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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.
Use of technologies and modern equipment in building and construction

Demands for further facilities for Agriculture and Fisheries Sector in Governorate

Several investment projects were offered to member states hosting meetings of Islamic Chamber of Commerce

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First and foremost with great pleasure, we take this opportunity to congratulate the workers on the International Labor Day and to commend and recognize the role played by the Sultanate of Oman’s General Federation of Trade Unions towards further strengthening productivity efficiency and promoting and developing the working class while taking good care of their demands and interests. We also appreciate Oman’s General Federation of Trade Unions for its significant role in familiarizing the workers with their rights and obligations towards their work and the organizations.

We must not forget the role played by the Sultanate’s General Trade Union and the other corporate labor unions in association with their partners, namely the three parties to the production process, their aim is to address the challenges facing the workers and exchange views with partners on further developing labor relationships. This endeavor has effectively contributed to reducing the gap between the workers and employers, which in turn added to the building of partnering and service relationship that preserves the rights of the two sides and assist each of them to perform their duties conscientiously.

It is of prime importance that the workers and organizations should pursue the principle of social dialogue among the production parties so that they can overcome the challenges and difficulties facing workers, establishments or employers. This positive dialogue is an effective tool assisting in building and instilling the culture of loyalty to the organization.

In conclusion, once again we congratulate the chairman and members of the General Federation of Trade Unions as well as the chairmen and members of the various labor unions and all Omani and expatriate workers in the Sultanate. We must put on record that we do appreciate their important roles in achieving development and prosperity wishing all of them further success, peace and welfare.
Said Al Kiyumi:
The government is required to decide upon many outstanding issues in respect of mining sector and adopt graduation philosophy in implementing decisions relating to private sector.
Several investment projects were offered to member states hosting meetings of Islamic Chamber of Commerce.

Renew confidence in the increase in the number of companies.
The 25th meeting of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA) Board of Directors and the 33rd meeting of the ICCIA General Assembly hosted by the Sultanate in April 2017 ended with a unanimous decision to renew confidence in the presidency of Sheikh Saleh Abdallah Kamil, ICCIA President for the next term of office. It was also agreed that the representatives of the chambers of commerce of Qatar, Egypt and Turkey will remain as vice-presidents of ICCIA Board for the next term of office.

The meeting hosted by Oman during the period from 11 – 13 April 2017 under the auspices of His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry; and in the presence of His Excellency Sheikh Saleh Abdallah Kamil, ICCIA President; and chairmen of associations and chambers of commerce, industry and agriculture in Islamic countries, decided to increase the number of ICCIA members from 17 to 19 members. It also supported the proposed plan of offering several investment projects to the member countries where ICCIA meetings are hosted and have them approved at that meeting. It was also agreed that the next meeting of ICCIA will be held in Indonesia.

The meeting discussed several issues on the agenda related to its activities. It approved the report of the 24th Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Islamic Chamber, which was held on 20th September 2016, in Kenya, Republic of Turkey. It also reviewed and adopted the Report of the 57th Financial Committee Meeting and auditors’ report for financial year ending on 31 December last year and appointment of auditors for the ICCIA for the current and approved renewal of ICCIA chairmanship, membership and vice-chairmanships for the new term of office 2017 – 2012. It further reviewed a report on Excellence Award for Islamic chambers (Itqan) and a report about the ICCIA’s Halal Approval Center and a brief report on the Chamber’s activities and events.

**Al Kiyumi:**
Diversification of income sources is a joint responsibility of private sectors in our countries and our governments in their capacities as the legislators of laws and regulations.

**Al Sunaidi:**
We should focus on creating employment opportunities via major production projects.

**Saleh Kamil:**
The attention needs to be focused on exchanging information among member countries and updating information on ICCIA websites.
Facilities for Private Sector

His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry, delivered the welcome address. Welcoming the delegates in their second country of Oman, he said: “The economic concerns of our countries are similar and joint and so is the solution to them which we believe in and working hard towards expanding the base of our economies by diversifying sources of income. There is no doubt that diversification of income sources is a joint responsibility between the private sectors in our countries and our governments in their capacity as the legislators of laws and rules capable of safeguarding the growth of this sector and smoothness of procedures. While the private sector is required to exert further efforts in so far as the local investment is concerned, the private sector itself requests further facilities in terms of streamlined procedures and removal of bureaucratic practices and reasonable levied taxes and royalties. Therefore, the undertaking of responsibility by each sector would seal the equation required to promote our countries’ economies. According to a report issued by the Islamic Center for Development of Trade of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the value of trade exchange among OIC member states has recorded a good rise over the ten years from 2005 – 2015 with the trade exchange doubling from USD 271 billion in 2005 to USD 878 billion in 2015, an increase of 223%. However, we are confident that our capabilities are much more than that figure and we can exert yet further efforts to augment these figures in order to meet our ambitions”.

Promising experiences

Al Kiyumi called for utilizing these forums to discuss joint investment opportunities and involve as far as possible the business community in order to double the potential partnership opportunities and promote available one. His Excellency said: “it is perhaps appropriate to familiarize you with our country’s experience to drive ahead the economic diversification plans, particularly since the impacts of the slumping oil prices have overshadowed our countries as oil producing states. Following royal orders of His Majesty the Sultan, the government has adopted a national programme for diversification of income sources called “Tanfeedh” whereby it was intended to expedite the execution of economic diversification plans
in partnership with the Omani Private Sector focusing on five promising and sustainable sectors away from oil: tourism sector, industry, logistic services, labor market and financial sector. This programme came out with pioneering initiatives, the echoes of which will hopefully be heard in the immediate future”. His Excellency also called for familiarizing with these available opportunities in these sectors, which could be the beginning of new joint investments between Omani private sector and new partners from the ICCIA members. He stressed the importance of this meeting, which was attended by a large number of chairmen of chambers allowing the opportunity for bilateral meetings to discuss investment exchange and ways of further developing economic ties.

Joint Ventures
On his part, His Excellency Sheikh Saleh Abdallah Kamil, ICCIA Board Chairman, stressed the importance of increasing the volume of trade exchange, boosting inter-trade activities among the ICCIA member states and discussing further available investment opportunities, which contribute to providing employment to job seekers in these countries.

H.E. Rifat Hisarciklioglou, President of the Union of Turkish Chambers, pointed out that the Islamic countries must realize the importance of solidarity and communication among themselves in order to take necessary measures to promote their economies and increase contribution to global production urging them to increase their contribution to more than the current percentage of 15%. He stated that 22 Islamic countries are included in the list of the poorest countries of the world. He called on Islamic countries to involve business in projects aimed at promoting the economy. He stressed the necessity of eliminating obstacles to setting up joint ventures including high taxes and reconsideration of visa system, which also adds to obstructing communication among Islamic countries.

Subsidizing small and medium enterprises
Naji Jabarov delivered the speech of the OIC General Secretariat in which he said: “ICCIA has dedicated considerable attention to trade as demonstrated in its statistics, including spending USD 8 billion last year to support small and medium enterprises in member countries”. He pointed out that the tourism sector is one of the important aspects contributing to promote the economy with the member states having significant tourism potentials enabling them to excel in this field. He stressed the significant role that the private sector plays in activating tourism. He also referred to the Iqraa initiative launched in Dubai, UAE, which contributed to communication among member states for activation of the economy among them.

Desirable economic sectors
At the end of the meeting, His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry, said that the current 9th 5-year plan of the Sultanate focuses on manufacturing, transportation, logistic services, tourism, fisheries and mining sectors in addition to some other potential sectors such as innovative financing, alternative energy, etc. He pointed out that the Sultanate has accomplished several ports overlooking the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and that these are connected to some other seaports in OIC member states.

Al Sunaidy stressed the need to focus on creating employment opportunities in the OIC countries to accommodate the increasing numbers of job seekers, but noted that this trend would only be possible through the setting up of major production projects capable of providing such employment opportunities and augment the capabilities of small and medium enterprises.

Side meetings
Within the framework of meeting programme, His Excellency the Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, met with a number of heads of trade delegations taking part in the ICCIA meetings in Muscat, including Dr. Ameena Al Harsi, Chairman of Ugandan Chamber of Commerce and Industry; His Excellency Rifat Hisarciklioglou, President of the Union of Turkish Chambers, His Excellency Al Ain Nayel Al Kabariti, Chairman of Jordanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Chairman of Mali Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Chairman of Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The meetings dealt with the importance of strengthening communication among OCCI and these chambers, which would further boost the partnership and investment between the Sultanate’s private sector and the private sectors in these countries.
When will the industrial area of Ibri be set up?

- One of the biggest challenges facing the economic sector in Al Dhahirah Governorate is the need for an industrial area to serve as an incubator of all industries at various levels. There is a pressing need for such an industrial area to serve investors and entrepreneurs who are always asking about the industrial area which has remained a requirement for many years.

- For over twenty years, there have been promises and media statements and at economic conferences where the officials confirmed that the long-awaited industrial area of Ibri was underway. People have been waiting for quite a long time to see the highly needed industrial area in Al Dhahirah Government but to no avail despite the need for it to accommodate strategic enterprises that are useful to all.

- For this reason, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s Al Dhahirah Branch considers the execution of the Ibri industrial area supervised by the Public Authority for Industrial Estate on top of its priorities since this project is the key to activating the economy in Al Dhahirah governorate, creating job opportunities for young males and females and attracting investors and eventually contributing to economic diversification in the country.

- In short, all people of Al Dhahirah Governorate and outside it concur on the importance of expediting the execution of the Ibri Industrial Area. The question is: when will we see the Ibri industrial area under construction? It has been long awaited!
Money laundering or white crime is a term that is widely used by the international organizations concerned with economic crimes and socio-economic security on the ground that money laundering is largely tied to illegitimate activities often intended to bypass applicable anti-financial corruption laws in a bid to re-emerge in a legitimately recognized manner under the same laws. Money laundering or whitening is a major problem of concern that can exist in any country, whether developing and developed, including the Omani economy in the light of wide openness towards external world. It is, therefore, necessary to study this phenomenon and work towards combating it due to the significant damage that it can cause to societies.

Through an in-depth study into the historical roots of money laundering, we can find that it is not a newly born phenomenon that emerged many years ago. No one knows exactly when money laundering occurred for the first time in history and where. Some say that some ancient civilizations knew this phenomenon. Traders during the era of Chinese Empire used to resort to this phenomenon to conceal their monies by way of investing them in remote
places outside the Empire in order to evade confiscation by the Empire’s rulers. Others indicate that the phenomenon emerged in Europe in medieval age when the Catholic Church used to prohibit usury. (Al Rabeei, 2005, page 14).

The term “money laundering” began to be used in the United States for the first time between the years 1920 – 1930 by referring to it by American security men. Money laundering using sophisticated technical methods date back to 1932 when it was regularly initiated by a man named Meyer Lansky who acted as a contact point between the US Mafia and the Italian Mafia during World War II. The term (money laundering) surfaced again on pages of newspapers during the Watergate scandal in the United States in 1973. However, the first time that the U.S. courts looked into this phenomenon in 1982. Since then, the term has been largely used to indicate acts of legalizing dirty money obtained from illegitimate sources by integrating them into the legitimate system in a process that takes several stages and different forms, eventually leading them to appear legal, i.e. clean. (Al Sisi, 2003, page 2).

1. Concept and definition of money laundering processes

It can be said that money laundering implies criminal activity where the efforts of money launderers and persons wishing to hide the sources of their illegitimate monies are made in an attempt to have them integrated into other lawful monies of legitimate source. This is carried out by way of entering them into the normal banking channels to be used in financial operations and in legitimate investment projects to integrate into such projects. (Hassan, 1997, page 24)

Definition of Money Laundering

What is money laundering? Money laundering is a criminal act following money raising using illegitimate methods in which the launderer attempts to evade accountability by legalizing this money to facilitate their use without doubts or legal evidences of previous criminal act. Money laundering is recycling of monies emanating from illegitimate acts into legitimate investment channels to hide the source of these monies making them appear legitimate and as if they resulted from legitimate source (weapons sale, prostitution, slavery, drugs). Money laundering/whitening converges in the indication of their concepts, which means the use of tricks and methods for disposal of monies acquired illegitimately and illegally in order to legalize and legitimize them. (Hassan, 1997, page 24).

2. Money laundering and shadow economy

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) defines underground economy as the economy that includes not only illegal activities but also unreported income from the production of legal goods and services, either from monetary or barter transactions. Hence, shadow economy comprises all economic activities that would generally be taxable were they reported to the tax authorities.

If the activity concerns dealing with prohibited commodities in terms of use such as weapons, drugs, trading in secrets, this sort of economy is called black economy or criminal economy. Examples of this economy include money laundering. However, if the dealing is prohibited and the use of a commodity is allowed such as black market of some commodities, production of some commodities in unlicensed laboratories or unlicensed and unregistered shops, private lessons, unsigned sub-contracts, then this type of economy is called unofficial economy. Despite the difference in terms of objectives, mechanisms and consequent impacts, both are considered to be consuming the public services provided by the state. The following figure shows an appropriate environment of money laundering as part of the unofficial and shadow economy.

Figure (1) money laundering and its relationship to shadow economy

![Shadow economy structure](image)

It is noteworthy that the term “money laundering” falls within what is called the phenomenon of shadow economy on the understanding that owners of laundered monies operate clandestinely. As a result, these amounts do not appear directly and are normally registered as part of shadow economy until they complete their cycle in the process of money laundering which may take longer before they flow into the official economic channels in a legitimate form as shown in the following figure: (Abdul Adheem, 2007, page 42). 

Figure (2): Money laundering operations (monetary transfer and deposit) from shadow economy into the official economy

![Money laundering operations](image)

3. Geographic distribution of money laundering

How much money is laundered per year? What are the most major places that can be described as favourable environment for the success, growth and development of money laundering?

Economic statistics and reports confirm that money laundering is highly increasing, particularly in the light of economic globalization
and widespread e-commerce. Economic experts estimate that the financial amounts laundered yearly amount to USD one trillion, i.e. 15% of the total value of global trade. Some estimates indicate that these amounts reached 3 – 5% of the global gross domestic product in 2009, a value exceeding USD 1.5 trillion. Discussions showed that the volume of money laundering trade according to IMF statistics range between USD 95 billion and USD 1.5 trillion.

In a study conducted by researcher, John Walker, in 1998 in which he relied upon total estimates of money laundering volume in the world he concluded that most of it is concentrated in European countries, North Africa and the Middle East. He designated marks depending on standards, facts and a set of attributes with the highest mark being 686 and the lowest mark being zero by adopting 21 levels (Sabah, 2002, page 142).

On the Arab level, studies of the Association of Arab Banks in Combating Illicit Funds Conference indicated that money laundering in the Arab World is estimated at about USD 25 billion, i.e. 2% of Gross Arab Product amounting to USD 1.2 trillion. This figure is much less than the estimates determined by US and European institutions monitoring this phenomenon globally. Statistics from the conference report that the volume of laundered monies yearly are estimated at no less than 5% of the Global Gross Product and 8% of the volume of international trade, an equivalent of USD 3 trillion, which is much more than the Arab Gross National Product yearly (Al Nahar newspaper, 2007).

4. Reasons behind evolution and propagation of money laundering operations

Before mentioning the main reasons behind dissemination of money laundering operations, it must be stated that a money laundering operation cannot be carried out, like any other business project, without being associated with an intensive contribution by human capital. Such operation represents a labour intensive technique. An evidence of the foregoing is the statement made by a senior official in the city of Miami, United States, that for cleaning USD 10 million, a team consisting of at least 16 employees must be used. This is basically due to the illegitimacy of such operations and because depending on the working factor would achieve more effectiveness in reaching the ultimate goal, i.e. employing the huge cash liquidity into the legitimate financial system. (Samra, 1997, page 9). In the following paragraphs, we will review a set of major factors and reasons for the widespread propagation and growth of money laundering operations at the local and global levels:

• Openness to international financial markets.
• Banks and their role in facilitating money laundering (confidential accounts)
• Open encouragement of countries
• Technological advancement
• Increased rates of taxes and fees and widespread tax evasion
• Quest for safety and attempt to obtain legitimacy in fear of legal prosecution.

5. Methods and ways of money laundering and white-collar criminals

Money laundering operations are unbound by regional borders or restricted to specific geographic zones. They are often cross-border crimes taking advantage of globalization, liberalized economic systems, free and unobstructed movement of international capitals and integration into global capital markets. Banks and some other channels remain to be arenas exploited by money launderers to pass their suspected operations by pursuing and using several methods. Following are the major common methods used for money laundering:

First: Money laundering methods through banking systems

There are several methods normally involving the banking system as the principal party thereof, namely the following:

• Deposit and transfer
• Use of credit cards
• Re-lending
• Documentary credit

Second: Money laundering methods through non-banking systems

Money launderers may also use some other methods to complete their operations without the banks having any role in this. The most important methods in this respect are:

a. Cash deals/transactions
b. Counterfeit invoices
c. Setting up of dummy companies
d. Manipulation of customs declarations
e. Smuggling of monies to abroad

Third: Money laundering using internet

Money launderers use the information available through the Internet in order to access accurate details about the systems and tools available for them to carry out these operations locally and globally. There may sometimes be indirect announcements about such details making it easy for money launderers to understand what they are going to do.

Fourth: Sources of laundered monies

• Drug trading
• Embezzlement of monies, bribery and tax evasion
• Politicians crimes
• Trading in created and illegitimate commodities and services, including the following:
  • Women and children trading (white slavery trading)
  • Trading of human organs with criminal organizations specialized in this field.
  • Biological and chemical weapons and nuclear substances

6. Stages of Money Laundering

The major stages can be reviewed as follows:

Stage I: Depositing, employment and placement

Here begins the process of depositing illegitimate monies into the banks and investing the same through these banks. This stage can be defined as the “stage of monetary proceeds accessing a business-based financial system. The depositing
Stage is considered to be one of the most dangerous stages through which money laundering passes and is the most critical one as the monies in case are always exposed to detection, seizure and confiscation by the law enforcement authorities which normally have greater opportunity to detect and trace these monies through the documents and information with the banking and non-banking financial institutions through which or by which these operations were carried out”. (Kamil, 2003, page 59).

This stage includes several points including:
- Currency smuggling which is the illegitimate movement of currency outside the country.
- Bank complicity which occurs when there are banks which are controlled by conscienceless individuals.
- Currency exchange
- Securities brokers

**Stage II: Layering**

Here begins a series of complex financial transfers and other operations. It is the stage through which several consecutive operations are carried out to conceal the illegitimate source of monies due to difficulty of tracing them. (Mahir, 2002, page 9)

**Stage III: Integration**

Here ends money laundering by injecting monies as legitimate funds. The funds, thus, disappear in foreign accounts and legitimate business facades or under cover of imaginary trade business to look as if they were obtained from legitimate businesses. Here the laundered monies access the financial system and integrate into it as clean monies, i.e. legitimate and legal funds of known source or natural gains (Al Khudhairi, 2003, page 53). The following figure shows the different stages of money laundering.

Figure (3) – Money laundering in economic activity cycle system

Second: Economic and social impacts of money laundering crime

The major economic impacts of money laundering operations are as follows:

a. Direct impacts at level of economic units

The direct impacts of money laundering revolves around the level of economic units revolves and are materialized in the following axes (Al Shaikh, 2003, pages 72 – 74):

**First axis: impact on consumer’s behaviour**

In accordance with the consumer’s behavior theory, a consumer wise while attempting to maximize the benefice obtained from spending his income on commodities and services. However, this hypothesis does not apply to money launderers, meaning that their spending does not tend to be wise. Money Launderers’ spending is normally featured by extravagance, purchase of non-productive commodities such as liquors, drugs, prostitution and other illegitimate areas. They spend too much on legitimate and luxurious commodities. On the other hand, this consumption pattern also applies to the other members of their families in what is called the effect of imitation with which irrationality in spending becomes a characteristic feature of the behavior of individuals.

**Second axis: Impact of producer behavior**

According to production theory, a producer’s goal is to maximize profits, but money launderers behavior when owning enterprises as a means of money laundering give no attention to making maximum profits. On the contrary, they buy losing enterprises and sell products in less than their market price because they simply focus on recycling their monies to appear legitimate and do not care about the standards of the enterprise economic feasibility studies.

Accordingly, the wise producer behavior also does not apply to money launderer. On the contrary, such behavior disturbs the balance and rules of the game with all forms of competition disappear in the market, and the producers who see to maximize their profit leave the market with this process eventually ending up in monopolizing the market by money launderers leading to significant structural disequilibrium within the State’s economic system.

**Third axis: Breakdown of price mechanism**

The previous analysis results in distortion of behavior of both the producer and the consumer and absence of assumptions of economic rationale in consumer behavior theories and producer/production theories. This also leads to significant omission in the competition markets inevitably leading to delay of cessation of one of the most important tools in the equilibrium of markets, i.e. the price mechanism tool which is the result of attraction between the forces of demand and supply in the market. Since the advocates of maximizing profits and benefits have disappeared as far as the rules of the games are concerned due to money launderers’ behavior, the final result would then be breakdown of price mechanism. This eventually leads to misdistribution of economic resources. As a matter of fact, the impact breakdown of price mechanism would extend not only in the commodities market but also in the services market with prices being distorted, particularly the related interest rates.

b. Direct bearing on national economy

These impacts are the result of extended factors having bearing on partial or whole level of national economy. They are often featured by the following:
1. Reduced national income
Decline of illegitimate investment productivity may lead to reduced national income because those enterprises may be associated with inefficiency in production and unequal competition with serious investors which would also reduce the outcome of income-related taxes which are also reduced due to tax evasion leading to reduced general expenditure and hence national income. The fact that income model includes saving invariables would lead to reduced saving within the society and hence reduced investment. (Babikir, 2003, pages 62-63).

2. Impact on economic stability (unemployment and inflation)
It can be derived that income misdistribution comes in the context of money laundering operations and leads to increased consumption without increasing production (little commodities against much money) putting inflatory pressure on the economies of countries where money laundering is highly operational. In addition, the demand on commodities in-kind leads to insensitivity of demand for money in terms of interest rate because money launderers seek to acquire direct commodities in kind. This results in weak use of monetary tools by the central bank leading to inability to control inflation rates by using monetary policy tools such as open market operations or discount price (rigidity of monetary policy) (Abdu Khaliq, 1997, page 28).

3. Impact on formulation of economic policies
Due to the confidentiality and ambiguity surrounding money laundering as being one of the forms of shadow economy or unofficial economy, considerable portion of information and data tends to be unknown affecting the formulation of economic policies. These policy makers have no sufficient information to draw up plans in consistence with the economic reality marred by shadow economy. For example, in the light of widespread money laundering, we expect that statistics on inward and outward financial expenses are inaccurate in the balance of payments because they simply do not contain significant part of the movement of capitals resulting from laundering, particularly in the context of evolution of mechanisms of parallel crediting or exchange. Even though, some laundering operations involving balance of payments accounts do not reflect the real fact due to forgery of export/import invoices.

4. Impact of money laundering on nature of market
It can be stated that “money laundering operations, particularly those carried out in large scales, distort the nature of markets by creating concentration and monopoly in terms of supply for specific sectors of commodities and removing many of the social segments from competition in terms of demand through price speculation. Hence, those owning monies will be the main controllers of the market which will adversely affect the ability to meet the needs of other segments” (Abdul Adheem, 2007, page 194).

   c. Impact of money laundering on monetary variables
   Interest rate
This includes increased interest rates in some countries with a view to attracting funds from local or external sources and raised interest rates paid by the country on its loans from abroad. It is also found that existence of monies intended to be laundered in bulk in addition to escaping capital may generate pressures on increased interest rates too. This rise in rate may contribute to increasing inflation rates (Zakim 2002, page 257).

2. Countries suffering from this phenomenon may opt to float their currency with the intention of luring foreign capital into them in the form of direct or indirect investments and increasing flow of foreign funds of whatever source to increase the demand on national funds. This leads to raising exchange rate of national currency beyond its real value and to the economically unjustified increase in national currency which in turn may constitute an obstacle to entry of direct or indirect foreign capital either directly and even monies of residents abroad from various sources.

Hence, the significant movement in volume across various borders with countries, particularly the developing countries, normally leads to impacts on the overall monetary variables of these countries. This applies in particular to the exchange rate and inflation rates. These are considered to be movements that do not reflect the reality of the economy and level of its performance and development to cause some sort of homogenity between all monetary and economic variables. We find that these movements reflect circumstances and developments which are alien to the economy. Economic policies responding to such movements are, therefore, found to have no effect on the reality of actual economic requirements (Zaki, 2002, page 22).

3. Impact of money laundering on balance of payments
Overseas money laundering adds yet further burdens on the balance of payments in the countries where money laundering is more widely exercised. The impact depends on value of financial transactions from countries, whether these operations are recorded into the trade balance, whether there is full knowledge of all methods used in smuggling funds for laundering and whether they exit directly or indirectly. It is recognized that exit of any capital is entered into payments in the balance of payments. However, we find that the funds which exit for the purpose of laundering are not recorded on this balance. (Salahul Din Al Sisi, 2003, page 66).

   d. Impact of money laundering on banking system
Banking systems like other economic variables are affected by money laundering through the damages that these systems sustain, and this can be summed up in the following points (Safar, 2001, pages 69-70):

   1. Liquidity risk: which may create a crisis in the cash liquidity available in banks.
   2. Unequal competition among fund owners and serious investors.
   3. Transfer of capitals from countries applying good and well-defined economic policies to countries applying ineffective policies.
   4. Reputational risk: this may lead to jeopardizing the reputation of banks prompting customers and external banks not to deal with the banking system.
5. **Legal risk**: this may result in legal proceedings and levying of financial fines on the banks which are involved in money laundering.

6. **Credit risk**.

7. Operational risk: featured by weakness of systems and procedures relating to the “Know your Customer” rule.

### e. Social impacts of money laundering

Money laundering in-country and overseas distorts income distribution structure within societies and economies where such operations exist. When doers of clandestine acts are not charged with any burdens such as licenses and taxes and are not subject to all stipulations relating to quality and specifications of products, this creates an unhealthy and inappropriate climate for serious and genuine business. Consequently, this would lead to the following (Hassan, 1997, page 22):

- Undermining positive values
- Lack of loyalty and affiliation
- Control of the media

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Talking Pictures

Visiting Business Delegations of the Chamber
Use of modern technologies is a pressing need

Engineer Humood bin Salim Al Saadi, Board chairman of OCCI South Al Batinah branch, stated that 5,201 building permits were issued in South Al Batinah Governorate last year making a growth rate of 0.3% since 2011. The South Al Batinah governorate occupies the first position in at the level of governorates affiliated to ministry of regional municipalities and water resources having 22% of the issued building permits. He stressed the importance of highlighting more intensively this sector in order to streamline procedures for investors and stakeholders. He added that the use of modern technologies and equipment has become an urgent necessity to uplift production efficiency and quality required and to reduce foreign manpower. It is therefore necessary to intensify the efforts aimed at further technological development of companies and establishments through entrepreneurs.

This came in a speech delivered by him at the opening session of the Building and Estate Development Forum held under the auspices of His Excellency Sheikh Hilal bin Said bin Hamdan Al Hajri, Governor of South Al Batinah Governorate. The forum included a number of working papers delivered by related parties concerned with the organization and support of contracting sector such as the tender board, ministry of regional municipalities and water resources and ministry of manpower. Muscat National Development and Investment Company (ASAAS) took part with a working paper representing the private sector.

Parties and roles

Talal Al Maamari, Director of Rustaq Municipality, stated that the ministry of regional municipality and water resources plays the role of a supervisor and regulator of urbanization and construction works in order to ensure execution of building works to the highest standards of security and safety in line with the Omani historical architecture. The ministry also contributes to the contracting sector by awarding various projects and works.

Engineer Said Al Amri, Director of Technical Analysis Department at the Tender Board, confirmed the keenness on better and efficient usage of public funds by organizing, regulating
and managing government tenders to the best practices and principles of transparency, equal opportunities, equality and freedom of competition. We are endeavoring to become a distinguished and advanced role model in organizing, regulating and managing tenders and providing services with transparency and professionalism in order to attain high levels of customers’ satisfaction.

Khalid Al Dughaishi, Assistant Director at Manpower Department at Barka, said: Wilayat Al Rustaq has recorded the highest number of facilities operating in the contracting sector in the governorate with facilities accounting for 1,253 facilities, 34.6%, followed by Wilayat Barka with 1,008 facilities, i.e. 27.8%. Facilities recorded in premium class are the ones where more national workforce are employed, at 87.8% of the total Omani working in the contracting sector in the Governorate and at Omanisation percentage of 32.7%. Basic engineering professions constitute more than two thirds of the national manpower, 76% of the total Omani against recording of greater number of expatriate manpower in the same professions at 99% of the total expatriate manpower.

Engineer Humood Al Saadi: Issuance of 5,201 building permits in the governorate last year, a growth rate of 40.3% since 2011
Musandam Manafidh Initiative in support of SMEs

Initiative aims at making opportunities and promote products for job seekers

Hamid Al Raeesi: This initiative is aimed at supporting entrepreneurs and job seekers as well as small and medium enterprises in the wilayah.
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Musandam Branch, has launched its initiative “Manafidh” in cooperation with Lulu Hypermarket under the auspices of Ameed Yasin bin Humood Al Maamari, Commandant of Musandam Governorate’s Police HQ; and in the presence of Hamid bin Muhammad Zaman Al Raeesi, Chairman of OCCI, Musandam Branch; and a number of officials of government departments and director of OCCI Musandam branch.

The initiative comes as one of the initiatives of OCCI Musandam Branch to support small and medium enterprises, promote entrepreneurship sector and provide opportunities to job seekers of domestic or beginners’ enterprises, the aim being to build a base of clientele and exhibit and promote their products. The main aim is also to promote local products and provide opportunities for job seekers. The initiative is conducted in coordination with Lulu Hypermarket in order to provide job seekers and entrepreneurs with promising future opportunities and to motivate others to set up their own enterprises. This initiative of the OCCI branch in the governorate constitutes one of the genuine subsidy programmes aimed at bringing about real enterprises in the economic sector in quest for developing diverse sectors within the governorate.

Supporting economic sector

About the initiative, Hamid Al Raeesi: This initiative is launched in coordination and cooperation with Lulu Hypermarket at Wilayat Khasab with shops found for two businesses, the first is sale of garments and luxuries and the second is sale of confectioneries and household items. We could, through this initiative, assist entrepreneurs and job seekers as well as small and medium enterprises. These two businesses were previously managed from home with their owners being unable to open shops until this initiative was created providing four opportunities where the chamber takes care of the financial matters, including rental of shops in coordination with Lulu for one year. It is hoped that we will be able over the coming months to open designated places for them to compete and pave the way for other entrepreneurs, job seekers and small and medium enterprises. The aim is also to promote these local products to meet the ambitions and goals of the community and contribute to supporting the economic sector in line with the Sultanate’s strategic developmental plan and with the private sector’s plan to keep abreast of the overall strategy of developing and supporting the economic sector in the Sultanate.
In a meeting between minister of agriculture and fisheries with business owners and farmers in Buraimi:

Demands for further facilities for agriculture and fisheries sector in governorate

Prepared by: Hilal Al Naqbi
His Excellency Dr. Fu’ad bin Ja’afar Al Sajwani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, stated that the government supports and caters for agricultural and animal wealth in various governorates of the Sultanate and that the ministry is keen on providing what would serve agriculturists and those working in the sector in its various fields since agriculture is important for achieving food security and is a source of subsistence for many families.

This came in the meeting organized by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Buraimi Branch, in the presence of Dr. Ahmed bin Nasser Al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture; His Excellency Saleh bin Dhiab Al Rubai’, Wali of Buraimi; and a number of Their Excellences, Sheikhs, dignitaries and officials of government departments and private sector’s companies.

The meeting began with a welcome address delivered by Zahir bin Muhammad Al Kaabi, Board vice-chairman of OCCI Buraimi Branch. He pointed out that the meeting comes in the context of studying and discussing the status of agriculture and animal sector in the governorate and reviewing the challenges and difficulties facing the Governorate’s wilayats in this respect.

“The three wilayats of the governorate, namely Buraimi, Mahdha and Sinaina, and their Niyabats (administrative divisions) have different natural wealths due to their diverse terrains and geographic nature known for their agricultural plains and numerous animal wealth and diversified water sources, including underground wells, Aflajs and wadis adding value to this sector upon which people of the governorate consider as a source of living”. Al Kaabi indicated that supporting this sector would be useful to all and contribute to developing and promoting the businesses associated with it. In concluding his address, Al Kaabi confirmed that OCCI dedicates continues attention to all economic sectors and endeavors by organizing such meetings and other events to play effective role in strengthening and developing businesses and

Al Kaabi:
OCCI dedicates special and continuing attention to all economic sectors and endeavors to organize such meetings for further boosting of businesses and trade and investment activities.
trade and investment activities in such a way as to uplift the private sector’s contributions to the gross domestic product as well as to the significant efforts being made by the government to diversify income sources.

The meeting discussed several topics relating to claims and clarifications from the citizens, farmers and business owners in the governorate’s wilayats, including increased lease fees for beneficiaries from agricultural lands and permission to allow drilling of wells near by the border areas. The need to boost the ministry’s efforts in combating the palm weevil (Rhynchophorus ferrugineus) and permitting the addition of new types of palm trees was also discussed during the meeting.

**Demands**

Cattle breeders requested the ministry to support them through cooperation with the ministry of housing and other related organizations in terms of providing places for farms and permitting them to construct cement buildings for appropriate accommodation of those taking care of these wealths. They said that there was also need for provision of electricity and water, paved and asphalted roads and facilities as well as the granting of approval of expatriate manpower procurement permits for this sector and augmentation of mobile veterinary clinical programmes in various wilayats of the governorate.

The meeting dealt with the importance of allocating lands for fish farming in Buraimi governorate and supporting honey bee breeders in the governorate and facilitating transit of agricultural and animal produce through the border outlets. The farmers stressed the importance of setting up laboratories near the outlets to facilitate import/export procedures. The attendants also stressed the pressing need for opening marketing outlets for these products.

The meeting also tackled the status of camels in the governorate and some camel owners pointed out that until now the new camel births have not been registered for the last three years and that there was difficulty in movement and crossing of camel from/to the governorate as well as other challenges.

At the end of the meeting, the attendants expressed their happiness at the positive response of His Excellency the minister to all demands and proposals which His Excellency confirmed that they would be studied and reviewed by the concerned staff at the ministry and that they would be dealt with in accordance with the national interest. The minister pointed out that the meeting was intended to hear the demands of the people of the governorate, familiarize with the demands of the governorate’s citizens and closely identify the challenges to the sector so that the ministry can assist in developing the agricultural and animal sector.

On the other hand, His Excellency Dr. Fu’ad bin Ja’afar Al Sajwani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, visited the Rural Woman Exhibition held on the sidelines of the meeting which included a number of household projects such as poultry and eggs and dates. His Excellency heard the major demands of rural women and the challenges they are facing.
The cancer causing foods, particularly agricultural produce, have recently become a nuisance that appears every now and then. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced during the fourth quarter of last year that nearly 134 persons from 9 different States acquired Hepatitis A due to their consumption of frozen strawberries bought from a series of famous shops. The U.S. Disease Control Authorities found that the strawberries were imported from an Arab country.

As a result of these findings, more countries of the world, including Arab states, started a ban on importation of fruits and vegetables from some Arab countries in reacting to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s report in this regard. It was further stated that residues of some pesticides were detected on some imported foods. We are not against these measures, which are intended to protect human health, but what we are against is that such measures should not be based on mere rumors or unreliable reports issued here and there. Certainly, such unsubstantiated reports affect the exports of producing countries, particularly those countries depending for their resources on returns of exported agricultural produce. However, at the same time we cannot relieve the exporting countries of their responsibility for ensuring quality of their exports and their consistence with the internationally recognized standards and specifications. Therefore, these countries are required to promote the quality of their products, remarkably increase their competitiveness and avoid the use of excessive pesticides in their attempt to protect these products against the danger of harmful substances.

Although exporting countries may not be entirely responsible for increasing food contamination with pesticides for there being some other factors such as the use of pesticides by wholesalers for the storage of imported vegetables and fruits in order to get rid of agricultural pests, thus sometimes causing toxicity to cattle, birds and humans. The effect of pesticides is not only restricted to vegetation, but it also extends to the animals feeding on such vegetation, and as a result the pests find their way to the liver of such animals. The cells and tissues of animals are incapable of getting rid of these pests. On the contrary, the pests are stored into the fats of animals and are secreted with the milk. Food contamination with pesticides can also occur when using chemical pesticides directly on vegetation or when there are residues of pesticides in water used for irrigation, and in this way pests find their way to the vegetation in an indirect way or upon storing seeds using pesticides.

Experience has particularly shown that the effects of pesticides and fertilizers do not disappear as a result of an industrial process or cooking. It is found that the real danger of such compounds is not featured by eating food contaminated with such compounds. The problem is that these chemical compounds tend to be precipitated into the human body in the long term until they reach a hazardous concentration causing renal or liver failure or even cancer.

Undoubtedly, there is a need for serious work to be done in order to preserve the safety of fruits, vegetables and all types of food by developing specialized laboratories and equipping them with the latest instruments and facilities to further improve their efficiency. There is also a need to have qualified cadres capable of efficiently and skillfully operating these laboratories to the ISO 17020 certification related to the requirements for the competence of bodies performing inspection and for the impartiality and consistency of their inspection activities and in accordance with the ISO 17065 certification regarding requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services. These measures would assist in ensuring the accuracy of analyses and soundness of findings as well as the safety and health of the society, augmentation of production and maintenance of fraternal and trade relations among Arab countries. It is really regretful to see that the Arab countries which have common policies and are connected with extended distinctive historical and social bonds are treating each other in a way that is contradictory to the agreements, objectives and principles they are sharing.
Wilayat Badiyah of Al Sharqiyah Governorate is witnessing remarkable development in the general services sector, particularly the banking and insurance sectors. An agency has been opened recently given by Oman United Insurance Company to a young Omani who has dedicated his efforts for provision of insurance services to the citizens and residents of Wilayat Badiyah and other neighboring wilayats. This agency is considered to be the first enterprise of its kind in the wilayat making it easier for the citizens and residents of the wilayat to buy insurance services locally instead of having to go to nearby wilayats for this purpose. With the opening of Al Mansoor Comprehensive Enterprises owned by Mansoor bin Zahir Al Hajri, it has now become possible for the local citizens and residents to clear their transactions and obtain the insurance services they wish expeditiously and with high quality.

Mansoor Al Hajri owner of Al Mansoor Enterprises:

Whenever the customers’ desires have been met the number of insurance service applicants will increase

Prepared by: Ibtisam Al Saadi
Enterprise incorporated with an integrated vision

In an interview with him, Mansoor bin Zahir Al Hajri stated that insurance is a vital sector which has recently witnessed further development with its services coming even much closer to the citizens and residents of the wilayah. The idea of setting up this insurance agency under agreement with Oman United Insurance Company was the result of Mansoor’s keen interest in making it easy for the citizens and residents of Wilayat Badiyah and Wilayat Wadi bani Khalid to obtain insurance services and make such services readily available to them, particularly since the two wilayats are now witnessing significant progress in infrastructure and urbanization projects. He said: “I set up my enterprise inspired by an integrated vision. I manage my business by myself with the support of efficient Omani cadres who are qualified in insurance. I have also embarked upon such business out of my belief in the importance of providing more job opportunities to my fellow Omanis.”

Endeavor to deliver services to all citizens of North Al Sharqiyyah Governorate

Al Hajri pointed out that he currently works on promoting and marketing his services with his self-financed enterprise now completing one month since its opening. He seeks to deliver his services to all people of North Al Sharqiyyah governorate as well as provide insurance services to the companies, establishments, businesses, health insurance and personal insurance in addition to life insurance. “We are fully prepared to serve our customers in the field of insurance quite easily and provide them with the required guarantees”, Mansoor concluded.

Marketing and excellence in service provision

Mansoor Al Hajri and his cadre are ambitious and look forward to promoting and marketing their services in a better fashion providing distinguished services following modern marketing methods, including the use of Internet and social media to propagate their commercials and advertisements about insurance services provided by Oman United Insurance Company. They are keen on attaining the entire satisfaction of their customers. Al Hajri confirms that whenever the customers’ desires are met more local applicants of the service will show up and increase further. He thanked the OCCI Al Sharqiyyah branch for its efforts in serving business owners and providing them with the support they need in their businesses.
Ali bin Hamdan bin Muhammad Al Balushi, owner of Baraem Al Dhahirah Private School, the first bilingual school in Al Dhahirah Governorate consisting of 15 classes, information sources center, computer center, administrative offices, science laboratory and students’ coffee shop. Enrolled are 150 male and female pupils studying in the school distributed to several stages from kindergarten through to pre-primary education and classes 1 – 5 of basic education. There are 10 qualified female Omani employees, who are efficiently taking part in the educational process together with 16 expatriate employees.

In setting up this enterprise, we were keen on achieving several objectives, foremost of which is the provision of high quality educational service in accordance with versatile curricula approved by the ministry of education, Cambridge University and Oxford University so that the students can build their intellectual and innovative capacities while acquiring diverse skills needed throughout their educational process.

“The school project was met with warm welcome by the citizens of Wilayat Ibri who were also satisfied with the standard of students’ achievement and reasonable school fees. We are now focusing on high quality education and building of the student’s personality using advanced and renewed educational methods and approaches in a bilingual environment under the supervision of highly qualified and experienced teachers. The school was set up in accordance with international specifications, and this is an important factor in creating a favorable environment where students can receive their education comfortably and with peace of mind. The school also provides IELTs tests service to the community”, Al Balushi added.

Requirements of success

About the requirements of success, Ali Al Balushi said: “There are several basic requirements that should be taken into consideration when thinking about setting up an economic enterprise, namely choice of appropriate enterprise and your love and passion towards such enterprise. There is an essential requirement of conducting an economic feasibility study of the project. Administrative and financial knowledge of the enterprise is also important factor in achieving success, let alone the continuing evaluation of the enterprise in order to ensure its effectiveness and success.”

Al Balushi added that he faced many challenges upon setting up his enterprise featured by several factors, namely the

Interview by Muhammad bin Salim Al Kalbani
community’s acceptance of a bilingual education setting. This required intensive efforts from the school’s management to persuade the parents of this new trend of education and hence have their kids enrolled to the school. The other factor was the continuing funding, support, sustainability of the enterprise and commitment to the specified plans.

**Plans and visions**

About the future plans, Ali Al Balushi said: “There are two basic elements in the enterprise, concentration on quality education and utilization of modern technology so that we can attract large number of students and develop our school environment while at the same time involving parents and guardians in diverse activities and programmes. We also seek to find an economic lever to support the school’s budget. We are keen on attending and participating in local and international forums in order to gain further experience and interaction.

In concluding, Ali bin Hamdan Al Balushi sent an advice to those wishing to set up their own enterprises. He said: “I advise the youth who opt to engage in entrepreneurship to be very patient and serious in their business and learn from their own experiences taking into account the need to have a real feasibility study before commencing your enterprise”.

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*Image 1: School exterior with playground.*

*Image 2: Classroom with students engaged in activities.*

*Image 3: Classroom with students working on project.*
With a view to addressing the obstacles and challenges to the application of the new tax system and dealing with the latest developments over the past years in respect of the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman and further uplifting the efficiency and effectiveness of tax system to keep abreast of the global tax practices, the Committee on Banking, Financial and Insurance Sector at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in cooperation with Horwath Mak Ghazali has recently organised a seminar on the latest amendments made to Income Tax Law. The seminar was held under the auspices of His Excellency Saud bin Nasser al Shakily, Secretary General of Taxation, and attended by His Excellency Hamoud bin Sangour Al Zadjali, Executive President of Central Bank of Oman (CBO); His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI Board Chairman; and a number of company representatives in the Sultanate.

“The major amendments made to the Income Tax Law are featured by raising the tax from 12 per cent to 15 per cent. The decision to increase the tax to 15 per cent takes into consideration that the average global tax rate is 27 per cent. We have chosen this percentage which is suitable to businessmen. The other amendment is cancelling the exemption limit which was set at RO 30,000 at the previous legislations as there has been a manipulation of this exemption by some companies which used to divide its business on very small companies to benefit from the under taxable income”, said the Secretary General of Taxation.

The Secretary General of Taxation also pointed out that the temporary exemption of tax has been amended as it is now restricted to industry activity instead of covering a number of economic activities, such as agriculture, education, health and manufacturing. The validity has been also restricted to five years only instead of five years’ renewable.

He further stated that the other issue that was under discussion is the deduction tax on interests of share distribution, saying that “I
appreciate the private sector’s role with regard to its compliance with the legislations, because the law has become applicable on all of us and we should comply with it. Our role and that of the private sector is to reach a clear rule about who is subject to this tax and how it is computed”.

His Excellency Hamood bin Sangour Al Zadjali, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman, said that the CBO’s capital has been raised from OMR 740 million to RO 1 billion with effect from April 1 in a bid to enhance confidence in the national economy and the reserves for covering the circulated money. He pointed out that the CBO’s capital has become now in a level that enhances the confidence not only in the Omani banking and monetary system but also in the national economy and local currency (Omani Riyal).

Al Zadjali indicated that capital is the basis of each financial institution, including the CBO and hence there it is important that it should be maintained at good levels. His Excellency also emphasized that the CBO’s assets are at healthy level and include fixed assets and financial liabilities by those dealing with the CBO including global banks and financial institutions which all constitute part of the CBO’s budget with the total assets now reaching nearly OMR 8 billion.

His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiymum, OCCI Board Chairman, said: “I have concurred with some businessmen that the taxes imposed by the government which were discussed are affordable and reasonable and can be fulfilled”. He added that the challenges to the private sector are featured more by the delay in completing transactions by some government authorities. “We do commend some government authorities for their role in shifting to e-government and call upon the others to exert yet further efforts to timely complete the private sector’s because time factor is considered to be capital and is part of the economic activity”, His Excellency concluded.

Redha bin Juma al Saleh, Deputy Chairman of OCCI for Administrative and Financial Affairs, in his speech said: “This seminar was organized to answer the queries of companies about the latest amendments to the income tax law. The seminar dealt with the considerable efforts exerted by the General Secretariat of Taxation at the Ministry of Finance. Updating the existing laws is something healthy and required. The amendments made to the tax law aims at addressing the challenges facing the proper implementation of the tax system, keeping pace with the developments made during the past years by the business sector and ensuring that the Omani tax system is consistent with international tax practices”, said Al Saleh.

Al Saleh further stated that according to the statement issue the General Secretariat of Taxation, it is hoped that the amendments and related subsequent administrative and organizational actions taken would contribute to streamlining the procedures and facilitate tax payers to perform their obligations while at the same time maintaining the facilities (advantages) such as request for postponing the payment of disputed taxes, the right of litigation in respect of taxes, exemption from additional tax subject to the conditions set forth by the law, the right to carry forward the losses sustained in any tax year to the following year and subsequently deduct it from the income that is subject to tax pursuant to the provisions specified by the tax law.
Omani-South African relations grow at positive rates and provide serious investment opportunities.

Oman-South Africa Friendship Association Seminar discusses trade and investment cooperation.
At the level of cooperation and partnerships and building of relations between business sectors in Oman and South Africa, statistics indicate that total imports from South Africa stood at nearly OMR 15 million in 2015 while Omani exports for the same year stood at about OMR 129 million, of which OMR 13 million are products of Omani origin and OMR 116 million re-exported Omani products. South Africa occupies the 15th position among the major companies exporting to Oman and 43rd position in the list of countries importing from Oman.

This came in the opening speech delivered by Abdul Adheem bin Abbas Al Bahrani, Director of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in the Oman South Africa Friendship Association seminar organized by OCCI in concurrence with the visit by a group of South African businessmen to the Sultanate, and in the presence of His Excellency Manabile Shogole, South African Ambassador to the Sultanate. The seminar was also attended by Harib Al Kharusi, Chairman of Oman South Africa Friendship Association. The seminar aims to discuss ways of consolidating trade and investment cooperation between the two countries.

The seminar was opened by Abdul Adheem bin Abbas Al Bahrani, Director of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), delivering a speech in which he welcomed the visiting delegation. He said that the visit confirmed the joint desire of the Sultanate and South Africa to further consolidate the level of partnership and cooperation in various economic and investment fields.

He pointed out that the Sultanate had during the years of comprehensive renaissance under the leadership of His Majesty, made many achievements at all economic and social levels which are clearly manifested in the GDP index which increased to more than 300 times with its value reaching about OMR 31 billion in 2014 and in 2015 it reached about OMR 27 billion as per the latest statistics issued by the National Statistics and Information Center. Added to this are exemptions from customs duties on machineries, equipment and raw materials used in industry and on income tax on companies to be 10 years as well as exemption from individuals’ income and provision of planned industrial lands in symbolic rental values with discounts in essential services such as water, electricity and gas. Foreign ownership is not 70% with the possibility of ownership up to 100% as well as other attractive factors also available for insurance of Omani exports against trade and political risks.

His Excellency Manabile Shogole, South African Ambassador to the Sultanate, said: “We thank OCCI for its efforts in facilitating the obstacles facing Omani businessmen and their counterparts from other countries. It is pleasing and encouraging that a trade delegation of South African businessmen is visiting the Sultanate to discuss direct investment opportunities following the visit led by His Excellency Dr. Minister of Commerce and Industry”. His Excellency the ambassador remarked that the Sultanate’s position can effectively make it a re-exporting zone for other countries and for South Africa which would assist in building healthy trade and investment relations between the two countries.
Statistics and studies confirm that Al Dhahirah Governorate is in pressing need for an industrial area to accommodate all industries that serve the three wilayats of the governorate, Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank, as well as the other governorates and neighbouring countries. The same is confirmed by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), businessmen and the latest developments in the economic activity in Al Dhahirah Governorates and its surrounds.

Commenting about this matter, Ali bin Saleh bin Ali Al Kalbani, OCCI board member and chairman of OCCI Al Dhahirah branch, said: “Al Dhahirah Governorate has a pressing need for an industrial area in view to the increasing demand by investors and business owners in order to set up industrial and economic enterprises that serve the local society. We urge all concerned departments to streamline the procedures in order to encourage investment in the wilayats of Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank”.

Khalfan bin Said Al Yahyai, Chairman of Industry Committee of OCCI Al Dhahirah branch, said: “The citizens of Al Dhahirah Governorate complain about having insufficient commercial, industrial and tourist lands and are suffering from delayed completion of transactions by some government authorities for there being no single station. The governorate also lacks existence of proper services from the current industrial workshop available in Dhank which belongs to the ministry of regional municipalities and water resources, Al Dhahirah Governorate. For this reason, we demand expediting the setting up of the industrial economic zone for its importance in boosting national economy”.

Ibri: Mohammed Al Kalbani
Obaid bin Muhammad Al Yaaqubi, Vice-chairman of Industry Committee, said: “I urge all government authorities to expedite execution of the industrial area in wilayat Ibri for its important role in prospering industry in Al Dhahirah in particular and the Sultanate in general. I also request these authorities to encourage industry and industrialists for the good of the society and to create a special area for warehouses in support of small and medium enterprises”.

Khalid bin Saif Al Farsi, Vice-chairman of Mining Committee, Al Dhahirah chamber, said: “There are many challenges to the industrial activity in the three wilayats of Al Dhahirah Governorates, namely, Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank. The foremost of these challenges are the non-existence of a well-prepared industrial area to embrace companies and factories operating in the governorate. Also, the areas of current industrial areas are insufficient to meet the future ambitions of the governorate’s industrialists”.

In conclusion, Saleh bin Said Al Jaafari, an owner of dates factory, said: “There are many challenges to the industrial sector in the three wilayats of Al Dhahirah Governorates, namely, Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank. The non-existence of an industrial area is the main challenge. The people of the governorate also lack basic services like the one which are normally provided in well-prepared industrial areas”.
The Chamber of Commerce of North Al Sharqiyah governorate has recently organized a seminar on mining and crushers in cooperation with the chamber’s branch of South Al Sharqiyah under the auspices of His Excellency Sheikh Yahya bin Humood bin Hamad Al Maamari, Governor of North Al Sharqiyah; and engineer Redha bin Jurmaa Al Saleh, Vice-chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) for Administrative and Financial Affairs; and a large number business owners from both governorates.

Difficulties and solutions
The seminar was opened with a speech delivered by Ali bin Salim Al Hajri, OCCI Treasurer and chairman of chamber branch of North Al Sharqiyah, in which he said: “this seminar on mining and crushers comes to familiarize the business owners with the laws associated with the activity of mining and crushers and the conditions that are required to be satisfied upon submitting an application to initiate mining and crushers activity and to review the difficulties and challenges to the mining and crushers sector and ways of bringing about suitable solutions to overcome such difficulties as well as the need to streamline procedures relating to the service sectors in general and mining and crushers sector in particular. The seminar is also intended to establish cooperation among the government and private organizations and business owners working in the sector of mining and crushers.

Objectives of Public Authority for Mining
- Developing and promoting mining sector
- Optimum use of mineral wealth
- Economic diversification

Participating in the seminar was the Public Authority for Mining. Salah bin Salim bin Hamad Al Masroori, General Manager for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Public Authority for Mining, delivered a working paper in which he pointed out that the mining sector is one of the five sectors on which the government is focusing in the 9th 5-year plan in order to achieve economic diversification. The objectives of the Public Authority for Mining are featured by developing and promoting mining sector, optimally utilizing mineral wealth and achieving economic diversification. The Authority seeks to create an appropriate environment for investment and harmonize the environment with mining activities and coordinating with the local community and preserving and protecting geological heritage to keep abreast of the growth witnessed in mining sector in Oman. The Public Authority for Mining has drafted a new draft law fitting the current status of this sector.

Most important minerals and mining activities in Oman
Salah Al Masroori presented a profile about the most important minerals and mining activities in the Sultanate of Oman and the major minerals available in the Sultanate. He mentioned the licenses in each governorate and for each mineral and the licenses...
as per the metallurgic data in North and South Al Sharqiyyah governorates and concentrated prospecting areas for some metals. He referred to the major investment opportunities in mining sector and some investments of large, medium and small companies. Direct investment opportunities of entrepreneurs focus on production of beads, rosaries, sculptures and artistic works. There are several types and colours of rocks in the Sultanate which can be exploited in these industries such as the quarts and basalt, granites, marble and chrome. Al Masroori also reported on the investment prospects associated with mining activities.

Licenses of crushers
Sulaiman bin Hamad Al Sunaidy, Director General of General Directorate of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources at North Al Sharqiyyah Governorate, presented a working paper on licenses of crushers. He pointed out that to obtain approval and municipal license there are certain documents that are required to be submitted before crushers, quarries and screens are approved. He explained some of the conditions required in protection of water resources, specifically that the location of a crusher or a screen should be 3.5 km away from big wadi streams and that depth should not be more than 2 m.

Environmental conditions for crushers and quarries
Speaking about crushers and quarries, Muhammad bin Amer Al Hajri, Director of Environment and Climatic Affairs Department at North Al Batinah Governorate, reported on the standards of environmental evaluation of crushers and quarries and provided some information about environmental stipulations for crushers and quarries and the ministry’s role in curtailing the negative impacts and spreading awareness among enterprise owners in case there are no natural barriers and in taking legal actions against offenders of applicable laws and rules relating to crushers and quarries. He also spoke about measures taken to ensure that the companies owning such enterprises are compliant with the laws, regulations and environmental stipulations and with the improvement of environmental conditions of those locations. Muhammad Al Hajri presented an example of the ideal environmental crusher and how it operates.
Memorandum of Understanding to create and manage the OCCI Award for Innovation has been recently signed between the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Research Council. Representing OCCI, the MoU was signed by Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, OCCI Chairman whilst it was signed from the Council’s side by Dr. Hilal bin Ali Al Hinai, Secretary General of the Research Council.

The creation of the Innovation Award comes in the light of the rapid global changes where innovation has become a fundamental element of development and a method to confront any potential challenges. The Award aims to encourage innovation and propagate its culture in the Sultanate as well as researchers and innovators to highlight their creative and research activities in all fields both locally and globally and...
set up a database of Omani innovators who may be embraced in the future with a view to developing their ideas and thoughts in consistence with the local and global requirements. This contest will be conducted once every two years with the first edition being launched this month.

OCCI invites all to take this course in order to integrate the efforts made by the entire government and the private sector to cooperate in finding solutions to various common issues at the local or regional level. The competition also targets to strengthen cooperation and partnership between the government and the private sector’s establishments, and the academic institutions to bring about innovative solutions in the most of the scientific and technical fields. It also aims at supporting and sponsoring and adopting innovative ideas and turning them into a product that can be marketed and implemented in reality towards opening up many job opportunities for ambitious young men and women.

**Award Sectors**

The Award covers many fields including energy, health, food security, environment, manufacturing industries, logistic services, tourism and information technology and communications. It also targets students, researchers, employees, male and female business owners and national job seekers.
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has signed an agreement with Oman Data Park. The agreement was signed on behalf of OCCI by Engineer Redha bin Jumaa Al Saleh, OCCI Vice-Chairman for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and on behalf of Oman Data Park (ODP) by Mqbool bin Salim Al Qahaibi, ODP’s CEO.

By this agreement it is intended to convert the OCCI’s conventional transaction clearing services into e-services through the OCCI’s website in a trend to streamline and organize such process and save time and effort. These transactions and procedures will also be linked to other related organizations for greater accuracy in performance.
It is natural for monetary transfers of expatriate workforce in oil rich countries to decline in the current year due to global slumping oil prices despite World Bank’s predictions that such financial transfers to developing countries would be USD 516 billion in 2016. There is no doubt that the continuing fluctuation of oil prices between USD 40 – USD 45 per barrel will result in decline of transfers from the GCC countries and other countries of the world over the upcoming years, particularly since these transfers come from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar. The increase in expatriates’ transfers is chiefly attributed to several reasons, including continuing dependence of GCC markets on expatriate workforce in running their businesses. Around 25 million expatriate population are living in these countries with their families, their number being almost equal to GCC citizens.

According to World Bank’s estimates, the numbers of expatriate workforce in the region are so large with Qatar coming on top of world countries in terms of expatriates who constitute 91% of the total population of this country against 88% in UAE, 72% in Kuwait and 45% in the Sultanate of Oman. Last year and this year, the flows of transfers continued in the GCC countries as a result of these countries using the huge financial reserves they have in order to maintain steady levels of expenditure. They also withdraw from their assets in order to cope with the sharp decline in oil prices. However, the continuation of this crisis may compel the region’s countries to adopt some other steps to impose cuts on employment and repatriate expatriate workforce to their home countries.

Some experts are of the opinion that there is a need to impose a financial tax on these transfers to reduce their rate on one hand and support the deficit suffered by the region’s countries due to declining annual revenues on the other hand. Other justifications are being presented in this respect stressing the need of bringing about practical solutions to invest the billions of US dollars sent by expatriates to their countries every year instead of levying fees or taxes on their financial transfers. They propose providing investment opportunities to expatriates to lure them into maintaining their liquidity in the region, allow them to invest their savings in national bonds, investment funds, insurance funds, properties, securities markets and other saving channels. There is also a need to reform the matters relating to the residence of expatriates in the region. Financial analysts accredited by GCC states have previously submitted several proposals to reduce the rates of growing financial transfers from GCC states and their overseas flow. These proposals include creating jobs for GCC citizens to reduce unemployment, stimulate local investments for GCC citizens, open up GCC markets for foreign investors including expatriate workforce and enhance infrastructure and electronic facilities. However, restrictions continue to be imposed on foreigners regarding property ownership and investment in most of the business, which reduces available investment opportunities though some GCC markets are now open for foreign investors. As there is no tax on income from salaries drawn by expatriates in the GCC countries, this trend encourages them to transfer their monies to overseas countries, and this has a negative bearing needing to be reviewed as part of the proposals to boost financial revenues of governments.
Ali bin Salim Al Hajri, Board chairman of North Al Sharqiyah branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said that the second Women Business Owners Forum aims to capitalize upon the huge opportunities available for Omani women to launch joint investments that are beneficial to them and to their society and that promote their products among big companies, create sources of constant income and pave the way for utilization of financing sources to operate income generating enterprises.

This came in the second women business owners under the theme “let us build an economy” organized by the chamber’s branch in North Al Sharqiyah governorate with the participation of more than 30 women entrepreneurs under the auspices of Muhammad bin Mahmood Al Zadjali, Director General of Investors’ Services and Quality Management at Ministry of Tourism and in the presence of Ali bin Salim Al Hajri, Treasurer of the chamber and chairman of chamber’s branch in North Al Sharqiyah governorate during the period from 16 – 18 March 2017.
Tourist products
Two working papers were presented at the forum. The first dealt with the launch by the ministry of tourism of new tourist products in the tourism sector such as the heritage motels, green motels and guest houses presented by Talal bin Khalfan Al Shuaibi, acting director of tourism, North Al Sharqiyyah Governorate. He explained that the objective behind the new tourist products was to encourage small and medium enterprises to invest in the tourism sector, create new job opportunities for citizens, particularly in the villages incubating these enterprises, introduce new interactive elements of tourist attraction involving the tourist, local environment, activate local economy and add value to the tourist return to the Sultanate. The objective is also to cater for cultural legacy of heritage houses and remain keen on sustaining and developing local communities and activating the movement of domestic tourism.

Heritage motels
Talal Al Shuaibi pointed out that the guest houses are accommodating facilities that use some homes as tourist residence providing essential requirements such as cleanliness, tranquility and at least breakfast in accordance with specific conditions and standards. Heritage motels mean the old building of traditional architectural pattern used for accommodating and serving tourists and providing essential requirements. He indicated that green motels are accommodating facilities using agricultural lands for tourist purposes having green spaces of trees and fruitful plantations.

Al Hajri:
The forum aims to capitalize on available opportunities for Omani women to launch joint investments that are beneficial to them and to their society.

Al Shuaibi:
Guest houses are tourist facilities where some houses (of residential use) are used as tourist accommodation having the basic requirements in terms of cleanliness and tranquility.

Al Amri:
The bank has financed 9 tourist enterprises in Al Sharqiyyah two governorates at a total of OMR 6,340,000.000.
Role of Development Bank

The second working paper delivered by Humood bin Nasser Al Amri, Customers Relations officer at Oman Development Bank, dealt with the bank’s role in supporting the tourist sector in Al Sharqiyah governorates. He said: “in view of the tourist potentials of the Sultanate, the bank has been encouraging investment in this sector by granting loans for new tourist projects and expanding existing projects. The bank has since 2008 financed more than 306 tourist projects in the Sultanate at a total value of OMR 43 million. The bank has financed 49 tourist projects in Al Sharqiyah governorates with a total value of OMR 6.34 million, 16% of the total tourist funding for all governorates of the Sultanate. The activities receiving the greatest portion of finance are the hotels, resorts, hotel apartments, tourist camps, tourist cafes, tourist land and maritime transport”. He added that the bank’s message is to achieve development plans in various economic sectors in accordance with the government’s objectives to diversify national income sources by providing distinguished services that satisfy the customers and meet their financing needs.

Pioneering experiences

The forum hosted Shaza bint Abdallah Al Jabriyah, owner of Mishan Dates and Sweets Enterprise. She spoke about her experience in business which she started with a small capital and limited capabilities until it has grown and developed into one which is of high quality and world-class standards. She could beat the difficulties she has faced.

Zuwaina bint Sultan Al Rashdiyah, Executive Director of the World Handicraft Products spoke about the idea of her enterprise. She said: “our ability to meet the unique needs of our customers, particularly during functions would contribute to maintaining Omani heritage and support local economy. We are working side by side with Omani craftsmen and crafts women in order to further develop Omani handicrafts and meet the expectations of our local and international customers. Our vision is to become a global platform for display of Omani products in various parts of the world. We could market and pack handicrafts in support of families and held workshop aimed at development such products taking into account quality and encouragement of Omani families to set up their own private companies”.

It is noteworthy that the forum continued its activities in the desert safari camp at Wilayat Badiyah where meetings and open working sessions were held involving women business owners with their counterparts from various governorates of the Sultanate. They met with tourist companies and members of the OCCI’s tourist committee and talked about ways of developing and promoting small and medium enterprises and take advantage of the products and services of enterprises of women business owners and expand them to enable them to reach regional markets.
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has signed an agreement for cooperation with Al Roya Press and Publishing House whereby the two parties shall have mutual cooperation with the aim of regulating a series of training courses in human resources (HR).

The agreement was signed for the OCCI by engineer Redha bin Jumaa Al Saleh, OCCI Vice-Chairman for Administrative and Financial Affairs; and for Al Roya Press and Publishing House by its CEO Mr. Hatim bin Hamad Al Taie. Mr. Al Taie commended cooperation with OCCI and expressed his hope that the designated training programmes offered in partnership with the company would be fully utilized.

Engineer Al Saleh stated that OCCI signed this cooperation agreement out of its belief in the significance of training as a vital element for developing and honing human skills to the benefit of individuals and establishments. He said he admired what Al Roya could offer in this framework and expected the existing cooperation to succeed in providing the Omani market with quality training programmes. He added that the private sector would continue to train and qualify national cadres considering training as one of the main leverages of development and success.

“The agreement is envisaged to keep the private sector constantly informed about the workshops and training courses organized by the office which are easy to join through the OCCI. It would also assist in accurately selecting training programmes needed by the Omani market, particularly in respect of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in consultation with OCCI”, said Al Taie. He further expressed the readiness of Al Roya Training Services Office to implement OCCI’s recommendations in this respect taking advantage of the OCCI’s close monitoring of market situations and full awareness of the private sector’s requirements.

The signed agreement comes in the context of mutual cooperation between OCCI and the private sector’s establishments in the field of training and in continuation of other areas of cooperation targeting training of individuals and SME owners.
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Al Dhahirah Branch, was the venue of the second edition of the Academic and Economic Forum organized by the College of Applied Sciences, Ibri, in cooperation with OCCI, Al Dhahirah Branch, last March. Lasting for three consecutive days, the forum was held under the theme “Technology and Economy towards Sustainable Development”. On the first day, Dr. Mohammed bin Said Al Balushi, member of the State council, presided over the opening ceremony of the forum and the accompanying exhibition, while in the second day, Dr. Essa bin Khalaf Al Toobi, Director General of Directorate General of Education, Al Dhahirah Governorate, presided over the seminar entitled “Technology and Economy Towards Sustainable Development”. The Forum’s closing ceremony was presided over by His Excellency Sheikh Saif bin Abdallah Al Maamari, Wali of Yanqul.

About the positive echoes of the Second Academic and Economic Forum, we are pleased to highlight the successes that the forum has achieved.

Commenting on the forum, Dr. Jehad Mahmood Al Khalaf bin Younes, Dean College of Applied Sciences, Ibri, stated: “This second academic and economic forum was a truthful and obvious expression of the aspired partnering approach which should overwhelm the relationship between various government and private organizations and establishments, particularly amid the increasing and awaited roles of the private sector. The forum has also provided a broad platform and wide window through which the college’s students and cadres could see the external community which would further consolidate cooperation with the economic poles and centers in Al Dhahirah Governorate in quest for further interaction with the production sectors in the Sultanate. In the framework of cooperation between College of Applied Sciences, Ibri, and the OCCI Al Dhahirah, the Second Academic and Economic Forum was organized under the theme “Technology and Economy Towards Sustainable Development” during the period from 20 – 22 March 2017 at the College and Chamber premises. The forum included 4 events, namely: exhibition of IT students, scientific seminar, technology festival competition and workshop. The forum aimed to familiarize the society with the potentials and capacities of the College’s students in information technology and the technology-related solutions which the students and graduates of the college can provide to their communities. A seminar was also held that gathered teaching staff from colleges and universities of the Sultanate who delivered their scientific researches. Higher education institutions students also took part in the technology festival competition. Workshops were also held that aimed at serving the society in the first place. This forum is considered to be a method whereby the College can link up with the external society”.

Commendations for the successes achieved by Second Academic Economic Forum, Al Dhahirah Governorate

Ibri: Mohammed Al Kalbani
Ali bin Saleh Al Kalbani, OCCI Board member and Chairman of OCCI Al Dhahirah Branch, said: “This forum provides a good opportunity for enlightening entrepreneurs in the three wilayats of the governorate, namely Ibi, Yanqul and Dhank on the importance of using information technology in the management of economic projects. The forum endeavored to uplift the level of technological awareness among business male and female owners and all stakeholders involved in the fields of marketing, sales and databases”.

Dr. Tahir Amran Faneer, Head of IT Section at College of Applied Sciences, Ibi, said: “the constructive cooperation between OCCI, Al Dhahirah Branch, and College of Applied Sciences, Ibi, had great bearing on the significant success made by the Second Academic and Economic Forum in its three days. The forum has flown high with two wings, academic and economic, and organized an exhibition combining academic and schools projects as well as entrepreneurship. A scientific seminar was also held during the forum during which academicians presented their latest researches in the field of using technology in economic projects which would contribute to achieving sustainable development. In addition, the accompanying technology festival held during the forum constituted the biggest students gathering of an academic institution in the Sultanate where students could compete in various scientific and technological contests. We must not forget the specialized workshops accompanying the forum in the three days and which added yet further glitter to the significant success that was achieved. Last year, we witnessed the successful launch of the first edition of this forum and today we are experiencing the echoes of successes achieved by the second edition and we will also witness further successes in the forthcoming forum in line with the strategic plans that confirms the College’s effective role within the society”.

Sheeban bin Muhammad Al Sheebani, an owner of a screen printing establishment and one of the participants in the exhibition accompanying the forum, said: “we were so happy to attend the Second Academic and Economic Forum which provided us with a good opportunity to familiarize with the activities, programs and technologies in which the IT students of College of Applied Sciences are involved in the forum has achieved the objectives drawn up for it owing to the cooperation between the College and OCCI Al Dhahirah. Such understandings are considered to be an important motive for further encouragement of the students to access the world of entrepreneurship, innovation and development in the field of information technology.”
To explore partnership and investment opportunities:

**Oman chamber of commerce and industry organizes trade tour of Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand**

*Al Kiyumi:*
We seek to increase trade exchange, create trade partnerships and attract investments.
His Excellency Said bin Saleh Al Kiyumi, Board Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said: “OCCI is keen on dispatching specialized trade delegations to many countries of the world as part of its role in strengthening fields of cooperation and creating economic partnerships between Omani businessmen and their counterparts in those countries which would certainly contribute to uplifting the level of economic cooperation and increasing the volume of trade exchanged over the next period”. This came in a statement made by His Excellency at the beginning of a tour of an OCCI’s trade delegation in Jakarta to meet with officials in the government and private sector in Indonesia as part of a visit which would also take the delegation to Singapore and Thailand from 7–13 March 2017. Led by His Excellency, the delegation consisted of 30 businessmen representing various economic sectors, including small and medium enterprises.

His Excellency stressed the importance of the visit which aims to discuss opportunities and fields of cooperation between the Sultanate and Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. He confirmed OCCI’s keen interest in boosting fields of economic cooperation at all levels and pointed out that these countries have been among the fastest developing and growing economies over the past period.

**Importance of trade delegations**

“During its visit to Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, the business delegation discussed several investment opportunities and fields through meetings that will gather businessmen from these countries and their Omani counterparts where fields and opportunities of cooperation will be reviewed and shown through visual presentations with the participation of the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Exports Development (ithraa)”, His Excellency said.

His Excellency further stated that OCCI realizes the prime importance of organizing visits for trade delegations and that is why it dedicates special attention and attaches great importance to familiarization with the Sultanate. The available investment opportunities in it as well as the motivational investment procedures and provision of opportunity to businessmen to acquaint with fields of cooperation and conclude economic partnerships that would allow for opening of new channels of communication with these countries. He indicated that these visit brought about positive results at all levels.

**Visit schedule**

During the visit, a meeting was organized, where investment opportunities between the two countries were discussed. Bilateral meetings were also held between the Omani businessmen and their Indonesian counterparts where opportunities and prospects of cooperation and investment between the two countries, particularly in the strategic sectors such as industry, tourism, energy and minerals, were discussed. Other sectors which would open up wider prospects of cooperation between the two countries over the upcoming years were discussed.

The tour also included a visit to the capital city of Singapore where meetings were held with the Singaporean officials and businessmen on fields and opportunities joint investment between the two countries. Following that, the delegation left to the Kingdom of Thailand where OCCI arranged visits and meetings with the Thai officials including a meeting with the Thai deputy prime minister and another meeting with businessmen.

He added that such visits would boost trade exchange between the Sultanate and other countries and would also provide great opportunities for our businessmen to hold bilateral meetings and set up trade and industrial partnership having direct bearing on increasing investment volume. He pointed out that trade exchange with these countries is below the ambitions and should be better which puts greater weight upon our shoulders to develop these relations and hence trade exchange.

He indicated that OCCI seeks to attract new investments and numerous industries into the Sultanate, particularly since there are many advantages available for investors reflecting positively on the economy in general with the existence of an integrated infrastructure, industrial areas and modern seaports. “We should take advantage of that in promoting the Sultanate and creating partnerships with global companies wishing to invest in our country”, Al Kiyumi said.

**Call for taking advantage of others’ experience**

His Excellency called upon the participating businessmen to take advantage of whatever is available in various fields. He pointed out that Indonesia is actively engaged in the industries of oil, gas, textile, food and beverages, metal industries, chemicals, shipbuilding, vehicles, instruments, equipment, tourism and agricultural produce. Such industries are needed in the Sultanate. Singapore has long standing experience in electronics, financial services, prospecting equipment, ship repairs, trade and commercial centers. Thailand on the other hand possesses extensive experiences that can be utilized and it also has many industries that enabled it to become an industrial center for many global industries.

It is noteworthy that such visits come in the context of OCCI’s endeavor to increase the volume of trade exchange which has witnessed an increase over the past years with Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. The volume of Omani imports from Indonesia in 2015 amounted to OMR 82.3 million while the volume of Oman’s exports accounted for OMR 34.5 million. Imports from Singapore in the same year amounted to OMR 90 million and exports accounted for 278 million. Oman’s exports to the Kingdom of Thailand amounted to OMR 636.9 million in 2014 while our imports accounted for OMR 185.5 million.
As part of the Sultanate’s preparations to take part in Expo 2020 Dubai, scheduled to be held from October 20, 2020 to April 10, 2021 under the theme ‘Connecting Minds, Creating the Future’, a team from the Expo’s organising committee visited the Sultanate.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted in March 2017 a delegation of organizers for Expo 2020 Dubai in the presence of Eng. Redha bin Juma Al Saleh, Deputy Chairman of OCCI for Administrative and Financial Affairs. The purpose was to discuss the many investment opportunities provided by the expected global event for Omani companies of various sizes in the different fields. The delegation’s visit comes as part of a tour of the region that would also take them to Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. More than 100 representatives of small and medium enterprises from different sectors including construction, hospitality, food and beverages, steel, copper and local crafts.

Eng. Redha bin Juma al- Saleh, Deputy Chairman of OCCI for Administrative and Financial Affairs, opened the meeting with a welcome address in which he said: we welcome our brothers and members of the Expo 2020 organizers in their home and among their relatives in the Sultanate and do appreciate this trend to promote the huge event and the giant opportunities through it. He pointed out that the participation of 180 countries from around the world in the same place and time in the creative Emirate of Dubai means flow of millions of visitors looking for distinguished opportunities and ideas and seeking to familiarize with the Middle East through the city of Dubai.

He stressed the importance of taking part in this great event and urged SMEs to benefit from the available business opportunities at Expo Dubai 2020 and to have a place in this great global event.

His Excellency Mohsen bin Khamis al- Balushi, Advisor of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, said that the visit aims at benefiting from the many and diverse opportunities that will be provided by the upcoming Expo 2020 Dubai for the Omani companies in the different fields, the criteria and the requirements for registering SMEs for participation in the Expo. He called upon the business owners to take advantage of this global event which will be hosted by the Emirate of Dubai in 2020 for its great importance at the global level and where nearly 200 countries from around the world will take part.

Manal al-Bayat, Deputy Head of the Business Integration and Development at Expo 2020 Dubai, said that Expo 2020 Dubai is a global event that concerns the entire region which is full of talented youth, entrepreneurs, innovators and high level global companies who can all contribute to the event and take advantage of it. She expects to award more than 140 contracts worth of AED11 billion in 2017. These contracts, which include goods and services, target the Omani business community in particular and Gulf business community in general.
“Within the framework of our commitment to providing opportunities relating to Expo 2020 Dubai at the largest possible scope, we have developed a purchasing and tenders mechanism characterized with simplicity, transparency and comprehensiveness. Most of the tenders will be floated into the market through a special digital portal. We are working towards polarizing over 200 countries to take part in this global event where the participants will be able to use the portal for their tenders allowing registered providers to reach a larger market and wider range of diverse opportunities’, she said.

She further pointed out that “we encourage all companies to register in our digital portal to have the opportunity to take advantage of the many opportunities which will be provided by Expo 2020 Dubai during the journey into 2020 and thereafter.”

Expo Dubai 2020 will be a platform to shed light on the national identity and an opportunity for the GCC states to showcase the development they have made before tourists and visitors to this big international expo, which is held in Middle East, North Africa and South Asia for the first time.

The visit included presentations on Expo 2020 Dubai plans and the progress made to host this international event. The visit also focused on the available business opportunities during preparation for the Expo and during the six-month long Expo itself and the stage of building a legacy that would transform the event location into a prosperous environment for various industries which would depict the features of the future of regional economy.

In the context of highlighting Expo 2020 Dubai’s support to small and medium enterprises, Manal Al Bayat said: “the small and medium companies are an important contributor to regional economy either at the level of gross domestic product or in terms of providing job opportunities. This segment of companies are known for their flexibility and capacity to innovate and for these reasons Expo 2020 Dubai is committed to providing them with all tools that would make it easier for them to engage as far as possible in the supply chain of the expected global event. For example, we have set flexible commercial conditions allowing small and medium companies to take part in the tenders with higher competitive capacities including the payment of 50% of the value of commodities or materials supplied and payment of 25% of the value of provided services. In June 2016, we announced allocation of 20% of total value of direct and indirect expenditure for the event in contracts exceeding in value AED 5 billion for small and medium enterprises”.

Mohsin Al Balushi: The visit seeks to take advantage of the many and diverse opportunities provided by the expected global event, Expo 2020 Dubai.

Engineer Redha: the participation of 180 countries from around the world means flow of millions of visitors seeking distinguished opportunities and ideas.

Manal Al Bayat: we encourage and call upon all companies to register through our digital portal allowing them the opportunity to take advantage of the many opportunities available at Expo 2020 Dubai.
With a view to familiarizing with the Duqm Economic Zone and closely familiarize with the investments ongoing there and the major incentives, privileges and facilities provided to investors in the zone, the OCCI North Al Sharqiyah branch has organized a visit for the real estate development committee members to Duqm Economic Zone led by Amor bin Mubarak Al Hajri, board member of OCCI North Al Sharqiyah branch and chairman of real estate development committee with the participation of the committee members.

The members met with the zone’s officials who provided to them an elaboration on the zone, competitive advantages it provides and its motivational environment which is conducive to investment either in terms of legislations or the benefits offered to the investors. The committee members also saw for themselves the existing industries and logistic services.

The committee members visited the ship repair dry dock and familiarized with its components, its future plans, total capacity and increased operational efficiency. They also visited Duqm port and familiarized themselves with its important role in developing Al Wusta (Central) governorate and Al Nahdha village and the investments and services therein.
Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Buraimi Branch, and Buraimi University College to Agree on Joint Cooperation

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Al Buraimi Branch, held a joint meeting with Buraimi University College in order to put in place an executive plan for implementation of the cooperation agreement signed between the two sides.

The meeting, which was held at the chamber’s premises in Buraimi, discussed means of activating the cooperation agreement, putting in place its executive and operational frameworks and identifying the initial needs for commencement of actual application of the provisions thereof. The agreement includes a number of clauses, foremost of which is the strengthening of cooperation in the fields of training, familiarization with employment opportunities available in the private sector’s companies and establishments and empowerment of educational institutions to identify the needs and requirements of the labor markets and maintain compatibility between educational deliverables and the actual need in business sector for professions and specialized jobs. The agreement also provides, in detail, cooperation in preparing various economic researches, studies and consultations, exchanging experiences in various fields and participating in the activities and events organized by the two parties.

Participating in the meeting were Said bin Hamad Al Haddadi, Deputy Director of OCCI Buraimi Branch; Dr. Yasir Fuad Abdallat, Assistant Dean Academic Affairs; Dr. Samir Fayez Turki, Assistant Dean Students’ Affairs; and a number of officials from both sides.
Ayman bin Abdallah Al Hassani, OCCI Board Vice-Chairman for Economic and Branches Affairs, received at the OCCI premises on Thursday 20, January 2017 a delegation of the students of the Kenyan National Defence College.

OCCI Board Vice-Chairman for Economic and Branches Affairs welcomed the delegation members and stated that such exchanged visits of official and non-official delegations would open up wide prospects for exchange of experiences, cooperation and partnership in various fields.

He pointed out that OCCI is keen on strengthening cooperation and partnerships with brothers and friends in all countries of the world and provide facilities to investors. He further emphasized that there were many investment opportunities available in the Sultanate.

Sulaiman bin Sultan Al Mughairi, OCCI Director of Public Relations, delivered a visual presentation about the climate and opportunities of investment in the Sultanate giving detailed introduction to the role played by OCCI as the official and main representative of the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman.
With the participation of more than 35 male and female entrepreneurs, the Financial Accounting for Non-accountants course concluded under the auspices of Muhammad bin Taman Al Maashani, board member of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Dhofar Branch, and chairman of SMEs Committee, held at the OCCI branch premises in Dhofar during the period from 2 – 6 April 2017.

The course was conducted in cooperation with Dhofar International Training & Qualification Training Center in the context of the endeavor of OCCI and all its branches to provide all capabilities in order to serve and develop the skills of male and female owners of SMEs and urge them to engage in entrepreneurship and encourage them towards utilizing the financing and awareness programmes provided by all organizations in the Sultanate.

OCCI calls upon the Omani young male and female business owners to take the initiative and register and participate in all course conducted by OCCI and other supporting organizations and take advantage of this opportunity with a view to developing the businesses of their enterprises and supplying them with what is new in the world of entrepreneurship.
The Banking, Financial and Insurance Sector Committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) held its second meeting for 2017 under the chairmanship of Engineer Redha bin Jumaa Al Saleh, OCCI Board Vice-chairman for Administrative and Financial Affairs and Committee Chairman, in the presence of the members and representatives of insurance, banking sector and banks.

Engineer Redha welcomed the members attending the meeting thanking them for their efforts towards promoting the sector’s activities and stressed that their role has now become yet greater in the light of the current situations facing the Sultanate and the entire world in general.

The meeting then discussed the recommendations of the committee’s delegation to Taiwan and how far has the delegation benefitted from the organizational structure of the insurance and banking sector in Taiwan. The recommendations dealt with the importance of participation in specialized exhibitions which are held in Taiwan and invite the Taiwanese Insurance Institute to deliver lectures on insurance in the Sultanate and seek its assistance in conducting training course in Oman or dispatch staff of the insurance establishments for training in that institute. The meeting also discussed the importance of setting up a specialized insurance institute in the Sultanate taking advantage of the experience of the Taiwanese Insurance Institute. The recommendations also dealt with the importance that the private sector should have part of the training grants offered by Taiwan and that such grants should not be confined to the government sector only.

The meeting then discussed the importance of organizing a meeting with one of the specialized staff of the General Secretariat of Taxation to talk about the recent amendments to the income tax law and its application mechanism.

The attending members proposed that the future committee meetings should be in accordance with the sectors with focus on specific points and solutions to the challenges facing this sector. The meeting also stressed the importance of organizing a visit to Duqm Economic Zone with the participation of businessmen wishing to visit the Zone.