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## Sheraa awards 'Little Thinking Minds' \$100K Equity-Free Grant



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### By Staff Report

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d its first Access Sharjah winner, 'Little Thinking Minds', a \$100K equity-free grant. ere presented with a \$20K equity-free grant.

ch was launched in celebration of Sharjah World Book Capital 2019, to those working in the



working spaces and free licensing, a pool of skilled human capital and media coverage.

Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, Head of the Advisory Committee of Sharjah World Book Capital (SWBC), said: "Investments in entrepreneurs in the publishing sector is an investment in the future of the international book market. The aspirations of these businesses, combined with their sustainable products and services, drive the growth and success of the publishing industry. It also stimulates cultural entities to embrace projects and initiatives which advance knowledge and culture."

"As Sharjah serves a year long stint as World Book Capital 2019; the SWBC Committee had set a number of goals to achieve in 2019-20. Most notably, enabling access of all segments of society to books and knowledge, and fueling the publishing industry's growth. To attain them, the emirate organised a host of activities, including large-scale cultural events which received the firm support of both public and private institutions. Sharjah entities have added to our efforts by devising excellent initiatives, including Sheraa's Access Sharjah program which is a fitting testament to these efforts, and a clear example of how all our cultural projects and companies are guided by a collective vision - to facilitate people's access to knowledge and pave the way for new investments in publishing," Sheikha Bodour Al Qasimi added.

After the COVID-19 crisis and due to travel bans, the program was delivered online, including remote pitch training, mentorship, and final pitch day with external judges.

Najla Al Midfa, CEO of Sheraa, said: "Access Sharjah was created to solve one of the most critical challenges that start-ups face, which is gaining access to markets. The program serves as a launchpad into the Sharjah and wider UAE market, supporting the growth of innovative start-ups as well as furthering the emirate's vision to be a global destination for high impact businesses. For the first edition, we focused on start-ups in the book and digital content space, in honor of Sharjah being named UNESCO World Book Capital 2019. We received over 250 applications from around the world, and are proud to announce, 'Little Thinking Minds', 'BoBu', 'Narrativa', and 'almentor.net' as winners. We look forward to having these high-caliber start-ups call Sharjah their home and shall continue to work with them as they grow their ventures."

Additionally, Sheraa's partners, Sharjah Publishing City Free Zone (SPC Free Zone) and Emirates Publishers Association (EPA), lent considerable support towards helping the start-ups scale and enter new markets.

Rashid Al Kous, executive director of Emirates Publishers Association (EPA), said: "The EPA counts amongst its key objectives, the elevation of the UAE's publishing realities and the creation of a nurturing platform for publishers to enable the advancement of the sector, regionally. To fulfil these goals, we have been hosting and participating in an array of key regional and global initiatives. Through this strategic partnership with Sheraa, we are opening the doors to more entrepreneurial talents seeking to enter the field, promote their presence in the UAE's publishing market, and enable their role as partners in enhancing the local industry's scope and competitiveness."

Al Kous added: "Access Sharjah stimulates competitiveness and promotes an entrepreneurial business culture in companies venturing into publishing and other creative sectors. It also aligns with the overarching vision of the EPA, Sheraa and allied entities in Sharjah. This inclusive vision is inspired by Sharjah's cultural project and signals an important new investment in its key pillars. I hope the program will enable entrepreneurs to leverage the emirate's thriving business environment, harnesses key opportunities presented by Sharjah at its annual international events and fairs, and benefit from the local and regional initiatives which focus on the promotion of creative content creation."

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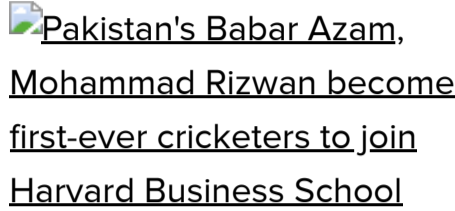
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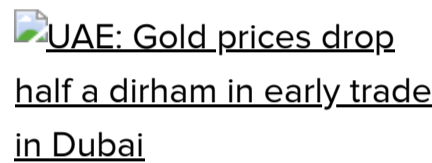
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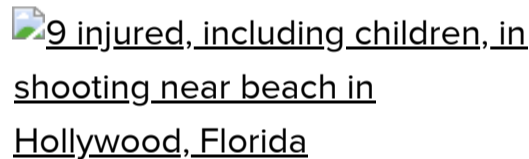
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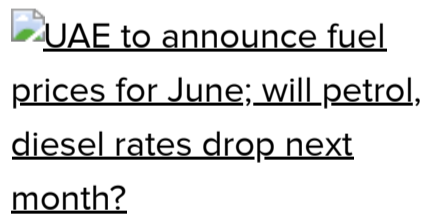
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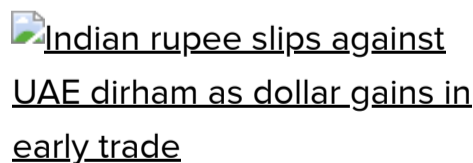
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