

CITY SNIPPETS

THE LATEST NEWS FROM AROUND THE EMIRATE OF ABU DHABI

HOWZAT!

Cricket took centre stage in sports in Abu Dhabi recently with a three-match one-day international series between Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Pakistan beat Sri Lanka 2-1 in the event held at the main stadium in the capital. Fans were able to see the likes of Mahela Jayawardene, the Sri Lanka captain, and Pakistan's world number two ranked batsman, Mohammad Yousuf, show off their talents.



One of the highlights was when Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi struck a blistering 73 not out from only 34 balls, including four sixes, in the first game.

Following the successful one-day showcase, the sport is set to be given a further boost to its development in the emirate by the addition of new facilities at Zayed Cricket Stadium.

"We have already decided to build a full-fledged cricket academy that will help serve the community here," said Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Cricket Club's chairman. "We have plans to both develop the game and keep Abu Dhabi on the international cricket map. It is all in the preliminary planning stages."

STARS IN THE CITY

The regional travel industry awards took place in Abu Dhabi last month which attracted big name stars to the emirate.

Chris Noth, famous for his role as Mr Big in *Sex and the City*, and US actress Lauren Holly appeared at the World Travel Awards' (WTA's) regional ceremony which was held at the iconic Emirates Palace.

Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority celebrated winning best new tourist destination and best promotion board following on-going efforts to boost the emirate's tourism offering.

"Abu Dhabi is spearheading the globe when it comes to luxury travel," said WTA president Graham Cooke. "Their offerings are setting the benchmark for the industry worldwide."

The winners and top nominees from the contest will be put forward for their respective categories at the global awards held in the Caribbean later this year. The verdicts are decided by surveys of thousands of industry professionals.



LOCAL SHOWCASE

Top architects have been invited to design one of the new museums planned for the capital's flagship project on a nearby natural island.

The museum will showcase local culture and art and be based in the cultural district of Saadiyat Island, which will also be home to international branches of the Louvre and Guggenheim museums.



The Sheikh Zayed National Museum, named after the late UAE president, will be one element of what the emirate's government hopes will be a cultural landmark in the region. It will have five galleries tracing the history of the small sheikhdoms' transition into the modern Emirates.

As well as showing how the money from selling oil has been used to develop society, the museum will have specific themes, including the country's heritage and the environment.

Saadiyat, meaning 'happiness', lies around 500 metres off the eastern coast of the city of Abu Dhabi. A public exhibition on the cultural district is currently being held at Emirates Palace.

SOLAR POWER

Solar power is being launched in Abu Dhabi's schools in an effort to spread awareness of the environment to children. A pilot scheme has been brought into one local school with a view of eventually putting solar panels in government and private schools across the emirate and the rest of the country.



Initially, an exhibition is being held at the privately run Emirates National School so young people can learn about the technology and its use as a source of energy.

The exhibition and school programme are part of a venture involving Abu Dhabi's Environment Agency (EAD), which represents the UAE, and the German government's energy agency.

REDFORD HITS TOWN

Hollywood legend Robert Redford paid a visit to Abu Dhabi last month.

"This is the first time I've been to this part of the world and I can't tell you how grateful I am to have the experience to see what exists here," the US actor said. Speaking to students at the local Zayed University, Redford added. "I guess I don't see films as just a simple way of entertainment; that's just a small part of it," he said. "The bigger role I think now is cultural exchange."

GUIDES ON TOP

As more and more visitors are attracted to Abu Dhabi, tourist guides are growing in value to help give people a more enjoyable, informative stay.

Many are receiving intensive training from an on-going programme so that they qualify for an official tourist guide licence. Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA) has witnessed a rise in the number of UAE nationals taking part in training.

"Nationals with good knowledge, language and communication skills will make excellent tourist guides, thus offering the visitor an authentic Abu Dhabi experience," said Nasser Saif Al Reyami, ADTA's licensing director.

OASIS OF CALM

The UAE is among the top 40 most peaceful countries in the world, according to leading magazine The Economist. The UAE finished 38th out of 121 countries and third in the Gulf behind Oman and Qatar.

Together with the year-round sunshine and standard of hotels, the security in the UAE is viewed as one of the main attractions for visitors. Apparently, Norway is the world's most peaceful country, according to criteria including crime, strength of security, human rights, terrorism and deaths from conflict.

FILM FEST

Abu Dhabi is launching its own film festival at the luxurious Emirates Palace as part of an effort to position itself as a cultural hub in the Gulf.

The emirate's government is also aiming to support local, regional and international films with a huge cash fund. The Abu Dhabi Film Commission will provide money for new pictures and encourage filmmakers to use the emirate, with its vast desert landscapes, for shooting on-location. The festival aims to attract people from all aspects of the film industry, including investors, directors and producers.

The announcement is the latest in a series of cultural projects unveiled by the emirate.

The first Middle East International Film Festival, which is planned for October 12-17 this year, will show international co-productions and be a place to talk about the financing of films.

