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# A musical bone of contention

GRAPEVINE

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

■ THERE'S A lot of talk about integrating Arab university graduates into hi-tech and other areas in which they can become part of the mainstream work force and earn enough to improve the quality of their lives. Some people are not only talking about opening the gates of opportunity but are actually doing something about it. A business conference sponsored by the Arabic business and economics publication *Malakom* together with Tsofen, which trains Arabs for work in Israeli hi-tech companies, was held at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Nazareth this week, with nearly all the addresses geared toward Arab integration. The conference, an annual event, was initiated in 2010.

Among the participants were founder and publisher of *Malakom* founder and publisher **Basel Ghattas**, who has a doctorate in environmental

engineering from the Technion, Tsofen CEO **Smadar Nehab**, Tel Aviv Stock Exchange CEO **Esther Lev-annon**, chairman of the board of directors of Bank Hapoalim **Yair Saroussi**, chairman of Israel Association of Electronics and Software Industries **Elisha Yanai**, CEO of Motorola Israel **Shimon Dik**, founder and director of JVP Venture Capital Fund **Erel Margalit**, CEO of IDC Israel **Gideon Lopez**, chairman of Palestinian Information Technology Association and co-manager of Dimensions Multimedia in Ramallah **Hassan Qasem**, scientist and founder of Plorol Biotech Prof. **Fuad Fares**, CEO of Jasper Design Automation's Israel Development Center **Ziad Hana**, senior associate in IBM R&D Group **Shadi Qupti**, hi-tech entrepreneur in interactive media for education purposes **Elia Abu Shamis**, CEO of E Paper Sign **Bilal Lahwani**, governor of the Palestine Monetary Authority Dr. **Jihad Al Wazir**, British Ambassador **Matthew Gould** and various Jewish and Arab entrepreneurs and financiers. Ghattas, who initiated the conference, noted the wealth of talent in the Arab sector that has been held back by many obstacles and that must be overcome not only by potential Arab employees but also Arab entrepreneurs. There has been progress since the first conference, he acknowledged, but there could be a lot more. If given the chance, talented Arab hi-tech people could make a signifi-

cant contribution to the Israel economy, he stated.