

How Expo 2020 Dubai hopes to inspire action to address pressing global challenges

Thu, 2021-09-30 23:06

DUBAI: A multiple reuse rocket. A desert farm where food grows using salt water. Pop-up theaters. A hyperloop carriage where passengers feel what it is like to travel in a superfast vacuum. These are just some of the experiences visitors can enjoy over the next six months at Expo 2020 Dubai.

Since 2013, when Dubai won over a panel in Paris with its presentation, the expo has easily been the most talked about event in the UAE.

Indeed, Expo 2020 has become a byword for an event to be celebrated not just for the scale and ambition of the projects and pavilions on display, but also because the organizers hope that it will be a game-changer for host Dubai.

The event, which got underway on Thursday with a grand opening ceremony, reportedly showcases over 200 participating entities, including about 192 countries, and features 60 events. Anticipation has grown because the opening has been delayed by a year due to the pandemic.

The fact that the expo is going ahead on such a scale with an expected “25 million visits,” even as travel remains difficult after 18 months of closures and postponements, is probably a feat in itself.

A 4.38-square-km site in Dubai South near the new Al-Maktoum International Airport, the city’s second, has been transformed over the past eight years. The center point is Al-Wasl Plaza, dominated by a massive molded steel dome designed by Adrian Smith and Gordon Gill Architecture of the US.

The permanent structure is 130 meters wide and 67 meters tall. It can screen images both internally and externally and will host the expo’s main opening ceremonies.

Expo 2020 Dubai has an ambitious goal: to create lasting change in the world.

EXPO 2020 DUBAI UAE: KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

Delayed by a year because of the pandemic, the showpiece event finally begins on Oct. 1 and continues until the end of March

438 Total area in square kilometers covered by the exposit.	44,000 Passengers Dubai Metro can carry each hour to and from the site.	30,000 Volunteers will help welcome the world to the expo.	4,000 Age in years of a ring, found in the UAE, that inspired the expologo.	200+ Number of entities, including 192 countries and organizations, taking part.	60 Live events will be hosted by expo each day.	200 Food and beverage outlets will serve visitors.	25^m Visits expected over 182 days of the expo.
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EXPO ENTRY PORTALS

Design: Asif Khan
Structural Engineer: Colin Golegan
Manufacturer: Ha-Co Carbon GmbH

5,000+
Number of times the carbon-fiber filaments, laid end to end, could circle the world.

21
Height in meters of doors, which despite their size can be opened by one person.

ENTRY PORTAL

AL-WASL DOME

The 150 meter diameter Al-Wasl Plaza is being designed as a central hub for the exposition.

675
Height in meters, taller than Leaning Tower of Pisa.

2,544
Weight in tons; equivalent to 25 bluewhales.

724,000
Volume in cubic meters of steel crown; equivalent to about 300 Olympic-size swimming pools.

136
Kilometers of steel used, equal to the height of 16 Burj Khalifas.

1,162
Individual sections were joined together to make the dome.

ALIF

TERRA

ALIF - THE MOBILITY PAVILION

Architect: Foster + Partners
Timings: 10:00 - 22:00
Location: Mobility District

160
Passengers that can be carried in the world's largest lift.

330
Length in meters of the partly underground track for viewing mobility devices.

9
Height in meters of historical giants of mobility created by Weta Workshop.

TERRA - THE SUSTAINABILITY PAVILION

Architect: Grimshaw Architects
Timings: 10:00 - 22:00
Location: Sustainability District

4
Gigawatt hours of energy generated by its solar panels in a year; enough for a Nissan Leaf to travel halfway to Mars.

25,000
Area of pavilion and surrounding grounds in square meters.

75
Percentage reduction in water use through new irrigation techniques and local plants.

ENTERTAINMENT FAST FACTS

- Each country's pavilion will stage its own National Day celebration.
- Daily events will include live shows, parades, musicals and roving entertainment.
- There will be a dedicated pavilion for women.
- Event mascots Rashid and Latifa will entertain children with daily stage shows.
- Three robots - Opti, Alif and Terra - will meet and greet visitors.
- Children and adults will be treated to an amazing outdoor movie experience every Monday.
- The expo has its own orchestra, an all-female ensemble called Firdaus, mentored by composer A.R. Rahman.
- Visitors can take in a daily schedule of sports and other activities.

ARAB NEWS

“What is extraordinary is the diverse range of programs Expo 2020 has put together – it is a global celebration evident in the events and festivities centered around 192 participating countries all showcasing their own culture, heritage and innovation,” Sumathi Ramanathan, vice president for marketing strategy and sales, told Arab News.

“More importantly, Expo 2020 reflects the inclusive spirit of the UAE, where we have over 200 nationalities living.”

The World Expo dates back to 1851 when the first event, then called the “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations,” took place in London.

It served as the first of what are now called World Expos, which have been staged every five years at an international city for a period ranging from three to six months. Dubai is the 34th World Expo to take place and follows the one previously held in Milan in 2015. The next is scheduled to take place in 2025 in the Japanese city of Osaka, which also hosted the 1970 expo.

EXPECTED EXPO 2020 DIVIDEND

A long-term investment 'in the future of the UAE'



Expo 2020 and its legacy will boost economic activity by
33.378 billion
2013-2031



Restaurants & hotels:
\$3.1 billion



Construction:
\$7.35 billion



And support
905,200
full-time equivalent (FTE)
job-years
2013-2031



Events organization &
business services:
\$18.757 billion



Economic activity will equal
1.5%
of UAE GDP during expo
October 2020 – April 2021



Spending in SME sector
\$1.279 billion
supporting 12,600 job-years
November 2013 – October 2020

Source: EY Report: The economic impact of Expo 2020 Dubai

ARAB NEWS

Today, the aim is to find solutions to global issues and challenges. Countries around the world have built pavilions that showcase their latest architectural and technological innovations, in accordance with a particular theme.

For Expo 2020, this is "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future," with the aim of exploring possibilities in the spheres of opportunity, mobility and sustainability. Technology on show should be unique, pioneering and sustainable.

The event, said Ramanathan, is taking place at "an inflection point in our society," when the act of uniting and celebrating together has become a rare event.

"People have not been able to come together for nearly two years now," Ramanathan said. "We are hosting an event at a time when the world is trying to manage the challenges of a global pandemic.

"People have not been able to meet, interact, experience, engage, or exchange in a physical environment, and that's what makes this expo incredibly special – the ability to be able to bring together a platform for collaboration and cooperation at a time when the world perhaps needs it the most."

Despite the challenges, Expo 2020's ambitious goal of delivering 25 million visits over the course of its six months – it runs until March 31, 2022 – remains.

Every single country from the original 192 participants, said Ramanathan, is coming to Expo 2020. And it is not just the country pavilions that hope to capture the spotlight. Visitors can view a host of other attractions, such as a collaboration with Cartier to design and host a pavilion dedicated to highlighting the advancement of women in the Middle East.

Commencing as it does just weeks before the UN Climate Change Conference, or COP26, kicks off in Glasgow, UK, Expo 2020 predictably puts a strong emphasis on environmental protection and sustainability.

Terra – The Sustainability Pavilion, designed by UK-based Grimshaw Architects, aims to meet the highest available accreditation for sustainable architecture, the LEED Platinum certification.



A view of Terra, The Sustainability Pavilion at the Dubai World Expo site in Dubai. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

There is also Alif – The Mobility Pavilion, designed by the award-winning architectural firm Foster + Partners. It features what it says is the world's largest passenger lift, which can transport over 160 people at a time.

The pavilion is dedicated to discoveries in cutting-edge mobility devices and has a partially open-air 330-meter track for visitors to view new gadgets and technology in motion.

In typical Dubai style, the opening ceremony featured high-tech performances and an impressive line-up of international stars. They included opera singer Andrea Bocelli; classical pianist Lang Lang; international pop stars Ellie Goulding, Andra Day and Angélique Kidjo; and regional stars such as Mohammed Abdo, Ahlam Al-Shamsi and Hussain Al-Jassmi.

Ramanathan said more than 1,000 performers and technical crew worked on the 90-minute extravaganza, which the organizers hope will change the way people around the world view Dubai and the UAE.



Artists perform during the opening ceremony of the Dubai Expo 2020 on Sept. 30, 2021. (Photo by Karim SAHIB / AFP)

She said ticket sales were strong, with an uptick in demand from countries across the world, including the UK, France, Germany, the US, Africa and the Middle East and North Africa region.

All an overseas visitor needs to be eligible to visit the event is a single successful PCR test and a flight ticket.

“The focus is really on what this expo will mean to you depending on what you are interested in,” Ramanathan said, adding that the programming is designed both for the individual and a broader collective, be it business networking, social and environmental change, knowledge and learning, space travel and exploration, or arts and culture.

What is proposed is an exercise in broadening and expanding knowledge about other people and places as well as introducing the power of new philosophies

and ideologies, she said.

“What is most interesting is the fusion of the programming that we are offering,” Ramanathan told Arab News. “You can view the traditional, such as the heritage of each country, as well as the most avant-garde technology and innovation.”

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Expo 2020 Dubai kicks off with star-studded Opening CeremonyTake an exclusive walk through the Saudi Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

[Cash-strapped Lebanon names team for IMF talks](#)

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Thu, 2021-09-30 23:57

BEIRUT: Lebanon said Thursday it has formed a new government delegation to resume talks with the International Monetary Fund aimed at rescuing the country from an economic meltdown.

The government of Prime Minister Najib Mikati said in a statement that a four-member committee had been appointed to resume talks with the IMF. The team – Deputy Prime Minister Saade Chami, Finance Minister Youssef Khalil, Economy Minister Amin Salam and central bank governor Riad Salameh – would be backed by experts.

The eastern Mediterranean country is facing what the World Bank has described as one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850s.

Its currency, the pound, has lost almost 90 percent of its value against the dollar on the black market since 2019, and people's savings are trapped in banks.

Inflation has soared, and 78 percent of all Lebanese now live under the threshold of poverty, according to the UN.

Power cuts are common in the country and basic goods including petrol and medicine have become scarce.

After defaulting on its debt in March 2020 for the first time in history, Lebanon started talks with the IMF but they hit a brick wall amid bickering over who should bear the brunt of the losses.

Lebanon hopes the talks with the IMF will help unlock billions of dollars in financial aid.

But the international community has demanded sweeping reforms and a forensic audit of the country's central bank before any financial assistance is

disbursed.

Finance expert Mike Azar recently told AFP that reforming the commercial banking sector and central bank, as well as restructuring the public sector, would be key for any deal with the IMF.



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Israel investigating after Lebanon's Hezbollah says it shot down Israeli drone
Swiss bank closes its office in Lebanon due to economic crisis

[Egyptian authorities say they blocked Brotherhood financing scheme](#)

Thu, 2021-09-30 23:06

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities said on Thursday they had blocked a scheme aimed at financing the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood and alleged a link to the

imprisoned founder and former chairman of dairy and juice firm Juhayna, Safwan Thabet.

The scheme aimed to funnel funds using Thabet's companies into "terrorist activities," the interior ministry said in a statement, adding that \$8.4 million and ammunition had been found in an apartment in Giza, across the Nile from central Cairo. It described Thabet as a "Brotherhood leader." The Thabet family have denied any wrongdoing in statements on social media. A lawyer for Juhayna could not be reached.

Thabet was arrested in December, and his son Seifeldin was detained in February after taking over as chairman.

Juhayna is a household name in Egypt and the country's largest dairy products and juice producer.

The Brotherhood has been subject to a sweeping crackdown since then-army chief Abdel Fattah El-Sisi led their ouster from power in 2013.

Juhayna continued to operate normally after El-Sisi became president the following year.



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[**Tough decisions are 'surgery' Sudan**](#)

needs to prosper: PM

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Thu, 2021-09-30 22:08

LONDON: Sudan is passing through “multiple transitions” in its efforts to move on from the 2019 ouster of Omar Bashir, but progress is fragile, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said on Thursday.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly High-Level Side Event on Sudan, he highlighted the great strides made by the country in putting a peace plan in place, rebuilding the economy, reforming public sector institutions, balancing foreign policy, establishing a legislative council and moving toward full democracy.

But Hamdok pointed to the severe economic and internal issues still faced by Khartoum as reasons for caution.

“Sudan is ... transitioning from war and conflict to peace, economic collapse and hardships to prosperity, from dictatorship to democracy and good governance, and from isolation, relinking to the world,” he said.

Last week’s failed coup attempt is a reminder of Sudan’s fragility, with Hamdok saying: “I’d like to convey our profound thanks and appreciation to ... all our international and regional partners for their utmost solidarity for the transitional government in condemning and denouncing the aborted military coup attempt ... With your support, and the resolve of our people, there will be no reversal.”

He added: “The No. 1 challenge is to get it right in the peace process. There are a number of issues here. Many armed groups, negotiations, regional and international actors and all that, complicate things.

“On the economic front, we’ve inherited a collapsing economy, serious macroeconomic imbalances. If I may just flag one indicator, today we collect less than 6 percent tax to GDP (gross domestic product) ... You can’t run a decent government on that level of taxation.”

He said further serious public sector reform is needed but strides have been made elsewhere, with Sudan recently taken off the list of global state sponsors of terrorism, and reforming swathes of its legal codes to bring up to date laws on apostasy, taxation, debt consolation, and recovery of stolen assets from abroad. “We knew these are very important decisions. It’s a surgery, but we had to go through it,” he added.

The talk was attended by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and dignitaries from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, the US, the EU and France, among others.

Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan congratulated the people of Sudan on the reforms that the country has undertaken since 2019, saying the Kingdom remains keen to work closely with Khartoum as a provider of crucial aid, and as a mediating partner in the peace process.

“In April 2019, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia declared its unwavering solidarity with the people of Sudan and the choices they made for their future. We accorded the highest importance to Sudan’s peace and stability in the face of the many challenges it faced,” he said.

“The Kingdom continues to be at the forefront of global efforts to facilitate peaceful transition in Sudan. We’re proud of our work as part of the Friends of Sudan group.”

Egypt’s Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry echoed the prince’s sentiments, highlighting the importance of establishing strong institutions to secure Sudan’s long-term prosperity and security.

“Egypt commends the steps taken by the government of Sudan to enact various macroeconomic reforms, and calls on all international partners to foster Sudan’s economic development,” he added.

Economic prosperity was a theme also picked up on by other speakers, with Samantha Power, administrator of the US Agency for International Development, urging the international community to use investment to “shepherd” Sudan through its transition.

Bankole Adeoye, the African Union’s commissioner for political affairs, peace and security, raised the specter of violence potentially derailing the peace process, highlighting increasing conflict in Darfur.

He said Sudan’s economic recovery is crucial to ensuring such an outcome is avoided. This was echoed by Mansur Muhtar, vice president of the Islamic Development Bank, and the World Bank’s Ousmane Dione, who called the current moment a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” to put Sudan on the path toward “sustained prosperity.”

Maged Abdelaziz, permanent observer of the League of Arab States, said its members stand alongside Sudan to defend its sovereignty over its borders and its water rights, in reference to the dispute with Ethiopia over the Grand Renaissance Dam.



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World Bank head sees situation in Sudan improving, urges patience
US condemns failed coup attempt in Sudan

[Houthis reject calls for truce, intensify attacks on Marib](#)

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Thu, 2021-09-30 22:01

AL-MUKALLA: The Iran-backed Houthis on Thursday rejected the latest regional calls to cease fighting in Yemen and intensified their ground and missile attacks on government-controlled areas in the central province of Marib.

Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdul-Salam demanded the Arab coalition stop military operations and lift what he described as a blockade on their territory as preconditions for accepting the Saudi initiative and the UN-brokered peace efforts to end the war.

“Steps for peace include stopping the aggression, lifting the blockade, (the) withdrawal of foreign forces from the country, addressing the effects of the aggression and paying compensation,” Abdul-Salam said on Twitter.

The latest calls for peace follow an initiative that was announced in March last year, which proposed a nationwide ceasefire under UN supervision. This demand for a cessation in hostilities included halting the Houthi offensive on Marib, easing restrictions on Hodeidah seaport and a partial reopening of Sanaa airport before direct talks between warring factions in Yemen.

The Houthis immediately rejected the initiative and demanded unlimited and unchecked flights into and from Sanaa airport and a halt to the coalition’s airstrikes on their forces.

The Houthi rejection came as they intensified ground attacks and missile and drone strikes on government-controlled areas in Marib province.

Residents and local officials on Thursday said that Houthis had intensified the shelling of villages and towns in Marib province with ballistic missiles and drones packed with explosives, triggering a new wave of displacement among terrified residents.

Large explosions rocked the Juba district, in the south of Marib, after missiles fired by the Houthis ripped through residential areas.

Elsewhere, the Houthis have continued their siege on hundreds of families in the Al-Abedia district into the second week, preventing people from leaving or entering amid severe shortages of food, fuel and medicine.

Local aid workers say the Houthis blocked the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the besieged people and prevented the wounded from traveling to other areas for medication.

“Two aging people died from strokes because of the siege. Seven out of nine groceries have been closed due to shortages of goods and food. The situation is very grave there,” Khaled Al-Shajani, deputy head of the Marib office of the Executive Unit for IDP Camps, told Arab News by telephone.

Heavy fighting between the Houthis and government forces on Thursday broke out west and south of Marib, as the militia attacked new areas in Juba, Al-Mashjah, Al-Kasara, Serwah and Jabal Murad.

The escalation in fighting around Marib started in February when the Houthis restarted an offensive to capture the city, the government’s last stronghold in the north.



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Scores killed as fighting intensifies near Marib city
Houthis told to stop 'stalelated' Marib offensive