ENGELIA EN SUPERIOR DE LA COMPANSION DE

- 64 | Refugee rights not up for debate Lebanon cannot force returns without contravening international law
- 661 Let's have a serious talk about drugs
 A scientific rationale for the cannabis
 debate in Lebanon
- 88 | Access to information in Lebanon Dead or alive?

PISSING IT AWAY

The destruction of our heritage



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EDITORIAL

#226

Trickle down trash

The destructive nature of the Lebanese never ceases to bewilder. While we claim to be the most civilized nation in the Levant, we have managed to slowly hollow out our mountains, toxify our rivers, turn our seaside into landfills, and contaminate our air with heavy metals and cancerous fumes—and we do not even care. With perennially selective vision, we turn a blind eye to the floating decapitated cows' heads, human feces, and plastics, and just dive straight in among them.

To observe this willful blindness, all one needs to do is go and watch our fishermen on Beirut's Corniche reeling in their dinner from the murky sewer water. These images rightly belong to far less developed nations, but now this reality is ours.

There has been a stunning degradation in our civil behavior. While Lebanese brag about how clean their homes are, they have total disregard for anything beyond their doorstep.

Why would they care? Successive governments have failed to develop policies, strategies, or indeed any plan that will preserve the only truly valuable national asset that we have—our nature. These same government officials are the first to acquire licenses to chew up our mountains, or bicker over garbage contracts to fatten their pockets while they tan in ostentatious villas built on public coastal land.

All this did not happen overnight. Ours is a decadent culture contaminated by more than 40 years of increasing ignorance and deteriorating awareness and leadership.

The garbage is up to our necks and it will drown us—unless we open our mouths, taste the scum, and renew our calls for an environmental policy that is quickly developed, implemented, and reinforced. One that is free of loopholes, self-interest, and corruption, and one that must make amends for years of contemptible negligence toward our natural environment.

Yasser Akkaoui Editor-in-chief

= Haur Tickaour

#226

CONTENTS

LAST MONTH

8 June's essential headlines

LEADER

12 A master plan It is high time to activate

Lebanon's tourism assets

14 It starts with you

Education and enforcement are needed to save our beaches

ECONOMICS & POLICY

- **56 Running a once famed industry** Lebanon's furniture makers get boosted
- 58 Lebanon's bid toward a lowcarbon mobility

The case of electric and hybrid vehicles

- **62 The Brussels II conference** Promises, policies, and progress
- 64 Refugee rights not up for debate

Lebanon cannot force returns without contravening international law

66 Let's have a serious talk about drugs

A scientific rationale for the cannabis debate in Lebanon

BOOK REVIEW

68 A Middle East oasis of peace The experiences of one man

helping to end conflict



HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

- **16** | A good summer?
- **20** No country for resorts
 - 22 | The livin' is easy?
- **32** | The people's beaches
 - **38** | A sea of garbage
- **40** Cocktails with a sea view
 - 46 | Slice of heaven
 - 50 | C'est la (mer)de
 - **52** It's only natural

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- 70 New infrastructure for education and research Lebanese academia progresses on path of collaboration
- **72 Like, share, donate**Social media for social good

EXECUTIVE LIFE

- 76 How to earn your angel wings
 - 12 tips to investing in startups
- 78 Beauty, inside out
 Lush ethical products and projects, in Lebanon and beyond

BUSINESS ESSENTIALS

- **80** Company bulletin
- 84 Conferences & exhibitions

LAST WORD

88 Access to information in Lebanon

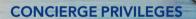
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LAST MONTH

ZOOM IN



German Chancellor Angela Merkel (L) meets with Lebanese President Michel Aoun (R) at the presidential palace in Baabda, east of the capital Beirut, during her official visit on June 22, 2018.

Naturalization decree courts controversy

A decree granting Lebanese citizenship to over 400 individuals that was signed by President Michel Aoun on May 31 continued to prove controversial throughout the month of June. The law was published on June 7, following heavy criticism around the secretive nature of its passage. Naturalization has long been a controversial issue in Lebanon, given the delicate sectarian balance in the country. While it is not unusual for Lebanese presidents to issue such decrees, they usually come at the end of the presidential term and are careful to balance between Christian and Muslim candidates. Both the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese Forces have submitted formal appeals of the decree to the Shura Council. Meanwhile, the results of a General Security investigation into the names of candidates included in the decree was still due to be released at the time of writing, though some media reports indicated that as many as 50 names would be struck from the list.

Bassil freezes residency permits for UNHCR staff

On June 8, Free Patriotic Movement leader and

caretaker Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil froze the renewal and issuance of residency permits for UNHCR staff. Bassil, who is at the forefront of calls for Syrian refugees to return to their homeland, accused the UN agency of conducting a "policy of intimidation" designed to frighten refugees away from the prospect of return. The move was widely criticized in Lebanon as a step beyond Bassil's mandate. Tensions between Bassil and UNHCR appeared to be cooling after he met with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in Geneva on June 15. The foreign ministry said it had received a letter on June 19 from the UNHCR that contained an agreement to encourage refugee returns. However, this was swiftly contradicted the following day by UNHCR, who wrote in an email to The Daily Star that the UN body was "not currently in a position to start encouraging or organizing the return of Syrian refugees."

EU announces \$191m refugee package; Merkel visits Beirut

On June 20, World Refugee Day, the European Union adopted a 165 million euro (\$191 million) support package to aid Lebanon in hosting an estimated 1 million Syrian refugees. The package was aimed at supporting the public education system in Lebanon,

8 ______executive-magazine.com

RIDING THE WAVE TO CYPRUS

High time to invest in up-and-coming Larnaca



The third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea has been enjoying a particularly sunny spell lately, and investors are flocking to Cyprus to take advantage of the exceptional economic climate.

The island nation is currently witnessing rapid growth across various sectors, becoming an increasingly appealing destination for international investors from Russia, China, Europe, and Arab nations, as it recovers from its 2013 economic setbacks. In fact, Cyprus currently has some of the lowest tax rates in the European Union—only 5 percent VAT on first residency projects, a corporate tax of 12.5 percent, and no inheritance tax or real estate tax on built properties—in addition to a number of other competitive advantages, making it ripe for investments.

The Cypriot government is also incentivizing foreign investment by allowing investors and their families to apply for citizenship or residency, through policies such as the "Scheme for Naturalization of Investors in Cyprus by Exception."

While Limassol has already attracted international investments, the next Cypriot hotspot is widely considered to be Larnaca, making this the perfect time to invest in the up and coming cosmopolitan city.

Larnaca is a seaside haven with sandy beaches, nestled beneath picturesque mountains. This laid-back town is known for its year round sunshine and the beauty of its landscape, making it the perfect spot to enjoy island life.

Larnaca is already home to the country's primary airport, which was entirely rebuilt in recent years, and the increasing number of airlines scheduling additional direct flights to the island suggests that more holidaymakers will be heading to Cyprus in the near future. Currently, more than three daily flights are scheduled from Beirut to Larnaca. In 2017, tourists visited the compact coastal city in record numbers, and the country aspires to attract even more tourists to Larnaca with the new development boom. Increasingly, holiday homes and other real estate projects are being built to cater to the flow of visitors that are choosing Larnaca as their home away from home.

President Nicos Anastasiades recently called for the removal of controversial fuel tanks on Larnaca's coast, which will lead to the restoration of more than 15 kilometers of shoreline. The president himself helped cut a piece out of the first oil tank in May, and the tanks' full removal is set to be complete by 2019. Anastasiades later announced a 19.3 million euro fund for the Larnaca municipality as well as an additional 1.9 million euros to go toward local communities in the district.

One of the most exciting projects for the scenic city is the Larnaca Marina, set to be one of the largest ports in the Mediterranean. It will sprawl across an estimated 100,000 sqm, providing luxurious facilities and a thousand berths, including for super-yachts and cruise ships. In the surrounding area, between the marina and the port, there are plans for the construction of sea-front high rise buildings with sky gardens, decks, and pools. Meanwhile, there is also a vision to make Larnaca a must-see international diving destination, with the creation of an artificial reef—designed to quickly increase marine life set to advance in fall 2018. The family-friendly city is also planning to build new infrastructure, hotels, and schools.

Just a half hour flight away from Beirut, Cyprus has always been popular with the Lebanese. Tourists have a habit of hopping over for long weekends, to enjoy the pristine coastline and Cypriot hospitality. Many Lebanese families even immigrated to the island during the Lebanese Civil War. Lebanon's relationship with its neighbor across the Mediterranean Sea has continued to flourish over the years, and today many Lebanese are investing in Cyprus, with property developers, contractors, and business owners lining up to invest in the attractive destination.

Lebanese real estate company The Gate Real Estate is actively developing areas in Larnaca, in collaboration with the local Marinakis Property Developers, with groundbreaking projects. With 35 years of experience in the city and a wide portfolio of projects under its belt, the Cypriot property developers are collaborating with their Lebanese partners to launch one of Larnaca's first high rise towers, designed by Lebanese architecture studio designed by Lebanese architects Bureau Beirut.

By contacting the family run business Marinakis Property Developers, you can be sure to be working with professionals and people at the top of their game who are ready for any consultation or collaboration with your potential investment.

Cyprus's beautiful nature, rich history, and relaxing lifestyle, in addition to new, exciting development projects, have combined to make Larnaca a thriving, modern European hub offering an attractive business environment.

LAST MONTH

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"People treat you like their property; they tell you what to wear, how to sleep, when to sleep, what to eat, when to eat, if you can send money for your family or not, if you can talk to them or not."

Ethiopian domestic worker Banchyi, writing a guest blog for Amnesty International on June 22, 2018.

and providing socioeconomic support for vulnerable Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees. The following day, German Chancellor Angela Merkel made her first ever visit to Lebanon. Merkel met with President Michel Aoun, Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, and Speaker Nabih Berri over the course of her two-day visit, during which she called for Lebanon to adopt structural reforms discussed at the CEDRE investment conference in April in order to attract German investment.

Geagea heads to court over LBCI

Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea and Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI) CEO Pierre Daher both made personal appearances in court on June 22, as part of their yearslong legal battle over the ownership of LBCI. The ownership of the company, formerly known as LBC, was transferred to Daher by the Lebanese Forces in 1992, when it became clear that Geagea was due to be indicted on charges related to alleged acts of violence committed during the post-civil war period. The Lebanese Forces leader was jailed for 11 years before receiving a pardon in 2005, on the grounds that his arrest and trial had been politically motivated, after Syrian forces withdrew from Lebanon. The Lebanese Forces are suing Daher for ownership of LBCI, claiming that the transfer of LBC had been made in name only. For his part, Daher claims to have paid \$5 million for the station in the early 90s. The trial was adjourned until October 8.

Stalled progress on new cabinet formation

Lebanon is still awaiting the announcement of a new cabinet following May's general elections, although talks on cabinet formation were expected to pick up speed after the Eid al-Fitr holiday. Prime Minister-designate Hariri met with President Aoun on June 22 and was widely expected to hand over a file of proposed ministerial candidates. This, however, did not happen. Among the issues holding up the formation of a new cabinet is the insistence of PSP leader Walid Jumblatt that his party be granted all three of the Druze ministerial posts. This led to some heated rhetoric between the PSP and Bassil's FPM, which wants one of the Druze spots to go to their ally and Jumblatt's rival MP Talal Arslan.

Hundreds march for domestic workers' rights

Several hundred protesters marched from Dora to Sin el-Fil on June 24 to protest the lack of labor rights and protections for domestic workers in Lebanon. The march was the ninth edition to be held in Beirut and was organized jointly by local and international organizations. There are an estimated 250,000 domestic workers in Lebanon who do not enjoy the same labor rights as other workers in the country: They cannot unionize, have no guaranteed freedom of movement, and their travel documents are often confiscated by employers. A 2017 IRIN report found that on average two domestic workers die each week in Lebanon. Human rights organizations blame this situation on the kafala system, which ties the worker's legal status in Lebanon to their employer through sponsorship. Protesters at the march called for the end of kafala and for Lebanon to ratify ILO Convention 189 on domestic workers, which was passed in 2011.

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LEADERS

BEACH TOURISM

A master plan

It is high time to activate Lebanon's tourism asserts

Tourism is often touted as one of the main pillars of Lebanon's GDP. As such, much more thought, time, and funding should be put into developing all tourism segments to their maximum potential. At this point, tourism stakeholders are simply not doing enough, and are neglecting potentially lucrative segments such as beach tourism.

The Mediterranean region, which Lebanon is a part of, attracts an average of 220 million tourists per year—of which Lebanon welcomes an average of 2 million, at best. While not all tourism in the Mediterranean is centered on the beach, it is still an important draw to the region. Neighboring Cyprus for example—which is smaller than Lebanon—attracted 3.6 million tourists to its beaches in 2017 and revenue from tourism reached \$3 billion, its tourism minister, Yiorgos Lakkotrypis, was quoted as saying in CyprusMail.

With the same geographical features as Cyprus, Lebanon could be enjoying a larger piece of the Mediterranean beach tourism pie-but it is not. Lebanon's beach tourism faces numerous challenges and at the moment mainly attracts domestic tourism and Lebanese expats (see article page 22 on resorts), which is great, but nowhere near enough. While other countries on the Mediterranean, including Cyprus and Turkey, have developed successful national strategies to grow their beach tourism, our government takes part in the annihilation of our beaches by polluting them (see article page 38).

Many factors contribute to the dismal situation of beach tourism in Lebanon. Polluted waters is one, but so is absence of proper infrastructure, of well-managed public beaches (see article page 32), and of urban planning to designate certain areas on the coast for the development of ports, public beaches, or private resorts. What all these factors have in common is a lack of a vision.

If there is any hope for beach tourism to become a major contributor to Lebanon's overall tourism offerings—and it has the potential—then it is high time we get our act together and come up with a master plan to

develop beach tourism in Lebanon. The master plan would look at Lebanon's coast and attempt to solve the most obvious problems, such as the pollution, but also lesser highlighted issues, such as road access to

beaches, which are also standing in the way of vivable beach tourism.

We are aware that this raises more questions, the first of which is: Who should be involved in developing this master plan? It is important that the plan take into consideration the needs of all stakeholders in beach tourism, and as such, an entity formed as a public-private partnership would likely work best. The public sector would need representatives from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (which has responsibility for our public beaches), as well as representatives from the environment, tourism, and interior ministries.

Representation from the private sector should include not only the syndicates of seaside resort operators and of hotel operators, but also representatives from environmental NGOs and public space activists. These civil society actors will play a watchdog role, monitoring the entity from within to ensure that the rights of locals and tourists alike to enjoy clean and free beaches are not infringed upon.

The second question: From where will the funding for the entity's grand

plans arise? A vibrant beach tourism scene would positively impact a lot of stakeholders, from the local shops in a remote area that suddenly find themselves catering to an influx of tourists to the luxurious resort that sees its revenues multiply, and even the locals and tourists enjoying a clean and well-managed beach. As such, it is in the best interests of all these parties to contribute to the funding of this entity, as they will ultimately be benefiting as

■ With the same geographical features as Cyprus, Lebanon could be enjoying a larger piece of the Mediterranean pie—but it is not.

well. The mechanism of this budget should be discussed and decided upon by the entity, but it could be funded through a beach tax for tourists and resort operators, or a similar model.

Once those two basic questions are resolved, the entity can get to work on deciding what beach tourism in Lebanon should look like and what should be done to reach that goal. We are not saying this will be easy, and even with a well-balanced and carefully governed entity incorporated according to the principle of public-private partnerships, there will be many conflicts and challenges. But if all stakeholders keep in mind that Lebanon's beaches are among our best-known and finite natural assets, and if the beach tourism industry is propelled into the future by adopting the many lessons that have been learned in countries around the Mediterranean over the past 50 years, Ex-ECUTIVE sees no reason why sunsets over a clean sea and pristine beaches should not nourish our economy and the souls of foreign tourists, visiting expats, and local leisure seekers for countless centuries to come.

12





LEADERS

ENVIRONMENT

It starts with you

Education and enforcement are needed to save our beaches

A driver throws a sandwich wrapper from his car window onto the street. A pedestrian casually tosses an empty plastic bottle into the sea during his daily morning walk on the Corniche. A family enjoys a lovely day picnicking on the beach or in the mountain and thinks nothing of leaving their trash behind. These are frustratingly and sadly daily occurrences in Lebanon, and they must stop. Now.

It is often said that the Lebanese have been spoiled by domestic help and tend to think that there is always somebody to clean up after them—hence littering with no afterthought—but this does not explain why the same Lebanese who walk the extra mile to place a piece of garbage in the bin in a foreign country think nothing of tossing it on the street in their own. This issue runs deeper. It seems that Lebanese do not feel a sense of ownership when it comes to public spaces, and while maintaining a sparkling clean home, they are apathetic toward littering on the street, beach, or mountain—public spaces to be enjoyed by all residents of Lebanon.

It is not a stretch to say that the vast majority know that littering is bad, but many do it anyway. There is a clear disrespect for public spaces in Lebanon. One factor could be the lack of civic education among many Lebanese. Civic education was only included in the Lebanese curriculum in the early 2000s and, therefore, the generations before that year were not taught to respect Lebanon, or their collective rights and responsibilities as Lebanese to maintain a clean and healthy environment. The generation educated from the year 2000 onwards have learned about the importance of collective responsibility, so hopefully they can share these ideals with their parents, teaching them not to litter rather than learning from them how to ruin Lebanon's natural environment.

But until a real social contract is adopted, the environment in Lebanon will continue to suffer immeasurably. Our shores are drowning in waste while a significant portion of our seawater is heavily polluted (see article on pollution page 38). All of the beach operators—whether of public beaches or private resorts

and clubs-who spoke with Execu-TIVE said that the biggest challenge they face is littering, despite regularly cleaning the shore, sometimes multiple times per day. There are many factors that contribute to this waste onslaught-including the ongoing garbage crisis—and the eradication of littering will not be a panacea to all of our environmental problems. But we have to start somewhere, and the best place to start is with ourselves. It is arguably easier to get someone to walk a few extra steps to dump a piece of garbage in a bin instead of throwing it on the street than it is to get those in authority to solve the country's waste management problems.

This does not mean the government should not intervene to force citizens to reduce littering. Civic education is the first step toward doing so, as it is only through the proper education of our youth that we can implement future change. For those who are beyond the age of civic education, a national awareness campaign against littering is needed to encourage people to treat public spaces like their homes and stop their rampant littering. Both of these steps, however, may be not enough of a deterrent against littering for some people and this is why some punitive measures should be introduced. It was only when driving without a seatbelt in Lebanon became a fineable offense that people began to strap in. Personal consequences for actions are the only thing that works for a wide number of people, and, as such, a fine should be imposed on those who are caught littering in public spaces.

Not littering may seem like a small step to take, but indeed, the longest journeys begin with a single step. If we want to save Lebanon's beaches and make them enjoyable for both tourists and locals alike, then it is time to take that step. Right now. No excuses.



14

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Hospitality and tourism stakeholders discuss expectations for summer 2018

The celebration of Eid el-Fitr on June 16 marked the beginning of summer 2018 in Lebanon. As the season kicks off, all those in the tourism industry are speculating over whether it will be as good a season as summer 2017, or whether tourism will take a turn back to the bleak summer days of 2012 to 2016. Despite a rocky end to 2017—with current Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri's since-rescinded resignation at the start November—the first quarter of 2018 was off to a good start. According to the Ministry of Tourism, the total number of tourists in Lebanon rose from 345,168 in the first three months of 2017 to 362,398 in the same period in 2018. This jump was led mainly by tourists from Europe and America, who together constituted 49.56 percent of all visitors to Lebanon in the first quarter. Performance numbers for the second quarter of 2018 are not yet available, but since summer has become the main touristic period for the country, all eyes will be on the next two months to determine what to make of 2018.

OF SUMMERS PAST

Tourism in Lebanon—the success of which had always been a roller coaster ride, dependent on internal and regional stability—was set on a downwards trend with the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2012, before taking a slight upwards turn in 2017, most likely as a result of the election of Michel Aoun as president at the end of 2016, and the resulting increase in political stability. However, this upturn was nothing to write home about, according to those in the hospitality industry, and was not comparable to the tourism witnessed in Lebanon in summers before the Syrian crisis. So far, according to those in the industry, it seems that 2018 is shaping up to be a repeat of the preceding summer. "Summer 2017 was a very good one compared to the previous year [2016], but not to be compared to the strong summers like 2008, 2009, and 2004. We are still very far from those summers. [Summer] 2018 is shaping up to be hopefully the same as 2017, but not better," says Chadi Gedeon, general manager of Mövenpick Hotel and Resort Beirut.

Indeed, the dismal touristic seasons of recent years have lowered the expectations of Lebanon's hoteliers. "We are seeing a light [at the end of the tunnel] this season, with better reservations so far in the year, and

Overview

Hospitality & Tourism

[we] are seeing more foreigners in the city," says Nizar Alouf, board member at Riviera Hotel. "We hope that finally June, July, August will be good for Lebanon, and of course for us. The hotel industry these days is not looking to make money but to break even or not to lose money compared to the loss of money in past years."

WILL THEY OR WON'T THEY?

Although 2017 was marked by the slow but steady return of tourists from the Gulf, Hariri's resignation announcement in November 2017 caused regional tensions to rise again, explains Daniele Vastolo, general manager of the Kempinski Hotel.

Whether summer 2018 will see more visitors from the Gulf to Lebanon is a subject of speculation amongst Lebanon's five star hoteliers. "Every business today in Lebanon is suffering, in my opinion, from the boycott of the Gulf and Arab tourists over the last few years," Roger Edde, the owner of the Eddésands Hotel and Resort, says. "This [boycott] is supposed to be formally lifted this year. What may help us is that there are serious tensions between Turkey and the GCC countries because of Turkey's connection with the Muslim brotherhood and Qatar, and so many who had deserted us for Turkey might change their minds." He continued: "Besides, Turkish people don't speak Arabic, while Lebanese do. Lebanon is a small country that [Gulf nationals] know very well. They miss Lebanon."

Gedeon says Movenpick had seen an increase of Arab Gulf visitors over this year's Eid, as compared to the same period last year, but that with travel advisories cautioning nationals from some GCC countries against visiting Lebanon not yet officially lifted, he is not expecting a drastic increase in their numbers. Thus, business continues as usual and hoteliers must keep looking to develop other markets while keeping a longing eye on the Gulf.

GOING LOCAL

For Beirut's Kempinski Hotel, local Lebanese looking for a "staycation" have grown into a significant market this year. "In the last few months, we have been very strong with the Lebanese market itself, and 40 percent of our guests are Lebanese," Vastolo says. "You have expats coming to visit their family, and, as a new market, we are having Lebanese coming from the south or the north for a little retreat here." Moreover, he noted, new Kempinski hotels in Africa would likely make African guests a future growth market for Kempinski Lebanon.

Gedeon says that expatriate Lebanese have be-

come the country's main leisure tourists. "Ideally, our occupancy is supposed to be a 50/50 division between leisure and business, but these days, unfortunately, it is 70 percent business," he says. "This is because there is no real leisure segment in Lebanon yet. We have the Lebanese expats who come back for the summer and this is our leisure market: they come for two weeks and don't want to open their house or sometimes they don't have houses in Lebanon. It is a strong segment but it is not enough."

WIDENING THE NET

For the past few years, most of the people making up the tourism crowds in Lebanon have been Lebanese expats, residents of Lebanon, and Europeans. The tourism industry has thus had to diversify its offerings to cater to these groups of tourists, whose expectations of a vacation may differ from those of a tourist from the Arab Gulf—which had prior to 2012 been the main market to which Lebanon catered. As such, alternative tourism segments such as rural, religious and food tourism have been developed, bringing significant advantages to the communities in which they have been established (see page 52 on rural tourism).

Driven by the search for non-polluted beaches (see article on environmental impacts page 38) and the high entry fees of most private beach clubs and resorts, beach tourism has been developing on public beaches like Sour's, and Anfeh's Tahet el-Rih (see article page 32 on public beaches), and is attracting Lebanese and European tourists alike. Beach bars, where one can enjoy a drink steps away from the water and without paying an entry fee, are also gaining popularity and have attracted seasoned hospitality investors (see article page 22). Meanwhile, beach resorts and clubs are coming up with innovative packages and concepts to attract new customers (see contribution page 46), but are struggling to stay abreast amid mounting costs and encroaching marine pollution, which works against their best efforts to provide a refreshing escape for those who choose to pay entry fees (see article on resorts page 22).

Only time will tell what summer 2018 will bring to the Lebanese tourism industry, but stakeholders in the sector will hopefully have learned their lesson, and will continue to work on the country's nascent alternative tourism options and on the new markets that have opened to Lebanon—while not forgetting about our neighbors, the tourists from the Gulf.

Hospitality & Tourism

By Nabila Rahhal

NO COUNTRY FOR RESORTS

Lebanon's challenges with beach tourism

EXECUTIVE met with Pierre Achkar, president of the Lebanese Federation for Tourism Industries, to discuss whether Lebanon's current beach resorts have the potential to attract an actual beach tourism market, what can be done to develop them, and Lebanon's potential for this kind of tourism.

What can you say concerning the status of beach tourism in Lebanon today?

Lebanon is not on the Mediterranean tourism map, although the Mediterranean is the biggest tourism draw in the world. No coast attracts the same volume and quality of tourists, and yet we are not part of that market. At one point, Lebanon had the exclusivity for tourism in the region, and yet today it doesn't have even 20 projects by the sea that are capable of attracting the Russian market, the Scandinavian market, and the German market. All of these nationalities ask for two things on their vacations: sun and sea. And today we don't have those [tourists] despite being on the [Mediterranean] sea.

How many beach resorts are there in Lebanon?

It depends on what you mean by resort. If we are comparing the beach resorts in Lebanon with those found on the touristic coast that Lebanon is a part of—namely Cyprus, Turkey, and Dubai—then Lebanon has a maximum of two beach resorts which are Kempinski and Movenpick.

There are some small hotels along the coast—[by small I mean] those with 40 to 50 rooms—but they cannot be called resorts. A resort is defined as a hotel property with around 200 rooms, several F&B outlets, and *pied en l'eau* features—



meaning resort guests can access the sea directly through the resort.

In principle, we have similar natural coastal assets to Cyprus, Turkey, and Dubai. Why is it that we don't have a comparable beach resort tourism segment?

We, the Lebanese Federation for Tourism In-

"No coast attracts the same volume and quality of tourists, and yet we are not part of that market." dustries, conducted a feasibility study on this very subject. We learned that the majority of these coastal areas had developed and applied national strategies to be on

the beach tourism map for some time now.

To give you an example, in 1996 Antalya was a desert with approximately a total of 4,000 hotel

rooms. So the Turkish government (which owns public spaces) back then priced the coastal land at \$10 per square meter for 10,000-50,000 meter sized land plots. There was a master plan for that area, where investors who bought a 50,000 meter piece of land got a 500,000 meter land on the condition that these investors develop a resort.

Twenty years have passed since then, and today Antalya has 100,000 hotel rooms. They had a master plan and lowered the price of real estate. The same thing happened in Dubai and the Egyptian coastal areas as well. These properties by the beach are owned by the state so the state can come up with a plan to benefit from them.

Meanwhile, in Lebanon, land by the coast costs an average of \$2,500 to \$5,000 per meter. Therefore, to buy a 50,000 meter of land [which is the size you would need to develop a real resort] you would need \$100 to \$200 million. You are starting your project with a huge investment, and this is without the cost of construction and everything else.

So, after this study and others, we concluded that there is no economic viability for resorts in Lebanon, and that investment in such projects would not be returned before 15 years at the least. At the same time, the legal buildup for real estate projects in Lebanon is much less than its neighboring countries. For example, if you own 10,000 meters of land, you can build a 10,000 meter project, while in Cyprus or Turkey you can build a 25,000 meter structure on your 10,000 meter land by building vertically.

So, in the study we developed we called for all concerned parties [from experts in the field to the ministries] to meet before it's too late. Today, all the coastal projects being developed in Lebanon are only economically viable if sold; an investor builds a project with 1,000 private chalets and sells them to make money. But in that case, the tourism sector is losing.

If this is the situation, can't we follow a different model and have many small to medium-sized hotels along the coast, which is what we sort of do right now?

This will not attract tourism. You would need 3,000 to 4,000 rooms clustered in hotels in the same area. For example, if there are 2,000

rooms between Jounieh and Batroun, then you can talk about building a beach tourism market. But we don't even have that.

Also, the area where these smaller resorts would be located would need to have the right qualifications in terms of infrastructure, [the] community's mentality and openness, choice of hospitality outlets, and activities beyond the resorts.

We have another major problem, which is that the sea is polluted in many areas of Lebanon. We have open untreated sewage in some areas, and we have garbage floating around where the waste dumps are located.

This is why we were calling for the forma-

"This is why we were calling for the formation of a committee made up of the ministers of tourism, public works, and the environment to discuss what the new master plan for beach tourism could be."

tion of a committee made up of the ministers of tourism, public works, and the environment to discuss what the new master plan for beach tourism could be. For example, should we allow for the construction of tower

projects by the sea? There are questions that I don't have the right to answer even if I have an opinion on the topic.

But wouldn't such a tower breach people's right for an uninterrupted sea view?

Look at Cyprus and Turkey's Antalya—they have many tall hotels by the sea. You cannot make an omelet without cracking an egg, and so we have to weigh the pros and cons of this issue: Do we restrict the sea view in favor of being on the tourism beach map? This is a question that needs to be answered by all concerned parties, and this is why I am calling for this committee.

Another question we can raise is: Why don't we have ports on cities by the sea for people to travel to by boat, like Cyprus or Dubai does? There are points to be raised within such a committee, and which have the potential to grow beach tourism in Lebanon, but the final decision is not in my hands, but in the government's.

Beach resorts

Hospitality & Tourism

By Nabila Rahhal

THE LIVIN' IS EASY?



What is standing in the way of a Lebanese beach tourism boom?

A quick online search for 'Lebanon in the 1960s' reveals dozens of photographs celebrating Mediterranean leisure. Some show people lazing on the sand in what appears to be a public beach, others are of smiling women water skiing with a backdrop of the glittering sea and an equally glittering resort, and others still are of those enjoying a swanky beach club—defined as properties where one pays an entry fee to access a pool area and services—and five star resort pools, which are the same concept but with a hotel by the sea.

It is clear that the sea was one of the major at-

tractions for tourism in Beirut back in the day. Today, a few of the beach clubs and resorts from the 1960s are still operational and many others have entered the arena, outgrowing the boundaries of Beirut to spread across a significant portion of Lebanon's 225 km long coast—pretty much wherever is not occupied with agricultural or industrial areas.

While these outlets had their years in the sun, lack of proper planning, sea pollution, a highly competitive market, and a dearth of tourists have all taken their toll on beach resorts and clubs—and hence on beach tourism in Lebanon.



■ This proliferation of saintly resorts led people to affectionately call Ramlet al-Baida's public beach Saint Balesh (Saint Free).

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

In the late 1950s, saints ruled Beirut's coast starting with Lebanon's first resort hotel Saint Georges (located in downtown Beirut) and moving on to beach clubs Saint Simon and Saint Michel, both of which were in Ouzai, on the southern outskirts of Beirut-which was back then the "it" location for beach clubs in Beirut. "The concept of beach clubs was popular historically and the most beautiful and biggest beaches were in Ouzai and Jounieh. Jounieh served more as a public beach, but Ouzai was where the best clubs were: St. Simon, St. Michel; Pepe Abed also had a beach there and it was "the" place by all means. When planes would come to Lebanon [tourists] would see that, and the first thing they would do is book a hotel in Ouzai," recounts Roger Edde, owner of Eddésands Wellness and Beach Resort in Jbeil. This proliferation of saintly resorts led people to affectionately call Ramlet al-Baida's public beach Saint Balesh (Saint Free). Sporting Beach Club was another successful beach club of that period, and it remains in operation to date, banking on its now vintage and nostalgic appeal.

Between the late 1960s and 1978, several resorts opened their doors, including Riviera, which opened as a hotel in 1956, and then got a permit to develop its beach in 1968. Summerland opened its doors as a resort in 1978, while La Siesta, a resort in Khalde, launched in the 1970s. "La Siesta was among the best resorts in the country. In July 2017, the owners decided to reopen it and bring back fond memories to many," says Walid Yammine, the resort's current general manager.

The intensification of the civil war in Lebanon brought an end to all these midsummer night dreams and Ouzai's glitzy resorts became home to those fleeing the war, while other resorts and beach clubs in areas heavily exposed to bombing were temporarily—or permanently—shut down.

While the civil war brought the shutters down on Beirut's resorts, it brought a new dawn to coastal properties starting from Nahr el-Kalb to Safra, and gave birth to the concept of chalet clubs or private beach resorts where one has to own a chalet—or be a guest of someone who does—to enter. Such chalets were often used by their owners as a refuge from the war (see box page 25 for more on modern day chalet projects).

Beach resorts

Hospitality & Tourism







Eddésands

■ It was not until 2003 that beach resorts—complete with a hotel and multiple F&B outlets—made a comeback in Lebanon.

THE REBIRTH OF RESORTS

With the end of the civil war in 1990, investors once again turned their eyes to the shore to study the feasibility of recreating the heydays of Lebanon's beach tourism. Ouzai had changed demographically and was no longer suitable for beach clubs, so investors headed further south to the sandy beaches of Jiyeh, on the outskirts of Saida, with Bamboo Bay beach club opening in 1999 and Voile Blue, also in Jiyeh, in 2003 (it later moved to Jbeil).

But it was not until 2003 that beach resortscomplete with a hotel and multiple F&B outlets made a comeback in Lebanon with international brand Mövenpick opening in Beirut's Raouche, and newcomer Eddésands opening first as a beach club then as a hotel two years later. In explaining his decision to open a beach resort in Lebanon, Edde says he wanted to somehow recreate, in his hometown of Jbeil, the beautiful surroundings and quality of life he enjoyed when living on the shores of south of France. What began as a small rustic project that mainly catered to family and friends soon expanded: "In 2003, we decided to go big and go for something that would compete with the likes of Nikki Beach [one of the first luxury beach resort concepts] when it comes to funky nightlife and a beach bar," he says.

At the time, large scale hospitality projects by the beach—especially in a then remote area like Jbeil-were rare and Edde says his intent of enticing people to come from Beirut to Jbeil for the resort was met with outright skepticism. But he says he knew the project would be a success for several reasons: "I knew it would work in Lebanon because, when [living] in the south of France, I met many Lebanese who had come back to Lebanon and were looking for fun activities like they had abroad, so I thought that if I made a good offering, people like me would come. Second of all, the Arabs, the European elites, and the Americans back then were in the south of France. Why? Because it is on the Mediterranean, they have the good weather and fun facilities. So I thought a good idea would be to have another destination like that, but in Byblos [Jbeil]," recalls Edde, adding that his idea worked and the resort was wildly successful during its peak years.

AN UNSETTLED SEA

The political situation being what it is in Lebanon, beach clubs and resorts would have a couple of great years before a crisis hit and business slowed

SEASONAL REAL ESTATE GETS A FACELIFT

Chalet complexes—typically with up to a 100 units of varying dimensions and layouts, complete with a large pool, children's pool, basketball court, entertainment center, and some shops—were the hallmark of coastal real estate development in Lebanon in the 1980s, especially in the area stretching northwards from Kaslik. Many families used these chalets as their permanent homes during the Lebanese Civil War, and continued to use them—as originally intended—as small summer retreats following the war's end. As such, long-lasting friendships were formed among children whose families owned different chalets, as they gathered around the pool or basketball court.

These chalet compounds remain in operation, but the concept of seasonal, coastal residential real estate has been modernized and upgraded in the intervening period, and new developments have sprung up on Lebanon's coast. Kÿe, which is developed by Rise Properties and Saab Marina Holding, is expected to be completed in 2021. It is earmarked to be Lebanon's largest beachfront private resort, spanning over 200,000 square meters and consisting of 770 chalets, which will range in size from 45 to 85 sqm. This private gated community will feature a yachting marina, nine swimming pools, 10 sports courts, a waterpark, four restaurants, a clubhouse with a cigar lounge, a gym and spa, as well as a running and cycling track, along with retail outlets. Clearly the days of bumping into other swimmers while doing one's daily laps are over.

Summer homes by the beach are no longer defined by small chalets: some new community developments are full-fledged housing units by the sea. Amchit Bay is one example of such a project, boasting six triplex villas—each of which comes with a private pool and garden. The project also consists of seven blocks of apartments, each three floors tall in compliance with the construction regulations of Amchit. Each floor contains three apartments—with dimensions varying between 160 to 230 sqm—that each come with their own private outdoor space.

Common amenities include a pool, juice bar, and gym. "The concept was that we were developing houses for people who wanted to have a house by the beach but not be involved in building it, or in maintaining it, especially since it will be more of a weekend and summer house," explains Mireille Korab, senior executive at FFA Real Estate which has developed the property.

Both concepts seem to resonate with the Lebanese lifestyle, given that Amchit Bay's properties are already 80 percent sold (the expected delivery date is 2020), and only half of Kÿe's chalets remain on the market. "Lebanese people seek to live the vacation experience everyday, especially during summer time. They'd rather choose a home that offers access to amenities whilst keeping them close to the usual attractions, nightlife, and even close to work to avoid heavy traffic," says Lena Jelwan, vice president of operations at Rise Properties, which developed Kÿe. "This is why Kÿe [located in Tabarja] is such a success, as it combines everything they need: the beach, the outdoors, the close distance, the facilities, the community living, etc." Such residential real estate projects, in which residents tend to spend a good portion of their summers, are good for the local economy of the area, since residents will shop in local supermarkets, carry out their daily purchases, and make use of the surrounding hospitality outlets for leisure, Korab explains.

down only to skyrocket the following season. During the 2000s, investments continued to be made in coastal areas—mainly in Jiyeh and Rmeileh in the south and Jbeil in the north—but they were more in beach clubs than resorts.

With the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2012, tourism in Lebanon went into a steady decline (see overview page 16). As result, many beach clubs have either shut down or re-conceptualized their experiences to stay afloat in a competitive market

(for more on beach clubs, see article page 41). On the other hand, beach resorts—with their hotels—seem to be more equipped to weather a stormy sea.

Hotels remain operational throughout the year, therefore sustaining a resort property during the winter. "Veer opened in 2012 as a beach club with only a few bungalows. The next year we opened a hotel property with 31 rooms. The original plan was just to have a beach club, but beach clubs are purely seasonal, so we decided to go into the hotel

Beach resorts

Hospitality & Tourism



To maximize their revenues, many of these resorts allow for day visitors to access the property by paying an entrance fee.





Kempinski

business to be able to work year-round although there is still a difference between the volume of work in the summer and in the winter," says Adella Bassim, operation manager at Veer, adding that in winter they work on low-season rates and mainly cater to corporate accounts in their vicinity in by hosting conferences and events.

Indeed, all resort operators EXECUTIVE interviewed spoke about the conferences and events they host on their properties during the winter. General manager of Mövenpick Chadi Gedeon speaks of his hotel as being a "five star business hotel with resort facilities," while the general manager of Kempinski Summerland Hotel and Resort Daniele Vastolo says they attract pharmaceutical companies who come for conferences and reserve hotel rooms.

For Nizar Alouf, board member of Riviera Hotel, the beach club and hotel complement each other. "Having a hotel really helps us in summer, and the beach adds value to the hotel as well. Tourists

have a wide variety of hotels in Lebanon to choose from, so when looking among them they choose Riviera because of the pool, especially in the summer. In winter, they come for the service and also for the beach because we have good weather in Lebanon year-round and foreign tourists appreciate that," he explains.

At first, the 86 chalets in La Siesta were planned to be rented out on an annual or seasonal basis, but the market demand was more in weekly or weekend usage, explains Walid Yammine, general manager of La Siesta, so they re-conceptualized them as hotel rooms that people can book on a nightly basis. Yammine says they were fully booked for the Eid weekend and expects to have a strong summer for the chalets, driven mainly by local Lebanese and expats looking for a getaway.

ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE

To maximize their revenues, many of these resorts allow for day visitors to access the property by

paying an entrance fee, just like they do at a beach club. "The beach club is more economically beneficial for us because we have daily entrance fees, whereas we only have 35 rooms in our property. But they support each other in that we have many people who come spend the weekend in the summer—30 percent of those who come to Veer stay in the hotel. In the summer we have an occupancy of 85 to 100 percent," says Bassim.

Three months after its re-opening in 2017, Kempinski Summerland Hotel allowed day passes, which at first were for a limited number of people to ensure quality service, but then gradually the number of guests increased. "We decided to have this because we did not want to be seen as a lonely entity; we want people to enter. Summerland was very popular with the Lebanese in the 80s and 90s, so how would they feel if they cannot access it?" asks Vastolo, explaining that the hotel also has 500 privately owned cabins whose owners are allowed to bring four guests each. This and the day passes support the hotel by bringing in more business to their F&B outlets, he says.

MANAGING A BUDGET

The slowdown in tourism, the dwindling purchasing power among locals, and the increased cost of doing business have created a situation where resort operators are feeling the stress. Edde says, "One of the biggest expenses we are paying is electricity because we can't use the Lebanese government supply—when it is available—because it is not regular and will damage our sensitive machinery. And then you have to put an entrance fee which is comparative [to the region], and when you do that, you are losing money," adding that their costs end up being higher than the revenues generated from their clients.

Alouf also mentions taxes, explaining that since Riviera is located in an upscale area they have to pay more maritime taxes than neighboring resorts or beach clubs in Beirut. "When Riviera is paying a certain amount of money to the state, and beach B is paying less than that, what shall we do? Shall we make customers pay more than they do in beach B? It is a real problem," says Alouf, explaining that they finally decided to increase their entry fee while improving their services in order to distinguish themselves from other resorts in proximity. Still, with a short season and lower resort occupancy during weekdays compared to the weekend, Alouf argues that operating a resort is not as profitable as people assume. "We have the taxes,





Veers

electricity, services, treatment of water, and maintenance, which is very costly being exposed to sea air and water. People think what they are paying is pure profit, but it is not the case," says Alouf.

La Siesta's Yammine says maintenance of their 20,000 square meter resort is the biggest expense. "Fixed expenses are the highest; as for operational costs we try to manage by having the right staff at a good salary. We try to cover our fixed costs during the summer when we have the high season," he says, explaining that they have managed their profit by creating affordable options for their customers that include packages that combine both entry fees and some F&B expenses, and affordable F&B choices.

WAVES OF POLLUTION

Whether it is a resort or a beach club, the impact of the waste crisis and subsequent ministerial decisions on sea water, and thus on beach resorts, cannot be overemphasized. All resorts operators EXECUTIVE spoke with, no matter where they were

Beach resorts

Hospitality & Tourism



Mövennick

located in Lebanon, said that the fact that the sea is polluted with both visible and invisible waste has negatively impacted their business.

Vastolo says the sea is more of a liability than an asset for them at Kempinski, which is located in Inah on the border of Ouzai. "For us it is very frustrating because we are very close to the sea, and this should be one of our strengths, and instead it is something we cannot really capitalize upon because of the sea pollution. We are very happy that there is a neighboring hotel which will open its doors soon, and we actually hope that with the opening of this hotel, the government will be more sensitive to the fact that people will come here to enjoy the sun and sea, but unfortunately next to it there is open sewage overflowing on the sand and going straight into the water. It definitely affects the quality of the water, and this is something you cannot run away from. We have a red flag displayed constantly on the sand and when our clients ask us why, we have to be very transparent and tell them," he complains. Gedeon says that at Mövenpick they constantly monitor their online reviews, and complaints about the quality of sea water are increasingly prominent.

Yammine says that not only are E. coli levels in the sea water near their resort constantly high—they run regular checks—but they also suffer from visible garbage which they have to clean several times per day to maintain the quality of their shore. "When you are by the beach and see a piece of a garbage the first impression you will get is that our resort is dirty, even if the garbage is not from us, so we are trying to avoid reaching that point. The waste crisis that happened only two years ago is not something to take lightly since a lot of garbage was

thrown [out] haphazardly during that period," he says.

Veer suffers from both visible garbage and the near constant emissions from the Zouk power plant, putting a damper not only on guests' experience, but also on their outdoor furniture—which has to be cleaned daily or will turn black—and on the quality of the sea water adjacent to them.

Even in areas where sea pollution is low, people's impressions regarding the sea water in Lebanon leaves them hesitant to take a dip. "People love to come to Eddésands, but they spend most of their time in the pools. I tell them 'I swim every day and drink water from the sea,' but they don't believe me. They don't even dare to come into the sea when we have a fabulous sandy beach where you can walk for 50 meters in the sand and you cannot benefit from it. You are really fighting a difficult war," Edde says.

All of the resort operators EXECUTIVE met with say that as a result of the sea water pollution, they put in extra efforts into their pool experiences either by having additional pools or by providing pools with distinctive features.

A BRIGHTER HORIZON

Despite these challenges facing resort operators in Lebanon, it seems not all hope is lost for a stronger beach tourism offering in Lebanon. Investments are being made into resorts in several areas along the coast, which indicates that people still see potential there.

Existing resort operators are keeping the faith knowing that, with the proper master plan and real in-

People's impressions regarding sea water in Lebanon leaves them hesitant to take a dip.

tent for change, things could turn around. "As hoteliers, we would love the government to take a stand and say, 'You know what? We have a coast line, so let us capitalize on that.'

This is what Italy did in the 1980s when they were in the same condition as well, but the government decided to take a stand and make the coast attractive. Italy is just the same as Lebanon in that we have good food, history, fun, and mountains, but Italy has invested so much money and commitment from generation to generation to be more attentive, and we are getting the results now," says Vastolo, who is Italian. For the sake of beach tourism in Lebanon, let us hope we decide to do things the Italian way.

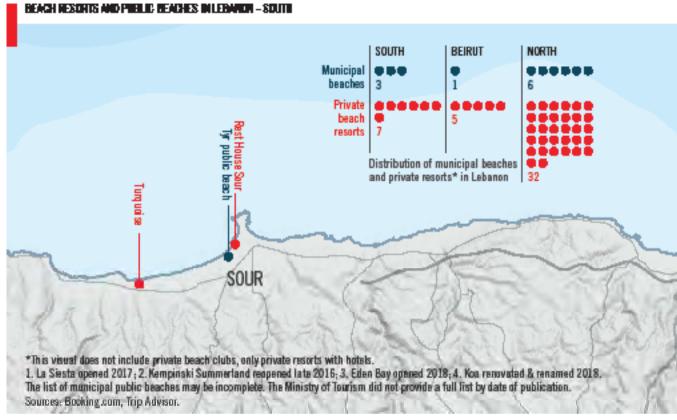


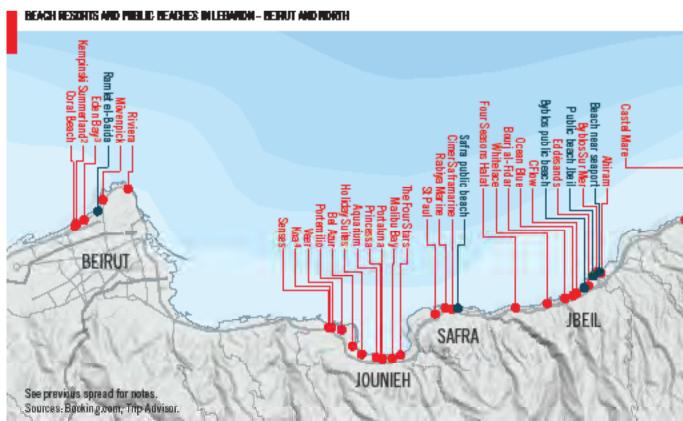


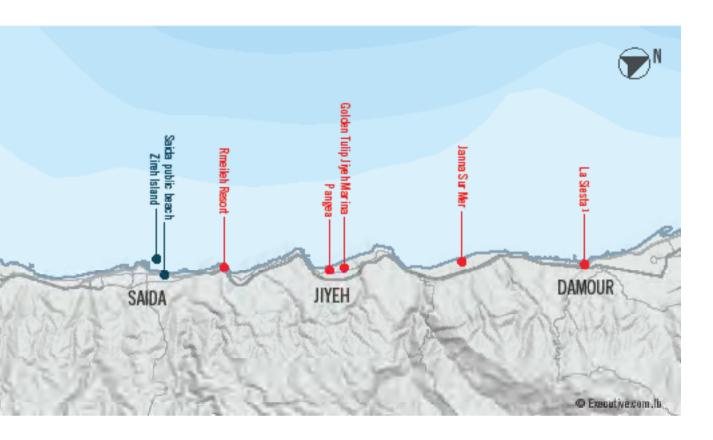
FROM BATROUN TO JIYEH, LUXURY ANYWHERE YOU GO

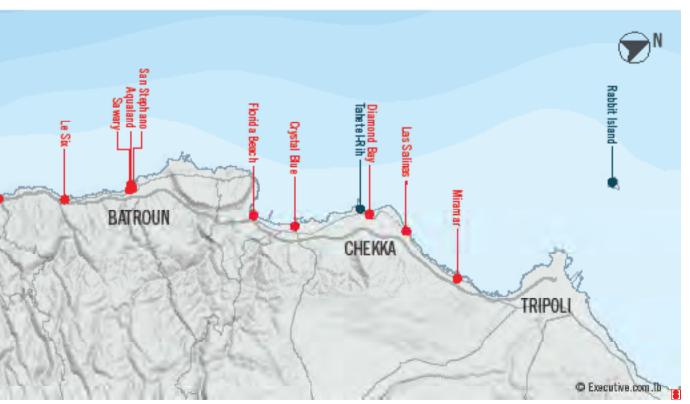
Beach resorts

Hospitality & Tourism









Public beaches

Hospitality & Tourism

By Nabila Rahhal



THE PEOPLE'S BEACHES

The challenges of Lebanon's public beaches

The French Riviera, Italy's Amalfi Coast, and the shores of Greece's Mykonos all have something in common: the existence of luxury private beach resorts and glitzy beach clubs alongside pristine and well-managed public beaches that are free for all. The presence of proper public beaches in a country is a significant contributor to its appeal to tourists—and hence its economy—not to mention a way to improve quality of life for the country's residents.

While Lebanon has an abundance of private beach clubs and resorts, ask most Lebanese to name a public beach they would gladly visit—without being harassed by security guards from private beach resorts demanding they leave their "property," or tripping over garbage—and they will be hard pressed to come up with an answer besides the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

Lebanon's coastline falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MoPWT), specifically the Directorate General of Land and Maritime Transport. It is thus the ministry's responsibility to protect and manage the country's public beaches.

All beaches on Lebanon's coast are, by law, public beaches, but only some of them are designated by the MoPWT as beaches for public use and therefore managed as such. The rest of Lebanon's beaches are either neglected or used by private beach resorts as an extension of their projects. While no one can stop you from spreading a towel on any beach in the country, you may be harassed for doing so, if not prevented initially by gates and entry fees.

32 ______executive-magazine.com

According to Iffat Idriss of Operation Big Blue (OBB), an activist network that seeks to protect the Mediterranean coast, in 2001 the MoPWT developed a strategy that designated fourteen coastal areas in various Lebanese cities as public beaches. The plan proposed to receive bids from NGOs and institutions to manage these beaches on the ministry's behalf. That strategy never saw the light of day, she says. (The MoPWT did not respond to multiple requests from Executive to confirm the existence of such a plan, or other information provided by sources for this article.)

Jean Beiruti, the head of the syndicate of seaside resort operators, claims that only seven truly public beaches remain today, and that the MoPWT had been working on managing and developing these beaches before its budget was recently reduced. This means that operational expenses, such as hiring lifeguards, maintaining the beaches' cleanliness, and constructing bathrooms, can no longer be funded, explains Beiruti, and without a budget to fund the maintenance of public beaches, there may soon be none left.

The public beaches that are still maintained today are either run by a city's municipality or—in the case, for instance, of Ramlet el-Baida—by an organization on behalf of the MoPWT. EXECUTIVE met with three public beach operators to learn more about the different models of managing a public asset like a beach, in a way that ensures all stakeholders' rights are respected while providing a well-run facility attracting locals and tourists alike.

RAMLET EL-BAIDA

The only public beach in Beirut is in Ramlet el-Baida, one of Lebanon's more expensive areas in terms of real estate—as evidenced by the lavish residential buildings facing the beach. The 1,300m long strip of beach was popular in the 1960s and early 1970s, before the civil war took over and transformed it into an abandoned dump. Idriss recalls that when OBB formed to help clean Lebanon's coastline in 1997, Ramlet el-Baida's shore and seabed was covered in meters-deep trash that had accumulated during the war.

It was while cleaning up the beach that OBB discovered that sea turtles lived in these waters, laying their eggs in Ramlet el-Baida's sand. They requested and received permission from the director general of land and maritime transport at

the MoPWT, Abdel Hafeez el-Kaissi, to monitor the turtles and make sure they are protected. This led to a good relationship between OBB and the maritime transport division, and so, when the

■ Without a budget to fund the maintenance of public beaches, there may soon be none left. MoPWT put the management of public beaches out to tender in 2001, OBB won the right to manage Ramlet el-Baida.

At the time, explains Idriss, the beach had acquired a reputation as a dangerous place because it was unmonitored and fights regularly broke out on it. The beach was also polluted, and despite OBB's cleaning efforts, people continued to use it as a dumping ground. To counter this, the first thing OBB did when it





Public beaches

Hospitality & Tourism

took over management was to develop a strategy for running an eco-beach. This strategy took into consideration four main elements: service management, which included all basic services, such as a clean bathroom and shower area and lifeguards on duty; environment management, which ensured the cleanliness of the shore through proper waste management and a plan for sewage treatment; raising awareness among beach users on the importance of protecting the environment, through activities and signage; and statistics and information management, whereby OBB gathered data on beach and water quality.

With this strategy in hand, OBB took over Ramlet el-Baida, divided it into physical areas to better manage people's interest in and expectations of a public beach. These divisions remain today, splitting the beach into several different pockets: one for sunbeds that beachgoers can rent for a small fee; one for women who would rather be secluded from other beach goers; one with tables and chairs for rent; and another for free use, to which people can bring their own picnics, tables, and chairs. A final area was due to be designated for argileh and barbecues, to lower the likelihood of beach goers burning their feet on hot coals buried in the sand. The only restrictions OBB enforces are on alcohol and public indecency (suntanning topless or naked), which are both against the law in Lebanon. (Consuming alcohol in public is against the law in Lebanon, according to lawyers Execu-TIVE spoke to, though this law seems to be enforced only rarely).

Managing such an operation requires a budget for annual maintenance and the setting up of tents, lifeguard posts, and other equipment, as well as the means to finance the salaries of the 60 employees who work on the beach (lifeguards, security guards, and others). The ministry does not have a budget to support Ramlet el-Baida public beach, says Idriss, and OBB thus covers its expenses by selling snacks and water at the kiosk on the beach as well as renting out sunbeds, chairs, and tables. The organization also relies on various kinds of donations, for example furniture, which they revamp and use to beautify the beach as much as possible.

While OBB has good intentions, it is working with limited available resources and a tight budget since the MoWT does not have the financial means to support it. It does not help that the beach water is polluted with unregulated sewage disposal, ac-



cording to multiple sources. And yet, approximately 2,000 people still access Ramlet el-Baida on a busy day, according to Idriss, swimming in the sea in spite of multiple warnings about the poor quality of the water.

ANFEH

Anfeh's public beach, Tahet el-Rih, got its name due to its protection from the wind. A rocky beach known for the blue and white walls of the structures around it (the result of a joint agreement between the municipality and the owners, struck more than a decade ago), Tahet el-Rih is reminiscent of Greek coastal villages.

Prior to the Lebanese civil war, according to Anfeh

Approximately 2,000 people still access Ramlet el-Baida on a busy day, swimming in the sea in spite of multiple warnings about the poor quality of the water.

municipality lawyer Kamel Anjoul, some residents acquired permits from the public works ministry to develop salt mines along Tahet el-Rih, as Anfeh was then known for salt mining. During the war years, salt min-

ing was no longer a lucrative business and so many of these people converted their salt mines into small chalets for personal use.

In 2014, says Anjoul, some of these people remodeled their chalets again, this time into small restaurants to cater to those who were accessing the public beach. At the same time, he says, Anfeh's seawater was gaining a reputation for being among the cleanest in Leba-



"If the beach is no longer clean, we will lose the attraction which drew in the tourists to Anfeh in the first place."

non. This came just in time for Lebanon's garbage crisis, when beach lovers were desperately seeking unpolluted beaches in which to dip their toes. Anfeh's reputation drew in more visitors, encouraging more chalet owners to convert their chalets into restaurants, which, in turn, drew in more visitors. Anfeh's popularity was also aided by social media, as user-generated photos of scenic blue and white houses by the sea inspired more visits.

Anfeh's public beach today boasts around a dozen restaurants and snack shops, and attracts around 400 people per venue on a busy day, Anjoul says. This means that, on such a day, close to 5000 people might visit Tahet el-Rih—placing a lot of strain on waste management. When the chalets were for private use, their sewage went directly into the sea, but at low volume, since chalet owners tended to only use these properties during the day. But with the development of Tahet el-Rih as a tourist destination, this system was no longer feasible. Restaurants also generate more solid waste than a private chalet, and some of them were throwing this waste into the sea. The municipality had to intervene, Anjoul says. "The municipality mandated that the chalet-turnedrestaurant owners develop a sewage network specifically for Tahet el-Rih, and this is what happened." The sewage is now directed into a big tank that is drained daily, Anjoul says, with the system paid for by the owners and facilitated by the municipality. "If the beach is no longer clean, we will lose the attraction which drew in the tourists to Anfeh in the first place," he says.

Tahet el-Rih's restaurants are a tourist attraction that has the potential to bring heightened economic

benefit to Anfeh over time, especially as the municipality is working on several projects to attract other forms of tourism to the area. "A lot is being done to develop tourism in Anfeh, but we need funding for that, and we are trying to secure that from NGOs," Anjoul explains. "But it takes time to prepare the needed documents and studies for such funding. We want to provide more for tourists to do when they come to Anfeh than just go to the beach for lunch and then go home. ... If we are able to develop [it] in the way we want and have people spend a longer time in Anfeh, it will have a good impact on the economy overall."

But one cannot escape the fact that these restaurants, despite their attractiveness and economic value, are in violation of the law, because they are built on a public beach. The municipality is aware of the sensitivity of this issue. Anjoul explains, "The current municipality is looking at the situation from a pragmatic perspective, saying that it is something that has already happened and so should be dealt with from that starting point, without looking at the past. So from now on, no one is allowed to build anything on the public beach. The municipality's main goal is to protect the environment and ruins of Anfeh, while trying to manage the existing situation and make the best out of it."

Public beaches

Hospitality & Tourism



SOUR

Sour's beach was decreed a natural reserve in 1998 by the public works ministry, through Law 708/98, and officially named Tyre Coast Nature Reserve. The reserve is 3.5 kilometers long—from Rest House Tyr to the Ras el-Ain area—and stretches over an expanse of 3,300,000 square meters, making it the widest shore on Lebanon's coast. It is managed by the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve Committee, which is made up of different ministerial representatives and a representative from the municipality, who is typically made head of the committee. The committee is supervised by the Ministry of Environment (MoE), since the beach is part of a natural reserve.

The reserve is divided into three sections, one of which is for agriculture and is located next to Ras el-Ain. The second section is designated as a sanctuary for sea turtles, fauna, and migrating birds, since it contains "wetlands of international importance," as per the 1971 Convention on Wetlands. The third section is the public beach, which is 900 meters long. Every year, the Municipality of Sour submits a request to the MoE for a permit to manage that section of the reserve as a public beach for the summer season (May 15 - October 15), though at this point this has become more of a formality, explains Hassan Dbouk, the head of the Union of Tyre Municipalities.

During the summer season, a 150 meter long stretch of the public beach contains 49 tents situated at a distance from the waves, serving food and drinks to beachgoers. Those who sit under the tents or use the chairs provided by these establishments must pay for what they consume—some tents have a minimum consumption charge—and those who prefer not to pay can sit closer to the sea or in another section of the public beach, where they can use their own beach equipment and enjoy a picnic.

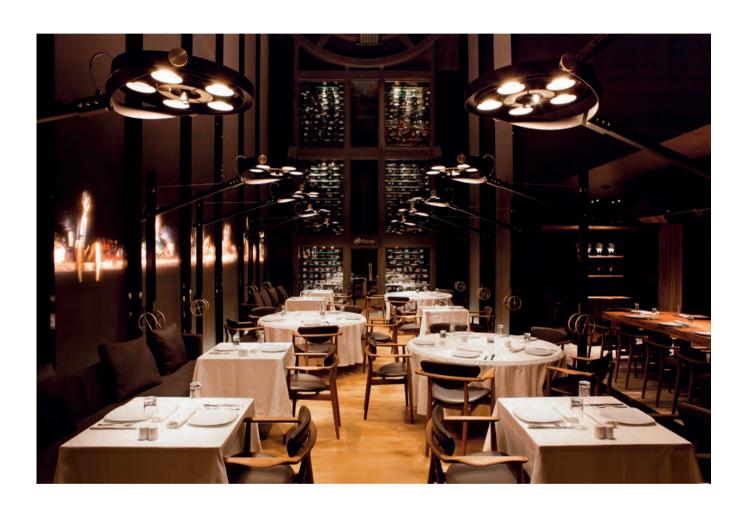
Every year, permission to set up tents is granted to the same 49 individuals who have run these tents since 2001, says Dbouk. While he wishes they could open the area to newcomers, he claims that this is not possible under the current system. A big tent rents for \$660 per month while the smaller ones cost close to \$580. Aside from renting out the tents, the municipality also makes money from the beach via parking lot fees, which are set at \$2 a day. Dbouk says 45 percent of the total revenue goes to the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve Committee and the rest is used by the municipality to cover their expenses, including maintenance and supervisory work.

At the start of every season, the municipality levels the sand on the public beach and removes the accumulated waste. They then check the infrastructure, which includes running water and the sewage system—the municipality has developed a sanitation network with two small pumping stations for the tented area only. The municipality also supervises the tents to make sure there are no violations to the rights of the public (infringing on the area designated for free public use) and that basic appearances and safety standards are met (clean kitchens and no broken furniture, for example). Finally, the municipality, in cooperation with the public works ministry, ensures the presence of lifeguards and other staff, while the Red Cross has a tent on the beach to treat any injuries.

While Sour's public beach was always an attraction—the tents have existed in one form or another since the 1970s, says Dbouk—the past five years have seen a significant increase in the number of visitors, reaching up to 20,000 on a busy day (usually on Sundays and they have around ten such days per season). Dbouk says the beach could host even more, if its capacity were increased by adding a small section of the protected area to it—something he is against. He believes this growing popularity is due to Sour's reputation for clean sea water and its proper management. It is a place, he says, where people can enjoy a day on a free beach without feeling they have compromised their standards of comfort and services.

This influx of visitors has become a bit of a challenge, explains Dbouk, although the municipalities union is happy with the boost to Sour's economy from the visitors. Still, managing waste on the public beach has become more difficult, and this year the municipality plans to add additional bins in an effort to control this. Controlling the wildlife sanctuary area of what is, after all, a natural reserve, is also starting to become difficult, since the volume of visitors means that the protected area is sometimes encroached upon by wandering beachgoers. Dbouk plans to raise this issue with the reserve's committee to reach a satisfactory solution for all parties.

NEW INTERIOR



RESTAURANT BAR

Mar Maroun st. Saifi

CENTRALE

RESERVATIONS: 03 915 925 / 01 57 58 58



Environmental impact

Hospitality & Tourism

By Charlie Darwich-Houssami

A SEA OF GARBAGE



Lebanon's polluted paradise

As Lebanon's summer season gets underway—off to a sleepy start thanks to Ramadan and atypical June weather—local media reports suggesting a drastic decline in the cleanliness of the country's coastal waters have tempered the country's beach mania.

Michel Afram, the director-general of the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI), issued a warning in June that Lebanon had crossed the threshold in terms of environmental degradation. "The sea along Lebanon's coast is extremely polluted," Afram told *The Daily Star.* "This is nothing new, but it is surely getting worse."

WASTING AWAY

While a 2017 LARI study found that no water source in Lebanon was free of contamination—in results that harmonized with 2011 findings by the World Bank on several fresh water sources—Afram told *The Daily Star* that a 2018 study was underway, and would likely find even higher levels of toxic water contamination.

A June headline from local paper *Al-Akhbar* summed up the mood: "No region in Lebanon is free of pollution: Farewell to swimming." Beirut.com followed, with: "Lebanese waters: Up to 100% pollution everywhere."

38 ______executive-magazine.com

A little dramatic, perhaps, but the severity of Lebanon's coastal pollution is, without doubt, alarming.

The country's coastline suffers from negligent littering, poor industrial waste disposal practices, and an extremely problematic national solid waste management plan. Greenpeace's Julien Jreissati tells EXECUTIVE that Lebanon generates around 2.5 million tons of solid waste per year, between 11 to 13 percent of which is plastic. Around 700 to 830 tons of plastic is disposed of in the country every day, much of it turning up on Lebanon's beaches.

Lebanon's landfills make an outsized contribution to coastal pollution, given that the country's three major, overworked dumps—Costa Brava, Bourj Hammoud, and Naameh—are right by the sea. Despite the lack of official case studies or government documentation, local media reports and eyewitness accounts suggest that garbage is being swept directly from these coastal landfills into the sea, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

"What you see on the shores and floating on the surface of the water is only a small part of it," Jreissati tells Executive. "Almost 90 percent of the waste goes under the seabed. These become microplastics eventually, since plastic decomposes into microplastic after hundreds of years but it never biodegrades—it is persistent in nature."

Activists have consistently pointed to the environmental costs of such solid waste pollution, arguing that leachate from garbage negatively affects the country's marine life.

A TOXIC MIX

The country's waterways contain traces of heavy metals, with mercury, lead, cadmium, copper, and zinc all found in varying concentrations, according to *The Daily Star*. In 2011, an environment ministry report produced in partnership with UNDP found that the level of the chemical nitrate varied drastically between different coastal areas, with low levels recorded in Jbeil, but much higher quantities in Ramlet el-Baida. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notes that accidentally drinking water containing high levels of nitrate can lead to blue baby syndrome, symptoms of which include shortness of breath and blue-tinted skin, and which—as the name implies—primarily affects infants.

Sewage, too, has long been a major factor in the cleanliness of Lebanon's coastal waters, although—

given the variations in sewage treatment and disposal infrastructure in different areas—the level of water contamination are not uniform along the coast.

One way to determine this contamination level is to examine the levels of Escherichia coli—commonly known as E. coli—a type of bacteria that lives within the intestines of people and animals, strains of which can cause infections. According to the EPA, water containing over 126 E. coli colonies per 100 milliliters is considered dangerous to swim in, due to its potential negative health impacts.

A 2013 American University of Beirut study of water samples from different Lebanese coastal regions found the cleanest sections to be Batroun, Jbeil, and Sour, based on the E.coli concentration,

Around 700 to 830 tons of plastic is disposed of in the country every day, much of it turning up on Lebanon's beaches.

while the most polluted areas were Tripoli and Ramlet el-Baida. In Sour, only four E.coli colonies were present per 100 milliliters of water; in Ramlet el-Baida, Beirut's last public beach, there were over 1,000.

The LARI 2017 study confirmed that Batroun's waters host some of the country's lowest levels of aerobic germs, while the sea off areas such as Tripoli and Ramlet al-Baida contains high levels of coliform bacteria (organisms found in fecal matter and used as a measure of sanitary quality). This is unsurprising, given that the latter is polluted by two sewage outfalls.

Despite the variations in contamination levels along Lebanon's coast, Afram told *The Daily Star* that swimming in the sea from anywhere in the country posed a risk. "Just because some of these places have the least amount of contaminants, it doesn't make the water safe to swim in," he said, cautioning particularly against swimming with an open wound.

While the potential health impacts of Lebanon's polluted coastal waters are hard to assess precisely, beachgoers over the past few years have anecdotally reported emerging from a refreshing swim only to develop rashes across their exposed skin.

Take a dip, if you dare.

CHARLIE DARWICH-HOUSSAMI is an undergraduate economics student at SOAS University, London. He is currently participating in the Executive summer internship program for business journalism.

Beaches

Hospitality & Tourism

By Nabila Rahhal

COCKTAILS WITH A SEA VIEW



Lebanon's hospitality operators discuss their coastal outlets

Dalia Farran, owner of Sour's beach bar restaurant Cloud 59, observes that wherever there is a body of water—be it the small village well, a river, or the sea—people gather around it for social activities: "Water brings life to the area," she muses. This is certainly true for Lebanon's coast, which is dotted with almost all kinds of socially inclined outlets: One can spend the day soaking up the sun's rays in a beach club (where you pay an entrance fee to enjoy facilities such as a pool, deck chairs, and service), or enjoy a six course fish

lunch or dinner in one of the many upscale restaurants by the sea.

One type of establishment growing in popularity is the beach bar, which falls in between a beach club and a restaurant. Such venues, unlike restaurants by the sea, have beach access and provide facilities like beach beds, showers, and in some cases, a pool. But instead of charging an entry fee as beach clubs do, beach bars make their money from what guests spend on food and drink.

Beach bars are not new to Lebanon, but their

40





Pierre & Friends, Batroun

number has increased significantly over the past five years, largely fueled by experienced hospitality operators turning their eye toward the coast for seasonal investments and identifying opportunities in previously untapped beachside areas.

THE TRENDSETTERS

The concept of such beach bars was introduced to Lebanon by a few entrepreneurial minds who saw value in combining the perfect sunset view with the perfect cocktail, and eventually, motivated by their success, others did the same.

Batroun district's Pierre & Friends, arguably Lebanon's first beach bar, is the brainchild of Pierre Tanous, a man who loved the sea, windsurfing, and his friends almost equally, and who started the project in 1994 as part-kitesurfing school and part-beach bar for enjoying drinks with his friends, recounts his son Jad Tanous. The project gradually grew into a fully-fledged business, and in 2003 Pierre & Friends became "official," meaning they

hung up a sign and streamlined their operations. Tanous says each year has been busier than the previous one, as people hear about the venue via word-of-mouth and international publications that placed Pierre & Friends on the "to-do" list of tourism in Lebanon.

It was not long after Pierre & Friends became official that other beach bars started opening nearby, and today around six venues lie side by side on the narrow strip of pebbly shore in Tehoum, just before Batroun, with several similar outlets operating a little further north. "When people saw our success, more operators started opening similar concepts around us, and, as a result, hotels and bungalows started opening around us as well. All this benefited the area, as it brought more visitors to it," explains Tanous.

Further north, Anfeh's Tahet el-Rih public beach, along with its private chalets turned restaurants, picturesque blue and white motif reminiscent of Greek islands, and clean blue waters is emerging as a potential location for new hospitality operators to spread their wings (for more on Tahet el-Rih, see article on public beaches page 32). Simon Azar, manager of Chez Fouad, says his was the second family on the strip to transform their chalet into a beach restaurant—complete with a pool previously built when the property was a chalet—in 2016.

Azar says that right from the start they became known for their good food—they served local fish from Anfeh and used only fresh ingredients—and attracted a lot of clients, which forced them to grow their business faster than anticipated. "For two years we used the kitchen of the chalet and cooked in a very basic way—we barely had cutlery

■ It was not long after Pierre & Friends became official that other beach bars started opening nearby. at the beginning," he says, laughing. "The more we made money, the more we added to the restaurant and grew it. We had a lot of people visit in

the first season, around 200 per day on the weekends and holidays, so it was a bit difficult, but we learned fast. Today I welcome around 550 people on a busy day and night combined. Azar adds that he has now transformed the entire chalet into a kitchen and has bought industrial cooking equipment. Azar is sure that it is only a matter of time until more outlets in Tahet El-Rih will be inspired by

Beaches

Hospitality & Tourism



Chez Fouad, Anfeh

his success and capitalize on their assets.

Beach bars have not found ground yet on the shores of south Lebanon, with the exception of Sour where Farran also started a trend with Cloud 59. Farran explains that she acquired her spot back in 2003, when the municipality had taken control of the catering tents on the public beach in an attempt to organize them (see article on public beaches page 36). "For me, it began as a parallel income from my main job with the UN, especially since I love the sea and music. At the beginning, people from Beirut and the north were wary about visiting the south, since they felt it was too far and unknown to them, but today I have many customers from Beirut, Jbeil, Tripoli, and even Akkar who have become regulars," she explains, saying that she welcomes no less than 500 people on a busy day with half as many coming on a weekend night. She credits her success to the casual atmosphere that has resonated well with her customers, as is evidenced by the many usergenerated posts on social media—which Farran says has also helped to boost the number of visitors to Cloud 59.

A CHANGE OF SCENERY

The beach bar trend started in a "mom-andpop" way with small operations gradually growing larger and more professional. Once the potential of beach bars became clear, hospitality operators with several well established venues in Greater Beirut decided to dip their feet in the seasonal coastal business as a means of diversification. Elie Barhoush, owner of Tonic cocktail bar, which has locations in Jounieh, and now in Okaibeh, says, "We have a location in the mountains, and we launched a beach bar two years ago in White Beach Batroun. We thought of opening at the beach because we saw potential in such a project as we realized that Lebanese like to go to coastal outlets in the summer, whether during the day or night. The concept of having a beach bar and restaurant is a growing trend that was set by Pierre and Friends and developed with time, and so we thought we could benefit from it."

This season, Barhoush moved Tonic from Batroun to Okaibeh, next to Safra, which he says is a better opportunity for them, since it is a larger space and allows them to have a wide shore, a restaurant, a bar, and lounge area. Barhoush believes that other projects will follow in the area next year because of its proximity to Beirut compared to Batroun: "People coming from Dbayeh and Beirut will find it closer than driving the extra way to Batroun to get the same type of pebbly shore, clean sea water, and vibes that they get in Batroun."

The seasonal hospitality business first came to be seen as an essential market to tap into in 2012

■ The beach bar trend started in a "mom-and-pop" way with small operations gradually growing larger and more professional.

as a result of the war in Syria and the subsequent slowdown of the Lebanese economy, explains Danny Khoury, managing partner of DAWA Entertainment, which owns and operates bar restaurants Dany's,

Main Street, and Wall Street. "Work in summer in Beirut slowed down because locals were either in the mountains or by the beach and there weren't enough tourists in Lebanon to make up for their absence. So we went to the mountains as well. This is our third season in Broumana, and we were among the first five outlets there," explains Khoury, adding that back then, they had also thought of opening a beach bar in the Batroun-Kfarabida area but were hesitant about the location.

Khoury finally decided to open a Dany's beach tent in Sour instead of in the north. "The crowd in Sour suits us because it is laid back like us, and this is why we chose it over Batroun. Another good rea-



Club 59. Sour

son why we chose Sour is the construction of the Jal el-Dib Bridge, which has created even more traffic than there was previously on that highway, so many people will prefer to head south to avoid that jam," he explains, adding that demand for a concept like theirs has a key motivator. "There are many tents that serve alcohol there, but not in a cocktail bar and restaurant style. There is only Cloud 59 that fits this model, and when people don't find a place in it, they end up going to other tents. So we can benefit from that market in addition to our loyal clients who know us from Beirut."

SEASONS IN THE SUN

Although the sun shines quite a lot in Lebanon, the season for beach bars is three months long at best. This means that such operations have to make their money in a short period of time. All of the beach bars mentioned operate day and night, although some owners, like Farran, say they are decidedly busier during the day. In an effort to keep people drinking for longer, both Dany's and Tonic introduced sunset happy hour formulas to bars. Others, such as Cloud 59, place a minimum order charge (\$10 on a weekend) to avoid the scenario of having people spend all day on a bottle of water. Azar requires all guests to order lunch when they come to Chez Fouad.

To Khoury, a short season means investment in the venue should be kept tight. "Summer escapes should not be big investments, even if you have the



best location in a seasonal city. This is because the season is short, and so to a return a big investment of say \$500,000, you would need at least eight years of good work. Eight years is a lot for a country like Lebanon, where the economic situation is weak," he explains noting that his investment in Dany's Sour was less than \$30,000 since they made use of a mobile bar they owned and got support from their sponsors for the beach umbrellas and other items. "Otherwise, it would not have been possible to break even this year and make a little profit. We chose it that way because it is a new area for us, and we want to test it. If we break even and make money on the side, next year we will improve on it," he says. Barhoush sees that although investment in some items like furniture can be kept low and still fit the rustic

Beaches

Hospitality & Tourism





Tonic beach bar

"I think seasonal projects are a challenge everywhere: It's like opening a new restaurant every year because you have to set up the place from scratch and hire new staff."

spirit of a beach bar, things like a good sound system and equipment should not be compromised.

Barhoush says a major expense in beach bars is annual maintenance as daily exposure to the salty sea air can be damaging to items like the point of sale or sound systems, so they have to be repaired almost every season. Tanous says he spends \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year on the maintenance of Chez Fouad, which includes repairing any damages caused by storms, as well as repainting, and setting up.

Farran sums up the struggles of seasonal outlets by saying, "Working on the beach is a challenge because of the heat and the seasonality, which means you have to find new staff almost every year. I think seasonal projects are a challenge everywhere. It's like opening a new restaurant every year because you have to set up the place from scratch and hire new staff."

A HAZY SUMMER SKY

Another challenge faced by seasonal beach outlets as opposed to seasonal mountain outlets is that customers perceive beach bars as escapes to spend the day in, and therefore interact with them differently. "Weekdays on the beach are slower than weekends, since most people are at work. They are certainly slower than businesses in seasonal outlets in the mountains. For example, it's a short drive to reach Brummana for an after work drink, while you would not head to Sour from Beirut for a similar outing; you would only visit at night if you were there since the morning, or if you are spending the night nearby," explains Khoury.

Both Barhoush and Azar mention the fickle weather this year as a challenge, telling EXECUTIVE in early June that the season had not yet picked up, despite being already well underway at the same time last year despite Ramadan also falling in June 2017.

Barhoush also mentions the rising number of beach bars and the competition among them as a challenge. "You have to give people good value and maintain standards to stay ahead of the game," he says.

Despite the challenges, beach bars are breathing life into some areas along Lebanon's coast, gathering people from all around the country for good times under sunny skies and offering alternatives for both residents of the area, and those who are staying overnight in coastal hotels and resorts.

44 _______executive-magazine.com



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Beach clubs

Hospitality & Tourism

By Ralph Nader

SLICE OF HEAVEN

Competition for beachgoers is fierce in Lebanon

Nothing feels better than spending a day or two, a month, or even an entire summer right on the coastal shore of the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean Sea. It is one of life's priceless pleasures, but for Lebanon's beach resorts and clubs, it is not just the weather that is heating up—competition and rivalry among them is also fierce.

The first private beach club in the Middle East, the Saint-Georges Yacht Motor Club, was founded in Beirut in 1936 by Michel Nader, sparking a domino effect. Beach clubs experienced a golden period pre-1975, followed by a dormancy period post-war, with a greater focus on publicly accessible beaches between 1990 and 2002. From 2003 until today, beach clubs started to develop both inside and outside the capital, until an estimated 300 had been constructed along the country's 225 km coastline. With more competition to win over beachgoers from a population of just 4 million, and around 2 million tourists annually, operators have been forced to change up their offerings to stand out in an increasingly saturated market.

STORY OF SURVIVAL

In a round table organized at Horeca Lebanon 2018 with five beach club and resort owners and managers, it was confirmed that beach clubs and resorts (the latter distinguished by offering accommodation) would not be able to rely on entrance fees alone to survive in the crowded market. Instead, they must differentiate themselves. All of the operators agreed that basic beach facilities were no longer satisfying customers, who are looking for a memorable experience worth sharing on social media.

While some clubs/resorts have developed new facilities to attract customers of all ages—such as the inflatable play area for children introduced this season by family resort La Siesta in Khalde—others followed market demand. For example, CFlow in Jbeil, shifted their entire concept from an adult-only resort to a family friendly destination. Allocating a budget for concept enhancement was also a strategy followed, for example, by Lazy B when it undertook an extensive enhancement of its facilities.

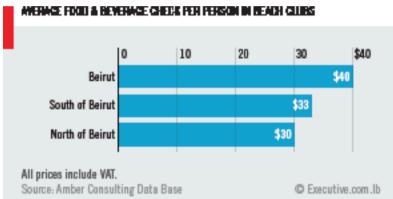


St. Georges, 1936.

Hiring seasonal staff is one of the main challenges in the beach club industry, which is why some businesses that operate year-round rotate staff through their various outlets to ensure trained individuals are always available depending on each outlet's needs. With Eddésands leading the way in 2003, an increasing number of beach resorts have been boosting their revenues by offering additional services such as beds, huts, and cabins for daily rental. Today, according to Amber Consulting's market research in 2018, about 55 percent of all Lebanese resorts offer private zones and beds.

This market research also showed that food and drink represent 70 percent of beach clubs' revenues. Thus, the majority of Lebanon's beach clubs are focusing on their food and beverage offerings by adding new outlets and catering events, such as beach bars, grills, snacks, and sunset parties. An increasing number of beach resorts—especially those in Beirut such as Riviera, Kempinski, La Plage, Saint-Georges Yacht Motor Club, La Siesta, and Mandaloun—also choose to operate year-round, especially through their restaurants.





CONCEPTS FOR ALL

To accommodate the shift in people's needs and habits, beach clubs as well as beach resorts have tried to target different market segments. Starting in 2010, these attempts have seen "ladies only" clubs and resorts open south of Beirut, such as The Palms and Bella Mare, as well as those aimed at the family market. An example of the latter is Aqua Ville, which opened in Jiyeh in 2014 and draws in Lebanese families with attractions targeted at children. Heading north, you find a different concept: beach bars that are also considered the ideal spot for water sports. There are also a growing number of clubs and resorts that are adult-only, such as Orchid Beach, which has an over 21 policy, and Mandaloun Beach Club, which also targets adults. Moreover, Eddésands, Laguava, CFlow, Janna Sur Mer, and La Siesta offer amenities for overnight stays (for more on resorts see article page 22).

However, adopting a unique concept is not enough to ensure the success and survival of a beachside operation. In this highly competitive market, attracting the largest share of customers demands the offering of discounts—particularly on entry fees. Beach clubs and resorts use these discounts as marketing tools to promote their premises on social media and to target different customer segments by offering, for example, special prices for women, children, or early birds.

Other beach clubs and resorts offer free entry, counterbalancing their profits by focusing on the food and beverage incomes that are mainly generated by young clients. A third strategy designed to draw in customers is the use of online offers, available on platforms such as Makhsoom or Gosawa.

COMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Dealing with competition for customers is not the sole challenge for beach clubs/resorts in Lebanon. Complicated construction and operational permits still constitute a barrier for owners, and, more recently, the challenge of securing subsidized loans has surfaced.

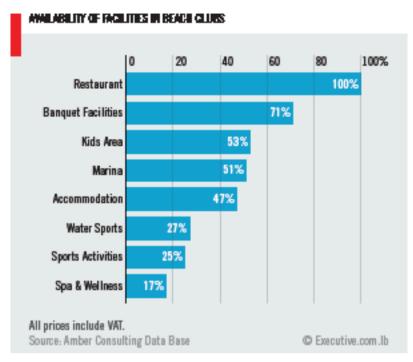
Since early 2018, financial institutions have been reluctant to grant longterm subsidized loans to the hospitality industry, as the deposit interest rate is increasing while interest rates on subsidized loans are capped by Banque du

Liban, Lebanon's central bank. In addition, limited financial encouragement from the government, such as the reduction of electricity fees, municipality taxes on rent, and taxes on profit, constitutes another financial challenge for owners. Meanwhile,



Beach clubs

Hospitality & Tourism



■ Traveling abroad for vacation has become a sought-after alternative.





IDAL, the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon, requires businesses to employ a minimum of 200 annual NSSF-registered workers in order to be considered for funding. This requirement tends to block applications from beach clubs/resorts, as their seasonal nature makes it near impossible for them to meet this target.

Meanwhile, the outdated categorization of these operations limits the ability of customers to identify the level and standards of their offerings and of their in-house facilities, such as spas, wedding venues, and food outlets.

PRICED OUT

Paying a fortune to spend a day at the beach has become less appealing for Lebanese families, who are nowadays thinking twice about spending a day on Lebanon's coast. Public beaches are not a viable alternative to private clubs, since,

for the most part, they are not maintained and managed by municipalities and lack basic beach facilities, such as sunbeds and sunshades (See article page 32 on beaches.) As such, nearby countries such as Egypt, Turkey, Greece and its islands, to name only a few, are gaining in popularity among Lebanese families.

With the extensive offers from Lebanese travel agencies, which are aggressively promoting foreign beach destinations with direct charter flights, traveling abroad for vacation has become a sought-after alternative. From affordable destinations with all-inclusive resorts to fancy islands with internationally renowned beach clubs, all demands can be met by the various and diversified packages.

Is it necessary for Lebanon's beach clubs and resorts to adapt their concepts to market trends and needs? According to those who have adopted various strategies to stand out in this highly competitive market, it is. Some of them have shifted their offerings to draw in more customers, others have used price reductions to achieve the same. As for those who decided to bunker down and wait for "market prosperity"—where are they now?

RALPH NADER is the CEO of Amber Consulting, an independent firm that offers a comprehensive range of hospitality, business strategy, and mixed-use consulting services. It assists public and private stakeholders in developing the tourism sector. Over the years, it has acquired substantial international experience in dealing with hospitality players that allowed us to understand the critical factors for a successful tourism sector.

48 _______executive-magazine.com







"Arab Student Starpack" Under the patronage of His Excellency the Prime Minister Mr. Saad Hariri, Unleashes the creativity of Arab youth in Beirut.





Under the Patronage of His Excellency, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, the Lebanese Packaging Center, LibanPack, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, (UNIDO), organized on Tuesday, June 26, an Arab StarPack award ceremony during which were announced the 28 Arab students winners.

Arab Student StarPack is the first regional packaging design competition in the Middle East and is open to university students in all Arab countries. This year, 827 students, from 13 Arab countries in addition to Lebanon, participated in the competition: Egypt, Tunisia, Kuwait, Palestine, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Yemen, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia.





The competition main objective was to promote creativity and innovation in this field. It included three categories: Visual Design Packaging, Structural Design Packaging and Save the Food Packaging category.

In her speech, Ms. Soha Atallah, Director of LibanPack, and Vice President of the World Packaging Organization WPO annouced the launching of StarPack Professional addressed to professional industrial and agricultural companies that will be competing for the Best Packaging of their current products. This professional version of StarPack will allow the companies to participate in WorldStar Professional Competition organized by WPO.



Dr. Fady Gemayel, President of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, described Arab StarPack as being the Champions meeting that brings together the industrialists and the students. The main dilemma remains in high percentage rate of migration and unemployment among the Lebanese youth. Hence, The government is requested to take further measures to prevent dumping against national products cause the Lebanese industry will provide job opportunity.

Mr. Cristiano Pasini, UNIDO Representative, highlighted that Arab StarPack 2018 competition provides students in the region with a priceless opportunity to unleash their creativity and innovation and make a positive impact on industries.

Dr. Hussein Hajj Hassan Minister of Industry confirmed that the productive sector in Lebanon mainly Industry and Agriculture are suffering a lot . He called the new government to prepare a strategic plan to uplift the industrial sector and to increase the export.



Photo Blog

Hospitality & Tourism

By Greg Demarque & Nabila Rahhal

C'EST LA (MER)DE

Lebanon's neglected public beaches

For those who cannot afford beach club or resort entry fees, public beaches are the only option to enjoy the sun and sand in Lebanon. Unfortunately, the majority of these spaces are unmanaged and unsupervised (see article page 32 on public beaches). As a result, you can see people swimming and fishing amongst floating trash. While it is certainly a horrid sight—which lessens the attractiveness of any beach day—the hidden pollution in the form of untreated sewage renders a significant portion of the sea around Lebanon unsafe to swim in. The responsibility for managing these beaches and the waste on the shore falls to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. The ministry did not respond to Ex-ECUTIVE's requests for interviews, but Jean Beiruti, the head of the syndicate of seaside resort operators, said the ministry does not have the budget to manage public beaches and has left them without supervision or maintenance. As such, it seems that those who lack the funds are destined to either swim among the trash, or take matters into their own hands by not littering and cleaning up after themselves.







Rural tourism

Hospitality & Tourism

By Kanj Hamade

IT'S ONLY NATURAL

Tourism as a tool for rural development

The launch of the national rural tourism strategy in February 2015 by then Prime Minister Tammam Salam and Minister of Tourism Michel Pharaon marked an important milestone in the ongoing efforts of local economic actors to develop alternative and sustainable forms of tourism. It constituted a clear sign of the Lebanese government's political recognition of the potential economic and social return on rural tourism.

The rural tourism strategy came as part of the political and institutional changes undertaken between 2013 and 2016 by the Ministry of Tourism. Pushed by the historically low number of tourists from the Gulf countries, the need for diversification in Lebanon's tourism offerings, and the increase in local demand for rural experiences and authenticity, the ministry, under then Minister of Tourism Pharaon, initiated a positive alteration of both practice and discourse to promote sustainable rural tourism. During that short period of time, it moved from being a public administration with a role limited to the promotion of Lebanon and the protection of the interests of five-star hotels, outbound travel agents, and illegal beach resorts, to a

public institution that was proactively concerned with the protection of the environment, the diversification of agricultural activities, the alleviation of poverty, and the creation of social cohesion in rural areas.

TRAIL BLAZERS

The importance of rural tourism and its ability to induce economic growth in rural areas relies on its capacity to bring together public institutions and local economic actors, including marginalized social groups. It embraces a wide range of activities through which foreign and domestic tourists experience the countryside's landscapes, nature, and agriculture—as well as both tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage—while leaving a positive economic, environmental, and social impact on local communities.

Local environmental activists and mountain guides were the pioneers in the promotion of rural tourism in Lebanon during the mid-1990s. However, it was only in the early 2000s that activists' efforts translated into a structured rural tourism offering through the creation of hiking trails across the Leba-



nese mountains. With the support of local communities and international donors (especially USAID), these efforts culminated in 2006 with the creation of the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT), a 430 km long hiking trail from Akkar to Hasbaya. Building on these environmental and hiking initiatives, local actors initiated the development of rural bed and breakfasts and guest houses across Lebanon. Between 2006 and 2011, rural areas witnessed a significant increase in the number of hospitality family businesses.

But it was between 2012 and 2016, when foreign tourism to Lebanon was shrinking and Lebanese policy makers began offering marketing and institutional support, that the sector witnessed its most significant boost. Increasingly, local municipalities, as well as natural reserves, became interested in offering rural tourism services. The 2012-2016 period also witnessed a diversification of activities and the creation of linkages with food (with the development of food-tourism packages), culture, as well as sports activities. More importantly, during that period, Lebanese policy makers became aware of the sector's potential.

ECONOMIC RETURNS

Rural tourism has created job opportunities and investment in municipalities that have opted for sustainable tourism strategies. Such places include Ehmej, Hadath el-Jebbeh, Tannourine, Jezzine, and Sir el-Danniyeh. Also, rural tourism is a major factor in increasing the economic value and people's positive perception of natural reserves. For example, estimates

based on research produced by the Lebanese University and development firm EDOCIT suggest there is a \$12.5 return for every dollar invested in Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve, and Shouf Biosphere generates at least \$2.5 million in direct and indirect revenues per year from tourism. It is also estimated that the Lebanese Mountain Trail offers direct employment to more than 400 people. As a matter of fact, rural as well as other forms of alternative tourism—religious tourism, cultural tourism, walking tours—offer significant economic opportunities in rural areas.

Unfortunately, political interest in rural tourism has died down with the potential return of tourists from the Gulf, and the Ministry of Tourism has gone back to business as usual. However, with the return of Gulf and potentially European tourists, there is a

■ Rural and alternative tourism offer significant economic opportunities.

significant economic opportunity for Lebanon. The Lebanese government and the yet-to-be-nominated minister of tourism should build on the Lebanon's rural tourism strategy to revisit tourism policies and work

toward the creation of synergies between the conventional and alternative tourism sectors. Such synergies would allow for a paradigm shift in the understanding of Lebanon as a tourism destination, and build toward a more sustainable tourism, respectful of Lebanon's green and blue spaces.

Kanj Hamade is an assistant professor of agricultural economics and rural development at the Lebanese University.



Lebanon celebrates the participation of two young Lebanese rising stars

in the Cannes Lions Festival







For the fourth consecutive year, Executive Magazine—country representative of the Cannes Lions Festival—celebrates the return of a young and talented Lebanese team, this year Youssef Yammine and Vera Karam from Mirum Agency, who represented Lebanon in the Cannes Lions Festival, held from June 17 to 22. Youssef and Vera attended and competed in the Young Lions Print Competition.

The competition called upon creative professionals under the age of 30 from around the world to submit a print ad for Creative Spirits, a nonprofit organization devoted to creating integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the best companies around the world.

With 38 teams competing, Vera and Youssef were challenged to develop a creative, innovative, and captivating print ad to help Creative Spirits achieve their goal of attracting candidates with intellectual and developmental disabilities to a large number of available job positions in the United States across a large variety of professions.

Youssef shared his enthusiasm with the experience, saying: "The Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity is the most inspiring creative festival. Every person in the advertising industry deserves this experience because when you come here you learn, you play, and you make connections. Personally, I'll work very hard every year to come here again and represent the agency I work for and present work that I am proud of."

Karam also expressed her appreciation. "The experience is really challenging for someone at the age of 23. I met really interesting and successful people from the industry and learned a lot from them, and I think that will help me in my career."

Mr. Yasser Akkaoui, managing director of Executive Magazine, saying, "When considering the important role that creativity plays in our economy, we realize that it is imperative to figure out ways to stimulate and nurture young creative talents. The Cannes Lions Festival will surely sharpen the skills of our young Lebanese and help them achieve their best."

Our most heartfelt thanks to all of our sponsors and partners: the International Advertising Association Lebanon Chapter, Advertising Association, Fortune Promoseven, Impact BBDO, Intermarkets Advertising, J. Walter Thompson, M&C Saatchi, Memac Ogilvy, Pimo, Young & Rubicam Lebanon, the American University of Beirut, and Air France.

Identifying, instigating, and rewarding young creative talents will always report a priority for Executive Magazine. Young talents have the power to shape the future and deserve the chance to develop and fulfill their potential. Our devotion to encouraging and nurturing artistic talent will continue to go above and beyond national efforts.

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Manufacturing

By Jeremy Arbid

Running a once famed industry

Lebanon's furniture makers get boosted



Lebanon's furniture making tradition dates back thousands of years—thanks, in large part, to the cedar tree, the country's national symbol. Historical records and religious texts often reference the high quality of Lebanese cedar wood, and its renown across the region as an important building resource and a material for luxury furniture. More recently, furniture making has been an important sub-sector of the country's economy and a driver of small business entrepreneurship, but stakeholders say this once storied industry has witnessed a decline in recent years.

Lebanon has been in an economic rut for more than seven years, with GDP annual growth rates consistently in the very low single digits, coinciding with turmoil across the Middle East and a refugee crisis stemming from the civil war in neighboring Syria. Meanwhile, this period has also seen rising unemployment and poverty rates for both Lebanese nationals and refugees, as EXECUTIVE previously reported. In such a climate, the furniture business has not escaped unscathed.

"Our assessment of the furniture sector showed that it was a very important sector for the Lebanese economy before the [economic and refugee] crisis," says Cristiano Pasini, representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Beirut. "It accounted for 8 percent of the industrial output of Lebanon, but we also noted that because of the crisis there were a large number of business closures and rising unemployment in this sector." Because of the refugee crisis and the slowdown of the Lebanese economy, UNIDO saw the need to support the furniture manufacturing industry, Pasini says. The agency designed a program and began to train and equip furniture makers last year, receiving funding from the Japanese Embassy in Lebanon, with additional support from Lebanon's Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

The collaborative effort focuses on furniture makers in north Lebanon, aiming to create more jobs, and to improve productivity and market access. The project originally scheduled 150 individuals for training, and planned to provide equipment to 8-10 micro or small- to medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). According to the project scorecard, these initial numbers were exceeded due to demand, with 285 individuals and 15 MSMEs receiving assistance. "We have been very happy to see that while our targets were based on the initial needs, we saw such demand that we could increase our targets," Pasini tells Executive. He adds that most beneficiaries were Lebanese nationals, though refugees also benefited. "There is a certain participation of Syrians reflected in the numbers. There were several training [programs] for Syrians based on a request by the Japanese Embassy, and we included Syrians also in the training program for carpentry, but the program is mainly directed at host communities."

Increasing producers access to markets is a key focus of UNIDO's support, with the domestic market the target for entrepreneurs setting up new business ventures. Even so, these young businesses will inevitably experience difficulties as they build their client list, Pasini says. "For the new furniture producers, we are trying to keep them afloat by providing new tools and keeping them competitive, but we notice that they are serving mainly the local market and, in a best-case scenario, neighboring countries," he explains. Even though the project is funded by Japan, that market is not within the reach of Lebanon's furniture makers, because they cannot compete with larger-scale producers already present in Japan, the country's ambassador to Lebanon, Matahiro Yamaguchi, tells EXECUTIVE (see interview page 58).

This was not the first MSME empowerment project undertaken by UNIDO. Agroindustry was originally a focus of the host community-support initiative, but it has also targeted, in addition to furniture, jewelry design, crafts such as embroidery, and other artisanal skills. Through its assistance programs, UNIDO has provided capacity building support to Jezzine's cutlers, Saida's soapers, and embroiderers using the *tulle-bi-telli* technique (a traditional metal thread embroidery found in parts of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe).

For these niche industries, including that of furniture making, the hope is that UNIDO interventions can help entrepreneurs upgrade their productivity and their product quality to compete in today's difficult market environment.

Is Beirut the new digital hub of the Middle Fast?

Lebanon's first UX and digital innovation conference drew international crowds and big names.

Lebanon's first user experience conference took place on May 10th-11th 2018 in the historic American University of Beirut. The exciting new UXB conference helped to put Beirut on the map as a hub of digital innovation and entrepreneurship. Digital experts from Google, IBM, Amadeus, and McKinsey drew an international crowd of 300 designers, entrepreneurs, and developers for two days of talks, workshops and networking in what some are calling the "Silicon Valley of the Middle East."

"Being part of this fantastic happening will be one of my lifetime memories."

- Emily von Eschwege, Google

The UXB conference forms part of a growing trend towards investment in digital technology and entrepreneurship in Lebanon.

When Rhéa Moufarrej, the founder of UXB, completed her Master's degree in Visual and Digital Media at the IE Business School in Spain, she hoped to return home to work in user experience, but felt the current digital industry in Lebanon didn't offer the same opportunities she saw in Europe. Undaunted, Rhéa and her business partner, sales manager for Uber Iberia, decided to organize a world-class event to bring together digital entrepreneurs and designers in Beirut, in the hopes of boosting the growing digital industry in Lebanon and attracting international experts to meet with local talent.

"Came back much happier and inspired! By far one of the most fulfilling conferences I've been to."

- Filipa José, Fjord

"We see UXB as the first of many events to foster entrepreneurship and digital innovation in Lebanon and surrounding areas," commented Moufarrej. "We're keen to partner with like-minded local organizations and international speakers to keep building the digital community in Lebanon."





About UXB: The UXB
Association has a mission to
bring together designers,
developers, digital experts and
entrepreneurs from all over the
world, who are united by a
passion for providing
extraordinary user experiences.
http://www.uxbeirut.com/



By Jeremy Arbid and Thomas Schellen

Promoting peace in the Mideast

Japan looks to help Lebanon's host communities

EXECUTIVE sat with Matahiro Yamaguchi, Japan's ambassador to Lebanon, to discuss the country's humanitarian aid to Lebanon, April's CEDRE infrastructure investment conference, and prospects for peaceful resolutions to the region's conflagrations.

The Japanese Embassy is now funding a United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)-designed project targeting job creation, productivity gains, and market access for furniture makers in the north of Lebanon. Can you tell us the motivation behind this initiative?

UNIDO made a well-designed plan, and we as [the] embassy aimed to see this project realized, because of the conditions of the host communities for refugees in Lebanon. We were attracted by a target to train host communities and include Syrian refugees. That idea was very suitable for us, [because] we not only want to help the Syrian refugees, but also [support] projects targeted at the development of host communities.

In Lebanon, one often encounters talk that host communities need to be supported before aid is given to refugees. Did you take steps to defuse such demands?

I know this claim. We always compare the situation in Jordan and Lebanon. Jordan has also received a lot of Syrian refugees, but they are hosting them where? In the Zaatari Camp, where a huge number of refugees live. This is very visible, and the UN can help systematically, and donors will see these refugees. But here in Lebanon, where are the 1.5 million refugees? We can see some unauthorized camps in the Bekaa, but these are small camps. All the refu-

gees have penetrated into society so that our approach should be different from the project in Jordan. We should think about society itself. We should provide some funds for the [humanitarian support of] refugees, but we should at the same time take care of host communities.

E Would the Lebanese furniture industry have any chance, in your view, to enter the Japanese market?

I think that, frankly speaking, this will be very difficult. One reason is that Japan is a very complicated market. We [have also] developed our own furniture industry which is very competitive. There would be a chance for a manufacturer who has very innovative design or material. For example, Swedish furniture is very popular in Japan.

Trade figures between Japan and Lebanon are driven by imports of cars and electronics to Lebanon, and in the other direction the flow is quite minimal and is mainly based on copper. Are there any trade deals that would make it possible for Lebanese goods to penetrate Japan's market in greater numbers, perhaps in agriculture?

I noticed that Lebanese agricultural products are very good, but Lebanon is far from Japan, so the cost of transportation is huge. We prefer to have a very competitive price, so we mainly import from neighboring countries. That is the reality. I was very surprised that there are more than 200 Japanese sushi parlors in Lebanon; it is so popular here to have sushi that even the supermarkets have sushi corners and sell kits to roll sushi.



Could you imagine seeing a Lebanese food corner in a Japanese supermarket?

No. But there is potential for some Lebanese products, like wine. Some wines get a Robert Parker [ranking of] 93 or 94 points, and these can sell in Japan because we are the biggest importer of foreign wines. Also, I find the best olive oil in Lebanon, and I'm so happy about that. I personally have an idea to organize some kind of Lebanese fair in Japan in cooperation with the Lebanese ambassador in Tokyo.

How is the reputation of Lebanon in Japan today?

To be honest, ordinary Japanese do not know Lebanon at all. It is such a small land in the Middle East. Usually, the Japanese think about the Middle East as a whole and have some concept of areas, such as Yemen and Syria [because of the conflicts], and the Palestinian territory, but our embassy is now fighting to correct the perception [of the Middle East as warridden and risky] by saying that Lebanon is a safe place. We have removed a travel advisory, and now we see that, even though it is still in small numbers, Japanese tourists are coming back.

We saw that just under 2,000 Japanese visitors come to Lebanon every year, but is there much of a flow of Lebanese visitors to Japan?

Of course, as we can see from the number of Lebanese applying for a visa to Japan at our embassy. This number is stable and slowly increasing.

But is the image that Lebanon is a country in a crisis region and has historic and current issues with militia organizations still a concern in the development of bilateral tourism or visits?

Yes. [Looking at the history], we established diplomatic relations with Lebanon in 1954 and have developed business relations with Lebanon since then, and before the civil war the population of Japanese in Lebanon was 1,500 people because many companies had established presences in Beirut because Lebanon was the hub of the Middle East. All representatives of Japanese companies were stationed in Beirut. It was a nice city and allowed very good access to other Arab countries. But all that is gone. After the civil war [broke out], these companies moved to Bahrain and then to Dubai. The idea that Japanese businessmen have of Beirut is that they had offices here, but after the civil war they moved. They are still remembering the civil war, and now we are trying to inform them about the new reality in Lebanon.

In the relations between the Middle
East and nations in the Western hemisphere, there is a main issue related to
Iran. How does the situation look from the
East Asian viewpoint? Is Iran a barrier for
relations with the Middle East?

We are very neutral and have very good relations with Iran, but big brother is always pushing us [in certain policy directions]. For example, we are not naming Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, like America does. They are a political party in Lebanon, and so we consider it as a political party. We are not discussing them under the aspect of activity related to arms.

So can this be interpreted as a policy that aims for peace? As a country, you have chosen the road of peace even in designing your constitution after the end of World War II.

Middle East peace is very important to us with regard to both the Palestinian issues that include Lebanon, which has received so many people of Palestinian origin, and also with regard to the peace process with Israel, which we are pushing for in our way, even as this situation is not easy, but rather very difficult.

In this context of enhancing peaceable structures in the Middle East—or specifically in Lebanon—is there interest from the Japanese business community in getting involved in infrastructure projects in Lebanon as were proposed under the CEDRE concept?

What is my concern is that the size of the [Lebanese] economy and the size of the projects is so small [by our standards]. Perhaps European firms, which are very near to this area, can more easily come here. Our engineering companies are highly developed nowadays, but the problem is that the labor cost in Ja-

pan is very high. How can we deal with such projects? [In some other cases] where we have very good and expensive technology, Japanese engineering companies will team

up with a Korean or Chinese company to build something. This is our reality: The infrastructure projects in the [CIP] list in Lebanon are not at all sophisticated.

At the CEDRE conference Japan pledged \$10 million in loans and part of the takeaway from the conference was that Lebanon's government would commit to certain reforms. Do you have a wish list for how Lebanon should change its modus operandi in terms of public finance or in order to create stability?

The conditions that they promised to meet are very, very important. As I said, we are not so interested in the infrastructure projects as they were presented in the Capital Investment Plan, but one project outside of the CIP pipeline—which is not decided yet—is that we are providing \$100 million [alongside] the World Bank in a rural road construction project. The World Bank has allocated \$200 million to this project, and they are about to start the project which was already passed in Parliament. With our contribution, the total funding for this project will be \$300 million in an infrastructure project that has a kick-start function for injecting money into the Lebanese economy. This is needed in the current situation. We, as the embassy, are trying very hard to see this project realized, and I hope that this will take place within this year. This is a very good project, and we already designed [it] with the World Bank. Thus it is different from the pledge at the CEDRE conference.

What are other things that Japan seeks to do to promote peace in the Middle

"The idea that Japanese businessmen have of Beirut is that they had offices here, but after the civil war they moved."

East as one of the core regions of global conflict that exist today?

We are not a main player in this region and have realized this. But we want to make the situation much easier for discussing peace. This is our policy. For example, in the Palestinian territories, we have an industrial park in Jericho. It is Japanese funded in cooperation with Israel and the Palestinians. This is a kind of realistic project that is now exporting products [from this industrial park] to other countries.

Old vehicles

By Vahakn KABAKIAN

Lebanon's bid toward low-carbon mobility

The case for electric and hybrid vehicles

With a global move underway to green the transport sector-in particular, to reduce the impact of privately-owned vehicles—analysts predict that the end of the age of the internal combustion engine is just down the road. The primary catalyst for this move toward greener options can be attributed to the Paris Agreement—a treaty struck among the countries of the world in a bid to save the planet from the impact of climate change, the main driver of which is anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Around 15 percent of global gas emissions are generated by the transport sector.

For Lebanon, the case is slightly more alarming as seen from the results of several studies undertaken by the environment ministry and the UNDP. For example, around 25 percent of the country's national greenhouse gas emissions emanate from the transport sector-more specifically, from land-based transport. The official number of registered vehicles in the country has surpassed 1.6 million, with 42 percent of these vehicles being older than 20 years and almost 60 percent being 15 years or older, bringing the number of outdated vehicles on Lebanon's streets to nearly 1 million. This indicates an excessively high vehicle ownership rate (with 250 cars per every 1000 people), dominated by old vehicles. In 2016, Lebanon's transport sector consumed 2.8 million liters of gasoline. The externality cost (the economic losses incurred due to air pollution, carbon emissions, congestion, and accidents) of this volume of gasoline is a staggering \$3 billion per year, or around \$2,000 per vehicle.

In addition to contributing to climate change, the transport sector in Lebanon is responsible for 93 percent of the country's carbon monoxide, 67 percent of non-methane volatile organic compounds, and 52 percent of nitrogen oxide emissions—all of which are air pollutants that have a disproportionate impact at the local level. Lebanese living around major road axes and in large cities are exposed to these pollutants on a daily basis.

Back in 2015, UNDP estimated the mobility cost in Lebanon-that is, the cost of one passenger traveling one kilometer in a passenger vehicle, including externality components of pollution, travel time, congestion, and accident costs. This study found an average (albeit conservative) mobility cost figure of 48 cents per km. It was also found that the most critical sub-indicator pointed to excessive energy consumption by the passenger transport sector (cost of fossil fuel). In fact, Lebanese consume close to 2.7 times more gasoline annually than the world average.

In an attempt to combine local benefits with global ones, a national mitigation plan for the transport sector was approved last October by the Council of Ministers. The incentive program aims to remove cars that are older than 15 years old and replace them with fuel efficient (hybrid and electric) vehicles. Replacing the 1 million older model vehicles on Lebanon's roads would result in a 14 percent reduction of the country's greenhouse gas emission by 2030 (nearly 1.1 million tons of carbon dioxide), a reduction in gasoline consumption by 466 million liters in total over a 12 year period, and less air pollution. Subsidizing these vehicles may also stimulate the market for new car purchases.

This spring, Parliament legislated the reduction or removal of customs taxes on hybrid and electric vehicles (EVs). This incentive was laid out in article 55 of the 2018 budget law. For private vehicles, customs and excise taxes are reduced by 80 percent for hybrid and 100 percent for electric vehicles, though the owner will still have to pay the registration and circulation fees (the latter is known as "mecanique"). For taxis/service vehicles, the customs and excise taxes are reduced by 90 percent for hybrid and 100 percent for EVs, in addition to a total exemption on registration and circulation fees. (See calculation table page 61).

This program does not contradict the efforts of the government to establish a public transport system. In fact, it complements the efforts underway to green the land transport sector. Both approaches contribute toward meeting Lebanon's global commitments under the Paris Agreement, as well as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13).

As global markets shift toward hybrid and electric cars, projections suggest that the upfront cost of these vehicles will become competitive on an unsubsidized basis starting in 2025 and reach parity by 2029, a trajectory that will accelerate as battery prices decline. For Lebanon to secure a smooth transition, and renew its private vehicle fleet with hybrids and

CHIS KOME AND RESISTRATION SAMPLES DOLLYSICO AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES

	PRIVATE CAR		TAXI	
VEHICLE TYPE	Hybrid	Electric	Hybrid	Electric
CIF* PRICE OF VEHICLE	\$20,822	\$20,822	\$20,822	\$20,822
Old Customs	\$7,078	\$7,078	\$7,078	\$7,078
OLD BASE PRICE†	\$27,900	\$27,900	\$27,900	\$27,900
WAT (11%)	\$3,069	\$3,069	\$3,069	\$3,069
Registration & Mecanique	\$3,097	\$3,097	\$3,097	\$3,097
OLD TOTAL PRICE	\$34,066	\$34,066	\$34,066	\$34,066
New Customs %‡	20%	0%	10%	0%
New Customs	\$1,416	zero	\$708	2010
NEW BASE PRICE;	\$22,238	\$20,822	\$21,530	\$20,822
WAT (11%)	\$2,446	\$2,290	\$2,368	\$2,290
Registration & Mecanique	\$2,468	\$2,311	zero	zero
NEW TOTAL PRICE	\$27,152	\$25,424	\$23,898	\$23,113
Savings vs Old Price	\$6,914	\$8,642	\$10,168	\$10,953
SAWINGS %	20%	25%	30%	32%
SAVINGS % ON ELECTRIC Vs HYBRID		6%		3%

This is an indicative calculation, based on a simplified case. It does not account for other factors affecting wehicle prices, or for the difference in price between hybrid and electric vehicles.*CIF = Cost, insurance & freight; †Base Price here means the dealer's price before tax, registration & mecanique; ‡Percentage of old customs charge.

Source: MoE/UNDP © 2018 Executive.com.lb

electrics, certain actions must be undertaken at the national level in the medium term. In relation to electric vehicles, the implications of the current state and quality of the power grid for the charging of these vehicles must be assessed, likewise the impact of this activity on the power sector (for instance, additional capacity requirements) and the proper alleviating measures (time-of-use pricing, for example). In parallel, it might also be useful to assess the current and required regulatory framework to further promote hybrid and electric vehicle usage, including building codes to introduce charging stations at home and in offices, where a certain percentage of parking bays must be installed with conduits to allow charging stations to be set-up.

Necessity dictates a plan for infrastructure and the provision of incentives to encourage and accommodate the growth of green mobility (including public transportation). A comprehensive plan must also be set out to prepare the electricity grid to accommodate increased demand generated by EV charging, and studies must be done to examine comparative emissions from EVs versus conventional vehicles. To be truly effective, this approach will also require the continued greening of the electricity grid, since an electric vehicle is only as clean as its power supply.

VAHAKN KABAKIAN is a climate change advisor/project manager at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lebanon

Human rights

By Francisca Ankrah

The Brussels II conference

Promises, policies, and progress

Despite the government's substantial commitments to improve the refugee situation in Lebanon, shortfalls such as continued gaps in funding and the lack of concrete commitments on resettlement, livelihood, and the accountability of funds still persist. These gaps were reflected in the outcomes of the Brussels II Conference on "Supporting the future of Syria and the region" held in April 2018. More specifically, the Lebanon Partnership Paper, issued after the conference, was disappointing in its lack of detailed focus on the aforementioned areas.

Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide, significantly straining its already weak, costly, and fragmented public sector. However, the international community has shown its preference for sharing the financial, rather than demographic, burden of the Syrian refugee crisis. According to the UNHCR, a total of \$559.3 million is currently available to implement activities under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, despite an appeal for \$2.68 billion. It is therefore apparent that financial assistance alone is insufficient to fix a crisis exacerbated by inadequate or otherwise non-existent national refugee policies, and further aggravated by an overstrained demographic reality.

Part of the responsibility for alleviating the demographic burden falls on the international community, but with limited and constantly decreasing resettlement options, other legal pathways for resettlement are necessary. If designed properly, these pathways may, for example, facilitate labor mobility

and help ease labor shortages in the EU.

Even if Lebanon is provided with sufficient financial assistance, and more refugees are resettled elsewhere, the situation will continue to deteriorate unless the Lebanese government initiates adequate policies. However, politicians and policy makers in Lebanon have demonstrated a strict unwillingness to address the crisis, unless the response focuses specifically on the repatriation of Syrian refugees. Historically, refugee return has proven to be the most sustainable solution to refugee crises, but only if refugees are returned voluntarily, in safety, and in dignity. In reality, the humanitarian and security situation in Syria continues to deteriorate, especially in former key economic areas of the country such as Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. By promoting returns at this stage, and making it ever more difficult for Syrians to seek protection outside of their country, Lebanon is effectively pushing refugees back to Syria, where they may face a renewed risk of persecution, and potentially future displacement.

Instead of proposing plans for refugee return to Syria, diverting the discussion away from Lebanon's responsibilities toward refugees, the government should focus on strengthening local policies—by for example, creating livelihood opportunities that may bring vulnerable populations, including refugees, out of poverty in the long term. However, the Lebanon Partnership Paper fails to put forward concrete commitments on whether and how access to livelihoods for Syrian refugees will be addressed. Instead, it focuses on achievements made at CEDRE, the international do-

nor conference to support Lebanon's economic development. What is more worrying is the absence of a protection-centric approach. For example, the paper fails to address access to decent working conditions, and proper safeguards against risks such as exploitation. For resettlement, return, and access to livelihoods to be possible, Syrians must also be able to obtain legal residency documents to access their rights, not only as refugees, but as individuals. The promises made in Brussels will not be beneficial unless Lebanon recognizes the weight of its commitments. This means engaging all perinent officials across all levels of government in a protection-centered approach designed to achieve real and recognizable change. Seeing the multiplicity of donor conferences and commitments without any attendant visible progress will increase frustration among the general population, especially among individuals living in poor conditions, and this may lessen faith in humanitarianism as well. There need to be stricter regulations monitoring commitments, as these are responsibilities that both Lebanon and the international community have taken on as duty-bearers toward host and refugee communities. Already halfway through the year, and with most of the country's attention focused on changes in Parliament and the government, it is difficult to predict, at least for the foreseeable future, when and how commitments made at Brussels will translate into clear, forward-looking policies.

FRANCISCA ANKRAH manages the human rights Monitoring and Advocacy Program at ALEF—Act for Human Rights.



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Refugee crisis

By Bassam Khawaja

Refugee rights not up for debate

Lebanon cannot force returns without contravening international law

In the past month, Lebanon has seen a number of troubling developments regarding the presence of Syrian refugees, with leading politicians heightening calls for the return of refugees to Syria and making unfounded accusations of an international conspiracy to settle them in Lebanon.

As countries around the world have turned their backs on refugees, Lebanon is hosting an estimated 1.5 million Syrians, by far the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. At the Friends of Syria donor conference in Brussels in April, Lebanon made important commitments to refugee rights, including on residency status, education, legal protection, and nonrefoulement-the prohibition on returning people to places where they are in danger. These could have a real and positive impact on the lives of Syrians in Lebanon—if they are carried out. But since then, things have taken a turn for the worse.

Following Brussels, Lebanon's president, speaker of parliament, and foreign minister slammed a joint EU-UN statement that mentioned a "choice to stay," saying that it suggested permanent settlement in Lebanon. But that phrase was part of a recommendation that only related to people displaced within Syria, not to refugees in Lebanon.

Just after Lebanon recommitted in Brussels to not forcibly returning refugees, politicians turned up the volume for their return. Although not calling outright for forced returns, President Michel Aoun said he would seek a refugee "solution" without the UN. He also called on the United Arab Emir-



ates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to help facilitate refugee returns. The Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, summoned the UN refugee agency's country representative and accused the agency of scaremongering after UNHCR put out a neutral statement saying it was not involved in the return of 500 refugees to Syria in April.

Most recently the caretaker Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil gave UNHCR two weeks to develop a strategy for refugee returns and alleged that it is trying to discourage returns to Syria. He then froze residency permits for UNHCR staff in Lebanon—without the government's backing—accusing UNHCR of hindering the return of Syrian refugees by "spreading fear."

Bassil claimed that by interviewing Syrians prior to their return, UNHCR was causing refugees to fear returning to Syria. But these interviews are part of UNHCR's core mandate to protect the rights of refugees and ensure they are aware of the conditions in Syria so they can make an informed choice about whether to return at this time. UNHCR cannot "encourage" or facilitate returns of refugees before it has assessed that conditions in Syria are safe.

The attacks on UNHCR are a troubling escalation of pressure on refugees. Since the beginning of the crisis, Lebanon has generally respected the international prohibition on refoulement, and has—with some exceptions—not forcibly returned refu-

gees to Syria. But while there is no evidence that recent returns of Syrians have been forced, Human Rights Watch found that returns from Arsal last year were not voluntary, but were the result of harsh living conditions, largely as a result of Lebanese policies that have restricted legal residency, work, and freedom of movement.

Refugees who want to return to Syria voluntarily are free to do so. But under international law, Lebanon cannot force or coerce refugees or asylum seekers who have a well-founded fear of persecution in Syria to return. Lebanese politicians have claimed that areas in Syria are "safe," but this ignores the volatile nature of the Syrian conflict, in which more than 900,000 people have been displaced within Syria in the first four months of 2018 alone.

And aside from generalized conflict, many refugees fear arrest, torture, and forced conscription if they return. These fears are well founded. Human Rights Watch has for years documented widespread patterns of arbitrary detention, torture, and deaths in Syrian government custody. If Lebanese politicians are so eager for refugees to return, they should stop

using UNHCR as a scapegoat and focus their efforts to addressing the real barriers to return, including Syria's unlawful detention practices and the government's use of urban planning laws to seize private property without due process or compensation.

Lebanese politicians have justified these calls for return by claiming that Syrians are hurting Lebanon's economy—arguments made largely

without evidence. The presence of Syrians has certainly put a strain on services including waste management, electricity, and education, but these services have also been bolstered with in-

ternational aid in response to the crisis. And while the war in Syria has certainly taken a toll on Lebanon's economy, there is little concrete evidence that the presence of refugees has done the same. Meanwhile, refugees contribute to Lebanon's economy, paying for rent, phone bills, and shopping in Lebanese stores—aside from the billions of dollars in humanitarian aid to Lebanon.

But despite aid to Lebanon, the international community's striking

failure to resettle meaningful numbers of refugees has contributed to the crisis here. Syrian refugee admissions to the US have dropped almost to zero. The European Union is still hiding behind the EU-Turkey deal to keep refugees out of Europe.

There is an urgent need for a factbased discussion around the issue of refugees in Lebanon. The government should keep the commitments

There is an urgent need for a fact-based discussion around the issue of refugees in Lebanon.

it made in Brussels and end attacks on the international community and baseless speculation about an international plan to settle refugees in Lebanon. Menwhile, the international community should step up both humanitarian aid and resettlement of refugees to demonstrate that Lebanon has not been abandoned to bear this burden on its own.

BASSAM KHAWAJA is the Beirut-based Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch. Follow him on Twitter @Bassam_Khawaja

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Drug policy

By Joseph el-Khoury

Let's have a serious talk about drugs



A scientific rationale for the cannabis debate in Lebanon

The cannabis debate never completely goes away in Lebanon.

This is not surprising, given that the country is a major producer and consumer of the psychoactive plant. Everyone who is anyone has an opinion on the drug, usually expressed through impactless sound bites. The discussion was reignited on June 18 by an Internal Security Forces (ISF) Facebook post reporting a "drug bust" that led to the arrest of three teenagers, accompanied by a picture showing rollups, a plastic bag with a small amount of hash, and one joint. The post drew widespread mockery online, with comments from Facebook users thanking the police for "saving" them and making them feel much "safer." Beneath the sarcasm, the inadequacies of our drugs laws were duly exposed.

RETRIBUTION OR REHAB?

This viral ISF misfire was followed by an official, theoretically binding, circular issued by Attorney General Judge Samir Hammoud on June 26—World Drugs Day—urging his colleagues to immediately refer drug

users to the Drug Addiction Committee, in accordance with article 199 of Law 376 (1998). Since the law was passed 20 years ago, judges have had the option of referring individuals arrested

for drug possession to a rehabilitation committee based in the Ministry of Justice. However, a survey released earlier this year by SKOUN, a local non-profit outpatient therapeutic center, found that a very low number of arrested drug users had been

referred. There are a number of explanations for this, stigma and ignorance being obvious ones. But for years the committee has also received no political backing, remaining chronically underfunded and understaffed.

The value of the rehabilitation offered via this committee is questionable, even to those arrested and referred to it as "addicts." The term addiction has itself lost popularity in clinical circles as it does not account for the wide variety in patterns of use and the impact on the physical and mental health of the user. Evidence from a multitude of studies worldwide suggests it is likely that the majority of those arrested for possession of cannabis, or even harder drugs, are not addicted to them and do not require intensive treatments like detoxification and residential rehabilitation. Most drug use is recreational, though some remains problematic and can lead to loss of functionality, mood disorders, and psychotic illnesses in the absence of physical dependence.

The traditional structure of rehabilitation in Lebanon focused on the tail end of heavy drug use: mostly opiate-dependent young men who had fallen by society's wayside. Some organiza-

■ Most drug use is recreational, though some remains problematic and can lead to loss of functionality.

tions, such as Oum el-Nour, did evolve, and now offer a more diverse approach, such as community programs and specialist centers for women. In 2012, the Ministry of Public Health launched its opiate substitution program, which widened Lebanon's treatment horizons,

but also widened the rift between the proponents of total abstinence and the advocates of harm reduction.

Despite an absence of reliable statistics, patterns of illegal substance abuse in Lebanon continue to evolve. New drugs have come onto the market-such as spice, salvia, and ketamine-and are often sold mixed together and laced with toxic contaminants. The use of cannabis is also on the rise, with studies revealing a wider public tolerance and increased use amongst the younger generations. The electronic dance scene has also exploded, with Beirut becoming an international destination for technofueled nights out. With this reputation came MDMA and a variety of stimulants, expanding the inventory of party drugs, which was long-dominated by cocaine.

Each country has an idiosyncratic drug ecosystem responsive to social, political, and economical factors that regulate supply and demand. In Lebanon, the establishment has realized that action needs to be taken, yet they and the public seem incapable of having a mature debate on which drug policies to adopt.

SHIFTING POLICIES

Whether you think drugs are harmless entertainment or the affliction of our generation, it is hard to find a convincing argument for putting adolescents in jails that fail to rehabilitate. Outside of Lebanon, the drug problem has been approached in a more innovative manner, with an emerging trend toward decriminalizing or legalizing some or all drugs. All policy options carry risks and have caveats. But generally, a body of evidence is building to support this liberal perspective. Portugal, the Netherlands, Uruguay, the US, and-most recently-Canada have all been more than willing to experiment with this approach.

Decriminalizing is usually the least problematic first step, as it in-



volves the state foregoing the use of incarceration for drug use. It does not require a significant shift in philosophy, as prison sentences could be replaced by fines and investment in prevention and treatment efforts.

Legalization, however, carries with it a logistical nightmare. It requires a strong state apparatus able to guarantee the sources of production and distribution of drugs. I do not believe the Lebanese government would be able to regulate a legal drug production and retail industry. For ex-

ample, calls to legalize cannabis for medical purposes—recently backed by the MPs of Baalbek-Hermel—ignore the fact that the overwhelming majority of cannabis is used

for recreational purposes in Lebanon. Exporting Lebanese cannabis for medical use would mean depriving recreational users of a cheap local supply. This might be welcome to some, but the counter effect would be an even greater reliance on criminal networks to source and sell cannabis to recreational users.

Politicians, bloggers, and advocates have too often used populist discourse to gain the support of a large section of the population, while dismissing the basics of drug economics and global experience. It is worth mentioning that the US is only now investing millions in researching the impact of cannabis on mental health, in particular psychosis.

As its stands, the takeaway message has to be that the drug conversation should continue, in a transparent and honest way. Supporting liberal laws for dealing with drug production, dealing, and use should not automatically mean support for recreational drug consumption. Cannabis is not a harmless path to achieve happi-

■ Despite an absence of reliable statistics, patterns of illegal substance abuse in Lebanon continue to evolve.

ness. In the event that it is legalized, it should be put at least on an equal footing with alcohol. Limitations on who can use it and under which circumstances should be enforced. Legal or not, substance abuse in all its forms should be discouraged, especially for those still in the developmental stage before adulthood.

JOSEPH EL-KHOURY is an assistant professor of psychiatry and an addiction specialist at the American University of Beirut. He has been involved in committees and initiatives relating to drug treatments and policies in Lebanon. He is also a co-founder of the drugs awareness website mukhadder.com

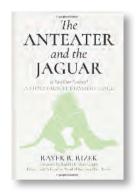
Identity

By Riad Al-Khouri

A Middle East oasis of peace

THE EXPERIENCES OF ONE MAN HELPING TO END CONFLICT

The Anteater and the Jaguar
Is this our destiny? A story from the Oasis of Peace
By Rayek Rizek
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The economy of peace in the Middle East is dwarfed by the economies of war. But at times like today, when the region is being suffocated once again by the overbearing weight of global power interests, even small stories that combine authentic experiences of real coexistence with critiques of its deficiencies can remind us of the cultural and economic potentials of such coexistence. "The Anteater and the Jaguar," which is both a personal account and a book about the politics of intercultural co-existence within the wider context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is such a story.

In its experiential dimension, the book is the personal account of author Rayek Rizek, who describes his life in the "Oasis of Peace," a mixed Jewish/ gentile settlement halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in Israel. This autobiographical aspect for me only adds to the book's credibility and to what it represents: contemporary history and a polemic. It is a polemic in which Rizek, while clearly calling for harmony, nevertheless criticizes all-Jews and others alike—as he examines the history of the Oasis of Peace and the successes and non-successes of this community, as well as the roots and effects of the conflict on his life in Nazareth, where he was raised as an Arab Christian.

In reviewing this book, I must mention at this point a personal connection: The author is my first cousin; his mother and mine were siblings in a close-knit family, which even today thrives in Nazareth and other parts of Palestine, as well as elsewhere. For me, this connection gives me every motivation to be an even fairer reviewer of "The Anteater and the Jaguar," whose title comes from an Amazonian myth involving the carcasses of the two eponymous animals found locked together after their violent encounter. As the book's subtitle implies, the question driving Rizek is whether it is the destiny of the Jews and the gentiles of modern Palestine to perish in such a pointless way.

Growing up as a middle-class Arab Christian in the state of Israel, the days of Rizek's youth and his education were good-but tinged with something negative, due largely to Zionism and its antitheses. As an adult, he headed for the Oasis of Peace, whose residents are not required to adopt a specific ideology or bent, beyond tolerance. They live with others from different creeds, however, they are sending their children to the country's only bilingual binational school (interestingly a key outreach tool as most students there are from outside the community).

As he engaged with the Oasis of Peace, Rizek describes his change in opinion from considering compromising to be a form of "giving in," to accept for others what one expects for one's self. The community, which was founded almost 60 years ago, is not described as a paradise—most individuals reportedly at some point consider leaving it—but it appears resilient, as

Rizek describes it. Along the way, he notes interesting characteristics of community residents, including the-fact that their disagreements are usually not defined nationalistically, but by more practical concerns, for example whether to privatize something. He says, however, that there always will be arguments defined by nationality—and that on some things you just must disagree.

The conclusion of the book argues that peaceful coexistence is possible in Palestine between Zionist settlers and the country's original inhabitants. Rizek is in favor of unifying Israel and Palestine, along with Jordan. I agree: A democratic confederal state would be ideal. In any case, the book's intellectual basis—which the author does not develop extensively—is that the real enemy is not a local Jew or a Muslim or other, but that all are victims: of imperialism, globalization run amok, or predatory capitalism. As the Americans are about to impose the Deal of the Century (in President Trump's words) on Palestine, we should be wary of ham-fisted hegemonizing. In that regard, Rizek tells the story of my father who, then working at the United Nations headquarters in New York and technically made stateless after the emergence of Israel in 1948, was offered an American citizenship, which he refused, responding "Do you want me to exchange Palestine for a piece of paper?"

RIAD AL-KHOURI is the Middle East director of GeoEconomica GmbH. He was assisted in this book review by Emily Silcock.

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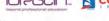






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Education plan

By Thomas Schellen and Samir Sleem

New infrastructure for education and research

Lebanese academia progresses on path of collaboration

To say that infrastructure is a hot topic in Lebanon is quite the understatement. As infrastructure deficiencies loom large and many new initiatives to implement necessary projects are, realistically, still months or even years away, it is good news that an oft-overlooked need for an academic research and communication network is moving gradually toward fulfillment—with five academic institutions recently reaching an agreement on the creation of a Lebanese academic Lebanese research infrastructure.

The five universities—the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Beirut Arab University (BAU), the Lebanese American University

(LAU), Holy Spirit University Kaslik (USEK), and the University of Saint Joseph (USJ)—in May signed a Technology Cooperation Agreement for Research and Education, dubbed TechCARE, taking a significant step on a rather complex journey toward the creation of a national research and education network (NREN). NRENs are information and communications technology infrastructure networks that have already been deployed in many countries-including innovation-minded countries in the Middle East-and that power academic collaborations at a national and global level.

Infrastructure is an existential economic good that is usually in dire

undersupply. It is expensive to create and tends to degrade quickly where it is most needed and thus used most intensely. Infrastructural projects often generate huge returns to both society and the economy but, in order to be self-sustaining in the short or medium term, typically require a lot of careful planning and complex financing arrangements. Moreover, some of the important tech infrastructure needs of a knowledge economy are far less obvious than an overburdened highway, an absence of urban parks, or an underpowered electricity grid.

COMING TOGETHER

The idea of developing an infra-



70

structure for academic collaboration infrastructure is compelling for Lebanon, which has a reputation as a small country where the quality and density of higher education providers are high in relation to its regional peers. Recent surveys by the World Economic Forum-which ranked Lebanon overall 105th out of 137 countries in the 2017/18 Global Competitiveness Report (GCR)-show Lebanon ranking in the global top 20 for quality of education in several measured categories, and for quality of management schools. The GCR also shows Lebanon to be punching above its weight in terms of national tertiary education enrollment rate.

A noted source of academic rankings, the QS World University Rankings includes six Lebanese institutions in its just-published 2019 report of the 1,000 top universities, allotting the country as many top entries as some much larger countries in the region (such as Egypt and Iran) and more than, for instance, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, or Oman. The QS 2019 report moreover ranked the American University of Beirut (AUB) 237th globally, and the third best university in the Arab world, after two Saudi institutions.

These educational accolades, however, do not mean that Lebanon's academic landscape has historically enjoyed harmony between its almost 40 licensed institutions of higher education. Competing communal and political interests have reportedly interfered with educational collaborations time and again, as have academic jealousies between and even within the various ivory towers. Joint initiatives for the advancement of research and education have been uncommon in the Lebanese context, as have assessments of the-direct or indirecteconomic potential that could result from national academic networking on levels involving more than two or three collaborating institutions.

To anyone who is familiar with

the structure and dynamics of academic research in Lebanon, it is unsurprising that AUB was one of the five initial signatories to the NREN plan. Equally unsurprisingly-although this university with about 9,000 students as of April 2018 is neither the country's largest nor its fastest growing tertiary education provider—AUB can be identified as a main force behind the successful initiation of the agreement. The driver of the initiative at AUB over the last few years has been the university's chief information officer, Yousif Asfour, who sat down with Executive to speak about the NREN initiative.

The idea of an NREN is to facilitate interconnections for education and research so that stakeholders can collaborate, and share data, information, and services. Sounds familiar? It should, because this is fundamen-

tally the concept behind the internet. As a matter of fact, as Asfour emphasizes, at the dawn of the digital era, the infrastructure of

the internet resembled an academic NREN that had been set free in the commercial wild via the information access and communication protocols of the world-wide web.

According to Asfour, the process of building a 21st century NREN for the interaction of academic institutions usually begins with the development of a high-speed, reliable, cost-effective network that can be used by universities and research institutions. After hardware has been installed, bandwidth acquired, and a network established, services are built into this existing framework. Universities then start collaborating and using these services to facilitate their research and their cooperation with each other. However, "cost-effective" in this case does not mean cheap. This traditional route, constructing a high-powered network as the base of sustained collaboration, requires massive upfront investments.

MOVING FORWARD

In Lebanon, this path to an NREN proved impractical. "Because of the politics and because of the high cost of the network, building an NREN was virtually impossible," Asfour says. "[But] if you can't build a network to build the service and encourage collaboration, and if the whole point of an NREN is to collaborate, why don't we do it backwards?"

"Backwards" meant reversing the process, so that universities would start by collaborating to interlink their existing networks and then develop more and more joint services on a step-by-step basis, which would eventually lead to the creation of a powerful NREN. In terms of past

■ The idea of an NREN is to facilitate interconnections for education and research so that stakeholders can collaborate, and share data, information, and services.

university politics, the process of developing a Lebanese NREN, which had first been proposed several years prior, has apparently also hurdled some barriers, which Asfour identified as "administrative," declining to specify further.

According to Asfour, 11 Lebanese universities had originally joined in the first discussions over establishing an entity that would operate the NREN. The discussions resulted in a call for the formation of an organization, which was to be called LEARN. However, this initiative did not proceed due to administrative reasons. Instead, years later, the TechCARE agreement was signed in May by only five (AUB, BAU, LAU, USJ, and USEK) of the 11 universities originally engaged in the project.

Asfour noted that the remaining

Education plan

six partners from the original discussions—including the Lebanese University, the country's largest and only public university, and the public sector National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS)—are expected to join the new agreement after some administrative barriers are cleared in the near future.

What characterizes TechCARE is the equality of its institutional stakeholders. "The agreement sets the framework for defining, developing, and funding different services in a very democratic manner. All members have an equal say. Decisions like the entry of new members is by majority, and also decisions concerning the development of services are [made] democratically," explains Asfour.

The services development road is where Asfour sees potential for university research and for members of academia in Lebanon. He cites as an example the case of EDUROAM, which provides researchers, university teachers, and students easy and secure network access when visiting an institution other than their own. As an international network that connects academics and students with resources on the basis of their university ID and registration in their university's IT network, the development of this service in Lebanon since 2015 has been both low cost and very successful, Asfour says. Other network offerings could follow and be deployed in Lebanon in collaboration with large research networks outside of Lebanon, such as the GÉ-ANT meta-network of NRENs based in Europe or the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN). In such a manner, TechCARE could result in the creation of seven or eight other new services within 12 months, Asfour estimates optimistically.

In terms of bandwidth, the network connectivity between different universities will be approximately 300-800 megabits per second (Mbps), which might seem high but is in fact relatively low in the research world. In this realm of large data transfers, gigabits per second, or 1000 Mbps, are the present measure, Asfour explains. "For research you typically need 10 Gbps. However, if you're doing astrophysics or genomics, we're talking 100 Gbps."

Lebanon will need to grow its nascent NREN before it can reach a point where contributions by Lebanon-

based researchers in fields such as astrophysics or genomics will be viable. But local minds have the potential to add new insights to all sorts of disciplines, if the adequate data

networks and IT environments are put in place. "I think the talent is there but the ecosystem isn't. Putting an NREN in place helps the ecosystem to enable and expose that talent and eventually get there. So if you were to say, 'We don't have astrophysics, let's not do this,' we'll never get there," Asfour says.

A FORCE MULTIPLIER

But why does it all matter? Well, in most cases, if not all, development and advancement come from research and collaboration. And that is what is most needed in Lebanon and across the region. An NREN, or at least a collaboration agreement, would undoubtedly facilitate and encourage both research and cooperation. It would benefit Lebanon and give it a better international standing, academically. It would also encourage foreign researchers to collaborate with local ones and would definitely cut the costs of research.

While examining the importance of NRENs, another well-debated question comes to mind: What if an academic institution affiliated with a political power wanted to join the NREN? And what if the concerned political party did not have good relations with a country that AUB

or another NREN member had to comply with? While Asfour acknowledges that compliance is an issue, he says TechCARE would deal case-bycase with questions such as a foreign stakeholder's objection to a local university on grounds of political or religious affiliation. He notes repeatedly that decisions in the NREN will be made democratically and insists that

TechCARE would deal caseby-case with questions such as a foreign stakeholder's objection to a local university on grounds of political or religious affiliation.

TechCARE will be inclusive, and is not to be misunderstood as an initiative by just one university—even the country's best reputed one.

Last but not least, when asked about the economic output, Asfour describes the NREN as a force multiplier. "AUB certainly has an impact on the Lebanese GDP. Getting five universities together to collaborate is more than five times the impact of five universities." He also notes that Lebanon has been able to build an NREN without huge cost, and emphasizes that the network, without its facilitators focusing on financial gain, is designed to help Lebanon's academic community cut costs, collaborate, and move forward.

At its present level of development, Lebanon's NRENs remains a long way from perfection, but it has great potential to enhance Lebanon's academic research standing in the region, and hopefully the world; help the lucky students of linked universities put their talents to greater use; and contribute to the economy in immeasurable and measurable ways.

This article was written as a collaboration between Thomas Schellen and Samir Sleem, an undergraduate student at AUB's Olayan School of Business, under the Executive summer internship program for business journalism.

You see a family recreating art.



At Fidus, we see a USD 57 million Van Gogh masterpiece.



Fundraising

By Natasha Schellen

Like, share, donate

Social media for social good

Social media giant Facebook has had its fair share of public relations battles and reputation misadventures in recent months, from fake news to the illicit mining—or, at least, immoral exploitation—of customer data. One bit of positive branding, however, has recently emerged, with the news that users—including corporations and celebrities, with their huge followings—will now have the opportunity to provide tangible support to civil society campaigns via the platform.

On June 5, banking on the good image that comes from promoting charity work, Facebook launched new fundraising options on its platform through the Facebook pages of brands and celebrities, as well as nonprofits. Public personalities now have the opportunity to create fundraising campaigns for charities of their choice, and thus to use their sizable social media followings for the greater good. Facebook also grants these campaigners the right to select up to three of their friends to be their co-campaigners.

CONTRIBUTE WITH A CLICK

This is not Facebook's first foray into the nonprofit sector. In autumn of 2017, the company introduced a new feature for registered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofits in 16 European countries: the donate button, a tool that had already been tested in the United States market since 2015.

Although currently only registered and verified NGOs in these 17 countries are able to take advantage of the donate button, it has the potential to give all 2.2 billion monthly active Facebook users—according to the company's most recent statistics from

the end of Q1 2018—a quick and easy way to donate to their charity of choice, without ever having to leave the social media platform. Users are also encouraged to set up a donation campaign on behalf of a verified NGO via a message from Facebook two weeks prior to their birthday. They then can, if they wish, set up a campaign and share a post with their friends with their

fundraising target.

What is the relevance of all this to Lebanon? First of all, Lebanon has a highly active and significant civil society presence. The country has

707 NGOs listed in the Arab NGO Directory, an index of civil society organizations operating in the Arab World—more than any other Arab country, bar Tunisia. Daleel Madani, a Lebanese civil society network, had 1617 registered organizations in its directory as of June 25, and with all of these organizations competing for funding, NGOs need the right tools to reach a broader pool of possible donors.

Facebook, meanwhile, is nearly ubiquitous in the country, with over 90 percent of the Lebanese population using the internet and a whopping 77 percent of the adult Lebanese population using Facebook in 2017, according to a recent study on media use in the Middle East published by Northwestern University in Qatar.

Online fundraising is a huge potential revenue stream that remains largely untapped in Lebanon, and nowhere is this more evident than in the use of social media. Social media management is now a core function of most businesses, as well as nonprofits, that are interested in engaging with the public.

In the Middle East, social media has been an accelerator for everything, from political uprisings to viral memes. But it has also played a key role in recent fundraising efforts, as evidenced by the enormous amount of money raised in a short period of time for victims of violence in Gaza following the relocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem in mid-

Online fundraising is a huge potential revenue stream that remains largely untapped in Lebanon.

May. The Gaza Emergency Appeal on Facebook spread rapidly across social media, and had raised more than \$1.72 million at the time of writing.

While Facebook and other social media platforms certainly lend themselves most effectively to massive appeals for trending causes, they can also benefit a wide spectrum of nonprofit campaigns. Fundraising is a constant uphill battle for NGOs; too often they are forced to sacrifice their independence to gain the sponsorship of large corporations under the guise of corporate social responsibility initiatives—often nothing but thinly camouflaged marketing campaigns. It is time for civil society organizations to harness the power of social networking to try and erase this co-dependency trap and raise money directly. Now all we need is for that donate button to be launched in Lebanon.

NATASCHA SCHELLEN is a master's student at the Bonn-Rhine-Sieg University of Applied Science in Germany who just wrote her thesis on the topic of online fundraising and NGOs.



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"A business that makes nothing but money is a poor business." — Henry Ford

HOW TO EARN YOUR ANGEL WINGS

12 TIPS TO INVESTING IN STARTUPS

Words by Olga Habre



ave some cash lying around? Want to be an investor? Tread carefully. Startups are notorious for their high failure rates and so are, by default, a high risk, high return investment. For those who have flirted with the idea of investing in a startup, we've consolidated tips and best practices from experts to mitigate the risk of losing your hard-earned cash. If you're really itching to invest, do so as wisely as possible.

1 BE CERTAIN

If you're not completely sure you're willing to risk your investment, then maybe don't invest in a startup at all. There are plenty of other ways to use your money to make more money, including stocks in larger companies that will perhaps bring in less revenue, but with a significantly smaller risk.

2 SET A BUDGET

If you've made the decision that you're willing to take the risk, decide exactly how much you are willing to gamble. Give yourself a strict budget and stick to it. Usually that means a single digit percentage, or perhaps as much as 10 percent, of your assets. Depending on wealth, some thrill seekers may venture in with more, but the bottom line is: You have to be ready to lose it all.

3 DIVERSIFY YOUR INVESTMENTS

Plenty of startups go under and take investments with them. Investing in a single startup is quite risky. By diversifying and investing in different companies, you spread the risk. So even if only one or two of them succeed, you'll still likely make a profit.

76 _______executive-magazine.com

8

BEWARE OF ADVERSE SELECTION

If you're a new investor and are being approached about investing in a startup, be aware that sometimes investment opportunities come up when the startup has been rejected by larger, more prominent investors.

4

PACE YOURSELF

It can also be helpful to diversify over time. For example, some people choose to invest in one or two startups a year for a few years. Depending on your budget, you could choose one startup each year that you think is most likely to succeed.

5

BE PATIENT

If you happen to invest in a startup that actually succeeds, it will still take a very long time for the business to become profitable. Plan accordingly. It's not likely you'll see any returns before at least five to seven years, and sometimes longer. Whatever you do, don't harass the startup with money issues. They already have enough pressure to deal with, and the majority are already very conscious that this is not their money.

6

NO FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO)

It's really important to be well informed about a startup before investing in it, and if you don't have the time to do solid research, it's better to pass. You may miss an opportunity by taking too much time to decide, but it's probably better to miss out than choosing a really bad investment because you had FOMO and rushed into a decision.

> , | |-

INVEST WHERE THE EXPERTS ARE

A young investor may not know where to invest so it might be a good idea to look around and see what the experts are doing. If you see seasoned investors interested in a company chances are it's a good opportunity. However, beware, as you need to check their reasoning. For example, are they only investing because it's a friend or family member's business? Or perhaps, they've just injected more capital into a startup that's starting to fail, trying to revive it.

O JOIN A NETWORK

Angel networks can be a great way to invest while mitigating risk. The groups pool capital and do solid research and valuation, advise the startups before voting to choose what startups to fund. This is a great way to find the fittest startups and safely go into funding with lesser risk.

10

ASK THE EXPERTS

Before investing, talk to an expert in the field of the startup to get their take. If it's a tech company, talk to a techie that knows the details of the business and ask if they see added value in the startup's mission. A finance person can help with the investment part but it's helpful to consult with someone who very specifically understands the technical aspects of the startup's work.

11

LOOK AT THE TEAM

Investing in the right team can be as important as in the right idea. Factors like how well the co-founders get along, their motivation, how well distributed the work is as well as their knowledge of their market are all vital to their company.

12

INVEST IN THE RIGHT IDEAS

Look at the work of the startup and ask yourself what it's adding to the community. The needs of each market and culture are different but socially impactful startups that address those needs are not only a good financial investment but a long-term investment into that society. It's responsible to not just think about making a profit, but really investing in the future.

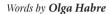
Executive Life will not be held accountable for any investments gone awry.



"A business that makes nothing but money is a poor business." — Henry Ford

BEAUTY, INSIDE OUT

LUSH ETHICAL PRODUCTS AND PROJECTS, IN LEBANON AND BEYOND





ave you ever tried solid shampoo? You may not have previously considered this alternative, but it works as efficiently as the bottled variety and has a reduced environmental impact—if you could get your hands on it, you might just give it a try. The idea of giving consumers ethical options to choose from, and educating them on the advantages of these products, is at the core of Lush's business strategy.

As well as formulating, manufacturing, and retailing a range of skin care products and cosmetics, the UK-based brand supports grassroots projects around the world and sources its raw materials as ethically as possible from various countries, including Lebanon. In May, Rowena Bird, one of the co-founders of Lush Global, visited Lebanon to check in with the company's local stakeholders.

The beauty industry is often taken to task for its ethical blind spots, but some companies are working to change this perception. All Lush products—such as the solid shampoo bars, which require no packaging and last for months—are 100 percent vegetarian, 74 percent vegan, 65 percent self-preserving, and 60 percent free of wasteful packaging, with no animal testing done on any product or ingredient. The brand is constantly innovating to formulate effective products that respect nature and people.

Lush, Bird tells Executive Life, is "good for the skin, soil, and community." She explains: "We are a cosmetics company, but we are a campaigning company too. There are a lot of issues we care about, and that translates through to our product innovation. Making small changes in your routine can have a massive impact on the environment." Educating customers to allow them to make informed decisions is an essential part of the business, she says.

The brand just opened its fourth boutique in Lebanon, at ABC Verdun. This latest store joins other Lush locations in ABC Ashrafieh, ABC Dbayeh, and Beirut Souks. In addition to their retail presence, Lush is now beginning to source raw ingredients for their internationally-sold products from Lebanon. Olive trees in the Bekaa are one of the company's sources of olive oil (other sources include Palestine). Likewise, plans are in place to source neroli oil, a pricey essential oil extracted from orange

78 ________executive-magazine.com

blossoms, from Bioland in Batroun. Securing this product will take years, Bird says, but she puts emphasis on the importance of long-term thinking.

Lebanon is perhaps unusual in that it is both a source of Lush ingredients and a market for Lush products. "We sell fresh cosmetics, but if you don't have enough buyers, you can't keep them fresh so they get wasted," Bird says. "Therefore, we only have stores in countries where we can have a turnover and we're not wasting." Many less wealthy potential producing countries are thus unable to support retail outlets.

Lush also aims to support other organizations in their ethical endeavors. The American University of Beirut's Nature Conservation Center was shortlisted this year for the annual global Lush Spring Prize for their multidisciplinary projects.

The prize is part of the Sustainable Lush Fund—an initiative launched 10 years ago that annually allocates 2 percent of the company's income to invest in and experiment with suppliers around the world. So far 20 million pounds (roughly \$26 million dollars) has been invested in 36 countries, mostly as small donations to grassroots projects. The fund is more of a partnership than a donation, adhering to the "teach a man to fish" mentality to avoid dependency.

Rather than buy land and develop it themselves, Lush establishes relationships with locals who know the land and climate. The idea is to help growers produce food and value-added products for the domestic market, while also selling a portion of their product to Lush and other international buyers. "We are spending a little more money but spreading the risk and helping a community," Bird explains, noting that this system also affords Lush opportunities to learn from other cultures and other people's expertise. "The process educates us and gives us a window into understanding where our markets are, where the resources are coming from, and it connects us with people doing amazing things," she says.

The company's efforts around the world are making a real impact. In Japan, Lush is helping farmers in Fukushima—which was affected by a 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and resulting nuclear disaster—by buying rapeseed oil from the area for their products. Rapeseed is thought to have a cleansing effect on soil, the plants soaking up toxins without affecting the product though this has not been conclusively proved. Thus, Fukushima farmers, who



were left struggling with contaminated soil are now able to earn an income by growing a plant that is also, theoretically, purifying their land.

In Lebanon, Lush is supporting two Lebanese NGOs in their environmental projects. The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) is creating a butterfly sanctuary in West Bekaa to preserve the creatures and educate the public about them, as well as aiming to stimulate the local economy by creating jobs. Meanwhile, the NGO SOILS is developing a beekeeping project dubbed *Afeer* (Beehive) in Saydoun, near Jezzine, to provide multifaceted information about bees and to preserve bees and their environment.

Lush plans to soon change the name of its fund to steer away from the word "sustainable" in favor of "regenerative." Being sustainable, the rationalization goes, is not enough, and regeneration is increasingly urgent. "We want to make a difference, but it also makes business sense, because we use ingredients that are a finite resource, so we want to support and invest in projects that are putting more into the earth," Bird says.

But Bird is realistic. She admits that, as a business, Lush has to make a profit in order to sustain itself and its network of suppliers. After 23 years in the sector, with over 900 stores in 49 countries, the company is evolving. They are now taking into account additional factors, such as digital ethics for their e-commerce platforms, and embarking on new initiatives, like creating easy recycling channels for clients to bring back used packages in exchange for a reward.

Bird is adamant that ethics and business absolutely can and should work together. She also believes working ethically does not have to make things more difficult. "People say, 'You are making it harder for yourself,' but we don't think about the other ways. If you just think about the ethics then it doesn't matter. That's our angle; that's where our passion is."

Company Bulletin

- Libano-Suisse an innovator in the domain of insurance, launched its newest service, Perpetual Health Plus, at Beirut's Four Seasons Hotel on May 21, attended by various stakeholders.
- Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri honored **LGB BANK** Vice Chairman and CEO Samer Itani for his contribution to Lebanon's economic development, at an iftar at the Four Seasons on May 31.
- To celebrate its 40th anniversary, **CMA CGM Group** has created a powerful and dynamic logo reflecting the group's history and values, and launched a program of worldwide initiatives for 2018.
- Boecker held a conference on May 22 at Le Royal Hotel—Dbayeh on "Development of Public Health Services in Municipalities," in the presence of a number of community leaders from across the country.
- Three employees from Bentley Emirates and Bentley Johannesburg were the first to win **Bentley Motors'** prestigious Silver Award for outstanding customer service skills.
- The **Summer Misk Festival's** fifth edition, June 22–28, will host Guy Manoukian—who will perform with Egyptian superstar, Abu—as well as Grammy award-winning band Clean Bandit.
- Clemenceau Medical Center was honored for "Excellence in Customer Service" and "Best Use of Technology in Medical Tourism" by the International Medical Travel Journal on May 23 in Athens, at the IMTJ Medical Travel Summit.
- With its striking appearance, agile handling, and daring design

- cues, the first **INFINITI QX30** is set to create a new generation of explorers on Lebanese roads.
- From June 14-17, **Art Basel**'s Swiss edition featured more than 4,000 artists. As a long standing partner of the shows, **BMW** offered VIP shuttle service and invited visitors to the BMW Reception and the BMW Art Journey Talk.
- Gargour Asia sal, the exclusive agent for Foton in Lebanon, was recently awarded a tender by the Council for Development and Reconstruction to provide a total of 97 new Foton trucks to Lebanese municipalities.
- **UNICEF** is calling on all Lebanese stakeholders to advocate for positive disciplinary measures, free of violence, as part of the **#EndViolence** campaign.
- As a component of its **Customer Centricity** procedure, **CMA CGM Group** has the pleasure of reporting the commercialization of an associated holders offer: TRAXENS by CMA CGM.
- The Arab Printing Press marked half a century of innovation in the world of printing at an event held on June 20 that showcased the history of printing and developments that will revolutionize the industry.
- It is with infinite sadness that the **CMA CGM Group** announces the death of **Mr. Jacques R. Saade**, founding president of the group, on June 24, at the age of 81.
- The presentation of the new **BMW 8 Series Coupe** adds a brand new chapter to the Bavarian premium carmaker's long history of sensational sports cars—kickstarting its offensive in the luxury segment.

- During a press conference held at Le Gray Hotel on June 5, Capital Banking Solutions (CBS) and Berytech Fund II announced a \$5 million equity investment of the latter in CBS's capital.
- Thirty-four Lebanese organizations are participating in **Lebanese Wine Day 2018,** to be held in Zurich on June 11 and in Geneva on June 14, sponsored by the **Ministry of Agriculture** and overseen by **Eventions**.
- Under the support of First Lady
 Mrs. Nadia Aoun, art admirers in
 Lebanon were invited to view Zad
 Moultaka's Šamaš, exhibited at Sursock Museum following its presentation at the 2017 Venice Biennale,,
 before it tours elsewhere.
- We are glad to report the launch of the **Arab Microfinance Innovation Prize** in June 2018: Calling trailblazers to present their plans to make the field of microfinance more efficient by lessening costs and better serving customers. More information is available at www.amfip.org.
- During the mid-year, visitors at the **Beau-Rivage Geneva** will taste "a thousand flowers" when experiencing the hotel's natural honey, which gourmet expert **Dominique Gauthier** infuses into dishes served at **Le Chat-Botté** for a nutritious Michelin-featured dining experience.
- Beirut Design Week, the yearly celebration started by MENA Design Research Center and devoted to all types of design and architecture, will grace the capital for the seventh time, under the title "Design and the City."
- Nutritionists from across
 Lebanon were gathered by **Nestlé Middle East** in Beirut for a scientific

30 ______executive-magazine.com

meeting focusing on how to provide information on all basic ingredients for packaged food.

- touch, run by Zain Group, held its yearly iftar dinner to pay tribute to the media, the Ministry of Telecommunications, touch merchants, and touch personnel, in the presence of Minister of Telecommunications Jamal Jarrah.
- A.N. Boukather Motorcycles composed the first phase of the Enduro Cup at Zaarour, only for KTM riders, with the help of TOTAL, Zaarour Club, Commercial Insurance, and Sky World.
- UNIFIL Sector West Commander Brigadier General Paolo Fabbri commended the objectives of the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace and its endeavors to globally ingrain a culture of peace and peace-building.
- Scuderia Lebanon sal, the official shipper of Ferrari in Lebanon, unveiled the most recent model from the Ferrari stable, the Ferrari Portofino, which provides an unparalleled level of driving delight and on-board comfort.
- Coinciding with World Environment Day on June 5, Ford Motor Company announced the seventeenth version of its Conservation and Environmental Grants program, with \$105,000 available to MENA entries.
- During a ceremony at the **Beirut Art Film Festival** (BAFF) offices, the
 BAFF 2018 honors for the Best Visual Contest were awarded to Nivine
 Zaheredine (Modern University for
 Business and Science) and Mazen
 Asmar (Lebanese University).
- We are happy to announce the arrival of the book **Those Who Inspire LEBANON**, which depicts 59

moving tales from Lebanese of all kinds of different backgrounds.

- Hyundai Motor has provided 530 vehicles to help with the streamlined running of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia. The vehicle handover event was held on May 31 at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium, celebrating the enduring cooperation between Hyundai and FIFA.
- The Garden Show and Spring Festival, Beirut's main outdoor spring occasion, came to an end on June 2 after four days at Beirut's Hippodrome. Displaying an immense variety of blossoms, plants, cultivating gear, patio furniture and handiworks, the 15th edition attracted 20,000 guests.
- The BLOM Lebanon Purchasing Managers' Index recorded 46.4 in May 2018, compared with 46.2 in April 2018. Lebanese private sector businesses stayed curbed in May with surveyed organizations noting security issues, cash-flow problems, and the political situation as negatively affecting interest.
- Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. in collaboration with Red Bull debuted "See the Bigger Picture" an extreme sports video showing Brazilian skateboarder Pedro Barros skating through a structure modeled after some of the world's most famous settings.
- ABC Verdun for the month of Ramadan enhanced its premises with a superb decorative scheme that enchanted and gave joy to customers and guests.
- Two weeks after its official launch in Lebanon, the **Huawei P20 Pro**, with its 40 MP Leica triple camera, has been drawing the attention of Lebanese consumers and positioning itself as a must have device.

- The **Union Vinicole du Liban** arranges yearly events to advance the best Lebanese wines abroad; this year's gathering was in Amsterdam, where 19 Lebanese wineries displayed their wines to more than 200 individuals, including local press and experts in the hotel trade and distribution.
- HMD Global, the home of Nokia telephones, presents the Nokia 3.1, Nokia 2.1 and Nokia 5.1, offering secure and up-to-date Android OS with Android One and Android Go, and access to the most recent Google facilities.
- Over 1,500 pioneers and specialists from government, business, and civil society are teaming up to ameliorate lives with improved data. The **United Nations World Data**Forum has propelled the program and enrollment for its 2018 Forum, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on October 22-24.
- **OLX**, the main classifieds platform in Lebanon, has launched the new "Phone Verification" option, an extra measure to guarantee safe trade on the platform and to limit illegal use.
- ABC sal is pleased to report that its Christmas enhancement in the area of visual merchandising has been granted at the Retail Design Expo, held in June at London's Olympia.
- Grand Hills, a Luxury Collection Hotel and Spa, reported that Mr. Adolph Spiro has been designated as the new hotel manager, after holding the position of director of finance for one and a half years.
- Ferial Youakim, renowned image consultant, marked the launch of her latest book "Past Beauty Former Refugee Looking for Happi-

Company Bulletin

ness," at Virgin Megastore, before a large group of media delegates and social figures. Proceeds will go toward the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

- The all-new 2018 Ford Expedition has earned the US government's crash test rating of five stars from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, making this full-size SUV a pioneer in security.
- For World Environment Day and World Oceans Day, held June 6 and 8 respectively, the **Believe in Lebanon** NGO, with founder **Colette Haddad**, launched two art exhibitions in collaboration with the **United Nations Information Center in Beirut, ATCL Club**, and **Octopus Team**.
- At its fourth **Regional Thoracic Medicine Forum**, recently held in the United Arab Emirates, **Boehringer Ingelheim**, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical organizations, united more than 150 of the region's best pulmonologists to share insights into advancements in respiratory care.
- After eight seasons, shot in 20 nations with more than 500 successful Lebanese individuals from around the world, "Asmaa Min Al Tarikh," featuring the Lebanese diaspora, dispatches its incredible interpersonal networking platform.
- Huawei today declared that it has expanded its brand value by 22 percent in the previous year and now positions 48th in the Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands, as indicated by the most recent **BrandZTM** report.
- Middle East Markets declared
 Boecker the winner of The Best
 Food Safety Training Provider in the
 Middle East for 2018.

- Clients, devotees, and the general public participated in **Porsche Center Lebanon's** "70 years of Porsche" festivities on June 9-10. Shaping part of the primary Sports Car Together Day worldwide calendar of events, the "Great Meets New" feature was held at **Zaitunay Bay.**
- Under the support of **Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri** and the help of **Beirut Municipality** and Solidere, In Action Events, Lebanon's multicultural event planning company, is propelling Summer in Action, from June 22 24 at **Water-front Beirut**.
- IFP (International Fairs and Promotions) facilitated an iftar at Enab, in the presence of stakeholders and the media, to dispatch the 23rd version of Project Lebanon, the International Trade Exhibition for Construction Materials and Equipment for Lebanon and the Middle East.
- The Arab Financial Inclusion Innovation Prize is currently open for applications. Prizes of up to \$50,000 will be granted to top pioneers who have a vision to diminish the expenses and expand the effort of budgetary administrations in the Arab world. For more details, visit www.afiip.org.
- St. Joseph's College of Sisters of Saints-Cœurs Sioufi held the grand opening of its new building on June 8.
- The Alzheimer's Association in Lebanon opened its Day Care Centers in Dekwaneh and Ashrafieh, where individuals in the early and middle stages of Alzheimer's can take part in exercises.

- SAMA, the exclusive distributor of BelN channels in Lebanon, which will broadcast the 2018 FIFA World Cup, celebrated before the kickoff of the matches with a supper catered by ICE Events at the Phoenicia Hotel on June 8
- **Pikasso** reported that it has entered the Ivory Coast showcase under the name of Pikasso Côte d'Ivoire sarl.
- With its one of a kind kitchen sinks range, **GROHE** now sets new guidelines, making each utilization of the sink less of a chore—the perfect amenity in present day kitchens
- In the true spirit of Ramadan, **HUAWEI Consumer Business Group** offered its thanks to its media partners during an iftar, according to the brand's regional **#SayShukran** campaign.
- Major worldwide law firm **Bonel- liErede** declared today the incorporation of regional boutique law firm **Tribonian Law Advisors**, situated in the UAE and working in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia through a global partnership.
- Around 14,000 Lebanese partook in **Sandouk El Dounia**, held under the patronage of Lebanese MP **Taymour Beik Joumblatt** and loaded with presentations that spread joy throughout the audience.
- Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. reported its promise to expand on its advance of energy efficiency and operational emissions diminishments to expand the use of sustainable power sources.
- The **BMW Group** has hit a histor-

2 ______executive-magazine.com

ic high in the initial five months of the year: more than a million clients worldwide have taken conveyance of their new BMW, **MINI** or **Rolls-Royce** vehicle in 2018.

- touch, overseen by Zain Group, has propelled an energizing special promotion comprising the Nokia 1 cell phone packaged with a half year of 1GB/month free social media for just \$84.
- The twelfth edition of the Middle East Driving International event for Homeland Security and Civil Defense is hoping to pull in driving organizations from Lebanon.
- The 23rd release of **Les Voiles** d'Antibes, the first round on the **Panerai Classic Yachts Challenge Circuit**, concluded, with the prizes won by Mariska in the Big Boats classification, Eva in the Vintage Yachts section, Resolute Salmon in Classic Yachts, and Tabasco 5 in Spirit of Tradition.
- Scuderia Lebanon, the official importer of Ferrari in Lebanon, held a brunch at their updated 3S office in Dora.
- **Ericsson** and Russian service provider **MTS** have collaborated to give a predominant mobile broadband experience for FIFA World Cup fans, through Europe's biggest yet arrangement of **Massive MIMO**.
- As a component of its commitment to the Lebanese market, **Huawei CBG** arranged a consumer activity at Beirut Souks from June 16-25, where customers could test out the **Huawei P20 Pro.**
- A quickly evolving atmosphere, persistent pockets of poverty and hunger, and fast urbanization are challenging nations' efforts to accomplish the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), as per a **UN** report released in New York.

- Ogilvy has reported the discoveries of the 2018 Global Media Influence Survey at the Cannes Lions Festival, which found trust in traditional media as a source for news has declined 22 percent since 2016.
- Samsung Electronics and Disney are breathing life into two more Disney characters—Daisy Duck and Goofy—as AR Emojis, joining Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, and Donald Duck, and Pixar's the Incredibles.
- The all-new **Ariston Dishwasher** spares water, energy, and time. This new dishwasher fits into modern kitchens to create a more relaxed daily life.
- HIMAYA, the opening ceremony of the Summer In Action event, took place on June 22-24, at Beirut Waterfront, facing the Four Seasons Hotel.
- Jammal Trust Bank, represented by its board of directors and its chairman and CEO, Mr. Anwar Jammal, facilitated a lunch get-together to dispatch the "Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy initiatives" in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development, at Le Gray Hotel, on June 20.
- Hyundai Motor Company has today declared a multi-year association with Club Atlético de Madrid, becoming the club's Global Automotive Partner.
- Maillon Group presents its most current Italian eatery and mixed drink bar, Sofita. An opening was held on June 20 at Printania Garden in Broumana in the presence of media agents, influencers, and bloggers.
- Embassy of India celebrated International Day of Yoga 2018, with

the support of the **Government of the Republic of Lebanon**, the Association for Development of Lebanese Indian Relations, Solidere, Le Yacht Club, the American University of Beirut, and yoga associations.

- A survey by **Bayt.com**, the Middle East's biggest job site, uncovered that 45.3 percent of respondents trust that employers settle on the hiring choice after the first interview.
- The United Nations Industrial Development Organization is pleased to announce its participation in the 7th edition of the Beirut Design Week exhibition.
- LG Electronics (LG), a global leader and technology innovator, supplied the Ministry of Energy and Water with LG photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, which were implemented by ECOsys.
- Genesis was granted Highest Satisfaction Premium Brand by driving exploration consultancy AutoPacific for the first time, with the Genesis G90 extravagance car coming first for the second year in the association's Vehicle Satisfaction Awards.
- The **UN's World Environment**Day was this year held under the theme "**Beat Plastic Pollution**," but Lebanon still faces many ecological issues.
- Ford Motor Company has earned its best-ever scores in the 2018 J.D. Power Initial Quality Study, due to enhancements in studio, audio, entertainment, and navigation.
- Samsung Electronics Middle East and North Africa formally declared the dispatch of Samsung Business Suite, a Business-to-Business (B2B) cloud based platform.

Events

CONFERENCES

ORGANIZERS	CONTACT	WEBSITE
N		
RETAIL BANKING SUMMIT EFMA	+33 1 474 25676; info@efma.com	www.efma.com
ARAB ECONOMIC FORUM Al Iktissad Wal Aamal	+961 1 740173/4; info@iktissad.com	www.iktissadevents.com
DR JOHN DEMARTINI CONFERENCE I Have Learned Academy	+961 3 376 390; randa@ihaveleanered.me	-
INTERNATIONAL BEIRUT ENERGY FORUM MCE Group	+961 9 900 110; bef@beirutenergyforum.com	www.mcegroup.net
HAPPINESS AT WORK CONFERENCE I Have Learned Academy	+961 3 376 390; randa@ihaveleanered.me	-
MIDDLE EAST AND SCANDINAVIA'S KNOWLEDGE Datamatix Group	EXCHANGE AND PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCES +971 4 332 6688; info@datamatixgroup.com	www.datamatixgroup.com
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GCC GREEN HR MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE Datamatix Group	+971 4 332 6688; info@datamatixgroup.com	www.datamatixgroup.com
LIGHT MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE Epoc Messe Frankfurt	+971 4 338 0102; info@epocmessefrankfurt.com	www.ae.messefrankfurt.com
SOCIAL IMPACT SUMMIT Informa Middle East	+971 4 407 2528; info-mea@informa.com	www.informa-mea.com
CYBER DEFENSE SUMMIT Naseba	+971 4 367 1376; prachid@naseba.com	www.naseba.com
GCC STARTUP AND SME SUMMIT Datamatix Group	+971 4 332 6688; info@datamatixgroup.com	www.datamatixgroup.com
GCC FINANCIAL MARKETS AND PUBLIC COMPAN Datamatix Group	HES CONFERENCE +971 4 332 6688; info@datamatixgroup.com	www.datamatixgroup.com
WORLD TEACHERS DAY SUMMIT IN DUBAI Datamatix Group	+971 4 332 6688; info@datamatixgroup.com	www.datamatixgroup.com
GOVERNMENT AND ENTERPRISE ASSET MANAGE Informa Middle East	EMENT CONGRESS +971 4 407 2528; info-mea@informa.com	www.informa-mea.com
MEPOS ANNUAL MEETING Epoc Messe Frankfurt	+971 4 338 0102; info@epocmessefrankfurt.com	www.ae.messefrankfurt.com
DATAMATIX GITEX CONFERENCE Datamatix Group	+971 4 332 6688; info@datamatixgroup.com	www.datamatixgroup.com
GCC MUNICIPALITIES AND SMART CITIES CONFEDATAMATIX Group	ERENCE +971 4 332 6688; info@datamatixgroup.com	www.datamatixgroup.com
MIDDLE EAST AIRPORT AND AVIATION SECURITY Epoc Messe Frankfurt		www.ae.messefrankfurt.com
FINTECH SUMMIT UAE Naseba	+971 4 367 1376; prachid@naseba.com	www.naseba.com
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84 _______executive-magazine.com

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21-23 Oct	SUPERRETURN MIDDLE EAST ICBI	+44 (0) 20 7017 7200; info@icbi.co.uk	www.superreturnme.com
JORDAN			
6-7 Aug	FORUM ON: REQUIREMENTS FOR DEALING WITH Union of Arab Banks	CORRESPONDENT BANKS +961 1 377800; uab@uabonline.org	www.uabonline.org
16-17 Oct	FORUM ON: ROAD TO BASEL 4 – THE EXPECTED E Union of Arab Banks	BASIC MODIFICATIONS +961 1 377800; uab@uabonline.org	www.uabonline.org
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24-Jul	REAL ESTATE INVESTOR MEETING SAUDI ARABIA Naseba	+971 4 367 1376; prachid@naseba.com	www.naseba.com
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3-4 Oct	GULF FAMILY BUSINESS FORUM Exicon intl group	+966 11 460 2332; info@exicon-specialist.com	www.exicon-specialist.com
10-11 Oct	SAUDI HEALTH INSURANCE CONFERENCE Exicon intl group	+966 11 460 2332; info@exicon-specialist.com	www.exicon-specialist.com
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EGYPT			
19-21 Jul	FORUM ON SME'S AND THEIR IMPACT ON WOME Union of Arab Banks	n'S EMPOWERMENT +961 1 377800; uab@uabonline.org	www.uabonline.org
17-19 Ѕер	INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY CONFERENCE Epoc Messe Frankfurt	+971 4 338 0102; info@epocmessefrankfurt.com	•
21-22 Sep	CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT PROPERT FAIR Promoteam	+961 1 339 050; sm@promoteam-ltd.com	www.promoteam-ltd.com
25-26 Oct	FORUM ON: PUBLIC- PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PP Union of Arab Banks	P) FOR DEVELOPMENT & RECONSTRUCTION +961 1 377800; uab@uabonline.org	www.uabonline.org
KUWAIT			
26-Ѕер	CYBER DEFENSE SUMMIT KUWAIT 2018 Naseba	+971 4 367 1376; prachid@naseba.com	www.naseba.com
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IRAQ			
19-21 Jul	FORUM ON: GREEN BANKING Union of Arab Banks	+961 1 377800; uab@uabonline.org	www.uabonline.org
BAHRAII	N		
2-3 Sep	MOBILITY 360 MIDDLE EAST Epoc Messe Frankfurt	+971 4 338 0102; info@epocmessefrankfurt.com	www.ae.messefrankfurt.com
31 Oct - 1 Nov	FORUM ON: FINTECH Union of Arab Banks	+961 1 377800; uab@uabonline.org	www.uabonline.org

_ 85

Events

EXHIBITIONS

	ORGANIZERS	CONTACT	WEBSITE
LEBAN	DN		
21-23 Jun	EXPLORE M.I.C.E Lebanon	+961 1 384 791; info@micelebanon.com	www.micelebanon.com
26-29 Jun	Project Lebanon IFP	+961 5 959 111; info@ifpexpo.com	www.ifpexpo.com
5-8 Jul	AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEBANESE ANNUAL FAIR Property Insider	+961 1 510052; info@ahlafair.com	ahlafair.com
3-5 Aug	THE LAKESIDE FESTIVAL GATA events and Promotions	+961 1 322 177; info@gata.pro	www.gata.pro
20-23 Ѕер	BEIRUT ART FAIR EVENTS Beirut Art Fair	+961 76 497 453; info@beirut-art-fair.com	www.beirut-art-fair
28-30 Ѕер	BEIRUT RESTAURANTS FESTIVAL Hospitality Services	+961 1 480 081; info@hospitalityservices.com.lb	www.hospitalityservices.com.lb
3-6 Oct	VINIFEST Eventions	+961 1 280 085; info@eventionslb.com	www.vinifestlebanon.com
4 Oct	DREAM: THE REAL ESTATE AND PROPERTY EXHI Promofair	### HITION +961 1 561 605; info@promofair.com.lb	www.promofair.com.lb
18-Oct	WEDDING FOLIES Promofair	+961 1 561 605; info@promofair.com.lb	www.promofair.com.lb
18-20 Oct	WHISKY LIVE BEIRUT Hospitality Services	+961 1 480 081; info@hospitalityservices.com.lb	www.hospitalityservices.com.lb
DUBAI			
23-25 Sep	LIGHT MIDDLE EAST Epoc Messe Frankfurt	+971 4 338 0102; info@epocmessefrankfurt.com	www.ae.messefrankfurt.com
1-4 Oct	CITYSCAPE DUBAI Informa Middle East	+971 4 407 2528; info-mea@informa.com	www.informaexhibitions.com
8-9 Oct	GOVERNMENT AND ENTERPRISE ASSET MANAG Informa Middle East	EMENT CONGRESS +971 4 407 2500; info-mea@informa.com	www.informa-mea.com
8-10 Oct	THE MINING SHOW Terrapinn Middle East	+971 1 444 02500; enquiry.me@terrapinn.com	www.terrapinn.com
29-31 Oct	SEATRADE MARITIME MIDDLE EAST 2018 Seatrade Communications Ltd	+971 4 324 5344; events@seatrade-middleeast.ad	e www.seatrade-middleeast.com
ABU DI	-HABI		
23 Oct	MIDDLE EAST GAMES CON Informa Middle East	+971 4 407 2528; info-mea@informa.com	www.informaexhibitions.com
BAHRA	IN		
28 Oct	GLOBAL HR TRENDS SUMMIT MANAMA P world	+3892 5 111 350; info@thepworld.com	www.thepworld.com
EGYPT			
12-13 Oct	CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT PROPERTY FAIR Promoteam	+961 1 339 050; sm@promoteam-ltd.com	www.promoteam-ltd.com
17-18 Oct	MARKETING KINGDOM CAIRO 4 P world	+3892 5 111 350; info@thepworld.com	www.thepworld.com
18-20 Oct	NEXT MOVE Informa Middle East	+971 4 407 2528; info-mea@informa.com	www.informaexhibitions.com
SAUDI	ARABIA		
10-12 Sep	GLOBAL HEALTH SAUDI Informa Middle East	+971 4 407 2528; info-mea@informa.com	www.informaexhibitions.com
IRAQ			
8-11 Oct	IRAQ AGROFOOD BAGHDAD IFP	+961 5 959 111; info@ifpexpo.com	www.ifpexpo.com
JORDAI	N .		
9-11 Oct	HORECA JORDAN Hospitality Services	+961 1 480 081; info@hospitalityservices.com.lb	www.hospitalityservices.com.lb

86 ______executive-magazine.com

JOIN THE 9TH EDITION OF "PULSE 5K OR 1K" ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2018, IN FARRA CLUB



The PULSE 5K OR 1K is a most enjoyable outdoor family outing in the mountainous environment of the Faqra Club, AND an opportunity to support a good cause!

It is TYSCHOOLPULSE's main fundraising event, organized with the logistical support of Beirut Marathon Association and Fagra Club.

MYSCHOOLPULSE is a non-profit organization bringing school to hospitals in Lebanon.

Since inception in 2010, it has catered to the education of 516 children suffering from life-threatening illnesses, enabling them to continue their education during their long treatment away from school and friends.

MYSCHOOLPULSE is present in six major hospitals where it employs 13 permanent and experienced teachers: At Saint George Hospital, Hôtel-Dieu de France, Lebanese Hospital Geitaoui, Rafic Hariri Hospital, Makassed Hospital and Hospital Notre Dame de Secours in Byblos. To date, the organization has provided about 24,600 hours of tutorship to children aged 4 to 18. Classes take place mostly at the child's hospital bed.

In addition, MYSCHOOLPULSE provides art therapy sessions at hospital, private lessons at the child's home and, in some cases, tutorship fees to siblings of the sick child.

More on www.myschoolpulse.com

MYSCHOOLPULSE's work has had a significant impact on the children's academic performance: 93% of children passed class in June 2017!

More importantly, the support provided helps the children's morale, giving them the confidence they need when they resume school at the end of their treatment.

Join us to enjoy a fun day and help us pursue our mission!

The registration fee is \$30 per person and is all inclusive: race, food, drinks, kids activities (supervised by KidzMondo Beirut) for kids whose parents take part in the race.

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For event details, please visit www.myschoolpulse.com/pulse5k.asp or call +961 76 370 589

Date	Sunday, A	August 5th, 2018		
Where	Fagra Club	ub (Parking & Shuttle bus provided just before the Club's entrance gate.)		
Time	9:45 am (to	have time	e to reach start arc	rh)
Races			Start Time	Age categories by birth year (eligible for awards)
	1K	Run	10:45 am	2 age categories: 2010 & younger, 2007-2008-2009
	5K	Run	11:00 am	9 age categories: 2006 & younger, 2001-2005, 1994-2000, 1989-1993, 1984-1988, 1974-1983, 1969-1973, 1964-1968, 1963 & older
Entrance Fee	The second secon	ged 3y & be	elow are admitted to 22y olds, ie YOE	free of charge and don't need to be registered.
Awards	12:15 pm	1K & 5K winners will be awarded medals & gifts. The award ceremony will be followed by an outdoor lunch buffet offered by Myschoolpulse, Faqra Club and Taanayel.		
To Register	- ABC Ac at Mysc	hrafieh L1 hoolpulse	booth	C Verdun L3 (near Starbucks) from July 12 to August 2, 10AM to 10 PM, awards, the deadline to register is Friday, July 27th at 10pm.
Contact	+961 76 370589 or info@myschoolpulse.com			

LAST WORD

By Ghassan Moukheiber

Access to information in Lebanon

Dead or alive?

The same questions come up often: "How can I use the Access to Information Law (A2I)?" or "Can I use it at all, or has it joined the ranks of the dozens of good laws that are not enforced in Lebanon?" Lebanese citizens, once hopeful that transparency in the country would be heightened with the passing of the A2I Law on February 10, 2017-after years of preparation—are now disappointed by the many unfortunate examples that show how difficult, or seemingly impossible, it is to actually enforce. The latest in the series of such disappointments was the delay in releasing a copy of the naturalization decree, ultimately published after significant pressure on the website of the interior ministry. So, is the A2I Law dead?

To all such citizens, take comfort that the A2I Law is alive, but requires a stronger will and better means for enforcement. The law is an important milestone on the road to preventing and fighting corruption in Lebanon, but not an end of the road by itself—it requires citizens to monitor and promote its full enforcement. Below are some facts to illustrate issues that are not always well understood:

The A2I Law is in full force and effect. It does not require any implementation decree to become obligatory, as is falsely believed in good or in bad faith, by citizens and administration alike. All entities listed in the law, collectively referred to as "the Administration," must abide by all its provisions without false excuses, such as waiting for an implementation decree that is in the making. However, all should make sure that such a de-

cree—albeit useful if properly drafted and enacted—should not modify or limit the very broad and powerful rights provided by the law.

Enforcement remedies are available. Many administrations responded positively to requests for information. Others, unfortunately, did not. In such cases, in addition to the legitimate, if not necessary, political blaming and shaming—and until the National Anti-Corruption Commission is established by law—the reluctant administration can be subject to a judicial injunction passed by the judge of urgent matters of the Shura Council. This was successfully done in the past and citizens are encouraged to seek such remedy in the future.

The law is about more than just access to information. Many, including politicians and lawyers, overlook the fact that the law also provides new provisions: to protect private personal data and to mandate a written rationale for all individual administrative decisions, under the sanction of annulment. Both subjects were in debate over the naturalization decree. The following caveats must be noted: First, the protection of personal data should not be an excuse for not providing access to personal decrees; and second, judges and lawyers should be encouraged to strike down non-motivated administrative decisions using the A2I Law in order to force a change in behavior of reluctant administrations.

Automatically published information is more important than access to information upon request.

This includes; annual activity reports, regulatory administrative decisions, and, most importantly, information about funds, within 15 days of their expenditure. The challenge remains to have all the above appropriately written and published on dedicated webpages for each administration. Many supportive initiatives are underway. The law further exposes the counter-trend decision of the government to put the electronic version of the Official Gazette behind a paywall. This measure is in violation of the general principle of transparency underpinning the A2I Law, and therefore requires a reversal through the development of a free, fully-fleged legal web portal. Also, the same general legal principle of transparency, and article 56 of the constitution, mandate that all administrative decrees and decisions be automatically published in the Official Gazette, including, but not limited to the so-called individual decrees, such as naturalization and pardon decisions.

As the saying goes in the legal world, "You win your case twice: once when the judgment is passed, and then again when it is enforced." The same applies to laws. We won first, after many years of effort, when the A2I Law was enacted. The challenge now, for citizens and politicians alike, is to keep-up the efforts of another nature, to win again, by making sure that the law is properly enforced by all concerned administrations.

GHASSAN MOUKHEIBER is a lawyer and former Member of Parliament. He sponsored the Access to Information Law and followed it through from inception in 2006 to vote in 2017.



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