Study:
Oman's Foreign Trade 2013

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Sohar Aluminium Board of Directors and all its employees express their heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said on the occasion of the 44th Renaissance Day.
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Natural Pure Water
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On the wake of celebrations marking the blessed Renaissance Day under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, we are most honored to extend to His Majesty on behalf of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Omani Private Sector our uppermost expressions of thanks and gratitude for the civilizational leap and remarkable progress being witnessed by the Sultanate of Oman in general and the Omani private sector in particular. Under His Majesty's insightful vision, our dear Oman is now placed in such a high profile among the nations of the world. This position could not have been attained without years of hard-work, diligence, dedication and strenuous efforts with all the country's potentials being devoted to serve Omani in each and every corner of our country.

It is with utmost pride and pleasure that we take note of the profound attention that has been accorded to the Omani Private Sector over the years of the blessed Renaissance which enabled it to make a qualitative leap in the last four decades, a trend which features the high importance attached to the business sector due to its role in enriching the country's national economy both at the present time and in future.

His Majesty's insightful thoughts and his wise policies whereby keen interest is being shown in this vital sector had the decisive role in turning the Private Sector into a promising key partner in the country's comprehensive development. In addition to these efforts, all citizens, whether they are traders or employees of the private sector, are required to play their part by intensifying their efforts with a view to making the development of Oman the ultimate goal that they must work hard to achieve. They should be driven and motivated by the national spirit and passion in order to make further achievements, thereby realizing the aspired goals and ambitions.

The Private Sector and its employees fall short of the appropriate words to appreciate and praise the generous support that is being accorded to the business sector. We sincerely and proudly extend our gratitude to His Majesty praying to Allah the Almighty, on the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan, to protect His Majesty and grant him good health, happiness and a long life and to sustain the dignity, pride and prosperity of Omani under His Majesty's wise leadership.

Editor-in-Chief
Heartiest congratulations to
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said
& the people of Oman on the blessed occasion of
the 44th Renaissance Day.
LET US CELEBRATE

“When I view the map, I wish not to see any country in hostility with Oman”
– His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said
The Sultanate's cool diplomacy is behind its distinguished relations with the world.

Comprehensive development gains reflect the Sultanate's strong will under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

International Peace Award is an international recognition of His Majesty's leading role in establishing peace in the region.

Forty-four years have already passed, during which the Sultanate has witnessed a qualitative leap in all spheres owing to the wise leadership of the builder of Oman, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who has always dedicated all energies and capabilities to lead Oman towards a flourishing future. The Sultanate these days celebrates the glorious 23 July which represents the birth of Oman's modern renaissance under His Majesty's leadership amid comprehensive developmental transitions in all walks of life.

Observers of Oman's drive over the years of the blessed renaissance would obviously notice the tremendous progress achieved by the country over this period which reflects the magnitude of efforts being exerted. These efforts brought about comprehensive development gains and changes reflecting the strong will of the Sultanate's decision-makers led by His Majesty the Sultan. Education, health, economy, social development, modern infrastructure, communications and tourism are sectors which were accorded considerable attention that had direct bearing on the emergence of a truly modern state.
The Sultanate's foreign policy: entirely moderate diplomacy

Oman's policy over the past period has been and is still based upon extending bridges of friendship and opening up prospects of cooperation and good relations with various countries of the world in accordance with firm principles of mutual respect and in line with the principle of non-interference in other countries' affairs and adopting dialogue as the sole means for resolving differences and disputes among various parties. Thanks to these principles, the Sultanate was able, over the past four decades, to build close and developed relations with the other counties and peoples establishing developed relations with international community. Thus, Oman's policy has played significant role in support of the economic and social development and achievement of peace, stability and tranquility for Oman and the countries around it. Due to this strenuous and diligent work, Oman's policy was turned into a constant pillar of national development and establishment of peace and stability in the region.

Oman's foreign policy is characterized by neutrality at the international level. This is quite obvious from its stances on the events taking place around the world, providing it with an appropriate atmosphere for the successful building and development at the internal level. Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and his well-known worldly political wisdom, Oman maintained a distance from political wrangles, struggles and blocs which might negatively affect the development and building process. The Sultanate also maintains distinguished friendly relations with many countries of the world which was the direct result of the Sultanate's action to establish good neighborliness and support international cooperation and contribution to peacemaking around the world. Capitalizing on its strategic location in the gulf region, Oman has played an important role in dealing with the region's issues with this work acquiring considerable credibility due to is balanced position towards these issues. This policy has qualified the Sultanate to become an influential party in the situations taking place in the region. Based upon this vision and in line with its clear and in-depth commitment, the Sultanate manages its policies and determine its positions towards various issues and developments locally, regionally or internationally.

Regionally and internationally

The Sultanate of Oman maintains fraternal relations with the Arabian Gulf countries as it shares with these countries common position in most cases with Oman playing a significant role in maintaining equilibrium in the Gulf region over the past years. This role in represented by the provision of an ideal channel for dialogue among the Arabian Gulf countries and Iran.

There is absolutely no doubt that the policy pursued by His Majesty the Sultan at the top of the Government's hierarchy whether on Arab or international issues takes into account the need to have the country's interest outweighing any other interests. The Sultanate has never been a party to any differences with an Arab or world country nor has it been biased towards any party against another. Rather, it has always pursued calm and neutral policy that serves its
own interests and achieves the desirable stability, security and tranquility. Through this policy, Oman has always avoided unwanted wars and involvement in any problems or hostilities with anyone. In its foreign policy, Oman has always put into consideration the interests of its citizens and such policy was wise enough to maintain the good position and reputation of the Sultanate at the international level.

On the international front, the Sultanate maintains strong friendship with all countries of the world which qualified it to be a popular state reflecting to its role in those countries welcoming Omani citizens on their territories and in international arenas.

**International Peace Award**

This Award represents the world's valuable recognition of His Majesty's policy and comes in acknowledgment of his role in serving and supporting regional and international peace issues. The unanimous decision taken by 33 universities and research centers that unanimously agreed to grant the International Peace Award to His Majesty does only come in continuation of the unanimity accorded to His Majesty the Sultan at all levels officially and popularly, but it also stresses that this recognition has gone farther to include reputed scientific institutions, foremost of which is the reputed Harvard University. As a matter of fact, these institutions constitute a vital aspect of international thought and policy as such organizations play an effective role in the United States and worldwide.

When ten of the most renowned famed universities and a large number of the most reputed research and political and strategic study centers in the world take a unanimous decision to highly assess and appraise His Majesty's policies and role in achieving and maintaining peace, this has significant indication whether in terms of the powerful conversion of these universities and centers or in terms of what this prominent scientific and political congregation represents in so far as choosing His Majesty as the first leader to be granted the International Peace Award in a historical ceremony at the United States Capital on 16 October 1998.

On the eligibility of Sultan Qaboos bin Said to be granted International Peace Award, former President Bill Clinton, in a message to His Majesty, said: "You have led Oman with vision and resolve. Your leadership is greatly respected around the world. I and the Presidents who preceded me particularly appreciate your advice and support for creating a regional climate for peace and prosperity."

Former President Jimmy Carter also said: “Over the years, I have personally admired His Majesty the Sultan’s brave efforts to establish peace in his region of the world. His Majesty has propagated peace in so many ways. The International Peace Award granted to His Majesty is an international recognition of his role as an advocate for international peace. We consider His Majesty as a luminous light for peace lovers.”

The importance of the Award lies in that it is an international recognition of the leading role of His Majesty and the importance and effectiveness of the efforts made by His Majesty in support of peace in the Gulf region and internationally and his renewed and continuing contribution to achieving this noble goal of establishing peace in the region and the entire world. It also represents a high-profile evaluation and appraisal on the part of international community in acknowledgement of these efforts.
Renaissance Day Greetings

Mohammed bin Khamis Al Hussaini,
Economic Research and Studies Department

On the wake of this occasion, we continue to be proud of being Omani living on the soil of this dear nation, breathing its fresh air and benefiting from its boons. We are thankful to Allah the Almighty for the continuing prosperity and flowing favor which are further increasing day after day. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased 200 times in years reflecting true love and connectivity between the citizens and their inspired Sultan thanks to whom Oman’s voice is now proudly heard and its reputation is wide-spread among all nations and peoples of the world.

While we celebrate this glorious occasion of 23rd July Renaissance Day, we pray to Allah the Almighty to grant the leader of Oman, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, robust health and happiness, protect our Oman safe at all times and give us the will to further strengthen the bonds of cordiality between the citizens and the Sultan.

Ismail bin Saif Al Shamli,
OCCI Branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate

On the advent of the glorious occasion of the 23 July Renaissance Day which marks a new dawn for Oman, we are honored to extend to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the Omani people our congratulations and blessings. We express our utmost gratitude to His Majesty praying to Almighty Allah to grant him robust health and happiness and the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

Mohammed Anwar bin Mehrab Al Balushi,
Public Relations Department

We extend our heartfelt congratulations and blessings to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the Omani people on the glorious anniversary of the 23 July Renaissance Day, praying to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty and this nation from any evil.

Fayel Bilal Mabrook,
Finance Affairs Department

I am pleased and honored to extend my heartfelt congratulations and blessings on the glorious occasion of the 23 July Renaissance Day, praying to Almighty Allah to grant His Majesty robust health, happiness and long life and the Omani people further prosperity. May Oman always be in peace and tranquility.

Thurayah bint Jumaa bin Udayy Al Mughairi,
Information Center

I extend my heartfelt and sincere congratulations to all my brothers and sisters in Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the glorious occasion of 23 July Renaissance Day. On this occasion, we are more than honored to extend our congratulations and blessings to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, praying to Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty and grant him robust health and happiness and for the return of this occasion and similar occasions on His Majesty for many years to come and the Omani people further progress, prosperity, security and safety under His Majesty’s wise leadership.
Saleh bin Jumaa Al Balushi,
OCCI Library

With due glory and pride, I have all reasons to hold my head and be proud of Oman, in its present day life, its deeply-rooted history, glorious past and bright future. I am proud of a nation which is a symbol of disdain and pride, the land of our ancestors and fathers, dignified people and martyrs.

I extend my utmost heartfelt congratulations and blessings to Oman and its leader coupled with prayer to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty and sustain peace, security and everlasting prosperity for its people.

Ali Al Jahdhami,
Economic Research and Studies Department

We thank Allah the Almighty who bestowed upon the citizens of this nation overt and covert boons blended with a wise, confident and capable leadership. Congratulation to Oman on taking the pleasure of living in prosperity in this flourishing era. On the glorious occasion of the 23 July Renaissance Day, we are honored to extend our heartfelt congratulations and blessings to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the inspired leader of our blessed march.

Talal bin Said Al Qasimi,
Public Relations Department

We are celebrating an important event, the day in which His Majesty assumed power. It is an occasion that represented a turning point in the history of our dear Oman and that changed the course of life in Oman and as a result the Sultanate is now living in peace and prosperity making steady progress on each day based on the principles of mutual cooperation and understanding with countries of the world.

I am honored to extend my congratulations and blessings to the builder of our dear Oman on the glorious occasion of the 23 July Renaissance Day, to OCCI board members, affiliated businessman and companies and to employees for their efforts in realizing our aspirations.

Talal bin Khalfan Al Shuaibi,
Public Relations

We congratulate our dear Oman and cherished Sultan on the glorious 23 July which marks the beginning of a new dawn for Oman. I also congratulate the affiliates of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its employees on this Day and greet their significant efforts in promoting business sector in the Sultanate through cooperation and ambition towards a better level of trade and industry in Oman.

Rashid bin Salim Al Ghafrí,
Administrative Affairs Department

What has been achieved in Oman is a pride to all those living in this dear country and witnessed the dawn of the glorious occasion of the 23 July Renaissance Day. It is a day for us to be proud of and recall the glories and achievements of our heroes who built Oman through their belief. We all should be proud of this anniversary on which Sultan Qaboos brought us glory.

Nadia bint Mohammed Al Nizwaniya,
OCCI Branch of Al Dhahirah Governorate

We find it so difficult to get the words that reflect our true love and loyalty to our inspired leader. We pray to Allah the Almighty to grant His Majesty robust health and long life and protect him against all evils. The 23rd of July is an occasion for each Omani citizen to be proud of and boast the achievements and good diplomatic relations with all countries of the world. This is all due to the wisdom of the leader and his great love to his people and this dear nation.
Omani foreign trade 2013 has been the subject of a study compiled by Ali bin Said Al Jahdhami, deputy director of economic research and studies department. Al Ghorfah magazine will deal with this study in some detail in the following pages:

All countries of the world, both advanced and developing, depend upon one another in meeting their needs for commodities and services. No country can live in isolation from the other countries even if it is self-sufficient in terms of raw materials, manufactured commodities, manufacturing requirements and foodstuff. Foreign trade is considered to be one of the pillars of economic development. Most of the developing countries depend significantly on world markets due to the variation in the nature of their economic structure.

Foreign trade is one of the vital sectors in any society regardless of whether that society is advanced or developing. Foreign trade connects countries and communities with one another and assists in expanding marketing capacities by opening new markets for the country’s products and also in increasing the country’s wellbeing and prosperity by widening the varieties base with regard to consumption, investment and reduction of production resources in general.

In addition, foreign trade derives its importance from being considered an essential indicator of the countries’ productive and competitive abilities in international markets as this indicator is directly associated with the available production capabilities, the country’s ability to export and import, the consequent reflection of such activities on the country’s foreign currency reserves and the impact of those parameters on the trade balance.

There is also a close relationship between foreign trade and economic development as economic development and its consequent rise of national income affects the volume and pattern of international trade.

The importance of foreign trade has increased to become a major factor in the political and economic strategy. A country may use foreign trade as a pressure card to achieve specific political goals or it may use it to implement specific economic objectives such as protecting emerging industries from foreign competitions.

Foreign trade is not only restricted to the exchange of commodities and services, but rather goes beyond that concept to include transfer of capitals and labor element (human brains and workforce) as a result of movement of persons from one country to another. This in turn leads to redistribution of labor element in a more appropriate manner among the countries allowing workers to move from a country paying less and having less job opportunities to another country where there are less workers and higher rates of wages. Hence, this movement leads to exchange of technical experience and increased productivity with the host country obtaining the technical expertise that it requires. Also, these working people need to transfer part of their income to their original home country although they can also invest their monies in the host country, resulting in capital turnover.

**Omani foreign trade is in continuing progress**

Oman’s foreign trade has recorded good growth rates. It has suffered some slight retreat for short periods of time but growth and development drive continued to further improve, which is a natural phenomenon.

Monthly statistical bulletins issued by the National Statistics and Information Center (2014) indicate that the total trade exchanges (imports and exports including oil) during 2013...
amounted to RO 34,897.9 million (34 billion and 897.9 million) against RO 31,057.5 million (31 billion and 57.5 million) recording a growth rate of 12.3%. The total value of imports amounted to nearly RO 13,210 million against about RO 11,010.4 million in 2012 at a growth rate of 19.9% between the two years. Total exports amounted to nearly RO 21,696.9 million against RO 20,047.1 million in 2012, at a growth rate of 8.2%. Exports are divided into three sections, oil exports amounting to nearly RO 14.349 million constituting 66% of the total Omani exports, non-oil exports (commodities of Omani origin) amounting to RO 3.807 million making up 18% of the total exports. The third section is re-exportation activity with exports amounting to nearly RO 3.541 million, 18% of the total Omani exports.

Firstly: Imports
Imports play an important role in providing economic growth requirements for importation of equipment, machineries and devices necessary for the manufacturing process. Imports normally directly contribute to national income growth by way of empowering the national economy to confront the burdens of development and provide necessary equipment, devices and expertise as well as essential consumers’ commodities so that production can be increased and diversified.

Most developing countries rely considerably on global market owing to their economic structures with their needs varying according to availability of raw materials, manufacturing equipment, machinery, skilful workforce and fertile lands for agriculture and setting up of factories.

Statistics issued by the National Statistics and Information Center indicate that the values of Omani imports over the past years have demonstrated an upward rise as shown in the above graphical representation. In 2004, they amounted to nearly RO 3,383 million, in 2008 to nearly RO 8,896.3 million and by the end of 2013 amounted to about RO 13,201 million.

Major Import Partners
Foreign trade statistics issued by the Directorate General of Customs, Royal Oman Police, indicate that the Sultanate imported miscellaneous commodities during 2013 from 102 countries amounting to RO 13,201 million, including 20 Arab countries in the sum of RO 5,584 million constituting 42.3% of the total imports of the Sultanate from all countries of the world that year. The United Arab Emirates topped the list of those countries with 29.6% of the total imports of the Sultanate.

Prepared by: Ali bin Said Al Jahdhami
Deputy Director of Economic Research and Studies Department

Source: National Statistics and Information Center
Imports as per customs outlets

Commodities imported through seaports constituted the highest percentage for being easier and less costly making up 71% of the total imported commodities during 2013. Commodities imported through land outlets came in the second place with 20%. Commodities imported by air constituted 9% of the total imported commodities by Oman in 2013.

Graphical Representation (2): Distribution of imports according to customs outlets

Secondly: Exports

Exports in their three sections (oil, commodities of Omani origin and re-exportation) constituted nearly 62% of the total Omani foreign trade in 2013 with oil exports dominating with 66% of the total Omani exports for the same year.

Observers of growth rate of exports since 2004 (graphical representation No. 1) will notice that the growth of these exports has a typical upward moving shape. In 2004, the value of exports amounted to nearly RO 5,145.1 million, including an increase in oil exports at nearly 81.4% with its value rising in 2008 to nearly RO 14,503 million. During 2013, the value amounted to nearly RO 21,696.9 million including RO 14,348.6 with oil exports being at 66% of the total exports during that year. It is noticed that the percentage of non-oil exports rose from 8.2% in 2004 to 17.5% in 2013.

It indicated here that commodities of Omani origin constituted 17.5% of the total Omani exports during 2013 while the re-exportation activity constituted 16.3% of the total exports.

Table (1): Major Trade Partners/Importers to the Sultanate 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Values of imports (million RO)</th>
<th>Percentage of total Omani imports %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>3,911</td>
<td>29.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>9.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>9.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>5.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate General of Customs, Royal Oman Police

Imported Commodities Structure

Metallic products constitute 27.5% of the total imported commodities topping the list of commodities in the total sum of RO 3627.6 million followed by transport equipment of various types and uses constituting 18% amounting to RO 2375.9 million followed by machineries, equipment and electrical appliances at 15.5% amounting to RO 2054.2%. Metals and their makes came in the fourth place at 10.4% of the total imported commodities amounting to RO 1376.9 million.

Table (2): Imported Commodities Structure 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Commodity description</th>
<th>Value (million RO)</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Animals and livestock products</td>
<td>429.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Metallic products</td>
<td>3,627.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chemical industry products</td>
<td>1,007.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Metals and metal products</td>
<td>1,376.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Machinery, electrical appliances and their parts</td>
<td>2,054.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Transport equipment</td>
<td>2,375.9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2,329.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>13,201</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin April 2014 issued by the National Statistics and Information Center
Graphical Representation [3] showing percentages associated with exports structure

Trade Partners in Exports

Omani non-oil commodities could access markets of more than 126 countries during 2013 amounting to RO 3,806.9 million, including 21 Arab countries totaling RO 383.3 million constituting 43.5% of the Sultanate’s non-oil exports to all countries of the world.

Table (3): Major Trade Partners importing from the Sultanate (The percentage figures are wrong. Please check original or refer to Chamber)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Values of imports (million RO)</th>
<th>Percentage of total Omani exports %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>3,203.6</td>
<td>14.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1,042.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>972.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>663.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>502.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>400.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>398.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>333.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>331.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>302.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4): Exported Commodities Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity description</th>
<th>Value in million RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oil and gas</td>
<td>14,348.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude oil</td>
<td>12,337.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refined oil</td>
<td>340.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural liquefied gas</td>
<td>1,670.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metallic products</td>
<td>1,277.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical industry products</td>
<td>800.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufactured plastics and rubber</td>
<td>288.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metals and manufactured metals</td>
<td>724.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>724.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-exportation</td>
<td>3,541.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metallic products</td>
<td>1,293.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport equipment</td>
<td>1,731.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total exports of commodities</td>
<td>21,696.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin April 2014 – National Statistics and Information Center

Major exported commodities

Oil and gas top the list of major exported commodities in 2013 amounting to nearly RO 14,348.6 million constituting 66% of the total exported commodities during that year. Non-oil commodities amounted in total to nearly RO 3,806.9 million, most importantly metallic products, manufactured items of plastics and rubber. The major re-exported commodities include transport means and equipment amounting to nearly RO 1,731.6 million at 48.9% of the total re-exported commodities.

Sources:

- Annual Statistical Book, August 2013, National Statistics and Information Center
- Monthly Statistical Bulletin, April 2014 – National Statistics and Information Center
- Foreign Trade Statistics 2013 – Directorate General of Customs, Royal Oman Police
- Database – Computer Department, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry
OCCI Board Chairman held a meeting with the Omani Journalists Society that was overwhelmed by an atmosphere of openness and honesty, the aim being to present a statement of account on the board's activity for the few months it has been in office. For the first time, the OCCI board is entirely elected as the “home of merchants” in Oman in a democratic transition process that allowed members to select their representatives without any imposed mandate.

The new experience has brought about new faces of small and medium calibers representing the majority of the economy in Oman. Although less than four months have passed since the new board took office, the journalists in their meeting with the OCCI board chairman were clear in evaluating the board's work during this short period of time. They explored future and new trends of the merchants’ home. Perhaps, the most important of these was the good relationship that existed between OCCI, the Sultanate of Oman’s Trade Union, the Public Authority for Consumer Protection and the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This is quite evident from the new trends adopted by the new board. Journalists were ambitious to ask questions intensively and openly about these axes. His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI Chairman, answered to them with yet further openness, honesty and transparency. Al Ghorfa Magazine reproduces the proceedings of this meeting which were already covered by the local media. What did the OCCI Chairman say?

**Thanks and gratitude to His Majesty**

In his opening statement, His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI board Chairman, extended his utmost thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said for the Royal gesture whereby it is ordered to conduct free elections to choose OCCI’s entire board members in a democratic transition process that is considered to be yet another credit to the expansion of political participation in the Sultanate of Oman.

“His Majesty has always dedicated particular attention and unlimited care to the private sector as being a partner of the public sector. This support stems from His Majesty’s belief in the significant role that this sector can play in the development process in particular and in the economy in general. On behalf of the private sector, we highly assess and acknowledge this care and call upon the private sector and its people to translate it care into tangible reality by effectively contributing to the development process. This particularly concerns employment of national cadres and their empowerment in their enterprises. This is a great responsibility that all should shoulder.”

About the relationship between OCCI, the Labor Union of the Sultanate of Oman and Public Authority for Consumer Protection as well as with the vital elements of the national economy, i.e. the small and medium enterprises, His Excellency said: Our relations with the Labor Union of the Sultanate of Oman are very strong and we have been exchanging views since I am chairman of OCCI Branch of North Al Batinah Governorate during my last term of office. All our contacts were focused on public interest and on bringing about solutions to labor strikes occurring in some companies. This relationship is above the interests of all parties and is governed by a sense of reasonability and fairness in bringing about solutions to some pending issues. It is in our interest and for the benefit of our country that we should work in harmony with all production parties in the Sultanate so that all parties can
benefit. There is no victor, no vanquished! Why do some people look at our positive relationship with the Sultanate of Oman Trade Union in an opposite way? The strong relationship between OCCI and the Labor Union does not necessarily mean that we have mutual agreement on all matters of mutual concern. Our ties with the Trade Union is an example of joint effort in the best interest of our nation. It is not in the interest of what we aspire nor is it in the interest of strengthening relationship between employers and workers to always be at odd with regard to all issues. We have, therefore, pursued the approach of dialogue among the various parties to production and could thus find solutions to many of the problems that arose between some trade unions and companies in record times. This is what we should endeavor to sustain and does not involve any concessions in the aspects which concern employers. What we could achieve were compromises that took into account the interests of all parties. This is our duty and is not dictated to us since serving our nation is something that we are very much proud of in all positions.

The OCCI chairman wondered why some people misinterpret positive trends. “Our goal in the context of this relationship is to serve all major companies operating in the Sultanate. As it is known, the other parties involved in labor cases are large companies and reputed employers. On the other hand, the Trade Union of the Sultanate of Oman has clear objectives, including paving the way for a favorable working environment for those under its umbrella and effectively contributing to the economy by increasing productivity of workers. We should not deny their efforts and national roles in catering for workers, defending their interests, encouraging them to work in companies and ensuring the provision of guarantees for the success of the Omanisation policies pursued by the government. This is a significant role which the Trade Union is playing and we should support it and stand by its side for public interest. What we are doing does not involve any contradiction to the OCCI’s roles and should not be interpreted as a retreat on our part. This is the role which we believe the OCCI should perform. It is not the OCCI board which turned things upside down and incited split and differences among various parties. This is not our philosophy nor is it our role which we should perform in serving our country. Like others, we have responsibility that we should shoulder to be best of our ability.”

**OCCI relationship with PACP bears no contradiction**

His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi commented on the OCCI’s relationship with the Public Authority for Consumer Protection saying: A number of OCCI board members held a cordial meeting with the Authority chairman in which opinions were exchanged on the Authority’s role and efforts made to protect the consumer. The OCCI supports and advocates this role. The OCCI does not protect traders who breach the rights of consumers not does it stand by any trader who works or attempts to harm consumers. Being consumers ourselves, it is natural that we want to see others get the same treatment as we get simply because they are our brothers and relatives. That is why we support the Authority in all its roles and in what it does in the interest of consumers. The two parties (OCCI and Authority) will organize a conference in the last quarter of the current year on the relationship between traders and consumers, the aim being to strengthen awareness on the importance of each party's rights and duties. The OCCI and
Authority concur on many aspects and differ in some which is a good sign that is useful for the exchange of opinions and views in many fields of work that concern the public domain. This solid relationship does not necessarily mean that there are concessions involved. It is rather a balanced relationship that is intended to be absolutely fair to all. Both traders and consumers have rights, and for this reason there is no harm and there is no reciprocated harm. We stand at equal distance from all parties.

Support to SMEs
Answering questions about the move towards small and medium enterprises (SMEs), His Excellency said: Small enterprises constitute 90% of the companies operating in the Sultanate and are considered to be the pillar of national economy. Our interest in these companies is fundamental and important in the light of the current situation and government's trends aimed at empowering national cadres to lead these enterprises within the context of entrepreneurship empowerment plans adopted by the government inspired by the orders of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in this respect. The private sector is a partner of the government and should support its efforts and role. Similarly, government does support the private sector and contribute to further strengthening it. Naturally, we should support these trends. The public and private sectors are partners in development and can never be at odd or in conflict. The country's interest requires joint efforts to be made by all parties. It is noticed that large companies support small and medium companies and this is an indication that the large companies back the OCCI and interact with its initiatives. All categories of companies are represented in the OCCI in a way or another and there is no difference between them. All efforts are underway to achieve the desirable goals in serving all categories of companies affiliated to the OCCI at par.

OCCI dedicates its entire capabilities
In this respect, His Excellency said: OCCI places all its capabilities and tools in support of the efforts being made by government authorities and support all steps taken to ensure success of small and medium enterprises either in the context of the initiatives aimed at familiarizing businessmen with the experiences of world countries through trade delegations or through the support accorded to national products and enrichment of local markets via “shop in Oman” initiative and other programs and initiatives. OCCI maintains contact with the Public Authority for Development of SMEs and coordinates with it with regard to the foreign trade delegations. There is also coordination in other aspects of business which contribute to strengthening the Authority’s role in the upcoming period. This approach will continue to serve national objectives and cannot be compromised. We call upon large companies to respond to the government’s efforts aimed at granting the SMEs part of their works which they obtain from government tenders. This would epitomize the role entrusted to these companies in serving the community.

Serious approach is required at the current stage
His Excellency called for deep understanding of the role of the private sector in empowering each other and effectively contributing to the comprehensive development through integration with the public sector and consolidation of the small and medium enterprises. He pointed out that the current and upcoming periods require all to be serious and work strenuously with all partners in development in the Sultanate in order to promote the national economy. OCCI supports any initiative or step that would achieve national aspirations and does not work bit by bit or gets things messed up for unclear objectives. The private sector is an integrated sector. Our care for a specific segment does not mean that we do not pay attention to other segments. Forthcoming days will prove our intentions and objectives. However, there are always priorities and trends which we have to cope with and further strengthen. There is no difference in that.

OCCI’s initiatives were met with satisfaction by entrepreneurs
About the OCCI launched initiatives and whether they meet the ambitions aspired from the role that is supposed to be played by the “traders home,” His Excellency said: The nine initiatives launched by OCCI aim to provide an addition to the chamber’s normal role as an umbrella for businessmen. They are only a little part of the activity undertaken by the chamber and came to keep pace with the trends aimed at enabling entrepreneurs, supporting national products and enriching local market. They are currently being implemented and are receiving excellent interaction on the part of a wide range of private sector organizations. Delegations were dispatched to many countries in quest for partners and in order to familiarize with their experiences and have hands-on global experience. They are all aimed at adding value to the chamber’s role as representative of the private sector in the Sultanate but of course they do not and will not constitute an alternative. We are forging ahead with materializing many of the trends which contribute to promoting the chamber’s role in the upcoming period.

No conflict in holding dual posts
Answering a question about how it is possible to cope with two position in his capacity as being chairman of OCCI branch of North Al Batinah, he said: There is no conflict between this and that and the law permits it. We are observing the law and working institutionally through the board in North Al Batinah Governorate as well as the branch administration which manages the branch affairs. Notwithstanding, we have delegated adequate jurisdictions to the vice-chairman through which he could play his role through the board and in accordance with working mechanisms in the same way as followed in the other branches operating in the various governorates of the Sultanate. Some people cause much ado about nothing for personal goals related to positions. We have not invented these positions nor did we seek them, but they were introduced in the spirit of the law. The elections have proved that votes go to those people who work efficiently in the public interest and in service of the wide range of categories within the community. Out work in North Al Batinah over the past period has contributed to our success in the current term of office. No one denies this fact. Our success could be achieved thanks to those who nominated us and granted us their trust to represent them in the North Al Batinah Governorate and thanks also to Al Batinah board and the OCCI board. There is no duplication in this as some allege and there is no race to take up positions as some claim. There was a system promulgated by a Royal Decree that we should apply in its entirety. The OCCI chairman does not maintain any position other than that of the board chairman under the law. Members are representing the chamber in committees and board which is a clear indication of distribution of roles. We are not running after positions as some claim. If anyone can prove otherwise then he should come out to disclose what he has. Otherwise, silence on our plan is the most effective response.

North Al Batinah is unforgettable start point
My work with North Al Batinah branch brought about many
Answering a question on the necessity of setting up large companies to accommodate national workforce, His Excellency said: OCCI stresses the importance of such steps which aim to set up large companies in all economic sectors and take advantage of the facilities provided by the government to them in this regard. Considerable efforts are underway in this respect with many of the government authorities and the private sector in order to create partnerships with foreign counterparts. There are many companies investing in the Industrial Estates in Rusayl, Sohar and Duqm, etc. However, expectations are always big and the goals are bigger. We welcome and support any step of this sort and this is our responsibility towards supporting any investment-related steps.

About the chamber’s support to Omani women, His Excellency said: The chamber is for all and support businesswomen in various economic sectors and look forward to their greater interaction in support of their presence at all levels. As far as small and medium enterprises, we encourage household and craft enterprises and all, men and women, can register to obtain the chamber’s support.

**Trade delegations**

About the chamber’s initiatives and their importance in support of small and medium enterprises in response to a question raised by Essa Al Qasabi, His Excellency said: There are many different initiatives, including “Join us to Accomplish” initiative with the participation of 11 delegation consisting of 200 persons. This is an indication that small and medium enterprises are participating in and interacting with the chamber’s initiatives. This participation will be evaluated and how to activate it for the upcoming period. There is “outlets” initiative in a number of commercial complexes which witness significant turnout and are intended to familiarize the visitors with what is provided by SMEs. There is also “my product” and “shop in Oman” initiatives which will set off on 15 November 2014. Business Opportunities Forum will also be organized at the level of the Sultanate in December this year where we expect to conclude large number of deals for SMEs. I believe that what we have provided to SMEs is still modest although we are keen on assisting all SME owners and seeking to provide them with all types of support required for them according to the available capabilities.

**The chamber’s investments**

Regarding the queries about the chamber’s investments amounting to RO 25 million, Al Kiyumi pointed out that by the end of 2006 the chamber’s investments were estimated at less than RO 3 million. Amounts were further injected to set up closed companies until the end of 2012 in the total sum of RO 3,200,000 (Rials Omani Three Million Six Hundred Fifty Thousand) was injected into the share market “Mutajarah”. Hence, the amounts injected from 2006 until the end of 2012 amounted to nearly RO 7,650,000 (Rials Omani Seven Million Six Hundred Fifty Thousand) and “outlets” initiative in a number of commercial complexes which witnesses significant turnout and are intended to familiarize the visitors with what is provided by SMEs. There is also “my product” and “shop in Oman” initiatives which will set off on 15 November 2014. Business Opportunities Forum will also be organized at the level of the Sultanate in December this year where we expect to conclude large number of deals for SMEs. I believe that what we have provided to SMEs is still modest although we are keen on assisting all SME owners and seeking to provide them with all types of support required for them according to the available capabilities.

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The total monetary value available to the chamber up to the end of 2012 amounted to RO 8 million. If we add the value of its investments to this sum the total will be equivalent to RO 19 million approximately.
Feliciation & Wishes to

**HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID**

and the people of Oman on the occasion

of the 44th Renaissance Day

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Economic Caravans

Oman in mind!

Since His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said assumed power on the 23rd of July 1970, the entire country has shined with love to its cherished leader who succeeded in building a history full of achievements at all levels and in all Governorates that took Oman to an excellent Omani experience of an Arab-Islamic nature and world prestige.

It is true that ancient history tells us how Omanis struggled to build their country and succeeding in establishing an Omani civilization which was dealt with by historians and geographers with extreme admiration.

Yet, the glorious era of His Majesty has awakened aspirations anew, cultivated the trees of development and national unity in all fields, disseminated government services all over the country, established military, civil and security organizations, placed the private sector on the right economic tracks, rallied the people in their Wilayats and Governorates around one national trend supported with belief in God and love to this great nation and opened up wider prospects for cooperation and communication with world countries until Oman has become an example of internal and external success.

Amidst these successful developmental files, Oman is certainly in the minds of both Omanis and observers of the Omani affairs in international arenas on the account that what has been achieved in the Sultanate along its developmental march features a deeply-rooted Omani, Gulf, Arab and Islamic experience. It is an excellent human experience highly commended by world and human institutions.

Of course, all these achievements and commendations were made possible thanks to the wise leadership of our leader, Sultan Qaboos bin Said. That is why Omanis have every reason to celebrate their achievements while at the same time maintaining further national interaction so that their country remains in mind, always admired by all.

Ali bin Salah Al Kalbani
OCCI Board Member and Chairman of OCCI’s Branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate
ali@alkalbani.net
OCCI to have new premises in South Al Batinah

At a cost of RO 385,000 to serve 15,000 companies and firms.
Construction works set off. New building will further consolidate OCCI’s roles in developing the Governorates’ economy

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has recently signed an agreement to build a premises for its branch in South Al Batinah Governorate. This building is part of the OCCI’s endeavor to improve working environment in all branches of the OCCI in various Governorates of the Sultanate. With this building, there will be only one building left to construct to complete the whole network, i.e. the OCCI branch in Al Wusta Governorate which will hopefully be constructed in the upcoming period.

The step also comes in the context of the OCCI’s endeavor to strengthen its contribution to the economic movement in the Governorate and provide opportunity to businessmen and private sector firms and companies to contribute to the economic development drive and take advantage of the considerable economic potentials. The step is also meant to strengthen the board’s resolve to delegate a number of its powers to the branches to enable them to cope with the private sector requirements in the Governorates and provide high quality, diverse services.

The cost of the new OCCI branch building in Rustaq amounts to RO 385,000 built on an area of 1,400 square meters at Al Araqi area, Wilayat Al Rustaq. The building will consist of custom-designed utilities to meet all needs of business owners who are members of the branch, including an elevated conference hall, exhibition hall, library, customers’ services hall, VIP waiting lounge and administrative offices. The design of the building features Omani architecture which derives its components and attributes from the local environment with future extensions taken into consideration.

Commenting on the building, a number of officials and individuals concerned with the private sector as well as beneficiaries from the services of the OCCI branch in South Al
Batinah expressed their satisfaction at this step which they say is projected to promote the standard of work and contribute to enabling the branch to comfortably host economic events and serve its customers more smoothly with diverse quality services. The building is also intended to enable branch’s staff to perform their tasks with higher efficiency.

About the agreement and its importance, engineer Humood bin Salim Al Saadi, board chairman of OCCI branch in South Al Batinah, said: The signing of the agreement reflects keenness of the OCCI board on creating a commercial and industrial system embodying all branches on equal footing in order to provide for an appropriate working environment. The building will make it easy for the staff to perform their duties with high efficiency. In view of the rapid commercial and economic development process now underway, the construction of the new premises for OCCI branch in the Governorate was a top priority for the OCCI board. Al Saadi pointed out that the new premises would serve businesspersons and private sector firms in South Al Batinah Governorate in general, including Wilayats of Barka, Al Musannaa, Rustaq, Nakhl, Wadi Al Maawil and Al Awabi. Recognized members of the OCCI branch as at the end of 2013 accounted for about 15,000 companies and firms of various activities and specializations.

Al Saadi added that the new building constituted an asset to the economic activity in the South Al Batinah Governorate. “We, in the OCCI branch board and the executive body, will endeavor to take full advantage of the facilities and capabilities provided by the building and employ them optimally to serve the private sector in the Governorate as well as the comprehensive development process in general. The new building will serve as a forum where business owners can meet and discuss their concerns.

Sheikh Nasser bin Salim Al Mardhouf Al Saadi, the previous term of office of economic committee at OCCI branch in South Al Batinah Governorate, commended this step which he said would serve the economic mobility being witnessed by the Wilayats of the South Al Batinah Governorate. He pointed out that with the growing number of companies and firms registered with the branch, it has become necessary to construct a premises that is in line with the importance and size of this organization. He stressed that the Wilayats of South Al Batinah Governorate are witnessing significant economic mobility with great deal of diverse investment opportunities being available for companies and firms in the Governorate. We believe that the new premises with its facilities and capabilities will provide the required high quality services. We hope that channels will be established for direct contact between the OCCI and business owners during the upcoming period as this is very important for all to identify the challenges that face the private sector and familiarize with the proposed solutions that may effectively contribute to promoting economic activity in the Governorate.

Yaaqub bin Salim bin Mohammed Al Obaidani, member of the municipal council, representative of Wilayat Nakhal and member of the economic committee in the OCCI branch in South Al Batinah Governorate, also commented on the agreement by saying: We congratulate all businessmen in South Al Batinah Governorate on commencement of
construction works on the new premises in Rustaq. He pointed out the new building would meet the needs of all stakeholders in terms of the services to be provided in it, easy access to it, allocated spaces for visitors and the well prepared waiting halls.

“On the other hand, the new premises will serve as a constant facility for male and female business owners where they can hold their seminars and meetings. It will also constitute a platform through which they can make their proposals with the participation of other male and female business owners,” he added. “We thank the executive body for the efforts that it has made in order to enable the branch to provide the best quality of services,” he concluded.

**An important step**

Rashid bin Masoud Al Siyabi, member of board of OCCI branch of South Al Batinah, stressed the importance of this step in activating and developing commercial and industrial sector and all other sectors in South Al Batinah Governorate. This leap shall have significant positive bearing on all those concerned with the business sector in the Governorate. He pointed out that the building in Rustaq was a basic requirement for speedier services to companies due to the increasing economic activity witnessed by South Al Batinah Governorate. “The building means providing a healthy working environment for employees, the branch committees and workshops organized from time to time,” he noted.

Ali bin Hashil Al Malik, board member of OCCI branch in South Al Batinah Governorate, said that the new premises of the branch came at the right and appropriate time when the Governorate, particularly Wilayat Barka, was witnessing considerable economic and developmental movement due to its proximity to Sohar Industrial Port. It also came at a time when the concerned authorities announced a series of plans and projects which will be embraced by Wilayat Barka in particular and South Al Batinah Governorate in general. “This will of course attract many investors, business owners and companies who are all in need of services and facilities to assist them in setting up and developing their businesses and commercial projects. It is, therefore, important that the new building in Rustaq should cope with the introduction of the series of services that will be provided in addition to the already existing services now provided by the branch. The branch should also work intensively to promote the investment opportunities available in all Wilayats of South Al Batinah Governorate,” he remarked.

Khalfan Al Rashidi of Wilayat Barka stressed the considerable importance of the new premises in Rustaq and pointed out the great role that the businesspersons expect from it during the upcoming period. He said that it was necessary to avail of the facilities which will be provided by the new building to serve the private sector. He emphasized the importance of catering for the working cadre of the new premises and the need to support it with yet additional competent personnel to enable them to provide high quality services.

The agreement was signed on part of the OCCI by Abdul Azeem bin Abbas Al Bahrami, Director General of OCCI; and by Mohsin bin Hashil Alawi, board chairman of Eastern Al Rowaq Trading Company, which is the company carrying out the project. The signing ceremony was attended by engineer Redha bin Jumaa Al Sahih, OCCI board vice-chairman for administrative and financial affairs.

The OCCI Branch of South Al Batinah Governorate serves the Wilayats of Rustaq, Barka, Wadi Al Maawil, Nakhal and Al Awabi. It will further continue to provide its services from its current premises to 15,000 affiliates until it has shifted to the new building which is expected to take about 14 months to be complete and hand over in 2015.
Felicitations & Sincere wishes
His Majesty
Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
and the people of Oman on the occasion of
44th Renaissance Day

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During a meeting of the OCCI’s Tourist Committee presided over by Ali bin Salim Al Hajri, OCCI board member, His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, Board Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stated that Oman has great deal of tourist potentials, but lacks promotion and marketing of these potentials and suffers deficiency in infrastructure. He pointed out that with joint efforts and capabilities, tourism can become a source of income that is not less important than the other national income sources. “We welcome any cooperation with the authorities concerned with tourist sector for the sake of promoting tourism in the Sultanate as integration of roles among various institutions leads to better results,” he added.

On his part, Ali bin Salim Al Hajri, chairman of OCCI branch in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, and treasurer and chairman of OCCI Tourism Committee pointed out that the committee put in place short-term and long-term objectives and programs and sought the efforts of all of its members to turn these objectives into tangible reality. “The committee’s members are a mixture of various government and private sectors. We are also keen to include in the committee representatives of the students studying tourism as they represent one of the important targeted categories when planning for development of tourism sector.”

Held at the OCCI head office in the presence of committee members, the meeting discussed implemented and non-implemented recommendations of the tourism committee over the past period. It also tackled the committee’s terms of reference and its anticipated duties for the upcoming period as well as the Committee’s working strategies taking into consideration the views and opinions of attending members on activation of the committee’s roles and promotion of its

TOURISM NEEDS PROMOTION

Strategies and working plans of OCCI’s Tourism Committee for the upcoming period and “My Project Clinic” as part of top priorities
activities. It was agreed to put in place a clear vision for the committee and short-term applicable objectives to enable the committee to prove its presence as an important and serious committee. The meeting also discussed a proposal to have representatives of the government sectors concerned with tourism sector to deliver the concerns of those working the field of tourism to decision-makers at these authorities in order to come out with rapid solutions to the obstacles rendering the sector unable to reach its desirable goal of enriching tourism sector in the Sultanate and increasing its contribution to the gross domestic product. In this regard, particular emphasis is placed on the practical and procedural obstacles.

Short-term and long-term strategies
“My project clinic” is considered to be the first initiative launched by the OCCI’s Tourism Committee and serves as a platform to provide consultancy and specialized technological services to stumbling or non-developing small and medium tourism companies in the Sultanate of Oman. The initiative is intended to diagnose the failure and its causes and put in place necessary plans to rectify it with a view to enabling the stumbling organizations to get up and recover as soon as possible.

From here the committee’s role begins by identifying the major obstacles to success and growth of tourism projects through consultancy services following examination, scrutiny and diagnosis of the underlying causes in collaboration with specialists from several organizations and hence provide the appropriate consultancy prescription. The committee then follows their application and follow up recovery stages until these organizations get to safe haven.

About the mechanism that will be followed when selecting these organizations, the committee pointed out that there were two mechanisms, the first carried out through workshops held by the committee regularly which will define the units requiring intervention of the “my project clinic” working team or through personal application by the owner of the stumbling organization. Then comes the stage of diagnosis which will be catered for by a specialized company in provision of economic consultancy services. A purely economic study shall be compiled on the stumbling project suggesting the appropriate solutions and recommendations.

Workshop involving tourism stakeholders
The committee will organize workshops where partners in local tourism from the government and private sectors will meet to discuss various aspects of tourism industry. These workshops aim to come out with recommendations that contribute to developing local tourism by small and medium enterprises and strengthening the performance of these enterprises and improve their productivity. The committee
Qualifying national cadres in the sector is an important demand

Mohammed Al Zadjali

The committee’s initiatives received favorable response from several companies and establishments

Abdul Aziz Al Hassani

Proposal by the committee to adopt and support owners of antiquities and private museums

Hassan Al Lawati

will work towards attracting a number of experts in various fields to take advantage of their views with regard to some matters under discussion.

About these workshops, Abdul Aziz bin Rashid Al Hassani, committee vice-chairman, stated that these workshops targeted SMEs first of all and that the committee would like to see these workshops as specialized and focused as possible so that they can bear fruit. “The initiatives launched by the committee were responded to with satisfaction by the companies wishing to provide support and assistance,” he said.

The attendants unanimously concurred that the tourism sector in the Sultanate was in need of more efforts and that reviving domestic tourism required huge work and creative marketing. They stressed that it was important for tourism service providers to uplift the standard of the service provided by their organizations and introduce unforgettable experiences for both local and foreign tourists in order to win their trust and impress upon them so that they choose Oman as their next destination.

Qualifying national cadres to work in tourism sector is an important demand

On his part, Mohammed bin Mahmood Al Zadjali called for qualifying national cadres to work in tourism sector as an urgent requirement. “The management of this vital and important sector by national cadres gives another dimension of innovation in this field. In this regard, great hope is pinned on Oman Tourism College and other academic institutions to provide suitable qualification for the youths to work in tourism sector at various levels.”

The outcome of the meeting included a proposal made by Hassan bin Mohammed Al Lawati about the possibility that the committee adopting owners of antiquities and private museum and provide them with financial and moral support to encourage them and their role in preserving heritage for next generations.

As part of the OCCI’s program to develop tourism sector, preparations are underway to introduce a new type of experience in the Sultanate of Oman, namely “Shop in Oman” initiative during which the commercial centers in various Governorates of the Sultanate will witness wide reductions in a plan to revive internal tourism in Oman. The OCCI will dispatch a specialized tourism delegation consisting of business owners operating in tourism sector to the Italian Island of Sardinia for the purpose of familiarizing them with the pioneering tourism experience in that island and taking advantage of the experiences of their counterparts working in the same field.
Felicitations & Sincere wishes to
His Majesty
Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
and the people of Oman on the occasion of
44th Renaissance Day
Warda Al Minji:

- I present my success to the first supporter of Omani women in all fields His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.
- Many new electronic equipment and other surprises will appear in the market shortly.
- Carefully choosing a working team was the greatest challenge.

**LIMITLESS PASSION**

Passion, ambition, challenge and strong resolve are the common qualities of entrepreneurs who were successful in their businesses. This applies to Warda Al Minji who is so passionate about her work and has great ambition to promote her company.

Warda has been working for the past five years with strenuous efforts on her private project of which she dreamed. Now, the project is bearing fruits. In this interview, we talked to Warda about her project and the secrets of success.

*Interviewed by Zamzam Al Hanai*

Recalling the beginnings of her company, Warda says:

The beginning was just an idea like most of the projects we are now seeing on the ground. Then, began the practical steps to set up the company, appoint a working team and provide the required capital for business to set off. This was the first difficulty that faced me at the beginning of the enterprise. However, thanks to God, I was able to overcome it by providing a self-financed capital and carefully selecting a working team. We were successful in that.

Seeing our goals realized day after another gave the working team an impetus to continue the good work with high spirit. This is how the company grew beyond expectation. For sure, this is thanks to the All-Mighty Allah who helped me in choosing an ambitious working team that was capable of promoting the company and empowering in the market.

About the age of the project and achievements made over the past period, she replied as follows:

The project is five years old. The success of my project may also be attributable to the rapid
growth of technology, the interest of people in obtaining what is new in the changing world of electronics and the trend to carry out transactions through e-government.

**Speaking about the future of her company with optimism and unlimited confidence, Warda says:**

We have adopted a clear future vision for the prosperity of the company. We are working smoothly to achieve this vision. We do not relinquish our dreams nor do we retreat. We have attempted three different ways until we could get to the current ideal model. If you are not confident of your steps you will withdraw from the challenge and raise the white banner for being unable to overcome the obstacles facing you. If you are not smooth you will be struck with waves of problems and you cannot sail with your boat or company to a safety haven away from storms. You need to be very wise when dealing with such things.

**Like any other successful entrepreneur, Warda adopts an ideal planning approach as a method to efficiently manage and develop her company. In this regard, Warda says:**

We do believe that business plan for any company is like a constitution that should be implemented by all those working in the company. Working plans should be practical and based upon scientific and logical principles intended to achieve the company’s overall objectives. This is what we pursue in DigitX. This clarity in defining the objective was the main reason behind the company’s success and propagation in quite a short period of time. We constantly work on updating our business plan in accordance with the market’s requirements and variables taking into account the importance of keeping our workers aware of such plan to enable them to implement it in the best possible manner. This is the only way to promote the company and sustain its progress.

Warda keeps pace with what is new in the field of technology. There are too many new equipment and surprises that DigitX will offer in the market shortly.

**About DigitX participations in specialized internal and external exhibitions, Warda says:**

We have great interest in this aspect of participations and seek to exploit every opportunity that is available for us to participate in such exhibitions. Through these participations we can prove our presence in the market. We have had several previous participations in schools over the past period. We also took part in COMEX 2014.

**In concluding, to whom Warda presents her successes?**

I present my success to the first supporter of Omani women in all spheres His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, and then to my husband, mother and sons.
An economic delegation of the OCCI branch of Musandam Governorate led by Hamid bin Mohammed Zaman bin Kamil Al Raeesi, board chairman of OCCI branch of Musandam Governorate, paid a visit to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates. The delegation was received by His Excellency Yousef bin Obaid Al Nuaimi and Their Excellences board members of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a number of directors and officials of economic authorities in Ras Al Khaimah Emirate and Administration of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. His Excellency Yousef bin Obaid Al Nuaimi, welcomed the visiting chairman and members of the delegation and stressed the strategic partnership and fruitful cooperation between the two sides.

Prospects of Cooperation
The visit began with a tour of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ras Al Khaimah, through which the delegation familiarized with the mechanisms pursued to accomplish certificates of origin and heard a brief elaboration of the procedures adopted to issue certificates of origin. The delegation also viewed the facilities and services provided by the chamber which include the chamber's theater and external exhibition halls and Sheikh Saud bin Saqr program for support of youth projects. The chairman of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry called for opening prospects of cooperation to establish joint events in support of revival of trade and economic activity. The delegation familiarized with the many achievements achieved by Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry in various fields.

Consolidating communication
A meeting was held between members of the two chambers at Hilton Spa Resort, Ras Al Khaimah, where several issues of mutual concerns were discussed including historical economic relations between the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman by virtue of their proximity to one another. They commended the cooperation accorded by the government of Ras Al Khaimah in the drive aimed at developing the private sector in Musandam Governorate. The two sides stressed the necessity of setting up a joint
committee to strengthen communication and develop mutual cooperation in various trade and tourist sectors as well as transport, labor and SME sectors. The meeting also emphasized a number of major axes which would contribute to consolidating this cooperation such as creating joint economic activities through seminars, workshops and exhibitions and introducing mechanisms for exchange of experiences between the two sides.

Qualitative Leap
In a statement, the chairman of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, His Excellency Yousef Obaid Al Nuaimi expressed his happiness at this visit and pointed out that it was intended to consolidate the bonds of bilateral cooperation for promotion of economic activities in both sides and affirmation of the historical association of the two parties in all areas. He said that he and the board were pleased to receive the delegation in this important visit which represented a qualitative leap in the history of relations between the two countries in the context of their desire to further strengthen channels of communications and exchange of experiences and information and consolidation of existing partnerships and introduction of mechanisms for future cooperation in the best interest of the two sides.

Trade partnership
Al Nuaimi emphasized that the Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry was keen on providing all necessary facilities for business sectors in both sides in order to sustain the distinguished trade and economic partnership since Ras Al Khaimah Emirate is one of the biggest strategic partners of the Sultanate of Oman. Total exports from Ras Al Khaimah amounted to AED 2,325 million in 2012, i.e. a contribution of 30.18% of the total foreign trade compared to AED 1,242 million in 2003, contributing with 20.06% to the total foreign trade, an increase of nearly AED 1,083 million. The Sultanate of Oman also topped the list in terms of re-exported commodities to the GCC countries from Ras Al Khaimah for 2012 with re-exported commodities to Oman amounting to nearly AED 1,437 million at 57.41%.
Joint Interest
About the most important points agreed upon during the joint meeting, Al Nuaimi pointed out that there were many items of mutual interest which were brought forward and discussed in a gathering involving all economic organizations in the Emirate. It was agreed at that gathering to set up a permanent committee to facilitate mutual cooperation with a view to activating economic movement and overcoming the obstacles facing the two chambers of Ras Al Khaimah and Musandam in all fields. It was confirmed during the gathering and private organizations. I wish every success to this meeting in the spirit of the historical relations that exists between the two brotherly countries, United Arab Emirates and Sultanate of Oman. Our relations are characterized with spirit of cooperation and genuine partnership between the two brotherly countries in all fields."

Continuing development
Al Raeesi pointed out that the economic cooperation between the UAE and Sultanate of Oman captures great attention and that it was necessary to strengthen trade and customs cooperation, exchange experiences of mutual interest and drive trade movement between the two sides.

Economic return
The chairman of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry commended the efforts being made by the Sultanate to strengthen the economic sector through various projects and support the private sector to enable it to contribute to the economic growth. He also hailed the great efforts made to encourage and develop small and medium enterprises and the huge projects at Duqm which are accorded extreme attention by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. All these projects are meant to boost economic activity and contribute to achieving a significant economic return for the Sultanate and the region in the general.

Historical relations
In a statement, Hamid bin Mohammed Zaman Al Raeesi, board chairman of OCCI branch of Musandam Governorate, said: “First of all, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Yousef Al Nuaimi, chairman of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for hosting the delegation of OCCI branch of Musandam Governorate and for the efforts made to prepare for this fraternal visit. I am also thankful to Their Excellences board members of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry and businessmen and all officials of the government constant development. He added that there was no doubt that the government of Ras Al Khaimah exerts considerable efforts to consolidate cooperation between the private sector in Ras Al Khaimah and Musandam Governorate and creates methods and mechanisms for development of joint labor sector. On this basis, we extend our utmost regards and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, member of the Supreme Council of the Federation and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah for his directives in support of mutual cooperation and brotherly historical relations.

Winding up the visit, Hamid bin Mohammed bin Zaman Kamil Al Raeesi presented a commemorative gift to His Excellency Yousef Obaid Al Nuaimi. He thanked him for the distinguished efforts made by Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry in organizing the visit program and for the cordial reception and hospitality accorded to the delegation. He called the chairman and members of Ras Al Khaimah chamber to make a similar visit to OCCI branch of Musandam Governorate. On his part, Al Nuaimi presented a commemorative shield to the chairman of the OCCI branch of Musandam Governorate and miscellaneous gifts to the visiting delegation. He expressed the hope that the visit had achieved its desirable goals. Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry also hosted a dinner party in honor of the visiting delegation at Hilton Spa Resort.
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Prepared by: Moosa J. Al-Moosawi, Director of Foreign Relations & Exhibitions. Phone: 24763750, Fax: 24708497. E-mail: moosa@chamberoman.com
An expanded gathering presided over by His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Barki, Minister of Manpower, was recently held at the OCCI Buraimi branch in the presence of businesspersons. The gathering concluded with several decisions and instructions in support of efforts aimed at developing labor market in the Governorate. His Excellency stated that Buraimi Governorate would continue to be exempted from Omanisation percentages for the upcoming period due to its particularity as a border governorate influenced by the neighboring markets. His Excellency also announced that the ministry of manpower would grant the companies applying bank system to 50% of its workers a grace period allowing them to commence joining the e-system which the ministry intends to implement shortly.

The gathering was held in the presence of H.E. Said bin Salih Al Kiyumi, OCCI Board Chairman; Sheikh Bati bin Mohammed Al Niyadi, board chairman of OCCI Buraimi branch; H.E. Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said Al Busaidi, Governor of Buraimi; H.E. Sheikh Salim bin Ali Al Kaabi, deputy chairman of the Shura Council; and a host of Their Excellencies, Sheikhs and senior officials of government and private organizations. His Excellency the Minister said: “Buraimi Governorate receives constant attention from the government on equal footing with the other governorates of the Sultanate. However, border governorates have specific particularity due their need to cope with border requirements and competition standards of the other neighboring markets. Accordingly, the provided support to them is based on these considerations. Yet, the government will not continue for so long to provide such support. It is for this reason that the private sector is required to shoulder its responsibilities towards employing citizens and taking part in implementing various development projects.”

The importance of dialogue
In his opening address to the gathering, Sheikh Bati bin Mohammed Al Niyadi, board chairman of OCCI Buraimi branch welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of positive dialogue between responsible decision-makers and merchants in order to review the challenges ahead and propose...
solutions to the problems facing the development of private economic activity. He also stated that this gathering was very important, particularly since it came during the first visit of His Excellency the Minister of Manpower to the OCCI Buraimi Branch.

**Aim of the gathering**

Al Niyadi emphasized that the objective of this gathering was to arrive at some recommendations and clarifications on a number of matters relating to Omanisation and the need of enterprises to procure expatriate manpower of various categories (both male and female). In addition, the gathering will also review the financial burden arising from the new wages of private sector employees, the calls demanding the government to bear some part of these new wages as well as the facilities which will be provided by the Ministry of Manpower to SMEs and other matters relating to the ministry's services.

**Joint roles**

Al Niyadi added that OCCI has a lot of common roles and objectives with the Ministry of Manpower and that this was obvious from the endeavors of each one of them towards developing the operational system through constant consultations on labor law and discussions on amendment of such law in line with the current stage of development and related legislations. He pointed out that this trend necessitated enforcing legislations that would be useful in terms of improving professional, educational and living standards of national cadres and imparting technology with the introduction of broad-based productive commercial and industrial projects. He also stressed the need to provide support to SMEs to enable them to promote their roles in uplifting the private sector's contribution to the gross domestic product. The ultimate goal of this is to build a private sector that is effectively capable of minimizing reliance on oil and gas as the main source of national income.

He added that the two sides also shared common responsibility for addressing the issue of foreign workforce. In this regard, he pointed out that the private sector was still in need of procuring expatriate manpower for some professions and trades where it is still difficult to find Omanis to fill despite the efforts being made towards Omanisation. He referred to the importance of changing our understanding of Omanisation, particularly in the light of significant variation in wages and benefits between job opportunities available in the government sector and those available in the private sector. He noted that government jobs were apparently more preferred than jobs in the private sector.

He pointed out that this reality created a big gap for some of the private sector organizations which also requested to be allowed to procure expatriates in order to continue their growth and projects. He emphasized that the current Omanisation policy needs to be reconsidered to keep pace with labor market circumstances.

**Government support**

In his address, Al Niyadi also stressed the importance of continuing government support to the companies operating in Buraimi Governorate in order to strengthen their competitive capabilities and enable them to develop and progress. “These companies are working under tough conditions due to imbalance of investments and productive capabilities between them and their counterparts in the neighboring country which places them under direct and constant influence by the variables in the neighboring markets,” Al Niyabi noted.

**National Workforce Volume**

On his part, His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Barkri presented a visual presentation on the volume of national and expatriate workforce in the private sector in the Sultanate in general and in Buraimi Governorate in particular. His Excellency pointed out that the percentage of expatriate amounted to 42.2% in Oman in general and 49.4% in Buraimi Governorate in particular according to statistics issued by the National Statistics and Information Center. His Excellency explained that the number of expatriate workforce in the private sector accounted for 1.5 million in Oman last April, including more than 49,000 working expatriates in Buraimi Governorate according to March statistics, which represented an increase of about 17,000 workers compared to 2010. “Most of this workforce have limited skills and work mainly in retails and wholesale making up 49% in total. Omani workforce in the Sultanate was accounted for 207,000 workers by the end of last March, around 4,000 of whom are in Buraimi Governorate. Nearly 17,800 Omani workers were employed in private sector enterprises during the first quarter of this year, including 363 workers employed in Buraimi Governorate. National workforce whose services were terminated in the same period accounted for nearly 24,000 including 407 in Buraimi Governorate. These figures indicate a rise in the number of national workforce who left the private sector,” His Excellency explained.

**Decrease of Expatriate Workforce**

His Excellency pointed out that the first quarter of the current year witnessed a decline in the number of expatriate workforce
permit to be brought in to nearly 90,000 down from more than 111,000 in the Sultanate during the same period last year. He noted that that this was the result of a package of measures taken by the government and the ministry of manpower to curtail expatriate workforce such as by suspending issue of licenses for some commercial activities.

In his visual presentation on the volume of national and expatriate workforce in private sector, His Excellency demonstrated that excellent grade enterprises had the highest employability of Omanis with the number of national workforce registered in these enterprises amounting to more than 154,000 at the end of March. Enterprises in fourth, third, second and first grades enterprises achieved record numbers in employing expatriates with the grade four enterprises taking the lead in this direction with more than 434,000 expatriate workers during the same period. His Excellency pointed out that enterprises at these grades were mainly small and medium enterprises which were meant in the first place to employ more Omanis and provide income to their owners. “However, reality indicates otherwise, as most of the owners of these enterprises hold only the commercial register. These enterprises have become a hub for employment of expatriates and this fact has negative bearing and consequences on the citizen and the progress of the developmental process in general.”

He also pointed out that national workforce growth rate over the past three years has accounted for 2.8% while corresponding growth rate for expatriate workforce was five times more amounting to 14.4% during the same period. Expatriate workforce growth rate in Buraimi Governorate accounted for 16.5% against 8.3% for national workforce.

**Exemption from Omanisation percentages**
Sheikh Bati bin Mohammed Al Niyadi then reviewed the various axes of discussion which included several demands and inquiries. Business owners in Buraimi Governorate requested continued exemption from the Omanisation stipulation for those wishing to obtain approvals for procurement of expatriate workforce which was granted to the Governorate as a government support during the visit to Buraimi by the ministerial committee set up in accordance with Royal orders in 2006. The committee at that time studied the obstacles to Omanisation in the Governorate due to its proximity to a country with no employment restrictions and having available liquidity and capital for commercial and economic enterprises. This matter of fact made the competition more difficult and as a result it was almost impossible to set up commercial activities with reasonable financial revenues. In this context, His Excellency minister of manpower stressed that the ministry of manpower would continue to provide such exemptions to Buraimi Governorate. At the same time, His Excellency wondered as to how long this support would be required pointing out that that the government would not continue for so long to provide such support and demanded the private sector to shoulder its responsibilities towards employing citizens and contributing to various developmental projects.

**Wages of private sector workers**
With regard to the demand by the business owners that the ministry of manpower should bear some part of the salaries of Omani working in the private sector, His Excellency said that he was against the government paying part of these salaries. “However, the government is prepared to support the private sector through on-the-job training programs bearing RO 150 per person (as on-the-job training allowance) with the private sector bearing RO 175 which leads us to the minimum level of wages amounting to RO 325,” His Excellency noted.

**Workers at foodstuff shops**
Concerning the request of owners of foodstuff shops to allow them to employ three expatriate workers instead of two allowed at the present time, His Excellency emphasized that this conflicted with the trend of the government and the Ministry of Manpower to reduce expatriate workforce. In his address to the business owners present at the gathering, His Excellency said: “We are visiting your Governorate for the first time expecting to come out with reduced levels of expatriate workforce through your initiative to relinquish some 10,000 expatriate workers in support of the efforts being made by the government towards Omanisation and curtailment of expatriate workforce.”

**Omanisation of sales representative position**
On a request made by a number of company owners to allow them to procure expatriate workforce for the job of sales representative, His Excellency replied that the Ministry had stopped giving licenses for some activities because they directly contributed to increasing expatriate workforce. “As for the job of sales representative and other jobs of administrative nature, the ministry has a conviction that such jobs should be filled by Omanis. As per the agreement with the OCCI the ministry is reviewing exemption of some individual cases provided that the enterprises should have a contract to carry out a government project with the enterprise owner being involved on full-time basis to manage his enterprise,” His Excellency pointed out.

**Permitting procurement of females to some specialized professions**
A discussion was conducted on a request to allow procurement of expatriate women workforce to fill some jobs in the Governorate which are not possible to be filled by Omani females, including the job of manager of specialized factory. There was a call to the concerned authorities to consider amending a stipulation whereby an expatriate worker cannot bring in his family to the sultanate unless he has a salary of RO 600 per month by reducing this amount to RO 250 per month. Those who requested this amendment noted that the currently applicable stipulation had negative bearing on the real estate sector and as a result more than 2,000 flats were vacated last year by expatriates whose works extend into the UAE. They said that it also affected property owners and the mobility of trade market. His Excellency stated that there was no barrier to employing female expatriates to fill some specific jobs of a specific nature, but he insisted that priority should be given to Omani women in the first place. As for reducing the stipulated salary for expatriates to have their families with them in Oman, His Excellency pointed out that the Royal Oman Police (ROP) was the authority directly concerned with this issue. His Excellency suggested that a committee should be set up under
the chairmanship of His Excellency the Governor of Buraimi with members from ROP, ministry of manpower and OCCI in order to arrive at appropriate solutions to this matter.

Permitting licenses for mobile phone technicians
On the request by mobile phone sale and repair shops to allow them to employ expatriate mobile phone technicians due to scarcity of specialized Omanis in this field, His Excellency agreed to allow one technician to be employed by each shop provided that the owner must be involved on full-time basis and that the shop is registered with the insurance authority. However, His Excellency rejected similar requests made by honey shops, used cars centers and pharmacies to procure one cleaner for each one of them. His Excellency attributed his rejection to the need to regulate labor market without bringing in unnecessary expatriate workforce.

Support to Small and Medium Enterprises
His Excellency also agreed to exempt serious SMEs which obtained loans from financial institutions in the Sultanate from waiting too long to obtain foreign workforce to set up their enterprises. He stated that the government supports business owners who are serious and involved in their business on full-time basis. On the difficulties facing SMEs in registering new expatriate workforce due to decision of ministry of manpower on the need to open a bank account before being allowed to procure any expatriate workforce, His Excellency stated that this decision was taken in agreement with the Central Bank of Oman [CBO] and hence banks are required to facilitate the opening of such bank accounts. He said that he would request CBO to address the banks asking for their cooperation and contribution to implementing this decision. He further stressed that this decision was intended to regulate labor market, particularly since the ministry of manpower was heading towards having all its transactions and services provided electronically in the near future. In this context, His Excellency announced that the ministry of manpower would offer the companies applying the bank requirement to 50% of its workers the opportunity to continue its transactions with the ministry until commencement of the upcoming e-system. This trend was highly praised and welcomed by business owners.

Decision to ban all companies of a violating business owner
About a request not to ban dealing with all companies of a business owner in case one of his companies was found to be in violation of the rules, His Excellency said that many of the companies operating in the private sector do not provide encouraging working environment nor do they comply with occupational health and safety programs and pay wages and register tenancy contracts. Some of these companies do employ absconding workforce. He pointed out that the ministry of manpower detects hundreds of such companies on monthly basis. “When one of his companies violates the rules, the business owner uses his other companies and for this reason the ministry issued its decision to ban all such companies and there is no intention to cancel it,” he said.

Commencement of application of two-year ban for departing expatriates
His Excellency the minister of manpower rejected a request to offer greater facilities in terms of allowing sponsorship transfer within the Sultanate considering that to be the main cause of the current labor problems facing labor market. His Excellency pointed out that as an initial step towards rectifying this situation an agreement was recently made with Royal Oman Police whereby an expatriate worker who left the country without completing his contract term would not be allowed to return except after the lapse of two years from the date of his departure. “This decision will ensure that there is no chance to change a worker except after the lapse of two years of working in Oman. It is a new measure aimed at regulating labor market and curtailing expatriate workforce. The decision will be effective from July 2014.”

Proposal to link Omanisation percentage to total wages
A business owner proposed that Omanisation percentages in private sector organizations should be calculated based on the total value of wages paid by the organization to its Omani workers. This is to enable these organizations to employ higher educational deliverables at various levels instead of just employing the largest number of low level cadres for the purpose of increasing Omanisation percentage also enabling it to obtain facilities for procuring expatriate workforce. This proposal was praised by the minister of manpower who undertook to raise it to the committee set up to review Omanisation programs. His Excellency stated that this proposal would support the government’s efforts towards qualitative employment of national workforce at the various medium and high administrative levels.

In concluding, His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi presented a commemorative gift to His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Bakri. Al Kiyumi thanked His Excellency for his visit to the Buraimi OCCI branch and for the facilities which he offered to the Governorate’s business owners. He said that he was looking forward to greater cooperation between the ministry of manpower and OCCI for the benefit of labor market and its development. He pointed out that the gathering was positive and successful and addressed so many problems facing labor market in the Governorate. He also stressed the importance of labor facilities granted to the Governorate towards developing its labor market and improving work quality as well as enhancing and supporting SMEs and providing job opportunities for national cadres.
Towards Better Food Security

In his meeting with foodstuff merchants in Buraimi, CEO of Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve says, “We are not in competition with merchants, but only seek to have an integral role with the private sector.”

A new brand and media plan will be introduced shortly to familiarize the people with the basic commodities provided by the Authority.

Densely populated Governorates will have priority when it comes to setting up stores.

His Excellency Dr. Rashid bin Salim Al Masroori, CEO of Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve, stated that the Authority did not intend to compete with merchants but seeks to play an integral role with the private sector. He pointed out that the Authority was keen on ensuring constant coordination and consultation with the merchants in consolidation of an effective partnership in support of the efforts aimed at achieving the Sultanate’s food security program.

Participating in an expanded gathering organized by the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve with foodstuff merchants in Buraimi Governorate in cooperation with the OCCI Buraimi Branch, His Excellency stressed that the Authority was in the process of conceptualizing a distinctive trade brand featuring the basic food commodities provided by the Authority in order to activate marketing of these commodities and augmenting their availability in the Sultanate’s markets in such a way as to give the consumer the opportunity to easily distinguish them. He also pointed out that the Authority is currently involved in preparing a media plan intended to introduce its roles and objectives as well as the commodities it provides.

The gathering was held under the auspices of Sheikh Ahmed bin Nasser Al Nuaimi, State Council member, and was attended by Sheikh Bati bin Mohammed Al Niyadi, board chairman of OCCI Branch in Buraimi Governorate; a number of branch board members; senior officials of the Authority and a host of merchants and distributors operating in the field of food stuff in various Wilayats of Buraimi Governorate.

The gathering’s program included an address by the Authority delivered by the Mr. Faisal bin Mohammed Al Alawi, head of marketing section, in which he introduced the Authority’s roles and objectives and provided an overview of the Authority’s operations, the basic commodities it deals with and the stock available in its warehouses. He pointed out that the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve was set up in accordance with the Royal Decree No. 62/1980. In the light of the jurisdictions designated for it, the Authority provides basic food commodities on permanent basis, secures their storage and renders them edible for local use permanently and at all times. He explained that the Authority had a plan for rapid interventions in cases of economic crises and severe atmospheric conditions. It also works towards preserving the stabilized prices of basic food commodities at times when they are globally or locally elevated by way of covering local demand and making prices affordable to all. He added that the basic food commodities include rice, lentil, sugar, edible oil, tea, wheat and milk powder.
In his address at the gathering, he pointed out that this meeting represented a favorable opportunity for exchange of views and propositions presented by merchants in the field of developing marketing of the basic food commodities that concerned the Authority. He also spoke about the best mechanisms followed by the Authority to support SMEs assisting them in selling foodstuff to merchants. He indicated that the meeting represented a great opportunity to introduce the various projects carried out by the Authority such as the construction of the Authority's head office at the Airport Heights and construction of a new administration wing of the Authority in South Al Sharqiya Governorate as well as automation of stores and office management, quality management system (ISO 9001) and other projects adopted by the Authority out of its belief in the importance of keeping abreast of the various developments in the fields of its activity and introduction of modern technologies to facilitate the process of serving distributors and those dealing with the Authority.

Mr. Salim bin Sulaiman Al Naabi, Director of Trade Affairs Department at the Authority, delivered a visual presentation that included elaboration on the Authority’s vision, message and versatile roles and objectives. He pointed out that the Authority’s vision is to secure a safe strategic stock of basic food commodities and make it available in emergency circumstances and cases using state-of-the-art stores, modern technologies and qualified cadres capable of providing high quality services and consolidating partnership with the private sector. The Authority's message, he said, was to ensure working towards providing safe basic commodities constantly and effectively securing their storage in hi-tech stores so that they remain fit for human use and meeting emergency situations in the Sultanate such as severe atmospheric conditions. He added that the Authority also sought to achieve stabilized prices of basic food commodities at times of global economic crises such as soaring prices of foodstuff and make these commodities available at reasonably affordable prices for all.

Al Naabi also elaborated on the quality policy pursued by the Authority which is based on adoption of continuing development and improvement concepts in line with the changes witnessed by today’s world. “In order to achieve this goal, the Authority has decided to adopt quality management system in accordance with the world standards known as ISO9001 (2008) which are based on a number of axes. These are namely the provision of distinguished service that is satisfactory to the beneficiaries, both at the local and external levels, continued and effective provision and distribution of basic food commodities, preservation of quality and safety of stored food commodities, implementation of projects which meet the Authority’s objectives and programs, maintenance of infrastructure, development of human resources operating within the Authority and commitment to achieving the highest standards of quality and efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the beneficiaries. It is also the aim of the Authority to work towards constantly developing commodities and ensuring compliance with the legal provisions and legislations with particular emphasis on quality principles with the participation of all workers of the Authority,” he further explained.

Commenting on the Authority’s objectives and terms of reference, the Director of Trade Affairs Department pointed out that the Authority manages and maintains storage facilities and warehouses and their attachments as well as storage of basic food stuff. The Authority also sets up necessary warehouses and related facilities, setouts and equipment in line with modern storage methods. The Authority seeks to provide the required quantities of basic foodstuff and secure their storage in the Sultanate. It ensures following the proper principles in storage processes to prevent any damage or deterioration of stored foodstuff. In addition, it puts in place a system for commodity stock handling in the Sultanate in coordination with the private sector for constant storage and replenishment such that no shortage occurs below the prescribed minimum level. It also coordinates with the private sector with a view to drawing up a plan for distribution of reserve stock to the consumers in emergency cases, replenishing any shortage as required and compiling studies on constant basis to identify the minimum level of food reserve that is constantly required to be available in government stores.
He pointed out that the total number of current stores belonging to the Authority amounted to 37 distributed to the Governorates of Muscat, North Al Batinah, the Interior, South Al Sharqiyyah and Dhofar in addition to the construction of 17 additional stores in North Al Batinah and South Al Sharqiyyah and Dhofar.

The Director of the Trade Affairs Department at the Authority also dealt with the mechanism whereby commodity distributors are approved by the Authority for various Governorates of the Sultanate. In this context, he said that distributors in Wilayats are approved according to the population size of each Wilayah, with one distributor being approved for each 10,000 people. Following their approval, distributors can purchase commodities from the nearest department of the Authority in the Wilayah for which the distributor is approved. Price lists will be determined by the Authority on monthly basis and include two sets of prices, one is the distributor's purchase price and the other is the maximum sale price by the distributor to the consumer. The Authority has defined a specific profit margin of 7% added to the distributor's sale price to the consumer. The distributor is also granted free commodities at 1% when its monthly purchases amount to RO 10,000. Price list is distributed to the distributors and to the Public Authority for Consumer Protection. In this way, compliance with the defined prices by the distributors can be monitored through site visits by the concerned staff at the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve.

In the discussion session that took place during the gathering, many questions were raised about the deficiency of the Authority’s commodities in Buraimi Governorate and non-availability of stores or silos in Buraimi. In reply to this, the Authority’s officials pointed out that the population of Buraimi does not exceed 2% of the Sultanate’s population and that priority is normally given to the more densely populated Governorates. In spite of that the Authority sought to have its own lands in the Governorate that it can use in the future for construction of new stores as required. They added that merchants should play their role in marketing and distributing the Authority’s commodities and hence they can effectively play the role of the Authority without the need to set up new stores.

A number of attendants commended that many consumers in the Governorate did not prefer to buy the Authority’s commodities due to their low quality compared to what is offered in the market and in the same prices. The Authority’s officials replied that the Authority is keen on providing diverse types of each food commodity to suit the variation that exists between various segments of the community and tastes of consumers. They said that was the reason why there are high quality products and medium quality products in the market.

One of the merchants suggested the need to provide subsidy cards to low-income categories of the community. His Excellency Dr. Rashid bin Salim Al Masroori pointed out that this matter is under review by the Authority’s board and that it is now in the final stages expressing the hope that it would be approved shortly due to its importance in supporting low-income people in the Governorate.

In concluding, the CEO of the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve affirmed the positive outcomes of his meeting with representatives of the food sector in Buraimi Governorate. At the same time, he called upon the OCCI Buraimi Branch to prepare a working paper on the obstacles and challenges to the foodstuff merchants and the facilities that can be offered by the Authority to them. He stated that the success achieved in this meeting motivates the Authority to organize similar meetings with food merchants in various Governorates of the Sultanate to familiarize them with the Authority’s roles and objectives and identify the challenges that face the marketing of basic commodities as well as the role of such meetings in consolidating partnership between the Authority and private sector in contribution to achieving food security and stability in various markets of the Sultanate.
Congratulation to
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the 44th Renaissance Day

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Oman chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) signed “Business Gate Agreement” at OCCI head office today. The Chamber announced this agreement earlier in the context of its nine initiatives aiming at serving private sector organizations.

The Agreement was signed on behalf of OCCI by Abdul Azim bin Abbas Al Bahrain, OCCI Director General, and on behalf of GULFCYBERTECH e-Solutions by Mohammed bin Abdul Malik Al Qadiri, company CEO.

The portal is meant to create a database for large companies looking for small and medium enterprises to carry out their projects and supply their requirements for materials or any other works. The portal will make it easy for the large companies to get to their suppliers and for the small and medium companies to get to the large companies offering projects and compete for winning sub-contracts. It also aims to connect the existing trade business of companies through business symbol directory of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry after ensuring the correctness of information relating to the business.

The services provided by the portal include e-tendering, submission of bids, electronic sales and purchases, disclosure and submission of reports in addition to free advertisements and blogs and direct communication between suppliers and purchasers.

Usernames and passports will be issued to the registered companies to provide them access and submit their bids directly on the network within the tender's available period.

The second preparatory meeting of Shop in Oman Festival was held at the head office of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). Organized in cooperation with the commercial centers operating in the Sultanate, the festival comes in the context of the initiatives announced by the Chamber earlier this year which are concerned with developing production environment in the private sector and reviving and promoting the private sector.

The meeting was presided over by Abdul Azim bin Abbas Al Bahrain, OCCI Director General, who highly assessed the positive interaction by commercial centers with this and other related initiatives. He stressed that the success of these initiatives cannot be attained except with the cooperation of all. He pointed out that the targeted audience of this festival are the citizens, residents and visitors. It was observed that the period of staging the festival coincides with the tourist season such that it can attract the largest number of visitors to the Sultanate at that time.

The meeting discussed ways of support required by the festival to succeed, particularly with relation to government support. It also discussed the period in which the festival will be held and it was agreed that it should be held during November and December of the current year. They reviewed the methods of making the festival a success and the roles entrusted to all relevant parties and the preparatory stages which will be followed by the organizers under the leadership and supervision of the Chamber to eventually reach the ultimate goal of staging a successful shopping festival.

The festival aims to promote shopping the Sultanate in the first place and activate purchase power of consumers from the Sultanate and abroad.

Al Dhahirah Tourism Committee Meets

The OCCI branch of Al Dhahirah Governorate held its first meeting this year under the chairmanship of Saif bin Said Al Badi, committee chairman, in the presence of committee members.

The committee discussed its terms of reference, objectives and role in activating tourism in the Governorate and study the proposals put forward for development of tourism projects and potentials available in the Governorate and highlight them on the media. The committee also reviewed the challenges facing the tourism sector in the Governorate's three Wilayats, namely Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank. It also discussed the latest developments on the agenda. Hammad bin Said Al Khatiry was selected as committee vice-chairman while Abdullah bin Saif Al Shebani was selected as committee rapporteur.
Buraimi Real Estate Committee Meets

The Estate Development and Contracting Committee of OCCI branch of Buraimi Governorate held its first meeting for this year under the chairmanship of Rashid bin Musallam Al Badi, OCCI branch board member and committee chairman; and in the presence of a number members. The meeting reviewed the committee’s terms of reference aimed at developing the real estate sector and augmenting its contribution to the national economy. There is a need to identify the difficulties and obstacles to the sector, propose appropriate solutions and study the real estate market conditions in the Governorate in the light of the joint GCC market requirements. It is also required to provide statistics, data and specialized researches in the sector and propagate them among workers involved in the various fields. The need also goes further to include proposing general policies to develop estate projects and drafting legislations and rules that are necessary to regulate the estate development process and strengthen connections between investors and those responsible for estate activities in the government sector for the purpose of participating in putting in place the appropriate systems for management of local real estate market.

The meeting also discussed the views of committee members relating to the mechanisms of activating and developing the committee’s work in Buraimi Governorate. It was agreed that the members would present their proposals to the next meeting of the committee scheduled for the second half of May.

The meeting concluded by stressing the importance of serious and motivating work for the upcoming period in contribution to regulating the estate sector in the Governorate and the urgent need to strengthen communication channels with the authorities concerned with estate business and hold seminars, workshops and exhibitions to focus on addressing the problems facing investors in estate fields.

Support for Private Sector in Musandam

The board of directors of OCCI branch in Musandam Government held its first meeting for the period 2014-2018 under the chairmanship of Hamid bin Mohammed Zaman bin Kalmil Al Raeesi, board chairman of the OCCI Musandam Branch.

The agenda included discussing mechanisms and ways of setting up specialized committees and reviewing axes of 2014 working plan which focuses on supporting the private sector in the Governorate as well as the small and medium enterprises and finding ways of achieving development of various sectors and facilitating difficulties and obstacles to business culture and prevent its development and diversification of its services. The working plan also includes activities and events aimed at activating business culture and bringing about an environment for communication among officials and authorities concerned with the private sector. The plan aims to strengthen communication between the branch and the largest segment of community using various advanced methods that cope with the information technology advancements in order to achieve the objectives and aspirations of businesspersons and develop the Sultanate’s economic sector.

Hamid Al Raeesi stressed that the board with its new formation would take strenuous steps using innovative methods to overcome the difficulties and obstacles faced by businesspersons and pave the way for appropriate development of the private sector to enable it to cope with all economic variables and requirements of the private sector. He pointed out that the branch through the axes contained in the 2014 working plan will focus on providing the best services to its affiliates, addressing all challenges and increasing business culture and taking advantage of experiences for the development of the business sector in Musandam. The branch also seeks to familiarize with the global experiences in development and diversification of businesses and services and management of commercial firms through participation with trade delegations which will be dispatched by the OCCI in the upcoming period. He added that the plan would also focus on supporting small and medium enterprises and devising ways to develop and strengthen their resources and diversify their services. He called upon all business community in Musandam Governorate to communicate and cooperate with each other and joint their ranks to achieve the sector’s objectives and aspirations.
SME committee discusses plans

The OCCI's SME Committee held its second meeting this year under the chairmanship of Ahmed bin Abdul Karim Al Hooti, OCCI board member and committee chairman. The meeting discussed a number of matters relating to the development of committee performance and activation of its role in the upcoming period. The meeting was intended to follow up the progress and implementation of decisions passed by the Saih Al Shamikhat seminar on small and medium enterprises and representation of new sectors in the committee membership. The meeting also reviewed the stages of setting up entrepreneurs club previously announced by the Chamber and discussed the need to prepare a clear and comprehensive perspective for the club and determine its objectives and clear visions.

The meeting also discussed the challenges to SMEs and the attempt to bring about solutions to them. In addition to the review of the committee's 2014 working plan, the committee set up four working teams with chairman of each team designated. These working teams are concerned with awareness, enlightenment, finance, government procedures, training and qualification. Each team is required to submit a clear perspective of its roles for the current year.

OCCI hosts female college students in Ibri

In a meeting with a number of female students of the Applied Sciences Colleges in Ibri, Abdul Azim bin Abbas Al Bahrani, Director General of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stated that the Chamber dedicated utmost attention to propagating the culture of entrepreneurship of this generation of higher education students about to graduate and access labor market. "We are happy to have such visits made by students and welcome their participations and call upon each student to take advantage of the services provided by the chamber's library which is exclusively rich of important references serving economic aspects as well as academic aspect," he added.

During the visit, the students watched a visual presentation on entrepreneurship that dealt with free business and requirements of success in business world and characteristics of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs. It was pointed out that free business was hard and required seriousness and patience and that it develops leadership skills of individuals. It was also mentioned that it was necessary to propagate the culture of entrepreneurship among students urging them not to be captive of stereotyped jobs which do not serve the economy like other trade enterprises regardless of their size. The meeting also stressed the role played by the Chamber in supporting business sector in the Sultanate and highlighted some other axes familiarizing the visiting students with entrepreneurship as a culture that needs to be instilled in the youth generation.

Transport Committee to hold Road Safety Seminar

The Transport Committee of OCCI reviewed ways of joint cooperation in the field of transport with the Oman Road Safety Association. This was decided in a meeting held between Sheikh Mohammed bin Hassan Al Ansi, vice-chairman of OCCI's Transport Committee, with Shaimaa bint Murtadha bin Ali Al Lawati CEO of the Society; in the presence of Hussain bin Omer Al Ibrahim, committee member.

The meeting comes in the context of the committee's initiatives to sponsor and represent the interests of the transport sector including land, sea and air transport, and promote its performance. The meeting aimed to consolidate the relationship between the committee and businesspersons and transport sector stakeholders including societies and institutions in the Sultanate. The committee seeks to work with the Association, participate in its activities and take advantage of such activities in order to achieve its objectives.

The meeting discussed the major obstacles and challenges to the transport sector and the best ways of cooperation with the Association to achieve security and safety on the road. The two parties focused on the importance of increasing awareness and working together hand in hand to propagate traffic awareness and disseminate the culture of giving priority to crossing pedestrians.

The meeting also discussed a proposal to hold a workshop on road safety in cooperation with the Association targeting specific category such as bus or truck drivers, to reducing accidents caused by unawareness and non-compliance with road rules.
Businesswomen Committee for Better Roles

In her address to the introductory meeting gathering a number of businesswomen at the Chamber's head office, the Chairman of OCCI’s Businesswomen Committee stated that the role entrusted to businesswomen was important. “We in the committee do not represent ourselves only, but we represent all businesswomen in our dear Oman. We should, therefore, reflect an honorable image of Omani businesswomen who proved their presence in all fields of entrepreneurship, particularly since our wise government has paved the way for us to access this field through the facilities provided to women who wish to engage in business on equal footing with our male brothers.”

The meeting witnessed tangible interaction and wide attendance on the part of Omani businesswomen. The program included an introduction of the committee’s role in serving businesswomen and the efforts of the Chamber to promote their enterprises. The meeting allowed businesswomen to know each other as the committee forms a platform for them to discuss issues that concern them in all sectors where businesswomen are engaged and to offer their experiences in these fields for general benefit.

Businesswomen Committee takes part in national seminar

OCCI, represented by the Businesswomen Committee, took part in the national seminar on employment of Arab women held in the Arab Republic of Egypt. The committee was represented by Seham bint Abdulrahman Al Zadjalia, chairperson of Businesswomen Committee.

Widely attended by various Arab countries, the seminar discussed seven working papers presented by consultants from various countries. The first paper discussed the role of the Arab Labor Organization in women's development. The second working paper discussed integration of the issues of social gender into development plans. The axis of the third paper dealt with labor inspection and its role in women's participation in the development. “Occupational health and safety in the work of women and the professions that are risky for the health and safety of women” was the title of the fourth paper. The fifth paper discussed the issue of eradicating legal illiteracy on the rights of Arab women. Social dialogue and its role in protecting equality and strengthening women's participation was the subject of the sixth working paper. The last working paper was entitled “Private sector's role in developing competitive capacities of Arab women”.

The seminar concluded by presenting a number of successful experiences in the area of employment of women in Arab countries. Seham Al Zajdalia, chairperson of OCCI's Businesswomen Committee, presented a working paper entitled “Role of Private Sector in developing competitive skills”, in which she elaborated on the role of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in promoting Omani women in the private sector and strengthening their participation in the trade delegations whether in the Sultanate or overseas and international forums to enable them to effectively contribute to building the nation side by side with their male brothers.

Buraimi HR Committee holds first meeting

The Human Resources and Labor Market Committee at OCCI branch in Buraimi Governorate held its first meeting this year under the chairmanship of Kamil bin Sulaiman bin Anad Al Riyami, board member of OCCI branch in Buraimi Governorate, in the presence of a number of committee members. The meeting began with members getting acquainted with one another before beginning to discuss the items on the agenda which included review of the committee’s jurisdictions and selection of a committee vice-chairman.

The committee chairman stressed that the main goal of this first meeting was to consolidate the principle of cooperation and participation among the committee members. “That is why the meeting is focusing on the professional and practical activities and fields of work of each member and his views and impression about prospects of committee development. From there we can move to activate the committee role in the upcoming period in order to contribute to developing human resources in private sector organizations and labor market and putting in place practical plans in achievement of this objective,” he said. He further added that the committee gathered the new members with the former members in order to take advantage of the various stages of evolution and start from where former members ended to address all matters relating to the committee’s work and objectives.

Salim bin Obaid bin Saleh Al Rabkhi was nominated to the post of vice-chairman of the committee. He said he was proud of the trust pinned on him by the members and undertook to work seriously in support of the committee's objectives and in the spirit of teamwork to achieve the desirable success and development.
OCCI and NHRC to hold Joint Seminar

OCCI discussed with the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) mechanisms of cooperation and coordination in the public interest and the interest of the private sector in particular. This came in a meeting held the OCCI head office in Muscat between His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI board chairman; and Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Riyami, chairman of National Human Rights Committee; in the presence of Dr. Rashid bin Hamad Al Balushi, Secretary General of the National Human Rights Committee; and Hussain Jawad, board chairman of Towel Group and member of the National Human Rights Committee.

The meeting discussed propagating human rights culture in the Sultanate, particularly with regard to the United Nations rules on responsibility of national companies for 2003 as well as companies' social responsibility. The two sides also reviewed involvement of merchants in human rights and work to activate and develop this involvement in the public interest as well as human rights laws and their application to the private sector organizations in the Sultanate.

It was agreed to hold an expanded seminar entitled “Reality and Aspirations of Workforce” where three working papers will be presented, the first one by a businessman, the second by the Trade Union and the third paper by one of the expatriates working in the Sultanate.

OCCI mulls Bangladesh products exhibition in Oman

Oman chamber of commerce and industry expressed its complete readiness to facilitate the mission of the Bengali trade delegation during its visit to the Sultanate and stressed the importance of strengthening trade exchange with the People's Republic of Bangladesh and consolidating trade relations in view of the solid fraternal relations that existed since ancient times due to its geographic proximity to the Sultanate.

This came during a visit made by the delegation to the OCCI head office where they met with His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI board chairman, in the presence of engineer Redha bin Jumaa Al Saleh, OCCI vice-chairman for administrative and financial affairs. The Bangladesh delegation was led by Homayon Khalid, Chairman of Jute Mills Company in the presence of His Excellency Sheikh Iskandar Ali, Bangladesh ambassador to the Sultanate.

The meeting discussed the possibility of holding an exhibition for Bangladeshi products in the Sultanate of Oman in the forthcoming months which was welcomed by the visiting delegation who expressed their complete readiness to organize such exhibition in a satisfactory manner so that it can serve as a gateway to access Omani market. It was also agreed to hold bilateral meetings between businessmen in the two countries in order to discuss aspects and fields of cooperation and exchange experiences.

OCCI chairman lauds support by Khimji Ramdas

His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, Board Chairman of OCCI, has thanked the companies which demonstrated tangible cooperation in support of the initiatives recently launched by the Chamber. He pointed out that activating such initiatives on the ground could only be achieved through the joint efforts and interaction of the private sector organizations targeted by these initiatives.

“One of these companies is Khimji Ramdas which was the first to show an appreciated response and tangible cooperation as it has contributed to financing the first trade delegations to the Republic of India. This gesture reflects how far the company is keen on activating the principle of social responsibility and its awareness of the roles entrusted to it and to the major companies operating in the Sultanate, particularly with regard to supporting emerging enterprises.”

On his part, Pankaj Khimji, board member of Khimji Ramdas, pointed out that the trend by the company to support the Chamber’s initiatives is in line with the general policy of the Sultanate and the insightful vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said towards consolidating the culture of social responsibility. He added that this initiative was part of other initiatives through which the company seeks to have a distinguished presence in so far as social responsibility is concerned.

This came during a meeting between the two in the office of His Excellency OCCI board chairman to honor Khimji Ramdas Company and thank it for its generous contribution in support of the trade delegation dispatched to India.
Al Dhahirah Branch honors former management

The OCCI branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate has organized a ceremony to honor the former members of the main committee and chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees under the auspices of Sheikh Said bin Al Nuaimi, deputy Wali of Ibri and in the presence of current board members.

At the onset of the ceremony, Ali bin Saleh Al Kilbani, OCCI board member and chairman of the OCCI Al Dhahirah branch, said: “The chamber appreciates all efforts made in support of the economic development drive in this dear nation. The current board of the chamber’s branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate in participation with other authorities is required to exert yet further efforts to revive the economy in the three Wilayats of the Governorate, namely Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank.” He pointed out that there were plans and programs for the future that would drive the Al Dhahirah branch to become on equal par with the Chamber’s active branches in all fields and at the level of the Sultanate.

Sheikh Said Al Nuaimi, deputy wali of Ibri and patron of the ceremony honored the former members of the main committee and chairmen and vice-chairmen of other committees. He expressed his appreciation for this step by the Chamber's branch which is a good gesture in tribute to diligent and cooperating persons in service of the local community.

OCCI participates in Turkish-Arab Economic Forum

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) represented by Ayman bin Abdullah Al Hassani, OCCI vice-chairman for economic affairs and branches in the Turkish-Arab Economic Forum held in the Turkish capital of Istanbul during the period from 28-29 May 2014. His Highness Sayyid Qais bin Salim Al Said, ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Turkey, also attended the forum.

The forum aimed to strengthen Arab-Turkish partnership and uplift investment opportunities exchanged between Turkey and Arab countries in the Middle East, particularly with the increasing interest by businessmen on both sides. The forum was intended to consolidate cooperation on the basis of mutual interests with a view to developing various aspects of economic and trade relations.

Workshop on Transport Sector Development

The Omani Land Transport Society in cooperation with the North Al Batinah Branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has organized a discussion workshop aimed at developing land transport sector in the Sultanate in the context of “Together to Curtail Hidden Trade in Land Transport Sector” campaign. The workshop was attended by Khalid bin Salim Al Dari, chairman of Oman Land Transport Society and Maktoum bin Rashid Al Miqbali, board member and chairman of transport committee at the OCCI North Al Batinah branch; Abdullah bin Ali Al Kishry, director of the branch and a number of business owners concerned with transport sector in the Governorate of North Al Batinah.

Held at the Chamber’s premises in Sohar, the workshop discussed how to develop and promote land transport sector in order to achieve the goals and ambitions of transporters in the Sultanate. Business owners involved in land transport sector focused on the necessity of curtailing hidden trade exercised by some expatriate. They stressed the importance of cooperation among all to regulate and develop land transport sector in Oman.
**Interior Branch holds seminar in support of youth enterprises**

Oman chamber of commerce and industry in the Interior Governorate in coordination with Al Itifaaq team of Bahla club has organized a seminar entitled “programs in support of youth enterprises” under the auspices of Sheikh Ibrahim bin Said Al Nabhani, board chairman of OCCI branch of the Interior Governorate, and in the presence of a number of male and female business owners and youth entrepreneurs, owners of SMEs and a number of job-seekers.

At the beginning of the seminar, Ahmed bin Sulaiman Al Amri, board member of the Chamber’s branch and chairman of SME Development and Human Resources Committee, delivered an address in which he pointed out that self-employment required strenuous efforts from the person involved. The success of any business lies in the belief of the business owner in the importance of his businesses and his effort to make such business a success either by acquiring the necessary skills that makes him capable of managing and developing his enterprise in the future or by taking advantage of the programs and services provided by all government and native organizations and authorities in terms of training, qualification, funding and marketing. Then, four working papers were presented, the first three papers dealt with the services provided by the Public Authority for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises and the Rafd Fund and Oman Development Bank and the fourth paper reviewed the experience of one of the entrepreneurs in the Governorate. The seminar further reviewed the matters included on its agenda.

**Training session for employees**

The OCCI branch at Al Dhahirah Governorate has organized a training session for the branch employees entitled “development of communication and dialogue skills” in collaboration with the Al Mawarid Training Services. The session was intended to provide the branch employees with lessons on communication and dialogue skills to promote their professional standards.

All bin Saleh bin Ali Al Kilbani, OCCI board member and chairman of OCCI branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate, addressed the session saying: “the OCCI branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate will continue to cater for its working cadres either through training or qualification in order to develop strategies of communication and dialogue of the branch’s employees.”

Dr. Mona Dali of the Gulf International Management Consultancy Center, delivered a lecture in which she dealt with the concepts and fundamentals of the art of communication and dialogue and how to overcome communication difficulties.

**Industry Committee seeks support for Omani Products Exhibition in Dubai**

The Industry Committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) held its second meeting under the chairmanship of Ayman bin Abdullah Al Hassani, OCCI vice-chairman for economic affairs and branches and committee chairman. The meeting discussed the matters included on the agenda and took appropriate recommendations on them.

The most important matters discussed during the meeting included third Omani products exhibition which will be held in Dubai, UAE. The committee stressed the importance of participation of industrial companies and factories in this exhibition expressing the hope that their participation will be significant reflecting the interest of Omani industrialists in external exhibitions.

The committee also emphasized its keenness on supporting the efforts aimed at promoting performance of the industrial sector. It assigned a working team of its members to visit industrial estates in Muscat and in various Governorates to see for itself the difficulties facing this sector and propose and forward appropriate solutions to the concerned authorities through the chamber’s board of directors. As a contribution from the committee to the efforts of marketing national Omani products, the committee members reviewed proposals to introduce a website on that would serve as reference to Omani products and to make it easy for businessmen in various countries to familiarize with the various Omani products for potential trade exchange through this website.
OCCI Chairman visits Dhofar Governorate

His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, board chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stressed the importance of the role played by the Chamber's branches in boosting the economy in their Governorates in cooperation with the concerned authorities in the government and private sector organizations in various Governorates.

He pointed out that the board of directors in its present term dedicates particular attention to the branches. This statement was made during the visit which His Excellency made to the OCCI Salalah branch which came in the context of the “let’s dialogue to progress” initiative as part of the Chamber’s 2014 plan. The purpose of the visit was to meet with male and female business owners and familiarize with the work progress in the Chamber's branches in the Governorate. The first meeting this year was held in Buraimi Governorate while the second meeting was in Dhofar Governorate as previously announced.

The visit’s program included a series of activities with the Chairman meeting with employees and executive body of the Chamber's branch in Salalah in the presence of a number of board members. His Excellency heard their views and proposals with regard to developing working mechanisms in the branch and upgrading the standard of service provided by the Chamber to its affiliates in Dhofar Governorate. He urged the employees and workers of the Chamber’s branch in Salalah to improve the standard of services provided to companies and innovate new services for the upcoming period.

His Excellency also met with board members of the Chamber’s branch in Dhofar Governorate to clarify on their role and duties. The meeting discussed issues concerning the private sector and the challenges facing business owners and establishments and the need to work in the spirit of teamwork to accomplish the Chamber’s announced initiatives and achieve the overall objectives of the Chamber in serving comprehensive development.

The meeting comes at the beginning of several visits planned by the OCCI chairman to the chamber’s branches in other Governorates to closely see for himself the working environment there and bring about solutions to the challenges and obstacles facing business communities.

Market Issues Committee discusses workforce absconding phenomenon

The Market Issues Committee of OCCI held its first meeting which was attended by His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, Board Chairman. The meeting was chaired by Ayman bin Abdullah Al Hassani, OCCI vice-chairman for economic affairs and branches and chairman of the committee and was attended by a number of businessmen.

The meeting discussed the phenomenon of absconding expatriate workforce and the negative impact of that on the society as a whole and the national economy in particular. The committee also discussed several issues and developments in the Omani market and their impact on the national economy in general. It was agreed to study the dimensions of the phenomenon of absconding expatriate workforce and the adverse implications of this trend after reviewing the statistics and data issued by the concerned authorities.

Statistics published by the Ministry of Manpower indicate an increase in the number of absconding workforce with the number of arrested absconding employees touching nearly 42,000 during the past three years (2011-14).

The committee concluded a set of solutions that can be applied to mitigate absconding of expatriate workforce, including activation of the role of inspection department and supporting it with trained cadres as well as other requirements to enable it to distinguish between violating and absconding workforce and how to deal with them. It is also required to enforce foreigners’ residence law in a proper manner. The committee suggested obligating the worker to obtain a clearance certificate from the employer upon departure from the Sultanate. It is also preferred to have an electronic link through which the employer can know about the arrival of his workers to the Sultanate through an SMS. There is also need to conduct awareness program for employers in particular and society in general to familiarize them with the risks of absconding workforce and how to deal with this phenomenon in the public interest.
Real Estate Committee Discusses Development Issues

The first meeting of the OCCI's real estate development committee was held at the head office under the chairmanship of Dr. Ibrahim bin Baqir Al Ajmi and in the presence of committee members. The meeting was intended to put in place an operational strategy for the committee for the current year and discuss the issues that concern the real estate sector in the Sultanate. The meeting discussed works carried out by the committee in the past period and its forthcoming plans towards developing the real estate sector in the Sultanate. The committee tackled a number of obstacles to the companies operating in the real estate and ways to overcome them. Being the first meeting, the members were familiarized with the jurisdictions of the committee and new members, which are summarized in studying the status of the real estate market in the Sultanate and the relevant vision in the light of the common gulf market. The committee reviewed the need to provide statistics, information, reports, researches and specialized periodicals to those working in real estate sector, familiarize them with the latest developments in the field, propose the general policies intended to develop real estate projects and enforce legislations and rules necessary to regulate real estate development transactions. The ultimate goal of these activities is to revive the sector in the upcoming period.

The committee will witness an eventful period ahead as it is in the process of organizing workshops on real estate development and real estate training seminars in coordination with a number of higher education institutions with a view to propagating the culture of real estate profession and the laws regulating the real estate sector as being one of the most important sectors affecting the development process.

Al Dhahirah Branch to conduct opinion poll on SMEs

The OCCI Branch of Al Dhahirah Governorate decided to conduct an opinion poll to identify the major challenges and difficulties facing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Wilayats of Ibr, Yanqula and Dhank. Chaired by Humaid bin Ali Al Zeedi, the committee began to put in place the perspectives and ideas which will be dealt with in this questionnaire which will be distributed to owners of SMEs for the purpose of assisting in bringing about solutions enabling them to promote their various economic activities.

The branch will print and distribute this questionnaire to the targeted audience in the Governorate during the coming days. The meeting was attended by the Director of SME Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Saidi.

Food Security Committee calls for setting up station for food and agricultural projects

The OCCI's Food Security Committee held its first meeting at the OCCI head office in Muscat under the chairmanship of engineer Saleh Al Shanfari and in the presence of His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI board chairman; committee members, male and female business owners, representatives of government authorities concerned with food security and chairmen of agricultural societies in Governorates.

Dr. Saud Al Habsi was nominated as vice-chairman of the committee during the meeting. Committee members were introduced together with their jurisdictions and fields of committee work. Proposals made by members to activate the committee's role were heard. The meeting discussed the challenges facing the sector and proposed appropriate solutions. The members unanimously agreed that logistic activity was one of the pillars of food security which should be put under focus. The meeting stressed the necessity of introducing creative projects to market local products in the upcoming period since the sector was in need of such projects. In addition, the committee discussed the necessity of creating new mechanisms to import meat from abroad.
Congratulations & Best Wishes to
His Majesty
Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the 44th Renaissance Day

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First Fashion’ opens debut store in Muscat

After satisfying customers and building a strong reputation in places like Pakistan, Canada and the UAE, the highly acclaimed boutique, ‘First Fashion’ recently opened its debut store in Muscat in the new ‘West Gate Mall’ on Ruwi high street amidst cheers and celebrations by the local population.

The store which was inaugurated by the Chief Guest of the evening, Mr. Anwarr Al Balushi, Chairman, Anwarr Asian Investments on Friday, saw the presence of distinguished guests and fashion lovers alike, who were all highly anticipating this launch event. To add to the celebrations of the opening day, the owners gave away a free dress material to every female who walked into the store and distributed traditional Pakistani sweets to them.

Originally from Pakistan, First Fashion is a boutique which caters to a range of customers delivering attractive and quality designer dresses from chic and high end labels like ‘Sana Safinaz’, ‘Asim Jofa’ ‘Lakhany Silk Mills’ and several other trendy brands from all over Pakistan to customers across the globe at very reasonable prices.

The store in Oman is exclusively launched for a growing population of fashion lovers and will stock on state of the art designs right off the runway, latest fashions that have just hit Pakistan as well as a line of accessories available exclusively for First Fashion customers.

Knowledge Sharing Conference in November

The Knowledge Sharing Conference, to be hosted and presented by the Electricity Holding Group (EH Group) on the 3 and 4 November at Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa, was officially announced at a press conference at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Muscat.

The press conference was led by Eng. Omar bin Khalfan Al Wahaibi, CEO, Electricity Holding Company (EHC), and Conference Chairman, Eng. Zahir bin Abdullah Al Abri, CEO, Mazoon Electricity Company, and Ghada bint Mohammed Al Yousef, Executive Manager, Group Communications and Sustainability, EHC.

The first day of the Conference will feature the top five speakers in EH Group who will be undergoing an evaluation by a group of industry experts during the coming months. Additionally, the conference committee will be inviting a number of local and international speakers who will share best practice in all five strategic programmes: Human Resources, Customer Services, Asset Management, HSE, Communications and Sustainability.

The second day will feature “Afkar” workshops which will be attended by a number of staff, experts and advisors in the local and international utility industry. “Afkar” will cover business development ideas produced by EH Group staff for the purpose of realising new or more benefits from the existing strategic programmes or any new proposals that can support the Group in building on past experiences.

Bank Sohar Receives three Awards

Bank Sohar has announced that it was the only entity from Oman to have won three individual awards from the Banker Middle East Product Awards 2014 organized by CPI Financial, Dubai, UAE. Bank Sohar was recognized as the Bank with the ‘Best Customer Service– Retail Banking’, ‘Best Cash Management’ and ‘Best Corporate Card’.

All three awards were handed over to the Bank by Mr. Adam Broom, CEO of CPI Financial, at an event held at the Bank’s premises on June 30. Receiving the awards on behalf of the Bank was Dr. Mohamed Abdulaziz Kalmoor, CEO of Bank Sohar in the presence of Mr. R. Narasimhan, DGM & Head Retail Banking, Ms. Munira Abdulnabi Macki, DGM Human Resource & Corporate Support, Mr. Nasser Al Maawall, DGM & Head Internal Audit, and other executives and senior management of the Bank.

Each award highlights key aspects of Bank Sohar’s products, services and operations. The ‘Best Cash Management’ award represents the efficient use of cash resources at the bank as well as efficient ATM operations. The ‘Best Corporate Card’ award was earned by the Bank due to its astute management of its corporate credit card business and the excellent benefits the product offers. Bank Sohar’s Excel Corporate Credit Card outperforms nearly every other corporate credit card in the market.
Huawei, a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider, in association with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Oman (TRA) has announced the launch of a new internship program to support Omani university graduates in pursuing a career within the region’s growing telecommunications industry.

The event was held under the auspices of His Excellency Said Bin Hamdoun Al-Harithy, Undersecretary for Ports & Maritime Affairs, Ministry of Transport & Communications, Sultanate of Oman.

Enrollment will be offered to students from different universities and colleges in Oman on a quarterly basis, structured as a three-month program with the first phase set to begin by 1 September 2014. The program is designed for newly graduated university students who have specialized in the engineering field. A focus on developing talent in such technical fields has been one of the main dimensions for the Oman Vision 2020 economic roadmap.
With pride rather than arrogance we can say that Oman has since the onset of renaissance dawn on 23 July 1970 reflected a dazzling image portrayed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos that is framed with tolerance, cooperation, hard-work and adoption of everything new and beneficial in all humanitarian, cultural, economic and social spheres and effective communication and consistent interaction with others regionally and internationally.

Over the past years, this bright image of Oman’s renaissance has been enriched with all noble human values and authentic Omani manners presenting Oman as a commendable role model when it comes to civilizations where people are the main target of development.

We are proud of a generous leader who has always had Oman in his heart guarding it with his eyes and empowering its people in all fields of work driving them ahead through his insightful directives. It is a glorious occasion in which we should proudly pray to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty and grant him robust health and long life.

We are also proud of the loyal and sincere men of this country of all ages who have capably shouldered their responsibility and achieved uncountable accomplishments for the nation. They are undoubtedly forging ahead with resolve that knows no tiredness or weariness in order to build a more beautiful Oman.

We are proud of Oman’s women who proved their competence in all fields with yet more confidence and offered this nation a distinctive model of dedication and contribution, be they mothers, employees, workers or private business owners. They all without exception deserve every respect and appreciation.

We are proud of whoever is living among us in peace contributing with his services to the progress and development of this nation.

I am proud being an Omani. I am proud of you, Oman.