

Local Media Report
04 April, 2019

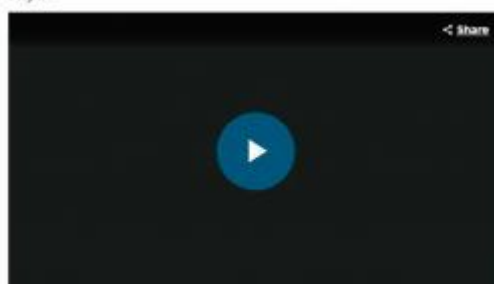


My Brands

Publication	Thenational.ae
Page	1
Date	03/04/2019
Value (\$)	3250

Saving turtles and tackling pollution: a day at sea with Abu Dhabi's oil response team

► The National joins Capt Saleh Ba Abbad and his team to witness the vital work they do



N John Donnelly
April 3, 2019



At the wheel of a speedboat surging through the waters of Mina Zayed, Capt Saleh Ba Abbad is a man on a mission.

As head of the oil-spill response team at Abu Dhabi Ports, he is responsible for ensuring the pristine waters of 10 ports across the emirate are kept that way.

"I am like the falcon of the sea," he says with a grin, his eyes scanning the horizon.

Capt Abbab started working at the ports in 1995 and the response team was established in 2006 to tackle pollution in the waters.

"Before you could see a lot of debris. But after my section came it all changed," he says. "Now look out. It is much better. It is all clean."

Ship movements in a single day at Mina Zayed can include several huge cruise ships, trawlers, commercial boats and vessels heading into the drydock. One oil spill could pollute the sea, harm marine life and disrupt business.

The National spent a morning with Capt Abbab and his team to see how they are fighting back against pollution – and even releasing rescued turtles back into the sea.

Abandoned fishing nets, discarded plastic, dumped timber and waste from tankers, oil spills and rescuing injured animals are just some of the issues they must deal with. The team collected a staggering 120 tonnes of floating sea debris across all 10 ports last year alone. At least 10 tonnes was recycled.

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A specialised boat, similar to a catamaran, allows workers to skim debris from the surface of the water and is vital to the operation. Two workers use large nets to retrieve plastic water bottles, styrofoam pellets and other rubbish that has been dumped. They can also dispatch sub-aqua divers into the sea to scan for underwater pollution.

Capt Abbad's team is comprised of 14 people, five speedboats and the debris boat. The speedboats can carry the team 83 kilometres per hour and they are used chiefly to target oil spills. The team gets daily reports from the ports, conducts patrols, monitors satellites and responds to any warnings of debris in the waters. Their work stretches from Khalifa Port to the east all the way west to Sila'a port on the Saudi border. There is someone on duty at all times, while Capt Abbad is on call 24-hours a day.

Over the past two months, three turtles were found dead while four were rescued and released back into the water. Capt Abbad has seen turtles suffocated by plastic or killed when boats crash into them. Abandoned nets are also a huge problem. "Some fisherman do not have that awareness," he says. "They [can trap] turtles and leave them there."

When they get trapped and cannot swim around, barnacles can attach themselves to their shells and they are unable to swim and can die. So the team takes the turtle, cleans the shell and returns it to the water.

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Capt Abbad had to confront a major oil spill in Mussaffah last year. Thousands of litres had been dumped into manholes, entered the sewerage network and the sea. He went straight the source, set up five plastic 100-metre booms – structures which float on the sea and contain the spill – to stop it spreading and the oil was tackled with skimmers.

"In just two hours the oil could reach the Corniche," he says. "But God gave me a chance and we stopped it."

Companies found guilty of causing oil spills face fines of up to at least Dh1 million and individuals caught throwing rubbish can be slapped with fines of thousands of dirhams.

Capt Abbad, now in his 40s, is from Abu Dhabi. He was in the army before the port posting and is one of those unsung heroes of the emirate. He drives a Toyota pick-up and, back on the quayside, recalls how the late President, Sheikh Zayed, used to just turn up and drive around Mina Zayed unannounced.

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"If there was a problem – he would say 'what do you need and I'll give you support.' He loved the sea and the desert. He liked all people – Pakistani, English, anywhere no problem. I never saw him angry."

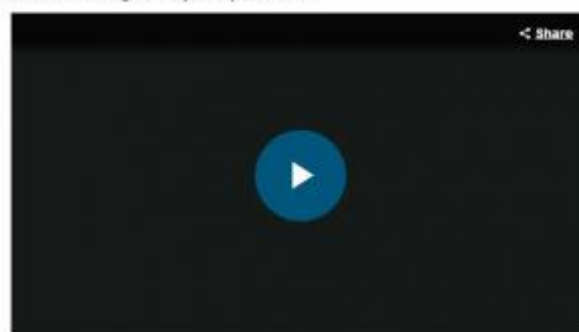
The oil response team is run by Safeen, which is in charge of marine services at the ports. About half of his team are Emirati with the rest from the Philippines, Pakistan, Ghana and Yemen and there are plans to expand it.

"I love the job," he says. "We help the environment and help the animals. Animals and humans are the same. Forget Muslim and Christian, we are all the same."

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Value (\$)	3250

The man who saves turtles while keeping Abu Dhabi's ports clean

► Meet Captain Saleh Ba Abbad, who leads efforts to save turtles weighed down by barnacles during his daily sweep of the seas



 **Willy Lowry**
April 3, 2019



As head of the oil spill response team at Abu Dhabi Ports, Capt Saleh Ba Abbad's task is to ensure the pristine waters of Abu Dhabi's 10 ports across are kept that way.

He and his team of 14 people pull plastic, abandoned fishing nets, debris and animals from the sea - sometimes even rescuing humans.

The team collected a staggering 120 tonnes of floating sea debris across all 10 ports last year alone. At least 10 tonnes was recycled.

Over the past two months, the team has found three dead turtles while four were rescued and released back into the water.

The injured turtles they find often have barnacles growing on their shells. The barnacles are a sign of sickness, indicating that the turtle is unable to scrape them off its back itself.

They can weigh the turtles down, stopping them from getting to the surface to breathe and leading them to drown.

So Capt Abbad's team takes the turtle, cleans the shell and returns it to the water.

Publication	Zawya.com
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Date	03/04/2019
Value (\$)	3250

HOME - ARTICLE

#UAE | 03 APRIL, 2019

Nomadic traces: journeys of Arabian Scripts delves into the most influential alphabets in the Middle East

Warehouse421's new commissioned exhibition **Nomadic Traces: Journeys of Arabian Scripts** is exploring the origins of six of the most influential alphabets in the Middle East, in collaboration with Khatt Foundation.

Press Release

Abu Dhabi: Warehouse421's new commissioned exhibition **Nomadic Traces: Journeys of Arabian Scripts** is exploring the origins of six of the most influential alphabets in the Middle East, in collaboration with Khatt Foundation.

Visitors to the exhibition can embark on a journey amidst nine newly commissioned artworks that delve into Middle Eastern history and culture, reflecting ancient scripts such as the Phoenician Script (1200 BCE – 100 CE); the Aramaic Script (750 BCE – 600 CE); the Musnad Script (1000 BCE – 400 CE); the Palmyrene Script (300 BCE – 300 CE); the Nabatean Script (250 CE – 450 CE); and the Early Arabic Scripts (6th C – 8th C CE).

Curated by Dr. Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès, **Nomadic Traces: Journeys of Arabian Scripts** features works by artists and designers from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. These works encompass a wide array of disciplines, including drawing, art installations and ceramics, as well as the design of jewellery, textiles, fashion, furniture and objects.

Nomadic Traces: Journeys of Arabian Scripts is open until 28 July 2019 at Warehouse421. For more information please click [here](#)

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and commercial activity relevant to the local and regional creative industries. Since November 2015, Warehouse421 has hosted 20 exhibitions and showcased the work of more than 400 local and regional artists and designers, providing a place for creatives to formally and informally converse. Warehouse421 offers public the opportunity to explore their creativity through interactive initiatives including talks, workshops, film screenings and performances. Located in the Mina Zayed of Abu Dhabi, Warehouse421 was converted from two former industrial warehouses and designed by the respected Janke Ingels Group (BIG).

About Dr. Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFaris
 Dr. Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFaris is the Founding Director of the Khatt Foundation and Khatt Books publishers. Based in Amsterdam, her professional, cultural, and educational activities extend from the US and Europe to the Arab World. She holds degrees in design and design history from Leiden University (PhD, 2017), Yale University (MFA, 1990), and Rhode Island School of Design (BFA, 1987). She has been a member of the select designers' organization AGI (Alliance Typographique Internationale) since 2015. She specializes in

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professional journals and contributed numerous academic papers to books on Islamic art, typography and design in the Arab world. She has also curated several design exhibitions including "Letters Off the Page" in The Tradition of Future—The Future of Tradition (Hans Der Kunst, 2009), Nomadic Traces: Typographic Journeys (Dar Bellag, Marrakech 2016-2017) and RAMS: Contemporary Arab Typographic Posters 2008-2018 (1971-Design Space, 2018). She supervises PhD candidates at Leiden University's Arts Program and works as design curator, writer, designer, and publisher.

About Khatt Foundation
 Khatt Foundation is a cultural institution dedicated to advancing Arabic typography and design research in the Middle East, North Africa and their diasporas. Building cross-cultural creative networks is an important instrument for this end.

The Khatt Foundation has developed a network of design specialists working on research projects and programs focused on contemporary design in the Arab World and Middle East. It aims to raise awareness of the vital role design can play in building a sustainable environment through conferences, forums, exhibitions and publications. It strives to stimulate design and production of socially relevant products and artifacts, to the highest professional standards.

The Khatt Foundation was founded in 2004 in Amsterdam. The goals of the foundation are: to build cross-cultural creative networks, provide a platform for dialogue and design research, support and initiate cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration, publish critical writing and establish a knowledge center on contemporary design from the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.