Pioneering experience for Government authorities & leading IT companies in spreading digital literacy across the Gulf region

10,000 students obtain ICDL Certificates via summer training camps

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ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body and certification authority of the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) program in the GCC and Iraq, has called for more efforts and stronger partnerships between government authorities and private sector companies in support of IT literacy initiatives across the region.

The invitation was made during an honorary breakfast organized by ICDL GCC Foundation today (Monday, October 11, 2010) at the Movenpick Jumeirah Beach Hotel in Dubai. The event was held in recognition of the efforts of the government bodies, academic establishments and leading IT companies in the Gulf to spread digital literacy particularly by supporting the Foundation's highly successful 2010 summer camps which welcomed over 10,000 students this year.

During the honorary breakfast, Jamil Ezzo, Director General of the ICDL GCC Foundation, pointed out that the camps complement the Foundation's leading experiences in the region. He added that they form part of ICDL GCC Foundation's

strategy of spreading IT knowledge and developing youths to sustain e-transformation. This, he said, would lead to an integrated knowledge-based community and enhance the position of the Gulf among advanced ICT-enabled countries.

Ezzo also underlined the effective contributions made by ministries and governmental bodies. He commended H.H. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah, for fully supporting the Foundation's mission of raising IT awareness in Sharjah and throughout the region. The ICDL GCC official noted the excellent roles of the UAE Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi Education Council and Abu Dhabi Systems & Information Centre as well for their exceptional support.

Ezzo thanked all educational areas – particularly Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Gharbiyah – as well as the Abu Dhabi Police and Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their support of the summer camps. Among the academic institutions he specifically mentioned in the UAE; UAE University, Higher Colleges of Technology, Abu Dhabi University, and Sharjah University; Kuwait University and ICDL accredit private centers in Kuwait; and the Higher Education Council along with some ICDL accredited private centers and schools in Qatar.

ITP Publishing Group was acknowledged for acting as the regional media sponsor during the camps, in addition the top students received valuable gifts from Acer, HP, Brother, Canon, Atlantis The Palm, and Dreamland Aqua Park Um Al Quwain. Members of the private sector were honoured for promoting an IT culture among youths and making the camps a fun experience.

Ezzo also emphasized the importance of IT as a pillar for economic growth, calling for its adoption on a wider scale throughout the region's educational systems: "Years ago, we started working with related GCC bodies to launch digital literacy programs for people of all ages and from all sectors of the society. We did this to support the e-transformation resulting from the region's social and economic boom."

"Recognizing education's role in preparing the new generation to keep pace with international advances, GCC countries have adopted a strategic plan to develop the educational sector by integrating IT and computer applications into the various educational and academic stages. This initiative includes the adoption of the ICDL program on a broader scale due to its importance in widening students' horizons; enhancing the spirit of excellence and innovation; and improving the employability of graduates in the local and regional job markets. We are confident that government support in terms of higher IT expenditures will lead to positive results in the long run," he added.

Ezzo underscored the need to draw on international experiences in educational systems development, particularly from advanced countries, in order to realize an integrated technological transformation in the Gulf. He emphasized the importance of focusing on learning strategies which rely on knowledge tools and technology, as they allow students to develop their analytical, creative thinking and self-learning skills. These strategies, he said, deliver higher levels of learning that can adapt to international changes at all levels.

The Director General urged decision makers and related bodies to increase investments into IT integration within the various phases of education. He called for the shift in curricula from a theoretical to a scientific focus, explaining that technology has become an important basis for employment and a vital tool for

limiting unemployment rates given the relevance digital literacy enjoys nowadays. He added how he looked forward to expanding the scope of ICDL program in order to influence a real digital transformation in line with the visions of the GCCøs leaders.

The ICDL GCC Foundation works in coordination with educational and academic bodies to enhance IT knowledge through the implementation of educational reforms in schools and universities. The Foundation is pursuing initiatives that follow the success of its summer camps and effectively raise IT awareness across all community segments. Its target audience covers school and university students, teachers, government employees, job seekers, women, retirees, the elderly, people with special needs, economically distressed, and inmates.

ICDL Summer camps are one of the most sought-after summer activities in the GCC due to the strong support they receive from governments and IT companies. These events gather thousands of participants from across the region to fill their summer leisure time and help them acquire the internationally-acclaimed certificate.

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