

# SOLID GITEX SHOW BY BAHRAIN

From JENNIFER GNANA in DUBAI

BAHRAIN private sector's participation in Gitex Technology Week in Dubai has increased nearly four times in the last few years, as Bahraini Information Technology companies continue to expand.

The private sector and governmental bodies from Bahrain put up a show of strength, as one of the biggest technology events opened yesterday at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre in the UAE.

Dubai Crown Prince Shaikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum inaugurated the exhibition, which runs until Thursday.

Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) information and communications technology committee vice-president Ahmed Al Hujairi said the Bahrain impact.



■ Mr Al Hujairi



■ The Bahrain Pavilion at the Gitex

Pavilion has grown from eight companies to 32. Given the size of Bahrain, it is a big impact.

"When we started six years ago, Bahrain's private sector's participation in such events was quite limited. The Bahrain private sector con-

tributed to 90 per cent of the country's contingent at the expo, said e-Government Authority marketing and awareness director Ziad Asfour.

"The participation of the e-Government and the Economic Development Board is 10pc while 90pc is from the private sector," he told the GDN.

## Wooing top expo

MANAMA: Talks are underway to attract Gitex to Bahrain next year, as the kingdom emerges as an informatics hub for the region, said Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry information and communications technology committee vice-president Ahmed Al Hujairi.

"We've been organising the Bahrain Pavilion for this event for the last three years and we have asked Gitex to come to Bahrain next year as part of MEET ICT 2013," the Gulf Future Business chief executive told the GDN.

"We're targeting the private sector in our next phase.

"This is part of our support for the SMEs.

"We also want to encourage innovation and enhance our services."

Gitex provided a platform for companies to communicate and realise synergies amongst themselves, said Bahrain ICT Suppliers Trade Association president Ubaydullah Udayli.

The Bahraini Pavilion was represented by public and private sector organisations such as the e-Government Authority, Economic Development Board, the regional centre of ICT, Bahrain ICT Suppliers Trade Association, Bahrain Investors Centre and a number of entities in the industry.

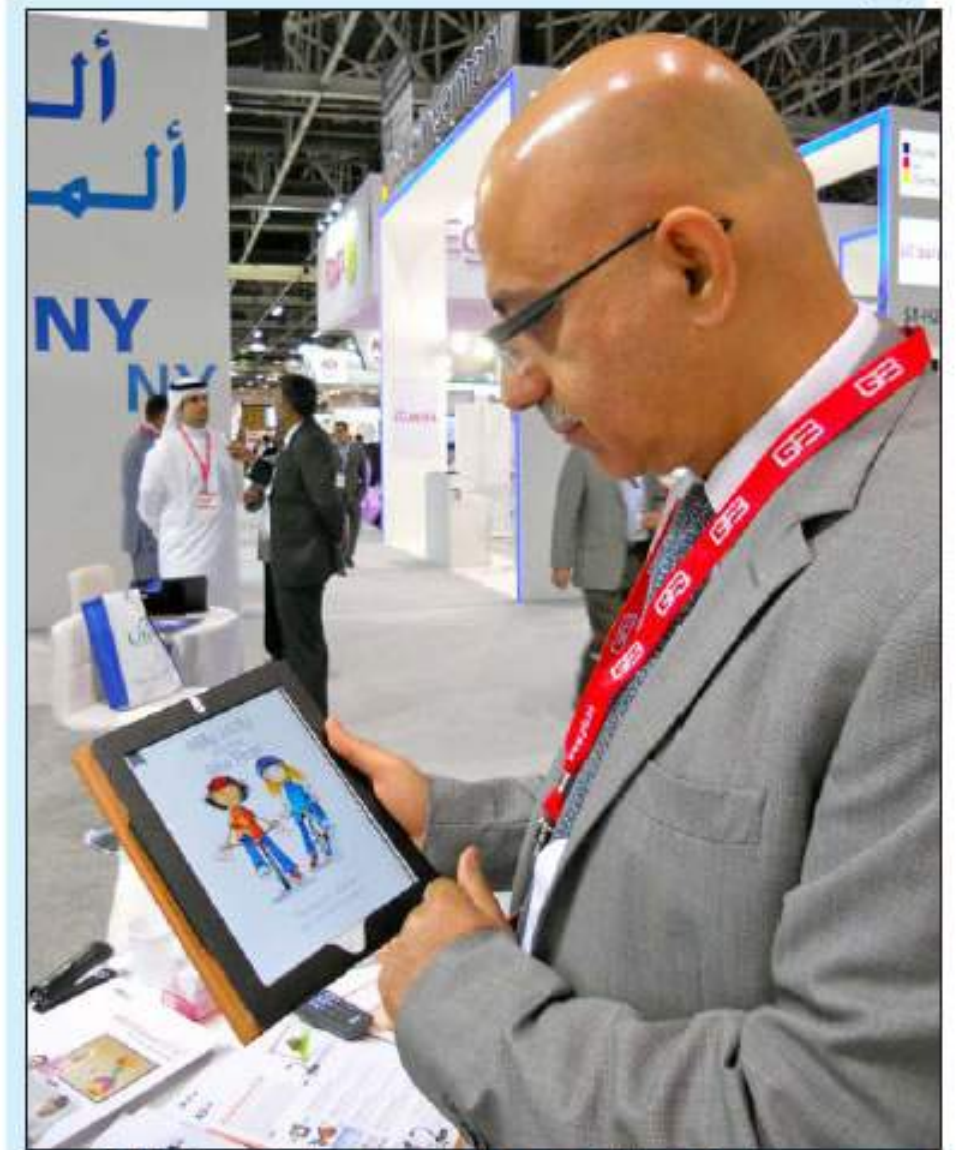
The pavilion was organised by Future Gulf Business in partnership with LMRA and Tankeen, who supported the participants of private companies including Al Nadeem IT, Almoayed Computers, Hitech, Microsoft, Life Telecommunications, Ascentech Telecom, ICOL Plus, Bin Hindy Informatics, Sky and Land Technologies and Communications, AFFNO Middle East, Al Amthal Consulting and Programming, Computer World, Digital Middle East, Denver Business Solutions, Etsalcom, Global ETS, Andrasistemas, Information Village, Uni-Data, Kanoo Consulting Services, Kanoo Information Technology, Mela Bahrain, New Horizon, Open Source Technology, Zayani Computer Systems, Mantech Computer Services, Yokogawa Middle East, and ThinkSmart for Training and Development.

This year, Gitex attracted more than 138,000 ICT experts from 144 countries, along with the participation of 77 international companies and 18,000 decision-makers.

Gitex is one of the largest industry events in the field of information and communications technology at the world level.

It is also a notable platform that provides the latest innovations in the technology sector - attracting the most prestigious names in the sector.

Mr Hussain demonstrates the use of the Q-Book



■ Mr Hussain demonstrates the use of the Q-Book

## IT firms leading drive to create digital platform

DUBAI: Bahrain's Information Technology companies are taking the lead in creating a digital platform to help the country's education sector.

Niche products, which seek to make education more interactive, were among the many innovative gadgets on show at the Gitex Technology Week in Dubai.

Bahrain-based Digital Middle East showcased an improved methodology of teaching and learning in classrooms, at the expo's Bahrain Pavilion.

"The syllabus in the region is well-designed and excellent, however the new generation of children are proving smarter by the day," the firm's director Abbas Hussain told the GDN.

"The methodology of having a book does not meet their standards."

"Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has matured but we're missing vital content, especially in Arabic, which is suitable for local educational systems."

Being a new entrant to the ICT market, Digital Middle East found it difficult to compete with established firms in the sector.

However, lack of Arabic content on digital platforms for software-enabled learning compelled Mr Hussain to

develop an interactive learning and communication tool.

Using Taiwanese hardware, Mr Hussain has developed the 'Q-Book', which allows children to play with words in different languages, simultaneously, if they choose in order to learn at their own pace.

"The content must be fun to attract students, who are very tech-savvy and use the latest gadgets such as the iPad or smartphones," he said. "To make sure they adapt it, you need to bring fun and knowledge together."

"We concentrated both on the hardware and the software. "Hardware includes tools which the teacher uses to impart education and software is the tool used to manipulate what is being taught to make it more understandable."

"We hope this will transform the educational sector in Bahrain and the GCC," said Mr Hussain.

Interactivity in classrooms will receive a boost through adoption of this technology, he said.

The other aim, he said, was to provide a more sustainable means of education.

"We also wish to save the environment and minimise the cutting of trees by reducing printing of books."

## Innovations in technology bolster SMEs

DUBAI: Innovations in technology such as cloud computing are making small and medium enterprises (SMEs) efficient and more cost effective.

Cloud technology, which enables companies to outsource various business processes to service providers will help start-ups grow, said VIVA Bahrain enterprise and wholesale chief Nezar Banabeela.

"SMEs by using cloud computing eliminate the need for more capital expenditure (capex) so they don't have to build network or place routers," he told the GDN on the sidelines of the Gitex Technology Week.

"They avoid capex at the start of their growth, which could hurt them otherwise."

"It will enable SMEs to channel their money for better uses, such as expansion."

VIVA Bahrain is the only Bahraini telecom company exhibiting various products under the umbrella of Saudi-based STC group.

An SME client typically has a lot of requirement, such as costing, which could be eliminated through cloud computing.

"Our strategy is to provide customers good quality and value for their money, especially for SMEs, which are still in



■ The STC stand, where VIVA Bahrain is participating. Pictures by JENNIFER GNANA

growth mode," he said.

"They cannot afford to spend money unwisely."

The enterprises segment head said that when it came to serving companies, VIVA was not battling on price strategy.

"We have never been the cheapest in the market," he said.

"Even in the enterprise segment, there are different types of customers, some are price sensitive, while others are less so and they are looking for better quality."

"We combined both of them in our



■ Mr Banabeela

strategy towards enterprises.

"We offer products backed by innovation and tailored for our customers' needs."

Technology had altered business processes in many ways, he said.

"Business services have also been altered dramatically over time because of the growth of technology," he said.

"Social networking has become an integral part of our lives, thanks to technology."

"If this is applicable to the consumer market, the opportunities for growth

and innovation are greater."

"Operators, who have successfully targeted the mobile telephony market are now tapping into the enterprises segment, which offers much promise."

"Any telecom operator, once it has a sustainable business and market share on the retail side, they look at the fixed or enterprises segment," he said.

"Most companies choose enterprises since they offer greater challenge."

"We started looking at enterprise solutions, which is a key developmental area that allows some operators to supply services to utilities and banking."

"It enjoys good growth potential."

## Demand for telecom equipment on the rise

DUBAI: Demand for communication equipment in the Middle East has witnessed a gradual upswing, on the back of continuing infrastructure developments.

Major sporting events such as the London Olympics and the soccer World Cup in Qatar have contributed to the demand.

Among the many regional telecom and equipment companies at Gitex Technology Week was the UK firm, Greenlee Communications.

The company, which was part of the UK Pavilion at the exhibition, has been returning to the region for the last 12 years.

"Markets such as the Middle East are always building and using small appliances," sales representative Nicholas Coyle told the GDN.

"All of these infrastructure developments have fibre requirements and communication needs."

The construction boom in the Middle East hasn't waned, he observed.

"Dubai has been growing over the last 30 years," said Mr Coyle.

"They have faced problems with financing. However, if there's space, people will continue to build on it."

The platform Gitex provided for technology companies was vast, by the sheer scale of the expo.

"It makes you realise how big and how difficult the sector is. You should know your product well and how to sell it to exhibit here successfully."



■ Visitors at the expo yesterday



■ The Indian Minister of Communication and Information Technology and Human Resources Development Kapil Sibal visited some of the stalls at Gitex. Many top government officials visited the Dubai World Trade Centre to attend the ITU World Telecom 2012 conference on the sidelines of the event. India's populous customer base has proved a lucrative bait for regional telecom players such as Etisalat and Bateco, which have previously invested in the country.

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