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BATTLING IT OUT



Dubai Eye on Meraas' Dh8-billion Bluewaters Island ... expected to open this year.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a serious damper on the buoyancy that Dubai has experienced over the past year. With Expo 2020 Dubai facing a delay, all sectors – including construction – have to rethink their strategies. Businesses hope Dubai's can-do approach will help put the wheels of growth back on track once the virus battle is won.

THE world is combating the novel coronavirus by curtailing movement of people and economic activities and Dubai is no exception. At the moment, the extent of economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is still unknown, but it's going to be enormous. And this could be an understatement.

As we go to press, the situation is still fluid. Many of the economic activities are at standstill with plans for a number of global events put off for later dates and the fate of many more still under consideration. The world's greatest show, Expo 2020 Dubai, is also seen facing a delay.

How much Dubai's construction sector will be impacted by the Covid-19 crisis depends on how long it lasts. For now, construction is one sector that is allowed to continue its operations. However, it cannot be denied that the slowdown in other sectors will surely impact construction activities too. Once the virus is driven away, the market expects a V-shaped recovery, especially with the release of the pent up

energy, given that the city ranks among the world's top construction markets.

According to a list compiled by leading data and analytics company GlobalData, Dubai has been ranked among the top 'Construction Mega Cities' for 2019 – those having a pipeline of projects worth over \$30 billion – along with London and New York.

Dubai dominates the 2019 list with total project values amounting to \$611.2 billion, ahead of London which comes in the second place (\$342.9 billion) and New York in third (\$285.2 billion), while Moscow slipped to fifth place (\$201.4 billion) when compared to the 2018 rankings.

In a decision that will have a huge bearing on various sectors of Dubai's economy, the Steering Committee of Expo 2020 Dubai during a virtual meeting agreed to explore with the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), the World Expo governing body, the possibility of a one-year delay to the opening of Expo 2020.

"While they remain firmly committed to

Expo 2020, many countries have been significantly impacted by Covid-19 and they have, therefore, expressed a need to postpone the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai by one year, to enable them to overcome this challenge. The UAE and Expo 2020 Dubai have listened. And in the spirit of solidarity and unity, we supported the proposal to explore a one-year postponement at the Steering Committee meeting. We look forward to welcoming the world, which we are certain will only come out of this pressing challenge stronger, and more resilient than it ever was," said Reem Al Hashimy, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation and Director General, Expo 2020 Dubai.

Billions of dollars are being invested by the emirate to host the Expo 2020 Dubai – the first time the event will be staged in the Arab world. Work continues at the event site, where Expo-led construction is complete, and international participant pavilions are being completed (*see Page 44*).

The construction sector has been indi-

rectly affected by some of the social distancing measures that have been implemented to 'flatten the curve' of the spread of Covid-19, according to GlobalData.

One of the major concerns for the construction sector is materials supply. With many countries suspending manufacturing and business operations to contain the virus, the market will be hard-pressed for supplies and this is bound to delay several projects that are under way.

The UAE Central Bank's Dh100 billion (\$27 billion) stimulus package and the other steps announced by Dubai to mitigate the impact on the private sector and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), will help them tide over the difficult period and be in a position to meet the demands of the market when things settle down.

Dubai's real estate sector has been witnessing an upsurge over the recent past, particularly with the Expo 2020 Dubai having provided the required impetus to fuel demand in the market. According to leading property portal Property Finder, the emirate marked the highest number of sales transactions since 2008 in 2019. And alongside the trend to cater to the affordable segment of the market, Dubai has continued to focus on creating architectural landmarks, such as the Dubai Creek Tower, Dubai Eye at Bluewaters Island, Museum of the Future, One Zabeel, Meydan One Mall, Royal Atlantis Resort and Residence and Uptown Tower, to name a few.

As a trendsetter in the global arena, Dubai has been quick to adopt new technology such as 3D-printing, which has already earned it another accolade in the Guinness

Expo 2020 Dubai ... a catalyst for growth.



Book of World Records for having completed the largest 3D-printed two-storey structure in the world, with a height of 9.5 m, and spanning a total area of 640 sq m.

This latest accomplishment is in line with the directives of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, to construct 25 per cent of buildings in the emirate utilising 3D-printing technology by 2030.

Local real estate developer Emaar Properties has followed the lead by announcing plans to build its first 3D-printed home at Arabian Ranches III in Dubai as a first step towards its ambition to be a leading adopter of advanced construction technologies.

On the sustainability front, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (Dewa) is

working to transform Dubai into a global hub for clean energy and green economy, to ensure the city gains recognition as having the lowest carbon footprint in the world. In line with these goals, Dewa is spearheading the development of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MBR) Solar Park, which will be the largest single-site solar park in the world based on an independent power producer (IPP) model. The project is in line with the objectives of the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050 to provide 75 per cent of Dubai's total power output through clean energy, which will require a production capacity of 42,000 MW of clean and renewable energy by 2050.

POWER & WATER

Dubai's ambitious plans for the MBR Solar Park have made remarkable headway particularly over the past year, with the 800-MW third phase of the facility expected to be operational shortly.

Upon completion, the solar park will have a capacity of 5,000 MW in 2030 involving investments of Dh50 billion.

Dewa is building the 800-MW photovoltaic third phase of the solar park in three stages, in partnership with Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar), and EDF Group's subsidiary EDF Energies Nouvelles. Work is currently nearing completion on the third stage of the third phase, which has a capacity of 300 MW photovoltaic technology. The 200-MW first stage became operational in May 2018;

The MBR Solar Park ... a Dh50-billion investment.





The RTA has carried out a number of roads projects, including those to link Deira Islands.

and the 300-MW second stage became operational in August 2018.

The solar power projects currently operational in the MBR park have a capacity of 713 MW with planned capacity expected to rise to 1,013 MW this month (April).

Work is also in progress on the 950-MW Phase Four of the mega solar plant that will boast both concentrated solar power (CSP) and photovoltaic technology to provide clean energy for 320,000 residences and help reduce 1.6 million tonnes of carbon emissions annually, according to Dewa. This phase includes the construction of the world's tallest solar tower at 260 m and the world's largest global thermal storage capacity of 15 hours, allowing for energy availability round-the-clock.

Phase Four of the project will use three technologies to produce clean energy, 700 MW of CSP – 600 MW from a parabolic basin complex and 100 MW from a solar tower; and 250 MW from photovoltaic solar panels.

Finally, the 900-MW fifth phase of the solar park will be built by a consortium led by Acwa Power and Gulf Investment Corporation. This phase is scheduled to become operational in stages starting Q2 of 2021.

Among other projects in this sector, Dewa intends to build 68 new 132/11 kilovolt (kV) substations over the next three years, at a projected value of Dh8 billion.

The authority has also indicated its intention to construct floating solar photovoltaic plants in the Arabian Gulf.

ROADS & METRO

Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) has completed several projects to ensure that the emirate's metro and road network is world class and geared to tackle the influx of the millions of visitors that will arrive for the six-month-long Expo 2020 Dubai. Among its initiatives at the site, the RTA has started the trial run of an autonomous vehicle that will enable individuals to commute on a dedicated path from the main entrance to the staff offices (*See Page 50*).

Elsewhere in the emirate, it has embarked on major developments such as the Dh5.35-billion Shindagha Corridor Improvement scheme, a 13-km-long road network along Sheikh Rashid, Al Mina, Al Khaleej, and Cairo Streets that will be executed in five phases and is due for completion in 2027 (*see Page 15*).

The RTA has also embarked on a five-year plan for the improvement of metro and marine transport stations and their surroundings to enhance multi-modal transit integration. A key project open to investors is a multi-usage Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project above the Union Metro Station to be developed on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis.

Key road projects completed last year include the tunnel and road works leading to the entry/exit points of Jewel of the Creek project undertaken in collaboration with Dubai International Real Estate.

Also in line with the Dubai Self-Driving Transport Strategy, which aims at converting 25 per cent of total mobility journeys in the emirate into driverless journeys by 2030, the RTA has signed an MoU with skyTran, a global company specialised in the development of suspended transport systems, to help develop advanced public transport facilities in Dubai.

The agreement involves developing Sky Pod units operated by 'Maglev' technology, which are characterised by their safety and speed as well as saving much of the resources associated with the daily mobility of people.

REAL ESTATE

Dubai's real estate market has demonstrated immense acumen in catering to the diverse requirements, tastes and budgets of investors from around the globe. For instance, among its latest offerings are the most exclusive 15,127-sq-ft penthouse in Dubai – located at Serenia Residences on the crescent of The Palm Jumeirah – for a whopping Dh55 million; a variety of affordable homes in some of



Nakheel Mall ... recently opened on Palm Jumeirah.

the up-and-coming neighbourhoods; and even homes that can be personalised, such as through Damac's 'A La Carte Villas', the UAE's first design-your-home concept (see Page 67).

It is no wonder then that Dubai registered a total of 41,988 real estate transactions in 2019, marking the highest number of sales transactions registered annually in the emirate since 2008, according to Property Finder.

The number of property deals during 2019 also marks a growth of 20 per cent in the volume of registered property sales transactions compared to 34,961 transactions in 2018, according to Data Finder, the real estate insights and data platform under the Property Finder Group.

The emirate's real estate market has, therefore, grown by 260 per cent in the past 11 years in terms of the volume of transactions, it says.

This news confirms recent reports that the Dubai property market has been regaining

number and value of transactions increasing for property sales in the emirate.

Popular freehold communities such as Palm Jumeirah, Dubai Marina, Downtown Dubai and Jumeirah Village Circle dominate the sales segment in the secondary market, added the 2019 End of Year report from Bayut.

Meanwhile, many developers in the emirate have been reassuring investors that work is progressing steadily on all their projects. For instance, Azizi Developments has set an ambitious target

to complete almost 3,000 housing units across 10 buildings in some of its key developments across Dubai. Among its key projects is Riviera, a 71-building French Mediterranean-inspired master-planned community project in Mohammed bin Rashid City, which will see several completions this year (see Page 64).

Among developers in the market, Emaar Properties has dominated the Dubai real estate landscape. The developer of the iconic Burj Khalifa is seeing a great deal of in-



Dubai registered a total of 41,988 real estate transactions in 2019, marking the highest number of sales transactions registered annually in the emirate since 2008

momentum, especially after the formation of the Higher Real Estate Committee in September 2019 to rebalance supply and demand. The committee is said to have helped inspire market confidence, with both October and November 2019 having seen a record number of transactions – 4,774 and 5,037, respectively. December 2019 clocked in 2,989 registered property sales transactions.

Meanwhile, another leading property portal Bayut reported that property prices in Dubai's popular areas continued to become more competitive throughout 2019 compared to 2018, resulting in both the

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The Valley ... a new Dh25-billion master development by Emaar Properties.

terest for projects being built under its joint ventures with Meraas and Dubai Hills Estate. Meraas is a local developer responsible for projects like Bluewaters Island, La Mer and City Walk.

Emaar units were primarily sold in projects such as Downtown Dubai, Dubai Hills Estate, Dubai South, Dubai Creek Harbour, Dubai Harbour and Arabian Ranches 2.

Other top developers are Damac Properties, Nakheel, Dubai Properties, Azizi Developments, Seven Tides International, Danube Properties and MAG Group.

Damac's largest community development project is Akoya, which welcomed its first residents within its 'Claret' cluster last July with a further 1,300 homes due to be delivered soon across other clusters within the 55-million-sq-ft master development. Other key developments by Damac are Aykon City, a \$2-billion luxury mixed-use project, coming up on Sheikh Zayed Road; and Damac Towers by Paramount, a collaboration with Paramount Hotels and Resorts, which was topped out last October.

Here is a selection of some of major real estate developments that have made headlines over the past year:

Uptown Tower: DMCC's (Dubai Multi Commodities Centre) 81-floor Uptown Tower, the first super-tall structure in the Uptown Dubai district is on schedule for completion in Q1 2022. Work on the landmark development is reported to be 20 per cent complete. Uptown Tower will stand 340-m tall featuring 188 luxury hotel rooms and suites, Grade-A offices and 229 uniquely designed branded residences.

Uptown Dubai district will be a 24-hour neighbourhood featuring world-class dining, high-end retail outlets, a central en-

tertainment plaza and hotels and leading businesses.

Burj Crown: Burj Crown – a 44-storey luxury residential tower located on the vibrant Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Boulevard with direct views of Dubai Opera and Burj Khalifa – was launched by Emaar Properties in January. Designed by leading Hong Kong-based architecture firm LWK Partners, the 440-unit tower offers one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments.

MAG City: MAG Development, the real estate arm of the UAE-based MAG Holding Group, broke ground on MAG City, its \$2-billion mixed-use project located at Mohammed Bin Rashid City's Meydan District 7. China National Chemical Engineering Group Company (CNCEC) has



Burj Crown, a 44-storey luxury residential tower launched this year.

the contract for the construction of Phase One of MAG City.

MAG City will feature 5,100 housing units comprising studios, one- and two-bedroom apartments as well as 694 units comprising two, three- and four-bedroom townhouses, in addition to retail and other amenities.

MAG City offers public facilities with an area of 48,000 sq m, 8,000 sq m of retail spaces, and 84,000 sq m of public parks and green areas. The mega development is due for completion in 2022.

The Valley: Launched by Emaar Properties last November, The Valley is a new Dh25-billion master development on Dubai-Al Ain Road.

Running through the heart of this ground-breaking masterplan is a lush green ribbon of breathtaking landscape, connecting residents with vast open spaces and mega-amenities, inspiring the name: The Valley. The master development will feature expertly designed townhouses in addition to world-class amenities, nurturing a strong sense of community and family-friendly living, with retail, entertainment, recreational, educational and health facilities.

The first cluster of townhouses at The Valley, named Eden, is due to be ready in Q4, 2022 and will offer three- and four-bedroom villas.

Heart of Europe: Kleindienst Group, the UAE's largest European property developer, expects to deliver key phases of its Dh5-billion Heart of Europe project this year (see Page 35). The developer created quite a stir last year with its summer promotion that offered visa-free travel to Europe by offering Moldovan citizenship to anyone who invested in the project by last September.

OTHER PROJECTS

Dubai will also host the first manufacturer of high-performance luxury sports cars in the Middle East when W Motors completes work on its automotive facility in Dubai Silicon Oasis, being set up with an investment of Dh370 million.

Another first for Dubai, Emirates Central Cooling Systems Corporation (Empower) has announced pilot operation of the world's first unmanned cooling plant at Jumeirah Village Circle, with a total cooling capacity of 50,000 refrigeration tonnes (RT). ■

DUBAI AT A GLANCE

Package name	Owner	Status**	\$ Million*
Al Ghadeer Community Extension	Aldar Properties	Construction	2,720
Al Maktoum International Airport Expansion – Overview	Dubai Aviation Engineering Projects (DAEP)	EPC ITB	36,000
Al Sufouh Tram System – Overview	Roads and Transport Authority (RTA)	PMC	1,000
Aykon City – Overview	Damac Properties	Construction	2,000
Bluewaters Island – Overview	Meraas Holdings	Construction	1,600
Clean Coal Fired Power Station – 1,200 MW – Phase 3	Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (Dewa)	Feasibility Study	1,500
Deira Islands Development – Deira Mall	Nakheel	Construction	1,600
Deira Waterfront Development – Overview	Ithra Dubai	Construction	816
Dewa Zero Energy Building – New HQ	Dewa	E&P	2,000
Dubai Creek Harbour – Overview	Dubai Holding – Emaar Properties	Construction	8,333
Dubai Hills Estate – Dubai Hills Mall	Emaar Properties	Commissioning	770
Dubai Metro – Route 2020	RTA	Commissioning	2,900
Dubai Strategic Sewerage Tunnels Project PPP	Dubai Municipality	Design	3,400
Emaar Beachfront – Overview	Emaar Properties	Construction	1,000
Emirates Towers Business Park	Dubai Holding	PMC	1,400
Expo 2020 Site – Overview	Dubai Municipality – Dubai World Central (DWC) – Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC)	Construction	3,000
Gate Avenue	Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)	Commissioning	1,000
Habtoor City – Overview	Al Habtoor Group/ BIC Contracting	Commissioning	2,900
Hassyan Clean Coal Fired Power Station – Overview	Acwa Power – Dewa	Construction	4,900
Jewel of The Creek – Overview	Dubai International Real Estate (Dire)	Construction	816
MAG City – Overview	MAG Lifestyle Development	Construction	2,000
Mall of the World	Dubai Holding	PMC	22,000
Marina Gate (Overview)	Select Group	Construction	1,000
Marsa Al Arab – Overview	Dubai Holding	E&P	1,700
Midtown Phase 1	Deyaar	Commissioning	817
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park – Overview	Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (Dewa)	Construction	5,500
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park – Phase 3	Dewa – EDF Energies Nouvelles – Masdar	Commissioning	1,200
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park – Phase 4 (700 MW CSP & 250 MW PV)	Dewa	Construction	4,500
One Za'beel	ICD	Construction	965
Pump Station (DS197)	Dubai Municipality	Construction	1,560
Royal Atlantis Resort and Residences	Investment Corporation of Dubai (ICD)	Construction	1,400
Shindagha Corridor Scheme – Overview	RTA	Construction	1,360
The World – The Heart of Europe	Kleindienst Properties	Construction	4,000
Town Square Development (Overview)	Emaar – Nshama Development	Construction	5,000
Wasl Gate – Overview	Wasl Properties	Construction	10,000

** E&P = engineering & procurement; EPC ITB - engineering, procurement and construction invitation to bid; PMC - programme management consultancy.



Consultant	Contractor	Start date	End date
–	Al Rakha Contracting and General Transport	2018-Q2	2020-Q4
–	–	2014-Q1	2030-Q4
Alstom – Systra Consulting	Alstom – Besix	2006-Q4	2020-Q2
–	China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC)	2016-Q1	2023-Q1
Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel & Partners – Artelia International – Faithful + Gould – Mirage Mille Leisure & Development – WSP Middle East	Al Shafar General Contracting – Alec – Habtoor Leighton Group – Hyundai Engineering & Construction – Kier Group – Starneth Engineering – Van Oord – WSP Middle East	2012-Q4	2020-Q4
–	–	2017-Q4	2024-Q4
RSP Architects	United Engineering Construction (UNEC)	2016-Q1	2021-Q1
Ae7	Al Futtaim Carillion – Alec – Beaver Gulf Group – CSCEC – Ssangyong E&C	2015-Q1	2022-Q1
–	Ghantoot Gulf Contracting – Ghantoot Transport & General Contracting	2016-Q4	2024-Q4
Atkins – Faithful + Gould – Hill International – Turner Construction International	Al Basti & Muktha – Al Futtaim Carillion – Al Naboodah Contracting – Al Shafar General Contracting – Nurol Group – Trojan General Contracting	2006-Q1	2020-Q1
–	Alec	2016-Q3	2020-Q2
Parsons – Systra Consulting	Acciona – Alstom – Gulermak Heavy Industries Construction & Contracting Company	2013-Q3	2020-Q2
Parsons	–	2015-Q1	2023-Q4
–	Al Basti & Muktha – CSCEC – Nurol Group	2017-Q3	2022-Q3
Tecom Investments	–	2017-Q3	2021-Q4
HOK – Mace International – Worley	Acciona – Al Futtaim Carillion – Al Shafar General Contracting – Alstom – Arabtec Construction – Besix – CSCEC – Gulermak Heavy Industries Construction & Contracting Company – Laing O'Rourke – Shapoorji Pallonji & Company	2013-Q4	2020-Q2
Turner Construction International	Habtoor Leighton Group	2016-Q1	2020-Q1
Atkins – Khatib & Alami	Habtoor Leighton Group	2011-Q1	2019-Q4
Poyry	Acwa Power – General Electric Company (GE) – Harbin Electric Corporation	2008-Q4	2024-Q4
Kling Consult	Habtoor Leighton Group	2011-Q1	2019-Q4
Parsons	China National Chemical Engineering Group Company	2019-Q1	2025-Q4
KEO International Consultants	–	2014-Q3	2024-Q3
–	Alec	2014-Q3	2020-Q1
–	Al Shafar General Contracting	2017-Q2	2025-Q4
Hyder Consulting	Belhasa Engineering and Contracting Company	2015-Q3	2020-Q1
ILF Consulting Engineers	Abdul Latif Jameel Company Limited – Acciona – Acwa Power – EDF – First Solar – Fotowatio Renewable Ventures (FRV) – Ghella Construzioni – Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar) – Shanghai Electric Group – TSK Electronica y Electricidad	2012-Q1	2021-Q4
–	Acciona – Ghella Construzioni – Grupo Gransolar	2014-Q3	2020-Q1
Mott MacDonald	Acwa Power – Shanghai Electric Group	2016-Q2	2021-Q4
Mace Group	Al Futtaim Carillion – Alec	2008-Q1	2021-Q1
Stantec Consulting Services	MA Kharafi	2017-Q3	2022-Q3
Faithful + Gould	Six Construct (Sixco) – Ssangyong E&C	2014-Q4	2020-Q4
Parsons	Belhasa Six Construct – CSCEC – Wade Adams Contracting	2015-Q1	2025-Q1
–	City Diamond Contracting – JK Bauen – Sino Great Wall International Engineering Company – Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Company	2007-Q1	2023-Q4
Al Wasl Al Jadeed Consultants	Beaver Gulf Group – Engineering and Contracting Company (ECC) – Larsen & Toubro (L&T) – UNEC – United Engineering Construction	2015-Q1	2020-Q1
–	–	2015-Q4	2030-Q1

* List includes projects worth over \$770 million only.

Source: DMS Projects

Heart of Europe phases near completion



Sweden island ... part of the first phase development of the Heart of Europe.

KLEINDIENST Group, the UAE's largest European property developer, has announced that work is in full swing on its flagship leisure destination – The Heart of Europe – with Phase One and parts of Phase Two of the project set for delivery by October this year.

More than 1,500 construction workers, technicians, engineers and environmental experts are already working on the site to deliver the innovative dream island destination on time, says the developer.

The Heart of Europe comprises seven man-made islands reclaimed from the Arabian Gulf, part of The World – a cluster of 300 islands that make up a minia-

ture version of the world just 4 km offshore from Dubai's coast off the Jumeirah 1 beach.

The World is part of the vision of Dubai Government to create a number of island resorts that will reinforce the emirate's global reputation as a major tourism destination.

The first phase of The Heart of Europe comprising three islands – Sweden, Germany and Honeymoon Island – besides around 78 Floating Seahorse Villas (three-level floating homes with underwater views) and the Portafino Hotel will be delivered in time for the Expo 2020 Dubai, thus adding greater cultural and entertainment attractions to the emirate's offering.

Once complete, The Heart of Europe – which combines sustainability with innovation – will deliver 15 hotels with 4,000 holiday homes including the iconic Floating Seahorse Villas and over 3,500 hotel keys that will create 4,000 jobs and help boost the UAE's sustainable tourism sector, says Kleindienst Group.

On the steady progress, Group Chairman Josef Kleindienst says: "The Heart of Europe is an out-of-the-world luxury leisure and hospitality island destination that one could only dream about. However, the dream is about to come true as we have substantially scaled up construction activities on all the seven islands.

"Today, we can confidently say that Phase One of The Heart of Europe will be delivered as the emirate gets ready to receive 25 million visitors during the Expo 2020 Dubai."

"Some of our facilities, including holiday homes and hotel facilities, will be ready to receive the Expo 2020 Dubai guests and offer them unforgettable experiences and the sweetest memories that will inspire them to keep coming back to Dubai again and again," he adds.

Giving a project update, Kleindienst says the first nine Floating Seahorse Villas (FSV) have already been 'floated' into position in the sea. The villas are being hoisted into place by construction cranes and anchored into position on the seabed. The final ballast will be set up, once the fit-out has been completed. Cleaning and maintenance below the waterline will be carried out by a specialist diving team in the next few weeks, it states.

Strategically anchored next to Germany, the heart-shaped, Maldivian-inspired



The Heart of Europe ... comprising seven man-made islands.

Honeymoon Island and Portofino Hotel, a total of 78 FSV villas are being built ready for handover in the fourth quarter of 2020 when Phase One of the overall project will be completed.

Phase One also includes 10 prestigious beachfront palaces on Sweden Island; 15 contemporary style beachfront villas and 17 lagoon, on Germany Island, and the 489 Princess Suites at the Portofino Hotel on the main Europe Island.

"Our Floating Seahorse Villas are de-

Some 78 Floating Seahorse Villas will be delivered in the first phase.



signed with creative imagination and engineered through innovation, ingenuity and precision. We were the first in the world to develop a luxury floating, above and underwater living experience," he explains.

"Each of these Dh20-million (\$5.4 million) Floating Seahorse Villas offers 4,000 sq ft of space over three levels and can sleep up to eight people. It includes a spectacular underwater floor and marine life, and four flexi living or sleeping areas, featuring state-of-the-art technology and outdoor climate-control features," he states.

Among the most striking features are the 60-sq-m coral gardens situated outside every underwater window, with up to 11 species of coral and illuminated by a wealth of marine life from the Arabian Gulf.

"These underwater gardens protect and nurture marine life and are a classic example of our sustainable outlook and ambition," adds Kleindienst.

According to him, the group has till date sold more than 80 of the total 131 units; of these 78 will be delivered by Q4 during the first phase and the rest will be completed during the third phase, along with the handover of Switzerland and its 60 sundrenched waterfront villas.

Kleindienst, he states, was also gearing up to deliver the Monaco and Nice boutique hotels at Côte D'Azur beach at the Main Europe island by the year-end.

The hotels feature picturesque courtyards, lagoon-shaped swimming pools, and hotel suites with ensuite viewing decks and sea views. With white sandy beaches and over 500,000 sq m of coral reefs, the pioneering project will also feature Spanish olive trees (aged between 100 and 1,500 years, specially sourced from Andalusia, a region in Spain's southern coast) and the world's first climate-controlled rainy street and snow plaza, he adds.

The group chairman says Heart of Europe had been designed with zero-discharge and zero micro-plastics policies to ensure the protection of the Arabian Gulf and species of marine life that reside around the seven islands.

"Sustainability and the protection of marine life have been pivotal in the development of the Heart of Europe. The project is home to the Coral Institute which spearheads a pioneering coral reef programme that aims at developing marine life in the surrounding waters," he adds. ■



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Al Gurg group marks key milestones



Showrooms of the ESAG Building Materials Division.

TWO companies under the umbrella of the Dubai-based Easa Saleh Al Gurg (ESAG) Building Materials Division are celebrating key milestones this year: Mac Al Gurg is marking 45 years of successful operations, while Al Samsam Building Materials commemorates 25 years of service, both in the UAE building and construction industry.

ESAG Building Materials Division (BMD) is part of the diverse corporation Easa Saleh Al Gurg Group, a well-respected UAE conglomerate comprising 27 companies with proven competencies in the building and construction, real estate, retail and industrial sectors and in joint ventures; with a portfolio of over 370 international brands.

The dedicated division for building materials was formed just a year ago – in March 2019 – to streamline and promote the sales of the growing business lines offered by the three companies under its fold, namely Mac Al Gurg, Al Samsam and Bath & More.

“ESAG Building Materials Division will manage and develop the building and infrastructure business of ESAG Group, through a proactive distribution business model that reflects the dynamic environment of the UAE,” Nicholas Papadopoulos, General Manager of the division, tells *Gulf Construction*.

“We aim to become a sustainable division with profitable entities on board, through a

distribution network comprising premium brands. We are also looking to expand our business in key GCC markets in the near future,” he adds.

As the trusted supplier of innovative, reliable and sustainable building solutions in the region, the division is building on ESAG’s 60 years of expert industry experience. BMD’s services include consultancy and professional supply of building materials covering sanitary ware, piping, metering and drainage solutions, gas fittings and distribution systems, shelving and racking products and passive fire protection.

BMD aims to be the preferred supplier in the construction industry, offering value-added and sustainable solutions for a safer and healthier environment. “Driven by a passionate, skilled team, our mission is to offer a wide variety of building solutions of consistent quality and the highest level of service. As a company partnering in the growth of the UAE, our focus has always been to create value for our shareholders, clients and, most importantly, the communities we operate in,” says Papadopoulos.

MAC AL GURG

The veteran in the division, Mac Al Gurg, has been active in the UAE building and construction industry since 1975. Today, Mac Al Gurg has established itself as one of the most reliable solutions providers for the building and construction industry. It has gained a formidable reputation for

bringing the most cutting-edge products to the UAE.

Some of the landmarks to which it has contributed are Golden Mile, Fairmont Hotel and Kingdom of Sheba at Palm Jumeirah; Park Place Tower on Sheikh Zayed Road; Cayan Tower (Infinity Tower) at Dubai Marina; and Safa Tower at Business Bay.

“We have never compromised on the quality of our products,” Papadopoulos stresses. “Partnering with renowned European and American brands, we pride ourselves on the ability to supply clients with technologically advanced, high-quality products. We ensure our product recommendations don’t just meet our client’s requirements, but exceed them.”

“With 45 years of success, Mac Al Gurg has established a strong footprint in the market,” Papadopoulos comments. “Mac Al Gurg has established a key role in the trading business of the UAE with a strong portfolio of premium brands.”

The product range covers bathrooms, building products and infrastructure products.

The bathroom line includes sanitary ware from Armitage Shanks (exclusive distributor), Brizo, Delta, Sanco, Lovair and Franke; toilet cubicles from Venesta; shower enclosures from Roman; and Tristone surfaces.

“We were recognised as the Distributor of the Year 2019 for Franke bathroom acces-

sories,” he remarks.

In terms of building products, Mac Al Gurg offers copper pipes and fittings from Pegler Yorkshire; smart metering systems from Diehl; drainage systems from Blucher, Purus and Wade US; water heaters from National Heaters of Oman and Pacific; radiant heating and cooling systems from Kantherm and Rehau; and domestic gas pipes and fittings from WASK, Sperry, Rehau and Enolgas.

Mac Al Gurg also offers stormwater and sewage systems from PAM St Gobain and Hauraton; access covers from Gatic and Howegreen; and water transmission systems from FAF, Viking Johnson and Straub as part of its infrastructure range.

As the market is evolving, Mac Al Gurg has been refining its business model to align with current and future market requirements.

“Introducing brand management with a strategic business development plan, tai-



Partnering with renowned European and American brands, we pride ourselves on our ability to supply clients with technologically advanced, high-quality products

lored to the geographical coverage, is the way forward. With strong inputs and support from the trade marketing and media communication platforms, Mac Al Gurg is in the transformation stage to become an essential partner of the building and infrastructure industry,” Papadopoulos remarks.

AL SEMSAM

Al Semsam Building Materials was established in 1995 to address the need for value engineering on projects with premium products, according to Papadopoulos.

“It was also set up to address a new and promising sector – passive fire protection (PFP) for the building and construction market in the UAE,” he adds.



Papadopoulos ... looking to expand in the GCC.

Passive fire protection is a “must” for all the buildings and hence Al Semsam has been focusing aggressively on fire-rated products, he emphasises. Among its latest projects are the Expo Link-Route 2020 of the Dubai Metro, for which it supplied and installed bullet-resistant glazing systems for the station ticket office; the Royal Atlantis in Dubai; and the Mall of Oman in Muscat, Oman.

“Dubai Civil Defence authorities, in alignment with the rest of the UAE, have strict guidelines on fire-rated products. Al Semsam has taken this opportunity to develop a strong premium portfolio of relevant fire-rated products from elite brands in this category. Working closely with our principals and in line with the authorities, we are addressing market needs, by also setting up a manufacturing facility to offer fire-rated and bulletproof glazing products for premium projects in the UAE,” Papadopoulos continues.

“Our latest passive fire protection solutions offer up to four hours of fire protection for structures. Among our partners in this business are Promat, Bach, Stalprofil, Vetrotech and Trespa,” he says. Other brands it represents in the PFP sector include Georgia Pacific, Stalprofil and Navair.

Today, Al Semsam is an industry expert in high-quality building products and works with leading providers to supply solutions for passive fire protection, warehouse shelving and racks, pipes and fittings, building infrastructure, drainage and access. It has built long-standing relationships with clients with a high level of professionalism

and efficiency, having supplied a wide range of products for numerous prestigious projects in the region.

The company offers drainage and access solutions from ACO; manholes from RBA; pipes and fittings from Mueller and Conex Banninger; warehouse shelving and racks from Kingmore Racking and Dalian East-found; and building infrastructure products from Amorim Insulation, and Prima.

BATH & MORE

The new entrant at ESAG Building Materials Division is Bath & More, which was set up in September 2019 to supply affordable, luxurious bathroom and kitchen solutions from European and American brands.

“With marquee brands, we are able to support our clients with a full range of services – from design advice to specification recommendations,” says Papadopoulos. “Whether our clients require premium shower enclosures, faucets, bathroom mixers or heating systems, we can create bespoke solutions, regardless of the design, project size, requirement or budget.”

Bath & More was established to address the needs in the refurbishment segment of the market.

“End users are moving towards retail and/or B2B for refurbishments, mainly for bathrooms, kitchens, flooring, painting and furniture,” he says. “Bath & More addresses the needs of end users and professionals in the sanitary ware sector with an emporium of premium brands – and much more.”

The product range comprises bathroom fittings, sanitary ware and accessories from Grohe, Conti+, Laufen, Jika, Huppe, Hoesch, Bette, Blanco, Kaja and Inda; kitchen fittings from Grohe, Blanco and Practic; heating systems from Ariston; and coatings from Viero.

In line with its vision to be a sustainable division, ESAG Building Materials Division now offers under “one roof” a premium range of products and services from Mac Al Gurg, Al Semsam and group companies Al Gurg Paints and Al Mashrabia Furniture which offers bespoke kitchen solutions.

“We are in the process of establishing our first showroom at a prime location on the junction of Sheikh Zayed Road with Umm Suqeim, to better serve our business partners, address the needs of end-users and more,” Papadopoulos concludes. ■

AFC eyes expansion in wider GCC

HAVING recently handed over the thematic souks at Expo 2020, Dubai-based AF Construction (AFC) is currently working on the fit-out of several pavilions at the prestigious site of the world-class event.

The leading Dubai-based construction major has also delivered the Festival Plaza at Jebel Ali which includes a new Ikea store, according a senior company official.

"The two projects handed over recently were completed to very challenging time-scales and they were a credit to our teams who often worked long hours to get these over the line," Edmund Mahabir, CEO of AF Construction, tells *Gulf Construction*.

"Whilst completing these projects to very challenging programmes, we maintained our excellent standard of health and safety," Mahabir adds.

AFC offers the full range of services for building and infrastructure projects across the UAE including luxury hotels, commercial offices, residential apartments and industrial civil projects. It works collaboratively with its customers and their design teams to deliver buildable, cost-effective solutions using innovative techniques.

AFC is now part of Al-Futtaim Contracting Group, which also includes Al-Futtaim Engineering which delivers mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) services, Al-Futtaim Technologies and Al-Futtaim FM divisions.

"This year has seen the consolidation and alignment of the AFC business with the Al-Futtaim Contracting Group and under the Al-Futtaim umbrella. As part of this



Mahabir ... challenging time-scales.

vertical grouping, we can now offer a wider and more complete range of services at a more competitive price and this will form an important theme for us in the marketplace going forward.

"Being part of the Al-Futtaim Contracting Group, we provide MEP, facility management (FM) services and specialties such as elevators, fire alarm installation within the overall offering," Mahabir says.

Apart from the fit-out work at Expo 2020, AFC is currently engaged on two residential projects for Emaar and civil engineering works for Emirates Global Aluminium's (EGA) Emal aluminium smelter at Taweelah.

For Emaar, it is engaged on a large residential project at Dubai Creek Harbour which is scheduled to be completed this year and has just commenced work on another residential high-rise tower within the Burj Downtown area.

"On the Dubai Creek Harbour project, we celebrated 10 million manhours without Lost Time Incident (LTI) on January 30, 2020," he comments.

The Creek Horizon tower project marked 462 days without LTI and the 10 million man-hour record is an industry best and reflects the Al-Futtaim Group's commitment to creating a safe workplace by setting high safety standards and ensuring operational excellence, he adds.

Meanwhile, in Abu Dhabi, AFC is expanding the aluminum potlines at Emal and in Sharjah, it is in the final stages of work on the Bee'ah headquarters, an iconic Zaha Hadid-designed building.

Commenting on the Dubai market, Mahabir says, there was a slowdown in the residential market last year. "After several years of growth, the residential market has slowed in the last year but there are still interesting projects coming on the market and a resurgence in infrastructure projects across the UAE. This did not come as a surprise to us and our forward business planning took account of this readjustment and we have been able to adapt the business to suit the increasing demand from infrastructure and oil and gas sectors.

"We strongly believe that AFC can offer world-class quality, health and safety, and a commitment to sustainability and delivery together with a competitive price – an offering that we believe few, if any, in the market can match," he claims.

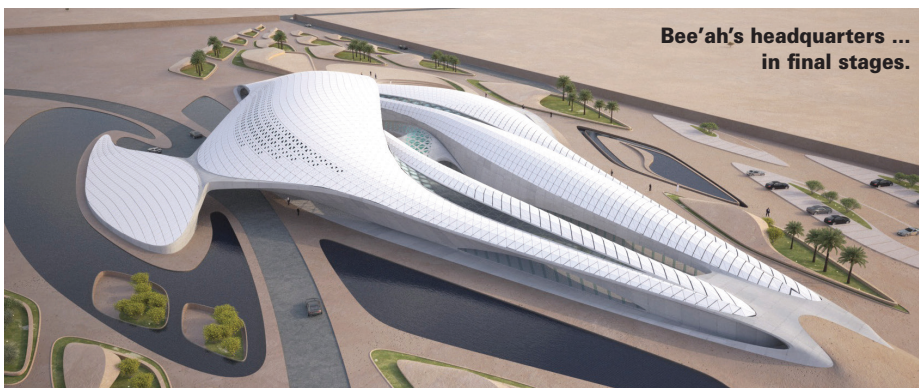
Mahabir sees 2020 as being a year to reshape the business as it pursues projects across the wider GCC and focuses on successfully and safely handover of the projects that are due for completion.

"We are still winning new orders in our core markets and we are particularly encouraged with the increased level of activity in Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi has always been an important market for us where, in the past, we have delivered some spectacular projects including the New York University, Al Muneera, the Yas Marina Hotel and the Abu Dhabi Investment Council headquarters," he points out.

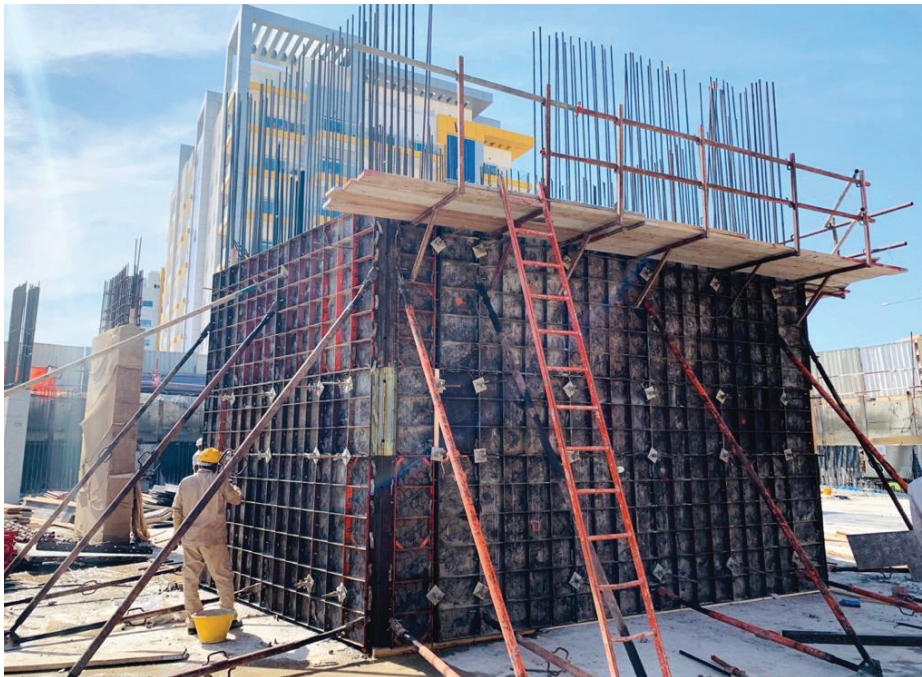
AFC's efforts are now focused on securing more orders within the UAE and it is also pursuing opportunities that will allow the company to expand into other regional markets on a selective basis. "We are also increasing our infrastructure portfolio to capture the increased spend we are seeing by the government sector," he adds.

Among other growth plans, AFC is putting increased emphasis on improved efficiency in building such as using modular building techniques, particularly where the company can influence the design at an early stage.

AFC is wholly-owned by Al-Futtaim group. The company has delivered mega projects in the UAE, such as Jumeirah Al Naseem, Al Bahr Towers, Dubai Marina towers, and Al Jalila Hospital. ■



Versatile Paschal modular systems gain popularity



A City Nights' project under way in International City using Paschal formwork.

AN increasing number of contractors working on villa developments in Dubai have been turning to formwork systems from Paschal-Werk G Maier to speed up work on their job sites, thanks to the versatility of these modular systems.

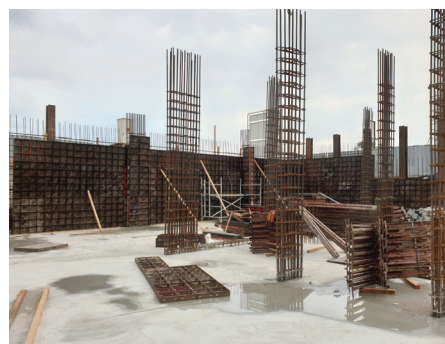
Over the past three months alone, UAE-based contractors such as Nashie Contracting, Shaharco Contracting and Al Ishrak Contracting Company have launched work on their villa projects located in Dubai Hills Estate, a master development in Mohammed Bin Rashid City, using the German formwork systems.

Nashie Contracting is using Paschal formwork for the retaining walls and columns of its villa development on Plot No 6316649, while Al Ishrak Contracting Company is also utilising it for the columns, core walls and retaining wall of the villa on Plot No 6319264. Both these projects are for Hadaeq Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid and involve the development of villas comprising a basement, ground level, first floor and rooftop. Also at Dubai Hills, Shaharco Contracting has deployed the Paschal system for the construction of

the retaining walls of its villa project on Plot No 6317013, which features a basement, ground and upper level.

The formwork systems and support are provided by Paschal Emirates Company, the Dubai branch of Paschal Concrete Forms, the Bahrain-based regional office of the German formwork manufacturer.

Other projects at Dubai Hills Estate where Paschal formwork systems were recently used are a nursery and retail facilities (parapet wall and water tank) being built by VGC Building Contracting. With the structure completed, the contractor is



Paschal systems ... increasingly used on villa projects.

now engaged in the finishing works.

Meanwhile, other latest additions to Paschal's list of UAE clients include Progress Constructions, Dubai Euro Contracting Company and City Nights Contracting. Progress Construction – which is working on nine residential buildings at Meydan One for Azizi Developments – is using Paschal formwork for the retaining walls of the two basement levels of two nine-storey buildings within the development.

Dubai Euro Contracting Company is working on laying the third-floor slab of a four-storey commercial and residential building on Plot No 6180102 at Nad Al Sheba First in Dubai. The contractor is utilising the formwork for the construction of the building's shear walls, core wall and water tank.

City Nights Contracting is using Paschal systems to build the retaining wall and water tank at a mid-rise (two basement levels and eight upper levels) residential building at International City – Phase Two.

Another contractor that used Paschal formwork at International City is Ideal System Contracting, which is currently giving the finishing touches to its four-storey residential building project also at Phase Two of the development.

Paschal systems have been used by most of the leading contractors in the UAE such as Transemirates Contracting, ANC Contracting, General Construction Company, Al Shafar General Contracting, Trojan General Contracting, Al Tatweer Contracting (part of the Belhasa Group), Larsen & Toubro Construction, IAS Lootah Contracting, and Pivot Engineering, among others.

Paschal is a sought-after partner for concrete projects worldwide, with customers in more than 40 countries and 50 years of experience.

Set up in 1997 as the main office for the Middle East, Paschal Concrete Forms has since become one of the leading suppliers of modern formwork solutions to the construction industry in the GCC.

Paschal Concrete Forms, which is based at the Bahrain International Investment Park (BIIP) in Hidd, has an assembling facility for modular formwork and a stockyard in Bahrain. In addition, with a branch in Dubai and its Scientific and Technical Office in Dammam, Paschal is strongly represented in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region. ■

DELAY SOUGHT FOR BIG SHOW



The thematic districts ... landscaped with water and shading features.

While all Expo-led construction has been completed and the 192 participating countries are working on getting their pavilions ready for Expo 2020 Dubai, the possibility of a one-year delay to the opening of the world's greatest show was being considered due to the Covid-19 outbreak, at the time of going to press.

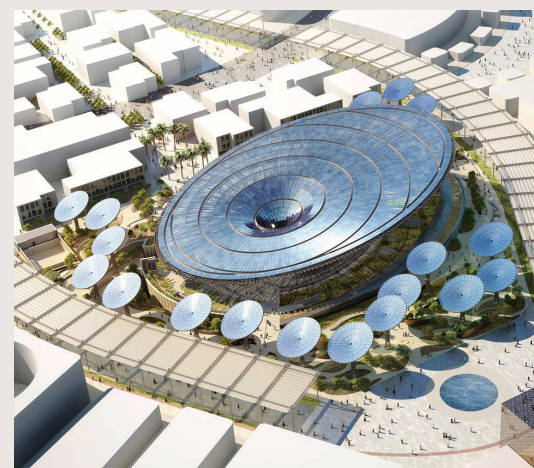
A S work continues at a steady pace on the various Expo 2020 Dubai projects, concerns regarding the coronavirus outbreak has prompted the organisers to consider rescheduling the six-month-long world-class event which was due to open on October 20, 2020.

The Steering Committee of Expo 2020 Dubai has collectively agreed to explore with the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), the World Expo governing body, the possibility of a one-year delay to the opening of Expo 2020. The BIE will now work with its member states and Expo 2020 Dubai organisers to establish a change in dates. A final decision on postponement can only be made by the BIE's

Executive Committee and the General Assembly and a change of dates requires a two-thirds majority vote from the member states of the organisation.

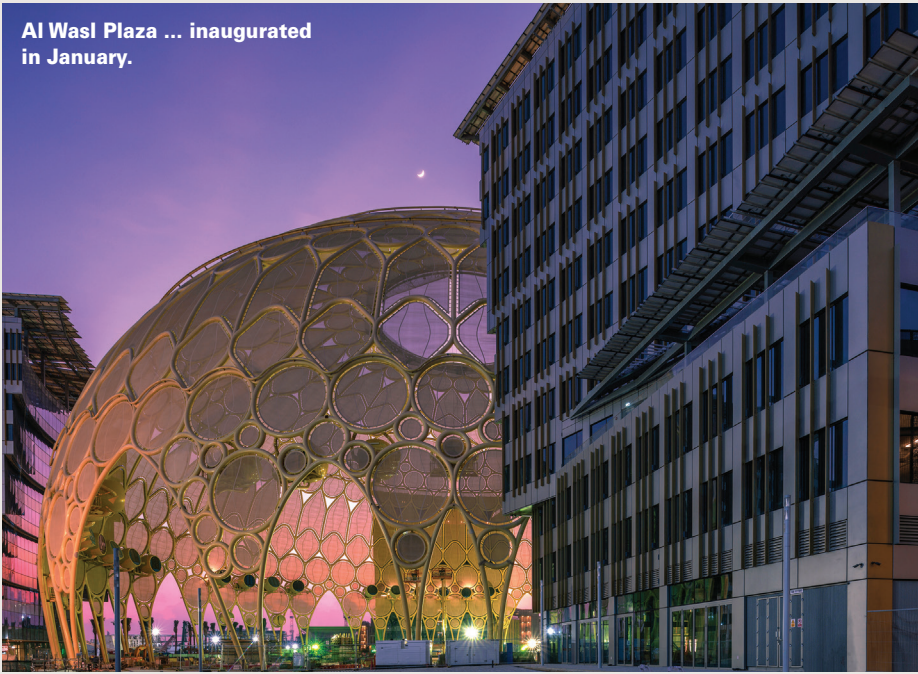
Elaborating on the decision, Reem Al Hashimy, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation and Director General, Expo 2020 Dubai, says: "The global situation is fast moving, and remains unpredictable. Over the last several weeks, we have been consulting with key UAE and international stakeholders to review the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on our plans and preparations for Expo 2020 Dubai.

"While they remain firmly committed to Expo 2020, many countries have been sig-



The sustainability pavilion ... designed to be a net zero energy building.

Al Wasl Plaza ... inaugurated in January.



nificantly impacted by Covid-19 and they have, therefore, expressed a need to postpone the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai by one year, to enable them to overcome this challenge. The UAE and Expo 2020 Dubai have listened. And in the spirit of solidarity and unity, we supported the proposal to explore a one-year postponement at the Steering Committee meeting. We look forward to welcoming the world, which we are certain will only come out of this pressing challenge stronger, and more resilient than it ever was.”

“We will follow due BIE processes on making the decision to delay Expo 2020. We remain firm in our collective commitment to deliver an Expo that’s true to its time and to our shared, urgent priorities. We believe that in light of this global challenge, humanity needs to come together to remember what unites us. That remains the collective ambition of all those involved in this Expo,” she adds.

Participating countries briefed the Steering Committee on the global precautionary measures that have to be taken to ensure the health and safety of all those involved in the preparation of this mega event.

Expo 2020 organisers have reaffirmed the UAE’s commitment to working hand in hand with its international partners to deliver a World Expo which holds true to its founding purpose: providing an inclusive global platform to address shared challenges, and seek solutions in the spirit

of international cooperation and global solidarity.

Dimitri S Kerkentzes, Secretary General of the BIE, says: “The world is facing extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances and we all expect the challenges to continue in the months to come. Today’s agreement by the organiser and the members of Expo 2020 Dubai’s Steering Committee to explore options for a one-year delay to the opening of the World Expo is welcome. In the spirit and in accordance with the Paris Convention of 1928, any decision on the World Expo needs to be collaborative, and agreed upon collectively in a vote of the countries that form the BIE. We will move forward in supervising the process to follow in accordance

with the rules and regulations of the BIE convention.”

A total of 192 countries are participating at Expo 2020 Dubai, the first World Expo and largest event ever to be held in the Arab world. All these participating countries will have their own pavilion for the first time in the 169-year history of the Expos. The show, held every five years, puts the spotlight on human brilliance and achievement and the theme for the Dubai event this year is ‘Connecting Minds, Creating the Future’.

According to the organisers’ construction update in February, the project had achieved 168 million working hours and has some 41,000 people working on site. Remarkable progress has been made on the ambitious plan to transform the 4.38-sq-km desert site, particularly over the past year. Approximately 2 sq km of this area will form the Expo gated area featuring the thematic districts, while the remaining 2.4 sq km will feature supporting amenities and facilities, including the Expo 2020 Village for participant and staff accommodation, warehousing, logistics, transport nodes, hotels, retail and a public park.

Several construction projects have been developed under the three sub-themes – Opportunity, Sustainability and Mobility – of the event. Major milestones have also been achieved along the way, the latest having been the installation of the three giant portals in February that will usher in 150,000 visitors a day on average or 25 million visits over six months of the show.



Mobility Pavilion ... designed by the UK-based Foster + Partners.



The thematic districts include 86 low-rise buildings.



Opportunity Pavilion ... designed by Australia's Cox Architecture.

Conceived by Expo 2020 in collaboration with top British architect Asif Khan and his studio, the portals are a futuristic adaptation of the traditional mashrabiya, an intricate design used across the region to regulate light and airflow. The 21-m-high and 30-m-long portals are woven entirely from strands of ultra-lightweight carbon-fibre composite that lend incredible structural strength. Each portal features two vast doors that will be opened every morning of the 173 days of Expo 2020 in a symbolic act of welcoming the world.

Earlier, at the end of January, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, inaugurated the iconic Al Wasl Plaza, the heart of the Expo 2020 Dubai site. Named after the Arabic word for 'connection', this centrepiece of Expo 2020 will host major ceremonies and celebrations, and the venue's steel trellis dome will act as an immersive 360-degree projection surface that can be viewed from both inside and outside. The dome, which reaches a height of 67.5 m and has a diameter of 130 m, covers an area the size of 16 tennis courts and weighs as much as 500 elephants.

In May last year, the construction of the three petal-shaped thematic districts was completed. These districts will feature the 192 country pavilions, showcasing unique architecture, culture and exhibits from

around the world. Designed by Hopkins and Partners, the thematic districts evoke old Dubai, with facades resembling traditional Emirati wind towers and walkways lined with flora indigenous to the UAE. Built by the UAE's Al Futtaim Construction, these thematic districts have been landscaped with water and shading features. They form the largest built-up area of the site and include 86 low-rise buildings. Each district will be anchored by its own thematic pavilion and connected to the central Al Wasl Plaza.

All Expo 2020-built structures are de-

signed to achieve at least Leed (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification, the globally recognised standard of sustainable architecture.

Terra, the sustainability pavilion for example, covers 25,000 sq m, has 6,300 sq m of exhibition space and has been designed to be a net zero energy and net zero water building. The pavilion has more than 1,050 solar panels arranged on its 130-m-wide canopy and on the locally-designed energy trees (e-trees) that dot the landscape and rotate to face the sun like sunflowers. These can produce four gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity per year and have the capacity to charge 890,000 mobile phones, according to the organisers.

Expo 2020 will have its own dedicated Dubai Metro station on the Route 2020 line, with carriages capable of transporting 44,000 passengers per hour to and from the site

The Dubai Metro Route 2020 extension, which will link Expo 2020 to the rest of the emirate, the three Dewa substations that will power the 4.38-sq-km site and other key water, sewage and telecommunications infrastructure, including the 2.2-km road network, have already been completed.

More than 80 per cent of the Expo-built environment will live on after the event as part of the future District 2020, an integrated mixed-use community. It will comprise 65,000 sq m of residential space and 135,000 sq m of commercial space in a location that will be home to world-class innovation, educational, cultural and entertainment facilities. ■



The 21-m-high and 30-m-long portals ... woven from strands of ultra-lightweight carbon-fibre composite.

Throwing light on French innovation



The design of French pavilion is based on the three pillars of bio-climatism.

FRENCH authorities have announced that work is progressing at a steady pace on their country pavilion at the Expo 2020 Dubai site.

Designed by the Atelier du Prado Architects and Celnikier & Grabli, the French Pavilion has light as one of the key inspirations.

The design of the pavilion is based on the three pillars of bio-climatism: Controlling solar gains, providing a highly insulating waterproof envelope, and limiting the use of fossil fuels as much as possible.

The French pavilion, which will come up over a 2,700-sq-m area, boasts an external façade covered with photovoltaic panels. It is this façade and a canopy, hanging at an altitude of 15 m and drawing a sky of 1,500 sq m, that will form an artificial screen and sky. This, in turn, will become dematerialised day and night in an invitation and a prelude to the "Light, Enlightenments" journey that the pavilion unfolds within it.

"With the support of our talented team that has been working non-stop, as well as the immense support we have received from the team at Expo, we anticipate construc-

tion to conclude by June, with a complete handover shortly before the launch," stated Philippe Mille, the pavilion director.

"The concept of the pavilion will bring to the forefront the interactivity and participation of all, which is an integral part of our public journey designed to interact with all types of visitors," he said, while visiting the Expo 2020 construction site in Dubai.

Mille was accompanied by Erik Linquier, General Commissioner and architects Bernard Mauplot from Atelier du Prado and Jacob Celnikier from Celnikier & Grabli during the tour.

Linquier said the pavilion will promote the French innovation model, which makes it possible to achieve sustainable development and international business competitiveness for connected and sustainable cities and territories, serving the citizens and the common good.

"The pavilion will express, through its name, "Light, Enlightenments", France's singular and innovative vision in terms of ecological and inclusive transition, combining a strong architectural gesture with an innovative immersive scenography," he added. ■

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Germany celebrates topping out of pavilion



Officials at the topping out of the German pavilion.

GERMANY has achieved a major construction milestone with the official topping out of the country's Expo 2020 Dubai pavilion, Campus Germany, early last month.

Some 480 tonnes of steelwork and 2,300 cu m of concrete has gone into the construction of the building taking shape on the Expo site. Over the past 12 months, construction workers have spent some 38,350 hours helping to complete the shell of Campus Germany.

Construction on the pavilion is moving to the next stage, said Koelnmesse GmbH, which is responsible for organising and running the German Pavilion at Expo

2020 Dubai on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

The exhibition design team is now all set to start finalising the content, and Koelnmesse is busy selecting staff for the pavilion.

While work gets under way on the pavilion interiors in the next few weeks, Cologne-based agency facts and fiction will start finalising the details of the exhibition.

According to senior German officials, the focus at Campus Germany will be on knowledge, research and human interaction – true to the Expo 2020 Dubai theme of “Connecting Minds, Creating

the Future”.

The consortium behind the German Pavilion work includes facts and fiction, responsible for content, exhibition and media design; Swiss company Nussli Adu-nic, in charge of concept design, planning and realisation); and Berlin-based Lava (Laboratory for Visionary Architecture, handling architecture and spatial design.

Speaking at the topping out ceremony, senior German officials said this was a milestone in the construction phase of Campus Germany within less than a year of the ground-breaking ceremony.

“The topping-out ceremony is another milestone on our journey to ensuring Campus Germany is finished in time for the opening of the Expo,” remarked Dietmar Schmitz, Commissioner General of the German Pavilion. “It’s a tight schedule but I’m hugely impressed by the professional approach being taken to make sure everything is ready on time.”

Preparations are under way away from the construction site too, with Koelnmesse currently, the company is in the middle of the recruitment process to find 180 staff to work in the pavilion.

The core team for the German Pavilion is scheduled to move to Dubai at the beginning of September. The completed pavilion will be handed over to Koelnmesse four weeks before the Expo launch, allowing time for the test phase and hands-on training for staff – the basis for smooth operations in and around Campus Germany and a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Expo visitors, he added. ■

US kicks off construction work on showcase

THE US authorities have officially kicked off construction work on the country's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, with the first concrete pour at the site in the Mobility thematic district.

The US pavilion aims to immerse visitors in innovation, showcasing technologies and concepts such as the hyperloop with the potential to move humanity into the future.

The dynamic structure was

designed by renowned American architect Curtis W Fentress. In line with its theme, ‘What Moves You? The Spirit of Mobility’, the circular pavilion features slants fashioned to project the sensation of movement, giving the impression that the building itself is in motion.

The first concrete pour took place in the presence of US Ambassador to the UAE John



US pavilion in the Mobility district.

Rakolta Jr and Counsellor of the Department of State T Ulrich Brechbuhl and other

officials, according to the US Embassy.

Speaking on the occasion, Rakolta said: “The US pavilion will showcase how freedom and liberty of thought have enabled success and innovation for American entrepreneurs and innovators.”

“We will share this message with the millions of visitors who will come to Dubai to attend Expo 2020, and we look forward to welcoming them to the pavilion of the US.” ■

Ireland to portray as 'Island of Inspiration'



Ireland's pavilion ... inspired by the Newgrange lightbox.

THE Republic of Ireland has unveiled the design of its 'Island of Inspiration' country pavilion for the Expo 2020 Dubai event. A fusion of Western and Eastern architecture, the facility is inspired by the megalithic Newgrange lightbox.

The pavilion will showcase the European nation as an island of inspiration and tell

Ireland's epic story to the millions of visitors who are expected to visit Expo 2020.

It reveals Ireland as a place of constant and multifaceted inspiration, from its landscapes and heritage to its culture and its people.

Welcoming the announcement, the Ambassador of Ireland to the UAE, Aidan Cronin, who is also Ireland's Expo 2020

Commissioner General, said: "Ireland's story is an inspirational one and Expo 2020 is an opportunity to tell that story to a large, truly global audience. Our pavilion will showcase Irish history, science, technology, business, and culture."

"The re-creation of the Newgrange lightbox will be a highlight of our pavilion, when visitors will get a chance to experience one of the wonders of Irish innovation and creative thinking, dating back some 5,000 years," he added.

Ireland's pavilion will be an enjoyable, inspirational and visually stunning place to visit, with permanent exhibitions, artistic performances, seminars, showcases and a daily 'Be Inspired' programme spread across four thematic quadrants – The Irish Fantastic; The Irish Scientific; Irish World Changers and Trailblazers and Global Ireland.

"Expo 2020 offers us an unparalleled opportunity to raise Ireland's cultural profile in the UAE and in the wider region and we are determined that this will be one of the tangible legacies of our involvement in Expo 2020. This will include partnerships with the local Irish community and with other local cultural partners," he added. ■



Cronin ... unparalleled opportunity.

Work in progress with health checks

CONSTRUCTION work on the Italian pavilion for Expo 2020 Dubai is progressing as per schedule with stringent security measures in place, including special health screenings for workers and isolation stations at the project site amid the Covid-19 crisis, according to the Italian Commissioner for Expo 2020 and Invitalia.

Commenting on progress in the construction work, senior Italian officials said that special structures have been set up to make it possible for people

to clean their hands, as well as isolation stations for any suspected cases of coronavirus needing quarantine.

Moreover, workers will go through health screenings, their temperature will be checked every morning and the number of people who can stay in closed spaces has been limited.

The Commissioner for Expo 2020 and Invitalia announced that they had published a tender for services, the organisation and production of events, and to hire artists besides the management of operational

activities. The deadline for submitting the bids has been set at April 15.

Giving a construction update, the duo said: "The foundations have been completed and the first steel structures can be seen now. On completion scheduled for April, it will reach 27-m tall and will showcase the pavilion's verticality."

The month of May will be crucial "when the shell coverage will be laid down to finally give the Italian pavilion a roof that will become the largest tricolour made in the history of our country",

stated the duo.

Construction material is being regularly delivered from Italy despite limitations recently introduced to air traffic, they added.

The facade of Italy's pavilion, entirely built with nautical ropes made with recycled plastic, is being produced in Italy and will be installed in June, completing the external part of the structure, they stated.

The interiors will comprise innovative and organic materials that represent the excellence of Italian companies. ■

Siemens in deal to set up operation in District 2020

GLOBAL technology major Siemens has signed a 10-year lease agreement with Expo 2020 Dubai representatives to set up its operations at the District 2020 soon after the close of Expo 2020 event.

District 2020 is the physical manifestation of Expo 2020's long-term investment in the future of the UAE, boosting the economy, helping to spur growth and support jobs for many years to come.

The lease agreement outlines the establishment of different divisions of Siemens' business group at District 2020, including the soon-to-be-spun-off Siemens Energy, said the Expo 2020 Dubai.

District 2020 has announced that as per the deal, Siemens, one of its key anchor tenants, will grow its presence within its innovation ecosystem and future-proof community – which is set to evolve from Expo 2020 Dubai – following the signing of a 10-year lease agreement for two

buildings, it stated.

The German company's 11,000-sq-m office space will be among the most technologically advanced in the UAE and will serve as a base in Dubai for Siemens and the newly independent Siemens Energy.

Approximately 1,000 Siemens employees are expected to work from the two buildings following Expo 2020 Dubai's transition into District 2020. The company's presence will encourage industrial growth, enable innovation, and stimulate job creation, bringing continuous long-term value to the project, it added.

The announcement follows Siemens' 2017 commitment to establish a global headquarters for its airports, cargo, and port logistics business in District 2020, said senior officials at the signing ceremony.

"We are delighted to announce this long-term agreement that extends Siemens' commitment within District 2020, where they will play a key role in the transition of

the Expo 2020 site into a tech-enabled and human-centred smart city," remarked Marjan Faraidooni, Chief Pavilions and Exhibitions Officer, Expo 2020 Dubai.

As Expo 2020 Dubai's Official Infrastructure Digitalisation Partner, Siemens' presence at District 2020 will help drive multi-sector innovation and idea sharing between organisations, particularly in Dubai's key industries of logistics, energy, and future technologies.

Dietmar Siersdorfer, CEO of Siemens UAE and Middle East, said: "Together with Expo 2020 Dubai we are developing a blueprint for future smart cities, making its legacy District 2020 a perfect base for our future operations in Dubai."

The two office buildings will inherit the building technologies installed by Siemens for Expo 2020 Dubai. This includes the smart sensors from Enlighted, a Siemens IoT solutions provider. The IoT platform creates 'sensory systems' throughout the building, providing real-time data and analytics into how the building is being used.

Siemens will also implement its digital building management system Desigo CC, and its cloud-based energy analytics platform Navigator which will connect 137 buildings across the site, he stated. ■

RTA starts trial run of self-driving vehicles

DUBAI'S Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) has started the trial run of an autonomous vehicle at the site of Expo 2020 Dubai. The vehicle will be used by individuals to commute on a dedicated path from the main entrance to staff offices.

This comes as part of RTA's efforts to broaden the scope of Dubai Self-Driving Transport Strategy, aimed at transforming 25 per cent of total mobility journeys in the emirate into self-driving modes by 2030. The strategy contributes to the integration of mass transit as well as safe and sustainable transport solutions.

"The Self-Driving Transport Strategy is part of initiatives

aimed at supporting the green economy drive.

Trialling an autonomous vehicle at the Expo 2020 site is an achievement and addition to our efforts to spread autonomous vehicles at various Dubai hot-spots," remarked Ahmed Bahrozian, the chief executive of Public Transport Agency at RTA.

"The trial run, which will last for three months, includes testing autonomous technologies, ensuring high safety of individuals, and protecting



RTA's self-driving vehicle on site.

surrounding properties. It illustrates RTA's keenness to adopting highly efficient, safe and reliable technologies in delivering smart services," he added.

According to RTA, the ve-

hicle uses green technologies and is powered by electricity to operate up to 16 hours. It accommodates 15 riders (10 seated, five standing) and travels at a speed of 25 km/hr. The vehicle is designed to travel in closed and internal public roads within the entertainment and residential communities. It features high safety and security standards to monitor the path using advanced sensors and high accuracy positioning systems, it stated.

It can monitor any obstructing object, and will automatically slow down when an object emerges. The vehicle will come to a complete stop when an object comes close to the vehicle, added RTA. ■