



INTERIORS & BUILDEX 2009
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MARKET REPORT

JULY 2006 - AUGUST 2008



The Wave, Muscat



The Blue City



Muscat Hills



Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa

Compiled by:



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*Asian Beach
Games Venue*



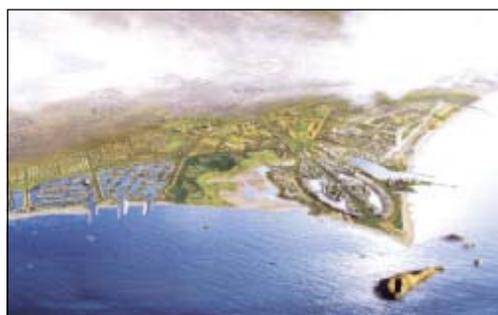
*Al Madina A'Zarqa
or the Blue City*



*The Wave,
Muscat*

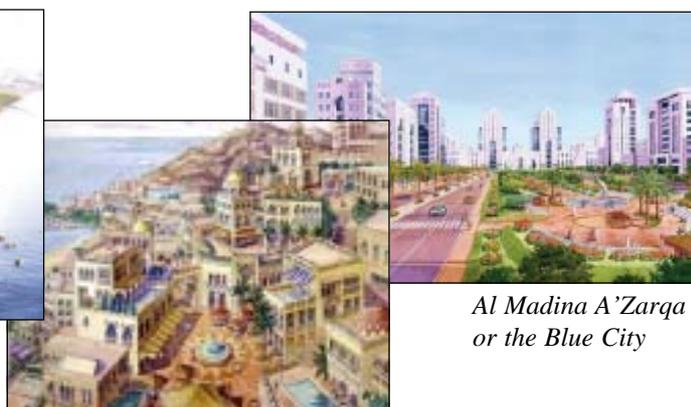
Major Development Projects in Oman

Name of Project	Owner/Developer	Cost (in million \$)	Status
Al Amerat and Quriyat highway upgrade	Muscat Municipality	180	Execution
Al Inshirah Boutique Hotel in Muscat	Oman Tourism Dev't Co. (OTDC)	50	Study
Al Madina A'Zarqa (Blue City) - Phase 1	Al Sawadi Investment & Tourism	1900	Execution
Al Musanaah air base expansion	Ministry of Defence	70	Execution
BarAl Jissah Residential Complex & Market	Zubair Corporation	50	Execution
Buraimi University College Building	Buraimi University College	31-100	Design
Concert Theatre Muscat project	Ministry of Palace Affairs	250	Execution
Dakhiliyah Central Prison in Sumail Town	Oman Government	140	Execution
Dubai Resort & Spa - Shinas Omani Resort	Sama Dubai	1900	Design
Salam Yiti Resort - marine works package	Sama Dubai	50	Bidding
Duqm Beach Hotel	OTDC	300	Design
Duqm Port - marine works	Ministry of National Economy	490	Execution
Duqm Port - ship repair yard and dry dock	Ministry of National Economy	200	Bidding
Eco-Resort at Ras Al-Hadd	Ministry of Tourism	300	Design
Extension of Palace at Nizwa	Ministry of Royal Court Affairs	31-100	Execution
Green Acres in Muscat	Radiance International	500	Planned
Hasik-Shuwaymiyah Highway	MOTC	178	Execution
Hayoot Beach Hotel Resort - Phase 1	Ministry of Tourism	60	Bidding
Hotels Development in Muscat - Hotel 1	OTDC	650	Study
Hotels Development in Muscat - Hotel 2	OTDC	650	Study
Hotels Development in Muscat - Hotel 3	OTDC	650	Study
Hotels Development in Muscat - Hotel 4	OTDC	650	Study
Industrial Estate in Sohar - infrastructure	PEIE	65	Bidding
InterContinental Muscat hotel expansion	OTDC	800	Design
International Maritime College Oman	Ministry of Manpower	31-100	Bidding



*Al Madina A'Zarqa
or the Blue City*

*Salam Yiti
Resort*



*Al Madina A'Zarqa
or the Blue City*

Name of Project	Owner/Developer	Cost (in million \$)	Status
Jabal Al Akhdar Hotel	OTDC	150	Planned
Khasab Family Resort in Musandam	Majan Gulf Properties	780	Design
Majan Logistic City in Sohar	Majan Gulf Properties	200	Design
Muscat Hills - golf course - villas	Ministry of Tourism	110	Execution
Muscat Southern Expressway	MOTC	350	Execution
New Sohar Airport - passenger terminal	MOTC	300	Design
Omage Project	Alfa International Holdings Corp.	1600	Execution
Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre	OTDC	500	Planned
Omantel Headquarters	Omantel	31-100	Bidding
Port Sultan Qaboos expansion in Muscat	Port Services Corporation	400	Bidding
Residential Township in Sohar	Saud Bahwan Group	120	Execution
Salalah Complex	United Real Estate Company	63	Design
Salalah Crowne Plaza redevelopment	Ministry of Tourism	31-100	Design
Salalah domestic roads	MOTC	167	Execution
Salalah Port expansion - container berths	MOTC	85	Execution
Salalah Port expansion - marine works	MOTC	200	Execution
Salalah-Thumrait Road Dualisation Project	MOTC	130	Execution
Seeb Airport / Salalah Airport Development	MOTC	1200	Bidding
Sohar Airport	MOTC	251-500	Design
Sohar Aluminium Smelter - residential units	Sohar Aluminium Company	200	Execution
Sohar Buraimi Road Expansion	MOTC	114	Execution
Sohar Health City	World Health Organisation	300	Planned
Sohar Port and Industrial Area - Phase 3	MOTC	243	Execution
Sohar residential and commercial project	Majan Gulf Properties	172	Execution
Southern Expressway road project	Muscat Municipality	342	Execution
The Wave, Muscat - infrastructure	The Wave, Muscat	100	Execution
The Wave - Phase 1 - 191 townhouses	The Wave, Muscat	60	Execution
The Wave - Phase 1- 303 villas	The Wave, Muscat	100	Execution
The Wave - Phase 1- marina	The Wave, Muscat	100	Execution
The Wave, Muscat - Phase 2	The Wave, Muscat	1000	Design
The Wave - Phase 2 - Fairmont Hotel	The Wave, Muscat	300	Planned
The Wave - Phase 2 - Kempinski Hotel	The Wave, Muscat	300	Planned



Muscat Hills



*The Wave,
Muscat*



*Sohar residential and
commercial project*

Construction starts on Dar Al Maha Phase I

Source: *Oman Observer* - August 30, 2008

Sohar International Development & Investment (SIDI) has started construction at Dar Al Maha Phase I in Darsait Heights — Greater Mutrah. Contractors Al Hajiry Trading Company and Consultants Engineering Innovation Design & Consulting (EIDC) have accelerated the pace of construction on site for timely execution of the project.

“It is with great pride that we announce the start of construction of our flagship project that has been carefully conceptualised replete with modern amenities and luxury. We are committed to complete Phase I as per schedule,” said a SIDI representative.

Since the start of mobilisation about a month ago, work has progressed at a fast pace preparing the site for construction, in terms of equipment and manpower. The laying of the foundation is expected to commence in three weeks.

Dar Al Maha is a premium residential development in Muscat’s business district area offering one, two and three bedroom apartments that have been conceived and implemented to project fine quality interiors. The 108 flats, having a built-up area of 19,243 square metres, will boast of luxury finishes and fittings, an outdoor balcony, wall mounted split ACs, with modern kitchens,

provision for television and telecom connectivity, security service and covered parking spaces.

SIDI, credited as one of the country’s fastest growing property developers, having three prime projects under construction (Bait Al Reem Office Complex at Al Khuwair; International Beach Restaurant at Al Shatti Beach Area & Dar Al Maha, Phase-I). Currently SIDI has a number of ambitious projects in the pipeline, which will be launched in due time and is committed to providing a series of master planned communities that will set new benchmarks in commercial and residential properties.

Oman Ceramics launches designer basins

Source: *Times of Oman* - August 26, 2008

Oman Ceramics Co. SAOG, manufacturers of high quality sanitary ware, launched their designer basins, ‘Trendz’, and also their new European look trendy suite named Zurich under the “Wave Premium” brand at the Hotel Grand Hyatt yesterday.

Rajan Paul, director of Oman Ceramics, along with Vish Natrajan, CEO of Oman Ceramics David Mott, ex-technical director of Jacuzzi UK, and other officials launched the product.

Before the launch the company organised a talk on the “Current Trends in Sanitaryware in Europe”.

David Mott, ex-technical director of Jacuzzi UK, who has several decades of experience in the sanitary ware industry, spoke on the latest trends in the market. His presentations gave an insight into the current practices in the world market as far as sanitary ware is concerned.

Officials from various ministries,

consultants, architects, builders, contractors and dealers attended the seminar to learn about the new products.

Vish Natrajan, CEO, Oman Ceramics, who spoke on the occasion said: “One of the things we are really proud as a company is Oman Ceramics makes world class products which are of European standards. The company has the distinction of exporting these top class products to the UK.”

Oman: Mining the ceramics industry

Source: *Oman Observer* - August 13, 2008

As the Sultanate continues to diversify its economy, industry is increasingly looking to opportunities presented by the country’s largely unexploited mineral deposits at a time when global demand for building materials is soaring. Oman’s ceramic tile industry is one sector ideally positioned to benefit from these resources.

In conjunction with the Directorate-General of Minerals and private partners, Al Maha Ceramics, the latest player to enter the tile manufacturing sector, launched Mineral Development of Oman (MDO) with the aim of developing investment prospects in industrial-grade mineral mining. The Directorate-General of Minerals is the government body

charged with the sustainable development of the country’s deposits.

Launched on March 20, the venture has already identified several opportunities and, on June 10, formed its first special-purpose vehicle, Manar Carbonates, which will produce ground calcium carbonates and precipitated carbonates from the

country's abundant limestone deposits. Information on the target markets and the amounts to be produced have yet to be released.

According to Suresh Deshmukh, general manager of Al Maha Ceramics, Oman is blessed with high quality industrial minerals in commercial quantities. "There are many opportunities here to develop non-metallic mineral-based industries," he told OBG on August 4. "The ceramics industry is based on industrial minerals, using shale, limestone and silica sand as the main raw materials. As such, we already have an expertise in processing industrial minerals," he added.

Although mining of metallic minerals in Oman dates back around 4,000 years, with archaeological evidence indicating that copper was both extracted and smelted in the region in ancient times, the future strength of the industry will be determined by the exploitation of non-metallic minerals since they are more abundant and have wider uses.

According to the Directorate-General of Minerals, the Sultanate has deposits that can be used as basic

raw materials for a number of industries. In addition to ceramics, these include glass, chemical, fertiliser, agriculture, abrasive, filler, refractory, construction and insulation products. In addition to the ready supply of feedstocks for such industries, there are other factors that are contributing to the prospects for the sector.

The Managing Director of Al Anwar Ceramics, A Shamsuddin, told OBG that in addition to the abundant raw materials the company benefited from the "relatively low energy costs and proximity to booming construction markets."

Elaborating, Shamsuddin went on to say, "We do not foresee a construction slowdown in the Gulf Cooperation Council markets because high oil prices are driving government spending in infrastructure projects. Additionally, the young population of the region is in need of homes, not to mention that the emphasis on tourism and freehold properties is further fuelling the sector."

According to Shamsuddin, the demand for ceramic tiles in the GCC continues to grow at 15-20 per cent

annually, while production capacity has seen a growth of merely 5-8 per cent. To meet part of this increasing demand, Al Anwar has increased the capacity of its plant in Nizwa by 3.5m sq metres per annum, bringing it to 10m sq metres. Al Maha Ceramics' Sohar Industrial Area plant, which came online at the start of April, has an annual production capacity of 5m sq metres. Plans are already afoot to increase that level.

"Because the region is a net importer of ceramic tiles, this presents a clear opportunity for local manufacturers. The market for ceramic tiles in the GCC is 150m square metres per annum. The GCC can produce only 50 per cent of what is needed and therefore imports the rest," Shamsuddin said. "The Chinese threat of cheap imports is diminishing for a variety of reasons, including higher shipping costs," he added.

Ventures like MDO represent collaboration between local industry and government to increase the prospects for mineral based industry within the Sultanate. Indeed, the sector looks well positioned for strong growth.

Blue City set to market villas

Source: *Oman Tribune* - August 13, 2008

Blue City will begin marketing its villas in the next two months, Richard P. Russell, MD and CEO of Blue City Company 1 told *Oman Tribune* on Tuesday.

The villas, which are part of phase 1 of the project, will be sold in the Sultanate and through brokers in the rest of the world, added Russell.

Phase 1, which will be completed by 2012, will include three five star hotels, 5,200 apartments, 400 villas, golf course, shopping centre, private primary school, police station, fire station and a mosque.

Building work for phase 1 will begin in Dec. 2008, according to Tassos Naoum, deputy project manager of AECO Development, who are developers and designers for the project.

Ninety-five per cent of the design work is complete, he added.

Naoum said a workforce of about 700 was already mobilised at the site and were involved in clearing and ground improvement.

Recently, citing poor sales, New York-based Fitch Ratings had put the company on a 'rating watch

negative' for \$526 million of debt issued by it. The bonds are part of the \$925 million arranged in Nov. 2006 to finance construction of the first phase.

Russell said sales were going up and were higher than projected. It was just that for reasons associated with the 'financial modelling' revenue from sales were not coming in. The company had sold 400 apartments so far.

Blue City, a \$20 billion planned community project, is located 60 minutes north-west of Muscat.

Muriya begins construction of Salalah Beach Project

Source: *Times of Oman* - August 12, 2008

Salalah has drawn countless numbers of visitors on account of its natural beauty that glows especially during the Khareef season. Muriya's ambitious Integrated Tourism Complex Project aims at ensuring that the numbers and the revenue soar even further.

Mobilisation at Muriya Tourism Development Company's Salalah beach started six months ago and Phase 1 is expected to be completed over the next five years.

"We are excited to start the process in realising our project. It is a step forward to break ground and to proceed with the installation of infrastructure required for the construction of the tourist complex," said Cyril Piaia, chief executive officer, Muriya.

The mobilisation started six months ago, which consisted in preparing the site for construction, in terms of infrastructure, equipment and manpower.

Temporary access roads have been built and generators installed to speed up construction. Other than three wells, a desalination plant has been set in place that will provide 500 cubic metres of water per day for the labour and construction.

On site, a labour camp of 50 portacabins that can accommodate 400 people and 20 natural stone buildings that can house another 120 workers have been built using material readily available on the site. The first batch of 300 workers has already started work and is living in the air-conditioned camps equipped with essential amenities. The company has taken up accommodation in town for 22 on-site engineers.

Phase I of Salalah Beach will be

completed in the next five years that would include the Marina, Marina Town, four hotels, an 18-hole PGA golf course and real estate. Currently the focus is on the construction of the Marina, two hotels (Movenpick Hotels & Resorts and Rotana) and the real estate sold in November 2007.

The ongoing work on the marina is divided into two phases – excavation of 100,000sq.m of the basin and building of the marina quay wall. The latter would involve construction of a concrete wall to form the central marina and waterway.

Excavation of 80,000 cubic metres of the marina has already been completed. Currently, excavation of top layer of soil until ground water level is in progress. The depth of the marina will vary to a maximum level of five metres. On completion, it will be able to house up to 200 berths depending on the size of the boats.

The 67 villas and 138 apartments sold in November 2007 will be completed and delivered within three years and will be set around the vibrant marina promenade and lagoon. The construction work on the villas will start by the end of August.

On the fringe of the eco-friendly township of Salalah beach, Muriya is offering a lifetime opportunity where buyers can build their own private retreat. 'Al Jeanan' homes comprise plots of land with a minimum area of 4,200 square metres where owners can create their very own utopian abode in urban proximity.

At present, a four-metre-high wall is being constructed using locally available natural stones around each of the 21 plots that were sold in November 2007.

Phase I of the project will also house four world renowned hotels and resorts, reinforcing its commitment to the country's booming tourism sector while maintaining high standards of comfort and luxury. These will include Rotana and Movenpick Hotels & Resorts, both of which will accommodate 400 rooms and 50 villas each. The construction will commence beginning of next year.

Founded in 1992, the Rotana Group offers a unique understanding of the culture and communities of the Middle East combined with the expertise of a team having extensive international experience.

In a short span of time, it has grown to be one of the leading hotel management companies within the Middle East and North Africa that is expected to grow to 65 properties by 2012.

Movenpick Hotels & Resorts is an upscale international Swiss hotel chain that currently operates in 20 countries. The Movenpick Group focuses on the hospitality business as well as the distribution of premium products. Its activities are centred primarily on Europe, the Middle East and the Far East.

Established in March 2006, Muriya Tourism Development Company (MTDC) is a joint venture between Egypt's renowned Orascom Hotels & Development with a stake of 70 per cent, and 30 per cent with the Omani government, represented by Omran.

It is the single largest tourism development company in Oman that is investing in two ITCs in Salalah and Jebel Sifah in addition to a city complex in Muscat and Boutique Hotel on Al Sodah Island.

Renaissance to build PAC facilities in Oman oilfields for \$91M

Source: *Renaissance Services* - August 11, 2008

Renaissance Services SAOG has been awarded contracts by Petroleum Development Oman LLC (PDO) to build, own and operate new Permanent Accommodation for Contractors (PAC) facilities in Oman's interior oilfields at Marmul and Bahja. The long-term contracts run until 2044 and the contract value of the initial 5-year period is in excess of RO 35 million (US\$91 million).

Renaissance is investing some RO 33 million (US\$86 million) in establishing the facilities. Once construction and other project contracts are finalized, operations are expected to commence in 2010. The Marmul facility will have 512 rooms and the Bahja facility 304 rooms, with both sites having room for further expansion. The rooms are designed for single, double and triple occupancy dependent upon requirements of the contractor populations in the interior oilfields.

The project anticipates an occupancy level of 1,000 residents at Marmul and 600 residents at Bahja. Renaissance already owns and operates 'PAC' facilities for PDO contractors at Fahud and Nimr, which opened in August 2000, and Qarn Alam, which opened in February 2002. These three existing PACs have a total of 1,452 rooms and accommodate over 3,000 people.

Commenting on the important new contract awards, Renaissance Chairman, Samir Fancy said, "Through the PDO PAC initiatives Oman has been at the forefront of raising living conditions and occupational health for workforces. Similar initiatives are being adopted by governments and large corporations in other markets. The Renaissance PAC concept and design provides a cost-effective quality solution to this increasing demand."

Renaissance CEO, Stephen Thomas

elaborated on this point, "A Renaissance PAC delivers higher standards at lower costs through economies of scale. The key to the cost-effectiveness of these projects is the predicted likely volume of occupancy and the longevity of the contract period. The concept can be beneficial to any large constituency of people, including resident workforces, students and military."

The PAC facilities include accommodation with en-suite bathrooms. Recreation facilities including swimming pool, gymnasium, squash, tennis, volleyball, basketball courts and other indoor and outdoor sports and games facilities. There is a fully equipped clinic. Dining facilities are supported by state-of-the-art kitchens, bakery and stores. Other facilities include the administration building and offices, laundry, reception, function rooms, meeting rooms and library. The new PACs will also have an auditorium.

Five Continents Marbles opens new showroom at Al Khoud

Source: *Times of Oman* - August 11, 2008

Five Continents Marbles LLC (5CM), a leading name in the building materials industry, has opened its second showroom in the Sultanate. The new showroom, located at Al Khoud, was inaugurated at a grand opening ceremony attended by top officials and dignitaries.

The new showroom showcases an extensive range of top-quality marbles and granites from all over the world. 5CM ensures a high standard of shopping by providing hands-on display supported by

warm and personalised attention of friendly and knowledgeable sales staff.

"We are extremely happy to open our second showroom at Al Khoud and this will enable us to serve our customers in a better way. This is only a beginning and we hope to expand our network to other parts of the country also in the near future," said Mohd Al Najjar, general manager of 5CM.

The team of highly-dedicated and professional staff of 5CM ensures

customer satisfaction and provides world-class services for its customers to choose the best of slabs, tiles or customised requirements like wall stones, paving stones, stepping stones, kitchen tops, counter tops and landscaping products.

Five Continents Marbles, established in 2003, has a state-of-the-art showroom and factory facilities in Muscat. 5CM is specialised in importing and supplying top-quality marbles and granites from all over the world and it prides in the widest range of marble collection.

WJ Towell launches Talat Al Koudh, a 90-villa project

Source: *Oman Tribune* - July 30, 2008

Keeping in mind the need for quality housing for young Omanis in Muscat, WJ Towell has launched "Talat Al Koudh", a 90 villa project at Al Khoudh.

These housing units have been designed and developed keeping in mind the Omani lifestyle which centers on the family. The total value of the project is valued at \$50 million and marks a series of launches that are due in the next few months.

'WJ Towell is an established and trusted name in property arena.

Towell will soon be launching various properties in Madinat Sultan Qaboos, Madinat Al Illam, Qurum and Al Khoudh to name a few.

These new projects would be launched in the coming three to four months", says Ivor Braganza, CEO – Towell Property & Construction. He went on to add "it is our intention to create a good living experience in all our projects with a focus on design, landscaping, a safe environment complimented with a good quality of construction. The group is poised to deliver this with an integrated approach to property development by a strong backward integration by partnering Architects – Talati and Patnaki, Continental sourcing, Gulf Properties, Home Essentials etc.

which brings in a unique strength that differentiates us as developers.

The Group also has many companies in the construction sector that supports the property development business namely building materials, paints and in electro mechanical.

The project would be exclusively marketed by Gulf Property world, who are among the leading property agents in the country. Says Mike Harris, CEO of Gulf Property World: "We are extremely proud to be associated with W.J. Towell in the marketing of Talat Al Khoudh. The project is not only well located but also well suited to the Omani life style. The opening response to the project has been overwhelming. It is assured that these three storied units will not only be a sought after home but will also prove to be an excellent investment."

The project will be constructed by W.J.T Construction, who is among the reputed Construction Company that has completed many projects in Oman. The project would begin in August 2008 and be completed by the last quarter of 2009.

"The concept design of Talat Al Khoudh was done by Maya Overseas, a well known Consultancy firm from Italy who are also our joint

venture partners. We had also spoken to and got feedback from many Omanis while designing this project. The design theme is a combination of Mediterranean and Omani influences, which are visible in the quality of architecture, craftsmanship and the finishes used" says Surinaa Triveen, Business Head – Design Division of W. J. Towell.

The project is set on a 28,000m² plot, with built up areas of each unit ranging from 308m² to 421m². The units are of two types, both comprising of spacious living and dining rooms leading to open courtyards which are ideally suited for private outdoor gatherings. These are 4 bedroom units with well thought of utility areas and storage. Thoughtful, spacious floor plans are designed for active family life, while neutral, quality finishes. In addition, each unit has dedicated parking space for 2 cars.

What sets Talat Al Khoud apart from standard offerings include its convenient location, within easy access of Muscat City Centre, University Hospital and Muscat International Airport. These villas provide comfort and style, both inside and out. A dedicated website has been created for the project that carries all details on the property: www.talatakhoudh.com

Kuwait's Action Hotels to set up budget property in Muscat

Source: *Oman Observer* - July 22, 2008

The Kuwait-based Action Hotels is developing a new hotel property under the well-known brand 'Ibis'. The 170-room Ibis Muscat will be located off Sultan Qaboos

Street in Al Khuwair, within distance of the main business hub, and the ministries and embassies of the Sultanate. It will further offer guests all-day dining restaurants, meeting

rooms, a state-of-the art fitness centre and a swimming pool. The hotel will be operational in July 2009. Ibis, which is part of the Accor Group, is Europe's leading budget

hotel network and is designed to meet the needs and expectations of a broad spectrum of customers who travel regularly on business or leisure. With an adapted service offer to budget prices, Ibis has over 800 hotels worldwide and are always conveniently located in business districts, tourist spots and near airports.

Action Hotels is one of the fastest growing hotel development companies in the Middle East. The company specialises in the development of 3- and 4-star hotels in partnership with global hotel operators at locations including Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman, the UAE and Australia. Action Hotels has completed two hotels and is engaged in the development of 11 more, providing over 2,500 rooms in the Middle East and Australia.

Plans for the opening of the new

Muscat property were announced by Action Hotels at the opening of its first partnered property outside the GCC in Melbourne, Australia.

The property was completed in partnership with Ibis and Accor Hospitality. The new 155-room Ibis Glen Waverley was officially opened in the presence of Shaikh Mubarak Abdulla al Mubarak al Sabah, Vice-Chairman of Kuwait based Action Group Holdings, the parent company of Action Hotels and Action Group Australia, the Victorian State Minister of Tourism and Special Events Hon Tim Holding and Simon McGrath, Accor Hospitality's Vice-President for Australia.

The development is the first of a number of hotel projects that Action Hotels are currently planning for the Australian market including other projects for Melbourne and the construction of a 314-room hotel in downtown Brisbane. Ibis Glen

Waverley is the second Ibis project to be completed by Action Hotels this year following the recent opening of the Ibis Salmiya in Kuwait.

The group also announced another 10 hotels under development, predominantly in the Middle East. Action Hotels has established a partnership with the global Accor Group to develop hotel projects initially in the Middle East and Australia and includes the construction of both Ibis and Novotel projects.

Speaking at the official opening ceremony, McGrath said, "The growth of Ibis in the Middle East owes a great deal to the commitment and faith in the brand shown by Shaikh Mubarak's Action Group. His company has been responsible for developing seven Ibis hotels in Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE, as well as the development of a new Novotel in Kuwait."

Galfar wins RO 25 million Al Amerat-Bausher road dualisation contract

Source: *Oman Observer* - July 1, 2008

Leading Omani construction firm Galfar Engineering & Contracting has been awarded a contract by Muscat Municipality to dualise the Al Amerat-Bausher Road at a cost of RO 25 million.

As part of its contract, Galfar will dualise a 14-kilometre stretch designed to enable smoother traffic flows between the rapidly urbanising wilayats of Al Amerat and Bausher. Of this dualised distance, a six-kilometre stretch will be built along a completely new alignment. Adding to the overall cost of the contract is the significant amount of rock excavation and blasting that the contractor will have to undertake as part of the dualisation project.

Additionally, the contractor will

build two pre-stressed reinforced concrete wadi bridges of a total span length of around 300 metres. Wadi bridges are increasingly the norm where new roads intersect fast-flowing wadis, thereby ensuring that such roads are essentially flood-proof. The dualisation project represents the third phase of a plan by Muscat Municipality to expand road communications between the two wilayats. In the first phase, well-known firm Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC) built an initial two-kilometre stretch through a rugged swathe of hills to open up access between Bausher and Al Amerat.

Following up on CCC's work, Galfar added another seven kilometres to this road link in the second phase of the project. That contract, com-

pleted in 2006, opened up a single carriageway link between the two wilayats. Following a strategic design review, Muscat Municipality finalised plans for the dualisation of the road to allow for smoother traffic flows between the wilayats.

According to officials, the dualised road will also help open up new areas of Bausher to development. The hills around Bausher overlook much of the city of Muscat and the Gulf of Oman beyond, making them attractive areas for tourism-related investment. Six other local and international construction firms bid for the dualisation contract. They are Nagarjuna Construction, Shanfari Trading, Sarooj Construction, CCC, Desert Line, and Afcons. The project is due to be completed in the first quarter of 2010.

Minister of Tourism unveils show villas at The Wave

Source: *Oman Observer* - July 1, 2008

The Wave Muscat's luxurious show villas were officially unveiled at a ribbon cutting ceremony held under the auspices of Dr Rajha bint Abdulameer bin Ali, Minister of Tourism, and in the presence of Abdullah bin Abbas bin Ahmed, Chairman of Board of Directors of The Wave Muscat, and Dr Noel Guckian, British Ambassador to the Sultanate, at its sales centre in Al Hail, Seeb, yesterday.

It was noted that the new villas, one each from architects, Tombazis, Santini and Triad, combine a modernist approach in their treatment with a distinct Omani character. In some ways it is correct to identify them as a modern interpretation of Omani architecture, set in a well designed environment, with rich amenities and services of international standards.

The three villas are, however, very distinct in their layouts, internal play of spaces and their inter-relationships. The event celebrated another milestone for The Wave as dignitaries and other guests were taken for a tour of the new show villas, located adjacent to the sales centre.

The highlight of the event was award-winning UK celebrity chef, Antony Worrall Thompson who came to Oman especially for this demonstration. He has entertained food lovers in the UK for the past 27 years and has achieved a great reputation in this field. In a live cooking demonstration he tempted the culinary taste buds of The Wave Muscat's customers at a cooking session organised at the kitchen of the Santini show villa at The Wave, Muscat.

Nick Smith, Chief Executive Officer, The Wave, Muscat said, "With the opening of our show villas we set another example of The Wave, Muscat's commitment to deliver luxurious living standards to our customers. The Wave will receive the highest quality kitchens within its properties, kitchens that are indeed fit for a Meilleu Ovrier de Grande Bretagne (MOGB) chef.

Smith further added that "The Wave, Muscat is pushing the boundaries of what has previously been delivered within Oman and this is an exciting task that carries with it a great deal of responsibility. We are determined to exceed the expectations of our home buyers and hope the show villas will provide another window for all to see what The Wave, Muscat has to offer in terms of fine living".

Omran starts onsite works in Musannah for Asian Beach Games

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 24, 2008

Onsite works for Oman's first ever world-class 'sports village' in Musannah is under way for the 2nd Asian Beach Games Muscat 2010. Following a spectacular unveiling of the games logo last week by Tourism Minister Dr Rajha bint Abdulameer bin Ali, a mixed use development custom built to host such a prestigious event is full steam ahead led by Omran. Only two years away, the countdown has started with a project completion date scheduled for June 2010.

The 1 million square metre site at Wudam al Sahil will comprise a mixture of facilities such as an Athletes

Village dedicated entirely to the sportsmen and sportswomen of the event, hotels for officials, media and guests, an administration building and a state-of-the-art Media Centre in addition to special features for the public's convenience including restaurants and recreational facilities. Dedicated playing pitches with temporary shaded grandstands to accommodate around 300 spectators for preliminary events and up to 5,000 spectators for the final event will be built along with a purpose built marina for docking sail boats.

Wael A al Lawati, Omran CEO, said, "We have commissioned some of

the most reputable international firms to understand the complexities and requirements of the Asian Beach Games project and are in regular liaison with a variety of sports associations specialising in beach sports for the development of the sports village." He added, "The project is running on a challenging schedule and the Government's strong support for the Games has been fundamental. Every detail is being re-checked to ensure the delivery of a quality product."

The main entry point to the site will be elevated overlooking the Arabian Sea to provide dramatic views. Spe-

cial attention is given to protecting the environment through extensive surveying where the sustainability of the infrastructure has been conceived and designed to later become a major sports, leisure and tourism resort providing significant benefits to the national and local economy. The Asian Beach Games is a multi-sport event held every two years

among athletes representing countries from Asia.

The first Asian Beach Games are less than four months away and will be hosted by the Olympic Council of Asia in Bali, Indonesia, in October of this year. Over 10,000 athletes, officials, media and volunteers from 45 countries are expected to

gather in Muscat for the sporting event in 2010, where athletes will compete in 11 beach sports disciplines. The 2nd Asian Beach Games Muscat 2010 will position the Sultanate of Oman as a magnet for premium sports tourism, instilling national pride while attaining international prestige and recognition through beach sports.

Alargan Towell launches Al Qurum Gardens real estate project

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 18, 2008

Alargan Towell Investment Co has unveiled a residential cum commercial real estate project in Qurum, opposite the Qurum Natural Park. Al-Qurum Gardens, recipient of the CNBC Arabian Property Award 2007 for the best architectural design, covers a total built-up area of 24,682 square metres. "Inspired by the traditional architectural style of Oman, Al-Qurum Gardens offers a total harmony between heritage and modernity to satisfy the needs of discerning Omani nationals," said Ali Hassan Moosa, General Manager, Alargan Towell Investment. Estimated to cost RO 22 million, the residential complex will be ready by 2010.

Construction at the site has started and 18 units are almost complete. The 40 premium residential units offered are in seven unique designs, and have built-up area varying between 259 to 350 sq metres with plot area of 194-284 sq metres. The units boast exquisite finishes, duct-type split units, dedicated car-park with electronic gate, fitted kitchens, branded appliances, audio-video security system, and sound system.

Raid Maqbool Ali Sultan, Assistant Business Development Manager, said Al-Qurum Gardens complex is flanked by two gateways at the southern and northern edges of the project, making the complex an exclusive community project in the

downtown area. The rental and office space is laid out at the southern and western ends of the complex.

The units come in various designs that shape the skyline of the neighbourhood in a way reminiscent of traditional Omani villages. They are characterised by a unique construction technique: peripheral shear walls and slabs, articulated through a palette of plug-in elements consisting of galvanised steel planters, wooden pergolas and tents. The party walls between each unit disappear as the elevation of these residences consists of different pavilion-like structures, breaking down the scale of the elevation. The two housing rows result in an inward slope that reinforces the introversion of the project, while expanding the visual horizon on the central road.

In view of the prime location, the unique design, the premium-quality construction and amenities, this project targets the higher end market. Established in 2003, the company has now broadened its attention by planning and developing projects for the up-market segment. "Our projects contribute to alleviating the accommodation shortages currently witnessed," said Vilas Kelshikar, Senior Vice-President, Alargan Towell. He said the company is evolving as a major real estate developer with a clutch of up-

coming projects including Al-Khairan Resort and beach-front Barka Resort estimated at RO 500 million.

In 1973, WJ Towell & Co envisioned and developed Madinat Sultan Qaboos — one of the finest addresses in Muscat. Now, 35 years down the line, the Group is again set to make a major contribution to Oman's burgeoning real estate and tourism sector. Alargan Towell's achievements in real estate and property development have earned it several industry awards such as the Best Residential Developer Award — 2005, by EUROMONEY, and the Best Developer in Oman — 2006 by Islamic Conference Group (ICG) in addition to the CNBC Arabia Property Award 2007 for the Best Architectural Design.

The projects are being implemented through a joint venture, Al Alargan Towell Investment Co that was formed in 2003, in partnership with Alargan International Real Estate Company, the Kuwait-based real estate development company with footprints in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and Lebanon. The joint venture had an initial mandate to develop middle-income real estate housing solutions in Oman. Its first project was 72 three-and-four-bedroom residential villas in Al Mawaleh, in the vicinity of the Muscat City Centre.

Subsequently, the company initiated another project of 100 townhouses at Al Hail, which is nearing completion. "Oman has witnessed unparal-

leled growth as an emerging real estate destination for both individual and institutional investors, owing to the attractive incentives it offers for

property developments, in addition to the government's privatisation initiatives and the liberalisation of foreign investment parameters.

Sadolin Paints launches two new decorative concepts

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 17, 2008

Celebrating 30 years of leadership as the largest paints manufacturing company in Oman, Sadolin Paints (Oman) Ltd recently held a Dealers Meet to announce the launch of its 'Sadolin White Collection' and 'Armour Water Based Gloss Emulsions'.

The Sadolin White Collection comprises 36 different and vibrant shades of white that can be used both for interiors and exteriors. These "Whites" are offered as colour collections in the premium range and available through 88 Plus, Sadomastic Silk and Armour 5/10/20 Gloss Emulsions.

"These can be teamed with any of the other ranges including Flair Interior Décor Range, Music and Wildflower Shade collections to create your own unique space," said Animesh Biswas, Marketing Manager, Sadolin Paints (Oman) Ltd.

The "Armour range" is a classic case of 'designed for durability'. An

eco-friendly paint that comes in five different gloss levels of 5/10/20/40/80, Armour Gloss Emulsions are designed to meet individual choice of finishes and for different needs.

The Armour range is designed to offer a life of over 7 years and has excellent washability. It can be used on wood and metal surfaces as well. The key feature that differentiates Armour from other paints is that 5 different gloss levels are available through water based system.

Speaking on the occasion, M M Khan, General Manager, Sadolin said, "Our strategy over the years has been to continuously offer a range of products with distinct features and benefits so that consumers can make an informed choice. Today we are proud to be the first to launch the new range of 36 whites and the water based gloss emulsions."

He went on to say, "Oman is witnessing an immense economic

growth and excellent market conditions are predicted for the next five years. With the recent move of shifting our headquarters to Rusayl and now with our single plant operation, we have increased our production capacity to over 20 million litres. We are now well equipped to cater to the increased demand as well as the change in market trends."

The two new ranges will be available at all Sadolin Colour Point outlets starting this month. Sadolin has the largest network of dealers in Oman, including branches in Sohar and Nizwa. Sadolin Paints also has branches in Bahrain, Qatar and Dubai. Sadolin Paints manufactures the entire range of decorative coatings and furniture lacquers under a technical licensing agreement with Azko Nobel, the number 1 paint company in the world. Sadolin Paints (Oman) Ltd is certified for ISO9001, ISO14001 and OHSAS 18001. All emulsions are truly low odour and meet EU norms for internal coatings.

Nine firms apply to prequalify for Ras al Hadd airport contracts

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 14, 2008

Nine construction firms have signalled their intent to participate in a competitive government tender for the development of an airport at Ras al Hadd in the Sharqiyah region. The new airport is seen as key to the Omani government's goal of positioning Ras al Hadd as a

world-class eco-tourism destination, centring largely on its turtle breeding beaches, nature reserve and potentially rich archaeological heritage. The greenfield facility, targeted for launch in the fourth quarter of 2010, is part of an ambitious tourism master plan that includes the devel-

opment of a number of eco-tourism resorts along the scenic Gulf of Oman coast.

Several international firms are also among those applying to prequalify for construction contracts linked to the development of airside and ter-

minal facilities as part of the Ras al Hadd airport project. The line-up of parties responding by last week's prequalification deadline are Desert Line Projects, Samwhan Corporation, Hanjin Heavy Industries & Construction, Larsen & Toubro (Oman), Strabag Oman, Bahwan Contracting, Galfar Engineering, Alsim Alarko Sanayi and Shanfari Trading.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications has envisaged development of the airport in two packages. One package, covering the airside facilities, entails the construction of a four-kilometre-long and 75-metre-wide runway, as well as taxiway, apron and car parking.

The other package provides for the construction of the passenger terminal building, concourse and Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower, as well as the provision of boarding bridges, baggage handling and security systems and fire-fighting facilities.

Built to Code F design standards of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the airport will be suitable for some of the largest aircraft in operation today, including the Airbus Superjumbo A380. Authorities are also pursuing development of another airport project at Duqm on the southeastern edge of the Sultanate. The greenfield facility will be constructed in three phases.

In the first phase of the project, also known as Package 1, the selected contractor will develop access facilities and build utilities that serve the airport during the operational phase. Package 2 covers the construction of the runways, while the terminal and associated facilities will be built in Package 3.

The new airport is expected to spur Duqm's development into a world-scale industrial, petrochemical and commercial hub with a major Port and Dry Dock project at its centre. When operational in the year 2012, Duqm International Airport is also expected to handle some of the largest aircraft in service today, as well as a range of heavy lift aircraft.

The Wave signs deal for Fairmont hotel

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 14, 2008

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, a global hotel company, has signed a deal with The Wave, Muscat to operate and manage a luxury Fairmont branded property at The Wave. An agreement to this effect was signed on Thursday by Eng Abdulla bin Abbas bin Ahmed, Chairman of the Board of Directors at The Wave, and David Walmsley, Vice President, Development Europe, Africa and Middle East, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts.

Fairmont The Wave, Muscat will be a 5-star luxury resort hotel, and will benefit from being positioned next to the Greg Norman signature 18 hole Links golf course. The accommodation will comprise approximately 280 rooms, supported with branded residential offerings, leisure and conference facilities together with a luxurious Willow Stream Spa.

The hotel's location within the development will allow guests and visitors to enjoy its extensive beachfront and beautifully landscaped gardens. Surrounded on three aspects by superb waterfronts and overlooking landscaped park

areas, the Hotel can be accessed directly from the 18th November Street.

The signing of the Agreement combines the strength of Fairmont's technical team with The Wave, Muscat's Hotel team and together they will use all their expertise to ensure delivery of a world class product synonymous with The Wave, Muscat and Fairmont brands.

Nick Smith, CEO, The Wave, Muscat said "Fairmont are the perfect partner for this project. As a leading global luxury hotel management company, with over a century of experience, they bring a new and exciting dimension to the world of Omani hospitality. The facilities they provide are second to none and this alliance will play an integral role in enhancing the lives of our home owners and also the people of Muscat."

David Walmsley of Fairmont Raffles Hotels International commented: "We are delighted to take this next significant step towards bringing Fairmont Hotels & Resorts to Oman. This will be our first development

within the Sultanate, following our existing offerings in the region such as Fairmont Dubai, Cairo's Fairmont Towers, Heliopolis and Fairmont Heliopolis, and demonstrates our commitment to working with key partners to develop world-class properties and to build the brand's global strength."

Expected to take approximately 3-4 years to complete, construction of Fairmont The Wave, Muscat will provide an opportunity for the local workforce across a wide range of skill sets and will not only enhance the lives of those who will use the facilities but also offer a place to expand knowledge and experience within this specialised construction category.

Fairmont is owned by Fairmont Raffles Hotels International, a leading global hotel company with 90 hotels worldwide under the Raffles, Fairmont and Swissôtel brands. The Wave, Muscat, is a joint venture between Oman's Waterfront Investments, National Investment Funds Company and UAE based Majid Al Futtaim Group.

Super-luxury Raffles hotel set for Oman

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 14, 2008

Oman will soon boast its own super-luxury hotel property under the world-renowned Raffles brand, underlining the country's growing investment appeal at the high-end of the hospitality market. Plans for the development of the Raffles branded property, which promises to set a new benchmark in luxury in the Sultanate, are currently being finalised, according to a top executive of the Singapore based hospitality chain. Last year, the company launched its first property in the Middle East — Raffles Dubai — which now competes with the iconic Burj Al Arab for top billing as the UAE's premier hotel.

"We are expanding the Raffles brand into Oman," said J David Walmsley, Vice-President — Development (Europe, Africa and Middle East), Fairmont Raffles Hotels International. "We are not ready to make an announcement, but I would expect that announcement would come in the next month or so." Fairmont Raffles Hotels Interna-

tional is a leading global hotel company with over 90 hotels worldwide under the Raffles, Fairmont and Swissôtel brands. The company also owns Fairmont and Raffles branded Residences, Estates and luxury private residence club properties.

Raffles' planned entry into Oman will be a major boost for the country's booming tourism sector, which in recent years has attracted several billions of dollars in investments in sumptuous integrated tourism resorts, luxury hotels, golf courses, and marinas. Over the past year, a number of leading hotel brands, notably Kempinski, Movenpick, Viceroy, and Shaza, have announced plans to manage properties in the Sultanate.

On Thursday, Walmsley signed an agreement for the management of the first Fairmont branded property at The Wave, Muscat — a RO 1 billion mixed use tourism and residential development off Muscat Inter-

national Airport. Speaking to the Observer, Walmsley said the global hotel company was keenly looking at other opportunities to expand its presence in the Sultanate. "We also own the Swissôtel brand, which is a business hotel concept. We think there are some fantastic opportunities in Muscat for potentially a Swissôtel. We don't have anything definite, but we are looking."

In terms of market positioning, the proposed Raffles property in Oman would rank among the premium hotels in the region. "Raffles is what you would call super-luxury. As high as you can go, Raffles is there or even above that. So its natural competition, in Dubai for instance, would be the Burj Al Arab." Raffles is a collection of luxury hotels and resorts worldwide, each distinguished by its luxury, elegance and residential charm. Each hotel is a landmark in its respective city, positioned at the top of its local market and rated among the very best in the world.

Al Balushi Investments launches Mayar Al-Khoudh home project

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 3, 2008

As Oman's real estate market moves into new realms, Al Balushi Investments, committed to deliver premium living and maximum investment value to its clientele, announced the launch of its multimillion home project, 'Mayar Al-Khoudh', Oman's first managed, exclusive community living experience yesterday.

'Mayar Al-Khoudh' embodies a vision to create contemporary living spaces for distinctive people in an exclusive and classy environment with the brand identity consisting of

a flower and inspired by a single Islamic arch — a confluence of elegant design, community living and modernity rooted in traditional Arabian ethos of warmth, hospitality and family orientation. With the total cost of RO 13 million, the project occupies an area of 23,029 square metres with built-up areas for each villa ranging from 288 to 363 square metres.

The villas will feature four different designs with the size spanning 230 to 347 square metres. The luxury houses in the project, which is in-

spired by community living, will feature four to five bedrooms, a living room and family sitting area, five to six bathrooms and toilets, a dining room, kitchen, storage, laundry room, a maid's room and two parking spaces.

The gated community living will have additional modern and well-appointed facilities that include a swimming pool, gymnasium, recreational spaces, walking tracks, children's play yards, as well as exclusiveshopping and recreational facilities. Al Rawahi International,

the company that was awarded the primary contract for the project, will construct the villas. Shaikh Ahmed bin Suwaidan al Balushi, Chairman, Al Balushi Investments and Shaikh Salim Said al Rawahi, Chairman, Al Rawahi International signed the construction agreement. Dubai-based architectural engineering firm Dubarch has designed the luxury residences in association with Azri Consultancy.

Addressing the press conference at The Chedi Hotel yesterday, Hussain Habib, Managing Director, Al Balushi Investments LLC, said: "Our vision is for 'Mayar Al-Khoudh' to become a premier development that will represent the current uptrend in the Oman real estate market not only in terms of project values, number of developments and profitability, but more importantly in high quality

standards."

The three-storey villas, which will be characterised as Type A (20 villas), Type B (30 villas), Type C (4 villas) and Type D (4 villas), are expected to present excellent rate of Rate of Investment (ROI) per year, considering the rising demand and soaring value of real estate properties in Oman. The exclusive sales and marketing agents, Eqarat.com, the region's leading total solutions provider in the real estate sector has been signed on as the exclusive sales agents of the residential project that comprises of 58 individual villas in Al Khoudh. National Bank of Oman and Oman Arab Bank have partnered with Al Balushi Investments LLC to provide finance to buyers and investors.

Dina al Jafari, Marketing Manager;

Eqarat.com Oman, expressed her happiness to be associated with a project as distinct as 'Mayar-Al Khoudh'. "We are confident that 'Mayar Al-Khoudh' will be one of the most sought after projects by investors as a result of its outstanding design and the highly profitable real estate climate in Oman," she said.

"'Mayar Al-Khoudh' reiterates the fact that Oman's real estate developing at an extraordinary pace. We are sure that investors will realise the potential of the luxury residential project with its launch today," she added. The construction of 'Mayar Al-Khoudh', located 10 minutes away from Muscat International Airport that truly embodies the soul of classic elegance and brings sublime beauty to your lifestyle, is expected to complete by the end of 2010.

Work on Salam Yiti project progresses

Source: *Oman Observer* - June 1, 2008

Sama Dubai, the international real state investment and development arm of Dubai Holding, has announced the completion of 85 per cent of advanced earthwork for its prestigious AED6.5 billion Salam Yiti lifestyle resort project in Muscat.

Salam Yiti project, a joint venture with Omran (Oman Tourism Development Company), a subsidiary of the Oman Ministry of Tourism, already has over three million cubic metres of rock and sand placed onsite. The advanced earth works are considered highly critical to the development of Salam Yiti, specifically the three-six metre high increment to the existing ground level, along with the realignment of Wadi Qanu.

The design followed an extensive study and analysis by Halcrow International of the upstream wadi catchment areas for ensuring the mitigation of natural calamities. To

maintain the steady progress of enabling work, Sama Dubai has contracted Boskalis Westminster Oman (BOC) along with its joint venture partner Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC) to drive the early construction and development works, which included the arrival of major dredging equipment to site capable of delivering nearly 300,000 cubic meters of sand per week to the site.

Farhan Faraidooni, Executive Chairman of Sama Dubai, said: "The fast progress of major foundation work at the Salam Yiti project reflects Sama Dubai's objective to deliver high quality real-estate products and services that endorse our far-sighted vision and commitment towards the local community.

"Complementing the steady advancement of the overall Salam Yiti project, work on its individual components is also moving ahead as scheduled. Concurrently, a series of

measures have been adopted to ensure the preservation and protection of the environment." The enabling work for the first of the two exclusive islands has also been successfully completed, leading to the commencement of further earthworks as part of the Phase-2 reclamation work for the development.

Over 30 per cent enabling works for the marina access has been completed for the access 'bunds', while the marina construction is firmly underway. A 'concrete batching plant' has been commissioned on-site to produce 30 tonne concrete blocks for the purpose of erecting marina walls that will accommodate 75 deep berths for larger sailing yachts. Salam Yiti, engulfed by mountains on the Yiti Beach, is an integrated residential resort between Oman's Al Hajar Ash Sharqi mountains and the pristine beach below, covering 420 hectares of land and rising as high as 140 metres above sea level.

Port of Salalah to invest \$112m for superstructure

Source: *Oman Observer* - May 20, 2008

The Port of Salalah is investing \$112 million for installing port handling equipment at the newly-developed berths, which will enhance the port's capacity to 6 million twenty equivalent tonnes (TEUs) per annum from 4.5 million TEUs now. The cost of expansion will be funded by way of long-term borrowing from institutions and internal accruals. The port is preparing to add four Super Post-Panamax Gantry Cranes for its two new 18m depth berths.

The four new Super Post-Panamax Gantry Cranes will complement the current 17 and enhance the port's capacity to about 6 million twenty equivalent units (TEUs) per annum

by mid-2009. "These cranes can operate the largest vessels in the world with their ability to reach containers stacked 23 across on deck. The investment will also include 4 mobile harbour cranes, 10 new spreaders that allow twin pick capacity and 11 additional rubber-tyred gantry cranes," said the port in a statement.

The new cranes will play an important role in meeting customer demands and ensure improved efficiency and faster vessel turn times. "Since its inception, the Port of Salalah has always strived to be an industry leader in innovation and port development. To ensure continued success, we must make necessary long-term investments.

Our business growth makes it important for us to increase available capacity in order to maintain our consistently high-quality service to our customers as our throughput continues to increase," Gary Lemke, Chief Executive Officer of Port of Salalah, said in the statement.

Salalah Port Services posted a 144 per cent growth in net profit at RO 1.56 million for the first quarter of 2008, over the same period last year. Similarly, the port's revenue soared to RO 9.84 million from RO 6.97 million, while earnings per share stood higher at 87 baisa from 36 baisa. Direct operating cost was up at RO 5.12 million from RO 4.22 million during the period.

\$1bn VALE project ranks among top 10 steel-based ventures in Gulf

Source: *Oman Observer* - May 20, 2008

The \$1 billion iron ore pellet plant planned at the Port of Sohar by Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (VALE), the global giant in the mining industry, has been ranked among the top 10 steel and related projects in the GCC.

More than \$18 billion is being invested in 46 steel manufacturing plants throughout the Arabian Gulf in an attempt to close the widening gap between supply and demand for steel — a major component for the construction industry as well as materials handling machinery for manufacturing, according to latest industry research.

"While there is talk of a slowdown in other parts of the world, the growth in the Middle East manufacturing base continues to expand with demand for steel far outstrip-

ping supply," said Spencer Felix, Exhibition Manager of the Middle East Manufacturing Exhibition (MEMEX), which takes place in Abu Dhabi from November 23 to 25, 2008.

"In the race to plug the supply gap a swathe of new steel plant projects as well as expansions to existing plants have been unveiled across the region with huge potential business opportunities for industry stakeholders," added Felix.

According to the database of research company Proleads, which monitors major construction projects across the region from initial study to completion, Saudi Arabia with 17 and the United Arab Emirates with 16 are leading the way in steel plant projects individually varying in value from \$2 billion to \$15 million. Oman has six steel

plants on the books, Bahrain four and Qatar three.

Topping the list of projects is an integrated complex of steel factories in Saudi Arabia which will turn out 500,000 tons a year of railway track, three million tons a year of iron and steel processing and production plant and 800,000 tons a year of pipeline manufacturing plant. Of the top ten projects, four are in Saudi Arabia, three in the UAE, two in Qatar and one in Oman.

Brazil-based VALE is planning to construct an iron ore pellet plant and iron ore distribution centre facility in the Port of Sohar. The production at the Port of Sohar of iron ore pellets is planned to commence in the second half of 2010. This will be the first whole-owned green field investment in the ferrous sector outside Brazil for VALE.

Real estate deals worth RO1.61 billion concluded in 2007

Source: *Oman Observer* - May 10, 2008

The real estate sector is the highest income yielding investment in the Sultanate, with demand growing across the different usage groups — residential, commercial and tourism related activities, according to the Kuwaiti think-tank Global Investment House (GIH). Despite the recent increase in real estate prices, Oman still remains a competitive market in terms of prices as compared to other GCC countries, it said. Citing statistics by Mazaya real estate, GIH said the total volumes of concluded deals jumped to new peaks reaching 24.2 million sq m in 2007 compared to 13.7 million sq m in 2005, an increase of 43.4 per cent. The investment during the period was RO 1.61 billion compared to RO 0.29 billion during 2005.

The average price per square metre for residential land increased by 253 per cent to RO 52 in 2007 compared to RO 16.3 in 2006 and RO 14.7 in 2005. The residential sector captured the biggest share, registering 94.6 per cent of the total number of plots in 2006, and the capital city Muscat having around 26.2 per cent of the total plots in 2006. On the commercial front, volume of deals increased by 27 per cent reaching 2.7m sq m in 2007 compared to 1.97m in 2005. The total value the deals increased by 314 per cent reaching RO 397.8m in 2007 compared to RO 96m in 2005. The average price per sqm of land for commercial use was RO 151 compared to RO 48 in 2005.

According to GIH, an ambitious free zone project in the Dhofar region has evoked considerable interest among local and foreign investors. This is due to the new amendments to visa rules and legislation governing foreign ownership of real estate. A new visa system is in place and a number of changes have been made

in the law governing land ownership by foreigners. Non-Omanis can now own real estate in certain tourist projects. The Capital Investment Law now permits up to 70 per cent ownership by foreigners in projects and the tax law has been revised to promote investor confidence. The free zone project covers an area of 2,000 hectares. Phase 1, currently being developed, encompasses 200 hectares. The entire cost of the infrastructure development is borne by the government of Oman.

Yenkit Tourism Development LLC is developing a \$2 billion luxury Integrated Tourist Resort Complex at Yenkit in Muscat Governorate. The project will be an 'Integrated Tourism Complex' as designated by the Ministry of Tourism, and will consist of four 5-star hotels with approximately 900 rooms, an 18-hole international golf course; a wide range of tourist facilities, including sports and leisure facilities, a resort village, nature reserve and visitors centre, beach club, heritage and craft centre and major open spaces; 1,400 residential villas and up to 1,900 residential apartments and townhouses.

The project responds to a major initiative of the Omani government to create a world-class tourism corridor, stretching down the scenic coast between Muscat and Sur to the south. A number of other factors have contributed to the increasing real estate demand. Firstly, ownership laws have been relaxed to encourage foreign ownership of real estate. Royal Decree 12/2006 extends foreign ownership rights to include non-GCC nationals (however only in certain designated areas). Demand for housing is also growing especially with 65 per cent of the Omani population below the age of 24.

The increase in commercial projects envisages an influx of expatriates further fuelling the demand for residential rentals. The number of expatriates in the Sultanate was 638,447 in 2007 representing a y-o-y growth rate of 25 per cent over 510,713 as at end of 2006. During the previous year the expatriate population had grown at a y-o-y rate of 20.2 per cent from 424,788 to 510,713. The increasing sequential y-o-y expatriate population growth rate is expected to maintain the upward trend in 2008 as well, and lead to a paucity of residential facilities, says Global Investment House.

Secondly, the recent surge in the Construction Cost Index (CCI) in the Sultanate underpins the increasing real estate demand. The CCI for commercial space registered a 3.5 per cent y-o-y growth in Q2 2006 compared to the 0.2 per cent y-o-y growth during the Q1 2006 period. For residential space, the CCI had grown at a y-o-y rate of 3.4 per cent in Q2 2006 as compared to 1.2 per cent y-o-y growth during the Q1 2005 thus representing an increased level of activity on a sequential basis.

Thirdly, the Muscat Wholesale Price Index for building materials has also grown by 8 per cent from 131.1 in 2006 to 141.6 in 2007. "The real estate in Oman is continuing its strong growth. The latest available data from the Ministry of National Economy indicate that the total number of plots have increased from 35,414 in 2004 to 71,263 in 2005, a whopping increase of 101 per cent. We expect further growth in demand in 2008 for commercial land as a result of vigorous commercial activity in the manufacturing and tourism sectors as a result of Sultanate's focus on these sectors during the current plan period," GIH stated.

New cement giant plans to enter Oman market

Source: *Times of Oman* - May 6, 2008

CEMENA, a new giant cement company whose creation was announced in Bahrain yesterday, also plans to enter the Oman market in the near future. Gulf Finance House (GFH), the leading investment bank in the region, yesterday announced plans to create CEMENA, which is set to become one of the largest cement companies in the Middle East and North Africa.

In a deal with an estimated end value of \$2 billion, GFH will be collaborating with strategic partners including the Associated Group, Emirates Islamic Bank, Capcorp, and leading technical partners Holtec and China National Building Material Group Corporation (CNBM), the

largest state-owned building materials in China. The project will comprise of multiple plants located across the MENA region. It is estimated that production will begin in 30 months, and the target is to supply 10 per cent of the region's requirements in the future.

The tremendous growth in the MENA real estate sector, driven by huge numbers of private and governmental infrastructure projects, have created substantial demand for cement in the region. This, along with interest shown by European companies to secure supply into their markets from this region, are the principle factors behind GFH and its strategic partners' plan to

create CEMENA.

The GCC alone consumes around 62 million tonnes per annum but over the next three to five years this figure is expected to increase by a projected value of 40 per cent. To meet this demand CEMENA will operate multiple plants in the MENA region and is planning to enter seven initial markets (the UAE, Bahrain, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Oman and Libya), and in time, hopes to broaden its reach into other markets in the future.

GFH Chairman Esam Janahi commented: "There is a substantial wealth of opportunity in this marketplace."

Development boom as 36 pacts worth RO205.5 million signed in a day

Source: *Times of Oman* - April 29, 2008

Thirty-six agreements to develop the infrastructure of ports, marine affairs, roads and civil aviation sectors at a cost of RO205,559,481 were signed at the Ministry of Transport and Communications yesterday.

The agreements were signed on behalf of the Sultanate's government by Dr Khamis bin Mubarak Al Alawi, minister of transport and communications, and the general managers of the contractors. The major agreements include an agreement with Dawoo Engineering and Contracting in partnership with Galfar Engineering and Contracting company, worth RO170,168,229, related to construction of dry dock at Al Duqm Port in the Al Wusta region.

The second agreement with Consolidated Contractors Oman, worth RO4,956,314, is related to the additional variation order No. 2 of the

project to construct the infrastructure of Sohar Industrial Port.

The third agreement with Haskoning UK Ltd and Khateeb and Elmi Al Barakah for Economic Consultancy, worth RO1,695,640, is related to the consultancy service for the design and supervision services as well as operation and management of the new port and dry dock construction in the wilayat of Al Duqm. The project also includes the design and supervision of the marine works at the port.

The fourth agreement worth RO925,165 is related to the variation order No. 2 for construction of berths at Sohar Industrial port.

The fifth agreement with Teejan Trading and Contracting Company, worth RO499,039, is related to the variation order No. 3, for the arrival terminal for tourists and passengers at Sultan Qaboos Port.

In the field of roads, Al Alawi signed the first agreement with Caisson Contracting Company, worth RO7,323,812 related to Khasab/Lima/Diba Al Baihah first part/Khasab/Al Khalidiyah 21.6km road.

The second agreement with Khalid bin Ahmed & Sons, worth RO3,340,295, is related to the additional variation order No. 5 for the design and construction project of Al Lhiban road in the wilayat of Saham to Kahnat in the wilayat of Ibri.

The third agreement with Arab Projects and Transportation Oman Company, worth RO3,321,626, is related to the additional variation order No. 2 and 3 for the construction of Wadi Dema road project in the Sharqiyah region.

The fourth agreement with the Gulf of Oman company, worth RO1184.666, is related to the additional variation order to the design,

construction and lighting of the internal roads project in the wilayat of Maqshan.

The fifth agreement with Strabag Oman Company, worth RO969,506, is related to repair of the damage resulting from the adverse weather conditions on BidBid/Sur road opposite Sur Hospital. It is related to the construction of new box culverts with 4x4m openings.

The sixth agreement with Shanfari Trading and Construction Company, worth RO945,686, is related to the additional variation order No. 2 on the design and construction of Al Ghaizin/Maskan road project.

The seventh agreement with Al Raseed Trading and Contracting Co., worth RO900,000, is related to the additional variation order No. 1 for maintenance of the graded roads at the mountainous areas in Dhofar governorate.

The eighth agreement with Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company, worth RO789,330, is related to the additional variation order No. 4 for Rustaq/Maskan road project.

The ninth agreement with Strabag Oman, worth RO761,000, is related to the additional variation order No.1 for the design and construction of Al Haj/Filam road in the Al Wusta region.

The 10th agreement with Al Nasr Al Arabia Company, worth RO700,000, is related to the additional variation order No. 1 for the annual maintenance of the asphalt roads in Dhofar governorate.

The 11th agreement with Al Sarooj Construction Company, worth RO579,590, is related to the design, construction, re-alignment and improving the hurdles of a number of graded road projects in the Al Sharqiyah region.

The 12th agreement with Khalid bin Ahmed & Sons company worth

RO572,640, is related to repair of the damage on Falaj Al Mashaiekh road in the wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Hassan, which was affected by the adverse weather conditions.

The 13th agreement with Wadi Al Sheab Trading and Contracting Company, worth RO459,795, is related to the design and construction of a 4-km road project in Fanja town.

The 14th agreement with Arab Projects and Transportation Oman Company, worth RO452,377, is related to the additional variation order No. 1 related to the construction of the second part of Al Ashkhara/Shannah road project, from Khuwaimah to Shannah.

The 15th agreement with Oub Hail Trading and Contracting Company, worth RO400,000, is related to the additional variation order No. 1 for the maintenance of a number of graded road projects in Dhofar governorate.

The 16th agreement with Oman for Building and Contracting Company, worth RO264,000, is related to the additional variation order No. 1 for the design, implementation, paving and lighting project for a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Shaleem and Halaniyat Islands in Dhofar governorate.

The 17th agreement with National Pakistani for Engineering Services and Partners Company (NASPAK) worth RO531,705, is related to the consultancy service for the supervision of the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Sumail (1, 2 & 3).

The 18th agreement with the same company, worth RO423,130, is related to the consultancy service for the supervision of the design and construction project for a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Izki and the wilayat of Nizwa (1, 2 & 3).

The 19th agreement with Parsons International & Partners Company,

worth RO405,000, is related to the consultancy service for the design and supervision of dual carriage way from Farq roundabout to Merfaa Falaj Daris in Nizwa.

The 20th agreement with the same company, worth RO376,800, is related to the consultancy service for the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Dema wal Tayeen, as well as the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Ibra 2.

The 21st agreement with the same company, worth RO371,800, is related to the consultancy services for the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of BidBid, as well as the design and construction of a number of internal roads and connections at Rahba in the wilayat of Sumail and BidBid.

The 22nd agreement with the same consultant, worth RO282,000, is related to the consultancy services for the repair of the damage resulting from the adverse weather conditions on Sur Bahari road, Sur Al Aija road and Ras Al Hadd/Asila road.

Al Alawi also signed the 23rd agreement with National Pakistani for Engineering Services and Partners company (NASPAK), worth RO229,000, for the provision of the consultancy service for the supervision of Al Maladda/Al Hazm dual carriage way project.

The 24th agreement with W. S. Atkins International and Partners Company, worth RO210,000, is related to the consultancy service for the design of asphalt road project from Wadi Al Minqal till Bani Jabir in the wilayat of Sur.

The 25th agreement, worth RO178,660, is related to the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Bahla (1 & 2).

The 26th agreement with Engineer-

ing Consultancy Services Company, worth RO175,000, is related to the consultancy services for the supervision of the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Mudhaibi, the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Ibra.

The 27th agreement with the National Engineering Office, worth RO143,630, is related to the consultancy services for the supervision of the design and construction of Misbit, the wilayat of Sumail and the wilayat of BidBid road.

The 28th agreement, worth RO132,700, is related to the consultancy services for the supervision of the design and construction of a number of internal roads in the wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid.

The 29th agreement with Consir & Partners Company, worth RO129,750, is related to the consultancy services for the supervision of the design and construction of road project in the wilayat of Sur. Al Alawi also signed an agreement with Comsoft GMPH, worth RO388,425, related to the supply, in-

stallation and test of automatic transmitters. He also signed an agreement with Carillion & Alawi, worth RO273,425, related to the supply and installation of a temporary security boundary at Muscat International Airport.

The signing ceremony was attended by the undersecretary for transport at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, undersecretary for ports and marine affairs at the Ministry of Transport and Communication and a number of officials at the ministry. — ONA

Al Madina A'Zarqa to drive economic growth

Source: *Times of Oman* - April 28, 2008

The Al Madina A'Zarqa coastal development, one of the most important tourism and infrastructure projects in the Middle East, is fast emerging as a valuable growth engine for the Omani economy through its successful Omanisation initiative and multi-million dollar contracts.

Situated on 32-square kilometres of prime beach front at Al Sawadi, located between Muscat and the rapidly growing city of Sohar, Al Madina A'Zarqa serves as a multi-faceted commercial centre, tourist attraction and residential development. Phase 1 of the project, which broke ground in 2007, has already created hundreds of employment opportunities for Omani nationals, with millions of dollars worth of contracts and subcontracts being awarded to local Omani companies.

“The \$2 billion development of phase 1 requires a labour force of approximately 7,000 workers and 500 engineers over the course of the next five years,” said Professor Fari Akhlaghi, CEO and managing director of Blue City Company 1, the developers of phase one of the Al Madina A'Zarqa project.

“From the outset, Al Madina A'Zarqa has been committed to generating employment opportunities for the people of Oman and to supporting Oman economy. It gives us great satisfaction to be able to contribute significantly to Oman's 2020 vision for the future”.

“We have achieved 52 per cent of Omanisation according to the stipulations of the Ministry of Manpower, and are looking forward to increasing this number as we continue to recruit and retain talented Omanis.”

This vision of Omanisation is supported by AECO Development LLC, responsible for construction of Phase One of Al Madina A'Zarqa (Blue City 1).

An estimated 17 per cent of AECO's workforce is from Oman, while 50 per cent of the group's machinery and equipment continues to be purchased locally from companies such as Saud Bahwan Group, Suhail Bahwan Group, Muscat Overseas Group and many others.

Tamer Perk, project manager of AECO Development LLC said: “The

mobilisation work for Phase One of Al Madina A'Zarqa is considered to be the biggest in the Gulf region due to the sheer size and scale of the project. More than 50 per cent of all material needed for this has been sourced from within Oman.”

“To date, 85 per cent of AECO's agreements have been with Omani registered companies and AECO has committed 40 per cent of its subcontract expenditure in the Sultanate. AECO has executed works in excess of \$70 million with nearly \$24 million awarded to sub-contracting companies as well as the procurement of equipment (\$21 million) and materials (\$16 million).”

According to Perk, more than 70 million working hours and almost one million cubic metres (1,000,000 m³) of concrete will be required for the construction of phase one of Madina A'Zarqa.

This involves more than 1,500,000 m² of building space and the associated urban infrastructure. It is estimated that more than 1,500 Omanis will be working at peak time during phase one, ranging from engineers to technicians.

Daewoo to develop tourism in Duqm

Source: *Times of Oman* - April 23, 2008

Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Co. has signed an agreement with the government of Oman to develop tourism projects in Duqm, the South Korean company's first foray into real estate.

The venture will develop the port city, about 450km south of Muscat, into a tourist and business area, Daewoo Shipbuilding said in an e-mailed statement yesterday. The value of the project will be decided later, the Seoul-based company said, without giving details of the development. Daewoo Shipbuilding, the world's third-biggest shipyard, is turning to new businesses to benefit from increased spending in the Middle East. Economies in the Gulf region will expand 9.2 per cent this year as oil revenue spurs spending

on airports, power plants and business parks, according to Morgan Stanley.

The Duqm project may be worth about \$20 billion, the Korean-language internet newspaper MoneyToday reported yesterday, without saying where it got the information.

Gulf states plan to spend a combined \$1.1 trillion to develop their economies, Qatar Finance Minister Yousuf Hussain Kamal said on March 16. That may help South Korean contractors win record orders for a third year in 2008.

Daewoo Shipbuilding may develop Duqm into a marine resort with condominiums and hotels as well as

building homes for people working in the city, which will become an industrial and tourist area by 2020, the shipyard said. The government also plans to build a refinery complex, a crude-oil export terminal and a new airport and expand port facilities in Duqm.

The South Korean shipbuilder in 2006 signed an agreement to build and operate a ship-repair yard in Oman, which will be the biggest in the Middle East. Other South Korean companies are also moving into Oman. LG International Corp., a unit of LG Corp., said on Tuesday it signed a preliminary agreement with Korea Southern Power Co. and state-owned Oman Oil Co. to bid for a \$2 billion coal-fired power project in the Middle East nation.

Majan Gulf launches sales of 'Springs Compound' homes in Sohar

Source: *Oman Observer* - April 20, 2008

Majan Gulf Properties (MGP), designers and developers of the Sohar Residential and Commercial Project, launched the sale of 1st phase of its luxurious 'Springs Compound' home project comprising 75 double-storied villa style residences yesterday. Combining Omani architecture with contemporary Arab cultural construction, the villas' interior design is a combination of Arabic and Western style. Strategically located in the fastest developing industrial bay in Oman, the Springs Compound seeks to cater to the growing real estate demand accelerated by the city's rapid industrial growth and influx of residents and tourists alike.

Addressing the press conference, Bader al Hamdani, Marketing and Sales Manager, said: "The growing residential demand in Sohar due to the pace of its industrialisation is

faced by the challenge of scarcity in such real estate projects. Additionally, the current devaluation of currencies has had a negative impact on financial investments." "In the light of these situations, investment in real estate poses as an ideal alternative to most investors today and hence has propelled the demand even more. Springs Compound, in this regard provides a unique opportunity due to its location amongst other features. The yield in Sohar is reaching 15 per cent. Moreover, potential buyers have easy financing options from banks across the country", he added.

On the progress of the 1st phase, Al Hamdani said: "The Springs compound is 70 per cent complete and is expected to complete by May 2008. Timely delivery is a core constituent of our overall marketing objective. We realise that adhering to our

promise of timely delivery is an important factor in instilling confidence in our customers."

Speaking about the details of the project, Sami Karam, Project Manager, said: "The Springs Compound' is spread over a total area of 63,758 square metres comprising 129 luxury villas in all, with different variations ranging in size from 200 m² to 220 m². "Each villa is extended on two storey, a ground and first floor levels, with a private landscape area, two outdoor parking lots as well as private services," he said. "The compound includes a mosque, a sports club and a recreational area. A modern infrastructure offers decorative street lighting, attractive public landscape areas and parks, centralised sewage network with the main entrances and exits provided with a 24-hour security tool booth with access barriers," he added.

Al Madina A'Zarqa project on course

Source: *Times of Oman* - April 16, 2008

Al Madina A'Zarqa, the most significant infrastructure development in Oman and one of the biggest developments in the Middle East, is firmly on course and progressing without delay on phase one of the city.

The 32-square kilometre project, located 60 minutes north-west of Muscat, is divided into a number of phases, the first phase being 2.6 square kilometres. The development will create a tourism platform for the country and will help to position Oman as an international destination. It will also become a vehicle for thousands of job opportunities directly in the new city and thousands of other jobs created through satellite services to the city.

"Al Madina A'Zarqa is not only significant in the region due to its sheer size and scope, but also due to the independent legal and financial structures under which the project is secured and managed," said Professor Fari Akhlaghi, Managing Director and CEO of Blue City Company 1 SAOC, the special purpose vehicle incorporated to oversee the management of phase one of Al Madina A'Zarqa project. "BCC1 SAOC is an independently financed legal entity established to develop Al Madina A'Zarqa, operating independently of the shareholders.

In other words, when one purchases a property in Al Madina A'Zarqa, payments are directed to bank accounts held in the name of Blue City Company One and supervised by the bondholders' representative bank, and not to the shareholders of the company," added Prof Akhlaghi. The funding of Al Madina A'Zarqa's first phase differs greatly from other developments in the Middle East. Unlike most other real estate projects in the region, Al Madina A'Zarqa does not rely solely on the pre-sale of off-plan property to finance the development. This provides investors and purchasers with the highest levels of confidence that the project is protected from all manner of challenge during its lifetime.

Phase one of the project used a unique and pioneering funding vehicle through issue of bonds on the Irish Stock Exchange that raised initial funds of \$925 million. Depending on their category, the bond issue has already been formally rated at investment grade by major international rating agencies such as Fitch and Moody's. The bonds, which are traded instruments on the financial markets, have been purchased by major international institutions that are regularly updated on the progress of the project and regard them as sound investment. According to a strict loan agreement under

which funds are made available to BCC1, all funds must be held in specific bank accounts.

The monitoring and supervision of the funds is overseen by the Bank of New York, as the appointed representative of the Bond Holders. A technical adviser, Hill International (UK) Ltd, also participates in the monitoring and supervision of the project to ensure compliance with the conditions on which funds have been made available to BCC1. Prof Akhlaghi commented that the strict supervision of fund releases has not affected progress of the project. "Phase one of Al Madina A'Zarqa is on schedule and progressing without delay," he said. "The main contractor's direct work force deployed on site is expanding rapidly."

Various enabling and preparation work has advanced, including the construction of a major facility on site to provide accommodation for more than 7,000 workers, engineers and staff. The facilities for delivery of the project are now complete and include living accommodation and all amenities for single status and married personnel. The project has passed more than one million man hours of site activity without any accidents and with significant construction activity about to start, this figure will escalate rapidly.

Real estate, luxury hotel project launched

Source: *Times of Oman* - April 15, 2008

The Malkai, a project representing a significant real estate and luxury hotel development in Oman, was launched yesterday.

Designed to be an exclusive community, The Malkai at Barka will comprise a country club, residences and resort that will compare to some of

the finest around the world. The project is scheduled to open by the end of year 2010.

Al Maeen Real Estate Services Co LLC is the developer of the project.

Announcing the launch at a press conference at Hotel Chedi, Pankaj

Khimji, owner of The Malkai, said: "Through the project we hope to make a statement in lifestyle and in architecture."

He informed the media that the project would be spread across 216 acres and will comprise 101 four-bedroom villas for sale, 92 two bed-

room suites, as well as a boutique hotel offering 41 luxury suites.

The project, estimated to cost \$250 million, will be a low-density development and only 10 per cent of the 216 acres will be built up. It will be a freehold title and there won't be restriction on foreign ownership.

The approximate price currently starts at \$1.3 million for the two bedroom suites and \$4 million for the villas.

Pankaj also said that a world-class nine hole golf course — the first ever in Oman designed by renowned golf course architects, Gary Player Design, will be an added advantage for the owners and guests at the property.

Pankaj and the most successful international golfer Gary Player also signed a golf-designing contract at the launch.

Gary who was present at the press conference said he had a great affini-

ty for the Middle East. "Golf is a great catalyst for getting people to travel. Bringing golf to Oman is something I am going to enjoy. The best part of Oman is that there is a lot of fresh air and sunshine," he said.

The Malkai's master plan and lead design has been carried out by AW2 from Paris. Internationally acclaimed designers Jaya and Associates are responsible for the interior design of all the villas and suites, which will be presented fully furnished for sale. Each property will be fully landscaped and also feature large swimming pools. All villas will have direct golf course views. A fully serviced spa enclosed in a walled water garden will also be part of the project.

Additional facilities will include the main clubhouse, two restaurants, a boutique, delicatessen, a junior club and tennis courts.

The Malkai will also have its own Beach Club within easy reach of the

property for the exclusive use of residents and guests.

Reda Amalou, architect, AW2 who was at the press conference said the project while clearly contemporary would remain rooted in the essence of Omani architecture and tradition, giving a strong sense of place.

The extensive use of walls, screens, shadows and light throughout the design is a direct reference to this rich Arabian and Islamic architectural past.

The operator of the project is the retained management company; GHM (General Hotel Management Ltd) bears the unmistakable imprint of legendary hotelier Adrian Zecha and will be setting a standard of style and service.

International Chartered Surveyors and Property Consultants, Cluttons are managing the sales of the project. Alex of Cluttons said, for those who buy the property it will be a turnkey purchase.

Muriya starts signing of Phase 1 contracts

Source: *Times of Oman* - April 15, 2008

Muriya Tourism Development has initiated the process of signing the agreements with the customers of the Phase I of its two major projects — Jebel Sifah and Salalah Beach. The first phase of both the projects was sold out within 48 hours of being launched in the last quarter of 2007.

Director of sales Ali Abuelhawa described the signing of the contract as a moment of great importance for Muriya. "The proud owners of the 420 apartments and villas have been eagerly waiting to sign the contracts and we are very pleased to announce the same. With this, we are entering the next phase of Muriya's ambitious development plans,"

Abuelhawa said.

The signing of the contracts commenced on April 5, wherein Abuelhawa along with the director of customers relations and sales operations, Hani Macki were present on the occasion of the first customer signing. Muriya is currently arranging appointments for customers to sign their contracts.

Mobilisation of the sites is already underway and the projects are progressing as planned. The integrated tourism complexes will feature a diverse range of commercial, tourism and high-end luxury facilities such as real estate, hotels, marinas, golf courses and much more. The prop-

erties will provide diversity in architectural style that will at the same time be integrated with Omani culture and traditions. Muriya is committed to preserving the country's natural treasures and is leading the way in promoting environmentally and socially responsible tourism.

Muriya Tourism Development Company was established in Oman in March 2006, as a joint venture between Egypt's Orascom Hotels & Development 70 per cent, and the Omani government 30 per cent represented by Omran. Muriya is investing over \$900 million in four major projects in Oman, namely Salalah Beach, Jebel Sifah, 'City Walk' in Muscat and Al Sodah Island.

W.J. Towell, 3 Indian companies to team up for real estate development

Source: *Times of Oman* - April 08, 2008

W.J. Towell Group has joined hands with three leading Indian business houses for real estate development in Oman. Piramal Group, Simplex Infrastructures Ltd and Talati and Panthaky Associated Pvt Ltd are the companies joining hands with W.J. Towell Group, headed by Hussain Jawad as the group chairman.

Imad Sultan, director in-charge of Indian ventures, W.J. Towell & Co. LLC said: "We are entering a new phase in its long history of success within the region. The association with these joint ventures will bring a new level of interest and expertise to the fore in all W.J. Towell construction and real estate activities."

W.J. Towell Group, formed in 1866, has been a pioneer in property development in Oman. Way back in the 1970s, the company developed the first residential complex characterised by garden courts, villas, apartment blocks and commercial centre. Property/real estate and construction is one of the group's core businesses.

Anil Wadhwa, India's ambassador to Oman said: "For these giants of Indian industry, an association with W. J. Towell & Co. in Oman will bring in synergy and will surely help to build and maintain close Indo-Omani relations."

Piramal Group under the leadership of Ajay Piramal has a group turnover in excess of \$1.1 billion, and a total market capitalisation of \$1.88 billion. Active in four main business sectors, including pharmaceuticals, financial services and real estate, Piramal has a global presence with representation and offices throughout Europe and in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, China, South America and Sri Lanka.

Simplex's history and current market presence is equally impressive. The company has enjoyed an uninterrupted profit track record since its inception in 1924. With a business model emphasis in diversification, Simplex has executed over 2,100 prestigious projects in India and across the world. Simplex was recently awarded the Seeb Corniche

development project, signed off by the two partners, Towell Construction and Simplex represented by Amitabh Mundhra, director.

Leading architectural and design firm Talati and Panthaky Associated Pvt Ltd, enjoys an unparalleled position of prestige in its field.

The firm was established four decades ago by group Chairman Noshir D. Talati. Talati and Panthaky's design is transforming more than 40 million sqft ranging from residential, commercial, corporate headquarters, retail, entertainment and health, education.

By engaging in these joint ventures Ivor Braganza, CEO (Property & Construction) said: "W.J. Towell is adding another successful chapter to its rich history in Oman. The new alliance with these major players of Indian industry will undoubtedly add significant value to the tremendous progress of Towell's construction and infrastructure projects to the benefit of all of us within the Sultanate."

Suhail Bahwan ventures into property market

Source: *Times of Oman* - March 30, 2008

At a time when Oman is experiencing a rapid development phase unparalleled in its history, the Suhail Bahwan Group is venturing into property development with two premium projects — a luxury residential development and a state-of-the-art commercial building. The projects are being offered to both Omani nationals and Gulf citizens.

Bahwan Properties LLC, the real es-

tate arm of Suhail Bahwan Group, unveiled the two exclusive projects yesterday at a ceremony held at Grand Hyatt Muscat. Saad Bahwan and Milind Pathare, business head-real estate, Suhail Bahwan Group, attended the press conference.

According to a company release, Janayin Sama (Sky Gardens) will set new benchmarks in luxury and convenience, unparalleled in architec-

tural splendour and spacious environment within the residences as well as the premises.

The project will include private pools, shopping facilities, spa, rooftop pool, restaurant, and health club — the luxury standards befitting the cream of high-end clients associated with the development.

Janayin Sama will be located in

North Ghubra, a few minutes from the beach and close to ministries and embassies. One of the compelling attractions of the project is that it is located within the heart of Muscat city, providing island of calm, greenery and water bodies which combine to offer a sophisticated lifestyle unparalleled in Oman. Janayin Sama will have leading brands operating in the shopping arcade, along with a world-class spa, restaurant, health club and recreational hall managed by renowned operators.

In all, 175 exclusive residential units will come up in Janayin Sama's three buildings facing a green courtyard. The entire basement of the three

buildings is reserved for vehicle parking, with dedicated space for two vehicles to each resident.

The architectural design of Janayin Sama has been conceptualised by architect Karan Grover, winner of the first Leeds Platinum award for green buildings in India.

Real estate management company Cluttons has been appointed the exclusive selling agent of the project.

Janayin Sama will be the only project of its kind, which offers duplex-pent houses with private pools. The ground floor will comprise duplex apartments facing the green central courtyard. Shops and offices

will form only a small segment of the facilities at Janayin Sama.

The second landmark will be a commercial building project, Al Rawaq, which will come up in the prime Qurum area, between Nissan showroom and Omanoil headquarters. The commercial property is expected to attract international corporate houses. This commercial development features substantial basement parking and 44,000 square metres showrooms and offices.

Spread over ground plus six floors, the offices will be available on lease in a wide range of areas, providing flexibility of space design.

Al Nabri Global to set up RO10 million hotel and resort

Source: *Times of Oman* - March 10, 2008

Al Nabri Global Investment Company recently announced the establishment of a world-class sea view hotel and resort at Al Zaafaran in the wilayat of Sohar.

Construction works on the project, worth around RO10 million, is expected to commence by the end of the third quarter of the year and will be complete by 2010. It will have 207 rooms, 10 luxurious suites, 2 presidential suites, seminar and meeting ballrooms and other hotel services.

Abdullah bin Ali Al Nabri, chairman

of the company, said that the project would form a new addition to the hotel and tourism sector in the Sultanate. It backed the government trends in enhancement of infrastructure in the wilayat of Sohar, he added.

"In the next few days, we will sign three agreements; the design agreement with an international consultancy firm in the Sultanate; an agreement for finance with a locally operating bank and agreement with an international company for operating the project," he said. The

project would create 200 job opportunities for Omanis, he said adding that the hotel's management would, in cooperation with the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Tourism, set an Omanisation plan.

Priority in employment would be for Omanis with some well experienced expatriates in the tourism field also being employed, he said stressing that there is a need for comprehensive training programmes in the field of hotels and hospitality for Omanis so as to ensure distinct services for visitors, tourists and businessmen.

The Wave's Ocean View project an instant hit

Source: *Times of Oman* - March 10, 2008

The recent sales launch of Ocean View villas and Almeria North apartments, at The Wave, Muscat received an overwhelming response, and was an instant sell out.

"Details of the launch were made available on March 2, and crowd started gathering outside The Wave, Muscat offices immediately after that in sheer speculation of the

launch date.

"By the evening of March 7, some 150 people had assembled at the project site. Whilst this is a huge

tribute to the credibility of The Wave, Muscat and success of the project, it was a situation that required immediate attention,” The Wave said here in a statement.

In an effort to address the situation and ensure complete transparency, the management had a dialogue with the crowd and potential customers were allowed access to the specially prepared tent in order to insure their safety and welfare. The registration process soon followed just after midnight on March 8, and continued until 9am when everyone holding a registration card has been offered a chance to secure a property in this release.

More than 3,000 properties will be offered in this beachfront community. The Wave, Muscat, is unprecedented in Oman and is much more

than simply a real estate development. It is helping to diversify the economic base of the country by attracting direct foreign investment worth RO1 billion. It also adds thousands of jobs to local employment and contributes to enriching people’s lives in the heart of Muscat. More than 2,500 people are employed on site and the project management team has grown to 100 people working towards making this project a success.

The Wave, Muscat has been recognised and rewarded with international and regional awards from prestigious organisations such as CNBC Arabian Properties and the UK-based Homes Overseas Magazine. The Wave, Muscat is a fully master planned community overlooking the Gulf Of Oman occupying a total area of 2,500,000 square

metres along 6km of natural beach. The Wave, Muscat, once complete, will be home to 4,000 dwelling owners of all nationalities, a signature 18-hole green golf course designed by the legendary Greg Norman, 300 berth marina, three luxury hotels, villas, retail and restaurant outlets.

Located within a 10-minute drive from the centre of town, the community will be within driving distance from the numerous authentic attractions of Muscat, while enjoying world-class amenities and facilities. The Wave, Muscat is being developed through a joint venture comprising Oman’s Waterfront Investments (representing the Government of the Sultanate of Oman), National Investment Funds Company (representing Omani Pension Funds), and the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Group.

Sayyid Haitham tees off ‘Muscat Hills’ project

Source: *Times of Oman* - March 9, 2008

The Muscat Golf and Country Club’s new brand identity of ‘Muscat Hills’ was unveiled by His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, minister of heritage and culture, at an exclusive launch event held at the Grand Hyatt Muscat.

A cherished dream and the brain-child of His Highness Sayyid Qais bin Tariq Al Said, Muscat Hills will bring many benefits of championship golf to Oman and rank amongst the best golfing experiences in the region. Anticipated to be the most spectacular and challenging course in Arabia, the first PGA-standard 18 hole Par 72 championship green golf course in Oman is designed by the internationally renowned Paul Thomas of Dave Thomas Associates and integrates the sporting demands of a high quality championship course with the natural beauty of the Omani landscape, contrasted by picturesque fairways, lush greens and dramatic wadis.

The new logo is inspired by the “golf swing”, the most debated topic in the game and illustrates the grace of motion while encapsulating the organic beauty of the project.

“Muscat Hills is easily the most unique real-estate development in Oman, as it was born not out of any commercial motivation but purely out of one man’s dream of gifting his country with its first green championship golf course,” expressed Chandra Lahiri, group managing director of Muscat Hills. “There is little doubt that it will be a magnet for premium golf tourism and we are fortunate to have a group of world-class partners to bring this project to fruition.”

Lahiri went on to say that a steering committee of reputed professionals was also constituted by His Highness Sayyid Qais bin Tariq Al Said to advise the management of the project.

Muscat Hills comprises four aesthetic and environmentally friendly parts that includes a golf course, an exclusive gated residential development, boutique resort hotel and premiere Country Club in addition to a tract of commercial land to house premium office space, retail and entertainment.

The first phase of the residential units comprising 80 deluxe villas and 25 exclusive apartment blocks along the periphery of the golf course have already been sold out and the next, and final, phase of high-value luxury homes in nooks around the golf course will be offered by invitation only.

He added: “Another noteworthy feature at our project will be an academy, not only to teach the game to aspiring youngsters here, but also to train Omanis in the highly skilled vocations of golf course maintenance

Gulf construction feels heat of supply shortages

Source: *Times of Oman* - February 20, 2008

The Gulf's booming construction industry is feeling the heat of soaring materials costs and labour shortages amid concern that supply pressures could delay the completion of projects.

The economy minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), whose construction and real estate sectors contributed 23 percent of the economic output in 2007, has warned that supply constraints might slow construction in the area.

"Regional and international factors that could unexpectedly cause a recession (in construction) should be watched, Sheikha Lubna al-Qassemi told an industry conference in Abu Dhabi earlier this month.

Among the critical factors were "knowing the limit in terms of the availability of building materials and labour force," he said. Construction in the Gulf, currently valued at 2.4 trillion dollars (1.6 trillion euros), has been hit by increased worldwide demand for building materials, as construction fever spreads to countries such as China.

The Gulf region has experienced its own building frenzy over the past

few years on the back of record-high crude oil prices, which are pumping huge liquidity into the economies of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

It was research firm Proleads that in November quoted the value of Gulf construction projects at 2.4 trillion dollars. This would rise to 2.5 trillion dollars (1.7 billion euros), if projects currently only at planning stages were included, it added.

But this building boom in GCC member states -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE -- has put extra pressure on the supply and cost of construction materials and labour force. "There is a chronic shortage of resources. Clients are facing a shortage of contracting capacity while contractors are having difficulty sourcing labour and materials," said a report by the Middle East Economic Digest (MEED) Contractors Survey 2007.

"The result is soaring materials costs and wages, which in turn have seen project costs soar," it added.

Giant UAE property developer Nakheel said it was trying to offset the unexpected escalation in materi-

als prices in pre-arrangements with contractors.

"We are formulating deals with contractors that will give us better protection from cost escalation," said Matt Joyce, managing director of Nakheel's Waterfront project in Dubai.

"We've spent a lot of time formalising 'locked-in' agreements for building materials such as steel. If you 'lock-in' with contractors early enough the price escalation risk can be removed," he told AFP.

Dubai-based Emaar, the largest Arab property developer by market value, also acknowledged the impact of surging costs in January, saying higher "pre-operating expenses" would cut profits generated by malls and hotels in 2008.

The property giant, currently constructing the world's tallest tower, Burj Dubai, said its profits in 2008 would grow at the same three-percent rate as last year.

An Emaar spokesman told AFP that increased construction costs had not caused delays to projects being completed.

31 pacts for 575 housing units in Dhofar signed

Source: *Times of Oman* - February 13, 2008

Thirty-one agreements for constructing 575 housing units worth RO26,265,472 were signed at the office of the minister of state and governor of Dhofar here yesterday.

The agreements were signed by Sheikh Saif bin Mohammed Al Shabibi, housing minister; and Sheikh Mohammed bin Marhoon Al Ma'amari, minister of state and governor of Dhofar, with 23 contractors.

The projects come in response to the royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said during his annual tours, aimed at ensuring that modernisation would reach all parts of the Sultanate.

The tours also aim at achieving further achievements for Omanis and securing better future for the country and its sons.

The agreements include construc-

tion of 180 housing units in the wilayat of Thumrait, 140 at Shaleem and Al Halaniyat Islands, 235 at Al Mazyouna, 10 at Aybout (1) and 10 at Aybout (2).

The signing ceremony was attended by the acting deputy governor of Dhofar, the chairman of Dhofar Municipality and the secretary-general of the supreme committee for town planning, a number of walis and CEOs of the contracting companies.

Bank Muscat to build RO36m head office in Seeb

Source: *Times of Oman* - February 10, 2008

BankMuscat is gearing up to move into a 32,000sqm state-of-the-art head office building that will come up at Airport Heights, Seeb by mid-2009.

The bank has entered into a 50-year lease agreement with Internal Security Service Pension Fund, which has agreed to build a custom-designed head office complex for the bank. Work on the project, which has been estimated at RO36 million, has already commenced.

Speaking at a press conference announcing the move, AbdulRazzak Ali Issa, chief executive of the bank, said: "The new head office is designed to be a landmark building in the Sultanate incorporating the latest technologies, security and conveniences that will accommodate the bank's current and future requirements. The building will also reflect our vision and stature of being a leading regional bank." The bank's head office currently operates out of 11 buildings in Muscat.

Waleed Al Hashar, member of the head office project steering committee for BankMuscat, said: "Our partner, Internal Security Service Pension Fund, has awarded the contract for construction of the new

BankMuscat head office project to Galfar Engineering and Contracting SAOG. The lead architects and consulting engineers of the project are WS Atkins International & Co; the project manager is Mace International Ltd and the IT and Security consultant is Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM). There are also various other consultants who are involved in the project for other specialised areas such as interior decoration and landscaping etc. We are confident that the new building will meet the needs and aspirations of all our current and future employees and further strengthen the perception that BankMuscat is the best place to work in the Sultanate."

John Cruiser of WS Atkins made a presentation about the design and purpose of the new building. "The new BankMuscat building is an example of a greater level of architectural finesse. The design reflects a commitment towards a sustainable future, social responsibility and energy efficient initiatives," he said.

The proposed building has a host of novel features, like overhangs and screen, automatic lighting control and variable air volume, in addition to facilities for social interaction, healthcare facilities, a crèche, spe-

cial features for the disabled, and added security and safety measures. Designed to project the bank's image of a corporate environment with an Omani identity, the building will reflect the bank's vision for the future, its commitment to the public, and be a bold statement that demands attention.

According to bank sources, the new head office building will bring with it a host of benefits. Besides providing a unique address to Bank Muscat, it will lend an excellent working environment to its staff and help boost their morale and motivation.

The proposed building will also improve efficiency by reducing movement of staff and documents between different head office buildings in different places. There will be higher customer satisfaction on account of their being able to carry out all transactions in one single location.

In addition to this, the new premises will have over 1,600 parking spaces for customer and staff convenience. It will also offer a better business continuity plan, as the location of the disaster recovery centre (in Ruwi) will be outside the recommended 7km exclusion zone.

Rising steel prices hit construction

Source: *Oman Tribune* - January 6, 2008

Rising steel prices are proving to be a damper on the ongoing infrastructure projects in the Sultanate. Steel prices have been on an uptick for some time now. It rose from RO90 per tonne in 2001 to about RO400 per tonne in 2007.

Though the price rise is not Oman-

specific, it is affecting the construction sector in the country. Globally steel prices are currently on an upswing.

Last month, ArcelorMittal, the biggest steel producer in the world, said it would raise the price of its long steel products in the Middle

East region by \$30 per tonne from January 1.

Hyundai Steel, South Korea's second-largest steel maker, said on Wednesday it will raise prices of some steel products by up to 7 per cent, reflecting soaring raw material prices, Reuters reported.

And closer to the Gulf, Indian steel makers have raised prices by RO5 to RO10 a tonne across product categories on rising prices of raw material such as coking coal and iron ore.

In the face of the relentless price rise, the demand for setting up steel factories in the Sultanate is rising. Some are also calling for subsidy on

imported steel to soften the blow for builders.

Mustafa Mukhtar Sayed, a sales executive with Bahwan, blamed the price rise on the unprecedented construction boom.

“Steel is hard to come by in the local market and this has resulted in delays in the execution of many con-

struction projects. This problem could be solved by establishing steel factories,” Mustafa added.

Welyam, manager of Al Rami Construction Materials Co., said the current wave of price rise affects every one because “it touches our daily activities and makes us unable to meet our basic needs”.

Gulf Stone Company opens factory in Sohar

Source: *Times of Oman* - January 6, 2008

The factory of Mahajir Al Khaleej (Gulf Stone) Company was opened at Sohar Industrial Estate under the auspices of Mohammed bin Nasser Al Khusaibi, secretary-general of the Ministry of National Economy, in the presence of Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, minister of commerce and industry.

Al Khusaibi said that the factory represented a new addition to the Sultanate's industrial sector, reaffirming that the Omani industry had

witnessed significant growth. He said that the Sultanate was putting in tremendous efforts for developing industries through providing incentives and required infrastructure.

The minister of commerce and industry said that the Sultanate had secured appreciable growth in the industrial sector, particularly in Sohar Industrial Estate, emphasising the role played by Sohar Industrial Port and the mega industries at the Sohar Industrial Estate.

Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Rasbi, chairman of the company, said that the idea behind establishing the factory was production of materials that could be domestically and internationally utilised by making use of the raw materials available in Oman.

The chief guest and the attendees toured the various sections of the factory, where they were briefed on the stages of production of industrial marble by using high quality quartz substance.

Barka Resorts joins RCI network

Source: *Times of Oman* - December 15, 2007

RCI has announced an agreement with Allied Oman, the leisure real estate enterprise owned by Salim Ali Nasser Aliyabi, to affiliate the timeshare project at the Barka Resort.

The Barka Resort located 60km to the east of Muscat consists of 65 units destined for the timeshare market with a further 131 residential units intended for a rental programme.

Inspired by the traditional Arabian architecture, each apartment will be

furnished with a full range of appliances and modern amenities. Set for completion in 2009, the development targets the AGCC and expatriate communities. With easy access to the airport, guests will experience the flavour of Omani hospitality amidst a landscaped rural community that is adjacent to the beach.

Residents will benefit from free access to a beach club and the facilities of a five star hotel being built within the same development.

An extensive range of amenities and

concierge services will be available, including a spa, country club, cinema and a selection of restaurants. Sports facilities, swimming pools and water attractions add to its appeal as a family oriented resort. It's close to the famous Omani heritage site of Barka Fort, the beautiful springs at Nakhal and even a local Ostrich farm.

“The Barka Resort is an excellent example of how Group RCI has the potential to add value to a developer's project,” said Nick Turner, managing director of Group RCI in the Middle

East.

“With our network of customer ser-

vice centres we offer Allied Oman the opportunity of distribution through a global network. We

recognise the potential of the Omani market and appreciate what makes it distinctive in the tourist market.”

Accor Hospitality plans Sofitel hotel in Oman

Source: *Oman Observer* - December 12, 2007

Accor Hospitality Middle East has announced the signing of a new Sofitel hotel, the Sofitel Muscat & Spa. The opening, scheduled for January 2011, will see the Sofitel brand venture into the Sultanate for the first time with over 230 rooms and a location on the Azaiba beach front. Sofitel Muscat & Spa will be owned by Al Mashriq Hotels & Tourism and managed by Accor Hospitality Middle East.

The major announcement affirms Accor Hospitality Middle East’s aggressive development plans for the region. A leading developer of all hotel segments, from budget to upscale, the international hotel group continues to expand its regional portfolio of four brands — Sofitel Luxury Hotels, Mercure, Novotel and Ibis and fully aims to reach its ambitious target of developing 70

hotels by 2011.

Says Christophe Landais, Managing Director, Accor Hospitality Middle East, who spoke at the ceremony: “We are thrilled to open yet another Sofitel hotel in a brand new market. Oman is undeniably the region’s emerging leisure capital; I believe our hotel will meet the growth in demand for the deluxe five-star hotel sector in the Sultanate and the region, and will undoubtedly set the benchmark with its contemporary lifestyle appeal, spa facilities and French flair, all symbolic of our most upscale hotel brand.”

Sami Ahmed Macki, Managing Director, Al Mashriq Hotels and Tourism, who was also present for the ceremony, added: “We are delighted to sign this strategic development agreement with Accor Hospitality at

a time when the Sofitel brand is being elevated in the international luxury hotel market. I believe the Sultanate is ready to receive more upper upscale international hotel brands and so we anticipate a fruitful opening and partnership with Accor Hospitality.”

True to the new positioning of the Sofitel brand, Sofitel Muscat & Spa will provide guests all the luxuries of an elite expansive beach hotel, from its well-being bedrooms to the unique luxury spa. Dining options at the Muscat hotel are second to none and cater to all age groups; the hotel offers three speciality restaurants including a Japanese-themed restaurant, a barbecue rotisserie, all-day-dining area, children’s club restaurant and a teenager’s club restaurant. It will also have a lobby lounge, pool and theme bar.

Consolidated Contractors wins multi-million dollar **Omagine** contract

Source: *Oman Observer* - December 12, 2007

Omagine Inc, the majority owner of the proposed multi-million-Omagine project, has announced the general contractor which will lead the construction of the 300-acre residential and entertainment complex planned near Muscat. Consolidated Contractors Company Oman (CCC), which is the Omani subsidiary of Consolidated Contractors Group SAL, will be responsible for all construction activities for the company’s Omagine project, said a company statement.

Consolidated Contractors Group

SAL (CCG) is a worldwide organisation with \$5 billion in revenue and employs approximately 125,000 people. The announcement is the second in a series of major events anticipated in the next few weeks, culminating in the final step needed to begin construction.

“With CCC, we have a contractor with a very strong reputation, a successful history of high-quality construction — on time and within budget — and a very active presence in Oman,” said Frank J Drohan, President of the company and of its sub-

sidary Journey of Light (JOL), which is the majority owner of the project.

Drohan said that an investment arm of CCG and another Omani financial investor will each become minority equity shareholders of Omagine SAOC, the company that is currently being formed in Oman by JOL to build, own and operate the Omagine project. The company — through its 100 per cent ownership of JOL — will own 70 per cent of the project company’s equity. “We identified CCG early on as a potential

partner who could handle the scope of this development and the rapid nature in which it is unfolding,” Drohan said.

“They can mobilise the very substantial manpower and equipment resources required almost immediately and they have the capability to execute high quality work quickly and efficiently. We are proud to be working closely with one of the

most prominent contractors in the Middle East to bring to life one of the most forward-looking projects in this region today.”

The company’s planned Omagine project is an integration of cultural, heritage, educational, entertainment and residential components. As presently planned, Omagine will be located on 1.2 million square meters of beachfront land facing the Gulf of

Oman just west of the capital Muscat.

The project also includes the construction and sale of approximately 3,300 residential housing units including luxury villas, townhouses and apartments in addition to 450 serviced apartments and 150 employee apartments. The project is expected to take between 4 to 5 years to complete.

Blue City kicks off first phase of development

Source: *Times of Oman* - December 11, 2007

The groundbreaking ceremony of the first phase of Al Madina A’Zarqa — a visionary city development in Al Sawadi — was held yesterday evening. The ceremony was held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tareq al Said, Representative of His Majesty the Sultan. It was attended by His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tareq al Said, Minister of Heritage and Culture, members of the Royal family, Dr Rajha bint Abdulameer bin Ali, Minister of Tourism, diplomats and dignitaries from across the region and Oman.

Anees Issa al Zadjali, Chairman of Al Sawadi Investment and Tourism (ASIT), which is developing the project, also attended the function. In a welcome address, HH Sayyid Haitham reiterated that “A Royal Decree was issued in 1982 assigning all government lands at Al Sawadi area for tourism purposes. Al Madina A’Zarqa came to reaffirm this assignment of the area through a profound and precise reading for the future of the place, and to keep abreast of the government’s initiatives which are supportive of the tourism sector as per the stipulations of the royal decree.”

The project enjoys a number of advantages not only as an integrated modern resort but also the area itself

expresses an appreciable uniqueness, rich and natural beauty, distinct environmental integrity that ensures all potential for success. “Al Madina A’Zarqa is planned to become a model for a lifestyle that adapts to the surrounding environment. The project has not excluded traditional Omani architectural design and construction; on the contrary it is inspired by the architectural elements to be found in the local environment. Al Madina A’Zarqa is planned to be a model for those seeking relaxation in an integrated community that meets the need of daily life including family and work requirements”.

HH Sayyid Asaad told reporters that Oman is looking forward to set up such projects, as it has several advantages. “We are trying to have a balance between different areas (in terms of development). . . . So that all areas will be developed equally within the next 10 years. This will benefit local people, and provide them with education and training,” HH Sayyid Asaad added. The first phase of the project is due to be officially released for sale tomorrow featuring a select group of properties which will form part of the ‘town within the city’ — and which will be ready for delivery by 2010. Further properties will be released for sale in the coming months.

The Blue City — a unique 32 square kilometre project and a significant metropolitan development in Oman — creates an entirely new city of more than 250,000 people and represents an estimated \$15 — \$20 billion investment. The highlight of the event was the laying of the foundation stone of the first phase by HH Sayyid Asaad to mark the official commencement of the development and the birth of Oman’s new city. Guests at the gala ceremony were also treated to a stirring musical performance by renowned singer Stefanie Rose Airey, accompanied by Paul Schwartz.

A short film titled A New City is Born in Oman was aired. Shown in two sections, the film depicted the past and present of Omani architecture, and included an impressive presentation of Al Madina A’Zarqa. Al Madina A’Zarqa will comprise a series of compact communities, set within an extensive, dramatic coastal landscape. The small-scale buildings borrow from traditional Omani architecture, forming tight-knit clusters that offer privacy, peace and safety. Roads will be curving and organic, meandering and winding — offering surprises at every turn. Connections will be seamless, with opportunities for discreet car parking, combined with pleasant pedestrianised routes that are

shaded and cool.

ASIT has established very high standards in this project. Enka from Turkey and Elliniki Technodmiki from Greece, the shareholders of the Omani company AECO Development, which is responsible for the first phase of this project, are fully committed to the target. The temporary city, which will accommodate

more than 6,000 people working on this project, as well as the infrastructure of this large job-site are nearing completion.

The first team of experts — consisting of more than one hundred and fifty people — has been working feverishly for a year now in close cooperation with the respective teams of ASIT and all the government de-

partments involved to prepare for the beginning of work.

More than 70 million working hours and almost one million cubic metres of concrete will be required for the construction of phase one of the project, which involves more than one million five hundred thousand square metres of buildings and the respective urban infrastructure.

Leading sanitary ware firm to tap tourism boom in the sultanate

Source: *Times of Oman* - December 06, 2007

Roca, the world-leader in sanitaryware, is looking at a three-digit growth in the Sultanate of Oman by capitalising on the booming tourism sector.

With multibillion dollar integrated tourism complexes mushrooming in Oman, the time is ripe to bag a slice of the sanitaryware share in all upcoming projects, said Victor Schoone, Roca country manager — Middle East, during a function to introduce the latest designer series from Roca.

The function was organised by the Infrastructure Group of Khimji Ramdas, the renowned business house of Oman and the exclusive franchisee for Roca in the country.

The new designer Roca series launched at the show were from world-renowned designers like “Frontalis” designed by Rafael Moneo; “Element” by David Chipperfield; and “Happening & Hall” by Ramon Benedito.

The function was attended by a virtual who’s who of Oman with renowned architects, engineers and consultants in the field, valued clients, contractors and consumers, representatives of various organisations covering both the private and public sector coming from all over the Sultanate including

Sohar and Nizwa.

When asked about Roca’s market share in Oman, Victor Schoone said: “It all depends upon which segment you consider. When you consider all the different segments of the bathroom sectors, then obviously we have higher market share in the medium and higher segments.”

“What we would like to get instead of a market share is the recognition as a leader. A market leader usually has a good percentage of market share. But we are definitely on a good path of growth in Oman,” Schoone added.

Roca, established in Spain in 1917, is the market leader in almost all countries where its products are sold. It has factories and subsidiaries in over 115 countries across the globe. Its world-class Roca Design Centre, headquartered near Barcelona, has revolutionised bathrooms by introducing innovative and versatile products that adapt to the habits and sensibilities of different markets. The growing trend towards viewing this private space as one where calm and well-being are paramount, has fuelled Roca’s desire to provide solutions to meet the varied preferences of its consumers.

Roca’s specialisation — “Everything in Bathrooms” — includes

sanitaryware, faucets, bathtubs, accessories, kitchen sinks, bathroom furniture, hydromassage wellness products among others.

The company also produces a comprehensive range of ceramic tiles in its state-of-the-art plant at Barcelona.

Khimji Ramdas Infrastructure Group, the well-known player in building materials with a slew of international brands, is proud to have represented Roca, in Oman, for the past two decades.

With a wide network of showrooms and offices and a well-honed logistics and distribution network, Khimji’s provide the best-in-class service to valued customers across Oman.

The new initiative to increase the retail network with state-of-the-art outlets at Muscat, Barka, Al Khoud and Sohar, is set to provide the customers across Oman the convenience of having the best products at their very doorstep. The audience was welcomed by M. G. Chengappa — senior divisional manager, Building Materials while N. S. Vijaya Kumar, general manager — Infrastructure Group, Khimji Ramdas addressed the elite gathering on the occasion and thanked them for their continued support, cooperation, and valued business.

Jebel Sifah, Salalah Beach projects unveiled

Source: *Times of Oman* - November 21, 2007

Integrated tourism complexes Jebel Sifah and Salalah Beach are all set to become the hot new tourism addresses in Oman with their official launch yesterday.

The two projects were unveiled yesterday by Muriya Tourism Development, the project promoter, at Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa under the auspices of Ahmed bin Abdunabi Macki, minister of national economy and deputy chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council.

A huge number of Omani and international potential investors, a host of dignitaries including ministers, undersecretaries, members of the Royal Family were in attendance at the grand function held amidst dramatic settings of the amphitheatre at Shangri-La.

Dr Rajiha bint Abdul Amir bin Ali, Oman's minister of tourism; and

Samih Sawiris, chairman of Muriya Tourism Development, unveiled the plans of the diverse range of commercial, tourism and high-end luxury real estate available at Salalah Beach and Jebel Sifah.

Muriya was established in March 2006, as a joint venture between Egypt's Orascom Hotels & Development (70 per cent) and Omran (30 per cent), representing the Ministry of Tourism, Government of Oman.

Jebel Sifah and Salalah Beach with an initial investment of over \$400 million will be bustling communities incorporating more than four hotels each, villas and apartments, first-class marinas and marina towns, 18-hole PGA golf courses, restaurants, and prestigious retail outlets.

Potential investors who gathered at the launch function expressed keen interest in the more than 250 apartments and 160 villas, which are up

for sale at the two projects. A sales team was on hand to offer further assistance to potential buyers.

The first phase of the two projects to be completed in five years, will comprise a total of 550 villas and 1,200 apartments.

In exclusive comments to *Times of Oman*, Ahmed bin Abdunabi Macki said that the two projects are expected to add more than 4,000 jobs to the local labour market and contribute greatly to the development of tourism in the country.

"Jebel Sifah and Salalah Beach are two great projects of course, and will contribute not only to the development of the country, but also to the tourism sector, because the projects will contain almost four more hotels each and golf courses besides adding more than 600 housing units in the first phase," said Macki.

Foster+Partners to design The Blue City

Source: *Oman Tribune* - November 20, 2007

Al Sawadi Investment and Tourism (Asit) appointed Foster+Partners to develop the master plan for Al Madina A'Zarqa (The Blue City), the most significant metropolitan development in Oman.

One of the foremost architectural firms in the world and designers of iconic structures such as Millau Viaduct in France, Swiss Re Headquarters in London, Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport and the Hearst Tower in New York, Foster + Partners are tasked with developing the master plan for the city with a focus on delivering the modern essence of Arabia, building on strong Omani heritage and history without compromising on modernity and quality.

"Al Madina A'Zarqa (The Blue City)

is one of the most significant construction projects in the Middle East," said Anees Issa Al Zadjali, Chairman, Asit.

"This metropolitan development will serve as an incubator of change for Oman, raising its international credentials as a place for tourism, investment and living where the true essence of Arabia is preserved, honoured and respected. This is a challenging yet rewarding brief," said Gerard Evenden, senior partner, Foster+Partners.

"The scheme for (Al Madina A'Zarqa) Blue City offers an exciting opportunity to create a new model for living and a new destination for Oman. It also brings with it tremendous responsibility – to its future

community, to the ecology of the area and to the productivity of the region. With its compact grain and defined courtyards, Al Madina A'Zarqa (The Blue City) is informed by Omani architectural traditions and modern needs. Designed to grow organically over time, the master plan is richly layered with a careful mix of education, knowledge and light industries."

Al Madina A'Zarqa (The Blue City) project is supported by integrated tourism legislation on freehold property ownership that recognises inheritance laws from the purchasers' country of origin. The project will create an entirely new city of more than 250,000 people and represents an estimated \$15 - \$20 billion total investment.

Muriya to launch property development projects

Source: *Oman Tribune* - November 20, 2007

Muriya, one of the single largest tourism development companies in Oman and a joint venture between Egypt's 'Orascom Hotels and Development' and Oman's government-owned company 'Omran' will announce the initial plans of the real estate development in its two Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITC) at an event to be held at Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa on Tuesday.

At the invitation-only event, Salalah Beach and Jebel Sifah's diverse range of commercial, tourism and high-end luxury real estate will be unveiled, Cyril Piaia, CEO of Muriya said while addressing a press conference on Monday.

"We want our guests to feel as

much a part of the Salalah beach and Jebel Sifah communities as we do. Using many exciting and innovative methods, we plan to reproduce the very essence of what these two developments are all about, with a view to generating excitement and curiosity amongst our potential customers.

Once the master plans are unveiled, guests will be able to understand the correlation between the future communities, and what we have created for them," he said.

Muriya has other ambitious projects in various locations across Oman, including a City Complex in Muscat and Al Sodah Island. The total investment for all the four projects is over \$850 million, Tamer Shendidy,

Vice-President Development, Muriya Tourism Development revealed.

The Phase-1 of Salalah beach and Jebel Sifah project is expected to be completed in five years, he said. Work is already underway in Salalah Beach and Jebel Sifah will begin by the end of December.

"Omani nationals and expatriates can buy residential properties at our projects," he said. "Our aim is to create tourist destinations, which have the branding and flavour of the diversified nature and culture of the Sultanate," he added.

At the launch event, the project models will be unveiled and properties will go on sale, Piaia said.

The Wave sells 100 properties in just a few hours

Source: *Times of Oman* - November 05 2007

The Wave, Muscat yesterday said that the response to the launch of the Shoreside Villas and the luxurious Almeria South Apartments was outstanding.

Just over 100 properties were sold out within just a few hours. The properties at Almeria South offer the first opportunity to purchase freehold apartments within the Sultanate, with residents living at the heart of the vibrant marina village. The demand for these 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties was extremely high.

The release of Shoreside villas, whilst offering a completely different lifestyle to that of apartment living, was also received with great enthusiasm. Residents at Shoreside Villas will benefit from peace and tranquillity being situated just minutes away from both the 6km natural

beach, and the park areas.

The Wave, Muscat is being developed through a joint venture comprising Oman's Waterfront Investments (representing the government of the Sultanate of Oman), National Investment Funds Company (representing the Omani Pension Funds), and the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Group.

Speaking about the response to this sales launch, John Langford, vice-president sales and marketing, The Wave, Muscat said: "We were delighted at the tremendous response to the release of the Almeria South apartments and the Shoreside villas. The properties offer two different lifestyles for residents, which come together to create the truly unique proposition that is offered at The Wave, Muscat.

"We thank all of our customers, some of whom queued for 24 hours to secure their dream home. This is yet another indication that The Wave, Muscat is seen as the most desirable place to live."

Overlooking the Gulf of Oman, The Wave, Muscat is a fully master planned community occupying a total area of 2,500,000 square metres along 6km of natural beach. The Wave, Muscat, will be home to 4,000 dwelling owners from all nationalities, a signature 18 hole green golf course designed by Greg Norman, 300 berth marina, four luxury hotels, villas, retail and restaurant outlets. Located within a 10-minute drive from the centre of town, the community will be within driving distance from the numerous authentic attractions of Muscat while enjoying world class amenities and facilities.

Oman Cement Co. to sign pact for \$162 million expansion

Source: *Oman Observer* - 29 October 2007

Oman Cement Company (OCC) will sign a turnkey project agreement with China National Building Material Equipment Corporation (CNBMEC) today to build a new production line with a capital expenditure of \$162 million. The new production line, which is the company's third line, will have a capacity to produce 4,000 tonnes per day (tpd) of clinker, Sharif al Sadaa, Chief Operating Officer of the company told the Observer. The new project, which will take another 25 months to complete, will be ready by end-2009.

Sharif said that although Oman Cement has an installed capacity to produce 2.4 million tonnes per annum of cement, its clinker capacity is limited at 1.2 million tonnes per annum. As a result, the company imports almost 800,000 tonnes of clin-

ker every year from Thailand and India for the cement mill, which is very expensive. The company aims at producing 2 mtpa of cement. "Once the plant is ready, we need not have to rely on imported clinker," he noted. CNBMEC, a subsidiary of China National Material Industry Group, is capable of providing complete sets of equipment for cement production lines with a capacity of up to 10,000 tonnes per day of clinker.

Oman Cement's Rusayl cement plant was completed in 1983 to produce ordinary portland cement and sulphate resistant cement. OCC subsequently added oil well cement in its product portfolio. In 1999, clinkering capacity was expanded to 1.2 million tonnes per annum. OCC's quality control is supported by its own central laboratory consisting of robot-

ics, X-ray spectrometers, laser particle size analysers and computerised physical properties testing equipment. There has been a phenomenal growth in cement demand in the whole Gulf region, particularly in Oman.

The country's two cement producers — Oman Cement and Raysut Cement — have achieved phenomenal growth in sales volumes and has been taking advantage on the rising selling price of cement. "Cement is selling like hot cakes as there is a shortage in the market," an official with a cement firm said. "There has been a 20 per cent growth in demand in recent months," the official added. This follows the recent unusual weather conditions in Muscat and neighbouring areas, which necessitated reconstruction of residential villas and office apartments.

Muriya projects in Oman worth \$850 million underway

Source: *Oman Tribune* - 17 October 2007

Muriya Tourism Development Company is making good progress in line with shareholder expectations with a variety of ambitious projects in and across Oman, including Sifah, Salalah and Al Sodah Island with a total investment of over \$850 million, according to a company press release.

Set up in the Sultanate of Oman in March 2006 as a joint venture between Orascom Hotels and Development with 70 per cent holdings and the Omani Government (Omran) with 30 per cent holding, Muriya is the single largest tourism development company in the Oman.

The company is developing virgin lands and providing a vast array of facilities, including real estate development, hotels, marinas, golf courses and more. And all this is being done with the support and cooperation of its partners Omran and Egyptian pioneers, Orascom, said the press release.

Eng. Cyril Piaia, the new French chief executive officer of Muriya said: "This is a new start for Muriya. The next few months will witness substantial developments. Two of our projects, namely Jebal Sifah and Salalah Beach, with a combined land bank of over 21 million square metres, are progressing at a steady rate and we look forward to an-

nouncing further investment opportunities shortly."

Piaia said: "Muriya is committed to develop sustainable multi faceted communities whilst developing tourism-related destinations with a diverse range of products, including commercial, tourism and high-end luxury real estate. Our real estate offering will provide diversity in architectural style whilst integrating within the Omani culture and adhering to local tastes and traditions." He added: "Our properties will pose an attractive proposition for potential investors who can choose from units spread around golf courses, beach front, marinas and hotels."

Phase I of Barka Tourism Resort project to begin soon

Source: *Oman Daily Observer* - 08 October 2007

The United Business Establishment has announced its preparations for the launch of Barka Tourism Resort project, which includes residential units, an international standard hotel and entertainment facilities.

The project, worth over RO30 million (including Omani and Gulf investment), is the only one of its kind that provides partial and complete possession as per the laws of the Ministry of Tourism.

Salim bin Ali Al Siyabi, chairman of United Business Establishment, said that all designs and the project-related procedures were ready for the final approval of the Ministry of Tourism.

The resort, covering an area of

180,000 square metres, is located in the wilayat of Barka in the Al Batinah region, Siyabi said, adding: "We will shortly begin Phase I of the project by constructing 360 residential units for retail sale in addition to other 360 residential units for whole sale (specified for Omanis and Gulf citizens).

The project is an integrated one with single/two/three bedroom units at 65 square metres, 85 square metres and 105 square metres, respectively.

On the location of the project, he said the wilayat of Barka enjoyed beautiful beaches and other tourism potentials. It is also adjacent to heritage sites in the wilayats of Nakhal and Al Rustaq, in addition to the presence of various tourism projects

of Al Nahda Resort and The Blue City.

The project required a spacious area, which was not available in Muscat.

The future vision necessitates establishing projects outside Muscat as it (Muscat) would not be able to accommodate all investment projects in the future, he said.

The project is expected to provide over 1,500 job opportunities for Omanis, he said, adding that the establishment was keen on employing Omanis in the various departments of the project, adding that they would coordinate with the universities and colleges to make available the well-trained and qualified national cadre.

\$3-billion expansion plan for Seeb, Salalah airports

Source: *Oman Tribune* - 26 September 2007

Seeb and Salalah airports will be expanded at a cost of more than \$3 billion, according to Undersecretary for Civil Aviation Affairs at the Ministry of Transport and Communications HE Mohammed Bin Sakhar Al A'amri.

New airports are also on the anvil at Sohar and two other important tourist sites, he told the 36th session of the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) general assembly in Canada.

Al A'amri said that the annual capacity of Seeb International Airport in the first phase of the expansion

will be 12 million passengers. The second phase will handle 24 million passengers. The annual capacity of Salalah airport after the first phase of expansion will be two million passengers.

As for the other three airports, Al A'amri said two will be constructed at two important tourist sites while the third will be built at Sohar.

Al A'amri said the Sultanate had issued the new law on civil aviation in 2004 and it contained all the ICAO legal and technical recommendations. The executive regulations of the Civil Aviation Law were also is-

sued in 2007. It contained important detailed procedures for setting up maintenance firms and establishments.

He said the Sultanate has joined all international treaties, issued the national programme for aviation, and paid attention to training.

He said, the Sultanate of Oman has supported the efforts of the Arab Authority for Civil Aviation by ratifying the Air Transport Services Liberalisation Agreement. He said the Sultanate was supporting the open skies policy to boost air transport.

Multi-billion project Blue City announces development timetable

Source: *AmeInfo* - 18 September 2007

Al Sawadi Investment and Tourism (ASIT) has finalised the eagerly anticipated launch plans for The Blue City - a unique 32 square kilometre project and the most significant metropolitan development in Oman.

It will create an entirely new city of more than 250,000 people and represents an estimated \$15 - \$20 billion total investment.

ASIT has set out the timetable for the launch of the project and sales of freehold property in its first phase. Unlike many similar projects found in the region, The Blue City project is the largest development in Oman, supported by integrated tourism legislation on freehold property ownership that recognises inheritance laws from the purchasers' country of origin, supporting Oman's drive to attract foreign direct investment to develop its tourism potential and economic growth.

'The dynamics of The Blue City project and its importance to Oman cannot be underestimated,' said Anees Issa Al Zadjali, Chairman of ASIT. 'The success of the first phase of this project is crucial to succeeding phases so it has been imperative to ensure our plans are in line with projected market trends and forces.

'ASIT is very pleased to announce that the master-plan and initial artists' impressions of the first phase will be revealed in October. The first tranche of retail sales will commence in November. Construction on site has already begun and vertical construction is scheduled to commence

in December 2007.'

Chris Steel for Hamptons remarked: 'We are expecting tremendous demand for the Blue City residential properties, from within the region and further afield, particularly the UK where interest levels are extremely strong'.

Visuals and details of the master-plan for the first phase of the city will be unveiled in the coming weeks and will show the unique architectural style and approach to urban planning which will characterise the Blue City project and set it apart from other Middle East property developments.

'Extensive research has been undertaken to find organisations and entities that share the vision of The Blue City in creating a harmonious community on one of the most beautiful natural coastlines in the region. Our master-planning and architectural designs have been focused on delivering a modern essence of Arabia which builds on our strong Omani heritage and history, but does not compromise on modernity and quality. Together these factors will distinguish the Blue City project and provide a unique set of highly appealing characteristics which we believe will be very attractive to buyers from across the world, as well as from Oman and the Middle East itself,' added Al Zadjali.

The Blue City's first phase is one of the most vital components of the entire project due to its value and the unique key tourism related elements it encompasses. It will accommodate 25,000 residents and local,

regional and international visitors and is primarily a residential and tourism development with leisure and retail components.

'The first phase represents a substantial standalone project in its own right but it is also intended to fit as a component of the overall development,' added Al Zadjali.

'The Blue City is being designed as a fully integrated live-in community and has a wider role as an important part of Oman's aims to be the pre-eminent tourism destination for the Middle East.'

AECO, a partnership between AKTOR of Greece and ENKA of Turkey has been appointed as contractors for the first phase of The Blue City which will see an initial area totalling 5.5 square kilometres (2.12 square miles) or 17.2% of the projected final site land of 32 square kilometres (12.36 square miles) developed. Al Zadjali added that further announcements on third-party contracts and partners will also begin shortly.

'The Blue City is one of the most important developments in Oman. It is much more than just a real estate development. We are creating a city which will take Oman into the next century, providing not just homes, but new jobs, new industries and a legacy for the future,' he added.

'As the cornerstone of the new city, the first phase of the development will set the tone and style for what is to follow and will offer wider opportunities beyond freehold property.

The Wave Muscat pioneers freehold ownership in the sultanate

Source: *Oman Observer* - 03 September 2007

The Wave Muscat is helping to pioneer freehold ownership in the Sultanate, according to Nick Smith, Chief Executive Officer of the prestigious integrated oceanfront tourism and residential development at Al Athaiba. Speaking at meeting of the European Business People Forum at the Inter-Continental Muscat on Monday, Smith noted that ownership interest in properties offered by the project remained very strong.

The Wave Muscat is being developed through a joint venture comprising Oman's Waterfront Investments (representing the Government of the Sultanate of Oman), National Investment funds Company (representing the Omani Pension Funds), and the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Group. In his address, Smith

illustrated the success of The Wave Muscat model, acknowledging the rapid pace at which development was taking place at The Wave, and its significant impact on the lifestyle of people in Muscat.

"Oman, has reinvented itself, and is rapidly moving ahead with its macroeconomic objectives. The country has political stability, strong economic performance and a positive attitude to business. It's the best kind of tangible and highly visible Arab prosperity," Smith said during his presentation. "The number of visitors to the Sultanate has increased dramatically, thanks to major investments in marketing 'Destination Oman'," Smith continued. He further reiterated that a significant proportion of incoming investments were foreign investments showing

the long-term confidence of foreign investors in the Sultanate.

Plans to develop The Wave started in 2004 against the backdrop of a freehold boom in the Gulf. "Our first release of property in early 2006 received an overwhelming response and the second release in November 2006 was also equally popular, and even though the price points were raised significantly the enthusiasm to buy remained the same.

The Royal Decree in January provided a robust legal basis to The Wave, Muscat. We have introduced an early reservations service that allows buyers to reserve property without price guarantees, and straightforwardness and transparency have become hallmarks of the way we run the project."

International firms line up for Wadi Adai dam project

Source: *Oman Observer* - 05 September 2007

A number of international contractors are among 16 firms that have applied to prequalify for a government contract involving the construction of a major flood protection system across Wadi Adai in Muscat Governorate.

The project will be the first of a number of equally large flood protection systems proposed to be implemented in flood prone areas of the Sultanate, notably Al Khoudh, Sur, and parts of the Batinah region. Implementation of these schemes is part of the Oman government's efforts to bolster flood defences around the Sultanate in the wake of flooding caused by the adverse

weather conditions last June.

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources is overseeing the implementation of the flood protection system across Wadi Adai. The aim is to regulate the monstrous volumes of water that flow through the wadi and its tributaries in the event of a major downpour.

During the June flood event, an estimated 95 million cubic metres of water flowed downstream through the wadi, say officials. A mix of local, regional and international companies has submitted offers in response to the Tender Board's invitation to bid-

ders to prequalify for the project. Those that responded by last Monday's deadline were: Nagarjuna Construction Company, Desert Line Projects, Consolidated Contractors Company, Shwar International, Arab Centre for Commerce and Real Estate, Strabag Oman and Sinohydro Corporation.

Sambu Construction, Sezai Turkes-Feyzi Akkaya, Zarubeshv Dstroy, Gamuda Berhad (Qatar Branch), Andrade Gutierrez, Gammon India and OHI, BFS Group, Salini Costruttori, and SEW Constructions. Eighteen other firms that collected bid documents declined. According to officials, three major

dams are envisioned along Wadi Adai and its tributary. The first — the Flood Protection Dam in Wadi Adai — will retain the flows from Wadi Adai just above the entrance of the wadi gorge, and will be the main flood protection component in the entire project. Two other dams are planned at specific points further downstream and will be built in separate contracts.

As part of the main Flood Protection Dam, the selected contractor will construct a concrete face rockfill

dam (CFRD) of around 6,000-8,000-metres length, some 20 m above the natural ground level. Some 3 million cubic metres of grouting will be required as part of the construction of the CFRD. Also as part of the project, the contractor will also be required to build 2-3 free overflow concrete spillways and an appurtenant spilling basin, leading to the existing downstream wadi channels. Provision must be made for the installation of valves for the controlled release of reservoir water into the wadi downstream of the dam.

A tender for the actual construction of the dam is expected to be floated in October this year, with actual construction work likely to commence in January 2008. Construction will be completed by mid-2010. The Wadi Adai Dams Project is designed to provide a greater degree of protection to Qurum area against severe flooding that results in loss of life and damage to property, agricultural land and infrastructure in the area. It is also aimed at enhancing water resources through groundwater recharge.

Eqarat.com launches innovative real-estate services

Source: *Oman Observer* - 03 September 2007

Leading regional real estate property solution provider Eqarat.com yesterday launched operations in Oman, heralding innovative e-services that promise to add momentum to the burgeoning sector in the Sultanate. Eqarat.com Oman is a joint venture initiative by the UAE company in association with Al Balushi Investments and Al Arabiya al Aqariya from Kuwait.

The announcement was made at a media briefing attended by Ahmed bin Suwaidan al Balushi, Chairman of Al Balushi Investments, Ali al Rahma, Chief Executive Officer of Eqarat.com, Mufeed Abdal, General Manager of Al Arabiya al Aqariya, and Hussein Habib, General Manager of Al Balushi Investments. Eqarat.com Oman is an ideal platform for property shopping through the Internet, Al Rahma said.

Eqarat.com has vast experience in offering real estate solutions tailored to the regional needs of investors and customers, he said, adding that the company is specialised in property management and real estate transactions for individual in-

vestors and developers.

The company can provide feasibility studies for new projects and is keen on sharing its knowledge, know-how and experience in the real estate sector, Al Rahma pointed out. The company has a wealth of database on property in the Gulf region, he added. "Our intention is to have a slice of the real estate pie in Oman. Eqarat.com can provide added value service to customers and we have the ability to showcase what the market is offering under one platform.

We can provide total sales solutions, including money transaction through an electronic payment gateway. We provide total solutions, including finance, home insurance and furnishing, to home seekers and investors," Al Rahma said. The launch of Eqarat.com Oman at InterContinental Muscat was attended by leaders of the real estate industry.

Eqarat.com was founded in the United Arab Emirates 16 years ago and is one of the leading real estate

service companies in the Middle East. "We intend to build on our record by focusing on Eqarat.com Oman and helping it grow into a global player offering diverse products that will meet the increasing demand of this region. Through secure, professional services designed to optimise client investment returns, Eqarat.com has seized the initiative in worldwide property e-solutions," added Al Rahma.

Hussein Habib said: "We are delighted to partner with Eqarat.com. This partnership will provide us with global expertise in the real estate industry, which will help boost our regional market and increase value by bringing stronger business relationships within the Gulf region."

Al Balushi Investments is an Oman based company with projects and partnerships with renowned medical and therapeutic organisations, including Welcare. Recently, Al Balushi Investments started developing housing, commercial and tourism estates for Omani and Gulf investors.

Leading contracting firms set sights on Sohar Port interchange project

Source: *Oman Observer* - 21 August 2007

A number of leading Omani construction firms are bidding for a major contract to build an interchange on the Batinah Highway leading to the Port of Sohar. The project, which will be financed and overseen by the Ministry of Transport and Communications, is the latest addition to the burgeoning infrastructure being created in tandem with Sohar's development as an industrial port city.

The interchange is designed to serve not only the Port of Sohar, but also a number of major industrial undertakings under development in the vicinity of the port. It will streamline traffic flows along the Batinah Highway, as well as enable the smooth flow of heavy vehicles between the port and industries located on the other side of the highway. Six well-known contracting firms — Desert Line Projects, Al Adrak Trading & Contracting Co, Consolidated Contractors Co, Larsen & Toubro (Oman), Nagarjuna

Construction Co and Shanfari Trading Co — are looking to bid for the contract, expected to cost several tens of millions of Omani riyals.

The main component of the project is a partial cloverleaf interchange, complete with collector and distributor roads and service roads to facilitate the transfer and exchange of traffic. A section of the Batinah Highway will also be realigned to accommodate the new interchange.

Also as part of the project, the selected contractor will construct several kilometres of a new access road leading to the smelter of Sohar Aluminium Company. Port access roads and link roads will be streamlined and strengthened, while a number of roundabouts will be constructed to ensure the smooth flow of vehicles.

A number of optional improvements are also envisioned as part of the contract. Optional works include multiple roundabouts on the alu-

minium smelter road, dualisation of this stretch, and loop ramps, underpass and flyover leading to the pre-gate area near the port. Improved road links are also proposed to the Sohar Industrial Estate, where a number of downstream projects are expected to materialise in the future.

Road communications around the Port of Sohar are being significantly strengthened to cope with a projected increase in heavy traffic in and out of the industrial port.

Earlier this year, the 61-km Sohar-Yanqul, connecting the Batinah and Dhahirah regions, was formally inaugurated. Development of the Batinah coastal road project, which will run from Sohar to Shinas, is expected to commence next year. The project will facilitate traffic flow between the Port of Sohar and the UAE and beyond. In future phases, the coastal road will be extended south of the port all the way to Barka wilayat.

Construction progressing at The Wave at a fast pace

Source: *Times of Oman* - 20 August 2007

During the hot summer months, whilst much of Oman has taken the opportunity for vacation, construction at The Wave, Muscat has been progressing at an aggressive rate, as plots that sat vacant only a few months ago suddenly find themselves supporting the superstructure of new villas and townhouses. Over 200 million rials in contracts have been let by The Wave and that number is clearly reflected by the stark progress that has been made in creating this new community.

The project has consolidated its growth strategy following the recent unusual weather conditions, which occurred along the Oman coastline. "Our commitment to growth, timely delivery of projects and customer satisfaction is unshakeable," says Eng. Abdullah bin Abbas bin Ahmed, Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Wave, Muscat.

The Wave, Muscat is constantly working towards successfully aligning their expertise in the different government and public sectors with

the Sultanate's vision for the future. Over the past two months the team at The Wave, Muscat has been faced with constant challenges that have risen over the course of a mega-project, from the day to day logistical grind to handling unusual weather conditions; every individual working at The Wave has come together to continue to make this project a success.

The Wave, Muscat, is a Joint Venture between Waterfront Investments (representing the Government

of the Sultanate of Oman), Majid Al Futtaim Group and the National Investment Funds Company (representing Omani pension funds), and has been officially granted the right to offer full freehold properties to buyers of any nationality.

During the design of the project a comprehensive Water Management Plan was put in place in order to manage the possible overflow of culverts and during the recent unusual weather conditions, it was this plan that saved the project from any significant flood damage by channelling and containing flood water

within the lake and then discharging it into the best possible place, the ocean, thereby keeping the valued construction areas safe and protected.

Abdullah bin Abbas further added: "We are committed to keeping stringent quality standards and our development plans for the country. In line with our strategy of transparency in operations, we will also keep our customers posted on the progress in the construction of residential properties and marine works at all different stages of our projects and operations."

Currently The Wave, stands at the threshold of officially unveiling their three show apartments.

Featuring a magnificent view of the ocean, each of the show apartments demonstrates the quality and attention to details that will go into every home in the development as well as a snapshot view of the options and upgrades available for the finishes. The modern, spacious open plan living mixed with an Arabic flavour will also give a feel of The Wave, Muscat lifestyle. A state-of-the-art Customer Selection Centre will also be opening soon.

Safeer group opens its ninth hotel

Source: *Times of Oman* - 11 August 2007

The Safeer Hotel and Tourism Company inaugurated Safeer Plaza Hotel, the ninth in a chain of hospitality properties owned by the company.

Safeer Plaza Hotel, located at Al Kuleiah Street in Al Khuwair, has 44 well-designed suites with all modern fixtures and fittings, satellite TV with multiple channels, multi-cuisine restaurant, 24-hour room service, health club, indoor games, wi-fi internet connectivity, business centre and other allied services.

The hotel also has a ballroom named 'Sohar' with a capacity of 400 people for weddings and conferences. Safeer Plaza Hotel has introduced a specially designed children's room on all the floors with a city view, a first of its kind.

The unique concept of Safeer Hotel and Tourism Company is that most of its hotel resorts and projects are a fusion of luxury hotels and serviced apartments where the guests can have the best of the most spacious accommodation in hotel apartments and hotel rooms with vast luxury hotel facilities.

The fusion concept can cater to both the high and low ends of the market needs by providing luxury hotels and serviced apartments to the guests.

This means that guests can have the most spacious accommodation in the hotel apartments and hotel rooms and also get luxury hotel facilities like food and beverage outlets, 24-hour room service, shopping arcades, health club, banqueting halls.

"Safeer Hotel and Tourism Company (SHTC), a member of the Golden Group of Companies, has several projects of hotel resorts and hospitality projects across the country aiming to bag a major market share of the booming tourism industry in the country," said D. Shekar, general manager, hotel projects and operations at a press conference to announce the launch of Safeer Plaza Hotel.

The company is presently operating eight properties of hotels, motels and resorts in Muscat, Ghaba, and Salalah, which include Safeer Continental Hotel, Safeer International

Hotel, Safeer Hotel Suites, Nuzha Hotel Apartments, Al Khuwair Apartments, Ghaba Motel, Oasis Residence and Safeer Residence.

Safeer Hotel and Tourism Company has plans to launch similar hospitality projects in Muscat, Sohar and Salalah with the fusion concept where it can offer a combination of hotel and hotel apartments to different segments of the market.

All the hotels and resorts are managed and guided by professionals and senior managers which include Ali El Hadi, general manager, Oman Commercial Agencies, a group company besides Shekar.

SHTC is also planning to launch attractive tour packages known as Tour Oman and market them among the AGCC and international markets through its wide marketing network.

Safeer Hotel and Tourism Company has a centralised booking system where anyone who would like to book a room or hotel apartment can log onto their website (www.safeerintl.com) and choose any property of their choice.

Development Agreement for Omagine project to be inked soon

Source: *Times of Oman* - 28 July 2007

Omagine Inc, which is investing in a major beachfront development in Muscat, has announced significant progress towards the imminent attainment of its primary strategic objective.

Omagine's President, Frank J Drohan, remarked, "The draft Development Agreement for the Omagine Project was completed and presented to the Ministry of Tourism on July 5, 2007 and the (Ministry) has officially circulated it among other appropriate concerned ministries for final review and comment."

The parties are expected to sign the Development Agreement in August, he stated, adding: "Both we and the government are pleased with the Final Draft. We are presently forming and organising Omagine LLC — the local project company in Oman — which will be jointly owned by our subsidiary and J&P. During the past sixty days we have held numerous

meetings and discussions with potential investors and leading banks in the region and there is a very high degree of interest on their part to participate in the Omagine Project."

The Company's planned Omagine Project is an integration of cultural, heritage, educational, entertainment and residential components. As presently planned, Omagine will be located on 1.2 million square metres of beachfront land facing the Gulf of Oman just west of Muscat and near Seeb International Airport. The Omagine project also includes the construction and sale of approximately 3,900 residential housing units including luxury villas, townhouses and apartments. The project is expected to take between 4 to 5 years to complete and generate in excess of \$2.2 billion in revenue.

In June the Company's subsidiary Journey of Light, Inc. (JOL') signed

an updated and amended agreement with Joannou & Paraskevaides (Overseas) Ltd (J&P). The Amended Agreement extends the original J&P-JOL agreement and firmly aligns the interests of the Company and J&P relating to the financial closing, construction, ownership and operation of the Omagine Project.

Drohan commented, "The Company's relationship with J&P has been further strengthened as we collectively work to organise Omagine LLC, update the Project's financial model and arrange the financial closing for the Omagine Project. As previously planned, J&P will be a significant investor and will receive a minority equity stake in Omagine LLC."

Omagine, Inc is primarily involved in the real-estate development, entertainment and hospitality industries in the Middle East and North Africa.

\$2-billion integrated resort to come up at Yenkit

Source: *Oman Observer* - 26 July 2007

Yenkit Tourism Development LLC has announced plans to develop a \$2 billion luxury Integrated Tourist Resort Complex at Yenkit in Muscat Governorate. Yenkit Tourism Development has been established by a group of private Omani investors and the Majid Al Futtaim Group, one of the region's most pre-eminent property developers, in order to plan, develop and manage this signature 5-star complex. The 950-hectare Yenkit

master planned community will be developed along the country's eastern coastline and is located just 20 kilometres to the southeast of Muscat.

The project will be an 'Integrated Tourism Complex' as designated by the Ministry of Tourism, and will consist of four 5-star hotels with approximately 900 rooms, an 18-hole international golf course; a wide range of tourist facilities, including

sports and leisure facilities, a resort village, nature reserve and visitors centre, beach club, heritage and craft centre and major open spaces; 1,400 residential villas and up to 1,900 residential apartments and townhouses.

The site has been both recognised and planned as a high-end environmentally sensitive tourism and investment project specifically designed to reflect the natural form of

the land. Approval of the master plan has been granted and development is expected to commence in early 2008, subject to finalisation of agreements with the government.

“Oman has enormous potential with visitors coming to indulge in the natural splendour of the country and with Middle East residents looking for sound investment options. We are certain that the fully integrated Yenkit Development with its stunning location and diverse product offerings will be a flagship project for the country and the region,” said Hakim bin Majid al Maamari, Chairman of Yenkit Tourism Development LLC.

“We are delighted to be part of this prestigious development that has great potential. Along with The Wave Muscat master planned community and Muscat City Centre shopping mall, the Yenkit project provides us with the opportunity to further consolidate Majid Al Futtaim Group’s reputation as one of Oman’s and the region’s leading developers of signature projects,” said Jeffery Rossely, CEO of MAF Developments.

The Yenkit project will be a flagship development for potential investors, tourists, Omanis and international visitors. The project responds to a major initiative of the Omani govern-

ment to create a world-class tourism corridor, stretching down the scenic coast between Muscat and Sur to the south. The location has been identified as an international destination within which significant tourism facilities and attractions will create a world-class development.

A team of internationally renowned consultants are involved in master planning, architecture, landscape, engineering and project realisation of the Yenkit lifestyle resort. The resort’s design theme is based on a number of key elements which build on the distinctive locality and illustrious history of Oman.

Many mega housing, water projects for citizens implemented

Source: *Times of Oman* - 23 July 2007

The Ministry of Housing, Electricity and Water made remarkable achievements during the last year, executing a number of water supply and housing projects in various parts of the Sultanate.

Many mega water projects were implemented in the wilayats which faced acute water shortage.

A number of housing projects aimed at achieving social development and enabling the citizens to continue in their present places of existence, are in the pipeline.

The ministry has been working on strategic plans to regulate the use of land in towns and villages. For this, it has adopted the latest methods and used modern survey equipment in town planning and laying out future plans.

The ministry has also been using

geographical database system — a one-shop database system, which helps in exchanging information among the various ministries and government departments.

During the last year, an analysis survey on 101,490 land plots was conducted.

The ministry recently signed a pact with a leading company for facilitating the land distribution process for the citizens in various parts of the Sultanate. The citizens can also submit their applications for land plots at some of the major post offices in the country.

Till the end of August 9, 2006, 45,882 applications from various parts of the Sultanate were handled through post offices. A total of 89,954 land plots were distributed in various regions and governorates of the Sultanate during this period:

Muscat (27,100 land plots), Batinah region (21,809), Musandam region (1,213), Dahirah region (2,667), Buraimi (1,107), Dhakhiliyah region (15,736), Sharqiyah region (8,351), Al Wusta region (645) and Dhofar (11,326).

As part of the efforts to promote social development, the ministry is keen to provide assistance to the families having limited income by setting up housing units with minimum necessary facilities accompanied by health services.

A number of citizens benefited from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said’s gesture for setting up housing units in various parts of the country.

The ministry has initiated a number of housing assistance programmes, helping the families with limited income and backward families. The

amount of assistance to those families was increased to RO15,000 from RO10,000 this year.

A total of 90 families benefited during the year 2006 with an assistance of RO1.12 million.

The other scheme is interest-free soft loan to the limited-income families whose income is below RO130 per month at the time of their submission of applications. The loans are granted for constructing houses

and expanding the existing damaged houses. Eighty-five Omani families benefited from this programme, which distributed RO1.07 million.

In the water sector, the ministry is striving to implement a number of mega projects, which include Sohar Water Network, which is being undertaken at a total cost of RO65.7 million.

The other water network projects underway are in the wilayats of Ibra, Al Qabil and Bidiya in the Sharqiah

region, at a cost of RO20 million; the water supply networks in the interior region which involves the construction of five key transmission lines linking various wilayats; the water networks project to supply water to some alienated areas in Bousher and Ma'abela.

As part of a training programme in the field of human resources development, the ministry provided vocational training to 129 Omani nationals last year.

Real estate deals top RO 2.5 bn in 17 months, says ministry report

Source: *Oman Observer* - 21 July 2007

Real estate contracts concluded between January 2006 and May 2007 — coinciding with a period of unprecedented growth in the property sector — topped RO2.5 billion in value, according to a report by the Ministry of Housing, Electricity and Water (MHEW). During this period, real estate deals covering a total of 173,178 new plots were registered by the Ministry. The total number of real estate transactions recorded during this 17-month period totalled 400,952, while 288,632 deeds were issued, according to the Ministry.

The huge volume of transactions attests to the extraordinary growth of the property sector in the Sultanate, according to officials. This growth stems from two key developments: firstly, the conclusion of an accord by each member state of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) to treat investments by GCC nationals on a par with those by its own citizens. The recently endorsed accord also grants nationals of other GCC states the right to own real estate for investment, residential use and

other purposes, subject to the laws of the host state.

Secondly, freehold property ownership by non-Omanis in select areas of the Sultanate designated as integrated tourism complexes, has now been made possible by Royal Decree No 12/2006 promulgated last year. The statute is key to the Omani government's efforts to attract foreign investment in the tourism sector. Oman is recognised as the first country in the Gulf region to have formally enacted legislation authorising freehold property ownership by non-GCC nationals.

Besides The Wave Muscat and The Muscat Golf and Country Club project, both of which have already begun offering residential units to foreigners, property ownership will also be allowed in the following tourism schemes: The Blue City; waterfront resorts at Yiti (in Muscat Governorate) and Shinas (on the Batinah coast); and lavish developments planned at Sifah (Muscat Governorate) and in Salalah. The list is likely to grow as new schemes are

classified as integrated tourism zones, and become eligible to offer residential property to foreigners, say officials.

In all, 4,033 GCC nationals were registered as owning property for investment or housing purposes in the Sultanate during the January 2006-May 2007 period, according to the latest MHEW report. Underlining the growing importance of this sector, the Ministry has adopted a modernised Real Estate Registration System to ensure efficient registration and documentation of all land transactions. The new system is also aimed at ensuring that any property in question is used only for the stipulated purpose.

Further, the Ministry is also introducing new imaging technology to maintain a suitable record of all land documents maintained by it. The new system will ensure the safety and integrity of land records, facilitate easy access to such documents through Intranet and Internet channels, and also ensure confidentiality of such records.

RO 250m Al Batinah coastal road work to begin next year

Source: *Times of Oman* - 07 July 2007

Work on the RO250 million Al Batinah coastal road will begin next year, according to sources.

“Initial designs of the road are expected to be completed by August and final designs by year-end. Construction work on the project will begin next year,” sources at the Supreme Committee for Town Planning said.

Salim bin Mohammed Al A’afani, director-general for construction planning at the Supreme Committee for Town Planning, said that the road would link the wilayats of Barka (Al Naseem Garden roundabout) and Shinas.

Work on the first-phase comprising 100km, from the wilayat of Sohar to the wilayat of Shinas, he said, would

begin from the less-affected and thinly populated area. Though the government has not specified the project cost precisely, the cost was initially estimated at RO250 million.

Development of coastal areas will help the government provide the public with open beaches. Though coastal area residents, particularly the fishermen, claimed that their work would be affected, Al A’afani said the new road would not affect fishermen as there would be systematic road crossing structures. It will take four years to complete the two-lane road construction. There will be areas for tourism and commercial activities.

The project, he said, would not affect the vital economic and tourism facilities, for example, the Blue City

and the Sohar Industrial City. It will be an environment-friendly project. The road project is adjacent to several schools, but only three schools along the coastal line to Al Batinah will be affected, Oman’s heritage sites will not be affected.

Initial estimates show that some 15,000 people will be affected by the road project. The government has already proposed to build 2,200 residential units to rehabilitate people. The road in some areas is 500 metres from the coast (to protect vital installations and utilities). The average distance between the road and the coast is 80-150 metres.

“The road comprises five flyovers, several roundabouts, and taxi-parking areas,” Engineer Kasim bin Mohammed Al Nabhani said.

Prices, shortage of materials impede contracting sector

Source: *Times of Oman* - 07 July 2007

Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah bin Ali Al Badi, chairman of the Contracting and Labour Committee at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has said that the Sultanate has been witnessing great progress in the construction field especially in mega projects.

Al Badi, who is also chairman of Oman Contractors Association, mentioned that projects worth some \$5 billion are underway including the Sohar Aluminum Project, adding that there are also several ongoing projects in road construction and in

the private sector. Al Badi pointed out that the sector has been severely hit by high prices and the shortage of building materials due to high demand.

“The contracting sector has been hit by price rise and shortage of building materials in the local market due to increasing demand,” he said. “Authorities are concerned about the crisis as the contracting or construction sector is the cornerstone of any progress,” said Hamid bin Abdulqawi Al Yafiei, managing director of Oman Strabag.

Al Yafiei pointed out that most of the contracting companies have been able to keep pace with the increase in the number of projects and several local companies have been awarded mega projects by the Tender Board. But this recent trend of increase in prices of building materials has affected the contracting sector badly as most of the projects were awarded prior to this trend.

He added that some traders have been charging more for building materials under the pretext that prices have been moving northwards in

the international market.

Omanisation: The private companies have positively responded to the drive of Omanisation, which is a national duty. Some flexibility is required in this campaign as sectors have their own unique problems.

One of the problems facing the sector is that majority of the Omanis working here are still under training. "The contracting sector depends 80 per cent on the expatriate manpower," he said, adding that salaries of those working in this sector should be increased.

Saif bin said Al Akhzami, CEO of Saif bin said Al Akhzami Trading &

Contracting Establishment, said that the sector which is expected to grow tremendously in the years to come, has been hit by a hike in the recruitment fee for expatriates, he added.

Al Akhzami mentioned that the small and medium companies have been hit by the liquidity crunch and they do not have financial resources to buy adequate equipment and machinery. There is also a crisis due to the large instances of expatriate manpower absconding.

He said though the Ministry of Manpower had stipulated a 30 per cent Omanisation target for contracting companies applying for high-grade contracts, the Tender

Board wants the companies to achieve 35 per cent Omanisation.

Ahmed bin Hassan Backer, deputy chairman of Hassan Juma Backer Trading and Contracting Company, said that in the recent past, the contracting sector had contributed significantly by executing vital and mega government projects, especially in the Sohar region.

As this confirms the government's confidence in this sector, to make it competent internationally, there is a need to implement a unified system for the sector and have proper mechanisms for contracts, manpower and specifications.

Deal signed for \$500m recreational project

Source: *Times of Oman* - 06 July 2007

An agreement was signed at the Grand Hyatt Muscat here yesterday for the development of a unique recreational project at an estimated cost of \$500 million. The deal was clinched by Oman-based Radiance International (Al Ishraq International) with Transmit Nangvang Engineering Construction (TNEC), a leading Malaysian developer and investor.

The project, dubbed the 'Green Acre', is proposed to be established in Muscat Governorate. It is conceived as a sprawling tourism and recreational complex, with mixed development elements as well. Significantly, the project's concept is themed around family-oriented recreation, water-theme parks, golf course, driving range, golf academy and horse riding facilities envisaged. Billed as the biggest of its kind in the Gulf region, the 'Green Acre' project will enhance Oman's appeal as a tourist destination..

Green Acres, a unique recreational development planned in Muscat,

will also be established in a number of other regions of the Sultanate, according to the project's promoters. On Thursday, Oman-based Radiance International signed an agreement with Malaysia's Transmit Nangvang Engineering Construction (TNEC) for the development of the first Green Acres project in the Governorate of Muscat. The complex, involving an investment of \$500-600 million, is conceived as a sprawling recreational, tourism and residential development.

His Highness Sayyid Khalifa bin Taimur al Said, Chairman and Chief Executive of Radiance International, signed on behalf of the Oman investor. TNEC, a leading Malaysian developer and investor, is a partner in this joint venture project. According to the promoters, Green Acres will include a golf academy and 9-hole golf course and driving range, 4- and 5-star hotels, water theme park, theme parks, largest indoor play pen for children, stables, riding school and equestrian sports facilities, ranches with a ranch hotel, shop-

ping centres and entertainment mall, natural camping sites, adventure tourism facilities, health farms and spa hotels and prime residential areas.

Billed as the biggest of its kind in the Gulf region, the 'Green Acres' project will enhance Oman's appeal as a tourist destination. Radiance International also plans to launch similar Green Acres type projects, although with different investment groups, in Dhofar Governorate, Buraimi, Sohar and other regions of the Sultanate.

The Green Acres project will create job opportunities for Omani nationals and open up business opportunities for local companies. Over the past two years, Radiance International has been studying and exploring business and investment opportunities for Oman and GCC investment groups in Malaysia, and has been successful in concluding a number of projects. Details about these ventures will be announced in due course, the promoters say.

Strong and sturdy withstood the cyclone fury

Source: *Times of Oman* - 04 July 2007

While the urban infrastructure and the coastal villages struggled to cope with the fury of the cyclone, the Wadi Shab to Sur stretch of the new Quriyat-Sur dual carriageway, whose work is in progress, withstood the onslaught of continuous rains and the subsequent flooding.

Under separate contracts awarded in mid-2003, the STFA-POLAT joint venture and the China Railway 18th Bureau (Group) Co. Ltd are sharing the implementation of the project at a total cost of RO56.2 million.

The STFA's section covers a 62km stretch from Daghmar roundabout in Quriyat to Wadi Shab. The China Railway 18th Bureau (Group) Co. is constructing the 27.74km stretch from Wadi Shab to Qalhat LNG roundabout leading to Sur.

Times' team embarked on the Wadi Shab-to-Sur trail to scan the route of any damage inflicted as a result of the cyclone. Right at the starting point of the stretch at Wadi Shab (a picturesque stream wedged between high rocky cliffs), the team found the bridge under construction over the wadi absolutely intact. Built on a concrete pile foundation, the eight-span bridge is 260 metres in length and the drive over the bridge with the calm Wadi Shab flowing down below can inspire the artist in you.

According to Zhang Shi Hua, chief

engineer of the project, no structural damage had been recorded to any of their structures in the entire stretch under their jurisdiction. He added that some scaffolding, steel dumped and some other material on the ground had been washed away and the track road eroded.

The second bridge over Wadi Tiwi, yet another lovely watercourse, too escaped the brunt of the cyclone. This nine-span bridge, 34 metres in height, cuts through the mountains and juts into the coastal road at Tiwi village. Here also only the scaffolding and the reinforcements were washed away into the nearby sea. Zhang said the fact that no structural damage had been caused to the structure spoke volumes of their expertise in erecting quality structures. A visit to the company site at the Tiwi beach tells about the fury of the cyclone as the batch plant and other machinery have been badly damaged and material strewn all over the place.

Says Zhang: "Though the accommodation, material and machinery have been damaged there has been no human casualty." The camp office has now been shifted to Sur and the work under the leadership of Zhang Wen Juan, general manager of the company resumed on June 18. Says Zhang Shi Hua: "We have started work but we need to bring in scaffolding from China. The ship carrying material for blasting works

had to return to India because of the cyclone and it may take weeks to get all the material. But other work is in full steam. This may cause a delay of some months to complete the work."

The third bridge over Wadi Heda is the only one that has been completed. When asked what was the most difficult work in a project like the one which needs cutting through the mountains or construction bridges over the wadis, Zhang said: "Bringing material to the site has its own difficulties. But considering the experience we have everything was done in a professional manner."

The fourth bridge on Wadi Hilm spans 200 metres, and like the three bridges, has remained intact. Here the ground-level road leading to the foundation has been badly scoured by the flooding and the wadi swollen by a few metres.

Besides the bridges, the highway also withstood the continuous flooding with very minor erosion seen at the edges at some places. The road skirts the Gulf of Oman at many places making the journey thrilling.

At many places along the stretch, the road is flanked by the azure mass of aquamarine blue sea on one side and the eastern majestic Hajar mountains on the other side.

Pact inked to develop tourism projects in Al Seifa, Salalah

Source: *Times of Oman* - 02 July 2007

The Sultanate government and the Muria Tourist Development Company signed agreements at the Ministry of Tourism, yesterday, to

develop tourist projects at Al Seifa area in the Muscat governorate and in the wilayat of Salalah in the governorate of Dhofar.

Dr Rajiha bint Abdul Amir bin Ali, minister of tourism, signed the agreements on behalf of the government, while Eng. Sameeh Sawers,

board chairman, signed on behalf of the company.

As per the Al Seifa project development agreement, the Sultanate will allocate six million square metres of land and the Right of Utilisation to set up a fully integrated tourist project.

Phase I of the project includes construction of five-star hotels, golf course of high standard, a berth to accommodate 200 boats, commercial centre, markets and luxury residential units.

The Muria Tourist Development Company will undertake the implementation and completion of the tourist utilities within a maximum period of five years of the signing the agreement, in addition to the setting up of infrastructural utilities. The right of utilisation period will be for

50 years, with a possibility of free ownership in accordance to Royal Decree No. 12/2006 and its executive panel.

The Al Seifa area in the wilayat of Muscat is renowned for its tourist attraction and sandy beaches. It is about 45km away from the Seeb International Airport.

As per the agreement of the Salalah development project, the government will allocate a space of 15 million square metres of land with 50 years utilisation right to set up a fully integrated tourist project to be implemented in two phases.

Phase I comprises construction of a five-star hotels, a high standard golf courses, a berth to accommodate 200 boats, commercial centre, traditional markets and luxury residential units.

The company will undertake to implement and complete the infrastructural utilities and the setting up of tourist projects in a maximum period of five years of the agreement signing date.

The tourist area in Salalah, which is renowned for its unique tourist location and sandy beaches, extends from the wilayat of Salalah to Khor Taqah, which is about 15km away from Salalah airport.

It is worth noting that the integrated tourist complexes comprise tourist and real estate utilities.

Free ownership is permitted for individuals and establishments in accordance with Royal Decree No. 12/2006. The signing of the agreements comes within the context of the Sultanate's efforts to attract more tourist investments.

50,250 houses and 4,557 establishments affected

Source: *Times of Oman* - 30 June 2007

The main Inventory and Assessment Committee formed as per the royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, yesterday, held its fourth meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Ali bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, in the presence of the minister of interior, the minister of state and governor of Muscat, secretary-general of the Finance Ministry, and the assistant-inspector-general of police and customs.

The main committee has examined a report on the decisions taken in the previous meetings. It also reviewed a report presented by the sub-committee on the inventory and assessment activities between June 16 and June 28. The number of affected

houses counted by the inventory teams stood at 50,250 in the wilayats of Muscat, Muttrah, Bausher, Al Seeb, Al A'merat, Quriyat, Barka, Bidbid and Sur.

The main committee has also examined a report on the efforts being taken by the field inventory teams to count the damage sustained by commercial establishments, which stood at 4,557 as on June 29 in the aforesaid wilayats.

Meanwhile, the committee reviewed the efforts being put in by the Donation Fund Committee to aid those affected by unusual weather conditions, where the fund committee continued to provide urgent aid to the wilayats of Muscat, Muttrah, Al A'merat, Bausher and Sur, in coop-

eration with the Omani Charitable Organisation (OCO).

Upon the committee's invitation, the meeting was also attended by the undersecretary of the Ministry National Economy for development affairs and chairman of the sub-committee formed at the Ministry National Economy for inventory and evaluation of damage sustained by properties due to the unusual weather conditions.

The second instalment of the urgent aid is expected to be distributed in the next few days in Muscat, Quriyat, Seeb and later in Barka and Bidbid. Meanwhile, the authorities concerned had started the supply of temporary accommodation for the affected people.

Shortage of cement halts many projects

Source: *Oman Tribune* - 30 June 2007

The shortage of cement has hit many sectors badly in the Sultanate. Many projects have been halted as contractors and companies were not getting the required cement supply to carry out their construction work.

The crisis has led to a rise in cement prices as scores of traders capitalising on the shortage have been trying to make a fast buck.

In the absence of any committee to control the rising prices, the situation was turning from bad to worse. Moreover, traders seem to have been ignoring the rules issued to regularise cement trade.

Cement prices have risen by 80 per cent in Ibri, Nizwa and Sohar – a rise that may prove catastrophic for a number of contractors and house owners who feel helpless in such a situation.

It may be recalled that *Oman Tribune* has written about the issue and also proposed a number of so-

lutions like setting up new factories, providing help to the existing factories, issuing new regulations which could control the market in a better way and protecting consumers against fraud by facilitating cement imports.

Oman Cement and Raysut Cement last Sunday had said that they are ready to meet the growing demand of cement in the coming months but called upon the authorities concerned to control the market and keep closely monitor traders who raise prices and hoard available quantities to keep the crisis going. They called upon the authorities to provide additional incentives to the private sector to import more cement or set up new cement plants. They also urged the government to make available the gas required to operate cement plants, especially when the Sultanate will need cement to carry out the reconstruction of the infrastructure devastated by Cyclone Gonu.

The CEO of Oman Cement said currently the company was unable to meet the growing demand because many traders buy large quantities and store them.

At the same time, there was a boom in the construction sector and landowners were trying to build their houses in the wake of the recent rise in rents.

Saif Bin Salman Al Tobi, a resident, said the cement market has been facing a real crisis with no way out. “We are spending long hours to buy cement and if we find a trader, we have to bargain and buy it at the hiked price.”

Hussein Bin Ali Al Mantheri, a contractor in Ibri, said: “Even if the price of a cement bag is RO3, it is still difficult to get the required quantity. The authorities concerned should be held responsible for their inability to control the market and maintain a balance between demand and supply.”

RO76 million okayed to rebuild cyclone-affected infrastructure

Source: *Times of Oman* - 27 June 2007

The ministerial committee formed as per the royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to rebuild the infrastructure affected by Cyclone Gonu, held its third meeting yesterday under the chairmanship of Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, minister of national economy and deputy chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council.

Macki said the committee has discussed during its meeting a number of issues related to the rebuilding of

the areas affected by the tropical cyclone.

A sum of RO76 million was approved out of which RO10 million was approved for Muscat Municipality’s developmental budget to carry out work related to removal of debris, water, opening of main and internal roads in the wilayats of the Muscat governorate.

The minister further said that RO36 million from the amount was allocated for the development budget of

the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources to repair damage inflicted on internal roads, lighting and aflaj in the governorate of Muscat and in the Al Batinah, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Sharqiyah regions.

He added that the balance amount of RO30 million was allocated for the development budget of the Ministry of Transport and Communications for repairing the asphalt and graded roads in the Al Sharqiyah and the Al Batinah regions.

Macki indicated that the ministerial committee had approved the formation of a technical committee comprising the Muscat Municipality, the

Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources and the Supreme Committee for Town Planning to study bridges and

the proposed protection works at the Al Qurum commercial district and nearby areas subjected to wadi flooding.

Nizwa Industrial Estate witnesses investment boom

Source: *Times of Oman* - 26 May 2007

Hamed bin Hamoud Al Qassabi, director of Nizwa Industrial Estate (NIE), said the volume of Omani and foreign investments at NIE had reached RO50 million.

He told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the NIE will require further financial resources during forthcoming stage in order to provide infrastructure and services such as expansion of road networks, water supply, wastewater management, and power and gas.

He said phase-one at NIE, whose area stood at 260,000sqm, was developed in 1994. Arrangements to prepare drawings for expansion of services to phase two and three are under progress due to be implemented in the second half of 2007. NIE is currently witnessing considerable turn out from investors as to set up new projects and expand existing ones.

NIE, recently received an additional space of 140,000sqm from the Ministry of Housing, Electricity and Water, thereby raising its total area to 2,140,000sqm. So far, only 800,000sqm have been utilised, he added.

Qassabi said a number of projects are currently existing at NIE, including 12 factories, seven of which are under construction, procedures related to five projects are under completion and two projects are being evaluated.

Major industries at NIE are ceramic tiles, foodstuff, metallic alloys, timber, water tankers, tea packaging, furniture industries, steel structuring, building materials, oil and gas services which provide technical and logistics support to various oil and gas projects, besides a company which provides storage and handling services at NIE.

The NIE director said the glass smelter project is one of the largest industrial projects to be implemented at NIE during forthcoming period. The total foreign investment in the project is to the tune of \$10 million. The project will commence operation in 2008.

Qassabi said raw materials such as marble quarries, sand and agricultural materials are located near NIE. With regard to Omanisation at NIE, he said, NIE is currently employing a great deal of Omani youth.

Omanisation ratio stood at 35 per cent of the 600 total labour force at NIE.

With new projects induction such as glass smelter project which is envisaged to provide 300 job opportunities for Omanis, Qassabi hoped that the Omanisation ratio would improve.

Third Crowne Plaza hotel to be located in Sohar

Source: *Times of Oman* - 20 May 2007

InterContinental Hotels Group, the global hotel company, has reinforced its commitment to Oman as a thriving business and tourist destination by announcing the development of a third Crowne Plaza hotel, in the burgeoning industrial city of Sohar.

The hotel, developed by owners Samco Trading & Contracting, is located on a hilltop near the Sohar Industrial Port Company project,

launched in 2002 and is set to become the economic backbone of Oman's diversification effort.

Planned to open at the end of 2007, the 126-room Crowne Plaza Sohar will be the first internationally branded hotel in the area. It will feature a diverse mix of food and beverage, leisure, commercial and service outlets, including a Mediterranean restaurant, a lobby-level patisserie, sports bar, poolside dining and a

banquet hall catering for up to 400 guests.

The extensive leisure facilities include a bowling alley with pool and snooker tables and a worldclass health club with a fully equipped gym, steam room, sauna and massage facilities, tennis courts and an outdoor swimming pool. Commercial services include boardrooms, meeting and training rooms furnished with state-of-the-art equipment. The

800-square-metre fully serviced office space with separate entrance and car parking will also be available for lease.

Tony Zamora, director of operations, InterContinental Hotels Group, Oman said, "With the addition of Crowne Plaza Sohar we will see the group's portfolio in the country rise to 1,300 rooms, this will allow us to offer a complementary choice of hotels in Oman, to cater to a diverse mix of business and leisure travellers. While established global

corporations and intra-regional travel remain key to the commercial success of the hotel, the Sohar property will also act as a vital facility and employer for the local community, further testament to the group's commitment to Omanisation."

Added Zamora, "The Sohar development is indicative of the high levels of industrial enterprise currently occurring in the country and we are proud to play a significant role in its success as a world-class leisure and

business destination."

Salim Macki of Samco Trading & Contracting said: "The development of an established branded hotel such as Crowne Plaza is vital to meet the business needs of the port of Sohar and local business community. The high standards that are inherent of the Crowne Plaza brand and its tailormade facilities will prove integral to international business travellers and provide a welcome addition to the leisure activities of the local community."

Oman Ceramics opens new showroom in Wadi Kabir

Source: *Times of Oman* - 20 May 2007

Oman Ceramics Co. SAOG, manufacturers of high-quality vitreous sanitaryware, opened their new showroom in Wadi Kabir on Sunday.

Oman Ceramics is the only manufacturer of sanitaryware in the Sultanate of Oman and boasts of a modern and state-of-the-art factory at Sohar. The plant was set up with the primary intent of exporting to Western Europe and also to exploit the business opportunities in the AGCC and nearby regions. The plant and equipment have been sourced from

reputed European suppliers and the technology is from the UK. Certain critical raw materials are imported from UK to ensure high product quality and reliability. The company is in the process of getting ISO:9001 certification. The present capacity of the plant is 375,000 pieces per annum and the company is in the process of implementing an expansion plan that will enhance the capacity to 600,000 pieces per annum.

The product quality of the company is comparable to reputed European brands and in fact approximately 30

per cent of its sales comes from exports to the UK.

The products are in conformance to EN (European) standards, British standards, Saudi standards and are tested and certified by CERAM — the world's largest independent certification body for ceramics products. The products of the company are sold under the brand name Wave. Wave sanitaryware are approved by Abu Dhabi Municipality, many ministries of the Sultanate of Oman and National Housing Authority in Kuwait.

Yiti resort first phase may go on stream by mid-2009

Source: *Times of Oman* - 14 May 2007

The first phase of the picturesque \$1.4 billion Salam Resort & Spa (Yiti) is expected to be completed by mid-2009.

Official sources told the Times of Oman that when fully developed, over 700 hotel rooms would be available for tourists with additional serviced residences.

The property offerings will include exclusive 5-star hotels, luxury villas and magnificent apartments, complemented by a golf course, a marina, a state-of-the-art wellness spa and eco-marina centre. The project is being developed by the UAE-based Sama Dubai in a joint venture with Omran (Oman Tourism Development Company).

Sama Dubai is the international property development & investment subsidiary of Dubai Holdings while Omran is the Oman Government sponsored tourism development representative.

Salam Resort & Spa-Yiti is one of the two resorts being created under the Sama Dubai Resort & Spa brand.

The other is Salam Beach Resort & Spa – Bahrain, which will be the kingdom’s first exclusive beach community.

The 3.7sq.km Salam Resort & Spa–Yiti located at a 15-minute drive south of Muscat, is positioned as an architectural testimony to Oman’s diverse natural beauty, rich culture and beauty and is poised to become a prime destination for the international luxury travel market.

Building on the natural canvas provided by Oman’s breathtaking surroundings, the Salam Mountain Beach Resort & Spa-Yiti will harness the beauty of the region, offering long stretches of beach and spectacular views.

One of the elements which makes

this project appealing is the unique architecture which is inspired by the Omani heritage and remains true to the traditions and culture of the Sultanate. The mountain and beach club setting will also deliver a luxurious and sophisticated environment to guests seeking escape. The resort aims to attract international and regional tourists as well as second-home owners in search of tranquility, wellness and relaxation and aims to convey the true essence of Oman.

Luxury villas and townhouses will be available for private freehold ownership to expatriates.

Officials of Sama Dubai are upbeat that Salam Resort & Spa-Yiti fits into the overall tourism component of the Sultanate of Oman.

“With Oman’s politically stable environment and a growing economic and social system, the progression of the country has resulted in a great increase in tourism. Oman’s dramatic deserts and coastal landscapes surrounded by the azure waters of the Gulf of Oman combines to create a wonderful tourism experience.

In addition the historic culture of the Omani lifestyle which dates back 5,000 years, makes Oman a truly unique destination for international visitors,” representatives of Sama said.

Living up to its Arabic connotation meaning of ‘peace’, the ‘Salam’ resorts promise harmonious living within the finest integrated luxury resort communities in the world.

The Wave signs pact with Kempinski

Source: *Times of Oman* - 28 April 2007

Come 2010, the Azaiba shore overlooking the vast expanse of turquoise Gulf of Oman will be home to a palace of dreams.

The Wave, Muscat, Oman’s leading tourism and beachfront residential development, announced that Kempinski Hotels, one of the leading luxury hotel groups worldwide, has signed up for a beachfront property at the development during a ceremony held here on Thursday at the magnificent Emirates Palace (managed by the Kempinski). The ceremony was attended by the companies’ officials and Majid Al Futtaim Group, one of The Wave, Muscat’s main investors.

At a ceremony Abdullah bin Abbas bin Ahmed, chairman of Muscat Municipality, and chairman of The Wave, Muscat, and Ulrich Eckhardt, senior vice-president, Middle East and Africa, Kempinski, exchanged documents after inking the pact. Enthused by Oman’s strong economy

and the resurgence of hotel industry, Kempinski’s presence will add momentum to the tourism growth.

After the signing ceremony Abdullah bin Abbas bin Ahmed said: “The partnership between the world-renowned Kempinski Hotels and The Wave, Muscat, is yet another important milestone in creating our landmark destination.

The Wave, Muscat, epitomises the aspiration and culture of Sultanate of Oman and we are committed to delivering exceptional residential, retail and leisure facilities”.

He added: “With the expertise on offer from our strategic partners like Kempinski Hotels, the development joins the league of the top community projects in the Middle East. Our tie-up with Kempinski is part of our vision to involve the finest world-class companies in the field.”

In his comments, Ulrich Eckhardt,

VP Development at Kempinski Hotels, said: “We are delighted to be part of The Wave, Muscat.

“Kempinski has entered the regional resort market in response to growing consumer demand even as we continue to maintain our leadership in the business travel market, endorsed by our renowned properties in many of the world’s key cities.”

He added: “Our foray into Oman and participation at this unique development property further reinforces our expansion plans in the Middle East. Our property at The Wave, Muscat, will offer an exceptional range of business and leisure facilities, and luxury amenities within a breathtaking beachside location.”

Rashid Al Saadi, board member of The Wave; Ahmed bin Brek, vice-chairman, board of directors, The Wave, Muscat and representative of Majid Al Futtaim Investments and

Michael Henssler, general manager, Mall of Emirates, Abu Dhabi were present during the signing ceremony.

Later at a press conference held yesterday at the Emirates Palace here, Wael Ahmed Al Lawati, deputy CEO, The Wave, Muscat, said that the management expertise of Kempinski will ensure that highest levels of service will be savoured by our guest and residents. Wael added: "The Kempinski Hotel will blend gracefully onto the Wave surroundings and offer luxurious accommodations and unrivalled amenities complemented by impeccable service."

Wael added that the third hotel in The Wave would be announced next year as they are already tied up with Fairmont and Kempinski presently. When asked if the presence of hotels would not disturb the privacy of the residents in the project Wael allayed the fears saying the residences are protected and would not lose privacy.

Participating in the press conference, Ulrich said: "We are pleased and honoured to participate in Oman's premier real estate and tourism project and guarantee to add value to the equation. Being Europe's oldest international hotel which is into business for the last 110 years and which has a strong brand name, Kempinski will be able to attract guests from Europe as

Oman receives the largest number of visitors from European countries.

For leisure and business guests alike, the name Kempinski has long been synonymous with style, nobility and efficiency. Put simply, they are the first choice for the discerning individual." He further said: "In addition to operating many of finest city hotels in the world, Kempinski is a name that now be found in many exciting resort locations, each combining local flair and ambience with the international standards of service and luxury Kempinski guests have come to expect." According to Ulrich the marketing strategy would be begin with the leisure segment. "With superb location, close proximity to the airport and brand image of Kempinski Oman would be able to entice tourists pretty quickly."

Jeff Rossely, board member of the Wave and CEO of MAF Developments LLC, averred: "The opulence at its finest' property will have about 300 rooms and will deliver service as a complete product." "The entry of Kempinski," he said, "would offset the shortage of good five-star rooms in Oman. He said: "With the tourism-friendly Government of Oman addressing the infrastructure demands and the potential of more air traffic from different regions of the world to Oman being realised property like Kempinski would be an ideal choice for the business as well as leisure travel-

lers." Commenting on the increasing demand for five-star hotel occupancy, Jeff Rossely said that three years ago Oman's five-star hotel occupancy rate was 40 per cent on an average and currently it has touched 80 per cent."

Ahmed bin Brek, vice-chairman board of directors, The Wave, Muscat and representative of Majid Al Futtaim Investments commented: "It is particularly exciting to have Kempinski Hotels at The Wave, Muscat. We have worked with Kempinski previously at Mall of the Emirates and we hope to continue our excellent rapport with the development of this landmark property".

Also present on the occasion was Amer Al Fadhil, vice-president (External Affairs), The Wave Muscat.

Rich in tradition, the Kempinski over the world comprises a fine collection of sumptuous hotels and resorts, from the truly historic to the breathtakingly avant-garde. Today Kempinski's prestigious portfolio comprises over 55 luxurious properties in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Asia and South America. Well known and established names such as the Hotel Adlon Kempinski in Berlin, the Ciragan Palace Kempinski in Istanbul, Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi, the Kempinski Grand Hotel des Bains in St Moritz and the Kempinski Grand Hotel in Heiligendamm are part of the international growing group.

The Wave begins construction

Source: *Times of Oman* - 15 April 2007

Oman's top tourism and beach-front residential development project, The Wave, Muscat, yesterday commenced construction of residential properties and marine works.

Overlooking the Gulf of Oman, The Wave, Muscat, is a fully master

planned community occupying a total area of 2,500,000 square metres along 6km of natural beach. The Wave, once completed, will be home to 4,000 dwelling owners from all nationalities, a signature 18 hole green golf course designed by the legendary Greg Norman, 300 berth marina, four luxury hotels, villas, retail and

restaurant outlets. Located within a 10-minute drive from the centre of town, the community will be within driving distance from the numerous authentic attractions of Muscat while enjoying world-class amenities and facilities.

With house foundations and infra-

structure commencing on site, and the arrival of additional construction equipment dedicated to the development, The Wave, Muscat, considered to be the Sultanate's most prestigious initiative, is now starting to take shape.

The landmark inaugural ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Al Mutassim bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, minister of state and governor of Muscat.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Harthy, minister of transport and communications; several government officials, dignitaries and top officials of The Wave, Muscat, as well as officials from one of The Wave, UAE based Majid Al Futtaim Group, and Omani Pension Funds, attended the prestigious event.

In his address, Engineer Abdullah bin Abbas bin Ahmed, chairman, Muscat Municipality and chairman of the board of directors, The Wave, Muscat, said: "We are extremely proud to witness the start of the

construction of this most exciting addition to this unique city.

"We are on course to deliver on our core mission to offer unparalleled investment and lifestyle opportunities at The Wave, Muscat. It is very exciting to see our vision come to fruition. We have assembled a fine team of reputed contractors and conglomerates to ensure the success of the project and we are well on schedule."

Jeff Rossely, CEO, MAF Developments, said: "The diligent process followed in the design, and now in the implementation of our project will create an object of pride for Muscat and will ensure a quantum leap for the Omani tourism sector."

The event celebrated the new construction phases and emphasised the progress achieved at the development. The Wave, Muscat, has recently announced numerous contracts amounting to more than RO100 million with market leaders

Carillion Alawi, Al Turki Enterprises, Al Mashrikia-Travo and Bauer Spezialtiefbau GmbH amongst other contractors, for housing construction and setting up of requisite infrastructure and related support structures. The recent agreements mark a pivotal stage in the development of the project.

The Wave, Muscat, is set to become the regional focal point, offering unparalleled prospects to both local and foreign investors with a vast array of modern amenities, accommodation and leisure facilities, including Oman's first sea facing links golf course — the signature course to be designed by renowned golfer Greg Norman.

The Wave, Muscat, is being developed through a joint venture comprising Oman's Waterfront Investments (representing the Government of the Sultanate of Oman), National Investment Funds Company (representing Omani Pension Funds), and the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Group.

Golden Tulip Nizwa plans expansion

Source: *Times of Oman* - 02 March 2007

Golden Tulip Nizwa Hotel, which is celebrating its 12 anniversary, is expected to give more value for money for all its shareholders.

The hotel is planning a major expansion. As part of this plan, jacuzzi/sauna facility, a theme restaurant and villas (which could be rented out to corporate clients, residents of Nizwa and international guests) will be added. The hotel held a reception as part of its 12th anniversary celebrations to honour all tour operators/travel agents, corporate companies besides ministries and government officials who have patronised and supported the hotel in the past years. In the early 90s the Sultanate of Oman was growing rapidly and

Nizwa being the cultural and heritage capital of Oman needed more accommodation to cater to the growing tourist market.

To serve the increasing demand of the market, Interior Hotels Co was established and came up with a world-class hotel in Dakhliyah region in the year 1994 on the auspicious occasion of 24th National Day of Oman.

Speaking on the occasion, Nasser bin Khamis Al Hashar, chairman of the company said that with the boost given to the tourism industry, Oman became a popular destination among tourists and to meet the increasing demand, the hotel ex-

panded its capacity and added 80 more luxury rooms in the year 2000. The chairman further added that the mission of the hotel is to maintain its reputation as the best 4-star deluxe hotel in the Dakhliyah region. In pursuit of this aim, efforts and plans are being laid out for continuous upgradation of standards and services to provide the guests unmatched hospitality.

Golden Tulip Nizwa entered into a franchise agreement with the international brand, Golden Tulip Hotels, Inns and Resorts, which offer over 500 hotels in 45 countries.

Nasser expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Tourism and to all

other ministries for helping in promoting the tourism sector in and outside Oman.

Sarfraz Ahmed Sethi, general manager, Golden Tulip Nizwa said: "Our aim is to combine the cultural heritage of Oman with all the interna-

tional standard amenities to ensure that the stay of the travellers is peaceful, relaxed and memorable."

Sethi expressed his thanks to the tours operators/travel agents, corporate executives and representatives of embassies and ministries

who were present at the function for their patronage and assured continuous and long lasting business relationship. Golden Tulip Nizwa is located an hour drive from Seeb International Airport, Muscat and is ideal for both business and leisure travellers.

Sharq Sohar's Steel Melt Shop to commence operations in August

Source: *Oman Observer* - 15 March 2007

Sharq Sohar's multi-million-dollar Steel Melt Shop (SMS) unit will come on stream by around August this year, a company official said. The project, under development on a 25-hectare plot within the Port of Sohar, is now around 60 per cent complete. Civil and structural works are now complete, with equipment erection set to commence shortly, the official added.

The Steel Melt Shop unit is being developed by Sharq Sohar Steel Rolling Mills LLC (SSSRM), which already produces reinforcement bars (re-bars) at its existing rolling mill at the nearby Sohar Industrial Estate. Conceived as a backward integration plant, the new steel-making unit will produce initially 200,000 tonnes per annum of continuous cast mild steel billets.

Capacity will be boosted to 500,000 tonnes per annum in the next phase

of the project's development. Scrap iron, the main raw material for the project, will be sourced locally, as well as from the United Arab Emirates. Melt shop technology is being provided by IDC of Turkey, a major force in scrap-based manufacture of steel billets. The entire output of steel billets is earmarked for SSSRM's rolling mill, which presently depends on steel billet imports from Ukraine and other markets.

When the Melt Shop unit is operational, Sharq Sohar's capabilities will extend from steel-making to rolling, the official said. In addition to using scrap as raw material, the plant is also configured to use Direct Reduction Iron (up to around 30 per cent). Established in 1995, SSSRM's rolling mill currently operates at around 295,000 metric tonnes per annum, producing a mix of 8 mm to 32 mm high strength reinforcement bars conforming to BS, ASTM and

SASO standards.

Today, the company is the largest producer of new generation high strength reinforcement bars in the Sultanate. The plant also comes with an epoxy coating unit, which provides rust and corrosion-proof coated rebars for the construction industry. The company enjoys a strong market presence in Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia and other countries of the Middle East.

Sharq Sohar's products have been used in the construction of a number of prestigious projects including Sohar Port, Sohar Refinery, Oman Methanol, Barr Al Jissah Resort, Omifco fertiliser project, Al Khoudh and Al Mawaleh interchanges, and Sohar Aluminium, among others. Customers in the region include Dubai Airport, National Petroleum Corporation (Iran), Qatar Petroleum, and Saudi Arabia's SGCN.

ACP launches new products

Source: *Times of Oman* - 21 March 2007

Assarain Concrete Products (ACP) yesterday launched a number of new and innovative construction and landscaping products.

Salem bin Said Al Ghattami, president of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry presided over

the launching ceremony at Grand Hyatt. Offering a diverse new range of products, ACP is continuing to extend its value for money to its customers, thereby raising the standard of living in Oman. Over 300 guests attended the ACP's mega-launch event at the Grand Hyatt last

night. This included VIPs, dignitaries and representatives from the government, consulting and business community.

Displayed on stage were the latest products set to benefit the general public and the commercial sector

alike, ranging from new generation design of interlocking tiles to latest dry pre-mixed plasters and renders to the most wonderful landscaping products.

Assarain Concrete Products had already grown multifold in the last five years. Assarain and Alserkals, both very renowned and respected business houses of Oman and Dubai, respectively, have joined hands in Dubai and commissioned a very large concrete products manufacturing plant at the Dubai Investment Park. This apart, they have also committed large investment in Sohar for a similar facility. This will meet the growing demand for Assarain products from the construction industry. ACP has the highest market share in the market by way of having an innovative range of products and designs.

Launching latest products in the market, ACP, in its core competency area, introduced the 'Najmah-Galaxy series' of paving tiles for the more discerning and niche clients. ACP has been the pioneer in Oman to introduce Light and Semi Light Weight Blocks, which are supposed to be giving good savings in construction. ACP has also come in with patented products like reflective pavers and innovative paver system for roads and airport construction respectively.

ACP is the exclusive agent in Oman for "Plaxit" products, manufactured in UAE, making cement, gypsum or lime based dry pre-mixed mortars and renders. Simultaneously, a new system for carrying out high speed plastering over large areas through automatic silos and plastering machines were also presented, a sys-

tem never used earlier in Oman. ACP Managing Director Khalid Said Al Wahaibi reaffirmed: "As a dedicated team, we remain committed as a partner to the construction industry, towards creating a beautiful Oman, and ACP will continue to fulfil its pledge to its customer base by way of bringing in beneficial and novel products to them."

Ibrahim Said Al Wahaibi, managing director for investments spoke about the group's focus on its products. He said Oman is growing in leaps and bounds to fulfil the requirements of the market. A. R. Varma, general manager of ACP gave a clear insight into the group's philosophy, work ethics and values. In recent years, ACP's growth has been in a definitive direction of quality, innovation and competitive pricing.

New projects will ease steel prices

Source: *Oman Observer* - 14 March 2007

Multi-billion investments in Oman's rapidly developing iron and steel industry are expected to impact positively on domestic steel prices, currently hovering at new highs, Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Harthy, Minister of Transport and Communications, said here yesterday. Speaking at the opening of the Arab Steel Summit 2007, which is under way at the Grand Hyatt Muscat, he said the country's burgeoning iron and steel sector would play a significant part in meeting future domestic demand for steel products vital for the construction industry, as well as petrochemical and industrial projects.

The two-day summit, organised by the Arab Iron and Steel Union (AISU) in co-operation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has attracted a number of heavy-weight players in the regional iron and steel industry. Oman's hosting

of the prestigious event, Al Harthy noted, was in recognition of the country's emergence as a steel-producing nation. "Mindful of the Sultanate's geographical location close to the major steel consuming markets of south-Asia, particularly China and the Indian sub-continent, the Oman Government had taken a strategic decision to foster investment in a domestic iron and steel industry. Five years ago, the government embarked on a heavy industrialisation drive centring on steel and aluminium," Al Harthy said.

He noted in this regard the Port of Sohar's strategic location for investments in iron and steel projects. Good infrastructure, access to energy, proximity to consuming markets and excellent transportation links are factors that lend a competitive edge to projects located in Sohar, he said. The industrial port

has already attracted commitments of around \$5 billion in investments in iron and steel projects. These include Oman's first steel making unit by Shadeed Iron and Steel, a proposal for a major seamless tube plant by Shadeed with India's Jindal Saw, an iron ore pelletising plant Brazilian mining giant Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD), a Steel Melt Shop by Sharq Sohar Steel Rolling Mills and a Merchant Bar Mill by Al Jazeera Steel Products.

Later, speaking to journalists, Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce and Industry, noted that the present high cost of steel was a worldwide phenomenon and not limited to Oman. Global consumption of steel, he said, had increased significantly on the back of strong economic growth. Freight costs of transporting steel from producing countries to consuming markets too had risen some 200 per cent, while

demand from China and East Asia continues to drive up prices. He voiced optimism that the upward trend in steel prices would ease off as new steel production units came on stream.

AISU Chairman M S al Jabr, in his address at the summit, noted the Arab region's growing influence as a steel producer. Total global steel production capacity is set to climb

to 35 million tonnes per year by 2010, from around 25 million tonnes in 2007. The Arab region will account for roughly half of this new capacity, he said.

AISU Secretary-General M L Lachgar urged Arab producers to seriously look at opportunities for mergers and acquisitions in order to remain competitive. Several well-known names in the regional iron

and steel industry are taking part in the Summit. They include Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), Al Ghaith Holding, GHC Emirates Iron Industries, Libya Iron and Steel, Jordan Steel, CVRD International, Monnet Ispat & Energy (India), Al Ghurair Steel (UAE), and United Gulf Steel (Saudi Arabia). A number of leading equipment and technology suppliers are attending as well.

Shadeed Iron & Steel to boost capacity to 3.5 mtpy by 2010-11

Source: *Oman Observer* - 14 March 2007

Shadeed Iron & Steel aims to expand the total capacity of its giant Sohar complex to 3.5 million tonnes per year (mtpy) by 2010-11, a top company official said.

Ali Hamil al Ghaith, General Manager of the UAE-based Al Ghaith Holding PJSC, the majority shareholder of Shadeed, said the increase is proposed to be achieved through capacity expansion and product diversification.

Addressing the Arab Steel Summit 2007, which began in Muscat yesterday, Al Ghaith said: "We have already set our sights towards our future plans and we look forward to developing a fully integrated state-of-the-art steel complex at our site, so as to achieve the vital edge in terms of product diversification and also to maximise the production capacity to 3.5 mtpy by 2010-2011."

Shadeed is currently building the Sultanate's first steel-making unit comprising a 1.5 mtpy Direct Reduction Iron (DRI) plant with a 1 mtpy Steel Melt Shop at a site within the industrial Port of Sohar. Total investment in this project is estimated at \$700 million. Work on the DRI unit, which is being built by Japan's Kobe Steel on an engineering-procurement-construction (EPC) basis,

is now 38 per cent complete, said Al Ghaith, who is also Chairman of Shadeed Iron & Steel.

"The foundation of the shaft furnace area has been duly executed and the furnace structure is currently under erection. As you may note, progress on the DRI unit is very aggressive as we are planning to start commercial production at the DRI unit by the end of 2008." Last month, the Al Ghaith Group announced plans to set up a major seamless tubes plant at Sohar at an estimated cost of \$4 billion in joint venture with India's Jindal Saw. Envisioned as part of the new project, Al Ghaith said, is a 0.5 mtpy capacity seamless pipes manufacturing facility along with the production of 1 mtpy of billets.

"We at Shadeed strongly believe that such product diversification would definitely enhance the competitive abilities of our plant and would support our future expansion programmes and strategies," he said. Emphasising the robust credentials of the project, he said the company had already concluded all the relevant strategic contracts with the Omani government, covering the supply of gas, power and seawater, as well as the construction of a quay wall of -19-metres draft. In ad-

dition, agreements linked to the supply of raw materials have also been inked with Samarco, LKAB, GIIC and CVRD.

Significantly, Shadeed's development will lead to a number of firsts in the region, Al Ghaith said. Besides being the first steel plant based on Hotlink Midrex technology, Shadeed will also develop the first-of-its-kind seamless tube mill in the region. The project also boasts the first fully dedicated quay wall of 600-metre length and -19 metre draft. All of these factors underscore the project's competitive and strategic advantage, he noted.

"Our vision is to become one of the leading steel makers in the region in a very short period of time and to expand our business in this field to reach new horizons. Towards this end, we are ready and open to any and all commercial proposals that might be raised from regional or overseas partners. It needs to be realised that only by combining knowledge and expertise we can move towards extreme competitiveness, which indeed is required to convert the Gulf region into the most competitive region in steel making and to elevate this region to the top of the world steel-making map," Al Ghaith stated.

Steel summit to highlight Oman's emergence as a steel producing nation

Source: *Oman Observer* - 12 March 2007

Oman's credentials as an emerging steel producing heavy-weight will be underlined at the Arab Steel Summit 2007, which opens at the Grand Hyatt Muscat tomorrow. The Sultanate's hosting of the two-day forum is a reflection of its impending status as a major steel-producer, according to an official of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, which is organising the event jointly with the Arab Iron and Steel Union (AISU).

A nascent iron and steel industry has already attracted commitments of around \$5 billion in investments in new projects at the industrial Port of Sohar. They include a steel unit being developed by Shadeed Iron & Steel LLC at a cost of around \$750 million. Shadeed's promoters — the Al Ghaith Group — has also re-

cently outlined plans to establish a major seamless tube plant at Sohar with India's Jindal Saw International at an estimated cost of \$4 billion.

Another giant venture contemplated at Sohar is an iron ore pelletising plant by Brazil's Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD), one of the world's biggest metal and mining companies. Total investment in the project is estimated at over \$1 billion. Other related ventures under development at Sohar include a Steel Melt Shop by Sharq Sohar Steel Rolling Mills, and a Merchant Bar Mill by Al Jazeera Steel Products.

Al Khusaibi sees significant payoffs to Oman as the host of this week's Arab Steel Summit 2007. "Besides highlighting the Sultanate's appeal

as a destination for investments in iron and steel ventures, this event will also give impetus to the government's desire to encourage downstream investments in this sector. We have adopted investor-friendly licensing procedures, while a One-Stop-Shop will speedily process applications at the Ministry," he said.

AISU, a grouping of 85 companies from 15 different Arab countries, accounts for roughly 90 per cent of total steel production in the Arab region. Total output exceeded 19 million tonnes in 2005, which was projected to reach about 21 million tonnes last year. With several new projects in the pipeline, total production capacity in the region is set to grow significantly over the next two years, according to AISU.

Fairmont joins The Wave

Source: *Oman Observer* - 12 March 2007

The Wave, Muscat, Oman's leading tourism and beachfront residential development, has announced the appointment of "Fairmont Hotels & Resorts", a global hospitality leader with 50 hotels across 10 countries, to manage the golf resort hotel. This was announced by officials from The Wave, Muscat and Fairmont at a press conference.

The announcement marks Fairmont's foray into Oman. Highlights of the resort, scheduled to open in 2010, include 300 rooms and suites, restaurants, meeting facilities, Willow Stream Spa and branded residential offerings. The resort will be located adjacent to the 18-hole championship links course designed

by Greg Norman. The tourism component of The Wave will comprise four hotels, and guests will be able to enjoy the many recreational and retail facilities available throughout the community.

Announcing the maiden hotel at The Wave, Abdullah bin Abbas said: "It is a matter of great privilege to announce that Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has signed with The Wave, Muscat, a project which is the pride of Oman. The management expertise of a world-renowned hotel brand such as Fairmont will ensure the highest levels of service." "The Wave, Muscat epitomises the aspiration and culture of the Sultanate of Oman and we are committed to delivering exceptional residential,

retail and leisure offerings. Our partnership with Fairmont is part of our strategy to involve the finest companies in their industries to realise this vision," he added.

In his statement, John Johnston, Executive Vice-President of Fairmont, said: "We are delighted to be part of this premier development project, which offers unrivalled travel and lifestyle opportunities in one of the most prominent integrated developments in the Middle East. Our first property in Oman reinforces our expansion strategy in the region and demonstrates our commitment to working with key partners to develop world-class properties and build upon our brand's global strength."

Cement, wood prices up

Source: *Oman Tribune* - 06 March 2007

The price rise, which has hit consumers hard, is no longer limited to food, but affected house construction as well.

Oman Tribune found out that prices of iron, cement, wood, electrical goods and pipes have also increased manifold. As a result, several individuals, who planned to build their own houses have either cancelled or postponed their plans. However, those whose houses are under construction have been hit hard by the sudden increase in the prices of these commodities.

Abdullah Al Habsi is one such vic-

tim. His two-storey house has been under construction for about a year. He says: "I used to buy a cement bag for RO1.200. Now one bag costs RO1.700."

Aya Al Hooti said: "When I asked a contractor for an estimate for a house I intend to build, he told me that a square-metre would cost approximately RO120. It used to be only RO80 not very long ago." She has planned to postpone it for the time being.

Fahd Al Amri, whose house is under construction, said that the rise in prices of iron and cement had led to an increase in the prices of wood,

water pipes and even electrical equipment. "The cost of a wooden door went up to RO800 from RO400."

Mohammad Al Siabi said: "I was thinking of building a house, but I was frustrated by the increase in the prices of building material. It compelled me to change my mind. The government must intervene to check this phenomenon."

A contractor said that the rise in the prices of building materials, such as cement, iron, wood, sand and even labourers' wages caused big losses to them as well.

Coral Int'l Hotel begins operations in Oman

Source: *Times of Oman* - 30 January 2007

Faisal Al Humoud Al Malek Al Sabah, ambassador of the state of Kuwait, inaugurated the Coral Hotel belonging to the Coral International Hotels, Resorts & Spas group in Muscat yesterday.

Keifi Omori, ambassador of Japan along with Michel Noblet, group's managing director, Suleiman Mohammed Al Yahyai, owner and Bob Khalife, general manager were also present on the occasion.

"Oman is witnessing a rapid growth in tourism. According to official estimates, the sector's contribution to national GDP will increase to 3 per cent by 2020 from the current 0.9 per cent. This would raise tourism revenues to a staggering OR130 million, thus offering the perfect breeding ground for any new hotel ventures. We are delighted to welcome Coral International Hotels, Resorts & Spas to this dynamic scenario," said Yahyai addressing a press conference after the inauguration.

"Coral International enters Oman on a strong footing. Having firmly established its credentials on the home turf (Dubai), the group is eager to explore international opportunities," informed Noblet

"We believe in the leadership and vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Owing to his far-sighted policies, the Sultanate has become an oasis of stability and prosperity. Rich in natural assets and cultural heritage, it provides an attractive and safe destination for tourists," Noblet added.

Driven by ambitious domestic and overseas expansion strategy, Coral International is in the midst of massive development. Created in 2003, the Dubai-based hotel chain is well on target of having 25 properties in its first 5 years of operation.

Unvieling statistics Noblet said, "So far we have got nine hotels operational and another 20 under devel-

opment. Apart from the UAE, most of these projects are located in different parts of the Middle East including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. Soon we have an amazing project coming up in Seeb in Muscat."

The Coral Hotel, Muscat has recently undergone an interesting makeover with new facilities, renovated rooms and two new food outlets with terraces. However, the property still retains its signature features like the beautiful façade and the spectacular staircase which acts as the centrepiece of the lobby.

All rooms are decorated in contemporary, urban style with delightful local touches. The suites are sensational too and are equipped with top-notch amenities including plasma/ flat TV screens. Twenty-four hour room service and a warm and welcoming staff catering to all your needs, thus making your stay truly enjoyable.

The Wave awards RO 100m contracts

Source: *Times of Oman* - 28 January 2007

The Wave, Muscat, has awarded numerous contracts worth more than RO100 million to construction companies, a majority of them Omani. The committing of the contracts indicates that development on The Wave, Muscat, Oman's leading tourism and beachfront residential development, has taken a giant leap forward in the New Year.

The Wave signed on with market leaders Carillion Alawi and Al Turki Enterprises amongst other capable contractors, for housing construction and setting up of requisite infrastructure and related support structures. Carillion Alawi LLC, an established Omani company responsible for the construction of several illustrious Omani structures, has been commissioned by The Wave to build 191 townhouses in the premier project.

Other infrastructure work to be un-

dertaken by the company includes manufacture of quay wall blocks for the marina and manufacture of core-loc blocks for the offshore reef.

Another major local developer, Al Turki Enterprises, will be involved in the construction of 303 villas as well as infrastructure work which includes all of the services.

Speaking about the landmark agreements, Abdulla bin Abbas bin Ahmed, chairman of the board of directors of The Wave, said: "The Wave is the pride of Oman, a distinct project, designed to reflect the aspiration and culture of the country offering a stylish community lifestyle. We are entirely committed to our vision of the project and we assign the finest companies in the field to realise this vision."

"Commissioning construction works to Omani companies, Carillion Alawi

and Al Turki is not only a strategic move but proves that we continue to adhere to the highest quality standards in our field. We are confident that at this tempo, the project will soon join the league of the top residential community projects in the Middle East," he said.

Construction contracts have also been awarded to the joint venture between local Al Mashrikiya-Travo LLC and Societe Nationale d'Enterprises from Lebanon for offshore reef construction based on their extensive experience in marine works. Furthermore, Bauer Spezialtiefbau GmbH from Dubai have grabbed the piling contract.

Phase 1 of the manufacturing of the quay wall blocks will comprise approximately 3,900 blocks, ranging from 30 to 80 tonnes and there will also be 20,000 core lock units manufactured.

Sheraton Oman closed for \$25m renovation

Source: *Times of Oman* - 8 January 2007

The Sheraton Oman Hotel has closed its doors as of yesterday after a 22-year journey.

The reason for closure is for the property to undergo a \$25 million renovation programme that will result in a complete transformation. The scheduled date for reopening is in October 2007 in time for the Eid holidays.

The Sheraton Oman Hotel celebrated this historic landmark by saying good-bye to their last in-house guests, the Mueller(s) from Germany, who have been visiting the Sultanate of Oman over the Christmas and Eid holiday period.

They both commented how exciting

their trip had been and that they had enjoyed the true and authentic Arab hospitality extended to them during their stay by the people of Oman. Regarding their hotel stay they had high praises for the team at the Sheraton Oman who had extended great service to them during their stay and they are already looking forward to returning to the property following the renovation. Other prominent departures included the crews of Indian Airlines and Biman Bangladesh Airlines. Between them they have occupied 250,000 room nights and consumed some 750,000 meals at the hotel and have been amongst the strongest supporters of the Sheraton Oman Hotel.

Talking to the associates of the Ho-

tel, Chandrakant Bilgi, director of finance, recalls that his 21 years of service at the Sheraton Oman Hotel have been absolutely wonderful. Recalling his first day of work at the Sheraton Oman Hotel he said: "The level of excitement on day one of the opening of the Sheraton Oman Hotel was such an occasion that he is eagerly awaiting the unveiling of the renovated Sheraton Hotel later in the year".

While the Sheraton Ruwi will be closing for renovation, the Sheraton Qurum Beach resort will remain fully operational, seven days a week, through out 2007. The resort has seven bedrooms, five with sea views and balconies; extensive gardens with direct access onto beach.

Muscat set for a real estate boom

Source: *Times of Oman* - 8 January 2007

A real estate boom is set to emerge in Muscat as the economy is increasingly considered as an attractive investment destination for regional and foreign investors.

Oman doesn't support unwarranted speculation. Nevertheless, real estate development plans, in the government and private sectors, according to official sources, are being pursued actively. Citizens from neighbouring countries, especially from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Qatar and Kuwait are keen to invest in Oman's real estate sector. The prices of certain new properties — completed and under construction — are quoted at 25-30 per cent premium.

"As long as the authorities ensure a healthy appreciation of real estate prices, Oman will remain as an ideal real estate investment destination. Nevertheless, potential buyers, businessmen or salaried-class should not expect real estate prices to reach an incredulous dimension. Undoubtedly, real estate will witness a reasonable increase in prices," a real estate investment consultant from Dubai told the *Times of Oman*. Businessmen from Pakistan and India are also keen to buy properties in Oman.

The salaried-class, especially the high-income and middle-class groups prefer buying small and medium-size villas and flats. Buyers, sources said, prefer investing in properties, preferably in and around the capital area rather than buying properties in the interior.

They also prefer buying new properties rather than buying 15-20-year-old properties regardless of the location.

Most buyers judge that the Muscat region will remain as one of the key

contributors to the nation's construction and economic vitality. "A boom in Oman's construction, in one form or the other, is already there. It is evident from the recent upsurge in the number of expatriate workers in the construction sector.

The number of expatriates working in Oman's construction sector climbed 20 per cent to nearly 145,000 in the first nine months of the current year ended September 30, 2006. Foreign labour is a vital component of the construction sector. More precisely, the construction sector created nearly 25,000 fresh jobs for expatriates in nine months since December 2005," official sources said. Consumer spending has recorded its biggest increase in December 2006 on Christmas, Eid and New Year holidays.

Inflation is on the rise, and the prevailing relatively moderate inflation of more than three per cent sets enough room for further growth in economic activity. Technically, the total number of Omanis and expatriates working in the private sector has witnessed almost similar growth in 2006.

The number of Omanis and expatriates working in the private sector grew by 12.2 per cent and 13.6 per cent, respectively, in the first nine months of 2006 to about 110,600 and 482,700, respectively.

More importantly, Oman's private sector created nearly 58,000 fresh jobs for expatriates and more than 12,000 jobs for nationals during the first nine months of 2006.

"The increase in jobs for expatriates has resulted in an increased real estate and economic activity, and in the capital area, no flats are available. If available or so, landlords are demanding unreasonable rates. Expatriate consumer confidence has

increased to an all-time high during the last quarter of 2006, which was reflected in their overall spending.

"The year also witnessed a significant increase in number of expatriate bank accounts in Oman, spending for cars and electronic goods, number of credit cards and other goods and services. Those expatriates living with their families spend a large portion of their salaries here, fueling the nation's economic activity. Those who live alone spend a lot on telephone calls, food, travel and entertainment," a businessman opined.

The government is already allowing foreign nationals to buy properties in selected areas. Leading banks are offering housing loans to both nationals and expatriates at attractive rates. For a foreigner, buying real estate in Oman is more or less like an investment in fixed assets, in a calm and emerging world-class Middle East city rather than buying property in a foreign country. "The Muscat real estate sector is on the road to international fame. Indeed, projects such as Blue City and The Wave will create goodwill for Oman's property market. Buyers, however, should not expect an unwarranted boom in Oman's real estate sector, but of course, a reasonable boom is in sight," a consultant told *Times*.

A little push by the authorities, according to industry captains, will create wonders in Oman's real estate and tourism sectors. No doubt, concrete plans to build hotels and corporate offices is set to fuel the construction industry, in terms of activity, cement production, fuel demand, employment opportunities, infrastructure, international goodwill. Many international businesses here are exploring the scope of constructing own offices, and a few have already started constructing their own office buildings.

Second phase of The Wave's sales to begin on December 16

Source: *Times of Oman* - 12 December 2006

The Wave, Muscat, a world-class beachfront tourism and residential community, will launch its crucial second phase of sales on Dec. 16.

On offer is the much-anticipated second collection of homes in the scheme will be 151 properties villas and townhouses.

There are 90 villas (16 waterfront, rest are garden front) and 61 boulevard townhouses.

Announcing this at a press conference yesterday, Nick Smith, chief executive officer of The Wave, said that all the properties will be given on a first come first served basis when the doors of the Sales Centre in Seeb open at 9am on December 16.

Keen interest from potential purchasers from India, UK, Netherlands, etc., prior to this second phase launch indicates that homes at this premier project will be snapped up fast. Around 60 properties have already been booked under the early reservation scheme.

A non-refundable payment of RO3,000 will be required from potential home buyers. Following this, a

first payment of 10 per cent needs to be completed within a duration of 10 working days, of which the RO3,000 will count towards.

The Wave is the first project, which is offering properties on a free-hold basis for foreigners. Attractive finance options are also available with National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Alliance Housing Bank for buyers including expatriates.

Prices range between RO115,000 and RO450,000 at an average price of around RO245,000.

The launch of the second phase follows the overwhelming success of the first phase homes, which are expected to be ready by the first quarter of 2008 coinciding with the completion of the golf course.

Phase two will comprise a wide selection of stylish townhouses, as well as garden and waterfront villas that have been carefully crafted around extensive landscaping, open parks and lakeside recreation areas.

All properties will be finished to the highest standards, boasting stylish interiors along with spacious private gardens and off-street parking.

John Langford, VP of sales and marketing said: "In the light of the phenomenal success of the first residential release, which was worth in excess of \$100 million, as well as the tremendous interest we have received since, we expect the next phase to be very popular."

"The location, the quality of the design, the outstanding facilities along with freehold ownership for foreign nationals, all combine to make a home at The Wave an extremely attractive prospect," John said.

Upon completion, The Wave will be a fully master planned community occupying a total area of 2,500,000 square metres stretching along 6km of natural beach and will include a string of man-made lakes and islands.

The development will encompass a signature 18 hole green links golf course designed by renowned golfer and designer Greg Norman, a 300 berth marina, four luxury hotels, retail and restaurant outlets along with approximately 4,000 one and two bedroom apartments, three and four bedroom town houses and garden, waterfront and beachfront villas.

Al Madina Real Estate Company launches major tourism project

Source: *Times of Oman* - 2 December 2006

Al Madina Real Estate Company (SAOC) has recently launched Tilal Al Khuwair Tourism Project, under the auspices of Dr Rajiha bint Abdulmir bin Ali, minister of tourism, in the presence of a number of officials.

Khamis bin Rashad Al Kiyomi, the company's board chairman, gave a speech in which he said the project reflected the significant role the private sector played in the construction sector in Muscat and the Sultanate's various cities.

Abdulrahman bin Awadh Barham, CEO of the company, said the idea of the project was based on the concept of integrity with the mega tourism projects in Muscat.

"The project provides the atmo-

sphere of shopping and entertainment and the hotel hospitality,” he said noting that the preliminary studies had showed the necessity for family entertainment facilities to serve the Gulf tourism.

The location of the project was selected after precise studies that took into consideration the direction of

the city extension and its distance from the airport and its connection to the new road networks, which provides smooth traffic to and from the site, observed Al Kiyomi.

A number of technical, economic and legal studies were conducted in cooperation with international companies working in the field. In the

management of the project, the highest occupational criteria were applied, he added. In the project design, the company availed itself of the expertise of reputed international companies working in this field. The project includes Muscat Grand Mall, five-star hotels and residential apartments on an area of 7,7000 sq.m. in Al Khuwair area.

Finance deal signed for major real estate project in Sohar

Source: *Oman Observer* - 1 November 2006

Majan Gulf Properties LLC (MGP), designers and developers of the ‘Sohar Residential and Commercial Project’, the largest real estate venture in the Wilayat of Sohar, announced their first project finance milestone to be partnered by the leading UAE bank, National Bank of Abu Dhabi (NBAD) at a project finance signing ceremony held in Muscat recently.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mohammad al Marzouqi, Chief Executive Officer, and co-founder of MGP remarked, “In tandem with the industrial developments initiated by the Government of Oman, we aim to develop Wilayat Sohar’s residential and commercial utilities to cope with the influx of new residents and visitors.”

The signing of the project financing is for part of the first component of this project, ‘The Springs Compound’ which is spread over a total area of 60,000 m2 comprising 106 luxury villas. The complete project includes the ‘Residential Villa Compounds’ which will encompass 570 villas.

Commenting on the occasion, Ahmed al Musalmi, Head of Operations and Business Development, NBAD, said, “We are extremely excited about our new partnership, and are confident that Majan Gulf

Properties’ finely honed knowledge of the national and international markets, coupled with their experience and professionalism will contribute to the success of the luxurious Spring Villas Compound. This will also provide a huge impetus to the overall development of the Sohar Residential and Commercial Project.”

Jayant Krishnaswami, Manager, Credit and Marketing, NBAD added, “The immense economic and social opportunity present in the development of this project is very tangible, and will help in bringing to the Wilayat of Sohar as well as the entire region the prosperity and growth it seeks to achieve.” The first phase of the Springs Compound construction started on October 15 and is slated for completion by the end of 2007. “Efforts are under way to market the project and to sell units in this first phase, with bookings opened by end of Q1 2007”, added Marzouqi.

MGP has on the anvil a number of other landmark projects including Al Bustan deluxe furnished apartments; ‘The Pearl’, an inspiring sea resort located in Mejis, Sohar; the Majan Logistics City; and the Khasab Family Resort in Musandam. “The Wilayat of Sohar is distinguished by its huge potential as a highly promising commer-

cial centre. These projects aim to act as a spearhead in the overall industrial revolution in the Wilayat of Sohar as well as to aid the initiatives of the government to increase tourism to the Sultanate”, explains Marzouqi.

Set on an area of over 134,000 sq m near the Sohar Industrial Estate, Majan Logistics City will be developed to include a high end commercial and headquarters bay, a commercial and multifunctional service bay; a light industry bay for specialised assemblies, nutrition/ pharmaceutical storage and handling, and so on; a bay for clean industries ranging from light metal production down to textile, signature and reproduction industry; and labour camps and catering facilities.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the establishment of the complex is under negotiation with investors from Saudi Arabia. The Pearl resort is envisaged as an up-scale commercial and residential complex set on a 10,000 sq m plot. It will feature meeting halls, high-end boutiques and shops, while the upper levels will house luxurious apartments. Also envisioned are a marina, sea walkways and other amenities. Detailed designs are due to be completed by January, while the promoters finalise an MoU with an anchor investor from the GCC.

Oman: one brick at a time

Source: *Oman Observer* - 18 October 2006

Whatever temporary shortages there may be in Oman, success doesn't appear to be among them. Near 100 per cent occupancy in local hotels has prompted a forecast that the market will need 1,000 more rooms within the next three years. And real estate projects, especially those directed at tourists and foreigners, are reporting high sales before the contractors even move out.

Although a rising and increasingly young population provides the basis for sustained, long-term real estate growth, the impetus this year almost all stems from the decision in the spring to allow non-GCC nationals to own property in designated areas. In this move, the Sultanate is falling in with the trend in other Gulf countries.

The Royal Decree (12/2006) allowing non-GCC nationals to own property in integrated tourist complexes was a landmark move. It came just two years after restrictions on GCC ownership to three plots of land of restricted size, in place since 2000, were relaxed. These moves drew GCC investors such as Al Argan International Real Estate from Kuwait, which partnered with the Omani Towell group. Although the decree for non-GCC ownership has yet to be translated into law, local real estate projects have already started catering to the demand.

The Wave, an integrated real estate

tourism development 7 km north of Muscat, began selling to foreigners in January. Wael al Lawati, Deputy CEO of The Wave, said the Ministry of National Economy had given approval to sell residential units to foreigners while the new law was being finalised. The first batch on sale was vastly oversubscribed, with 221 properties being acquired by investors of 20 different nationalities. The next release of property is due in November.

Other projects catering to foreign demand include the Muscat Golf and Country Club, said to have sold 85 per cent of properties already, as well as the Yiti Project, the Blue City and residences in Bar al Jissah. The Sultanate is meanwhile trying to keep pace with growing demand in infrastructural development, implementing widespread electrification as well as an extensive road-building scheme. Tourism is an integral part of His Majesty the Sultan's economic diversification strategy, with the creation of the Ministry of Tourism just three years ago.

One side effect of the booming demand from the rapidly rising population, both local and expatriate, has been to push prices up. Figures from the Ministry of National Economy show that expatriates now represent 24 per cent of Oman's population. To date this year the number of expatriate workers has risen by 8.9 per cent. The construction sector is also by far the largest

employer of expatriates in the private sector. At the end of June this year, the total amounted to some 132,000, almost 30 per cent of total expatriates in the private sector.

Local population growth — 2.2 per cent in 2005 — is also having a strong impact on demand. It is estimated that just under a third of Omanis are aged between 15 and 29, most of whom will be seeking houses or apartments in the next decade or so.

The concerted effort to attract tourists, alongside the growing population, has prompted serious increases in both sales and rental prices in the residential sector. Land prices can reach as high as RO 500 (\$1,300) per sq metre in the Azaiba area, on the outskirts of Muscat, while average rental prices were estimated to have increased by 25 per cent last year.

Sustainability of the pricing trend depends on several factors. While an excess of demand over supply will ensure a queue of buyers for a while, it cannot be a permanent feature of the market. At one point, the frustration of unmet demand linked with prices similar to those in more developed parts of the region could rebound. For this reason alone — quite apart from any other consideration — the government's measured approach to expanding tourism and Oman as a haven for holiday homes is clearly the way ahead.

Safeer Group to set up mega mall in Sohar

Source: *Oman Observer* - 18 October 2006

Safeer Group is building one of the biggest malls in the Sultanate in Sohar to cater to the increasing shopping needs of residents in the area.

Creating a world of its own in a built-up area of 36,000 square metres, the mall will house a major hypermarket spread in an area of 10,000 sq metres, an exclusive

amusement area of about 2,500 sq metres and 67 outlets dealing in popular brands. Ajith Kumar, Leasing Manager of Safeer Group in Oman told the Observer.

He said the mall would cater to the shopping requirements of different segments — Omani nationals and expatriates from Europe and Indian sub-continent. “We are bringing the best brands in the world,” he noted. As several large industrial projects are being built in Sohar simultaneously, there has been a phenomenal growth in people taking up employment there.

“We expect a growth in European expatriate population in Sohar,” he said, adding: “They prefer to use the brands they were using in their homeland. The mall is slated to open by the first quarter of 2007,” he noted.

Located close to the highway between Globe Roundabout and Salam Roundabout, it is the only mall in an

area of 200 kilometres.

Now, people in Sohar go to far off places like Muscat or Dubai for their major shopping. Besides the major hypermarket, Safeer mall spread on a land area of 40,000 square metres will house a wide range of tenant outlets like fast food joints in an exclusive food court, ready-made garment shops selling premium brands, footwear, furniture, perfumes and jewellery.

The ground floor will have the hypermarket and amusement area, while the first floor will house a food court and tenant outlets for a wide variety of renowned brands. The food court will have eight outlets, which include MacDonald, Pizza Hut, Shemiana (an Indian speciality restaurant) and Majic Wok (a Chi-

nese speciality restaurant). Safeer mall will also be home to several other tenant outlets like Damas, Mikaji & Niyomi, Rasasi, Ajmal, Gulf Oasis, Jovial Watches, Muscat Pharmacy, Lakoos and Cell Com. Bahrain-based Jawad group is bringing Costa Coffee, Pumpkin Patch, Hush Puppies and Accessorizes.

On the present status of the mall, he said the structure has already come up and flooring and interior works are to be done. Safeer Group has six outlets in the Sultanate, which include a hypermarket at Azaiba. The premier retail chain, which is owned by a UAE-based business house, has around 50 to 60 outlets in the Gulf region. The company’s operations in Oman are headed by an executive director — Mohan Sippy.

Carrier launches super quiet air-conditioner

Source: *Times of Oman* - 03 October 2006

Carrier Middle East Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Carrier Corp., a unit of United Technologies Corp, has launched G3, the third generation series of window air conditioners in Oman.

The G3 air-conditioners are equipped with a high Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) of 8.2, which will result in a 10 per cent savings in energy when compared with other air conditioners in the market.

The new air-conditioner comes with low noise, four-in-one-filter technology, four-way air distribution and water drip-free system. Powered by the high ambient rotary compressor, the air conditioner is capable of delivering comfortable cooling even when outside temperatures soar to 55 degrees Celsius.

The four-in-one-filter technology is a powerful anti-pollutant that ensures high indoor air quality (IAQ). According to research in Japan, the

filter technology defuses negative ions, which magnetically attracts pollutants such as dust, smog, human and animal dander, smoke and allergens. The newly formed particles become too heavy to remain in the air and the advanced air-cleansing system filters them with remarkable ease.

“The filter system eliminates bacteria, dust mites, and potentially harmful pollutants and chemicals. It removes bad odours, smoke and domestic smells”, said Bassam Al Awar, general manager, Carrier Middle East Limited.

One of the salient features of the G3 is its water drip-free system that sprays the condensate water on to the condenser coil, improving the performance of the unit. This system can prevent water from dripping in ambient conditions of up to 70 per cent relative humidity.

The air conditioner’s special design

and mounting for the rotating components delivers a super quiet operation. “The low noise air flow system, which consists of a large diameter cross flow fan, can greatly reduce the indoor unit’s noise level by lowering the fan speed. Previously Carrier WRAC’s have earned their reputation based on superior cooling power. But with the new features of low noise airflow and air filtration systems Carrier is now offering the best value among all window air-conditioners in the market,” added Al Awar.

The new G3 systems are easy to maintain with the slide-out chassis and the easy access filter. The front panel is effortlessly removable for periodic cleaning. It comes in three models and is available in 1.0 tonne, 1.5 tonne and 2.0 tonne capacities to suit individual needs at very competitive prices. Carrier air-conditioners are available at Bahwan Trading Company outlets and with air conditioning retailers in Oman.

Development of Duqm Port and drydock set to kick off

Source: *Oman Observer* - 16 September 2006

The construction of a major port and dry dock complex at Duqm on the Wusta coast is set to get under way in earnest, with the government launching the competitive bidding process for a contract covering the first phase development of the ambitious project.

In the first phase, a contractor will be appointed to undertake the maritime works package entailing the construction of breakwaters and quay walls, as well carrying out dredging and reclamation works. Landside and infrastructure facilities will be established under a separate contract to be awarded in the second phase, while a ship repair facility — the centrepiece of the Duqm Port complex — will be constructed in the third phase.

Duqm Port will be established at Ras Duqm, some 7km from Duqm town. The site includes the imposing headland of Ras Duqm, a smaller headland some 2km northwest of Ras Duqm and the seabed within the bay in between. Duqm is being conceived as a main maritime gateway that will serve an ambitious in-

dustrial and commercial hub envisioned in the Duqm area and its hinterland. When completed, the facility will stimulate development in this remote part of the Sultanate, as well as bring employment opportunities to this area. Eleven firms and their joint venture partners have so far collected tender documents for the first phase maritime works contract.

Royal Haskoning, in association with Khatib and Alawi, are consultants for the project, which is being overseen by the Ministry of Transport and Communications. In the fray are well-known contracting firms such as Larsen & Toubro (Oman) with Dredging International; Hani Archirodon; Galfar Engineering and Contracting; Hyundai; Van Oord; Consolidated Contracting Co and Sezai Turkes — Feyzi Akkaya (STFA); Boskalis Westminster Middle East; Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company with Carillion Alawi; and Six Construct Company with Hindustan Construction.

The selected contractor will be required to construct two breakwaters of a total length of around 5

kilometres. A pair of quays will also be constructed — a 700-metre-long quay for container, general cargo and dry bulk vessels, and a 330-metre quay for government vessels. Berths for tug and pilot boats and other craft will be built as well. In addition, dredging will be carried out to provide for the entrance channel, harbour basin, construction pockets and turning circle, with deeper dredged pockets created at the berths and floating docks.

Also as part of the maritime works package, reclamation will be undertaken behind the breakwaters, quay walls and inshore areas. Allowance must also be made within the commercial quay for the potential future installation of electrically operated rail-mounted quayside cranes. At the heart of the port complex is a plan for a ship repair facility which will rank among the biggest in the Gulf region. In June last year, the government signed an agreement with South Korea's Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Company, which is the second largest shipbuilder in the world, for the design of the shipyard.

Oasis Living Group to cash in on home décor, furniture market

Source: *Times of Oman* - 13 September 2006

The Oasis Living group, the home décor solution provider in Oman, hopes to cash in on the rapidly growing home décor and furniture market in Oman.

The home decorations and furniture segment is an important ancillary to the real estate sector which has picked up pace in line with the economic growth witnessed by the Sultanate.

Kim Jepsen, general manager of Oasis Lifestyle, dwelling on the group's future plans, its effects on the industry and lifestyle, said that Oasis has planned to not only glean the retail market but is also looking to tap the institutional segment.

“From the amount of interest we see, there seems to be a lot of projects coming up like The Wave and Blue City. I have to say that

from our point of view, we hope to gain as much as 15 per cent of our turnover from such projects,” says Kim.

“As Oman's leading furniture store, Oasis Lifestyle persists as the country's principal ‘trend centre’, reflecting modern-day tendencies which come to life in a number of fashionable brands including Zone, IDdesign, and Bodum,” Kim said.

“Oasis is all about creating experiences. They come here to experience the quality, the service and the product that they find. We want people to be inspired and go out of the door with hopefully something that they can use in their home,” Kim said.

According to Kim, Oasis accommodates aesthetic solutions, making room for individual choice of design and design with the basic philosophy of giving the customer an exciting shopping experience filled with

colorful inspiration at affordable prices.

The Oasis store located in Markaz Al Bahja has a product range which includes everything from furniture and carpets to lighting and accessories with the primary focus on living, dining, sleeping, outdoor, home, office, accessories, carpets, gallery, kitchen and lighting. As part of its expansion initiatives, Oasis teamed up with LG Electronics, global leader in consumer electronics, in creating a first-of-its-kind home solutions

universe in Oman.

The result is the new store, ‘Oasis Living’, which presents an innovative combination of trendy furniture design and electronics, creating a new venue for stylish furnishing solutions. Another exciting feature at Oasis is a design studio known as Flexar, where you can design your home decor and the furniture that you want fitted in. You can order different parts and have them assembled to suit your needs and tastes.

Oman fastest growing market for Daikin airconditioners: Sato

Source: *Times of Oman* - 12 September 2006

Oman has received singular praise from a top Japanese business head for hosting a conducive climate for businesses to thrive in.

Stressing that Oman in general offered a fantastic climate for a product boom, Junichi Sato, managing director of Daikin Industries Ltd, Japan Global Operations’ division, also revealed that Oman was a fast growing market for Daikin airconditioners in a brief meeting with the press yesterday.

The reason was the thriving business climate in Oman and the extraordinary growth the country has made over the years, he noted.

Muscat Electronics LLC., its distributor in Oman, has commissioned the largest number of Daikin’s prestigious VRV A/C system (variable refrigerant volume) in the Middle East. Sato, was accompanied by Toshitaka Tsubouchi, general manager, Daikin Europe NV and three senior managers from Daikin.

Varghese Samuel, deputy general manager, AC division, Muscat Electronics, received an award for high

performance of sales of the VRV systems in the Middle East during the fiscal year 2005 to 2006.

Sato noted that he was particularly happy about Muscat Electronics’ performance in this regard and openly commended them for their “exceptionally good customer care”. He noted that they were proud of their design, execution and service, which “enabled them to excel in their sales performances”.

Daikin Industries Ltd., which has been established in Japan, more than 80 years ago, are the pioneers in the AC industry.

Daikin is not only numero uno in the AC industry in Japan but also second overall in the world, Sato noted. “Daikin is the inventor of the VRV systems, which is the most energy-efficient AC system for the middle to large scale buildings and houses.”

Sato noted that with the acquisition of the OYL/Maquay, Daikin is slowly emerging as the top global AC manufacturer in both name and reality.

Daikin is mainly into the AC and re-

frigerant chemicals and manufacturers of all types of AC and compressor factories spread all over the globe maintaining highest standards of quality and reliability. “We have opened a new Daikin representative office in Dubai to give strong support for the Middle East countries,” Tsubouchi noted. Saidja Geirnaert and Akihiro Okumura, have been appointed as the general manager and sales manager, respectively, at the Dubai Daikin office.

“We are extremely proud to be associated with Daikin, the world leaders in air conditioning. We have completed 19 prestigious VRV projects amounting to approximately 4000 tonnes during the last four years,” noted Varghese Samuel. He emphasised that all Daikin VRV systems, commissioned by Muscat Electronics, crossed several summers without any problems.

“Efficient customer care (ECC), voice of customers (VOC) and zero part waiting ration (PWR) is our strength. We are at the customer’s premises within 24 hours of a call. We also provide 24 hours’ service to all customers on demand,” Samuel said.

Physical activity of Blue City project to begin in November

Source: *Times of Oman* - 11 September 2006

Physical activity on the Blue City (Al Madina Al Zarqa) mega mixed-use urban project will begin in November this year.

This was disclosed by Ahmed Abubaker Janahi, chairman and chief executive officer of AAJ Holdings, yesterday on the sidelines of the first Business Roundtable with government of Oman, organised by Economist Conferences.

The \$20 billion Blue City project, which hopes to complement Muscat city, in many respects, is a master-planned, mixed-use urban develop-

ment project of a very large scale.

It has the potential of growing to become one of the largest economic and real estate development projects of the whole Arabian Gulf region.

Upon completion, Blue City is expected to be home to more than 200,000 permanent residents and become a tourism and business destination of national, regional and international relevance.

Ahmed Abubaker Janahi told the *Times of Oman* that Blue City would

become a hub of services which includes education, entertainment, tourism, sports, technology and other economic activities generating thousands of employment opportunities both direct and indirect.

The Blue City project is a visionary, ambitious joint effort of local, regional and international private sector investors and developers and the government of the Sultanate of Oman. In a balanced win-win partnership it is intended to maximise and align sustained returns on investments with the economic and social benefits for the country.

MCC to build first-ever multi-storied car park

Source: *Times of Oman* - 16 August 2006

Muscat City Centre's (MCC) grand, RO23 million, expansion plan will include Oman's first-ever multistoried car park.

The three-tier, state-of-the-art parking structure, set to accommodate anywhere between 2,100 to 2,250 parking stalls in a span of 87,000 square metres (on three levels), will be one of the main highlights of the expansion for this shopping centre, which also offers Oman's largest range of fashion and lifestyle retail. Work is currently being done on this multi-level parking deck, and the first stage (it will be done in two stages) is expected to be completed by the end of this year, top MCC officials said.

The MCC, a part of the Majid Al Futtaim (MAF) Group, already offers one of the biggest parking spaces in the mall scene here, and from the current 1,250 parking spaces to 2,250, it may not be an ex-

act double, but most definitely a huge leap, Wayne Scherger, asset manager, MAF Shopping Malls, Oman, said, in recent comments.

According to him, the mall will be extended out into the parking area with double-storey East and West wings. The flyover from the Sultan Qaboos Highway will give customers direct access to the car park.

Shaded parking area, more space for customers, designs of international standard, will all serve in making it an exciting parking structure, Scherger enthused.

"I mean, it will not be another concrete structure, but a well planned, spacious and well lit architecture. It will not offer the usual dungeon-like area, but more of a high-tech structure."

Thanks to an electronic traffic-management system, customers will be

directed to available parking spaces on the first, second and ground floors.

"In addition to that, there are 10 internal ramps, which will give customers convenient access to each car park level," Scherger said.

Also, access to all levels of parking is gained by travolators, escalators and elevators located in the expanded mall and car park, he said.

He was of the opinion that this three-tier car park would bring down usual customer complaints against parking. "Most of the times, the biggest complaints from customers, with regards to parking, is on getting out of the parking lot. But, here, the car park is designed in such a manner, it will be quite easier for the customer to leave the parking area," he explained, adding that proper care has been taken to ensure easy flow for customers from the parking

lot to the shopping centre. There will direct access to the new mall ground floor and first floor.

“It will be very easy for the customers to go from the first to other levels, with their shopping trolleys, baby trams etc.,” Scherger noted.

Designated pedestrian walkways

would easily separate customers from vehicle traffic.

The total expansion will see the MCC, which will turn five this October, extending the current centre by over 31,000 square metres, which will not only double its current size and add over 60 new outlets to the malls existing 80 shops. Most of the

new stores will be regional and international brands, not presently represented in Oman.

Earlier reports noted that the main contractor of the development, Carillion Alawi, is committed to deliver the project in two phases, and is on target to be fully completed by mid-2007

Oasis Lifestyle opens new shop

Source: *Times of Oman* - 06 August 2006

Oasis Lifestyle LLC, a leading furniture store in Oman, teams up with LG Electronics, in creating home solutions in Oman. The new store, Oasis Living, was opened on August 3, in the presence of guests and local media representatives at Markaz Al Bahja. The international furniture store, known for its minimalist, Scandinavian style, has joined forces with LG Electronics to present an innovative combination of trendy furniture design and electronics, creating a new venue for exciting shopping experiences and stylish furnishing solutions.

According to Kim Jepsen, General Manager at Oasis Lifestyle, the thought behind the furniture-front row entertainment fusion is to allow customers to create their own complete home solutions, with a personalised look, feel and functionality. “Our products are carefully selected with functionality and flexibility in mind, Jepsen explains. “They accommodate aesthetic solutions, making room for individual choice of design and style. With the addition of the LG product range, we have found an exciting approach to providing exactly those core elements

of our business.

It’s a new way for us to meet our customers’ desire for great design and innovation. With the combination of furniture and electronics, they can create their own complete home universe, just the way they want it,” he added. According to Jepsen, the opening marks a new path for Oasis Lifestyle, yet it is still an opportunity for the store to live up to the company aim of providing exciting shopping experiences filled with colourful inspiration at affordable prices.

Development in overdrive

Source: *Times of Oman* - 02 August 2006

Plans are afoot to expand the country’s two main airports — Seeb International Airport and Salalah — as modern airports in the region, Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, minister of national economy and deputy chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council has told the Times of Oman.

This is part of the government’s ongoing seventh five-year plan, he added.

Developing Salalah airport and the government’s plan to develop a free trade zone in Salalah will serve the

growing tourism activities in the region, the minister stressed. By the end of December 2005, the Sixth Five-Year Plan had been fully implemented, and from the beginning of this year, the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan (2006-2010) has been approved and implemented. As a continuation to the various diversification programmes, new projects came into being, whether on gas-based industries, tourism or other production and services sectors.

The government announced early this year that it will have three new airports, one each at Sohar, Duqum

and Ras Al Hadd.

Duqum airport is part of a larger development plan to establish a modern port and other facilities, while an airport in Ras Al Hadd will help tourists. Sohar airport will help Sohar, which is the Gulf’s fastest developing industrial zone.

Other mega industries in Sohar include: aluminium, power, refinery, Oman Formaldehyde Chemicals, Oman Petrochemical Industries, Oman Polypropylene, Shadeed Iron and Steel, International Urea and Chemical Industry. Some of these

projects are at an advanced stage of commissioning, while others are in different stages of implementation, the minister said.

Macki noted that the government had signed an agreement to purchase five ferry boats for coastal transport so as to serve the population of the remote coastal regions in northern Oman, and supply them with services and activating local trade, tourism and strengthening social relations.

He also noted that the 5" and 6" LNG vessels (Ibri and Ibra) had been launched and would join the

fleet of Oman Shipping Company (OSC) soon.

Oman has also signed an agreement with Mitsui OSK Lines to purchase a crude oil carrier, a liquefied petroleum gas carrier and two product tankers, which is in line with Oman's efforts to give new impetus to the government's economic diversification drive and to add value to the oil and gas sector.

"By 2009 the OSC fleet will have grown to 12 vessels, hence developing oil, gas and marine transport projects, which will reflect the Oman's successful investment poli-

cies," the minister revealed.

Macki said that the construction of Sohar Refinery was in its final stage. "It is worth mentioning that the Sohar Refinery will produce propylene which will be a major input to be used by the Oman Polypropylene Company, as well as other petrochemicals and aromatics companies. "Also, the third train project of liquefied natural gas has already been opened in Qalhat, with a production capacity reaching 3.3 million tonnes per year. Its construction had taken 30 months only, and the first shipment had already been exported last December."

Galfar bags two major contracts from PDO

Source: *Times of Oman* - 24 July 2006

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has awarded two major contracts worth \$70 million to Galfar Engineering and Contracting for major construction projects that will help greatly enhance transportation links between key interior locations.

"The first contract involves building of airports with paved runways at Fahud, Qarn Alam and Marmul, and the other involves the laying of a new blacktop road linking Fahud with Lekhwair," PDO said here yesterday.

The airport contract, valued at nearly \$20 million, calls for a major upgrade to PDO's existing unpaved airstrips at Qarn Alam and Marmul. In the case of Fahud, the contracted work involves the upgrading of the existing paved runway there.

The plan is to develop these sites into hard-topped airports that are capable of handling aircraft larger than the turbo-prop aeroplanes that they are currently handling. Each upgraded airport will feature 2,440

metres of paved runway — enough for the take-off and landing of jet aircraft such as the Boeing 737. Each of the upgraded airports will also have a taxiway and apron asphalted to the standards set out by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Furthermore, small terminal buildings will be constructed with facilities for check-in, baggage handling, and control-room operations; separate buildings will additionally house the fire and rescue unit as well as rest areas for aircrews. All three upgraded airports will be operational by the end of 2007. "This contract will create a network of modern paved airports within PDO's concession area, thus greatly facilitating the safe, convenient and speedy movement of company personnel between Muscat and our interior sites," commented Dr Abdulla Al Lamki, deputy managing director of PDO.

"With the growth of our operations, we have been reviewing our internal

air-transport services with a view to making commuting a comfortable experience for our staff and contractor personnel. The new airports will be served by jet aircraft with a capacity of a hundred or so passengers, which is far greater than the capacities now available. There are clear efficiencies and economies of scale to be gained if we rely on popular commercial jet aircraft and fewer but bigger airports for our air-transport needs."

The road-building contract, valued at around \$50 million, calls for a new 125-kilometre-long blacktop to be laid from Fahud to Lekhwair. Lekhwair is presently served by a graded road that can no longer be suitably maintained.

The deteriorating road condition, compounded by an increase in third-party traffic, has necessitated a major overhaul of this road. The road project is due for completion by 2008.

"With this investment, Lekhwair will

finally be linked to PDO's paved-road network. This project stems primarily from PDO's desire to ensure safe motoring conditions for all people driving to Lekhwait — not only PDO staff and contractors but also local residents and third-party users.

PDO is keen to maintain uninterrupted access to Lekhwait, where a major increase in activities is envisaged over the coming years."

Salim Hamed Al Fannah Al Araimi, chairman of Galfar, said: "These contracts are just the latest develop-

ments in our long association with PDO in building the nation's infrastructure.

"We look forward to delivering the new airports and asphalted road from which PDO — and Oman in general — will benefit."

IECC well-positioned to tap construction boom in Oman and Gulf region

Source: *Oman Observer* - 30 July 2006

A key player with dominant market presence spanning over 20 years in the Sultanate says the construction boom in Oman, the region and beyond offers excellent opportunities for companies of repute.

"The construction sector, spurred by new infrastructure projects, is gaining further momentum in Oman and the wider Gulf region. Against this backdrop, International Equipment and Contracting Company (IECC), a division of Bahwan Building Materials, is not only looking for strong business opportunities in Oman, but also the GCC region and beyond in India and African countries," G V Rao, General Manager of Bahwan Building Materials, said.

IECC meets the varied hi-tech equipment requirements of the construction industry, representing a number of leading brands that have a strong presence among medium and light construction equipment in Oman. The extensive product range includes steel rebar machines, concrete mixers and dumpers, rock breakers, plate and roller compactors, vibrators, light towers, gensets, trowels, screeds, survey equipment (auto levels, theodolites, total solutions and GPS), laboratory test equipment, power tools, wood working machinery, industrial equipment, forklift trucks, personnel lifts, scaffolding, chain pulley block hoists, EOT cranes, warehouse

equipment (pallet trolleys, stackers, reach trucks, VNA), side loaders, mobile cranes and storage systems.

"The construction sector is experiencing a major boom in the Sultanate as new mega industries and manufacturing companies are progressing in different parts of Oman. The infrastructure development is a very good and positive sign for the construction sector in Oman. Investment, both foreign and domestic, is flowing into infrastructure development in Oman, especially in Sohar and Salalah. This is well reflected in a lot of queries we receive from major companies for a wide range of construction equipment. We definitely perceive a huge scope for the construction industry in the next 10 years," Rao said.

IECC's growth in 2005 was well above 30 per cent. "Definitely, this will begin to taper in the coming years, but we hope to maintain strong growth figures in the coming years. Year-on-year growth projection for IECC will be in the region of 10 to 15 per cent in the coming years. We are looking beyond Oman to expand our horizon of activities, especially focusing on opportunities available in the GCC region. The Indian market is also promising as it is a huge market offering adequate room for several players.

The Indian market can easily absorb

new players as the volume is very large. We are in a position to provide the entire range of medium construction equipment and have been in some way or the other linked to all major infrastructure projects in Oman," Rao noted. IECC's primary strength lies in representing leading brands, offering quality service and reliable parts back-up. The company has a 250-strong workforce led by professionals with multi-skills. IECC has a wide reach in Oman with eight branches in Muscat, Seeb, Ibra, Buraimi, Sohar, Barka, Nizwa, Salalah and Sur.

The company also has strong business in Syria, Yemen, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Summing up IECC's future growth vision, Rao said "the whole world is yours and sky is the limit. We are aiming for consolidation in Oman and looking beyond for establishing ourselves as a leading company in the region and beyond." IECC represents Simpedil brand from Italy, which is a market leader in steel bar bending and cutting equipment. Wacker from Germany is another market leader in vibration and compaction equipment segment. Wacker is also a leading player in light towers, gensets, trowels and screeds.

Silla concrete mixers and dumpers from Italy have a strong presence in Oman. Topcon from Japan belonging to Toshiba and Trimble from

Sweden are also market leaders in survey equipment, including digital and auto level theodolites and total solutions. IR-Montabert rock break-

ers from France belonging to Ingersoll Rand in the US features a patented design for automatic blow control technology. The life cycle

for this equipment is much higher than its competitors. BT warehouse equipment from Sweden is another leading brand represented by IECC.

Mirbat tourism resort to open in early 2007

Source: *Oman Observer* - 25 July 2006

A new deluxe resort is scheduled to open early next year at Mirbat on Dhofar's southeastern coast under the auspices of the well-known Golden Tulip brand. The Golden Tulip Resort and Spa — Mirbat will boast around 170 rooms, 70 chalets, a spa, banquet rooms and meeting halls, and offer a wide spread of water-based leisure and recreation activities. The waterfront resort is set on a picturesque stretch at Hino village, overlooking Mirbat's splendid bay. The planned launch of the property under the Golden Tulip label underscores a phase of rapid growth for the Europe-based hotel management group in the Sultanate. Under a contract signed with Dhofar Tourism Company, which owns the multi-million riyal resort at Mirbat, Golden Tulip will operate the property.

Speaking to the Observer, Golden Tulip's General Manager and Director of Operations, Paul Z Diab, said the company has made significant inroads into the Omani hospitality sector. Golden Tulip is also looking to grow the portfolio of properties under its management, he added. "As an operating company, we are looking at a number of possible locations around Oman to establish a Golden Tulip property. One area we are seriously looking at is Sohar, which urgently needs new hotels and facilities to match developments on the industrial and economic fronts," Diab said.

"We are also talking to investors in The Blue City and The Wave Muscat projects. We are in negotiation

with certain people about the prospect of setting up Golden Tulip properties within these projects," he stated. A new addition to its portfolio is the Golden Tulip Resort Diba in Musandam Governorate, which is due to open in October. Built by the Ministry of Tourism, the new hotel boasts around 54 rooms and all the amenities of a beachfront resort. It is currently the only deluxe hotel in Diba wilayat, and will complement properties in Khasab in the north of the Governorate.

The Golden Tulip Resort Khasab is already a major draw with domestic and UAE based tourists, says Diab. "Khasab is an attractive getaway for travellers from around Oman and from the UAE, which is just a short drive away. People come here for the beaches, boat cruises, sight-seeing, diving, snorkeling and other pursuits. Dolphin watching is a popular pastime as well. In fact, many companies make use of the Khasab resort to conduct their annual meetings for their executives, while taking the opportunity to give staff and their families the chance of a relaxing holiday in Khasab."

With the scheduled opening of the Diba resort later this year, both extremes of the Musandam peninsula will now have fine hotels, says Diab. "The Khasab and Diba resorts will cover all of the Governorate in terms of catering to tourists and travellers. A blacktop links Khasab with Diba, allowing tourists to drive south to explore some nice beaches or try hiking, off-road driving, paragliding or other adventures of this sort." Of late, Golden Tulip has been looking

to forge a strong partnership with the Ministry of Tourism by offering its expertise in operating coffee shops established by the Ministry in key tourist areas. Recently, the company signed a deal with the Ministry to operate eateries at Nizwa Fort and Jabrin Castle.

Envisaged at Nizwa Fort is an up-scale cafeteria serving snacks, and hot and cold beverages. The facility, which can seat up to 80 guests, will open by the end of this month. Slated for launch shortly thereafter is a full service restaurant planned at Jabrin Castle. "We are happy to support the Ministry in operating these facilities, which are designed to enhance the appeal of historical landmarks to tourists. These coffee shops are part of the Ministry's efforts to provide a range of amenities at key attractions for the convenience of tourists," Diab commented.

Significantly, Golden Tulip's regional arm Flamingo Hotel Management will also assume operation of two other government-owned properties — the Youth Hostels at Al Ashkarah in the wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, and at Sahanout in the wilayat of Salalah. Both properties were launched in 2004 as part of an effort to provide youngsters and families with accommodation at reasonable prices in a drive to encourage domestic tourism. While the Salalah facility was reopened at the start of the khareef festival after an overhaul, the Al Ashkarah property will be relaunched within a fortnight, said Diab.

Six Omani firms vie for Seeb fish harbour contract

Source: *Times of Oman* - 26 July 2006

Six Omani construction firms are competing for a contract to build a major fishing harbour in Seeb wilayat in Muscat Governorate. In the race for the multi-million-riyal contract are Oman Shapoorji Construction Co, Al Adrak Trading & Contracting, Galfar Engineering & Contracting, Modern Construction, Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC), and Larsen & Toubro (Oman). The six firms submitted firm offers in bids that opened earlier this week.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is financing the development of the harbour, which will come as a major boost to the wilayat's thriving fishing community. The facility will be built to accommodate a variety of fishing vessels of different capacities. According to offi-

cial, the Seeb harbour will be equipped to provide safe berthing and mooring facilities for around 200 small boats (skiffs) and 10 multi-purpose vessels. Envisioned in the second phase is an expansion of the harbour capacity to cater to an additional 50 skiffs, 10 multipurpose vessels and 200 bigger boats.

This phase will primarily cater to the Youth Vessels planned by the ministry — an ambitious public-private-partnership (PPP) designed to create a new modern fleet of fishing vessels, owned and operated by young, trained Omani fishermen. The contract calls for the construction of two breakwaters, the dredging of the harbour basin, and the construction of an entrance channel. Also planned as part of the harbour infrastructure are two pontoons in the

first phase, and a fixed berth for the Youth Vessels in the second phase.

In addition a land area of eight hectares will be reclaimed to provide space for the construction of harbour buildings, approach roads, vehicle and boat parking and other utility structures. The onshore infrastructure also includes fish auction halls, ice plants and cold storage facilities.

Development of the Seeb fish harbour is part of the government's Ten-Year Fisheries Sector Development Plan (TYFSDP), a comprehensive fishery harbour development programme for the entire country. The objective of the TYFSDP is to develop a modern fishery industry backed by a network of harbours, processing and market facilities.

Development drive in Oman hits top gear

Source: *Times of Oman* - 25 July 2006

Sheikh Abdullah bin Salim bin A'mer Al Rowas, minister of regional municipalities, environment and water resources, has signed 11 agreements worth around RO11.5 million for developmental works in various parts of the Sultanate.

The signing of the agreements is in line with the 36th Renaissance Day anniversary celebrations. The agreements signed with different contracting companies include six for upgradation and building of new interior roads, two for souqs, and one each for construction of sewerage network and sewage treatment plant (STP) in Sur; a pedestrian suspended bridge; and laying of underground cables.

The road projects have been commissioned in different wilayats in

the regions of Batinah, Dakhiliyah, Sharqiyah and Dahirah and will mostly be single carriageways.

A 100-m-long suspended pedestrian bridge will be built on the Khood Al Batah valley near Sur to connect nearby villages and it will be completed in 18 months. The souqs will come up in Masirah Island and Duqm.

According to Abdul Hakeem Al Zadjali, director-general of technical affairs at the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources, all these projects are aimed at improving the well-being of the people of the Sultanate.

For example, the development of the entrance of Mahout will ease the traffic congestion and enable

smooth movement of vehicles.

Similarly, the construction of the sewage treatment plant and sewage network in Sur will improve the quality of life and civic amenities in that town.

All these projects are part of the community service initiatives and add to the building of a modern Oman, which is the main aim of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the officials of the ministry said. These projects will in turn will improve the social structure, and increase the economic activity in the regions. The upgradation and building of new asphalted roads in the different wilayats are expected to contribute to the growth of tourism because many of these roads are part of the tourism locations.

Beautifying the capital

Source: *Times of Oman* - 23 July 2006

Muscat Municipality has made many enviable achievements during the past one year. Many new projects were implemented and many were taken up. Seeb airport flyover and bridge project is one among them.

The municipality began preparations for execution of this project by a company specialised in construction of main road projects. The project is designed according to the international standards and specifications applicable in this field. This is regarded as one of the vital projects, through which the municipality aims to lessen traffic jams for smooth flow.

The project works include construction of three lanes along Sultan Qaboos Street at the site of the airport roundabout, construction of a flyover as well as construction of roads for the surrounding road networks such as the airport road. The project also includes construction of extra parking lots, landscaping works and lighting works.

The Seeb International Airport roundabout is regarded as vital in Muscat Governorate, which makes the said project of great significance for smooth traffic flow, particularly after the completion of Al Mawaleh and Al Khoudh flyovers and bridges.

The project will be constructed in compliance with the most advanced traffic engineering criteria for maintaining the optimum traffic flow.

Construction work is going on in the southern and central highways, which link Muscat Governorate with the other governorates and regions. The Southern Highway will become the first alternative for Sultan Qaboos Street as it links the residential and industrial areas.

The central road project, which will link the South Al Ghubrah with Al Khuwair, Madinat Sultan Qaboos and Qurum 29, includes construction of a number of bridges and flyovers.

Work is also going on in Al Amerat/Bausher road, which is expected to be asphalted at the beginning of 2007. Currently, work is going on in Phase II of the project, which comprises 6km. Refilling and levelling works have already completed by the municipality in the 3-km Phase I of the project.

The project will shorten the distance between Al Amerat and Bausher and would ease traffic jams in addition to activation of tourism as it crosses mountainous areas and would provide a marvellous aerial view of Muscat city.

The construction works in Al Amerat/Quriyat dual road will begin in August through a tender to be awarded to one of the companies specialised in construction of such projects. The project construction works extend for 70km, which starts from Al Amerat Police Station roundabout to Quriyat-Sur road.

Work is also going on in the construction of Wadi Al Lawami dual road in the wilayat of Seeb, expected to be completed next November. The project aims at improvement of the eastern entrance of Seeb Souq area, which the project links to Al Mawaleh flyover and bridge.

The dual road begins from Al Khoudh flyover and bridge to the Wadi Al Lawami Souq and includes construction of a roundabout. The coastal road will be linked to Al Khoudh flyover and bridge through construction of this dual road.

The municipality has completed

preparation of designs and drawings of the coastal road (North Al Ghubrah/Azaiba). The project will be completed within the celebrations of the 36th National Day. The road extends from the area adjacent to Chedi Hotel in North Al Ghubra to Al Mansouriyah and crosses Khur Al Azaiba to end at Al Naejeel garden in Azaiba, where it joins the coastal road. The projects include car parkings along the roadside and other separate parking for the motorists as well as road lighting works.

Work is going on in Phase II of Muttrah coastal road after completion of Phase I of the project, last year. The project includes landscaping and beautification works at the coastal road in the wilayat of Muttrah.

Phase II of the project includes removal of the upper part wharf to be replaced with granite, which resists weather conditions and seawater impacts. The project also includes expansion of the car parks at the waterfalls and Al Inshirah restaurant areas.

The project comes within the municipality's keenness to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field of tourism. For this, the project comprises construction of tourism facilities in addition to modernisation of other facilities and improvement of infrastructure and landscaping projects.

The project works will be completed within the celebrations of the 36th National Day. Work is also going on for the Al Sahwah Park project in the wilayat of Seeb, which includes entertainment facilities and car parks at an area of over 250,000 square metres.

The project includes integrated ad-

vanced facilities, six gardens and a number of water fountains yard. It also includes rose gardens in attractive geometrical designs, a mosque, coffee shops, internal transport means among other facilities.

The municipality has completed the facilities required for a park in the wilayat of Quriyat between the villages of Dhabab and Bima and along the Quriyat-Sur road currently under construction.

The municipality has started construction of the facilities of this project since 18 months at an area of over 160,000 square metres.

The services recently completed at the said park include electricity and water supply and planting of shade and palm trees. The park now began receiving visitors.

The municipality has completed a project of a public park in Madinat Al I'alam in Qurm. The park includes different entertainment facilities, basketball and football grounds. The park includes a number of entertainment facilities, a fast food coffee shop, closed air-conditioned family areas as well as open-air family area among other facilities and services.

The municipality has carried out innovation works for a traditional souq and a tourism coffee shop in old Muscat city, which embraces

tourism and cultural landmarks such as Al Jalali and Al Mirani forts and the tourism facility of Al Bustan Palace Hotel.

The traditional souq displays silver works, antiques, pottery products, coffee shops and public facilities.

The project is designed similar to the pattern of the traditional architectural designs of the buildings of old Muscat.

Work on the renovation and rehabilitation of the fish market in the wilayat of Seeb will begin soon.

The project includes removal and replacement of the current roof of the fish market building, replacement of the front side of the building, demolition of the current fish sale outlets, to be built according to advanced specifications, establishment of platforms for fish slicing for 12 workers, exchange of the current sewage system, identification of fish wholesale areas, a coffee shop and health inspection office.

The project comes within the municipality's efforts to cope with the rapid construction and population growth in Muscat Governorate and to meet the requirement of the trade movement witnessed in fish market in the wilayat of Seeb.

Work is also going on in Phase II of improvement of construction envi-

ronment project for Muscat. This project includes construction of new residential units with new architectural designs in Mayabeen and Al Dalalil areas.

Phase II of the project includes construction of 10 residential units each at an area of 120 sq.metres

Work is also going on in Phase II of the social houses in the wilayat of Al Amirat for construction of 37 houses. Over 90 per cent of the construction works of the social houses have completed and shortly would be handed over to the owners.

The municipality is currently working for execution of Bait Al Baranda History Museum in the wilayat of Muttrah in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. The museum represents a cultural and tourism centre and heritage landmark, which showcases the deep-rooted history of Muscat by using advanced technology in the field of demonstration and display.

The museum will play a significant role in attracting tourists and researchers from within and outside the Sultanate.

The museum will focus on a number of aspects with regard to Muscat including its natural history, history of man, Muscat and the sea, heritage, modern Muscat and preservation of environment.

Health projects in north Batinah

Source: *Times of Oman* - 20 July 2006

The Health Ministry will be constructing five health centres in the north Batinah region at a total cost of RO2.5 million. The health centres will provide healthcare services for residential villages and areas in the wilayats of Sohar, Al Suwaiq, Al Khabourah, Saham and Liwa.

Al Owainat health centre in wilayat of Sohar is under construction at a cost of RO426,000. It will serve six villages. The centre is expected to provide health services to 16,454 people.

Al Sharisah health centre in the wilayat of Al Suwaiq will be con-

structed at a cost of RO410,000 and is expected to serve 15 villages and provide health services for a population of 22,891.

Al Qasabiyah health centre will be constructed in Al Khabourah at a cost of RO400,000, and expected to provide health services for five vil-

lages and a population of 19,539.

Hafeet health centre is under construction in the wilayat of Saham at a cost of RO400,000. The centre is expected to provide health services for six villages and a population of

14,808.

Nabar health centre in the wilayat of Liwa is under construction at a cost of RO398,000. The centre is expected to provide health services for six villages and a population of

9,636.

As per Ministry of Health statistics, the number of patients expected to benefit from the prime medical services is estimated at 80,000. — Oman News Agency (ONA)

EBS targets construction projects in Oman

Source: *Times of Oman* - 16 July 2006

Emirates Building Systems LLC (EBS), a subsidiary of Dubai Investments Industries, the industry arm of Dubai Investments, has announced the appointment of CEMEC Trading & Services to market its range of construction and engineering products in the Sultanate of Oman. A distributor agreement to this effect was signed recently between Fouad Arwadi, sales general manager, EBS; and Adil Salim Al Hooquani, chairman, CEMEC.

With this partnership, Emirates Building Systems will further extend its role in Oman's booming construction and real estate industry. The company had recently signed a prestigious contract in Oman with Carillion Alawi to engineer, fabricate and deliver 2,300 metric tonnes of steel, as part of the Phase II expansion of Muscat City Centre.

"By appointing CEMEC as our distributor in Oman, we will be better positioned to strengthen our market

presence in the Sultanate, which is witnessing significant developments in the construction sector.

"Over the years we have been involved in the construction of several landmark projects across the Middle East, and now we are glad to increase the availability of our high-quality pre-engineered metal and steel building structures in Oman through CEMEC," said Fouad Arwadi.

Al Hassan Electricals opens new showroom

Source: *Times of Oman* - 24 June 2006

Hassan bin Ali Salman, chairman of Al Hassan Group, has inaugurated the fifth showroom of Al Hassan Electricals Co. LLC in Al Khoudh.

Al Hassan Electricals already has its showrooms in Honda, Hamriya, Seeb and Ghubra. With the opening of the fifth showroom, Al Hassan expects to target the dealer and other business segments in and around Al Khoudh.

Al Hassan Electricals is known in the market as the one-stop destination for all electrical products. With 'customer focus' and 'project-based selling' as its buzzwords, it has been registering phenomenal growth since its inception in 1976, successfully meeting challenges on the way.

With five showrooms at strategic locations and a 160-strong dealer network spread over the country, supported by an experienced interior sales team and efficient warehousing/ inventory facilities, the company offers premium products at unbeatable prices.

Constant innovations, research and development in sourcing enable the company to offer the latest products to its clients. It holds exclusive distributorship rights from well-known manufacturers the world over. The product spectrum encompasses power and distribution transformers, medium and high-voltage cables, overhead line conductors, 11kV/ 33kV switchgears, power/control/ instrumentation cables, heat shrinkable cable accessories, switches, in-

door decorative light fittings/chandeliers, ceiling/exhaust fans, PVC conduits, building wires, energy meters, MCCBs and MCBs, earth leakage circuit-breakers, PG clamps, bimetallic lugs and LV/MV switchgear panels, power tools, pumps, water heaters and much more.

Al Hassan Electricals is part of the Al Hassan Group, a multi-million, multinational, 30-year-old professionally-managed diversified group, having business interest in contracting of EPC projects in oil, gas, power, water and petrochemical sectors; trading of power, oil, gas, water and petrochemical-based equipment and services, and manufacturing of low and medium voltage switchgear panels, lighting systems and paints.

Plans for \$1 billion Yiti and Shinas resorts firming up

Source: *Oman Observer* - 10 July 2006

Plans for the establishment of integrated tourism resorts at Yiti in Muscat Governorate, and Shinas on the Batinah coast, are making good headway, according to officials working with the project's promoters. Both resort properties are being promoted by Dubai Holding's international property development arm, Dubai International Properties, which was recently rebranded as 'Sama Dubai'.

Total investment in the two ventures, which are currently in the master planning stage, is estimated at \$1 billion. Conceived as unique lifestyle resorts with an Arabian flavour, the Yiti and Shinas projects will bear Sama Dubai's new global brand name for its planned chain of international tourism and leisure properties 'Salam Resort & Spa'. Both developments, covering an area of around 48 million square feet, will feature a number of 4- and 5-star beachfront hotels suitably designed to offer a combination of mountain, golf, spa and beach resort experiences.

In addition to golf courses, the properties will also be equipped to cater for a range of water sports and outdoor pursuits, including diving, sailing, and so on. Also envisioned are around 2,100 low-rise residential units comprising 1, 2, 3 and 4-bedroom apartments and villas, in addition to some 500 hillside townhouses.

Elements of Oman's rich culture and heritage will be incorporated in the design of these homes. A number of traditional-style souqs are also planned as part of these properties.

The multi-use resort and leisure developments stem from an agreement signed in April last year between Dubai International Properties and Oman's Ministry of Tourism, outlining plans for an integrated tourism resort at Yiti. In May this year, Currie & Brown, the leading international construction and management consultancy, announced that it was appointed as Cost Manager for Sama Dubai on behalf of the prestigious beach resorts. Currie & Brown

will provide cost, risk and value management services to link together all elements of the project.

Established in 1876, Currie & Brown is a global leader in construction cost, project, and risk management operating in over 50 countries. The company acquired Barker Barton & Lawson Ltd in June 2003 and is now one of the largest construction consultancies of its kind operating in the Middle East. The regional head office is in Dubai and in addition the company has offices in Muscat, Abu Dhabi and Doha.

Over the past year, Sama Dubai has unveiled a clutch of major property development and tourism projects that will place it in the big league of international-scale real estate developers. It includes Dubai Towers Doha, a commercial, residential and retail high-rise complex in the Qatari capital; Amwaj and Marina de Casablanca ambitious projects in Morocco; the Salam Beach Resort & Spa in Bahrain, and 'The Lagoons' in Dubai.

ADPi bags Seeb and Salalah airport contracts

Source: *Times of Oman* - 06 July 2006

French engineering and infrastructure specialist Airport de Paris Ingenierie (ADPi) has won a RO7.7 million (\$20 million) contract to provide project management consultancy services linked to the development of the Seeb and Salalah airports.

Envisaged at Seeb is a new passenger terminal designed to cater to 12 million passengers per year in the first phase up from a present capacity of around three million passengers.

In Salalah, a new passenger terminal of a capacity of around two million passengers per year is proposed, along with a new cargo terminal and associated infrastructure.

A joint venture of Cowi and Larsen Architects and Consulting Engineers has already commenced work on the design of the new airports under a contract worth RO 18.3 million awarded in May last year.

According to officials, Cowi and Larsen will work closely with the

new project management consultants ADPi to finalise detailed design plans for the new terminals at Seeb and Salalah. Construction of the new terminals is expected to be shortly put to tender, with a contractor likely to be selected before the end of this year.

With its selection as project management consultant, ADPi will bring to the project its vast experience in the design and development of airport platforms and major infrastructures around the world.