



Tagipedia to help 'correct' history

PALESTINIAN BUSINESSMAN FEELS THE NEED TO FIX MISTAKES MADE ON THE NET THROUGH A NEW SITE DESIGNED TO DO THE JOB

DUBAI

By JUMANA AL TAMIMI
Associate Editor

When Jordanian businessman of Palestinian origin Talal Abu Gazaleh entered a search for his name on the internet, he was shocked to find his birthplace mentioned as Tel Aviv.

Abu Gazaleh was born in the Palestinian city of Jaffa, which Israel occupied in the 1948 war, but his efforts to correct the mistake were rejected by the website.

Being a successful businessman, he thought of a better idea — an idea that had been brewing in his mind for a while. He could think of a number of reasons for putting it into action but his interest in the internet was perhaps the clincher.

He felt the need for "correct geography and history" if he were to download his own encyclopaedia from the internet.

"We want correct facts," Abu Gazaleh told *Gulf News* from Amman, the headquarters of his chain of companies, Tag-Org.

"Let us have another content environment. We are not refusing wrong content, we want another point of view to be displayed," he added.

That quest set the ball rolling for Tagipedia, a free online Arabic encyclopaedia that is expected to be launched by the year end with a million entries.

To Abu Gazaleh, the upcoming \$10-million (Dh36.7 million) project is the 29th company in a business empire he



Reuters

Web course

■ Dr Talal Abu Gazaleh with students during a course held at Talal Abu Gazaleh Graduate School of Business in Amman in March last year.

started building in the 1970s. The project will be also entirely self-financed — a fact the self-made businessman prides himself in.

Born on April 22, 1938, in Jaffa, Abu Gazaleh had to move at the age of 10 to the Lebanese village of Ghaziyah, like many Palestinian refugees in 1948. But this didn't stop him from pursuing his dreams.

He pursued higher education at the American University of Beirut (AUB), one of the most reputable higher education institutions in the Middle East.

After graduation, his first job was in an audit firm. In 1970, while attending an intellectual property conference in San

Francisco, Abu Gazaleh decided to pursue a career in the field of intellectual property rights. This perhaps explains the setting up in 1973 of the tycoon's first business venture, Abu Gazaleh Company (Tagco), simultaneously with Abu Gazaleh Intellectual Property (Agip). The enterprises specialised in accounting and intellectual property respectively.

Today, Tagco is among the top global players in auditing, and Abu Gazaleh's translation company is the biggest of its kind in the world.

Noting the variety of sectors his companies are active in, Abu Gazaleh said of the new project. "The group itself is one of pro-

fessionals with different disciplines, and therefore, everything was developed in-house," he said. "This is a completely new concept," he says of Tagipedia. "One of the principles we adhere to adamantly is that there is no politics, no religion and no personal bias."

HAVE YOUR SAY

What do you think of such a project? Would it boost the online content in Arabic? Should other languages have a bigger presence online, or English, the global language, will continue to be the preferred search language? Tell us at:

readers@gulfnews.com

IDENTITY CRISIS

The Palestinian birthplace dilemma

DUBAI

By JUMANA AL TAMIMI
Associate Editor

It is a predicament facing many people who were born in various Palestinian cities, towns and villages that became part of Israel after the 1948 war.

Where were they born exactly?

Were they born in Haifa, Palestine, or Haifa, Israel? Should their place of birth registered as Nazareth, Palestine, or Nazareth, Israel? The same question applies to Jaffa and other places in Israel.

The Palestinians, especially those who were born before 1948, refuse to be referred to as born in Israel.

Those who were born after the creation of Israel, and are born in Israel, don't face such a situation and are registered as born in Israel.

The Arab-Israeli conflict runs deep in several aspects of peoples' lives, not just the political or the security angles of the nearly 65-year-old conflict. It is not just a land dispute, it has grown into a full-blown identity crisis.

Occupied Jerusalem

The fight over occupied Jerusalem, which both sides claim as their capital, has also extended to passports and place of birth. Jerusalem is the only city in the world where its name stands alone in any passport.

The Palestinians refuse the Israeli version of adding Israel to the name of Jerusalem.

They argue that it can't be followed by Israel because it is still a disputed land that they insist it will eventually be part of the Palestinian state. Israel already says east Jerusalem is part of its eternal capital.

However, under international law, east Jerusalem is classified as an occupied city and until the issue is resolved, Jerusalem is unattached and regarded worldwide as just Jerusalem.