ICDL Saudi Arabia reveals new strategies for 2010 to support the Kingdom's digital literacy campaign

Figures show the Kingdom's IT market will grow to USD 4.9 Billion by 2013

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ICDL Saudi Arabia, the governing body and certification authority of the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) programme in Saudi Arabia, will pursue stronger ties with both the public and private sector in an effort to help bolster the country's campaign to promote digital literacy. The move, which will include the implementation of newer and effective strategies and programs for 2010 under a new phase of development, aims to reinforce partnerships between ICDL Saudi Arabia and various government and private sector organisations; even as the country's IT market is predicted to grow to USD 4.9 billion by 2013.

Identified as one of the Saudi Government's strongest partners in the campaign to promote digital literacy among Saudi Nationals, ICDL Saudi Arabia has announced that it will be introducing more aggressive strategies and programs that will heavily concentrate on encouraging more schools and government agencies to adopt the ICDL certification program. To date, top universities like King Saud University; Princess Noura Bint Abdulrahman University, the first university for girls in Saudi Arabia; Taibah University; Baha University; and the University of Tabuk have already started to offer the ICDL program as a mandatory or equivalent course for freshmen students.

More than 20,000 students are currently enrolled in the ICDL program and ICDL Saudi Arabia is moving towards increasing this figure by partnering with all 24 universities in the Kingdom over the next few months. Government agencies like the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology have also recently discussed entering into agreements with ICDL Saudi Arabia to make ICDL certification a mandatory requirement for their employees.

Moreover, the introduction of the ICDL Syllabus Version 5.0 will help further update trainees on the IT knowledge needed in today's rapidly developing world. ICDL Syllabus 5.0 incorporates new areas including personal devices and new communication technologies, and reflects innovations in mobile computing and considers new emerging media such as 'podcasting,' and new areas of communication such as 'Voice over IP' and 'online chat.' Syllabus Version 5.0 also provides answers on how to manage newly emerged security threats, including 'phishing' and 'spy ware'.

Dr. Sulaiman Al-Dhalaan, Consultant, ICDL Saudi Arabia, said, "Saudi Arabia continues to move closer towards its vision of being a global IT hub and to create a fully integrated digital society. The progress that the Kingdom has made towards this end is reflected in the impressive growth of the Kingdom's IT market. ICDL Saudi Arabia aims to reinforce its ties with its partners in both the public and private sectors to give the country an added boost in the effort to promote digital literacy across all segments."

"Moreover, as we begin 2010, ICDL Saudi Arabia will be implementing new programs and strategies that will focus on getting more academic institutions and government agencies to adopt the ICDL standard. Our keenness to promote the adoption of the

ICDL standard among all sectors demonstrates our unwavering support for the government's move to enhance the IT competencies of KSA nationals and encourage more participation in digital proficiency certification programs," he added.

ICDL Saudi Arabia is introducing fully integrated online services and support to help authorized centers and trainees fully benefit from ICDL programs. These enhanced online capabilities will enable the community to embrace technology much faster and provide added independence and flexibility to implementers and adopters of ICDL training.

According to recent industry reports, Saudi Arabia's IT segment has developed to become one of the most vibrant markets in the region and has started to reach out to different target audiences like women, youth and even the elderly. A recent Nielsen report shows that there has been a substantial increase in female online users in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. Other reports have also shown the Kingdom's increasing preference towards new media due to a growing expatriate population, modernisation of work environments and increased connectivity.

The ECDL/ICDL program is the world's largest vendor-neutral end-user computer skills certification, endorsed by education ministries, universities and government organisations in more than 168 countries and available in over 40 languages, including Arabic. It recently marked its 9 millionth enrollment, with ICDL Saudi Arabia emerging as one of its key contributors in the Middle East. During the ECDL Foundation's Annual Global Forum held in October 2009 in Athens, Greece, ICDL Saudi Arabia won the 'Programme Implementation within an Organisation' award for convincing major educational institutions to integrate ICDL certification into their academic programs.