

# SHEIKH MOHAMMED: SPEARHEADING PATHBREAKING IDEAS

**H**is Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, is a pioneer extraordinaire. He just doesn't make promises, he acts on his goals too. He has many distinguished achievements to his credit. He is the man behind the building of such iconic landmarks as the Burj Al Arab and the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa. He introduced the revolutionary driverless Dubai Metro. He is the proponent of annual fiestas for Dubai residents and tourists alike such as the Dubai Shopping Festival and Dubai Summer Surprises. He launched fun icy entertainment spots in the middle of hot desert terrain such as Ski Dubai. He has also been stoking, from time to time, intellectual debates at conferences graced by some of the world's leading politicians, thinkers and motivational speakers.

All with one purpose in mind: to make Dubai a stellar and ground-breaking city on the global map.

He steered Dubai towards making it not just an economic and industrial hub in the Middle East, but also helped make it an oasis of stability, peace and security. His guidance morphed the landscape of the desert, with highrises of glass and chrome, along with other fascinating traits.

Under his stewardship, Dubai has enhanced the leisure and lifestyle quotient for not just Westerners but expatriates too. Even Hollywood has made a beeline for this glitzy cosmopolis, finding it an ideal location to shoot its movies and for its stars to relax in ultra-modern luxury.

Perhaps nowhere is Dubai's spectacular progress more evident than in the field of aviation.

Dubai International Airport was the world's busiest for international passenger traffic last year, stealing the thunder from London's Heathrow Airport.

Full-year passenger numbers for the Dubai International totalled 70.4 million.

Terminal 3 airport is as swanky as swanky can get, with its state-of-the-art trappings and self check-in counters.

Now comes the announcement from him that Dubai is going to build the largest airport in the world.

Sheikh Mohammed tweeted on Friday that Dubai was going to effect the biggest deal in history by buying planes worth \$100 billion.

When officials briefed him on plans to enlarge Dubai airport, he told them he did not want an airport for Dubai but wanted Dubai to be the airport of the world.

The Cassandras may be dismissive of the logic behind this humongous figure, but Mohammed's followers have immense faith in him.

Dubai's theme of "connecting minds, creating the future" for Expo 2020 appropriately fits the rapid developments of Dubai World Central (DWC) in elevating the emirate's standing as an aviation and logistics hub and a centre of commerce.

The aerotropolis provides a critical backdrop to Dubai's bid for the World Expo 2020.

Around 30 million travellers are estimated to pass through the passenger terminal at Al Maktoum International Airport by 2023.

In April, while honouring Sheikh Mohammed on his selection as the Cultural Personality of the Year for the 9th edition of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan said,

"Honouring of Sheikh Mohammed is an honour for the founding fathers of the country, since he is the best person who carried on their legacy and completed their march wisely."

The word 'impossible' does not exist in the dictionary of Sheikh Mohammed's life. As Sheikh Khalifa remarked on the leader, "He also led the march of progress and development with ambition, hope and determination with the will that does not know what is impossible."

When it comes to success and vision, Sheikh Mohammed is truly a trailblazer.