CELEBRATION OF 45 YEARS
VISION
To develop the Omani private sector and make it a key partner in sustainable economic development.

MISSION
OCCI is the official representative of the Omani private sector inside and outside the Sultanate. It is also its active tool in taking decisions of interest for the sector. It seeks to develop the sector through the available tools and programs for enhancing economic growth in the Sultanate.

Indicator of OCCI members
April 2018

New companies
1,642

Renewed companies
8,893

Companies that changed its capital
290

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The interest shown by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to the private sector as a key partner in the economic development of the Sultanate and the issuance of the Royal Decree on May 15, 1973 establishing Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry as the official representative of the private sector have enhanced the status of private sector and those working in the sector. OCCI acts as a bridge of communication between Omani businessmen and their counterparts abroad through organizing various exhibitions, forums and by assisting in settling commercial disputes. Over the past 45 years, OCCI continued its partnership with the government and society by taking part in the implementation of economic diversification plans and programs and representing the private sector in regional and global forums.

As part of its efforts to improve the business environment, OCCI has recently organized a number of specialized workshops that targeted a wide range of businessmen in order to identify the perspectives and aspirations of private sector institutions to create a business-friendly environment that facilitates the establishment and growth of businesses. OCCI has developed its strategy for the period (2018-22) that outlines the objectives and initiatives, implementation mechanism and the performance indicators.

The current issue of Al Ghorfa magazine focuses on the prospects for public-private partnerships and investment opportunities in the private sector. This coincides with the celebration of International Labour Day, as well as the celebration of the Chamber Day. The issue highlights also the challenges being faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has laid the foundations and pillars of national unity and the development of human resources as the cornerstone of sustainable development in various fields. The economic Renaissance of Oman’s modern economy has begun on 15 May 1973, with a Royal Decree establishing Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

The first board of directors of the Chamber was elected early in 1975, and since then OCCI has been receiving and operating commercial and industrial delegations. It has also attended conferences, seminars, meetings, and councils. It also makes heroic effort to ensure activating its membership of Arab and foreign unions and chambers. It also acts as a link between Omani businessmen and their counterparts abroad.

OCCI seeks to develop the private sector and make it a key partner in sustainable economic development. It deals with private sector issues and interests, and actively participates with the private sector in the implementation of plans to diversify sources of national income.

At the external level, OCCI is the bridge of communication between Omani businessmen and their counterparts abroad, through the establishment of various exhibitions, and organization of meetings. It also plays a role in the settlement of commercial disputes and the completion of the strategic objectives of the Chamber. It does everything possible to ensure supporting small and medium enterprises, promoting scientific research and innovation and enhancing economic diversification. It also plays an active role in attracting and encouraging foreign investments and endeavors to enhance business with other GCC states.

By the Editorial Team

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has been established to partner with the Government and the community in nation building.

OCCI continues receiving trade and industrial delegations.

Development of the private sector and making it an essential partner in sustainable economic development is a key element of OCCI activity.

By the Editorial Team

Board of Directors
His Excellency Mohammed Bin Al-Zubair bin Ali assumed the post of Chairman of the Chamber Founding Committee during the period 1973-75. His Excellency late Haj Ali bin Sultan bin Fadil was the first elected president of the Board of Directors during the period 1975-81, followed by His Excellency Sheikh Ahmed Bin Mohammed bin Oumair Al Hinai during the period 1987-91. He was followed by His Excellency Sheikh Yaqub Bin Hamad Al Harthy during the period 1991-95 and HE Sheikh Salem Bin Hilal Al Khalili during the period from 1995-2001. He was followed by Sheikh Abdullah bin Salem Al Rowas during the period from 2001-04.

HE Saeed bin Saleh Al Kiyoumi was elected as the Chairman of the Board of Directors during the period 2014-17. The current chairman of the Board of Directors (2018-22), is HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef.

The current Board of Directors is preparing a work strategy for the Chamber for the coming period. The strategy is expected to focus on strengthening the tripartite partnership between the Chamber, the Government, the private sector and the community. It is also focusing on achieving the principles and standards of governance in the Chamber and private sector institutions. It also seeks to activate the private sector’s role in the comprehensive development process led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

To mark the occasion, Al Ghorfa magazine has been keen to get feedbacks and comments from the Chamber’s employees about the roles played by the Chamber and the services it provided and well as what do they expect from OCCI.
Commenting on the upcoming role of the Chamber during the next phase, Sheikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalili said: We hope to find a clear platform with the government to discuss issues related to economic and commercial aspects in general. OCCI should identify the areas that fit foreign investment. It should decide the size and timing of this investment. This will help us to identify the sectors that are left only to Omani and which do not need expertise and knowledge of foreign or foreign capital.

Al-Khalili pointed out the importance of focusing on the media aspect of the Chamber and disseminating the Chamber’s vision through traders. OCCI needs to clarify what is required of the government, traders and society to achieve a positive environment for the members of the Chamber.

Sub-committees
Mr. Mohamed Al-Ansi (Logistic Company): The private sector relies heavily on OCCI board of directors, especially in light of the current economic conditions. OCCI is the official representative of the private sector. It should review the laws and legislations that will affect the private sector and represent the private sector interests and act as a link between the local investor and the foreign investors. Therefore, OCCI should review the means used in selecting members of the sub-committees. There should also be an effective role for these committees, which will contribute to raising the efficiency of the private sector. We need to ensure the participation of the private sector in decision-making and in drafting the development plans. This will make OCCI a strong voice.

Strategy formulation
“In the coming stage, OCCI will have to formulate a strategy in the areas and challenges faced by the private sector, especially in evaluating the Omanization plans in different sectors. It should be involved in identifying new ways to contribute to the implementation of Omanization more efficiently,” he said.

“We hope that OCCI will work to increase the exports of Omani products to the basic markets, by providing export guarantees in cooperation with Credit Oman. It should find mechanisms to facilitate and accelerate the provision of guarantees more than it is now.

We look forward to OCCI to carry out and provide specific studies on the quality of exportable products to the United States of America to benefit from the FTA and to identify a department to do so and to evaluate its work by focusing on large and important markets close to us such as India and Iran, he added. We should activate the media aspect, especially social media through raising awareness of the private sector of the events and exhibitions and create a platform for identifying the difficulties and challenges facing small and medium enterprises.

Clear goals
Asmaa Al Futaisi said, “I would like to congratulate the Board of Directors of OCCI. The next phase is a sensitive and challenging stage for the economy, both locally and globally. The new management is therefore expected to focus on developing a comprehensive and clear work plan for OCCI. OCCI head office and branches should concentrate their efforts to ensure that OCCI acts as the voice of the private sector.”

It is very important to focus on several key goals, including enhancing e-services to facilitate transactions and providing greater support to small and medium enterprises by creating more training and training environments and create new marketing outlets. It needs to enhance efforts related to strengthening governance in all OCCI’s executive bodies to achieve the comprehensive economic visions - Vision 2040.
Stimulating investment

Hafiz Al-Rabaie pointed out that OCCI plays a key role in developing the economy and attracting foreign direct investment, either through direct promotion by visiting international markets or hosting investors or monitoring laws and regulations enacted by the government and ensuring that they are investor-friendly.

Al Rabaie explained that OCCI plays a key role in organizing the markets and spreading the culture of entrepreneurship, especially creative innovations. It also supports businessmen and women and care for their interests. It seeks to handle rehabilitation youth by providing them with advisory and training facilities as well as legal, marketing and services. We need also to activate the role of the committees in the governorates to ensure that OCCI provides the required support to all sectors, said Saif Al-Raisi.

Promotion and marketing

In the coming period, we hope OCCI will focus on the marketing and promotion of SME products, especially of Omani origin, by intensifying exhibitions. A large number of Omani already started small and medium enterprises and are making great efforts to promote the goods produced by their projects.

There is a need to increase the methods of promotion and marketing, said Aziza bint Salim Al-Hajriyyah, owner of a project specialized in the production of perfumes.

Enterprise challenges

Amal Bint Selim Al-Meslihi, who runs a project to produce sweets and pastries, spoke about some of the challenges facing small and medium enterprises saying that we should address these challenges and raise awareness of business owners. Moreover, we should encourage entrepreneurs to work hard and offer the best services so that they remain viable at the market.

Exchange of experiences

It is very important to develop the partnership between local entrepreneurs and their counterparts in the region to exchange experiences and create new projects in the SME sector as this will enhance competition among existing projects, said Salameh Bint Jamaa al Hajri, the owner of a Manali project.

Partnerships there are small projects run by Omani women that we hope they will be supported by the provision of incubators equipped with the services, and the infrastructure that you need such as raw materials and equipment. These projects should be followed up until they are able to access the local market and women can manage it,” said Nadia Bint Abdullah Al-Khashidya.

We need also to create trade partnerships and identify new ways to encourage investment. I believe that OCCI should be involved in drafting any laws or regulations that will affect the business environment.

Programs and activities

OCCI has given a positive boost to economic activity, which has stimulated the continued creation of sustainable jobs in private sector institutions by encouraging and facilitating investments, and supporting small and medium enterprises. OCCI has also provided many programs, activities and events that serve all small and medium enterprises, said Said bin Al-Mur Al-Ghazali, owner of Ibn Al-Mur Golden Projects LLC.

OCCI has sought to address the needs, aspirations and changes that have taken place in the work environment in the private sector. To this end, it carried out several studies and recommendations which will enhance the economic activity in the Sultanate, he concluded.

Sector support

At the outset, we thank and appreciate the efforts of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and hope that OCCI will play a better role in developing and supporting traders to help them meet the requirements of the economy at this stage. OCCI should focus on supporting the industrial and commercial sector. It should also encourage and facilitate small and medium enterprises, as these institutions are the cornerstone of the economy in any country. We hope OCCI would play a significant role in supporting and motivating young people to establish their own ventures. It should rehabilitate youth by providing them with advisory and training facilities as well as legal, marketing and services. We need also to activate the role of the committees in the governorates to ensure that OCCI provides the required support to all sectors, said Saif Al-Raisi.

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Oman Economic Forum reviews Opportunities and Prospects

by Rabeea bint Saeed Al Harthiya

The Sultanate’s government continues its programs to attract investments to various economic sectors. The Forum is an appropriate opportunity and an explicit invitation to the local and foreign private sector to contribute effectively to investment in various sectors. Significant improvement in most economic, financial, monetary and banking indicators during 2017.

Bank deposits and loans grew by 5.6% and 6.4% respectively.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the Sultanate’s GDP to grow by 11% this year at current prices.

Local liquidity grew by 4.2% during 2017.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Al Ittisad Wal Amaal jointly organized the sixth version of “Oman Economic Forum” on 29 and 30 April 2018 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

The forum was opened under the patronage of His Excellency Sultan bin Salem Al Habsi, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, in the presence of a number of their excellences and officials.

The aim of the forum was to highlight development projects, government policies, explore investment opportunities in all economic sectors and review the prospects of the Oman economy in light of the recovery of the global economy. It also aimed at highlighting the strategic importance of ports in establishing a sustainable economy and Duqm an integrated logistics, tourism and industrial center.

The forum also aimed to shed light on the prospects for public-private partnership, investment opportunities in the private sector, investment prospects in the real estate sector, financing infrastructure projects and real estate projects, and the future of the banking industry.

Attracting investments

HE Sultan bin Salem Al Habsi, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, said in his speech that the Sultanate’s government continues its programs to attract investments from sisterly and friendly countries in various economic sectors and expand the role of the private sector in the Oman economy and provide investor-friendly business environment.

Besides launching investment projects for domestic and foreign investments, the government provides every possible support to small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship as they play a key role in creating employment opportunities for Omanis. The government is also making endeavors to provide more flexibility and facilitate the business and investment environment in the Sultanate.

The Government has taken several measures, the most important of which is the establishment of the Investment Services Center at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The Center is facilitating the processing of transactions for establishing investment projects and expanding the role of the private sector in the Omani economy and provide investor-friendly business environment.

Al-Zubair: The Sultanate and the rest of the GCC countries recovered from severe recession in 2016 to a remarkable recovery in 2018.

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banking sector while preserving the quality of the loan portfolio. Capital adequacy ratio for the banking sector was around 18% at the end of 2017, and of non-performing loans remained at a low level of about 2%

As part of the continuous efforts to exploit the comparative advantages and competitiveness of the Sultanate through diversification and economic stimulus programs, Oman’s non-oil exports, whether commodities or services, are expected to continue to grow. The Sultanate will also adopt a balanced fiscal policy which will boost non-oil revenues, and measures aimed at enhancing the economic environment and ease of doing business as this will attract more domestic and foreign investment and will lead to more prosperity and progress, he added.

Significant recovery

Khalid bin Mohammed Al Zubair, Chairman of Ominvest, highlighted in his speech the general economic situation in the region where oil is the driving force of GCC economies. He showed the difference oil price can make in one year. The price of oil in June 2014 peaked to $115 per barrel, then fell to $29 per barrel by January 2016. Oil experts believe that oil is heading to $80 and even higher. This sharp fluctuation in the prices of raw materials such as oil poses major challenges for companies and oil sectors, as it is the case with the Sultanate. These fluctuations also provide incentives for major reforms and create opportunities for a good investor.

The Sultanate and the rest of the GCC countries have recovered from the severe recession in 2016 to a remarkable recovery in 2018, but still we cannot say that «mission accomplished», because there is still a longer distance to go achieve the desired goals, he added.

Al-Zubair discussed recent improvements in the Sultanate’s economic conditions and future outlook and the GDP growth. He noted that despite the economic downturn in 2015 and 2016, the Oman economy is expected to grow by 3% in 2018, thanks to the significant recovery in oil prices and reforms. The Government of Oman announced an increase in spending by 7% in the 2018 budget. Moreover, the Government intends to continue spending on important development projects and major social programs.

He noted that between 2015 and 2016, the Sultanate experienced a huge deficit. For example, the budget deficit widened to RO 5.3 billion (22% of GDP) in 2016, which fell to RO 3.5 billion (13% of GDP) in 2017. The budget was set to reduce the deficit by an additional three billion Rials (10% of GDP) in 2018. The budget was set to reduce the deficit by an additional three billion Rials (10% of GDP) in 2018. The budget deficit will also be reduced to low single digits (between 3% and 4% of GDP) or may disappear completely if the average price of oil in Oman is about $70 a barrel, the financial equilibrium point.

Strengthening the banking system and the private sector

“The Sultanate’s budget for 2018 is based on the average oil price of $50 per barrel. The average price of Oman oil is expected to reach $65 per barrel in 2017 and US $52 per barrel. If oil prices stabilized on current levels, this will have a significant positive impact on Oman’s key economic indicators and prospects. The budget deficit will also be reduced to low single digits (between 3% and 4% of GDP) or may disappear completely if the average price of oil in Oman is about $70 a barrel, the financial equilibrium point.

Al-Zubair pointed out that the Central Bank of Oman allowed banks to include their net borrowing from local banks at their deposit base, which gave banks more space to expand their loans and allowed to expand their liabilities and assets. Oman banks have high capital and banks’ capital adequacy ratios are much higher than the minimum stipulated by the Central Bank of Oman. While Bank Muscat’s capital adequacy ratio stood at 18.6%, National Bank of Oman was 17.3%; Bank Dhofar was 15.4% and Sahar Bank was 16.2%.

The lending rates for banks have fallen well below the ceiling set by the Central Bank of Oman, so there is ample scope for loan growth. The actions and measures taken recently by the CBO will serve as an additional stimulus that will boost credit growth, enhance liquidity flows, help the private sector to borrow more aggressively and invest such funds in creating fresh jobs.

Sovereign debt

On aggregate, Al-Zubair pointed out that sovereign debt is a challenge to the economic image of the Sultanate. The Sultanate’s government has sought to finance the budget deficit by borrowing from international markets. In the last four years (from 2015 to 2018) it borrowed more than $12 billion. For example, in January 2018, the Sultanate raised $6.5 billion from the international market. The issue was oversubscribed by more than 2.3 times, indicating an attractive interest rate of 5.6% due to Oman sovereign ratings.

With the strong recovery in oil prices and accelerated government initiatives to diversify the economy and financial reforms, we expect that the debt as a proportion of GDP will reduce to more moderate levels over the next three years. We noted that the Oman government has financed more than 80% of the deficit financing requirements through US dollar borrowing from international markets and refinancing with local banks and the Central Bank of Oman, which has left the local capitalization ratio reduced and helped the banking sector in meeting the needs of the private sector.

The wise decision taken by the Ministry of Finance to borrow from international markets and the recent flexible policy of the Central Bank towards the banking sector presented a wide range of soft policies. This provided a strong boost to the local financial system and the private sector, he furthered.

Currency Peg:

Al-Zubair said that with the great recovery in oil prices and support for the economies of the GCC countries, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Sultanate continued to borrow heavily and confidently from international markets. He noted that he believes that that there is no direct risk from pegging the GCC currences to the US dollar as good coordination among the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council will be always maintained.

While it seems that the financial position of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait of foreign currency is very strong, this is due to the speculative behavior. The US dollar has been in a trough for about 8 months, which has fallen to a 22% of GDP in 2016, which fell to RO 3.5 billion (13% of GDP) in 2017. The budget was set to reduce the deficit by an additional three billion Rials (10% of GDP) in 2018. The budget was set to reduce the deficit by an additional three billion Rials (10% of GDP) in 2018.

Al-Zubair said that there are many opportunities from other sectors such as e-commerce in addition to attractive opportunities in the financial technology, banking and financial services sectors. The financial information technology is expected to penetrate the assets of the GCC banks, estimated at $2.1 billion and to capture a large part of this market. This can be translated into billions of dollars, of course, over the next few years. This means that the Omani Rial is in a advantageous position.

Al-Zubair concluded by saying that these developments highlight the fact that the Sultanate and the rest of the GCC are moving ahead towards rapid growth in the non-oil and gas sectors, the so-called new sectors of the economy.

Sessions

The first session discussed the prospects of the Oman economy considering the recovery of the global economy, means of adaptation to global economic developments, the new challenges and policies, ways to shift from a consumer to a productive economy, and the interaction of the private sector with new challenges.

The second session, entitled «The strategic importance of ports in establishing a sustainable economy», touched on the challenges and opportunities in a highly competitive environment. The session highlighted infrastructure projects, expansion plans, developing trade exchange and expanding shipping lines to Oman ports. The session also highlighted the Sultanate as a logistics hub for the Middle East and North Africa region.

The third session was entitled «Duqm, an integrated logistics, tourism and industrial center» The session covered several topics, including the review of completed and ongoing projects, prospects and investment opportunities.

The fourth session discussed the prospects of public-private partnership and investment opportunities in the private sector.

The fifth session titled «Investment Horizons in the Real Estate Sector» discussed the real estate investment funds and the Port of Sultan Qaboos. It reviewed the real estate development projects by the private sector.

The sixth session titled «Financing Infrastructure Projects and Real Estate Projects», covered financing projects through Islamic banks, and ways to develop real estate projects and Islamic bonds.

The seventh session titled «The Future of the Banking Industry», touched on the use of financial technology to enhance the capabilities of banks, investments in emerging companies, creating employment opportunities and diversifying of investments. It also highlighted means of improving the consumer experience.
TABLE 1: Significance of Oil Exports in the Omani Economy

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oil exports as % of total exports of goods &amp; services</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil exports as % of GDP</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports as % of GDP</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil exports per capita (RO)</td>
<td>181.6</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>3845</td>
<td>3474</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: calculated by the author and based on National Center for Statistics and Information Statistical Year Book

The oil sector in Oman has become a backbone of the economy. Since it has huge financial returns and it is the main source of hard currency, it is the most important factor to raise the income. The performance of Omani economy improved significantly due largely to the mid-year upturn in oil prices (up to $100 per barrel). The period from 2000 to 2013 is one of the best years of Oman’s economy in terms of economic performance because of rising oil prices. The rise in oil prices in this period has helped to build Omani budget surpluses, trade surpluses and foreign reserves. However, the sharp decline in oil prices has upset the positive relationship between oil revenue and economic performance where the equilibrium situation has changed of the surplus to a deficit of RO 3 billion during the period 2015-2017 (Omani budget 2016-17).

1.3 Research Problem and Objectives

Oman has been exporting oil for more than 40 years. For the year 2014, the percentage of oil exports was about 65.5% of the total exports, nearly 43% of GDP. The share of oil exports to GDP went to its lowest level (35 percent) in 1999, when oil prices (nominal price) were very low (less than US$13 per barrel). The sharp rise in oil prices during the period of 1999-2014 pushed this percentage to its highest level which is 47% percent in 1999 and around 65.5% of the world’s oil reserves.

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The data in Table 1 indicates that in 1973 oil exports were responsible for over 68 percent of GDP. This percentage changed significantly over the following four decades due to changes in oil prices. The distinguished increases in the percentage of oil exports to GDP was approximately 47 percent in 1974, due to the oil embargo. At the end of the oil boom in 1985, the percentage of oil exports to GDP was reduced to 46 percent. It is clear from the data in Table 1 that the share of oil exports to GDP went to its lowest level (35 percent) in 1999, when oil prices (nominal price) were very low (less than US$13 per barrel). The sharp rise in oil prices during the period of 1999-2014 pushed this percentage to its highest level (47 percent in 2008). Finally, Table 1 shows that oil exports per capita was the highest in 1999 and 2014. However, the picture was opposite during the period 1985 to 1999 that the lowest oil exports per capita was (less than RO 914) in 1999.
studies. One may mention the contributions by Shaalan and Handy (1991; Al-Yousif, 1997; Metwally, 2004; Hosseini and Tang, 2014; Delacroix, 1977) among others. Shaalan and Handy (1991) argue that the rate of growth in government expenditure during the last three decades follows closely the rate of growth in oil exports in Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, but not in Kuwait. Al-Yousif (1997) investigates the interaction between exports and economic growth in several oil producing countries namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, and Oman over the period 1973-93. He applied aggregate production function model, which involved output, labour, capital, exports, government expenditure and terms of trade. His findings indicate a significant positive correlation between exports and aggregate output.

Hosseini and Tang (2014) concluded unidirectional causality developing the country. The impressive increase in Omani GDP has taken place after 1970. However, the growth process it will stay underdeveloped. So, using raw materials in the industry will help in economic growth and will lead to the country does not use the raw materials in the industrial process it will stay underdeveloped. So, using raw materials in the industry will help in economic growth and will lead to developing the country.

### 3. STUDY REFERENCES

3.1 Relationship between Oil Exports and Sectoral Output Growth in Oman

The aim of this section is to test if there is relationship between Oman’s oil exports and its non-oil sectoral output. If such a relationship exists, this would suggest that the two variables do not drift too far apart from each other over time. This would imply that growth in non-oil GDP in Oman is simply a reflection of growth in its oil exports. However, if there is no evidence of this relationship, the relative level of Oman’s GDP may be increasing or decreasing over-time, compared with its oil exports (Yahia and Metwally 2007).

The impressive increase in Omani GDP has taken place after 1973 and the consequent export price rises. It is therefore, attributable to the performance of the export sector and especially to the increasing oil prices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2: Rates of Growth of Sectoral Output (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth in Oman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omani oil exports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-oil sectoral output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, Elect &amp; Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11.8)</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-8.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHERE:

\( b_x \) = Coefficient of oil exports

\( b_o \) = Coefficient of GDP

\( D \) = A dummy variable where: 0: 1985-99

\( OX \) = Oil exports

\( Y \) = GDP

The regression results in table (3) suggest that the current period export coefficient is highly significant in all periods including the recession period (1985-99). In addition, the lagged GDP variable (representing all lagged exports via the Knlyck mechanism) is not significant in the periods that enjoyed high oil prices (1973-84 and 2000-14). However, the coefficient of GDP at second difference (which represents exchange) are significant in the period of recessions.
This might be interpreted as fact that the Omani economy has benefited from the opportunity generated oil exports during the boom periods. As this part of the outcome may be explained as representing the spread effects ‘proper’, the lagged effects are outweighed by the current period export coefficient is highly significant in all periods including the recession period (1995-99). These are strongly supported by those of Table 3. Accordingly, it could conclude that in Oman, output of all sectors, has responded to growth in oil exports. In other words, the elevated level of significance of the coefficient $b_1$ might be interpreted as fact that the Omani economy has benefited from the opportunity generated oil exports during the boom periods.

The coefficient of the lagged variable of GDP is statistically significant then it could confirm that there is any spread effect from oil export sector to the rest of the economy. The following models are used and tested for the period 1973-2014:

**Model (1):**
\[ \ln(Y, t) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(OX, t) + \beta_2 Y_{-1} + D_t \]

**Model (2):**
\[ \ln(Y, t) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(OX, t) + \beta_2 Y_{-1} + D_t \]

### Table 3: Omani Oil Exports and Gross Domestic Product (current price)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>$b_1$</th>
<th>$b_2$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>&quot;Dh &quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973-1984</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1999</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2014</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: calculated by the author and based on National Center for Statistics and Information Statistical Year Book

### Table 4: Omani Oil Exports and Non-Oil GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>$Dh$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>-7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>-7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water El. Construction</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Trade</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Activities</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Part two: Examination of the relationship between Oil Exports and Sectoral Output

Exports as an engine of growth models suggest that various sectors in any economy respond to changes in the major source of income, such as oil exports in the oil producers (Barro, 1991; Mankiw, Romer and Weil 1992, Salvatore, 1996; Balassa, 1985; Metwallly, M.M. and Tamaschke, 1980; Moran, 1983; Riedel, 1984, Allunisik, 1996; Yahia and Metwallly, 2007). Therefore, GDP by type of economic activity of Oman was disaggregated into six sectors to examine the response of those sectors to fluctuation in oil exports. It is assumed that the expansion in oil exports would motivate the production of these sectors, through the mechanism of direct effects as well as through less direct spread effects.

The results obviously imply that the Omani GDP has benefited from the opportunity generated oil exports during the boom periods. The isometric evidence of spread effects of oil exports to the rest of the economy (non-Oil GDP). The following models are illustrated in table (5).

### Table 5: the response of non-oil sectors to fluctuation in oil exports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>$Dh$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Trade</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Activities</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: calculated by the author and based on National Center for Statistics and Information Statistical Year Book
When the inflationary effect is excluded (again deflated by GDP deflator) and geometrically declining weights (a Koyck distributed lag scheme) are imposed from the current period to assess if there is a spread effect to the rest of the economy. The econometric results of the sectoral analysis support, those of Table 4. Thus, the results of model (2) in table (5) suggests that in Oman, real output of all sectors, apart from transportation and wholesale and other economic activities has not responded to growth in exports. In addition, dummy variables in all cases are not statistically significant, which suggests that the intercept of real output did not increase during periods of rise in export prices.

5. DISCUSSION, MAIN RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Discussion

The most important result that arises from the sectoral analysis is that the main sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, water, electricity, construction and mining in the Oman economy do not seem to have responded to changes in oil exports. It may also indicate that the expansion in oil exports is not fully exploited in motivating the production of these sectors (Metwally, 1979).

The other reasons of this sector engage primarily in the production of import substitutes for which there is a ready demand. There is also the possibility that some of the imported capital goods may not be fully utilized due to market limitations. The expansion in exports is not enough to give the required “big push” or to create enough demand to justify the economic establishment of a sizable number of manufacturing industries, particularly in those countries with small populations, relatively small per capita incomes and/or very unequal distributed incomes. It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the increase in oil revenue finds its way to investment overseas, imports of goods and services and to the pile up of reserves and that only a small fraction of oil export proceeds are ploughed back into the economy to build its productive capacity.

5.2 Conclusion

This paper was motivated by the need of an econometric investigation of trade relationship between oil exports and economic growth in Oman. The main results can be summarized as follows:

1- The growth rates of all Oman sectors were much higher during the periods of rise in oil prices than during the period of oil recession.

2- The regression results suggest that the current period export coefficient is highly significant in all periods except in the recession period (1985-99).

3- The relationship between GDP and the lagged GDP variable (representing percentage change in GDP via the Koyck mechanism) is slightly significant at least at the 10% level only in the periods that enjoyed high oil prices (1973-84 and 2000-14).

4- When the component effects are excluded, the sectoral output analysis indicates that all sectors output in Oman economy confirm that there is no evidence of spread effects of oil exports to the rest of the economy. However, the coefficient of the dummy variables of trade sector (wholesale and retail trade) and manufacturing are statistically significant at least at five percent level. It suggests that the intercept of these sectors have raised during periods of increase in export prices.

5- Finally, the sectoral output analysis of Oman supports the conclusion reached by (Metwally 1979) that “the increase in oil exports in oil producer of Middle East and North Africa is not enough to give the required “take off” or to generate adequate demand to justify the economic establishment of a suitable number of manufacturing industries.

5.3 Recommendations:

Omani industrialization is the best hope for achieving self-sustained economic growth. However, the policy of industrialization through “build – and – wait”, based on the assumption that as development proceeds and the level of income increase, plants which are not justified at lower income levels may become justified, may not prove effective for Oman whose market size is too small and the higher value of its currency compared to its neighbors might destroy the aim of export policy.

So, it is recommended that as suggested in the Five-Year Development Plan 2016-20, manufacturing and tourism sectors should be the corner stones of economic development and diversity in Oman.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First, it’s important to indicate that the first draft of this paper was presented at international conference of economics, business and management, 28/29 September 2017, Jakarta, Indonesia. Secondly, this research has been sponsored by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Therefore, the author is thankful for this support and encouragement.

Finally, this research does not reflect the opinion of OCCI in any manner and any errors in this paper are the responsibility of the author.
Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the Sultanate has paid great attention to Omani workers and their support and enacted laws and legislations that safeguard their rights. Omani workers have contributed to the building of this precious country today. the labour force of the Sultanate pined the rest of the world in marking the International Labour Day on the first of May.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has been keen to make the educated Omani men and women responsible for building the country. His Majesty also attached great care to Omani workers. His Majesty’s policy was to train and qualify human cadres and prepare them for the labor market by improving social insurance and retirement benefits.

Economic horizons

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) report said that Oman’s economic outlook is improving, although it remains highly dependent on structural reforms in the GCC countries and the geopolitical tensions of the region. Economic growth in Arab countries is expected to improve to 3.2 percent in 2018, from 0.1 percent in 2017, and may maintain this level in 2019. The expected improvements are due to the economic recovery in the GCC, where GDP is expected to increase by 2.2 percent in 2018, compared to 0.5 percent in 2017. It is also attributed to the increased activity of non-oil sectors and the continued expansion of budgets. However, and despite the uncertainty in the outlook of oil prices, the big downside risks remain as a result of the worsening geopolitical tensions in several countries in the region.

Strengthening Tripartite Partnership

The Sultanate is exporting trained and qualified engineers in the oil and gas sector.

Qais Al Yousef: Celebrating International Labour Day is an opportunity for strengthening tripartite partnership.

Bani Arrabah: The private sector provides an opportunity to overcome the difficulties and challenges posed by the nature of work.

Al-Riyami: The Sultanate is exporting trained and qualified engineers in the oil and gas sector.

By the Editorial Team

Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said: “Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Omani private sector congratulate the world’s workers and the Sultanate’s workers in particular on the occasion of the International Labor Day which falls on May 1 of each year. We celebrate the many achievements of the trade unions achieved over the past period, as well as the cooperation and tripartite partnership, which reflected positively on the comprehensive development process led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.”

“There is no doubt that the celebration of International Labor Day is an opportunity for further progress in strengthening tripartite partnership and joint initiatives, particularly in terms of enhancing governance concepts, improving the business environment and empowering national cadres in private sector companies. We are looking forward to the role of the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions (GFOTU) and the trade unions of companies. We urge them to double their efforts to contribute to the development of the national economy in all fields.”

Continuous Efforts

Ahmed bin Khalifa Al Zaabi, Director of the Public Authority for Social Insurance in Al Dhahirah Governorate, said: “The Sultanate and the countries of the world celebrate May 1st each year as International Labour Day. The Sultanate participates in the celebration of this occasion in recognition of the great efforts made by the workers. The Sultanate’s workers in particular and the world deserve recognition for their concrete efforts in the service of the homelands. As labors play an important role in the economic growth of any country, the Sultanate has attached great care to the Omani and non-Omani labors.
Al Sharqiya: Recognizing workers motivates them to do more.

Al Hajri: We commend the working Omani cadres and it is necessary to strengthen their capabilities.

Al Abri: Private sector working experience is enriching. More than 228,000 private sector workers insured 9692 active insured entrepreneurs and their equivalents.

To this end, it has enacted laws and legislations that maintain labors’ rights. For example, the Social Insurance Law provides Omani workers with insurance benefits such as severance pay and compensation according to disability rates and partial and total disability pensions, which are subject to the provisions of the Social Insurance Law. It also provides them with benefits when they get occupational injuries and diseases. It also provides benefits for early retirement, timely retirement, non-vocational benefits, end of service gratuity and bonuses.”

Training and Education
Abdul Aziz bin Ali Al-Jahdhami, a private sector employee, said: “Work is the cornerstone of the prosperity and progress of nations. It is measured by the progress of countries in their efficiency and workmanship, with the hard work of developing the means of work. The employee and labor are the main drivers of production. Therefore, providing training and education plays an important role in the development of the country’s economy and output.”

Gain experience and skills
“Working in the private sector is one of the most important pillars of the economy of the country, because it is based on young Omani cadres. It is also a fertile field for acquiring experience and skills,” said Yaqub bin Saif bin Sadiq, a private sector employee. Developing skills and overcoming the difficulties are the challenges posed by the nature of work.”

He added: “The private sector in various fields of logistics, oil, services and other sectors plays an important role in the growth of national economy of the country. A good example of this role is evident in Singapore which paid great attention to the private sector. Singapore has become one of the developed countries. Many youths are now ready to work for the private sector. We are inspired by the speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said when he urged Omani youths to work in the private sector.

Opportunity Making
“Oman has provided the Omani youths with the chance to take part in the building of their nation,” said Mahboud bin Mohammed Al Riyami, a drilling assistant at the Oman Drilling Company.

“Oman has mastered the sea and shore, built castles and forts, learned astronomy and secrets of stars. The Omani youth has always been the goal of our wise leadership. To this end, many universities, colleges and technical institutes were built to graduate national cadres to meet the needs of the labor market. Today, the private sector represents a large segment of the population and plays an important role in creating many job opportunities in various industries and sectors. Tangible achievements have been made in this area and Oman is now a labor exporting country in certain areas such as oil and gas engineers especially those specialized in EOR.

“I am here at KCADETTAG Oman Drilling Company, the leading oil and gas drilling company for more than 40 years. We are proud of the achievements made by the company in terms of providing opportunities for Omanis. The company provides training and employment opportunities for Omanis.

Al-Riyami pointed out that International Labour Day is an opportunity for the private sector employees to stand together and renew the pledge to achieve further development and to work as one team for the prosperity of our nation.

Honor and Motivation
Asma bint Mohammed Al-Saqriyah said: “The International Labour Day is an opportunity to celebrate all the achievements made by Omanis working in the private sector. They are the source of prosperity and progress in all sectors of production. Their recognition is a gesture that motivates them to make more efforts. It is a sector that is growing and needs great efforts. It must be flexible and adaptable to all variables. The private sector also includes occupations and work that require specific skills and expertise that may not be available in other sectors.”
**Strengthening Capacities**

"Oman has given the Omani worker a great deal of attention and given him/her all rights. It has enacted the laws and legislations that preserve their rights and define their duties towards their institutions. Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry plays a role in providing support to the Sultanate’s workers. He stressed the importance of the dialogue between the parties to production, strengthening the link between trade unions, as well as urging employers to cooperate with public and private sector institutions and to maintain coordination to create an appropriate environment for the workers of the Sultanate and enhance their capabilities and development.

"Being a specialist in the transport and logistics sector and head of the transport committee and the logistics sector of the OCCI branch in the Al Sharqiya, I can say that this is one of the most important areas of work that have witnessed remarkable development and growth recently. I commend the national cadres working in it and wish it further progress and success."

**Career Development**

Adnan Al Habsi, a private sector employee, said: "The private sector is a unique sector that provides many opportunities for Omani youth. I encourage Omani youths to start their careers by working in this sector. They can acquire skills that qualify them to develop themselves in short periods. I take this opportunity to congratulate all workers.

**Advanced Positions**

"Working in the private sector is characterized by giving employees the opportunity to exchange views and discuss topics for different parties, as well as the flexibility and ease of friendly communication between the employee and the administration. Moreover, work in this sector is full of fun and excitement for the employee. The sector receives large numbers of job seekers and has been the No 1 choice for many since it provides many opportunities for career development.

"It is necessary to focus on developing the sector to ensure that workers in the private sector are skilled and experienced, and are able to acquire new and innovative methods of work. This will qualify Omani to get advanced positions and higher salaries."

**Improving practical conditions**

"The workers are the center of all economic development in the country. Thanks to them, many achievements have been made in the industrial sector over the blessed renaissance years," said Salem bin Ali Al Farsi. This activity was not confined to any specific sector but included all sectors."

Al-Farsi added that the labor sector in the Sultanate has undergone very important stages during the past period. All stakeholders did their best to improve the conditions of workers. The government is making great efforts to defend the rights and interests of workers in order to improve their conditions.

**Statistics**

The number of insured persons working in the private sector in the Sultanate until 29 April 2018 stood at 228,236. The number of insured entrepreneurs and their equivalent stood at 9,692.
Interview

THE WINNER SPEAKS


Choosing the right team is essential to success and overcoming obstacles. We are delighted that Innotech is the first Omani technology company and a pioneer in the field of education. We are looking forward to becoming global.


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Choosing the right team is essential to success and overcoming obstacles. We are delighted that Innotech is the first Omani technology company and a pioneer in the field of education. We are looking forward to becoming global.
A discussion forum on the development and opportunities for the free trade agreement (FTA) entered by and between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States was held at the headquarters of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI.)

The discussion forum was organised by OCCI in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the US Embassy, Muscat and the Public Authority for Investment promotion and Export Development.

Dr Salim Al Jenaibi, vice chairman of OCCI for economic affairs said that “The discussion forum comes within the efforts of the two sides for evaluation of the free trade agreement signed by the Sultanate of Oman and the United States and to avail from the opportunities and facilities the agreement offers to further activate the business sector.”

He added that the FTA opens the door for free exchange of goods and investments between the two countries. The agreement has canceled the customs tariff from both sides, except for some goods protected by the agreement.

He noted that the FTA, which has been put in place since 2009, further cements the political, economic and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the US. Statistics showed that the volume of Omani exports to the US amounted to RO million in 2016 at the time the imports stood at RO 417 Million, he added.

He also pointed out that the major commodities exchanged between the two countries included animal and plant products, metals, construction materials, equipment and electrical appliances.

Saud bin Naser Al Khusaibi, Director General of the Directorate General of Organizations and Trade Relations at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said that the discussion forum comes within the Ministry’s efforts for dissemination of awareness on the significance of FTA with the US.

Saif bin Hilal al Maawali, assistant director of custom cooperation at the Directorate General Customs at Royal Oman Police said that the 10th anniversary of the agreement marks exempting all US and Omani imports and exports from taxes.

He noted that since signing the FTA, the reciprocal trade is growing and that between 2015 and 2015 the growth rate has been more than 50%. He noted that the major Omani exports to US include polypropylene and cables.

The speakers gave an overview about the US markets and the US trade legislations in addition to presenting a number of successful experiences by Omani businessmen.

The meeting also discussed, among other issues, the challenges faced by the Omani exports such as the standard specifications applied by the US to all imports, which have reduced the volume of Omani exports to the US.
Sayed Al Oud is an Omani brand specialized in the manufacture of the finest Arabic and French fragrances. It is made of natural and synthetic materials that have a distinctive and unique scent that has secured high sales in the local market due to its high quality. “Sayed Al Oud” brands are promoted by Al Sharqiyah Elegance LLC in the wilayat of Ibra.

Zahir bin Abdullah bin Salem Al Sawafi started his business in 2004 when he founded his specialized project in the sale of ready-made garments and textiles of all kinds in the popular markets of the Al Sharqiyah Governorate, such as Wednesday market in Ibra and the Thursday market in Sinaw and the Tuesday market in the wilayat of Badiyah. He then sought to expand the project to include the sale of all the luxuries of perfumes, incense, antiques, gifts and household accessories. He then launched “Sayed Al Oud,” which achieved a remarkable success and witnessed growing demand since its launch.

Celebrating the New Achievement

“In celebration of the new achievement, we have made promotional offers to our customers. We have provided good discounts on all our products from the finest perfumes, incense and gifts in a move that we consider to be very important for success.”

Success Factors

Al Sawafi pointed to some of the challenges he faced when establishing the project, which consisted of the lack of capital to meet all the requirements and expenses of the project. He also faced competition by the expatriate workers who practised these activities on imported materials. Good planning, analyzing supply and demand, adopting flexible marketing policies and appropriate product pricing have enabled him to achieve gradual success and remain in the market.

Selling is an Art

Al Sawafi said: “I have learned the skills of selling through special training courses and I have been keen to apply them. I also learnt how to provide all the information and details about the product I am offering for sale, and how to meet the needs of customers and deliver them the products on time. I always seek to establish good relations with them and inform them of the new offers and products that I put on the market, through the use of a range of social media to ensure long term relationship with them.”

Success Journey

Al Sawafi pointed out that the success of the business lies in his commitment to the timetables and deadlines he sets with the customer and his ability to take risks from time to time and make the right decisions. He attributes success to good planning before launching any new product and try to innovate and become creative in the offer he makes. He also uses many means to convince customers to buy his products. He believes that success is ensured if the entrepreneur is confident of himself and his abilities.

“Entrepreneurs in North Sharqiyah have to take advantage of this period of the tourist season. The governorate receives many visitors and tourists who visit the shops and commercial markets. This is an opportunity for entrepreneurs to promote their products and motivate them to buy Omani products. They should ensure good display of their products and make them attractive to customers.”

Ambition and Vision

At the end, Al Sawafi hopes to expand his project and make “Sayed Al Oud” an international brand. He is determined to do his best to rise to the high expectations of customers of different age groups. He also hopes to have strong presence in the major markets and make his brand an international one.

Zaher Al Sawafi:
I am seeking to establish a strong presence for the brand in key markets and be one of the leading brands

Sayed Al Oud: A growing brand
Good planning, understanding of consumer needs and having flexible marketing policies are essential for success.

Taking appropriate decisions and planning before launching any new product are crucial.

Interviewed by Ibtisam Al Saadiya
The first conference on primary materials management recommends opening one window for raw material transactions.

By Ibrahim Al Jualandani

The Conference held on Materials Management

T he first conference on primary materials management “Towards a close business relationship between the State of Qatar and the Sultanate of Oman” recommended establishing unified investment procedures in raw materials trading to facilitate investments and processes and overcome obstacles. It also recommended increasing cooperation between Omani and Qatari companies operating in the field of building and raw materials. The conference recommended that the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GOIC) prepare investment opportunities studies to manufacture building materials using raw materials available in the Sultanate in partnership with chambers of commerce and industry in the two countries. The conference recommended publishing guidelines presenting specialized data and information in the area of building and raw materials to promote companies and products in this field.

The conference took place on the 28th and 29th of March, 2018 at the Kempinski Hotel, Muscat. Oman’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Oman’s Public Authority for Mining and GOIC supported it. Furthermore, it was the result of strategic partnerships with Qatar Primary Materials Company (QPAMC) and the chambers of commerce and industry of Oman and Qatar.

Commenting on the conference, Eng. Ahmed bin Hassan Al-Dheeb, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, said: “The conference brings Omani businessmen together with their peers in the sisterly state of Qatar to discuss meeting the need of the State of Qatar for building materials available in the Sultanate in large quantities such as Al jabro, gyspnum, and limestone. Qatar provides many promising opportunities as it implements a number of construction projects in the coming period wherein Omani building materials can be used in large quantities.”

Numbers and statistics

Abdul Azim bin Abbas Al Bahrani, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the trade and investment relations between the Sultanate and Qatar have been moving forward in recent years. He pointed out that Omani exports to Qatar reached RO 549 million during 2017. The value of the Omani exports stood at RO 210 million, representing 3.38 per cent of total exports and re-exports of RO 339 million, representing 61.7 per cent of total exports. Omani-Qatar joint investments amounted to more than 116 million Omani Rials 2016, with a Qatari contribution of RO 76 million (65%) through investment in 152 companies in trade, construction, services, real estate, industry, transport, mining, health, finance, electricity and water sectors.

Al-Bahrani confirmed that the Sultanate’s production of building raw amounted to 39 million cubic meters in 2017, and 34 million tons were exported in the same year. The value of the Sultanate’s raw material exports to Qatar exceeded $ 19 million in 2016. He hoped that the private sector in the Sultanate would double the joint investment in this sector during the next phase.

Promising projects

HI Eng. Halaif bin Mohammed Al Buaisid, Chief Executive Officer of the General Authority for Mining, said that the Sultanate has a number of raw materials including Al jabro. The conference aimed to review the needs of the sisterly State of Qatar and how to supply and export them to Qatar.

HI Saad bin Ahmed Al Muhannadi, Chairman of the Qatar Public Works Authority and Chairman of Qatar Primary Materials Company, said that the conference aimed at highlighting the opportunities of production and export of raw materials, and learn about the international experiences in this field and apply them on the ground. He noted that the company’s project in Khatmat Milahah reached the final stage and the signing of the contract with the contractor will be during the second quarter of this year. The contractor will start work on the project, which is one of the largest projects of Qatar Company for raw materials. During the first eight months of the start of the project, it will produce grit gabbro. At the initial phase, the plant will produce three million tons per year which will be raised gradually to seven million tons per year.

He pointed out that the second part of the project is the construction of a 1.5 sea road which will end with a terminal with the latest equipment that will load the Al-jabra product to the ships. This will allow the export of seven million tons annually to Qatar.

Qatari jabro imports from the Sultanate increased from 500.37 tons in June 2017 to 633,000 tons during March 2018. The number of Omani quarries exporting such materials to Qatar increased to 16.

Mohammed bin Tawar Al Kawari, Vice Chairman of Qatar Chamber, said: “The conference comes at a time when Qatar is witnessing a growth in the volume of construction projects and infrastructure of roads, logistic and service areas and projects related to hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The volume of trade exchange between the two countries grew during 2017 by 42 percent compared to 2016.”

Promotion of SMEs

The conference recommended inviting SMEs to partake in raw materials, mining and building materials projects and encouraging the youth to benefit from opportunities in this area. It also recommended encouraging big companies to adopt domestic value-added strategies in the field of primary materials management and encouraging and promoting the use of limestone in the building and construction sector. It also recommended benefiting from the big capacity of Oman’s ports with global competitive tariffs, reviewing the prices of bulk materials in ports and pricing each one of the raw materials separately and using government laboratories or any other accredited laboratories in Oman to ensure quality control before exporting.
Rubens Hanoun: Considering the establishment of a joint Omani-Brazilian joint investment company to invest in promising sectors.

INTERVIEW

Rubens Hanoun, President of the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce, met with Rabeea Al-Harthiya, President of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to discuss the volume of joint activities between the two countries. This has played a major role in introducing the Omani culture, traditions and customs to the Brazilians, and has contributed to activating investment movement.

The presence of an Embassy of the Sultanate in Brazil and its cooperation with the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce contributed to the establishment of mutual relations in various aspects, including economic, social and cultural. This has enhanced the confidence of Brazilian investors and encouraged them to benefit from the Sultanate’s strategic location and other incentives provided to foreign investors.

Interview with Rubens Al-Jandalani and Rabeea Al-Harthiya

1. What are the facilities provided by the Brazilian-Arab Chamber of Commerce to both Omani and Brazilian investors to facilitate Omani-Brazilian transactions?

The Brazilian-Arab Chamber of Commerce provides the Omani investor and the Brazilian counterpart with several facilities. The Chamber’s information bank is very strong and efficient. It covers the needs of both countries for information, data and statistics that help to understand the market. The Chamber also translated the investment law from Arabic to Portuguese. It also plays a major role in developing the local agencies and attracting the Brazilian investor to Brazil. The Chamber is also known to be facilitating the RBI meetings between Omani businessmen and their Brazilian counterparts.

2. What are the qualities of the Brazilian and Omani chambers of commerce that are in the right direction towards developing trade and economic relations?

The Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce organizes and holds joint economic events and forums to bring the views closer together. The Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce organizes and holds joint economic events and forums to bring the views closer together.

3. What is the geographical location of the Sultanate in Brazil and in the Brazilian market for Omani products?

The Sultanate enjoys a privileged location in the Brazilian market, which has laws, regulations and legislations that encourage economic work. They also look for safe and stable political, social and economic environment. The geographical location of the Sultanate has a great role in attracting the Brazilian investor.

4. What do you think of investment at SEDAR?

Two years ago, we organized an investment forum in cooperation with the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and the Chairman of SEDAR, and the Brazilian Minister of Commerce and Vice President of the Republic of Brazil, during which an agreement was signed with Qamr Port to activate the logistics activity between the two countries. We hope that there will be joint investment projects in the coming days and more trade and investment relations between the two sides.

5. What are the most important projects and objectives that you seek to achieve in the field of trade and commerce?

Our meeting with HE Qais bins Mohammed Al Yousuf, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the first meeting between the two sides and we plan to enhance relations through the establishment of joint programs and activities aimed at developing trade and economic relations. Our relations are more than excellent, and this gives an indication that both chambers aim in the right direction towards developing relations and increasing the volume of trade exchange in the future.

Development of Omani-Brazilian relations

To develop Omani-Brazilian relations in terms of trade, it is necessary to study the Brazilian market for Omani products and identify the products that can enter the market. After conducting the feasibility study, we should consider the opening a commercial representation office for the Sultanate in Brazil. We should also consider the establishment of a joint holding company that operates in a number of fields such as industry, tourism, food security and petrochemicals.

We should also organize a roadshow in at least three Brazilian cities to showcase the available business opportunities and investment incentives offered by the Sultanate to foreign investors as an incentive to the development of cooperation. We should establish free trade and economic cooperation with Brazil, whether directly or through the GCC bloc. We should also consider the establishment of a joint holding company that operates in a number of fields such as industry, tourism, food security and petrochemicals.

Creating joint projects between the private sector in both countries.

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Ma’ariam Al Maamaryah and her husband Majid al Yahyaie from Sohar decided from the beginning to work for their own. They established a translation office in the wilayat of Sohar in 2014. Within a short span of time, the office has become the first choice for many companies and individual clients who need to get their legal, financial, public relation, marketing, advertising and medical documents translated. Since the beginning they decided that quality and high professionalism should be the main characteristics of their office. Besides high quality and professional standards, they also provide their clients competitive rates.

The office provides the clients with a wide range of services that include translation, simultaneous/consecutive interpretation, subtitling, transcription, proof reading and summary preparation.

“Even though there are many translation companies in Oman, we provide the best services to our clients,” said Majid. “We provide high quality work to please our customers.”

In the beginning, their office in Al Hambar near Sohar Municipality and the Directorate General of Commerce and Industry, we managed to form a solid base of clients, thanks to our dedication to managing our project and complying with the best practices in the field, said Majid al Yahyaie.

What are the difficulties you are facing during simultaneous and consecutive interpretation?

Having to deal with different cultures is a real challenge because you have to be familiar with such cultures to understand what they mean by certain terms. Sometimes, the speakers are going very fast as the translator has to understand first and then select the proper terms of the targeted language for the listeners. Sometimes, the voice of the speaker may not be clear or suffers from pronunciation problem due to his mother tongue or what we call “negative transfer of language”. All these difficulties make the interpreter face tough times while doing the interpretation.

Firstly, the public organizations should monitor the unlicensed translation offices and not to give licenses for the practice of the legal translation for those who are not specialized in translation. The government organizations should award translation tenders to Omani offices only and ban making translation outside the Sultanate. We should encourage the private sector organizations to support translation offices as part of their efforts to enhance the growth of SMEs. We need also to organize seminars and roadshows to raise public awareness of the importance of translation and the hard work done by translators.

Some believe that the business environment at the private sector is not conducive. Do you agree with them?

This is inaccurate in the full sense of the work because work at the private sector is very lucrative but needs patience and hard work. Over and above all, you need to love what you are doing to enjoy it.

Based on your experience, do you encourage job seekers to work for the private sector?

Sure, but you need to select the project very carefully. You should avoid replicating the projects around you and be creative. You should select the projects that fit your interests, desires, skills and capabilities.

Do you have a plan to develop your office?

We have a plan to establish a translation academy that provides translators with the required skills and knowledge. We are planning to have specialized departments for legal, medical, economic, political and business translations. This will allow our academy to give certificates to trainees that they have received training at one or more specialized translation fields. This needs to get licenses from a number of organizations. When we started our project, it was difficult for us to get the license to practice translation profession and get the municipal license as well.

How can the translation profession be more regularized? How can we eliminate illicit trade?

We should go in two directions. Firstly, the public organizations should monitor the unlicensed offices. A circular should be sent to all public and private organization barring any translation through unlicensed offices. This will ensure the growth of the translation business because owners of licensed offices are dedicated for their businesses and are not working for any public or private organizations. The move will provide translation business owners with the opportunity to develop their performances and improve the quality of their work.

Secondly, the business owner should enhance confidence of his customers by providing high quality work.
STARTUPS: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Survey by: Rabeea bint Saeed Al Harthiya

Startups play an important role in the country’s economic growth. The local market is witnessing a great diversity of products and institutions managed by Omanis. This has contributed to the reduction of the percentage of job seekers. A number of Omanis have started their projects from scratch and became key companies. But the challenges facing these projects may be a long hurdle for entrepreneurs. OCCI met with a number of pioneers and business leaders to talk about the most important challenges facing startups and ways to address them. We also highlighted the strategies used for starting a project and the social role played by these projects.

Engineer Zaman bin Hussein Al Lawati, Chief Executive Officer of the Capital Group for Construction and Engineering Projects said that the challenges faced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are many despite the fact that they play an important role in the creation of job opportunities. They are also involved in community service. Still they face many challenges such as the lack of cooperation by some government agencies in the government tender program, the joining of all hands to meet the challenges and address them. We also highlighted the strategies used for starting a project and the social role played by these projects.

Facing Challenges
To meet these challenges, we must spread the investment culture, overcome all obstacles and challenges, and provide a stimulating environment for the development of the startups. We need the collaboration of all efforts and the joining of all hands to meet the challenges and address them.

Study the idea
The CEO of the Capital Group for Construction and Engineering Projects said that to develop good strategies you need to ensure good planning and study the idea of the project. You need also develop the required arms by making a timetable for the cost, the roles and function of staff, the follow up and management. We need to become balanced as this will facilitate proper implementation of the project.

“Projects don’t materialize on their own but rather require good planning to achieve the prospective aims. By planning we mean good planning in a scientific and structured manner that avoid any conflicting effects among the components of the project.

As for the social role for this event, we consider them the engine for economic development and play an active role in the field of operation and enhancing production. They also provide great services to key companies by helping in meeting their needs for raw materials. The startups thus can make many achievements and may contribute to the growth of our society if they are provided with the healthy milieu for their development and growth. We need also to provide them with due care to prove themselves.

Characteristics of Projects
On his part, Ahmed Bin Mohammed Al Hosni, Chief Executive Officer of the Madadir Construction LLC (Security and Safety Services) said that private projects or institutions and startups are among the most important pillars of economic growth in the country. The concept of projects varies according to their specialization and manpower. These projects contribute to the allocation of resources in the country, provide job opportunities and contribute to growth in products and services. Support to these projects demonstrates the strong effectiveness, development and financial and moral return of the country. A number of agencies have provided a wide range of support and interest to small and medium enterprises. Entrepreneurs are thus required to increase their production abilities and develop their businesses.

Financing Challenges
Al Hosni pointed out that the challenges of the emerging projects are divided into two parts: the financing challenges of the project capital and the management challenges. The financing challenge is there whenever the entrepreneurs need to finance his own project. He starts looking for loans from commercial and development banks or subsidy funds. The entrepreneur suffers from complicated procedures to get approval on his loan. He thus becomes under pressure delaying the due payments. Moreover, the feasibility study of the project is very important. Employees at these organizations should take into consideration the financial needs of entrepreneurs. If the loans meet requirements, approval should be granted without any delay. We should also avoid making any mistakes in the loans and make procedures simpler. The bank should follow the performance of the borrower to ensure timely payment and in some cases the bank has to provide flexible repayment terms.

Management and marketing challenges
Al Hosni said that if the entrepreneur is not familiar with the administrative work and the manner of managing the expenses of the organization and controlling revenues and profit margins, he will be at risk and his project may not succeed. The entrepreneurs should attend training courses on project management.

He added that marketing is the backbone of any project. If the entrepreneurs implemented good marketing techniques and managed to build good relations with customers, the project will succeed but if he failed to do so his project will be at risk. The lack of specialized marketing companies may be a real challenge for entrepreneurs who are not familiar with the process of marketing their products. This situation makes the entrepreneurs at risk of making critical errors that may affect the goodwill of his brand. The marketing companies in some cases impose very high charges for marketing entrepreneurs’ products. This may exhaust the entrepreneurs’ funds and may be an added burden on the project balance sheets.

Financial, administrative and marketing challenges hinder growth of entrepreneurs.
States indicated that about 5.20 million projects out of 21 million are considered small enterprises, i.e. 98%. These enterprises play a very important social role by creating job opportunities for job seekers. They can also be a source of income for some projects. They also contribute to building relationships between the community and the private sector.

Project Management
Mana Al-Shukairiya, owner of Al-Joury shop shared her opinion on the challenges facing the projects. She believes that challenges are multiple, such as financial management, time management, lack of experience and skills, government laws, fees and high costs, as well as the entrepreneur’s sense of skepticism at the beginning of the project. The project may also fail because of the absence of required data on the size of the market and the demand and supply of the product or service that the investor intends to provide.

Providing Opportunities
Al-Shukairiya pointed out to the importance of providing financing to start small and medium enterprises by granting youths good grace periods for repayment. The repayment should be structured in a way that it is not made before the project stabilizes and starts making profits. Banks should not tighten the guarantees required to obtain financing. Omani products should be encouraged by reducing customs duties and helping entrepreneurs to find opportunities for export. There should be direct communication with entrepreneurs and they should be provided with opportunities for joint cooperation. The malls and shopping centers should give entrepreneurs special advantages in the leasing of commercial space by allocating certain spaces for small projects at competitive prices.

“Strategies are a way of describing how to work and deal with events, by taking advantage of opportunities, gaining time and knowing goals. There are many strategies, including the growth strategy, which defines how projects grow and how to exploit the financial surplus in developing projects and improving product quality. The stability strategy is also used to maintain the market power of the project and the stability of a specific financial situation. There is the contractionary strategy whose aim is to reduce expense, or the number of services or activities in the event of predicting the occurrence of financial deficit and in the case of deficit/loss recurrence. In such case, the entrepreneurs begin liquidation the project and pay off the debt. This strategy is the last resort.

Economic and Social Roles
Al-Hosni pointed out that private enterprises and small and medium enterprises are the main pillars of the country’s economy. They help to create new products and enhance export and import business activity. They also meet the needs of major companies and can also attract foreign investors.

Al-Hosni said that the statistics published in the United

Shukairiya: It is important to give entrepreneurs special benefits to support their projects.

Education and Participation
Ibrahim Al-Ishaqi said: “The entrepreneur must be well prepared for these challenges and qualified to overcome them. He should have trust and confidence in his capabilities first as this is very essential for success. If he loses confidence, he will surely fail.

“Youths should get enough knowledge about entrepreneurship and the methods used for evaluating performance. I advise entrepreneurs to take part at the workshops, conferences and seminars related to entrepreneurship. They should also seek to attend meetings held between businessmen and women as they provide the opportunity to share and get new experiences.”

Remarkable Returns
Shaza Al Jabriya, owner of the Mishan project, pointed out that the high level of competition and the purchasing power imbalance due to the economic situation is one of the challenges facing the projects. The modern laws and regulations have a role to play as a hindrance to the continuation of the project. We need to minimize production costs as this will lead to reducing the price of the product thus making it more competitive in the market.

Ibrahim Al-Ishaqi: Frequent competition and purchasing power variability may affect the viability of the project.

Shukairiya: Providing Opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences is important.
OCCI workshop to make the Chamber Effective

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized a two-day specialized workshop for the heads and members of the board of directors of the head office and all the branches in the various governorates of the Sultanate. Representatives of a number of government and private organizations participated at the event.

HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chamber, welcomed the members of the Board of Directors. He pointed out that such a workshop is held for the first time in a broad manner among members of the Board of Directors of the Chamber with the aim of ensuring that everyone joins hands to achieve the vision and mission and common goals of the Chambers -- to develop Oman’s private sector and make it a key partner in sustainable economic development.

Al-Yousef explained that the workshop was titled « working for an effective Chamber » due to the importance of making Chamber more effective, and help it in keeping pace with the internal and external developments. This has been the reason for inviting some parties to participate in the workshop.

Al-Yousef added that the workshop aimed at benefiting from the information presented, through which the strategy of the Chamber for the period (2018-22), its objectives, initiatives and implementation indicators would be drawn up. Mr. Abdul Azim bin Abbas Al Bahrani, the Chamber’s CEO, gave a presentation on the vision and mission of the Chamber, the services it provides, the functions of the Chamber and its role, the importance of the strategy and its role in the next phase. The seminar also included many working papers by different organizations.
Various countries of the world endeavor to improve the business environment to facilitate economic activities and support private companies operating in all sectors. The improvement of the working environment is one of the most important factors needed to attract local or foreign investments and encourage young people to start their own projects.

The Omani government is making endeavors to improve business environment. We have noticed that the government has initiated a number of studies to identify the challenges facing the private sector and propose solutions to them. We here refer to such initiatives made by OCCI in cooperation with Public Private Work Team supervised by the Diwan of the Royal Court for the improvement of the business environment. OCCI has implemented several seminars and workshops that targeted many businessmen and women representing major companies and SMEs. These seminars come within the efforts made by OCCI to get inputs from the private sector organizations on how to create investor-friendly environment and ensure the growth of SMEs.

Qais Al Yousef:
It is necessary to adopting joint economic and development initiatives that achieve the desired objectives.

Abdelqader Askalan:
Investment needs to be improved and encouraged to create a friendly investment environment supported by investor-friendly laws and legislations.

Strengthening tripartite partnership
Commenting on the initiative, Qais Bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the Chamber said: “We are pleased with the active partnership that characterizes the Omani private sector in its various sectors. This partnership contributes to improving the business environment that everyone wants.”

“There has been significant progress in initiatives in the first package related to improving the business environment by the competent authorities. We have organized workshops for a large group of business owners representing business sectors in the Sultanate.”

He stressed the importance of strengthening the tripartite partnership between OCCI, as a representative of the private sector, government and society. He pointed out to the sincere desire of all parties to develop joint economic and development initiatives, which will enable everyone to achieve the desired goals and contribute to finding solutions to many challenges thus ensuring growth of our national economy.

By: Ibrahim Al Julandari

Improving Business Environment: Necessity or Priority
The aim of these meetings is to come up with proposals and solutions and adopt some of the topics that we can follow in the next stage instead of making a long list of recommendations that could not be implemented in the ground.”

The need to review laws to attract foreign investment

Commenting on the importance of improving the business environment, Abdul Qader Asqalan said that improving business environment is one of the most important fundamentals for attracting foreign investments. It regulates the relationship between employees and employers. The relationship must be based on legal principles that protect the rights of each party. I suggest that OCCI take the initiative to regulate this relationship.

Sheikh Ali bin Sulayem Al-Junaibi said: To improve the business environment, we hope that there will be a law that contributes to overcoming obstacles and simplifying procedures and ensure better investment of time and effort.

He added that the establishment of a single window that gathers various competent authorities under one roof helps in improving business environment, pointing out that service providers need to keep pace with changes and developments. Those who delay the business transaction should be held accountable for their failure to provide high quality service for investors.

Entrepreneurs and investment opportunities

Ruqaya Al Maani said that the investment climate in the Sultanate provides many opportunities for entrepreneurs. The regulations and laws should be periodically revised especially those related to small and medium enterprises. We should activate the role of media in raising awareness of these regulations.

<Improving business environment requires improving global competitiveness, encouraging foreign, domestic and joint investment, and contributing to economic development and GDP growth,” said Ahmed Al Mahrouqi.

Conducive environment for entrepreneurship

Hamid bin Hamdoon Al Amri, CEO, and Al Mahdootha International Projects said: “To have a healthy business environment we need to provide an appropriate platform for entrepreneurship.”

“There are some suggestions to improve the business environment, including the sincere desire of decision makers to improve the business environment, the need to move away from bureaucracy, activate the windows that support the employer and others, and provide knowledge support,” he added.

Dr. Firas Al-Abduwani, Chief Executive Officer of Hossam Technologies said: “Today we live in a world where globalization and local protection tend to clash. In all scenarios, local capacity is a cornerstone for global competitiveness and cooperation. SMEs are of the highest priority.”

“We hope to see a central body that has the authority to review the current legislation and study its implications on the private sector and small and medium enterprises. This entity should maintain continuous communication with the parties it represents.”

OCCI endeavors to study the proposals and solutions that were presented and analyze them to identify the challenges and their impact on the current and future economic sectors and fields.
The OCCI Ramadan evening (1439 H) has seen a big interest by those interested in the economic affairs. They have been active on OCCI twitter account. The social networking department has followed this interaction.

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Here are some of the responses we received about Ramadan evenings.
Economic Committee Discusses 2018 Action Plan

OCCI Economic Researches and Studies Committee held a meeting, presided by Abdul Kareem al Hoosti, member of the board of directors and Chairman of the Committee. Nasser bin Ali Al Mahroqi has been selected unopposed as deputy chairman of the Committee. The Committee then discussed its action plan for 2018, means of improving business environment, attracting foreign investment, policies and mechanisms for employment of job seekers and following up the progress made by the economic diversification program implemented by the government.

First meeting of Omani-Turkish Business Council held

OCCI received a Turkish business delegation representing Turkish members of the Omani-Turkish Business Council. The delegation met Rashid bin Amer al Meselhi, Deputy Chairman of OCCI for Financial and Administrative Affairs in the presence of Sheikh Salem bin Abdullah al Rowas, Chairman of the Omani side at the Omani-Turkish Business Council as well as the chairman of the Turkish side. The meeting was attended by the Turkish Ambassador to the Sultanate and several Omani businessmen. The meeting discussed areas of cooperation and partnership between the Omani private sector and its Turkish counterpart. Rashid bin Amer al Meselhi stressed the importance of enhancing import and export activities with Turkey. He stressed OCCI’s readiness to provide support to stimulate trade exchange through the ports between the two countries. The Turkish-Omani Business Council held a meeting chaired by Sheikh Salem bin Abdullah Al Rowas, chairman of the Omani side of the Omani-Turkish Business Council.

Seminar on Franchising

The Labor Market Regulatory Committee held a meeting at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in North Sharqiya, headed by Qais bin Amer Al Shabani, Deputy Chairman of the Board and Chairman of the Committee in the presence of Salik Dar Al-Meselhi, Saleh bin Saed Al-Meselhi was elected as Vice-Chairman. The members discussed the committee’s work plan during the coming period. They also discussed means of activating the role of the committee through organizing a workshop on organizing the labor market and nurturing national cadres working in private sector companies. Members also discussed the effects of municipal fees, if the decision is implemented. They also discussed some of the obstacles facing employers in processing their transactions. They also discussed the issue of long distance to travel from some Wilayats to process transactions and the high operating costs and limited financial resources of some small and medium enterprises which come at a time they are suffering from weak revenues and failure to pay their financial obligations. The Committee members stressed the importance of supporting these institutions in cooperation with the competent bodies and the development of mechanisms to promote and empower their owners. The members also pointed to the importance of holding a meeting with representatives of government institutions concerned with the labor market, and the employment of national cadres and Omanization in the private sector.

North al Sharqiya Labor Market Regulatory Committee Meets

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in cooperation with Francorp Middle East, organized a seminar on franchising, attended by Issa bin Seif Al Qubi, Assistant Director General for Administrative and Financial Affairs. Khalid Rashid al Rashid, Head of Francorp of Kuwait presented a successful experience in Franchising – Mocha café Kuwait. The seminar addressed several points, including the Commercial Excellence Strategy and the Business Plan, the Business Process Implementation and Implementation Guide, legal information on the terms of the Franchise Agreement and the legal structure of commercial franchise. Al Rashid also pointed out in the paper the marketing plan and sales strategy for commercial franchises. Al-Muzaini presented a successful experience in the field of commercial franchise through the opening of his own project Mocha café in Kuwait and his experience in expansion in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Mohammed Al-Ibri, Director of SME Department at OCCI delivered a speech where he pointed out that OCCI represented by the SME Department in cooperation with Francorp Middle East Consulting organized this seminar as part of the efforts to develop the Omani private sector to help it play an active role in achieving sustainable development of the Omani economy, diversifying sources of income and providing employment opportunities for Omani youth as key partners in the development process. He also pointed out that OCCI welcomes franchises from outside the Sultanate. According to him, the Sultanate’s rich heritage and culture qualifies it to be a source of many trademarks and franchising especially in the fields of food, clothing, perfumes and handicrafts. He pointed out the importance of paying attention to branding and the preservation of intellectual property rights for Omani institutions and companies, to avoid any imitation or theft of the ideas of Omani entrepreneurs.

First meeting of Omani-Turkish Business Council held

Yousef Al-Rasi, a promotion specialist in SEZAD presented a working paper prepared on the incentives provided by SEZAD. Nayef Al Abri, Project Development Director General at Oman Power and Water Procurement Company made another working paper on the efforts made by the company to meet its customer needs and the available investment opportunities. The head of the Turkish side of the Omani-Turkish Business Council expressed the delegation’s desire to intensify the economic cooperation and trade movement between the two friendly countries and intensify the maritime traffic. He highlighted the key areas which can play a role in developing the private sector’s relations including tourism, trade, logistics and others. Sheikh Salem bin Abdullah Al Rowas said that the visiting delegation will make several visits to various organizations such as the National Program for the Promotion of Economic Diversification (Tanfeeth), the Tender Board, the General Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development (Ithraa) and Ijaza Industrial Estate. The delegation concluded with bilateral B2B meetings. The visiting delegation was specialized in several specialties including construction, fishing techniques, trailer equipment, power plants, information technology and defense machinery industry.
Oman to Host “Made in Qatar Expo” in November

OCCI IT & Service Committee held its first meeting at OCCI headquarters under the chairmanship of Ali bin Hamadan al Ajmi, OCCI board member and chairman of the committee.

The committee selected Ishaq Al Ismaili as deputy chairman. It formed three teams for the retail & wholesale under Mohammed Ibrahim Awdad, IT and Sanad team under Hood al Hosani and Translation, Media and Marketing team under Hamoud al Hooti.

The meeting discussed the committee’s plan, organizing sectors, identifying priorities and prospective aims during the current year and period. The Committee also approved its action plan for 2018 and reviewed the developments.

OCCI promotes Relations with the Slovak Republic

Al Bahriani: The next phase requires the cooperation of both sides to strengthen trade relations, especially between the private sector in both countries.

Al-Hinai: Intensifying promotional activities make the Sultanate an important investment destination.

Al-Hassani: SEZAD has prepared the investor-friendly legislations that facilitate investment procedures in the region.

The meeting program included presentations by both sides on investment opportunities in the two countries. Faisal Al-Hinai, Head of Investment Services Promotion, presented a working paper on investment opportunities in the Sultanate. He said that attracting foreign investments and introducing investment opportunities in the Sultanate is one of the most important objectives of the Omani and Slovak private sector companies. They also explored ways to support small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate and Slovakia.

A seminar was held on investment opportunities between the Sultanate and Slovakia. The seminar was attended by H.E, Peter Kažimír, Slovak Minister of Finance. The head of the visiting delegation met with Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the OCCI and discussed opportunities for cooperation and partnership between the Omani and Slovak private sector companies. They also explored ways to support small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate and Slovakia.

Al Bahrani, Chief Executive of OCCI said during his speech that the Sultanate has many promising investment opportunities at the various sectors. To this end, it seeks to enhance its relations with various countries of the world to promote mutual investment and businesses. The Sultanate provides scores of incentives to foreign investors.

“We believe that your visit provides us with an ideal opportunity to have business to business meetings to present and consider available business opportunities and seek avenues to enhance our bilateral business relations. Although the two states have good relations, the value of reciprocal trade is still not up to our expectations. “We seek to enhance our bilateral relations in the coming period through operating regular business delegations and taking part at the international exhibitions and fairs organized in the Sultanate and Slovakian Republic. We need also to share information about business and export opportunities. We also need to share business and industrial directories and activate the MoUs and economic cooperation agreements.”

Investment opportunities

The meeting helped to enhance trade relations and contribute to the growth of trade volume between the two friendly countries.
The time we have now may not be available to us in the coming days and years. Allah wisdom provided everyone with equal time. This means that everyone has 24 hours a day and about 730 hours a month. Here we cannot say that we do not have the time the rich have.

The message here is for young jobseekers, who are more fortunate to have time. They have full hours of the day for themselves. The case is different for those working for their employees because a large part of their time is dedicated to their employers.

Wealth and money come only with hard work and the use of resources available, such as time and vigor of the youth. Both are more valuable than the financial resources. Job seekers have these two sources in their hands.

Here we can say that opportunities are available to job seekers to take advantage of their resources and not waiting for the job in the zero or the comfort zone as it is called. Youths should not remain idle for days or months and should stop being reliant on others.

The market is open for competition and is full opportunities to those who want to become entrepreneurs. Money is not a big obstacle. There are many projects that do not need money. Many of our brothers have made their way, established their projects and continued to strengthen them by relying on the available resources they have.

There many example of companies that started from scratch and reached the top. We here may refer to the story of Chinese billionaire Jack Ma, owner of Ali Baba Electronic website. We may refer also to the story of his ambitious Sultan Siyabi, who is pursuing his passion despite the difficulties he is facing.