

Comments on the Expo 2020 in Arab News, Sep 29 2021

Dr. Nasser Saidi's comments appeared in an Arab News article titled "[How investment in Expo 2020 will pay off for UAE economy, burnish Dubai brand](#)" on 29th September 2021.

The comments are posted below.

Independent economists are taking a rather more cautious view of the long-term economic legacy.

"The 25 million expo visits may be a tad too optimistic during an ongoing pandemic," Nasser Saidi, a regional economics expert and Lebanon's former economy and industry minister, told Arab News.

But he recognizes the achievement of staging the event at all after such an unprecedented slowdown in travel, trade, and tourism during 2020.

"Little did anyone envisage the scenario within which the expo would eventually take place," he said. "Expo 2020 will be the first global mega-event to be held permitting physical entry of visitors, after the Tokyo Olympics went ahead without spectators.

"A successfully run event will boost Dubai's and the UAE's image as a global frontrunner in safely hosting large-scale events during the pandemic era. The expo will act as a stepping-stone for potential investors to buy into Brand Dubai and move businesses and families into the country."

Staging such a huge event is a costly and demanding exercise, although no detailed up-to-date figures on the actual cost are available from the organizers.

"Hosting such mega-events is usually found to be a strain on

country or city budgets," Saidi said.

"The economic case for hosting such events is based on the increase in economic activity, the rise in tourists and spending, building the intangible Dubai brand, as well as other qualitative and social impacts, like strengthening trade and business with global counterparts.

"Plus the feel-good factor, which is more important during a pandemic when trying to return to normal."