



Business monthly

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PROPERTIES



MISR ITALIA PROPERTIES SURPASSES 2023 SALES TARGET TOTAL CONTRACTUAL SALES SOARING TO EGP 16.1BN, ACHIEVING A 46% GROWTH WITH TOTAL PUMPED INVESTMENTS OF EGP 2.1BN

Misr Italia Properties (MIP) discloses its end-of-year business results and achievements, showcasing remarkable growth rates achieved throughout 2023, where the company's total contracted sales reached EGP 16.1 billion, compared to EGP 9 billion in 2022, reflecting an impressive increase of 79%.

These figures surpass the company's sales target for the year, initially at EGP 11 billion, indicating a notable 46% growth. Moreover, 2023 has seen MIP make substantial investments of EGP 2.1 billion.

MIP completed the delivery of 1,052 units in La Nuova Vista, Cairo Business Park, IL Bosco – New Capital, and KAI Sokhna during 2023, and construction is currently underway within IL Bosco to develop more than 3,000 units. The company has also completed the construction of more than 600 apartments, in addition to 300 villas currently under construction in Vinci, with the first deliveries starting in the first half of 2024. KAI Sokhna has also welcomed its owners after successfully delivering the first phase and operating all its amenities while making steady progress in constructing the second phase.

2023 has seen the company sign EGP 500 million agreements with Group Construction and Al-Andalus Construction and Development to complete construction works in IL Bosco City-New Cairo and IL BOSCO and Vinci in the New Administrative Capital.

Last year, we also launched Solare-Ras El Hekma, the company's newest and first project in the North Coast. Phase one sold out within the first hours of the launch, with total contractual sales amounting to EGP 4.2 billion.

Additionally, the company introduced its latest commercial project, Radical-1, with investments of EGP 5.6 billion, closing the year on a high note by surpassing the project's sales target.

"As an Egyptian company, we are particularly proud of our contribution to the economy. These accomplishments are a testament to our commitment to clients, which wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of our employees who firmly believe in our promise of 'Life Inspired by You' motto. Other key success elements are the company's adaptability to market changes and consistently meeting our clients' evolving needs," said Mohamed Khaled El-Assal, CEO and Managing Director of MIP.

Mohamed Hany El-Assal, CEO and Managing Director of MIP emphasized that the strategic partners contributed significantly to our success.

Through 2023, the company organized "numerous events at Cairo Business Park, East Cairo's entrepreneurship and innovation hub, to foster creativity and innovation. We joined forces with Startups Without Borders and partnered with Creative Summit for the second year.

The company also hosted the IL Bosco International Padel Tournament for the second year, attended by the Minister of Youth and Sports and Khaled Abbas, Chairman and MD of The New Administrative Capital.

Other major events included our participation in MIPIM and the Saudi-Egyptian Real Estate Development Conference (SEREC) for the first time, as well as proudly partnering with the first-ever Cairo Food Week, further demonstrating our dedication to engaging with diverse sectors and creating memorable experiences for our valued stakeholders."

MIP actively participated in initiatives that uplifted lives, fostered awareness, and extended a helping hand to those in need. Initiatives included supporting 57357 Children's Cancer Hospital in light of International Childhood Cancer Day and Magdi Yacoub Heart Foundation's initiative celebrating Valentine's Day.

Furthermore, MIP organized charitable Iftar tables in collaboration with the Egyptian Food Bank during Ramadan in the village of Tante Gezira in Qalyubia, where the company built El-Assal Primary School. The company also raised awareness on World Autism Day in partnership with the Egyptian Autistic Society and collaborated with Baheya Hospital for an awareness campaign during Pink October. The company also collaborated with the Red Crescent to donate emergency medical supplies to the people of Gaza, providing them with essential services and vital resources.



People, Potential and Public-Private Partnerships:

How **Amazon** Collaborates and Innovates **Towards** **Egypt's Vision 2030**



Omar Elsayh
Country Manager

Building on Potential through people and partnerships – the chance to build on these key foundations are why the role I play today at Amazon Egypt is purposeful, exciting, and gratifying. The confluence of an innovative private sector, a growing and digitally-savvy market segment, a talent pool of the high caliber and a supportive, vision-driven government has revealed massive opportunities across multiple sectors, and building on these opportunities is something that we at Amazon Egypt relish.

I am lucky to have the opportunity to work in a place brimming with possibilities; in a country that is building for a brighter future; and among the smartest and most ambitious colleagues. Amazon's progress in Egypt thrives on building fundamentals. To me, they are as important as the core public-private-partnerships that are driving Vision 2030's targets of economic development, diversification, and empowerment nationwide. These and other pillars are in-line with our own purpose and investment in the country.

PEOPLE

I have seen first-hand the talent in Egypt. Vision 2030's prioritization of digital infrastructure and the expansion of a nationwide pool of young, ambitious, and tech-savvy individuals, has opened exciting avenues of investment and development. Every year, Egypt adds more than 600,000 new graduates to the talent pool, with up to 40% of them holding STEM degrees. Digital-first, multilingual and ambitious, this talent pool is the beating heart of organizations like ours.

I see our commitment to local talent as part of a broader partnership – with our employees, our customers, and with Egypt. I'm proud that Amazon empowers many of Egypt's brightest and best, fit to excel, including software engineers, developers, applied data scientists, as well as in corporate functions, customer service, operations, and other areas. We provide more than 2,500 people with sought-after and fulfilling careers.

Attracting talent is one thing – retaining is another, especially in today's competitive world. We do this

by providing clear and inclusive empowerment policies and a range of benefits. It was exactly this convergence of talent and opportunity that I discussed with both H.E. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly and H.E. Amr Talaat, Egypt's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, when they visited our Customer Service Center in late 2023 to meet and mingle with more than 1,600 exceptional Egyptian Amazon employees – 65% of whom speak and support foreign languages.

POTENTIAL

Amazon's entry into the Egyptian online retail market segment was about tapping into a sector of vast size, scope, and potential. Nationwide, a growing number of consumers – 72% – are shopping online more than ever. When aligned with a preferential combination of robust and long-term support from the government, as part of Vision 2030, a talented and multilingual workforce, and Egypt's advantageous location, our entry was a necessary priority.

At Amazon, we see our investment as an opportunity to serve the online retail market segment demands of the region, to join a transformative national strategy, and expand our services to nearby regions and beyond. Egypt's undeniable effort to improve the built environment and connectivity infrastructure over the last decade has enabled Amazon to establish fulfillment centers with over 130,000 cubic meters of storage, 22 delivery centers across the country and, a 24/7 Customer Service Center that serves not only Egypt, but key countries in Europe and the Middle East.

The digitalization of services and functions falls within Vision 2030's transformational priorities and agenda, along with growing people's digital and financial literacy and access to online tools. We saw the potential benefits of creating new payment options and supported a push towards a digital-first, fully-banked financial landscape that could proficiently serve Egyptian customers and their needs, especially amidst global and local economic pressures.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our successful launch of customer-first services, including new installment payment plans with more than 10 Egyptian banks and embedding Amazon Prime benefits within Orange mobile plans have seen great success. Additionally, our partnerships with Egyptian FinTech solutions including ValU, Vodafone Cash and Etisalat Cash have all helped build up people's online shopping comfort levels, reaching greater numbers of online customers.

Our commitment to serving the Egyptian market segments also means championing local, Egyptian

companies, SMBs, and entrepreneurs to reach more customers – nationally and beyond the country's borders – through partnerships and programs that support sellers by connecting them with customers.

For example, participating in 2022's 'Made in Damietta' exhibition – inaugurated by Egypt's Ministry of Trade and Industry – was a fantastic opportunity to connect with and learn how we can better support SMBs. We've also held our own Seller Summits in Cairo and Port Said, under the patronage of local governors, inviting hundreds of existing and prospective Amazon sellers, to explore our innovative solutions.

At last year's Turathna Exhibition, which specializes in Egyptian heritage products and handicrafts, it was a great pleasure to personally meet and speak with artisans and entrepreneurs to help drive awareness and boost our positioning as the go-to online partner. Through our collaboration with the Egyptian Micro, Small, and Medium-size Enterprises Development Agency (MSMEDA), we support Amazon sellers to export to foreign market segments. After a successful pilot last year, it is exciting to see 556 Egypt-based factories shipping their goods to the US and GCC.

We are also proud to count on national institutions, the Post Distribution Company (PDC) – the logistics arm of Egypt Post – as a key partner in helping us provide nationwide shipping and distribution services. Working alongside Egypt Post gives us valuable access to a network of infrastructure sites and delivery services.

VISION

These partnerships, the potential they reveal, and the people-first strategies they support, reflect how we are aligned with the values and goals that are shaping the Egypt of tomorrow. Through tech, talent, opportunity, and dedication, we are in-step with Egypt's leadership and their ambition of delivering a bright, diversified, and economically empowered future.

As Amazon's services and capabilities in Egypt evolve, our long-term commitments will remain steadfast; to champion local businesses to reach new customers and build their brands; to celebrate quality Egyptian products; to provide fast and reliable deliveries; to support our people and customers; and to be an active partner in helping the nation achieve its Vision 2030 goals.



¹ <https://itida.gov.eg/English/Programs/Talent-Landscape/Pages/default.aspx>

² <https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/egypt-ecommerce-market/market-trends>

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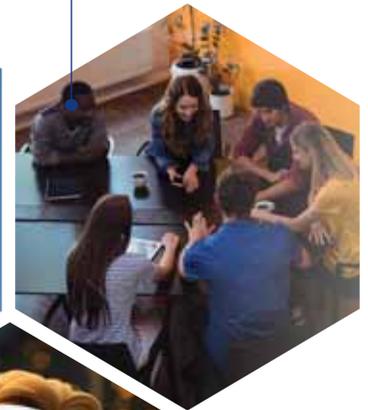
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GOODBYE PRINT? NOT YET

The shift to accessing written, audio and video content on smartphones, tablets and laptops has already happened. Using any other medium has become a niche, seen only under certain circumstances or by individuals with old-fashioned tastes.

Since 2005, usage of the term "digital first," indicating that content generators must prioritize producing media for digital platforms, increased sevenfold until 2019 based on Google's metrics.

That shift led to many reputable print publications, such as Entertainment Weekly and other magazines, to close down to focus on their digital footprint. However, others persist with print, even if they publish bespoke digital content on their websites and social media accounts. That list includes the likes of The Economist, The Financial Times, Bloomberg and other reputable non-business publications.

Aside from the nostalgia (for our older readers) to hold something tangible that is not an electronic device that isn't pinging every few minutes with a new notification, printed publications have tangible benefits.

The first is credibility and accuracy in reporting and insightful analysis, as only licensed and resourceful news and journalism organizations can print and publish magazines. That comes as the use of such terms as "fake news" to describe online content has increased from nearly zero in 2012 to be used almost as much as "digital first," according to Google metrics.

Meanwhile, the advent of unregulated artificial intelligence that can write news articles (generative AI) only increases the risk of stumbling upon wrong information, leading policymakers and business leaders to make less-than-optimal decisions. Also, with algorithms always directing readers to articles that align with their previous searches, casual readers are rarely exposed to diverse content with different points of view.

Meanwhile, overcrowding in the digital landscape has led to the rise of niche platforms catering to a subset of target markets. A print magazine could reach all targeted readers, regardless of age and location, assuming a solid distribution company.

Inevitably, though, print will no longer be viable due to environmental considerations and the rising cost of printing and distribution. In the meantime, print publications need to build their reputation as trusted news organizations and create a loyal following to ensure they remain essential to their readers (even if few read them) when the inevitable shift happens.

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HOLDING OUT FOR REAL CHANGE

Is it possible to restore trust now that there is a light at the end of the tunnel? The International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreement seems to be imminent. There was uncertainty about whether the Egyptian government would accept the lender's conditions, but it seems both parties have reached a satisfactory understanding on terms.

News that the UAE has extended a helping hand with the Ras El Hikma real estate deal is more credible than previously perceived, to the extent that rumors are now circulating that the money has already been deposited against the sale of the property. If we tie everything together, including the timing of the crackdown on currency and gold traders and the appreciation of the EGP against the dollar in the parallel market, an IMF announcement could be imminent. It cannot come too soon: Unless there is swift action, the control on the market will wither.

Several other actions taken over the last few weeks signal coordinated measures, including a new law giving the military authority to clamp down on those hoarding commodities or damaging public facilities and infrastructure. The Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) has revived the cash withdrawal limit of EGP 150,000 per day, raised interest rates by 2% and announced bank certificates of 22% and 23%. All these moves are in step with attempts to address inflation.

On the fiscal side, the Cabinet has introduced measures to tighten the belt on spending and level the playing field between public and private sector businesses. The announcement that bidding for the Wataneya gas stations is finally closing is a symbolic nod to appeasing the IMF on divesting state-owned enterprises.

These measures must be carefully orchestrated and implemented concurrently to ensure a sustainable currency float and restore confidence in the central bank's and government's ability to manage the transition. It is a delicate job that requires a professional economic team at the helm of it.

Constitutionally, a Cabinet change is mandatory after or before the expected presidential inauguration, with a deadline of April 3. One scenario suggests that the currency float and IMF agreement would precede the Cabinet reshuffle, which would take on the full brunt of the measures. This, in my opinion, is more probable. The other scenario is an immediate reshuffle to manage the transition from the start, which would make more sense. This is all speculation, however.

Regardless, the choice of a prime minister and Cabinet members will show which direction the country is heading. Is it going to be a "yes" team like the current period? Or will we finally get a team that rolls up their sleeves and stands up for a credible reform agenda, one that levels the playing field, consolidates the government's fiscal budget, and sets solid priorities and investments, with the roles of the private sector and the state in the economy clearly spelled out. A shadow economy cannot be tolerated if we ever aspire to rebuild trust and confidence in our economy.

The current state of our economy — loaded with local and foreign debt, non-performing assets, historically depreciated currency, and runaway inflation — is testimony of incompetency. We are anticipating a real change this time. Egypt deserves better.

TAREK TAWFIK
President, AmCham Egypt



EXPLORE CAIRO'S CULINARY ADDRESS; THE FIRST NILE BOAT BY FOUR SEASONS HOTEL CAIRO AT THE FIRST RESIDENCE

Located at the widest part of the West banks of the Nile, opposite Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at First Residence, the First Nile Boat is set to be Cairo's trendy culinary and lifestyle location. Accessible from the Nile Street via a carefully-designed, contemporary designed dock area that exudes simplistic luxury. Enter the boat, and you will be greeted by a perfect blend of textures, light and dark hues of the genuine teak wood floor, modern light fixtures and wall fittings that warmly welcome you into this uncompromising world of that exude luxury, taste and lifestyle.

Situated on the ground floor Xodó offers the best Brazilian ambience and Churrascaria in Cairo while Nairu will serve some of the most popular cuisines of Asia.

Xodó (the Portuguese word for an expression of a feeling of love) with its promise to deliver authentic Brazilian cuisine the best bespoke meats grills including the renowned Churrascaria concept. Xodó chefs have beautifully curated a Churrascaria inspired menu including an all-you-can-eat Churrascaria incorporated with traditional Brazilian flavours ideal for meat lovers.

Xodó's interiors feature teak wood adorning the floors and walls, giving the restaurant a rich and warm ambience. An open mise-en-place will greet you as you enter, bar area where guests can sip on the best signature Brazilian cocktails whilst enjoying the panoramic view of the Nile.

Walk into Nairu, which translates to Nile in Japanese, and you are greeted by a richly-coloured, teak-wood doorway and patterned floor that, during the day, perfectly complements the light and airy atmosphere from the guests panoramic

Nile view. Further immersing you into this fascinating region is the colorful street-art hand-painted mural showcasing the colorful, rich and storied Asian history and culture. Offering some of Asia's most popular cuisines Nairu Chefs have carefully selected the best of each region - to excite all senses and palates.

The restaurant features an eight seat Teppanyaki station grilled to perfection by Nairu chefs; head over to the opposite side of the restaurant to watch our expert and passionate sushi chefs masterfully create some of the most original, vivid and luscious sushi plates in the capital.

Inspired by the soothing colour palettes of Santorini island, the unique ambience of Zoé restaurant offering the ultimate style setting for a dining experience with a side of panoramic Nile and Cairo views.

Complemented with blue and white interiors, the Mediterranean style walls and furnishings add a rich yet subtle touch, making each corner of the restaurant unique with its own personality, and its welcoming air-conditioned indoor space is a relaxed ambience awaiting Cairenes. Meanwhile, the dining experience continues to the outdoors in vibrant and colourful leafy surrounds. Zoé menu features Mediterranean favourites and elevated seafood options, ideal for afternoon lunches, an evening get-together with the golden Egyptian sun setting over the horizon at the backdrop or a fun night out with friends on the weekend with live music.

If you're looking forward to an unforgettable dining experience, head to Le Petit Chef for a 3D theatre culinary journey one course at a time.

THE NEWSROOM



MORE BANKS HALT DOLLAR WITHDRAWALS

Emirates NBD froze foreign currency cash withdrawals from ATMs outside Egypt for all its credit and debit cardholders. However, it retained their credit card purchase limit of \$250 abroad, with the bank taking 10% of the transaction value in fees.

CIB, the largest publicly traded bank in Egypt, adjusted some credit card limits for overseas purchases to the dollar equivalent of between EGP 15,000 and EGP 75,000, down from EGP 75,000 for all CIB cards. Meanwhile, cash withdrawals from foreign ATMs range from the equivalent of EGP 2,000 to EGP 6,500 a month in dollars. That compares to

\$250, regardless of the value in Egyptian pounds.

Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank decreased its monthly foreign currency transaction limit to \$50 to \$100 for Egypt-issued cards and accounts, down from \$250. For credit card purchases abroad, the bank has limited them to between \$500 and \$2,000 a month, down from \$2,000 for all cards.

The news comes as the Central Bank announced in January that holders of new credit cards will not be able to use them in any foreign currency transaction during the first six months of their issuance.

WORLD BANK DOWNGRADES GDP FORECAST

The World Bank expects Egypt's GDP growth for fiscal year (FY) 2023/2024 to drop to 3.6% instead of the 3.8% predicted in October. "Import restrictions constrained access to inputs for domestic production and exports while declining purchasing power of households and sluggish corporate activity weighed on investment and private consumption," it said.

The new forecast aligns with the IMF and

S&P Global, which forecast GDP growth rates between 3.5% and 3.6% for FY 2023/2024.

EBRD and Morgan Stanley remain optimistic, forecasting Egypt's GDP growth rates at 4.2% and 4.5%, respectively.

The government is even more optimistic, expecting growth to reach 4.7% compared to 3% in FY 2022/2023 and 4.2% in FY 2021/2022.

GOVERNMENT CHASES FOREIGN CURRENCY INFLOWS

The Egyptian government is negotiating with the Africa Finance Corp. and Islamic Trade Finance Corp. a \$250 million Sharia-compliant one-year loan. The money would go to buying food and fuel from abroad.

The government will split the money between the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation and the General Authority for Supply Commodities to buy wheat, corn, vegetable oils, and sugar.

Also in January, the Ministry of Finance said it plans to issue bonds denominated in local currency for BRICS members (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE and Ethiopia).

The ministry also plans to issue bonds denominated in the Indian rupee this year. It would be the third bond issuance denominated in currencies other than the dollar and euro. In 2023, the government issued Chinese bonds worth CNY 3.5 billion and Japanese bonds worth JPY 75 billion.

The ministry also plans to attract \$6 billion worth of eco-friendly (green) projects, having received requests for Golden Licenses from Gulf-based, Chinese, and Indian investors. Hossam Heiba, head of the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI), said each would invest about \$2 billion.

Also in January, rumors continued about the EU's plans to mobilize up to EUR 10 billion in investments alongside debt relief programs to stabilize Egypt's economy as part of efforts to curb illegal migration.



ABU DHABI PORTS GROUP TO OPERATE THREE TERMINALS

The Abu Dhabi Ports Group signed a 15-year concession agreement worth \$3 million with the Egyptian Red Sea Ports Authority (RSPA) to develop and operate passenger and cruise ship terminals at Hurghada, Safaga, and Sharm El-Sheikh.

A statement by the group said they expect to conclude a concession agreement in the first quarter of 2024, subject to regulatory approvals.

The investment will add new services and

improve access for cruise operators. In addition, the group's cruise terminal network in the Red Sea will add new itineraries, strengthening the group's cruise business in that region and boosting tourism in Egypt, Asharq Al-Awsat reported.

The Abu Dhabi group also signed a 30-year concession agreement in December worth \$200 million to operate the Safaga 2 multipurpose terminal at Safaga Sea Port.

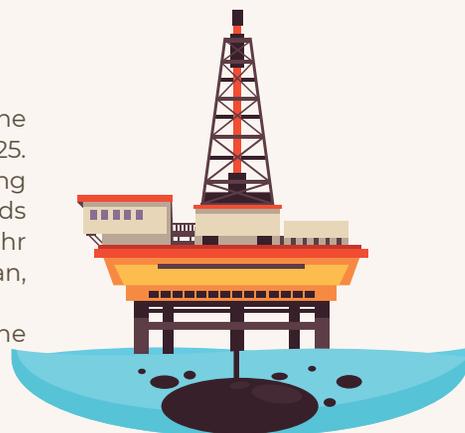
WORTH FOLLOWING

MORE GAS PRODUCTION COMING?

U.S. Chevron announced it expects to start production from the recently discovered Narges natural gas field in the first half of 2025.

Output in phase one should reach 600 million cubic feet, rising to as high as 1 billion in the following two years. The field holds about 2.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. For comparison, Zohr Field, the largest discovered natural gas field in the Mediterranean, held 30 trillion cubic feet when ENI found it in 2013.

Pundits expect Chevron to invest \$3 billion to develop the Narges field.



Digital battlegrounds

Calls on social media platforms from Egypt and the Arab World to boycott Western brands re-emphasized the need for businesses to remain vigilant on social platforms to ensure such calls do not hurt their bottom lines.

by **Fatma Fouad**



Social media platforms have become instrumental in influencing buying decisions, as their reach spans almost everyone with an internet connection. "Social media has given consumers a bigger voice and new channels to communicate with brands and share their opinions with peers," noted The Keen Folks, a developer of AI tools for businesses, in a September 2023 post.

Users, particularly the young generation, increasingly use social media to search for written, audio, and video content. According to Google's internal data for 2022, nearly 40% of Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, prefer using TikTok and Instagram to search for content, including products and reviews, instead of using Google search.

Consequently, reviews on social media act like word-of-mouth recommendations that influence consumers' preferences and can either build or destroy a brand's reputation. Nadzeya Rukhlia, customer support operations specialist at Viral Nation, a marketing agency based in Canada, said, "A single bad review or negative post can quickly spiral out of control and damage your reputation beyond repair."

Recent calls to boycott Western brands across Egypt and the Arab world have accelerated the need for intelligent social media marketing strategies. "Several markets in the Middle East and some outside the region were experiencing a meaningful business impact due to the war (in Gaza) and associated misinformation about the brands," McDonald's CEO Chris Kempczinski told international media in January.

Despite such calls receding slightly since they started in October 2023, it showcased how powerful social media has become and the need for companies to remain alert to potential negative sentiments.

Online Societies

Building a positive brand reputation on social media is a "critical and multifaceted exercise," Jon Younger, principal at RBL Group, a consultancy, wrote on Forbes website in August. Without it, "even the best companies are endangered by actions and reactions that destroy goodwill and leave companies vulnerable to erosion and mischief by competitors and bad actors."

Negative consumer reviews carry more influence than positive ones. A 2022 study published by Service Industries Journal, which specializes in services research, said, "The impacts of positive reviews are neglected compared to negative reviews, and it is possible that positive reviews are more frequent than negative ones."

Brands should actively work on mitigating the damaging effects of negative consumer engagement

on social media. Vijay Malhotra, Marketing Head of Marg ERP Limited, a developer of business tools, sees overcoming a negative brand reputation demands a proactive approach. He told Time of India in May 2023 that businesses have to "address customer concerns promptly, transparently communicate the steps taken to rectify any issues, and demonstrate a commitment to delivering a superior customer experience."

Establishing a positive reputation also requires "a strategic blend of authenticity, consistency, transparency, and active engagement," AIM Technologies, an Egyptian AI-powered consumer and market intelligence company, said in August 2023. By mastering such factors, brands can secure their positions as trusted industry leaders capable of constructing meaningful connections with consumers.

Boycott impact

As the trend cycle moves fast in today's digital age, companies must stay alert to emerging trends on social media to manage their brands' reputations effectively. "It's imperative to tune into conversations happening around your brand and industry," Aubree Smith, a content strategist at Sprout Social, a software company, said in February 2023. That is mainly because social listening is a tool businesses can utilize to analyze what people say about them, even if they are not tagged or mentioned.

Brands should be cautious when taking a stand on social and political issues to avoid damaging consumer sentiment. "Before taking a position on highly charged social issues, companies should consider their own history and values, as well as the audience being targeted," said Deloitte, a consulting firm, in May 2022.

Businesses should also be aware of their customer base and where they are located to manage their brand voice effectively to align with their customers. "If your consumers feel strongly about an issue and lead you in a certain direction, it can be helpful to follow them that way," said Bill Rand, associate professor of marketing and executive director of NC State's Business Analytics Initiative, on an April 2022 blog.

It is not new to see buyers supporting or boycotting a brand based on social or political issues. A 2018 study by Edelman Earned Brand, a global communications firm, found nearly "two-thirds of consumers around the world buy on belief. These belief-driven buyers will choose, switch, avoid or boycott a brand based on where it stands on the political or social issues they care about."

The primary objective of boycotts is to create a compelling incentive for change. Consumers aim to

exert financial pressure on targeted companies to influence business decisions. However, Ahmed Metwally, a serial entrepreneur and businessman, wrote in the Egyptian Gazette, "The actual economic impact of boycotts is a subject of much debate. While some argue these movements have significantly hurt the targeted companies, others contend the effects are more symbolic than substantive."

Regional action

Post Oct. 7 events in the Gaza Strip, social media platforms have been awash with calls to buy Egyptian brands instead of those affiliated with Western nations that directly or indirectly support the war. The spotlight fell on McDonald's and Starbucks. Hanan Sulaiman, a journalist in the Global South World, a news platform, said in November 2023, "Local brands have been booming in Egypt amid rising calls for a boycott of American and European goods as a form of economic resistance in light of their support to the war in Gaza."

"This strategy is not just about direct economic impact, but also about sending a strong message using economic leverage as a means of political and social advocacy," said Metwally. "This movement has gained momentum across various sectors worldwide, reflecting a collective response to complex geopolitical issues surrounding Israel and its policies."

A December 2023 survey by AIM Technologies showed that 95% of Egyptians actively support the boycott. In December, John Saad, AIM CEO, and co-founder, told AmCham Egypt members that local brands started to gain support and increase in demand as people turned to them as substitutes for international brands that they decided to boycott.

He said that posed unexpected risks, as some people seem unsure about which brands are Egyptian and which are foreign, saying that brands in English are more confusing.

Others argue that boycott campaigns negatively affect Egyptians whose work involves boycotted brands. The Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce (FEDCOC) said in November 2023 that the boycotted brands rely on Egyptian suppliers who "employ thousands of Egyptians and pay taxes to the state's treasury."

FEDCOC also noted that boycotted brands operate in Egypt under franchises. That means parent companies remain mostly unaffected by the drop in local sales. That is because most brand owners require a fixed annual payment in foreign currency, not a percentage of sales, and they do not accept fees in Egyptian pounds.

Boycott exposure

According to Reuters in November, Western brands in Egypt and Jordan are feeling the effect of boycotts, and there are signs the campaign is spreading to other Arab countries, including Kuwait and Morocco. "Participation has been uneven with only minor effects seen in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates," it reported.

International brands in the Middle East need to adopt strategic approaches to retain customers quickly. "The success of a boycott often comes down to the brand, not the consumers," said



Yakov Bart, associate professor of marketing at Northeastern University in Boston. "When the brands are more easily replaceable, then they're more vulnerable to a consumer boycott."

However, he noted that big companies in Egypt have broad global reach and are, therefore, harder to boycott. "The more market power a company has, the more pervasive it and its products are, and the more challenging it is for consumers to make a dent in its profits with a boycott," he said.

Local boom?

On the surface, boycotting imported brands favors local counterparts, who must rev up their social media presence to stand out in the market and attract consumers. In November 2023, Ahram Online reported that the boycott campaign in Egypt had benefited several local companies, especially in the food and beverage sector, such as Sprio Spathis, an Egyptian-Greek beverages company founded in 1920.

Further fueling that transition is that boycott activists almost always voluntarily place local brands as alternatives to international ones, claiming they taste better, are cheaper, and are better for Egypt's GDP and employment.

Naturally, local brands have started to capitalize on the power of social media to compete with those boycotted brands. "[That required] local brands ... to launch successful marketing campaigns to attract

customers," Mohamed El-Bahi, board member of the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), told Ahram Online in November 2023.

The second pressure point was that those local brands had to live up to the hype by enhancing the quality and availability of products to avoid alarming local consumer feedback on social media. "Higher demand for local brands sparked consumer complaints about service quality, product availability, and rising prices, impacting social media sentiment scores," said Saad.

Saad added that competition among local brands is fierce, as strong demand for certain products leads consumers to focus on quality and comparison.

That led local businesses to call on the government to support them by mitigating the economic impact of inflation and currency devaluation. "The government should offer more incentives and privileges to local industries, including allocating land at low prices, or even free, for national industrial projects," said El-Bahi.

On the upside, local consumers are willing to support affordable substitutes for international brands. "Egypt's economic challenges are fuelling the rise of local brands," Radwa Abo Shady, a senior economic researcher at the Free University of Berlin, told Fast Company Middle East, a business media brand. "Its limited resource access and global supply chain disruptions force consumers to seek more affordable and reliable alternatives." ■

Brand rescuers?

How influencers can help build a company's reputation

In recent years, influencer marketing has gained popularity on social media to build trust between consumers and brands. McKinsey and Company said the influencer marketing economy was valued at \$21.1 billion last year.

Influencer marketing can significantly affect consumer behavior and perception toward certain brands. "Influencer marketing can be an effective way for brands to reach a specific target audience and build trust with consumers, according to the Economic Times. "Many consumers view influencers as trusted sources of information and are more likely to make a purchase based on a recommendation."

According to the "The State of Influencer Marketing in the UAE 2023" report released in May 2023 by YAAP, a content and influencer marketing

company, the influencer marketing industry in the Middle East was estimated to reach a market value of \$1.3 billion last year. The report found that 77% of marketers surveyed said Influencer marketing was a top priority for their brands.

In the Middle East, brands have the opportunity to leverage a diverse influencer landscape to engage with their target demographics effectively and foster genuine connections. "Regarding [business to consumer] campaigns, the Middle East region boasts a rich pool of influencers from various backgrounds," Anastasiya Golovatenko, a startup mentor and business adviser, told the Economic Times. "Social media personalities, content creators, and industry experts are the main sources of influence here."



WORKING WITH AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the technology that will power the future. Integrating it into existing systems and building new ones with AI at their core will require the entire economy to be ready for it. Its most significant benefit



will be fueling energy sustainability, managing and reducing waste, and ensuring agriculture uses as many environmentally friendly resources as possible.

By **Tamer Hafez**

BUILDING BLOCKS

Artificial intelligence will underpin most aspects of the modern economy. Oxford Insights' Government AI Readiness Index 2023 report highlights how governments can prepare.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is quickly becoming an indispensable tool powering (and changing) how governments work and offer services. "The transformative potential of AI is undeniable, with governments worldwide acknowledging its impact," said Oxford Insights' Government AI Readiness Index 2023 report published in December. "Governments are not only working to regulate AI and foster AI innovation, but also striving to integrate this technology into public services."

Egypt is a regional AI trailblazer, founding the National Council for Artificial Intelligence in November 2019 and publishing its AI strategy in July 2021. Phase two should start in May and end in May 2027.

Yet, despite describing the country as the "North African outlier [and] securing a position in the top 10 in MENA," the 2023 report's ranking shows that Egypt still needs to do a lot to fully benefit from AI.

Egypt's AI readiness

Egypt was ranked 62nd out of 121 nations globally and eighth out of 19 in MENA. It was No. 1 among North African countries.

The report highlighted two standout local developments. The first was the introduction of the Egyptian Charter for Responsible AI (ECRAI) 2023 v1.0 in May.

The charter document, which is updated annually, says it draws upon guidelines developed by the OECD, UNESCO, World Health Organization (WHO), IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers), EU and from Singapore, the U.K., United States, Australia and other advanced economies. ECRAI "signals Egypt's readiness to follow responsible AI practices, something many investors [and] AI ranking bodies consider."

The second development highlighted by the Oxford Insights report was Egypt's plan to build a hyperscale data center, which would host cloud services, in cooperation with UAE data center developer Khazana. It would involve a "substantial" investment of \$250 million. The government announced the deal in May.

In Khazana's press release announcing the project, Hossam Heiba, President of the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI), said: "This [project is] in line with Egypt's plan to localize information technology and data centers, especially given the significant development witnessed by the technological infrastructure sector in Egypt."

Preparing for competition

The Oxford report said, "Half of the AI strategies ... published or announced [last year] came from low- and middle-income countries," similar to Egypt. The list includes Rwanda, Tajikistan, Senegal, Benin, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka. Those nations will invariably seek foreign investors and funding to build their domestic AI capabilities in competition with Egypt.

To create an attractive investment environment, according to the Oxford Insights report, governments should not just promote and fuel investments and adoption of AI but "have a strategic vision of how it develops and governs AI, supported by appropriate regulation and attention to ethical risks."

The report also noted the importance of a "strong internal digital capacity, including the skills and practices that support its adaptability in the face of new technologies."

That means emerging markets like Egypt need to invest heavily in data generation and digital infrastructure as they "are critical enablers for AI readiness ... essential for fostering equitable and inclusive advancements."

Since early last year, technologies that generate bespoke content by "learning" from existing data (generative AI) have increased the need for more expansive data sets and increasingly advanced digital infrastructure.

"Extensive data volume [is] for training models, refining algorithms, and mitigating bias, among other crucial aspects," said the Oxford report. Meanwhile, having a "robust infrastructure foundation is essential to facilitate the operability and scale of AI tools, as well as to guarantee equitable and safe access to them."

"Without a solid base of data and infrastructure," it said, "countries may find it challenging to develop domestic generative AI capabilities, potentially leading to reliance on foreign technology."

Data and infrastructure also help governments "avoid bias and error," according to the report. That requires digital infrastructure to cope with ever-increasing amounts of data generated by continuous "learning" and use of AI-powered tools.

Additionally, vast amounts of data and capable digital infrastructure could tackle "major risks like privacy protection, labor displacement and misinformation," the Oxford Insights report said. "It's important not to underestimate the effects of the existing global digital gap."

AI tools

A thriving and mature domestic ICT sector is a prerequisite for implementing and integrating AI technologies. The Government AI Readiness Index report said any "government depends on a good supply of AI tools from the technology sector," which needs to be mature enough to supply them."

That requires the ICT sector to be innovative, "underpinned by a business environment that supports entrepreneurship and a good flow of R&D spending."

Using locally developed AI-powered tools is essential. "If a country's domestic tech sector is too immature or lacking ... governments may be forced to turn to foreign companies," the report said. "This both stings the growth of the domestic tech sector and can have even more dire consequences for AI-enabled public services, which may be improperly trained on foreign data not representative or relevant to a country's context."

In 2024, Egypt can accelerate the advancement of its AI sector by increasing cooperation with its fellow members of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and five other emerging nations). "China, Brazil and India all rank near the top in number of AI unicorns (startups valued at more than \$1 billion)," the report said. Also, Brazil, Russia, India, and China are "represented in the top 20 for AI research papers ... and quality of engineering and technology higher education."

One AI world?

Countries have sought "increased international collaboration on AI, especially ... governance and

ethics," the Oxford Insights report said. "A robust global governance framework for AI is essential to equitably distribute the benefits of this technology and effectively address and mitigate its risks."

Emerging economies developing their AI ethics and regulations can benefit from the work of advanced nations. November saw the release of proposed ways to govern AI, including the G7's International Guiding Principles for Advanced AI Systems and the Bletchley Declaration that emerged from the U.K. AI Safety Summit. Earlier regulatory frameworks include the OECD's 2019 AI Principles, UNESCO's 2021 Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and the EU's draft AI Act.

Since 2023, low and middle-income nations in the Global South have been looking to develop bespoke AI regulations not influenced by what wealthy economies are doing. "We are seeing AI governance developments beyond [advanced nations in] the Global North, in part because of support from cooperation agencies and development banks," said the report. Those agencies include Germany's GIZ, the World Economic Forum, UNESCO and the AU-EU Digital Development Hub.

The report singled out UNESCO's work with countries lacking AI strategies to develop regulatory guardrails for using foreign-developed AI-powered tools. "This [is] a reversal of the process we have seen across other countries, and it has the potential to significantly change how countries approach AI in government."



POTENTIAL GRID POWERHOUSE

The government's efforts to promote AI can help it manage power grids more effectively and decarbonize them.

In 2023, power outages for two hours were, for the first time, a fact of life in Egypt beyond the summer months when air conditioner use drops. In December, Asharq Business, Bloomberg's Arabic news portal, reported that load shedding would continue until March due to a decrease in fuel for generators.

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into the national power grid could significantly reduce those blackouts. "AI holds promise ... for optimizing energy generation, distribution and consumption," FDM Group, a UK-based consultancy, said in September,

AI is also increasingly essential as "power systems become vastly more complex as demand for electricity grows and decarbonization efforts ramp up," said Vida Rozite, a policy analyst with the International Energy Agency (IEA), in November. "The result is a vastly greater need for information exchange -- and more powerful tools to plan and operate power systems as they keep evolving."

Such integration will be challenging, as governments need to ensure digital, legislative and human capabilities can cope with the significant influx of sensitive data generated from integrating AI into the power grid.

Getting it right means "increasingly sophisticated AI-driven solutions [will] improve the efficiency of ... energy sources, enhance grid stability and reduce greenhouse emissions," said FDM Group.

AI grid

AI technologies in smart grids "predict consumption patterns using historical and real-time data, which can help allocate resources more efficiently," FDM Group noted. That is particularly useful during "sudden periods of high demand. AI can improve the distribution of electricity, ensuring that power is directed where it's needed most" and lessen the chance of blackouts.

Such AI systems also could also predict equipment failures. "Machine learning can analyze large amounts of data ... such as usage stats, weather and historical maintenance records to predict breakdowns," said FDM Group, "This approach minimizes downtime, reduces repair costs and improves the overall reliability of [the] energy infrastructure."

Using AI in power grids means "automating manual inspections of millions of power lines, poles and mounted devices," Marc Spieler, senior managing director at NVIDIA, a producer of computer hardware, said in a July blog.

Implementation should be straightforward. Yehu Ofer, CEO of Odysight, a developer of AI-powered tools, told Reuters in December that utility companies need only fit optical sensors connected to a computer with the AI algorithm at critical points of failure to "see issues before they become problems. I can change the model of maintenance by not replacing things before they need to be replaced."



Demand prediction

Using AI-powered systems to predict peak demand patterns and adjust supply significantly benefits governments. “Many traditional approaches to forecasting [electricity demand] only have the capacity to look at a small number of parameters with small datasheets,” Karen Panetta, a fellow at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, told Reuters in December. “AI can allow us to explore relationships and ... redistribute energy in the most efficient way.”

That would ultimately lower operational costs and, more importantly, “help make the shift toward renewable energy sources,” said FDM Group.

Another reason making AI forecasts necessary is that power grids now use fossil fuels alongside renewable sources. The Egyptian government plans to generate 42% of the country’s electricity from renewables by 2035, up from 22% in 2022. “With renewables, we have two variables,” Sherif El-Mashad, digital lead at ABB Electrification, told Reuters in December. “We will need to have precise predictions, but at the same time, we need to have orchestration between all the different elements at play.”

Sustainable supply

Ensuring a stable energy supply from renewable sources while minimizing dependency on non-renewables is another perk of using AI in power grids. “This can be complicated ... since the sun doesn’t always shine, and wind doesn’t always blow,” noted Rozite of the IEA. “That’s where machine learning can play a role, [matching] variable supply with rising and falling demand ... allowing it to be integrated more easily into the grid.”

Kristjan Jansons, CEO of MindTitan, an AI startup, told Reuters in December, “AI can be helpful in selecting sites where wind or solar facilities could be installed.” The result would be more scalability of clean energy output that is cost-effective.

FDM Group said AI could determine the best times to store renewable energy, when to release it, and how much to distribute. It would be particularly crucial for hospitals, data centers, and emergency services.

AI also is “profoundly” transforming the oil and gas exploration sector, said FDM Group. “AI can identify potential oil and gas reserves that may have gone unnoticed using traditional methods [and] guiding exploration toward the most promising prospects.” That is vital for Egypt, as nearly 75% of its electricity supply still relies on fossil fuels.

Egypt also could benefit from AI at its Dabaa nuclear power plant. AI’s “role in nuclear power plants is indispensable, as it ... helps prevent accidents while maintaining the reliable generation of clean energy,” said FDM Group.

AI headwinds

FDM Group said the biggest challenge facing governments is the cost of implementing AI into existing infrastructure.

The second is that AI systems used in utilities would have access to “vast amounts of sensitive data, including grid information, customer data and operational details,” FDM Group said. “Ensuring the security of this data is paramount ... Compliance with data privacy regulations ... adds an extra layer of complexity.”

The third issue facing the government is a shortage of AI professionals who also understand the energy sector, said FDM Group. “This scarcity ... can slow down the adoption and development of AI solutions in the industry.”

Another problem is that AI-powered electricity grids require fewer workers, a concern for emerging economies seeking to create jobs. Manoj Sinha, CEO of Husk Power Systems, an Indian mini-grid operator, told Reuters in December that since adopting AI, his company has hired 1,000 workers instead of about 3,500.

Jansons of MindTitan added that AI isn’t suitable for every situation a power grid faces. “It needs to be used on [parts] maintained often enough so that small tweaks ... enable big gains. Wind turbines are suited to predictive maintenance because they are standardized.”

Another problem is integrating AI into existing power grids requires significant lead time. “The energy sector is very stable,” El-Mashad of ABB Electrification told Reuters. “Companies need to be fully confident that AI-based technologies are 100% reliable and robust before they deploy them ... The worst-case scenario, where lights go off as the result of a mutant [AI] algorithm, is certainly to be avoided at all costs.”

Rozite also noted that AI uses “more energy than other forms of computing -- a crucial consideration as the world seeks to build a more efficient [decarbonized] energy system.” He estimated that “training a single [AI] model uses more electricity than 100 US homes consume in an entire year.”

To overcome those headwinds, governments need to agree on developing “mechanisms for data sharing and governance,” Rozite said. “A coordinated global approach can enable internationally applicable and replicable solutions, transfer learning globally and expedite the energy transition while reducing costs.”

COMING FULL CIRCLE

Artificial intelligence is becoming an increasingly important technology for managing waste, which is proving an effective way to decarbonize economies.

Waste and carbon emissions have long been the top byproducts of increased human and economic activity. That is particularly evident in low- and middle-income countries whose GDPs grow significantly faster than advanced nations. According to a McKinsey Global Institute report, "Emerging economies accounted for almost two-thirds of the world's GDP growth and more than half of new consumption" from 2003 to 2018.

That disparity is expected to continue. An Economist Intelligence Unit report published in October 2022 projected real GDP growth would remain stronger in emerging markets than in developed economies until 2026.

Such growth means more waste and harmful emissions. "Climate change is impacting the world at a rapid pace, and the best way we can bring change is through optimal waste management," said CleanRobotics, a developer of eco-friendly products and technologies, on its website. "Waste management is no longer an issue of tomorrow."

Artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly proving a sustainable long-term solution for managing waste, raising public awareness of the problem and boosting innovation. "Integration of AI in this sector is revolutionizing the way we handle, process, and recycle waste, leading to more efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective waste management practices," Nicole Sroka, founder of Mind Moves, a business consultancy, wrote on the Solid Waste Association of North America website in December.

Egypt's strategy

Egypt lags in managing waste. A World Bank Group report in 2022 estimated "more than two-thirds of Egypt's total solid waste is mismanaged -- compared to [an average of] 53% in MENA."

The government is expediting efforts to improve that track record. A June report from the OECD praised Egypt for "rethinking its economic growth, adapting its strategy to grow in a more sustainable way, [placing] the circular economy (where waste is eliminated) at the heart of [its] sustainability agenda."

That "rethinking" started with legislation in 2012 allowing the private sector to manage and recycle waste. Also that year, the government began to digitize the monitoring of waste collection and management in Cairo, home to 25% of Egypt's population, to improve collection and recycling.

In 2015, the state published the National Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production, where one of its four "priority sectors" was municipal solid waste management. It includes "utilizing agricultural waste to produce energy," treating wastewater and managing municipal waste.

The official document said it aims to promote good governance; R&D and innovation; public awareness and community engagement; restructure public institutions and legislation; provide access to finance; and encourage investments.

In 2016, the government issued a law requiring cement companies to use organic waste for 10% of their fuel needs. Subsequent law amendments empowered governors to contract with private-sector companies to collect waste.

In January 2020, the Environment Ministry launched the Go Green initiative to raise public awareness of the waste problem and the importance of recycling to lower the economy's carbon footprint.

The OECD report also noted that more local businesses are joining the foray, "developing circular models ... to reduce dependence on scarce resources, create value from waste streams and increase resilience to raw material price fluctuations."

AI's role

For Egypt, ensuring that waste management efforts are more effective requires AI-powered solutions. PLAEX Technologies, a developer of AI-powered tools and technologies, said in a June note on LinkedIn the first benefit of AI is enhancing the efficiency of waste sorting and processing. "By analyzing vast amounts of data, AI systems can identify different types of waste," the company said. That "allows for more precise sorting and recycling efforts."

CleanRobotics, a manufacturer of AI-powered devices, said on its website there are two options for separating waste. The first is using AI-powered recycling bins in homes and companies to sort waste as soon as it is thrown away. The other is building a "material recovery facility" for neighboring households and factories to dump waste. They would use the embedded AI system to separate types of waste for collectors.

"AI can turn the 1% of waste that is monitored and analyzed into 100%," Cathy Hackl, co-founder of Journey, a business consultancy, told Forbes in July 2020.

Meanwhile, data and information collected from AI-powered waste management systems should guide policymakers and businesses to "develop targeted strategies to promote recycling, reduce packaging waste and encourage the adoption of sustainable practices," PLAEX Technologies noted. Ultimately, "supporting a circular economy and reducing the environmental footprint of waste generation."

Forecasting waste

A unique feature of AI-powered tools is their ability to forecast trends and patterns. "AI systems can analyze historical data and environmental factors to accurately forecast waste generation rates," said PLAEX Technologies. "By leveraging AI-powered predictive analytics, waste management practices become more sustainable and resource-efficient."

The top use is predicting the most common types of waste in cities, neighborhoods, and collection, sorting, and recycling hubs, influencing investment decisions based on that data. It also could indicate the most effective kinds of incentives city by city.

Sroka of Mind Moves noted that AI can help "municipalities and waste management companies [plan] more effectively [to meet] seasonal variations in waste generation and in planning for special events."

Predictive maintenance, powered by AI, will revolutionize how waste management facilities are maintained, noted BlueSky Creations, adding it's not just about avoiding inconvenience; it's about saving resources.

AI and awareness

CleanRobotics said a lack of public awareness is the plight of waste management. "Despite their best intentions, [people] often become the biggest barrier to recycling."

AI can "foster public engagement and awareness in waste management practices," PLAEX Technologies noted. "Individuals can access personalized information about waste reduction, recycling techniques and sustainable consumption habits."

"AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can provide real-time guidance on practices and answer user queries," said PLAEX Technologies. That "empowers individuals to make informed decisions and actively participate in waste reduction efforts."

More to come

The increasing number of household devices and factory equipment connected to the Internet and AI algorithms promises innovation in waste management. That direct communication enables AI to collect and learn from the entire ecosystem in real-time, using the data each device produces to recommend or, if authorized, take appropriate actions.

Hackl of Journey said AI-powered fleet management systems would provide more benefits if integrated with AI waste collection and recycling systems. The technology "provides waste-truck drivers with optimized route planners each day," she said. The planners would connect to "routing optimization software."

PLAEX Technologies added that connecting AI-powered



robotics to AI waste management systems would "revolutionize waste processing and recycling, minimizing human intervention and maximizing accuracy and speed."

However, as with almost all new technologies, implementing AI in waste management systems relies on individuals. "Artificial intelligence can analyze, predict and recommend actions," Hackl said. "However, it's up to people to make the final call and change the systems in place to make the most of the way we produce."

CULTIVATING TRANSFORMATION

Artificial intelligence will define agricultural practices as farmers fend off increasingly complex challenges.

The Russia-Ukraine war has put the spotlight on a growing global food security problem. "The conflict quickly sparked fears of a global food crisis," said a book published in 2023 by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). "Food prices were already high in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many countries were facing serious food insecurity."

The crisis comes amid worries that conventional agricultural practices are unsustainable. "In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the impact of conventional farming practices," Emerging India Analytics, a think tank, noted in a September research paper. "Excessive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and water resources has caused significant alarm over soil quality, biodiversity and the overall ecosystem."

Enter artificial intelligence (AI). "AI stands at the forefront of [the agriculture] revolution," AMINI, a developer of AI-powered agricultural systems in Africa, said on its website. It "offers solutions ... to enhance farm operations and decision-making."

The Egyptian government needs to fuel that transformation. "Government policies play a crucial role," said IFPRI. "In recent years, governments around the world have recognized the potential of [AI] in transforming agriculture into a more sustainable and efficient industry."

Agriculture challenges

Farming is the top consumer of drinkable water worldwide. "Agriculture accounts for 70% of global freshwater consumption, putting immense pressure on this limited resource," noted IFPRI. "With climate change causing irregular rainfall patterns and melting glaciers affecting river flows, farmers are struggling to secure enough water for their crops." AMINI said arable land might suffer droughts one year and destructive flooding the next.

Inadequate irrigation infrastructure is a severe problem in many low- and middle-income nations. "Farmers have limited access to irrigation systems in many parts of the world," Jiva, an Indonesian tech company operating an e-commerce platform for farmers, said in March. "This can lead to crop failures due to drought, reducing yields and income for farmers."

The second big issue is soil degradation due to

"intensive farming practices," said AMINI. It "makes land prone to erosion and less resilient to climate extremes." IFPRI explained that deterioration comes from "monocropping," which damages the soil's biodiversity and fertility." That leads to lower crop yields and less food, IFPRI noted.

Soil degradation also occurs from overusing chemical-based fertilizers to control pest and disease outbreaks, said Jiva. IFPRI said overuse threatens underground water supplies and harms insects essential for pollination and natural pest control.

Jiva also noted "labor shortages" as a significant challenge facing farm owners, further magnified by rising demand for food worldwide.

Meanwhile, "declining rural populations and a lack of interest in farming ... lead to increased labor costs and reduced efficiency," Jiva said. This phenomenon is prevalent in low- and middle-income nations, where small-scale farmers dominate agriculture. They "face significant barriers to selling their products, such as lack of transportation, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to finance," Jiva said. That "reduces farmers' income and contributes to poverty in rural communities."

Local agro-sustainability

Sustainable agriculture in Egypt is vital. It is a significant contributor to GDP (15% in 2022), exports (17% of commodity exports), and employment (25% of the workforce), according to the Ministry of International Cooperation (MIC). "The wider value chain employs 55% of Upper Egypt's total population," MIC Minister Rania El Mashat said in a sponsored article published by Bloomberg in November 2023.

The government is committed to growing that sector further. El Mashat said the 1.5 Million Feddan Project, announced in December 2015, "is the core of Egypt's agricultural renaissance. It aims to increase agricultural land by almost 20% through the creation of a new [sustainable] Egyptian countryside on reclaimed land." In July 2023, the government announced they had cultivated 537,000 feddans under the project.

That necessitates the adoption of sustainable practices. In 2016, the government launched the Sustainable Agriculture Investments and Livelihoods

Project. As of September 2023, there were sustainable agriculture projects in Aswan, Minya, Red Sea, and Kafr El Sheikh, covering a total of over 934 acres exclusively for individual small farmers.

Ali Hozayen, chairman of the Executive Agency for Comprehensive Development Projects at the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, said in the sponsored Bloomberg article, "The aim is to increase resilience to climate change impacts such as water scarcity, water salinity, and increasing temperatures."

In December 2018, the government announced the 100,000 Greenhouses Project. "The initiative [will] reduce water consumption by up to 70% compared to traditional farming methods," Hozayen said, adding the crops produced would be "free" of contaminants and pesticide traces.

Introducing AI

The top benefit of using AI in agriculture is that it "determines the exact amount of resources needed for specific areas of land to optimize crop growth and minimize waste," IFPRI said. That approach is called precision farming. The rationing of fossil fuels, fertilizers, and pesticides will ultimately decrease farms' carbon footprint, said Simran Ahuja, author of *Agricultural Economics and Agri-Food Business*, a book published in December 2023.

According to Codiant, a tech company developing AI agriculture programs, ChatGPT, a commercially available AI tool, "is one of the most powerful tools in precision agriculture." It enables "irrigation scheduling [to reduce waste water], optimal fertilization practices and pest control." It also can identify disease and weed infections "by analyzing images and descriptions provided by the farmer."

ChatGPT also could provide the "right market insights, giving advice on what crops to grow, how to price them, and how to market them," Codiant said. "They'll look at ... past prices, how much [food products] people want, and how markets go up and down."

AI also will enable farmers to predict weather patterns

more accurately. "This information allows farmers to take proactive measures, such as adjusting planting schedules or choosing more resilient crop variants," said IFPRI.

However, as with any AI-powered system, agriculture applications need "data from multiple sources, such as satellite imagery, drones, sensors and weather forecasts to create a detailed map of the farm's soil conditions," IFPRI said.

That requires significant investment to "collect data about soil moisture levels, weather patterns, crop growth rates and other factors," IFPRI said. It will likely also change small farmers' decades-old practices, which can be a significant challenge.

AI proliferation

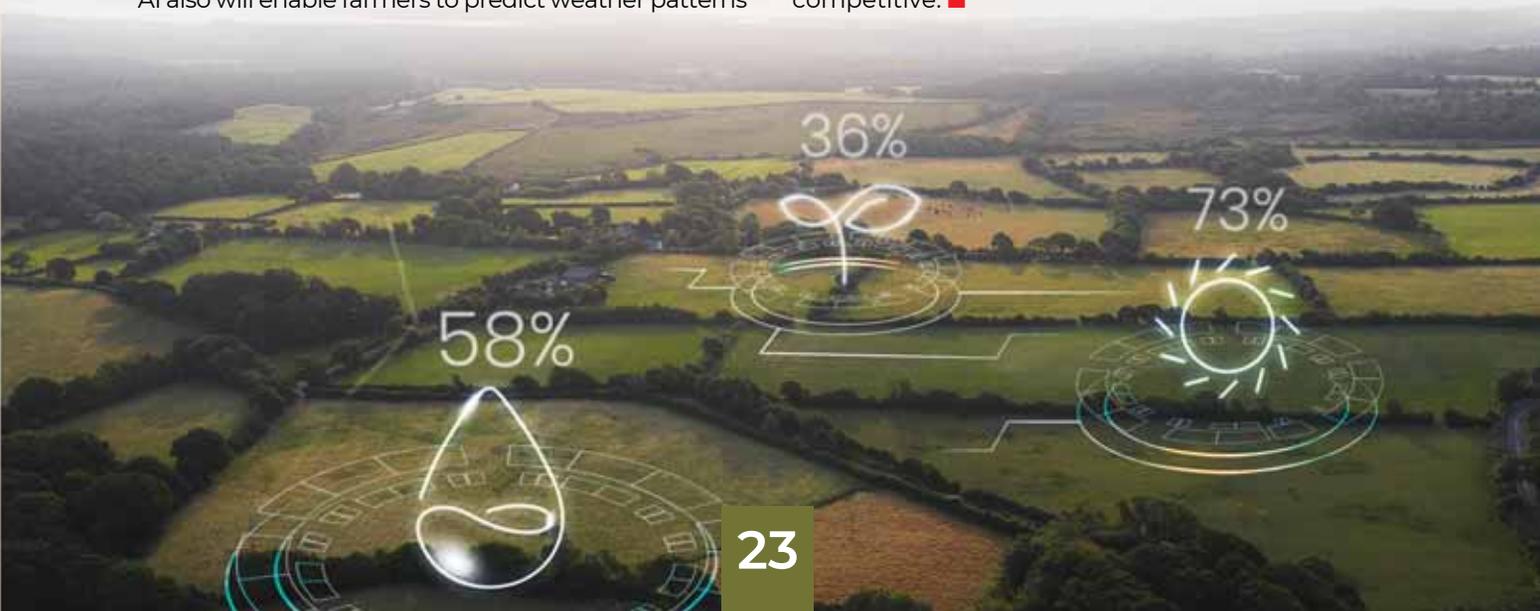
The IFPRI stressed the government needs to "incentivize farmers to adopt AI technologies by providing financial support for purchasing equipment and implementing AI-based solutions." Such support also should cover "funding for research and innovation projects related to AI in agriculture."

Another approach involves the governments leading the way for investment in research and development into the use of AI in agriculture. "By collaborating with universities and private companies, governments are able to develop cutting-edge technologies that address specific challenges of [local] farmers," IFPRI said.

Conversely, the government needs to regulate and limit pesticides and fertilizers to avoid degrading soil quality until farmers can use AI-powered systems.

The next step would be integrating autonomous robots or drones with AI agriculture systems. "These machines can be programmed to perform tasks such as planting seeds, applying herbicides or pesticides, or even harvesting crops without human intervention," said IFPRI.

Such applications would "reduce labor costs," IFPRI said. That ultimately leads to more affordable foods, curbing inflation and making food exports more competitive. ■



MIND THE 5G GAP

A GSMA report shows a sizable gap between the "mobile economy" in the Middle East and that in North Africa.

Summarized by **Tamer Hafez**

In the coming years, Egypt urgently needs to significantly boost investments to increase internet speeds and reliability. Speedtest Global Index, a portal ranking internet speeds worldwide, said that with no improvement in mobile internet speeds for the year ending in November, Egypt fell five places to rank 109th out of 146 countries. For fixed landlines, internet speeds increased a whopping 40.46% over the same period, yet the country's rank improved by only six places to 77th out of 178.

Shifting from 4G to 5G networks is essential to achieve that much-needed acceleration. "5G connectivity is already proving to be a power driver of GDP growth," said the Mobile Economy Middle East and North Africa 2023 report. It was published by GSMA, a nonprofit organization representing mobile network operators worldwide.

Egypt is taking its first steps into 5G, giving its first license to state-owned Telecom Egypt (aka We Telecom) in January. In that, the country significantly lags behind GCC nations. "5G networks now cover 75% or more of the population in GCC states," the GSMA report said. "5G contribution to MENA's [GDP is] expected to reach just under \$60 billion in 2023."

That could open the door to cooperating with GCC telecom operators to expedite local deployment of 5G networks. The threat is that 5G-dependent investment opportunities will likely land in Gulf countries first.

Fast growing

MENA should witness rising demand for increasingly faster and more reliable internet. The GSMA report estimates "unique mobile subscribers" in the region will increase 32.5% from 2022 to 2030. "In absolute terms ... Algeria, Egypt, Iran and Turkey ... have the highest number of unique mobile users." By 2030, "they will account for more than half the regional total."

In that time frame, unique subscription penetration will jump from 65% to 77% of MENA's population. The caveat is "penetration levels vary widely, with GCC states [averaging] 89%, while [less wealthy and developed nations] have penetration rates below 40%."

Also during that time, the number of SIM cards accessing the internet should increase from 51% to 59% of the total number of issued cards. Driving that growth is "the availability of affordable data plans and the cheapest internet-enabled handsets across low- and middle-income countries," the report said. The other factor is MENA's young population, which is "increasingly engaging with various online content."

Accordingly, smartphone ownership will increase from 79% to 90% of device owners by the end of this year. The "availability of affordable devices and digital awareness [are also] key in driving smartphone adoption in the region."

Two-speed prospects

The GSMA report stressed the growing disparity between the "mobile economies" in the GCC and North Africa.

In 2022, 68% of GCC residents used 4G networks versus 16% for 5G networks. The rest used 3G or older networks. North Africa, meanwhile, has no commercial 5G networks. According to GSMA, 45% used 4G and 38% 3G, while the rest accessed 2G mobile technology.

By 2030, the GCC will have stormed ahead with 95% of mobile owners using 5G. The rest will use 4G. Africa will still be in transition, with 41% using 5G, 42% using 4G, and the rest using 3G and 2G networks.

The report said that one reason for that difference is that the GCC needs 5G to upgrade metropolises to smart-city status and build new fourth-generation cities. "In GCC states, the smart-city agenda is closely tied to national economic development," the GSMA report said. "Several nations have already begun developing smart cities, such as Neom in Saudi Arabia, Pearl Island in Qatar and Dubai's smart city."

GCC

By November, 23 mobile operators in the GCC had commercial 5G networks. According to GSMA's report, most rely on updated 4G networks, making them hybrid 5G networks, to shorten deployment time. That setup remains dominant in MENA countries, the report noted. "Several operators in the region have put [it] at the center of their 5G expansion strategies."

However, several GCC telecom companies have started investing in "standalone" or "private" networks, built from day one as 5G networks. Those networks are "true 5G networks," John Burke, chief technology officer at Nemertes Research, a consultancy, told TechTarget, a specialized portal. "5G standalone offers all the intended benefits of 5G and is not subject to the limitations of 4G."

Throughout 2023, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE said they completed trials of standalone 5G networks. In September, Jordan commissioned Orange Telecom to build a standalone 5G network for the Aqaba cargo port. Meanwhile, unconfirmed news reports said UAE telecom operators also are looking to construct "private" 5G networks for the country's cargo ports.

The move to 5G led GCC telecom companies to change their business model. "In the MENA region, the majority of tower assets had traditionally remained in the hands of mobile operators," said the GSMA report. "In recent years, ... there has been a notable shift [as] independent tower companies have been among the main acquirers of operator sites, utilizing [shared use with other operators] to drive profitability."

The upside is it frees mobile operators to accelerate deployment of hybrid and standalone 5G networks.

"Mobile data traffic is expected to grow threefold in MENA in the next five years, in part due to the growing adoption of 5G," the GSMA report said. "Operators will have to increase the number of sites, particularly in urban areas, to cope with rising demand for data."

North Africa

North African nations are still working on deploying 5G networks. Algeria was the first to make a formal announcement. In November 2022, mobile operator Djezzy said it had tested 5G networks.

In March, mobile operator Ooredoo Group signed a deal with Nokia to upgrade infrastructure to be 5G-ready and build new 5G stations in Algeria and Tunisia. In May, Tunisia's ICT minister said the country would launch commercial 5G services in 2024.

In January, Egypt's National Telecom Regulatory Authority announced it had given state-owned We Telecom a license to operate 5G networks locally for \$150 million to be renewed after 15 years. At press time, none of the other three foreign-owned local operators have announced plans to acquire a similar license. Also, there is no news year on spectrum availability or plans to build 5G towers.

GCC nations could greatly benefit from a win-win scenario by cooperating with North African countries to expedite their 5G deployment. "The relatively small size of [the GCC] markets makes it challenging to compete at the same scale as their global peers," the GSMA report said. "International expansion has been a core growth and diversification strategy for major GCC operators looking for opportunities to scale up and drive new revenue and subscriber growth."

Emerging low and middle-income nations are good options for GCC operators. They "enable the companies to claim a vast geographical footprint and tens of millions of subscribers due to large youthful populations," the report said.

However, North Africa's target markets need to address GCC's telecom operators' concerns. "Revenues and profitability [have] been less convincing [in emerging markets] because of the high competition and low

[average revenue per unit]," the GSMA report said. "This is in addition to a myriad of macroeconomic challenges, such as forex losses and high inflation, as well as the political and regulatory challenges that often characterize emerging markets."

Challenges to opportunities

The fast deployment of 5G networks and the rapid rise of tools and applications that won't function otherwise can lead to problems. "Adoption of 5G is outpacing that of previous wireless technologies, leading to a surge in demand for telecom equipment and devices," the GSMA report said. That makes the "concept of circularity a top priority for policymakers and industry stakeholders in the region."

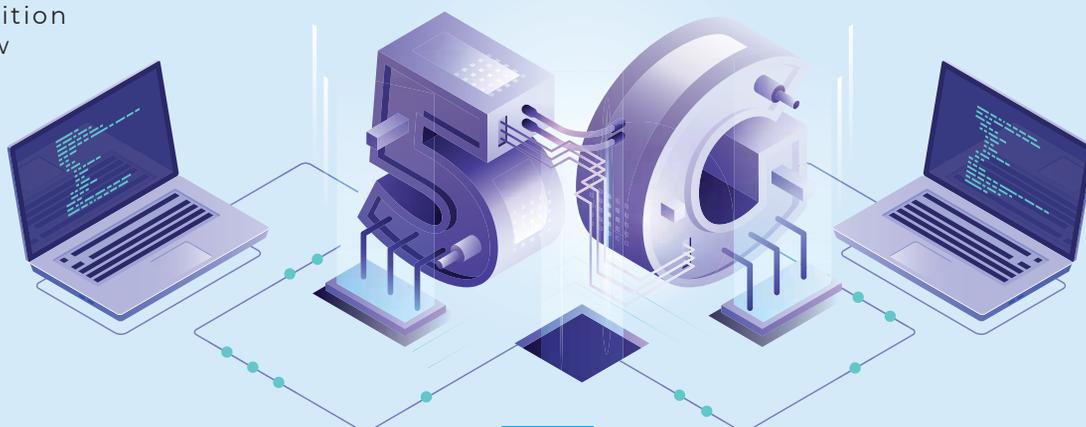
Correctly disposing and recycling discarded electronic devices requires scalable investment in the region. The GSMA report said there were more than 270 million operational non-5G devices in MENA in 2022.

In the GCC, almost all non-5G devices must be replaced by 2030, as 95% of the population will be using 5G. In Africa, that disposal problem could be less severe as only 41% of users will access 5G networks by 2030. The rest will still be on 4G (42%), 3G (15%) and even 2G (2%) networks.

The other opportunity arising from having commercial 5G networks is accelerated innovation that would not be possible without those fast networks. "5G in the region ... has a key role to play in enabling new applications and becoming the backbone for the future of smart cities," the GSMA report said.

Enticing local operators and investors to capitalize on 5G capabilities will depend on government decisions. The GSMA report said contracts should be three to five years to "help facilitate ongoing network investments and enable planning that ensures service continuity."

The other factor is "fair spectrum prices," the report stressed. "Higher spectrum prices can slow the rollout of next-generation mobile networks and reduce the network quality. They can also be associated with higher retail prices in developing countries."





5G to the people

by **Tamer Hafez**

An interview with Raghda Amer Public Relations Manager highlights the country's readiness to own 5G phones.

What role do personal digital devices play in digital transformation?

Personal digital devices, including mobile phones, tablets, wearable devices, PCs and laptops, are crucial to the Egyptian government's ambitious drive to digitize the economy.

Mobile phones and tablets provide ubiquitous access to digital services, ensuring citizens can seamlessly interact with government initiatives. These devices facilitate connectivity and communication, fostering real-time exchanges between government entities, businesses and citizens.

Digital wallets and banking apps on mobile phones and wearables contribute to adopting cashless transactions, aligning with the government's objective of financial inclusion.

PCs, laptops and tablets enable citizens to access e-government services and participate in online learning, supporting educational initiatives and expanding digital literacy. They are also vital in smart cities, entrepreneurship, telehealth services, and data-driven decision-making.

What is the mentality of electronic device buyers in Egypt?

In Egypt, the electronic device buyer mentality is shaped by several factors. Affordability is critical, influencing buyers to balance cost and features. Brand preferences, influenced by product reliability and customer support, also contribute to buying decisions.

Local buyers often desire the latest features, leading some to opt for mid-range devices with newer specifications, while others may choose last year's flagship devices for a balance of high-end features at a reduced price.

The interest in building a digital ecosystem varies, with some buyers prioritizing seamless integration and connectivity between devices.

Longevity and durability are factors for those viewing devices as long-term investments.

Local market trends, social influences, and after-sales support also impact buyers' decisions, reflecting a nuanced approach to purchasing electronic devices in the Egyptian market.

Is it vital for Egypt to have a 5G network?

Yes, it is imperative, as deploying a 5G network can pave the way for more advanced technological innovations.

For example, 5G networks can support advancements in augmented reality, virtual reality, and the Internet of Things on smartphones and tablets. Those technologies contribute to Egypt's digital transformation.

Not only does 5G offer significantly faster speeds and lower latency compared to its predecessors, it also facilitates improved connectivity.

A reliable 5G network can position Egypt as a competitive player on the global stage, attracting international businesses and fostering collaborations that contribute to its digital transformation.

Do you see local buyers caring about buying 5G smartphones?

Several decisions shape the decision-making process for local buyers in choosing 5G over 4G smartphones. Priorities also vary from one individual to another.

Consumers who understand and appreciate the benefits of 5G technology, such as higher data speeds and support for the latest and future applications, may be more inclined to choose a 5G smartphone.

Others may choose 5G phones to take a step toward the future. Anticipating the eventual rollout of 5G networks in Egypt, individuals may opt for 5G-compatible devices to ensure they are ready to take advantage of the technology when it becomes available.

Consumers in Egypt often keep their smartphones for several years. A 5G phone purchase is considered a forward-looking decision, ensuring the device remains relevant as 5G networks expand globally and locally. ■



MASS-PRODUCING STARTUPS

Venture studios are becoming a top option for startups to succeed. However, they have limitations, raising questions about their ability to replace incubators, accelerators and venture capital.

by **Rania Hassan**

The government is betting entrepreneurs and startups can lower youth unemployment, position Egypt as a regional business innovation hub and grow the country's GDP. "Entrepreneurship can provide innovative and realistic solutions to economic challenges," said Minister of Planning and Economic Development Hala El Said during the One Million Entrepreneurs campaign launch in April 2021. That strategy "will stimulate the economy with new small projects for young people to become a productive social force that effectively contributes to efforts to achieve development."

The steps to transform ideas into a stable company are well-known. "The path to building and funding a company [are almost always] come up with an idea, form a team, start testing minimal viable products, raise seed funds, then obtain venture capital," noted Steve Blank, an adjunct professor at Stanford University, in January 2023. Accelerators or incubators drive that process, converting ideas into startups that seek venture capital investments.

That model is becoming increasingly unsuitable. In December, CNN reported that "[more] startups have shut down in the third quarter of 2023 since Carta [an equity management company] began tracking the data almost five years ago."

That has put the venture studio model in the spotlight. They "create

startups by incubating their own ideas or ideas from their partners," said Blank. By developing everything in-house, success metrics are higher than market averages. Yi Minig K of Krux Asia, a Singapore-based venture studio, said in a LinkedIn blog in February 2023 that venture studios have an exit success rate of 34%. "That is almost twice that of accelerators (19%) and multiple times higher than startups themselves," he noted.

Venture studios

The venture studio business model first appeared about 15 years ago "after a handful of seasoned tech entrepreneurs with successful exits had a lot more than one single new startup idea to pursue," Alex Moazed, founding Partner and CEO of Applico, a business consultancy, explained on his company's blog. "They wanted to apply their startup expertise in pursuing multiple business opportunities [simultaneously] rather than only one. Enter the venture studio."

Compared to accelerators, venture studios "focus more resources around opportunities they identify as ripe for a startup," said Moazed. They "don't typically accept [incubation request] applications ... as the venture studio's strategic insight and ability to select opportunities is a part of the value it brings to its investors." Unlike accelerators, venture studios don't have a predefined time or cash ceiling to support their startups.

Meanwhile, venture capital firms "specialize in giving capital to [existing] startups," Kuber Ventures, a venture capital company, posted on LinkedIn in March 2023. "They typically give higher sums of capital [than venture studios] in exchange for a [25% to 50%] stake in the company." They also let the founders manage the companies. That contrasts with venture studios' 100% or majority stake ownership in the startup from the idea phase. That means they control day-to-day operations and decision-making.

Despite less funding and more control, venture studios are growing increasingly popular. Ming K says venture studios are set up "to allow for a more efficient and effective startup creation process." He also noted that when entrepreneurs "work on multiple startups at the same time, venture studios can leverage their expertise and resources to create and launch new businesses more quickly and cost-effectively."

Venture studios also help entrepreneurs working for them to diversify their startups, reducing exposure risks. Moritz Von Raczeck, a senior venture architect at MVP Factory, a consultancy, estimates that startups created by venture studios are 44% more likely to

succeed compared to those using conventional approaches -- 84% make it to the seed funding round and 72% reach Series A funding. Ming K estimates venture studio startups secure seed and series-A funding twice to three times earlier than startups that use traditional partners or go at it alone.

That likely translates to sustained success. "The average startup created by a venture studio returns an average [internal rate of return] of 53% vs. 21.3% for a traditional startup," Ming K said.

Independent studios

Over the years, two categories of venture studios have emerged. "Independent" venture studios hire a team of entrepreneurs full-time, raise their own capital and develop their own strategic direction. Its entrepreneur employees' job is to create startups using the venture studio's capital and resources and align with the studio's strategic direction.

"The principal of the venture studio makes the final decision on what startups to spin out and the amount of resources to allocate as these new businesses gain traction," Moazed explained. "Independent venture studios are, in essence, a more vertically integrated approach to the traditional venture capital model of starting a business from scratch."

Blank of Stanford University noted that independent venture studios might be "niche venture studios .. generating their own ideas and [intellectual property] in a specific industry and domain." Another sub-category is "industry agnostic studios," which don't focus on a specific industry.

Affiliated studios

The other type is the corporate or government-affiliated venture studio. The parent organization "will often provide initial capital and strategic direction. The venture studio ... brings the talent, process and know-how to build a startup," said Moazed. "It helps [large and mid-sized] companies harness the big advantages they have in starting new businesses while helping to address some of the challenges and risks that new ventures bring."

For established corporations, the importance of having access to venture studios is rising in response to fast-paced changes in the tech world. "Large companies excel at incremental innovation that grows the core business," said Moazed. "They have long struggled ... to capitalize on industry disruption and embrace new business models."

Corporate venture studios spare their parent firms from seeking startups to acquire. "The lack of

acquisition opportunities ... has led more enterprises to embrace the co-creation model of corporate venture studios," said Moazed. "This model enables large enterprises to capitalize on [their advantages] in building new business while helping mitigate many of the challenges."

He also noted how "over the past 10 years, dominant platform companies -- like Google, Facebook and Amazon -- have become new business creation engines, using their existing networks and assets to spin out new businesses. They have, in effect, created their own internal venture studios focusing on building new business models."

Changing the mindset is essential to benefiting from corporate venture studios. "Instead of investing in a business that already has initial traction and has been vetted by institutional venture-capital investors, [a corporate venture studio] allows the enterprise to take on additional risk in exchange for ... an increased ownership stake and more control," Moazed explained. "The risk-reward balance is much different."

Governments in advanced nations also benefit significantly from having venture studios. "In North America and Europe, many venture studios in non-major cities are funded by government agencies to stimulate local growth," Blank said.

Blank said one type of affiliated venture studios is "tech transfer studios," which work with governments or partner companies to "source ideas and intellectual property." Other venture studios are part of the company or government hierarchy rather than an offshoot, wholly owned, or majority stake subsidiary, making the venture studios' work all in-house.

Building the studio

The top challenge facing venture studios is "finding great founders," Gary Coover, COO of SuperLayer, a venture studio, said in a blog published in September on Medium, a digital platform. They "are the lifeblood of a successful venture studio."

"The most successful venture studios are founded by entrepreneurs that have previously built companies with [over] \$10 million in revenue and [over] 100 employees," said Moazed.

Coover said great founders have a "relentlessness to solve any problem and the ability to act decisively. They are the discoverers of the problem, the architects of the initial solution" and make the hard call on allocating resources to attack a problem.

Additionally, great founders "set the mission and

then create pathways to achieve where none previously existed," said Coover. "They thrive in ambiguity. They make decisions on the fly ... armed with limited data, fueled by instinct and vision." That is unlike leaders or managers who "typically operate within a predefined problem set with clear guidelines ... accustomed to data-driven decision-making."

Another critical aspect of building a venture studio is how it's structured. Igor Pertiya, the managing partner at Hypra Fund, a joint-venture fund, stressed, "The studio must have a well-defined strategy that outlines the prioritized activities, allocated resources and targeted markets. All studios have different approaches, but one common thread is the need for focus."

He also noted the importance of "cultivating a robust network of partners and advisers who can offer valuable assistance and information," which is essential to ensure successful execution. "We leverage our network of connections to attract advisers who can mentor ... companies, particularly in setting up and scaling sales, marketing and operations," said Pertiya.

Studios' limitations

Réseau Capital, a venture capital and private equity association based in Montreal, noted in October that venture studios could be less attractive to high-risk entrepreneurs, given the studios' increased control over the startup.

Another issue facing independent and corporate venture studios is they are "notably more complex [to establish and manage] than traditional venture capital funds," Réseau Capital said. "They also deviate from commonly agreed [funding] patterns in the venture capital universe."

The lack of funding conformity is an issue for independent venture studios, who must generate their own funds. "Securing funds ... can prove more demanding compared to the process for a traditional venture capital fund," Réseau Capital said.

Additionally, corporate and individual funds might find "recruiting and retaining top-tier founders ... challenging due to intense competition within the startup and investment ecosystem," Réseau Capital said. "Studios require a diverse in-house team with members possessing skills and expertise that are often high in demand."

Studios also could find themselves stretched too thin. They "work on several startups in parallel, which can pose challenges in terms of resource allocation,"

Réseau Capital noted. "This complexity arises because the needs of each startup can differ based on factors such as their development stage, industry and specific objectives."

Corporate venture studios face additional limitations due to "their limited tolerance for uncertainty, risk and failure, and with that the inability to move quickly," Moazed said. That is mainly because large companies will likely question the value of having a venture studio, as it requires upfront investment and offers no guarantee that ideas and startups would immediately improve the parent organization's bottom line.

Réseau Capital also noted that corporate and individual venture studios face the same problems as venture capitalists and incubators, including finding the correct exit strategy, having a conducive culture, and managing founder expectations and the funding network.

Here to stay?

There is no "right way to do innovation," Moazed said. "As the constraints and competitive demands of the market have changed over the last decade, new models of business creation and value capture have grown to meet them."

Venture studios are a case in point. Their "model grew organically out of the changing needs of venture investors and large corporations, as well as the evolving market for entrepreneurial talent," Moazed said.

Kuber Ventures sees venture studios as essential to building a sustained and thriving entrepreneurship ecosystem in any country. Their high ownership stake, more structure and targeted approach to innovation are "especially helpful for first-time entrepreneurs, who may not have the experience or expertise to launch a successful business on their own." ■





Market Watch

Stock Analysis

Starting the year on a High

Last year was quite outstanding in performance across the market's two leading indices. The EGX 30 rose 70.5%, while the EGX 70 EWI almost doubled, up 95.3%. That marks the second consecutive year small caps outperformed large caps. Regionally, the Egyptian market outperformed the GCC markets, followed by Dubai (up 21.7%) and Saudi Arabia (up 14.2%).

Regarding investor trading behavior, Egyptians made the bulk of trading with some 84% of turnover, followed by Arabs (9%) and foreigners (7%). Meanwhile, individuals accounted for 69% of total market trading during the year, with institutions making up the remainder. CIB (COMI) remained at the top in market cap, ending 2023 at EGP 219 billion, with MOPCO (MFPC) almost 40% less at EGP 134 billion. Regarding average daily traded value, COMI topped the list with EGP

337 million, followed by Beltone Holding (BTFH) with EGP 194 million.

Stepping into 2024, it was a continuation of the same story. The EGX 70 EWI outperformed the EGX 30 from Dec. 15 to Jan. 15 (15.9% vs. 6.2%) and year-to-date (13.7% vs. 5.4%). The EGX 30, in particular, had been hovering around the 25,000 level by the end of 2023. Once investors returned from the New Year's Eve holiday, it was as if a genie were let out of a bottle: The EGX 30 has never closed below the 25,000 mark since then.

For 2023, ASCOM (ASCM) led gainers, up 522%, followed closely by Misr Hotels (MHOT), up 406%. So far in 2024, the leading role has been taken over by none other than Iron & Steel for Mines & Quarries (ISMQ), which jumped 135%, followed by Ataq Steel (ATQA), up 77%. Both stocks also topped the leaderboard, up 148% and 98%, respectively. When

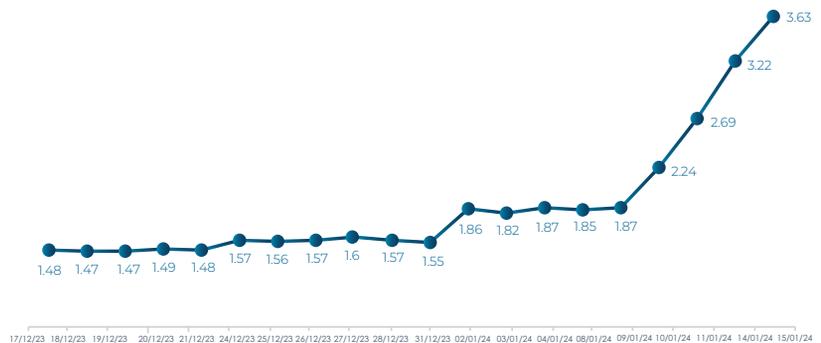
asked about its stock's atypical performance, ISMQ's management denied the existence of any non-public material events.

Interestingly, the top 15 performing stocks during the period had an average price of about EGP 4 a share. That suggests that so-called penny stocks were leading the market, which reflects the sheer size of individual investors' contributions. They often like stocks priced below EGP 5 a share because they get a bigger bang for the buck trading them as small incremental price movement means large swings.

Some of those companies have yet to start reporting their full-year results, meaning their stock performance was driven by other factors. One reason could be that the rise in the dollar's value (against the Egyptian pound in the parallel market) caused a repricing of Egyptian assets.

Iron & Steel for Mines & Quarries (ISMQ)

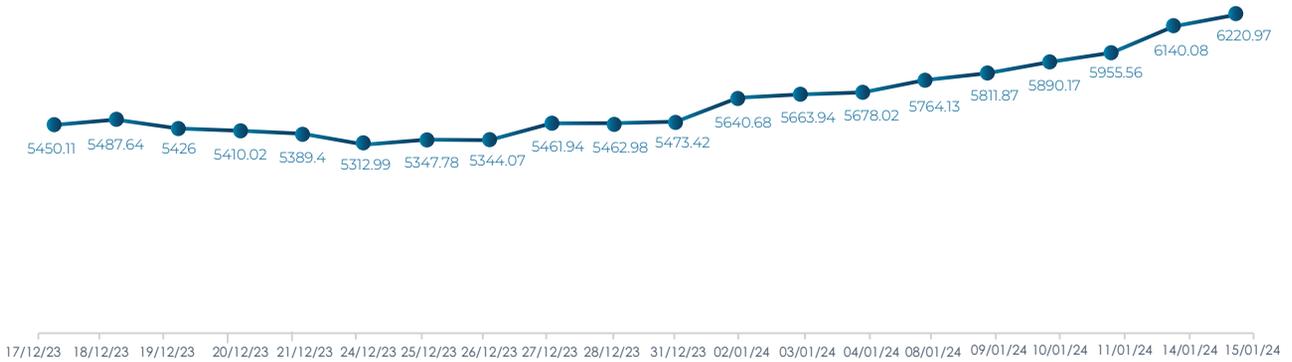
Iron & Steel for Mines & Quarries (ISMQ) was born following the split of Egyptian Iron & Steel (IRON) into two separate companies back in 2021. At the time, ISMQ was hailed as the profitable segment of IRON's business. Having traded the stock at around EGP 1.50 a share throughout most of last year, investors began to bid the stock higher lately. During the period, the stock rose 147% from EGP 1.47 to EGP 3.63, with 265 million shares changing hands worth some EGP 616 million.



EGX 30



EGX 70



Tamayuz



Tamayuz index is an all-new weighted index, launched on June 23rd. It comprises companies with high free cash flows from operations. EGX stresses that this is not an endorsement of those stocks.

NON-HUMAN RESOURCES

Integrating artificial intelligence in HR departments can be vital in reshaping talent acquisition processes, introducing new jobs, and boosting productivity.

by **Fatma Fouad**

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools have become an indispensable business component, significantly reshaping the labor market dynamics. Saadia Zahidi, managing director at the World Economic Forum (WEF), noted that in 2023, "labor market transformations driven by technological breakthroughs, such as the coming of age of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) [which can generate bespoke content], were being compounded by economic and geopolitical disruptions and growing social and environmental pressures."

While the first idea associated with AI is that it might replace people in workplaces, the WEF report says AI will create 97 million jobs globally between 2020 and 2025.

That will require employees to embrace new skills to adapt to the changing employment landscape. A global study from IBM Institute for Business Value (IBV) in 2023 said executives believe they need to re-skill around 40% of their workforce in the next three years. Meanwhile, a study by McKinsey Global Institute says that by 2030, at least 14% of employees globally might need to change careers due to digitization, robotics, and AI.

Those significant shifts mean HR departments need to identify and quickly hire those with the correct skills to help the company cope with and benefit from the transition to AI. HR would also need to manage the upskilling of existing top employees to be AI-ready from technical and mental perspectives.

HR experts also need to reliably predict the organization's "new workforce" needs to develop plans to attract fresh talent and retain and motivate their top employees. That means HR departments should embrace AI faster than the rest of the organization to build a future-ready company.

New Era

Implementing AI tools in human resources management activities can elevate and transform HR teams' operation and structure. "In practice, AI technology has the potential to automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks, help HR teams analyze data, and support improved decision making – and therefore improve productivity and cost-effectiveness," said Pete Cooper, director of people partners and analytics at Personio, a German software company.

Businesses embrace different AI tools within their HR departments to streamline talent acquisition and management processes. A study by Engagedly, a talent

management software platform published in 2023, showed that 45% of human resource management leaders already incorporated AI to manage their workforces.

While integrating AI and GenAI technologies in HR departments brings profound advancements, that does not mean AI will replace HR professionals. According to Cenk Sidar, co-founder and CEO of Enquire AI, "The only workers who will be replaced by AI are those who don't learn how to utilize it in their work."

Knowing how to benefit from AI is vital, as human input will always be crucial to ensure that AI produces the desired outcomes. "The value will remain in having a human in the loop to develop prompts to guide the technology and double-check that AI-generated content truly aligns with the needs of the task, role, and/or organization," said McKinsey & Company in July.

Global change

What AI and GenAI systems will likely do in practice is "improve operations and outcomes [from HR departments]," said the Engagedly report. Accordingly, HR managers should focus on developing AI strategies that align with their organization's objectives while addressing AI integration concerns and challenges.

A case in point is Deloitte LLP, which uses AI to "evaluate staffers' skills and map out plans that would shift employees away from quieter parts of the business and into roles that are more in demand." That system is part of Deloitte's plan to use technology to minimize hiring growth. "It is obviously a great objective to be able to avoid large swings of hiring and layoffs," Stevan Rolls, Deloitte's global chief talent office, told Bloomberg in December 2023.

"You could always be more efficient and effective about finding the right people."

Another function of AI is ensuring "objectivity, as well as transparency and fairness, in the applicant selection process," noted Felix Hensel, head of rentals at Mr. Lodge GmbH, a real estate sales company. He added that will "lead to a noticeable reduction in workload" as employees focus more on "strategic tasks."

Personalization of candidate communications is another benefit AI offers HR managers during hiring. "Generative AI makes it easier to personalize communications to acknowledge each applicant, explain why they weren't selected, and highlight any



other opportunities that may be a better fit for them within the organization," Bryan Hancock, a partner at McKinsey & Company in Washington DC., noted in a July 2023 research note.

He also stressed that the best application of GenAI is in large skill pools. Hancock explained that while HR managers are trying to fill well-known jobs, they need a more productive and efficient way to navigate applicant profiles.

GenAI can also assist HR managers while onboarding and quickly bringing new hires up to speed. Hancock noted that research by Stanford and MIT found that GenAI functionality "was incredibly helpful with new folks because they were able to get that institutional knowledge much more quickly." He explained that new hires can easily get answers to their questions using generative AI, which can get them 80% to 90% of the way to full proficiency.

Local practice

In an event titled "Unlocking HR Potential in Turbulent Times," organized by the AmCham HR and Talent Management Committee in June, HR executives shared and discussed challenges and the digital tools companies use to manage workflow.

Ahmed Salama, head of Microsoft Cloud Solutions in Egypt, said AI in HR departments can leverage and analyze the vast amount of data stored over the past 10 to 20 years. That can be done using ready-made programs like "learning management solutions and applicant tracking systems," Salama said. "Now is the time for organizations to leverage AI because we now have huge data stored about the business over the past five, 10, or even 20 years." He added that AI can significantly advance the entire organization if used properly and ethically.

Reham El-Kady, people experience director at Pfizer, said digital tools were "embedded in the fabric" of the company even before COVID-19 forced everyone to work from home and use different technologies.

She said her company utilizes AI in HR in the form of a chatbot named Olivia that acts as a personal assistant to employees. The chatbot highlights the needed job descriptions, tracks applicants, filters them, and schedules interviews. El-Kady added that her company uses another AI tool named Viva that helps employees track their well-being.

Rania Selim, IBM's HR lead, said her company uses an automated compensation adviser. The Watson AI solution is an algorithm based on elements of compensation strategy that helps managers make informed decisions. She said such a tool provides the organization with transparent communication and conversation with employees; furthermore, it helps give the proper compensation to each employee.

Slow-moving?

Egyptian businesses are likely to be slow to embrace AI tools. El-Kady emphasized that fear of change is a significant challenge to integrating AI into HR. She explained that layoffs are the first thing that pops into people's minds when it comes to incorporating AI.

This fear is common throughout the world. According to a whitepaper by Personio released in December titled "Playtime is over: AI has reinvented HR," 51% of surveyed HR managers rank the fear of job loss as the primary challenge in implementing AI in their organizations.

The other "challenge HR managers face is understanding AI's capabilities and the potential impact on their processes," noted NextGenAI Staffing Group, an HR consultancy, in October in a LinkedIn post. "A lack of understanding can lead to unrealistic expectations, resulting in disappointment and underutilization of AI's potential."

Another is the need for robust access rules and regulations and protection from cyber threats. "The use of AI in recruitment often involves processing large amounts of personal data. This raises concerns about data privacy and security," noted NextGenAI Staffing Group. "Organizations must continually refine their strategies to keep data safe and ensure its integrity," futurist author Bernard Marr wrote on the Forbes website.

To safeguard sensitive and confidential information, the Personio whitepaper recommends implementing a data classification framework. This framework categorizes data into various categories, such as internal and external data, confidential data, and public data.

Third, "if the training data is biased, AI will perpetuate these biases in its decision-making process," said NextGenAI Staffing Group. "This can result in unfair hiring practices and a lack of diversity in the workforce."

For companies to mitigate bias in AI, "special attention must be paid to decontaminating the outcome variables AI is trained to predict," said Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, chief innovation officer at ManpowerGroup, a global workforce solutions company. He explained that AI models should include desirable or ideal indicators of future value for the business instead of historical individual success factors.

Regardless of the reason for slow adoption, it is essential to provide relevant training to HR professionals to effectively leverage AI tools. The Personio whitepaper found that "96% of HR managers across Europe say at least some training will be necessary to successfully implement generative AI in HR processes."

The last reason for slow adoption, mainly in less educated nations and societies, is that humans will remain at the helm. Tom Cheese Wright, an author and applied futurist, sees that, for better or worse, human intervention is indispensable. "The more technology we introduce and the more we use AI, the more we're going to value people and the qualities that are uniquely human," he said. ■

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Monthly luncheon



21 January

Update on Egypt's Tourism Antiquities Sector

each destination provides more experiences for visitors. "Our ultimate goal is to increase the number of nights tourists spend in Egypt by increasing the time they spend at each destination," Issa said.

He also noted the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' efforts toward digital transformation, including buying plane tickets online and offering more tourist services via the ministry's portal. Issa also mentioned efforts to ensure tourist safety.

From the investment side, Issa aims to triple the number of tourist rooms to match the growth in tourist arrivals. "Egypt now has 15 million rooms," he said. "In 2022, we received over 14.9 million visitors, a new record."

In 2019, Egypt accounted for 0.9% of tourist arrivals worldwide. In 2023, the country accounted for 1.2%. That 33% growth in market share comes as tourism worldwide declined from 1.5 billion in 2019 to 975 million in 2023. "Our benchmarks until 2028 will allow us to increase our global market share."

On Jan. 21, AmCham Egypt hosted Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Ahmed Issa to discuss plans to double the number of tourists in the coming five years as the war in Gaza continues. "Risk has increased significantly for the local and foreign private sector, which is leading the tourism sector's growth," Issa said.

To counter that risk, the government is giving every charter flight carrying tourists from abroad to Sharm El Sheikh \$500, he said, and overseas tourism operators an additional \$500 per plane if "they commit to increasing the number of tourists they are carrying to Egypt by 20% compared to 2023," the minister said. "If they fail, we will reclaim the subsidy from them."

Issa said 30 companies "carrying 80% of tourists to Egypt in 2023" signed on for the subsidy.

The ministry also produced a promotional video of foreign tourists' testimonials and sent it to overseas companies that bring tourists to Egypt.

"Those efforts translated to an 8% increase in the number of incoming tourists in the last three months of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022. That was our second-highest number of visitors coming to Egypt during the last quarter," Issa said. "I am very proud of that achievement, despite receiving 3.8 million tourists compared to the pre-Oct. 7 plan to attract 4.2 million."

Plan for 2024

Issa reiterated the ministry's commitment to grow the tourism sector by 25% to 30% annually through 2028, "led by a robust private sector."

Issa said that would require tripling airline seat capacity by 2028 "as nine out of 10 foreign tourists arrive by air," he said. The ministry is also working to "improve the tourist experience" by renovating archaeological sites to ensure



Government role

Issa stressed the importance of the role of the private sector in driving the sector's growth. "The government will remain focused as a regulator," said Issa. "That is the best model to ensure we achieve our growth plans."

The ministry also aims to ensure that all agencies under its umbrella realize revenue from their operations. "For example, the Supreme Council of Antiquities relied on government coffers to cover its costs," said Issa. "We helped it increase revenues fivefold so that now their dependence on the treasury has reached zero."

Finally, Issa said the government has launched an EGP 50 billion five-year initiative for investors who build hotels or "acquire non-operating rooms" to borrow money at a flat 12% rate. They also would enjoy several tax exemptions and rebates for the first years of operation.





Power and Renewables



21 December Roundtable on green hydrogen investments

AmCham Egypt's Power and Renewables committee hosted a limited roundtable discussion on Dec. 21 with Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZone) Chairman Waleid Gamaleldien and Sovereign Fund Chairman Ayman Soliman to discuss Egypt's plans to invest in producing hydrogen using eco-friendly methods (green hydrogen).

Key sector players and significant investors in green hydrogen projects attended the meeting. Discussions focused on recent progress in renewable energy projects and Egypt's potential to attract green hydrogen FDI.

Those plans align with the government's Egypt Vision 2030, which aims to significantly reduce Egypt's carbon footprint by increasing the usage of eco-friendly fuels and renewable sources of energy, especially wind and solar power.

Investments in green hydrogen also open the door for new industries and export opportunities. Topping that list is the production and export of green ammonia to Europe.

Gamaleldien outlined investment incentives offered to developers in the SCZone and Egypt's regional competitive advantage and opportunities for hydrogen development projects.

Soliman highlighted the Sovereign Fund's role in advancing investments in the sector by facilitating the entry of foreign green hydrogen investors to establish production facilities and provide the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the export of that fuel to European markets.

Members shared their concerns, focusing on the challenging terms and conditions of the available production agreements.

AmCham Egypt's Power and Renewables committee's primary target is to become a platform to bridge the gap between the private sector and the newly established National Green Hydrogen Council, which Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly leads.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation



16 January Egypt's FDI incentives

During a limited Roundtable discussion held on Jan. 16, the AmCham Entrepreneurship and Innovation Committee discussed Egypt's foreign direct investment (FDI) and the incentives offered in special and free economic zones to encourage exports.

Hossam Heiba, President of the General Authority for Investments and Free Zones (GAFI), reported that in 2022, Egypt ranked first in Africa in terms of the value of incoming FDI.

In 2023, Egypt's FDI increased by 10% compared to the previous year, with FDI inflows reaching an all-time high of 71.4% to \$8.9 billion during the fiscal year 2021-2022. Heiba also explained the incentives offered in special and free economic zones in Egypt that encourage exports, including tax exemptions.

Furthermore, GAFI is partnering with a UAE-South African consortium to establish a financial hub in the New

Administrative Capital's Financial and Business District. To tackle the challenges that startups face, Heiba believes that a permanent unit in the Council of Ministers is required to propose appropriate policies, laws, and regulations for the growth and prosperity of startups in Egypt.

GAFI is developing regulations to support startup growth and encourage global and local venture capitalists (VCs) and private equity (PE) firms to invest directly in Egyptian startups. They have also prepared standard shareholder agreements and articles of incorporation for startups that include the provisions and principles globally recognized for joint venture agreements between startups and VCs.

Lastly, GAFI and the Financial Regulatory Authority (FRA) now acknowledge the Simple Agreement for Future Equity (SAFE) note. By obtaining a SAFE agreement, startups can secure funding while giving investors the right to convert their investments into equity.



HR (Talent Management)



21

 January

AI's role in hiring talent

On Jan. 21, the HR (Talent Management) Committee hosted a session on "Building a Future-Ready Workforce in a Digital Era." Guest speakers were Mohamed Tharwat Waheed, Vodafone's design, security and digital subject matter expert, and Mahmoud Ward, SAP chief HR solution advisor for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Talks focused on how artificial intelligence (AI) streamlines the hiring process by automating repetitive tasks, allowing HR professionals to concentrate on more strategic aspects of talent acquisition.

AI-powered tools can analyze resumes, screen candidates, and conduct initial interviews, enhancing efficiency and reducing the time it takes to fill positions. "Generative AI transformed the technology in different industries in under a year," said Tharwat.

It can significantly diminish bias toward candidates in interviews and subsequent evaluations. AI also can generate reports summarizing applicants' skill sets, job

experiences and educational backgrounds.

Ward explained AI can help create a tailored onboarding experience for employees, incorporating their skills, preferences and learning styles.

Attendees highlighted several concerns about AI in HR, such as data privacy and ethics. "HR professionals need to ensure that AI systems are transparent, fair, and aligned with organizational values," said Ward. He emphasized that organizations can create a more personalized, efficient and adaptive learning experience for employees, ultimately contributing to better performance and job satisfaction.

The rise of remote work underscores the crucial role of technology in HR operations, particularly in recruitment, streamlining processes across the employee lifecycle and enhancing the overall employee experience. As different organizations continue to adopt and refine AI applications in HR, achieving an equilibrium between technological progress and ethical considerations is crucial.



NEW MEMBERS



BUILDING MATERIALS

International Company for Metal Forming & Processing - ELASHRY STEEL

Ayman Ashry

Chairman

Address: 5 Mohamed Thaqeb Street (from Maraashly Street), Zamalek, Cairo

Tel: (20-2) 2736-5937/530

Website: www.elashrygroup.com

Membership
Type:
**Associate
Resident**



CHEMICAL PRODUCTS

Ascom Carbonate and Chemicals Manufacturing (ACCM)

Ahmed Niazy

ACCM Managing Director

Address: 48 El Nasr Street, New Maadi, Cairo

Tel: (20-2) 2517-7981

Website: www.accm.com.eg

Membership
Type:
**Associate
Resident**



BUILDING MATERIALS

Sinai Cement Company

Tamer Magdy

Managing Director

Address: Cairo Festival City, Plot 12B04, Fifth Settlement, New Cairo

Tel: (20-2) 2377-7772

Website: www.sinaicement.net

Membership
Type:
**Associate
Resident**



CHEMICAL PRODUCTS

Helwan Fertilizers Company

Hassan Ali

CEO & Managing Director

Address: 1081 Corniche El Nil, Garden City, Cairo

Tel: (20-2) 2795-7684

Website: www.hfcegypt.com/en

Membership
Type:
**Associate
Resident**



NEW MEMBERS



INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Pixelogic Media
Mohamed Hashish
Managing Director

Membership
Type:
General

Address: Smart Village, B2116 Nexus Building, Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road
Tel: (20-2) 3538-0094/5
Website: www.pixelogicmedia.com



RETAIL

EGO The Egyptian European Company for Exhibition & Trading
Hesham Ouf
CEO

Membership
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Associate Resident

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Tel: (20-2) 2417-7727
Website: www.egoegypt.com



POWER AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SERVICES

EDF Renewables Egypt
Mohamed El Semellawy
General Manager

Membership
Type:
Associate Resident

Address: Street 90 North, Adj. Plot 45, First Sector, City Center, Fifth Settlement, New Cairo
Tel: (20-2) 2673-0700
Website: www.edf-renouvelables.com



SECURITY SYSTEMS (ALARMS, FIRE FIGHTING, VIDEO CAMERAS, ETC.)

Integrated Fire & Security Solutions Group IFSS Group
Karim Afifi
Managing Director

Membership
Type:
Associate Resident

Address: Pyramids Heights Office Park, Building 1B, Km 22 Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road, Sixth of October City, Giza
Tel: (20-2) 3539-5000/ 3539-5333
Website: www.ifssgroup.com

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Omar Mohamed

Head of PR Section, Helwan Fertilizers Company

Construction Engineering Services

Louza Farahat

Chief Executive Officer, Smart Solutions Trading, Industrial & Contracting

Mohamed Kamal

Commercial Director, Smart Solutions Trading, Industrial & Contracting

Hoda Mahran

Senior Human Resources Director, Smart Solutions Trading, Industrial & Contracting

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Chief Compliance Officer, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank – Egypt

Kamel Fayed

Chief Finance Officers, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank – Egypt

Marie Therese Nagy

Chief Human Resources Officer, Credit Agricole Egypt, SAE

Healthcare

Ramy Mikhael

Chief Marketing Officer, Yodawy Egypt

Information & Communication Technology

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Chief Business Officer, Etisalat Egypt by e&

Amr Fathy

Chief Technology and Information Officer, Etisalat Egypt by e&

Sherif Attia

Chief Customer Care Officer, Etisalat Egypt by e&

Tayssir Hawary

General Manager, Pixelogic Media



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Industrial Machinery

Ahmed Handosa

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Head of Government Affairs and Policy, Pharmaceuticals GCC & JENA, Janssen - Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson

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Meziane Ghaoui

Regional General Manager North Africa, Honeywell Egypt

Real Estate

Khaled Safwat

Co-CEO, Cred

Retail

Ibrahim Ouf

Consultant, EGO The Egyptian European Company for Exhibition & Trading

Service Providers

Sondos Effat

General Manager, FP7/McCann



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Deputy CEO Wholesale Banking, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait ABK - Egypt

Category: Affiliate

Sector: Financial Sector

Amr Tantawi

Chief Risk Officer, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait ABK - Egypt

Category: Affiliate

Sector: Financial Sector

Rashwan Hammady

CEO Retail Banking & Financial Inclusion, Commercial International Bank (CIB)

Category: Affiliate

Sector: Financial Sector

Sameh Sayed Elmallah

CEO, Damen for Electronic Payments

Category: Associate Resident

Sector: Financial Sector

Amr Nossair

Assistant Managing Director for Retail & Branches, Société Arabe Internationale de Banque (SAIB)

Category: General

Sector: Financial Sector

Deena Seoudi

HR Director, AXA Egypt

Category: Affiliate

Sector: Insurance

Eslam Nagah

Country President & Managing Director, Chubb Life Insurance Company SAE

Category: General

Sector: Insurance

Amr Mostafa Namek

Partner, Head of Corporate Commercial, Nour & Partners in Association with Al Tamimi & Company

Category: Affiliate

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Wael Lotfy

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Sector: Petroleum

Dalia Elgabry

VP & Country Chair, Shell Egypt

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Sector: Petroleum

Michael Youssef

Egypt Country Manager, OneHealth By AXA

Category: Associate Resident

Sector: Pharmaceuticals



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for London Cab
reservation: 19670
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This offer is valid until December 31, 2024



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Emad Fathy
Tel: (20-2) 2241-9206/207
Ext: 225/ 286/ 117;
2414-0929; 2290-1836
Abdalla Hussein
Tel: (20-2) 2291-5757
Emails:
reservation@baronhotels.com; reservation@baronsharm.com; reservation@baronpalacesahlhasheesh.com; reservation@baroncairo.com

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- Fruit Basket

The offer is applicable on Baron Palace Sahl Hasheesh, Baron Resort Sharm El Sheikh, Baron Palms Sharm El Sheikh and Baron Cairo.

For the reservations in Baron Palace Sahl Hasheesh and Baron Resort Sharm El Sheikh): Emad Fathy

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This offer is valid until December 31, 2024

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Contact:
Tel: 0653404420/
01201788882
Email: reservation.hurghada@marriott.com

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This offer is valid until December 31, 2024



Contact:
Noorhan Youssef
Tel: (20-3) 481-0127/
01026880187
Email: noorhan@thinkbig-gih.com

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This offer is valid until December 31, 2024

AmCham members can claim these discounts by presenting their AmCham 2024 membership card.

For more offers, please visit AmCham Cyberlink on www.amcham.org.eg



A Glance At The Press

Instead of spending time with your buddies at the coffee shop, open a channel on TikTok and become a food blogger.

Al Masry Al Youm, Jan 9



Media Lite collates a selection of some of the most entertaining offbeat and lighthearted news items published in the local press. All opinions and allegations belong solely to the original source publications and no attempt has been made to ascertain their veracity.

Joy Awards honor Egyptian actor

The recently held Joy Awards Ceremony 2024 in Riyadh has honored Egyptian actor Adel Imam with the "Arab Art Leader" award. Imam's sons, director and producer Ramy Imam and actor Mohamed Imam accepted the award on their father's behalf.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the sons confirmed their father's retirement, saying he "has decided to dedicate all his time to the family." Imam's long career was marked by roles in more than 100 movies and a wealth of plays and television series.

The ceremony also recognized Egyptian Nelly Karim with the "Favorite Actress in Film" award for her role in the movie "(Voy! Voy! Voy!)" released in August.

The surprise of the event was the honoring of Nagat El-Sagheera, who performed her iconic song "Oyoun El-Qalb." Nagat retired from acting in 1976 after starring in 13 Egyptian movies and from singing in 2002.

Abram Online, Jan. 21

Ministry of Tourism installs self-ticketing machines

In a new move toward digitization, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has installed and activated its first self-service ticketing machines at the Valley of the Kings in Luxor.

"The introduction of self-service ticketing machines is a pivotal component for improving the overall tourist experience," said Mostafa Waziry, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

Waziry said the move is part of the broader national strategy to develop the tourism sector, adding that it aligns with "the government's vision for a digitally advanced and visitor-friendly industry."

The new machines allow visitors to purchase entry tickets to archaeological sites in the Valley of the Kings and pay using bank cards. The machines should help reduce congestion at traditional ticket sales outlets.

Khaled Sharif, the Assistant Minister of Tourism and Antiquities for Digital Transformation, noted that the initial phase of the self-service system implementation "aims to install and operate 40 machines in 20 of the most visited archaeological sites in the country."

Abram Online, Jan. 12

Egyptian soprano performs in Saudi Arabia

The Egyptian mezzo-soprano Farrah El-Dibany and Saudi soprano Sawsan Albahiti performed on behalf of Opéra National de Paris, the first concert in AlUla, a city in Saudi Arabia. "It's an important show because this is the first collaboration between the Paris opera and Saudi Arabia," El-Dibany told Arab News.

The event was held on Jan. 17 in Maraya concert hall, the world's largest mirrored building. Villa Hegra, a French-Saudi institution for arts and culture, supported the event.

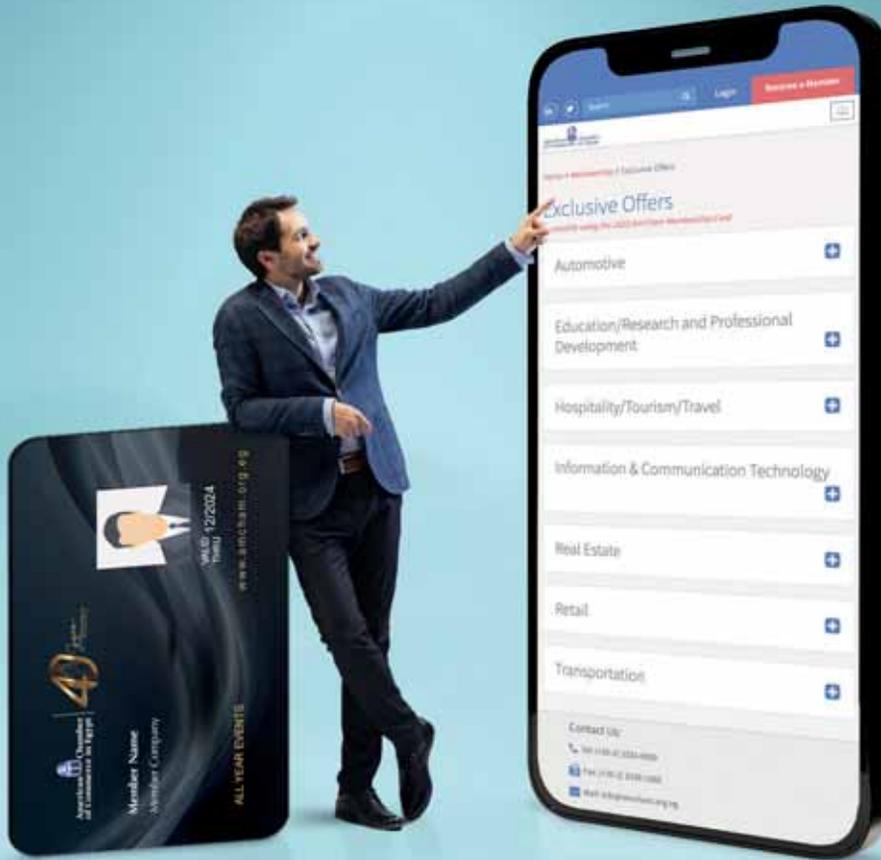
The story-based concert, music-meets-dance show presented scenes from opera productions, including "Carmen," composed by Georges Bizet in the 19th century.

El-Dibany performed the French national anthem at the reelection ceremony of French President Emmanuel Macron and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The Egyptian soprano also was the first Arab artist-in-residence at the Paris Opera.

Arab News, Jan. 20



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