ECONOMIC BOOM
Through Cultural Achievements & Sustainable Projects
Greetings and felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
and to the people of Oman on the occasion of
the glorious 49th Renaissance Day

Warm felicitations and heartfelt greetings to
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
and the people of Oman on the joyous occasion
of the 49th Renaissance Day!

On the occasion of the glorious Renaissance Day, Chairman, Board of Directors, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Group and the QNB staff extend their warmest greetings to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, may God protect him and the people of Oman.
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is pleased to participate in the Sultanate’s celebrations of the blessed Renaissance Day, while Oman is wearing the garments of progress and prosperity, and enjoying the achievements and strategic projects that have set a goal and become a reality we are proud of.

While celebrating this occasion, the private sector is inspired from the enlightened thinking and sound vision of His Majesty the Sultan in the country’s march and development plans to be in parallel and complementary to the role played by the government in building Oman and driving it to progress. We at OCCI are working hard to develop the private sector and make it a key partner in the sustainable economic development.

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, OCCI has performed many achievements and aspirations that, in their entirety, serve the private sector and seek to raise its contribution to the national income and increase its effectiveness in the recruitment and attraction of qualified national talents.

On my own behalf and on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors of OCCI and the members of the boards of directors of its branches in all the Sultanate’s Governorates, and its executive body, and on behalf of the Omani private sector, we are pleased to extend to His Majesty the Sultan the highest congratulations and blessings on this occasion. We pray the Almighty to bestow health and wellness upon His Majesty, and preserve the grace of security, safety, progress and development for Oman under His Majesty’s wise leadership.

Editor-in-Chief
Raysut Cement Company congratulates His Majesty Sultan Qaboos on the occasion of the 49th Renaissance Day.

Wishing him long life and good health so that the coming generations can also enjoy his care, protection and kindness for years and years.
ECONOMIC BOOM
Through Cultural Achievements & Sustainable Projects

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) at Al Alam Palace on 18 February 1990, His Majesty said:

“The development process has gone a long way, but we have to maintain what we have achieved and make greater efforts to build on that. Furthermore, we have to develop and diversify our economic resources in order to lessen dependence on oil, and to secure for our national economy a solid basis from which to face the unstable international economic conditions and fluctuations in the world oil market. The private sector should show the highest degree of awareness and sense of patriotism in dealing with all new circumstances. It should join hands with the Government to avoid all negative effects which have resulted or may result from any unfavourable circumstances. Today, the private sector is required to exert more efforts through its representatives in the State Consultative Council, the OCCI and all other establishments and companies to double its national role to meet the targets of the policies on which we are constantly placing stress on many occasions.”

In this issue of Al Ghorfa magazine, we explore some of the views of business owners in different parts of the Sultanate about the achievements made in various economic, social, educational and other fields in 49 years.

Year of difference
Essa bin Al Badi, Member of the Board of Directors, OCCI in North Batinah Governorate, said: “Every year the Sultanate celebrates the Omani Renaissance Day on the 23 July, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. The year 1970 was a difference in the history of Oman; the first signs of the blessed renaissance began by establishing the foundations of unity and stability and uniting all energies and efforts to achieve security and prosperity throughout Oman.”

Empowering Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
Sultan bin Abdullah Al Shibli, a contracting and construction business owner, said “His Majesty has been keen to strengthen the role of the private sector and develop the legislative and legal structure of the business and investment environment to achieve an increase in income rates and diversification of sources. These have enabled the SMEs through the packages of facilities offered so that these institutions play a large role in economic development.”

Social Responsibility
As for the achievements of the Renaissance, which are relevant to the private sector in Al Wusta Governorate, Salim bin Jumaa Al Junabi, a member of the Municipal Council representing Wilayat of Al Duqm and a businessman in the Governorate, said: “There are a lot of achievements during the blessed Renaissance era in Al Wusta Governorate and the achievements of the blessed Renaissance still increasing year after year, including those relevant to the private sector and small and medium enterprises. The government has developed a new growth pole at the turn of the century in the Wilayat of Duqm, namely the economic zone that the government seeks to make it an international hub which will undoubtedly have a great impact in supporting the private sector in Al Wusta Governorate.”

Positive Impact
Abdullah bin Salim Al-Harsousi, Chairman of the Board of
Directors, Al-Imtiaz Al Ahlia Company, pointed out that Al Wusta Governorate has witnessed a great remarkable change, known to any insightful person. The Governorate has witnessed many achievements perceived by the private sector, whether in the field of roads, transportation or infrastructure. In the field of transportation, our wise government has established the most modern ports, including the port of Duqm, which is used by the private sector in the transport of goods and equipment, as well as Duqm airport, which has brought about a special qualitative leap in the field of flights from and to the Governorate, which has had a positive impact on ease of movement. The laws and legislations related to the private sector have allowed the freedom of business to everyone, and have made the companies carry out their business easily. All these achievements are some of the fruits of the blessed Renaissance.

As to the private sector, Al Harsousi said: “The sector contributes to creating opportunities for Omanis from the Governorate, supporting small and medium enterprises, and working in partnership with the large projects that the private sector implements in the Governorate at all levels, whether in oil or gas or infrastructure such as airports, roads and other services, which will enable achieving the sustainable development of the local community in the Governorate. The wise government’s instructions are clear on this side; it has allocated 10% of the proceeds of the major projects to the people of the Sultanate’s Governorates in general.

Development March
23 July is the light and joy that have spread all over Oman and in the hearts of its loyal people,” said Lafi bin Humaid Al Ameri, owner of the Ocean Beach Fish Trading Project in Niyabat of Sinaw. “On this anniversary we renew the pledge and loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos who has renovated ancient glory, heritage, civilization and culture of Oman, which has contributed to the progress and prosperity of the country. Many achievements have been carried out on the land of our generous nation since the dawn of that blessed day. Development included all aspects of social life, and Oman witnessed important stages of development activities. All economic sectors have also been revived, and several investment opportunities have emerged.”

High Mettle
In his speech about blessed Renaissance Day, Saleh bin Nasser Al Maskari, businessman, said: “The strong will and thoughtful progressive steps taken by His Majesty since the dawn of the Renaissance to build the present and pave the way for the future, and strive to work for a better future for Oman and its people, in addition to high, superior and noble purpose, our country, in a short period of time, has been able to construct a strong infrastructure consisting of a strong network of roads, ports, industrial zones and free zones, etc. all of which have contributed to the formation of a solid base for economy to start-up and attract global investments.

Established rules
Sultan bin Rashid Al Kalbani, owner of Abu Hazza Al Kalbani International Est., said: “The Sultanate, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, has gone ahead carrying out its modern achievements on the basis of solid rules that harmonise between the requirements of its national, regional and international commitments. The commemoration of this anniversary opens a new chapter in the national epic as a source of the blessed renaissance, which, since its inception, has added a balance of the economic and political development gains of our country. The development process is proceeding in the way of construction, accomplishing all the achievements which are apparent in the constant growth and development guaranteed by law and judicial institutions which provided the citizens and residents a decent livelihood and allowed a suitable investment environment to businessmen.”

Greetings to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and the people of Oman on the occasion of the 49th Renaissance Day of Oman
May Allah, the Almighty Bless His Majesty with Health, Wisdom and Happiness
Also this Land with Lasting Peace, Prosperity and Progress
We remain inspired by His Majesty’s Vision and
Ever Committed to Realize it in every work that we do
Great Roles

“The 23rd of July is a precious day for every Omani who sees the great achievements performed on the land of our dear Oman,” said Dera bin Mohammed Al Alawi. «Perhaps we were not alive at the start of this renaissance and be with the founding fathers, but today we pick the fruits of that great effort which would not have reached without the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. In fact, that day has been a milestone in the history of modern Oman, whereas its lofty history has been embracing its bright present, so that future generations will enjoy a prosperous future. The hard work that accompanied the beginnings of the blessed Renaissance, from the moment of its inception, was the result of a structured planning and great effort we enjoy its good fruits today.”

Thoughtful Plans

Haitham bin Abdullah Al Shehhi, businessman, said, “There is no doubt that the private sector is a cornerstone for the prosperity of any country, especially if it contributes to products exported abroad, and its fruits return back as proceeds to Oman. The nation put the thoughtful plans and scientific programs to develop the Omani economy and diversify sources of income. Tangible positive results in this regard have been achieved whether in agriculture, industry, trade or services. It is well known that the development of these fields effectively cannot be performed in a short time, but it takes an effort that takes many years, hence patience and exerting more effort is necessary to drive the development wheel forward in this regard.”

Unique Vision

Fahd bin Al Fanna, Chairman of the Industry and Mining Committee of the Chamber Branch in South A’Sharqiyah, said: “Oman is a nation that all countries of the world confess of its wisdom, security, excellence, philanthropy and prosperity in various fields. The Sultanate will embark on its new vision (Oman 2040) in accordance with a unique vision that start off from its ancient past and rich heritage to embrace, by its objectives and aspirations, broad horizons of human, cultural, industrial and economic development, which we, the people of the community, have to translate into a practical reality with all sincerity and loyalty, so that it can bear fruit and the society enjoys prosperity, health and justice.”

Qualitative Leap

Ali Hamad Rashid Al Hashmi, Chairman of the Education Committee of the Chamber Branch in South A’Sharqiyah, said: “We thank the Almighty for the grace of security, safety and wise policy of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. The achievements are the best witness on the stages of the qualitative leap which our beloved Sultanate has lived for 49 years in all fields. Now, we hope that there will be a real partnership on the ground between the public and private sectors to continue implementation of the plans set in light of the economic changes taking place in the world. We also hope that private school sector is given more attention, like private university (higher) education sector, so that it can play the hopeful role along with government schools.”

Great Day for Omanis

Muhannad Al Saadi, CEO, Amwal Company, said: “His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has fulfilled his promise to his people on the day of his accession, when HM said: I will proceed as quickly as possible to transform your life into a prosperous one with a bright future. Every one of you must play his part towards this goal.”

Al Saadi added: “And how the eye of the sun is denied! Every part of the country’s economy is witnessing the blessing of this Renaissance, which transformed the entire economy from an agricultural, fishing and trading economy in distant areas into a prosperous and diversified economy.”

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said

Oman has a deep-rooted history and firm principles established ages ago and, what we have done is to confirm these principles, and express them in modern-day language.

Sohar Aluminium and all its employees express their heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and to the people of Oman on the occasion of the 49th Renaissance Day.
Economic Vision Awardees honoured

In a festive ceremony organized by Al Roya newspaper in a strategic and effective partnership with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and His Highness Dr. Faris bin Turki Al Said, the winners of the Economic Vision Award in its eighth edition (2019), were honoured at the Grand Hyatt Hotel Muscat, in the presence of a number of Highnesses, dignitaries, Excellencies, businessmen, and entrepreneurs. There was special presence of some Indian investors with the attendance of India as Guest of Honor in this year’s edition.

Hatem Al-Taie, Editor-in-Chief of Al Roya newspaper and supervisor of the award, spoke by honoring the winners of the Economic Vision Award, in which he said: “The strategic partnership agreement between the Award and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Oman was signed in recognition of the pioneering role played by the Chamber in supporting the economic growth and its inherent responsibility as a sole representative of the private sector. The current board OCCI has succeeded in carrying out many tasks and roles that have contributed to the development of the private sector, supporting entrepreneurs and stimulating the growth of small and medium enterprises.”

He pointed out that in this year’s edition of the award, India was chosen as a guest of honor, based on the strong relations between the Sultanate and the Republic of India in light of the diversity of Indian investments in the Sultanate, noting that the volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate and India was 6.7 billion US Dollars during the period from April 2017 to March 2018.

Abdul Azim bin Abbas Al Bahrani, Chief Executive Officer of OCCI spoke about the importance of celebrating excellence and honoring the actors of economic and development aspects of Oman. He pointed out that this is the optimum means to support the entrepreneurs which is an appreciation message urging development and improvement. “OCCI was founded 45 years ago to take care of the interests of business owners, to express their views and to provide a platform for continuous cooperation between all parties to stimulate the movement of the economy, promote opportunities and serve sustainable development.”

HE Mano Mahwar, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Sultanate, praised the strong bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India in various economic fields, noting that the trade relations between the Sultanate of Oman and India are more than 5,000 years old. He pointed out that Oman is focusing on its vision 2040 on the knowledge economy, which is commensurate with India’s future economic goals.

Khawla bint Hamoud Al Harthiya, member of the jury, said that the award contributes to support the growth of various economic sectors, along with enhancing the private sector, through honoring its pioneers, and to celebrate the achievements made in all areas.

The winners

The award ceremony started with honoring the most important national economic achievement in the Sultanate, with the “National Achievement Cup”, which went to the Million Nakhla project in the Dhowan of Royal Court. Dr. Saif bin Rashid Al Shqasi, Director General of the project received the trophy. The Million Nakhla Project in the Dhowan of Royal Court is one of the most prominent government projects with economic impact and has 11 farms in six governorates and uses artificial intelligence techniques to reach high production volumes. The production of the project is expected to reach 96,000 tons in the year 2034, in addition to 49,000 tons of byproducts.

In the second category of the award, the category of the best private project (the large private enterprises) was won by Al Nahda Village Project in Duqm. This project is one of the largest investments of Al Nahda Services Group in the Sultanate, costing RO 75 million. It includes 16,960 beds to accommodate the workforce in the various companies and projects in the economic zone of Duqm, located on an area of 200,000 square meters.

In the category of the best private enterprise (the category of small and medium enterprises) and given the strength of competition, the main committee decided to grant this award to the top three small and medium companies in support of the entrepreneurial sector.

The first place was won by the National Center for Natural Honey, established in 2014, and is now one of the leading brands in the Sultanate and the main importer of honey of all kinds. The company’s products are available in more than 750 branches of commercial markets in the Sultanate. The second place was granted to the Commercial Engineer Group, a conglomerate of small and medium enterprises, which plays a significant role in several sectors, including: information technology, marketing and promotion, management, design and implementation of events, as well as activities related to solar energy and renewable energy, engineering, administrative and economic activities, and other activities related to the management of institutions and theaters. The number of projects in the group today is nine, while the third place was granted to the International Al Nimr Exhibition and Conferences, and Al Nimr Expo, with known experience in organizing Exhibitions and conferences, and has succeeded in attracting the best international companies to hold its activities in the Sultanate. The company also provides opportunities to enrich the local market and introduce its capabilities in this sector.

Al Jouri Company for Incense and Perfumes also received special recognition in the same category for its outstanding performance. It has been established in 2012, and depends in its products on the local market, and the company is keen to subject its products to laboratory tests for safety and soundness, and it has a certificate of specifications and measurements from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for cosmetic products.

SAGEC Oman has won the Best Foreign Investment category, PDO in the category of Best Value Added Programs. The company aims primarily to contribute effectively observing safety and respect responsibility towards society.

Salalah LPG has received special recognition for its efforts in its local value added program. It is of a strategic national importance that will contribute significantly to advancing the progress of the existing and future petrochemical industries in Dhofar.

In the category of the best economic figure was the share of businessman Sheikh Mahmoud bin Mohammed Al-Jarwani Chairman of Al-Jarwani Investment Group.
Enhanced Future, which is a promising student company founded in 2018. Its product is a machine that separates the plastic waste from the aluminum waste that is cut and stored in separate, replaceable tanks, each contains 20,000 cans. The second place went to the Omani Recycling Company, and the company relies on industrial activity based on the recycling of used tires, and convert them to sound, heat and fire insulation for buildings, and the company has a patent in this area.

The Watad company which won the third place is a student company from Sultan Qaboos University that participates in the Oman Achievement Competition and seeks to be the first choice in providing the best long term economic and environmental solutions. The company’s activities are in the industrial field through the exploitation of palm leaves and integrating them with recycled plastics to produce environmentally friendly raw materials in the form of panels that are used to make furniture and some wood products.

The Economic Vision Award also received a special award this year titled Permanent Giving Award and was awarded to the late businessman Mohsin Haider Darwish. The award was received by his daughter Areej bint Mohsin Haider Darwish. Mohsin Haider Darwish was one of the most prominent Omani businessmen. He died on 10 January 2018, after a long career in the various economic sectors in the Sultanate. He achieved many milestones and established in 1987 a famous institution bearing his name, working in a number of production sectors. He previously headed a number of positions in the country including the membership of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman and the chairmanship of a number of boards of directors of various companies in the Sultanate.

Heartiest felicitations to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and the people of Oman on the occasion of the 49th Renaisssance Day.
In his paper, Dr. Muhannad Al-Asfour pointed out that one of the most important problems faced by economic planners and economic decision makers is the difficulty of quantifying the phenomenon of practicing works without license and its impact on the official economy in the country. The seminar comes to identify the challenges facing the labor market through questionnaires and workshops organized by a team of the Commission to follow up and study the violations of the law of taxes and fees, violation of labour law and legislation regulating the practice of commercial work, as well as the Foreigners' Residence Act. He also referred to the negative impact on the consumer according to the sector in which the violator works, the negative impact on taxes and fees, security, an official and national data and statistics, modernization of small and medium enterprises and the regulation of the Omani labour market.

**Economic Problem**

Dr. Abdul Salam Yahya, economist at OOCI presented a working paper on the shadow economy and its relation to the phenomenon of work without a license. He pointed out that the problem or phenomenon of growing work without a license is one of the most prominent problems that can exist in any economy of the world (developing and underdeveloped), and added that when the phenomenon of working without a license may turn into a real economic problem, because it leads to the growing size of the shadow economy or the informal economy.

The economist pointed out in his paper that the shadow economy and its relation to work activities without a license, that the shadow economy is an economy out of the law, and that combines the honest and dirty work in a single chain of accounting, noting that this economy is not subject to government control and their inputs and outputs does not enter the national accounts and it does not recognize the legislations issued and therefore relies on confidentiality in the process of selling and buying (there is no system of keeping books).

He explained: «Why does the phenomenon of working without a license constitute an economic problem?» As it is a problem facing the programs of development plans and decision-makers in the state because they have to develop very effective monetary and financial policies in the random and uncertain economic climate or that most of their plans and decisions are wrong, which may result in the failure of programs of growth and development in society. He added that it is considered an infringement on state property and in violation of the provisions and laws governing municipal and urban work.

**Recommendations**

The workshop made several recommendations, including addressing the competent authorities to start taking some steps, including circulating all parties to stop assigning work to those who do not have a license, and limiting the dealings with legally authorized parties. And to organize an extensive awareness seminar and discuss the subject under the umbrella of the Al Ghorfa to invite all employers and traders, and it was agreed on the importance of organizing a national campaign to raise awareness about the negative effects of the phenomenon of work without a license.

About the workshop, Mohammed Bin Hassan Al Ans, Chairman of the Labour Market Regulatory Commission at OCCI, said: “The committee is working to identify the challenges facing the labour market regulation through its meetings, seminars and workshops organized to identify the challenges facing the labour market, with relevant sides and institutions to this subject.”

**Impact of unlicensed activities on the economy**

**Shadow Economy**

In order to identify the phenomenon of work without a license, and to find ways and tools to be followed to reduce this phenomenon, OCCI, represented by the Labour Market Regulatory Committee, organized a workshop on “Work without License”, with the participation of several relevant governmental and private bodies and institutions, in the presence of a number of experts, businessmen, and those interested in organising work market in the Sultanate. The workshop was organised and managed by Dr. Muhannad Al Asfour, member of the Committee, and Eng. Faisal Al Shanfari, member of the Labour Market Regulatory Committee at Al Ghorfa.

The seminar considered that practice of work without a license is an integral part of hidden trade, which in turn is classified as one of the sections of the informal economy or the so-called shadow economy.

**Breaking the Laws**

In his paper, Dr. Muhannad Al-Asfour pointed out that one of the most important problems faced by economic planners and economic decision makers is the difficulty of quantifying the phenomenon of practising works without license and its impact on the official economy in the country, adding that the lack of laws to limit the size and number of practitioners to work without a license may lead to the inability of the economic planners to develop effective economic plans that are compatible with reality. This leads to an outbreak of hidden trade phenomenon and the migration of funds out of the Sultanate, which impede the programs of growth and development in society.

Al Asfour pointed out in the paper that working without a license is contrary to laws and regulations, including violation of the law of taxes and fees, violation of labour law and legislation regulating the practice of commercial work, as well as the Foreigners' Residence Act. He added that the workshop comes to discuss and tackle the issue of work without license and determine its effects on the national economy and its direct and indirect negative effects on the national economy, and what are the ways that can be followed to identify this phenomenon and monitor it and work to eliminate it or reduce its presence.

He stressed that this workshop came after the formation of a team of the Commission to follow up and study work without a license through questionnaires and meetings and many efforts that led to the holding of this seminar with relevant institutions.
Under the auspices of HE El-Sayed Ibrahim Bin Saeed Al Busaidi, Governor of Buraimi, and in the presence of Zaher bin Mohammed Al Kaabi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of GCCI Branch in Buraimi Governorate, the Branch’s Board members, and a number of Excellencies, Sheikhs and officials from government departments in the Governorate, as well as businessmen and businesswomen, the second meeting of the “Opportunities” events, organized by OCCI branch in Al Buraimi in the framework of its Ramadaniyat Economic Program, hosted officials from Orpic Company to talk about the most important economic and investment opportunities available to companies and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The meeting started with a video presentation about Orpic by Saif Bin Salem Al Fodhaily, the company’s domestic value added manager, in which he highlighted the company’s main achievements and projects, including Mina Al-Fahal, Sohar Refineries, Polypropylene Factory, Aromatics Factory, Jeelfan Station, Muscat-Sohar pipeline, and Liwa Plastic Industries Complex. He also pointed out that Orpic gives great attention to domestic added value; it has launched its domestic added value since 2013 because it strongly believes in the important role played by domestic added value to the large companies in the Sultanate in various aspects, especially in terms of business development, national human capacity building and local economic sector stimulation, adding that Orpic has established a specialized department to follow up the local added value in the company and has contributed to achieving many great results through its continuous plans to maximize the efforts of the company to support its added value. The company determines 20% of the annual expenditure as a minimum contribution to the aspects of local added value.

Managed by Dr. Rashid bin Salem Al Shamsi, director of the Institute of Islamic Sciences in Buraimi, with participation of Nasser Bin Saeed Al-Esi, Head of SMEs’ Development, the meeting discussed the opportunities available for investment by local companies in the following fields: information technology, maintenance services, support services for operation, projects, non-technical services, tools and general services.

A detailed explanation was provided about tendering mechanism and availing of the opportunities available in Orpic through registration at the electronic tender portal «Tawreed», which includes all the services related to tendering (from suppliers’ registration, launching of tenders and receiving offers, follow-up of tendering stages, analysis of offers and delivery of invoices). Saif Al Fodhili explained that more than 350 SMEs benefited from the opportunities available in Orpic with a contract value of more than $20 million (RO 8 million) in 2018.
CCI branch in Al Wusta Governorate, in cooperation with Al Wusta Sports and Cultural Club, organized the second Ramadan cultural and economic evening with the participation of small and medium enterprises, Sanad offices in the Governorate, large private sector companies and the banking sector.

A number of large companies, located in the Governorate, participated in the evening event, namely Occidental Oman Mukhaizna, Special Economic Zone Authority in Duqm, Port of Duqm Company, Oman Gas Company in Nimr, Arabian Industries Company, Al Turki Enterprises, Rural Areas Electricity Company, Omantel, in addition to the participation of the banking sector in the Governorate, represented by Bank Muscat, Haifan Branch and HSBC Bank, Haifan branch.

In addition, small and medium enterprises in the governorate also participated in the evening competitions. Special competitions were organised for the institutions. Institutions and companies in the governorate including Remal Al Zamayem Trading and Services, Konouz Al Wusta Trading, Ruboa Al Wusta United Trading and Ruboa Siwan Services and Business took part.

Mahmoud Tabuk, journalist, presented the competition. As for the results, banking sector won the first place, the Port of Duqm Company and HSBC got the second place, and the Arab Industries Company won the third place. In the competition of small and medium enterprises, Remal Al Zamayem Company won the first place.

From Sanad Offices, Reem Al-Wusta Office won the first place. A draw was made on the prizes of Ana Montasib (I’m an affiliate) competition, through which CCI branch in Al-Wusta encouraged members to renew their membership through the conditions of the competition in which the participants will win valuable prizes.
Platforms Forum discusses electronic marketing strategies

Al Ghorfa’s branch in South Al Batinah Governorate organized a forum for social networking platforms, Thraa and Ithraa under the patronage of His Excellency Ali bin Khalfan Al Jabri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information.

In his opening speech, Eng. Hamoud bin Salem Al Saadi, Chairman of Al Ghorfa Branch in South Al Batinah Governorate, highlighted the importance of e-marketing through social networking platforms and considered them as one of the most important developments in the field of marketing. Social communication techniques are available in the various fields to adapt the best conditions to reach the largest number of potential customers at a limited cost. It is necessary that the employer be well acquainted with the modern technologies to manage and organize the marketing plans of the institution, taking advantage of the available means.

Al Saadi added that social networking platforms are a two-edged sword that may contribute to the success of the organization and at the same time may lead to the collapse of the institution if misused. Therefore, there are important and fundamental rules that must be followed by the institutions when managing social networking accounts.

Hamad bin Salem Al Malki, member of the Board of Directors of Al Ghorfa Branch, said that the forum aims to expand the marketing concepts of the business leader through social networking platforms, through highlighting the basics to be followed when managing the social networking accounts of businesses, in addition to focusing on legal and ethical frameworks to manage these accounts.

Ahmed bin Yaqoub Al Ghaithani, member of the Board of Directors, pointed to the importance of the entrepreneurs to activate and functionalize the social networking platforms of his organization. There are significant and essential rules to be followed by institutions in the social networking accounts. These rules contribute to strengthening the accounts and empowering them as an added value to the institution. The forum reviewed a number of working papers. Salma Al-Hajari discussed the basics of digital media, the most important ways to build social media strategies, build professional content in social media platforms and ways to activate digital advertising through various channels such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube and the most important tools that help to professionalism in the digital world.

Fatima Abdul Ali Abdulla, head of the electronic media team at the IFA, presented a working paper on the importance of familiarity with the policy of social media channels, their controls and guidelines, the main principles guiding the development of social media management policy.

She reviewed the policy model of managing the social channels of the IFA, and reviewed a working paper aimed at introducing entrepreneurs to the marketing opportunities available in social media.

The basics of successful business identity was presented by Mustafa bin Ahmed Al Rahbi, Executive Director of Darb Al Majra Foundation. The event also included a presentation of two innovative ideas in the e-business world.

In completion of the activities of the Forum, a promotional photography workshop was held on 5 May 2019. The workshop aimed at introducing the basics of advertising photography to the owners of the products, and presented them in cooperation with the Photography Association.

"Eid with us is Different" event held

On the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr and in the framework of the efforts, endeavours and partnership with the initiatives that give economic and educational momentum and activity, OCCI branch in Al-Alamin Governorate, represented by the Committee of Tourism, has adopted that event, entitled "This Year your Eid with us is Different", during the period from 5 to 8 June 2019.

The event was organised in cooperation with Shorfet Al-Alamin Hotel in eastern mountain in Wilayat Al-Hamra and included many educational activities, which contributed to increasing popularity of this tourist place and stimulated the economic activities associated with that event.
Ramadan Economic Competition

OCCI Branch in South Sharqiya Governorate organised the first Ramadan economic competition with the participation of a number of temporary committees in the Branch and various government and private institutions. The aim of the competition was to raise economic awareness of the people of the governorate and strengthen the bridge of communication and interaction with various government and private institutions.

The competition covered several matters, including cultural and economic competitions, introducing the services provided by South Sharqiya OCCI, Riyada, Rafd Fund, Oman Development Bank and the other institutions which provide support to businessmen and businesswomen. The competition also focused on introducing the economic and investment sectors in the Sultanate in various industrial, tourism and service fields.

The event was patronised by Najib bin Mahfouz Al Sinani, member of the board of directors of South Sharqiya OCCI branch. During the closing ceremony, the winners of the competition were declared, and the first three winners, as well as all the organisers and participants, were bestowed with awards.

Panel discussion on “Owners and Tenants’ rights in leases”

A discussion session was held at the Omani Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in North Al Batinah Governorate, during Ramadan Iftar evenings, entitled “Owners and Tenants’ Rights in Lease Agreements” which dealt with the definition of the legitimate and legal controls governing contracts in the Sultanate.

The session aimed to determine the legal nature of contracts and obligations towards tenants, and the development of legal culture, which reflects positively on the quality of management of institutions, in addition to providing the owners of institutions with information and views on legal issues and improve the business environment and developing it.

Abdullah bin Ali Al Shafei, Chairman of OCCI branch North Al Batinah Governorate, said: “The importance of this dialogue session is to increase legal awareness among the various segments of society, especially the community of business owners who are the most exposed to disputes between tenants and owners, to clarify the legal situation towards them, hear the views of the attendees and the most important challenges facing them in this sector and discuss them with relevant persons.

The session was managed by Abdul Aziz bin Rashid Al Shafei, member of the Committee of Legislation and laws in the Chamber’s branch. He opened the session by presenting a brief about the participants: Dr. Hamad bin Khamis al-Jahouri, President of the Court of Appeal at A’Rustaq, and lawyer Saheed Al-Roushi, member of the Committee of Legislation and Laws in the Chamber’s Branch and Engineer Mohammed Al-Muqbali, Director of Health Affairs Department, Sohar Municipality, and Salim Al-Maamari, Head of Contracts Section, Health Department, Sohar Municipality.

Sohar Economic Festival by year end

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in North Al Batinah organized Ramadan Iftar to honor the companies and supporters of the first Sohar Economic Festival held last November.

The ceremony was held at Radisson Blu Hotel in Sohar under the auspices of HE Sheikh Muhanna bin Saif Al Lamki, Deputy Governor of Dhofar and attended by HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousuf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, Abdullah bin Ali Al Shafei, Chairman of the Chamber Branch in North Al Batinah Governorate, and business owners, officials and sheikhs.

Al Shafei, said: “The Board of Directors of OCCI in North Al Batinah Governorate, in its current session, decided to hold the Sohar Economic Festival to be a real start for the Governorate and to be recorded on the map of the festivals in the Sultanate, as the Governorate of North Al Batinah boasts many of the economic and tourist components that qualify it to organize the festival. He pointed out that the Chamber’s vision is focused on developing the private sector and making it an essential partner in sustainable economic development. Sohar Economic Festival was organized in its first edition to achieve the desired objectives in the development process and activating the private sector and to achieve the aspirations of business owners in the Governorate.

Al Shafei added: “After the success of the festival in its first edition, we are delighted to announce the launch of the Sohar Economic Festival in its second edition in December 2019 as a contributing factor in stimulating the economic sector of the Governorate and the Sultanate as a whole. The Festival in its second edition will include new visions to keep pace with the developments that are taking place in the economic arena during these years.”
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Oman Builders Exhibition for Student Companies

Under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Nabti, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Civil Service for Civil Service Affairs and in the presence of the Excellencies and the Directors of the Governmental institutions, employers and business persons, the third Omani Builders Exhibition for Student Companies was organized by the Chamber Branch in the Governorate of North Sharqiya in cooperation with the General Directorate of Education.

Promising Opportunities

The events of the opening ceremony of the exhibition started with a speech by Ali bin Salem Al Roji, Chairman of Al Ghorfa Branch in North A’Sharqiya Governorate, in which he explained that the Chamber’s branch at the Governorate seeks to establish strategic partnerships that reflect the meaning of integration between public and private sector institutions and promote entrepreneurship in the Governorate and supports entrepreneurs and emerging companies. He also explained the efforts of the Chamber Branch in North A’Sharqiya to spread the culture of entrepreneurship among the community and strengthen cooperation among all supporting parties as well as the services provided by owners of small and medium enterprises operating in various sectors and economic activities and the preparation of studies, surveys and economic reports.

Basic skills

Nemna bint Jumana bin Sulaiman Al-Shafriyah, Director of Al-Shamoos Bin Al-Nu’man Al Ansariyah School, delivered a speech in which she said: “The Omani Builders Exhibition for student companies in its third edition highlighted 60 student companies at the governorate level. Thirty-three qualified student companies were supervised by 25 specialists who acquired many skills therefrom, including time management, communication and communication art, overcoming challenges, managing commercial records, marketing and promotion arts, as well as the efforts of the Department of Career Guidance in the Directorate to instill entrepreneurship and encourage students to develop their companies and exchange experiences among their colleagues and among those interested in entrepreneurship in the hope that these companies turn to local and international companies.

The crowning of the winning companies

This was followed by presentation of video reports and materials known as the Chamber’s services and how to benefit the start-up companies and the owners of small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs in addition to clarifying the types of investment projects in the Governorate and the factors affecting the development of entrepreneurship and business opportunities available in North Sharqiya. The winner student companies were announced and the company of Alban Ormatic from Al Shamous Bint Al Nu’man Al Ansariyah School student Shaiba bint Musalam Al Maheeriyah won the first place. Health and Healing Co. from the school of Lamis Bin Amr Al Ansariyah student Othaa bint Abdullah Al Farsiyah won the second place and the third place went to Long Dream Company of Al-Shamous bint Al-Nu’man Al Ansariyah school for the student Bayaan bint Mohammed Al Rasidiyaa and student Suhaila bint Sawad Al Busaideyah. The fourth place was won by Wamda Company of Manara School for Basic Education for the student Maria bint Abdulah Al Braimy. The sponsor of the event and attendees took a tour at the exhibition, which included a presentation of products and services provided to the community, such as perfumes, oils and accessories and natural flower arranging and antiques, gifts and food products such as natural honey, sweets and some popular food.

Workshops focus on innovation

The third Omani Builders’ Exhibition was accompanied by workshops focusing on innovation, entrepreneurship and opportunities for the development of small and medium enterprises. The first workshop focused on Entrepreneurship Competition in its fourth edition, entitled “Competitiveness and Innovation”, aimed at entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises owners, and supporting parties thereto. The objectives of the award are to promote the culture of entrepreneurship in the society and to develop the performance and ability of small and medium enterprises to compete and encourage excellence and enable them to compete, innovate and appreciate individuals and institutions supporting entrepreneurship. It also provided an appropriate environment to building networks of acquaintance and exchange of experiences in the sector of entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium enterprises. The Workshop explained the fourth version categories and the mechanism of participation in the award and the criteria of each category. The workshop also reviewed all winners of the last three versions and programs presented to support the winners and candidates for the arbitration stage where technical support is provided to them through the program of supporting the winners and candidates. The participants also learned about the evaluation criteria in the award and its types.

Omani Academy for Small and Medium Enterprises

Abdullah bin Rashid from the Omani Academy for Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund presented the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (NMEDA) participated in the second workshop where Abdullah bin Hamad Al Barashdi presented the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund a work paper on the Fund’s objectives and its role in contributing to economic diversification through the financing of value added projects and supporting entrepreneurs in implementing. The project also aims at creating an environment conducive to the growth of small and medium enterprises. Al Barashdi also spoke about the initiatives adopted by the Fund for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises such as care, follow-up, guidance, training, qualification, financial accounting programs, marketing of products and services, expansion of the customer segment in small and medium enterprises. He also referred to some success stories for entrepreneurs in the Sultanate and pointed out some pioneering models that enable their owners to benefit from the support programs offered to them by government and private institutions.

Enhancing competitiveness

Abdulrah Al Barashdi also briefed the Omani Academy for Small and Medium Enterprises on the development, small and medium enterprises and the training of entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises and provide all their training and rehabilitation needs. The Academy works to promote a culture of entrepreneurship and intensely interest in innovation, develop the managerial and financial skills of entrepreneurs as well as its interest in creative capabilities, effective management and leadership skills, and enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises.
Musandam Branch signs agreement for advisory services

At the headquarter of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in Ruwi, OCCI branch in Musandam Governorate, represented by Raed bin Mohammed Al Shehhi, Chairman of the Chamber Branch in the Governorate, signed an Agreement with Amwal for Financial and Administration Advisory and Services, represented by Mohannad Al Saadi, CEO of Amwal Company, with funding from Raed Al Shehhi Est., to provide accounting, administrative and advisory services for the affiliates of OCCI branch in Musandam for the year 2019, in the presence of HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousuf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI.

The aim of the Agreement is to increase the information awareness about technical trade issues, which increases the financial and administrative efficiency of the affiliate, and to supervise and determine the quality of administrative workshops that are not related to accounting and finance, such as marketing, operating and administrative workshops, in order to reach the results which are appropriate to the Agreement.

Khalifa Al-Hinai: The interest of Musandam Chamber branch in this matter reflects recognition and awareness of the importance of legal work and the desire to have legally capable companies.

The agreement provides for the joint cooperation between the parties to provide oral and written legal advice in all matters related to any company affiliated with Al Ghorfa branch in Musandam Governorate.

The agreement also provides for the response to all queries and the formulation of official letters (legal notices) for companies and institutions affiliated with Al Ghorfa branch in Musandam Governorate or to reply to them, providing advice on labour issues related to these companies, legal translation of documents and studying any subject and any issue related to these companies.

The Chamber’s branch in Musandam Governorate also aims to create sustainability and continuous momentum for developing the capacities of the affiliates in managing crises, opportunities and financial challenges, and empowering and helping them to achieve growth through the development of their business.

The agreement touched upon some social objectives through the Chamber’s keenness on its role in the community service by training and employing a group of graduates from Musandam governorate to provide accounting and financial services through the Amwal office located in the governorate or by fully qualifying them for employment. It will include specialisations related to accounting, finance and marketing.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Musandam Governorate, represented by Raed bin Mohammed Al Shehhi, Chairman of the Chamber Branch, signed an agreement with Khalifa Al Hinai Advocates & Legal Consultancy, represented by Dr. Khalifa bin Satt Al Hinai, Head of the Office, to provide legal services to the affiliates of OCCI branch in Musandam, as part of the initiative of “Musandam Legal Clinic” which is funded by Raed Al Shehhi Establishment.

HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousuf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, said: “The agreement for providing legal services to the affiliates of the OCCI branch in Musandam Governorate is a qualitative initiative sought by the Chamber’s branch in the Governorate in cooperation and partnership with one of the leading legal offices in the Sultanate. We thank Raed Al Shehhi for his institution’s sponsorship of this initiative and provision of support to it. We also thank Dr. Khalifa Al-Hinai for this cooperation, which enhances the business environment and reflects the importance of the spirit of cooperation and partnership among institutions to serve the private sector.”

Raed Al Shehhi, Chairman of the Chamber Branch in Musandam Governorate, said: “The Chamber seeks to provide quality and specialised services, and it also provides all types of support and services to serve the aspirations of the affiliates. In this initiative we focused on the legal aspect which is one of the fundamental aspects in preparing the business environment. To activate this initiative, we have been keen to cooperate with a leading institution in the legal aspect, namely “Khalifa Al Hinai Advocates & Legal Consultancy”. Through this agreement, the Chamber dedicates the legal culture by way of holding legal seminars and giving consultancy, review of contracts and representation of companies in courts.

Dr. Khalifa bin Satt Al Hinai, head of Khalifa Al Hinai Advocates & Legal Consultancy said: “We are very pleased to cooperate and sign the agreement with Al Ghorfa branch in Musandam Governorate. The interest of Musandam Chamber branch in this regard reflects recognition and awareness of the importance of legal work and the desire to have legally capable companies in terms of management and quality contracts reviewed and formulated in a way that can make these companies stand strongly on their feet during their internal and external business dealings.”
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.

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The Real Estate Forum seeks to achieve objectives that are intended to contribute to the revitalization of the real estate sector and to enhance its contributions to the national economy in light of the government’s ambitious plans for economic diversification to enhance communication between the concerned parties.

Residential Project

During the forum, the society initiative “Residential Project” was launched by the Omani Real Estate Association. Hassan bin Mohammed Al Lawati, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Real Estate Association, presented the idea of the initiative, its importance in particular and the voluntary initiatives in general, in contributing to the progress of the Sultanate and the development of societies and disseminating the values of cooperation and coherence among the members of the society. He pointed out that the idea of the initiative is conceived in providing financial support for the implementation of projects for the maintenance and repair of homes of insolvent families from the families of national security and limited income groups in all governorates of the Sultanate, through financial contributions from members of the Association of real estate companies in particular, as well as individuals and institutions in the Sultanate.

He also pointed out that the initiative aims to maintain 100 homes a year in select Wilayats of the Sultanate, according to an annual program previously prepared by the committee supervising the initiative to include, over the years, covering all the Wilayats of the Sultanate. The initiative will contribute to the restoration and maintenance of homes affected by undesirable climatic conditions in some of the Wilayats of the Sultanate and require urgent intervention for the maintenance and restoration of these houses.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Real Estate Association said, “The mechanism of implementation of the initiative will consider the principle of transparency in dealing with beneficiary cases to be accepted within specific conditions and criteria. To ensure that aid reaches only those who are entitled to them from needy families, the Initiative Committee will not accept any cases except for rough social development committees, associations and voluntary teams.

Numbers and data

Finally, the report issued by the Ministry of Housing about real estate trading in the Sultanate during the first quarter of 2019 shows that the total value of sales contracts amounted to RO 263,454 million through 15,767 sale transactions of title deeds, while selling fee is more than RO 11,128 million.

The report also shows that in the first quarter of this year, 108,845 title deeds were issued, including title deeds of GCC citizens, of which 15,581 issued in the North Batinah Governorate; the highest percentage compared to the rest of the governorates, 13,365 in Muscat Governorate, 10,767 in South Al-Batinah, 11,342 issued in A’Dakhilya Governorate, 6,591 in North Sharqia Governorate, 5,282 in South A’Sharqia Governorate, 4,950 in Al-Dhahirah Governorate, 293 in Dhofar Governorate, 1,230 in Musandam Governorate and 990 in Al Wusta Governorate.

The total number of title deeds issued to the citizens of the GCC countries during the period from January to March of this year, according to the controls of ownership of real estate in the Sultanate, was 299. The citizens of the State of Kuwait ranked first among the number of owners with 128, followed by citizens of the State of Qatar (76), United Arab Emirates (73), Kingdom of Bahrain (12) Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (10).
COMMITTED TO OMAN’S FUTURE

Since its inception of operating processes, Shell Oman Marketing Co. has been able to cope with the transformations witnessed by the Sultanate during the past decades and is proud to contribute to supporting the comprehensive development of the blessed renaissance under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said over the past 49 years. It is also committed to the future of this country giving at all levels.

The company’s history of over six decades reflects its commitment to the principles of sustainable development in its business practices, including adherence to the highest standards of health and safety, security and environment, business ethics, and the company’s ongoing endeavor to provide state-of-the-art solutions and leading technologies, and business ethics, and the company’s ongoing endeavor to stand of health and safety, security and environment, in its business practices, including adherence to the highest commitment to the principles of sustainable development said over the past 49 years. It is also committed to the future under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Oman’s future.

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Interview with Dr. Mohammed bin Mahmood Al Balushi, CEO of Shell Oman Marketing Co.

Economic and social gains

in implementing its projects, the company is keen to create sustainable social and economic benefits and gains for the community individuals in the long term by focusing on creating In-Country Value (ICV) agenda, employment and business opportunities and dealing with local suppliers and contractors. The Company contributes actively and effectively in the field of social investment, through various events and activities targeting different segments of society. The company focuses mainly on road safety, environment and community development through sponsorship and donations, and the development of small and medium enterprises (SME) sector in the Sultanate.

What are the efforts of Shell Oman to contribute to this development through the development of the Omani human resources?

The development of national human resources is of paramount importance in the company’s policy and vision through its support, sponsorship, training and development, in the belief that this will positively reflect the achievement of the company’s objectives and will contribute to the company’s reach and its employees to the highest levels of success. Shell Oman

Dr. Mohammed Al Balushi: Shell Oman has been pioneering fuel technology in the Omani market with world-class value such as Shell V-Power and Shell Lubricants. Shell Oil Blending Plant is the only ISO-certified facility of its kind in Oman; a proud recipient of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos award for the top five factories in the Sultanate.

Oman has achieved continuous success in this regard, as it has received recognition from many government and private bodies for its superior role in developing Omani talents, with approximately 92% Omanization, including the senior management of the company. We truly appreciate the role of our colleagues over the many decades in the successes achieved by the company during its journey, considering that human resources come first and is one of the most important and valuable assets of the company.

Over the past years, the employees of Shell Oman Marketing Company have been the best ambassadors for the company’s brand among the communities in which the company operates and have been a reflection of the society’s reality and principles, which has contributed to strengthening this relationship, maximizing the partnership developed by the Shell Oman with the community.

Shell Oman continues with the long term growth strategy to invest in new sites and improve the existing ones. Work is progressing on the development of many existing stations, with additional sites under construction currently, and is expected to reach the number of Shell service stations to 208 during the current year. The Company launched Shell V-Power, our best performance and efficiency fuel in Oman, for the first time in the middle east. This fuel technology is a result of decades of R&D between scientists from Shell and Ferrari, and the formula was developed for Formula 1. This product has been very well received, and the customers have been giving us rising reviews.

The company has also made a leap in improving and enhancing customer experience with the relaunch of the new generation of Shell Select, a popular brand of convenience shopping, has been launched in Oman through seven stores in 2018, with the addition of a number of new stores in 2019. In addition, the service station network has been strengthened with car care and wash facilities and Shell Helix Oil Change + facilities to provide a different and modern experience for our customers making their journeys better.

What value does a company carry to a world-leading brand like Shell in the local market?

The company benefits from the technology of Shell Group, which has been in the forefront of technology in the oil and gas sector for more than a century. It is one of the largest Research & Development investors among international oil and gas companies, working with governments and academists and exchange ideas and experiences with partners within and outside the energy sector to drive innovation forward.

Therefore, the company has always pioneered the launch of the latest products, services and technology to contribute to the addition of world-class value in the local market. Shell service stations are trusted by customers due to their advancements and outstanding experience they offer to customers.

The company’s interest in developing its customers’ experience has been enhanced to include environmental aspects such as Shell’s launch of Oman’s first solar powered service station. Shell Oman an oil blending plant in Mina Al Fahal, with the ISO International Quality Certificate, which is proud to have won His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Award for the top five plants in the Sultanate, the plant processes the latest and most advanced lubricants products to meet the local market needs of Shell lubes as well as exporting them to international markets. Shell lubes is still the world’s number 1 and continues its lead in for more than 12 years, according to a report by the Klein & Company International.

The Sultanate is embarking on new development plans and mega projects to diversify sources of income and boost the economy of the Sultanate. How do you see the role of Shell Oman in the next stage?

Dr. Mohammed Al Balushi spoke about the various developments witnessed in various sectors in the Sultanate of Oman, including the logistics sectors in the Sultanate. He spoke about the distinctive characteristics of Shell Oman Marketing, its honoring history and its contribution to the comprehensive development witnessed by the Sultanate as a leader in the local market.

The company is working for business development and growth in a sustainable and efficient manner that enhances the company’s ability to create added value in the Sultanate in its work and support efforts to diversify sources of income for the national economy in the interest of this country and the citizens. The wise government’s exerted efforts in investments and the infrastructure projects and the development of the free, industrial and logistic zones in Muscat, Sohar, Qurum, Salalah and others open the way for the company to provide its world-class products and services. The Sultanate is also poised to strengthen its position as a regional hub attracting large investments and projects while diversifying its economy and improving its competitiveness in the global market.

Shell Oman will play its part in its efforts for achieving this vision by providing the best global fuel technology with operational excellence and the highest standards of health, safety, security and the environment, and ethics in dealings with partners and our local and international customers.

In Oman’s aviation sector, which dates back to 1962, Shell Oman continues to be the main supplier of fuel and oil services and consultancy. It is the sole operator of fuel facilities and warehouses at Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport, as well as being the main fuel supplier at Salalah Airport and PDO runways. He added that the company recently won a tender with Oman Air to supply 50% of its aviation fuel requirements, which showcases the company’s lofty standards of health, safety, security, environment, operational excellence and commercial competitiveness.
Durrat Al Shifa Medical Complex in the Wilayat of Saham is one of the most important health complexes for citizens. The complex provides various health services according to the highest standards of quality and has many departments and clinics that have contributed to relieving pressure on Saham Hospital, including Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Infertility Clinic, Dentistry and General Medicine. They also provide other health services, and testing with the latest equipment and modern and sophisticated radiotherapy devices. Durrat Al Shifa Medical Complex also provides important services to the private sector by actively contributing to the creation of jobs in the various sections of the complex.

In this issue, we meet with the pioneer businessman Ali bin Musalam Al Badi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Durrat Al Shifa Medical Complex, to learn more about his experience in the private sector and his establishment of the Health Center. He said: “Working in the private sector is a university of giving, and renewed thought and infinite aspirations, and I am as much as my experience was humble at first; but my ambition at first glance was to be free in everything. From the very beginning I have developed this ambition, and I owe the major credit to my father, may God have mercy on him, where I was inspired by his thought, self-reliance, and gained experience working in the private sector.”

Durrat Al Shifa Medical Complex

Ali bin Musalam Al Badi says that the complex of Durrat Al Shifa was opened a few years ago. The average number of visitors per day is about 80, about 2,400 visits a month. The complex offers comprehensive treatment services. Al-Badi stressed that the complex adopts the policy of continuous development and modernization in order to guarantee the best health services for the visitors.

Health to support private health institutions. He called for the government sector to be more supportive of the private health sector in addition to facilitating the procedures and the completion of transactions urgently, as the delay, especially in the health sector have harmful and adverse consequences.

As for government support for the private health sector, Al-Badi said that efforts are being made by the Ministry of Health to support private health institutions. He called for the government sector to be more supportive of the private health sector. In addition to facilitating the procedures and the completion of transactions urgently, as the delay, especially in the health sector have harmful and adverse consequences.

As for the future plans to expand the scope of Durrat Al-Shifa project by opening other branches, Ali Al Badi said: “The beginning was very modest and limited. However, during the past period we have come a long way. There are ambitious plans for the medical development of the complex through the opening of specialized medical departments and increasing the number of medical appliances. However, we call for the support of the competent authorities for the health sector in order to reach the desired goals, including the service of the people of the homeland by providing a variety of health services.

Leading Entrepreneurs

“Working in the private sector can make a qualitative leap,” Al Badi says. "But young people who join the entrepreneurial world need diligence, perseverance, patience and faith. They have to realize that success will not happen overnight, and they have to believe that a thousand miles begins with one step. Government agencies should overcome obstacles that hinders young people who wish to become involved in the private sector so that they can play a role in national development, as young people are the backbone of the present and the future, and the main engine of the economy.”

Challenges

As for the challenges he faced during the establishment of the project, Al Badi said: “Any obstacle may be challenged by any entrepreneur, especially those related to the licensing procedures. However, my will was available to overcome all obstacles. Government agencies such as Ministry of Health and Ministry of Manpower and Royal Oman Police have a prominent and significant role overcoming some obstacles and more is hoped from them.”

At the conclusion of the dialogue, Al Badi pointed out that the media is one of the most important tools and elements of the success of any commercial project. He called on the various media to intensify participation in highlighting the development process, focusing on the aspirations of the youth and motivating them to engage in the private sector and to highlight and market their projects, as media is one of the success makers, as it has made very effective economic entities and has resonated greatly.

Interview by:
Hamoud Hamad Al Breiki

Ali bin Musalam Al Badi
The economic movement in North Al Batinah Governorate has contributed to creating job opportunities in various technical, administrative and supervisory levels.

Recently, there has been increasing talk about the immense importance of North Al Batinah Governorate in supporting the national economy. How do you view the importance of the economic movement in the North Al Batinah Governorate? The Governorate of North Al Batinah is witnessing steady growth in all fields of industrial, commercial, tourism and logistics, especially with expansion of the development projects map in the governorate and the desire of many local and foreign companies to invest in vital areas equipped with the latest equipment and infrastructure such as Sohar Industrial Port, Free Zone, Sohar Industrial Zone, the Port of Shinas and Al Suwaiq, and the existence of multiple projects including the Sohar Refinery, the aluminum factory, the plastic industry plant, the petrochemical plant and the polypropylene plant, in addition to the great importance of the mining and quarrying sector in the quarry in the governorate.

These commercial projects have contributed significantly to raising the volume of investments during the recent period, which demonstrates the keenness and interest of the government in the development of the governorate and the creation of an economic zone attractive to investments and international companies in all fields. Not only that, the governorate enjoys a unique strategic location with the presence of sea ports, land and air link, as well as proximity to neighboring countries, which facilitated the process of trade exchange and develop partnerships between the different countries of the world.

The National Program for the Promotion of Economic Diversification (implementation), which is part of the objectives of the Ninth Five-Year Plan 2016-20, was found in the North Batinah Governorate an ideal environment for increasing the contribution of manufacturing, tourism, transportation, logistics, mining and fisheries sectors to GDP and enhancing the flow of foreign direct investment. The economic movement in the governorate has contributed to the creation of jobs at various technical, administrative and supervisory levels, which reflects the remarkable development witnessed by the governorate.

The completion of infrastructures in the industrial areas was the main factor in the development of the economic movement, but the existence of incentives and facilities that encourage attracting businessmen to establish investment projects, and laws guarantee their rights such as the existence of investment law. There is no doubt that the rapid development movement in the governorate of North Al Batinah will enhance the economic status of the Sultanate as a whole, especially that the economy of the governorate is growing and developing.

Important statistics that confirm increase in the number of commercial records in the governorate, which amounted to the end of 2018 to 46,600, and investment indicators indicate the development of the business environment in the governorate.

The Chamber’s vision is to develop Oman’s private sector and make it a key partner in sustainable economic development. What is the role of the Chamber’s branch in North Batinah Governorate in this? The Board of Directors of the Chamber in North Al Batinah Governorate has been keen on supporting the private sector in various ways and means of representing them on various occasions. It also held several meetings in order to identify the challenges facing this sector and submit proposals to the competent authorities for consideration and finding realistic solutions that contribute to the development of the sector.

Abdullah bin Ali Al Shafei, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in North Al Batinah, said in an interview with Al-Ghorfa magazine that the current Board of Directors of the Chamber’s branch follows a clear policy that promotes transparency in all the works and tasks assigned to the Council and ensures the participation of business owners’ decisions that affect their interests considering that the Chamber takes care of their goals and aspirations.

Al-Shafei also stressed that the Board of Directors of the Chamber’s Branch is looking at developing student projects with higher education institutions and working on an innovative exhibition in which the students of the projects are a major part in order to develop these projects and turn them into start-ups. The following is the text of the interview:

Interview

Abdullah bin Ali Al Shafei:

ABDULLAH BIN ALI AL SHAFEI

The economic movement in North Al Batinah Governorate has contributed to creating job opportunities in various technical, administrative and supervisory levels.
This is in addition to the periodic meetings held by the Chamber’s branch with the employees to deal with specialized and general topics in order to facilitate the work of the private sector and its development. We also assure you that the Board has made a commitment to make every effort to provide the best services to the Chamber’s affiliates and to sponsor their objectives. For example, we have developed a plan to study the opinions of the employers and the auditors about the affiliate’s services department at the Chamber’s branch and its affiliate office at the industrial zone, to improve the services and achieve the satisfaction of the members.

The Chamber’s Board of Directors also sought to identify and promote the investment opportunities of the North Batinah Governorate, whether through visiting delegations to the Sultanate or delegations led by the Chamber’s branch or through periodic seminars. The Branch held four specialized training courses during the last year, and is organizing five training courses during July and August of this year, in addition to multiple workshops.

The Chamber’s branch has been keen to conduct a number of business delegations to businessmen and business owners in the governorate in order to open the horizons of cooperation and trade exchange and follow up the latest developments and economic changes taking place in the regional and international arena. This contributes to supporting the private sector in all its sectors and promoting economic diversification through the creation of new commercial markets. The Branch organized a number of trade delegations to China, Turkey and Taiwan. We believe in the importance of trade delegations in bringing the diversified knowledge in the economic field to small and medium enterprises, which positively reflects these institutions in creating a diverse and solid economy for the governorate and the Sultanate as a whole.

Some business owners wonder about the mechanism followed by the Chamber’s board of directors in organizing and running commercial delegations. What procedures do you have in this regard? How can real-time organization of trade delegations be used?

We have followed a clear policy that enhances the level of transparency of the Chamber’s branch not only in the conduct of business delegations but in all the functions and tasks undertaken by the branch. We publish the electronic links in various media channels and in the main website of the Chamber to ensure the participation of various small and medium enterprises in the governorate in trade delegations to maximize the economic advantage of the private sector, and to inform the owners of small and medium enterprises of the opportunities available and the most important sectors covered by the delegation.

This is done by preparing a marketing plan that shows the size of the flow of foreign investment in the Sultanate and providing visual presentations that facilitate the presentation of investment sites in the North Batinah governorate and the areas of cooperation. The trade delegations highlight the Sultanate’s economic status and work to create multiple relationships and partnerships between different institutions in different countries of the world. To further benefit from the trade delegations, we are conveying the experience of the visiting delegations through meetings between the members of the delegation and the business owners in the branch.

What is your role in increasing the number of student projects in the institutions of higher education in the governorate?

We recently held visits to Sohar Applied College and Sohar University to discuss opportunities for developing student projects and to identify successful pilot experiences. We are currently working in coordination with these institutions to hold an innovative exhibition where the students are a key part of presenting their entrepreneurial projects and developing their innovations in real and tangible terms.

You announced the launch of the second edition of the Sohar Economic Festival in December. Did the Sohar Economic Festival in its first edition achieve the desired goals? What are your expectations in the second version?

We thought of organizing an annual economic event that would have a clear signature in supporting the economy of Al Batinah Governorate in particular and the Sultanate in general. Therefore, the Chamber’s Board of Directors decided to establish Sohar Economic Festival to be a real start for the governorate and to be recorded on the map of festivals in the Sultanate. The festival has achieved a number of important objectives set by the Council to highlight the economic, industrial and natural components of the governorate of North Batinah, to highlight the small and medium enterprises in the governorate and enhance its role, and marketing for home crafts, and to stimulate internal tourism, as well as develop communication with the community and business owners, and attracting and encouraging domestic and foreign investments.

The festival in its first version has achieved great success, but every achievement is subject to some challenges, so after the completion of the festival we had a comprehensive review of the various economic sectors in the governorate. They held meetings with large segments of the business owners in a specific field to identify the challenges and formulate appropriate solutions in cooperation with the competent authorities, review their visions and inspirations to develop each economic sector individually, in addition to urging the members of each specialized committee to make efforts to develop the work of the Committee. From time to time we evaluate the performance of these committees to ensure that they work well and scrutinize the ideas presented so that we can implement the message and vision of the Chamber in the development of the private sector and make it an effective strategic partner in the economic system.
CCI received a Sudanese trade delegation at its headquarters. The members of the delegation were received by Dr. Salem bin Sulayem Al-Junaibi, deputy chairman of the Chamber for Economic Affairs and Branches. The delegation was headed by Yahya Mousa, chairman of the Sudanese Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Salem welcomed the visiting delegation to the Sultanate, and said: “This meeting comes within the framework of the efforts of the private sector institutions in the Sultanate and the Republic of Sudan to continue work, in a way that would boost joint cooperation and investments. Oman’s exports to Sudan amounted to RO 5.5 million. Oman-Sudan joint investments registered in the Sultanate amounted to about RO 8 million until the year 2016, of which the Sudanese contribution rate reached RO 3 million by almost 44%, these investments are distributed among around 36 companies and are concentrated in various sectors of animal and plant products and chemical industries, metal products, and other sectors.”

He added: “There is no doubt that we in the Omani private sector look forward to developing trade and investment relations with the brothers in Sudan and exchanging experiences and expertise with them. We are interested in studying the challenges facing investors in both countries and working to find ways and means to face these challenges.”

Al-Junaibi affirmed the readiness of Al Ghorfa and the Omani private sector to provide all facilities and support joint investment initiatives.

Hani Sabri Sayyid, General Manager of Havast Import and Export Company, welcomed the Sudanese delegation, referring to the importance of enhancing Omani-Sudanese trade relations in various commercial activities, in addition to enhancing trade exchange, as Sudan is rich in huge resources, and this participation is the first of its kind after changing the political situation in the Republic of Sudan.

**Investment opportunities**

Mohanna bin Ali Al-Sanani, an investment promotion executive, presented a visual presentation on the investment opportunities in the Sultanate. He pointed out the importance of the geographical location of the Sultanate and the incentives offered by the Sultanate to foreign investors in addition to the geographical locations that can be invested such as free zones, industrial zones and services available to investors. He referred to the fact the Sultanate enjoys good trade relations with many countries has contributed to the holding of many international conventions.

**Investment in the Sudan**

Yahya Mousa, President of the Sudanese Chamber of Commerce and Head of the delegation said that Sudan is considered one of the most important and of the first countries to settle the food basket of the world for several international organizations through the adoption of the World Food Program and the Arab League. It is also considered a strategic anchor for global and regional food insurance, noting that the field of investment in medicinal and aromatic plants is still characterised by unprecedented profitability. Sudan also has a large database, research and feasibility studies in various fields, as well as investment maps, geological research and studies for all mining squares.

He also pointed out that the field of services in Sudan flourishes investments in the field of higher education and public at relatively high profitability rates with a huge gap between supply and demand Industry, manufacturing, mineral, chemical and plastics industries are flourishing and upgrading the precision, medical and pharmaceutical industries promoted by the state to bridge the gap. There are projects in the field of air navigation, Nile and Navy that are ready for implementation system of smart partnerships.

The Chairman of the Sudanese Chamber explained that the investment environment in Sudan is characterized by flexibility and openness. In the legal and legislative framework, it has the protection and full care of the investor and his rights. The Companies Law regulates the establishment of business and partnerships quickly and easily. Investment disputes shall be settled in accordance with the Arbitration Law as soon as possible in order to save the cost of litigation.

Bilateral meetings was also held between the Omani and Sudanese sides to review experiences and exchange trade experiences.
The growth rate of the world economy in 2018 fell from 3.6% to 3% and forecasting its slowdown to 2.9% in 2019.

Ahmed bin Saleh Al Marhoon: The brokerage companies should have great interest to the studies and analyses and distribute them to shareholders and investors.

“Impact of Financial Markets on Muscat Securities Market” was the title of the first Ramadan evening gathering organized by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) under the patronage of His Excellency Sultan bin Salem Al Habsi, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman and attended by HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousuf, Chairman of the Chamber, business men and women and journalists. It was directed by Dr. Ahmed bin Abdulkarim Al-Houti Member of the Board of Directors and Chairman of the Economic Committee.

The evening touched on the current situation of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM), whose indices and trading volumes declined. Several solutions were introduced to stimulate the market through the interventions of the attendees and the talk of a number of economists and specialists.

The keynote paper was presented by Dr. Salah Al-Talib, an expert on the Muscat Securities Market, entitled “The Performance of the Global Financial Markets and their Impact on the Muscat Securities Market” in which he talked about the political, economic, social and psychological variables affecting the performance of the markets which are related to future investor trends.

Dr. Al-Talib addressed the reality of the performance of the global economy and its effect on the financial markets since the beginning of 2018, where it faced the challenges of trade wars between the large economic powers in the world, especially between China and the United States, causing large declines in the indices of international exchanges, currency markets and digital markets. This resulted in the emergence of a range of phenomena, including the decline of the global economic growth rate in 2018 from 3.6% to 3% and the expectation of a slowdown to 2.9% in 2019, which led to inflation of global indebtedness to reach the percentage of 224% of the Global GDP, and consequently, decline in the indices of international exchanges, currency markets and digital markets.

The evening resulted in a series of suggestions and solutions put forward by the speakers and attendees to address the phenomenon of the decline in MSM index and the decrease in trading volumes which require market support by deepening the market by activating the privatization process and encouraging the private sector companies to become public joint stock companies and enhancing market liquidity through the reactions of the role of the Balance Fund established after the global financial crisis in 2008.

Suggestions and Solutions

Speaking at the evening, in response to inquiries and interventions by attendees, Mr. Ahmed bin Saleh Al Marhoon, Director General of OCCI said: “The current market situation does not mean that the market is going to decline. We have preceded many markets in using many advanced trading systems. We need large companies to be launched on the market in the absence of free tradable stocks so that the situation does not remain as it is.”

Al Marhoon referred to the pivotal role of the market in providing the environment and finding transparency and fairness in trading operations, stressing the role of brokerage companies regarding their interest in studies and analyses and distributing them to shareholders and investors to keep pace with anything new.

Mustafa bin Ahmed bin Sultan, Chairman of the board of United Securities, said that the market can be mobilized and work collectively with a complete package of solutions to address the decline in the performance index and trading volumes through marketing to the market and amendments in legislation, taxation and governance.

Investment Policies

The evening gathering also stressed the need to review the investment policy of funds to enhance the performance of the market and the profitability of funds as well as the abolition of tax on dividends to foreign investors or amendments to some laws to promote foreign investment in the market and to avoid their aversion. There is also need to restructure the financial brokerage sector towards raising its efficiency as it forms the main driving force of the market.
Importance of Marine Economy
The Chamber discusses the axis of innovation and investment opportunities in marine industries in its second Ramadan evenings

The second day of OCCI Ramadan evening focused on the “Importance of the marine economy in the promotion and diversification of the Sultanate’s economy” under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim Al Said, in the presence of His Excellency Qais bin Mohammed Al-Roud, OCCI Chairman, Dr. Salem Bin Sulayem Al-Junabi, Deputy Chairman of the Chamber for Economic Affairs and Industries, and fishing in the Sultanate, marine logistics and supporting industries as well as opportunities for renewable energies and water production from the ocean. The workshop was hosted by Engineer Daud Bin Sulaiman Al Yahiai, Director of the Department of Fisheries Development of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ahmed Bin Saeed Tabuk, Senior Manager, the Global Markets of Middle East and Africa (ASIAAD), Eng. Bushra Bint Jafar Al-Abdawaniya, PhD, Environmental Sciences, Head of Muscat Center for Sustainable Development, Hussain bin Mohammad Reza Almaskati, Director of the Department of Development and Management of Fisheries Resources, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and moderated by Dr. Ahmed Al-Hadi.

Sustainable environment
The first paper of the evening was on the role of the environment in sustainable development and was presented by Engineer Bushra Bint Jafar Al’Abdawaniya, PhD, researcher of Environmental Sciences, Head of Muscat Center for Sustainable Development. In the above paper, she talked about the environment, the ecosystem and its types and sustainable development and its goals. She further tackled the blue economy in terms of its main components and sub-activities thereof, as well as its principles and role in achieving sustainable development, and the role of stakeholders in achieving sustainable development of the blue economy.

Dr. Al-Abdawaniya explained that the latest UN statistics recorded at the Arab Labor Conference in April 2018 indicated that the value of the activities of the blue economy around the world reached at 3 to 6 trillion annually, and other estimates of at least $24 trillion for various resources and services that include transport and represents about 90% of worldwide business activities. On the other hand, global telecommunications holds about 95% of all digital data and is a source of food for about 4.3 billion people around the world while providing more than 15% of the animal protein consumed. Besides, 30% of oil and gas of the world’s production is produced from the seas and oceans, and demonstrated that the activity of tourism is estimated at only 5% of global GDP in which from 6 to 7% works in the world. Regarding business activity, 13 of the world’s largest cities on the shores of the seas and oceans, and 40% of the world’s population or 301 billion people live in coastal areas in 150 billion in coastal cities.

Investment opportunities
Eng. Daud Bin Sulaiman Al Yahiai, Director of Fish Farming Development Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, presented a working paper on investment opportunities in the fisheries and fish farming sector in the Sultanate. He pointed out that the contribution of the sector to GDP reached RO 248 million, with an annual production target of 1.3 million tons. The total number of completed projects is 22, while the number of jobs to be provided to Omaniis is 4,611. The total value of the investment is RO 248 million. Regarding fish farming projects, the total contribution of the sector to GDP is RO 222 million, while the annual production target is 100,000 tons, 26 projects have been completed and 2,454 jobs will be provided to Omaniis. The total value of the investment is RO 99.8 million.

Contributions of the logistics sector
Eng. Ahmed Bin Saeed Tabuk, Senior Manager of the World Markets of Middle East and Africa (ASIAAD), talked about marine shipping through the Omani ports, explaining that Oman’s logistics performance index in 2016 is 48 and the Sultanate reached 43 during the current year, in road quality index is 12, and in the road infrastructure quality index 8, and in the efficiency of port services. He added that the contribution of the logistics sector in the Sultanate’s economy reached 3.7% in 2018, which is the sector of transport and storage of goods excluding passenger transport.

The Sultanate’s market share in total port handling in the GCC is 12%, most of which is re-export to other countries. In 2018, Oman exported 68 million tons of solid materials and 20 million tons of liquid materials. In the future, liquefied gas will be the fuel used for ships, so the Sultanate is investing in this field.

Ensuring sustainability
Dr. Hussain bin Mohammed Reda Al Maskati, Director of the Department of Fisheries Resources Development and Management at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, talked about the fishing sector and the most important commercial opportunities available in the market, pointing out that the fishing sector is a promising sector in growth and is intended for artisanal fishing. In the Sultanate there are a number of applications coming from outside the Sultanate such as Turkey and China, and the Ministry is considering these applications in accordance with environmental requirements to ensure sustainability.
Al Ghorfa discusses ways to benefit from WTO

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organized its third Ramadan evening, at the headquarters of the Chamber under the title “The private sector and benefit from the World Trade Organization”, under the patronage of His Excellency Dr. Adham bin Turki Al Said, in the presence of H.E Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousuf, Chairman of the Chamber of Economic Affairs and Branches, and a number of Board members, officials and decision makers in government institutions, private sector institutions, and specialists in the trade sector.

The dialogue session discussed the importance of the presence and participation of the private sector in the meetings and events of the WTO and the desired benefits of this, and the role of the Sultanate’s office. The role of the Chamber to promote understanding of the private sector and businessmen to participate in events, Conferences and meetings of the World Trade Organization, the cases in which Oman companies face difficulties in export markets in the area of goods and services were also discussed. An overview of the recent developments in WTO was also made. Hilda Bint Ali Al Hinai, Director of the Sultanate’s Office to the WTO was the keynote speaker with the participation of Rashid Kawkab, Executive Director of CUTS International Foundation in Geneva. Dr. Ashraf Musharraf, Chairman of the OCCI for Economic Studies at Sultan Qaboos University managed the evening.

**Importance of participation**

Hilda Bint Ali Al Hinai, Director of the Sultanate’s Office at the World Trade Organization, pointed out that the need for a large and active presence in trade organizations lies in economic diversification and needs to know the rules of international trade affecting local policies such as export markets, imports, protection, dumping, and among other important needs.

Al Hinai demonstrated that the Office provided a training opportunity for five Omani youths including two young ladies in the office at their own expense or at the expense of their companies. Four Omanis were employed as trainees and one lady trainee was seconded for one year at the WTO. She noted that the Sultan Qaboos University has won the hosting of the regional session of Arab countries for trade policies for a period of three years paid by WTO, in addition to hosting the chair of the World Trade Organization, as being the only Arab Gulf country to host the chair and the third in four Arab countries (Jordan, Tunisia, Oman, Morocco). The Sultanate has also hosted UNCTAD regional courses on key issues on the agenda of the International Commission for Western Asia economic agenda for the years 2012, 2014 and 2016.

**Business Relationships**

Rashid Kawkab, Executive Director of CUTS International in Geneva, presented a working paper on the current situation and some impressions of the World Trade Organization, pointing out that there are important issues for developing countries in the WTO such as agriculture, services, special and differential treatment and others. It is important that the Sultanate pursue negotiations of E-commerce to be involved in making the right and timely decision. The WTO has active discussions on investment facilitation, small and medium enterprises support and pilot projects, as developed countries are more active in making proposals in a way that serves their interests with developing countries. The reforms in the World Trade Organization should include attention to the rights of small countries, and work in the committees of the Organization such as health and technical standards and trade policy review is very important for the interests of the private sector and exporters in developing countries.

It is important that the Sultanate cooperate with other developing countries so as not to lose sight of their business interests in the final outcome of the meetings. The Sultanate should continue its work in WTO while also working to establish bilateral trade relations that serve its economic interests.

**Evening results**

The evening tackled gap between the private sector and the organization, and several reasons were mentioned for this gap, including the lack of a platform for exchanging information and data between the Omani private sector in particular and the organization. It is true that the private sector is far from the works and meetings of the organization and its results and the changes taking place in the international arena, especially in the economic field. Therefore, we find that many countries benefit from the results of the meetings of the Organization in the development of import and export business and the development of foreign trade in general, because of the presence of representatives thereof in this organization and the existence of continuous and effective communication and effective coordination between the private sector and representatives of the States.

Al Hinai highlighted the weak representation of private sector companies and institutions in the meetings of the organization due to the rapid material interest mentality. As these companies and institutions refuse to send their representatives to attend meetings and appointments of the organization to benefit from the events that took place in these meetings under the pretext that the participation is just formal without any useful benefit. However, the theses discussed were related to the electronic commerce and how to keep pace with the world in terms of digital and technological development, and how to make use of it in the import and export, keeping abreast of changes and sharing information on international trade.

**Challenges of the private sector**

Dr. Ashraf Musharraf, professor of OCCI at Sultan Qaboos University, pointed out that the Omani private sector has the capabilities and is growing rapidly, but there are some challenges that hinder its movement. The administrative system moves slowly and does not keep pace with the speed required by the development plan in the country. This requires the liberalization of the administrative system especially in terms of economy and trade, liberalizing trade policies, giving a strong impetus to reviewing challenges and how to overcome them, and coordination between ministries and government institutions. There is a need for support and coordination between the two sectors, and the private sector should be the motive and defender to play its role in construction and development.

**Note:**

Hilda Al Hinai: The presence of large and active trade organizations contributes to achieve economic diversification.

Rashid Kawkab: Oman’s cooperation with the WTO is important so that its trade interests are not overlooked.

Ashraf Musharraf: Oman’s private sector is growing rapidly but challenges hinder its progress.
MINISTER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY MEETS OMANI STAKEHOLDERS

In order to support Omani products and to discuss mechanisms that would contribute to their presence in the local markets, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized a meeting with His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al-Sunaidi, Minister of Commerce and Industry with the owners and representatives of large commercial complexes, hypermarkets and Omani factory owners and producers, in the presence of HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousof, OCCI Chairman, HE Hamad bin Saeed Al Amri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Manpower for Labor Affairs and Chief Executive Officer of the General Authority for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (Riyada)), and the CEO of the General Organization for Industrial zones (Madayen), two vice presidents of the Al Ghurfa, a number of members of the Board of Directors and business owners. The meeting discussed the challenges faced by Omani producers in terms of the presence and marketing of their products in the large commercial complexes in the Sultanate.

His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al-Sunaidi stressed the government’s interest in Omani industries and national products in general. He stressed the necessity of cooperation of all large commercial complexes with Omani products produced in the Sultanate of Oman, especially from those small and medium enterprises whose owners hold the Riyada card, who are dedicated to managing their own businesses and projects through facilitating the presence of Omani products in these complexes, as well as direct communication between the General Authority for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (Riyada) and OCCI to find sufficient ways to ensure the support of those products and industries and enable them to be able to compete.

Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousof, OCCI Chairman said that the meeting comes within the framework of the Al Ghurfa’s initiatives in cooperation with the relevant authorities in the government headed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to support national products and industries in an important aspect, namely, marketing and promotion of products as they enjoy high quality and specifications and popularity of local and external markets.

The meeting included proposals aimed at supporting the presence of national products and industries in large complexes and shops, including re-requesting the amendment of Article (60) of the Commercial Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 55/90, which stipulates that “The shop may be disposed of by way of rent in whole or in part according to the provisions of this chapter,” which Al Ghurfa had previously requested to amend, and the drafting of a contract or agreement under the name “National Product Support Contract in Retail Stores” to regulate the relationship between the parties and to clarify the obligations of each party.

The aim of the proposed contract or agreement is to provide more space for Omani products in the commercial warehouse shelves and to put in place a mechanism for monitoring this by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This aims to provide more space in warehouses for Omani products to avoid distribution of small quantities and frequency of distribution several times per week, to improve the procedures for receipt of goods in the receiving section and to give priority to national companies to reduce waiting hours for trucks, stop the annual increase in discounts and shelves rent, and to identify specific ceiling of discounts.

During the meeting, Manafez initiative was launched by OCCI in cooperation with the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada), for the allocation of marketing outlets in the large commercial complexes to small and medium enterprises, whose owners hold the Riyada card.

Al Ghurfa is keen to provide access to the largest number of small and medium enterprises to benefit from this initiative, which is part of its efforts to support national products and industries.
Responsibility of economic Media

The economic media is one of the most important means used by media institutions, whether government or private, to publish, analyse and follow up the economic issues that are emerging in the arena. Despite the importance of transmitting the economic news in analysing the economic phenomenon and discussing the problems and challenges and offering opinions and economic solutions, it does not have big popularity in our societies.

The economic media cannot achieve its ultimate mission of raising economic awareness and contributing to development without the presence of certain factors such as transparency in the presentation of figures on the economic reports of various development institutions and the translation of economic concepts and terms to the public as the language of trade and economics is English, which create a cognitive gap between the specialist and the general public. The involvement of specialists in economics and financial studies in the information programs, both digital and traditional, to communicate information on economic issues in an easy and attractive way to the public through periodic bulletins and video clips is one way of kindling public interest. Economic institutions, both government and private, must join hands with media institutions in promoting economic activities such as trade delegations, economic forums, lectures and workshops that raise economic awareness in daily issues such as inflation, liquidity, equities, and monetary policy. Other economic terms, or emerging issues such as artificial intelligence, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, digital currencies, the blue economy and smart cities, the diversity of economic reports and information help the three production parties to understand the point of view of each other and expand economic knowledge base and reduce public emotion time of economic crisis and to assist governments in the selection of optimal economic solutions.

OCCI has endeavoured to raise economic awareness to serve business owners and members of society through a number of programs and initiatives in addition to its efforts in the Chamber’s magazine and the printing of laws of interest to employers, and economic studies for economic issues in the Arab world. To involve a larger number of writers and those interested in the economic field, OCCI has launched an award for the economic writers, the award committee invited all economic pens in the Sultanate of Oman to participate in this award to serve the common economic and media objectives and to support the creativity and innovation of the media and economy. To solve the issue of economic knowledge gap, a competition was launched for participation in both languages, Arabic and English, as well as the participation of the Chamber as a strategic partner in the Economic Vision for three years. These efforts can achieve greater success through continuity, development, and with greater cooperation with all media institutions in the Sultanate.