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Abu Dhabi prepares for tens of thousands of participants and spectators at WorldSkills competition

Exhibition centre expands to cope with large numbers for education event



Roberta Pennington

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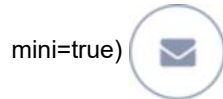
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With two weeks to go before World Skills, organisers are putting the final touches on what they say will be an unforgettable event at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, that is expected to draw more than 100,000 local visitors to the capital region. Chris Whiteoak / The National

Abu Dhabi's biggest indoor exhibition space will expand by nearly 40 per cent to accommodate the world's largest vocational skills competition when it comes to the city later this month.

With just two weeks to go before the UAE hosts the WorldSkills competition, organisers are putting the final touches on what they say will be an unforgettable event at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre.

EDITOR'S PICKS



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(/arts-culture/music) Ne-Yo to perform

More than 100,000 local visitors are expected to travel to the emirate for the event.

The competition will challenge about 1,300 pupils and students between the ages of 17 and 25 in one of 51 vocational skills-testing contests within six main industries: construction and building technology; creative arts and fashion; transportation and logistics; manufacturing and engineering technology; and information and communication technology; and health and social care.

As the student competitors fly in from 77 member countries accompanied by chaperones, coaches and other support staff, officials in Abu Dhabi say the event will be a boon for the local economy.

“When we talk about the booking of 30 hotels in Abu Dhabi - 47,000 room nights - we are talking about more than 10,000 participants from outside of the UAE,” said Mubarak Al Shamsi, director general of Abu Dhabi Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ACTVET), which is hosting the competition at Adnec.

The international visitors will begin arriving next week, days in advance of the opening ceremony that kicks off the event on October 14, and some are expected stay beyond the closing ceremony on October 19, said Mr Al Shamsi. Students will complete from October 15 to 18. WorldSkills will be an optimum opportunity for the youngsters and their chaperones to experience the UAE at its best, he said.

“Our aim is not just to focus on the days of the competition, our goal is to invite people to come and see the UAE, see the culture of the UAE, witness the very nice atmosphere and climate and the environment here in the UAE,” said Mr Al Shamsi.

“The UAE is considered to be, as you know, a safe haven, but for some people who have not been here, they might not have the full picture. So, we are confident when they come here, they will come again.”

In addition to the welcoming delegates and competitors from around the globe, WorldSkills Abu Dhabi is expected to draw 100,000 local visitors, including 80,000 pupils and students from across the country who have registered to attend.

They will be encouraged to cheer on their peers during competition. There will also be an exhibition area where pupils can try a number of interactive activities meant to introduce and expose them to a variety of trades. Officials from corporations and colleges will be present to offer the young visitors career and academic advice related to the various hands-on vocational activities on display.

With 34 competitors, including nine young women, the UAE will have the largest Arab team participating in the challenge representing a number of local colleges and universities. The team members made the cut based on their performance in the

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Emirates Skills National Competition, which was held in April.

“There are multiple goals and aims that we have and we are seeking to achieve, one of them is to bring the industry closer to the education sector,” said Mr Al Shamsi.

One of the key goals of WorldSkills Abu Dhabi is to raise awareness of the trades and promote the benefits of vocational education among young Emiratis so that they have the skills to thrive in the private sector, he said.

“We have seen some shift toward that direction, we are trying to empower students more, we are trying to encourage them more to seek careers in the private sector, but the most important thing is to empower them in the technical side of education,” said Mr Al Shamsi. “Technical education does not have a limit. We have no limits in terms of supporting the young Emiratis to empower them.”

Ali Al Marzouqi, president of WorldSkills Abu Dhabi, said he was pleased with how well everything has fallen in place to set the stage for the competition, which is now just days away.

“It’s like a dream come true,” said Mr Al Marzouqi. “We have been trying to get to this stage for a long time.”

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