Pressure Mounts for Article 11

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The Chamber works on developing a draft that regulates benefiting from “Muntaji” (My Product) initiative.
The Omani economic scene needs activation of its elements and components and considering that Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry is the organizer of many economic activities all around the year. Those who are targeted by these events and activities shall react with them more positively and contribute towards making such events successful and presenting them in the manner that creates a brilliant picture of the Omani private sector.

We and others consider that the business sector is the sector of the future and we work as institution to expedite the steps for developing this sector and promoting it to a stage that would be relied upon in supporting the national economy and boosting its contribution in the national income. This would not be possible except by concerted efforts among us as individuals and institutions to serve this country that deserves from us unified stand to drive the Omani development process.

If we consider the means of developing the private sector we will find that boosting the services and products provided by this sector is inevitable and the interest of the national economy necessitates enhancing it and the private sector institutions shall work in tandem to raise their productive efficiency in order to achieve the anticipated results. Entrepreneurship necessitates follow up, care, skill, continuous learning, active presence and being well informed. If these factors are met by the entrepreneurs they will become the solid and wide base for a diversified economy and this what we aspire for through the great efforts exercised by the decision makers in our government.

We call upon all the affiliates of the Chamber to support the Chamber and participate and actively react with the efforts that it exercises for a better future for the business sector and the Omani economy in general.

Editor-in-Chief
The board of directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry requested the relevant authorities in the government to apply article 11 of the Law of Foreigners’ Residence in the Sultanate that stipulates: “It is prohibited to grant a visa for the foreign employee for a period of two years from his last date of departure from the Sultanate. Inspector General may oversee this period in the instances necessitated by public interest.” It is pointed out that the non-application of this article is considered as one of the reasons leading to the trespasses and problems in Oman’s labor market. The Chamber requested these authorities to respond to this request particularly since it was issued after elaborate discussions with relevant parties in the public and private sector.

A number of the businessmen and women from different governorates in the Sultanate confirm that they are harmed by the non-application of Article 11 of the Foreigners’ Residence Law because it has obvious and tangible negative effects on their establishments directly caused by the expatriate manpower some of which reached to the extent of blackmailing these establishments and companies and acting against their interests and leaking their professional secrets and expose their competitiveness to risk. Further, all these lead to the irregular and unhealthy turn-around of the employees in the private sector while the government endeavors to organize the labor market in a way that keeps pace with the actual development needs of such manpower, particularly the needs of the companies and establishments in the private sector.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) reacted to the continuous demand from private sector and it issued a statement after a meeting of the board of directors with relevant authorities in the government. The Chamber requested these authorities to respond to this request and confirmed its readiness to cooperate in full with all the relevant government and private sector parties to restrict the hidden trade and organize the labor market and achieve the secure percentages as determined for the expatriate manpower in the Omani market.
The Affected Companies: Our claim continues as we are affected as companies and we submitted an appeal demanding reintroduction of Article 11 of the Foreigners’ Residence Law.

Abdullah bin Khalifah Al Shafi, director of the board of chamber branch in North Batinah governorate and chairman of small and medium establishments committee in the branch confirmed that the application of the Foreigners’ Residence Law will contribute to creating stable work environment in the companies because the employee will not consider leaving the company and becoming independent by his own business through working in the previous company because he will be denied the entry to the country for two years or after the approval of the sponsor. He added, some professions require training and the Omanis train the expatriate and refine them in doing their job to be surprised afterwards with the resignation of this employee for fabricated reasons then his visa is cancelled to return later in the same business with another Omani sponsor. This manifests the involvement of some Omani businessmen since they allow the expatriate employee to make his independent business a matter that exposes the company that trained him to bear costs and losses.

On the other hand, Abbass bin Umair Al Maskary, the Manager of Administration and Human Resources of Omani Porcelain Company explained that the non-application of the Law of Foreigners’ Residence has a positive aspect as it preserves the positive view to the Sultanate by the international organizations with whom the Sultanate signed international treaties. However, the State shall enact some laws that protect the merchant citizen from the consequences of the hidden trade. For instance, a driver (who holds light or heavy licence) gets all initial training in a company until he gets licence. Then he resigns because he receives a better offer or for the purpose of leasing a vehicle through which he performs some of the types of the hidden trade. Here, the government represented by Royal Oman Police may cancel the driving licence since it is connected with the visa and labour card and after cancellation the worker shall be denied a licence for one or two years for instance. Exception from this may be given to the employees in high positions such as chief executive officers and general managers as well as doctors and engineers and this could be applied with other activities so that the Sultanate will not be embarrassed internationally. At the same time, the major concern of the State is to serve the citizen and not the organizations.

Rashid bin Mohamed Al Kalbani, chairman of Awan Company, believes that the application of the article is an important
Yusuf Al Harthy:
We thank the Chamber for highlighting this issue within its main role in serving the private sector and enhancing its roles in the comprehensive development.

Abdullah Al Shafie:
Application of Article 11 of the Foreigners’ Residence Law in the Sultanate will contribute in creating a stable work environment.

Rashid Al Kalbani:
Application of the article is an urgent need.

Yusuf Al Busaidi:
We demand applying this article as we as companies, particularly small and midsized companies, are suffering greatly.

Adel Al Kiyumi:
Non-application of Article 11 of Foreigners’ Residence Law harms the Omani market.
and urgent in the view of the government's trend towards eliminating hidden trade. He adds that the relevant authorities shall find regulations to organize the application of the article taking into consideration the type of the profession and the activities performed by the expatriate employee as well as the time spent by him in the company. For instance, the employee who has spent shorter period of time may be allowed to shift to another sponsor without applying the article to him and vice versa, the article shall be applied to the employee who spends a long period of time.

Al Kalbani adds: “We believe that it is necessary to apply article 11 to the investors more than others and we are sure here in the Sultanate we are bound by international treaties. However, if we refer to the decisions of the countries who call for freedom of trade we will find that they apply strict laws in the same situations and moreover they apply to specific nationalities and exclude others. How can they enact laws that they don't comply with and require us to apply them?

Adel Sulaiman Al Kiyumi, chairman of Al Kiyumi Electric Company pointed out that as the Sultanate is characterized by stable labor market this makes it attractive to many of the gulf companies in particular and international companies in general. The most important features of the targeted employee is that he shall have experience in the market and this they will not find except in the companies working in the same field. This affects the existing company since all the strategies and plans of the company and its customers go with that employee to the competitor company. This harms the stability of the existing companies. It is not secret this law encourages the hidden trade and harms the Omani market as the expatriate employee, after receiving the experience will need only a sponsor since the law allows him to shift to the new sponsor the next day after resigning.

Yusuf bin Yaqub Al Busaidi, chairman of Asia Food Industries Company says: The issue of application of article 11 is important and it was previously discussed during the last period and we as small and medium companies suffer a lot from the non-application of the article. We recruit the expatriate manpower, train and qualify them and give them full experience and at a moment they depart from the country or transfers to other establishment, particularly the larger ones. Hence, due to non-application of this article, the small establishments become mere training centres for the larger companies as the smaller establishment spends the time and funds in recruiting the employee and, training, qualifying, making him gains experience and enabling him in the market. Therefore, we believe that the application of this article within the context of appropriate options for all the parties that do not affect the obligations of the Sultanate nor affect the labour market negatively will lead to organization of the movement of the expatriate manpower in the Omani market.

Businessman, Sheikh Yusuf bin Yaqub Al Harthy, emphasized that the private sector companies are harmed by non application of article 11. The companies are actually harmed by the non-application of this article. We believe the application of this article will restrict poaching as the companies spend much on recruiting the expatriate employees. On the other hand, those employees do not meet their obligations with the companies and search for other opportunities outside the company and often shift to another company or leave the Sultanate and return within a short period.

Sheikh Yusuf Al Harthy talked about instances that happened in such a way and the company lost opportunities and funds that might be said to occur as a result of non-application of article 11. He emphasized the importance of coordination during the next period between all the relevant parties to find appropriate solutions to achieve the interests of all the parties without exception. He thanked OCCI for highlighting these issues.

Abdul Hussein Jaafar, deputy chairman of Muttarh Insulators Company referred that the expatriate employees, after gaining the experience, and sometimes leaking the significant documents and secrets of some companies’ establish their own businesses that compete with the national companies, particularly the ones that comply with the Omanization percentages. Thus, those companies are harmed and they find themselves among unfair competition even at the level of the local market in addition to the effect of that on their development plans and programs. Many of these companies incurred losses, a matter that necessitates reconsidering this issue in the best interests of the country.

In a previous meeting of the board of directors, the Chamber addressed a call to the relevant government authorities to apply article 11 of the Foreigners’ Residence Law in the Sultanate as non-application of this article is considered as one of the reasons that lead to many problems in the Sultanate’s labor market. They board requested the authorities to respond to this call particularly since it is made after repeated and continuous correspondence from all the relevant entities in the public and private sector. The board confirmed the importance of the cooperation of all the parties in the government and private sector to show the necessary response in order to restrict hidden trade and organize the labor market and achieve the secure and specified percentages of the expatriate employees in the Omani market.
Role of Chambers in the Economy

Economic studies and researches department in the Chamber prepared previously a study titled “Chambers of Commerce and Industry and their Role in the Economy”. The study consists of many points presented in detail by Al Ghorfa Magazine in the following paragraphs.

Origin of Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Chambers of commerce were not known as a modern concept except when the first chamber of commerce was established in Marseille in France in 1599 as an initiative from a number of merchants in Marseille city in order to represent their interests in the port. In the 18th Century chambers of commerce were established in different parts of France, England, Ireland, United States of America and some other countries. With the increase of importance of industry in the economic activity, it was necessary to establish industrial chambers or expand the scope of the existing chambers of commerce to include the industrial sector. Further, the concept of chambers of commerce was made common after the First World War and the establishment of these chambers was expanded particularly after the end of the Second World War.

In the Arab world, the first system for the chambers of commerce was issued on 6 Safar 1297 Hijri corresponding to 1885 during the Ottoman rule of the Arab countries. In Jamada Al Akhira 1328 H, the

- Study: Despite their new incorporation, some of the GCC chambers now occupy a leading position among the Arab chambers.
- Aleppo Chamber of Commerce is the first Arab Chamber
- OCCI is a successful experience
Study published by Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1981 showed that the age of the Arabian chambers may exceed one hundred years and around 75% of the Arabian chambers were established after the Second World War. The study also showed absence of direct relationship between the age of the chamber and some performance indicators of level of services, particularly in terms of conducting studies and researches and providing opinions and proposals. Despite their novelty, some of the GCC countries’ chambers now occupy the leading position in the movement of the Arabian chambers in particular in the ability to represent the interests of their members and elaborate the viewpoint of the private sector in many local and international economic issues in a scientific way. This is on account of many factors, the most important of which are: the economic and political stability in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

The Role of Chambers of Commerce in the Economy

Chambers in their present concept are considered as regulatory framework for business sector and the role of Chambers of Commerce and Industry is multifaceted:

• Provide information, data and studies that assist in taking the investment decisions and carrying out the different economic activities.
• Explore the investment and trade opportunities and acquaint the businessmen with the economic activities in which they are interested.
• Endeavor to seek suitable facilities and supporting capabilities to the products and services provided by the public sector.
• Examine the problems and obstacles that face the private sector institutions and follow up solving them with the relevant authorities.
• Provide legal, economic and other advisory in all the issues related to the establishment and operation of the projects.
• Acquaint the businessmen with the developments in relation with the economic systems, instructions and directives relevant to their businesses.
• Develop investment and commercial relationships between businessmen and their peers in friendly countries and organize visits to enhance ties.
• Endeavor to develop the activities performed by private sector and enhance its performance and raise its position in the structure of the national economy.
• Organize events to discuss international, regional and local issues and developments and their positive and negative impact on the private sector’s performance.
• Give opportunity to the businessmen to meet in a regulatory framework nurtured by the Chambers to exchange experiences and study the common issues and topics.
• Improve the business environment by reconciliation and settlement of commercial and financial disputes among the national establishments or between them and foreign establishments.
• Express viewpoints of the businessmen about the economic directives and the regulatory legislations and procedures that affect their interests.

• Conduct procedural works that organize the relationships between the institutions and their transactions with other entities including the attestation of the documents and papers and issue certificates of origin.

OCCI, a successful experience

Umbrella for private sector and partner in comprehensive development

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry [OCCI] was established by virtue of a Royal Decree on 15 May 1973 to become the supporting tool to the Omani economy through its role in cherishing the affairs of the private sector and work to develop it and contribute in promoting its different developmental roles to add to the efforts of other economic entities in supporting the national economy and achieving the national strategy that aims to diversifying the resources of income and improving the living standards of citizens through participation in providing the employment, education, training and qualification opportunities in different sectors. All these are in addition to its roles in stimulating the Omani private sector establishments and companies to participate in the comprehensive development plans through adopting the establishment of development projects in all the economic sectors and fields such as trade, industry and agriculture and representing the Sultanate and Omani private sector in the regional and international forums and express the Omani viewpoint on the economic issues. The Chamber also has relations with regional and international institutions through its membership in the common associations and chambers.

Partnership with the government

In addition to its role in developing and serving the private sector, OCCI is a partner with the government in the comprehensive building and development of the country and it exercises this role through its membership in the committees of five year plans and long term plans as well as other government committees in addition to its role in studying and reviewing the laws and legislations before enforcing them. Its efforts with the other productive sectors during the financial and economic crises such as trends of inflation and international financial crises and the lead in taking necessary precautionary steps is commendable. Thence, it contributes with other authorities in supporting the development process and direct its paths to serve the growth and prosperity of the people and the nation.

Further, the Chamber continuously strives to open wider fields to serve its members in the Omani private sector and in the different economic sectors to maximize their benefits through these markets that may serve them in two main parts: The first is related to helping them to reach with their national products to the largest number of international markets in export as the Omani products are characterized by high quality that facilitates entering the most difficult and fortified markets in terms of customs and non-customs obstacles while the other part is related to educating the Omani importers about the most appropriate international markets for the import in terms of quality, prices and other factors.
The campaign “Participate with us to Promote” was launched by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry within the nine initiatives at the beginning of the present tenure of the board of directors that focuses on sending delegations from small and medium establishments (SMEs) to the countries developed in different fields in order to benefit from the experiences of their peers working in similar fields in other countries and promote these establishments and boost their efficiency and improve their productivity.

The first commercial delegation in this initiative enjoyed the visit to the city of technology, Bangalore, in the Republic of India which is considered as a centre of technology as it consists of more than 1,500 technology companies. It is very renowned internationally in the field of “computer” and “information technology” as there are branches of international companies such as “Yahoo!” and “Microsoft” in this city. The visit was during the period 23 to 28 March 2014 under the sponsorship of Khimji Ramdas Company.

HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry pointed out that: The Chamber actually started executing the initiatives that it launched. The delegation to India was the first delegation in the initiative “Participate with us to Promote” and it included 17 persons from among the owners of the SMEs who are specialized in the field of information technology as India is considered as one of the developed countries in this field in order to avail.
of their experiences. HE added: “We will send many commercial delegations during the next days to many developed countries to serve the private sector in general and SMEs in particular. He paid his special thanks to Khimji Ramdas Company for the support that it extended to the commercial delegation to India and called the other companies to cooperate with the Chamber during the next period in such initiatives.

About the sponsorship by Khimji Ramdas Company to this delegation, Mr. Pankaj Khimji said: “We, as establishments working in the private sector, support such initiatives to encourage and stimulate SMEs. This support is considered as part of the social responsibility that our institution usually undertakes. We hope that the delegation would achieve the goal put for it and gain new experiences and knowledge by meeting their peers in India.”

Hamid bin Mohamed bin Zaman Al Raisi, director of the board and chairman of the board of the Chamber in Musandam Governorate and president of the delegation said: “This delegation endeavored to enhance the commercial and economic ties among the Omani businessmen and their peers, the Indian businessmen. It also tried to create actual and tangible partnerships among them. Since India has the environmental, human, commercial and investment elements, this makes it one of the countries that realizes great economic growth. We are working to avail of the Indian experiences in the different economic fields in addition to concluding the mutual commercial agreements and boost trade exchange between the two countries.

Hamoud bin Said Al Mahrouqi, vice president of the commercial delegation to India, pointed out that the commercial delegation aimed at opening new horizons for the owners of SMEs and assist them to understand the world outside their country and the latest technologies, particularly in the field of information technology. The owners of these establishments shall draw clear objectives that make them benefit from these meetings and visits in developing their establishments.”

**Information Technology Companies**

The delegation visited many of the establishments and companies operating in the field of information technology and computers. Among these companies was Infosys Company, a multinational company specialized in the provision of information technology services and its office is located in Bangalore city in India. The company operates nine development centers in India and has more than 30 offices around the world and considered as the largest information technology company operating in India and it has around 76,000 employees all over the world.

Further, the delegation visited Baehal Software Limited that provides the solutions of information technology and services. It was established in 1993 and operates in designing programs and applications specialized in the system and planning of the resources of the institutions and engineering services and technological publications for multimedia. The company serves an extensive sector in the field of its business such as aviation, defence, transportation, civil aviation, railways, airports and engineering industries.

**Technological solutions**

The delegation visited the research and development center that is concerned in developing research capabilities and availing of them and correlating the findings of the scientific research with the scientific, technological and creative activities and translating them to productive activities and new businesses. It also contributes in solving the national problems related to the infrastructure and natural resources and the requirements of production and business. It also identifies the capabilities and activities and coordinate among them and developing them in the research fields in the educational institutions and different scientific centers and building information database. This helped the delegation to think about creative methods in developing their products in different fields. The visit helped them to think in finding technical solutions to many of the problems.

The delegation visited the space centre (Antrix) which is the Indian Space Research Authority located in Bangalore. The main activity of the Authority is researches in the field of space and developing and applying these researches to the reality of India. The Authority is also involved in production and marketing of the space industries such as satellites and radars and the budget of the Authority amounts to US$ 940 million.

**Real partnerships**

The participants from the owners of SMEs have their own viewpoint and their impression about their participation in the delegation to India is expressed by Khalid bin Khalifah bin Hameed Al Hatmi, owner of Digital Media for Computer and Electronic by saying: “The commercial delegations make us acquainted with the owners of SMEs operating in the same field, a matter that enabled me benefit from the experiences of my colleagues in the delegation and their experiences in the commercial activities and also benefit from the experience and knowledge of the Indian companies and searching the possibility of cooperating with them.”

Al Hatmi added: “I have some proposals that may help in
benefiting from the delegation. I propose well preparation after confirming the participation through holding a meeting by the members of the delegation or at least there should be good introduction about the business of the establishment and the objectives of participation in the delegation. I hope also to give introduction about the companies to be visited in the hosting country and prepare a pre-developed schedule for preparation and sufficient search of data in the internet to develop a plan or targets on meeting the officials of the mentioned companies.

Modern technologies in management
Mohamed bin Ridha Mahdi, owner of Mohamed El Mahdi Trading Establishment says: “I have drawn many goals for myself about the participation in this delegation focused on identifying the latest techniques in India and visiting some of the management mechanisms and how to activate them in making success to the commercial establishments and seeking companies to create future partnership in the Sultanate. This is in addition to searching real partnerships with SMEs operating in the same field. This visit realized these goals and we are still looking forward to concluding partnerships with the businessmen whom we met through communicating with them and searching the possibility of cooperation.”

“I wish our colleagues who would participate in further delegations would be patient during the visit and bear the difficulties of travel because this is a commercial and not tourism visit in order to realize the maximum benefit to them.”

He added that he would like to express his sincere thanks for the efforts exercised to render success to this mission, particularly from the part of the chairman of the board of directors of the chamber and his deputy as well as the coordinator and all those who participated in this delegation.

Yusuf bin Salem bin Suhail Al Maashani, owner of New Version for Trading and Contracting Establishment says: “Our participation in this delegation was excellent. We have benefited from Indian experiences in the field of information technology particularly in software development. I have seen the experiences of these companies operating in Bangalore and it was invaluable benefit, particularly four visit to Infosys Company.”

He added: “I advise anyone who participates in these delegations to avail of such visit to the maximum and to facilitate the matters. I advise to prepare all the letterheads of the establishment in addition to curriculum vitae and the person shall specify what does he needs from the companies that would be visited to facilitate the meeting that would result in concluding partnership contracts with institutions from other countries.”

Pre coordination and focus on specific goals
Yunus bin Murad bin Ismail Al Balushi, owner of Green Apple Commercial Projects Establishment says: “The main goal of my participation was to acquaint with the Indian experience in the field of information technology and to benefit from their progress in this field. The visit enabled me to achieve many of my goals and I am aspiring to meet many of the Indian businessmen from smaller establishments.”

He added: “It is preferable that direct coordination would be made with the relevant authorities in other countries during a prior sufficient period of time and all the particulars shall be prepared with those who are nominated for the visit.”

At present the direct forums and meetings among the owners of the small and medium establishments and their meetings with their peers from other countries have become one of the essential elements that should be taken into consideration to develop and boost these establishments. Such delegations and meetings have other benefits that are reaped by the participants through acquainting with those who are working in the same field in the same country, a matter that in turn would build bridges that strengthen these establishments and support their growth. On this basis Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry is very keen to provide the appropriate environment to the owners of the SMEs and give them opportunity to visit the developed countries and take from their accumulated experiences in different fields.

Mohamed Ridha Mahdi
Yunus Al Balushi
Yusuf Al Maashani
**Economic Caravans**

**THE WAITING IS ON**

After the lapse of one year from Al Dhahira Economic Conference, citizens of Ibr, Yanqul and Dhank look forward to investment after years of waiting.

The role of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry as a public utility institution is to support everything that promotes the economic interests in a way that boosts the spirit of partnership with the different government and private parties. As an embodiment to the Omani economic vision that aims to generalize the gains in the comprehensive renaissance in all the Governorates and Wilayas of the Sultanate Oman, the OCCI organized “the Economic Development Conference of Al Dhahira Governorate” during the period 11-12 March 2013.

Due to its great importance, the conference received a merited official care from the Government as HE Sultan bin Salem Al Habsi, Secretary General of Supreme Council for Planning sponsored the opening ceremony while HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Said Al Kilbani, Minister of Social Development opened the program for the second day of the activities of the Conference.

The Conference held at the Crowne Plaza Muscat Hotel witnessed massive participation from those who were concerned with the economic and investment affairs from government and private sectors. The work papers submitted during the two-day conference presented the reality of economic development in Al Dhahira Governorate and the challenges that faced it and they gave optimistic aspect about the eventual economic activity of the Governorate considered as an important link between many of the governorates of the Sultanate as well as between the Sultanate and many of the neighboring countries.

The positive dialogues and discussions underlined the importance of the strategic location of Al Dhahira Governorate and in understanding what it contains in regard with the promising unutilized economic and investment stock. The Conference confirmed the importance of giving Al Dhahira the care that it deserves similarly to the other governorates of the Sultanate. Accordingly, the Conference recommended to constitute a ministerial committee from the Council of Ministers to visit the three wilayas of Al Dhahira governorate, (Ibr, Yanqul and Dhan) to identify their actual development needs and meet the stakeholders including the businessmen and women and to conduct a comprehensive economic study about the economic reality of Al Dhahira Governorate.

Accordingly, Al Dhahira Governorate people appeal to the Government to execute the recommendations of that successful economic conference because they are important to identify the development needs and requirements of the Governorate that would greatly contribute in the development and growth of Al Dhahira Governorate that is a frontier governorate, both economically and socially.

Ali bin Salah Al Kalbani
OCCI Board Member and Chairman of OCCI’s Branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate
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Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry was one of the stops of the Chinese delegation that is marketing the Chinese Import and Export Exhibition. The delegation is in tour of many countries to introduce the exhibition, that originally needs no introduction, and to enhance ties with the business society in different countries as the exhibition targets this categories and will be active through its participation, particularly with regard to import and export.

For those who wish to participate, the following lines will give an introduction about this renowned exhibition. China Import and Export Exhibition was established in 1975 and then it was known as Canton Exhibition. It is held twice a year once in the spring round during April and May months and autumn round during October and November months. The exhibition was successfully held for more than 100 consecutive rounds till it became a comprehensive international commercial carnival in China. In addition to its long history, it is distinct for its vast scope and comprehensiveness to include all types of commodities and large number of participants and huge volume of commercial exchange.

**Diversified products**

The exhibition is managed by the Chinese Department of Trade and the Public Government of Guang Dong district and executed by the Chinese External Trade Centre. The exhibition attracts a periodical follow up from the presidents of the State Councils due to its great significance and because it is the largest exhibition in China in terms of total display area that exceeds one million and one hundred sixty thousand square meter. The total number of the display wings exceeds 59,000. China Import and Export Exhibition combines between the characteristic of the comprehensive traditional exhibition and the specialized modern exhibition.
The Sultanate is the location for the symposium for introducing the Chinese import and export exhibition.

**The exhibition:**
Traditional and comprehensive, specialized and modern.

**Chinese Ambassador in the Sultanate:**
Omani Chinese relationships are distinct.

**Wang Rinching:**
The Sultanate is the fourth in Arab countries in terms of the volume of commercial exchange with China.

**Ridha Al Saleh:**
Invitation to Omani businessmen to participate in this important event.

as it consists of more than 150,000 diversified products from all the parts of China including excellent traditional products of light industries, textile and weaving, dresses, mechanic and electrical products of high technology and high value addition. The Chinese export institutions of good reputation receive preference in participation in the exhibition.

China Import and Export Exhibition “Canton Exhibition” attracts merchants from all parts of the world who meet annually in Quang Chu, the area on which the exhibition is held, and it is attended by more than 200,000 participants from 210 Countries and regions and from different cultures and beliefs with a common objective represented in exchanging information and purchasing commodities.

The introductory symposium was held in the presence of HE Wu Geu Hong, Ambassador of Peoples Republic of China in the Sultanate, Mr. Wang Rinching, head of China External Trade Centre and the accompanying delegation of interested businessmen. The symposium was inaugurated by a speech by HE the Chinese ambassador in which he said that the Omani Chinese relationships are distinct and age-old and it is in progressive development particularly during the last years due to the policies of the two countries that are open to the world. He added: “The volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate and China amounted to US$ 23 billion out of which 20 US$ billion for oil and gas products and the three billions for other products. HE emphasized their readiness in the Chinese embassy in the Sultanate to exercise their maximum efforts towards developing the Omani Chinese relationships and facilitating the work of the Omani businessmen who intend to invest in Peoples Republic of China in a manner that serves the enhancement of the trade exchange between the two countries.”

**The exhibition is a valuable opportunity**
After that Engineer Ridha bin Juma Al Saleh, deputy chairman of the Chamber for Administrative and Financial Affairs gave a speech in which he welcomed the representatives of Chinese External Trade Centre and thanked them for their efforts in introducing China Import and Export Exhibition in its 115th round. He added: “China Import and Export Exhibition is considered as one of the most important platforms for external trade in China and it is an indispensable opportunity for the companies who are working in the international markets.
interested in import and export as it represents the most effective channel in this field. It is enough to know that the exhibition in its previous round witnessed an unprecedented participation as the number of the companies participating in the exhibition reached to 24,500 companies from all over the world.”

He added: “Figures and statistics indicate that Republic of China is considered as one of the essential trade partners of the Sultanate and many other Arabs countries. In this context, we are pleased to inform that the second round of the Arabian Chinese Exhibition for the current year will host the Sultanate as honorary guest in the exhibition and this is very appreciated by us and we will attach great care to this participation to appear at the required level due to our belief in the significance of these exhibitions in introducing the Sultanate politically and socially besides their role in introducing the investment opportunities and fields available in the Sultanate and supporting the commercial and investment relationships with the trade partners around the world.”

He concluded his speech by thanking the Chinese External Trade Centre for its efforts in introducing the exhibition and praised their visit to the Sultanate. “Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomes any enquiries that are sent by the Chinese businessmen who are interested in making commercial partnerships with their Omani counterparts or who are interested in investment and that the Chamber is ready to provide all the facilities for them to increase the volume of the trade exchange and reciprocal investment.”

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**China is the largest oil importer from Oman**

After that Wang Riching, head of Chinese External Trade Centre gave a speech in which he elaborated that the delegation’s visit was part of a tour made by a team from Chinese External Trade Centre in many countries with the objective of introducing and marketing the exhibition. He mentioned that the Sultanate occupies the fourth position in Arab countries in terms of volume of trade exchange with China and on the other hand China is considered as the largest importer of oil from the Sultanate. “The Omani Chinese trade relationship will receive a progressive development and promising prospective.” Wang Riching confirmed that the long history of the exhibition qualifies it to become one of the most important exhibitions in the world that receives a peerless participation from all over the world. “We look forward to a vast participation from the Omani businessmen in the exhibition in its next round.”

On the same occasion, the chamber announced sending a delegation from the businessmen and women to attend the exhibition. The members of the delegation were from among the businessmen who attended the symposium and contributed in enriching it.

The symposium was concluded by a rich interaction by audience who addressed their enquiries to the members of the Chinese delegation about the wings and how to participate and the procedures for attending the exhibition. Introductory booklets about the exhibition and the district on which it is going to be held were distributed as a part of the introductory campaign of the exhibition.
The company has provided RO 2.045 Million towards December 2013 is RO 239.946 million with an increase of 10.47%. The total assets size as of 31 December 2013 continues to slightly higher in 2014, at around 3.7%, rising to 3.9% in 2015. The reliance on emerging economies to keep the global economy up will still continue as emerging markets are expected to contribute 55% to global growth in 2014, and advanced economies 45%. But volatility of capital inflows and increase in risk premium triggered by FED tapering quantitative easing measures could lead to disruptive growth not only in developed economies but also in developing countries. Uncertainties associated with the political situations beyond economic risk could derail the world economy far away from the projections outlined in the baseline forecast.

In the GCC the overall macroeconomics outlook remains positive, having maintained solid growth over the year. GCC offers strategic advantages, such as availability of cheap energy and feedstock supply, low tax environment, well-developed infrastructure, growing population and increasing income levels, conducive for the development of various industries in the region.

Domestic Economy
In the regional market, Oman has witnessed good growth due to strong and stable oil prices, reserves and budget surpluses and anti-cyclical fiscal policies. During the year 2014 the stable oil prices and an expected increase in infrastructure spending will boost Oman’s Gross Domestic Product.

The government initiatives to strengthen the small and medium enterprise, contribute significantly to the economic development of the country. Finance and leasing sector, which is a major contributor for funding of SMEs, thus plays a significant role in the economic development.

With demand for capital goods expecting to go up due to higher infrastructure expenditure announced by the Government in the eighth five year plan 2011 to 2015, the overall macroeconomics outlook remains positive, having maintained solid growth over the year. GCC offers strategic advantages, such as availability of cheap energy and feedstock supply, low tax environment, well-developed infrastructure, growing population and increasing income levels, conducive for the development of various industries in the region.

Financial Highlights
In the year 2013 the company achieved a growth in business volumes, earnings and profitability. The company has proposed a dividend of 25% for the year 2013 comprising 17.5% cash and 7.5% unsecured compulsorily convertible bonus stock bonds with a face value of 100 Baisas to be paid from company’s share premium account, thus maintaining its track record of paying consistent dividends without interruption since inception. This takes the cumulative dividend paid to shareholders to 232% since inception.

Capital Enhancement
During the year the company has converted twenty million fully compulsorily convertible bonds and 10,890,435 fully compulsorily convertible stock bonds aggregating to RO 3,889,645/- into equity by issuing 7,193,558 shares and 3,903,920 shares respectively. Further the company issued 5% stock dividend by issuing 10,104,389 equity shares. With these additional equity, the company’s equity capital stands at RO 22,330,699/-. During the previous year 2012, the company has issued RO 10 million compulsorily convertible bonds to be converted into equity in five equal tranches of RO 2 million each, out of which RO 2 million bonds will be converted into equity during the year 2013. Further the company proposes bonus stock bonds of 7.5% for the financial year 2013, which will increase the capital further. The company is well capitalized and the capital adequacy stands at a healthy 26.9%.

Concerns
Diminishing margins due to intense competition, raising cost of funds, new banks entering the market and higher delinquencies due to reduced cash flow at the individual borrower level are causes of concern. The impact of the credit crunch and continuation of slow recovery could see increase in delinquencies resulting in dilution of the NPA coverage.

Prognosis
We foresee a challenging yet optimistic year ahead, given the expected economic turn around and the positive economic indicators. The company is very well positioned to take advantage of the one opportunities given the high capital structure, high net worth, free leverage, and fresh funds. Your company is expected to maintain its track of profitability and dividends in spite of challenging circumstances.

Acknowledgement
On behalf of the company and the Board of Directors, I would like to express my deep gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said for his vision and leadership, which is taking the Sultanate on the new path of development and prosperity. We are also grateful to the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority and other regulatory authorities for their guidance and support. We also thank our shareholders, bankers, dealers and customers for their continued trust, confidence and support. Last, but not the least, we acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the management and staff of the company.

Khalid Said Al Wahibi
Chairman
Competition from expatriate manpower affects the success of the Project.

I am on continuous challenge with myself to prove that the Omani may be creative in any field.

Suleiman Mohamed Al Dhaawi
Owner of Car Cleaning and Polish Project

SELF CHALLENGING

Interviewed by Yahya Al Hussaini

Wherever you put him the Omani will come out successful and he will emerge in any of the types of trade and he leaves his footprints through his effort, perseverance and patience. This youth who is filled with vigor and thought, has aspiring soul and strong determination. He has clear vision to materialize what he wishes. His business and scope of work does not attract much interest from youth and no one may think that an Omani will compete in such a field. The business of his establishment is to clean and polish cars. Suleiman manages his project assisted by some workers whom he supervises and directs personally.

The Chamber takes many steps and tools that enable it disseminate the culture of free work and support the incorporation of small projects. This is considered as one of the efforts that it makes to promote the projects of the Omani youth. To motivate them, Al Ghorfa devotes a section under the title “entrepreneurs” that is specialized in conducting interviews with the projects that deserve support. Al Ghorfa paid a visit to the workshop of Suleiman Al Dhaawi in Wilayat Al Amerat and made this interview with him.
Suleiman Mohamed Al Dhaawi is an ambitious youth who did not intend to limit himself in the government work hence he tried the experience of entrepreneurship and he met success as a consequence of his efforts and dedication. Al Dhaawi established his project five years ago, i.e. on the first of August 2010. The nature of the business is to polish and clean all the types of cars internally and externally.

**About the category targeted by his project he replies:**
Thanks to Allah those who benefit from the project are many categories and most notably of them are the owners of the sports cars and four wheel drive cars and generally we do not specify the type of the car that we receive as we have the capabilities that enable us clean any car with high quality and unrivaled proficiency a matter that made the shop gain good reputation and our work always receives the satisfaction of our customers.

**Suleiman talks about the idea of establishing a project in such field by saying:**
I always had the idea to start my own project far from being bound by the routine of government jobs. The business of car cleaning and polishing always impresses me, so I went to this experience with some distinction because this scope is not new but it was restricted to the expatriates. My commitments delayed the inauguration of the project but now I am devoted to the management of my project that I dreamt off for long time. I have proven my abilities and managed to gain the trust of my customers during a short period of time.

**Obstacles are part of the challenge**
Suleiman's project met some obstacles but his persistence on success enabled him to overcome these obstacles and he says: “Undoubtedly the obstacles are part of the challenge that meets human beings in his work and professional life but through perseverance and determination such obstacles are eliminated. The obstacles were represented in providing the capital and selecting the appropriate and suitable place for such type of specialized businesses as well as marketing and creating large base of customers in the region and outside it. Thanks to Allah I mastered the profession and the results are satisfactory.

He adds: “The main obstacle that I fear is the competition from the expatriate manpower in this field as some expatriates use traditional ways in the polish and cleaning process as well as using cheap materials that are not specialized to the cleaning of cars. This is not understood by some customers that the cleaning process needs special equipment and materials a matter that places us in a critical position since the rates in the shops managed by expatriates are lower than our prices.”

Al Dhaawi says: “Some Omanis are surprised when they see Omani working in this field, a matter that places me in a continuous challenge with myself to prove that the Omani could be creative in any field and I always endeavor to attain the trust of the customers of the shop and gain their satisfaction.”

**Work and perfection**
Al Dhaawi tells us: “Undoubtedly perfection of work needs modern equipment and devices used in the field of washing and polishing the cars including the electrical and pneumatic equipment and we own this specialized equipment that reduce time duration to accomplish the work. We have all the solutions that are used in the technique of cleaning and polishing. The place also employs the skilled and specialized technical manpower that has the ability to accomplish and execute the washing and polishing the car in high perfection and quality within record time.”

**Thanks to the Chamber**
I would like to thank you for this visit and for your efforts in manifesting the commercial activities and marketing our project, a matter that encourages us to do more to promote the level of our work.
Oman-Belgium Business Forum Meets

Followed by: Zamzam Al Hinai

The Oman-Belgium Business Forum was held in Grand Hayat Muscat under the sponsorship of HH the Princess Astrid, the representative of HH the Apparent Emir Belgium Queen in the presence of HE Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sinaidi, Minister of Commerce and Industry and HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a group of businessmen and women accompanying the delegation and their Omani peers.

At the beginning of the meeting HH the Princess expressed their contentment for being in the Sultanate heading the economic delegation of her country and wished success to the discussions of the Forum and the mission of the delegation.

The delegation consisted of 200 officials in the Belgian government consisting of businessmen representing 126 companies. The mission was accompanied by a delegation of 14 journalists representing the different Belgian mass media such as newspapers, and TV Channels.

**Railway project is promising**

HE Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sinaidi, Minister of Commerce and Industry gave a speech in which he confirmed the importance of these bilateral meetings between the businessmen from the Sultanate and other countries. He pointed out in his speech to the future vision of Sultanate of Oman 2040 through which the government aims to develop a roadmap that could create a political, economic and social strategic position for the Sultanate. In the field of trade and economy the Sultanate went a long way as the number of shipping ports in the Sultanate increased to three main ports in addition to the railway project that would connect in its first phase Buraimi and Sohar with other GCC countries a matter that serves the goods exchange and revives the industry and trade sector in the GCC countries.

“There are promising areas in the Sultanate and attractive to the foreign investment represented in four main sectors which are: catering, tourism, health and manufacturing in addition to solar power applications,” he added.

**Exchange of trade delegations**

This is followed by speech of HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, chairman of OCCI, in which he mentioned that the Sultanate has very strong bilateral relationships with the Kingdom of Belgium. The agreement signed by the Sultanate and Belgium Kingdom on double taxation avoidance and income tax evasion helped in organizing the levying of Omani and Belgium tax for the companies operating in the two countries.

This helped in encouraging further investments and establishment of joint projects and improving the growth of trade exchange between the two countries. “We look to this visit and this encouraging and interested present number of business society is considered as a good initiative and important step towards achieving a greater level in increasing the volume of trade exchange and joint investment.”
In respect with the feasibility of exchanging such visits of trade delegations, Al Kiyumi elucidated that the exchange of trade delegations leads to acquainting the business society of the two parties with the available investment opportunities. It further contributes greatly in identifying the facilities made available to the investors in the two countries to stimulate them, establish investment projects and create and develop successful commercial partnerships. Therefore, it is important and essential to activate and ease the movement of the businessmen and women and intensify the exchange of their visits. Al Kiyumi expressed the willingness of OCCI to provide all the means of support and help to the members of the delegation and confirmed the care of the Chamber.

**Stable banking sector**

Sulaiman Al Harthy, general manager of Islamic Banking Business Group in Bank Muscat, discussed the growth of the Omani banking sector since the number of the banks operating in the Sultanate reached to 20 commercial and specialized banks. He also discussed the role of the Omani banking sector in preserving the financial balance, economic stability and enhancing the confidence and transparency in the banking operations at all the levels in the Omani economy. He added, “The Omani banking sector is distinct for stability, high efficiency and capability to respond to the changes imposed by the different regional and international developments including the globalization and increasing tendency towards liberalization of the financial services within the context of World Trade Organization.”

**Speeches by Delegation Members**

Philip Suwnon, administrative manager of Waloniya and Brussels and CEO of Waloniya International Trading and Investment Agency gave a speech in which he confirmed that the objective of the visit by this large number of Belgian businessmen was to boost the cooperation with the Omani side. The members of the delegation represented companies working in different fields such as education, health, infrastructure, logistic services, water, telecommunications and information technology, industrial equipment, technology and renewable energy and other fields.

After that the bilateral meetings started between the Omani and Belgian businessmen during which the discussions about the joint projects between the two parties started and the available investment and facilities granted to create partnerships or foreign investments in the Sultanate were discussed.

Many agreements were signed between the Sultanate and Kingdom of Belgium including the double taxation avoidance and prevention of tax evasion agreement on income and the agreement for encouragement and mutual protection of investments and a franchise agreement to manage Duqm Port.
Name: Amel bint Darwish bin Saif Al Aamry
College: Oman Management and Technology College
Specialization: Bachelor of Computer Science

Amel Al Aamry is an example of ambition among the people of our beloved country. She obtained a scholarship from Najah (Success) program supported by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry to continue her study in the computer science. She was keen to avail of this opportunity in an optimal way and she was assiduous in her studies and she gave example of the ambitious student to graduate in the year 2013-14 with excellent degree.

Amel did not succeed in completing her studies through the scholarships granted by Ministry of Higher Education. Fortunately she applied to the Najah program and her application was approved and the story of her success started as Amel narrated to us with little pride and much humility...

Interviewed by: Zamzam Al Hinai

Computer science
Amel tells us on the reason behind choosing the computer sciences as a specialization. “This specialization was chosen after deep thinking to suit my hobbies and attitudes and as required by the labour market. I selected this specialization in particular because it is considered as a requirement for the development of the country particularly with the tendency towards applying the e-government and use of modern technologies in the government and private departments and institutions and as a main factor for the quality of work.”

Excellence
“The secret behind my excellence is attributable, after Allah to the encouragement of my family, to the support and encouragement from the college to give more efforts to attain the highest ranks. The college delegated me to the Kingdom of Hashemite Jordan and this delegation was an incentive to me to attain the first rank.”

Difficulties
When she was asked about the difficulties that confronted her during her study, Amel replied: “Of course there is no road that is free from difficulties and obstacles and we shall overcome them to reach to the summit. During the course of my study I confronted some difficulties related to the study and test pressures compared to short periods of time and other problems that face the students in general. However, time planning and reference to the teachers were the effective tools in most of the cases to overcome these difficulties.”

Post graduation
About her ambition after graduation Amel adds: “I endeavor to join the labour market in a position that suits my qualification in computer science to apply the studies that I received during my education years. Moreover, I aspire to continue my higher education, if suitable circumstances warrant so.”

Away from Study
Far from the requirements of study, Amel spends her time in reading and exploring the new developments in the field of computer sciences to enrich her knowledge and develop her skills in the field of her specialization that requires a great information and familiarity with the developments. Since it is an ever changing world, a person shall keep pace with these rapid changes in the field of computer science in general.

Advice from Amel
I advise my colleagues to pursue their endeavors to attain the highest ranks and to exercise great efforts to serve our beloved country. I also advise my colleagues who got the opportunity to complete their studies through Najah program to avail of this opportunity to materialize their aspirations because education is the beginning of the road to achieve other successes in life.

Acknowledgment
“At the end, I would like to express my special and sincere thanks to Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the financial and moral support that it extended to me and its encouragement that helped me to complete this way in high spirits. I express special thanks to those who are in charge of the Najah program that is distinct for its theme and benevolent objective.”
### List of International Exhibitions May to December 2014

| May 2014 | Riyadh International Exhibition, 17-20/5/2014 Riyadh - Saudi Arabia [www.riyadinterexpo.com](http://www.riyadinterexpo.com) | Baghdad International Fair, the second car accessories and spare parts 21-24/5/2014 Baghdad Iraq [info@bg-liq.net](mailto:info@bg-liq.net) | HEALTH CARE Fair 1-3/10/2014 Baghdad Iraq [info@ifpiraq.com](mailto:info@ifpiraq.com) |
| July 2014 | International Industrial Trade Fair 9-12/7/2014 Ekaterinburg - Russia [www.russarabbe.ru](http://www.russarabbe.ru) | International Industrial Trade Fair 9-12/7/2014 Ekaterinburg - Russia [www.russarabbe.ru](http://www.russarabbe.ru) | HEALTH CARE Fair 1-3/10/2014 Baghdad Iraq [info@ifpiraq.com](mailto:info@ifpiraq.com) |
| August 2014 | Trade Fair 6-8/8/2014 Vietnam [logistic@vietchamexpo.com](mailto:logistic@vietchamexpo.com) | Trade Fair 6-8/8/2014 Vietnam [logistic@vietchamexpo.com](mailto:logistic@vietchamexpo.com) | Trade Fair 6-8/8/2014 Vietnam [logistic@vietchamexpo.com](mailto:logistic@vietchamexpo.com) |
| September 2014 | Sri Lanka International Gem & Jewellery Show 4-7/9/2014 Sri Lanka [facets@facetssrilanka.co](mailto:facets@facetssrilanka.co) | Sri Lanka International Gem & Jewellery Show 4-7/9/2014 Sri Lanka [facets@facetssrilanka.co](mailto:facets@facetssrilanka.co) | Sri Lanka International Gem & Jewellery Show 4-7/9/2014 Sri Lanka [facets@facetssrilanka.co](mailto:facets@facetssrilanka.co) |

Prepared by:

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The Chamber works on developing a draft that regulates benefiting from “Muntaji” (My Product) initiative.

- Al Kiyumi: Muntaji initiative endeavors to create a space for the products of small and medium companies in supermarkets and hypermarkets.
- We seek to create a generation of independent business pioneers.
- Muntaji initiative: Display of the products of the small and medium establishments without fees.
- The initiative is a practical plan to facilitate entry of emerging entities to the markets.

OCCI, within its plan of this year, endeavors to promote the small and medium establishments (SMEs) and strives to develop these establishments and introducing them to the Omani markets and help them to go ahead of the success path. Thus the Chamber confirms that the roles of SMEs will maximize during the next period and they will contribute to the enrichment and growth of the national economy in a greater way and help in creating continuous job opportunities and the opportunity will be available to this sector for creativity, innovation and development.

This is obviously manifested from the initiatives launched by the Chamber during the present tenure of its elected board of directors as the Chamber made the small and medium establishments on top of its concerns as it believes in the role that they play in the growth of the national economy and in creating job opportunities.

Among the initiatives launched by the Chamber previously, the initiative of Muntaji (my product) that is concerned in providing special shelves to display the products of emerging establishments in the commercial shops to introduce their products and market them. Within this context, the Chamber organized a meeting of the large shop and hypermarket owners and the Omani owners of industries and products from the small and medium sized establishments. The meeting aimed to introduce to the owners of larger shops the Omani products that could be sold directly to the consumers and to enable the owners of the SMEs to display their products in spaces that are granted to them by the large shops without incurring financial costs.

The meeting was presided by HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the chairman of OCCI who said: "We endeavor through this initiative to create a space for the Omani products in a competitive form without restriction and without incurring financial expenses provided that they shall abide with the laws of the places that host the product so that no party would harm the interests of the other party. He added:
“The producers shall take the lead to market their products and display them in the manner that realizes the profitability which they aspire to. We are seeking to create an independent generation of the business entrepreneurs.

HE explained that the product benefiting from the initiative shall meet the conditions that qualify it to enter the market in a competitive manner and shall attain the level that qualifies it to enter these commercial establishments and its producers shall comply with the laws and requirements of these establishments.

Omani producers: For the initiative to meet the anticipated success, we wish to convene a subsequent meeting to identify the positive and negative aspects of the experience.

HE added that the objective of the meeting was to create channels of dialogue that gathers the two parties, the owners of the Omani industries and products of SMEs and the owners of the large shops and hypermarkets in the Sultanate to agree on the best ways for these products to reach the consumer directly through these large shops.
During the meeting, some important points were agreed about this initiative and how to activate it. The points included the entry of these Omani products to larger shops free of charge, i.e., the owners shall be exempted from the registration and display charges. It was also agreed that the period of the free display shall be three months as minimum and to be extended to six months, according to the agreement between the two parties. The owners of SMEs shall bear the costs of transporting their products to these shops. It was also agreed that the Chamber, within 10 days from the date of the meeting, will sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the large shops containing all the points agreed upon and regulate the process of availing of this initiative.

Khamis bin Salem Al Ghusaini, owner of Khamis Al Ghusaini National Enterprise says that the initiative is considered as a link between the Chamber and owners of SMEs and it opens to them a window through which they could market their products and deliver them to a larger section of the society through giving us outlets in the larger shops for specific period of time to display and sell our products.

He added: “To my viewpoint, the period on which we agreed upon in the meeting which is three month is unfortunately not sufficient as each new product needs a longer period so that it could be identified and accepted by the consumer. Therefore, I request that the period would be one year at least as these large centers received the support of the State and facilities that enable them work smoothly therefore we expect them also to provide services to the society against these facilities in an activation to the principle of the social responsibility. For this initiative to attain the targeted success I wish if the centers and large shops would be followed up to ensure their compliance with the points agreed upon and a meeting shall be convened to identify the positive and negative aspects of the experiment later.”

About the idea prevailing to many people in interpretation to lack of demand of the consumers to the Omani products is the large margin that the Omani producers put to their products. According to Al Ghusaini, “This is not correct as the value of the product increases due to the fees for the registration of these products with these centers as it reaches to RO 4000 for each product and this is only the registration fee in addition to the interest which is 20% in addition to the rentals that reaches to RO 500.

He added that there are some obstacles that hinder the spread of our products including the existence of very strict conditions upon the small investors and existence of goods imported by the owners of the centres and thereby not allowing to display competitor products. “I wish, we are given the confidence to enter these large centers and break the obstacles that hinder the existence of Omani products in the shelves of these centers.”

Demand for holding a training workshop

Ahmed bin Saleh Al Hashmi, the general manager of Ateaux: “The Muntaji initiative and other initiatives help in marketing SME products and introducing them to the local market, a matter that contributes in developing such institutions. However, I believe the proposal of three months to display the product is not sufficient and I wish if it is reconsidered and increased. I wish those who are in charge of this initiative would harness all the possible means to make it succeed and
serve the interests of the small establishments and assist them growing.”

Al Hashmi adds: “Marketing is the winning card in the success of whatsoever project. Since this initiative gives the opportunity to the SMEs to promote their commodities and products, I expect that it will achieve great success, by Allah’s grace. I propose this initiative would be accompanied with some training workshops by the successful persons from this beloved country to stimulate the youth and assist them to overcome the difficulties and obstacles that they might face in marketing their products.

Mahfouza bint Hamed Al Amriya, owner of Al Aamry Omani Incense Establishment, shares the same opinion as she said: “The Muntaji initiative launched by the Chamber is considered as an opportunity to us and it helps us in marketing our products and delivering them to the society through displaying them in the large centers that receive large demand from consumers.”

“I hope the Muntaji initiative will receive acceptance from larger centers and they will contribute in its success so that it would achieve the objectives behind it. I request that the products that receive larger percentage of sales to be given longer period for display and start gradually to levy fees from them after ensuring that the product received the praise of the consumer.”

“I would like to express my sincere thanks to Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry for these initiative and for the support given for the development of small and medium establishments.”

Mutual Cooperation

Hamad bin Hamoud Al Touqi, Executive President of Badaie Al Juman Company says: “The Muntaji initiative is a good step towards serving the SMEs and is considered a qualitative jump and notable development in the role of the Chamber in supporting the Omani products. It is a practical more than a theoretical step towards activating the mutual cooperation between the Chamber and business entrepreneur. This is what we are aspiring for and requesting from the Chamber. I propose to be given a longer period of time to display our products in these large centers upon which this initiative depends as the success of any product needs a period of not less than six months.”

He added: “I propose to select from among the appropriate products to give their owners outlets for display and sale in larger and medium centers and to activate the advertisement to these products so that the initiative would be successful and achieve its anticipated objectives. I request my Omani manufacturing brothers to give care to the quality of the product in addition to the external appearance of the product in general because they have great role in attracting the attention of the consumer.”

Al Touqi added: “I propose to convene a joint meeting of SME and supermarket owners at OCCI in September or October to know the results of this initiative and measure the extent of its success and identify its positive and negative aspects. I also hope that the mass media would be involved in promoting this initiative in terms of making television interviews and in the daily newspapers and other information channels to explain its theme to all people and deliver its results to all the sectors of the society.”
Camber to expedite formation of National Commercial Arbitration Center

OCCI agreed with the commercial arbitration centre of Gulf Cooperation Council Countries to activate cooperation between them and work to expedite the procedures for establishing a national commercial arbitration center adopted by the chamber previously and coordinate with relevant authorities to render success to it.

This took place during the meeting of HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Ahmed Najm Abdullah Al Najm the secretary general of Commercial Arbitration Centre of GCC Countries in the presence of Engineer Ridha bin Juma Al Saleh, deputy chairman of the chamber in the main office of the chamber.

HE pointed out that the chamber will study the project and its needs and the requirements that it shall meet as a centre for commercial arbitration in the Sultanate. HE also discussed the activities carried out by Commercial Arbitration Centre of GCC Countries and its role in many issues related to trade in GCC countries.

At the end of the meeting the secretary general invited HE the chairman and directors of the board to attend the annual conference held by Commercial Arbitration Centre of GCC Countries in Dhofar Governorate.

Chamber Discusses Investment Opportunities with Ethiopia

Ayman bin Abdullah Al Hosni, deputy chairman of OCCI met HE Demetro Almusuoh, chancellor of Political and Economic Cooperation Affairs in the Ethiopian Republic in the presence of HE Fahmi bin Said Al Hinali, Honorary Chancellor of Ethiopia and Abdul Azim bin Abbass, the General Manager of the Chamber to discuss and develop possible mutual economic relationship and investment projects and review the available commercial opportunities and search the possibility of the investment by Omani businessmen in Republic of Ethiopia.

The African countries play commercial and investment role in providing the opportunities and rich environment for investors in the field of agriculture, mining and other investment opportunities. He explained the importance of reviving the memorandum of understanding signed in 2010 in addition to the establishment of joint business council between the two countries. The deputy chairman also pointed out that the Sultanate will organize bilateral meetings between the Omani businessmen and their Ethiopian peers by the end of 2014 and Omani products exhibition will be held in Ethiopia in 2015. He invited the Omani establishments and companies to participate in these activities and avail of the available facilities and opportunities and identify the products.

HE Demetro Almusuoh also said that the general trend of the Ethiopian government is to encourage private investments. He explained the procedures and facilities provided to foreign investors and referred to the advantages that characterize the Republic in terms of political and social stability as well as vast areas of the fertile and arable lands and Ethiopian manpower. HE added that the Omani investor has many encouraging and investable fields such as agriculture, fisheries and mining.

Chamber looks for boosting cooperation with UK

The Omani and British parties agreed on the significance of exchanging visits by the trade delegations in the two countries to closely acquaint with the investment opportunities available with them in addition to the exchange of commercial and industrial information and the lists of commercial, investment and exportable products to the two countries in order to activate and increase the volume of the trade exchange between them.

This took place during the meeting of HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in his office with HE Jimi Powdah, accredited Ambassador of United Kingdom in the Sultanate. At the beginning of the meeting, HE the chairman welcomed the guest and praised the distinct relationships between the Sultanate and United Kingdom considering it as a model for the progressive historical relations between the countries.

The meeting discussed the aspects of mutual cooperation between the two countries and means to boost them and activate the commercial relations and look for more opportunities to activate the commercial, industrial and tourism cooperation in its different aspects and develop the required plans and suitable execution mechanisms to activate the cooperation.

On his part HE the ambassador praised the notable diversity of the investment opportunities in the Sultanate particularly in the free economic zones such Duqm and Sohar. He elucidated that the volume of the British investment in the Sultanate shall grow within the next period and confirmed the need for diversifying the areas of investment particularly since the investment environment in the Sultanate is attractive and catalytic and it witnesses stability that stimulates future investments.
Tasawaq fee Oman and Manafiz initiatives discussed

A number of officials and key persons in the commercial centers and complexes expressed their support to the initiatives of the chamber particularly the two initiatives Tasawaq fee Oman [Shop in Oman] and Manafiz [Outlets] that have been declared since the beginning tenure of the board of directors 2014-2018 and they showed their keenness to cooperate with the chamber and relevant authorities during the next period.

In the coordinative meeting attended by HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the chairman of the chamber and many of the officials in the large commercial centers and complexes in Sultanate the participants praised the initiative of the chamber represented in convening such a meeting and opening discussion and partnership to identify the challenges and difficulties faced by the commercial complexes on one hand and to search the fields of cooperation to execute the offered initiatives on the other hand. They praised the initiative of the chamber (Tasawaq fee Oman) considering it as a distinct and leading idea that receives the support of the commercial centers and complexes.

Dakhiliya Branch holds Second Meeting

The board of directors of the Branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dakhiliya Governorate convened its second meeting for the year 2014 presided by Sheikh Ibrahim bin Said Al Nabhani, chairman of the Branch and member of OCCI Board.

The meeting discussed the viewpoints and objectives of the branch for the next period that consisted of 10 focal points represented in: revival of the powers and authorities of the chamber stipulated in the Chamber’s Law and revise and redraft them to keep pace with the economic and development changes and developments in the country and granting the boards of directors of the branches in the governorates the powers and authorities that enable them carry out the duties and tasks assigned to them to serve and economically develop the governorates in addition to thorough revision of the laws and regulations related to the investment, trade and manpower to make them provide an environment that is attractive and stimulant to encourage the investment and develop and improve the small and medium establishments.

The meeting also discussed the importance of disseminating awareness about the works of the Chamber, Its powers and activities to the businessmen in particular and to the society and government in general in coordination and cooperation with the different types of mass media and social websites forums. The chamber will adopt the establishment of companies in the different governorates to benefit from the available investment opportunities and encourage local investments. This is in addition to the development of the investments of the chamber and taking care of the human cadres in the chamber in terms of qualifying and training and introducing amendments to the organization structure of the chamber and its branches in the governorates to keep match with the future.

The meeting also discussed the importance of shifting the services of the chamber to become electronic services and employ modern technology and expedite the project of electronic linking with the government departments whose services are correlated with those of the chamber and activate the role of the private sector in serving the local communities and encourage the initiatives regarding the social responsibility and importance of providing the support and promotion to the Omani products, handicrafts and traditional crafts and productive families inside the Sultanate and abroad.

The chamber also aims to boost the partnership and cooperation with the government and private sector entities to manifest the role of the chamber and Its economic and social contribution in pushing the process of comprehensive development in the Sultanate. It is anticipated these visions would activate the development movement in general and Dakhiliya governorate in particular as well as the prospective trends in order to activate and develop the economic business and efficient participation in executing the sustainable development plans for better and brilliant future.

Further, the specialized committees were reconstituted to match the requirements of this stage and their chairmen were nominated. There are seven committees namely: the economic, small and medium establishments, human resources, transport and services and real estate development, industry and mining, tourism, food security and businesswomen committee. The work of these committees will be activated by inviting the businessmen and women from among all the relevant and specialized sectors in the field of these committees to apply for their membership. Many of the issues that promote the business sectors were discussed and discussions also dealt with the challenges that face the businessmen and women in the governorate to find suitable solutions.
Ahmed bin Abdul Karim Al Hooti, director of the board of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and chairman of the small and medium establishments committee and Hamoud bin Salem Al Saadi, director of the board and chairman of Chamber Branch in South Batinah Governorate met a delegation from International Labor Organization.

The meeting discussed conducting training courses to the owners of SMEs and work to increase care to the female entrepreneurs in terms of training and qualification since they are essential drivers of the development in the country.

The meeting also discussed the possibility of working with International Labor Organization in the Sultanate and abroad. The meeting discussed preparing a questionnaire to identify the needs of Omani labor market for skills and experiences and distribute the questionnaire to the students of universities and colleges to rectify the path of training, qualification and education for the coming generations in a manner that achieves consistency with the needs of labor market. Moreover, the meeting discussed the topics and plans that the chamber will execute with the Organization during the next two years.

Discussions also covered the possibility of the chamber hosting a regional ILO meeting for officials in the chambers of commerce in GCC countries in Muscat during this year.

HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the chairman of OCCI called upon the businesswomen to diversify their commercial activities. He explained that the sector, during the last years, witnessed a diversification but not to the sufficient extent. He added that the environment in Oman is fit to enter into endless activities and the Omani women have the ability to prove in different fields.

The experience proved the commitment of the lady who enters the world of trade and her ability to achieve success and excellence. He added: “Within the scope of the initiatives committed by the Chamber is to involve the woman in the commercial delegations sent by the chamber as a belief from the chamber of the role of the woman and to search for creative ideas to improve her business. Al Kiyumi also affirmed the willingness of the chamber to provide training courses to the business women to refine their skills in entrepreneurship.

This was during the bilateral meeting of the Omani business women with their Emirati peers in the head office of OCCI. The Emirati businesswomen delegation was presided by Sheikha Dr. Hind Al Qasmi, president of Emirati Businesswomen's Forum and Free Professions Club and the Omani part was presided by Siham bint Abdul Raheem Al Zidjali, president of Businesswomen’s Committee in the Chamber.

The members of the delegation represented different fields such as education, training, dress designing, exhibitions, women accessories, investments and others. The chamber provided them with the chance to meet their Omani peers who are working in similar or identical fields in order to create fruitful cooperation and successful and effective commercial partnerships.

OCCI, represented by Engineer Ridha bin Juma Al Saleh, deputy chairman of the chamber for administrative and financial affairs participated in the activities of the 60th meeting of the Commercial Arbitration Center of Gulf Cooperation Council Countries held in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Khalid Abdul Rahman Al Mudahka, State of Kuwait and attended by Mr. Ahmed Najm Al Najm, the secretary general of the center and other directors of the board.

The board of directors reviewed a number of financial and administrative reports for the last period in addition to understanding the decisions of the board issued in the last meeting and discussing them and follow up of their execution. The meeting also proposed terms that aim to promote the work of the Center and improve its performance at the international and regional levels.

The meeting also discussed a group of issues related to the holding of the annual conference on the commercial arbitration that is intended to be held in cooperation with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Salalah during the period 26-28 August 2014 as well as the mechanisms to support the incorporation of International Association for Arbitration Centers in the Islamic World.
Al Dhahira Branch Committees Formed

Directors of the board of Al Dhahira branch of chamber convened a meeting in the head office of the branch in Wilayat Ibi. The meeting was presided by Ali bin Saleh bin Ali Al Kalbani, director of the board of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and chairman of the board of Al Dhahira Branch of the Chamber.

During the meeting the committees of the branch were formed and they included: tourism committee, economic committee, small and medium establishments committee, investment promotion committee, food security committee, industry committee, mining and crushers committee, real estate development committee and businesswomen’s committee.

The directors of the board of Al Dhahira branch discussed the mechanism to execute the nine initiatives of the chamber, the new law of the chamber and the executive regulations and reviewed the list of the delegations nominated from the governorate for the external visits organized by the chamber.

On his part, Ali bin Saleh bin Ali Al Kalbani, said: “Al Dhahira branch of chamber will convene periodical meetings between the businessmen and women and HE Sheikh the governor and Their Excellencies the Walls in the governorate.”

“The objective of these meetings is to open channels of communication with the officials in the government departments to familiarize with the process of promoting the economy of the governorate.”

Al Junaiabi calls for cooperation

The first meeting of the Transport Committee was convened at OCCI presided by Sheikh Salem bin Sulaim Al Junaiabi, director of the board of the chamber and chairman of the committee. Mohamed bin Hasan Al Ansi was recommended as a deputy chairman of the transport committee for the first tenure of the board of directors (2014-2018).

On the other hand two work teams from among the members of the committee were formed. The first team will be concerned in follow up and coordination while the other team will assume the informative side of the activities of this committee and manifesting it. The challenges that meet the transport sector in the Sultanate were discussed and the work plan of the committee for the present year 2014 was prepared.

Al Junaiabi urged the businessmen and women operating in the transportation sector to join in and react with the activities of the committee and he confirmed that the committee attaches importance to taking the opinions and viewpoints of those who are operating in this important sector particularly those in the interest of developing the transportation sector. He pointed that at the same time the challenges that encounter the transportation sector are many and should be understood to resolve them. He added that the Sultanate is on the verge of important and vital economic projects in the field of transportation, a matter that pushes us to work seriously in supporting the transportation sector and improving it.

The committee has gone far steps during the last period and exercised notable efforts to serve the transportation sector in the Sultanate. The members of the committee attach great importance to the development and activation of the transportation sector during the next period.

Chinese commercial delegation received

Engineer Ridha bin Juma Al Saleh, deputy chairman of OCCI received Wang Lee, Secretary General of Arabian Chinese Commercial Council in Peoples Republic of China and the accompanying delegation during the visit that the delegation paid to the Sultanate in the presence of a number of directors of the board. The meeting was to search and develop the possible economic relationships and investment projects and to review the available commercial opportunities and look for the possibilities of investment by Omani and Chinese businessmen in each of the two countries.

Engineer Ridha bin Juma Al Saleh welcomed the president and the delegation accompanying her. He spoke about the commercial and investment relationships between the Sultanate and Peoples Republic of China. He referred to the importance of boosting this relation through sending delegations and visits between the businessmen of the two countries and importance of notification about the international conferences and exhibitions that are held in the two countries and involving the businessmen in them. He explained the investment and commercial opportunities in the Sultanate in terms of the procedures and facilities granted by the government to the investors. He pointed out that a visit will be organized for a group of Omani businessmen during the next few months to China and visit to Guanzhu exhibition to avail of the offered opportunities and to identify the industrial areas and the investment opportunities that could benefit the businessmen.

From her part Wang Lee praised the generous welcome that she and her accompanying delegation received and the role played by the Sultanate in extending the amicable and commercial relationships with the other countries. After that she talked about the investment and commercial aspect that characterizes China and the opportunities available there for the Omani businessmen. She added that Guanzhu exhibition organized by China will be an open opportunity for all to avail of its contents and represents an opportunity to meet the owners of establishments and conclude partnerships with them.
The first meeting of the studies and researches committee for the year 2014 was convened in OCCI and presided by HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the chairman of the chamber.

HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi welcomed the present members of the committee and thanked them for attending the meeting and wished there would be continuous interaction to enrich the discussions of the committee and this year would be full of activities and events that enrich the studies and researches. HE confirmed that the members of the committee are the people who would select the president and who would develop the objectives expected from the committee that would work under the umbrella of the chamber.

The business of the committee started by electing Sheikh Nasr bin Aamir Al Hosni as a chairman of the committee and Dr. Mohamed bin Ahmed Al Habsi as his deputy. Further, the committee discussed the goals and specializations of the committee to dedicate care to economic researches and studies and to expand the circle of the beneficiaries in the Sultanate and study the challenges that encounter the economic sectors and give the appropriate solutions to them.

The committee recommended that the chamber would adopt many projects including: creating a contest for economic researches and studies for the students of colleges and universities provided the committee shall oversee activating it and to create an electronic window in the website of the chamber to become a reference database that consists of economic studies researches prepared by the different government and private entities to be available for those who are interested.

The beginning of the ceremony witnessed a presentation on the financing programs provided by Al Rafd Fund that are represented by “Mawarid” [Source], “Taasis” [Incorporation], “Riyada” [entrepreneuring] and “Taaziz” that have been launched in last January. Mawarid program targets the social security beneficiaries with a maximum of RO 10,000 while Taasis program lends RO 20,000 and targets job seekers and those who are interested in incorporating new projects. Riyada program benefits other categories targeted by the Fund with maximum assistance of RO 100,000 in addition to Taaziz program with RO 100,000 which targets those who intend to support and expand their projects.

Ishaq Al Shiriyani, president of Al Toumouh Al Shamikh Center gave a speech in which he talked about the achievements of the center during the last period and its future plans. Some successful experiences of the entrepreneurs were presented. At the end of the ceremony the owners of the distinct projects financed by Al Rafd Fund in Dakhiliya Governorate were honored.

Tareq Al Farsi, CEO of Al Rafd Fund, in the presence of the directors of the board of the branch of the chamber in Dakhliya governorate sponsored a ceremony to honor the distinct projects in the first batch funded by Al Rafd Fund which comprised 80 projects organized by Al Tomoh Al Shamikh Center in collaboration with OCCI in Dakhiliya Governorate.

This gesture was in line with the efforts exercised by the public and private sectors to stimulate and encourage the entrepreneurs, particularly the youth who are keen for the success of their businesses and developing them in respect of administration, marketing and technology.

A delegation from the Uzbek businesswomen led by Maleeka Khak Amdjanouva, president of Women’s Association in Tashkent visited OCCI to meet the Omani businesswomen and to identify the facilities granted to the Omani businesswomen or those who are willing to invest or make commercial partnerships.

The delegation was received by a number of Omani businesswomen. The session was presided by Siham bint Abdul Rahman Abdul Rab, president of Businesswomen Committee in the Chamber who welcomed the visiting delegation and praised the members of the delegation for the visit and interest in creating communication channels with the Omani peers, particularly since the Sultanate was the first Arabs country visited by the delegation. The members of the delegation expressed their high regard to the Omani heritage and the generosity and warm reception that was extended to them. Then discussion started about the role assigned to the businesswomen and to the fields of work of the members of the visiting delegation represented in design, training, education, business leadership and development of the skills of the rural women.

From her part, the president of the visiting delegation expressed her delight for this visit and the affluent visit program and she elucidated the goal of this visit is to recognize the Arab culture and business environment in the Sultanate. She assured of their readiness at the Uzbek side for any type of cooperation and partnership with the Omani side. She invited the Omani businesswomen to visit Uzbekistan to closely acquaint with the opportunities available for investments there as well as the facilities provided to make successful and effective commercial partnerships and to participate in the exhibitions and activities being held there.

The Uzbek businesswomen delegation expressed her appreciation for the experience and the procedures that were managed to be carried out.

HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi welcomed the present members of the committee and wished there would be continuous interaction to enrich the discussions of the committee and this year would be full of activities and events that enrich the studies and researches. HE confirmed that the members of the committee are the people who would select the president and who would develop the objectives expected from the committee that would work under the umbrella of the chamber.

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Chamber plans Omani Products Website

OCCI, represented by the industry committee, discussed establishing industrial forum during the month of February 2015 in coincidence with the Omani Industrial Day. It also discussed forming a delegation of industrialists to visit factories in South Korea and acquaint with their experiences in the field of industry.

Further it was discussed to establish a website that aims to gather all the Omani products in one place (www.buyoman) and formation of an executive committee to visit the industrial areas in the Sultanate during the month of June this year to identify the needs of industrial companies and understand the obstacles that face them and endeavor to improve them and prepare a report that consists of concerns and obstacles facing the industrial sector in the Sultanate to be raised to the relevant authorities.

This took place during the meeting of industry committee of OCCI in the presence of HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, the chairman of and Ayman Abdullah Al Hosni deputy chairman and chairman of the committee to present the business plan of the committee for the year 2014 in Al Wusta Hall at the main office of the chamber. The meeting discussed many ideas that relate to the activity of the committee during the current year. Sheikh Fahmi bin Said Al Hinai was elected as deputy chairman of the committee.

HE also referred to the roles assigned to this committee and how to activate them to serve the industrialists in the Sultanate. HE urged the members to find new ideas to market the Omani factories and products.

The meeting also discussed the role of solar cells in providing power and reducing the costs of production in the factories and urged to utilize this energy which creates an added value that helps the Omani industries to compete in the local and international markets.

Workshop on opportunities in Oman and South Africa

Ayman bin Abdullah Al Hosni, deputy chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry opened a workshop to introduce the investment and economic opportunities in Sultanate and South Africa that aimed to enable Omani businessmen meet their South African peers and exchange the information and data and work on benefitting of the two sides from the Omani investment in South Africa and South African investment in the Sultanate.

Al Hosni pointed out that such programs and visits are means for promoting the opportunities and the investment incentives and facilities and introducing the resources and capabilities of each country for those who are interested in the investment or concluding deals or making partnerships with their peers in the Sultanate or South Africa. He added that the Sultanate is affluent with many resources a matter that makes investment horizon thereon very promising and flourishing and its distinct location mastering the Indian Ocean qualifies it to play a pivotal and strategic role in the region particularly with the expansion in establishing free zones that represent important economic focus and attraction for foreign investments. The Sultanate also provides many facilities to the foreign investors.

The workshop also received a speech by HE Brigade Chris Bibani, accredited ambassador of South Africa in the Sultanate who said: “The workshop aims to boost the economic and commercial relationship and it provides us with a good opportunity for communication between the businessmen from South Africa and Oman and enables us to explore the capabilities and opportunities that make us able to expand the scope of the economic and commercial relationships with different world countries. Sadhir Ramishran from the commercial office of South Africa gave a speech in which he talked about the economic capabilities of South Africa as a stable country and very attractive for investment.

After that Anwar Al Balushi, CEO of Anwar Asian Investments Company talked about his experience in South Africa.

The workshop ended in bilateral meetings between the Omani businessmen and their South Africans peers to identify available cooperation opportunities in the economic and investment fields and to search the means of boosting the bilateral and economic relationships between the private sectors in the two countries and developing the cooperation between them in the different economic sectors.

Workshop on Scrap Trade

HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi sponsored a workshop on the laws of the systems for selling and trading in scrap at the main office of the Chamber in Ruwi targeting those who are engaged in selling and trading in the scrap in Muscat Governorate.

This workshop was within the context of the awareness program of the national campaign [Our Oman is Trust] to preserve the essential public utilities (electricity, water, sewage) in cooperation with OCCI. This workshop is considered as the first activity from among a series of workshops hosted by the Chamber in its branches in the other Governorates that would be held during this year.
Joint exhibitions committee formed for Omani products

HE Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sinaidi, Minister of Commerce and Industry issued a ministerial decision No. 94/20014 to form an external joint exhibitions coordination committee for Omani products. The first article of the decision stipulates: “to form a committee chaired by Ayman Abdullah Al Hosni, deputy chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry for economic affairs and branches and Fahmi bin Said Al Hinal, chairman of the board of directors of Raha Company (Poly products) as deputy chairman. The members are Basim bin Ali Al Nasri, general manager of marketing and information in Public Authority of Industrial Estates and Yasir bin Mohamed Al Ajmi, general manager of marketing in Al Ajmi Marble Company and Naseema bint Yahya Al Balushiya, General Manager of Exports Development in Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Exports Development and Salem bin Nasser Al Burtnani, deputy general manager of Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives Company and Moosa bin Jaafar Al Musawi, Manager of Exhibitions and Events in Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Hamoud bin Abdullah Al Balushi, manager of Omani Products in the Public Authority for Industrial Estate and Emad bin Khamis Al Shikaili, manager of exports facilities in Public Authority for Investment Promotion.

The committee is authorized to coordinate the external joint exhibitions for the Omani products. Ayman bin Abdullah Al Hosni, the chairman of the committee explained that a pre-designed plan was prepared about the organization of exhibitions for the Omani products that focuses on the markets of GCC countries, Africa and other markets. He added that Dubai is the second destination for the Omani Products Exhibition in its third edition in next September after the exhibition in its previous two editions in Riyadh and Doha respectively witnessed extensive success. Al Hosni invited the businessmen and women to actively participate in the next exhibition and utilize this opportunity to market their products regionally.

International Relationships Committee holds First Meeting

International Relationships and Organizations Committee in the Chamber convened its first meeting in the head office of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, presided by Ahmed bin Abdul Karim Al Hoot, director of the board of the Chamber and chairman of the committee.

The meeting discussed the objectives that led to the creation of this committee represented in reviving the agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed or to be signed by the Chamber with the chambers and relevant economic associations and organizations in different countries through revising these agreements and making them in an executive form with the aim of augmenting and activating the commercial cooperation and exchange between the Sultanate and the different countries. This is in addition to concluding partnerships with new parties. Mr. Jameel bin Ali Sultan was selected deputy chairman of the committee in addition to the formation of three work teams that should study all the agreements and MoUs signed and express their opinions on them.

Dialogue with Bandar Abbas Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Commercial talks were held in the office of OCCI between Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and an Iranian commercial delegation from Bandar Abbas Chamber of Commerce and Industry headed from the Omani side by Qais bin Mohamed Al Yusuf, director of the board of the chamber and from Iranian part by HE Mohamed Amin, chairman of Bandar Abbas Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the presence of a number of Omani businessmen and their Iranian peers who represent large Iranian companies that are operating in different fields.

The delegation was received by Qais bin Mohamed Al Yusuf, director of the board of the chamber who welcomed the visiting delegation and thanked them for their interest in making the Sultanate a target for prospective investments. He affirmed that the Sultanate has very warm relationships with Islamic Republic of Iran and due to its geographical location in proximity to the Sultanate that boosts the importance of creating ideal commercial partnerships. He emphasized the concern of the chamber to reinforce the Omani-Iranian commercial relationships and its endeavor to intensify the mutual visits between the commercial delegations from the two countries.

From his part, HE the chairman of Bandar Abbas Chamber of Commerce and Industry affirmed the readiness of the chamber to give all the facilities to Omani businessmen who are interested in investment or concluding commercial partnerships with the Iranian part. He added: “We intend to create effective cooperation between the two chambers of commerce in our countries to serve the interests of the businessmen of the two sides. One of the ways to achieve that is the bilateral meetings that have been and will be convened under the umbrella of the chamber to the businessmen on both sides.

Notably the members of the visiting delegation represent vital and essential sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, organic fertilizers trade, food stuff, building materials, electrical materials, transport, import and transport and others.
OCCI branch of Al Dhahira governorate witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Ibri College for Applied Sciences and the branch of OCCI in Al Dhahira governorate in the field of commercial entrepreneurship.

The MoU was signed on behalf of the college by Dr. Ahmed bin Juma Al Riyami, the dean of the college, and on behalf of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Al Dhahira governorate branch by Ali bin Saleh bin Ali Al Kilbani, chairman of the branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Al Dhahira governorate. The MoU aims to execute workshops and lectures on entrepreneurship to the students of the college, private sector and job seekers in Al Dhahira governorate. The MoU also aims to exchange the experiences, studies and some administrative and financial execution mechanisms as well as the training programs.

Dr. Ahmed bin Juma Al Riyami, dean of the college, pointed out that the MoU is within the efforts of the college to build distinct relationships with different government and private institutions and this is considered as a boost to the bilateral and distinct relationships of the college with the branch of the chamber in Al Dhahira governorate.
The first meeting of the small and medium establishments (SME) committee for the current year was held at OCCI presided by Ahmed bin Abdul Karim Al Hooti, the chairman of the committee. At the beginning of the meeting the chairman thanked OCCI chairman and members of the committee for the previous tenure and praised their tangible efforts to promote the role of the committee through arranging and organizing Seeh Al Shamikhat symposium and explained that the next stage will witness more work and effort by the cooperation of all members and their interaction with the activities of the committee. He added: “The creation of the SME department in the chamber will be a helping factor to rise with the role of the committee and revive the visions and plans that the chamber plans to carry out during the four years of the current board.

The meeting discussed many issues such as eliminating the social obstacles that hinder the work of the owners of the SMEs and restrict their success and the negative notion about the workers in this field and lack of confidence in their capabilities particularly with those who are not aware of it that could be eliminated through information, education and increasing the awareness. Further, the meeting discussed the establishment of the entrepreneurs’ club and the works and activities carried out by the constitutional committee of the club and how the club will work during the next stage under the umbrella of the chamber.

The members of the committee agreed to activate all the decisions of Seeh Al Shamikhat symposium in relation with SMEs as they were focal and strategic decisions and the integration of the common work between the chamber and Public Authority for Small and Medium Establishments in order to promote this vital sector.

The members also discussed the importance of identifying a consultancy firm for the entrepreneurs to provide them with free advisory and hold specialized courses and workshops. The meeting discussed the initiatives launched by the chamber this year that targets SMEs and the mechanism to activate them and ensure the common benefit from them.

The duties and roles were distributed among the members of the committee through four teams that are concerned with entrepreneurship, government procedures, training and financing.

The continued cooperation between OCCI and the General Union of Workers in the Sultanate of Oman resulted in agreement to stop the strike of the workers of Mawarid Mining Company. This was declared after a session held in the Chamber in the presence of HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, chairman of the board and Nabhan bin Ahmed Al Battashi, president of General Union of Workers in the Sultanate and representatives of Oman Mining Company and the Workers’ Trade Union in the Company. It was agreed within a record time of not more than half an hour to call off the strike of the workers of the company on condition that the company compiles to realize the terms of agreement that were disputed between the trade union and the company as they agreed to its final form.

HE Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, chairman of the chamber emphasized that the methodology of the chamber in solving such crises is a moderate and consensual one as the schism is not to the interest of any party pointing out that the progress of countries and economies are based on dialogue and conflict in viewpoints does not serve any party. He explained that the convergence between the chamber and union serves the private sector and large companies in particular and not as promoted that such convergence harms these companies. He also confirmed that the partnership of the chamber with the General Union of Workers in the Sultanate of Oman receives great praise and esteem and it springs as a belief from the chamber in the trade union work that preserves the rights of all the parties. Al Kiyumi praised the response and cooperation of Mawarid Mining Company.

From his part, Al Battashi confirmed the role of the chamber in solving these issues and keenness of the union to boost this role in the next stage. He thanked HE the chairman of the chamber for the initiative to sponsor the dialogue between Mawarid Mining Company and the trade union of its employees. He also wished to continue the cooperation to serve the interests of the relevant parties.
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OMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

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Aster Opens Al Khoud Branch

Aster DM Healthcare has opened Aster Al Raffah Polyclinic in Al Khoud-Muscat, in line with the Group’s expansion strategies in the Sultanate of Oman. The Polyclinic is bringing its brand of ‘care beyond boundaries’ – of providing comprehensive care to ensure the greatest of comfort, closer to the people in the locality.

Sheikh Rashed Bin Ahmed Bin Mohammed Al Hinai, Under Secretary of Sports Affairs, inaugurated Polyclinic, in the presence of JS Mukul, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate, Miteb Zaben, Ambassador of Jordan to Oman, and Barbara Joziasse, Ambassador of Netherlands to Oman.

Located next to Kutkut roundabout in Al Khoud, Aster Al Raffah Polyclinic offers the best of facilities and the finest team of healthcare professionals from all around the world.

Dr Azad Moopen, Chairman and Managing Director of Aster DM Healthcare, said, “The Aster Al Raffah Polyclinic in Al Khoud brings us one step closer to our dream of expanding to other areas in Oman and other places across the Gulf region.”

“Aster DM Healthcare significantly contributes to the medical sector of Oman, focusing on raising the standards of medical practice here. Aster Al Raffah in Al Khoud will act as a satellite centre of Aster Hospitals, the touch point of Aster Oman facilities and Aster Medicity-Kochi,” he added.

Audi A8: More composed than ever

Audi Oman, represented by Wattayah Motors, the official dealer for Audi in Oman, launched the new A8 against the awe-inspiring ambiance of Bait Al Zubair, a museum replete with centuries-old relic; a testimony to Oman’s glorious past, timeless heritage, rich culture and tradition.

The A8 can now pitch itself as a legitimate contender on almost every level, and a superior on some, including in-car connectivity. Excellent comfort, superb craftsmanship, strict lightweight construction and a broad portfolio of high-end technologies: Audi has exhaustively updated its A8 flagship. New assistance systems and the innovative Matrix LED headlights make for even more superior driving. The engines are more powerful and more efficient.

The A8 makes Audi one of the innovation leaders in the luxury segment. One of the outstanding strengths of the sedan is its lightweight construction. The standard-wheelbase A8 50 TFSI Quattro has a curb weight of just 1,830 kilograms – the lowest value among the competitors with all-wheel drive. The decisive factor here is the body. An Audi Space Frame (ASF) made almost entirely of aluminum, it weighs just 231 kilograms.

The new Audi A8 is the largest sedan in its competitive segment. It is 5.14 meters long, 1.95 meters wide, 1.46 meters tall and has a wheelbase of 2.99 meters. The A8 L gains an additional 13 centimeters in both length and wheelbase. The 520-liter trunk in both variants has been reconfigured to be even easier to load. Thanks to new noise damping measures, the already low interior noise level has been reduced even further.

Earth Hour 2014 Observed

Electricity Holding Group (EHG) participated in Earth Hour 2014 through its partnership with Environment Society of Oman (ESO) through the provision of data on electricity consumption during this period in addition to supporting the campaign by encouraging all group staff’s participation.

At a press conference at Grand Hyatt Muscat, EHG and ESO announced the results of Earth Hour 2014 during which Eng. Abdullah Al-Badri, CEO of Muscat Electricity Distribution Company, stated “We are pleased to announce the saving of 67,000KWh on electricity consumption which also takes into account the annual increase of nine per cent in our customer base.”

“The Electricity Holding Group is engaged in the procurement, generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity for the country, and we are committed to raising awareness about our role combined with the public’s role in demand side awareness for the benefit of reducing the burden on government subsidy, changing the culture of consumption and to reduce our carbon emissions,” said Ghada Al Yousef, Executive Manager, Group Communications and Sustainability.
Al Suwadi Power Plant Opened

The Barka 3 power plant, owned by Al Suwadi Power, was officially inaugurated today. The ceremony also celebrated the first successful year of operations of the power company. Together with its twin facility Sohar 2, owned by Al Batinah Power, which was inaugurated on 24 March, they represent a total investment of USD 1.7 Billion, and a total installed capacity of 1488 MW, accounting for about 27 per cent of Oman’s MIS total installed capacity of approximately 5589 MW.

The inauguration of the Barka 3 power plant was graced by H.E. Ahmad bin Abdullah bin Mohamed Al Shehhi, Minister of Regional Municipalities, along with senior representatives of the regional Government and PAEW.

Mazda 2: A car that suits every budget

Available at an incredible EMI price of just RO75 per month, the Mazda2 now fits into your budget and lifestyle. The car also comes with free first year insurance, registration and three years/ 50,000 kms service.

The only Japanese car to ever win the prestigious ‘World Car of the Year’ overall award, the Mazda2 offers drivers good visibility and spaciousness coupled with convenient equipment that makes driving easy. The Mazda2 sedan is available in 1.5 litre engine with a whole lot of advanced features as standard such as Four-Speed Automatic Transmission, Central Locking (also available with Keyless Entry), Power Windows and Mirrors, AM/FM Radio with 4 Speakers, and Auxiliary Audio Input.

Award for ECGA General Manager

Mr. Nasir bin Issa Al-Ismaily, the General Manager of the Export Credit Guarantee Agency of Oman (SAOC) has been adjudged by the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and Pacific (ADFIAP) for the Distinguished Person of the Year Award. This prestigious Award was presented to Mr. Al-Ismaily during the 37th annual meeting of the ADFIAP in Moscow, Russia last week.

According to ADFIAP the “Distinguished Person Award” is a lifetime achievement award given by to a person who has in his or chosen career, excelled and made a mark in the country or internationally and for his or her outstanding accomplishments(s). According to the Secretariat of the ADFIAP, this is the fourth time in the 37 years history of the Association it has bestowed to a distinguished person to such an award. It is also the highest award presented by the Association.

Mr. Nasir bin Issa Al Ismaily professional career started as the development banker and subsequently as an export credit expert. He joined the Oman Development Bank (SAOG) in 1979 a year after it started its operations. He heads the Export Credit Guarantee Agency of Oman (SAOC) since 1992.
Economics started with its simple concept that means the way through which the affairs of the house could be managed in optimal manner that ensures the safety of the house and its residents. From this concept and this origin we realize that the economic policy adopted by the countries in managing their wealth and financial and non financial bounties and how to make optimal utilization that ensures brilliant future for them and their people.

The systematic, strategic economic planning policy by individuals or the State in general helps in broadcasting the coming matters through which they ensure the security of the future of the family or security of the State. This planning requires the human to behave rationally in the economic manner with farsightedness and rationality.

Here in the Sultanate we have surpassed many of our peers in the region in terms of planning our life. The State exercises efforts in developing the five year plans since 1975 and thereafter the future vision of Oman Economy 1996-2020 that endeavor to realize a balanced economic growth and raising the level of sustainable development in the Sultanate.

This opened doors for progress, growth and prosperity and within a period that is not long created the maximum satisfaction in the Sultanate among its people and those who aspire to invest in it. It also helped raise the level of individual income and provide him/her with decent life since the State progresses on clear and studied steps. The World Bank expects the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the Sultanate to grow by 5% in 2015 against 4.9% in the year 2014.

At present the Sultanate is executing the eighth five year plan that is considered as a vital link in the long term development strategy (future vision of the Omani Economy: Oman 2020) and endeavor to provide stable macroeconomic framework and work on creating the appropriate circumstances to materialize the economic diversification and the optimal utilization of the available natural resources and the distinct geographical location of the Sultanate. It also endeavors to raise the standard of living of the Omanis and encourage self reliance in terms of focusing on entrepreneurship and creating commercial projects and reduce dependence on government employment.