

THE NEWSPAPER THE KEY

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Joy Basu Visits Nouakchott

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs, Joy Basu, visited Nouakchott. She met with the Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr. Ousmane Mamoudou Kane, the Director General at the Agency for Promotion of Investment in Mauritania, Aissata Lam, and held a roundtable with the U.S.-Mauritania Business Council to discuss their engagement at the recent Africa Leaders Summit in the United States.

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Nouakchott:

2023 Cultural Capital of the Islamic World



The foundation of the city of Nouakchott dates to the late 1950s, when a modest rural village with a population of barely 300 people was chosen as the nascent Mauritanian state's capital. In July 1957, under French occupation, the first Mauritanian government held its first meeting in a modest tent in Lksar, now located at the heart of Nouakchott. On July 4, a French decree transferred the capital of Mauritania from the city of Saint Louis, in Senegal, to Nouakchott, the new capital. In March 1958, the cornerstone was laid for the capital, Nouakchott, in a ceremony attended by both Moktar Ould Dadah, who would become the country's first president, and Charles de Gaulle.

The declaration of Nouakchott as the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World came from a program launched by the Arab League's Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). In 2004, ALECSO adopted the program of the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World, which is assigned annually to three Islamic cities, one for each of the three Islamic areas, the Arab World, Africa, and Asia.

..... to be continued in our upcoming issue number 20.

In A National Precedent, Former President Ould Abdel Aziz is Tried For Corruption



On Wednesday, January 25, the trial of former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz opened at the Palace of Justice in Nouakchott. The former president alongside eleven other defendants, including former presidents, ministers, prime ministers, and businessmen are facing charges of «illicit enrichment».

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The Silent Epidemic: Mauritania vs. Mental Illness



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Sahel Foundation Launches Training Session in Collaboration with US Embassy



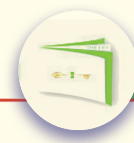
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The Mystified Village:

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Abdel Wedoud's Latest Novel



Close up on Germany!

Germany's Leadership in the green light



Going back in history, we unquestionably realize that the reunification of Germany and Europe from 1990 onward brushed up the leadership skills of Germany on the balance of power within Europe. During the 1990s, the biggest concern of Europe was related to the issues of enlargement and deepening. At that time, Germany tried to endorse a leadership role regard to (1) managing the conflicts in the Balkans and (2) promoting enlargement through political coalitions within NATO and the EU.

When Germany was heading the EU presidency in the first half of

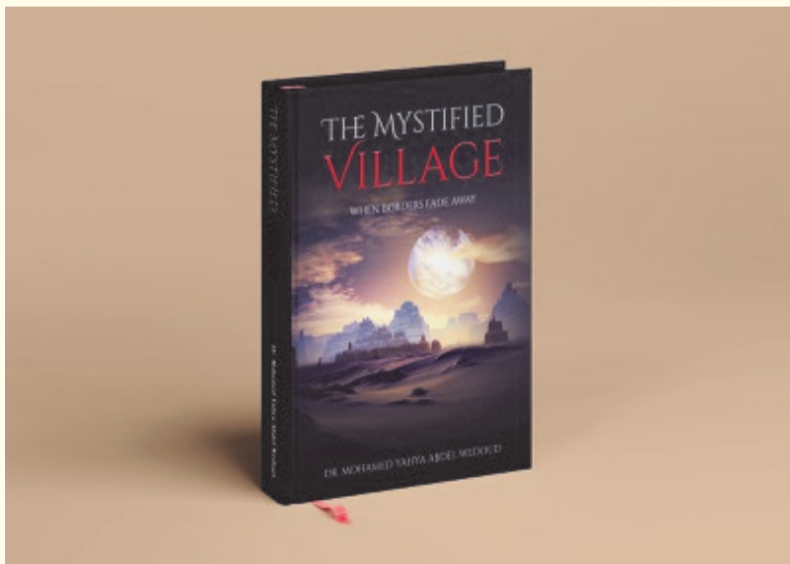
2007, Berlin was playing a key role in overcoming the EU deep crisis related to the rejection of the EU Constitutional Treaty by referenda in the Netherlands and France in 2005. Indeed, Germany contributed a lot in replacing the aborted Constitutional Treaty with the Treaty of Lisbon to enable the EU to regain its footing; Germany undoubtedly met the expectations in terms of leadership from almost all of its European partners with solid diplomatic and financial solutions. Germany has been in peacekeeping missions across the globe since the time of the former Yugoslavia (1995 in Bosnia, 1999

over Kosovo). Besides, Germany deployed Special Forces in Afghanistan to express empathy to the US after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Above all, Germany has had the honor of being one of the top list countries that developed a task force program to counteract the COVID-19 outbreak and protected the affected European economy. Until December 16, 2022, Germany has faced 37,272,430 coronavirus cases; only 160,972 deaths of 36,542,100 were recovered. Who can do better?

By **Makha Koror**
Senior correspondent

The Mystified Village:

Abdel Wedoud's Latest Novel



Few have written about the sociocultural history of the Mauritanian Sahara, and even fewer have written about it in English. This land is not just a vast desert in an isolated corner far from the world's research centers, but rather a land that has had many cultures across thousands of years. There are many questions and few answers related to the personality and behavior of the Sahara people in this corner of the world. From a novelistic perspective, I tried to explore

the cultural perceptions of such peaceful nomadic communities that have been struggling with poor leadership and severe natural conditions while the economic and cultural gaps have been growing wider with the Other. I published two books, so far, in English with plans to write more books in the future as I continue to explore further historical and humanistic aspects.

This novel explores the question of leadership in an astonishing context in which mystery is used to attract, lead, and pre-

vail. Mystery has been a powerful tool across human history to create, maintain, and shape power. The idea of having borders has haunted humans for a long, but time has proved that borders will fade away as minds and hearts come together to challenge and solve the mystery. Knowledge proves to be the sole magic tool to finally brush away the darkness of souls and open eyes to the brightly shining rays of truth. The collapse of borders had long been seen by only a few righteous spirits. It was a battle that began in nowhere spiritually, was fought technically, and was likely to end up metaphysically once again.

With the help of the Other, Maatouk succeeded in freeing himself from the invisible chains of illusion to fly high over the nearby mountains. He absorbed knowledge, which is the key to tackling mental chains not only in the White Village but also in the City of Thieves, where mystery had been dominating human life.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Thoughts



By: **Yanick Douyon**

For the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, THE KEY asked me to write something to commemorate this giant in the civil and human rights movements. Immediately many different considerations came to my mind—some positive and some not. I do not know if I would say I am a typical American, yet I believe I can give a balanced view of what many people think about King today, more than 50 years after his death by assassination, in 1968.

When I went back to listen to his most famous speech, "I Have a Dream," given in 1963, a number of points jumped out at me. I have heard this speech dozens of times, but have not listened to it in several years. It is instantly noticeable that he was first a preacher, a Southern Baptist religious minister, speaking in that incomparable style. The cadence and

poeticism of the speech are riveting. The analogies are very American, yet in a number of ways universal. The vocabulary is advanced, nevertheless, the ideas are clear and would have been followed even by the many children who were there in person.

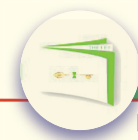
Many of the things King dreamed of in 1963 are still unfulfilled. The economic, social, and political conditions for African-Americans are still unsatisfactory. Police brutality has been more obvious with social media. Many more blacks are educated and are in professional careers, while at the same time, the poverty rate has increased in general. Segregation is no longer legal yet a large proportion of children attend schools where almost all of their classmates are of the same ethnic group as themselves and many of their schools are substandard. The incarceration rates of the poor and minorities far exceed their numbers in the population. Voting rights had improved significantly, then gains are being lost. In 25 of the 50 states, new restrictions have been legalized since 2010.

Improvements in the political arena are evident in the election, and re-election, of Barack Obama as president and Kamala Harris as vice president. In many national, state, and local offices throughout the country, there are black men and women in elected and appointed positions. This trend is not only likely to continue, but it has stirred greater numbers of women, and every other minority group of the country to also become included as leaders.

King once said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." So it should not be surprising that progress is slow. We cannot deny that quite a

few things are better. That there are also setbacks is a disappointment. Even if some have become discouraged, others have continued to struggle for more fairness. New leaders have come, few with his level of acceptance, but with as much hope and determination as he would want to maintain. I believe that his example had and has a significant impact on many who were not even born when he was alive. There has been an increase in the admiration Americans of all races have for him. That a holiday is celebrated in his honor is extraordinary. He is the only individual for whom that is true in the United States today.

(The speech, "I Have a Dream," is only 17 minutes long and easily available online).



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Joy Basu Visits Nouakchott



Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs, Joy Basu, visited Nouakchott. She met with the Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr. Ousmane Mamoudou Kane, the Director General at the Agency for Promotion of Investment in Mauritania, Aissata Lam, and held a roundtable with the U.S.-Mauritania Business Council to discuss their engagement at the recent Africa Leaders Summit in the United States. She also visited a local madeleine producer, a beneficiary of the Ambassador's special self-help program.

American Corner at the High Institute of Islamic Studies and Research (ISERI) Presentation at the American Corner by American University Students



On January 12, the American Corner of the High Institute of Islamic Studies and Research in Nouakchott hosted presentations on several topics related to studying at American universities and the importance of learning English. The three American presenters

also discussed Martin Luther King Jr. and the eponymous holiday celebrating his legacy. The presenters were keen to answer the various questions raised by the Mauritanian students on topics ranging from American culture to strategies for improving English skills. The lectures

were attended by a significant number of students and professors at ISERI. Both the presenters and the attendees learned a tremendous amount about academic and student culture in their respective countries from the exchange.

Sahel Foundation Launches Training Session in Collaboration with US Embassy

The Sahel Foundation for the Defense of Human Rights and Support for Education in collaboration with the US Embassy in Nouakchott launched a training session for twenty women. This session is part of the foundation's program for women's empowerment. The session included discussions about small income-generating projects, in addition to presentations and lessons about project management, capital, profit, expenses, and goals. Mr. Ibrahim Belal Ramadan, president of the foundation, emphasized in his opening remarks that the foundation is pressing forward with its goals for creating a new dynamic to support people, regardless of their backgrounds, especially those with limited income. The foundation will also provide funding to ten trainees after the end program.





The Silent Epidemic:

Mauritania vs. Mental Illness

Mental illnesses, more formally known as mental disorders, are a wide range of disorders that affect mood, thought, and/or behavior. They can cause extreme distress and hinder a person's social relations, school or work performance, basic life skills, and personal hygiene. Depression, the most common mental disorder and which is present in approximately half of all suicide victims, affects 350 million people around the world, according to the American Association of Suicidology. The World Health Organization estimates that 1 in every 8 people in the world suffers from a mental illness and that one person commits suicide every 40 seconds.

Despite their prevalence, mental disorders are still seen as inconsequential and those who suffer from them face serious stigmatization in many countries around the world. Due to the way they manifest, they have long been associated with the metaphysical. Most African communities still believe that mental disorders are caused by witchcraft or evil spirits. These spirits are chased away through special ceremonies and rituals usually conducted by priests. Believers of voodooism perform ceremonies where they reach out to their ancestors to help the afflicted person. Muslim cheikhs and Christian priests perform exorcisms that consist mostly of prayers to expell the demons from the bodies of the ill.

In Mauritania, the mentally ill face social stigma and shame. Médicos del Mundo (Doctors of the World) counted only four practi-



■ Neuropsychiatry Center Nouakchott

laye El-Hassen, an intern at Neuropsychiatry Center Nouakchott (NCN), "newcomers are usually patients who have shown great changes in behavior and have been taken by their families to the ER or another doctor who then directed them to come here." In extremely rare cases, the patient's family might notice the behavioral changes and bring them directly to NCN.

When a patient who has suffered a psychotic

that they have a problem and most believe that others are trying to hurt them."

To get a better understanding of mental health, its importance, and its prevalence in Mauritania, I spoke with Dr. Elghadi Mohamdi, a psychiatrist at El Manar Clinic.

First of all, what do we mean by psychiatry, psychology, and therapy, and what is the difference between them?

Psychiatry is like any other medical specialty, you go to medical school and then specialize in psychiatry. Psychology is studied at the college of social sciences and is independent of medicine. When studying psychiatry, you also study psychology. Therapy, on the other hand, is treating patients without medicating them, using techniques such as psychoanalysis. These techniques can be studied in conjunction with psychiatry or psychology, or studied separately after you get your degree.

Many people confuse mental and neurological disorders. What is the difference between them?

mental disorders and neurological disorders are quite different. Sometimes, they might have some symptoms in common, but they are still very different. For starters, neurological disorders are physiological. Whereas mental disorders can be just that, mental. Just as the body gets ill, so does the mind. However, some disorders might be both neurological and mental.

What is the most common mental illness in Mauritania?

Depression is the most common mental illness in Mauritania and the world. It is also one of the leading causes of suicide and, unfortunately, we are seeing a rise in suicide rates in the country caused, most likely, by depression.

Are there any official statistics about the number of people suffering from depression, or other mental illnesses in the country?

Unfortunately, there are no accurate statistics. I do not believe there has ever been one.

Has there been a change in society's views at mental illness and mental health nowadays?

Mauritanians have changed the way they look at mental illness. They used to believe that people with mental disorders were possessed by jinn (paranormal spirits) or evil eyes. It is true some of that still exists, however, we are seeing a noticeable shift. Many people are now voluntarily taking themselves to see a psychiatrist, whereas before, they would be brought to a psychiatrist forcibly.

How important is mental health?

We can divide health into the mental and the physical. We tend to focus more on our physical health and not give our mental health the same level of care. We must give our mental health the same care and attention we do our physical health. Recently, WHO has started to draw attention to the importance of mental health and its effects on people's social and professional lives and their productivity. The thing is, with physical illnesses people can still function in society. Someone with heart disease can still go to work, whereas someone who is depressed cannot. Mental health affects all aspects of our lives. We must preserve it from the moment our children are born. We must provide a proper environment for them to grow up at home and in schools as well. From parents to teachers, everyone must work together to raise a mentally stable and healthy child, just as we do with physical health. Mental illnesses affect the physical body as well, and vice versa.



■ Dr. Elghadi Mohamdi, a psychiatrist at El Manar Clinic

cing psychiatrists and fifteen psychologists in Mauritania in a 2016 report.

I have met several people throughout my life who suffer from symptoms that resemble a depressive disorder or an anxiety disorder. Whenever I would suggest they seek professional help, they gave the same answer, "my family would never allow it." Indeed, it is not easy to see a psychiatrist in Mauritania.

"People who come for consultation are usually patients who are already following a treatment plan with a doctor here," said Mou-

episode or has become violent towards themselves or others is brought to NCN's ER, the doctors run a brain scan and blood tests to determine whether the symptoms the patient has exhibited are caused by a neurological condition or a brain tumor.

"People with anxiety, unlike people with psychosis, usually know that there is something wrong with them," explained El-Hassen, "they usually bring themselves here. Whereas people with psychosis do not understand

Social Justice:

A Solution for Human Welfare



■ By Makha Korera

Examples of Social Justice issues

Racial inequity

Racial history, skin color, language, cultural background, place of birth, and ethnic origins are all causes of racial discrimination and prejudice of some kind. As an illustration, the legacy of slavery persists in Africa, Asia, and the United States. Even in modern Mauritania, racial stereotypes and clichés affect citizens’ ability to find decent jobs, access healthcare, and receive social benefits.

Gender inequality

True gender equality is not on the horizon. Analysts believe that it will take 135 years for global gender equality to be achieved. Obstacles such as gender pay gap, weakening reproductive rights, unequal education opportunities, and other obstacles hold women back around the world. According to social justice activists, gender equality intersects with racial and sexual equality, making it one of the most important social justice issues today.

LGBTQ+ rights

People in the LGBTQ+ community face deadly levels of violence and discrimination at home, in the workplace, and at school. Moreover, the LGBTQ+ community suffers from shortage of opportunities for employment, housing, healthcare, and safety. In recent years, the trans and non-binary community has experienced a surge of discrimination, which has led to violence and a rollback of rights. The state of LGBTQ+ rights is more in peril in some places than others, but even in the most progressive countries, social justice for the LGBTQ+ community is not well-established.

Social justice can be defined as, “The objective of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest.” According to the field of social work, social justice is the view that each and every individual living within a society deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities. Social workers open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, especially those in greatest need.

Social Justice includes fairness in healthcare, employment, housing, education, and other domains. Respect for human rights is essential to social justice. The term “social justice” was first used in the 1780s by American legal scholars, in an economic sense, at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Today, it is applied to all aspects of society (race, class, sexuality, and gender).

Importance of Social Justice

Academics, politicians, and economists apply social justice to promote fairness and equity across various aspects of society. On one hand, the concept promotes equal economic, educational, and workplace opportunities. On the other hand,

social justice is important to the safety and security of individuals and communities. Furthermore, it impacts livelihoods as it (a) promotes the celebration of diversity and equality, and (b) promotes opportunity, growth, and social well-being. There are a number of movements working to achieve social justice in societies across the globe.

The Four Principles of Social Justice

Access

Before anything, individuals must have access to the bottom rungs of Maslow’s hierarchy: food, shelter, medical care, and even education. Access that must not be restricted on the basis of factors such as gender, race, or class. If it is, individuals, communities, and society as a whole suffer. Social justice activists worldwide dedicate their lives to ensuring and increasing access to those in need.

Equity (or Equality)

Equity doesn’t mean equality for all. Equity is about ensuring an equal outcome. See for example, the graphic showing three people trying to watch a baseball game over a fence. All of them stand on a box. One can easily see the field, the second can just barely see, and

the third person is still unable to watch. “Equality” has given everyone just one box to stand on, even though the tallest person doesn’t need a box and one box doesn’t allow the shortest person to see. “Equity” gives the tallest person’s box to the shortest person, allowing them to see. Now, everyone can watch the game.

Human rights

Even though social Justice and human rights differ in some respects, they are closely related. One can’t thrive without the other. A just society protects and respects everyone’s human rights. In such a society, social justice flourishes. This connection is essential because human rights are recognized globally. When activists fight for social justice, they can lean on the connection with human rights to hold governments, corporations, and individuals accountable.

Participation

All voices in a society should be heard. Social Justice requires that all voices be respected and heard. Unfortunately, the voices of the disadvantaged are silenced in favor of those with more wealth or political power. Participation must be promoted, encouraged, fostered, and rewarded at all levels in order to find solutions to major societal problems.

The Mauritanian Economy:

Challenges and Opportunities

Maximizing Mauritania's Resources for Development

Mauritania's Economy:

Challenges and Opportunities

Mauritania's economy relies heavily on the extraction and export of its natural resources, with a GDP of around \$10 billion in 2021, according to the World Bank. With a population of 4.6 million, the country needs to develop a strategy for increasing domestic economic activity in a range of sectors in order to generate sufficient revenue to fund its social programs and infrastructural, human, and capital development.

Mauritania is rich in gold, iron ore, copper, fish, and other natural resources. Despite this, the country is still underdeveloped and the majority of its population living under poverty.

With natural gas exportation on the horizon, it remains to be seen what this new revenue stream can do for the Mauritanian economy, and whether it can replace other extractive industries.

Like most other underdeveloped African countries, Mauritania lacks leadership with a strategic vision and the ability to properly utilize the country's resources for infrastructural, human, and capital



opportunities for a significant number of Mauritanians.

The fishing and agricultural industries have been neglected by the government and, as a result, have come to be controlled by foreign firms. Mauritanian waters abound with marine life, yet most ordinary Mauritanians cannot afford to eat fish regularly. The Mauritanian government should devise strategies for generating revenue through the sale of fishing licenses to foreign vessels in the country's exclusive economic zone. This re-

Agriculture:

The agricultural sector has been neglected for many years. The government should now invest heavily in agriculture in order to attain food self-sufficiency or to at least reduce our reliance on food imported from abroad. This could be done by supporting farmers with grants, machinery, and technical training. Nouakchott should also establish a training center to train the younger generation on the techniques of commercial

Manufacturing:

The manufacturing sector in Mauritania is underdeveloped, with only a few local factories that struggle to employ significant numbers of Mauritanians. The government should fund and support entrepreneurs who are willing to invest in manufacturing and build the factories that can process the products of the extractive sector. Increased manufacturing would increase the market value of Mauritania's exports and generate substantial income for the domestic market.

Services:

The service sector has, in contrast to manufacturing, been developing in recent years, especially banking and telecommunications. There remains, however, significant room for improvement. Nouakchott should establish a public utility agency to regulate their services and to ensure that the population is receiving the highest quality of the services. Without proper regulation of the companies providing these services, Mauritanians risk suffering from low quality service at high prices.

Tourism:

Mauritania is one of the least visited countries in the world. The government, through its ministry of arts and culture, should promote the country's arts and culture at the international level. In doing so, the ministry should also ensure the safety of tourists visiting the country. Measures should also be taken to introduce tourism and hospitality programs at the university or other tertiary institutions to give the students the opportunities to learn these programs. This would make the country more attractive to visitors, generate income for those working in the tourism industry, and bring in foreign currency for the government.



development. While measures have been taken to alleviate some of the economic stresses facing the country, these issues remain far from resolved.

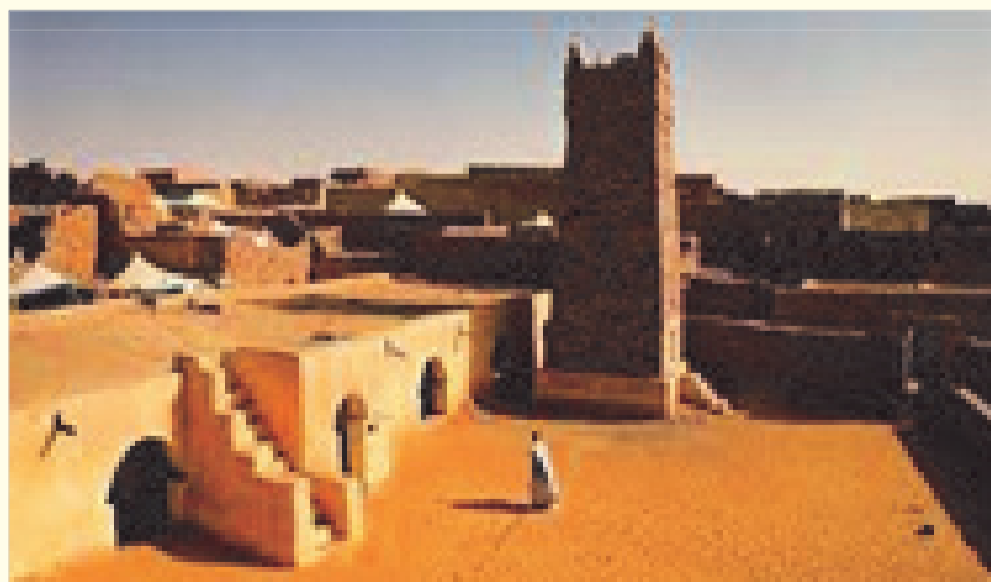
Utilizing domestic capital for productive investments in infrastructure, agriculture, fishing, education, and health should be a top priority. Below, I lay out a sector-specific strategy that policymakers in Nouakchott should adopt as they look toward diversifying the economy.

Extraction:

Although resource extraction is the backbone of many countries' economies, it has not been properly developed in Mauritania. The Mauritanian government, its partners, and stakeholders should develop strategies and mechanisms to develop the extractive sector in order to fund other, less-developed sectors. Extractive industry, if well developed and managed, can generate substantial revenue for the country and create employment op-

venue could be directed, in part, toward training and funding local fishing. This would both develop the fishing sector and create new employment opportunities for Mauritanians.

farming. This would help to reduce the youth unemployment rate and push the country toward attaining food self-sufficiency.



By: Talib Alaim Sabar
 email: talibsabar@gmail.com



For The First Time In Mauritania:

NEBOSH Certificate Courses Are Being Offered



EdUKate Mauritania has organised NEBOSH health and safety courses. These courses are offered for the first time ever in the country and they lasted from the 16th to the 25th of January. The courses were taught by Russell Prince, Chief Executive of SETA Training & Advisory Services, a certified NEBOSH health and safety course Gold Provider, headquartered in the UK. NEBOSH is an acronym for National Educational Board in Occupational Safety and Health, "it [NEBOSH] was set up around about 43 years ago with the main aim of providing accredited health and safety qualifications," said Prince, "and it won the Queen's Award for Enterprise a number of years ago, for exporting all their courses outside of the UK into many countries. [...] SETA as an organization has been offering these courses since 1993." He continued, "Since then we've offered these various courses in 52 different countries around the world." Russell Prince teaching a NEBOSH course at edUKate. A NEBOSH certificate offers new job opportunities. Holders of such qualifications can become health and safety officers, advisors, executives, and managers. This is the first time that NEBOSH courses are being taught in the country and they are offered by edUKate Mauritania. "We've run four different courses in Mauritania," explained Prince, "I've known Matthew Anderson, founder of EdUKate, for many years, and we were with him for a few different projects." Given their nature, these courses demand a certain level of the English language. "We looked at the market and we've also looked at the levels of English both written and spoken."

"The courses that we've offered this week were: Process Safety Management, which is 4 days with multiple choice examination, Health and Safety Leadership, which is one day with a written assessment, Incident Investigation, which is one day with a written assessment, Health and Safety Award, which is 3 days with a risk assessment type assessment." The training has been highly regarded by the attendees. "The courses are going smoothly, and the teacher is very professional and explains things in a straightforward, easy-to-understand manner," said El Khalil Chouaib, ACT Chief Executive, "I took this course to improve our company's policies in general and in particular in terms of health and safety. Which are very important for our business when dealing with gas and oil companies and their sub-contractors." EdUKate is an educational institute that "is set up to serve Mauritanian businesses and Mauritanian general public to enhance their skills," said Duncan Barnes, Principal of Edukate Mauritania, "starting with the English language and then bringing technical and vocational training to the country from the UK." Indeed edUKate has already started English language programs for both the general public and VIP clients. "We've already done 'Dangerous Goods by Air Sea and Road' courses back in December, which were very well received, and now we have done the NEBOSH courses. Next, we're looking into two more NEBOSH courses at the end of February or early March," stated Barnes, when I asked him about edUKate's future plans, he said that they consist of different phases: "Phase one, we've got a new building right next to the American Embas-

sy and it's going to be a pioneering international education center for Mauritania. That's where we'll do all of our English classes, business, leadership and other classroom-based courses courses. This should be open in the summer.

Next two to three years ahead, is going to be about teaching construction, plumbing, carpentry, electrical, and other industrial craft studies." "We're very resourceful and we're



El Khalil Chouaib, ACT Chief Executive

trying to meet the demands of everyone's budgets," said Barnes." EdUKate is also offering study abroad agency services to help students who are interested in studying in the UK in English, under graduate and post graduate and summer schools, for example English plus football, English plus tourism activities aimed at the 12-16 market". "The Key newspaper has got a nice circulation electronically and lovely hard copies. It was very well received by the British ambassador. He likes to read and keep himself up-to-date as we all do so it was a breath of fresh air to have an English newspaper to read in Mauritania," said Barnes as we wrapped up.

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