

PUTTING INNOVATION FIRST

The UAE is firmly focused on supporting innovation as a cornerstone of social and economic development.

February was celebrated as UAE Innovation Month, with more than 1,000 events held across the country. Since the launch of UAE Innovation Week in 2015, it has become one of the largest innovation festivals in the world, and represents a consolidated effort by government, the private sector and individuals to help create a widespread culture of innovation in the UAE.

This focus was clearly reflected by the three-day World Government Summit 2019 (WGS 2019) that was held 10 – 12 February, at Madinat Jumeirah, in Dubai. The WGS is a global platform dedicated to shaping the future of governments worldwide. Each year, the Summit sets the agenda for the next

generation of governments, focusing on how they can harness innovation and technology to solve universal challenges facing humanity. The seventh edition of this landmark event convened more than 4,000 participants from 140 countries, including heads of state and governments, and top-tier representatives of 30 international organisations.

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, the Crown Prince of Dubai, gave a holographic address at WGS 2019 and said that future cities should provide 80% of all services within 20 minutes of their residents. The summit also highlighted that Dubai aims to become a driverless city in 50 years,







Above: HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, the Crown Prince of Dubai, gave a holographic address at WGS 2019

while IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde noted that artificial intelligence will drastically reshape the future of jobs and human intelligence. Pope Francis addressed the summit via a live video, praising the UAE for starting a new historical chapter in a modern, tolerant world.

The UAE has long recognised that innovation is a cornerstone of social and economic development. This is particularly pertinent to the country as it strives to becoming a knowledge-based economy and seize opportunities offered by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, such as artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, 3D printing and nanotechnology.

The UAE, like many other nations, has developed national innovation strategies and frameworks. In September 2017, the UAE Government launched the UAE Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The National Innovation Strategy was launched in 2014 and superseded by the National Strategy for Advanced Innovation in 2018.

Another project bringing a transformational change to the UAE's economy is Vision 2021, which

was launched in 2010 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Innovation is part of the pillar 'United in Knowledge' of Vision 2021, which focuses on innovative Emiratis building a competitive economy.

In 2015, the country celebrated the Year of Innovation and the first UAE Innovation Week was held. Following its success in 2016, it was extended to UAE Innovation Month.

Innovative education is key to strengthening the UAE's position as a global hub for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and increase its contribution to the national economy. This principle is supported by the Emirates Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, which was launched in 2015 with a budget over AED300 billion.

Aimed at empowering youth between the ages of 15 – 35 to actively engage with the digital revolution, it was recently announced that this year's Think Science Fairs would be expanded to reach all corners of the UAE. The Think Science Fairs are organised by the Emirates Foundation, in partnership with the

Ministry of Education and Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Chairman of Emirates Foundation.

“Our commitment to nurture science and innovation in the nation, aligned with the national Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy, adopted by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, has never been stronger,” said Her Excellency Maytha Al Habsi, CEO of Emirates Foundation. “I am therefore delighted to announce that we will be expanding the Think Science platform this year and taking the competition to all four corners of the UAE to uncover and encourage young scientific talents in the country.”

Having already taken place at Zayed University, Dubai, and Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi, during Innovation Month, the Think Science fair stops off at Sharjah Astronomy Centre, on 3 March. It will then head to RAK Exhibition Centre, on 10 March, Fujairah’s Zayed Sports Complex, on 17 March, and Ajman University, on 21 March.

A very important part of the Think Science Fair is the Future Science Entrepreneurs platform, which was created by the Emirates Foundation last year. It enables Think Science participants to showcase their projects and connect with the Foundation’s private



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CEO, EMIRATES FOUNDATION

Below: IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde noted that artificial intelligence will drastically reshape the future of jobs and human intelligence





Above: HH Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, accompanied by HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, reviewed two models of Sky Pods recently, a mobility system being tested by the RTA

and public sector partners for potential adoption, incubation and funding.

“Our Think Science Program is all about building the scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs of tomorrow and connecting youth to opportunity,” said Her Excellency Al Habsi. “The private sector will help them nurture their ambitions and this will enable us, working hand in hand with the education sector as well, to accelerate the number of young people studying STEM and pursuing STI careers.”

The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation (MBRF) undertakes numerous initiatives that support innovation and the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

This year marked the fifth time the Nobel Museum exhibition was held in Dubai under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Chairman of MBRF. The exhibition, which opened on 3 February and was due to run through until 2 March, focused on the Nobel Prize in Literature under the slogan ‘Sharing Worlds’.

According to His Excellency Jamal bin Huwaireb, MBRF’s CEO: “The annual exhibition encourages the youth to embrace innovation and creativity and become active players in the development of their societies and a part of the knowledge industry.”

Last year, MBRF organised the first Arab Innovation forum to coincide with UAE Innovation Month,

which provided a platform for experts, entrepreneurs, speakers, national and international companies to come together, showcase their innovations, discuss topics of interest and ways for future collaborations.

As part of its remit, MBRF also organises the annual Knowledge Summit. The fifth edition, which was held on 5 and 6 December last year under the theme ‘Youth and the Future of the Knowledge Economy’, was in line with the objectives of the UAE Vision 2021 to build a competitive economy, as well as the UAE National Agenda for Youth. The previous edition focused on the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

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MBRF, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), also releases the annual Global Knowledge Index – part of the Arab Knowledge Project – which seeks to provide an accurate and objective tool that monitors the state of knowledge in the world, as well as opportunities and challenges around knowledge acquisition. Last year's Global Knowledge Index covered 195 countries.

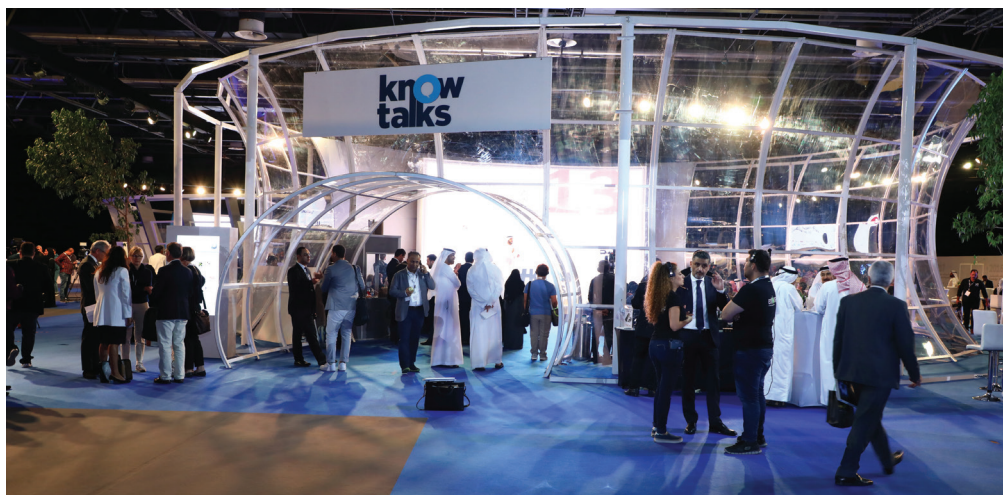
MBRF is just one of many entities playing a vital role in disseminating knowledge and a widespread culture of innovation in the UAE. These combined efforts are clearly having an impact.

In the Global Innovation Index 2018, the UAE ranked number one in the Arab world, 38th globally and 24th in

the innovation input pillar. In addition, the country also demonstrated an increase in its innovation output pillar from 56th in 2017 to 54th. The positive positioning across these indices reflects the significant improvements in knowledge and technology outputs, business sophistication, market sophistication and infrastructure. Furthermore, last year's score growth rate of 10% was one of the highest percentage score growth rates among all countries in the Global Innovation Index.

By 2021 the UAE aims to be one of the top 10 innovation leaders in the world. Thanks to national innovation strategies, events such as UAE Innovation Month and the efforts of organisations such as MBRF, this target is definitely achievable. 

Above: This year's Think Science Fairs reached all corners of the UAE



Left: MBRF organises the annual Knowledge Summit, in Dubai