

# BEAAH HQ nurtures UAE's COP28 ambitions

The public-private entity's twin-pillared strategies of sustainability and digitalisation, and the state-of-the-art building that was designed by the late renowned Iraqi-British architect Dame Zaha Mohammad Hadid, showcases the picturesque and culturally-vibrant Sharjah's call to action against climate change



The BEAAH Group's ground-breaking new headquarters building, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, has been imagined as an "Office of the Future", with sustainability and digitalisation as its core principles. — SUPPLIED PHOTO

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Two dynamic Emirati women — Hind Al Huwaid and Nada Taryam — are powering a quiet change in the sustainability landscape in the picturesque emirate of Sharjah, where a public-private entity's twin-pillared strategies of sustainability and digitalisation are in sync with the UAE's COP28 ambitions ahead of the showpiece event that will be held in Dubai later this year.

While Al Huwaid is managing director (MD) of BEAAH Education, Taryam is MD, Civil and Architecture Projects at BEAAH — and their endeavour is taking place under the able leadership of His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah; and Khaled Al Huraimel, the group chief executive officer (CEO) of BEAAH Group, a position he has held since August 2009.

On March 30 last year, BEAAH Group officially opened its ground-breaking new headquarters, unveiling the "Office of the Future" amid the desert landscape at the Al Rowdat suburb in Rodhat Al Sidir in Sidhir, Sharjah. The headquarters building was designed by the renowned late Iraqi-British architect Dame Zaha Mohammad Hadid, who, unfortunately, passed away on March 31, 2016, around six years before the state-of-the-art building was inaugurated by the Sharjah Ruler.

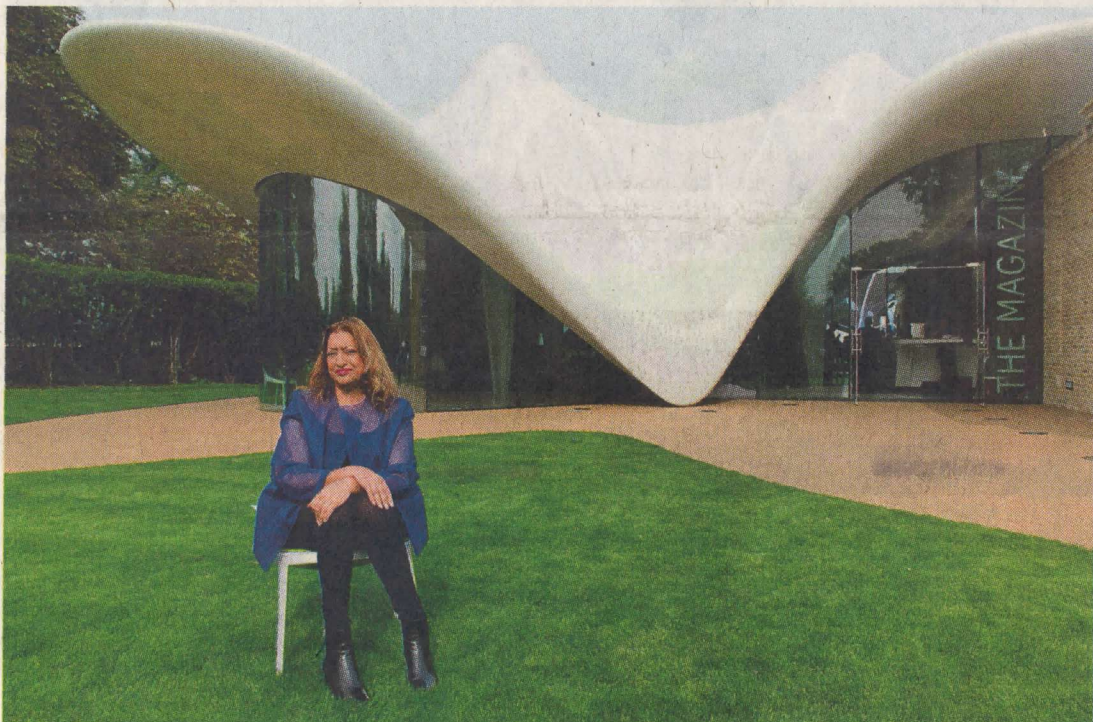
But Hadid's architectural marvel lives on.

Taryam is the proud torchbearer of that mantle — she is an alumnus of the same institution in London that Hadid attended, namely the Architectural Association School of Architecture, and has been at the helm of affairs at Civil and Architecture Projects, BEAAH, since 2013.

"The project has been in the works for over four years and Zaha Hadid Architects won the bid from among three contenders to build this iconic and contemporary landmark," Taryam told *Khaleej Times*.

Sharjah, which is known for its understated and publicity-shy way of stealing a sustainability march over other emirates in the UAE and across the Middle East and Africa Region (Mena) — the hub of Arab supremacy in a non-aligned world — has impressive data points that speak for its acute ecological concerns.

"Sharjah was the first emirate in the country to reach zero-waste capability last year, despite the overarching Covid-19-pandemic chal-



The late Zaha Hadid, the renowned Iraqi-British architect, has left behind a legacy of avant-garde buildings that are at the leading edge of architecture. In this 2013 photo, she poses before one of them — London's Serpentine Sackler Gallery. — AFP



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**Khaled Al Huraimel,**  
Group CEO, BEAAH Group

lenges. We notched up the highest waste diversion rate of 76 per cent, while the remaining 24 per cent was recycled through waste energy facilities. Besides, we've embarked upon an impressive programme to educate students in schools and universities across the country, along with corporate houses, about the far-reaching impact of climate change," Al Huwaid, a passionate educator, told *Khaleej Times*.

Taryam weighed in on the architectural marvel that's tucked away in scenic and culturally-vibrant Sharjah's desert landscape.

"The location was inspired by sand dunes, as reflected in the state-of-the-art architecture. The building looks like the intersection of two sand dunes, where the outdoor courtyards act as the



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**Nada Taryam,** MD, Civil and Architecture Projects, BEAAH

lungs of the building. It's like an oasis in the middle of a serene desert," an elegant and soft-spoken Taryam said.

BEAAH group CEO Al Huraimel elaborated on the company headquarters' net-zero emissions and how it has set a new standard for employee convenience and collaboration.

"The building is a manifestation of our twin-pillared strategy of sustainability and digitalisation. This strategy has led to diversification and growth of the Group's businesses, not only across industries but also across geographies. The new headquarters is our base of operations as we continue to pursue ways our businesses can make global impact," he said.

BEAAH's headquarters is ar-



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MD, BEAAH Education

guably the most artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled office in the Middle East. It is equipped to operate at LEED Platinum standards, the highest standard for energy efficiency in the world, and realise net-zero emissions. The distinct curvilinear features of the headquarters mimic the intersection of sand dunes, drawing from the desert landscape of Al Sajaa in Sharjah, where the building is located.

It's a major milestone for BEAAH, signalling its growth from a company founded to proactively tackle environmental issues within the emirate and across the UAE, to an international holding group with businesses in industries that are critical to realising a sustainable future.

Al Huraimel added: "The build-

## An architectural marvel

- » The design responds to its environment as a series of interconnecting 'dunes' orientated and shaped to optimise local climatic conditions
- » Passive and active design come together to create a new benchmark for green architecture in the region
- » Open plan office space and individual offices to host over 200 employees
- » State-of-the-art auditorium to accommodate 220 guests
- » Built to operate at LEED Platinum standards, completely renewably powered and achieve net-zero emissions
- » Curved structure allows the flow of natural sunlight while limiting harsh exposure and reducing energy required for lighting
- » High thermal mass allows heat to be absorbed during the day and dissipated at night, minimising energy required for cooling
- » Structure is made of recycled and locally sourced construction materials
- » Construction debris and waste processed in specialised BEAAH facilities
- » Smart meeting rooms that automatically transcribe meeting minutes and e-mail to all participants
- » Companion platform helps employees automate tasks such as sending administrative requests or ordering a beverage
- » Frictionless smart secu-

- » rity, including automated alerts when motion is detected in restricted areas
- » Secure, contactless pathways for employees to move through the building, including motion sensors and smart-phone control
- » Powerful, cutting-edge cloud capacities for end-to-end integration of systems, devices, and services
- » On-site sewage treatment plant recycles water and feeds it back into the building
- » Landscaping with regional plants irrigated using water-efficient systems and recycled greywater
- » Solar panels power the HQ, supported by Tesla battery packs for energy storage
- » Windows positioned to reduce solar gain and Low-E glass to minimise entry of infrared and UV light
- » Demand control ventilation and MEP systems with up to 90% energy efficiency
- » AI-integrated building with over 100 AI use cases, including self-learning and self-healing capabilities
- » Equipped for remote, hybrid, mixed and virtual reality work, such as in the Metaverse, supported by digital twin technology
- » Smart building technologies with AI to study and predict occupancy, automatically adjusting light and temperature based on preferences
- » Virtual concierge with facial recognition facility

ing is not only sustainable and digitally enabled, but it also achieves an unparalleled environment for employee comfort and productivity. It demonstrates that by adopting future-ready systems, we can achieve environmental targets and improve quality of life at the same time."

The employee experience of the headquarters includes contactless pathways with secure facial recognition check-in, a virtual concierge, smart meeting rooms and a companion app to automate day-to-day tasks (see box).

Light and temperature in the smart meeting rooms are managed automatically depending on occupancy and time of day. The rooms are also equipped for remote and hybrid work scenarios, with powerful collaboration tools.

In addition to the technological integrations, the structure and finishing of the headquarters is sustainable by design, facilitating minimal energy consumption.

The curved façade of the building is inspired by the surrounding sand dunes and is orientated to account for the prevailing Shamal winds. Expanding outwards, the Headquarters creates a sense of harmony with the natural desert environment.

The exteriors are made up of glass-reinforced concrete, reflecting the sun's rays for a natural cooling effect. Inside, slab and glass cooling helps naturally regulate the building with ambient temperatures. The building is also powered by a solar farm with energy stored in Tesla battery packs.

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| <p><b>SIZE</b><br/><b>9,000</b><br/>SQUARE METRES</p> | <p><b>SITE AREA</b><br/><b>9,300</b><br/>SQUARE METRES</p> | <p><b>CAPACITY</b><br/><b>500</b><br/>PEOPLE</p> | <p><b>LOCATION</b><br/>Al Rowdat Suburb,<br/>Rodhat Al Sidir, Sharjah</p> |
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