

Dubai says flying taxis to take off by 2026 from 4 stations across city



DUBAI: Dubai again is planning for the takeoff of flying taxis in this futuristic city-state, offering its firmest details yet Monday for a pledged launch by 2026.

Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, announced the relaunched flying taxi program on Twitter Sunday, saying air taxis will begin flying in Dubai within three years.

Sheikh Mohammed revealed that he had approved designs for air taxi stations at the World Government Summit in Dubai this week.

"From the World Government Summit, we approved today the design of the new air taxi stations in Dubai, which will start operating within three years," Sheikh Mohammed tweeted.

The announcement also included the city plans for four "vertiports" by Dubai International Airport, downtown Dubai, Palm Jumeirah archipelago and Dubai Marina. Those points will include two launching pads and four charging points for the flying taxis.

"We believe those are attractive areas with business hubs and tourist hubs that could generate considerable demand," Bahrozian said.

The pricing for the flying taxis "will be in the range of a limousine service in Dubai, maybe slightly higher," Bahrozian said. The RTA describes limo services rates as "at least 30 percent higher than taxi fares" in the city. Taxis have a minimum fare of around \$3.25 and charge \$0.50 a kilometer.

The Joby prototype can fly over 240 kilometers before needing a charge — something which would put Abu Dhabi and other areas of the country within range. It takes off and lands vertically, while its rotors tilt forward in flight. It has a maximum speed of 320 kph.

Joby Aviation Inc., which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, was at \$4.20 a share before trading Monday. Its major shareholders include Intel Corp., while Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines also has invested.

Opening the skies to flying taxis would contribute to easing the daily traffic that's only worsening as city population booms to over 3.5 million people.

Rush hour on Sheikh Zayed Road, a dozen-lane artery running down the length of the Dubai, alternates between dense gridlock and sports-car slalom.

Saudi Arabia's 5G experience among the best in GCC, says report



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's push to develop 5G infrastructure is helping it score higher in the Gulf Cooperation Council region in terms of achieving strong growth in both speed, video experience and availability of the network, the latest industry report revealed.

According to a report published by independent analytics company OpenSignal, the Kingdom recorded a 5G availability of 28.2 percent, just a few percentage points behind Bahrain and Kuwait where availability is 34.9 and 33.6 percent respectively.

This is despite the fact that Saudi Arabia has a large geographical area compared to other countries in the region.

The report titled, "Benchmarking the GCC 5G Experience," describes the availability of the 5G network — the time that users spend in an active connection with 5G — in Saudi Arabia as "outstanding."

This reflects Saudi Arabia's rapid growth in the 5G sector as it continues to expand its digital infrastructure with private companies. The Kingdom is also embracing advanced technologies to improve the 5G experience.

Earlier in August, the Saudi Telecommunication Co. increased its 5G infrastructure using an additional 5G spectrum to become the first operator in the Middle East and North Africa region to enable 5G carrier aggregation technology.

The network upgrade is expected to boost the 5G network capacity up to 60 percent and improve download speeds for subscribers.

The upgrade uses a 2.3GHz band spectrum for 5G across more than 1,000 sites in its initial deployment phase, and it will be carried out through the reuse of the spectrum initially used for 4G.

In March, Saudi Arabia conducted the world's first trial of 5G transmitters 14 km above the land at the Kingdom's Red Sea Project site.

The trial, touted to be the world's demonstration of the High-Altitude Platform System using aircraft to extend a 5G service covering an area of 450 sq. km. aims to ensure continuity of services, extended coverage to remote areas, and increase environment-friendly technologies.

The OpenSignal report further revealed that the UAE ranked top among the GCC countries in 5G download speeds, as users achieved average speeds of 316.8 megabits per second, followed by Qatar with 278.5 Mbit/s, Kuwait with 263.4 Mbit/s, and Saudi Arabia with 234.4 Mbit/s.

The same four markets topped the list for 5G peak download speed as well, with a score of 743.3 Mbps in the UAE, 713.4 Mbps in Qatar, 663.7 Mbps in Kuwait and 635.9 Mbps in Saudi Arabia.

In August last year, a report published by Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission revealed that the 5G download speed in the Kingdom was 370.12 Mbps on average, and the recent OpenSignal report indicates that the Kingdom has leapfrogged in terms of 5G download speeds.

In February, Saudi Arabia's operator Zain announced the rollout of the Kingdom's first 5G standalone network as it aims to develop projects in vertical technologies such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and robotics.

As expected, 5G upload speeds were approximately one-tenth the speed of users' average 5G download speeds, as designers of 5G technology concentrated more on downloads than uploads, the report added.

Kuwait topped in the ranking of 5G video experience where users had an excellent experience with 75 on a 100-point scale. The video experience scale in the UAE is 72.4 points, followed by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia with 71.5 and 68.8 points respectively.

Saudi Arabia, however, was placed in the sixth spot in the 5G gaming experience ranking with a score of 59.7 on a 100-point scale. The UAE ranked the top in this section with a score of 74 points, with a clear lead over Qatar and Bahrain which both scored 69.6 points.

"In all six markets, users experience much improved speeds and video experience using 5G. While smaller markets top the rankings for 5G download speed, the position of Saudi Arabia is notable: its users saw a strong uplift in both speed and video experience as well as good 5G availability despite its size," wrote OpenSignal in its report.

The GCC region is expected to have 62 million 5G mobile subscribers by 2026 and they will account for nearly 73 percent of all mobile subscriptions in the region, according to a report released last year by the Swedish company Ericsson.

New competition launched to empower emerging digital innovators



MAKKAH: The Center of Digital Entrepreneurship unveiled a new competition, Ma'amel Code, this week to empower Saudi university students and promote a new wave of digital entrepreneurship.

An initiative of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the competition seeks to transform innovative digital ideas into promising startups, fostering the growth of a digital generation.

Yousef Abu Bakar, director of the digital innovation program at the ministry, said that CODE was dedicated to supporting and empowering entrepreneurs and emerging tech companies.

“Operating through its branches in various Saudi universities, CODE has set up six laboratories across the Kingdom, including those at Princess Nourah University, King Saud University, Qassim University, Dar Al-Hekma University, King Khalid University, and King Faisal University,” Abu Bakar said.

These laboratories have highly skilled teams with strong technical acumen, offering extensive support to both university-based and external projects and startups.

The Ma’amel Code competition stands as a flagship initiative among the array of programs introduced by CODE.

It is tailored to encourage student-led projects. The process is straightforward — teams of students from each university can visit the competition page, accompanied by a technical expert, to present their innovative ideas.

A rigorous evaluation process is used to shortlist the most promising ideas. Once accepted, students undergo a brief training program designed to enhance competitive spirit and facilitate interaction among universities and the laboratories.

Winners will be awarded financial prizes and granted access to a variety of services offered by the laboratories, enabling them to realize their entrepreneurial visions.

The atmosphere in all CODE branches is brimming with tech companies, projects and aspiring individuals eager to tap into the wide range of services.

CODE’s involvement in the “Tech Growth” program positions it as an executive partner focused on supporting tech companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, in their market expansion efforts.

The partnership provides various support programs, including the MVP Lab initiative. Through this program, incubated companies receive non-refundable support amounting to SR150,000 (\$40,000) aimed at fueling the development of tech business models and diverse tech solutions.

Abu Bakar said that the Ma’amel Code competition was just the beginning as three more events were in the pipeline.

These forthcoming events will be announced later, each in collaboration with different partners and technologies, further igniting competition among university students and the valued partners of CODE.

Egyptian e-commerce platform Wasla raises \$9m

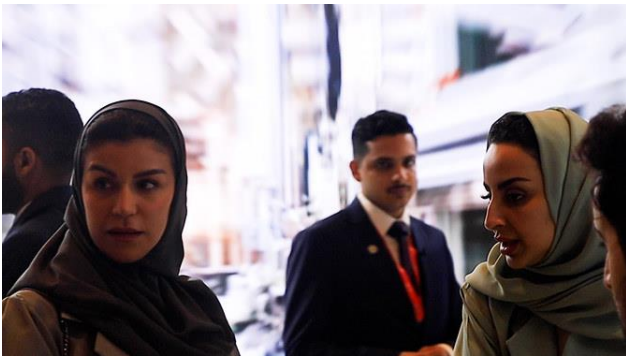


RIYADH: Egypt-based e-commerce platform, Wasla, has raised \$9 million from Egypt's largest non-bank financial service provider, Contact Financial Holding, formerly known as Sarwa Capital.

Wasla is planning to accelerate the platform's expansion in emerging markets as well as introduce more features and products such as 'buy now pay later.'

Founded in 2019 by Serag Meneassy, Taymour Sabry, and Mahmoud El Said, Wasla claims to be the first emerging markets mobile web browser and desktop extension that helps users save money, pay securely, and gain access to flexible financing.

Saudi women forge tech collaborations at G20 young entrepreneurs meeting



NEW DELHI: The G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance Summit, which ended on Saturday, has sparked new collaborations between Saudi Arabia and other G20 countries — many involving Saudi female investors in technology and innovation.

The three-day summit, held in New Delhi under India's presidency of the G20, attracted hundreds of participants with the aim of promoting young entrepreneurs as a driver of economic renewal and social change.

The Saudi delegation, led by Prince Fahad bin Mansour, consisted of more than 40 leaders from both the public and private sectors, of whom around a third were women involved in startups based on high-tech innovation in engineering and science.

"In Saudi Arabia, we have equal opportunities," said Meshael Al-Assaf, director of human capital development at the National Industrial Development and Logistics Program, who was part of the delegation. "If you have a good idea, regardless of whether you're male or female, we have a lot of programs that help entrepreneurs to scale up in the Kingdom."

One such women with a plan is Dr. Huda Al-Fardus, CEO of HealthGena — a Riyadh-based "digital health innovation service provider," for whom participating in the G20 meet was an opportunity to "experience the entrepreneurship ecosystem in another country" and set up international partnerships.

"We have been lucky to establish collaborations between ourselves, as a private company in Saudi, and private companies here in India," she told Arab News. "Hopefully, you will hear more about it."

Others, like Tuba Terekli, a Jeddah-based investor and international business consultant, joined the Saudi delegation to scout for solutions they could bring home.

“My expectations were all about meeting brilliant young entrepreneurs and those that are into deep tech and high-tech solutions that we can take back home as investors,” she said. “And it was beyond my expectations. So much positive energy, such brilliant minds. We have, here in the exhibition hall, brilliant startups — everything from satellites to drones, underwater and health-care robots. It’s incredible.”

She added that she was holding talks with three companies from the event, facilitated by the Kingdom’s programs for entrepreneurs.

“We are very blessed to have with us, as our key supporter, the Ministry of Investment. They have a program for entrepreneurship licensing that helps us — Saudi investors and businesspeople — to find companies anywhere around the world and ensure that, whether it’s a joint venture or distributorship or a production facility in Saudi Arabia, we have all means of support,” she said.

The significant participation of women in the Saudi delegation was no surprise to Terekli. Efforts to promote female leadership and entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia are at the core of Saudi Vision 2030, launched by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2016.

“We didn’t bring a large delegation of women to prove anything to anybody,” Terekli said. “It’s natural.”

For Noura Al-Otaibi — another Saudi delegate who has been training female entrepreneurs and helping them establish their businesses — the Kingdom has already become a “role model” for other countries. When she began, less than a decade ago, she had 60 Saudi businesswomen on board. That number has already grown eightfold and Al-Otaibi suggests she may expand internationally.

“We need to speak about common challenges for women in the startup sector globally. We need to support females across all countries and find common solutions for everyone,” she said. “I’m sure that Saudi Arabia is a benchmark for everyone, of any country, who is seeking positive transformation.”

Saudi communications minister discusses expanding technology ties with China



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah Al-Swaha held a series of meetings, including with the Chinese Minister of Industry and Information Technology, Jin Zhuanglong, during his visit to Beijing, the ministry said on Thursday.

The meeting discussed expanding the technology partnership between the Kingdom and China to support the growth of the digital economy in the region, as well as the technologies of the fourth industrial revolution and the development of digital competencies in the Kingdom.

During his visit, Al-Swaha visited the Beem Company offices in Beijing, and met with the employees, following the establishment of the partnership between the private sectors in the two countries, which resulted in Beem

launching the instant-messaging application during the LEAP Conference earlier this year, Saudi Press Agency reported.

These meetings come within the agenda of the high-level visit of the delegation to the digital economy, space, and innovation system, in light of Saudi-Chinese relations developments in recent years. They also reflect the strength of the two countries' partnership, which is characterized by an accelerated pace reflecting the escalation of global opportunities and the development of technologies in various fields.

Saudi Data and AI Authority recognized for achieving maturity in software development



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's technology prowess in artificial intelligence and data management has been recognized as a benchmark for process excellence worldwide, with its nodal agency achieving the highest level of maturity in software development, reported the Saudi Press Agency.

Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority, represented by the National Information Center, has achieved the most advanced process capability, becoming the first agency in the Gulf Cooperation Council to be awarded the CMMI Level 5 certification.

CMMI stands for Capability Maturity Model Integration, a process level improvement training and appraisal program, and Level 5 is the highest level of maturity within the model.

According to the SPA report, the CMMI Institute, which specializes in software engineering, evaluated the software development life cycle of the National Information Center and awarded it the highest honor.

The CMMI Institute was formally established in 2012 and later acquired in 2016 by the global nonprofit organization ISACA, previously known as Information Systems Audit and Control Association.

Positioning Saudi Arabia as a global leader in advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and software development is a key agenda of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

In 2022, Mishari Al-Mishari, the deputy director of SDAIA, told Arab News that the agency aims to create a leading data and AI-driven economy and make Saudi Arabia one of the top countries in technology.

"Data is the new oil, and that's our perception and belief of how much we could make out of data," said Al-Mishari.

Earlier in May, Google's vice president for global public affairs and public policy, Karan Bhatia, said that Saudi Arabia could provide the right environment for businesses and economies to maximize the potential of AI.

“The Kingdom is well-positioned to leverage AI with its young, educated population and a strong commitment to innovation. It is important to establish the right environment, policies and skills for AI so that people, businesses and communities in Saudi Arabia can benefit from AI,” said Bhatia.

In April, a report by Stanford University revealed that the Kingdom ranks second globally for societal awareness of artificial intelligence. The survey covered several areas, the most important being the extent of “society’s knowledge of the benefits and value of AI products and services.”

Emirati royal calls for more female influence on policy-making



PARIS: An Emirati ruling family member has called on tech firms and governments to include more women in policymaking to maximize the benefits and limit the dangers of new technology.

Sheikha Bodour Al-Qasimi, President of Sharjah Research, Technology and Innovation Park, told the 2nd Women in Tech Global Summit in Paris that offering leadership opportunities to women and including their perspectives in decision and policy-making would have a positive effect.

“Things need to change and change fast. We need to take the reins,” she said. “When you consider that even today, government decision-making, policy frameworks, and regulatory parameters are still dominated by men, we need a call to action.”

She addressed more than 400 international delegates from business, government, civil society, and the arts at the annual Summit, which aims to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and innovative STEM ecosystem.

Al-Qasimi shared UN Women data showing that women remain severely underrepresented at all levels of decision-making and across political life in general.

“According to UNESCO, 57 percent of STEM graduates in the Arab world are women, with this number rising to 61 percent in my country, the UAE,” said Al-Qasimi.

The publishing entrepreneur and philanthropist described women as creators of social fabric who, if empowered to be more influential in decision-making, would deliver policies that unlock the benefits of new technologies while managing their potential harms to communities.

“Today we need to ensure that gender parity is guaranteed and not just a target,” said Al-Qasimi.

Global ClimateTech Forum to discuss key energy policy matters at WSG 2023



RIYADH: Aiming to create a global platform to address energy and technology policy issues, the World Government Summit and US-based think tank Atlantic Council will launch the first Global Climate Technology and Policy forum during WGS 2023, which will be held in Dubai from Feb. 13 to 15.

The ClimateTech Forum will foster global dialogue on the pivotal role of governments in finding feasible, innovative energy and technology approaches to address climate challenges.

The forum will have top decision-makers, government officials, civil service organizations, and experts addressing energy security and the potential of large-scale climate technologies as key areas for government leaders and policymakers to discuss.

Omar Sultan Al Olama, minister of state for artificial intelligence, digital economy and remote work applications and managing director of the World Government Summit Organization, said: “The forum’s agenda is in accordance with the ‘Year of Sustainability’. It reflects the UAE’s directions for sustainable economic development and climate neutrality.”

“Cooperation to confront climate change must be a foremost global priority,” said Frederick Kempe, president and CEO of the Atlantic Council. “Action on climate entails ambition, steadfast political will, and fruitful discussion between nations, all of which will be on display at this forum.”

In its 2023 edition, WGS is expected to witness the participation of 20 presidents, including Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, president of Egypt; Recep Tayyip Erdogan, president of the Republic of Türkiye; Macky Sall, president of the Republic of Senegal and chairperson of the African Union; Mario Abdo Benitez, president of the Republic of Paraguay; and Ilham Aliyev, president of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

On day three of the WGS, Elon Musk, the CEO of Twitter and founder, CEO and engineer of SpaceX, is expected to attend the summit.

The ClimateTech Forum comes as the UAE prepares to host the 28th UN Conference of the Parties Climate Change Conference, or COP28, this year, which will assess global progress in tackling climate change.

Through its sessions, forums, and dialogues, this year’s edition of the WGS will discuss the most notable global challenges – both existing and future – and how to strengthen the capabilities and readiness of governments to cope with changes and future challenges.

Science, technology, investment hold key to ‘future-thinking’ UAE’s success



DAVOS: The UAE is utilizing science and technology to “leapfrog” its way to becoming a global leader in various fields, including space travel and tackling climate change, Emirati ministers told a World Economic Forum panel in Davos on Wednesday.

Sarah Al-Amiri, the UAE minister for public education and future technology, and Omar Sultan Al-Olama, minister for artificial intelligence, discussed how, since its independence more than 50 years ago, the UAE has a proven record of design thinking in governance and what lessons it can teach the developing world.

Al-Amiri said the secret behind the UAE’s recent successes had been its skill at harnessing and combining individual human potential and institutional, governmental potential while instilling a sense of urgency among the population to achieve certain goals.

“What drove us? A real sense of urgency, knowing that science and technology is required and a fundamental part of the growth of the future of our economy and the future of our industrial sectors,” she said.

“We have a technology transformation program (in the UAE), developed with and embedded within our industrial strategy. How do you sustainably and effectively increase the impact of your economic sectors?

“We are working closely with key local players to do that, but also fostering more global partnerships so we can create the necessary relevance and impact.”

Al-Olama said that the spirit of advancement has been part of the psyche of Emiratis and the wider Gulf region for millennia.

“We see that there is a constant need to adapt, to reinvent ourselves, and to face all challenges and opportunities equally,” he said.

“With every single era, the people of the UAE choose an industry and they go all in into it. If you look at the (ancient) trade of pearls as an example, it became a key industry, but we did not focus on local markets, we wanted to become global players.

“Moving forward (to today), the UAE has taught 1 million people in the Arab world how to code, and as that program concluded last year, it has ended up creating tens of thousands of companies and business endeavors across the Arab world.”

Al-Olama said that attracting global talent is key and that globalization should be welcomed, not shunned, but added that should a globalized world collapse tomorrow and fall back into global blocs, the UAE would have the talent and “future thinking” required to face that challenge.

Saudi Arabia to host ICT Indicators Forum on March 8



RIYADH: National and international experts are set to congregate in Riyadh to discuss key developments and future trends in the information and communication technology sector amid Saudi Arabia's push to promote digital transformation.

Saudi Arabia's Communications, Space and Technology Commission, in association with the International Data Corporation will host the ICT Indicators Forum in the capital on March 8.

The ninth edition of this forum, which will take place at Four Seasons Hotel, comes at a time when Saudi Arabia is steadily diversifying its economy in line with the goals outlined in Vision 2030.

"The Saudi government has been at the forefront of embedding digital transformation initiatives into its transformation journey and the results are there for all to see," said Hamza Naqshbandi, IDC's associate vice president for Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, in a press statement.

As the execution phase of Vision 2030 approaches, he said the impetus on revamping and implementing digital strategies will be a key priority for Saudi organizations.

The forum is also expected to examine the progress made in enhancing the efficiency of Saudi Arabia's digital infrastructure and reaffirm the vitality of scaling digital businesses to support the Kingdom's digital economy aspirations.

He added: "For the last eight years, IDC Directions has provided an essential platform for executives from across the ICT ecosystem to converge and discover IDC's outlook and predictions for the Kingdom's technology markets. It is our pleasure to collaborate with CST once again as we showcase the true value of effective public-private partnerships."

In line with its Vision 2030 goals, Saudi Arabia is steadily moving ahead in the information and communication technology sector.

According to the figures released by the CST Commission, the Kingdom's ICT market hit SR154 billion (\$40.9 billion) in 2022.

During 2022, Saudi Arabia witnessed several developments that boosted its ICT sector. This includes the registration of 600 firms in the first global spectrum auction aimed at covering the airspace with Internet services, with the size of investment opportunities forecasted to stand at SR1 billion.

Additionally, as a result of the commission's regulatory reforms, the number of ICT firms aiming to be listed in the financial market hit 11, reflecting a growth rate of 350 percent when compared to 2021.

Egyptian president meets with representatives of 'unicorn startup companies' in Dubai



President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi took part Monday in a roundtable discussion with representatives of “unicorn startup companies” operating in the sectors of technology, artificial intelligence, e-commerce and sustainable management of resources on the sidelines of UAE’s World Government Summit held in Dubai.

The attendees expressed interest in investing in Egypt, and those already having investments in the country, said they wanted to expand. In that context, the president showcased the government's eagerness for constantly communicating with investors to learn about the obstacles they face, and hence, eliminate them.

President Sisi said that private investors, especially startups, are pivotal for the transfer of modern technology, and sustainable development. He also shed light on the economic, institutional, and legal reforms Egypt had carried out, as well as the facts that Egypt is turning into a regional energy hub, and that the country is a large market.

The president had met with UAE Vice-President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum, newly-elected Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, and Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva.

Egypt's Sisi directs to use technology in litigation system



President Abdel Fattah El Sisi gave directives to enhance the use of the state-of-the-art technology in the litigation system nationwide, said Presidential Spokesperson Ahmed Fahmy in a statement on Monday.

The President added that the usage of this technology would help regulate and govern all components of the system and contributing to the achievement of equitable and swift justice, Fahmy continued.

The President's directives came during a meeting with Minister of Justice Omar Marwan.

The meeting also followed-up on the main aspects were presented, including the expansion of the application of artificial intelligence techniques to convert speech into written text during judicial hearings.

The minister presented the latest ongoing efforts to prepare and draft the new package of family laws, particularly the personal status bill for Muslims and Christians, as well as the draft law establishing and organizing the Egyptian Family Support Fund.

Regarding this matter, the President gave directives to conduct a broad and in-depth community dialogue on draft laws to be finalized, listening with interest and seriousness to all voices, and accommodating various concerns and views that would achieve the laws' objectives of safeguarding rights, protecting children and supporting family cohesion, in the public interest.

MENA IT Spending to Reach \$178.1B in 2023, Egypt named regional tech hotspot



A new report by Doha-based strategic communications agency BLJ Worldwide reveals that the MENA region is expected to witness a significant surge in information technology spending, reaching \$178.1 billion in 2023.

The report, titled "MENA Tech 2023: Mapping the Technology Landscape," analyzed various aspects of the MENA technology sector, covering areas such as FinTech, gaming, and overall technological trends.

Egypt stands out as a leading player as one of the MENA region's top tech hotspots, emphasized by its inclusion as one of the top five countries for startups. These countries were selected based on several factors, including substantial investment in future technologies, thriving startup ecosystems, and world-leading internet connectivity.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was named as the tech startup capital of the region, with local companies raising \$1.85 billion in 2022. Saudi Arabia (KSA) follows closely behind with \$907 million, while Egypt secured \$736 million in startup funding.

In terms of funding for startups, the FinTech sector emerged as the most funded in the region during 2022, gathering \$1.1 billion. CleanTech secured the second spot with \$409 million, followed by logistics at \$362 million.

The report also identifies KSA, the UAE, Egypt, Qatar, and Bahrain as the top locations for research and development within the MENA region.

Egypt, the UAE, KSA, Oman, and Morocco were recognized for having the highest representation of influential women in the region's tech industry, highlighting the progress made in promoting gender diversity and inclusion within the sector.

The MENA region's ecommerce market is currently valued at \$37 billion, and the report predicts that it will exceed \$57 billion by 2026, indicating significant growth potential.

Justin Kerr-Stevens, CEO of BLJ Worldwide, emphasizes the tremendous strides made by the MENA tech industry, citing major investments and global events such as the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and Expo 2020. Kerr-Stevens also noted that the region has evolved from a collection of markets following the lead of the US and China to become a distinct technological hub with its own identity. The report also highlights the increasing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the prominence of women in Arabic esports, as well as the region's significant investments in future technologies.

Egypt's GAFI wins 1st place in MENA at AIM 2023 Global Awards for 5th consecutive year



The General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI) won for the fifth year in a row the first place, in the MENA region, in the 12th edition of the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM 2023) Global Awards held in Abu Dhabi on May 8-10, for attracting VIVO Communication Technology Co. Ltd. to operate in Egypt.

In a similar context, GAFI Chairman Hossam Heiba attended Monday the signing of an MoU between Benya, Khazna Data Centers, and Maadi Technology Park to establish a high-density data center with a capacity of 25 megawatts and a cost of \$250 million, spanning over 40,000 meters.

The signing was attended by UAE Ambassador to Cairo Mariam al-Kaaby who had met the GAFI chairman in February to confer over investment opportunities in Egypt and bolstering economic cooperation.

The GAFI chairman and the Emirati ambassador also discussed establishing partnerships in African markets to capitalize on the trade agreements between Egypt and other states on the continent.

Further, they also agreed on exchanging experience on the management of free zones and business development as well as periodically holding an Egyptian-Emirati Forum to examine investment opportunities. It is noted that the UAE is a partner in the foundation and operation of 1,300 firms in Egypt.

Telecommunications Minister, Amb. of Latvia talk ways to advance cooperation in information technology



Egyptian Minister of Communications and Information Technology Dr. Amr Talaat, received Andris Razans, Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia in Cairo, to discuss ways to advance cooperation between Egypt and Latvia in the fields of communications and information technology.

The meeting tackled topics of building digital capabilities, supporting technological innovation and entrepreneurship, financial technology, and electronics design and manufacturing.

During the meeting, Dr. Amr Talaat stressed the importance of strengthening bilateral relations between Egypt and Latvia and exchanging experiences in the field of communications and information technology.

Dr. Amr pointed out that Egypt has a base of young professionals trained professionally in the fields of communications and information technology. He also stressed out the possibility of Latvian companies benefiting from specialized Egyptian competencies.

Dr. Amr Talaat referred to the Applied Innovation Center established by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, through which solutions are developed using modern technologies to address the challenges facing society.

He also reviewed the efforts made to support technological innovation and entrepreneurship by spreading Egypt's digital innovation centers across the country, noting the possibility of inviting startups in Latvia to be present in Egypt's digital innovation centers and networking with Egyptian startups.

On his part, Andris Razans, Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia to Cairo, explained: "The communications and information technology sector is one of the important sectors that have contributed to the advancement of the state of Latvia," pointing to the development that Latvia has achieved in the field of developing communications infrastructure and building digital capabilities, as well as the growth witnessed by the emerging companies sector, especially in the field of quantum computing.

The meeting discussed ways to establish academic cooperation in the field of cybersecurity. It was also agreed to prepare a memorandum of understanding to be signed later that includes the areas of cooperation that were discussed.

Egyptian president discusses investment with Italy's Danieli Group



President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi received Wednesday Chairman and CEO of Italy's Danieli Group Gianpietro Benedetti who stated that the company planned to expand its activities in Egypt.

That is by establishing green industrial complexes capitalizing on incentives offered by Egypt, recently-introduced advanced infrastructure, as well as regional and global trade agreements.

President Sisi told Benedetti that Egypt aims for the localization of different industries and technology, expressing hope that the Italian company, specialized in supplying equipment and physical plants to the metal industry, to also introduce training center for Egyptian workers.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli, Minister of Planning and Economic Development Hala al-Said, Minister of Public Enterprise Mahmoud Essmat, and Chairman of the Arab Organization for Industrialization (AOI) Mokhtar Abdel Latif.

2023 in Review: Actualising Egypt's Ambition to Lead Space Technology in Africa



Egypt has one of the earliest and most robust space programmes in Africa. With two launched satellites, a space city under construction, the operationalisation of the African Space Agency in the country, several bilateral agreements in advancements in space technology, and other satellite projects in various development stages, Egypt led the African space technology development in 2023.

Some of its most remarkable collaboration is the capacity and technology agreement with China, which led to the launch of the Horus 1 and 2 satellites earlier in 2023 to combat climate change and the impact of urbanisation on its arable lands, and the development and testing of the MisrSat-2 in Egypt's state-of-the-art Assembly, Integration, Testing facility.

Furthermore, Egypt's Space City project continues to progress with monumental steps towards leveraging space technology for economic advancement. The newly operational African Space Agency, headquartered in

the Egypt Space City, was inaugurated in January 2023, and the Egyptian parliament approved hosting the agency in June 2023.

In this interview, Dr Sherif Sedky, the CEO of the Egyptian Space Agency, discusses more about the country's space vision for 2023, its achievements, and goals for the coming year.

What are the primary goals and objectives of the agency? What specific goals did the agency work towards in 2023?

We had several objectives for this year. The first was the completion of the AIT facility, which we managed to finish in time. It is considered to be the largest in Africa and the Middle East. The facility can handle satellites weighing up to 650 kilograms and run all seven major tests a satellite needs to undergo.

The second goal was to complete two satellite missions. The MisrSat2, a 350-kilogram satellite with two payloads combined (2 metres panchromatic and 8 metres multispectral), was tested at our AIT facility.

The satellite can give us imagery with a 2-metre resolution. It is ready and was launched on 4th December 2023 in China. The satellite has various applications, including precision agriculture in Egypt and Africa, urban development, and water and natural resources management. We are working hard toward commercialising the MisrSat 2 once it gets launched, not only locally but globally, and we are looking to share our knowledge and data with other African countries. Another of our objectives was the completion of our earth-receiving station, which will be used to control the MisrSat2. The second satellite that we needed to complete is the NextSat, a microsatellite that will be launched on 30th January 2024.

Additionally, we facilitated a lot of training programmes. We are working on the CLIMCAM project, a joint initiative between Egypt, Kenya and Uganda. The team from the other countries are working on-site at the Egyptian Space Agency to develop a remote sensing camera, which will be placed on the Bartolomeo platform of the International Space Station. We have also conducted several training programmes for African engineers from 16 countries and are trying to localise small satellite manufacturing and assembly technologies. Consequently, we have 60% capacity to develop nanosatellite systems. Currently, we are working with five other African countries to build a 6U satellite to help manage climate change. Also, on our own, we can develop 35% of a microsatellite system, including the satellite's software, design and AIT. And we have access to several applications for analysing satellite data and providing critical insights to policy-makers in various industries.

Egypt is also working on finalising the Egypt Space City, which is the headquarters of the African Space Agency. By the end of this year, we will have the project completed and ready for operation. This year, we focused on building space infrastructure. In 2024, our focus will be on commercialising our satellite imagery data.

What were the agency's most impactful initiatives or collaborations in 2023?

The most impactful projects for us will be the launch of the MisrSat 2 and the completion of the AIT centre, two projects we worked on with China. These will help us boost space technologies in Egypt and Africa at large. We had our local engineers trained on these projects and gained critical space infrastructure. This will increase the chances of strategic and symbiotic partnerships with other African countries.