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OMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

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Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) was established on 15 May 1973 as a public utility organization.

**Vision:**
To develop the Omani private sector and to make it a key partner in the sustainable economic development.

**Mission:**
The Chamber is the official representative of the Omani private sector both at domestic and international level, as well as its active tool in participating in taking all the decisions pertaining to the sector. The Chamber is keen to support, develop and improve the private sector through the tools and programs available for advancing economic development in the Sultanate.
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There is no doubt that the economic sector is of prime importance due to its vital role in spearheading progress and development in any country of the world. World advanced models have relied upon the economic sector to lead the movement of development and change in all other sectors and, hence, were able to achieve a holistic and sustainable development in these sectors. There are too many and numerous examples in this respect both regionally and internationally.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the government is paying particular attention to the economic work which has basically been under care throughout the past years of the blessed Omani renaissance in terms of establishing legislative and legal frameworks regulating work in the economic sector. In addition, the government has injected huge investments towards strengthening the infrastructure intended to support economic projects, promote and market Omani economy both locally and overseas.

Much has been done in all fields associated with the economic affair in particular at the level of legislation, laws and continuing investment in infrastructure. It is the aim of the government to enable the sector to cope with the latest developments of economic work in order to maintain the prestige, robustness and flexibility of Oman’s national economy.

Studies, including the study prepared by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and published in this issue of the magazine, reiterate the important and necessity of adopting a specific economic identity of Oman’s economy that is clear, well-defined and represents a working approach for this vital and important sector in all our economic activities, particularly at this difficult stage which requires integrated roles to overcome such difficulty and give impetus to the economic movement in the Sultanate in accordance with an advanced economic concept.

Redrafting and renewing a fresh identity for Oman’s economy requires, as we believe, involving all parties related to the economic affair in the country, particularly the Omani private sector, OCCI and other stakeholders, who have a more diversified and important role to play in the development drive. This role will undoubtedly effectively contribute to bringing about a new distinctive and ambitious identity of the economy.
The Identity of the Omani Economy, Basis & Criteria

SUMMARY

of the STUDY
This study tackles the issue of the Omani economy's identity and tries to answer questions such as what is the strategy that should be followed by the State to achieve its economic identity, what is the relationship between the volume of production and the diversity of economic base, the size of the role played by the private sector and how far the Omani economy is open to world markets.

Having clear-cut broad guidelines will surely contribute to achieving the prospective aims of the State, namely, the sustainable development and economic stability. It is true that the economic identity plays an important role in guiding society and controlling its various political, social and economic activities. It also guides the broad trend of the State and contributes to standardizing the laws and regularizing economic identity and achieve the approved identity.

The study concluded that economic identity is not a new approach but rather has been there in the economic literature. There are many examples on the issues that specifies the identity of a certain economy.

The economic identity is not a novel thing as there are many examples on the basic issues that determine the identity of a certain economy. In terms of theories and since the 18th centuries, there has been some theories on foreign trade. As per the competitive advantage theory, a country will be specialized in the production of a certain service or product which it has competitive advantage. The is also the Heckscher-Ohlin Theory which focuses on the intensity of the capital and labor element.

In terms of economic systems during the feudal system and business system and then the modern system, the literature resulted in two main identities. The first one is the capital identity which depends on the market economy or liberal market that is controlled by supply and demand forces. There is also the socialist at which the state controls every business activity through central planning. Many theories appeared in between the two approaches by creating a mix between them in what is called social market (mixed economic system) which was adopted by many countries.

While there are rich countries, there are middle income and poor countries as well. There are also developed, developing and least developing countries. While there are some industrial countries, there are other countries that focus on agro product or tourism or business or even financial services. This depends on the potentials of each country.

The study tried to explore the natural and human potentials of the Omani economy as well as the unique component that can make Oman an agro or industrial or a tourist or a business country.

Throughout the past years, efforts were made to give the Omani economy its identity but this did not happen due to several internal and external factors that did not help the Omani economy to gain its identity.

We may describe the Omani economy as a capital economy with some socialist elements or a socialist economy with some capital elements. To be fair, we have to admit the Sultanate has made impressive achievements during the past years even if the achievement may appear below the international rates.

We have used the following basis to determine the identity of the Omani economy:
- Is the Omani economy big or small?
- Economic exposure - Is the Omani economy closed or open?
- The structural imbalances at the Omani economy (the Dutch Disease and the Gulf Disease).
- The contribution of public and private sectors in the growth of the Omani economy.
The study came with several outcomes, the most important of which are:

- The economic identity plays an important role in guiding societies. Identifying the economic identity is the broad lines for the establishments of the state which may lead to achieving the prospective aims of the state; suitable development and economic stability.

No doubt that the Sultanate has made many achievements during the past three decades in all fields. Still these attempts failed to create a clear identity for the Omani economy. In other words, we can't describe the Omani economy as an agro economy, or industrial economy, or IT economy. The Sultanate does not as well have a tourist or industrial or cultural or artistic dominance as it is the case with some other countries.

This situation is due to many challenges such as failure to take the basis and guidelines of economic identity into consideration while developing the previous economic plans.

Failure to include the Omani identity in the previous development plans resulted in continuous imbalance in the structure of the Omani economy which remained dependent on oil revenues. The Omani economy suffers from what is called Dutch disease in that oil sector and service sectors are controlling the bulk of the economic activity. It also suffers from the Gulf Disease as the expatriates are occupying the largest number of jobs at the private sector which does not give its fair share in mega investments.

The study came out with recommendations on the importance of building and enhancing an economic identity of the Omani economy. It should be noted that the environment is conducive for the Sultanate to do this as it enjoys political stability, security, young manpower, high population growth rates as well as rich history and culture. On the other hand, the Sultanate is known for its unique strategic location which enables it to be a hub for investments and logistics. Efforts should be made to ensure maximum utilization of this strategic location and the free economic zones it has in boosting trade, export and re-export activity.

There are different definitions of economic identity. In Wikipedia, it is defined as a number of social, economic features in a certain country around which social and economic options available for everyone can be identified.

The importance of the Omani economy

Economy is the main nerve for any country and the driver for the remainder sectors. If the state economy does not have clear cut features and laws, it will be difficult to define the economic pathway of the state. Selecting an identity is one of the main reasons for success of any given country. For example, when you mention the word ‘Germany’, the name is always associated with modern technology in engines. Germany has become the technology provider for Europe and the world. When you mention the word
‘tourism’, the countries that immediately come to your mind are Thailand and Spain. China is a good model for successful economy in the field of manufacturing.

The economic identity guides the national economy. For example, if a country chooses to focus on manufacturing, the education institutions should streamline their curricula to achieve these aims. For example, Thailand has designed education curricula on tourism because the identity of the economy is tourism. Thai ports, airport and road networks have been designed in a way to contribute to achieving this aim. The port that receives tourists is different from the port that is used for heavy industries. At the end of the day, any economy should aim at ensuring welfare of society and sustainable development.

This is a general introduction about the economic identity for any country. What do we have here in Oman? Does the Omani economy have an identity? Has the legislator left economy without identity where the state does not intervene?

Quick analysis of the consecutive five-year development plans shows that the Omani experience included everything starting from industry and then moving to agriculture, tourism, heavy industries, petrochemicals, import and export. These attempts did not create an identity for the Omani economy because it did not have specific choice that was put into implementation. The previous plans did not take into consideration the available resources that can be used while planning the national identity.

First: Is the Omani economy big or small? (The production volume and industry base)

The production volume and the diversity of the economic base helps us to identify the importance and the relative weight of the Omani economy in the global economy or the GCC economy or the Arab economy. This will help us to select the most suitable identity for the Omani economy.

Table No (1) shows that the contribution of the GDP to the GCC GDP is not more than 5% in average during the period between 2010 and 2013. This places the Sultanate just above the bottom position i.e. above Bahrain whose contribution is not more than 3% compared to Qatar (11%).

Table No (1) The GDP index for the Sultanate in the regional and world economy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Average 2010-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sultanate of Oman</td>
<td>78.183</td>
<td>70.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>744.336</td>
<td>668.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>203.235</td>
<td>172.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>32.898</td>
<td>29.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC States</td>
<td>1636.830</td>
<td>1447.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, complied by the researcher based on Arab Monetary Fund and IMF statistics.
If we took into consideration that the contribution of the GDP of the Arab States is about $5.2 trillion, we will find that this is almost the contribution of one European country. This means that the Omani economy, in terms of the Arab or the regional economy is a very small economy.

Table (2) shows the diversity of the Omani economy production base.

Oil sector contributes by about 40% of the GDP during the period from 2001 to 2002 and by 45% during the period from 2010 to 2011. The contribution of agricultural sector stood only at 1.5 to 2.2% compared to 8-9% for industry. The contribution of agriculture in 2010-2011 stood at 1-1.4% compared to 10-12% for industry sector. The oil exports constituted about 81-77% during the period from 2001 to 2002 and 70-75% of the total Omani exports from 2010-2011.

This proves that the Omani economy is still relying on oil revenue which means that it is dependent on a single revenue (exhausting source – the production volume and prices are controlled by external factors.

Table (2) The contribution of economic sector in the composition of the Omani GDP (2011/2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2001/2002 (%)</th>
<th>2011/2013 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1.5–2.2</td>
<td>1.00–1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and mining</td>
<td>40.0–45.0</td>
<td>50.0–55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>9.0–8.0</td>
<td>10.0–12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil exports of the total exports</td>
<td>77.0–81.0</td>
<td>70.0–75.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the annual statistical book – the Ministry of National Economy – Statistics and Information Center

Second: Economic Exposure

This criterion measures the relationship of the national economy to the global economy and determines how open is it on the international system. It is measured as the percentage of international trade (imports and exports) to the GDP. This index shows how far the national economy is linked to the global economy. The more this percentage is high, the more growth of the GDP is associated with the growth of foreign trade. In such case, the effects of the world market development are higher and thus the national economy becomes dominated by the global economy. Table (3) shows the rate of economic exposure by the Omani national economy.

Table (3) Degree of Economic Openness of the Sultanate of Oman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of economic exposure</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>102%</td>
<td>1973 – 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.5%</td>
<td>1986 – 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>2000 – 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102.5%</td>
<td>2010 – 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by the researcher

The Omani economy is dependent on oil exports therefore we have calculated the economic exposure by dividing the periods based on the sharp fluctuation of crude oil prices. The Omani economy has high degree of exposure during the oil prices boom i.e. 1973-1980 and 2000-2009 as well as 2010-2014 – in average about 95%. This means that the Omani economy is open to the foreign world and not closed. The data on exports show that there is a continuous growth in exports and imports volume.

Diagram (1) exports and imports during the period from 1990-2014 ($1 billion)

Subject: prepared by the researcher based on the previous source.

Third: Structural imbalance indicators in the Omani economy

a. The dominance of the oil sector and the services sector (Dutch disease).

It is possible to clarify the phenomenon of the so-called
Dutch disease, which is an economic imbalance reflected in the non-diversification of production base in the national economy of a state as follows:

When a new resource, such as oil and precious metals, is discovered, oil starts to flow, followed by oil exports, which in turn leads to foreign exchange flows and increased spending. On the opposite side, the value of the local currency rises and the inflation rate rises, which is reflected in the high exchange rate of the local currency and or the relative prices of non-commercial goods. The result is the transfer of people and capital from other sectors to the oil sector.

The result is the emergence of the Dutch disease in the non-diversification of the production base, which causes other industries less competitive and exports declining because the economy is less diversified as shown in the figure below.

Source: Symposium on Policy Options in Investing Oil Wealth 2013

On the other hand, during production in a new mine, or an oil or gas field, and several years after the start of production, governments get large revenues, but often spend all of them and no part is being saved to develop the rest of the sectors. This leads to the (in case of decline in revenues from this resource) increase in the general level of domestic prices and wages without any result in the development, and leads to higher exchange rate, which harms local exporters and causes a decline in non-oil or non-metal industries. At the same time, this is reflected in the low standard of living for individuals not working outside this sector.

The Dutch disease and the Omani economy?
The phenomenon of the Dutch disease can be identified by studying the relative importance of GDP components and the contribution of national and expatriate labor to various activities of GDP as follows:

As for the relative importance of the components of the Omani GDP, by analyzing the components of the GDP mentioned in Figure 3, we note that the extractive sectors, which include metals, oil and gas, still have an important portion in the composition of the GDP. For example, this percentage was 50% in 2008 and still 50% in 2013 and it was not very different in the past three decades. On the other hand, the figures indicate that the contribution of the manufacturing sector is still (not exceeding 10% during the same period), indicating that the so-called positive effects or leaks from the extractive industries sector to the other productive sectors such as agriculture and industry. At the same time, it refers to the dominance of extractive sectors on the identity of the Omani economy.

Figure (3): The contribution of the economic sectors in the composition of the Omani GDP


As for the relative importance of the contribution of local and expatriate labor in the Omani economy, by inspecting the contribution of national and expatriate labor in the various productive sectors, as shown in Figure 4, it becomes clear that the contribution of the national component of Omani labor is particularly high in oil, banking and telecommunications sectors. It is 90%. These sectors are relating to the oil sector and service sectors.

Figure (4) National labor contribution indicator in key private sector institutions - Active (%)

Source: Based on the previous source.

To compare between the contribution of national and expatriate labor, the study in Figure (5) that shows the graphical distribution of the contribution of the foreign component in the operation of public and private sectors:

- The proportion of expatriate workers in the government sector has gradually decreased during the study period,
but returned to a new escalation during the period 2010-2014.

- On the other hand, the relative importance of the expatriate labor force in the private sector should be noted. It ranges from 75% to 95% on average, which is high despite the issuance of Omanaization laws.

- Accordingly, given the high contribution of the services sector in Oman’s GDP, which averages between 35% and 40% during the period 2000-2014, we can say that there are signs of Dutch disease in the Omani economy.

![Graph](image)

**Figure (5) Evolution of the percentage of the contribution of expatriate workers in the government sector and the private sector %.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the previous source.

b. The dominance of expatriate labor in the private sector (the phenomenon of Gulf disease)

The analysis of the data in Table 4 of the overall contribution of national labor in the private sector in 2010 and 2014, as an example, shows the following:

Total active labor in the private sector was approximately 1,133,000 in 2010, with 1,708,000 workers in 2014. The number of Omani workers contributing in the private sector was approximately 197,510 or 12%, while the number of expatriate workers in the private sector was about 1,510,393 workers or 88%. This indicates that the portion of national labor in the rest of the activities, which form the GDP, is very weak.

Given the structural imbalance of the high contribution of the services sector in Oman’s GDP, which ranged from 30 and 40% during the period 2000-2014, it leads to the following conclusion:

National labor does not favor to work in many of vocational and operational jobs, which resulted in the control of expatriate workers of this type of jobs, which indicates the phenomenon of the Gulf disease in the Omani economy.

![Table](image)

**Table (4) Distribution of Labor in the Public and Private Sector - Active (000)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Sector</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (Omani)</td>
<td>61.941</td>
<td>61.353</td>
<td>74.941</td>
<td>88.483</td>
<td>117.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (Omani)</td>
<td>15.566</td>
<td>20.289</td>
<td>34.841</td>
<td>51.887</td>
<td>78.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate</td>
<td>33.493</td>
<td>28.305</td>
<td>22.99</td>
<td>23.567</td>
<td>36.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>644000</td>
<td>551000</td>
<td>524000</td>
<td>1.133000</td>
<td>1.708000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (Omani)</td>
<td>21058</td>
<td>45623</td>
<td>81912</td>
<td>143482</td>
<td>152959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (Omani)</td>
<td>3632</td>
<td>10048</td>
<td>16625</td>
<td>34234</td>
<td>44551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate</td>
<td>619000</td>
<td>495000</td>
<td>425000</td>
<td>955000</td>
<td>1.510393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The total active expatriate labor force in 2014, which was 1,510,393 out of 1,708,000 indicates the phenomenon of the Gulf disease in the Omani economy.
Fourth: The role of public and the private sectors in shaping the economic identity

It is to be noted that support programs are not successful in the long term. Even in developed economies, they cannot continue to spend indefinitely on the public sector. In many studies, negative effects on the national economy of countries resulting from the large size of the public sector are much bigger than the negative effects of the growing private sector. The public sector may suffer from problems that do not exist very much in the private sector, especially poor management, poor regulation, lack of competitiveness, lack of reliance on economic feasibility studies, and the severe negative effects of increasing public debt.

In Oman, studies show that the private sector emerged in the mid-1980s and was supported by the government in varying degrees. It has undergone many stages. The privatization of 1988 began with the sale of Flour Mills by the government in part. However, privatization was made in its institutional framework in the five-year plan 96-2000 according to Royal Decree No. 24/96 on privatization policies and controls. It was enhanced with the Decree No. 77/2004 to comply with the requirements of accession to the World Trade Organization. Successful examples in the privatization program are the following: In the field of communications, Oman Telecommunications Company 2005, as 30% of the company's shares were privatized after converting them to a company. In the transport side, it started with the Port of Salalah and the National Transport Company.

In order to identify the importance of the private sector in terms of its contribution to the economic activity in the Sultanate of Oman, it is important to study the aspects of partnership between the government sector and the private sector, which are:

- Private sector contribution to GDP
- The national labor employment in the private sector
- The volume of investment in the private sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production sectors</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oil activities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative Industries</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructions</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Fish</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and retail</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage and communications</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brokerage and real estate</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total contribution of the private sector</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>60.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The second aspect: The extent to which the private sector contains the national labor force

There is no doubt that the private sector in Oman offers a large number of jobs, but by analyzing the data in Figure 6, it is clear that the contribution of national labor force in
the private sector during the period from 1995 to 2014 was very low and did not exceed 15%. On the other hand, on the national labor side, there was a slight improvement compared to 1995 due to the emergence of Omanization laws and their application to private sector institutions. It is easy to observe the dominance of expatriate workers on most activities in the private sector, especially productivity and craftsmanship. Therefore, it can be said that the aspects of the partnership between the government sector and the private sector are still weak in terms of the private sector contribution in the containing national labor.

Figure (6): The ratio of national labor and expatriate labor in the private sector

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on: The Statistical Annual Book - different numbers

The third aspect: The private sector is a partner in development investments.

Investment is one of the common aspects between the government and the private sectors. Available data indicates that the proportion of investments implemented by the private sector in accordance with various development plans is still low (between 30% and 40% in all five-year plans) except for the seventh five-year plan, which was expected to increase private sector investment to about 42%, which is not measured, whether or not achieved so far.

On the other hand, the sixth five-year plan was characterized by the acquisition of the non-oil sector on the largest share of the volume of investments in the private sector, which reached about 62% (Husseini 2004). By comparing these percentages to the contribution of the private sector to economic activity, it becomes clear that 40% to 45% of the private sector investments are still directed to the oil sector and this is a natural outcome of the Dutch disease phenomenon.

Results:
The main objective of this study was to study and analyze the subject of the availability of principles and criteria of economic identity and its applicability to the Omani economy.

The study concluded that:
Economic identity plays an important role in determining the direction of societies and determining their options for different areas of political, economic and social activities. The definition of economic identity is the guiding principle of the state institutions adopted in its strategic plans for growth and development that lead to achieving the desired goals of the state; sustainable economic stability.

There is no doubt that Oman has achieved over the past three decades achievements on more than one level in the field of economic and social development. The Omani experience included everything starting with industry, agriculture to tourism, heavy industries, petrochemical industries, import and export. However, these attempts could not create an identity for the national economy in the Sultanate.

The lack of clarity of the identity of the Omani economy came because of many difficulties; the most important was not taking into account the principles and criteria of economic identity in the previous economic plans.

The lack of inclusion of the subject of economic identity in the previous development plans resulted in the continued imbalance in the structure of the national economy. It is a single-source economy that suffers from the lack of diversification of production on one hand, and from the phenomenon of the Dutch disease in terms of dominance of the oil sector and the service sector on most economic activity on the other hand. It also suffers from the phenomenon of the Gulf disease represented in the dominance of expatriate labor on most jobs in the private sector, which is already suffering from the lack of a fair share of investment in large projects in the Sultanate.

Recommendations:
First, it should be noted that the conditions are favorable to the prosperity of the Sultanate. From a regional perspective, it possesses a state of security stability, a human labor force, high population growth rate and many distinctive natural elements that qualify it according to the theories of comparative advantage to gain the advantage of tourist identity. On the other hand, the Sultanate has a distinct strategic location, which makes it the gateway to the Middle East, which links it with the countries of the Indian Ocean Association and the rest of the world. Therefore, I firmly believe that the identity of the Omani economy must also be determined according to its strategic location, which gives it the advantage of logistics, which should be used in stimulating and revitalizing the foreign trade sector in terms of exports, imports and re-exports.
Al-Dhahirah Governorate talks economics!!

- The aesthetics of the economic scene in the Al-Dhahirah Governorate is the increasing frequency of talks about economy, investment, trade, industry, tourism, agriculture and logistics showing an increase in economic awakening among the people of the three Wilayats of Al-Dhahirah Governorate viz Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank and in Hamra Al-Dorou Niyabat!!

- Yes, the social concerns of Al-Dhahirah Governorate in the economic dimensions have clearly increased in the recent years. Most talks and ambitions of the Omani houses in various human gatherings, the Omani councils, markets and in discussion sessions have become how to activate the economic conditions in the three Wilayats of Al-Dhahirah Governorate.

- These economic talks and community initiatives for adoption of projects that serve the community in terms of economics, investment and employment, came as a result of the great efforts, programs, activities and events organized by Al-Dhahirah Chamber and other parties, which contributed to the overall increase in the economic culture and investment awareness in the community in Al-Dhahirah Governorate.

- Therefore, in the near future, it is expected that the economic and investment awakening would increase in the Wilayats of Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank and Hamra Al-Dorou Niyabat, especially after the growing community and official convictions that the economy and investment have become a developmental and employment necessity. Hence, the community and the official bodies should push the economy and investment in Al-Dhahirah Governorate to the best and most active, taking advantage of the optimistic atmosphere in Al-Dhahirah Governorate which thinks and speaks economics and investments!!!
Based on the interest of the OCCI branch in Al-Dhahirah Governorate, we are pleased to highlight one of the young people who has made a great success in entering the entrepreneurship world. We met with Ibrahim bin Saeed bin Mubarak Al-Qamshoei, owner of the Royal Hospitality Sweets, where he says about the idea of his project: “I have opened a shop specialized in the sale of chocolate, cake, natural flowers, coffee and ice cream. My business is to provide chocolate and flowers in beautiful designs to suit all tastes.”

Interviewed by: Mohammed bin Salim Al Kalbani
Requirements of Success...
On our question about the requirements for success to establish any business he says: "The pre-planning and feasibility study of the project and development of future objectives are the map of the success of any economic project. "The presentation of chocolate products in modern and artistic ways consistent with the events is an important attraction and is the focus of customer satisfaction for the product displayed, in addition to the design of bouquets in all shapes gives the occasion a beautiful aesthetic touch in addition to making of cake in line with the demand of the customer." Added Al-Qamshoei.

Challenges and Obstacles
Speaking about the challenges encountering SME owners, Al-Qamshoei says: "I have encountered many difficulties and hurdles at the beginning of the project, but thanks to God, I have overcome all these difficulties through persistence, love of work and keenness to add artistic touches to the products of the project, which was a distinctive and competitive brand among the products available in the market.

Hopes and Ambitions
As for his ambition, Ibrahim Al-Qamshoei said: “I look forward to expanding in all governorates of the Sultanate by opening various branches and expanding the business scope through producing chocolate of superb quality that is different from the existing ones. I also have several branches in the Wilayat of Ibri and soon I will open the coffee shop (Kahwa Coffee shop) which will be the first of its kind at the level of Al-Dhahirah Governorate with a new nature and elegant design, God willing.

Al-Qamshoei said: “I participated in many exhibitions, the most prominent of which was the first sweets exhibition held at the OCCI branch in Al-Dhahira Governorate in the Wilayat of Ibri. I have also took part in the Omani delegation participating in the events of Istanbul Sweets Exhibition led by OCCI where during that visit I have seen many experiences, machines and equipment used in the manufacturing and production of sweets and ice cream. I have also participated in “Food” exhibition held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. In conclusion, Ibrahim Al-Qamshoei addressed the young people planning to enter entrepreneurship world by saying: “Young people must follow up their business and projects by themselves and not to rely on others as well as develop and search for everything that is new in their business scope, and they must take into account that the livelihood from Allah and not in the hand of any creature. Additionally, a feasibility study should be carried out that clearly outlines the project’s features.
Innovative and creative youth energies have caught up business opportunities. This is based on the conviction that success requires creativity, innovation and a focus on the added value of the product they offer to the society and their aspiration to entrepreneurship. You need to translate ideas, talents and innovations into productive projects and take the initiative to be successful entrepreneurs to realize benefit for oneself and one’s community.

ABAAD student company is hosted by the Technical College in Ibra, where the company has made its way towards success and sought to highlight its role as an emerging entrepreneurial entity in the world of software and smart phone apps. The owners of the company also seek to attract their peers to work with them and to establish collective initiatives that invest their money and energy significantly.

How did these young people make their success story? What are their most important products in the software world and what are their features? We answer these questions through our interview with them.

Objective of the Company:
- To meet the market needs for software.
- To highlight what is new and distinctive in the world of modern technology.
- To provide services to the smart phone sector

Arwa Bint Saud Al Harthiyah, a member of ABAAD Company, says that the company was founded in February 2016. We designed a logo carrying the name of ABAAD COMPANY, and we set several goals to achieve i.e., meeting the demands of the market for software and coming up with everything new and distinctive in the world of modern technology and providing the services needed by the customer in the smart phone sector.

Launch of an application for smartphones
"We have distributed the functions and works of the company, consisting of nine employees, across the various sections of the company to perform the functions assigned to them to the fullest. Our products which we consider the most important in the launch of an app for smart phones has several features, most importantly is the tracking movement of your loss of something in addition to the possibility of using it for other personal purposes. The app is easy to carry and link between two different sites.

Company’s Corporate Vision and Values:
- Leadership in the field of electronic applications and software
- Customer satisfaction
- Provision of all information about the product
- Transparency in dealing
Saeed bin Abdullah Al Maskari, a member of the company, said: “Our vision, as members of ABAAD Company, is to be a leader in the field of apps and software in general to compete with the international markets, and our corporate values are based on satisfying the customer and providing all information about the product the customer needs or the service he/she is seeking to have from the app. We also depend on the principle of transparency in our dealing with customers both inside and outside Oman.” Regarding way of use of the app, he says that the customer should only download the program, register his data as a new user and add his phone number and the name of the service provider.

Nasser bin Said Al-Araimi, a member of the company, has also added that one of the features of the app is that it sends the location from the device that contains the app and allows voice communication between the parties and guiding via the location of the parties. In order to maintain permanent communication it is preferred to have sufficient data packages so that both parties can send their locations. For example, the app has been very popular among parents in the community as it allows them to track their children’s movement in markets, neighborhoods, shopping malls and entertainment centers for fear of losing them. You may also buy the device itself and connect it to your mobile phone thereby ensuring that you do not lose even your valuables.

**Serving SMEs in the field of software**

Al-Araimi added that we, at the company, also work on improving specifications of any product offered to us by small and medium enterprises and serving them in the field of software and provide them with models for the designing and production of interactive multimedia. We work on upgrading their systems, improving their efficiency and operation procedures, and we also build creative cadres and human resources capable of managing the company competently, as we believe that the use of IT by SMEs positively impacts the level of their performance, including increasing their sales, improving the quality of their services and opening up new local markets.
Eng. Hilal bin Mohammed Al Busaidi, CEO of the Public Authority for Mining, said that the final draft of the new mineral wealth law has been finalized in Oman, pointing out that there are demands from the Authority, OCCI and companies and establishments engaged in the sector as well as the citizens to the government authorities to speed up issuance of the law for the importance thereof to strengthen the partnership that the Authority seeks to achieve as a genuine objective between the government, the private sector and the citizens alike.

HE Hilal bin Mohammed Al Busaidi pointed out during the meeting organized by the OCCI Mining and Crusher Committee in the presence of HE Saeed bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI chairman, Sheikh Batti bin Mohammed Al Niyadi, OCCI board member and chairman of the OCCI Mining and Crusher Committee and the members of the committee representing a number of companies operating in the mining sector across Oman, that the new law comprises many new amendments and additions that come in line with the government’s tendency to raise the sector’s contribution to the gross product thereby supporting the economic diversification program through activating investment in the sector. The Law also grants many privileges and facilitates investment procedures and reduce the red tape in the clearance of transactions. The amendments include extension of the duration of permanent licenses and concession licenses.

At the beginning of the meeting, HE Saeed bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI chairman, stressed the great role played by the Public Authority for Mining in regulating the work and investment in the sector and the activation and development thereof to contribute more to the national economy during the next phase. He appreciated the efforts exerted by the Authority, its coordination and permanent partnership with OCCI and the private sector, and stressed the importance of finding suitable solutions to the challenges facing the companies and establishments engaging in the mining sector in Oman. This should start with finding legislations and laws that define duties and powers of all parties and government bodies, the private sector and citizens, in order to facilitate the procedures and limit the red tape for issue of licenses and clearance of transactions for export of the sector’s products. His Excellency pointed out to the need to prepare the Omani ports to be export outlets for those products. Further, His Excellency referred to several pending issues, which the government should resolve according to the interests of all parties and adoption of the philosophy of gradual implementation of the decisions which the government does not have at present, especially in respect of the issues related to the private sector.

On his part, Sheikh Batti bin Mohammed Al Niyadi, chairman of the OCCI Mining and Crusher Committee, welcomed the CEO of the Public Authority for Mining, expressing his appreciation for the role played by the Authority to reorganize the sector and the challenges it faces, and at the same time, stressing OCCI support, the Mining and Crusher Committee and all the companies and establishment engaged in the mining sector in Oman for the efforts...
of the Authority and its willingness to cooperate in achieving its objectives aiming at activating and developing the sector.

The meeting discussed the reality of mining, the difficulties facing it and the efforts of the Authority and its plans to reorganize the sector and enhance its contributions to the national economy, the challenges the sector encounters to achieve this and involving the private sector in the decisions and laws related to the sector. This is in addition to reducing the red tape in the sector, especially with regard to the approvals for the issuance of licenses, which require approvals from eight ministerial bodies in the government. The CEO of the Public Authority for Mining pointed out that the importance of the mining sector as a great national wealth and must be exploited appropriately to benefit the government, the private sector and citizens, explaining that the Authority has been seeking since its establishment in 2014 to achieve this and focuses its work mainly on the achievement of strategic partnership with the government, private sector and citizens in particular. The Authority believes that the development of any sector can only be achieved through such a partnership. Therefore, the partnership must be present and effective at all levels of work in the mining sector, especially the sector is currently considered one of the five promising sectors on which Oman’s five-year plan is based to achieve the desired economic diversification. In this context, Eng. Hilal Al-Busaidi stressed the importance of finding an appropriate mechanism to activate the existing partnership between the government, private sector and the citizens, which will create added value for the sector and lead to a concrete and effective community partnership.

**Said Al-Kiyoumi:**
The government should decide on many of the outstanding files in the mining sector and adopt the philosophy of gradation in the implementation of decisions affecting the private sector.

**Hilal Al-Bousaidi:**
We support the appeals of the Chamber and private sector to the government to speed up issuance of the new mineral wealth law.

**Batti Al-Niyadi:**
We appreciate the response of the Public Authority for Mining to the demands of the mining sector and crushers and we have good omen in its CEO.
Al-Busaidi pointed out that the Public Authority for Mining relies on a number of pillars in its work, including regaining confidence of citizens in the mining activities in Oman. He also indicated that the Authority is engaged in coordination with other concerned parties to find suitable solutions for this. The Authority is also working to find a legislative basis that motivates investment in the mining sector aimed at reorganizing the sector and creating a fair opportunity for all in addition to encouraging investment to move from reluctant investment to effective investment and be able to support overall economic and community development. He explained that the Authority focuses mainly on the supervision and inspection aspect, as it is working to find the effective mechanism in this regard, pointing out that there are currently approximately 550 licenses in the mining sector, 50% of which are permanent licenses and the other 50% are temporary licenses. This is in addition to its focus on keeping pace with modern technologies to harness them in speeding up the completion of transactions and facilitating procedures, pointing out in this regard that the Authority will join the One-stop-Shop of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry after completion of the necessary formalities.

Concerning involvement of companies and establishment working in the mining sector in the drafting of laws and legislations related to the sector, the CEO of the Public Authority for Mining stressed the keenness of the Authority to take the opinions and views of those companies, which have extensive experience in this field. He welcomed all the proposals that are certainly aimed at developing and activating the sector during the next phase, noting that the Authority is working in coordination with other bodies to complete the necessary legislations and facilitate the procedures, but it is facing challenges related to limited physical and human potentials compared to the size of growth in the sector. He also pointed out that the Authority coordinates with the Ministry of Environment regarding environmental permits so that environmental precautions are adopted according to specialized scientific environmental studies, in addition to minimizing environmental visits to speed up issuance of licenses. A monitoring and inspection strategy is also under way, through which the responsibilities of the Authority and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs will be identified.

Hilal Al-Busaidi also indicated his support for the private sector’s proposal to allocate the Port of Shinas for collection and export of the mining sector products, stating that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry also supports such trend. Therefore, it is important to find an appropriate regulation and open the way for the companies to exploit the port for the benefit of all. He also stressed the importance of the development of government laboratories to be effective, professional and externally accredited. It is necessary to support them with the necessary equipment as well as the distinguished competencies, pointing out to the interest of the Authority in this issue, explaining existence of a plan to activate the laboratory and get it accredited globally.

Al-Busaidi mentioned that the Authority has conducted a comprehensive survey of the Sultanate, identified possible mining investment sites and coordinated with other government bodies in respect of such survey. Those sites will be offered for investment in public tenders during the current year.
INDUSTRY DAY CELEBRATED
The OCCI North Sharqiyyah Branch discusses with the owners of industrial workshops ways of promoting them and providing them with the basic services

The OCCI North Sharqiyyah Branch organized a visit to the owners of the industrial workshops in the Governorate of North Sharqiyyah on the sidelines of the celebration of the Omani Industry Day on February 9 each year. The visit aimed at learning about the business and activities of the workshops, the most important challenges they encounter, their role in enriching the trade and investment movement in the Wilayat as well as the use of some modern technologies in production and their providing of jobs to the nationals.

Ali bin Hilal Al Hajri, owner of Auto Repair Workshop, said that the workshop provides a wide variety of services to different types of cars and is characterized by its proximity to the basic services that we need in addition to availability of infrastructure elements which are important for any workshop specialized in the automotive sector. Ali Al-Hajri considers that shifting to the new industrial area is somewhat difficult, as it currently lacks the basic services and once provided with its requirements, he will move the workshop to carry out its business in the new location.

Hamad bin Saeed Al-Hajri, owner of a smithery workshop, said that due to the far distance of the workers’ residence in the industrial area from the houses which need the service, we face difficulties in transportation and movement. In addition, the road is not completely paved, therefore, we get less work in the workshop. We look forward to expanding and providing the solutions to the industrial area in the Wilayat in the near future. Further, Hamad bin Salim Al Hajri, owner of Al-Shaq Golden Projects Workshop, pointed out that the workshop suffers from lack of customers due to the distant location for them and the lack of services that need support from various entities in order for the industrial area to realize a wide activity and play a role in attracting local investments.

Hilal bin Hamad al-Hajri, owner of Al-Qitaif Trading Enterprise and specialized in aluminum field, said that the lack of interest in the enterprise’s services has made expatriate workers to absent themselves from duty and sometimes running away from work. Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Hajri and Saeed bin Alabd Al-Wahaibi agreed to his views and demanded provision of necessary infrastructure to the industrial area so that all workshops achieve their objectives and work to develop their services and be flexible in dealing with their customers, including extending them with water network and blacktop roads.

Sulaiman bin Salim Al Manji, owner of blocks & ceramic factory, said that he is currently producing large quantities of blocks and different types of ceramics used for various purposes, and the site incurs many financial costs. In order to move to the new industrial area in the Wilayat of Ibri he suggests transfer of ownership of plots to all owners of industrial workshops in order to enable them to provide them with the materials needed by the project. Mohsin bin Ali Al-Saadi, owner of a workshop specialized in carwash, said that Omanization is a challenge for me seeking to find appropriate solutions apart from the multiple procedures where one should move from one entity to another to clear the transactions and demanding establishment of a one-stop-shop in the governorate through which the business owner can finalize all procedures of his activities and business.

On his part, the owner of AL-Hisn National Enterprises explained that most industrial projects need to increase the number of workers, and in return, we face the problem of high prices for getting expatriate workforce apart from the problem of high prices of buildings that we rent for the business. We hope the competent authorities to consider this problem and find a solution to the high prices in addition to the provision of water services in the industrial area. Hamad bin jabir Al-Ghennaimi, owner of Al-Aqeer Trading Est., pointed out that the lack of customer demand for our services has made it difficult for us to produce in addition to our inability to own the industrial land as we pay the rental charges for the land while we face few demand for our products.

Ahmed bin Salim Al Rashidi also pointed to the lack of their ownership of industrial land, which makes them unable to expand the industrial workshops and build new shops to suit the volume of demand in the local market. Ali bin Sulaiman Al Nahdi added that the support should be extended to the SME owners from various public and private entities and to support them and benefit from their services. He thanked the OCCI North Sharqiyyah Branch for meeting with them and getting closer to the owners of industrial workshops and discussing ways to promote their business and activities.
The Second Real Estate Forum discusses Development of the Real Estate Sector in the Sultanate

REAL ESTATE: NEED OF REGULATOR STRESSED

HE Said bin Saleh Al-Kiyumi, OCCI chairman, applauded the efforts of the Real Estate Development Committee and its continuous efforts to develop the real estate business and the sector in general, expressing his hope that the real estate sector will have one representative to regulate the real estate sector business in the Sultanate.

This came at the Second Real Estate Forum organized recently by OCCI represented by the Real Estate Development Committee under the patronage of HE Said bin Saleh Al-Kiyumi, OCCI chairman.

The aim of the forum was to contribute to the development of the real estate sector in the Sultanate and to exchange views on all aspects of this sector in an attempt to promote it in the coming phase, highlight the OCCI role in the importance of the sector and its role in interaction with the real estate owners and work to overcome the obstacles they face.
At the opening of the forum, Dr. Ibrahim bin Baqir Al-Ajmi, chairman of the Real Estate Development Committee, welcomed the attendees, confirming his thanks to HE OCCI chairman for his patronage of the Forum and continued support for the activities and events of the Committee.

He added that the Chamber is working hard to stimulate the establishments and companies of the Omani private sector to participate in the comprehensive development plans, and discuss the issues of the private sector through specialized committees in Muscat and the branches. He also added: “Within this framework this forum is held through, we are looking at the real estate sector in the Sultanate, which is one of the most prominent economic sectors that achieve growth, and it also enhances its contributions to the national economy at good rates.

He pointed out that the OCCI Real Estate Development Committee is seeking to develop the working mechanisms and address the challenges that will enhance the performance of the sector in general, as it believes in the significant contribution of this sector in supporting the national economy by raising the value of domestic investments, attracting foreign investment and providing employment opportunities and other direct and indirect contributions. Accordingly, the Committee held a workshop “TASHEEL” for real estate owners to identify the needs of the sector at this stage in order to be forwarded to the competent authorities and for consultation on the views of sector experts and specialists.

He added that the Committee endeavors through holding this annual forum to contribute to the development of the performance of the real estate sector in the Sultanate and exchange views in all that related to this sector in order to promote it in the next stage, highlight OCCI role in the importance of the sector, and the role OCCI plays in communicating with real estate owners and working to overcome the hurdles they face.

The OCCI chairman said that the work of associations of economic interest is largely similar to the work of the OCCI economic committees, stressing the willingness of the Chamber to give the associations the powers and support to be a substitute for the competent committees provided that they are under the OCCI umbrella.

On the proposal of the OCCI Real Estate Development Committee to set up a club for real estate owners, he blessed the idea, stressing that the purpose of the establishment of the club is to be a place for exchange of ideas, opinions and proposals and a platform through which real estate owners adopt ideas and treatises that work on developing the sector and contribute to enhancing its contribution to the national income. This is in addition to discussing the most important solutions proposed by the Real Estate Development Committee to overcome the obstacles experienced by this sector to create a successful real estate sector.

The forum also presented two working papers, the first paper entitled “Impact of Visual Identity in Enhancing the Real Estate Establishments’ Position” presented by Eng. Ahmed bin Ali Al-Siyabi, board member of Wifaq Real Estate, and manager of Foundation Stone for Real Estate Consultancy Bureau, wherein he pointed out that corporate identity is the “personality” of the company designed to harmonize and facilitate achievement of the business objectives. It is usually clearly manifested by the brand and the use of these brands to present itself to the public.

He added that identity is a set of elements used to deliver an optical statement about brand to the consumers, and that one of the most important factors in the success of the media of different companies and establishments is the existence of a distinct identity in a vital markets full of elements of visual and written ads to complement the design of a strong and attractive logo. The next stage is to make everything related to the entity or organization consistent with this logo in terms of color and symbolism.

The second paper was entitled “Importance of Operational Planning for Real Estate Establishments” presented by Hassan Al-Ruqaishi, owner of Al-Ruqaishi Real Estate Establishment wherein he pointed out that the strategy is not a subject to be taught, rather it is an ongoing changing assessment of how the real estate establishment should put itself in the best position to face the challenges it encounters.

Then he touched on the skills of the manager of real estate office, which includes intellectual skills such as the ability to comprehensively view the establishment and link the parts of the subject to each other. This skill is required more in all types of administrations, and the human skills that mean, in short, the ability to deal with others, which are equally required at all levels of management as well as the technical skills such as language acquisition, accounting and computer skills which are required more at lower administrative levels.
Omani Delegation Visits Turkish Exhibition

OCCI delegation participated in the Republic of Turkey specifically in (Antalya city of Turkey) in the opening of the hospitality equipment and tools exhibition. The delegation was led by Ali bin Salim Al Hijri, treasurer and chairman of the OCCI North Sharqiyyah branch. The delegation comprised 10 members from the business owners involved in this field during the period 16 to 19 January. The visit was aimed at reviewing its advanced experience in the field of hospitality tools and equipment.

On the sidelines of the visit, Munir Karglu, the governor of Antalya, Turkey, said: “Oman and Turkey have close commercial relations but still need further strengthening and enhancement. The features of this cooperation may emerge through the trade delegations sent by the Chamber between the two sides.”

As the world endeavors to strengthen the means of communication, trade exchange and diversification of the income sources, closer bilateral relations between Oman and Turkey, especially at the commercial level plays a pivotal role in diversifying the income sources. From this point, we call on the government of the Sultanate of Oman to establish further cooperation with Turkey’s Antalya and create opportunities that would fetch benefit to both parties.

On his part, Ali bin Salim Al Hijri, OCCI treasurer and chairman of the OCCI North Sharqiyyah branch and the delegation head said: “The visit to Antalya targeted a number of factories, which had a great and positive impact on the delegation. The delegation members were briefed on the products developed in hospitality industry from the first stages of the work as raw processed materials throughout manufacturing processes and then obtaining the product for display, sale and purchase in the market. Hence, SME owners have the opportunity to establish partnerships to import equipment that suit their needs, especially since the prices are within reach, since Turkey has become one of the leading industrialised countries in the world.

The delegation members also visited a number of factories and companies in the industrial zone in Antalya and acquainted themselves with the mechanisms of work in addition to hands-on knowledge about the new equipment and tools in regard to hotel furniture, kitchens, curtains, decorations etc.

On the other hand, entrepreneur Ahmed Sulaiman Al Ghannami, owner of Al-Siraj Advanced Services Est., said: “The hospitality equipment and tools exhibition, which is held in its 28th edition, is deemed to be one of the most important exhibitions held annually in Turkey thanks to the accompanying media momentum and interest from the world’s leading businessmen. Participation in the exhibition was very important in acquiring new relationships that serve interests of our establishments. In addition to the comparison between the international markets and the Turkish market. It is worth mentioning that all products and services are of first class and characterized by a high level of quality. Further, the prices are suitable compared to the products and services. The press conference held by the organizing committee has had a great impact on adding a unique experience...
in exchanging expertise and experiences between the countries of the region in the field of hospitality and tourism.

Said bin Hamad Al-Hijri, owner of Al-Sulaiie Restaurant and Grills, said that through this participation he was able to identify the business, activities and services of a number of companies that are concerned with the hospitality sector and hotel and the requirements thereof. He also noted through identification of equipment, machinery and tools of factories and companies that there is no big difference between the equipment and machinery of the factories that we have in Oman, especially in the various industrial areas, but the differences are often concentrated on quality and price between the different products. Al-Hijri added that Al-Sulaiie Restaurant represents a turning point for him and his family who share the success and expansion of the services and meals offered to the customers.

Al-Farooq bin Said Al Hijri, the youngest entrepreneur in the delegation, expressed his pleasure for this participation, through which he was able to listen and learn about the discussion mechanisms and methods with various entrepreneurs at home and abroad. Further, his participation at this age marks the beginning of his career in the world of entrepreneurship at the international level.

Munir Karglu: Oman and Turkey have close trade relations but they need more strengthening and enhancement.

Al-Hijri: SME owners should take advantage of the opportunity to enter into partnerships to import the right equipment, especially since prices are affordable.
The seminar, organized by OCCI, discussed activating the role of the sector to contribute to overcoming these exceptional economic conditions through coordination between the public and private sectors and civil society organizations to formulate the policy of attracting domestic and foreign investments. It also stressed on the resettlement of modern technology and maximize reliance on the national human resource as well as the outlook for oil prices, and the most important economic changes expected during the current year at the domestic and global economic level through activating the role of the private sector and carrying out the necessary financial reforms to avoid the economic stagnation.

Mohammed bin Hassan Al-Ansi, chairman of the OCCI Human Resources Development and Labor Market Committee, started the seminar by saying: “The objective of the seminar is to identify the future outlook for oil prices and the most important economic changes expected during the current year both locally and globally in order to activate the role of the private sector and carry out the necessary financial reforms to avoid the
economic stagnation. It is also aimed at activating the role of the sector to contribute to overcoming these exceptional economic conditions through coordination between the public and private sectors and civil society organizations to formulate the policy of attracting domestic and foreign investments and the resettlement of modern technology and maximize reliance on the national human resources.

He explained that the global economic changes have had direct and indirect impacts on all sectors of economic production, and service sectors. He continued by saying: “We all know that the public sector cannot absorb the outputs from the educational institutions, and the private sector, the primary partner, is not prepared to accommodate those numbers in light of increasing administrative and procedural complications. It is, therefore, important to adopt joint initiatives to establish a diversified economic base that would contribute to raising the employment rate in the private sector in the Sultanate.

He pointed out that the growth of the absorptive capacity of the manpower, particularly the national manpower in the private sector is a good indicator that leads to the fact that the performance of this sector is growing, in addition to the Omanization policy that has been reformulated in some aspects in coordination with the sector, which also contributed to raising the percentage of national manpower in the private sector establishments over the last few years.

Weakness of the global economy and the surging debts

Tariq Sayed Jamal Al Ruffaie, CEO, Corum Center for Strategic Studies, UK, presented a paper entitled “Instability of our financial system and the next major crisis” wherein he explained that this paper comes through the study conducted by the Center six years ago related to financial crises and the solutions thereof.

He added that: “The study indicates that financial crises span from five to seven years worldwide where the recent financial crisis took place in 2008. Financial crises are part of the current financial system, pointing out that there are some indications that there is a crisis coming. Among these indicators are the fall in prices of commodities such as oil, which began in June 2014 due to the imbalance in the financial system and weakness of oil with the strength of the dollar, which usually cause financial crisis, according to the study.

He pointed out that the main causes of financial crises are weakness of the global economy and surge of debts, explaining that speculation and risk in the financial markets and oil markets must be kept away where during the past 10 years allow entry of non-investor in speculative operations in commodity markets through financial derivatives and others that led to the accumulation of debt and economic problems.

Discussion Session

Further, the seminar included a dialogue session in which Eng.
The OCCI branch in South Sharqiyyah organized the (Women Economic Empowerment Forum) in the Wilayat of Sur in order to involve women entrepreneurs and develop their skills and competencies to play their role in the development and establishment of commercial projects.

Commenting on the forum, Ms. Yusra Bint Abdullah Al-Ghailaniyah, chairperson of the Businesswomen’s Forum in South East Governorate, said: “The forum is to shed light on the importance of the economic independence of Omani woman in order to make her own financial decisions and be able to realize capital used for setting up her successful economic projects, and this is the global concept of women’s economic empowerment. She also added that the forum also aims at building the participants’ capacities by helping them acquire the necessary skills and abilities for planning, management, communication, creative thinking, group leadership etc. The forum also aims at discussing the role and contribution of women entrepreneurs in activating economic activity, contributing to the economic development of the country, working to open up new scopes and roles for the Omani woman and encouraging her to innovate and develop her capacities and create a suitable environment for communication between small enterprise owners and the government and private entities in the Sultanate in line with the forthcoming stage. She pointed out that the forum comes in the belief of the Businesswomen Forum committee in the value and importance of the role played by businesswomen in promoting economic growth and achieving the sustainable development, which makes them contribute effectively in the labor market, especially that Omani woman has been able during the last period to prove her leadership and competence. Yusra Al-Ghailaniyah clarified that the forum included a working paper entitled “Empowerment of woman in the light of economic changes” presented by Ahmed bin Abdulkarim Al-Hoti, member of the OCCI Board of Directors and chairman of the OCCI SME Committee.

Zwaina bint Sultan Al Rashidiya gave a presentation on the success of her project (Dar Al-Herafiyah Handicrafts).

The forum also included a discussion session in which a number of women entrepreneurs came together where they have discussed a number of topics under the heading (woman in the Economy World - Opportunities and Challenges).
Hasnaa Al-Dawoodiya, owner of (Al-Shamrookh Event Management) said: “I would like to thank the OCCI branch in South Sharqia Governorate for providing me with the opportunity, as small enterprise owner, to organize this forum, which demonstrates the many services the Chamber provides to its members and the opportunities given to them for the development of their establishments and creation of opportunities for partnership and cooperation among us. She pointed out that this is not the first forum organized by the company, as our company has earlier organized the “My Hand-made Project” forum implemented by the Omani Women’s Association in Sur under patronage of HE. Said Al Kayoumi, OCCI Chairman, who said that the development of the human resource is the most important, and explained that the alignment between the education outputs and the labor market will be achieved only by the integration of efforts between the institutions responsible for the education and the labor market sectors together. “The challenges facing the GCC labor market are similar and often revolve around this pivot,” He added. The committee also met with the OCCI Human Resources and Labor Market Development Committee headed by Mohammed bin Hasan Al-Ansi and attended by representatives of the training institutes and centers in Oman and representatives of the Directorate General of Vocational Training at the Ministry of Manpower in the Sultanate.

The visit comes within the framework of the Committee’s quest to learn about the points of strength and excellence of the training and qualification practices in the GCC countries to come up with a common document that combines these points together to achieve the main objective of upgrading the training industry and come up with creative and non-typical solutions that promote training institutions and elevate their programs. The program of the Committee’s work is based on six important pillars: the acquaintance between the GCC’s training makers, bridging of expertise, exchange of databases, documentation of these inputs to draw up a clear roadmap for the training sector, synchronization of joint periodical activities among the members as well as signing of strategic partnerships and training associations to promote the training industry and adoption of feedback for development.

The delegation of the National Training Committee at the Council of Saudi Chambers was headed by Dr. Ahmed Al-Sultan, Chairman of the National Training Committee, who said that the alignment between the outputs of education and the labor market is the common concern among the GCC states and that the solution is undoubtedly lie in training and qualification explaining that to achieve greater productivity we should focus on improving training, qualification and development. The delegation members familiarized themselves with the training sector in the Sultanate, the types of training institutions and a profile of the executive regulations of the private training institutions.
In cooperation with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), the Environment and Climate Affairs Department at Al Dhahirah Governorate, organized on Tuesday 24 September 2016 a seminar entitled “Environment and Economy ... Achievements and Expectations” under the auspices of His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Khalaf bin Salim Al Ishaqi, Wali of Ibri, and in the presence of Ali bin Saleh bin Ali Al Kalbani, OCCI member and chairman of Al Dhahirah OCCI branch, His Excellency Shahm bin Rashid Al Shuhoomi, OCCI Al Dhahirah Branch board member and representative of Wilayat Ibri at Al Shura Council, a number of officials, directors general, members of the municipal council, Al Dhahirah branch board members, companies, individuals and stakeholders and citizens.

The seminar was in the context of activities marking the Omani Environment Day and was aimed at familiarizing male and female business owners with the systems and laws followed in incorporation of economic activities. It also highlighted the difficulties and challenges facing business entrepreneurs in the field of environment. The seminar familiarized all with the investment opportunities available in waste recycling.

At the beginning, the chief guest and attendees toured the exhibition which included several issues and publications by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. Then, Abdallah bin Ali bin Saleh bin Ali Al Saqri, Director of Environment and Climate Affairs at Al Dhahirah, gave an address in which he spoke about the role played by the Department in preserving the components of environment in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

Talib bin Ali Al Abri, an environment inspector at the Ministry, presented a working paper on the efforts made by the directorate general of environmental affairs. Asim bin Yahia Al Sharji, head of community communication section at an environment company, delivered a working paper entitled “management of wastes in the Sultanate of Oman”.

Following that, Ali bin Saleh bin Ali Al Kalbani, OCCI member and chairman of Al Dhahirah OCCI branch, chaired an open dialogue session where the major difficulties and challenges to the male and female business owners in terms of obtaining environmental permits necessary for incorporation of economic enterprises were diagnosed.
Coface, a global pioneer trade credit management solutions and risk information service provider, stated that economic growth is expected to slightly improve in 2017 across the GCC states, except in Oman and Bahrain. The GCC economies have recorded a sharp slowdown in 2016 amidst public sector spending cuts, tightening liquidity, and investor uncertainty. All GCC countries except Kuwait, had seen economic contraction in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GCC Countries</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>Qatar</td>
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<td>Bahrain</td>
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<td>Oman</td>
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<td>Kuwait*</td>
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Global growth and protection policies

At the global level, in its “Outlook on Global and Regional Economies and Analysis of Sectors, Coface said: “The global growth tended to be weak in 2016 for the second consecutive year to go down to 2.5%. Mild improvement is expected. The global economic growth is, thus, expected to rise by 2.7% in 2017, particularly with the escalating growth rates in the emerging economies which are more likely to rise to 4.1% against 3.7 in 2016 and the economic boom in Brazil and Russia which will neutralize the impact of gradual economic slowdown suffered by China. Business in developed countries will lean towards stability (with the growth rate in their economies amounting to 1.6%) with the Euro Zone enjoying further flexibility and slight improvement in respect of the economic activities in the United Kingdom.

At the end of 2016, global sector trends remained mixed, including in the regions that until now have been relatively spared by the increase in risks. Over the whole year, across 12 sectors evaluated in six regions of the world, nearly half saw their assessments change. There were 23 downgrades for 10 upgrades.

Trade can be negatively affected in 2017 due to growing protection policies pursued by the new Republican Administration which has recently taken over power in the United States.

In general, there are two types of global risks that are required to be taken into consideration according to Coface’s analysis. The first is the political risk and risk of protection policies, while the second is featured by the banking risks which include severe inflation of corporate debts in China and escalating bad debts in the banking sector in the four BRIC countries, namely Brazil, Russia, India and China.

In conclusion Coface said: “The importance of risk management and protection of trade credit has risen to unprecedented levels as a result of the regional and global developments. Oil prices are not expected to return to their previous high levels in the foreseeable future. Therefore, government spending in the GCC countries will remain cautious. There is also wide range of factors which will affect the regional and global consumption pattern requiring grater measures to be taken to protect the assets of businesses.”
OCCI Delegation takes part in
GUJARAT SUMMIT IN INDIA
Two MoUs worth USD 0.5 billion signed

A

n official delegation of OCCI comprising His Excellency OCCI Chairman and a number of senior businessmen participated in the Gujarat Summit in the city of Ahmedabad, India, from 10 to 11 January 2017.

The Gujarat Summit witnessed high-ranking global presence with the participation of more than 60 countries. The inauguration was made under the auspices of India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The inauguration was intermitted with a number speeches by officials and senior businessmen about the investment opportunities in Gujarat and the most important features of economic aspects and human resources that attract investors from various countries of the world. At the conclusion of the summit, Indian Prime Minister spoke about the importance of the conference for being a real investment opportunity for India and the countries of the world. He expressed his extreme happiness at the rapid development witnessed by his country over the past five years amid the global economic stagnation. He said that this reflects the determination and resolve of
his people to promote their country’s economy. He added that the Indian government seeks to focus on the IT aspect and benefit from the tremendous human resources with Indian population below 35 years of age amounting to about 800 million, a tremendous youthful energy assisting in promoting India’s economy. He also spoke about the importance of utilizing natural resources on the country, particularly the agricultural produce. The OCCI’s delegation held a number of meetings with senior Indian businessmen as well as bilateral talks with GCC businessmen on the sidelines of the summit in order to familiarize them with the most important investment opportunities and the economic experiences of these countries.

As part of the participation in Gujarat Summit, the business delegation visited the accompanying exhibition to familiarize with the major economic sectors and companies looking for investment opportunities inside and outside India. The Gujarat summit’s exhibition is one of the most important exhibitions as it contains a huge hall comprising hundreds of companies looking for business cooperation opportunities. The OCCI delegation visited a number of sections in the exhibition and met with a number of businessmen, including international investment section, investment in education section, IT and innovation section, financing services section, health, drugs, food stuff and biotechnology sections and heritage and tourism section. The delegation held a number of bilateral talks to discuss trade cooperation opportunities between the Sultanate and Oman and participated in a mini-workshop about investment opportunities in electronic education and the possibility of adopting this system in the Sultanate for being one of the most important sectors of knowledge. In the same context, His Excellency the Chairman of OCCI, stated that business exhibitions are important for economic growth of any country. He pointed out that this exhibition in its high caliber and facilities reflects a clear desire by the concerned officials in India to promote their country’s economy and make it a global vital and competitive
The delegation then visited the Mahatma Gandhi Museum where the delegation expressed their admiration at the architecture of the building derived from Gandhi’s philosophy.

Meeting with Chief Minister of Gujarat

The OCCI’s delegation held an official meeting with the Chief Minister of the government of Gujarat and a number of ministers and businessmen to discuss cooperation opportunities and trade exchange between the two countries. Gujarat Chief Minister, Vijay Rupani, expressed his utmost happiness at this meeting stressing the deep-rooted relations between India and Sultanate of Oman. He pointed out that Gujarat enjoys a long coast that facilitates trade exchange between the two countries. He also spoke about the infrastructure and surplus electrical power to encourage foreign investors to invest in the state expressing his government’s desire to invest in petrochemicals. At the same time, His Excellency Said Al Kyumi, OCCI Board Chairman, spoke about the deep-rooted historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and India. He also dealt with the means of developing these distinguished relations for the benefit of the economy of the two counties. His Excellency stressed OCCI’s interest in supporting the establishment of a chamber of commerce gathering the Arab chambers of commerce with India in order to increase channel of communications between Arab businessmen and their Indian counterparts. The most important promising trade sectors in the two countries and investment opportunities in those sectors were discussed during the meeting.

Mutual international experiences

His Excellency the OCCI Board Chairman said: “This visit comes in the context of the OCCI’s keen interest in creating real business opportunities that assist in bringing about investment opportunities and diversification of income source of the national economy. For this reason, OCCI has been keen on taking part in this summit with a delegation of senior businessmen in order to strengthen trade cooperation between the two countries. There is no doubt that the Indian economy is one of the most important promising economies in the technology and IT sectors as well as in the human resources and natural wealth attracting large number of investors from the various countries of the world. During the visit, we found true wish and will from the senior officials of the State of Gujarat to encourage investment in India and this trend is obviously featured by the organization of such an international trade summit and the construction of infrastructure in such a record time for attracting investors. During the visit, we met with the Chief Minister of Gujarat State and a number of high-ranking businessmen and concluded a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding between the Gulf Mining Group and the government of Gujarat in the total sum of USD 0.5 billion. This reflects the importance of participation of trade delegations in international trade conferences and exhibitions.”

Engineer Khamis bin Mubarak Al Kiyumi, Board Chairman of Al Madina Real Estate Company, spoke about their participation in the Gujarat Summit by saying: “The Gujarat Summit is one of the most important international conferences worldwide
attended by nearly 70 delegations of the world, including Japan, United States and a number of European countries. This strong presence reflects the significance of investment in Gujarat which is known for its population of 65 million and 600 km beaches and important international seaports. It also owns important investment tools, including the technology, IT and human resources sectors.”

Speaking about his participation in the summit, Sheikh Salim bin Ali Al Siyabi said: “The Gujarat Summit is an international conference with prestigious international presence from all over the world. The business facilities in India are encouraging with the country possessing large market and considerable consumption capacity that encourage foreign investors. The Indian government seeks to provide high level privileges to investors. The conference also reflects India’s trend towards an economic renaissance with clear vision and features summarized in three main themes, namely qualifying India, revising industry in India and transforming India into an e-country. These three themes have absolute priority in India and that is why they take good care of infrastructure. From our meeting with a number of Indian officials we could understand that India is achieving economic growth rates with high pace. The achievement of such an economic growth by one billion people means that there is a great economic leap in India and that India will have the decisive word in terms of exports around the world in parallel with China though India is ahead of China in technological education.”

Commenting on the importance of the trade delegations dispatched by OCCI, Sheikh Salim Al Siyabi said: “Business delegations dispatched by OCCI reflect an effective participation and involvement and enable businessmen to be in contact with the world to familiarize with the available opportunities and options and the possibility of attracting investors from these countries. However, these business delegations require to be furnished with sufficient amount of information before taking part in such events.”

Dr. Mohammed bin Yahia Al Sheebani also spoke about the participation in the Gujarat Summit saying: “Through our visit to the summit under the chairmanship of His Excellency the OCCI Board Chairman, we could sign a memorandum of understanding of USD 500 million. The memorandum was signed between the Gulf Mining Group and Paprica Laboratories of the United States on one hand and the Government of Gujarat on the other hand, the aim being to set up and manage medical testing laboratory for the early detection of infectious as well as other diseases. Another memorandum was also signed between the Gulf Mining Company and His Excellency the Chairman of Mining Authority at Ahmedabad for investment in aluminum Bauxite at Port Bandar.”

The OCCI delegation’s participation in the Gujarat International Summit in India comes in the context of the OCCI’s plan to dispatch business delegation to assist in creating investment opportunities and trade exchange between the Sultanate and other countries. It also comes in the context of the OCCI’s endeavor to follow up the results of the 5th Arab-Indian Partnership Conference organized by OCCI last December.
Focus on Agriculture & Fisheries

1. 30 new projects in agriculture and fisheries with promising investment opportunities in red meat, chicken and fish farming
2. 212 projects financed by the Fisheries and Agricultural Development Fund worth more than 38.4 million Omani Rials over the past three years.

Food Security

His Excellency Dr. Fuad bin Jaafar Al Sajwani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, delivered a visual presentation at the Council of State about the agricultural and fisheries production and food security system in the Sultanate of Oman. The presentation was attended by His Excellency Dr. Yahya bin Mahfoudh Al Mandheri, Chairman of the Council of State, members of the council and His Excellency Dr. Khalid bin Salim Al Saidi, Secretary General of the Council of State. The presentation comes in the context of cooperation existing between the Council of State and Council of Ministers featured by some officials to highlighting fields of various activities in the organizations they represent.

His Excellency the Secretary General of the Council of State, stressed the importance of food security saying that it has been and remains to be a global concern with each country endeavoring to avoid any deficiency thereof. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) brought forward this issue in the sixtieth of the last century. His Excellency stated that the concept of food security is deemed to be have been achieved when human beings enjoy, at all time, good chances of obtaining sufficient and safe food.

His Excellency emphasized that food security is the responsibility of all and requires considerable efforts to be made. He indicated that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries was not alone responsible for this aspect. He called for concerted efforts by all concerned authorities by working together through an integrated system to achieve this objective. He said that the responsibility for safety of food requires legislations and strong control system capable of undertaking supervision of food to ensure that it strictly complies with food safety specifications and standards.

Concept of food security

His Excellency the minister of agriculture and fisheries then delivered his visual presentation tackling a number of issues relating to the development and performance of the various production sectors. He began his presentation by giving an introduction on the concept of food security which is achieved by providing sufficient and stable supplies of food and when all the individuals of a society can obtain food and secure their food needs at all times. His Excellency pointed that the general framework of food security system in the Sultanate of Oman is required to strengthen self-sufficiency and investment in food production, liberalize the importation of food commodities and create an early warning system and robust silos and warehouses. His Excellency drew the attention to the fact that investment in food production inside the Sultanate of Oman includes all agricultural, livestock and fisheries sectors while investment outside the Sultanate focuses on
safe environments and in the fields of dry and green fodder for animals and feeds for poultry.

**Food system consolidation process**

His Excellency the minister of agriculture and fisheries explained that there were several procedures already in place to consolidate food security system in the Sultanate by setting up a ministerial committee concerned with food security, establishing the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve, monitoring price movement and reserve stock and providing food in exceptional circumstances. He noted that this was also coupled with the requirement for putting in place effective precautionary measures to ensure stabilized prices of food commodities, setting up investment specialized government companies, building strategic food stock system, liberalizing food importation and adopting a package of programmes aimed at increasing food production and subsidizing the prices of some of the main food commodities, fodder and feeds. His Excellency added that plans were in place to promote the agriculture and fisheries sectors with particular emphasis on the relative advantage of the “Made in Oman” commodities and produce in addition to the issuance of legislations and laws regulating food production. His Excellency informed that the Sultanate scored the second position in the Arab world and the 26th position worldwide in the 2016 annual report on food security global index. The Sultanate also ranked among the excellent environments at the level of the world for having the lowest agricultural custom duties. He clarified that the global standards whereby countries of the world are rated in respect of food security include abundance, ability to obtain food and food safety and quality. His Excellency reviewed the development of the cultivated area in Oman and pointed out that it increased from 181,000 hectares in 2011 to 197,000 hectares in 2015, i.e. 3.1% growth.

He informed that the plant production reached 1773 thousand tons in 2015 increasing from 1387 thousand tons in 2011, an increase of 7%. With regard to animal production, His Excellency pointed out it amounted in 2015 to nearly 277,000 tons compared to 149,000 tons in 2011, a growth rate of 15%. Total fish production increased from 150,000 tons in 2011 to 257,000 tons in 2015, an average increase of 13%. His Excellency considered that the average growth rate achieved by these sectors is promising and is better than many countries of the world.

His Excellency informed that the value of agricultural and fisheries production last year was RO 574 million and that the contribution of the agricultural and fisheries production to the gross domestic product in 2015 was 1.6%, which is a high percentage compared to the GCC countries and other countries of the world.

**Challenges**

About the major challenges facing the agricultural sector in Oman, His Excellency pointed out that the limited traditional water resources is a top priority challenge in addition to decreasing area of agricultural area, soil exhaustion and water consuming crop structure, unskilled expatriate workforce, limit of government investments in the sector, non-involvement of the Omani youth in agriculture, weakness of infrastructure of marketing and increased loss rates. His Excellency identified the challenges facing agricultural and animal sector as insufficiency of fodder/feeds, low productivity of natural pastures and their exposure to illegal herding and desertification, limited veterinary cadres, low government investments in the sector, scarcity of slaughterhouses and wide-spread traditional methods in cattle breeding. As for the major challenges in face of fisheries sector, His Excellency pointed that they are featured by basic dependence of traditional fishing, incomplete infrastructure and fish marketing outlets indicating that there were promising investment opportunities in fish farming projects in addition to value added fish production.
About the Agriculture and Fisheries Strategy (2020-40), His Excellency pointed out that a strategy for sustainable agriculture and rural development 2040 and Investment Plan 2016-20 in joint coordination between our national team and the FAO and that another strategy was put in place for the development the fisheries sector (2013-20) in joint coordination between the national team and the World Bank. His Excellency explained that these strategies provide a road map for sustainable promotion of the agriculture and fisheries sectors until the year 2040. He indicated that they include policies, programmes, plans, procedures and measures capable of developing performance and utilizing the available potentials for further expansion in food production and consolidation of food security system in the Sultanate of Oman.

Strategic Trends
His Excellency revealed that the strategic trends of food security system in Oman include increase of production of plant, animal and fisheries commodities, expansion in foreign investments on commodities that are not possible to produce in Oman and promotion of storage capacities of basic food commodities, price indicators, monitoring and follow-up of global production of food commodities, follow-up of population rise to identify the volume of future food demand as well as the patterns of food consumption and its connection with food production and liberalization of food commodity importation.

His Excellency the minister of agriculture and fisheries pointed out that there were many investment opportunities in the field of food commodities, including investment in red meat, chicken meat, fish farming, vegetables, fruits and dates.

New Projects
His Excellency said that there were 18 new investment projects that are under incorporation and that the major investment projects in the fish sector already approved are nine projects with expected total production of 235,000 tons annually. His Excellency informed that the programmes aimed at strengthening fisheries sector include developing ports, supporting fishing fleet, constructing villages for fishermen on the coasts of Arabian Sea, constructing the largest artificial reef farm in the Middle East, commissioning an advanced ship for fish researches and executing a pilot project for fishing of lantern fish.

His Excellency the minister of agriculture and fisheries stated that the ministry’s sectors include many available opportunities due to the large stock of fish and animal wealth estimated at more than 3.4 million heads and promising growth rate in this respect. He also referred to the date palm resources which amount to about 7.6 million palm trees. These resources are leveraged by a strategic location, diverse climate and distinguished environment.

Positive Expectations
His Excellency expected high rates of self-sufficiency in food commodities after completion of the main investment projects, including dates and fisheries sectors which are expected to achieve self-sufficiency by 2020 producing more than 100% of local needs. The expected results of the entire investment developmental activities in support of the food security system till 2020 involve integration between the management of the available natural resources and agricultural and fisheries production systems, fishing and fish farming. He stressed the need for strengthening the contribution of the two sectors to the gross domestic product in this area as well as the contribution of the private sector in order to implement the economic diversification programme and provide job opportunities to Omanis. The plan also extends to building human capacities and imparting technology with a view to promoting production and adopting new investment patterns for further uplifting the performance of the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

His Excellency recalled the basic role played by the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve in the food security system in the Sultanate of Oman through its duties which include building storage system that is distributed all over the Sultanate, establishing a strategic stock of basic commodities, mitigating the risks arising from global price fluctuations, ensuring stability and supply of food commodities and monitoring and following up conditions of food in the world through an early warning system.

His Excellency stated that there were 37 stores in existence and that 17 stores were under construction in the governorates of Muscat, North Al Batinah, the Interior, South Al Sharqiyyah and Dhofar. Commenting on the Agriculture and fisheries development fund, he said that the 212 projects were carried out in plant, animal and fisheries sectors during the period from 2014-16 at total cost of more than RO 38.4 million. He added that the Future Strategy of the Fund 2040 includes various programmes for food security with new partners from inside and outside the Sultanate being involved, the aim being to diversify the sources of financing and augment revenues and encourage self-financing, innovation and excellence.

Promising Investment Opportunities
His Excellency expected high rates of self-sufficiency in food commodities after completion of the main investment projects, including dates and fisheries sectors which are expected to achieve self-sufficiency by 2020 producing more than 100% of local needs. The expected results of the entire investment developmental activities in support of the food security system till 2020 involve integration between the management of the available natural resources and agricultural and fisheries production systems, fishing and fish farming. He stressed the need for strengthening the contribution of the two sectors to the gross domestic product in this area as well as the contribution of the private sector in order to implement the economic diversification programme and provide job opportunities to Omanis. The plan also extends to building human capacities and imparting technology with a view to promoting production and adopting new investment patterns for further uplifting the performance of the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

Following the visual presentation, discussions were conducted with the participation of the members of the Council of State. His Excellency the minister of agriculture and fisheries answered all questions raised by the members. Participating in the discussion were particularly Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Awfi, undersecretary for fisheries, His Excellency Dr. Ahmed bin Nasser Al Bakri, undersecretary for agriculture and His Excellency Dr. Rashid bin Salim Al Masroori, CEO of Public Authority of Stores and Food Reserves.
A delegation of the Food Security Committee of the Interior’s Branch of OCCI organized a visit to the Agricultural Society of North and South Al Batinah led by Salim bin Said Al Hadhrami, Board member of the OCCI Interior Branch. More than 40 persons took part in this visit representing the food security committee in addition to 13 technicians and specialists of the agricultural development departments of the Directorate General of Agriculture at the Interior Governorate and 20 farmers.

The delegation met with Sheikh Saaid bin Abdallah Al Kharusi, Chairman of the Agricultural Society, South Al Batinah, and board members where several objectives and expectations were discussed. The chairman and members of the agricultural society at the South Al Batinah have prepared a practical schedule for this visit that included reception and hospitality at a farm belonging to one of the committee members in order to familiarize with the situation and exchange information about the farmers’ efforts, the importance of food security and agriculture in the two governorates. The visit also included an inspection tour of some model farms where beans crop is harvested and familiarization of the modern irrigation system as well as collecting produce from the field and having them packed for delivery to the society premises. The delegation visited the society premises where they familiarized with its facilities and heard a detailed elaboration on the practical steps of preparing the produce before being exported. The delegation also familiarized with the sorting and washing machine and final packing processes of products and their storage in chillers in preparation for their transportation to the exportation site.

The visitors toured some of the society’s facilities consisting of storehouses and packing facilities and saw for themselves the truck designated for carriage as well as some produce such as coloured capsicum and beans ready in the stores for their collection and transportation to the importer.

Following noon prayers, the delegation toured another pilot farm of eight hectares specialized in cultivating colored capsicum, small and big tomatoes, mangoes and water melons. They heard and saw for themselves the modern digitally controlled irrigation and fertilizing techniques. They were very pleased to have seen such a progress in the field of large producing farms.

Prior to the end of the programme, the delegation had their lunch in one of the farms where they heard a detailed elaboration by Sheikh Saaid Al Kharusi, head of farmers’ society who explained the efforts made and continue to be made by the concerned staff at the two governorates until the Omani Agriculture Society could be set up. He pointed out that the farmers and specialized staff are now having a role to join their ranks and efforts and cooperate in order to get a license for opening branches for the society in other governorates pursuant to specific conditions. The society will coordinate and cooperate with all branches of the society in governorates in order to achieve the joint objectives that farmers look forward to.

The visit wound up at with the chairman and members of the Food Security Committee thanking the chairman and members of the Farmers Society for their good reception and hospitality and for dedicating their time for this day. He called for achieving the joint objectives of the country in general and of the farmers all over the Sultanate in particular.
Social Responsibility Seminar:
“Consolidated rights - Developed work
- Sustainable development”
On Tuesday 17 January 2017
The Transport and Logistics Committee at OCCI has organized the first forum of transportation and logistics sector under the auspices of His Excellency Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Futaisi, Minister of Transport and Communications. Held at the premises of Public Authority for Civil Aviation, the forum was attended by several important personalities.

The forum was inaugurated with an opening address by Dr. Salim bin Sulayem Al Junaibi, OCCI Board member and Chairman of Transport and Logistics Committee, in which he said: “The Sultanate’s geographic location is considered to be a basic factor making it an attractive center and an important distribution point for transport and cargo movement between the East and West. It is indicated that the upcoming period will witness considerable growth in the cargo movement involving economies of Asia, Africa and Europe with the Sultanate having the potential to play the role of strategic passage for goods and shipments among nations of these producing continents.”

He further added: “The vision is clear for us to build a logistics sector capable of leveraging national economy growth and contributing to taking advantage of the Sultanate’s strategic location to make it a global center for shipping and logistical movement. In our capacities as parties to this sector, we should consolidate this trend and accelerate the pace towards creating an attractive environment in this sector through the organizational frameworks, laws concerned with transit, infrastructure at seaports and airports, and road and railroad networks using state-of-the-art technologies in facilitating shipping and handling operations.”

The forum featured presentation of several working papers that represented various aspects of transport and logistical services. Presented by Engineer Hanan bint Salim Al Rahbiyah, Director General of Planning and Studies at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the first paper dealt with the general transport strategy and future enterprises. Dr. Khalifa bin Said Al Shuaibi, Director General of Preparedness, Oman Airport Management Company, presented a paper on airports system and vision of Muscat International Airport. Engineer Ahmed bin Ali Al Balushi, CEO Oman National Transport Company, presented a working paper on transport and new taxis, followed by a paper on customs system presented by Lt. Col. Said bin Khamis Al Ghaithu, Director of Investigation and Evaluation of Risks at the Directorate General of Customs, Royal Oman Police. Another paper on e-commerce and its role in private sector was presented by Abdul Malik bin Abdul Kareem Al Balushi, Oman Post CEO and the final a working paper entitled “logistics zone” was presented by Salim bin Said Al Rawahi, Director of Operations Engineering at Oman Logistics Company.

Results and recommendations:
First: Logistics Sector in general:
1. To consider the logistics sector’s strategy as an essential and integrated one requiring credibility in implementation and follow-up with clear and transparent methods with all segments of the society cooperating in its implementation.
2. To highlight the need for the logistics sector to operate efficiently as one system in partnership with the government and the private sector while at the same time curing the aspects causing malfunction in operational efficiency.
3. To urge the Omani private sector to dedicate sufficient attention to this strategy and support its implementation by investing financially in the economically feasible projects.

4. To keep abreast of the logistics progress and to train and qualify Omani human resources to enable them to take up positions in various activities of the logistics sector and highlight the potential position in the sector over the few coming years. There should be continuing coordination with the manpower register at the Ministry of Manpower and other concerned authorities.

5. To consider the logistics project at South Al Batinah as being the first measure for the success of the logistics system in the Sultanate of Oman and its ability to connect land transport with sea and air transport between Muscat governorate, South Al Batinah and other governorates of the Sultanate.

Second: Seaport Sector
1. In confirmation of the importance of the seaport sector in connecting the Sultanate’s economy with the economies of the outside world, it is necessary to stress the importance of operating these ports in an integrated and efficient manner with high operational capacities in order to achieve the desirable objectives.

2. There is requirement to consider operation of existing fishing ports in many of the Sultanate’s wilayats in a manner that would allow them to perform their duties of importation/exportation and transportation of goods.

Third: Airport Sector
1. To stress the importance of airports as being gateways and honorable destination to receive the Sultanate’s guests in a way that reflects the real civilized attitude of the Sultanate. The airports also serve as a spacious outlet of beauty featuring Oman’s prestige and its hospitable people and are a source of inspiration promoting Omani products and encouraging tourism.

Fourth: Shipping and Land Transport Sector
1. Recognizing the efforts made in the public transport sector since land transport provides the vein that connects various governorates of the Sultanate and provides passengers with comfortable and affordable alternatives.

2. It is necessary to designate places with sufficient areas for parking of trucks in various wilayats of the Sultanate.

3. It is necessary to work towards creating spaces on the sides of the roads that are sufficient for stoppage of trucks in emergency cases.

4. It is important to conduct a seminar to study the obstacles to the land transport sector and seek solutions to such obstacles.

5. It is important to work hard towards eliminating clandestine trade in public transport sector.

6. There is a need to stress the importance of regulating the work of taxis with a view to reflecting an honorable image of the Sultanate.

Fifth: Customs Regulation and ROP Role
1. To commend the steps taken by ROP in strengthening the economic and trade environment and supporting investment and trade activity in Oman. This would strengthen partnership with the commercial community and government departments and authorities concerned with this matter.

2. The integrated customs management system is of great importance for managing risks arising from importation/exportation. It is hoped that the system will be an integrated one through a single electronic window.

3. To create and put in place the regulatory and legal regulations to curtail commercial cheating in protection of e-purchasing.

Sixth: Postal Sector
1. To confirm the deep-rootedness on Oman Post and the methods pursued to enhance its capacity to play greater dynamic roles in serving postal activities as well as e-commerce.

2. To increase postal services in various governorates of the Sultanate and raise awareness of the new postal services provided by Oman Post.

3. It is important to expedite the Oman Postal system and pave the way for completion of transactions relating to transport and e-payment.

4. To study the prices of postal services established by Oman Post, particularly for large packages of less than 25 kg giving special consideration to all segments of the society and small and medium enterprises.
In an opening address to the Iranian Consumer Goods Exhibition at Khasab Hotel, His Excellency Sayyid Khalifa bin Al Murdas Al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam, stated that the 2nd Iranian Consumer Goods Exhibition came after the success of the first Omani-Iranian exhibition held last year. The exhibition this year focused on the best known consumer commodities and goods in Hormuzgan Province and is widely desirable in Musandam and other governorates of the Sultanate. He added that such exhibitions provide good opportunity for further consolidation of bilateral trade relations between the two countries and creation of partners and agreements between the Omani and Iranian sides in the future. Heavy industries exhibition will be held in the future in the light of the meetings held between officials in Musandam and from Hormuzgan which led to the setting up of joint committees under the umbrella of the chambers of commerce and industry in the two countries. The agreed activities include organizing exhibitions aimed at increasing awareness about consumer products and commodities, consolidating trade exchange between the two countries and joint promotion and marketing work.

Trade Exchange

On his part, Barvas Akrami, deputy governor of Hormuzgan province expressed his condolences on the death of the former Iranian President. He indicated that the holding of such consumer goods and trade exhibitions between the two provinces has a positive bearing on strengthening Omani-Iranian relations. An exhibition of Iranian products will be held in Muscat shortly focusing on heavy industry. These exhibitions also consolidate the historical and cultural relations existing between the two countries. He added that the features of joint trade cooperation and exchange between the Sultanate and Iran will become yet stronger. Iran can access Omani market with a number of activities and services such as fruits and seasonal vegetables stretching from Musandam to the other Omani governorates in accordance with the Omani market’s requirements.

Economic diversity

Hamid bin Mohammed Zaman Kamil Al Raeesi, board chairman of OCCI Musandam Branch, stated that in line with the brotherly historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Islamic Republic of Iran and in consolidation of the bonds of economic cooperation and exchange between the two countries and in continuation of the good results achieved by the first Omani Iranian exhibition in Khasab in January 2016, the Iranian consumer goods exhibition is now held in coordination with the concerned authorities in Iran, particularly with Hormuzgan Province. The exhibition has opened wider prospects and new ambitions for joint economic activity in some of the most important and promising sectors in Musandam and Hormuzgan Province in their quest for diversified economy and for creating a working environment that would contribute to supporting national economy and developing services.

Coping with economic variables

Al Raeesi said: “It is necessary that such work copes with the...
economic changes and integrates with the requirements and goes in line with the visions, strategies, plans and trends, in the light of the current global economic crisis due to reduced oil prices for the countries whose economies depend on oil production. It is from here that it was a must for the chamber of commerce and industry in Musandam to endeavor to open up new prospects and find diverse economic environments for the private sector. Economic diversification is one of the most important solutions on which we must focus due to its tangible contribution to driving the course of comprehensive development. Through this international economic meet which gathers us with the brothers from Iran for five days from 9 to 13 January, we can review the Iranian products and commodities of various types and discuss the possibility of establishing partnerships for setting up small and medium enterprises in these diverse sectors, thus contributing to economic diversification and augmenting investment in these promising sectors for both sides. The exhibition will also feature bilateral meetings between businessmen of both sides to discuss opportunities of investment and mutual cooperation to develop and strengthen economic diversification. We confirm that we will contribute to providing facilities and streamlining procedures which would further consolidate exchange of investments between the two sides. We invite our brothers in Iran to invest in the promising sectors in Musandam.”

Al Raeesi revealed that OCCI in Musandam will do its best to coordinate with the concerned authorities in order to hold another exhibition for Omani consumer goods in Bandar Abbas in Iran this year.

Consolidating relations
Jalal Al Qasimi, responsible official of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry at Bandar Abbas, stated that the opening of the second exhibition for Iranian consumer goods is considered to be a continuation of the drive of consolidating Omani-Iranian relations and strengthening trade exchange as part of a package of activities involving the two countries. He said that the exhibition’s program will include a number of bilateral meetings to open up opportunities before businessmen and small and medium enterprises to obtain partnerships and conclude working agreements for the benefit of the two parties. The exhibition will also enable them to familiarize with the consumer commodities which may be mutually invested in by the two sides. The Iranian consumer goods exhibition in Khasab was participated in by 30 Iranian companies of various sectors, including food stuff, building and contracting, marble and ceramics, light industries, agriculture and fisheries. It was intended to support trade exchange with the Islamic Republic of Iran and activate investment in the promising sectors in the two sides.

The inauguration ceremony of the exhibition was attended by Barvas Akrami, deputy governor of Hormuzgan province, Jalal Qasimi, responsible official of the ministry of commerce and industry in Bandar Abbas, His Excellency the Wali of Khasab, deputy Wali of Bukha, officials of the government departments in the governorate and a number of officials, businessmen and owners of small and medium enterprises from both sides.
OCCI approves certificates of origin for exportation of RO 113 million worth of products during January

Abdul Adheem bin Abbas Al Bahraini, Director General of OCCI, stated that certificates of origin for exportation of RO 113 million worth of productions were approved during the month of January 2017. The amount constitutes the value of exporting Omani products to all countries of the world with the exception of the Arab and GCC countries, whose exportation invoices have not yet been approved by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The value also includes re-exportation of foreign origin products from the Sultanate to all countries of the world.

The OCCI Director General pointed out that the total transaction approved during January amounted to 10,647, including 2,967 commercial invoices and 1,071 Omani certificates of origin for national goods, 842 Omani certificates of origin for foreign re-exported goods, 128 transactions for European generalized system of preferences (Form A), 168 commercial agency transactions and 450 transactions for ratification of authorization agencies, 2,660 various transactions, 52 transactions for approval of duplicate certificates, 390 transactions for sale of Omani certificates of origin and 1,919 transactions for sale of Omani certificates of origin.

Al Bahrani indicated that the total of 115,671 transactions were approved by OCCI during 2016.
As part of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman, His Excellency Pierre Garminja, minister of finance of Luxembourg, has visited Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Means of developing the economic ties between Oman and Luxembourg for the benefit of the private sectors in the two countries were discussed during a meeting held at OCCI.

The guest was received by Aiman Bin Abdullah Al Hassani, OCCI Vice-chairman for Economic and Branches Affairs, who welcomed His Excellency the guest and his accompanying delegation. He said that in view to Luxembourg’s advanced experience in logistics and services sector, the Omani private sector can take advantage of this experience, particularly since this sector is under focus in all economic diversification plans in the Sultanate.

He called upon the two sides to exert yet further efforts and establish cooperation between the chambers of commerce of the two countries. He added that there was a need to coordinate between the two sides, exchange trade delegations, look into the possibility of setting up a joint business council and sign a memorandum of understanding between the two chambers with a view to establishing trade relations and investment partnership in the near future.
The Ministry of Transport and Communications has reviewed its 2017 Plan, the completed strategic road projects and role of ports, logistics sector and civil aviation sector in economic development.

Dr. Ahmed Bin Mohammed Bin Salem Al-Futaisi, Minister of Transport and Communications, said: “The ministry seeks to place the Sultanate among the pioneers in the transport and communications sector through the provision of high-quality accessible, sustainable and safe services meeting at the same time its social responsibility. The endeavor is also to make this sector the second source of national income with the Sultanate becoming one of the top ten logistics hubs at the international level by 2040.”

His Excellency revealed the operational preparedness stage of the passengers’ terminal at Muscat International Airport scheduled to be opened by the end of the current year. His Excellency affirmed the opening of Al Batinah Expressway before traffic, in addition to the establishment of a specialized unit for the management of enterprises, which is one of Tanfeedh initiatives for the current year.

He pointed out that the first stage of the satellite project (booking of orbits, technical specifications and alternatives of implementation and human resources) will kick off, in addition to the establishment of a holding company for information technology and communication, as well as the establishment of communication towers company (private sector investment), enabling the Omani Broadband Company to reach the self-reliance stage in funding and the implementation of the strategic plan for the development of Oman Post Company, in addition to signing with strategic partners for some services during the current year.

“The ministry will focus during this year on raising performance indicators for Omani seaports and airports by up to 10% and implementing 15 initiatives of the national programme for enhancing
economic diversification (Tanfeedh) in respect of the logistics sector and development of ministry’s various companies and setting up the Oman Civil Aviation Group and continuing to offer further investment opportunities to the private sector such as the Sohar Airport (full development), Khazain (phase 1 development), partnership with Oman Air to operate the terminals of catering, maintenance, general aviation (additional operators), Shinas Port (developers and operators) and Khasab seaport (developers and operators).”

His Excellency the minister of transport and communications stated that during 2017 a national strategic plan will be prepared for the communications and IT sector as well as a national strategy for the civil aviation sector and approval of the already prepared strategy for the postal sector which will be implemented.

He pointed out that all the proposed transport policies have been raised to the Council of Ministers for their approval and establishment of mechanisms for follow-up of implementation of these policies. He noted that the new ministry structuring project is expected to be completed with the training of 500 employees to obtain level 4 in preparedness measure for conversion to e-government.

As with regard to the land transport sector for the year 2017, His Excellency stated that procedures for completion of issuance of land transport regulations governing the sector and which will be binding on all those having licenses to provide the new taxi service in Muscat. He also stated that work is expected to be completed on issuing safe management of Omani ships, load measurement regulation, sea identification document regulation, regulation on procedures for qualifying, training and licensing

Al Futaisi:
Performance indicators for seaports and airports rise by not less than 10%.

Al Nuaimi:
37 projects in 2017, including 34 road asphalting projects, three track road pavement at a total cost of RO 1.02 billion.

Al Harthy:
In 2016, a total of 24,723 passengers arrived at the seaport and 149 ships sailed into the seaport.
sailors working on board the non-sailing ships, regulation for investigation in maritime accidents, loading lines regulation, maritime guidance regulation, regulation for transportation of dangerous substances on ships and in seaports, regulation for work organization and licensing of tourist maritime units, yachts, recreational boats and aquatic boats in addition to completion of issuance of air transport law, splitting of air navigation and meteorology in a government company and transforming the authority to an authority regulating all civil aviation and transport sectors, procedures of issuance of the new communications and information technology law and the granting of license to the third mobile phone operator.

Eng. Salim bin Mohammed Al Nu’aimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications for Transport, stated that work was ongoing on carrying out 37 projects in 2017 including 34 road asphaltling projects, three track road projects at a total cost of RO 1.02 billion spanning 1121.3 km. He indicated that a number of asphalt roads are expected to be completed in the current year spanning nearly 607.4 km at a total cost of about RO 647.5 million.

He underlined that the most prominent projects expected to be completed during 2017 include Bidbid-Sur road doubling (phase I and part of phase II), Al Batinah Expressway doubling (six packages), Nizwa-Ibri road doubling (phase II), Jibrin-Ibri road doubling (phase II), construction of Sinaw-Mahut Al Duqm road (phase I and II), execution of road joints at Wilayat Iibri phase II, construction of subways on existing Al Batinah road (phase III), part 1 and 2, execution of Sabat-Al Mazra, Wilayat Al Kamil wa Al Wafi, Southern Al Sharqiyah, dualing of Aqabat Rustaq road and Qurayat-Sur road from LNG roundabout to Bilad Sur roundabout, construction of Al Salan bridge, Sohar, execution of roundabouts in areas of Arhab, Al Sinaiyah, ROP headquarters, Al Dhahirah governorate, execution of remaining works on Sant-Wadi Al Aala-Interior Governorate, protection works on Wadi Sal-Raas Al Had road, construction of Bilad Al Shuhoom-Al Hafir and rehabilitation of Mirbat-Hasik road, Dhofar Governorate.

He also indicated that work is ongoing on ratifying the Convention on International Transport of Goods which constitutes an inseparable part of the measures aimed at facilitating trade and supporting national logistic services strategy (2040). This convention allows for 85% of all goods to be cleared in advance before arriving at the Omani seaports and borders with the goods being delivered at any place inside the Sultanate within 48 hours from their arrival at the borders. It also enhances the ranking of the Sultanate in respect of various indicators of the World Economic Forum and WTO. The convention provides a mechanism capable of ensuring transportation of goods between various seaports and free zones, integration with Bayan system for e-clearing and improvement of security and safety in general by setting up a mechanism for verification of vehicles and operators.

He said that it was anticipated that during 2017 the fleet of buses of the Omani National Transport Company (Mawasalat) will be further consolidated with the purchase of 118 multi-use buses and that new lines of public transport would be opened together with improvement of the users’ information system in respect of services, prices and introduction of modern technology in service of public transport. A new regulation will also be issued in respect of cargo services through Mawasalat buses that includes re-structuring of prices, application of new systems and procedures and generation of more returns through advertisements on buses and the Mawasalat products.

About the components of the public transport strategy 2016-40, His Excellency affirmed that coordination was conducted with the governors and concerned staff with a view to coming out with a joint vision of public transport services inside each governorate. The bus fleet will be supported with 350 multi-use buses and the number of lines will be increased and so is the area to be covered by the public transport buses. A special path will be established for buses and emergencies in order to reduce mobility timings and increase quality of services and strengthen the transport infrastructure through the building of integrated stations, construction of pedestrian crossing places and development of the current bus stations. Said bin Hamdoon Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications for Ports and Maritime Affairs, confirmed the continuation of Port Services Corporation in the management and operation of Sultan Qaboos Port in 2017. He pointed out that the passenger traffic at the port during 2016 amounted to 249,723 with the cruise ship traffic at the port touching 149 ships. He said: “The studies being conducted at the Sohar port includes designing the facilities pertaining to the security and safety of the port by constructing a main gate in coordination with ROP. The studies also include designing other buildings such as the customs terminal and single station terminal for government authorities and work will be completed on design during the current year. Studies and designs are being prepared for development of the container station (D2) at the port in order to raise the capacity of handling of containers to five million standard containers.

His Excellency Said bin Hamdoon Al Harthy pointed out that the studies being conducted at Salalah port include the consultancy services for rehabilitation and development of the general goods station by rehabilitating new jetties for the general goods station at the port and design and execution of a corridor for services connecting the free zone to the port as well as the consultancy services for preparing studies and designs for security requirements at the port, developing the port (phase III), constructing the northern breakwater, extending the southern breakwater and preparing studies and designs for berths 7, 8 and 9 and government berths to be completed during 2017.

He indicated that the maritime law and the maritime navigation regulation law are being updated and that preparations are underway for the mandatory verification to be conducted by the International Maritime Organization on the Sultanate of Oman in March. He added that the Sultanate will join three international conventions, namely the Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks, International Convention on the Control of Harmful, Anti-fouling Systems on Ships and International Convention on Oil Pollution Hazards. In addition, the maritime management strategy of the Sultanate will also be prepared.
Modern technology has advantages as well as risks and disadvantages which we come across from time to time. The emergence of information and communication technology coupled with the Internet have brought about tremendous services, but at the same time with negative effects and bad practices. As a result of this technological advancement, considerable change has occurred in the pattern of life of societies, people and interests of the entire countries of the world.

The Internet and electronic networks can be manipulated for use as platforms for electronic crimes, particularly with the effective integration that took place between information technology revolution and globalization. Electronic crimes are not confined to individuals or groups, but their risks may extend to the level of countries to include e-espionage, financial thefts and other cross-border crimes such as penetration and piracy in all fields which can be part of an organized effort by electronic terrorists or pirates or foreign intelligence agencies seeking to propagate chaos and instability. Some consider that this sort of attacks may become the most prominent feature of future wars in the world by forming electronic armies whose objective is to penetrate other countries and destroy their infrastructure and by exploiting potential security gaps in the vital systems as a means of intimidation, deception, theft of identity, information war, dissemination of immorality and adultery and threats and seizure of confidential economic, social, political and military data as well as trading in forbidden products and human trafficking and other electronic economic crimes.

Some specialized companies estimate the annual value of such crimes at nearly USD 445 billion. Estimates also indicate that financial deception operations on the Internet in the United States have caused the loss of USD 1.5 billion as a result of theft of credit card data or cheating by some corrupt employees in financial institutions by entering wrongful data or unauthorized information or through the use of technology with the aim of stealing. The risks also include modification, deletion or manipulation of stored data or misuse of the system’s tools, package of software or writing programmable codes for the purpose of deception. To this end, electronic offensives may be launched against the computers, networks, information and stored data and assault operations may be resorted to in order to cultivate electronic viruses into the system for the purpose of destroying the files or programmes.

We must, therefore, be careful and disseminate awareness among the users by conducting seminars and encounters with specialists and experts in the field of cyber security to ensure protection of our networks, continuity of completion of works, exchange of information and consolidation of cooperation with the international organizations concerned with combating such crimes. There is also a need to exchange expertise and experiences with various in-house departments so that these crimes can be controlled.

In the light of the fourth generation wars supported by the climate of globalization, particularly if the concept for the upcoming era is for electronic wars to replace conventional wars to cause the same range of material losses, and even more. Hence, it is necessary to be well prepared from now to confront these challenges due to the escalating risks and the impacts of cyber wars and exploitation by terrorist groups of new information technology and its adaptation in favor of their devilish activities which are managed by specialized intelligence agencies. In this way, it is possible to preserve the state sovereignty and security in its wide conception in civil, economic, political and military terms. It is difficult to chase and trace the developer of viral software or the person who has waged the direct electronic attack and identity him to bring him to justice. The reason for this difficulty is that most of these actions are conducted in the electronic space. Cyber wars include Internet sabotage and disruption using the very electronic means, which may also be used in the future wars, if not already used!
OCCI has recently organized a visit for an Omani business delegation specialised in Information Technology (IT) under the chairmanship of Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Deputy Chairman of OCCI for Administrative and Financial Affairs. The delegation took part in the Indian IT Exhibition organized by the Indian Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) during the period from 13-14 February at Hyderabad, India.

The Indian IT Exhibition 2017 was aimed at introducing a number of Indian companies operating in IT sector with a view to exchanging expertise, skills and competences and developing IT market and support it with new technologies. It was also aimed at creating awareness among the participants about the opportunities and capabilities and skills available in India which is one of the strongest markets in the world in the field of IT and to urge the participants to invest in this vital field. The exhibition provided an opportunity for manufacturers to familiarize with this technology and establish business and investment partnerships in other markets and inform the world the capabilities that India has in this field.

About the OCCI delegation’s participation, Engineer Ridha Al Saleh said: “OCCI always seeks to develop the private sector organizations, including small, medium and large enterprises in general by giving them the opportunity to familiarize with new technologies and skills attained in the world by allowing them to participate with specialized delegations in such events. This particular participation of an IT specialized delegation provided a good opportunity for Omani businessmen to familiarize with new technologies and take advantage of the experiences available over there and the possibility of having them implemented in their own firms for further development.” He also stated that this participation allowed them to set up business partnerships with the other firms participating in the exhibition and sign cooperation agreements with them. “As Omani businessmen, we must benefit from the rapid progress witnessed in India in the IT and software and work towards using these technologies in developing the firms’ operations. I call upon the Omani business owners to benefit from the visits made by delegations dispatched by OCCI,” he added.

Specialized delegations
Shehab bin Yousef bin Alawi, a business owner taking part in the delegation said: “Specialized delegations tend to be more beneficial to us as Omani business owners because they give us the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the latest developments in our field of specialty. Our delegation, specialized in IT, took part in the inauguration of the 17th edition of the Indian IT Exhibition. As the IT field is so wide and constantly updated, it is incumbent upon us to be more conscious about the software and new technologies used in the market.”

He indicated that India is one of the developed countries in IT and perhaps one of the first advanced countries in this area which would assist us in having access to the latest industries and software for all technology-based solutions. It is hoped that by such participation we can obtain some technological solutions to assist in further developing our firms in the future. He added that IT serves all other fields such as developing real estate and contracting businesses and familiarization with the latest IT industries.

Jameel Ali Sultan, board member of WJ Towel Group taking part in the visit said: “Our participation in the OCCI delegation was to
acquaint with the latest developments in IT and benefit from the development being witnessed in India in this respect with a view to developing out firms and provide them with the latest software and technologies. We have met here with one of the companies with which Towel is dealing and provide us with many of our requirements for software and modern technologies. Omani SMEs specialized in IT should benefit from these exhibitions to modernize their information and technologies in line with the market and to familiarize with the new software provided by India as an advanced country in the field of software.”

**Exchange of Expertise**

About the delegation’s participation, engineer Aiman bin Ibrahim Al Maymani, an IT specialist, said: “Our participation in these business delegations is an asset to us as specialists and business owners. We should know the right way to maximize our benefit from our meetings with our IT counterparts and from their expertise and new technologies that would contribute to raising awareness of the latest technologies. There is no doubt that India is an advanced country in IT and software and our participation in this exhibition is a considerable addition to us enabling us to update our knowledge in this respect and it also provides an opportunity for us to familiarize with some of the exporting companies of this technology which would eventually allow us to establish business partnerships with them.”

In the framework of the delegation’s activities, Yahya bin Khamis Al Mukhaini, board member of Comprehensive Development Company LLC, said: “The first objective that I set for participation in this delegation is to represent Oman in the international specialized arenas involving business and investment. The second objective is to benefit from the visit and exchange experiences with the members of the delegation with regard to the development of our company. The participation also allows us to familiarize with many of the opportunities which could increase our competence and that of the company as well. Such participation also allows us to establish business relations with other participating delegations from various countries of the world. The experience was so useful and constitute an asset to me personally and to my company. We highly assess the role of the head of delegation and media crew for facilitating the mission of the delegation. I would like to thank everyone who took part in the delegation.”

Hassan Abdul Rasool, a member of the delegation, said: "We sincerely thank OCCI for giving us this opportunity to take part in the Indian IT Exhibition which I consider a good chance for us as business owners to familiarize with the latest IT technologies and meet with specialized business owners in the same field from various countries of the world. This would contribute to enabling us to update our knowledge and take advantage of the exhibition to organize some of the businesses of our firms by using modern technologies and software.”

**Opportunities and businesses**

Anil Samuel, Business Development Manager at Sytotech Technology Digital Solutions, said: “We took part in this annual exhibition to display our IT products and technologies and to familiarize the participants with our latest developments. We have so many new programmes and technologies which make it easy for enterprises to run their businesses and reduce expenditure. Our company has the capability and skill to create modern programmes that assist the customers in facilitating their business. We are looking for agents and representatives in other countries and we are ready to provide all facilities required to serve the development of their businesses and create opportunities for them in this field.”

During the visit, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between Ahmed Qadir Al Balushi, owner of Al Burooj International Group of Companies and Edia Atlantic Company for cooperation in respect of provision of technologies and software required by his company against the marketing of Idea Services and provision of expertise and skills owned by Al Burooj International Group of Companies in local and GCC markets.

Mohan Kumar, Executive Director of an IT company, said: “Our participation in the exhibition was in order to familiarize with the services that our company provides in the field of software manufacturing and to meet with other business owners operating in the same specialty and delegations from various countries of the world. We have so many businesses in some Arab countries, including the Sultanate of Oman. We have made a lot of software and technologies to a group of companies in Oman and we have a specialized crew and we are ready to offer the best services. Our company is looking for a representative in the Sultanate of Oman who will have a role to introduce our services and communicate with the public and private sectors, with our role being to provide the technology and software.”

Mohammed Riadh, owner of Object Technology, said: "The exhibition provided a good opportunity to us as specialized IT business owners to introduce our companies and services. We look forward to expanding the scope of our business outside India. We have some businesses with private firms in one of the GCC countries. We also look forward to working with our business counterparts in the Sultanate of Oman by providing new technologies and software.”

**Jameel Ali Sultan:**

Omani specialized small and medium enterprises must benefit from these exhibitions to update their knowledge and technologies in keeping abreast of the market.
Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Resort, the highest resort in the Middle East, invites residents of Oman and GCC countries to spend a wonderful holiday enjoying the feeling of being cuddled between impressive mountainous in the Sultanate and benefit from exclusive offers on rooms, Spa services, food and beverages. The five-star resort perches 2,000 metres above sea level on the curving rim of a great canyon. The mild climate that dominates the area allows the guests to enjoy fun and exciting activities or otherwise experience the comfort of the Spa.

The guests can also avail an exclusive 30% discount allowing them to select from among 33 villas fitted with swimming pools with controlled temperature system or from among 82 premier or deluxe rooms overlooking the prestigious wadi. In the vicinity, guests can have the pleasure of experiencing marvelous adventures and thrills such as mountain climbing, diverse biking journeys and lots of fun. Guests looking for relaxation can pamper themselves with the treatments inspired by region’s legacy and the traditional Moroccan bath in Anantara Spa, for which residents in Oman and GCC counties avail a 20% discount on all such treatments. Food lovers, on the other hand, can satisfy their needs in six exotic restaurants and lounges serving food with diverse flavors, including an elegant Arab grills restaurant, a Roman style restaurant by the swimming pools, an international restaurant operational around the clock presenting classic food and a lounge for Shisha on the roof where guests can enjoy taking their food in the fresh air throughout the year.

PACKAGE INCLUDES:
- Up to 30% off Best Flexible Rate for a room or villa
- Daily buffet breakfast served at Al Maisan for two people
- 20% off selected Anantara Spa treatments
- 20% off food & beverage in all outlets (excluding alcohol and tobacco)

Prices are exclusively applicable to the residents in Oman. Valid identification card is required to be produced upon Resort check-in. For reservations please visit our website or write to us on our email reservations.aaja@anantara.com or contact phone number 0096825218000.
Epson's latest intuitive ultra-short-throw interactive teaching solution, the EB-696Ui is designed to encourage teaching collaboration, deliver advanced connectivity, and great results. With optional wireless connectivity and an enhanced moderator function, it’s easy to inspire and engage students with highly-detailed images presented in Full HD resolution.

Jason Wiley, Sales manager, Epson Middle East says: “This high-end, ultra short-throw projector uses the latest technology to allow sharing and impressive interactivity, with a scalable display size of up to 100 inches, something that flat-panel displays just can’t economically offer. A long lamp life of up to 10,000 hours in eco mode reduces maintenance levels. Finger-touch and dual-pen interactivity make it easy for students to join in by directly writing or drawing on projected images. Alternatively, EasyMP Multi-PC Projection software’s enhanced moderator function means teachers can easily display the content they want from up to 50 student devices, providing even more opportunities for sharing content between teachers and students.”

The Epson iProjection App makes it easy for students to share content. It’s available for iOS and Android devices, and now Google Chromebooks. Intuitive PC-free annotation functions are expanded by enhanced control and annotation toolbars, including the addition of print and save functions, that can be accessed through the new home screen. Also featured are split-screen capabilities, the ability to control a visualiser directly from the EB-696Ui, a built-in 16W speaker and microphone input.

The EB-696Ui is also joined by ten further models in the range; the EB-695Wi, EB-685Wi, EB-675Wi, EB-685W, EB-675W and EB-670. All are built around 3LCD technology to produce bright, vibrant images up to 100 inches in size with a contrast ratio up to 16,000:1. All models have three HDMI inputs to allow educators to easily connect multiple devices, including PCs, DVD and Blu-ray players, streaming dongles and visualisers. SMART Notebook software is also included with all models – a familiar educational package, purpose built for interactive display.
OCCI SET TO OPEN CHAIR AT SQU

OCCI is seeking to establish a Chair for Economic Studies at Sultan Qaboos University. The overall objective of the University Chair programme is to establish cooperation networks between higher education institutions on one hand and enterprises adopting important projects on the other hand. Research chairs are efficient means of supporting and catalysing scientific research, which is an essential source of disseminating scientific knowledge and modern technologies, enhancing social community development achieving excellence in scientific, economic and social disciplines, etc.

The main aspiration is that OCCI Chair becomes an important research chair at SQU, assuring cohesion and cooperation between OCCI and the private sector on one hand, and the Omani society in general on the other hand. This Chair seeks promotion and understanding of current economic issues in the Sultanate, whilst contributing to enhancing the role of the private sector in achieving economic diversification and international competition. Saeed bin Saleh al Kiyumi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, noted that OCCI Chair for Economic Studies is an unprecedented initiative at the regional and global level, aiming at promoting the understanding of current economic issues in the Sultanate along with contributing in enhancing the role of the private sector in achieving economic diversification and international competition. Through this initiative, OCCI aims at making the Chair a pioneer in economic studies through empirical studies and economic analyses and setting up a database for research and economic analyses.

OCCI has expressed its willingness to provide support in pinpointing the most important trade and economic issues in the Sultanate through studies conducted by SQU and postgraduate students. These studies shall cover the strategic sectors included in the Five-Year Development Plans along with practical solutions to be utilised by commercial enterprises and companies to move forward and set up a database for research and analysis on domestic and global economic issues. This project is the first-of-its-kind initiative at the regional and global level, where the private sector takes on developing and supporting applied research related to Omani economy through SQU, and achieving the country’s strategic goals in accordance with the current Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2020). The Chair will guide decision-makers, politicians, businessmen and other stakeholders to take appropriate decisions that will contribute to the economic and social development of the Sultanate together with attracting domestic and foreign investments for national industries. Meanwhile, the Chair will act as a channel that supports faculties and students in acquiring knowledge and skills in disciplines relevant to economic studies.

The project for establishing an OCCI Chair at SQU comes under the ideas and initiatives presented by OCCI-formed committees to discuss issues of interest to each sector, according to Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Chairman and member of the Economic Committee. The Research Chair will enhance awareness and understanding of current economic issues in the Sultanate in general, and benefit decision and policy makers, enterprises and the private sector in particular. The project will yield positive results to the Omani market, especially with the presence of several thorny issues facing the private sector and national and foreign investments, considering that the majority of the country needs more projects, infrastructure and development. This entails facilitating matters relating to commercial activities with investors and providing them with the necessary services to continue with their projects instead of going abroad.