

ICDL GCC Foundation urges stronger government role in IT literacy drive to combat unemployment among GCC nationals

Boosting IT competency is key to mobilizing GCC national workforce in the private sector

November 21, 2007

ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body of the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) program in the Gulf States, has called on GCC states to further strengthen their digital literacy programs as part of collective efforts to expand and enhance the employment prospects of GCC women and men nationals in the private sector.



The move comes as recent statistics reveal that the influx of foreign workers is affecting the ability of nationals to find work in the private sector. Unlike GCC nationals, who are predominantly employed in the public sector, the majority of the 12.5 million foreigners working in the Gulf region, accounting to 70 per cent of the entire GCC workforce, are employed in the private sector.

Furthermore, in the UAE, it is estimated that the proportion of UAE nationals employed in the private sector has remained constant at levels less than two per cent since 1995.

"The number of jobs provided by the government cannot keep up with the growing numbers of nationals who are joining the workforce. Initiatives must be implemented to encourage nationals to join the private sector, which offers excellent career prospects and growth opportunities. In line with this, GCC nationals must also be suitably equipped with essential skills required in the private sector," said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

"We understand that GCC states are now searching for various remedies to reverse the trend and motivate GCC national employees to join the private sector. These initiatives must be proactively implemented and must focus on equipping GCC nationals with the cutting-edge skills and knowledge that will help them succeed in the private sector. As the region moves towards a knowledge-based society, encouraging excellent IT skills will definitely be one of the cornerstones of a strong local workforce," Ezzo added.

With the GCC states fast emerging as global business hotspots and high-technology hubs, the skills level of the region's workforce has subsequently been raised, requiring a broader knowledge of various technologies and IT applications. This has likewise necessitated integrated efforts between policy makers, educational institutions, technology leaders and the business sector to chart a clear-cut development plan to take advantage of the large talent pool waiting to be tapped.

"It is commonly known that skilled workforce is essential for socioeconomic growth. Education and training systems play a critical role in fostering the development of knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the job market. Digital literacy must be incorporated at all levels of the educational system as well as in all phases of corporate human resource development to ensure consistency and meet the demand of the job market. We are pleased to see governments, leading private organizations and educational institutions taking a proactive approach and working hand-in-hand with the ICDL GCC Foundation to implement the ICDL global standard throughout the region. We have gained endorsement and support of government organizations and academic institutions by requiring their staff, students and job applicants to secure their ICDL certification," said Ezzo.

"Moreover, we are also very happy to see the ICDL program providing equal learning opportunity to all members of society and helping change countless lives for the better. Through our strategic alliances with various governmental and private establishments, the ICDL program has reached millions across various fields of occupation. Recently, we celebrated the enrolment of the seven millionth candidate in the ICDL program worldwide, which only verifies the growing importance of the ICDL digital literacy program worldwide," Ezzo concluded.