

Web readers in a league of their own



By
Nic Ridley on Friday, April 10, 2009

Often it is not what makes the best-read online story that's interesting, it is what didn't to take the top spot.

In last weekend's editions, two major topics were highlighted in the front section of the print edition – the quality and cost of education in Dubai plus the UAE-wide issue of Emiratisation.

However, despite being particularly hot subjects, they slipped down the rankings of the best-read online – taking third and fourth positions, respectively.

In their place, the best-read story online from last weekend's edition was a feature from the Homes pages on the stability and growth of Qatar's property sector.

And in second place was a breaking news story by reporter Nadim Kawach on how Saudi sees a rise in demand for oil once the current financial crisis and recession passes.

Meanwhile, in a feature headlined 'Schools, fees and failures', features writer Aimee Greaves interviewed leading officials at the Knowledge and Human Development Authority, the body which regulates schools in Dubai.

The KDHA had just released the first tranche of 'league tables' of 69 of the emirate's schools, categorising the quality of education to unsatisfactory.

Dr Abdulla Al Karam, Director-General and Chairman of the KDHA, said the ratings would be used to cap fee-increase for the coming academic year.

But, tellingly, he strongly discouraged any school from raising its fees next year – and if they had to, it should be linked to quality.

"Schools have to justify why we should give them a rise," he said in an exclusive interview. The full report is expected to be published next month.

In another exclusive, we reported the Government of Dubai was poised to roll out training and development programmes for UAE nationals in a fresh bid to help Emiratis secure better jobs and identify career goals.

Experts from companies such as LloydsTSB, Emirates Islamic Bank and Deyaar Development urged other companies to tap into the UAE talent pool to help attract the calibre of professional they sought to fill positions.

Abdul Rahman, Head of Emiratisation at LloydsTSB Middle East, urged greater understanding of the UAE and its people.

"As more nationals seek better opportunities, private sector companies should focus on preparing them for corporate roles and allow them to compete at every level," he said.

"To Emiratis, I would say be career-driven, understand what career you want to be in, focus on it, and find a path you can stick to."

Back to Qatar's property market, and our report caught online readers' eyes as it showed that demand would continue to outstrip supply in the emirate – making it an ideal proposition for investors.

Mounir Bensegueni, Country Manager for real estate firm Fine and Country, said: "Strong fiscal planning and surplus cash reserves from growing gas production has allowed the government to continue with its economic diversification plans and investment in the construction sector."

The Qatar Government's allocation of \$130 billion (Dh477bn) to finance infrastructure and related real estate projects over the next six years has gone some way to keep the property sector robust, he said.

And finally to Saudi, and the kingdom said it expected a resurgence of crude after the crisis.

Government-owned Saudi Aramco, which runs the kingdom's hydrocarbon industry, said oil would remain the main source of energy and driver of the world economy for the foreseeable future.

Khalid Al Falih, Saudi Aramco's President and CEO, told oil engineers at a conference in Dhahran: "The energy sector sustains and powers all other economic sectors. Oil will continue to play a vital role as the main source of energy for the foreseeable future and is needed to propel economic development forward."

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