

PATHS



H.H. SHEIKH AHMED BIN MOHAMMED
BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM,
CHAIRMAN OF THE MBRF



Country of Readers

It is a universally accepted truth that there is no progress without knowledge, one evidenced by history and by experiences of nations. Reading is the key to knowledge, we also know, and the higher the level of reading among all segments of society, the greater the advances we can make. This is something the UAE has become acutely aware of lately, following publication of some reports that signal a worrying decline in reading levels in the Arab world. In response, the UAE is trying to remedy the situation by prioritizing literacy, with the goal of making reading a daily activity performed by everyone in the Arab world. This literacy drive dovetails well with UAE's prioritization generally of all aspects of knowledge.

When H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum launched the Arab Reading Challenge on September 16, 2015, he said: "The Arab World is suffering from a reading crisis, and the numbers we hear about it are shocking." Motivated by a desire to radically remedy the situation, through his initiative he has provided 50 million books to a million Arab students, with each student given the goal of reading

“ WITH YOU, MEZNA, AND YOUR FELLOW ARAB STUDENTS, WE ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE. ”

THAT WAS THE TWEET THAT HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM, VICE-PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE UAE AND RULER OF DUBAI, POSTED TO CONGRATULATE THE STUDENT MEZNA NAJEEB AFTER BEING DECLARED THE COUNTRY'S MOST AVID READER IN 2019.

50 titles in the first year.

Explaining his focus on students, His Highness said: “The first book assures that students will write the first line of our future”, hopefully a better and brighter one. His Highness conscientiously follows up on all reading-related initiatives, displaying a paternal affection toward distinguished youths. Reading as many as 50 books at such a tender age will undoubtedly forge an enlightened community of readers, equipping them to make positive impacts on their environment, fortified by the information that promotes both rational thinking and faith which they have absorbed.

The UAE further developed the initiative by declaring 2016 as the year of reading, designating March of each year a month for reading, the years 2016–2026 as the decade of reading, and by issuing the first law of reading. Consequently, the whole country is immersing itself in reading through brainstorming sessions, initiatives at ministries, establishments and various institutions, and by various other events and activities. Underpinning of all this is a solid literary infrastructure, including

book fairs and extensive libraries in which the nation can take pride. There is, for example, the Mohammed bin Rashid Library comprising eight specialized libraries and nearly one million print, electronic, and audio books. And there is the ‘A Book in Minutes’ initiative of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation, which provides the Arab library with summaries of three books of international literature every month.

The UAE may be the only country in the world to have issued a law specifically to advance reading and to adopt a national strategy that covers 30 major topics in the fields of education, health, culture, and media. The national discussion on the importance of reading now transcends media and intellectual circles, it is all pervasive, and is in fact really a discussion around the broader theme of knowledge. It is about how to advance toward the future armed with this most important and durable tool, it is about fostering a generation of readers that is aware of the world around them and that knows how to deal with all the challenges that surround them.