

ECONOMIC FOCUS



ARABBRITISH
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ISSUE 1 SUMMER 2019

MAGAZINE OF THE ARAB BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

أضواء على العلاقات العربية - البريطانية

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Introducing **Mr Bandar Reda**, Secretary General & CEO of the Arab British Chamber of Commerce

The Arab British Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce that Mr Bandar Reda has joined the Chamber, assuming the role of Secretary General and CEO on 1st March 2019, becoming the fourth person to occupy this leadership position at the Chamber.

As CEO for the Chamber, Mr Reda will contribute his expertise and a proven track record, along with his combined experience as a diplomat and extensive hands-on experience in the private sector to help bring the Chamber to the next level.

Mr Reda has a distinguished professional career of more than a decade in banking and corporate industry at SABB HSBC Saudi Arabia, prior to taking up senior positions in the diplomatic service of his country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as the Commercial Attaché in the UK & Europe and before that in Italy and the Saudi delegation to BIE in Paris.

Mr Reda holds a BA in Economics and Business Administration from Orlando USA. He was an Executive Member of the Saudi-Italian Business Council, Council of Saudi Chambers; a Member of the Business Youth Committee, Jeddah Chamber of Commerce; a Member of the Saudi Economy Association; and a Member of the Saudi Arabian legal accountants.

Mr Bandar Reda's undoubted experience and abilities is clearly demonstrated in his extensive career

of service in both public and private sectors. This appointment will enable him to make a vital contribution to the strengthening of the Chamber's activities and extend its influence as the leading strategic business services organisation in the UK working to improve bilateral trade.

ABCC Signs Memorandum of Cooperation with Jeddah Chamber

We are pleased to announce that the Arab British Chamber of Commerce has

signed a memorandum of cooperation with Jeddah Chamber of Commerce. The memorandum was signed by Mr Bandar Reda, Secretary General and CEO of the ABCC and Mr Hassan Ibrahim Dahlan, Secretary General of Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The occasion of the formal signing took place at a ceremony in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in the presence of His Excellency Dr Majid Al Qasabi, the Minister of Commerce and Investment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Vice President of Jeddah



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Media No. 1727
Published June 2019 © Benham Publishing

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Clockwise from the top:
Mr Mohammad Taiyyab Sajid,
VATGLOBAL,
Mr Marc Saroufim, BSA, and Ms
Reem S AlSharekh, SAGIA.
Mr Yaarub F AlDaghither, SAGIA.
Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, ABCC
Deputy CEO & Secretary General.
Ms Reem S AlSharekh.



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Advantages of Doing Business in Saudi Arabia

SAGIA officials at the Chamber to meet British investors

The Chamber hosted a business seminar on Doing Business in Saudi Arabia with officials from the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) as the main speakers. The more than 60 delegates who attended the event on 3rd April were drawn from ABCC members and non-member companies.

In his welcoming remarks, Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, Deputy CEO and Secretary General, ABCC, elucidated the key functions of the Chamber and the numerous services that it provides to help its members export and trade and its historic role in strengthening UK-Arab relations.

Mr El-Idrissi briefly mentioned some of the remarkable achievements that make the Saudi market a place that investors could not afford to ignore. Selecting just from recent news, he highlighted the following:

- Third of the Gulf's best 100 firms were listed in Saudi Arabia, says Top CEO ranking.
- Saudi Aramco had just been named the 'world's most profitable business' by Moody's.
- Growth in the final quarter of 2018 rose to 3.59%.

- Key mega projects in the KSA included NEOM City, Great Mosque of Mecca and Knowledge Economic City.
- 10 Saudi entrepreneurs had made it to World Economic Forum's most promising Arab start-ups.
- Construction projects worth \$1.1tn (SAR4.2tn) were at various stages of development in Saudi Arabia.

Mr El-Idrissi concluded by inviting delegates to become members of the ABCC and to sign up for the Arab British Economic Summit that will be held on 3rd July.

The seminar offered many valuable insights into the Saudi Arabian market and the huge number of opportunities arising as the Kingdom takes steps to implement its Vision 2030 programme and diversify its economy.

The speakers from SAGIA shared their insights and expertise into doing business in the Kingdom and outlined some of the many opportunities for investors.

Mr Yaarub F AlDaghither, International Office Director, SAGIA, began by stressing the major transformation that the Kingdom was currently undergoing. The country's continuing transformation was clearly evident across many areas, in particular in its tourism sector, which was opening up for investors, he said.

The SAGIA official described the rich and varied natural geography of the

Kingdom whose land size was nine times that of the UK, highlighting the numerous ancient sites, unspoilt coastlines, mountain ranges and oases which were increasingly attracting developers and investors.

Mr AlDaghither stressed that the KSA was a large market within the region with its population of 34 million, a workforce of 6 million and in ranking it was the 19th largest economy in the world.

He explained that new opportunities were arising in connection with the mega projects such as the King Abdullah Financial District which is on track for completion in time for hosting the G20 Summit in 2020. He also drew the audience's attention to the healthcare sector which was in the process of privatisation and the untapped resources in mining. Ms Reem S AlSharekh, Advisory Account Manager, SAGIA, concentrated on the licensing options available for companies seeking to operate in the KSA and how SAGIA could help. The options varied from a limited liability company (LLC), a one-person company, opening a branch of a foreign company and shareholding company.

She stressed that regulations had been streamlined and SAGIA was keen to hear from new investors seeking to enter the market. The agency would normally reply within two days to any request made through its website and

was able to respond to requests in seven languages apart from Arabic.

Ms AlSharekh explained that the basic condition for receiving permission to operate was that a company must first be an established operator in their home country before seeking to set up in the KSA.

The SAGIA officials were joined by Mr Marc Saroufim of law firm BSA and Mr Mohammad Taiyyab Sajid of VATGLOBAL for a panel discussion.

Questions about setting up procedures, overcoming potential obstacles to getting paid, the advantages of opting to work with a local partner and obtaining visas to the Kingdom were among the many topics raised in discussion.

The seminar succeeded in dispelling some of the misconceptions about the business environment in the Kingdom that might be held by potential investors.

The event concluded with a networking reception where delegates were able to interact and share ideas with their peers.

The Chamber hosted this exclusive seminar in association with SAGIA and the international law firm, BSA Ahmad Bin Hezeem & Associates LLP. The event was sponsored by VATGLOBAL, tax compliance specialist, which is a member of the ABCC.



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Her Majesty the Queen is graciously pleased to confer the Most Excellent Order of Commander of the British Empire (CBE) to Raminder Singh Ranger popularly known as Rami Ranger, Chairman of Sun Mark Ltd, Sea Air & Land Forwarding Ltd and Bulldog Energy Drink Ltd in the New Year's Honours List 2016 for outstanding service to business and community cohesion in the UK.

Sun Mark Ltd established in 1995 to provide and distribute famous supermarket products all over the world. In particular we service and distribute in the emerging markets of the world. We believe very strongly that we should do all that we can in helping customers to succeed in ever-competitive business environments.

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Dr. Rami Ranger CBE, FRSA
Managing Director

Moroccan Beauty Products expand into London



Internationally acclaimed family business opens their first store in London

In the Spring of 2015 a trip to the ancient city of Meknes, Morocco near the Atlas Mountains sparks the beginning of an exciting journey for Ameera London's British founder, Nabil Abbaze.

Meknes hosts SIAM: Salon International de L'Agriculture au Maroc – the nation's expansive and infamous annual agricultural exhibition. At the tradeshow Nabil was fascinated by the lustrous hair, sleek nails and glowing skin of the Berber women at the Argan Oil stands. Impressed by the rich heritage behind their products, he visualised the potential for pure organic products, crafted from high quality ingredients, formulated following ancient Moroccan beauty secrets to be launched on an international stage.

Returning home to West London energised by his discovery, together with

his family he spent the following months researching and developing what would later become the dynamic Ameera London brand as it is known today – hugely popular in Morocco and an internationally recognised organic beauty business.

Launched in March 2016 and named after his daughter (Ameera means 'princess' in Arabic) and her birthplace London, Ameera London is a successful family run business with London roots and prides itself on its Moroccan heritage.

Ameera London's passion for ancient Moroccan beauty secrets is coupled with a desire to empower and instil confidence in women of all ages and skin types through their inner and outer beauty. The team strives to share its love for North African skincare regimes with social media trendsetters and enthusiasts.

Since launching in 2016, taste makers and major publications including British Vogue, Tatler, Glamour, Cosmopolitan and Brides have recognised the luxurious sophistication of Ameera London's nourishing Moroccan Ghassoul facial mask and rejuvenating Liquid Gold Pure Argan Oil.

Ameera London is spreading their beauty philosophy further by recently opening their first store in central London. Situated on Fulham Road they welcome all new or returning customers to come in store and discuss Moroccan beauty.

"We founded our business to help empower others. Through working together, we can all make a difference."

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ABCC Welcomes Trade Mission from Baghdad Chamber

"The event, to which ABCC members were invited, highlighted the huge business opportunities for UK investors that are available in the Iraqi market. Upwards of 80 business executives were present."

A delegation of companies from Baghdad Chamber of Commerce visited the Chamber premises on 11th April. The trade mission from Iraq was led by Mr Jaafar Rasool Jaafar Al-Hamadani, Chairman, Baghdad Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and included representatives of companies in the trading, construction, investment, tourism, transport and other commercial activities.

The event, to which ABCC members were invited, highlighted the huge business opportunities for UK investors that are available in the Iraqi market. Upwards of 80 business executives were present.

The Iraqi companies were visiting London to meet British companies and potential investors to explore the opportunities for strengthening links between the UK and Iraq private sectors.

The visiting delegation was accompanied by officials from the Iraq Embassy in London including Mr Nazar Mirjan Mohammed, Iraq's Charge d'Affaires.

Welcoming the delegation, Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, Deputy CEO and Secretary General, ABCC, delivered greetings from the Chamber's Chairman, the Rt Hon Baroness Symons, and from CEO Mr Bandar Reda, who were unable to be present.

Mr Nazar Mirjan Mohammed spoke of the role of the chambers in the development of business contacts between the two countries. He stated that the Baghdad Chamber was one of the oldest in Iraq having been established in 1926.

The Charge d'Affaires stressed that the Iraqi economy was currently under going a major transformation and was offering increased opportunities for private sector activities.



From bottom left:

Mr Nazar Mirjan Mohammad, Charge de'Affaires, Iraq Embassy (Centre) with Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, ABCC Deputy CEO & Secretary General (second left) and delegates and officials.

Mr Jaafar Rasool Jaafar Al-Hamadani, Chairman, Baghdad Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi receives a presentation from Baghdad Chamber.

The need had been recognised by the UK government which was establishing a fund to support UK-Iraq cooperation in the sector.

He believed that the Baghdad Chamber could work more closely with the ABCC in future to help companies take full advantage of the emerging opportunities.

Finally, Mr Al-Hamadani welcomed the forthcoming Arab British Economic Summit and hoped to organise another Iraqi delegation of companies to attend, a point that Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi welcomed.

Mr El-Idrissi indicated that the ABCC was committed to supporting Iraq and pledged to work with the Baghdad Chamber. He expressed the need for more face-to-face contacts between Iraqi and British companies in order to increase the level of bilateral trade. Finally, Mr El-Idrissi outlined the services that the ABCC was able to offer companies in the Arab countries seeking to do business in the UK and with British partners.

The opening presentations were followed by discussion which continued over lunch. One-to-one business meetings were held in the afternoon session.



He looked forward to the trade mission leading to a reinforcement of bilateral trade relations and paid tribute to the ABCC for its work in support of Iraq.

Mr Nazar Mirjan Mohammed urged British companies to recognise the investment potential of Iraq because of

its abundant natural and human resources and strategic geographical position. The country was open for business.

For his part, Mr Jaafar Rasool Jaafar Al-Hamadani reiterated the thanks to the Chamber for its hospitality and for hosting the event.



He also extended thanks to British companies that had continued to trade and do business in Iraq throughout the recent period. He stated that the visit enabled Iraqi and British firms to explore ways of working together for mutual success.



Mr Al-Hamadani briefly outlined the major sectors in the Iraqi economy starting with oil and gas. Agriculture also made a major contribution to the country's wealth because of the natural landscape and rivers. Construction offered huge opportunities for investors because of country's demand for new housing units.

Makkah Chamber of Commerce Trade Mission at the ABCC

A trade mission from Makkah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, visited the Chamber on 8th April and were welcomed by the Rt Hon Baroness Symons, Chairman of the ABCC, and Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, ABCC Deputy CEO and Secretary General.

The delegation of around forty company executives and officials from Makkah Chamber of Commerce represented a wide spectrum of industries including construction and real estate, education and training, healthcare, the food industry, hotels, hospitality, ICT and law.

Their trade mission to London was to meet potential investors and business partners from the UK with a view to deepening the collaboration between Britain and the KSA.

The delegation was headed by Mr Hisham Kaaki, Chairman, Makkah Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Welcoming the visiting delegation and opening the session, Mr El-Idrissi described the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a key supporter of the work of the ABCC and the Chamber was privileged to work with its Saudi counterparts.

The Rt Hon Baroness Symons, chairing the meeting, presented greetings from the ABCC's new CEO, Mr Bandar Reda, who was in Saudi Arabia. She looked forward to greater cooperation with the KSA and urged members of the Makkah delegation to attend the forthcoming Arab British Economic Summit which would provide an important platform for Arab-British engagement.

Mr Kaaki wished Mr Reda success in his appointment and looked forward to working more closely with the

ABCC in future. The Makkah Chamber official described the delegation as an opportunity to meet UK business people and develop relations.

In an exhaustive schedule, members of the Makkah delegation had already held a series of business meetings in London during their trade mission prior to attending the event hosted by the ABCC.

The Makkah Chairman highlighted the major economic activities of the region including those directly and indirectly connected to the Holy City and the need to provide services for the large number of visitors taking part in the Haj. The region needed new tourism infrastructure to accommodate the increasing number of visitors and this was creating a wide range of opportunities for business.

Local officials in Makkah were determined to improve the quality of the services available to visitors and for the two million strong local population by launching a series of strategic initiatives covering sectors such as hospitality, real estate, retail, housing, education and healthcare.

Mr Kaaki pointed out the changes in the Saudi labour market including the rising number of women in the workforce. He stressed the importance of the partnership of the UK with the KSA and the levels of trade and investment. Much of the UK's £12.5 billion investment in the KSA was concentrated in the industrial sector.

Mr Kaaki urged British companies to take advantage of the new opportunities emerging under the Saudi Vision 2030. The Kingdom was working to harness the efforts of business and investors to successfully fulfil the aims of Vision 2030 and he expressed the hope of broadening the horizons in the trade with the UK.

In his presentation, Mr El-Idrissi stressed that more work needed to be done to make UK companies aware of the potential of doing business in the Arab World and the KSA in particular. Explaining the role of the ABCC, he focused on the services available to Saudi businesses seeking to enter the UK market or succeed in working with British partners.

ABCC offered various services tailored to meet the needs of Saudi business people consisting of assistance with investors' visas; UK property searches; concierge services; business visa support letters; assistance with UK company formation; research and translation services.

The ABCC could also offer international trade training courses in collaboration with the UK's Institute of Export, as well as cultural training courses customised to meet individual business requirements, and a new MBA in conjunction with Chester University would soon be launched.

Finally, the ABCC Mayfair premises were ideal for holding business events and offered a range of venue hire

options for events of various scale. In conclusion, Mr El-Idrissi urged Makkah delegation members to sign up to attend the ABCC's July Economic Summit.

Mr Chris Innes-Hopkins, Executive Director, Saudi British Joint Business Council, explained what his organisation was doing to advance UK-KSA trade relations by working closely with SAGIA, the Department for International Trade and British chambers of commerce and in cooperation with the ABCC.

The opening contributions were followed by a series of presentations by British and UK-based companies representing various key sectors such as IT, computer technology, renewable energy, construction and engineering who were working in the KSA or preparing to work in the market.

Companies, with products and services of interest to Makkah, making presentations, were Honeywell Building Solutions; Alium Medical Ltd; Rider Levett Bucknall; Ricardo Energy & Environment; Big Innovation Centre; Newtecnic; SAVORTEX, Geotourist Ltd; PK2M & Consilience Ventures; and Movement Intelligence.

The event concluded with one-to-one meetings and discussions between the Saudi executives and their UK counterparts to explore future collaboration.

"an opportunity to meet UK business people and develop relations"



From the top:
Rt Hon Baroness Symons, ABCC Chairman
Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, ABCC Deputy CEO & Secretary General

Rt Hon Baroness Symons (centre) and Mr Hisham Kaaki (second right) with Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi (left) and other senior officials.

Mr Hisham Kaaki, Chairman Makkah Chamber of Commerce & Industry



Opportunities in Egypt

A successful business seminar on Opportunities in Egypt was hosted by the ABCC on the morning of 14th March. Organised in cooperation with the Embassy of Egypt in London and the Egyptian-British Chamber of Commerce (EBCC), the event attracted business executives and investors from many different industries.

UK Export Finance, the UK government's export credits agency, was a partner in the event.

CEO & Secretary General, Mr Bandar Reda, welcomed delegates and described Egypt as a unique market that acts as a bridge between Europe, Africa and the Middle East. He urged delegates to visit to ABCC's website for details of its forthcoming activities including the Economic Summit.

The ABCC was honoured by the presence of H E Mr Tarek Adel, Egyptian Ambassador to the UK, and by H E Mr Ibrahim F Mohielden, the Ambassador for the League of Arab States in London.

Mr Ian Gray, OBE, EBCC Chairman, chaired the discussion which he began by delivering an overview of the market and stressed the importance of closer UK-Egyptian business collaboration.

H E Mr Tarek Adel, the Ambassador, stated that relations between the UK and Egypt were developing rapidly as reflected in numerous trade missions and high level delegations that have taken place since he assumed his post only a few months earlier. The Ambassador cited delegations regarding education, investment and finance. The London Stock Exchange was building contacts with the Egyptian Exchange and Prime Minister Theresa May had attended of the Arab-European summit in Sharm El Sheikh.

Egypt was one of the most promising emerging economies in the world, the Ambassador remarked. Its economic reforms were beginning to bear fruit illustrated by the fact that growth was rising, exports to the UK were on the increase and the number of British tourists was on the increase.

The UK was already the largest foreign investor in the country, but this was mainly confined to the oil and gas sector. New opportunities were emerging as a result of the major projects that Egypt had embarked upon, such as the Suez Economic Zone, the new administrative capital in Cairo and the Golden Triangle mining development.

Ian Gray identified opportunities for UK firms in infrastructure, education, healthcare and export oriented

manufacturing. Egypt's extensive transport plans in development of roads, rail, dry ports and metro offered many business opportunities. Healthcare ambitions offered further opportunities not only for construction firms and project management, but also for suppliers of pharmaceuticals and technical training of medical staff. Specialist technology relating to health was also important.

The financial services industry in Egypt was also a growth area with expansion occurring in microfinance, insurance and capital support facilities for entrepreneurs. The UK's expertise in financial services meant that it was in a strong position to partner with Egypt in the development of these areas.

Mr Wedad Kurugky, Export Finance Manager, UK Export Finance, remarked

on the attraction of Egypt to investors and said that it had a lot of potential for investors. He mentioned the strength of the Egyptian banking industry reflected in the presence of the IFC, EBRD and World Bank in the country.

Mr Kurugky explained the role of UKEF as acting as an interface between the business community and the UK government's financial support for the private sector firms seeking to win contracts and fulfil export orders overseas.

UKEF support could be extended to firms exporting goods as well as those firms providing services to overseas clients. It was able to help exporters to manage risk by providing insurance products in circumstances where the market is unable to assist.

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP, the UK Trade Envoy for Egypt, described himself as a great enthusiast for Egypt. The country's regional significance was increasing, making it an important base for UK firms looking to do business in Africa, the Middle East and the southern Mediterranean.

Sir Jeffrey mentioned skills based education, construction and transport as some of the key areas where UK investors should look to play a role. Healthcare offered the opportunity for strategic partnerships while the mining sector was opening up to foreign investors. Egypt's reforms were making it easier to invest and do business in the market, he observed.

Mr Matthew Shires, Managing Director, Eurofinsa UK Ltd, provided a case study of a success story of a UK-based company operating in the Egyptian market. Eurofinsa, with a record in the execution of civil projects and turnkey Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) projects, was beginning a new hospital construction project in Egypt.



Clockwise from top left:

Front (from left): Mr Bandar Reda, ABCC CEO & Secretary General, H E Mr Tarek Adel, Egyptian Ambassador, and Rt Hon Baroness Symons, ABCC Chairman. Back: Ms Iman El Sherif, EBCC Secretary General, Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, ABCC Deputy CEO & Secretary General, Mr Ian Gray OBE, EBCC Chairman, and H E Mr Ibrahim Mohielden, Head of Mission, League of Arab States.

From left: H E Mr Tarek Adel, Mr Wedad Kurugky, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Mr Matthew Shires, Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, H E Mr Ibrahim Mohielden, Ms Iman El Sherif, and Mr Bandar Reda.

H E Mr Tarek Adel, Egyptian Ambassador



Front: H E Mr Omar Al Nahar, Jordanian Ambassador (right), Rt Hon Baroness Symons and Mr Bandar Reda.
Back: H E Mr Tarek Adel, Egyptian Ambassador, Mr Mohamed Elkoni, Libyan Chargé d'Affaires and Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi.

Opportunities in Jordan

The ABCC hosted a business event on Opportunities in Jordan at its premises on 13th March when the Chamber was pleased to welcome H E Mr Omar Al Nahar, the Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in London. The Chamber was also delighted to be joined at the event by H E Mr Tarek Adel, the Egyptian Ambassador and H E Mr Mohamed Elkoni, the Libyan Chargé d'Affaires.

In welcoming remarks, Mr Bandar Reda, ABCC Secretary General & CEO, stressed the important opportunities in the Jordanian market for British business. He also explained why companies should join the ABCC to take advantage of its services.

Chairman, the Rt Hon Baroness Symons, welcomed Mr Reda's appointment and wished him all success in his position. She described Jordan as a remarkable country at the heart of the Arab world and praised the generosity of its people. She mentioned that H M the King of Jordan had been in London recently for the major international investment conference.

A promotional film focusing in on the key attractions of Jordan as a logistics hub and centre for tech industries was shown.

The Ambassador, H E Mr Omar Al Nahar, told the audience of business people and investors that Jordan was working towards achieving financial self-reliance and economic sustainability

which would be based on the resilience and innovation of its people. The London Initiative conference held in February had unveiled a plan for growth for which Jordan had received pledges of support from the international community.

H E the Ambassador outlined the main assets of the country such as its skilled and educated population, and its strategic location that offered access to markets of over a billion people as a result of the free trade agreements that Jordan had successfully concluded. This had made Jordan advantageous to exporters.

Mr Wedad Kurugky, Export Finance Manager, UK Export Finance, explained the funding that his agency was able to offer to companies to help them secure exports and win contracts overseas.

He stated that UKEF, which was marking its centenary this year, had access to a budget of £50 billion but this was not fully utilised. He stressed that support was available to SMEs and not exclusively to large corporates. In fact, 75% of firms receiving UKEF support could be described as SMEs.

Dr Neil Quilliam, Associate Fellow MENA Programme, Chatham House, spoke jointly with Dr Sue Griffiths, Executive Director, Global Partners Governance, about a research project they had been undertaking into the

Jordanian market which was designed to facilitate greater engagement with the UK.

Dr Griffiths stressed that the research was focusing on Jordan's own priorities for growth and development.

Dr Quilliam described some of the findings of the research by highlighting the opportunities in some key sectors which he hoped UK business would not miss out on. The four main sectors he highlighted were healthcare, agriculture, tourism and electrical machinery.

He stated that a key message was that while UK and Jordan enjoyed excellent relations at the governmental level, much needed to be done to strengthen relations in the economic sphere and UK firms should expand their presence.

Mr Maher Ghanma, Head of Government Affairs ME, DLA Piper, said that the challenges to investors in the market were being seriously addressed by the Jordanian government and the country was experiencing a turnaround.

He flagged up the pipeline projects available to investors that could be accessed online. In total, there were 123 projects identified 10 of which were to be tendered this year.

Mr Ghanma confirmed that the growth sectors that investors should be looking at were IT, education, renewable energy and healthcare. Investors would be encouraged by the determination to simplify the country's regulatory framework to make it easier to do business.

Mr Andrew Holland, Research & Development Director, IrisGuard UK, delivered a case study of a UK SME that was working successfully in Jordan. He said that UK firms would be attracted by the highly educated labour, the stability of the market, the widespread use of English and the long history of friendly UK-Jordan relations.

Finally, Mr Jun-Dai Bates-Kobashigawa, Senior Director, technology, Expedia, shared his own experiences of the technology sector in the country by describing how his company had successfully established a partnership with Jordan that recruited local IT personnel.

Higher education, cooperation between public and private sectors, the available assistance for entrepreneurs and the integration of refugees into the labour market were topics that came up for discussion.

UAE Ambassadorial Roundtable

The Chamber was honoured to host the UAE Ambassador to the UK, His Excellency Sulaiman Al Mazroui, for a roundtable discussion with British investors and executives from a wide range of industries.

The event, held on the morning of 18th February, attracted senior representatives from financial services, education, transport, legal services, health, security, insurance, real estate, construction, communications and the

in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Citizens from over 200 nations had made the UAE their home, including 120 thousand Britons, which reflected its diverse and tolerant culture.

Turning to address relations with the UK, the UAE Ambassador stressed the importance of bilateral trade and, with a nod to the Brexit negotiations, he mentioned that the UK would remain a trusted and valued partner whether the UK was inside or outside the European Union.

Elaborating on the strengths of bilateral relations, Mr Hassane stated that 6,000 UK firms were now located in the UAE and, in addition, each year the UAE attracted over 1.2 million British visitors.

The UAE was also a major investor in the UK economy and there was particular involvement in UK infrastructure, clean energy, healthcare, real estate, hospitality, innovation and transport.

He urged UK investors to look to the opportunities in the seven strategic priority sectors identified by the UAE as those that would offer the greatest potential for development: namely, renewable energy, transport, healthcare, education, water, technology and space.

The UAE had an innovative economy and was particularly proud of the growing achievements of its space industry, he said. It had also become a knowledge centre in the region for artificial intelligence.

Mr Hassane urged UK companies to look to taking part in the Dubai Expo 2020 which was expected to attract 25 million visitors. He concluded by remarking on the key factors that make the UAE market attractive to investors such as its excellent infrastructure, the new 10-year visa option for investors and the possibility of 100% ownership.

H E Mr Sulaiman Al Mazroui concluded by warmly thanking the ABCC for organising the event and for its ongoing work in promoting closer UAE-UK relations.

Questions raised by delegates during the discussion ranged over the need for more clarity on VAT, the use of the English language and education, the possibility of a UK-GCC free trade deal after Brexit, the impact of UK tax changes on UAE investors, the UAE's ambitious plans for Smart Cities, and opportunities in the UAE financial services industry with the growth of Islamic finance and fintech.



H E Mr Sulaiman Al Mazroui, UAE Ambassador (centre) flanked by Rt Hon Baroness Symons, ABCC Chairman and Mr Abdeslam El-Idrissi, ABCC Deputy CEO & Secretary General

hotel industry. The number of sectors represented reflected the UK business community's widespread commitments in the UAE market.

H E Mr Sulaiman Al Mazroui described the success of the UAE in creating a sustainable and diverse economy where over 70% of GDP was derived from sectors other than oil.

The UAE was continuing to build a knowledge based economy and could now boast of having developed an Emirati space programme.

The Ambassador stated that the UAE was the third largest economy

A detailed presentation was then delivered by Mr Youssef Hassane, Chief Economic Advisor at the UAE Embassy, who began by referring to the UAE's strong economic fundamentals. Its growth outlook was expected to strengthen with increased inflows of investment and increased private sector activity. The UAE enjoyed high rankings for its economic competitiveness and efficiency.

In terms of bilateral relations, UK-UAE ties were expanding across a broad spectrum of economic, strategic and cultural activities. A trade value target of £25 billion had been adopted by the two governments to be reached by 2020.

Exciting times ahead as technology offers hope for vision correction



Five minutes with Harley

Street ophthalmic surgeon Dr C T Pillai, Advanced Vision Care

A Fellow of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and the Royal College of Surgeons, Dr C T Pillai is founder, Managing Director and Medical Director of Advanced Vision Care (AVC). Dr Pillai, who has been at the forefront of pioneering eye surgery for many years, was one of the first surgeons in the UK to perform LASIK (Laser Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis) laser eye surgery on both eyes.

Q. Briefly, state how Advanced Vision Care has developed since it was founded in 2003.

A. When we started out in 2003, we had only one surgeon, two members of staff and only provided laser vision correction. We have since grown to employ five surgeons, ten staff, fifteen locums and provide the whole range of eye care services to our patients. I also conceived the idea of an optometrist network, in which we partner with independent optometrists across the country so that our patients, which travel from around the world can have their aftercare locally. This network has built a model on which others have tried to replicate but have

not matched our success. Our network has been nurtured and grown into the largest and most successful in the UK. We have over 200 partners benefiting from an extension to their services, educational seminars, CET accredited events and the reassurance of knowing their patients are in the hands of world renowned experts.



AVC team receive the prestigious Patient Excellence Award in 2019 from Doctify

Q. Describe the main services that AVC provides to its clients.

A. Advanced Vision Care offers a range of eye treatments to provide total visual rehabilitation and we are often able to treat individuals that have been found unsuitable by other clinics and

hospitals. Our modern clinic houses the only transparent laser theatre in Europe and the most advanced non-laser theatre in the country; the Alcon Refractive Suite. Hence we don't only offer laser surgery but also alternatives for those not suitable like Implantable Contact Lenses (ICL) and Lens Replacement. We perform Cataract removal surgery and unlike the NHS we offer Trifocal lenses which will completely free patients from their dependency on visual aids, including reading glasses, bifocals and varifocal lenses. For those that have undergone Cataract surgery we also provide Piggyback Lens surgery which will correct the remaining untreated reading prescription after Monofocal Cataract surgery. As specialists in the cornea, we provide a range of solutions to help treat, manage symptoms and correct the prescription issues caused by Keratoconus (a degenerative corneal disease).

Q. There are many milestones in Advanced Vision Care's company history. If you were asked to choose one important milestone what would that be and for what reason?

There have been two important milestones. In 2008, we expanded from offering only laser vision correction to providing other services with the result that we can help just about anyone who walks through our door. Then in 2015 we built a surgical theatre on the ground floor of our Harley Street premises so that patients are not inconvenienced by having to travel to a secondary site for surgery, which is commonplace elsewhere. Hence our patients have the benefit of knowing that they will have their consultation, surgery and aftercare in the same facilities, with no last minute surprises. Also, for convenience all our patients have access to AVC's independent optometrist

network allowing them to have their post-operative care locally, with the knowledge that they are being seen by a professional trained at the AVC clinic, whilst still under my supervisory care.

Q. What makes AVC "truly independent" as a company?

A. At AVC we are truly independent which means that we have no affiliation with any manufacturers or consultants. That means that all the treatments that we offer are premium without any extra costs and have the best equipment in the industry irrelevant of manufacturers not only for the treatment process but for the consultation which is very important when designing a bespoke treatment plan. Not being tied down means that we are able to provide a range of lenses from best lens manufacturers in the world, ensuring that can match the right lens to each individual. Having no affiliations has given us the edge as a clinic in a highly competitive industry, given that it allows us to deliver tailored treatments to meet our patients' visual and lifestyle needs.

Q. AVC seeks to provide patients with the best laser eye technology that is available. How are the very rapid changes in science and technology having an impact on your business activities and service delivery?

A. Technology is changing all the time and there is no other option but to keep up with it especially if you want to deliver the best results. As a clinic driven by patient satisfaction and exacting results, keeping up to date with technology is important but not at the risk of the patient. Hence at AVC we only use methods, treatments and technology that have undergone and passed rigorous clinical trials and tests. We use the latest learning and equipment to deliver our services and are always on the pulse. As an independent clinic we are able to keep up to date in regard to technology without being tied down to a particular manufacturer, which is why we house the best equipment in the country. We were the first clinic to have the Alcon Cataract suite and we have recently upgraded our laser which is the latest and fastest treating laser in the world.

Q. What would you foresee as the key technological advances waiting to happen in the future?

A. I believe that there are going to be three main advances that will have a significant impact. I think that stem cell therapy with its revolutionary potential could help tackle even very serious conditions that cause blindness like Macular Degeneration.



Another key potential advancement would be the creation of artificial corneas, these would mean that people requiring a corneal transplant would not have to wait for one to be donated, allowing for treatment immediately.

Artificial Intelligence will have a big impact as well, including DeepMind. This can compare large numbers of records to help with the diagnosis of conditions and has the potential to make a huge difference for patients.

Q. How important is the Arab market to your business?

A. The Arab market is very important to us, as everyone knows they demand nothing but excellence, to which we share a common ethos. It is well known that members of the United Arab Emirates understand the importance of not compromising when it comes to healthcare. A lot of our patients travel from various countries in the UAE to have treatment at our Harley Street clinic, given they are willing to pay more and even factor in the cost of travel to ensure that they are treated not only by the best surgeons but with the best equipment

and comprehensive aftercare. Given the volume of interest that we have with UAE patrons we realise that country's like Dubai, Qatar and Saudi Arabia offer great opportunities for us to expand our services.

Q. Advanced Vision Care has been a member of the ABCC for a few years. Would you like to comment on your experiences of membership?

A. Our membership with the Chamber has been a very beneficial experience for us, enabling us to attend events at which we have met likeminded individuals and companies with whom we have made valuable connections. In fact, through one of the contacts made at the Chamber, we are now currently in talks about potentially carrying out work in Saudi Arabia, enabling us to provide our unsurpassable standards locally for our UAE client base.

Q. Would you like to tell us anything about AVC's future plans?

A. As always, we will continue to maintain our unrivalled standards but will look for ways to stay ahead of the trend to make sure that every patient has the best experience and results. We are seeking to further expand in size and are in the midst of entering into a strategic alliance with MEAHCO as part of our expansion programme. We are also planning to provide other eye care services so that we can treat an even wider range of conditions such as macular degeneration and glaucoma.

Q. Do you have a final message for our readers?

A. If you are interested in having vision correction surgery do not be drawn in by fancy adverts or false promises, never compromise and make sure that you do your research before deciding to have a surgery with potentially life changing outcomes. It is important to make sure that you are fully informed before going ahead and that includes having all your questions answered.



Laser Treatments



Implantable Contact Lenses



Lens Surgery



Cataracts



Keratoconus

If you want to find out more about how vision correction surgery can transform your life, do not hesitate in contacting Advance Vision Care's expert team on **0207 935 7497** or email on **info@advancedvisioncare.co.uk**

Exploring our Shared Vision: the Arab British Economic Summit 2019

The Arab British Economic Summit 2019 (ABES 2019) is set to take place on 3rd July at the QEII Centre, Westminster.

It is an international conference aiming to address the central issues facing business now and in the future within a changing global and regional economic landscape.

The Arab British Chamber of Commerce is organising this high-level event driven by the belief that there remains enormous untapped potential for deepening Arab-British business relations to the advantage of all concerned.

The Summit, ABES 2019, seeks to strengthen the vital strategic connections between the UK and the Arab countries by building on the achievements of its previous international conferences, such as the Arab-British Economic Forum of 2014 and GCC-British Economic Forum of 2016.

UK Ministers from the Prime Minister downwards have indicated a keenness to strengthen the UK's involvement with overseas markets and to look beyond the EU borders in the wake of the ongoing Brexit uncertainties. The Arab economies in particular offer some of the greatest prospects in this regard. Both sides are open to new partnerships and see the value of collaborating in different areas recognising that the global economy is experiencing a huge transformation driven by emerging new technologies. Traders, exporters and investors are now operating in an era of accelerated technological progress where tremendous innovations are

transforming the way that business is carried out across global markets.

The Summit will bring together upwards of 400 delegates from government and business, public and private sectors, and will provide a unique platform for senior executives from the UK and the Arab world to enter into discussions on the new trade and investment opportunities that are opening up.

The programme for ABES2019 consisted of keynote presentations and panel discussions that brought together experts from the Arab and British public and private sectors to explore issues of common concern.

The programme facilitates important discussions on some of the trends that are currently transforming the world economy and allowed for debate on how businesses need to adapt their approaches to the new conditions to achieve success. The shared vision of Arab-British friendship and collaboration was seen as a means to achieving greater prosperity, sustainability and economic success going forward to meet the global challenges.

MAIN SPEAKERS

A prestigious line up of speakers is headed by H E Dr Abdulatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP, Secretary of State for International Trade, Alderman Peter Estlin, the Lord Mayor of the City of London, H E Mr Ali Mohammed Thunayan Al-Ghanim, Chairman, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr Adam Marshall, Director General, British Chambers of Commerce, Dr Khaled Hanafy, Secretary General, Union of Arab Chambers and Mr Simon Penney, HM Trade Commissioner for the Middle East.

The programme for the Summit was inspired by a recognition of the rapidly changing nature of the modern global economy and the transformation of

the Arab economies. It is a process that offers many new opportunities for Arab-British cooperation. This broader context witnesses:

- The closer integration of regional and global economies;
- Trends towards the greater diversification in the Arab economies;
- More inclusive economic development would provide opportunities for the growing young population;
- Increasing investment to upgrade education and training;
- New industries emerging based on the development and growth of new technologies such as AI, Fintech, 5G, digitalisation and automation;
- How advanced technologies can improve local agricultural productivity and significantly improve self-sufficiency;
- Expansion of industries in the service sector including tourism is a major trend;
- Ambitious construction projects and huge investment budgets were improving utilities and infrastructure;
- Regional expansion of renewable energies is driven by increased investment in natural resources such as solar;
- Irrespective of continuing uncertainties about the outcome of Brexit, the UK was looking to deepen its relationship with its partners in the Arab world.

The Summit was divided into a series of sessions each addressing a key theme.

SESSION 1: Infrastructure Investment and Sustainable Development

The session highlights the huge scope of infrastructure development taking place across the Arab world driven forward

by ambitious investment programmes initiated as part of the vision strategies that have been adopted by the Arab countries. The potential was addressed for UK-Arab cooperation in different areas of the implementation process in aspects of infrastructure development, such as, for example, housing construction, telecommunications, power, transport by road, rail, sea and air.

Topics in this session included:

- Key investment opportunities such as in the emerging 5G networks. What are the challenges of upgrading telecommunication infrastructure in developing economies?
- Challenges when planning and establishing modern infrastructure.
- How to attract inward investment into Arab infrastructure.
- Role of infrastructure planning in achieving sustainable development.
- How infrastructure investment can generate prosperity.
- The extent to which Arab vision programmes depend on modern infrastructure.
- Future prospects within the industry.
- Potential for UK-Arab cooperation.

SESSION 2: Renewable and non-renewable Energy

Topics addressed in this session included:

- Key areas where the UK can develop renewable technologies such as wind and tidal power.
- Key areas where the Arab world can develop renewables such as solar.
- Most attractive investment opportunities.
- Untapped potential of renewable energy resources within the Arab world.
- Potential for Arab-UK collaboration.
- How British innovation and expertise in the renewables industries can assist.
- How developing renewables can generate income.
- Striking a right balance between renewables and non-renewable energy within national energy policies.
- Future prospects in the energy industry.

SESSION 3: MENA- A hub for global markets

Topics addressed in this session included:

- MENA as a strategic hub for trade between the UK, Europe and new global markets.

- Main sectors that benefit from the MENA hub.
- Main risks to business in the region and possible solutions.
- Factors that make MENA attractive to UK investors.
- Prospects of future investment opportunities as the region expands as a hub for inter-regional trade.

SESSION 4: Agriculture and Water Security

The session facilitated discussion on issues such as:

- How global warming and climate change were putting further pressure on scarce water resources whose shortage was in turn impeding agricultural productivity.
- Water as a scarce resource globally and poses common challenges of increased conflict, poverty, famine, poor health and strains on healthcare services and infrastructure.
- The key strategies for dealing with water scarcity and improving access to drinking water.
- Measures that the Arab states can take to reduce reliance on food imports and improve self-sufficiency.
- Steps that can be taken to improve farming methods in order to increase agricultural output to enable greater self-sufficiency and food security.
- How technology can help enhance agricultural efficiency.
- Investment, partnership opportunities and potential areas of cooperation with the UK.

SESSION 5: Youth employment and entrepreneurship

The session opened up discussion on issues such as:

- The session sought to amplify the key challenges posed by the growing youth population.
- The action that can be taken in the public and private sector to improve education systems.
- The need to maximise efficient use of time and resources.
- The challenges created by a growing youth population.
- Training strategies to enable young men and women to succeed in the labour market and to stimulate entrepreneurship.
- How youth can be helped to apply their awareness and skills in technology to the advantage of business.

- Solutions such as business mentoring and the provision of seed finance for start-ups
- Areas and potential for UK-Arab cooperation.
- Role of UK institutions in the Arab education sector.
- Arab students in UK higher education.

SESSION 6: Banking and Finance - Fintech and Blockchain

This session enabled discussion on issues such as:

- How traditional banking in both the UK and Middle East is adapting to the arrival of new technologies.
- The potential disruptions of these new technologies on the wider banking sector.
- The infrastructure needed in response to the rapid advances in technologies.
- How Fintech will support new businesses.
- How Fintech opens up new opportunities for the growing young workforce across the MENA region.
- Role of the City of London.
- Discussion of the implications of the new potentially disruptive technology for business and the new opportunities for international trade in goods and services.
- Maximising the potential of 5G and the opportunities that come in its wake.
- Exciting investment opportunities.

The Summit provided an excellent opportunity for delegates to enter into dialogue and share ideas on a range of issues of vital interest to business. The clear benefits and advantages of trading, investing and doing business within the Arab and UK markets were advocated and underlined. A shared vision of a future founded on cooperation and partnership was strongly emphasised as a means of ensuring mutual success and common prosperity.

Morocco Gold ONE YEAR ON

*By Robert Watson, Director,
Morocco Gold Ltd*

Morocco Gold extra virgin olive oil was formally launched at the end of January 2018 to our trade customers.

Morocco Gold is an award winning, superior quality, single estate extra virgin olive oil from an entirely new source for the UK market. The oil is made from olives grown in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, where the unique micro-climate and geology provides ideal conditions for olive growing.

For health conscious, discerning food lovers across all cultures and culinary backgrounds, Morocco Gold's exquisite taste and health enhancing qualities are guaranteed by our rigorous testing, provenance and authenticity, and strict adherence to single estate sourcing, with no blending or mixing.

The response to date has been truly amazing: Morocco Gold is now available to food lovers in some of the UK's most prestigious, luxury retailers including Fortnum & Mason, Partridges of London, as well as specialist on-line fine food retailers and specialist delicatessens around the country.

A whole series of 'firsts' for a Moroccan extra virgin olive oil and a quite remarkable achievement in such a short space of time. So, what do we put this success down to?

From the outset we wanted Morocco Gold extra virgin olive oil to be different. Morocco Gold combines centuries of local cultivation and harvesting knowledge, with our rigorous traceability and quality assurance procedures to bring what is locally considered a 'noble food' to the UK and other markets.



Morocco Gold is an award winning, superior quality, single estate extra virgin olive oil from an entirely new source for the UK market.

THE TASTE

By far and away the biggest positive has been the feedback at our tasting events on the taste of Morocco Gold. Our olive oil is produced from the Picholine Marocaine olive that gives Morocco Gold its distinctive green fruitiness, hints of sweet almonds, fresh turf and a hint of herbs. It has the distinctive 'pepperness' of a fine extra virgin olive oil giving Morocco Gold a clean, well balanced finish that delivers an elevated gastronomic experience for food lovers.

HEALTH PROPERTIES

We also set out to re-establish high quality extra virgin olive oils as the premier, health enhancing 'superfood' and challenge some of the dubious claims being made by alternative products.

Extra virgin olive oil is probably the most researched foodstuff on the planet. We now know through scientific analysis exactly why genuine extra virgin olive oils are so good for you. A key constituent is the level of polyphenols, one of the numerous health-enhancing antioxidants that are found in extra virgin olive oil. Like other antioxidants, polyphenols fight against age-related diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and certain types of cancer. They also contain strong anti-inflammatory properties. Morocco Gold extra virgin olive oil is high in polyphenols.

SETTING A NEW STANDARD

A key aim was to set a new standard for authenticity, provenance, and the absolute assurance of extra virgin olive oil quality, within a sector that has been tainted by

poor practices including mislabelling, adulteration and down-right fraud.

Morocco Gold extra virgin olive oil has indeed set a new standard, through our rigorous testing and traceability regimes. Uniquely, we include the results of our testing on each-and-every bottle of Morocco Gold, so our customers can see at a glance the guarantee of extra virgin quality.

PRESENTATION

We have received much positive feedback on our luxury design and presentation of Morocco Gold extra virgin olive oil. The striking and sophisticated bottle echoes the shape of ancient amphorae but with a clean,

critical acclaim at the recent Packaging Innovations 2018 at London's Olympia.

Our internet packaging is: as robust as a house-brick, to ensure each and every bottle of Morocco Gold arrives intact; anonymous from the outside – nobody can guess the value contained; easy to open – with a simple tear-strip; no wastage – no excess packaging, polystyrene chips, bubble wrap etc; completely recycle-able. And when you do tear the strip and open the box – the unique story of Morocco Gold is revealed as well as the luxury designed bottle of this fantastic new extra virgin olive oil.

Morocco Gold is now being sold to our customers in the USA, throughout

Fortnum & Mason's up-market store food hall was attended by Moroccan ambassadors; Soumia Bouhamidi, the Deputy Head of Mission for the Moroccan Embassy in the UK and Marouan Abousif, the embassy's Economic Counsellor.

Recognising Morocco Gold's unique efforts to showcase Morocco's quality exports to UK consumers, the embassy officials committed their support to the extra virgin olive oil brand.

The expansion of olive oil production is a major strategic initiative for the Moroccan government, as is the growth of Moroccan women employed in the olive oil industry and we are extremely proud to help drive both of these objectives through opening up the UK and other markets to this wonderful product and to assist in the modernisation of the sector in Morocco.

PR & COMMUNICATIONS

We have recently appointed the leading food and drink PR agency, LUX to help get the positive messages about this wonderful new extra virgin olive oil, Morocco Gold, out to trade customers and end consumers alike.

Our aim is to make Morocco Gold the most talked about and sought after extra virgin olive oil in the UK and beyond.

MOROCCO GOLD AND BREXIT

Whilst Brexit was never a factor when we planned and launched Morocco Gold, we know that supplies and prices from traditional EU producers have already been impacted and are likely to be further affected. Morocco represents a stable and reliable source of highest quality extra virgin olive oil and we can assure our customers of year-round availability and price stability going forward.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MOROCCO GOLD?

We are naturally delighted with progress to date. We look forward to continuing to spread the good news about this most wonderful, new extra virgin olive oil throughout the UK and beyond and further re-establishing consumer trust and confidence in this most wonderful of 'super-foods'.

Morocco Gold Ltd is a member of the ABCC.

<https://morocco-gold.com>

Robert Watson (right)



Launching the product at Fortnum & Mason.

modern aesthetic, to create a real presence on the shelf or in the kitchen. The dark bottle also helps to preserve the longevity of Morocco Gold.

INTERNET SALES

Later in 2018, we launched the sale of Morocco Gold directly to consumers through our website, www.morocco-gold.com. Our bespoke internet packaging was greeted with much

Europe, as well as in the UK. A remarkable 42% of our internet orders are repeat customers. Morocco Gold is on page 1 of Google for Moroccan olive oil. We are even exporting Morocco Gold back to Morocco!

OUR SUPPORTERS

We are privileged to have won the support of the Moroccan Embassy in London. Our launch event at

How are CEOs in the UAE responding to growing global economic and political uncertainty?



Oliver Cornock,
Middle East
Managing Editor
Oxford Business Group

The results of the most recent Oxford Business Group Business Barometer surveys make for interesting reading against a backdrop of increased global economic and political uncertainty.

From talk of the trade war between the US and China, to oil prices dropping by 30% in the fourth quarter of 2018, to wobbling eurozone finances and of course to my own dear country's Brexit shambles, market jitters can be excused. Add to this the political challenges afoot – Russia's belligerent positioning, China's projectionism, Venezuela's economic crisis, tension in the GCC and Iran's ongoing provocations – my only surprise is that markets have not been impacted more adversely.

OBG CEO surveys are designed to track sentiment in the countries we cover. Our signature brand colouring has always been yellow, and we have come to start internally referring to these markets as Yellow Slices of Pie. This is a useful title for a portfolio of countries that all fall on the frontier or emerging market spectrum.

We cover these countries not because they are all posting stellar growth figures – not all of them are. Rather, we cover them because they have made significant progress in getting their finances in order – controlling inflation, managing debt – and are actively pursuing policies aimed at attracting foreign investors and businesspeople.

THE STATE OF EMERGING MARKETS

The emerging market growth story has taken a bashing over the past few years. From rising US interest rates making their debt obligations more costly and difficult to service, to fluctuations in the commodity markets emerging economies so often rely on for significant proportions of their revenue.

However, OBG remains strongly of the opinion that these markets are here to stay over the long term; they are going to play a much greater role in the economy of the future than they currently do, and in many cases service the new powerhouses of China and India.

Furthermore, the fact that they have begun to address the systemic challenges facing their economies is placing them

in a strong position – just look at the debt-to-GDP ratios of the world's leading economies in comparison!

Yes, they will be buffeted by global winds because they are increasingly becoming part of international markets through trade agreements and supply chains. So, it is inevitable that our markets will be affected, and it is precisely for this reason that plans to ensure economic stability and sustainability in the face of these exogenous shocks are so important.

DIVERSIFICATION AWAY FROM OIL

The UAE has pursued a policy of diversification both at the federal and emirate level for some time now in a bid to reduce its reliance on the hydrocarbons that have fuelled its rise. In many senses it is a success story; the emirates of Dubai and Sharjah are among the most diversified in the region. Meanwhile, the largest emirate by land mass and home to the bulk of the UAE's oil and gas resources, Abu Dhabi has made significant progress in increasing its non-oil economy.

As I have written before, the shift from state-led growth to economic activity driven by the private sector will take time, as will the change in mindset necessary for this to happen. The period of lower oil prices that began in 2014 has brought the urgency for diversification to the fore, and although prices rose significantly in 2018, price reductions of up to 30% in the fourth quarter show that the pressure has not been relieved entirely.

But it has not only been hydrocarbons that have driven the UAE's growth; the real estate sector has played a vital role, too. Perhaps apocryphally, it is said that Dubai was once home to more construction cranes than anywhere else in the world. While the emirates have been reliant on real estate development and the "if you build it, they will come" mantra, property price fluctuations demonstrate that a clear diversification away from this is necessary.

REAL ESTATE MARKET PRICES DROP WHILE SENTIMENT RISES

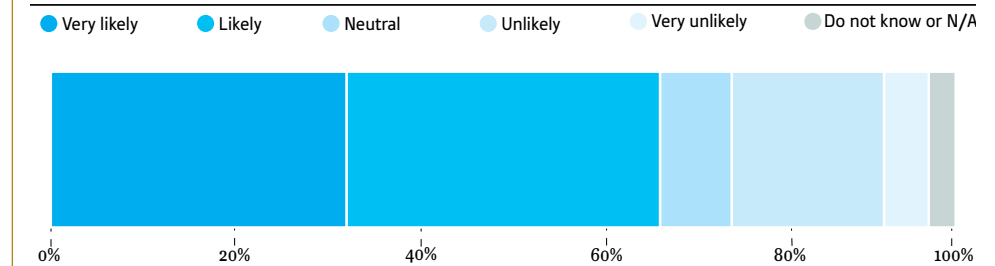
The real estate market and the construction sector, the health of which are contingent on demand, have been weighing on the UAE's finances recently. In the second quarter of 2018 Dubai property prices dropped by 5.8% year-on-year, while Abu Dhabi prices fell by 6.9%, according to figures from the Central Bank of the UAE.

Property prices in Dubai and Abu Dhabi have long been said to be bloated and over-inflated. In both markets, the corrections seen in 2018 might be welcome by some, such as individuals looking to buy, but the broader reflection is of economic uncertainty, albeit for differing reasons.

So, the results of our survey are more positive than one might have imagined, with over 60% of respondents saying that they would likely or very likely make a significant capital investment over the coming 12 months, which is a similar outcome to the same question on last year's UAE CEO survey.

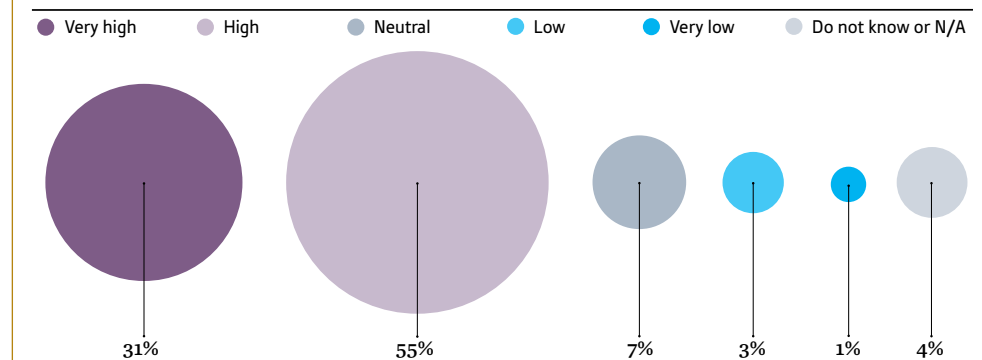
"Abu Dhabi has made significant progress in increasing its non-oil economy"

How likely is it that your company will make a significant capital investment within the next 12 months?



The CEOs we spoke with were also overwhelmingly positive about the comparative level of transparency in the UAE vis-à-vis the rest of the region. This will be welcome news to the authorities and foreign businessmen looking to the country as a potential investment destination.

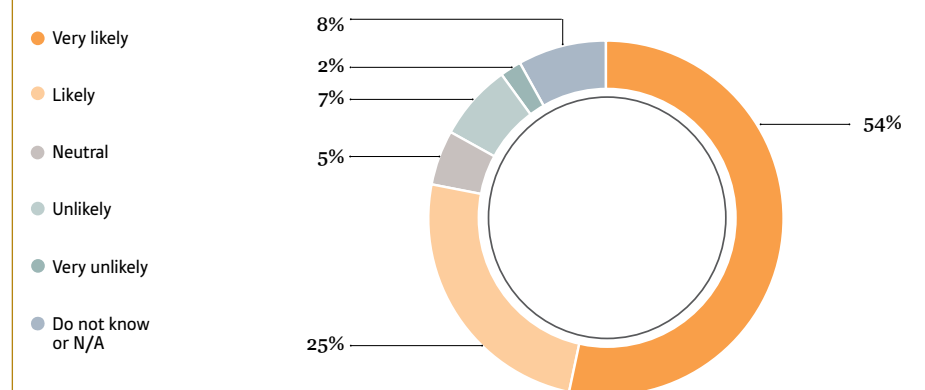
What is the level of transparency for conducting business in the UAE relative to the region?



TECH INVESTMENT TO CONTRIBUTE TO NON-OIL GROWTH

Talking of investment, the finding that just under 80% of those surveyed say that their company would increase spending on smart technology and research and development struck me as particularly interesting. We hear so much about the disruptive nature of new technology, such as artificial intelligence and big data, it is perhaps obvious that businesses would be looking to stay ahead of the curve on this front.

How likely is it that your company will increase smart technology/R&D spending within the next 12 months?

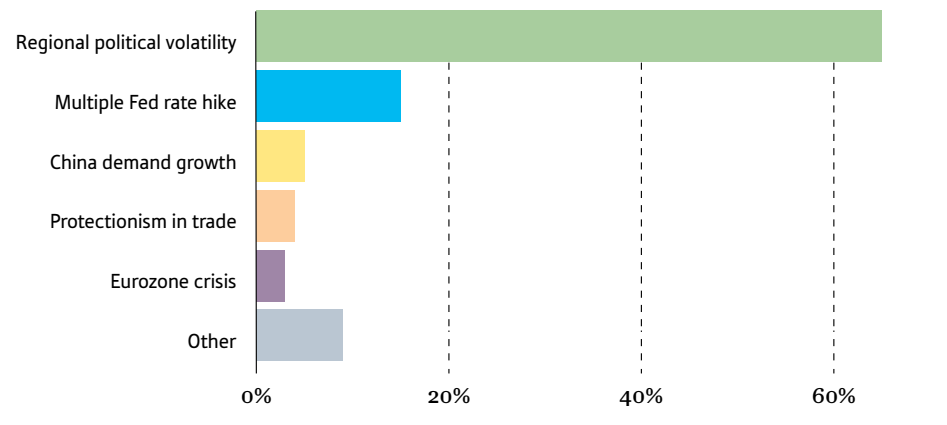


This will be music to the ears of young entrepreneurs and tech-savvy Emiratis, as well as to established businesses within the sector. It may not shift the dial significantly in terms of bolstering non-oil economic growth, but it looks set to be a growing contributor.

CONCERNS OVER REGIONAL POLITICAL VOLATILITY AND INTEREST RATE HIKES

Unsurprisingly, regional political volatility was identified as the overwhelming concern of businesspeople when it came to the top external factors that could impact the UAE economy. Ever considered a hotspot for volatility, the Middle East remains a region of tension and uncertainty, with key players continuing to pursue controversial policies that have often increased the negative rhetoric rather than reduced it. This is clearly not only a concern domestically, but internationally too.

Beyond the movements in commodity prices, please indicate the top external event that could impact the UAE economy in the short to medium term.



The next biggest concern was multiple US Federal Reserve interest rate hikes, which was selected by 16% of respondents. Recent news of a further rise underscored this rather poignantly. The US economy has been posting growth by most metrics until recently, and therefore tightening fiscal policy can be expected. However, this has coincided with a period of slower growth for many emerging markets, such as the UAE, where looser policy can be used as a stimulus, or at least as a mitigating measure.

It will be interesting to see what 2019 brings on the interest rate front. Any of us who watch the financial press will by now be familiar with the talk of the slower growth and trade tensions tipping over to recession in the new year. That may slow down interest rate rises, but more broadly, should a downturn materialise, this would be bad news for everyone. Though businesspeople in the UAE remain upbeat on the whole, it is clear that they are well aware of geopolitics and both the domestic and global ramifications of economic policy.

About OBG Business Barometer

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This survey has been designed to assess business sentiment amongst business leaders (Chief Executives or equivalent) and their outlook for the next 12 months. Unlike many surveys, the OBG Business Barometer is conducted by OBG staff on a face-to-face basis, across the full range of industries, company sizes and functional specialties. The results are anonymous.

OBG Business Barometer is based on data from companies with revenue within the following parameters, among others:

- 79% of companies surveyed were private
- 47% of companies surveyed were international

- 14% of companies surveyed were regional
- 39% of companies surveyed were local

The data generated allows for analysis of sentiment within an individual country, as well as regionally and globally. Additionally, comparisons can be drawn between both individual countries and regionally. The results are presented statistically within infographics and discussed in articles written by OBG Managing Editors.

OBG provides this survey, infographics and accompanying analysis from sources believed to be reliable, for information purposes only. OBG accepts no responsibility for any loss, financial or otherwise, sustained by any person or organisation using it.

For further information on the content of the survey, please contact: Oliver Cornock, Regional Editor for the Middle East, at ocornock@oxfordbusinessgroup.com

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Oman Air soars to new heights



Economic Focus speaks to Mr Kelpesh Patel, Sales Manager UK & Ireland, Oman Air.



Oman Air is the award-winning, national airline of the Sultanate of Oman. We currently operate double daily connections from London Heathrow and daily flights from Manchester direct to Muscat, the capital of Oman, as well as operating routes to over 80 destinations globally direct from our hub in Muscat.



Could you briefly explain the history of its operations to and from the UK?

Oman Air commenced operations in 1993 and since then the airline has grown exponentially offering international direct routes from its hub in Muscat. Oman Air's first service between Muscat and London was launched in 2007. We initially operated the service from London Gatwick. Our aim was to move operations to London Heathrow and after receiving a successful slot our operations moved to Heathrow offering a daily service. In February 2016, Oman Air increased frequencies to double daily flights from London Heathrow and then in May 2017 we launched daily flights from Manchester Airport to Oman.

Can you describe how the airline's UK operations are being improved?

Oman Air takes great pride in operating with one of the youngest fleets in the sky. This year alone will see the airline take delivery of eight new aircraft. Introducing three-class configuration eco-friendly

Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners on one of the world's busiest routes, London Heathrow, has also been a positive factor in improving relations between the two nations. We have phased out the use of older A330s in favour of the Dreamliners. The aircraft is quieter and more efficient helping us to operate a route that emphasises our commitment not only to Heathrow Airport but also to improving our environmental footprint. As a result, Oman Air was named the best long-haul performer in the "fly quiet and green" chart in Q3 2018. Considering the number of carriers flying from the global hub of Heathrow this is a significant success for Oman Air.

How important is the British market to Oman Air's total global business?

The UK is of great importance to the Sultanate of Oman. Boasting a melange of traditional and modern cultures, heritage sites and diverse geological regions, diving spots and several hidden gems, Oman caters effortlessly for the British market. Not only are British travellers attracted to Oman for its incredible offering, but the airline has also facilitated the Sultanate as a stopover

destination. Oman Air's international network is now firmly established with Muscat recording solid transit passenger growth over the years. By embarking on selected tactical campaigns to entice stopover traffic we are hoping to develop business across Oman Air's growing international network, as well as encouraging the large number of travellers to spend more time in Oman before flying further afield. Destinations such as the Maldives, Thailand, and Malaysia, as well as our competitive price point, certainly make Oman Air attractive to British travellers.

The corporate markets are just as important, the Oil & Gas industries and the construction/engineering industries are segments that play a vital role in the Sultanate. Education also plays a role in the bilateral relations between the UK and Oman. The UK welcomes approximately 4,000 Omani students each year who study at UK universities to develop their careers and excel. The investment is due to very strong ties between the UK and the Sultanate of Oman. Meetings & Conferences in Oman is also growing, complementing the new Oman Convention Centre which recently opened.

In November 2018, Oman Air reported that its revenue from UK services had risen by 45% year-on-year. To what factors do you attribute this success?

Oman Air can attribute its success to offering a world-class product, impeccable service, and fantastic onboard experience to all passengers regardless of whatever class they are travelling. The industry is also recognising what our passengers know which has resulted in a number of significant awards. Oman Air has won the award for World's Leading Airline – Economy Class four years in the row, as well as Middle East Leading Airline – Business Class. Over the years, Oman Air has been recognised as a leading airline for its commitment to quality, comfort and a seamless passenger experience. The awards are testament to where we are as a global carrier today.

Please outline the steps that Oman Air is taking to invest in the modernisation of its fleet.

Oman Air has a plan to improve its fleet by replacing old aircraft currently in operation alongside manageable growth plans. Our plan will also increase the total aircraft from 53 aircraft in 2018 to 71 aircraft in 2023. Our operational plan is focused on efficiency whilst ensuring that gradual growth is possible. Our investment in aircraft consists of 737-800 MAX aircraft which are the ideal aircraft for all short-haul destinations. Our long haul aircraft plan is very much centred on the 787-900 & 787-800 aircraft.

What would you summarise as the unique features of Oman Air that distinguish it from its competitors? How would you define the Oman Air brand?

We understand the importance of offering our guests the very best regardless of whatever class they are travelling, which helps us stand out against competing airlines. It is important first and foremost that our airline reflects the beauty and the key values of the Sultanate. As the national carrier it is imperative that guests travelling to our beautiful country experience the very best of Oman culture from the moment that they board one of our aircraft. Travelling with Oman Air truly offers a real flavour of Omani warmth and hospitality, which can be appreciated by all guests whatever their cultural background.

Can you highlight Oman Air's most popular packages with customers?

When it comes to our most popular package with customers, Muscat is, of course, the first choice. We have noticed recently that guests are choosing Oman Air to fly onwards to other Arab destinations such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia. The reason for this, I believe, is because Oman is a superb stopover destination for guests who wish to explore more than one Middle East destination. This is certainly true of our business travellers.

What in your view are the main challenges facing the international airline industry today?

Challenges within the international airline industry that need to be taken into consideration include the fluctuating oil prices, the development of e-commerce in the aviation sector and trade restrictive measures linked to government policies – all of which can impact trade volumes between countries across the globe. As an airline we are committed to ensuring that any decisions we take do not negatively impact our customers and stakeholders.

Oman Air joined the Arab British Chamber of Commerce in March 2018 as a corporate gold member. What were your key objectives in joining us at this particular time?

The intention for Oman Air is to cement ties with Small to Medium Sized businesses with vested interests in the countries to which we fly. We have the ability to provide a dedicated account manager who is on hand to take care of all flight needs and supply customers with solutions that match individual business requirements. We want to add the personal touch and service to any businesses with flight needs.

"Oman Air can attribute its success to offering a world-class product, impeccable service, and fantastic onboard experience to all passengers"



Protecting Yourself Against Political and Personal Risk

By Withers partners Hussein Haeri, Tracy Evlogidis,
Steven Kempster and Michael Gouriet

All of us experience the impact of political and personal risk in the current economic and political climate around the world, possibly more frequently now than ever before. In an uncertain world full of threats and risks, many of us are understandably reluctant to make important decisions, and prefer to maintain the status quo in order to avoid problems that can be hard to predict. The converse side of this inertia is that valuable opportunities – both commercial and personal – may be missed.

On 1st May, a group of our partners at Withers spoke at an event that we co-hosted with the Arab British Chamber of Commerce, of which we are members. We strongly believe that careful planning can provide protection against a wide range of personal and commercial issues, and we shared our thoughts on mitigating risk in areas such as investment, migration, marriage and divorce and trust and tax planning. Here we summarise our key points on these issues.

“We strongly believe that careful planning can provide protection against a wide range of personal and commercial issues”

Starting from the broad perspective of investment risks, one of the biggest challenges to foreign investment is political risk. This includes obvious risks such as nationalisation and discriminatory treatment, as well as more oblique ones such as unfair and arbitrary treatment and a lack of due process. What can you do if a new government tears up your deal with the previous government, or different parts of the government or regulatory bodies adopt different stances as to whether your investment is welcome? Not infrequently, these events can completely blindside you.

Trying to sue a government in its own courts can be problematic and getting your home country to bring a claim at the state-state level by means of diplomatic protection tends to be wishful thinking for all but the largest of investments. However, the chances of seeking redress for investment losses has changed dramatically over the last few decades as governments have signed up to more than 3,000 bilateral investment treaties (BITs) worldwide. BITs give qualifying foreign investors rights of protection vis-a-vis the states in which they invest, including a right to fair and equitable treatment, non-discrimination and a right to compensation if their investments are expropriated, whether directly or indirectly.

Most BITs also give qualifying investors the right to bring international arbitration proceedings directly against the host state for any violations of

the treatment standards in the BIT. Importantly, this arbitration will be held in a neutral place such as London, Paris or Geneva. This applies even if the investor doesn't have a contract, let alone a contractual arbitration agreement, with the government.

Investors have brought many successful investment treaty arbitrations against states in all parts of the world in recent years, and to be forewarned is to be forearmed. When investors know and secure their rights, that can be the most effective way of ensuring that they won't need to exercise them.

Immigration is a similarly hot topic in politics and economics at present, and the rules are subject to constant adjustment and even wholesale changes. Looking close to home, the UK's Tier 1 investor visa has recently undergone important changes. This visa scheme has been a popular channel for high net worth migrants to enter the UK, but was almost temporarily suspended following speculation of it being exploited for money-laundering purposes.

Instead the scheme has been reformed, with a number of requirements tightened up in a bid to prevent misuse, including the need to hold a minimum of £2 million in funds which have been under the migrant's control for two years (rather than just 90 days) and for such funds to be documented throughout the full period. In addition,

it will no longer be possible to invest the £2 million in Treasury Stock.

Further reforms have seen the introduction of two new visa routes, known as start-up and innovator schemes. As the names suggest, these are aimed at entrepreneurial individuals creating their first business in the UK, and for seasoned business creators. The latter will need to invest a minimum of £50,000 (reduced from £200,000), while start-up applicants will be allowed two years to develop their business, rather than one. These wide-ranging changes came into place from the end of March 2019.

Moving our focus to the personal scale, we look at protecting family trusts and dealing with disputes about trusts in private. Trusts are most commonly established to ensure the safe and controlled transfer of assets across generations, but, just like international investments, they can suffer from unexpected incursions. We strongly recommend regular reviews of any trust structures to ensure they are not vulnerable to potential attacks. The review should aim to identify particular vulnerabilities of the structures and how to best address the risks by changing the current structure or improving its administration.

The most common forms of attack on trust structures include:

- A direct attack on particular assets in the trust which alleges that the trust was not properly created. These claims will often be brought by disgruntled creditors of a settlor, or a family member who is disappointed by the inheritance they have (or have not) received.
- An attempt to pierce the corporate veil of a holding company, or claim that the company is simply a nominee for the 'true' owner. Again, significant powers vested in one individual leaves the structure vulnerable and it is essential to take an honest look at the reality of how the trust operates in practice. Consider segregating assets into separate trusts, with different trustees, to protect one asset class from becoming "tainted" if another asset class comes under attack.
- Imposing restrictions on the ability of individual power holders to take actions with regards to the trust, such as travel bans, incarceration or restriction of communications. To manage this, the redistribution of some of those powers should be considered, through a discussion of the level of risk for each power and a menu of options to address those risks. If important roles such as the protector are currently held by a single individual, committees could be created, including members outside any unstable regions. Care is needed to ensure voting arrangements maintain the level of influence that the family feels comfortable with.
- Orchestrating bankruptcy or incapacity of a power holder, ceding effective control over the trust to a government-appointed receiver. Amendments to the trust could significantly decrease these risks.
- Expropriation of assets. As with investment protection, trustees should review the level of protection provided by any relevant investment treaties and seek advice on whether steps can be taken to increase this. Trustees might be sued by their beneficiaries if they fail to take action to protect the trust's investments.



Withers legal team at the Ask the Experts event held at the ABCC on 1st May.

It may also be appropriate to establish a separate cash trust to ensure that if any beneficiary or power-holder needs access to cash there is an emergency fund available (if other assets are subject to freezing orders or similar). This fund could prove to be a valuable precaution so that swift action can be taken to limit potential damage where an attack on the trust is launched.

Weddings should be happy affairs for a family (though not immune from drama!), but they can leave family assets open to claims should the marriage dissolve. The most effective way of managing this risk is frequently by use of a pre- or post-nuptial agreement. These are recognised in many countries, and although not yet legally binding in England & Wales, they have become an increasingly effective tool in protecting wealth and limiting claims in the event of marriage breakdown.

The general position is that as long as certain criteria are adhered to (such as each party having a clear understanding of the other's existing and prospective financial resources) and each having received advice on the terms from their own legal counsel, and the terms are not unfair, spouses should expect to be held to a pre- or post-nuptial agreement. Advance planning is therefore important since, in an ideal world, the agreement should be signed at least a month before the marriage. Having taken these simple steps, a couple can be confident that they are on the same page with regards to their future and can move on with enjoying their marriage. Much like insurance, a pre-nup should be a tool that sits in the background and only comes into use should the unexpected arise.

Another far reaching and unique feature of English law that surprises many from other countries who move to this country or have a second home here, is that the family courts have the power to make financial orders in favour of a divorced spouse where inadequate provision has been made by the overseas court in which the divorce took place. There is a raft of case law which demonstrates that these claims can be of very high value. A well-crafted pre- or post-nup can mitigate against this potential exposure and should be considered when a move to England or property purchase is being planned.

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Useful tips for Contract Negotiation Skills

The most skilled and successful contract negotiators achieve results not by communicating effectively and understanding the dynamics of negotiations, but because they arrive at the negotiation table fully prepared and take objectives and measurable steps to maximize their negotiating interests, says Dr Bader Al Busaies, Managing Partner, ALSuwaiket & AlBusaies law firm.

There are two fundamental issues that arise in any contract negotiations. Each party wants to make a good deal, and each party wants to mitigate the risk as much as possibly can be. The contractor wants to maximize its profit, receive payment fully and on time, and avoid key risks such as delays. The owner is looking to get a quality project at the lowest cost, in a timely manner and within budget.

For the negotiation process the contracting party should consider the following:

- Control the document: The party that prepares and revises the drafts has an advantage. Words should be selected carefully and thoughtfully. A party that drafts the language has abundant advantage over a party that merely comments on the language;
- Select the most appropriate contracting model: It is important to thoughtfully select an appropriate contracting model (e.g., whether to "wrap") and the appropriate pricing model (e.g., fixed, firm or target pricing);
- Establish a realistic budget: Disputes frequently arise because the budget was unrealistic. If a contractor underestimates its cost or an owner underestimates the budget, the likelihood of disputes increases dramatically;
- Establish an achievable schedule: The project schedule must be realistic and achievable. Contracts that include overly aggressive and unachievable schedules are destined for trouble;
- Check project teams: The quality of the team members cannot be ignored as a factor affecting the success of a project. Disputes often arise because of interpersonal conflicts, ineffective management skills, divisive personalities and poor communication practices. Thus, it is in each contracting party's interest to identify and agree on their respective project teams before the project commences;
- Define the scope and division of responsibilities: There must be a clear definition of the scope of work and a clear matrix of the division of responsibilities. Hazy descriptions of scope and undefined divisions of responsibility are sure to result in added cost and project delays;
- Identify technology risks/mitigation: projects involve complex systems and equipment. Each contract participant should identify any technology risks associated with the project and ensure that strategies for mitigating or managing those risks are reflected in the contract;
- Know the regulatory requirements and restrictions: It is critical that the contracting parties identify and understand applicable governmental and regulatory requirements and develop a compliance programme;
- Obtain financial, performance and security guarantees: The contracting parties should ensure that the content of any guarantees (e.g., parent guarantees, performance and payment bonds, lien waivers letters of credit) are negotiated and

agreed to upfront. The sufficiency and validity of these instruments is important and should be finalized as a part of any contract; and

- Plan for the unexpected: There is no such thing as a negotiation without surprise. The more preparation and due diligence performed, the better the result you get.

"Our law firm, having a remarkable career record in rendering legal services to the construction sector, has established a department for contract negotiation and dispute settlement dedicated to the construction sector,"

Dr Bader Al Busaies adds.

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Brexit Update the UK in Countdown Mode

By Jennie Gubbins, Senior Partner,
Trowers & Hamblins LLP



Image by Pete Linforth from Pixabay

On 29 March 2017 the UK notified the European Council of its intention to withdraw from the European Union. As a result, at 11pm (UK time) on 29 March 2019 the UK will leave the EU and will no longer be an EU member state unless there is an extension of the two-year Article 50 period; a withdrawal agreement is concluded with a different commencement date; or the UK revokes the Article 50 notice.

Although the latter scenario is legally possible following the ECJ's ruling in *Wightman and others v Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union*, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has given a statement that the UK government has no intention of doing this.

What will be the possible legal implications for business of the UK leaving the EU?

THE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

If the UK and EU conclude a withdrawal agreement by 29 March 2019 (or any agreed extension) then the post-Brexit transition period will run from 30 March 2019 until 31 December 2020. This transition period could be extended for up to one or two years, and during the transition period the future UK-EU relationship would be formally negotiated. During the transition period most EU law would continue to apply to the UK. (Even though when the UK leaves the EU, Article 50 states that the EU

treaties will cease to apply to the UK.) The withdrawal agreement "backstop" would come into effect, if, by the end of the transition period, there is no agreement on the future UK-EU relationship. This would establish a single UK-EU customs territory, aligning Northern Ireland to EU customs and single market rules required to avoid a hard border, and imposing UK-EU level playing field measures to ensure fair competition.

The UK government has contingency plans should the UK face a "no-deal" Brexit on 29 March 2019 and leave the EU without an agreement to govern the terms of withdrawal.

THE CURRENT POSITION

Currently the government is planning for all eventualities, including the no-deal scenario. Some legal continuity will be provided by the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 which will incorporate most directly applicable EU law into UK law. The Act provides the legislative basis for a "hard Brexit", but if the draft withdrawal agreement is agreed there is provision for regulations to be made, which would make consequential amendments to the Act to tide the UK over until the end of the transition period (31 December 2020).

As part of the contingency planning for a no-deal scenario, the UK government has published a number of technical notices to ensure that both citizens and businesses have the information to prepare for an exit from the EU. It has also been putting in place the staffing, infrastructure and policy that the UK will need in such circumstances.

EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION ISSUES

The impact of Brexit on UK employment law is likely to be limited, and it is unlikely that there will be much change once Brexit has been implemented. An understandable issue of keen interest for businesses is the right of freedom of movement of European Economic Area (EEA) nationals.

To address this, EU citizens and their families can start applying for UK immigration status through the EU Exit Settlement Scheme. They will need to apply under the Scheme even if they already have permanent residence documents. The Scheme is already being phased in and will be fully open by 30 March 2019. People who are living in the UK by 31 December 2020 will have until 30 June 2021 to make an application for status under the Scheme. Under the

Scheme EU citizens who have resided in the UK lawfully for five years by 31 December 2020 will be able to stay indefinitely.

From 1 July 2021 EU citizens and their family members in the UK must hold or have applied for UK immigration status to be here legally. Those who have not yet lived in the UK for five years will be granted pre-settled status and be able to apply for settled status once they reach the five-year point.

Close family members (spouses, civil partners, unmarried partners, dependent children or grandchildren, and dependent parents or grandparents) living in the UK or overseas are also eligible for the Scheme.

The government has published a policy paper which guarantees to protect the rights of EU citizens and their family members resident in the UK by 29 March 2019, even if the UK leaves without a deal. In a no-deal scenario the UK will continue to run the Settlement Scheme, but only for those EU nationals and their family members resident in the UK by 29 March 2019, not 31 December 2020, as there would be no agreed implementation period.

The government has recently unveiled its White Paper on immigration. The White Paper contains the following measures:

- EU citizens will be treated the same as those arriving from outside the EU.
- The cap of 20,700 per year on the number of new highly skilled migrant hires from outside the EU who are paid less than £159,000 will be abolished.
- There will be a consultation on a minimum salary requirement of £30,000 for skilled migrants seeking five-year visas.
- Low-skilled workers may be able to apply for short-term visas of up to a year.
- There are plans to phase in the new system from 2021.

The knock-on effect of Brexit may well be a potential increase in trade and relations between the UK and non-EU countries. From every perspective, this means that there may be more opportunities for individuals and businesses outside the EU to come and work and do business in the UK.

COMMERCIAL ISSUES AND SUPPLY CHAINS

Some commercial contracts may be affected following Brexit.

We can highlight the impact of these changes in the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing accounts for 10% of UK GDP, and over half of all the UK's exports are EU-bound. Currently the Single Market and the EU Customs Union allow the free movement of goods, but this will only be the case if the UK remains part of a customs union with the EU. Customs checks may be needed for goods entering and leaving the EU, which could necessitate the need to vary costs and timescales.

If a withdrawal agreement is agreed, then there will be provision for a Free Trade Agreement in goods. If a good has already been placed on the market, it can continue to be made available on the UK market and the EU Single Market after the end of the transition period. For customs, VAT and excise purposes, the movement of goods which start before the UK's withdrawal from the EU Customs Union will be allowed to complete their movement.

Even if there is a hard Brexit so that the UK will cease to be part of the Customs Union on 29 March 2019, the government has published guidance, 'Existing free trade agreements if there's no Brexit deal', in which it commits to seeking to bring into force bilateral third-country agreements for exit day, or as soon as possible thereafter. These will replicate existing EU agreements and the same preferential effects with "third" countries as far as possible, whilst making the technical changes needed to ensure the agreements operate in a bilateral context.

So, on a positive note, there could be opportunities and a possible positive outcome to Brexit in terms of business investment opportunities from Arab countries into the UK. It could also bring about flexibility to negotiate improved trade agreements between UK and Arab countries.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

UK copyright law has been increasingly harmonised by a series of EU directives and regulations, but it is unclear if the UK will retain these laws. On

26 October 2018, the government published guidance on changes to copyright law in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

There are some registered trademarks and registered designs that cover the whole EU. The draft withdrawal agreement provides that the registration, grant and protection of comparable UK rights shall be carried out free of charge by the UK authorities. IP-related technical notices have also been published in preparation for a no-deal Brexit which provide that the property in all existing EU trademarks and registered Community designs will continue to be protected and enforceable in the UK.

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR INVESTORS?

Some investors are seeing this time as a window of opportunity. Inevitably because of the uncertainty, the value of sterling has dropped. However, sterling may rally when the uncertainty ends. Until it becomes clear what happens on 29 March 2019 it is difficult to predict the true impact of Brexit. A Confederation of British Industry (CBI) survey on how businesses are preparing for Brexit carried out in October 2017 found that companies are already getting ready for a no-deal scenario simply because no-deal is the clearest scenario to prepare for. This may indicate no deal has already been priced in.

We are already helping our clients to find solutions to the legal, regulatory and commercial implications of Brexit across all of our practice areas to help prepare for all possible outcomes.

Regardless of the outcome, Brexit could bring about stronger trade agreements between the UK and non-EU countries and generate more opportunities for businesses to invest, making it easier for people to live and work in the UK. The UK has contract law which dates back almost a millennium giving the UK a substantial legal foundation for business.

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How culture and sports are unlocking opportunities for the next generation in the Gulf



*By Rehana Mughal,
Senior Culture and
Sports Programme
Manager, British
Council*

The Middle East has important and unique connections to the UK. For over 80 years, the British Council has worked to create new opportunities and support cultural exchange with the

UK across the region. In the last three years, our teams have worked with 2.5 million people in 17 countries across the Middle East.

In the Gulf, we collaborate with leaders, influencers, educators, artists and young people to challenge stereotypes, reduce barriers to participation in education and culture and connect opportunity in the UK and the Gulf. By working closely with the next generation, we are able to assess emerging needs and identify future opportunities.

All the GCC states have ambitious plans to develop knowledge-based economies, where original ideas and

creativity are supported. Our Culture and Sport programme responds to these plans, by supporting young people to develop their knowledge and skills so they can play a greater role in the changing economies. The programme aims to reach more than one million young people through high quality culture and sport experiences by 2020. In 2017, the programme recorded a press reach of over 16.7 million people and was supported by several award-winning bi-lingual digital campaigns.

Studies show that diversity and collaboration between creative sectors in different countries leads to growth and innovation. A UN report from

2013 states that the creative economy is growing quickly, and is transformative in terms of income generation, job creation and export earnings.

In 2017, the digital, culture, media and sport sectors collectively accounted for £268 billion of the economy; a year-on-year increase of 3.4%. The digital sector represented the biggest share of this contribution with £130 billion, up 33% since 2010, while the creative industries sector grew the most during the same period, with a 53% increase to £101 billion.

But how can businesses benefit from strong education and cultural connections? Research shows that a country's exports actually increase by roughly 0.8 per cent for each one per cent of positive influence. In other words, soft power assets can have a real impact on bilateral trade. Bilateral trade between the UK and the GCC was £34.8 billion in 2016.

TEACHING FUTURE SKILLS THROUGH CULTURE AND SPORTS

Physical health and sports feature high on the UK and the Gulf's national agendas, as diseases such as diabetes are impacting heavily on healthcare budgets, the quality of life of individuals, limiting productivity in the workforce, and affecting mental health across society.

Our three-year sport education programme led by Youth Sport Trust International, works with teachers and coaches to enable them to train 15 and 16-year-olds to develop skills related to inclusion, equality, leadership and fair play. These skills are essential in supporting young people to develop their confidence and improve their health. In Saudi Arabia, the British Council became the first international organisation to support teachers to develop their offer of physical education for girls in 60 Saudi government schools. Over 90% of the participating teachers felt that the programme will improve female students' leadership skills.

Last year, we trained over 250 coaches and teachers and over 1,400 students. More importantly, the programme is designed to become sustainable by 2020.

Next year, 1,000 young people will take part in the Youth Sport Award, designed to celebrate the achievement and recognise the skills acquired through the programme.

Sports is not only a great education tool but can also be used to share values around inclusion. In Qatar, for example, we trained 78 teachers to develop the skills to support disabled children and young people, encouraging them to actively participate in and enjoy sports activities ahead of the World Cup 2022. We are offering similar training in the UAE to coincide with the Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi.

Our cultural programming also offers rich opportunities for learning and connecting. It has several components that help young people to develop essential skills such as critical thinking, creativity and team work, these are skills that employers in the Gulf are now looking for in the workforce. Our work in arts is focused on

their work in the UK to help increase understanding between countries, and we are interested in working with a wide variety of partners to accomplish this.

Partnerships are at the heart of our work in over 100 countries worldwide. Building trust and understanding are critical in helping us to develop needs-led programmes. We create unique opportunities for our partners to make a difference, develop insight, expand networks and find new opportunities for growth.

If you would like to find out more about the impact of our work, or if you are interested in sponsoring or partnering with us to support more young people in the Gulf to achieve their full potential,



supporting talented artists, filmmakers, cultural leaders from the Gulf to connect with the UK's thriving arts sector through skills development and tailor-made training programmes in Arabic and English. These range from training the next generation of cultural leaders, through to developing new research to share with the sector in areas such as creative skills, film and festivals.

In 2019 and 2020 we will support UK museums and cultural institutions to collaborate with new partners, to bring world class exhibitions to audiences in the Gulf. We will work with emerging artists from the Gulf to showcase



please get in touch, as there are many ways to support our work.

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It is a registered charity.

Understanding Middle East Education

PwC explores provision in the public and private education sectors across the seven Emirates of the UAE, with a focus on its two biggest markets in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.



The United Arab Emirates is one of the more mature education markets in the Middle East region and remains a draw for investors, providers and students.

Its scale and ambition remain undimmed, but what is the reality on the ground? What do trends over time tell us about the education sector by segment, and what are the key differences between its main markets?

In order to better understand the UAE's education sector, it is important to understand the following aspects:

- The Education Ecosystem;
- Structure of the Education System;
- Key Players;
- Overall Quality of Education.

This sets the scene for an understanding of the enrolment trends and education outcomes of the UAE's education systems across its three main education stages: Pre-K, K-12 and Higher Education.

EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM

Key influences on private provision in the UAE.

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

In the 2017-18 Global Competitiveness Report, the UAE's macroeconomic environment was ranked among the top 30 globally, with the country being the largest destination for FDI in the region. The government recently introduced ownership laws to allow for 100% foreign investor ownership of companies outside free zones and 10-year residency visa options – a move designed to drive more foreign investment into the country and to attract longer term residents. More and more private equity firms in the region are growing their education portfolios in the light of this climate, with the education sector ranking second in terms of private equity transactions among all sectors in the Middle East.

The cost of living in the UAE continues to increase, however, and the degree to which this and the introduction of VAT will affect education sector growth is yet to be determined. The Dubai government has already stepped in by freezing

tuition increases for the 2018/19 academic year to protect parents, but the move has caused some existing investors to re-evaluate their investment decisions, at least for the coming year.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Dubai and Abu Dhabi have regulatory bodies in place to streamline the education investment and operations processes.

In Abu Dhabi, the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) is undergoing changes to its mandate, shifting its focus away from public educational institutions – which are to move under the Ministry of Education's responsibility – to focus on private institutions, in a manner similar to that of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai.

Schools continue to face challenges in attracting and retaining the highest quality teachers and principals regionally and in the UAE market in particular. Recent legislation from the Ministry of Education to introduce teacher licensing is aimed at ensuring a minimum standard of quality for all teachers in the country.

ATTRACTIVENESS TO EXPAT FAMILIES

The UAE ranks 10th in HSBC's 2017 Expat Explorer Survey, climbing two places from its 2016 ranking, making it the highest ranking country in the Middle East in terms of expat attitudes and behaviours – an indicator for the attractiveness of a country to expats.

However, a more recent survey by YouGov shows that 42% of surveyed UAE residents think the introduction of VAT is likely to discourage expats from coming to the UAE. This is mainly driven by the belief that the tax will increase the cost of living and have a somewhat uncertain effect on the overall economy.

The UAE is at a point of inflection, making predictions for the coming years difficult to forecast. What is clear is that the country's potential – and government willingness – to create a successful sector make for a strong

starting point in the region. This is particularly relevant considering that the relative immaturity of the private sector in surrounding GCC countries, in particular in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, continues to drive expats to base their families in the UAE.

KEY EDUCATION TRENDS: PRE-K

Whilst Dubai has reported having more than 200 nurseries, (around 50 more than Abu Dhabi reported), nursery enrolment in Abu Dhabi has seen faster growth, which, if it continues, will result in an expected 2016-2021 CAGR of 11.5% compared with 9% in Dubai. Overall, we expect growth to continue as the emphasis on the importance of early childhood education increases, alongside a move towards higher female participation rates in the workforce. OECD average participation rates of 0-2 year olds are estimated at 33%, compared to estimated participation rates of 7% in Abu Dhabi and 10% in Dubai.

KEY EDUCATION TRENDS: K-12

Private education enrolment is expected to grow at a CAGR of ~4%, almost 4 times higher than the rate of public education enrolment growth.

K-12 private sector enrolment grew by more than 95,000 between 2013 and 2016 across all seven Emirates, with almost 60% of the growth coming from Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

"The United Arab Emirates is one of the more mature education markets in the Middle East region and remains a draw for investors, providers and students."

By Curriculum: UK, Indian and US curriculum popularity continues to drive growth in enrolment, with UK preference being significantly higher in Dubai, compared with a mix of preferences in Abu Dhabi.

More than 150,000 new students will enrol between 2016 and 2021 in private K-12 if enrolment growth continues at the current rate – although some of this will be absorbed by capacity in existing schools with low utilization rates, particularly those most recently opened.

Dubai's average fees per student are around 26,000 AED, with the majority of schools charging fees below 30,000 AED, particularly where schools tend to be bigger and have ratings of "Good" or lower. The majority of "Very Good" and "Outstanding" schools charge average fees over 40,000 AED. There is a market gap for schools in the 30,000-50,000 AED range, specifically for high quality schools.

In Dubai, if UK school enrolment continues to increase, it will represent over a third of the market by 2021. This will translate into 26,000 more enrolments by 2021, representing growth over 6 times higher than any other school curriculum type. In Abu Dhabi, the case is similar for US curriculum schools, where, if enrolment continues to increase, it will represent almost a third of the market in 2021,

with more than 21,000 additional enrolments. The drop in MoE curriculum popularity could reflect a preference among parents for more international curricula.

By Quality: Overall school quality in Dubai improved over the past 5 years, with schools rated good and higher growing from 49% of total schools to 66%.

Overall utilization has dropped across curriculum types meaning that at least some of the projected additional enrolment will be provided for in existing schools. The new capacity in International Baccalaureate (IB) in particular has not been filled yet, which could be explained by the high tuition fees of these schools. Despite higher average fees, parents remain willing to send their children to 'Outstanding' and 'Very Good' schools. On the other hand, the utilization of "Good" and "Acceptable" schools has dropped significantly. The "Weak" rated schools are now seeing higher utilization, perhaps explained by the closure of the weakest and emptiest schools and the fact that these schools tend to cater to lower income families.

By Market Size: There is a shortage of quality schools in the AED 30,000-50,000 fee range.

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KEY EDUCATION TRENDS: HIGHER EDUCATION

The environment is uncertain, but higher education enrolment has the potential to grow by around 5,500 students by 2021.

Higher education enrolment grew between 2013 and 2015 but fell in 2016, due to a drop in private enrolment estimated at -2.5%. If enrolment continues to drop at the same pace, the market will lose more than 10,000 students in private HE by 2021, in what could be called a pessimistic scenario.

On the other hand, the 18-24 population is projected to grow at a CAGR of around 2% (2017-2021), inbound student numbers exceeded 70,000 in 2016, and recent reforms have extended student visas from 1 year to 5 years and up to 10 years for "exceptional" students. These factors, in addition to arrival of highly ranked universities such as University of Birmingham, are likely to drive recovery in a "supply driven" market, closing some of the gaps resulting from the small range of programmes currently offered. An optimistic scenario could see private enrolment continuing to grow linearly at a CAGR of 3.5%, adding more than 21,000 students by 2021.

The reality may be somewhere between these scenarios, where some recovery is expected, but at a growth rate lower than that seen over the past few years. We estimate both public and private enrolment will grow at a CAGR of around 0.7%, resulting in more than 5,500 extra enrolments by 2021.

BY EMIRATE: DUBAI AND ABU DHABI DOMINATE WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS.

In Dubai private provision makes up a much larger proportion of seats while in Abu Dhabi the split is even, likely driven both by the fact that around 70% of Abu Dhabi students are Emiratis, compared with around 35%, in Dubai. Equally important for understanding the difference is the impact of Dubai's academic free zones, which attract a large number of private universities and international branch campuses to the Emirate, making private higher education a more attractive option for students seeking quality international education.

By Specialization: There is little annual variation in graduating students' specializations, despite changing labour market needs, with Business and Engineering continuing to be the top choices in both public and private universities.

Public universities tend to have more diversity among their graduating students' specializations than private

HEIs in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, where 75% of all graduating students fall under two specializations: Business and Engineering in Dubai and Business and Education in Abu Dhabi. Private universities are also driven to offer more profitable programmes, and often stay away from programmes that either attract smaller enrolment numbers or have higher infrastructure and running costs. Examples include Medicine, Arts, Sports, History, Archaeology etc.

The UAE has a relatively low number of postgraduate students compared with mature markets and the number of undergraduate students in the country. To enhance its global standing in education, more is required to increase the number and attractiveness of postgraduate courses available as well as the availability of research funding.

UAE leadership recognizes the need to move away from business and finance courses and focus more on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) related subjects in preparation for a job market where technological disruption is underway and a push to reduce the current dependency on government employment will increase the need for private sector participation. Priority sectors

identified as needed for the UAE's future job market include:

- Energy and Petrochemicals;
- Travel, Tourism and Hospitality;
- Manufacturing;
- Trade and Logistics;
- Financial Services;
- Technology, Media and Communications;
- Construction.

The UAE's national vision and major projects like the Expo 2020 are likely to influence a transition towards specializations like Information Technology, the Sciences, Communication, Media and Design, alongside a continued focus on engineering. However, to what extent and speed both the private universities and the student population will respond is yet to be determined. Private universities are unlikely to be able to invest in new programmes with low initial student numbers, a gap that public universities might be expected to fill. Student uptake of these programmes may need a combination of a necessary shift in mindset, alongside a rapid shift in the job market to supply new jobs that will encourage students to venture towards different specializations.



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THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

The Joy of Lifelong Learning



By Esther Clark
Director of Marketing and Communications
TASIS The American School in England



You may have seen the TED 2006 Conference talk where the renowned educationalist, Sir Ken Robinson asks the question, “Do Schools Kill Creativity?” In a highly entertaining talk, he makes the argument for creating an education system that nurtures (rather than undermines) creativity. In fact, there are a number of discussions taking place both inside, and outside, the education sector relating to the jobs of the future and how we can build talent for a future that is uncertain and for jobs that don’t even exist yet. In fact, infusing creativity and innovation into our organizations has been a trending topic in business literature in recent years.

As an international school offering both day and boarding programmes for students from over 50 nationalities, TASIS The American School in England works with each member of our learning community to nurture intellectual curiosity and prepare them for a dynamic global future. As an example of our commitment, every week our Curriculum Director circulates a thought leadership piece that talks about an aspect of learning – usually beyond the borders of “school” and academics. They are articles with content such as the TED Talk cited above that compel us to think about learning in – and for – the future.

One such piece highlighted the work of educational researcher, John Hattie, who, in “Ten Mindframes for Visible Learning,” states: “The best way to make [learning] enjoyable is not by ensuring that particular conditions have been met but by designing a learning situation that takes up the thread of learners’ prior learning and experiences, ties in with their existing thinking, and thereby presents them with a challenge. In a nutshell, when we learn there can be a joyful emotion from this success – so learning breeds joy.”

“The joy of learning” is deceptively simple yet something that schools

(and organizations) could do so much better: by promoting a culture of learning, of exploration, of discovery, trial and error, of innovation, and of making connections between unexpected things. In fact, literature in the area of organizational development talks about the need for learning to be “lifelong,” that is, our thirst for knowledge and exploration is something that should be cultivated throughout our lives not just in our childhood or while we are at school or university but as a daily exercise to learn more about ourselves and our world. It is said that companies with strategic advantage are those that “see around corners” and facilitate learning and connections between groups of people, ideas, markets, etc.

TASIS England’s Head of School, Mr Bryan Nixon, has tied these concepts together through a new mission statement and innovative approach to communicating our school’s commitments and outcomes. Through the TASIS England Mission Circle, that places our school mission at the centre of everything we do, Mr Nixon has brought to life one of the fundamental questions of organizations today: “Why?”



*Mr Chawki Karam,
Director of the
Board of TASIS
England*

Finding purpose and working with students and their families to discover the unique talents of each of our students and our community members is something that our Director of the Board, Mr Chawki Karam, has embraced since joining the TASIS England Board in August 2018. Mr Karam, who is originally from Lebanon, is a TASIS England 2003 alumnus. He has lived in the UK since 2001 and following completion of his high school studies at TASIS England, he went on to pursue three university degrees: BEng. in Computer Systems & Electronics at King’s College London, MSc. in Finance at Imperial College Business School, MSc. in Law and Accounting at London School of Economics and Political Science. He currently works in the asset management industry in London and has been an active member of the Arab British Chamber of Commerce since 2014, in addition to other similar organizations.

Mr Karam’s ideas around learning are inspiring: “I have always believed that every single day provides an opportunity to learn something new and different I consider myself very fortunate for attending TASIS England as a boarder at the age of 16. The experience has given me the golden opportunity of learning how to become independent, organised and fitting-well across different cultures at an early age. I always look back to such experience with pride, as it acts as a foundation block to the person that I have become today.”



As a Director of the Board of TASIS England, Mr Karam is keen to focus on further strengthening the School’s international culture through connecting prospective students globally (particularly those based in the Middle East) to TASIS England.

Moreover, through his involvement in three different committees at TASIS England – namely Admissions & Marketing, Boarding, and Finance – he is committed to ensuring that the school maintains its position as a

leading educational institution, one that gives its students the opportunity to grow towards their full potential. In sum, when we think about schools and education, let’s also not forget the joy of learning and, in the larger panorama of our companies and the future of work, fostering a joy of lifelong learning is something that all of us should strive towards in order to create resilient future-ready organizations.

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Esther Clark works with international schools to connect interests, ideas, and actions. She is the Founder of Hipona Consulting, the Director of Marketing and Communications at TASIS The American School in England, and a contributor to Forbes, America Economia, the Global Peter Drucker Forum and WEF.

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Oman: Attracting Investment & Talent



We spoke with Nasima Al Balushi, Director General, Export Development at Ithraa, Oman's inward investment and export promotion agency, about micro-manufacturing, 4IR, the Attraction Economy, start-ups and the latest initiatives to boost Oman's exports.

Can you tell us about Ithraa's work in helping boost Oman's non-oil exports and attracting investment?

Ithraa has worked with inward investors and Omani non-oil exporters since 1997 helping them identify opportunities domestically and internationally. We have helped to create and safeguard thousands of jobs across the Sultanate, spanning manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, financial services to IT. However, without the continued support of our government partners and our wider private sector stakeholders, Ithraa would not be the award-winning organization it is today. Likewise, we have always been fortunate to attract an outstanding team of professionals, all of whom have served Ithraa and Oman well over the years.

Today, Omani firms export to over 135 countries and in 2017, exported US\$8.2bn worth of non-oil commodities, up from US\$6.21bn in 2016. As of June 2018, Oman's non-oil exports were recorded at US\$5.07bn. Exporting is good for Omani businesses, good for Omani workers and good for Omani jobs. Put simply, when Oman exports, Oman prospers.

Targeting middle class consumers in Asia and Africa as well as in Europe and North America is crucial to putting Oman's economy on a solid footing. Helping businesses penetrate these markets is what we excel at.

Exporting is of course fundamentally a decision driven by local businesses. But, firms attempting to close an export

sale can face hurdles, including lack of market information, challenges obtaining export financing and strong competition from foreign companies. This is where Ithraa's staff and services play such an important role. We help Omani businesses assess export opportunities, from developing a plan, identifying buyers and markets, advising on regulations to managing logistics. Our goal is to provide everything an ambitious company needs to succeed in today's global economy.

Up to 2017, FDI stood at US\$24.19bn compared to US\$20.95bn for the corresponding period in 2016, a rise of US\$3.23bn, a growth rate of 15%, according to the National Centre for Statistics & Information.

The UK was the largest investor with an investment of US\$11.8bn as of the end of 2017 against US\$8.8bn for the same period 2016, followed by the UAE, US\$2.641bn compared to US\$2bn.

Investors are clearly drawn to the Sultanate by various factors, particularly as the government continues to drive its successful and ambitious diversification strategy forward, providing more opportunities for potential investors in sectors ranging from manufacturing, logistics, utilities, renewable energy, fisheries, technology, mining to tourism.

Helping support our drive to attract increased levels of investment and promote Oman's non-oil exports we have recently organized missions to Qatar, Italy, Algeria, India, Sudan, France, Switzerland, Germany, the UK and the UAE, these were very successful and have helped strengthen our business ties with these important international markets. We also play a lead role in the success of

the Omani Products Exhibitions recently held in Riyadh, Dubai, Doha, Algiers and Tehran. This initiative was designed to help expose local companies to the many commercial opportunities available in these countries. With mega events such as the World Cup and the World Expo coming to the region, it is important we help local businesses explore and penetrate these markets.

With regard more mature markets, we have been helping Omani companies participate at major international trade shows in the Gulf, the US, Asia, Africa and Europe. We have also been encouraging Omani exporters to take advantage of the Oman-US Free Trade Agreement which has seen our non-oil exports to the US reach over US\$350 million in 2017.

Helping Omani firms of all sizes penetrate mature as well as emerging markets is extremely important to us. In fact, we have had considerable success in this regard and the number of Omani firms exporting to international markets continues to rise.

Our non-oil exports matter because they represent the very sectors that drive wealth, attract investment, talent and technology transfer, boost productivity and innovation, and generate employment. The production of exported goods and services creates jobs, both directly and indirectly in the supply chain. In fact, Canadian research suggests that, when compared with non-exporters, exporting companies tend to be more productive and competitive; faster growing with higher revenues; more innovative; and less vulnerable to risk. This is a message we relay to local businesses thinking of entering the export market.

How do you see the manufacturing sector changing over the next few years? What are the trends we should be looking out for?

Oman is a country that makes things. From car batteries, AC units, fibre optic cables, confectionery, footwear, marble kitchen tops, pasta, soap powder, ceramic tiles to tomato paste, the products manufactured in the Sultanate are diverse. Representing 10.2% of GDP in 2017 and employing over 244,463 people, Oman-made goods are exported to over 135 countries. Indeed, manufacturing is a key contributor to Oman's growing and ambitious economy.

And breathing new life into the sector is the growth of niche micro-manufacturers - these small companies typically employ fewer than 10 workers; examples include hand-made chocolate, organic cosmetics and personal care products to women's fashion and precision engineering, where innovation in design create products that capture the consumers' attention. Though small in size, many of these micro-manufacturers are becoming an economic force to be reckoned with. Indeed, a revolution in manufacturing is coming. The power of automation and the dropping of the costs of tools will alter the landscape of how things get made in Oman.

In fact, the micro-manufacturing sector is part of a much larger global creative economy that, if it were a country, would already be equal to the fourth-largest economy in the world, with the fourth-largest workforce. Indeed,

a 2015 UNESCO – EY report shows that the creative economy employed nearly 30 million people worldwide and generated US\$2.25 trillion in revenue - 3% of the world's GDP. Micro-manufacturing creates jobs, increases local incomes and preserves cultural traditions that in many places are at risk of being lost.

We live in a world defined by personalization and unique product offerings. Thanks to the rise of technology that allows the customization of everything from music playlists to food, clothes to cosmetics, there is no longer such a thing as "one size fits all". Smaller cultures that function within the wider culture are becoming more common, as is the acceptance of variety within tastes and lifestyles. The marketplace is changing rapidly to accommodate this new culture of diversity. And it's doing this through niche micro-manufacturers.

'To capitalize on the opportunities presented by micro-manufacturing, the Oman government has introduced a number of successful programmes to facilitate workspace for companies'

As well as provide finance and start-up mentoring through Madayn, the National Business Centre at Knowledge Oasis Muscat, the Research Council, the Industrial Innovation Centre, the Public Authority for SME Development (Riyada), Al Raffd Fund as well as the Oman Technology Fund.

Aided by these organizations, young Omani entrepreneurs are setting up manufacturing businesses, attracting funds to their projects and figuring out how to build their products and services locally. They do not need large factories. Instead, they require compact, micro-manufacturing facilities tailored to small, flexible production runs. For many talented Omani designers, inventors and makers, micro-manufacturing will be the key to their commercial success.

Retaining and growing Oman's manufacturing base is a matter of vital national importance and key to new and enhanced national efforts to boost the Sultanate's non-oil exports. At the same time, it has been working to solidify a new "placed-based" vision for Oman's economic growth and prosperity, integrating the work of several government organizations to promote sustainability, liveability and economic competitiveness. Indeed, our government clearly recognizes that business and job growth come from having a skilled, multilingual, internationally-focused workforce, a modern infrastructure to transport Oman-made goods, a commitment to ongoing improvement such as through energy efficiency and waste reduction and a stable supply of appropriate manufacturing workspace.

CONTINUED

Moreover, critical to all these factors are public-private partnerships that work with Oman's manufacturers to create a competitive business environment, one that attracts talent and investment.



Can you highlight any sectors that will be important for Omani companies?

There are a number of sectors that are growing at the moment, from logistics, manufacturing, tourism, fisheries to mining. We are constantly encouraging companies from different sectors to go international with their products. Currently, our major export markets include China, India, the UAE, Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Qatar, but we are also encouraging current and potential exporters to consider markets in Africa, such as Ethiopia. We see a lot of potential in Africa for Omani manufacturers.

India is a market on which we have spent a lot of time working. It is one of the world's fastest moving economies, forecast to grow 7.2% in the 2018-19 fiscal year. However, it is a market that varies widely across its many different regions and states, but it is one that is taken seriously by Omani companies that are seeking to expand and go international. Interestingly, the business opportunities have now stretched beyond the traditional business centres to the emerging cities such as Chennai, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Pune and Jaipur, to name but a few.

Supporting Oman's growing export community are our ports, free zones and industrial estates. It is important, in particular, to highlight the important role that the Public Establishment for

Industrial Estates, Special Economic Zone Authority Duqm, Sohar Port and Freezone, as well as Salalah Port and Salalah Freezone are all playing in helping to take Oman's ambitious economy forward.

Where does the Industry 4.0 factor into Oman's manufacturing scene?

Today, Oman's manufacturing sector is being driven by social media, mobile technology, analytics and cloud computing (SMAC). Indeed, many believe our manufacturing sector could be on the cusp of a major breakthrough with the move towards Industry 4.0 (4IR), a revolution that has the potential to transform the way Oman-made goods are ordered, designed, manufactured and delivered. According to a 2015 Accenture report, by improving productivity, reducing operating costs and enhancing worker safety, 4IR could add US\$14.2 trillion to the global economy over the next 15 years.

At the heart of this revolution will be smart factories, using technology to change global supply chains and production lines, bringing a much higher level of automation and digitization to their operations. Local manufacturers will use AI, self-optimizing and self-configuring machinery to complete complex tasks, delivering superior cost efficiencies and better-quality goods.

Local manufacturers realize that the most obvious benefit of 4IR is the opportunity to increase production yields and reduce waste. Anything that affects yield, such as downtime or equipment failure is a blow to any company's bottom-line. Data that can inform an Omani manufacturer to problems with yield, alerting workers to fix equipment that is about to fail, or otherwise highlight pending issues is the perfect use of 4IR.

There is undoubtedly a need to raise awareness of the potential, as well as the risks, of 4IR across the economic spectrum. While larger Omani companies in oil and gas and manufacturing are embracing new technologies emerging from 4IR and re-adapting business models, micro-businesses and SMEs are not always

familiar with them. Technical staff in new and established enterprises, as well as managers and policymakers, need to be trained in order to understand the implications and opportunities of 4IR. This is an issue we are working on.

Economic diversification is a hot topic in Oman. Could you share your thoughts on this?

Today, the reach of Omani products is truly a global phenomenon. This is healthy and exciting. It speaks volumes about the quality of the products made in Oman.

If I am to talk diversification and attracting high-impact investment, I would have to mention Vale – the Brazilian multinational metals and mining company which made an initial investment of US\$1.25bn in its Oman operations. The company has generated thousands of direct jobs and generously supported the growth of locally-based SMEs which will lead to further job creation and national capacity building. It has also invested heavily in training their employees, many of whom are now qualified mining industry engineers, technicians and operators.

It is also important to look at what is happening around us. By 2025, it is estimated that 600 cities will generate nearly 65% of the world's economic growth. But, the most revealing fact is that by 2025, cities in emerging economies will account for about half of overall growth. Moreover, one billion people will enter the global consuming class by 2025. They will have incomes high enough to be classified as significant consumers of goods and services, and 600 million of them will live in emerging markets on Oman's doorstep.

These trends point to great opportunities for not just Omani firms but also the ports, airports, industrial estates and free zones that the government is investing in. We are strategically placed and have the business base, track record, infrastructure, experience, talent, leadership and connectivity to help any business take their activities global.

What is the thinking behind how Oman's brand is being presented to the world?

In today's competitive world, countries are often viewed more like a product. A product that provides labour, land, premises, services and infrastructure to businesses while offering housing, shopping, leisure and other amenities, and a social milieu to residents and tourists.

In this regard, Ithraa is working with partners in the public and private sectors to help differentiate Oman from other places and hence facilitate the promotion of the Sultanate's place product offer.

What a potential investor or customer thinks, does and ultimately buys, is driven by their perceptions of the country it comes from. Like any country, Oman's brand is experienced through various encounters, which range from the ease of doing business, to how visitors are welcomed by passport control at Muscat International Airport, through to the quality of products bearing the 'Made in Oman' label.

With the impact of globalization and the rise of the 'Attraction Economy', it is increasingly important that Oman gets its international image right. Essentially, we are up against every country in the world competing for the investors' attention and respect.

Let us be clear, investors as well as consumers are attracted to clear and consistent messages about things they value, from competent governance, to friendly and hospitable people, to financial transparency and investment opportunities. It is in these areas that Ithraa is working with public and private sector partners to present unified and coherent messages.

As a nation, Oman is always seeking to enhance its role in the global economy by making the most of the opportunities created by new or established global markets. For that to happen, Ithraa is actively encouraging more Omani businesses to sell their goods and services overseas; it is attracting more quality international investment; and encouraging closer research links between academia and local firms. In this regard, in December 2018, we organized, with a range of public and private sector partners, Oman's first 'Export Week' – 15 workshops delivered by trade, finance,



packaging, branding, social media and marketing experts drawn from Oman, India, Jordan, Australia and the UK. The five-day programme attracted over 200 participants, many from local start-ups and small businesses, all eager to learn about breaking into international markets. It is an initiative we intend to run in Q4 2019.

Clearly, Oman is already in a strong position internationally. Many global businesses run their regional operations out of Oman and with that presence we are attracting more international talent, people that bring with them a wealth of skills and experience. Oman could not be truly successful if it did not attract and encourage these international companies to invest and build their operations here. Attracting and retaining investment is hugely important to our economic ambitions. We want Oman to be a place where businesses can grow, succeed and thrive. Moreover, we want it to be a place where great ideas and innovations are turned into great products and services.

We are determined to deliver the pro-business environment investors require, offering them certainty and stability, access to a flexible and well-educated workforce and eliminating unnecessary red tape and regulation.

Whether you are already doing business in Oman, expanding or looking to relocate to the Gulf region, Oman is open for business.

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London and Dubai Set New Standards for Hospitality

By Claire Farrington, Partnerships Manager & PR Manager, GHS Global Hospitality

A host of innovative hotels to open in Dubai and London this summer prove the hospitality industry is as robust as ever.

Despite Brexit uncertainty in the UK and murmurings of how Dubai's continued hotel industry development is contributing to an oversupply; both London and the UAE City of Gold are experiencing a boom in new hotel openings.

The UAE is forecast to open the most hotel rooms outside China in 2019, with Dubai, the fourth most-visited city in the world, prepping for the World Expo in 2020. And it seems that tourism and travel to the British capital is still keeping hoteliers and developers more than busy. With 77 hotels planning to open their doors to guests in the coming years, offering 14,764 guest rooms, it's safe to say that London will always be a draw for travellers, whether for business or pleasure.

DUBAI: A CITY OF CEASELESS CREATIVITY

Dubai continues to wow the world with its ambition, ground-breaking architecture and scale. Emaar Hospitality Group,

represented worldwide by Chamber members GHS, are at the forefront with five new hotels opening this year.

Emaar Hospitality Group's upscale brand for inspired visionaries, Vida Hotels and Resorts, currently have two hotels in operation in Downtown Dubai and are due to open Vida Harbour Point, a waterfront lifestyle hub in the city's new mega-development, Dubai Creek Harbour. Now taking bookings for stays from August 1st, this 275-bedroom hotel is perfectly positioned, allowing guests to immerse themselves in the Creek Marina lifestyle with the Creek Marina Yacht Club just in front of the building. Location-wise, staying on the waterfront and next to such remarkable natural surroundings, Vida Harbour Point will prove to be popular.



Vida Hotels and Resorts are also introducing Vida The Hills, a new hotel set in the tranquil and leafy Emirates Hills. Again, giving guests the chance to stay close to nature, yet being able to enjoy all the sophistication and impressive facilities that is very much expected from Dubai's hospitality standards. It's perfectly positioned just 10 minutes by foot from two of Dubai's most iconic golf courses, Emirates Golf Club and Address Montgomerie. Vida The Hills is now accepting bookings for stays from 1 June 2019.

CHANGING THE DOWNTOWN DUBAI SKY LINE

Emaar Hospitality Group's first brand Address Hotels + Resorts, a premium luxury hotel group in prime locations continues to set new standards for hospitality and architectural design. Two highly-anticipated openings – Address Sky View and Address Fountain Views – will bring a new dimension to Downtown Dubai as the buildings themselves are striking in their design and level of luxury. Both are now accepting bookings for stays from August 1st.

Address Sky View is a resplendent twin-tower complex comprising of a 61-storey tower containing serviced apartments, a spa and the 'Sky Collection' of luxury apartments and a 56-storey tower of 169 premium rooms and suites. The towers will be linked directly to the Dubai Metro and The Dubai Mall via an air-conditioned travellerator.

The stand-out feature here is the Sky Bridge linking both towers at floor 51, offering unparalleled 360-degree vistas of Downtown Dubai and panoramic views of the Arabian Gulf.

Guests can relax outside at an incredible height on the leisure deck, in the infinity pool, enjoy restaurant and bars and a viewing deck; creating a unique in-the-sky extravaganza for ultimate hospitality experience. Designed by the architects behind neighbouring Burj Khalifa, this landmark development will be known worldwide as the figurative gateway to Downtown Dubai, visible for miles, offering some of the highest residential buildings in the City.

Address Fountain Views, a three-tower marvel, will join Address Sky View in meeting this demand. Built on a 500-acre mega-development in one of the prime spots in the area, it will house 788 serviced and hotel apartments and 194 elegant bedrooms. As the

name suggests, guests are exceptionally close to The Dubai Fountain and will have unobstructed, mesmerising views of this and Burj Khalifa. Especially appealing to British travellers is the new Londonesque lounge, Moss & Moon, designed as a fusion of UK vintage and Cool Britannia styles where the glamour of Bond Street and the charm of a British local pub is skilfully combined.

The resort is an integral part of the structural expansion of The Dubai Mall as it will be linked to the shopping complex via a glass suspension bridge over Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard.

GROWING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY

"London is a world class destination for leisure and business travellers and it's no surprise to see that hoteliers are showing a strong appetite for opening some of their best and most exciting properties in the capital" says Tracy Halliwell, Director of Tourism at the London Convention Bureau.

Although immigration to the UK may be slowing after the Brexit vote; coupled with the undeniable political uncertainty, the UK hotel industry can be cautiously optimistic. This is partly due to a consistent rise in demand from business and leisure travel, keeping hotels buoyant, but also from a competitive pound attracting inbound leisure travel, making the Capital affordable for many leisure groups. Indeed, the growth of London's hotel market is set to outpace a number of major European cities by 2020, including Paris, Berlin, Lisbon and Milan.

Tracy Halliwell adds that *"a number of different styles of establishments are opening up"* and this can certainly be attributed to the growth in serviced apartments. In the UK alone, 77% of British business travellers now stay in serviced apartments up to five times a year for trips of up to seven nights – and 79% of guests prefer them to hotels. Not surprisingly, then, London is a key city for serviced apartment growth.

London's newest independent hotel group, Blue Orchid Hotels, launching this Summer, also represented worldwide by GHS, opens its doors to three hotels including a new 270 all-suite property, enviably located opposite the world-famous Tower of London. Recognising the burgeoning trend for longer stays and rooms with more home-from-home facilities, London Tower Suites is one of London's most-anticipated hotel openings of 2019.

ROOMS WITH A VIEW

Situated in the heart of the historic Tower Hill, Blue Orchid's floor-ceiling windows will enable guests to soak up spectacular views over London, including the iconic Tower Bridge and the river Thames. Very much akin to Address Hotels + Resorts, Blue Orchid operate hotels in iconic, sought-after locations where guests are well-connected to the rest of the City's main attractions. Guests can enjoy independent living inside the elegant suites with fully equipped kitchens and lounges whilst having access to a myriad of facilities of a five-star hotel; including many dining options and fitness facilities.

Blue Orchid Hotels will also have an innovative approach to optimising wellbeing, overcoming jetlag and improving sleep experience for guests.

Renowned Hotelier Tony Matharu, the Group's Founder and Chairman explains *"I have successfully trialled all-suite apartments as Managing Director of Grange Hotels. They proved popular with guests in the past, providing luxurious, independent living combined with personal and attentive service. Now, with the launch of a luxury all-suite hotel in one of London's best locations, I'm confident that this spectacular new property will satisfy and exceed the demands of today's most discerning travellers."*

The Blue Orchid Collection will contribute nearly 450 bedrooms, with over half of these being suites, to London's hotel offering in 2019 and have exciting expansion plans for the next few years.

The group also has two 4-star properties in Westminster, another prime central London location, with a total of 160 bedrooms across two boutique hotels, including unique meeting spaces and self-contained suites. Acknowledging that location is the most important factor when choosing a hotel, Blue Orchid Hotels has that covered as guests can easily access Canary Wharf, the City, London's renowned West End and Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

GHS are proud to help these stand-out hotel brands develop, leaving their mark on their respective cities and the rest of the world as hospitality leaders with their innovative growing portfolios.

ABCC members can take advantage of preferential rates at these new properties in both Dubai and London. For more information and details of how to book contact bookings@g-h-s.com.

The Westbury Mayfair, a Luxury Collection Hotel in London

Located in fashionable Mayfair and retaining its title as Bond Street's only hotel, The Westbury Mayfair, A Luxury Collection Hotel, London, showcases a timeless sophistication, defined by the geometric facade and stylish furnishings, creating a delectable and contemporary environment ideal for the most discerning traveller.

Following a full refurbishment of all guest bedrooms, corridors and lift lobbies in 2017, the five-star property, which opened in 1955 and debuted under the Luxury Collection in April 2017, offers a heightened sense of luxury, inspired by the purity of Eastern culture and translated through its Art Deco design. The redesign, led by **Alex Kravetz Designs**, saw the extensive renovation of its 225 bedrooms increasing its allocation of luxury suites to an impressive 64.

Guests choosing to stay in one of the hotel's suites will be delighted by the hotel's renowned Presidential Suite. With magnificent views over the rooftops of Conduit and Bond Street from the private terrace, the 115sqm **St. George's Penthouse Suite** features a master bedroom with accompanying dressing room and a luxurious marble bathroom. A plush private dining and lounge area surrounded by floor to ceiling windows completes the offering, flooding the suite with natural light.

The Westbury Mayfair's sumptuous **Berkeley & Hanover Terrace Suites**, also offer some of the finest accommodation in London. Both offering large outdoor terraces overlooking London's most exclusive shopping district



complete with 80sqm of inside space, the roomy residences are perfect for both entertaining or watching the world go by.

Throughout the hotel, elegant dark wood and rich Italian marble juxtapose against accents of purple and grey,



whilst custom made furniture creates a cosy but chic residential feel in a city setting. The signature Luxury Collection bed can be found in each guest room complete with Asprey toiletries, work desk, Wi-Fi and Handy smartphones, which allow guests to make unlimited local and international calls for free. Guests can also enjoy a unique culinary experience at **Alyn Williams at The Westbury**, the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant. Along with Four AA Rosette Awards, a top 15 ranking in the UK's 100 Best Restaurants and a National Chef of the Year crown, the hotel's fine dining eatery, which opened in 2011, sources only the best seasonal ingredients. The restaurant also features two exclusive private dining rooms including the Wine Salon where guests can dine surrounded by 600 of the world's finest wines including a 1937

bottle of Château Climens, 1er Cru, Barsac and a 1996 methuselah of Dom Pérignon, Rosé Gold, Brut.

Under the same roof is the multi-award winning **Polo Bar**, with its lavish interior showcasing Swarovski crystal fittings and bespoke Fendi detailing. Welcoming Londoners since 1955, the team is headed-up by Fabio Pezzini, who brings with him a wealth of experience from iconic London institutions such as Quaglino's, The Lanesborough and The Dorchester. The talented team specialise in premium cocktails, offering unique and innovative takes on all of the classics.

Across the lobby, beside stylish sculptures by Italian artist **Giacinto Bosco**, hotel guests will find the renowned **Luxury Collection Concierge**. Senior members of Les Clefs d'Or, the team aim to help guests transcend the ordinary with expert local knowledge that will unlock the city and make every travel experience effortless. The property also features two large meeting rooms with a maximum capacity of 120, a state-of-the-art fitness centre and a tailored butler service to ensure a personal and memorable experience.

All of this is meticulously managed by **General Manager, Andrew Henning**, who joined in 2018 from the United Arab Emirates where he successfully opened The St Regis Dubai, Al Habtoor Polo Resort & Club to great applause.

He brings an impressive wealth of experience and extensive knowledge of the luxury hospitality industry with him, including three years as General Manager at Hotel Bristol, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Warsaw. Earlier career highlights include leading the Westin Dublin, a role as Executive Assistant Manager of The Park Lane Hotel in Mayfair and managing the team at the 5* Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa, Edinburgh.

With its prime location on Bond Street, in the heart of Mayfair's fashion and arts district, The Westbury Mayfair, a Luxury Collection Hotel, London is the only hotel to occupy such a prized address. It shares its illustrious position with prestigious boutiques, arts institutions and city landmarks, offering an ideal base from which to explore the individuality and authentic personality of the neighbourhood.

ABOUT THE LUXURY COLLECTION HOTELS & RESORTS

The Luxury Collection, part of Marriott International, Inc., is comprised of world-renowned hotels and resorts offering unique, authentic experiences that evoke lasting, treasured memories. For the global explorer, The Luxury Collection offers a gateway to the world's most exciting and desirable destinations. Each hotel and resort is a unique and cherished expression of its location; a portal to the destination's indigenous charms and treasures. Originated in 1906 under the CIGA brand as a collection of Europe's most celebrated and iconic properties, today The Luxury Collection brand is a glittering ensemble, recently surpassing 100 of the world's finest hotels and resorts in more than 30 countries and territories. All these hotels, many of them centuries old, are internationally recognized as being among the world's finest.

For more information and new openings, visit theluxurycollection.com or follow Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The Luxury Collection is proud to participate in the company's award-winning loyalty programmes – Marriott Rewards, The Ritz-Carlton Rewards, and Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG). The programmes, operating under one set of unparalleled benefits, enable members to earn points toward free hotel stays, achieve Elite status faster than ever, and seamlessly book or redeem points for stays throughout our loyalty portfolio of 29 brands and more than 6,700 participating hotels in 129 countries & territories. To enroll for free or for more information about the programmes, visit members.marriott.com.

Marriott International, Inc is based in Bethesda, Maryland, USA, and encompasses a portfolio of more than 6,700 properties in 30 leading hotel brands spanning 129 countries and territories. Marriott operates and franchises hotels and licenses vacation ownership resorts all around the world. The company also operates award-winning loyalty programmes: Marriott Rewards, which includes The Ritz-Carlton Rewards, and Starwood Preferred Guest. For more information, please visit our website at www.marriott.com, and for the latest company news, visit www.marriottnewscenter.com. In addition, connect with us on Facebook and @MarriottIntl on Twitter and Instagram.

For more information please visit:
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If you are travelling to an Arab country and need a visa secured quickly and efficiently, then the Chamber's Visa Section is the ideal point of contact. We can provide this service whatever type of visa you require such as a business visa, a work visa or a family visa.

Please contact Mr Saleh Hasaballah for details of the terms and requirements to obtain your visa at Saleh@abcc.org.uk or 020 7659 4875

www.abcc.org.uk

Inspiration by Design



*Economic Focus speaks
to Karen Howes,
Chief Executive,
Taylor Howes Designs*



After 25 years in the business of interior design, Taylor Howes has become one of Britain's foremost design brands.

To what factors do you attribute your success?

We pride ourselves on the relationships that we build with our clients. We work hard to listen and interpret their briefs and start every project getting to know their hopes and intentions for the space. We also want to know how the client intends to live in the space long term as this helps us with functionality. I think this attention to detail has attributed to our success and we are progressive in nature as a design studio.

What would you pinpoint as the milestones in your company's history?

I call these moments "turning points", when brand Taylor Howes has evolved another step and developed closer to our position now as a leading design studio, furniture house and as creators. In 2018, we launched our first capsule furniture collection, Love at Dusk, and expanded our business to include Luxury Business Sphere a member's club and business orientated networking event series. Latterly, I would say it was in the expansion of our own studio and change of office, to our Cheval Place address. Further milestones have gone on to become the calibre of the partner brands we are collaborating with such as Clive Christian, De Gournay and SA Baxter.

How would you define your philosophy and business vision?

For me it's as much about the business side of interior design as it is the actual designing. I work with our developer clients particularly closely to really understand what is going to help them sell, and what will help them sell quickly. In the same vein, you need to know the market, the neighbourhoods, the agents and the sales statistics in each area, to really be useful to your clients.



You have worked with some of the world's leading developers and influential individuals. Would you like to name some of the highlights?

Discretion is inherent in our practice, but the highlights have been getting to know the people, many of whom have gone on to become friends.

Please describe any important business activities undertaken with clients in the Arab World.

We are working on a number of residential and commercial interior design projects for clients in the Middle East. We completed an office last year for a client in Abu Dhabi and are currently working on three private properties in Abu Dhabi and another one in Kuwait.

What would you say is unique about working with clients from the Middle East?

Working with clients in the Middle East is very interesting as it entails carrying out projects on a different continent, which always throws up different challenges. It also means that we are able to form new working relationships with local specialist suppliers and contractors. The breadth of style of projects is diverse and exciting and also enables us to design in a different way to suit the environment, the weather conditions and other factors. Our Middle Eastern clients are very well travelled, educated and knowledgeable about design; this therefore keeps the projects exciting and challenging.

What are the main sources of inspiration for your company's work?

My team are also a constant source of inspiration – their energy and creativity are second to none. Nina Campbell once said always surround yourself with young designers and that's exactly what I do!

Can you name any significant projects that your company is currently engaged on?

We are currently working on a truly remarkable 18,000 square foot new build project in the Cotswolds, which has received classification as a 'Building of Unique Architectural Merit'. This is due to the fact that it is the largest thatched

roof house in the United Kingdom. We are also currently working on a showroom in Vietnam in partnership with Clive Christian which is hugely exciting as it is always great to expand our business in new global regions.

Which of your numerous achievements are you most proud of?

We worked on an amazing church conversion project in Knightsbridge, which from an architectural perspective was hugely complicated – transforming 13m high spaces into zoned living and bedroom areas, whilst retaining the original brief of keeping the essence of the building and working with the Listing and Heritage consultants. It was a once in a lifetime project and one that we are hugely proud to have been a part of.

What are you doing to encourage and inspire the young generation of designers?

I'm a hugely committed to nurturing the next generation of talent, I regularly contribute as a guest speaker at the KLC School of Design and encourage all of their students to speak to me after the lectures. We have a regular internship programme and we welcome young, talented designers into studio.

Describe any future plans that would be of interest to our readers.

As mentioned, we've just launched our first capsule furniture collection, Love at Dusk, and this year we will be expanding on this to roll out an entire product arm of Taylor Howes.

Do you have one final message for our readers?

I always tell my team if you are not constantly moving forward you are not growing.

Contact

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Reach for Palestine's Telecom Services



Economic Focus meets Mr Hisham Zaid of Reach Telecom,

a call centre services company in Palestine, who was recently in London to meet potential customers at the Call & Contact Centre Expo held at the ExCeL Centre.

What are the origins of Reach Telecom?

In 2009, the Palestine Telecommunications Co (PALTEL GROUP) decided to merge the call centre operations of its three main operators (Fixed line, Mobile, Internet) into a one large call centre company. REACH Telecom launched into operation utilizing the expertise of teams that worked in this domain for over a decade. Initially, Reach

would provide services only to the PALTEL Group companies, but then in 2010 it acquired its first external customers and began to expand its customer portfolio. Reach is therefore wholly owned by PALTEL Group, which is a telecom conglomerate in Palestine with investments both regionally and internationally.

How has Reach developed as a company since it was founded a decade ago?

We went from a few dozen agents to over 700 agents in a matter of years. Our infrastructure along with our service portfolio is one of the most advance in the region. We have also continued to implement a strict creed of achieving our commitments to our clients by providing transparent KPIs & SLAs.

How important is the telecommunications sector to the wider Palestinian economy?

The service sector in general and the telecommunications sector specifically is the largest contributor to the Palestinian GDP. Furthermore, the telecommunications sector is the second

largest employer in Palestine after the government. For every direct job in the ICT sector three indirect jobs are created. Even with all the geopolitical restrictions faced by the Palestinians, they have still been able to build one of the fastest broadband and fixed line networks in the Middle East.

Please give us some idea of the diverse range of Reach's international and regional clients in terms of the types of companies and of the main sectors.

Reach has worked with clients that are located not just in Palestine, but also internationally specifically in the US, Europe, and the Gulf. Furthermore, our clients' industries are diversely horizontal including telecoms, banking, FMCG, health, and marketing. In the past few years, we have engaged several MVNOs and market research firms in the US. In Europe we have worked with major brands such as Haribo as well as corporate health counselling. In the Gulf we've worked with content providers and sales agencies to market products in the region. Even in Palestine, we service global companies such as Philip Morris among others

Reach describes itself as "a customer engagement specialist with a full range of business services". Please outline the main services that you provide.

- Inbound Voice Services (customer service, emergencies, comments, enquiries);
- Outbound Voice Services (telemarketing services, telesales services, data cleaning, lead generation, market research, surveys, feedback);
- Social Media & OMNI Channels Managements (digital services, chatbot, live chat, live monitoring, customer engagement, tracking, analytics);
- Business Process Outsourcing in Financial Bookkeeping, IT Support and HR Payrolls.

How would you summarise Reach's business ethic and its approach to customer service?

We strive for transparency with our customers especially when we provide them with unique contact centre solutions. We pride ourselves on establishing clear and comprehensive SLAs with direct reporting mechanisms that continue to increase the confidence and trust of our customers in our reliability and efficiency.

What are your objectives in exhibiting at the Call & Contact Centre Expo in London early in 2019?

The primary objective in exhibiting at the Expo was to promote Palestine as a serious outsourcing player in the MENA region especially when talking about full service contact centres. The Palestinian population is highly educated (one of the highest ratios in the Middle East) and therefore can provide a wide range of multilingual BPO services to the international world.

What exactly can your company offer to attract new business clients from the UK?

- Innovative & flexible call centre solutions;
- Multilingual agents with years of

- years experiences in customer care, marketing, and sales;
- Competitive pricing for quality services;
- Near shore and off shore outsourcing;
- OMNI Channels Solutions & Analytics.

What is unique and distinctive about Reach?

Reach's greatest asset, and what makes it unique, is the passionate energy it puts into all the services it provides. We are extremely excited to be exhibiting at this year's Call & Contact Centre Expo, March 27th & 28th at the ExCeL London. We look forward to meeting everyone there and would be more than happy to give a detailed presentation on all our offerings. *

Contact

Reach for Telecom Services
www.reach.ps

* This interview was carried out in the run up to the Expo.

THE VIEW FROM PALESTINE'S COMMERCIAL TRADE REPRESENTATIVE



For his part, Commercial Trade Representative at the Palestinian Mission to the UK, Mr Majdi Haj Khalil, says:

"Palestinian companies have already explored the international markets and formed partnerships with various companies, for example:

- 50% of our companies have partnerships outside Palestine.
- 30% are exporting services and products.
- Major joint R&D projects include CISCO, Intel, HP & Microsoft.

"Therefore, Palestinian representation in any UK ICT event is a positive move towards adding international markets, especially since companies in the UK's evolving market are always in need of outsourcing some of its services, such as call centres, BPO and other services.

"Palestine has demonstrated impressive resilience over the last decade to develop a capable and growing Information

Technology Services (IT Services) sector. Palestinian companies are already successfully delivering work in services such as software development, maintenance, and Business Process Services for clients in the United States, Germany, Jordan, Holland, the UAE and other countries. Leading local companies such as REACH are actively servicing clients from renowned companies such as CISCO, Microsoft, Intel, Cadence and IBM.

"These services are in demand in the UK, which is among the world's largest and most dynamic markets for IT services, with an ICT sector that is worth £120 billion. Expansion of what is at present a small base level of trade in IT services between the UK and Palestine, and following the extension of the EU/UK FTA, offer the opportunity of generating mutual benefits for both economies – providing economic value for UK-based firms and growth in Palestinian services, which could potentially yield hundreds of quality jobs for youth.

"The Palestinian ICT sector currently employs 6,000 people and makes up to almost 7% of its GDP. Palestine can be commercially attractive for international IT companies, who are looking to develop, invest or award general IT contracts such as Call & Contact Centres, since it can offer a low cost highly skilled labour, especially in Gaza, if compared to the average cost in the UK or the other Arab neighbouring countries.

"The time difference between UK and Palestine is only two hours. Data connections are very reliable. IT capabilities exist across a range of skills, from lower skilled call centres and data entry work, to higher skilled software development in a number of languages, including Arabic. Finally, skilled personnel require no movement when it comes to delivery commitments and deadlines; therefore, it is risk free, if the political situation is taken into consideration.

"Contracting Palestinian companies is also an opportunity to contribute towards peace and helping Palestine to reduce unemployment and curb poverty; as a matter of fact, the British Government has pledged to increase ICT contracts in Palestine by 1% in order to assist in the state building and to ensure that peace is not only negotiated politically but is achieved through business-to-business relations as well. Within this context, international companies can build their confidence by starting with low-risk and small contracts that require short delivery time. Some companies are already developing software in Palestine today."

Taking a Leap

Economic Focus speaks to Mrs Nadia Nevin, Director of Your Self Centre.



What's the story behind your business?

As an expat myself, having lived in the Middle East, Paris, London and Dublin, and coming from a multi-cultural/multi-ethnic background, I saw that there was a need for a company offering both relocation and a cultural awareness service. Having this knowledge of a new country can help avoid potential problems due to cross-cultural misunderstanding which in turn can influence the success of a business or employee's move and in turn their effectiveness at work. At Your Self Centre, we take care of everything from property rental, property purchase, moving your belongings, helping you to integrate in your new country as well as offering a suite of lifestyle and concierge services.

If all goes well, where do you see the company going in the next five years? The next decade?

From an individual service provider, Your Self Centre has expanded, and we now have offices in many areas including Dublin, London, Paris and Milan. We will expand further over the next 5 to 10 years and aim to become the number one recognised concierge service and relocation company.

Where do great ideas come from in your organisation?

We are a very open company and are proactive in getting feedback from our clients and employees on how to improve our services for the benefit of our clients.

What is the most important in your company – its mission, its core values or its vision?

If I had to choose one, I would say vision. Everything begins with the vision and from there we develop the core values and mission. Our mission and core values are based on trust, transparency and customer recommendations.

What would you say to a new employee about the culture of your organisation?

We embrace diversity at Your Self Centre; it is an important part of who we are as a company and our mix of different cultures reflects that.

Do you believe social networking has impacted your organisation or yourself personally? How has it done so?

Many of our clients are high profile people who value their privacy. As a result, we rely less on social media than many of our competitors. If we find a dream house for a client for purchase, renting or investment and relocation, they would prefer not to read about it on social media. Instead we tend to rely more on recommendations and repeat work.

Can you name a person who has had an impact on you as a leader? Perhaps someone who has been a mentor to you? Why or how did this person impact your life?

Alysia Ali Sultan, is a Board member of Smart City Dubai, part of the Dubai Holding. Ms Sultan holds an MSc in Operational Research and BSc in Mathematics, French and Leadership programme and she also a Fellow and Chartered Director from the Institute of Directors (MSc, BSc, CDir, and FLoD). This shows through hard work and education how women can forge a place in the business world.

What is the most important/biggest decision you have ever had to make for your company?

The strategic decision to expand Your Self Centre or to maintain the status quo was one of the biggest decisions I have had to make. Going from a small local company with easy day-to-day operations to a multi-country/city setup with offices in Dublin, London, Paris and Milan was very challenging, but we are now seeing the benefits in increased turnover and more rapid growth.

What advice would you give to someone going into a leadership position for the first time?

Lead by setting examples, remain humble and be open to new learning and knowledge. Be responsible and take ownership of all your decisions. Leadership is about respect and this must be constantly earned.

What's your greatest fear in business?

Anytime you stretch beyond your comfort zones there is an element of uncertainty or fear. I read a quote once that stayed in my mind; "A comfort zone is a beautiful place, but nothing ever grows there". For me it is always important to challenge myself and to strive for success and grow as a person.

What's the best way to prepare for uncertainty (which is increasingly relevant in today's market)?

Today's market is rapidly changing. Your Self Centre, like any other business, must be able to make decisions about future risks and opportunities despite uncertainty. While we can't always predict the future, we can plan ahead; hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

Do you have a quote to live your life by?

I have always liked the old quote by Roman philosopher Seneca. "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity". It sums up life perfectly, in a way you make your own luck by being prepared and ready as best you can for the opportunities that come along.

What's one thing most people don't know about you?

That I am also a Partner in Future Realities Studios, a London/Dublin based Computer Animation company.

This gives me fantastic connections into the architectural, design and property developer worlds and I use this experience to help our clients find/buy/renovate suitable properties when they relocate.

Finish this sentence, "the world would be a better place if only...."

We can accept our diversity and have respect for each other and the environment.

What is your most prized possession?

My husband and my children.

What is the biggest luxury in your life?

To wake up healthy every morning, anything else is a bonus.

If something were to happen to your business, what would be your backup plan?

Winston Churchill once said, 'Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.' I would just continue, learn from any mistakes and try to do better next time.

What does a typical day look like for you?

I am an early riser and begin most days at 5 am with meditation followed by a cup of green tea. I get to the office early to make sure everything is ready for our daily meeting going through our objectives for the day and the lessons learned from yesterday.

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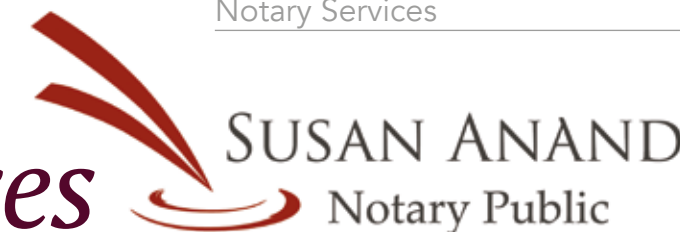


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of Cambridge. Now based in London (Kensington) and Northwood, Anand Notary Ltd can offer a full range of Notary Public and Legalisation services.

Documents for use overseas often require notarisation. These include certified copies of company documents, power of attorneys, commercial contracts and affidavits. As a Notary Public, Susan is able to legalise and authenticate these documents. Each country has its own requirements and Susan has a wealth of experience to understand specific country requirements, specifically Arab countries to ensure that the process is completed with efficiency.

She is also able to arrange for documents to be legalised at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This is required by many countries to ensure authorisation to act as a Notary Public by applying

for an apostille, a type of certificate to ensure documents can be used for official purposes outside of the United Kingdom. She is also able to arrange legalisation in all Consulates and as a member of the Arab Chamber of Commerce she is able deal with all commercial documents required for international trade that require legalisation through the Chamber.

Susan often provides notary services outside of office hours, both in the evenings and at weekends (although this is strictly by appointment only). She is also able to travel to her clients to notarise documents as required.

Susan is a member of the Notaries Society (<https://www.thenotariessociety.org.uk>) and the Arab British Chamber of Commerce (<https://www.abcc.org.uk>).

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To book an appointment at either the Northwood or Kensington offices, or to arrange an office visit contact Susan on
Telephone: 07958 088690 or 01923 840554 | **Email:** susan@myLondonNotary.com
www.myLondonNotary.com

Northwood Office: 41 Westbury Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 3DB **Kensington Office:** Pavilion, 96 Kensington High Street, London W8 4SG

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RACHEL COYLE
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FIND OUT MORE: <https://www.s-rminform.com/services/corporate-intelligence/>

Imam Qasim Rashid Ahmad is the founder Al-Khair Foundation (AKF). A graduate in Islamic sciences, he has been actively involved in AKF's work both at home and overseas.

For many years, Imam Qasim led AKF's fundraising efforts by utilising his expansive reach and influence in the UK Muslim community. He has also played a large role in establishing and overseeing many of the charity's aid and development programmes to date.

Prior to AKF, Imam Qasim served as counsellor, community/faith leader and imam at the Croydon Mosque and Islamic Centre. He also worked as visiting imam at Her Majesty's Prison, for nine years. Here he counselled, taught and offered general welfare support to reforming prisoners.

Imam Qasim is also the CEO of IQRA TV, which has come to be known as one of the UK's premier Muslim television broadcasters.

امام قاسم

Imam Qasim
Founder and Chairman
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YELL TESTIMONIAL: GulfVisa - ACCA certificate attestation from UAE embassy in UK

I am pleasantly surprised with the speed with which Gulf Visa team got my ACCA certificate apostilled from UAE and Saudi Arabia Embassy in UK. It took only 3 days for them to do a set of attestations from Notary, FCO, UAE and Saudi Embassy. The entire process from shipping the document from India to UK till the time I had the document in hand took only 7 days. Hat's off to Gulfvisa team!

Gulfvisa is also the most cost effective provider of the services. I had taken the quote from 5 consultants for the attestation. Gulf visa was at least cheaper by 20% than its nearest competitor.

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Qatar’s banking sector continues to grow while embracing the digital agenda: KPMG

12 June 2019 – Doha: KPMG recently released its fourth edition of the ‘GCC listed banks’ results’ report, which analyzes the published results of listed commercial banks across the region for the year ended 31 December 2018. The report, titled ‘Embracing Digital’, has shown that Qatar’s banking sector saw positive results in 2018, with an average 9.5 percent growth in net profit, and 3.2 percent growth in total assets.

Mahmood further commenting on the findings in the report, added that, “another leading focus for banks over the next year will be credit quality, which remains a challenge, as loan impairment and non-performing loan (NPL) ratios increased from the prior year. Although NPL ratios remain relatively low when compared to international norms, 2018 saw higher ratios in comparison to the previous year.”

to have hit the banking industry yet it has the potential to lower barriers of entry to the financial services market and elevate the role of data as a key commodity and drive the emergence of new business models.”

Additional insights in the report find that all countries across the region have experienced mergers or talks to merge in 2018. Commenting on the situation in Qatar, Mahmood said, “in early 2019, the merger of two unlisted banks was completed which is expected to trigger further consolidation initiatives across the banking sector in our view. The merger of banks is expected to combine market share and improve pricing and cost synergies, which may make them more competitive in the context of shrinking margins currently being faced by banks in Qatar.”

Qatar National Bank (QNB) remains the largest bank in the region, by assets and profitability, with a market share of 58 percent of total listed Qatar banking assets, showcasing their dominant position in the sector across the region. In comparison to 2018, there has not been a significant impact on capital adequacy ratios in Qatar as a result of the adoption of the IFRS 9, which introduced new requirements for classifying and measuring financial assets and liabilities.

The report titled ‘GCC listed banks’ results: Embracing Digital, analyzes the results of selected listed banks in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. It summarizes bank’s results against selected key performance indicators for the year ended 31 December 2018 and compares these with the same information for the year ended 31 December 2017.



■ KPMG in Qatar_Omar Mahmood

Speaking about the report, Omar Mahmood, head of Financial Services for KPMG in the Middle East & South Asia, and partner at KPMG in Qatar, commented, “Overall it has been a positive year for listed banks in Qatar. While profitability and assets have, on average, increased from the previous year, banks in Qatar have also managed to reduce costs by 1.3 percent on average, resulting in a sector cost-to-income ratio of less than 28.2 percent. With the lowest cost-to-income ratio in the region, these impressive results reflect the continued focus by the sector, and the country as a whole, on efficiencies to improve net profits.”

As predicted last year, the regulatory agenda continues to evolve on local, regional and international levels, driven by global developments. Mahmood further commented that, “New accounting standards, Basel III requirements and an increasing focus on Anti Money Laundering (AML) and Know Your Customer (KYC) will not only keep regulators busy in the year ahead, but will also drive banks to reshape their strategies to better prepare for, and effectively manage, tighter regulations, particularly in the new fast-paced digital era.”

Looking to the future of the financial services sector in light of the rapid technological advances we are witnessing, Mahmood commented, “In order for banks to differentiate themselves in a competitive market and remain relevant, they need to continue to innovate their practices and digitize their processes. Whether that be through their go-to-market channels, or through the use of innovative technology in the back and front office, we expect an increased investment in this space.

Commenting on Qatar’s efforts to embrace the digital agenda, Mahmood stated that, “Financial institutions and regulators are showing greater support for the FinTech sector, through various recent and upcoming initiatives, such as the launch of a local innovation hub and the expected opening of the first digital branch of an international bank in Qatar. The emergence of FinTech is only the latest wave of innovation

An interview with Haytham Kamhiyah Chief Executive Officer Europe Arab Bank

Haytham brings over 25 years of experience in the banking industry with focus on the MENA region. He spent several years at Capital Bank of Jordan, progressing internally to be the General Manager. More recently, Haytham was the Chief Executive Officer of Emirates Development Bank in the United Arab Emirates. He holds professional qualifications from the Institute of Certified Management Accountants (ICMA) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) in the United States and obtained the Advanced Management Program Diploma from the INSEAD Business School in 2005.]

Tell us a little about your career to date?

I started my career at Arthur Andersen in the audit and business advisory division before joining Capital Bank of Jordan in 1996. In 2005, I took over as the General Manager and led Capital Bank to become one of the leading financial institutions in Jordan. Before joining Europe Arab Bank in December 2018, I was the Chief Executive of Emirates Development Bank in the United Arab Emirates. I have also had the privilege of serving on the board of directors of a number of prestigious organisations, including Jordan International Investment Group, Ithmar Islamic Finance Company, Jordan International Insurance Co and Safwa Islamic Bank.

As the new CEO of Europe Arab Bank since December 2018, how do you see your role in developing the bank's business?

Europe Arab Bank has a strong brand and reputation in the European market. We act as a financial bridge between MENA and Europe and have a physical presence in some of the key trade and investment centres in Europe. Our strategy is complemented by the geographical footprint of Arab Bank Group particularly in the MENA region. There are opportunities to build on this further. Overall, I see my role at EAB as

one of transformation. I am keen to push our Bank into the next phase of responsible growth by working closely with our Private Banking customers and corporate clients to become their preferred bank of choice. We will focus on using technology as a catalyst to improve and enhance our operating model whilst at the same time strengthening our control and support functions. We will work to improve the efficiency of what we do. Ultimately, our objective at EAB is to achieve sustainable profitability for our stakeholders whilst maintaining high standards of service to our clients and regulatory compliance.

What is the biggest challenge in your business?

We continue to be faced with an uncertain economic and political environment in a number of key markets in which we operate. As a relatively conservative institution, we have to be cautious and selective when assessing new business opportunities. The environment also has an impact on our cost base. As an example, EAB, like many other banks, has had to put in place robust contingency plans for Brexit as we wanted to ensure seamless

The Arab Bank celebrates 90 years in 2020. What changes do you see in banking over forthcoming years?

Arab Bank has been a pioneer of the banking industry in the MENA region. Since its foundation nearly 90 years ago, it has been trusted in the region as a safe haven during times of trouble, and it has never betrayed that trust. Arab Bank is a symbol of strength and continuity, and has been building bridges between Arab economies and the rest of the world. It is a legacy of which we are very proud.

I see challenging, yet exciting, times ahead for the banking industry in the forthcoming years. The evolution of financial technology has created opportunities for many new and different players in the market who are more agile and efficient. Additionally, our clients' use of technology, be it corporate or private banking, is evolving at a rapid pace. Banks as financial intermediaries will have to keep up with the pace. Again, Arab Bank Group is at the forefront of embracing this change. It has recently set up an 'Innovation Hub'

As a member of the ABCC how does the Europe Arab Bank work with the Chamber?

We have worked closely with the Arab British Chamber of Commerce for a number of years and were privileged to receive the 'Facilitation of Finance with the Arab World' award from the Chamber in 2017. The Chamber has played a vital role in the promotion of trade and investment between the UK and the Arab countries. EAB is looking forward to the Arab British Economic Summit being organised by the Chamber in the summer of 2019, which will allow an opportunity to further unlock the commercial potential between the UK and the Arab world.

"Arab Bank is a symbol of strength and continuity, and has been building bridges between Arab economies and the rest of the world."

As part of the Arab Bank Group, with more than 600 branches, across five continents, clients of Europe Arab Bank benefit from a long tradition of personal attention, a dedicated relationship manager, and seamless access to services in 16 MENA countries.

continuity of services to our clients. This has introduced additional overheads and complexity in our operating model. Operational resilience, alongside regulatory compliance, are also areas of significant focus. For institutions of EAB's size, there are very limited economies of scale. This is where closer integration with our parent group, Arab Bank, is key so that we benefit from investments they have undertaken in these important areas.

with the aim of finding new solutions. Arab Bank has also established a venture capital fund targeting fintech companies for investment.

I also expect the role of financial institutions in the wider society to remain under focus, including improving financial inclusion and tackling financial crime. As part of the Arab Bank Group, we are committed to continue playing our role as a responsible ethical banker and lender.



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BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q1 2019

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) Quarterly Economic Survey – Britain’s largest and most authoritative private sector business survey – based on more than 7,000 responses from firms across the UK – finds that key indicators of UK economic health weakened considerably in the first quarter of 2019.

“Our findings should serve as a clear warning that the ongoing impasse at Westminster is contributing to a sharp slowdown in the real economy across the UK. Business is hitting the brakes – hard.

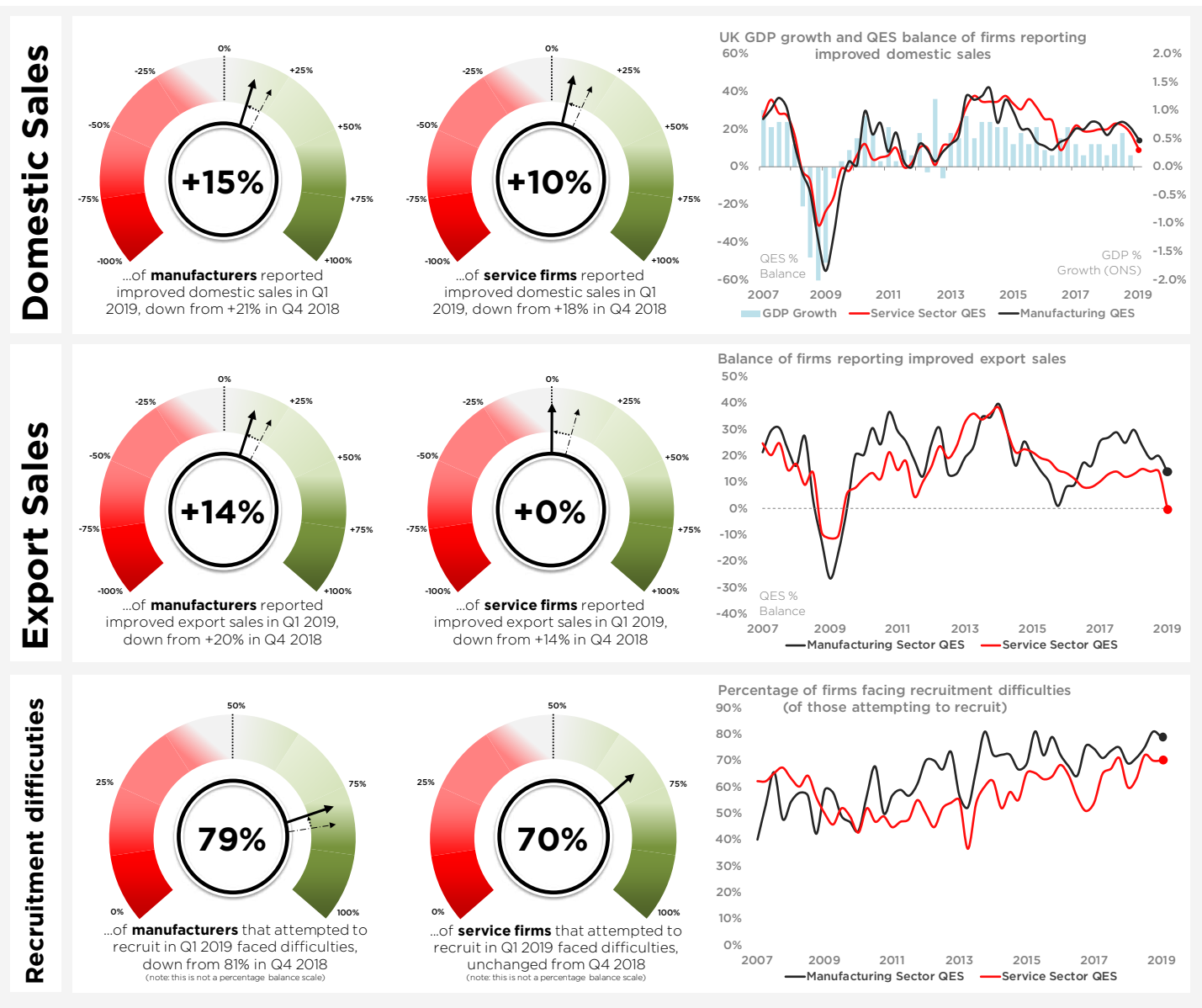
These are some of the weakest figures we’ve seen in nearly a decade, and that’s no coincidence. The prospect of a messy and disorderly exit from the EU is weighing heavily on the UK economy, and must still be avoided. The unwanted prospect of a disorderly ‘no deal’ exit, and the serious damage and dislocation it would bring, is still just days away unless Parliament acts to avoid it.

At the same time that firms are having to enact costly contingency plans, the cost of doing business here in the UK continues to rise. This week sees a new tax year with a number of changes adding to the upfront cost of doing business in the UK, including the introduction of Making Tax Digital and changes to auto-enrolment, leaving many firms facing more bureaucracy and new expenses. It beggars belief that ministers are piling on more and more costly obligations at a time that businesses are already having to cope with Brexit and uncertainty.”

Dr Adam Marshall Director General, British Chambers of Commerce

AT A GLANCE

Positive balance (+) = growth | Negative balance (-) = contraction



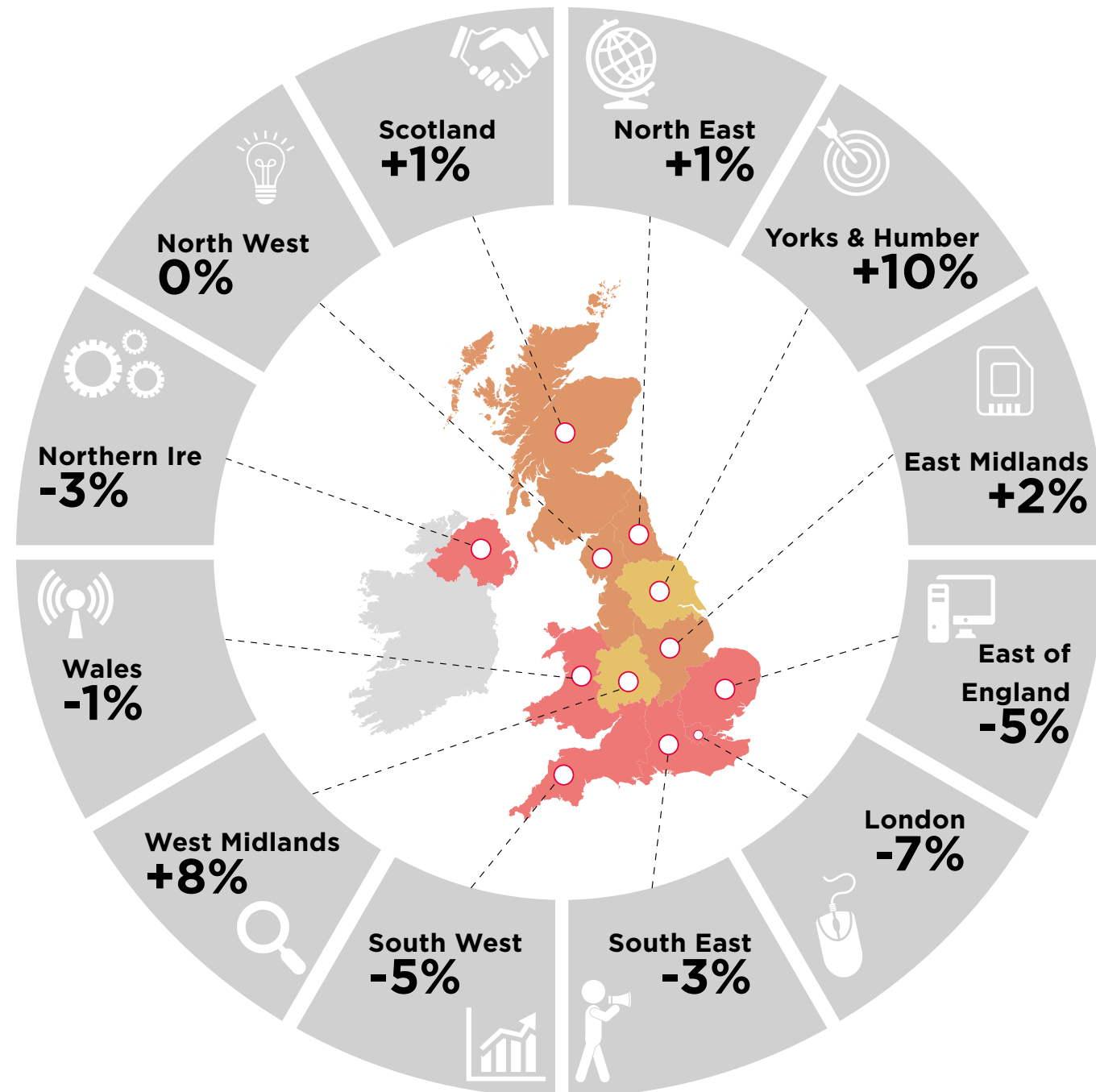
LOOKING AHEAD

The Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) examines business sentiment on a range of forward looking indicators, including investment intentions, turnover confidence, and prices. In Q1 2019, these indicators are downbeat with weakening orders, confidence and investment intentions pointing to tepid growth over the coming quarters. In particular, cash flow – a key indicator of business health – has now fallen into negative territory for the first time since 2012.



CASH FLOW

In Q1 2019, the percentage balance of firms reporting improved cash flow fell into negative territory for both sectors. This means that more firms reported worsening cash flow over an improvement. In both the manufacturing and services sectors, the balance stood at -1%. This is the lowest since 2012. The below chart shows the geographical breakdown of the balance of firms reporting improved cash flow.



“Our latest survey suggests that UK growth nearly ground to a halt in the first quarter of 2019, with increasing anxiety over Brexit and weakening global economic conditions driving a significant deterioration in almost all the key indicators in the quarter.

The deterioration in cash flow is particularly concerning as it can leave firms more vulnerable to external shocks, including disruptions to supply chains.”

Suren Thiru Head of Economics, British Chambers of Commerce

ABOUT THE QES

The Quarterly Economic Survey is the flagship economic survey from the British Chambers of Commerce. It is a prominent tool used to measure the state of business sentiment and is monitored by a range of national and international organisations, including the Bank of England, HM Treasury, and European Commission.

The BCC Q1 2019 QES is made up of responses from more than 7,000 businesses across the UK. Firms were questioned between 18 February and 11 March 2019. In the manufacturing sector, 1,744 firms responded, employing approximately 230,000 people. 69% (1,209) of manufacturing respondents were exporters. In the services sector, 5,340 businesses responded, employing approximately 757,000 people. Of the services sector participants, 42% (2,265) were exporters.

This report has been prepared by the British Chambers of Commerce. Further information about any of the region and nation surveys may be obtained from the following:

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 Business West, Dorset, Cornwall, Somerset, and Devon

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 London Chamber Of Commerce and Industry (020 7248 4444)

Northern Ireland

Coordinator: Christopher Morrow
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 Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce (028 9024 4113)

Methodology

QES results are generally presented as balance figures - the percentage of firms that reported an increase minus the percentage that reported a decrease. If the figure is a plus it indicates expansion of activity and if the figure is a minus it indicates contraction of activity. A figure above 0 indicates growth, while a figure below 0 indicates contraction.

For example, if 50% of firms told us their sales grew and 18% said they decreased the balance for the quarter would be +32% (an expansion).

If 32% told us their sales grew and 33% said they fell the balance would be -1% (a contraction).

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Executive Director

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Activities: Aloe Vera pure juices and cosmetics
Contact: Mrs Saida Hrabí, CEO
Email: saida.bioland@gmail.com

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Activities: Strategic political and economic risk
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Contact: Dr Neil Quilliam, CEO
Email: n.quilliam@castlereagh.net

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Email: tilly.mcadden@checkout.com

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Activities: Multidisciplinary Engineering and
Planning Corporation
Contact: Mr Nabeel Ahmed, CEO
Email: nabeel.ahmed@engcorp.co.uk

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Email: accounts@e2s.com
Website: www.e2s.com
Activities: Manufacturer of warning signals for oil,
gas, petrochemical and industrial applications
Contact: Mr Michael Green, Finance Director
Email: mike.green@e2s.com

Grand Majestic for Hotels Management

PO Box 29907, Safat 13159
Abdullah Al Mubarak Street
Mirqab, Kuwait City KUWAIT
Tel: +965 2225 4700
Activities: Hotel management and hospitality
Contact: Mr Mohammed Abuslaib, Chairman
Email: lopera.gcc@gmail.com

InfraOne Development Management

232 North Teseen St
Fifth Settlement
Cairo
Egypt
Tel: +2-02 25378678
Website: www.infraone.org
Activities: Integrated and comprehensive
development management, financial advisory
services and corporate finance & investment
advisory services
Contact: Dr Mahmoud Gamal El Din, CEO
Email: mgamal@infraone.org

Innervate Technology Solutions Limited

Arcapita 3rd Floor
Fintech Bay
PO Box 11299
Bahrain Bay
BAHRAIN
Tel: +44(0)20-3880 0770
Website: www.innervate.uk.com
Activities: IT consultancy, Microsoft Dynamics,
Digital transformation, managed services
Contact: Ms Danielle Brown, Operations
Manager
Email: danielle.brown@innervate.uk.com

H&M Security Services Ltd

1st Floor 476/478 Larkshall Road
Highams Park
LONDON E4 9HH
Tel: +44(0)20-8523 2227
Email: info@hmsecurityvipsservices.co.uk
Website: www.hmsecurityvipsservices.co.uk
Activities: Safety, protection and security solutions
Contact: Mrs Tania Al-Hassani, Business
Development Executive
Email: Tania.AlHassani@hmsecurityservices.co.uk

Morocco Gold Ltd

3 King James Place, PERTH
Perthshire PH2 8AE
Tel: +44(0)173-8621 526
Email: info@morocco-gold.com
Website: www.morocco-gold.com
Activities: Extra virgin olive oil
Contact: Mr Robert Watson, Director
Email: robert@morocco-gold.com

Hotel Cafe Royal

68 Regent Street
LONDON W1B 4DY
Tel: +44(0)20-7406 3333
Website: https://www.hotelcaferoyal.com
Activities: Luxury hotel services
Contact: Mr Rohit Gupta,
Regional Director of Sales
Email: rohit.gupta@hotelcaferoyal.com

Hownam Studio

C/O Greaves West & Ayre
17 Walker Gate, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED
Northumberland TD15 1DJ
Tel: +44(0)753-821 9112
Website: www.hownamstudio.com
Activities: Contemporary sculptural furniture and
art for private and public collections
Contact: Mr Scott Horner, CEO
Email: scott@hownamstudio.com

LD Collins & Co Ltd

1st Floor Gallery Court
28 Arcadia Avenue
LONDON N3 2FG
Tel: +44(0)1442 345086
Website: www.ldcollins.com
Activities: Pharmaceuticals, IVF, fertility treatment
Contact: Ms Maria Rosca, Business Administrator
Email: mariarosca@ldcollins.com

LXL LLP

1B Blake Mews, Kew, Richmond
SURREY TW9 3GA
Tel: +44(0)20-8439 8810
Website: www.lawxl.com
Activities: International law firm
Contact: Mr Yanal Failat, Associate
Email: yaf@lawxl.com

Magnum Industrial Ltd

57 Salisbury Road, WORCESTER PARK
Surrey KT4 7DE
Tel: +44(0)20-8337 0444
Activities: Exporting services
Contact: Mr Abdullilah Daoud, CEO
Email: adaoud@magnumindustrial.co.uk

Medex Pharma Limited

Office 15, 12 Jenne Avenue
LONDON W3 6WQ
Tel: +44(0)20-8993 2392
Email: admin@medexpharma.co.uk
Website: www.medexpharma.co.uk
Activities: Pharmaceuticals wholesaler
Contact: Mr Karam Almustafa, CEO
Email: mshnaf@medexpharma.co.uk

Motis Ireland Ltd

9 Downshire Place, NEWRY
County Down BT34 1DZ
Tel: +44(0)283-0252 500
Website: www.motis.com
Activities: Storage, Logistics, Freight Forwarders
and Shipping Agents
Contact: Mr Kevin Letham, Forwarding
Development Manager
Email: kevin.letham@motis.com

Nawasa Mahal International Ltd

9 Arran House, Raleana Road
LONDON E14 9RN
Tel: +44(0)751-840 1588
Website: serendi.co.uk
Activities: Trade in high-value sapphires
Contact: Mr Omar Anbargi, COO
Email: omar@serendi.co.uk

Pantaq Limited

Unit 2 Ringway Industrial Estate
Eastern Avenue, LICHFIELD
Staffordshire WS13 7SF
Tel: +44(0)845-459 9441
Website: www.pantaq.com
Activities: Procurements and exports
Contact: Mr Irshad Haque, Director
Email: ihaque@pantaq.com

Pestana Chelsea Bridge Hotel and SPA

354 Queenstown Road
LONDON SW11 8AE
Tel: +44(0)20-7062 8000
Fax: +44(0)20-7720 4534
Website: www.pestana.com
Activities: Hotel services
Contact: Mrs Michelle Brown,
Director of Sales & Marketing
Email: michelle.brown@pestana.com

RAF Estates Ltd

Trident Court, 1 Oakcroft Road
CHESSINGTON
Surrey KT9 1BD
Tel: +44(0)20-8641 6663
Website: www.rafestates.com
Activities: Sourcing properties for commercial and
residential clients; interior design and tenanted
property management
Contact: Mr Raqim Sacranie, CEO
Email: raqim@rafestates.com

Randall Parker Foods

Dolwen, Wales, LLANIDLOES
Powys SY18 6LX
Tel: +44(0)168-641 2114
Email: sales.wales@randallparkerfoods.com
Website: www.randallparkerfoods.com
Activities: Meat processing and retail packing of
high quality beef and lamb for retail, wholesale
and international markets
Contact: Mr James Evans, Sales Manager

RELM Interiors Limited

F2 59 Putney Bridge Road, Wandsworth
LONDON SW18 1PB
Tel: +44(0)20-3732 2522
Email: info@relmintinteriors.co.uk
Website: www.relminteriors.co.uk
Activities: Design and build company specialising
in both residential and commercial properties
Contact: Mr Rodi Mirza, CEO

Repaircraft Plc

The Common, CRANLEIGH
Surrey GU6 8LU
Tel: +44(0)1483 273536
Email: hq@repaircraft.co.uk
Website: www.repaircraft.com
Activities: Defence contractor
Contact: Mr Adrian Stainton, Managing Director

Research Intelligence Unit Limited

10 Briar Road, Garston
Kingswood, WATFORD
Hertfordshire WD25 0HN
Tel: +44(0)746-340 1869
Website: www.riunit.com
Activities: Market research and consulting with
focus on a variety of sectors
Contact: Mr Roshan Madawela, CEO and
Founding Director
Email: roshan@riunit.com

Root Group UK Ltd

23 Eyot Gardens
LONDON W6 9TR
Tel: +44(0)20-3959 2020
Fax: +44(0)20-3959 2029
Email: info@rootsgroupuk.com
Website: www.rootsgroupuk.com
Activities: Architecture, interior design, building
materials and architectural finishes, distribution of
construction machinery and building equipment
Contact: Ms Pauline Chambers, Adviser
Email: pauline.chambers@areen.com

Sensory International Ltd

Unit G1 Redwood Court
Tytherington Business Park
MACCLESFIELD
Cheshire SK10 2XH
Tel: +44(0)162-550 5720
Website: www.sensoryinternational.com
Activities: Smart electronics and
security systems
Contact: Mr Neil Sherman, Director
Email: Neils@sensorygroup.com

Smart City

Al Esteqlal Street, 610001
Basrah IRAQ
Tel: +964 (0)790 1288 966
Activities: ICT and electronics; automatic doors,
security cameras and alarm systems
Contact: Mr Muqdad Alatwan, CEO
Email: muqdad84@gmail.com

S-RM Intelligence & Risk Consulting

Beaufort House, 15 St Botolph House
LONDON EC3A 7DT
Tel: +44(0)20-3597 7512
Website: https://www.s-rminform.com/
Activities: Consultancy helping clients understand
and manage regulatory, reputational and
operational risks
Contact: Mr Tom Croke, Associate Director
Email: t.crooke@s-rminform.com

Sterling Marketing Consultancy Ltd

79 College Road, HARROW
Middlesex HA1 1BD
Tel: +44(0)750-058 4418
Website: www.actioncoach.co.uk/khalilarouni
Activities: Business coaching and training
Contact: Mr Khalil Arouni, CEO
Email: khalilarouni@actioncoach.com

The British Council

10 Spring Gardens
LONDON SW1A 2BN
Tel: +44(0)20-7389 4385
Website: www.britishcouncil.org
Activities: Promoting culture, English language
and education
Contact: Ms Susan Hay, Programme Manager,
Culture and Sport (Gulf)
Email: susan.hay@britishcouncil.org

The Copperfields Property Management Limited

53 Pinter House, Grantham Road
LONDON SW9 9DX
Tel: +44(0)796-100 2100
Activities: Investment and property management
Contact: Mr Yasser Abdu, Director
Email: yasserlondon1@hotmail.co.uk

The Edge Picture Company

20-22 Shelton Street
LONDON WC2H 9JJ
Tel: +44(0)20-7836 6262
Email: ask.us@edgepicture.com
Website: www.edgepicture.com
Activities: Film production company with
operations in the Middle East
Contact: Ms Faye Jackson, Head of Digital
Marketing & Creative
Email: faye@edgepicture.com

The Westbury Mayfair

37 Conduit Street, Mayfair
LONDON W1S 2YF
Tel: +44(0)20-8382 5036
Website: www.westburymayfair.com
Activities: Hotel services
Contact: Mr Gerardo Andriaccio,
Assistant Director of Sales
Email: gerardo.andriaccio@westburymayfair.com

Tree MR Ltd

79 Bushgrove Road, DAGENHAM
Essex RM8 3SL
Tel: +44(0)730-575 2770
Website: https://www.treemr.co.uk/
Activities: Management consultancy activities
services
Contact: Ms Marina Romyanskaya, Director
Email: marina@treemr.co.uk

TSH Office

Al-Dora, M 828, Z19
Office Number 3, Baghdad IRAQ
Tel: +964 (0)790 2432 078
Email: tsh.store2017@gmail.com
Website: www.tsh2017tsh.com
Activities: Technology products and services as an
internet provider and all services to a wide range
of cities in Iraq.
Contact: Mr Khaleel Al-Mullah, CEO
Email: kha89ahm@gmail.com

a vision for growth and development



Dr A. G. Abubaker
Al-Maktoum College
College Secretary and
Acting Head of College

Dr A. G. Abubaker discusses his role within Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education

Dr A. G. Abubaker completed all his further and higher education in Scotland gaining an HND in Mechanical Engineering, BA (Hons) in Information Management, MSc in Mechatronics and Project Management both from University of Abertay and PhD in Construction Management from the University of Dundee.

Dr Abubaker was appointed as acting Head of College in November 2017 and has led the College with a vision for growth and development through the provision of high-quality teaching and learning, enriched by a multicultural environment. His efforts have seen the College grow as a recognised institute of higher education, at both national and international levels.

Q. Tell us a little about your career to date?

Having gained my masters degree from the University of Abertay, I joined the Al-Maktoum College and have since played a significant role within the development of its systems, procedures and strategies. Beginning my time here at the College initially as a volunteer, I progressed within various roles, from general administration, finance, student administration, estate management, Director of Operations to eventually being appointed College Secretary and acting Head of College.

Prior to working at the College, I held various positions within the manufacturing and retail industries both in the UK and Libya. I have also served as a member of the Board of Trustees of a number of local charities.

Q. How do you see your role in the College, in promoting multiculturalism and bridging possible gaps between the Muslim and western worlds?

As Acting Head of College, it is my duty to ensure that the College's vision for high-quality teaching and learning, enriched by a multicultural environment is realised. I am a firm believer that the College's success is dependent on a team effort, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to work with and lead such a supportive team. Our intellectual endeavours are dedicated to building bridges between 'western' and Muslim worlds, to ensure that understanding span the different history and experience of all communities that make up our city, nation and world today. We believe that this approach makes the College a somewhat unique establishment in Scotland and the UK today. Small in size but great in our ambition, we embrace differences, tolerance and breadth of understanding as the key to meeting the challenges of 21st Century.

Q. What is the biggest challenge in your role as acting head?

The way I see it, is that every challenge can be turned in to an opportunity. The College has become an integral and well-respected pioneering institution for multicultural education within the City of Dundee and Scotland. Whilst it is known for its specialist and niche studies, in working closely with local businesses and councils it looks to also support its communities as far as possible. In this, it can be challenging to ensure that the College's success and strategic plans are aligned with the expectations of our stakeholders

and those of the wider community, and that we develop in accordance to these expectations.

Q. The College will soon be celebrating the 20th anniversary of opening. What changes do you see in multicultural education over forthcoming years?

Our journey to this point as an independent, internationally recognised centre of higher education has been far from easy. In looking back to 2001 when the College was first established, I remember that we were repeatedly told that the project was destined to fail. However, our dedication to promoting harmony between different communities has seen the College go from strength to strength. The fact that we are still here eighteen years later is a testament to our success and we are pleased to have achieved our goal of becoming a valued part of the local community and the education scene of Dundee, and indeed Scotland. The demand for multicultural education is growing. On every level, the College is a place where potential and ability is valued over background or ethnicity, and education is available to all.

Q. How can Al Maktoum College help Arab British Chamber of Commerce members?

The College is in a unique position to help individuals looking to expand their prospects, make a career change, and or progress on to further academic qualifications. We offer contemporary, unique and specialised courses in areas such as Arabic Language, Business, Management & Leadership, Islamic Finance and Islamic studies. All of which present opportunities for professional development, retraining and upskilling of the workforce. We aim to empower learners, not only from ethnic minorities but also those who value being part of a smaller, amiable and dedicated provider. Its reputation is vast and thriving at both national and international levels.



Al-Maktoum College
of Higher Education

Discover diversity

at Al-Maktoum College, Dundee

The College is in a unique position to help individuals looking to expand their prospects, make a career change, or to progress on to further academic qualifications.

Discover Courses

Open to individuals from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities, we offer specialist courses in:

- Arabic Language
- Islamic Banking & Finance
- Business
- Management & Leadership
- Islamic Studies

Introducing Masters Programmes

The College in collaboration with University of Dundee, are pleased to announce the launch of three unique Masters programmes in **Islamic Finance; Islamic Banking and Finance; and Islamic Banking, Finance and International Business**. Full information at:

almcollege.org.uk/study/courses/islamic-banking-finance

Fees & Funding

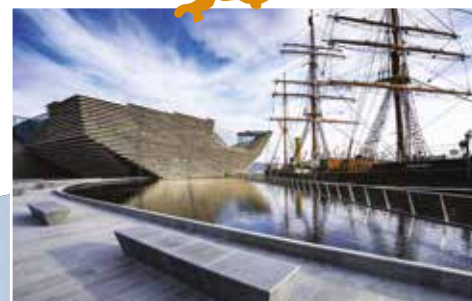
Information on fees can be found here: almcollege.org.uk/study/fees

There are also a range of scholarships and bursaries available:

almcollege.org.uk/study/available-bursaries

Apply now for September 2019

Apply online: almcollege.org.uk/study/how-to-apply



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