew from a family-owned operation to become a key player in Thailand's development as an industrial nation. Following a period of investment in innovation and technology, BJC's interests now span four primary areas of focus: packaging, consumer goods, retail and healthcare supplies.

The company sets great store by its strong ethical principles and has won awards that not only recognise the quality of its innovative products, but also celebrate BJC's pioneering corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability initiatives. BJC has been making impressive progress against ambitious sustainability goals for several years, by focusing on improving recyclability, increasing renewable energy usage and reducing raw and packaging materials waste – an approach that is also positively impacting the bottom line. In fact, with environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics carrying increasing weight in corporations' 360-degree assessments of risks and opportunities, BJC's determination to meet the stringent requirements of internationally recognized sustainability standards is a decision that is as good for business as it is for the planet. A landmark deal was recently secured with the United Overseas Bank (UOB) involving the issuance of sustainable linked bonds and derivatives, totalling US\$200 million in capital.

With reported net profits of US\$130 million against total revenues of US\$4.6 billion in 2023, BJC is well placed for future growth. Recently, the firm's business focus has been on boosting sales growth, particularly in the retail sector, to keep pace with the rise in tourism. Future plans involve exploring profitable new consumer categories. A strategic expansion into aesthetics, including Botox and fillers, has tapped into the current zeitgeist, with Thailand increasingly being seen as a global hub for state-of-the-art aesthetic treatments.

BJC President, CEO and Director Thapanee Techajareonvikul outlines the company's vision, and talks about her plans for the future.

Q: With the imminent CEPA agreement between Thailand and the UAE, how does your company plan to expand into the UAE market or attract investors and partners from the Middle East?

TT: We visited the UAE and Middle East, where we were impressed by the market potential. Our retail business has attracted customers from the region, reflecting its growing population. We aim to cater to their preferences and expand our product offerings accordingly.

Q: What export opportunities do you see for Thailand in the UAE and which sectors do you think would be the most promising for export?

TT: Currently, our consumer products play a significant role. We offer tissue products across all price segments and additionally provide soap, personal care items, as well as hair care and facial products. We also export a variety of food and snacks to neighbouring countries, China, and Hong Kong, where we have branches.

Q: How has BJC's historic listing as one of the first seven companies on the Stock Exchange of Thailand influenced its financial strategies and relationships with investors over the years?

TT: Regarding our listing and historical performance, I believe we entered the capital market efficiently and amicably. Our debt structure and cost of capital are highly competitive, offering significant benefits. Our first-of-its-kind deal with UOB has opened doors to investors keen on sustainability, given our accolades in this area. We are also collaborating with suppliers and partners, further enhancing our position. Overall, this venture into the capital market, combined with our history and opportunities, promises substantial benefits.

Q: How does BJC approach its CSR and sustainability commitments?

TT: We have focused on reducing food waste, ensuring it reaches the right organizations promptly. Additionally, we have partnered with international organizations to emphasize energy conservation. We are completing the



“WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO EMPHASIZE ENERGY CONSERVATION.”

THAPANEE TECHAJAREONVIKUL
PRESIDENT, CEO & DIRECTOR, BJC

installation of solar roofs across all our stores, which will significantly cut down energy costs. These initiatives have been ongoing for some time. We have also been involved in community development projects. One notable project is the Don Jai initiative, which supports traditional mom-and-pop stores, providing them with POS systems and other necessary equipment. This not only benefits them but also helps us streamline our sales operations and data analytics. These initiatives align with our commitment to ESG goals and

contribute to both environmental sustainability and business profitability. Our efforts, though grassroots at the beginning, continue to grow and make a significant impact.

Q: How does your management style contribute to achieving BJC's strategic goals?

TT: What I value most is the long-standing relationship with our executives; I have known and worked with them for a long time. Recently we have been preparing for a generational shift, ensuring a smooth transition to the next management team. Being closely involved in shaping our company's culture and processes has helped me understand how to facilitate the leadership transition seamlessly.



www.bjc.co.th

Leading Voices

Meet the business and industry leaders driving Thailand's booming economy.

■ PTT PCL



“WE SEE MANY INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIDDLE EASTERN INVESTORS.”

WUTTIKORN STITHIT
COO, PTT PCL

State-owned energy company PTT manages an extensive network of submarine gas pipelines, together with nationwide LPG terminals and associated retail businesses. It is responsible for supplying electricity, gasoline and petrochemical products across the kingdom. PTT is tasked with fostering national energy security, at the same time ensuring stakeholders are treated fairly. “We work with government on our infrastructure plan to maintain the energy balance in Thailand,” comments PTT COO Wuttikorn Stithit. “But we’re also supporting socio-economic programmes, including forest conservation and clean water projects.” PTT is making significant investments in developing sustainable energy options, too. “We have a target of net zero for 2050,” says Stithit. “We need to be profitable but sustainable and are looking at our short- and long-term strategies to ensure we can continue to add value to our society.” PTT has a long-standing relationship with the UAE, having established an office in Abu Dhabi in 2021. “The UAE is already a key trading partner for Asian businesses,” says Stithit. “We see many investment opportunities for Middle Eastern investors in Thailand.”

■ BANGCHAK CORPORATION



“WE ARE ANTICIPATING YET ANOTHER RECORD YEAR AHEAD.”

CHAIWAT KOVAVISARACH
CEO, BANGCHAK CORPORATION

Bangchak Corporation operates oil exploration and refinery businesses while pioneering biofuel and clean energy innovations.

Q: How are you balancing your organisation's priorities?
There are three key aspects to consider: security, affordability, and sustainability. Striking the right balance is critical. Our goal is for half of our profits to come from renewable sources by the end of the decade, with a broader aim of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Q: What are your next targets?
We are anticipating yet another record year ahead. Our continuous improvement is evident and our growth noteworthy, considering our relatively small starting point. I aim to achieve a new revenue milestone by the end of this year. We also successfully completed the acquisition of ExxonMobil in Thailand last year.

Q: Are there opportunities for UAE investors?
We are anticipating yet another record year ahead. Our continuous improvement is evident and our growth noteworthy, considering our relatively small starting point. I aim to achieve a new revenue milestone by the end of this year. We also successfully completed the acquisition of ExxonMobil in Thailand last year.

■ WHA GROUP



“WE INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY WITH INFRASTRUCTURE TO OPTIMISE PROFITABILITY.”

JAREENPORN JARUKORNSAKUL
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, WHA GROUP

WHA Group provides a fully integrated logistics and manufacturing service to businesses looking to extend their operations in Thailand or the wider ASEAN region. The organisation's best-in-class facilities, prime locations and integrated solutions provision has helped it become one of the country's leading logistics operators. “We started with logistics and then began to explore the concept of building our own distribution centres,” explains co-founder and CEO Jareenporn Jarukornsakul. “In 2015 we took over the largest industrial estate in Thailand.”

Since then, the company has expanded rapidly and now also provides power, utilities and digital services to customers. “We have diversified our business operations and are expanding internationally, too,” continues Jarukornsakul. “We are currently working on projects in Vietnam and elsewhere.” Jarukornsakul envisages leveraging technology to boost business development and help create synergies across the company's interests: “We integrate technology with infrastructure to optimise profitability.”

■ PORT AUTHORITY OF THAILAND



KRIENKRAI CHAISIRIWONGSUK
DIRECTOR GENERAL, PORT AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

The Port Authority of Thailand (PAT) is responsible for regulations and governance at the country's ports including the two busiest, Laem Chabang and Bangkok Port.

Q: What are PAT's main priorities?
We are focusing on two key areas: digitisation and decarbonisation. Projects include implementing modern port technology, as well as developing data logistics chains connected to the Port Community System (PCS), which acts as an operational hub. Our overarching vision is to establish a world-class port with excellent logistic services.

Q: How can you ensure sustainable growth?
PAT aims to upgrade its services continually, aspiring to become a gateway port and eventually a hub port. Transitioning into a smart and green port aligns with the larger goal of creating an efficient port city and positioning

Thailand as a maritime industry front-runner. PAT also plans to develop regional ports to international standards and to become a trade gateway to the Andaman Sea.

“OUR OVERARCHING VISION IS TO ESTABLISH A WORLD-CLASS PORT.”

Q: How do you plan to strengthen trade ties between Thailand and the UAE?

The expanding trade between Thailand and the UAE positions the UAE as a gateway for Thai exports to Western countries, and Thailand as a gateway for UAE exports to Asian countries. Many business opportunities exist here for UAE investors.

THAILAND BOARD OF INVESTMENT



NARIT THERDSTEERASUKDI
SECRETARY GENERAL, THAILAND BOARD
OF INVESTMENT

The Thailand Board of Investment (BOI) promotes foreign investment in Thailand, as well as offering support to Thai investors looking to invest abroad.

Q: How is the BOI planning to boost Thai businesses?

We have rolled out a new five-year plan pushing Thailand's economy forward into a new era. We want an economy that is innovative, competitive and fair for everyone. We are keen to position Thailand as a top spot for international business and are eager to help Thai SMEs and startups expand globally.

Q: What are your priorities?

We have identified five sectors that will transform Thailand's economy: BCG—Bio Circular and Green Industries; the EV industry; the upstream electronics sector (wafer fabrication and IC design); digital and creative services; and establishing Thailand as a regional business hub.

Q: How will you encourage inward investment?

Our focus is on bringing together the tools to support investors, making things easier and connecting industries to create more chances for business. Soon, a pioneering

green tariff system will ensure ample clean energy supply, enhancing Thailand's appeal to industries. Simplified administrative procedures also enable smoother company setups and operations, positioning Thailand as a premier investment destination.

“OUR FOCUS IS ON BRINGING TOGETHER THE TOOLS TO SUPPORT INVESTORS.”

Q: How are you promoting opportunities between Thailand and UAE?

The UAE stands out as a major investor. Recognising the region's potential, we are establishing a new office there. Given the ample investment funds in the region, we aim to engage them and showcase the opportunities in Southeast Asia, particularly in Thailand.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE PROMOTION



“THAILAND BOASTS A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT.”

PHUSIT RATANAKUL SEREROENGRIT
DIRECTOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL TRADE PROMOTION

Thailand's Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP) was set up to help Thai businesses optimise international business opportunities and to expand available channels for Thai products and services. The department has a presence in countries all over the world. “Creating a recognised brand is crucial for Thailand,” explains Director General Phusit Ratanakul Sereroengrit, “instilling confidence in consumers and businesses, signalling reliability, and showcasing the high quality of Thai products.”

For potential trade partners, Thailand offers many benefits, including its strategic location which acts as a convenient gateway to Southeast Asia, providing easy access to a dynamic market with an advanced logistics network. “Thailand boasts a business-friendly environment, offering incentives for foreign investment,” continues Sereroengrit. “The country actively participates in liberalised trade policies, promoting a favourable business environment for free and fair trade.” The UAE is Thailand's top trading partner, connecting Asia with the Middle East and facilitating the smooth flow of goods and services between the two markets. “We promote non-oil businesses in the UAE, including the food industry,” says Sereroengrit. “Other promising sectors include digital content, automotive and parts, healthcare and services.”

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY



“UNDER THE CEPA, INVESTORS CAN EXPLORE NEW OPPORTUNITIES.”

SUTTIPONG KONGPOOL
GOVERNOR, CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) has oversight of Thailand's aviation industry, acting as the sector's regulator, developer and strategic planner.

Q: What are your current priorities?

Our midterm goal is to keep Thailand's aviation sector safe, efficient and globally competitive. The key change has been the shift to a tourist-based approach, which is a high-risk area and a place where we should maintain efficiency. CAAT is dedicated to enhancing these operations by utilising technology and data analytics for improved risk management.

Q: How do you plan to achieve your goals?

Our vision goes beyond just adhering to global standards; it encompasses sustainable development principles that balance economic, social and environmental considerations. We would like to work with like-minded associates to ensure ongoing success in innovation and being environmentally sustainable.

Q: What are the opportunities for UAE investors?

The economic partnership with the UAE offers a unique opportunity to build on areas that could provide mutual benefit—and air transport is one of them. Under the CEPA, investors can explore new opportunities by considering joint ventures with Thai businesses.

BATA THAILAND



“I AM EXCITED TO SEE HOW THE CEPA AGREEMENT IS IMPLEMENTED.”

WILASINEE PARNURAT
COUNTRY MANAGER, BATA THAILAND

Bata Thailand is one of the country's best-known footwear and accessories manufacturers. Under the leadership of Country Manager Wilasinee Parnurat, the company is recalibrating its approach to appeal to an expanding customer base. “We have a lot of initiatives happening in Thailand that could eventually benefit the whole group in the future,” explains Parnurat. “We're keen to ensure that whatever we learn here, we can share with other markets.” Bata is known for well-priced products that offer comfort and durability. Parnurat is determined to preserve the quality of its range, while introducing new styles and streamlining the supply chain to provide a base for sustainable growth. “Compared to our peers in the market, this balance between the quality of shoes and the price point is one of our strengths,” says Parnurat. “Our goal remains the most accessible quality shoes in the market.”

Expanding Bata's market in Dubai and the UAE remains a long-term ambition. The company currently extends its reach through partnerships on international franchises, but future plans could focus on direct investments in the region. “We see this opportunity as a huge potential, because consumers from the region are part of the top 1 percent,” says Parnurat. “I am excited to see how the CEPA agreement is implemented because it opens the doors for both sides.”



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in Thailand inspire the world...



Koh Haa, KRABI



HALA THAILAND

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