

WOMEN EXPO

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Market Report

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Dream big, be confident and dare to be different

Source: *Times of Oman*, 1 April 2009

The third 'Women in Business Conference 2009' focusing on 'The Global Marketplace - Opportunities and Challenges' was an exercise in inspiration and motivation for women to excel in their profession as well as personal development.

On the concluding day of the conference held at InterContinental Hotel yesterday, acclaimed speakers advised women to dream big and dare to be different. The session saw moving talks and interesting workshops.

The conference, held under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Aliya bint Thuwaini Al Said, was hosted by Envent, and event management and public relations company, in cooperation with the Business Women Forum of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Overjoyed with the success of the conference, Salma Al Hashmi, managing director, Envent, said: "I am delighted that the conference turned out to be such a huge success. The conference was an interesting mix - in the sense that it dealt with topics like micro-finance to work life balance."

Looking forward to the fourth edition of the conference, Salma said: "I am optimistic about 2010. Besides, I am glad that the 2009 conference has decided to establish online networking so that local as well as globally businesswomen can be in touch."

The second day began with Dr Lien Els, associate professor in Human Resources & Management, shedding light on 'how talented women thrive as leaders'.

Personal strategies

She provided an overview of a model for talented women to

thrive as leaders; she linked the dimensions in the model to examples of how it affected women leaders worldwide and thought about personal strategies for success.

She asked women to be self-aware and incorporate restorative elements into their day besides spacing out energy-sapping tasks and allowing time to focus without distractions.

Dr Lien Els said hard work would not be noticed if women don't find their own voice.

"You did the work, so you've got to talk about it," she said. Marina Mahathir, spokesperson for HIV/Aids and Women's Rights - Malaysia and International Steering Committee, Asia Pacific Leadership Forum on HIV and Development, made an inspiring presentation on "HIV/Aids: It's a women's business."

Explaining why HIV is women's business, she said: "Because, women are increasingly become infected with HIV."

Although three out of four adults living with HIV in Asia are men, the proportion of women living with HIV has risen from 19 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2007.

She pointed out that women infected with HIV in Thailand was 39 per cent, Cambodia 49 per cent, India 40 per cent and PNG 60 per cent. She also said 70 per cent of youth infected with HIV in Thailand are women and girls (15-24) and about 1/3 of new infections in Thailand are among women.

Stating that when a woman is infected, the entire family is affected, Marina said, adding that "women are often responsible for the welfare of family members, providing emotional, educational and childcare support. So when a mother or wife

is infected with HIV, family cohesion is at risk".

Marina said there was a need to provide greater training opportunities for women infected, affected and at risk of HIV/Aids.

"We need to establish partnerships and build coalitions, between women living with, affected by and at risk of HIV and local political leaders, men, businesses and religious organisations to improve prevention, treatment, care and support programmes for women and girls," Marina stressed.

Aids malice

Stressing that it is important for women to make HIV/Aids their business, she said: "If we don't, the Aids pandemic will continue to spread and women and young girls will be the most affected, which in turn, will leave families vulnerable to break-ups which will put communities under severe pressure." Martina Strake, head of design BMW Individual, explained about inside the BMW design.

Dr Fatma O Ali, owner and CEO, Emirates Medical Centre, spoke on 'meeting and beating: business challenges in the Arab world'. Asking women to stay connected, she said: "Take small amounts of time to socialise and set aside time each week to see friends".

Rashidah Ali Hamood Al Hamdani, chairperson, Women National Committee, spoke about the challenges facing Yemeni women entrepreneurship. Informing that women own approximately 10 per cent of Yemeni firms, she said: "Yemeni female entrepreneurs manage their businesses through on-job learning with minimum formal training."

Talking about women entrepreneurship in the AGCC, she said: "The AGCC countries are creating programmes to foster entrepreneurship among women and encourage their participation in the private business sector."

"Women in the AGCC countries are taking advantage of the new opportunities available for them," she added.

Rashidah said there was a need to ensure women's presence in public offices related to economic decision making.

"There is a need to activate the Five-Year Plan directions related to women in the promising economic sectors and strengthen linkages with media to combat gender stereotypes

and promote role models," she said.

Anne Hilton, founding member of Enterprise Works, a consultancy specialising in entrepreneurship development, access to finance and gender, South Africa, spoke about 'Women in business - the myths, the challenges and the power of change'

"The universal truth is that both men and women face challenges when seeking to start a business. Entrepreneurship is not an easy road to success for anyone, but for women there are additional challenges because of the gender biased constraints that they face," she said. Saying that women in business face

challenges wherever they live, she said: "As women we need to recognise the factors that undermine our economic options and join hands for change."

"Strong government support for facilities, strong and cohesive women's organisations which rally women and lobby for change and institutions that focus on demand based strategies to overcome some of the limitations faced by women, are essential features of the growth and opportunities for women entrepreneurs," she said.

Quoting a saying she had read from an article she said: "Women don't fail in business because of their multiple roles, they succeed despite them."

Women asked to contribute to financial and IT sectors

Source: *Times of Oman*, 31 March 2009

During this economic downturn women can make a significant contribution to improve the situation and their skills can best be utilised in the financial, banking, and IT sector, according to Dr Norraesah Mohammed.

She was delivering the keynote address at the 'Women in Business Conference 2009' at the Muscat InterContinental Hotel here on Monday.

The conference, which was attended by around 200 young businesswomen and entrepreneurs and which had "The Global Marketplace - Opportunities and Challenges" was inaugurated by HH Sayyid Asa'ad Bin Tariq Al Said, Representative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said.

The conference is run under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Aliya Bint Thuwainy Al Said in co-operation with the Business Women Forum of the Oman Chamber of Commerce

and Industry (OCCI).

Dr Mohammed said that it was during these times of economic downturns, brand innovations and creations were born and this was the best time that women can show that they are equal to the best.

She recounted how at the recent World Economic Forum at Davos in January this year, a consensus was reached among the delegates that had the Lehman Brothers been Lehman Sisters, the world would not have got into the mess it is now in today.

Earlier, Salma Al Hashmi, managing director of Envent, said Oman accords equal rights for men and women in all aspects and it is well known that His Majesty the Sultan has repeatedly called upon female citizens to lend full support to the development of Oman describing them as representing "half of Oman's potential."

She added that there were

now more than half a million students in Oman at the universities and private colleges, some of which have international affiliations. As a result, Oman now had some 30,000 graduates to be accommodated in Government and private sector industries, with women comprising a healthy proportion of those graduates. These are the business women of the future and it is with them and their male counterparts that the future development of Oman lies," she said.

"Women in Oman are key players in ensuring sustainable development and in shaping their communities and families. The participation of women in education, employment and decision-making has grown considerably over the last 10-15 years and has resulted in the emancipation of Omani women this century presenting an example for other Arab countries to follow," she added.

OCCI assures women entrepreneurs more support

Source: *Times of Oman*, 31 March 2009

Inspiring lectures, seminars and workshops by internationally-acclaimed women marked the first day of the two-day 'Women in Business Conference 2009' focusing on 'The Global Marketplace - Opportunities and Challenges', that opened at Muscat Intercontinental Hotel yesterday.

His Highness Sayyid Asad bin Tariq Al Said, representative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, was the guest of honour at the conference, which is into its third edition.

The meeting held under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Aliya bint Thuwaini Al Said, and hosted by Event Management and Public Relations company Envent in cooperation with Business Women Forum of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, saw participation of around 200 businesswomen, entrepreneurs and other delegates. Dr Rajiha bint Abdul Ameer bin Ali, minister of tourism, was among the dignitaries who attended the conference. It opened with Natasha bint Yayha Naseeb, OCCI board member and chairperson of Business Women Forum, reading out a speech by Khalil Abdullah Al Khonji, chairman, OCCI.

Al Khonji, in his speech, stated that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said was paying great attention to the welfare of

Omani women, and "as a result of this huge support and consideration, Omani women were able to establish and operate a number of economic projects."

Asking Omani women to intensify their efforts, Al Khonji said: "Women should continue to work to consolidate their presence in the available economic and investment fields."

Hoping that the conference would shed light on changing nature of world trade and business, Al Khonji said: "It will help find methods of confronting the challenges in a well advanced manner through the presentations of a bunch of renowned and specialised speakers."

He promised: "The Business Women Forum at the OCCI will make great efforts under the administration of the present board of directors to play a bigger role in improving the contribution of Omani businesswomen." "We will support her to take a leading role in the society, to realise her ambitions and ensure necessary support for her smooth performance to contribute to the national economy," he added.

Inviting all active businesswomen in various economic and trade sectors to join the OCCI Business Women Forum, he said: "We are well aware that the achievement of the targeted objectives will require joint works and cooperation between vari-

ous authorities of public and private sectors, especially from business women."

The conference also saw Women in Business award being announced. Kamla Ali Aufer of World Natural Stones won the 'Entrepreneur of the Year Award' and Abeer Al Mukhaini of Institute of International Education won the award for the 'Executive of the Year'.

The panel of judges who chose the winners were honoured on the occasion. They included Dr Ahmed Al Rawas, COO, Oman Mobile, Muneera Macki, HR director, Bank Sohar, Susanne Daniel, Pricewaterhouse Coopers & Majid Al Toky, manager, Trowers and Hamlin.

Speaking on the occasion, Salma Al Hashmi, MD, said: "The Women in Business Conferences has been a great forum for voicing the challenges women face when doing business in this country. This is our third year and I think we have now established ourselves as a powerful forum for women to learn, share and to inspire one another. I look forward to returning next year to a repeat performance."

The second session of the conference saw workshops, Maximising Potential, by Sally Burns, and How to Start Your Own Business by Samya Taroum.

Jet Airways extends discount for women

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 28 March 2009

Jet Airways has extended its special offer of 10 per cent discount on base fares for women who book tickets through their website to March 31, said Ragini Chopra, vice-president of the airlines.

The offer which became effective on March 25 is a re-introduction of the special offer for ladies announced as a part of 'Celebrating Womanhood' initiative which was valid from March 1 to March 15.

The 'Celebrating Womanhood' initiative of Jet Airways is being held in association with other partners. Apart from discount on fares, the airline is offering other concessions also to woman passengers.

Lady travellers who book tickets through the website of Jet Airways between March 1 and April 30 are eligible to participate in a draw which will offer valuable prizes to winners, she said.

During this promotion, Jet Airways is also raising a fund through its in-flight collections to support five NGOs working among women.

The airline will provide lady travellers a free pen with any

purchase from Jet Boutique, the in-flight duty-free shop, as well as a rebate on the purchase of any perfume, jewellery or cosmetics, till March 31. Details of the offer are available on the website of the airline.

Omani Women's Association launches campaign for youth

Source: *Times of Oman*, 26 March 2009

Omani Women's Association, in collaboration with Oman Air, has launched a campaign among the young people of Oman, aimed at shaping their lives by enforcing the value of time. This campaign is organized with the participation of Scouts and Guides of Sultan Qaboos University.

The campaign slogan that encourages young Omanis to seize the day and the logo that reminds them of the importance of time were also released at the launch.

Speaking on the occasion, Shukkoor Mohammed Al Gamari, chairperson of Omani Women's Association, said the campaign's main goal was to

help shape the lives of young people in Oman by enforcing the value of time.

Al Gamari said a study conducted by the Values of the Arab Community showed that 43 per cent of youngsters suffered from the problem of spare time. "This campaign aims at contributing effectively to this end by creating awareness amongst youngsters and giving ways to utilise time effectively to achieve positive results which will serve them and the country in general," Al Gamari added.

The campaign is being initiated by non-profit media establishment Rekaaz, based in Kuwait, and is organised in all the AGCC and other Arab countries

by local associations.

Mohammed Al Musafir, campaign coordinator, said a variety of promotional items, including a model and booklet of achievement, motivational youth stories for both males and females and an audio CD/cassette on tales of encouraging achievements, would be distributed free to youngsters during the campaign. All these publications would be distributed free among youngsters.

Waleed Al Abri, head of Scouts, pointed out that this campaign had chalked out various events in malls, universities and high schools, spread across the capital, to achieve its desired goals.

Meet focuses on women empowerment

Source: *Times of Oman*, 20 March 2009

A group of women from different walks of life came together on a common platform here last week where they debated over topics that had significance to all women in general.

The get-together was the latest installment of a series of events organised by Bareeq Al Shatti in association with Dar Al Atta'a, American Women Group and Gazelle Marketing LLC, as part of 'Celebration of Womanhood' month.

The select group of women

invited to the event discussed on many subjects ranging from women empowerment, uplift of rural women to the importance of women-led organisations.

"The empowerment of women and achieving gender equality permeates everything we do - our policies, programmes and investments," said Kemal Dervis, UNDP administrator.

"Gender equality and women's empowerment are human rights that lie at the heart of development and the achieve-

ment of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the progress that has been made, six out of 10 world's poorest people are still women and girls; less than 16 per cent of the world's parliamentarians are women; two thirds of all children shut outside the school gates are girls and, both in times of armed conflict and behind closed doors at home, women are still systematically subjected to violence," Kemal Dervis added.

That is why UNDP inte-

grates gender equality and women's empowerment in its four main areas of work - poverty alleviation, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery and environment and sustainable development.

The empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world.

Kemal said women were being continuously pushed to the forefront of small businesses today. From Bangladesh to Paris and from Nairobi to New York, an important growth in women entrepreneurs was noticeable. The profound structural changes taking place in the economies of the developed world provided new opportunities for women. Though manufacturing is in decline, services and information

industries are burgeoning.

"Traditional management methods and structures are proving ineffective in this period of rapid change and the ensuing disarray brought about by the globalisation of markets and competition, new technology, and instantaneous communications. As a result, new ways of thinking and doing are given a hearing.

"At such a juncture, the leadership style of women and their unique capacities and qualities appear especially valuable. Moreover, changing values and attitudes towards paid work also encourage some financially secure women to seek self-realisation outside the home. This emerging pattern in the West has found an echo in the developing world as well. In country after country, develop-

ment agencies have discovered the importance of women's contributions to the local economy and their potential as key actors in promoting sustainable development at the grass roots," Kemal Dervis concluded.

Shatha Abbas of Dar Al Atta'a and Susan Bagyura of American Women's Group were present at the discussion.

Speaking of Dar Al Atta'a, Shatha said though the organisation is not for women, it is an association that has been formed by women who wanted to make a difference to the society.

"This association is proof for women's commitment to the society," she said.

Others present at the event included Jane Jaffer, Emme Haunme, Anna Parker, Cluss Everard and Sahara Askalan.

Express love, devotion with Mother's Day collection

Source: *Times of Oman*, 15 March 2009

Damas, the leading international jewellery retailer in the Middle East, unveiled two stunning in-house creations that symbolise universal love for the woman that brought you into the world.

Expertly crafted in the most precious materials, the stunning pendant chains evoke the deepest emotions in every detail, making them fitting presents this Mother's Day.

Tawhid Abdullah, managing director of Damas, said: "We are pleased to present the limited edition Damas Mother's Day collection to those who are in search of the perfect gift for mothers this season. The new collection makes this occasion truly special as we adorn our beloved mothers with memorable creations that will forever remind them of our eternal love."

The special Mother's Day diamond pendant with chain is created in 18ct white or yellow gold. It is highlighted with choice diamonds, Mother of Pearl and adorned with semi-precious stones such as citrine, peridot, amethyst, rhodolite and blue topaz. Every detail in the exquisitely crafted piece evokes special meaning. Take for instance the heart shape and elegant engraving that reads 'Mother' in Arabic calligraphy to celebrate mothers' pure and unconditional love. The coloured stones signify a garden in spring that brings happiness while the diamond-encrusted butterfly represents prosperity.

The poetic assemblage is surrounded by Mother of Pearl which connotes 'Mother Nature' and 'Mother of All'. Taken as a whole, the pendant chain repre-

sents that special bond of love that we and our mothers share.

For mothers who have deep affinity with yellow gold, Damas has created a special piece - the Damas Mother's Day gold pendant as perfect present. Made of 18ct yellow gold and accentuated by cubic zircon stones in delectable colours, the elegant pendant takes the shape of a square and has at its centre a graceful engraving which means 'I am willing to sacrifice my life for you, mother' - a fitting ode to the most important woman in our lives.

Delight your mother with a truly special gift from the limited edition Damas Mother's Day pendant collection now available in select Damas outlets across the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Libya and Jordan.

A boost to Omani fashion scene

Source: *Times of Oman*, 10 March 2009

Oman's nascent fashion scene got a major boost yesterday with the Omani fashion events management company, Layali Al Asalah, inaugurating its own space after two years of its inception.

The Layali Al Asalah villa in Al Khuwair was opened under the patronage of Sayyida Sanaa' bint Hamad Al Busaidi, GM of the Directorate-General of Education.

The opening ceremony was marked by a fashion show, showcasing original Omani designs in jalabiyas, abayas and accessories such as handbags and clutches. It was supported by many citizens of Muscat who came to watch the show and encourage the young women in their enterprise.

Nadia Al Zakwani and Samah Al Wahaibi, the two entrepreneurial young Omani women who run Layali Al Asalah, are delighted at the opening of the villa, which will serve as an institute that en-

courages Omani women to make a career in the arts by providing them with information and resources.

Some rooms of the villa are being let out to Omani designers and entrepreneurs, where they may showcase their designs. The space will also host the regular workshops that Layali holds for Omani entrepreneurs who work out of home.

The Layali team points out that there are a lot of women who work informally in the fashion sector, but 80 per cent of them work from home. Layali strives to give those silent 80 per cent a voice.

Layali has so far held two fashion show competitions for Omani women, named 'Authenticity Speaks' at Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa, and both have had an overwhelming response. Winners of the competition have won scholarships to study in fashion institutes abroad.

"The aim of our shows was

to look for creativity among Omani designers. As a result of these fashion shows, some of our girls got scholarships to study fashion. They have been able to compete with fashion designers at an international level and have come back with prizes," said the organisers.

Past winners include Najla Al Kindi, who went to Monash University, Australia, to take lessons in jewellery design; Lubna Al Zakwani, who is currently studying at the French Fashion University (ESMOD) in Dubai, and Khatija Al Lamki who launched Oman's first branded abaya and is the recipient of 'Young Woman Entrepreneur' Award at the Oman Women Business Awards 2008.

Layali is the brainchild of two young ladies who believe in themselves, and who are working hard to convince people that Omani fashion is not a matter to be shrugged off, because it is out there earning laurels on the international catwalk.

Women's groups plan a month-long celebration of womanhood

Source: *Times of Oman*, 9 March 2009

Bareeq Al Shatti, in association with Dar Al Atta'a, American Women Group, Caribou Coffee and Gazelle Marketing LLC, have planned a 'Celebration of Womanhood' month.

"The Celebration of Womanhood is a one-of-its kind conclave, created with the intention of celebrating and enjoying the spirit of being a woman. It essentially hopes to pay a tribute to women. The purpose of Celebration of Womanhood is to bring together women, from many diverse communities, to

make it a national event," said Budoor Al Lawati of Bareeq Al Shatti at a press conference held here yesterday.

The announcement of the month-long celebration coincided with the International Woman's Day which falls on March 8 every year. Shatha Abbas of Dar Al Atta'a and Susan Bagyura of American Women's Group were also present at the press conference.

Celebration of Womanhood will feature various activities, promotions and meets that will

deal with various aspects concerning women. Keeping women in focus, an open discussion forum has been scheduled for March 18, which would cover a plethora of topics and subjects of importance and significance to women where, a select group of women will confer on a common platform. As a fitting finale and to commemorate the event, Charisma, a booklet will be launched on March 31. Charisma will focus on various niche issues, articles and stories about women achievers.

Celebration of Womanhood seeks to create a sense of harmony and to delve deeper on different ideas and views of women for the betterment of the society. The promotions and activities will also focus on woman who need improved education,

better facilities and also take a comprehensive look at projects that will raise awareness and increase mutual understanding.

Speaking of Dar Al Atta'a, Shatha Abbas said though the organisation is not for women, it is an association that has been

formed by women who wanted to make a difference to the society. "This association is proof for women's commitment to the society," she said.

Susan Bagyura spoke about how the American Women's Group was established.

... And they lived happily ever after

Source: *Times of Oman*, 26 February 2009

The Omani wedding ceremony is a combination of traditions and customs. And wedding dance is an integral part of the wedding.

The most fascinating thing about Omani wedding is that it follows a series of meaningful traditions that have been passed on from one generation to the next.

Those who had come to witness the 'Omani wedding enactment' event organised by the American Women's Group's (AWG) at the Omani Women's Association in Qurum on Tuesday got a rare chance to not only participate in a wedding celebration, but also carry back experience and knowledge.

The American Women's Group's (AWG) charity event titled 'Omani Night', a fund-raising event, showcased true Omani tradition where those present experienced the enactment of the henna night, the wedding, music, dance and also authentic Omani cuisine served in a Bedouin ambience.

Apart from that they also got lessons on how a groom

dresses for a wedding as well as how to wear the mussar.

Author and poetess Nasra Al Adawi explained how the wedding ceremony is a symbol of the rich cultural heritage of the country.

Speaking of the event, Emmee Haun, president of AWG, said: "When I came in as the AWG president in September I asked myself what it is that I want to see as an expat. I had never been to an Omani wedding and thought we should try to enact one so that expats could see what exactly happens.

Stating that it had been a lot of hard work to put together the event, Emmee said: "We had great people who helped us. We started in October but it was during the past few months that everything came together.

"The event is open to all though but mostly AWG members are here tonight. We are happy with the response."

Layla Salva, a dancer from Latin America, who witnessed the celebration, said: "I really liked the exchange of cultures. I was able to identify with this cul-

ture. I particularly liked the dances performed. The music touched one's heart too."

For Oman Rahma Adullah Al Ismaily it was a new experience. "Even though I am an Omani, I witnessed, for the first time, traditions that I was not aware of."

For Richard Spiteri from Canada, the ambience was impressive.

"It was an enjoyable experience. It was brilliant to know what the Omani culture is like. We live here, we may as well know what the culture is like," he said.

Reiter said the experience was very interesting and very diverse. "It was fascinating to find out this culture. It was quite amazing."

Fairouz Asfour, board member of AWG, was glad that the event was successful. "We have been making preparations for this event for quite some time now. I found it really successful and amazing. Everything turned out to be really good. The band, the performance, two brides and the groom," she said.

American Women's Group to host Omani Night on Tuesday

Source: *Times of Oman*, 21 February 2009

American Women's Group (AWG) will organise the charity event of the year as Omani Night on Tuesday Omani Women's Association in Qurum.

This fund-raising event will showcase a true Omani tradition where attendees can experience an enactment of the henna night, of the wedding, perform-

ers with music and enjoy authentic Omani cuisine served in a Bedouin ambience. All attendees are encouraged to dress up in Omani attire and to mix and

mingle with our friends of the host nation.

"Amouage, our preferred perfumery company, is presenting each guest with an exquisite door gift. We will have a charity raffle with prizes such as two return economy air-tickets to selected European destinations on

Qatar Airlines, the official airline for Omani Night, and two glamorous Damas Forever Love diamond necklaces from Crème de la Crème. Dinner vouchers and other fabulous prizes await the lucky winners. The organising committee has been working very hard to make this event a

success," the organisers said.

Tickets for the charity event can be had from Cindy Lundberg (99800305). Tickets are priced at RO10 for AWG members (two at this price) and RO12 for non-members for advance purchase. Ticket prices will increase at the door.

Beauty and Womanhood show from today

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 16 February 2009

Nissan and Infiniti plans to celebrate beauty with a special two-day Beauty and Womanhood show at Qurum showroom today.

It will all start with the arrival of women guests around 5.30 in the evening on Feb. 16.

A lavish fashion show, featuring some of the top models in Oman, will take the audience through some specially de-

signed classy costumes. Apart from Nissan Qashqai, Murano, Tiida and Infiniti EX, the evening will be filled with offers for women, from Kaya Skin Clinic, Damas Jewellery, VLCC and Al M'ara, the glossy Women's magazine.

"Bringing together women is most interestingly done by bringing together products and services women love," said a se-

nior spokesman for Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), the importers of all Nissan and Infiniti vehicles into Oman.

The programme will run over two evenings - on Feb. 16 and 17.

"We see great importance in women as decision-makers. This is our tribute to womanhood and beauty," added the SBA spokesman.

30 Omani women take part in Amideast's career fair

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 11 February 2009

As many as 30 Omani women participated in a career fair organised by America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (Amideast) on Monday that enabled them to learn about job opportunities for secondary school graduates in a variety of sectors ranging from tourism and hospitality to banking, according to a press release.

The event comes at the end of the four-month 'Developing women's career and leadership skills' programme funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. "These women are highly energetic and have great potential, and they resemble the Omani hard working character" said Maimuna Al Sulaimany, senior manager, regulatory strate-

gies and relations at Oman Mobile, expressing her deep appreciation for the programme and Amideast's initiative in organising the event. "If I had a project for 30 people, I would have taken all of them."

"I have just completed my CV and I am excited about distributing it and meeting with possible employers," said one of the participants. "This is a great chance to learn about interviewing and looking for jobs," said another.

The 'Developing women's career and leadership skills' programme has reached women who have not had the opportunity to pursue higher education and who have faced challenges in finding employment. Now in its final month, the programme

has included intensive English language instruction, IT training, a variety of sessions dedicated to job-skills development, role-playing and project work, and presentations by women professionals representing a variety of careers.

"We are very pleased to see how these women have become empowered as a result of this programme," said Matthew Pizzorno, Amideast English language instructor. "They have improved their English language skills, learned how to use the computer, and gained knowledge about the working world."

"There is a big change in the level of confidence of the participants," added Christiana Duke, another Amideast English language instructor.

Workshop on empowering women from February 10

Source: *Times of Oman*, 8 February 2009

A workshop titled 'Creating Successful Social Relations' will be conducted on February 10 and 11 at the conference hall of the Omani Women's Association (OWA) from 6.30pm to 9.30pm. It is open to the public.

It will be conducted by eminent trainer and Kuwaiti social councillor Ayesha Al Lughani, who is also a Human Resource Development Academy (HRD Academy UK) certified trainer.

Aimed at empowering women, it is organised by Al Jazeera Training, in association with Innovation Group, as part of the Muscat Festival 2009.

Another workshop on 'Dis-

cover your powers and unleash your creativity' was held recently, as a part of the Muscat Festival, under the guidance of the Muscat Municipality.

The two-day workshop was organised by Al Jazeera Training in association with Innovation Group LLC. It was conducted by Noora Shaaban, a well-known Saudi entrepreneur and Cambridge certified trainer.

So far, Noora has trained more than 3,500 women in the AGCC states. The workshop was held under the auspices of Her Highness Dr Muna bint Fahad Al Said.

The workshop aimed at providing women with the tools

needed to excel in any walk of life, especially self-development. Some of these tools that were given to the participants included 'The path to success', 'Creating yourself before managing yourself', 'Effective planning to achieve your goals', 'Successful communication skills in spite of differences', 'Internal motivation and concepts of creativity through interacting with the participants'.

The workshop was meant for woman desirous of excelling in the world of distinguished women. It was conducted in Arabic to maximise the benefits for the local population and admission was free.

Women's League from tomorrow

Source: *Times of Oman*, 3 February 2009

The Oman Cricket Club has decided to go full steam to prepare the national under-19 women's team to display a better performance in international games conducted by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), revealed OCC official Madhu Sampat yesterday.

It may be recalled that an Oman's under-19 women's team had participated in the First ACC tournament in Chiang Mai (Thailand) recently. The team managed by Vaishali Jesrani and coached by Rakesh Sarma had entered the fray more or less under-prepared and had no match exposure prior to the tour. Despite this, the team performed admirably by batting through the entire 25 overs or close in all the games, an achievement which was commendable.

Learning from the mistakes made during the tour and

analysing the performance and what the team lacked in, both the manager and coach had proposed to the OCC that substantial match exposure be provided to the girl players such that they understand the nuances of the game better than they did during the tour.

"The OCC has been kind enough to accept our request," said Vaishali, who is very thankful to the OCC for their support and encouragement. She added: "A domestic tournament of this kind will certainly help nurture the girl players in addition for more talent to surface."

Coach Rakesh suggested that such domestic tournaments can help in the technical points such as improvement in the running between the wickets, stealing of quick singles, correct direction to throw to run out batsmen, and an overall improvement in their cricketing abilities

at such high levels. The girls too are also bubbling with enthusiasm and looking forward to such cricket exposure claimed both Vaishali and Rakesh. The OCC has also done well to add another high level coach in the form of Ikhtiar Kazmi, who will perform his duties along side Rakesh.

The OCC has formatted a Four-School League for the girls which will commence tomorrow at the PDO ground starting at 1.20pm. The four schools who have agreed to contest in the first of its kind tournament, of 25-over-a-side are Indian School Gubhrah (ISG), Indian School Muscat (ISM), Indian School Darsait (ISD) and American British Academy (ABA). The same rules of ACC, which applied to the ACC tournament in Chiang Mai, will be in force in the League in which two points will be awarded to the winning team

of each game, one point for a tie or no result and zero for the losing team. At the end of the League phase the top two teams will clash again in the final.

The OCC, in order to provide more games is contemplating to play more matches between the teams such as the team placed in the third position to play the fourth placed team in the League and the winner of this game to clash against the losing finalist.

Later a combined team from

the second, third and fourth placed teams will play a game against the champion team.

This game will also allow the tournament selection panel comprising Vaishali, Rakesh and Ikhtiar to select players. This will ensure that both the clashing teams will incorporate the best players and will play the strongest teams on the cards thus making the game highly competitive.

The possibility of staging these last few games after the

final will depend on the summer weather, availability of players, ground and umpires. All efforts will be made to make these games possible as such exposure will lead to better preparation for the next international tournament.

The first game of the league will be played between ISG and ISM. Both teams have been advised to report at the ground by 12.45pm to enable the organisers to start and complete the match on time.

Damas celebrates legacy of love with 'Valentine masterpiece'

Source: *Times of Oman*, 31 January 2009

Damas, the world-renowned jeweller, presents a special dedication to love - its new Valentine masterpiece.

Combining 18k white and yellow gold adorned with the finest handpicked diamonds and mother-of-pearl, this splendid jewel is designed to win your beloved's heart and make a strong impression towards those you hold dear, says a press release received from Dubai.

"Damas brings together a host of the most precious materials in a fusion of harmony and shapes, backed by craftsmanship of the finest kind. What makes the Valentine masterpiece so much more appealing is that it's shaped to offer several hearts at the same time, with the innermost heart entirely packed with gold. This offers a blend of various textures to the

jewel and sets it apart as one of the emotive creations of the season. The subtle use of diamonds also enhances its wearability at all times of the day," commented Tawhid Abdulla, managing director of Damas Jewellery.

Inspired by love's myriad wonders, Damas' new Valentine masterpiece celebrates its timeless beauty and honoured place in our lives with a creation that brilliantly captures its many eloquent qualities. Strung on a dazzling 18k yellow gold chain this utterly feminine jewel portrays the power of love in a highly textured yellow gold heart positioned at its very centre that epitomises the proverbial 'heart of gold' which has the allure of freshly mined gold ore.

The design house thereafter defines this 'heart of gold' with a

bold outline in luminous mother-of-pearl, which is further defined by yet another outline, this time in highly polished yellow gold. This striking and attractive design is linked to the chain by a smaller, heart-shaped design in 18k white gold that is closely lined by round brilliant diamonds totalling .07 carats.

The interesting blend of materials and their varied colours and textures as also the play of light given off by their natural glow combines to present one of the most fitting testimonies to love that is sure to turn the tide in your favour! Win your love over this Valentine's Day or just celebrate the magic of love with Damas' Valentine masterpiece, now available in most Damas shops in the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, KSA and Kuwait.

Sara Studio's 3-day winter collection exhibition opens

Source: *Times of Oman*, 31 January 2009

Sara's Design Studio opened the three-day winter collection exhibition at the Centre for Performing Arts in Al Khuwair

yesterday.

The exhibition which concludes today, showcases smart casuals, long tunics, capris,

churidar suits, fabrics, semi-formals, sarees and embroidered salwars.

According to Anjum

Kamdar, managing director of Sara Design Studio, the exhibition promises customers a taste of wonderful rich colours meant for the season. "Apart from the variety of collections to choose from, there are wonderful rich colours meant for the season," Anjum said.

Tahera Kamdar, fashion consultant of Sara Design Studio, who was also present, said that the exhibition offers many figure flattering silhouettes. "For those

who follow fashion trends, but might not always fit into the fashion itself, this winter offers many figure flattering silhouettes," she said.

Asked about the new trends in the market, Tahera noted that blouses are showing their soft feminine side. "They are being fashioned from great soft materials. Ruffles and bows, the feminine styles are so in this season, it's hard not to love ruffles

and bows. Raw heavy silk blouse are also big, belted at the waist, and fall longer at the hip than last season," she noted.

Tahera pointed out that the exhibition largely focuses on the embroidery styles in India that are the rage in the international markets.

"Indian embroidered garments are all the rage now in the international markets, and on the ramps the world over," Tahera added.

Exhibition unveils wonders of Turkish jewellery

Source: *Times of Oman*, 27 January 2009

Wonders of Turkish Jewellery', an exhibition that presents the art works of prominent jeweller Avedis Kendir, opened at the showroom of JK Enterprises LCC at Al Asfoor Plaza in Qurum yesterday.

The three-day exhibition is jointly organised by the Turkish embassy and Ramesh Khimji, chairman of RK Group of Companies, and was attended by the ambassadors of various countries, well-wishers and dignitaries. The exhibition explores marvels of traditional jewellery-making in Turkey, which has its glorious roots in the Ottoman Empire.

"I am happy to be here in Muscat and present my 100 pieces in front of a lovable

Omani crowd. This is my first trip to Muscat and I am honoured to be here," Avedis Kender told *Times of Oman*.

Avedis' unique creations are all reflections of the taste of the Ottoman eras, not only in the sense of design but also with regard to the traditional technique of jewellery production, which is done by the miraculous hands of artisans.

Ottoman Palace in Istanbul has been the main source of the manual artistic industry under the auspices of Ottoman Sultan. "I am happy to be associated with the Turkish embassy in promoting Turkish culture in this part of the region," Ramesh Khimji said.

Engin Turker, ambassador of Turkey, thanked Ramesh Khimji

for extending his support to this exhibition and lauded Avedis for keeping alive the tradition and unique quality of Ottoman jewellery making.

"I would like to thank my dearest friend, Ramesh Khimji, who has wholeheartedly supported us in making this wonderful exhibition a success. Avedis is no doubt a genius...and there is no other person who is as good as him to promote the rich Ottoman culture," Turker said.

Avedis has elegant showrooms in London, the United States and Istanbul, and his works of arts to be presented at the exhibition is a verification of the continuation of the rich heritage. The exhibition will be open from 9am to 1pm and from 4:30pm to 9pm.

VLCC launches unique Family Card

Source: *Times of Oman*, 22 January 2009

VLCC, the Middle East's premier beauty, scientific slimming and preventive healthcare brand, launched the unique VLCC 'Family Card' at its Muscat Centre at Shatti Al Qurum yesterday.

Shoukur Mohammed Salim

Al Ghamari, president of Omani Women's Association, launched the unique card.

Sandeep Ahuja, CEO, VLCC International, presided over the launch in the presence of several other dignitaries.

Speaking on the innovative

concept of Family Card, Sandeep said the card offered exclusive services at a preferential rates.

"VLCC is pleased to introduce 'Family Card' in Oman. The one-of-its-kind card offers a unique opportunity to all family

members to experience the exclusive bouquet of services from VLCC at preferential rates. Our loyalty card, coupled with our world-class range of services, extends unbeatable value to our patrons," he said.

This family card is a special card that has preloaded VLCC services with added value, especially customised for families. For only RO200, the entire family can enjoy RO400 worth of VLCC services.

Sandeep further noted that

VLCC's approach was to provide unique solutions - a holistic and scientific approach in addressing the mind and body, and oriented towards transformation.

"The VLCC approach focuses on long-term solutions that address the core of the problem rather than just its outward manifestations," Sandeep said.

Globally, VLCC has nearly 150 centres, spread across 70 cities in India and at other overseas locations. Having success-

fully operated seven centres in the UAE over the last few years, VLCC recently expanded its presence in the AGCC region by opening its first centre in Oman at Shatti Al Qurum.

VLCC also manufactures and retails the exclusive VLCC Personal Care line of over 100 herbal/ayurvedic skincare, haircare and bodycare products as well as a range of functional foods like fortified honey and isabgol - a dietary fibre supplement.

Dar Al Atta'a, MEPI to hold workshop on 'Empowerment of Omani women' today

Source: *Times of Oman*, 3 January 2009

Dar Al Atta'a, in association with the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), will inaugurate today a workshop on 'Empowerment of Omani women' to train low-income women on how to plan small projects.

The workshop will be open to all Omani women who wish to use their free time for productive activities in their own houses in

order to increase their income and participate in the national production.

The workshop will be a good opportunity for any ambitious woman to realise her dreams and make a quantum leap in her life and build experience and self-confidence.

Dar Al Atta'a extends its thanks and gratitude to MEPI for

its support and for training 100 Omani participants. It also expresses its thanks to Omani Women's Association in Muscat for offering its lectures hall for the workshop.

Omani women, who wish to participate in the workshop, may contact Dar Al Atta'a for registration or more information at 24699692.

Salam Stores unveils new concept store

Source: *Times of Oman*, 23 December 2008

Salam Stores has officially unveiled its new concept store '4 U' which brings the world's luxury perfumes and cosmetics under one roof.

Situated in the plush environs of Qurum City Centre, the store will offer a unique shopping experience. With the combi-

nation of elegant lighting and well spaced perfumery area, one can now browse through world renowned brands.

'4 U' is a beauty retail concept for the urbane Oman. It is one-stop shop for perfumery, cosmetic and skin care with brands from the world's perfum-

eries and leading cosmetic houses such as Chanel, Lancome, La Prairie, Dior, Clinique and many more world-class brands.

The new '4 U' store has a vibrant and innovative ambience, surpassing the expectation of its customers.

GCC women parliamentarians' regional meeting begins

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 22 December 2008

The Third Regional Meeting of the GCC states' women par-

liamentarians and leaders was opened at the Muscat

InterContinental Hotel under the auspices of Her Highness Dr

Sayyida Muna Bint Fahd Bin Mahmoud Al Said here on Sunday.

Chairmen of the State Council and Majlis A'Shura and ministers were also present on the occasion.

The two-day meeting, in which women parliamentarians and leaders from the GCC states and Yemen (monitor status) are taking part, is discussing several issues related to women parliamentarians, the media and women's associations, women's role in national and social fields.

The themes and working papers of the meeting which is organised by Majlis A'Shura in collaboration with the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) will provide the international expertise on topics presented by

the women parliamentarians.

Muna Bint Fahd Al Said stated that hosting of this regional meeting of the GCC woman parliamentarians and leaders by the Sultanate stems from its belief in supporting and making successful the GCC march to realise further achievements in all spheres.

Muna Bint Fahd Bin Mahmoud Al Said appreciated the great efforts made by women for development in all spheres. She added that the GCC and Arab women have set examples of work, dedication and efforts in all spheres.

"The Omani woman, thanks to the Royal attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, has received maximum care which enabled her to support the comprehensive con-

struction efforts in Oman," she said.

Abdul Qadir Bin Salim Al Dhahab, Secretary-General of Majlis A'Shura, said that organising the meeting by the Majlis A'Shura signals a joint cooperation between the Majlis and the International Parliamentary Union, especially after the Sultanate joined the international body.

Samirah Bint Mohammed Amin Bin Abdullah, Member of the State Council and head of the Sultanate's delegation to the meeting, said the meeting is a good opportunity to ascertain the role of women in political and parliamentary activities in the GCC states. She thanked His Majesty the Sultan for the full and continuing support to the Omani women.

BankMuscat extends support to businesswomen

Source: *Times of Oman*, 14 December 2008

BankMuscat, leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, has extended a helping hand to Omani women as part of its efforts to encourage the development of entrepreneurial skills.

The presence of Al Wathbah (a big leap for small business), BankMuscat's comprehensive suite of lending solutions for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), was perceptibly felt at Al Mar'a Festival, which evoked good response from women across all segments. Al Wathbah supported the annual women's festival as a key partner.

Abdul Nasir Al Raisi, head-SME Programme Lending, BankMuscat, said: "The role of women in nation-building was amply demonstrated at Al Mar'a Festival, which was an ideal opportunity to interact with existing and potential women business

entrepreneurs and discuss the way forward with regard to their projects. BankMuscat's support to such events is in line with the commitment to contribute to developing the small & medium enterprise sector in the Oman. As the nation's leading bank, BankMuscat is in the forefront of utilising every opportunity to assist citizens in its efforts to develop the SME sector."

Al Wathbah presently offers six product categories - Working Capital Finance, Equipment Finance, Receivables Finance, Import Finance, Contract Finance and Credit Card Receivables Finance. Small commercial establishments with an annual turnover less than RO250,000, that are looking to grow their businesses, can receive Al Wathbah assistance up to RO100,000 in funding.

Fully realising the important

role played by SMEs in the economic development of Oman, BankMuscat provides the required support to them. The BankMuscat support stems from the strong belief that SMEs help boost the local economy, contribute to the GDP and create employment opportunities. BankMuscat not only provides funding but also training, counselling and sponsorship to SMEs.

The SME Credit and Marketing Department of BankMuscat has been very dynamic in financing businesses and strengthening the SME foundation in Oman. Notably, the SME Department initiated a consultancy project with International Finance Corporation (IFC), the financial arm of World Bank, and has implemented recommendations to improve its SME services.

Babyshop opens 7th branch in Sur

Source: *Times of Oman*, 5 December 2008

The latest branch of Babyshop was opened in Sur last week amidst great excitement and fun. The new outlet is situated in the Shariya area, next to the Toyota showroom.

The simple but elegant inauguration was made even more memorable for the Sur residents with a lot of balloons, freebies and school bags for all the customers who purchased on the launch day. In addition, there was face painting and cartoon characters moving around the store making it colourful and lively. Sur is Landmark Group's 7th Babyshop in Oman.

A unique concept store, catering to the formative years of a child and the needs of a mother, Babyshop has revolutionised re-

tailoring for children and mothers by understanding the needs and delivering products and services in a pleasant and fun filled environment. The new store is spread over approximately 7,000 square feet, featuring a smart look.

It offers a specialised retail experience to all customers who will not only benefit from the flexibility and accessibility of being able to satisfy all their children's shopping requirements under one roof, but will also enjoy the whole experience as well.

The store has been designed with both customers and their children in mind; the sense of appeal accentuated by the large aisles that offer a bright

and spacious environment which is both appealing to children and adults alike. Babyshop holds all the latest designs in baby fashions at affordable prices, all designed by specialist designers.

On the sidelines of the inauguration, Saibal Basu, general manager, Landmark Group-Oman, said: "We are hoping that the Babyshop in Sur will become a destination of choice for all mothers who want their children to feel good in regard to their appearance. Doing so gives the kids confidence. We are pleased to apply our years of retail experience and a strong, scalable platform to help Babyshop continue to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing retail environment."

MPH launches women's healthcare programme

Source: *Times of Oman*, 2 December 2008

The Muscat Private Hospital (MPH) managed by United Medical has launched a unique healthcare programme named Women's Health Services (WHS) which is a one-stop service covering all areas of women's health. The programme was launched at a function here on Monday.

Gary Dorahy, country manager of the hospital, said that the aim of WHS was to promote, maintain and restore physical and emotional well being of the women of all ages.

The WHS would actually coordinate various services existing in the hospital, he said. Gary said the specialist doctors and nurses at the hospital would collaborate closely to provide best possible care to women affected by various problems, including high-risk pregnancies and gynaecologic cancers.

"We offer a full health service which is individually tailored to each woman's specific requirement based on age, family history and lifestyle and pre-existing conditions," said Dorahy.

WHS gives emphasis on taking steps to help women prevent illness or diagnose it at the earliest so that the treatment could be most successful, he said.

Those women with sensitive health issues could make use of general WHS, he said.

Arif Jahan, who described the services of obstetrics and gynaecology department, said the services being provided by the department as a part WHS will include general gynaecology care, obstetrics, assisted conception unit and IVF, breast care, cosmetic surgery, managing menopause and general health screening.

On the services being provided by paediatrics department, Gary said the department provided comprehensive care for children from birth to adolescence.

The caesarean and high risk deliveries were being attended by consultant paediatricians. The hospital has a well equipped neo-natal intensive care unit with facilities for neo-natal ventilation, he said.

All new born babies were being examined by expert consultants of the hospital before discharge and one week after discharge, Gary said.

The baby clinic and immunisation clinic at the hospital were functional on six days a week, he said. The other facilities being provided at the hospital included ancillary services like laboratory radiology and physiotherapy.

Omani women's creativity to the fore at Dar Al Atta'a Eid exhibition

Source: *Times of Oman*, 1 December 2008

A two-day Eid exhibition, organised by Dar Al Atta'a Association, opened at Al Noor Hall, Al Noor Plaza, in Madinat Sultan Qaboos yesterday.

Her Highness Sayyida Amaal bint Turki Al Said was the guest of honour.

The exhibition, which is in its fifth edition, hosts 40 stalls, stocking a variety of creations by women.

While the proceeds collected from selling tables for those exhibiting their products will go to Dar Al Atta'a, the exhibition is meant to be a platform for upcoming and established women entrepreneurs to showcase their creations. Well-known showrooms have opened their stalls at the exhibition.

Hand-woven embroidery jalebeeyes, stunning abayas, swarsoki-studded shailafs, colourful lihafs, designer jewellery, silver and stone-studded jewellery, perfumes, bakhoor, utensils, food, watches, children's clothes etc are the items that offer customers good options while shopping.

Stating that the exhibition was also aimed at providing a "one-stop shopping opportunity"

for the coming Eid, Shatha Abbas, spokesperson for Dar Al Atta'a explained: "This is our fifth Eid exhibition. Every exhibition has been better than the previous. We usually used to have the exhibition for Ramadan's Eid, but a lot of the women entrepreneurs were asking if we could hold it again. Based on their demand we decided to have this for Eid too."

The exhibition has an entrance fee and runs between 10am and 1pm and from 4pm and 8pm. The organisers have also been encouraged by the footfall registered at the previous exhibition.

"For the Ramadan Eid exhibition we registered a footfall of over 1,000 people," says Shatha.

"We at Dar Al Atta'a feel good to promote young entrepreneurs who are just establishing themselves. We have been encouraged by the fact that women who were operating from their homes during the last Eid exhibition have now registered under their new names and now own shops," added Shatha.

She also said that Dar Al Atta'a raised around RO6,000

the last time around.

"The stalls and the shops are offering something special. There are discounts for the visitors," she added.

After visiting all the stalls, a very impressed Sayida Amaal said: "I was very happy that I was able to see a lot of lovely things. I am proud of the Omani girls showcasing their creations. I think they are very courageous in becoming entrepreneurs and coming up with brilliant ideas. I thank the people behind Dar Al Atta'a for having conceived the concept of the exhibition."

The wife of the Jordan ambassador, who found the exhibition a wonderful thought, said: "It is not the first time for Dar Al Atta'a to have organised such a charitable event. I have attended almost all their events. These exhibitions talk a lot about the calibre and talent of the Omani women."

Maryam Al Zadjali, chairperson of Dar Al Atta'a, said the exhibition was aimed at making Eid shopping a comfortable experience for families.

"It also serves the purpose of charity and that makes us very happy," she said.

Fashionistas make a bold statement

Source: *Times of Oman*, 1 December 2008

Basma Al Harthi, Huda Al Riyami and Nasra Al Atabi took the first three places at the Costumes Designing Competition (theme toys and celebrities) organised by the Fashion Design Department at Higher College of Technology on Sunday.

The costume choice of Basma Al Harthi, who won the first place, was the Puzzle. Huda Al Riyami's costume

choice was that of Robin Hood. Nasra Al Atabi took on the character of Joker.

A large number of the audiences were students who plan to enroll in the ESMOD programme for the next year.

Incidentally, for enrolling in the programme, Fashion Design Department at the Higher College of Technology will begin accepting new applications in May

2009.

"The details on Basma's gloves, head, and even her boots were impressive. The likeness of the character Huda represented to the legendary figure who is an iconic celebrity appearing in movies and books; his bow and arrows, hat and shoes as well as clothes which were all Huda's work made her stand out. Nasra dazzled too,"

said Lara Ayoub, head of Fashion Design Department.

Award of Appreciation was also handed to Nasra for her dedication in helping all the students by preparing short videos of the characters that played in the background during the competition.

The prizes were distributed by Dr Obaid Al Bou Saidi, dean, who also headed the seven-member jury consisting of heads of various departments in the college, teachers with inkling for fashion. Salim Al Habsi, head of the fashion committee, Ministry of Manpower, attended the event.

The dean congratulated all the girls and assured them that all the students who participated were winners for the outstanding effort they put in. The students

were applauded for coming up with spectacular creations in just two days time. Outside the class caravans, the students displayed their most recent project like the long pleated skirt and belt, which were hand made.

The displays proved that the students were serious about their education and were capable of producing made-to-measure garments, which like architecture, begins on paper with numbers, calculations and line building. All in all, 18 students participated in the first competition, which marked the start of an annual event for the capital, as this event is a reoccurring practice in all ESMOD branches around the world and the theme changes yearly.

Next year's event is expected to be bigger and better,

as new students will join the programme making the department body larger.

The judges and audience said that they were completely absorbed by the fashion show as well as entertained by the creativity. Teachers Bissan Nahle and Shirin Boukhary played a crucial role in making the event a success. Bissan teaches fashion design or the techniques of drawing models and how to transfer the sketch into a technical drawing for pattern making, and how to identify trends as well as create mood boards. Shirin was very integral in helping the students develop their costumes. She teaches pattern drafting or the technique of constructing a pattern in order to cut, sew and put together the final piece.

Abeer Ali, Salwa Abdullah attend Women's Forum for Economy and Society in France

Source: *Times of Oman*, 29 November 2008

As part of Microsoft's engagement to develop both diversity and citizenship programmes aligned with the European policy agenda, two young women, - Abeer Ali Al Mukhaini, project manager of the Women in Technology (WIT) programme, Oman Women's Association (OWA), and Salwa Abdullah Al Jabri, a graduate of the WIT programme - participated in the Women's Forum for Economy and Society held in Deauville, France recently.

The conference brought together top women executives and leaders from politics, culture and society and provided a unique platform for them to come together and highlight issues they face in business, particularly in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, as well as solutions to overcome them.

The Deauville conference

kicked off with the Sci-tech Girls (STG) Day, attended by a delegation of over 100 young women. The event saw the European Commissioner for Information Society and Media as well as high level representatives from the technology industry discussing the future of women in technology.

Abdullah Lootah, country manager, Microsoft Oman, said: "It was great to see the representation of Oman in an international forum and this will expand the Women in Technology (WIT) programme in Oman.

"Microsoft's Unlimited Potential initiative gathered the women to talk about their mission to decrease the digital divide in their communities and in the process, use IT training to advance a woman's skills thereby enabling them to learn, grow and thrive in their communities."

In her comments, Abeer said: "The conference highlighted the importance of technology and we are proud of the success of the WIT programme in Oman. Women's empowerment is essential to developing an open, active civil society and acquiring skills, in the field of IT, is a powerful building block. I am glad to have represented the Omani women and I hope to pass on what I have learnt to them."

The WIT programme has seen around 1,163 trainees graduating within a period of one-and-a-half years since March 2007 and 33 women were trained by Microsoft as certified 'Trainers' to run the programme.

At the forum, Salwa, who is now majoring in Natural Resources Economics, highlighted how the WIT programme gave her access to further education and online government services.

"I am very happy to have a chance to attend the conference and I thank the WIT programme for giving me the opportunity to share my experiences with other women and to learn what other are doing to improve skills for women," she said.

The Women in Technology programme is a joint project funded by the US Department of State, Institute of International

Education and Microsoft and reaches women across the Middle East and North Africa. This project has already changed the lives of 4,500 women and aims to touch more than 10,000 before 2010.

Microsoft Oman has been supporting the WIT programme by training trainers as well as making cash donations.

In line with their mission to

support non-profit organisations, Microsoft has contributed 90 computers through their Microsoft Authorised Refurbishment programme to OWA to equip the project centres with the right hardware. The Oman Women's Association is working towards raising awareness amongst Omani women in the areas of health and the development of ICT based skills.

Al Mar'a Festival provides unique experience for women

Source: *Times of Oman*, 24 November 2008

T rue to its promise, the second edition of Al Mar'a Festival, which concluded yesterday, provided a refreshing and exciting experience for those who attended it, especially women.

The event was attended by Her Highness Amaal Turki Al Said and other dignitaries.

Ladies from all walks of life thronged the venue and enjoyed the spectacular shows that had been specially lined up for them throughout the evening.

The annual extravaganza is one of the much-awaited events of the year. Conceptualised keeping women in mind, the aim of the festival was to bring women from all walks of life together, at one venue, in a spirit of fun and camaraderie.

This year, Al Mar'a Festival was bigger and better with a nice combination of fashion, style and entertainment.

From 5pm to 10pm, activity, lifestyle, dance, music and more

made up the ingredients that were put together to give every lady present a truly memorable experience.

Skincare tips, the art of make-up and a personality development session were some of the interesting highlights. There was also a special session on nail art with Top Note introducing their concept 'Top Nails' at the event.

Entertainment came in the form of some great musical performances. Omani singer Otaifa enthralled the audience with her spellbinding performance. A special African dance and a ballet performance completed the entertainment experience.

The fashion show was a delight to watch with models sashaying down the ramp in designer clothes from brands like Aftershock, Promod, Parfois, Bana Fashion and Kawashi by Khadija Al Lamki with a special segment exclusively for

jewellery from Damas.

Spot contests were also organised and many prizes were won. Volkswagen conducted contests with exciting gifts and there were goodie bags to take home from Capital Store.

"We are overwhelmed by the support, encouragement and response we have received from women. We hope that through Al Ma'ra Festival, women will enjoy a truly remarkable experience and learn more about herself and her passions," said Alpana Roy, executive vice-president, United Media Services, publishers of Al Mar'a magazine.

This exclusive extravaganza had a number of prestigious event partners. These included Volkswagen, Bank Muscat /Al Wathbah, Oman-tel, Oman Mobile, Sunsilk, Top Note, Splash, Damas, Balmain Watches, Gallery Argaan, Kaya Skin Clinic, Times of Oman/Al Shabiba and Almarai.

OICC forms 'women's wing'

Source: *Times of Oman*, 22 November 2008

T he Overseas Indian Cultural Congress (OICC), one of the popular cultural organisations, formed its 'women's wing' on the

occasion organised to celebrate the 91st birthday of late Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, at the Kairali Restaurant in Ruwi.

The OICC members selected Priya Dharman as the president of the women's wing while Binu Jolly and Rehana

Lajuddin will serve as general secretary and treasurer, respectively.

Speaking to Times of Oman, OICC president Siddique Hassan noted the importance of women's role in their organization and called upon women to join the cultural club.

"We at the OICC believe that, like men, women too have equal importance in an organisation. We have noticed that most of the ladies are reluctant to participate in community-related activities and that's the reason which prompted us to form a women's wing," he said.

"Indira Gandhi was regarded as the 'iron lady' of India and that's why we chose her birth anniversary day to launch the women's wing.

"She single handedly played

a role in the modernisation of India and that is why we have selected this day to form the ladies wing," he said.

Siddique hoped that the lady members of OICC would take Indira Gandhi as an example in serving their duties as office bearers.

In her inaugural address, the newly elected women's wing president Priya Dharman spoke about the importance of women standing together and contributing towards the betterment of the society.

"Over the years, I have found women sitting idle at home most of the time and doing nothing. I feel, it is high time we stood together and came forward to make our own mark in the society," Priya said.

The OICC members paid

tribute to Mrs Gandhi by observing a minute of silence. The cultural programmes, which began with a prayer song by Akshara Mohan, included music, games, skits and documentary shows.

Praveena Dileep, a senior lecturer at Oman Nursery Institute, was the chief guest on the occasion and she congratulated the newly formed women's wing.

"Women throughout the world face so many problems and I hope the women's wing will be able to address at least some of them," she said.

The others who spoke on the occasion included Mini Giridhar, Beena Vijayan, Bincy Biju and Jessy Thomas. Biny Jolly proposed a vote of thanks. Members of OICC Vijayan Madathil and Nooruddin Payyanoor were also present.

Al Mar'a Festival, a special package for ladies on Nov. 23 and 24

Source: *Times of Oman*, 17 November 2008

A range of fun-filled activities awaits all at 'Al Mar'a Festival 2008' to be held on November 23 and 24 at Crowne Plaza Muscat.

The festival billed as event of the year is a neat little package of style, fashion and entertainment. 'Al Mar'a Festival' promises non-stop action on both days and will include promotions, lucky draws with loads of gifts to take-home. Apart from the special fashion shows, salsa training sessions, musical and ballet performances, there's other stuff to keep one on their toes at Crowne Plaza from 5pm to 10pm on both the days.

Givenchy will provide visitors with a glam, new look while Clarins gives tips on skin care. Top Note will introduce their concept 'Top Nails' at the event where guests can experience a trial of their 'Nail Extension and

Nail Art' treatment. Ladies will also get a chance to win free vouchers from Top Note during the evening. An expert from Kaya Skin Clinic will give the lowdown on laser hair reduction, skin renewal and age control solutions. Ladies, get yourselves a personality makeover too! Karen Green and Yasmin Gill will hold special personality development programmes.

The 'Al Mar'a Festival 2008' will also see a number of different contests and promotions running over two days. Special gifts from Volkswagen, laptops (courtesy BankMuscat), jewellery (from Damas) and gifts from Oman Mobile too, apart from goodie bags from Capital Store too.

"The 'Al Mar'a Festival 2008' is an opportunity for women to come together and have a great time! Over two days, there is an

entire range of activities to satiate everyone's interest and loads of gifts and prizes to keep them happy," said Alpana Roy, executive vice-president, United Media Services - publishers of Al Mar'a magazine.

This exclusive extravaganza has a number of prestigious event partners. These include Volkswagen, BankMuscat, Al Wathbah, Omantel, Oman Mobile, Sunsilik, Splash, Damas, Top Note, Rivoli Group, Gallery Argan, Kaya Skin Clinic, Times of Oman/Al Shabiba and Almarai.

The hospitality partner is Crowne Plaza Muscat and the event is supported by Dar Al Atta'a. Entry to the event is by invitation and is open only to ladies. For more information and invitation passes contact: 99516811, 95538552 (between 9am and 6pm).

H&M store now open at QCC

Source: *Times of Oman*, 12 November 2008

H&M (Hennes & Mauritz), the international fashion retailer, is now open at another new regional destination in Muscat, the Qurum City Centre (QCC).

Fashion aficionados in Muscat will have a lot to look forward to in the large 920-square metre store that recently opened at QCC - the newest retail hub in Oman. This new H&M store is dedicated to ladies and kids fashion along with denim wear.

The expansion of the trendy high street brand is a result of H&M's strategic partnership with M. H. Alshaya, the Middle East's leading retailer operator, through its local subsidiary Gulf Imports Est.

Jazz Hayer, business director H&M Middle East, is confident that this new H&M store will be the first step for the brand's long relationship with the booming retail market in Oman.

"Muscat is growingly becoming an important retail market in the Middle East with many new shopping destinations and top international brands entering the market. So we are very excited to make our debut in Muscat as well with our exciting brand. We are certain that the Sultanate will have a fresh shopping experience at our H&M store in Muscat."

Available at this new H&M store is the latest collections in season's most fashionable

colours and designs. The launch of the H&M store at Muscat is a part of the bigger phased growth plan for H&M's business in the Middle East.

The new store in Oman follows the successful launch of the first H&M store in Bahrain and two new stores in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Jeddah and Dammam.

Founded in 1947, there are now over 1,600 H&M stores in 32 countries. The H&M brand is synonymous around the world with affordable, up to date and high quality fashion. The company's collections are created by more than 100 in-house designers.

Women's Guild adds 'dimension to life' in Oman

Source: *Times of Oman*, 24 October 2008

Even as the members of the Women's Guild in Oman enjoyed a pleasant morning in the garden of one of their committee members recently, they raised money in aid of the Macmillan nurses who advise, care and provide support for cancer patients and their families.

The ladies also listened attentively as guest speaker Sarah Kneebone from the Oman Botanic Gardens made an interesting and informative speech on Oman's unique Botanic Gardens, which is to open its doors to the public in the near future. Anne Parker, the new president of the Women's Guild in Oman, is very emphatic about the role of the women's organisation that she currently leads. "It is meant to look after people who are lonely. Part of our mission statement says that we 'offer fellowship'," she explains.

The Women's Guild is an international organisation with about 700 members, mostly expatriates of all nationalities and also some Omani women.

While the social, 'welcoming side' is one facet of the Guild, the other is to raise money for charities.

"Our monthly general meeting is actually more than just a coffee morning. We bring women out and together, and we also raise a lot of funds for charity," Parker adds. At an average coffee morning, about 50 to 100 women gather.

Many of the months are themed, she points out. September was the registration meeting; October was the breast cancer awareness month in which the organisation raised money for charity, not just for the Macmillan nurses but also for the National Association of Can-

cer Awareness (NACA).

"In November, we will have an arts and crafts event where we'll have stall holders and we expect a lot of visitors to come along - people who want to buy Christmas presents, and things like that," she says.

In December, the Guild has a carol service at the Ghala church. But it is the Annual Crystal Ball that they all look forward to.

"It is our biggest event of the year," says Parker. "It is a sparkling occasion at which everybody comes dressed up, and we have dinner and dance. The first ball was a 'black tie and pearls' affair. We are changing the theme - last year it was a black, white and silver theme, but this time we'll have creams, pinks and peaches maybe."

The Crystal Ball this year will be held on December 4 at

Shangri-La's Amphitheatre. The ball also works as a major fund-raising event for an Omani charity. "This time, we are trying to raise awareness about Down's Syndrome and the Diabetes Society," says Parker.

In the past few years, the Crystal Ball has helped raise about RO68,000! "Of course, we have sponsors that donate cash, raffle draw prizes, and most important, they give us time," she adds.

Sometimes, the Guild gets charity requests and appeals, such as for the Burma floods and the Chinese earthquake.

"We ask people to donate and in one such impromptu appeal one morning, we have been able to collect about RO1,800 just through donations!," she says.

The Guild has a list of charities that it associates with, including the Sidab Ladies. Parker points out that the Women's Guild was already functional in

the 1970s. "In fact, we have records of the minutes of the meetings held in 1973 by Louise Bosche."

The Women's Guild started as a church group, but as Oman has changed and needs have changed, the face of the Guild too has changed, she says, adding: "For now, we would like to stay as we are. We have a dynamic committee. And the Women's Guild adds a dimension to life here."

Acute shortage of ladies fashion tailors in country

Source: *Times of Oman*, 16 October 2008

The Ministry of Manpower has done well to facilitate jobs for a number of Omani women under the Sanad fashion project programme after sending them to Jordan for specialised training in tailoring.

Immediately on their return after the completion of the programme, the ministry helped them set up their own tailoring shops in the wilayats, either on their own expenses or by providing them loans.

However, ironically, the number of ladies tailoring shops in the wilayats has actually come down compared to the large number of ladies' tailoring shops run by expatriates that were present before this profession was brought hundred per cent under the Omanisation drive.

What went wrong?

How far has the Sanad ladies' fashion programme succeeded? Why are Omani ladies still not skilled enough in this profession? Is it a matter of training? These are lingering questions for which answers need to be found if Omanisation is to succeed in this field as well as in other areas.

This correspondent met a number of Omani women to find

out their opinion on this.

Um Khalid, a homemaker, said: "We are not against Omanisation of the profession, if it is implemented gradually in each of the wilayats. But banning all expatriates from the profession has put a lot of pressure on us".

"In the area where I live there were not less than 20 tailors, but now there are only three. During the Eid days or on such other occasions, we have had to look for ladies tailoring shops in other areas," she added.

F. Al Yafei, an Omani woman in the wilayat of Taqa, was however, supportive of the Omanisation process, saying that she would encourage such projects as she found it easier to communicate with Omani tailors regarding the nitty gritty of stitching the kind of dress she had in mind.

"And we always feel proud when we come to know that an Omani lady is running a certain shop or is about to set up her own ladies tailoring shop," Al Yafei added.

"I am totally against the idea of Omanisation of ladies tailoring. However, Omanisation should be implemented in com-

panies and such other establishments," Um Abdullah, a working woman and homemaker, said, adding: "A number of youths who have finished their university education are still looking for jobs, and if at all they come across some vacancies, their applications will be rejected saying that they do not have the required experience".

Al Buloshi, a government employee, said, she wouldn't encourage Omani women taking up the tailoring profession unless they were doing it from the premises of their homes. Women would not be able to do justice to their responsibilities at home if they were to spend long hours in shops, she averred.

"I agree there are women who work in the sales field and spend long hours at their shops or sales outlets, but they leave once they finish the designated working hours without any commitments unlike tailoring which requires meeting deadlines".

Another woman was of the opinion that Omani ladies, though skilled in stitching skirts, trousers and shirts of children, were not good enough when it came to more complicated attires.

Running a tailoring shop is a difficult task, according to N. Al Sadi, a government employee, who said that those women sent for training in Jordan should also have been trained in fields such as running of tailoring shops, etc.

M. Al Batashi, a ladies fashion tailor, said: "We have joined the Sanad fashion project and attended a ten-month course on tailoring and stitching in Jordan. We were trained in stitching

shirts, dresses, skirts, trousers and children's clothes, in addition to Omani ladies' dresses".

H. Al Sulti said: "We were proud when over nine ladies tailoring shops run by Omani ladies came up in the area where I live, but disappointed when they closed down one after the other on account of reasons like marriage, sickness, or on some other personal reasons. Only four shops remain functioning now, she added.

Sh. Al Shidi revealed that she knew many expatriates who were still performing this job from their homes. "But we would not report them to the authorities as we need their services."

Many other Omani women whom this correspondent talked to revealed that in their respective wilayats there were not enough tailors who could stitch ladies clothes well, and they had to depend on tailors in other wilayats.

Lancome launches 'Magnifique' for women

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 20 September 2008

Salman Studio and Stores launched a new feminine fragrance of Lancôme, Paris, at Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Ballroom on Thursday.

The event had a presentation on the uniqueness of Lancôme fragrances.

Lancôme is a part of L'Oreal, the world-wide leaders in cosmetics and was established in 1935. It is now being distributed to over 165 countries around the world, with 18 brands to its name. Lancôme is considered an icon that inspires women.

Kader Dalvi, operations manager of Salman Stores, welcomed the gathering and introduced Shady Makhoul, technical-commercial manager of Lancôme, Paris, who had flown in especially to grace this major event.

The presentation dealt with

the unique ingredients used by Lancôme and described the bottles as a piece of art that depicts the uniqueness of women.

Shady said: "The fragrance of Lancôme touches a women's soul and most importantly, her emotions. And this year we are proud to present the 2008 feminine fragrance - Magnifique, the first time that Lancôme has used the colour red for its products - a red that symbolises love and passion."

The latest creation by Lancôme -- Magnifique, a feminine fragrance - has a perfect harmony of the three ingredients: Woody Nagarmota - a precious and mysterious woody base note which gives the perfume character; a floral scent with May and Bulgarian roses - symbols of love and the Lancôme signature for femininity and finally spicy saffron for an

exhilarating top note that brings a vibrant and luminous touch to the fragrance.

Shady launched the product by unveiling the advertisement board with a flourish, "The image of our brand -- the Magnifique woman -- Anne Hathaway."

The advertisement was directed by Peter Lindbergh at the Grand Palace in Paris and can soon be seen in the Pan-Arab stations, for the first time in Lancôme history.

Shady ended the evening's launch by thanking everyone on behalf of L'Oreal Middle East and gave a special thanks to Salman Studio and Stores for its support. MR Savanth, divisional manager, luxury products division, Salman Studio and Stores, also thanked the guests present and thanked Shady for the wonderful presentation.

Capital Store reopened ... with a new look

Source: *Times of Oman*, 19 September 2008

Capital Store, Qurum, which now has a new look, was reopened on Thursday. The store was closed after being affected by the adverse weather condition. The Jawad Sultan

Group relaunched the store with a new branding and retail store image.

The store, with a great ambience, has been beautifully designed and ensures that all the

products get maximum retail exposure.

"It was Jawad A.R. Sultan, chairman's, dream to offer Oman the most luxurious shopping experience.

"I feel the new look will complement Oman's economic progress and the world's awareness that Oman is a blend of modernism and traditional values," said Haider Jawad Sultan, managing director, Capital Store.

Capital Store, Qurum is a modern and an exquisite store offering world-renowned luxury brands, including, perfumes, cosmetics, handbags, giftware, designer jewellery and fashion accessories, writing instruments, luggage, cameras, men's

accessories and many other products.

The brands available at Capital Store include Dior, YSL, Guerlain, Clarins, Sisley, Estee Lauder, Clinique, Issey Miyake, Jean Paul Gaultier, Loewe, Kenzo and many more from the perfume and cosmetic line.

The handbag and designer jewellery section is the new addition within the portfolio. Lancel, Givenchy, Thierry Mugler and Paris Hilton handbags are any woman's dream to possess

which can be fulfilled at the new store. Christofle, Bacarrat, Nao, Daum, Versace and Rosenthal, would surely tempt anyone looking for choicest collectors items which could be a pride forever.

For men waiting to make a statement, Mont Blanc, S T Dupont, Waterman, Monte Grappa writing instruments and accessories are available.

Premium range of Delsey luggage is available for the traveller who is looking for renowned quality and assurance.

First ladies only café set to open

Source: *Times of Oman*, 4 September 2008

In an increasingly competitive world, where women are successfully making a niche for themselves in every field, there's another first that can be added to the list in Muscat. The city will soon have its first all-women's coffee shop.

The new Nawaan Café, exclusively for women, will be launched on September 6 on the Omani Women's Association premises in Qurum. The launch event will include a number of activities to engage women and to get the coffee shop going.

Shukur Al Ghammary, president of the Omani Women's Association, said: "This will be the first time that a coffee shop only for women is being opened in Oman. Because we are a women's association, it will serve as a place for women to sit together and discuss their concerns, relax over refreshments and enjoy the beautiful view of the sea."

The coffee shop will be located on the roof of the Omani Women's Association building in Qurum, adjoining which the association also has an Internet café and library. It was during the renovation of the building after the unusual weather conditions last year that the members of the association discovered they had a splendid view of the sea, which could be put to good use. The members of the governing body of the association then decided to open the coffee shop.

"It has a kitchen where refreshments are made, and we can use the area also for lectures and other discussions," Shukur said, adding that the café would be open to all women and not just to members of the association.

The café will be launched on September 6 with activities organised by Layali Al Asalah, an event management company

that promotes Omani talent in fashion and other fields. Nadia Al Zakwani of Layali Al Salah said: "The event will launch with some motivational speakers for women in the Arabic language. But from the 8th to the 11th, we will have an exhibition of things that women need in preparation for Eid, like clothes, accessories and fashion items.

"We will also have activities like poetry evenings, a 'Mum and Me' fashion show and other games and activities."

During the month of Ramadan, when coffee shops around the city are open into the early morning hours but frequented only by men, women too now have a place of their own where they can hang out and relax after a day of fasting and prayer.

Though it is being launched in the month of Ramadan, the café will continue to function thereafter too.

40 trained women in Demit honoured

Source: *Times of Oman*, 27 August 2008

At a ceremony held in Demit, 40 women were honoured for having completed a training programme made possible by

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development and the Dhofar governorate.

This was the first graduation ceremony to be held this week. The second one was held on Monday in Salalah, to mark the

completion of training in skills related to the setting up and running of businesses in tailoring, embroidery and cosmetics.

This ceremony honoured those who had received training related to the manufacture and marketing of dairy products.

At the ceremony, held under the auspices of Sheikh Said bin Saleem Tamtim Gawas, adviser at the Ministry of Social Development, certificates were presented to women who had re-

ceived the training.

Government dignitaries and PDO officials as well as local community leaders attended the function.

PDO Human Resources Manager Mundhir bin Salim Al Barwani said: "We believe that any social-investment project with which the PDO becomes involved must support the wider community and be sustainable.

"This is why we liked working directly with the Ministry of

Social Development and the Dhofar government in this particular case.

They know best the needs of the region and have the expertise and resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of this training project. This is also why we favour investing in training programmes. They are inherently sustainable in that the skills that are taught can be put to use over a lifetime of gainful employment."

Amouage's 'Lyric' for men and women

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 26 August 2008

The House of Amouage, which reflects the heritage and traditions of Oman in creating fine, exotic and unusual perfumes, yesterday launched its new fragrance, 'Lyric', at an exclusive event at Chedi Muscat.

The new fragrance was launched by His Highness Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al Bu Said, chairman of the House of Amouage.

The fragrance 'Lyric' was created under the guidance of Amouage creative director, Christopher Chong, from the UK, who drew inspiration from his musical background. He created Lyric woman and Lyric man - both fragrances his interpretation of the rose.

At the launch, CEO of Amouage, David Crickmore, said: "The rose is the grandest of all ingredients we use. It is the most loved around the world." In keeping with the international image that Amouage has built for itself, the fragrance will be available at all Amouage shops around the world. "They will be on the shop shelves tomorrow morning," said Crickmore.

Amouage, he said was excited and proud to push the boundaries of conventional rose fragrances with the aim of creat-

ing a unique scent that makes a statement and is synonymous with the brand. "We have created a very unusual and unique fragrance by combining the rose with different notes, using only the finest ingredients, whilst maintaining an accord that evolves with drama and power."

Crickmore added: "Perfection is sometimes paradoxical and this is what we have tried to encapsulate in the two 'Lyric' fragrances."

Elaborating on the fragrances he has created, Chong said that Lyric for Man and Woman is an exquisite duo personifying the purity of sound and based around the most loved of all fragrances, the wonderful Damascene rose.

A film, titled Lyric - Story of the Rose created by Chong, was screened at the launch, depicting Lyric Woman as an ambitious young opera singer and Lyric Man as Svengali - a person who manipulates another into doing what he desires to the destruction of the person's individual powers of thought. "Lyric is beautiful on the surface. But there is more to it - it is deep and meaningful," said Chong.

'Lyric Woman' emulates the magic, beauty, drama and tonal quality of the stunningly lyrical

voice of a classical female opera singer. It is a floral Oriental fragrance with spicy cardamom, cinnamon and ginger in the top notes, with rose, jasmine and ylang-ylang in the heart notes, rounded off by notes of sandalwood, frankincense and musk in the base.

'Lyric Man' is the juxtaposition of darkness versus light and goodness versus evil represented by the fusion of modernity and classicism in the fragrance. It is a spicy Oriental fragrance created for the confident gentleman who dares to desire. The fragrance features bergamot and lime in the top notes, rose infused with angelica, orange blossom and spicy ginger in the heart notes with a warm base of vanilla, musk and frankincense.

The Lyric' bottles are in a deep shade of red adorned by gun-metal embellishments. Both bottles' caps are crowned with a Swarovski black diamond crystal.

In keeping with the great Arabian tradition of story-telling, Lyric is the second chapter of the collection of narratives created for the House of Amouage, which began with the successful Jubilation launch late last year on the 25th anniversary of the international fragrance house.

The House of Amouage will continue to be a niche, highly-prized brand, sought after by only the most sophisticated and discern-

ing international consumer and today has a stellar following around the world including Royals, global leaders and some of

the most celebrated names in film, television, fashion, sport and music, a release of Amouage said.

Joyalukkas to open new outlets in Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain

Source: *Times of Oman*, 25 August 2008

Joyalukkas, the world's number one jeweller, has announced its expansion plans of opening new outlets in Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman.

This announcement follows the company recently winning the coveted Consumer Choice title at the Retail Jeweller India Awards 2008 (TRJA).

Currently four new stores will be added to Joyalukkas's already expanding chain bringing the total to 70 outlets. The first store is set to be inaugurated today at the Lulu Hypermarket in Al Rai, Kuwait. This will be followed by one tomorrow at Lulu Hypermarket in Al Rifa, Bahrain, and two more on August 28 at Lulu Hypermarkets in Darsait and Barka in Oman.

Commenting on the new stores being opened, Joy Alukkas, chairman of the Joyalukkas Group said: "We always work towards meeting customer needs and making it a memorable experience for them to shop at our stores. Visiting hypermarkets for their daily needs is a regular feature for people.

"Thus opening Joyalukkas outlets in Lulu Hypermarkets will provide consumers the advantage of buying jewellery from a convenient location."

Joyalukkas has entered into a strategic tie-up to open showrooms in all the Lulu Hypermarkets. Joyalukkas currently has three showrooms in Kuwait, two in Bahrain, two in Oman in addi-

tion to the 28 showrooms in the UAE and Qatar.

"Our strategic alliance with Lulu has tremendously benefited both the parties. Therefore, it made perfect business sense to open the new outlets in the Lulu Hypermarkets. I take this opportunity to thank Lulu for its support to Joyalukkas in all our associations," added Joy Alukkas.

As usual, all the four new Joyalukkas outlets will offer quality and variety in gold, diamond, platinum and other precious stone jewellery.

Joyalukkas, an ISO certified group with 70 showrooms in nine countries across the world, has been the proud recipient of the prestigious Middle East Local Retailer of the Year award.

More women pursuing careers in accounting and finance

Source: *Times of Oman*, 24 August 2008

If your image of an accountant is that of a middle-aged man in grey suit, think again. Around 54 per cent of the ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) students are women and the last many years have seen an increase in women members.

If these figures are not enough, four members and two students of the ACCA holding top positions in the field reiterated that accounting & finance is the right field to be in for women. They also shed light on

the fact that women are taking giant strides in the field of accountancy & finance. They were participating in a group discussion on 'Growing interest of women in accounting and finance' held at Grand Hyatt yesterday.

Fatma Al Kharusi, finance director of Petroleum Development Oman, who is the first Omani woman to qualify as an ACCA in the year 1978, led the group discussion.

The participants included ACCA members Amal Al

Tawaijary, manager for Disbursement and Compliance of Occidental of Oman Anita Balakrishnan, financial and cost analyst - contracts department of Royal Courts Affairs, and Mili Ramaiya, assistant manager, business management and advisory services of Ernst and Young.

Sharifah Al Mahrouqi, senior auditor of State Audit Institution, and Fakhra Al Kharushi, senior accounts officer of MB Petroleum, and students who are about to complete their ACCA

examination also participated in the discussion.

The success stories they shared supported the fact that more and more women are pursuing careers in accounting and finance the world over more than ever before. They shared their experience in accountancy field and shed light on how women have influenced this profession in this country and the opportunities available.

"There are women in almost all the companies in this department now," said Fatma Al Kharusi pointing out that the scene was very different when she started in 1978. "In my days, they were hardly any qualified accountants let alone a woman," she said.

The women agreed that there are enough and more role models in the field to emulate.

While agreeing that the climb had not been very easy,

they did say that once they had mastered their subject they were never questioned.

When asked what attracted them to the profession, the women pointed out to a number of factors. "It is a dignified profession. It establishes credibility, provides stability and the profession instills a lot of confidence," they said.

The discussion followed a report presented by Stephen Shields, head of Corporate Development of ACCA Middle East on the ACCA in the Middle East and the global perspective. Before that Mohammed Khan, country manager of ACCA Oman, presented the Oman figures. Nasser Al Mughairy, managing partner of Grant Thornton (Abu Timam) Chartered Certified Accountants, was also present at the meeting.

In his speech Stephen Shields pointed out that 54 per

cent of who appear for the ACCA examination are women. "There is a lot of potential to develop the role of accountancy in Oman. I quote my CEO to say that the future of accountancy could be Asian, young and female," he said.

The ACCA is a global body for professional accountants with over 325,000 students and 122,000 members around the world including Oman. In Oman 65 per cent of the students are Omanis and the remaining are Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans etc. In Oman, there are 63 members - 29 Omanis and 34 expatriates

The ACCA is a professional qualification recognised and respected all over the world. The ACCA members are always in demand for their finance and accounting knowledge and skills, regardless of the employment sector.

95pc Omani mothers breast-feed babies, says Al Kharusi

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 5 August 2008

Ninety-five per cent of Omani mothers breast-feed their infants, said Dr Sheikha Amur Al Kharusi, Co-coordinator for Private Health Establishment Affairs in the Ministry of Health, on Monday.

This high rate of breast-feeding is largely due to the country's culture, which encourages it, she said, while speaking to Oman Tribune on the sidelines of a programme at Atlas Star Medical Centre (ASMC), which is observing International Breast Feeding Week from Aug. 1 to Aug. 8.

Al Kharusi said at all hospitals, mothers are told about the benefits of breast-feeding. "We are now encouraging the same guidance at private hospitals," she added.

Two of the most common

reasons for mothers not to breast feed are discomfort caused due to improper feeding technique and the false belief that it could spoil the form of the breasts. Al Kharusi said mothers need to be counselled, taught the proper breast-feeding technique and their misgivings should be removed.

The Ministry of Health has adopted the World Health Organisation (WHO) theme of, "Mother support going for the gold," Dr Rohil Raghavan, Medical Director of ASMC, told the audience of mothers, health officials and hospital staff.

Dr Beena, gynaecologist at ASMC said that breast-feeding provides the baby with the perfect blend of proteins, fat, carbohydrates and immunoglobulin. At the same time, it helps

the mother in many ways, including controlling post-delivery bleeding, losing weight and reducing the chances of breast cancer and osteoporosis.

A two-year interval between children will ensure ideal nourishment from breast milk, she added.

Dr Reghu, paediatrician at ASMC said that bottle-fed babies in developing countries had a 2.7 times higher mortality rate, while breast-fed babies had a lower incidence of infections like pneumonia, diarrhoea and meningitis. Human milk also helps in the development of the brain and the higher lactose content improves iron absorption.

Later, Siji George of ASMC explained the correct breast-feeding techniques to the gathering.

Workshop urges women to explore ambitions further

Source: *Times of Oman*, 21 July 2008

The two-day workshop, intended to empower Omani women with knowledge of business dealings, which opened at Hilton Salalah Resort on Saturday, came to a close yesterday.

The workshop, organised by Eventscom as part of 'Women in Business Conference 2008' events, saw more than 100 women participating in it.

The workshop urged women who dream of starting their own businesses to explore their ambitions further.

On the concluding day, all the participants received a certificate of participation from Noor Al Ghassani, president, Omani Women's Association, Salalah and Salma Al-Hashmi, managing director, Eventscom.

Noor Al Ghassani once again stressed that the workshop was a much-needed one for the region.

"I can assure that the workshop has provided women with tools, resources and social networking opportunities designed to continue the momentum gained during the workshop," she said.

The second day of the workshop saw more topics such as basic marketing, hiring and management of employees being discussed. Speaker Dr Samya

Awad Taroom, lecturer, Institute of Banking and Financial Technology and visiting lecturer, Bradford University, spoke on the subject, 'Running out of space in your home and moving into office premises'. The second day equipped the participants with how to focus on marketing and also on how to stay ahead of competition.

Buoyant with the success of the workshop Salma Al Hashmi said: "The day two of the workshop was even better than the first. It was good to see so many women turning out for the workshop. It provided them not only an opportunity to learn new skills but also network and interact as well. We received much appreciation for organising the event."

Salma said the workshops helped with all aspects of setting up a business, in particular guidance on how to further exploit ideas, conduct market research, prepare a business plan, identify how to finance the business and then form it.

Salma also added: "We will take this workshop to the different regions in Oman in the coming years. With the workshop over, the participants have accomplished skills as well as made valuable connections,

gained referrals and forged supportive relationships with fellow participants," she said.

Moona Ahmed, a teacher in Salalah who participated in the workshop, said: "It was a good workshop. It provided us with a good opportunity to learn some tools, tips and tactics. Since this is the first time that a workshop of this kind is being held in Salalah, I must say it was a great opportunity for women having plans to open their own business as well as those having problems in established businesses."

Fatma said the workshop focused on what each individual woman needs in order to move forward with her business.

Around 100 women attended the workshop. While majority of the participants are from Salalah, few others flew in from Muscat.

Yesterday Huda Bajri, manager, Training Administration, from the Port of Salalah Service and Batool Ali Abduwani, account relationship manager, SME credit and marketing, Bank Muscat were the main speakers besides Dr. Samya.

The sponsors of this workshop were BankMuscat, Al Wathbah, Oman Mobile, Port of Salalah, Times of Oman and Al Shabiba.

Workshop to arm women with business basics opens

Source: *Times of Oman*, 20 July 2008

A two-day workshop meant to arm Omani women with know-how of business fundamentals opened at the Hilton Salalah resort yesterday.

The workshop is being held as part of Women in Business

Conference 2008 events and is being organised by Eventscom. This is the first time that a workshop of this kind is being held in Salalah and around 100 women are attending it. While majority of the participants are from

Salalah, a few have flown in from Muscat. The conference was officially declared open by Noor Al Ghassani, president of Omani Women's Association, Salalah.

Speaking to Times of

Oman, she said: "This workshop is a wonderful opportunity for the women of Salalah. My request to them is to make best use of this occasion provided to them."

She also hoped that the workshop would be a trendsetter. She said: "I look forward to more such workshops and trust that people will take this workshop as a point of reference and will be inspired to hold more such events".

Noor added that she was sure the workshop would empower the women of Salalah with enough knowledge to develop as successful businesswomen.

Explaining the thought behind the workshop, Salma Al Hashmi, managing director of Eventscom, said: "We wanted to empower women with business knowledge. We know young Omani women have the talent and the potential. We thought if they get a little bit of advice in terms of how to structure their business plan and how to execute it, they would go a long

way. That is why we put together this workshop, which will see experienced women from different fields speak on varied subjects. I hope we will be able to arm them with tools and knowledge."

Salma also added: "I hope from these successful women they learn and eliminate fears they have as they are planning their business."

Speaking on the choice of Salalah as the venue for the conference, Salma said: "Having a good weather made it an appealing location. Besides that we had a lot of people from here who wanted to participate in the conference, which was held in Muscat but were not able to at that time, so we thought we would bring it for them, though on a smaller scale."

This workshop in Arabic is basically discussing essentials such as writing a viable business plan, business structure and start up details. It is also dealing with topics such as business licence requirements and law.

Apart from this it is touching upon subjects like growing your customer base, staying ahead of competition and know your competitor. The nitty-gritty of hiring and managing employees will also be dealt with.

The first speaker of the day was Huda Bajri, manager, training administration, from the Port of Salalah Service. She spoke on how to work up a career path without obstacles.

Batool Ali Abduwani, account relationship manager, SME credit and marketing, BankMuscat spoke about the financial service available at BankMuscat to help make success out of a business plan.

The main speaker on the day was Dr Samya Awad Taroom, lecturer of Institute of Banking and Financial Technology and visiting lecturer, Bradford University, UK who touched upon a variety of topics.

The sponsors of this workshop are BankMuscat, Al Wathbah, Oman Mobile, Port of Salalah, Times of Oman and Al Shabiba.

2 Omani women in 'Forbes Arabia' list

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 4 June 2008

Here is another success story of the Sultanate's powerful women who exemplify the virtues of determination, perseverance, hard work, business acumen, tradition and simplicity.

Manal Abduwani and Lujaina Bint Mohsen Haidar Darwish Al Zaabi were counted among the most powerful women in the Arab world by Forbes magazine.

Abduwani, chairperson of the board of directors of Oman

Flour Mills Co. and Mazoon Electricity Distributing Co., has been ranked 20th among the most successful 50 Arab businesswomen, while Lujaina, deputy CEO of Mohsen Haidar Darwish group, has finished one rung down on the ladder, according to Forbes Arabia, the Arabic version of world renowned Forbes magazine.

This was Abduwani's maiden attempt, while Lujaina

had taken part in the competition in 2006 and finished 13th among the most successful 50 Arab businesswomen, while in 2004 she was ranked 42nd. The World Economic Forum also nominated her for the coveted young world leader award in 2005.

The Dubai-based Forbes Arabia has published a list of the 50 most powerful businesswomen in the Arab world in its latest issue.

Sky Jewellery's 3rd anniversary

Source: *Times of Oman*, 21 May 2008

Sky Jewellery will once again rock the gold industry with

its third anniversary celebrations on May 24.

With its innovative campaigns and activities, Sky

Jewellery has been successful in luring customers. "Ever since the starting of Sky Jewellery, we have been enjoying a consistent and steady business throughout this period. Our valuable customers during this period have been cooperative and encouraging," said Babu John, managing director of Sky Jewellery.

As usual, this is a celebration just meant for all valuable customers. The showroom opens at 8am to 12 midnight without lunch break. The first 25 customers will carry with them

special gold coins absolutely free with their purchases. First 100 customers can still be happy with attractive gifts for their purchases.

There are fascinating offers throughout the day. Customers who prefer to shop between 2pm and 4.30pm will also enjoy special gift items. Every diamond customer during the anniversary day also will bag free gifts with their purchases.

The third anniversary celebration ceremony will take place at the showroom at 11am.

Chairman and sponsor of Sky Jewellery Hamad Sultan Hamad Al Araithi will inaugurate it followed by cake cutting. All neighbouring showrooms and well wishers of Sky Jewellery will be present during the ceremonies. "Sky Jewellery has deep gratitude to all its customers for making this brand a real and final choice in the gold and diamond jewellery market and invites everyone in the region to be part of the celebrations," stated Cyriac Varghese, general manager of Sky Jewellery.

Shell shines at Oman Business Woman awards

Source: *Times of Oman*, 1 April 2008

It was a proud moment for Shell Oman as its employee Fawzia Abdul Aziz won the 2008 Executive of the Year award at the recently concluded Oman Business Woman Awards 2008.

Oman Business Woman Awards are one-of-its-kind awards in Oman saluting the contribution of women towards the success of corporate Oman.

Fawzia joined Shell Oman in 2005 in the Quality Control Department. Her previous experience included extensive work in one of the ministries. She is highly qualified with a degree in chemistry from the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Fawzia worked successfully in Quality Control for two years and was then promoted to lead the blending function in 2007.

What sets Fawzia apart, is her amazing work ethics and an undying passion for implement-

ing ideas. Her zeal at work and enthusiasm caught everyone's eye from the very beginning of her assignment with Shell Oman.

But she took her work a notch up to the next level after heading the blending section of production last year. She transformed the blending section and took it to greater heights by the day into unheard of levels of productivity. All this was possible because of her inborn leadership qualities and her focus on the big picture (Enterprise First).

Her passion to lead saw her sacrifice her personal time to steer her team and colleagues to challenging targets. Considering the fact that she had no background in manufacturing and this field is considered a man's domain, as an Omani woman, she has delivered results, which were once thought

impossible. She truly deserves this prestigious award.

Fawzia after the award show said: "It's a fantastic achievement for me personally and the entire Shell Oman team as this award wouldn't have been possible without the team support.

This award means a lot to me in terms of my hard work and dedication, focus and vision which I had laid out for my function, and all the encouragement shown by my friends and family."

The Oman Business Women Awards aim to reward women's success in business, thereby creating female role models whose achievements will inspire other women to raise their sights and achieve their goals. These awards celebrate women's contribution to the economy and their empowerment in society.

Shell launches Sidab Women Group

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 25 March 2008

Under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Muna Bint Fahd Bin Mahmood Al Said,

Assistant to Vice-Chancellor for External Co-operation at Sultan Qaboos University, and the

Shell Development Oman LLC hosted a function to celebrate the launch of Sidab Women

Group.

The celebration was organised in Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa in the presence of several dignitaries and governmental officials.

As part of its social investment initiatives in Oman, Shell has supported the Sidab Women Group by providing a specific training and development programme to allow them to improve their handicrafts products, and develop their management, marketing and sewing skills and enable them to get a sustainable income.

The programme, which was carried over a year, consisted of three main phases, focused on upgrading the group's building, machines and their HSE standards to create better working environment for the women. It also aimed at enhancing the lady's skills, and equips them

with skills to improve their products and to communicate with customers by conducting a number of training and development programmes.

The final phase focused on helping the group to develop marketing plan to promote their products in the market.

Addressing the audience, Al Mutasim Said Al Sariri, Social Investment Manager at Shell Development Oman LLC said: "Over the past year, Shell, jointly with the Sidab Women Group, was able to achieve a number of milestones. We renovated one of the Sidab's programme rooms and converted into a gallery to display all produced products.

The total numbers of ladies have increased from only 15 in 2006 to 25 at present. The total number of machines has increased to 35 different sewing

machines, compared to 4 only at 2006.

"Moreover, the group has managed to support 8 ladies to produce products from their homes, and 8 special machines have been bought for this purpose. The total number of products sold per week has increased to almost 200 bags."

This initiative forms part of the Social Investment Programme pursued by the Shell in Oman to further the education and personal development of young Omanis in various fields. Shell's Social Investment programme in Oman is managed by a panel, headed by HE Sheikh Al Fadhli Bin Mohammed Al Harthy, the Undersecretary for Development at the Ministry of National Economy, and representatives from the Ministry of Oil and Gas, the Ministry of Interior and Shell.

Dream big and be bold: Mantra for women in business

Source: *Times of Oman*, 17 March 2008

The Women in Business Conference 2008 has been an exercise in inspiring and motivating women to excel in professional as well as personal development.

On the second and last day of the Women in Business Conference 2008 at the InterContinental Hotel, the speakers kept urging women to dream big and take bold steps to be different.

The concluding day of the event held under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Aliya bint Thuwaini Al Said saw several interesting issues being raised by the delegates.

The first speaker of the day, Cathy O'Dowd, who has the distinction of being the first woman ever to climb Mount Everest from both the north and south faces, said that 'there is no

mountain too high to climb.'

"Each achievement must bring with it the knowledge and confidence to strengthen us for the next one," she said.

Dr Asya Lamki, assistant dean for post graduate studies and research at SQU's College of Commerce and Economics, spoke on "Feminising Leadership in Oman: Challenges and opportunities." She also spoke on the challenges for women within the Arab world.

"Dare to be different" was the next speaker Dawn Gibbins' call to the participants. Gibbins, who is the founder and chairman of Flowcrete, insisted on the fact that creativity is the catalyst for success.

Diane Girard, founder and president of Global Links Network, Women Economic Em-

powerment, the Role of SMEs, Trade, Marketing and Technology, stressed the importance of thinking out of the box and looking beyond routine life.

Laila Karami, president of Lebanese Business Women Association, spoke about the 'Role of Businesswomen in Peace and War.' She interspersed her presentations with short films on women who have made a success story in spite of odds.

Shamsa Al Seefi, head of Informational Technology, BankMuscat, spoke about the Women in IT. She said it was important for women to stop fearing the IT world and instead must take a plunge into it.

Huda Mohammed Janahi, chief executive of Global Cargo and Traveller's Services, from Bahrain, shared her success

story as a businesswoman.

The concluding session included workshops by Diane Girard and Cathy O'Dowd. While Cathy provided strategies for tackling life's great obstacles, Diane Girard provided a list of key ingredients to prepare a unique recipe to make a success out of home-based busi-

nesses.

Salma Al Hashmi, managing director of Eventscom, said: "We are ecstatic over the outcome of this conference. Our speakers were enigmatic and they have managed to capture the attention of their audience. The feedback we received from attendees was very positive. At-

tendance was very high and the interactions between the delegates and the sponsors were also lively."

"Eventscom is now working on next year's conference, only with a renewed challenge this time - to eclipse the success of the Women in Business Conference 2008," she added.

Women urged to be committed and passionate in their ventures

Source: *Times of Oman*, 16 March 2008

Inspiring lectures and informative seminars involving some internationally acclaimed women marked the first day of the two-day Women in Business Conference 2008, at the InterContinental Hotel yesterday.

The conference held under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Aliya bint Thuwaini Al Said was also attended by Rajiha bint Abdul Amir bin Ali, minister of tourism. Eventscom is organising the event.

The day began with a reading of the speech of Bahia Hariri, president of the woman's committee in the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, by the Lebanese ambassador to Oman. Bahia Hariri who was to be the guest of honour did not make it to the conference due to "unavoidable circumstances".

A dedicated champion of woman's rights, Bahia Hariri has been consistently promoting the status of women in the Arab society, campaigning for laws to protect women and promote their rights.

Bahia's speech highlighted her beliefs and lauded the efforts of women in business. She stressed that women and business have been twins since time immemorial.

Elizabeth Jackson, founder and CEO of Great Guns Marketing, spoke on the theme: If you

think you can... Her lecture was enlightening, enriching, illuminating and inspiring. She took the listeners to a journey through the wonderful facets of her life as an entrepreneur who made it big against odds.

She certainly hit home with her point, "If you think you can or if you think you can't, you are absolutely right".

Elizabeth who lost her eyesight in adult life asked the participants to embrace failure and learn from it. "Understanding failure means you will be successful the next time around," she stressed.

Huda Al Habsi, head of marketing and product development, Omantel, the second speaker for the day spoke about 'Women in Leadership'.

Citing her personal experience, she said, "There are many good reasons for this trend of emergence of women as leaders in diverse fields."

She asked women to have a clear goal and be fully committed and passionate in whatever they do.

Concetta Lanciaux, strategy luxury adviser, Adviser Groupe Arnault, spoke on 'The art of luxury branding'.

Dr Naeema Al Gasseer, WHO representative for Iraq, United Nations Cluster Coordinator Health, spoke on the "chal-

lenges facing Arab women in complex emergencies".

Dr Naeema emphasised the need for women to share knowledge with one another and build on experiences. "Collectively we can move forward," she advised participants.

She also called upon women to think about the environment. "Women can do a lot in this front," she said.

Sangeeta Pendurkar, chief marketing officer, Middle East, HSBC Bank came out with a unique presentation on "Branding in Planet Venus - A Marketer's Perspective in Targetting Women." She said that women are a key driver of all economies.

Bouthayna Iraqui Houssaini, president of the Association des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprise du Maroc (AFEM), provided a testimony on the female entrepreneurial environment of Morocco and the contribution of the association in women empowerment.

The second session of the day saw workshops by Diane Girard, founder and director Global Links Network, and Sally Burns on effective communication at work.

In recognition of the success of women, the Oman Business Women Awards will be presented later in the night on Saturday.

Women's Day rally salutes HM

Source: *Times of Oman*, 9 March 2008

Expressing its loyalty and allegiance to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the leader of the Blessed Renaissance, the Ministry of Social Development, in association with local communities, yesterday took out a march from the ministry premises at 5pm, passing through the Ministry of Culture roundabout and concluding at the starting point.

The participants at the march included Dr Rawiyah bint Saud Al Busaidiyah, higher education minister; Dr Sharifa bint Khalfan Al Yahyaeyiyah, social development minister; Sheikha Aisha bint Khalfan Al Siyabiyah, chairperson of the Public Authority for Craft Industries, a number of female honourable

members of the State Council, chairpersons of the Omani Women's Associations and businesswomen.

A number of dignitaries in the region, heads of local associations, children of the various associations for the disabled, and hundreds of women from different parts of the Sultanate took part in the march.

They also carried the pictures of His Majesty the Sultan and banners reflecting the love and loyalty to His Majesty the Sultan, who led the renaissance of women in the Sultanate in various fields along with the development achieved by women in modern world in the social, economic, political, legislative and scientific fields.

The women in the Sultanate today feel proud, along with the women of the world, to celebrate their success and contributions in all walks of life without any gender discrimination and negligence.

The Omani women today have their share in political, social and economic fields assuming good positions in political and social institutions and casting their rights of franchise like other male citizens without facing any legal or social barriers.

A number of processions were organised by various branches of the Omani Women's Associations in various regions and wilayats of the Sultanate as part of Women's Day celebration.

Oman guarantees women equal rights, opportunities: Sharifa

Source: *Times of Oman*, 7 March 2008

The Sultanate, along with the world, will observe and celebrate International Women's Day today.

"Today, March 8, of every year marks a day which is dedicated to women regardless of their race, language and culture. In fact, women advancements and achievements occur on a daily basis. The Omani woman is the focal point of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's government, guaranteeing her equal rights and opportunities. March 8 allows us to reflect and acknowledge these accomplishments.

"The wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said recognises the important role in the empowerment of all Omani women in all sectors of the society. Omani women are the foun-

dation of support for their families, and are at the forefront in every sphere of life. Dr Sharifa bint Khalfan bin Nassir Al Yahyaeyiyah, minister of social development, said here yesterday.

"It gives me great pleasure to join every mother, wife, daughter and sister all over the world in celebrating 'International Women's Day', and to congratulate every woman in every nation on her advancements in securing her important role in the society. Women are key players in ensuring sustainable development and in shaping their communities and families," Dr Sharifa said.

"We must pay tribute to the exceptional achievements of Omani women in all sectors, which are attributed to the visionary leadership of His Maj-

esty Sultan Qaboos bin Said."

The Omani woman enjoys a wide array of civil and political liberties that are founded on the Islamic Sharia Law and all other laws, particularly the Basic Law of the State. These laws have respected and protected all Omani women. Her equal attainment to education without gender discrimination and free access to all healthcare services has supported her to excel.

Omani women have been appointed to high-level posts in the government and private sectors, which has had an impact on the country's development. Today, an Omani woman is a minister, an undersecretary, an ambassador, and a member of the State Council (Majlis Al Dowla).

Women are doctors, teach-

ers and engineers, and are employed at educational institutions, the armed forces and the police. Omani women proudly undertook these responsibilities together without compromising their vital role in the upbringing of the new generation and in instilling social values.

"Her voice is heard and echoed throughout the country. Since 1970, the Omani woman was granted the right to establish associations, and engage civil society, in addressing the needs of all. Omani Women's Association (OWA) provides a channel for voluntary work and the development of local communities. There are now a total of 52 Omani Women's Association units in the Sultanate," Dr Sharifa emphasised.

On the international front,

the minister said, Omani women have proven themselves as leaders. The government has ensured that their rights remain protected and supported through the ratification of international treaties and conventions. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in May 2005, where a multisectorial committee was formed to ensure that these articles are implemented and closely monitored.

The Ministry of Social Development exerts tremendous efforts in providing basic services to the community and particularly to the family, with close attention to issues pertaining to women and their empowerment and advancement. It works in close collaboration with the gov-

ernment counterparts, the private sector and civil society to ensure that women are at the core of the country's development. The achievements of women are endless, and are in every area.

The 'National Women Strategy' is a comprehensive strategy that aims at addressing all key areas of concern for women to ensure their well-being and support them. This strategy is currently under revision.

"On behalf of all Omani women, I have the honour to greatly praise and highly appreciate His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's continued support in ensuring that the Omani women are an essential component of this country, and its sustainable development," the minister concluded.

Omani fashion designers coming of age

Source: *Times of Oman*, 13 February 2008

The glamour world of fashion in Oman may not make international headlines, but it is suddenly the profession, which is being pursued seriously by the youngsters.

Shadiya Al Habsi, a young fashion designing student and a coordinator for Sanad Incubators Fashions, admitted that youngsters, especially girls are very keen to join the art of fashion designing. "Besides, there is an opportunity being provided under the Sanad programmes for appropriate training to the local aspirants," she added.

Shadiya, who initially underwent a professional nursing course in India, is now undergoing a formal training in fashion at a fashion institute.

She pointed out that 840 female designers would graduate from a Sanad-sponsored insti-

tute next month. They would be free to start their own boutiques or other-fashion-related business. "We would get an initial grant of RO5,000 to start our own ventures."

She added that the teachers are mostly from Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan and they provide training on the European and traditional Omani designs in particular.

Shadiya was excited to get an opportunity to showcase her products at the Muscat Festival.

"It is indeed our first big show and we hope to get more such platforms in the coming days."

On the general feedback, "We really feel happy when a lady from the audience comes to us after the show to discuss minute details of fashions and our work."

The fashion show organised by Sanad Incubators Fashions at Al Sahwa Gardens on February 10 had 19 girls displaying 22 dresses. "Omani ladies travel abroad frequently and they are well-versed with the latest trends in clothing. So we welcome any valuable inputs from an informative fashion-lover."

Sanad incubators set up with the purpose of providing help to small projects are established with the participation of authorities, private associations and the private sector.

These authorities provide the premises for projects and the equipment for establishing the incubators and training candidates who will work in these incubators, offering advice and technical and administrative support, besides framing terms and laws.

Women sports study week at SQU

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 12 February 2008

The opening ceremony of the 'Sport and Physical Education for Muslim Women' Study Week organised by the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) was held under the auspices Her Excellency Dr Muna Bint Salim Al Jardaniyah, Undersec-retary for Education and Curriculum at the Ministry of Education, and HE Dr Saud Bin Nasser Al Riyami, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, on Monday.

In her welcome speech, Dr Thuwaiyba Al Barwani, dean at the College of Education, said that more than 17 researchers from various countries will discuss the issue of women's participation in sport activities.

The discussions are being held with a view to evolve suggestions on how culturally generated myths can be challenged and policies changed, she added. The study group is con-

ducted in association with the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Women and Girls (IAPESGW).

Dr Tansin Benn from School of Education, University of Birmingham, delivered a speech on behalf of the organisation. She said that Oman has made tremendous progress in participation of women in sport and physical education activities. The aim of the organisations is to provide the opportunity for women physical educators to come together and share their ideas, methods, programmes, problems and solutions with each other, she added.

Dr Benn added that all girls and women should have access and opportunity to develop and sustain their full potential. The association stands as a network of voices of and for the support of girls and women, improving

their position at local, national and global levels.

The theme being addressed through this study group, organised by the Curriculum and Instruction Department of the College of Education, is global inclusion, including gender equity and addressing the diversity and marginalisation and polarisation of accounts of Muslim women's role and participation in physical activity, physical education and sport.

The study week will include programme of research projects that will be feasible, realistic and will maximise the skills and potential of the team. The purpose is to conduct empirical research to increase awareness and understanding of opportunities and constraints that Muslim girls face in physical education and sport. The programme will conclude on Feb. 16.

Centrepoint, Home Centre opened in Sohar

Source: *Times of Oman*, 11 December 2007

The Landmark Group opened the new Centrepoint and Home Centre in Sohar yesterday. This is Landmark Group's fifth Centrepoint and third Home Centre in Oman.

The showroom was inaugurated by Eng. Abdullah bin Abbas bin Ahmed, chairman of Muscat Municipality in the presence of Saibal Basu, general manager, Landmark Group,

Oman. Spread over 100,000 sqft, the showroom also provides parking facilities for over 250 cars.

Centrepoint offers a vast collection of some of the best brands including Babyshop, Splash, Lifestyle and Shoe Mart.

The group has a presence across the retail categories of fashion clothing and garments;

kids wear, toys and baby needs; home furniture and furnishings; cosmetics, accessories and lifestyle products; footwear, leather and accessories; electronics; hospitality covering food entertainment and hotels.

From its first store in Bahrain in 1973, the group today has a retail footprint that across the Middle East, India and Spain.

Perfume, cosmetics store opens

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 11 November 2007

An exclusive perfume and cosmetics store, a division

of Muscat Pharmacy, was inaugurated at the Jawharat A'Shatti

Complex here on Nov. 7.

The store showcases the

latest collections of fragrances, makeup and skincare products from luxury, prestige and designer brands catering to the needs of both men and women of all age groups.

The store has great ambience and is beautifully designed to ensure that all the products get maximum exposure. Spread across a retail space of 3,500 sq.ft, global brands like Estee Lauder, Clinique, Dior, Gu-erlain, Clarins, Givenchy, Elizabeth Arden, Cerruti, Calvin Klein,

DKNY, Michael Kors, Sean John, Gucci, Dolce& Gabbana, Valentino, Mont Blanc, Dunhill, Baldessarini, Hugo Boss, Lacoste, Escada, Maxmara, Trus-sardi, Aramis, Tommy Hilfiger are some of many brands available.

The highlight of the store is that Amouage has a very special section with its recent launch of 'Jubilation' complementing the existing range.

The store has been designed keeping in mind the

grooming needs of men. There is a section featuring world's leading skincare products such as 'Lab Series Skincare for Men' from Aramis, Clinique Skin Supplies for Men and Clarins Men.

It also houses two beauty rooms for women, where appointments can be taken for beauty consultations.

Specially trained professional beauty consultants/advisers attend the needs of the customers and also provide important beauty tips.

Presentation on research into Omani apparels

Source: *Times of Oman*, 22 October 2007

The American Women's Group yesterday organised a presentation on the 'Omani Dress Project', a research project about Omani garments spanning different periods of time - both past and present.

The presentation held at Crowne Plaza Hotel was made by Julia Al Zadjali, director of the Centre for Omani Dress (COD), to a large group of women who gathered on the occasion.

"The aim of the presentation is to bring great attention to the Omani dress and increase enthusiasm about Omani garments among the people," said Julia in her comments to Times of Oman.

Julia gave the audience a brief but closer look at not only the intricacies and finer nuances of the clothes collection but also the aims and objectives of the Omani Dress Project which is but one element of the newly established Centre for Omani Dress. The ODP began after being contacted by the Stitching Textile Research Centre (TRC) in Leiden, Netherlands.

Julia disclosed that pres-

ently the ODP collection has nearly 400 pieces of garments with many sub-collections. Most of these garments have been worn by Omanis and represents the clothes from birth-to-death cycle of the people of Oman. Research for the project began through books and photographs sourced from individuals as well as from Bait Adam museum. The sub-collection of the garments includes textiles, cosmetics, jewellery, footwear, face veiling and embellishments which are the biggest part of the project. So far the national garments of Oman have remained undocumented and, therefore, the COD through the Omani Dress Project aims at having a conservation centre for garments as well as setting up a resource centre, Julia said.

According to Julia, the Omani Dress Project (ODP) was started in 2003 with the aim of recording the regional and urban dress of Oman, worn by men, women and children. The project is divided into two phases.

The first involves making a general study of the main styles of regional dress, with the aim of

creating a dress collection that will be the basis of a real and/or digital exhibition and suitable publications.

The second phase is more involved and includes detailed, academic research into the main and lesser styles of regional dress, with the intention of publishing the information in the form of an in-depth study.

The Centre for Omani Dress also has several projects wherein the centre will help in restoring work in places like Al Hazim Fort and Castle as well as Bait Al Radaydah. The COD is also involved with the Omani Heritage Gallery and The Sultan's School where students are asked to log in 150 community hours by taking part in the research and field trips organised by COD.

Julia was also all praise for Abdulatif Al Balushi, owner of Bait Adam, who allowed her to look through his invaluable book collection for information on Omani garments. This enabled Julia to collect information going as far back as the late 1600s. The presentation was followed by traditional dinner.

Women in the Sultanate of Oman defying boundaries

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 30 September 2007

The Western view that Arab women are just homemakers confined to their home and hearth can now be safely dismissed.

For proof, take Oman.

Women here have chosen to enter the challenging world of business and make a mark on the country's economic and social horizon. Armed with confidence, commitment, idealism and talent, these women have become a force to be reckoned with, and have a say in almost all aspects of the country's development.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report, 2004, as much as 20 per cent of Omani women are economically active. At the end of July this year, the number of Omani women working in the private sector stood at 21,313.

One third of government employees in Oman are women and there are currently more women than men enrolled in higher education at the university level. While there are no official figures available, it is said that Oman has the highest number of working women among the AGCC states.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has always emphasised the importance of the woman's role in the country's growth: "Many years ago, I said that if the energy, capability and enthusiasm of women were excluded from a country's active life, then that country would be depriving itself of 50 per cent of its genius. I have taken very good care that this should not happen to Oman, and I look forward to the further progress of women in my country with the greatest pleasure and confidence."

A major fillip for Omani entrepreneurs in general, especially women, has been The

Knowledge Mine (TKM), a business incubator programme based at Rusayl Technology Park, Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM). This initiative was set up in April 2004 to help create jobs, enhance Oman's entrepreneurial climate and help diversify the national economy. TKM has managed to attract a lot of women-managed enterprises, the first of them being Success Technology, a scientific and medical software technology start-up founded and managed by Dr Zahra Al Rawahi and Munira Al Mahrooqi.

Special mention must be made of the Omani Women's Association (OWA), a government organisation that encourages women to contribute to the development of their society. OWA provides opportunities for voluntary work and child welfare services throughout the Sultanate.

According to statistics, at the end of 2003, there were 39 OWA's across the country, with some 3,000 members. Its activities include sponsoring lectures on health and society, providing kindergarten services and handicraft training programmes; also, informal counselling and legal advice relating to domestic issues. Early this year, the OWA in Muscat tied up with Microsoft Oman, to help equip women across the country with IT skills and capabilities.

The long-term development strategy Vision 2020 adopted by Oman has also encouraged women to participate and contribute effectively to society.

Moreover, easy access to education, training and awareness has helped emancipate Omani women and make them self-reliant and independent. Initiatives like Sanad (Self Employment and National Autono-

mous Development) and The Knowledge Mine (TKM), a business incubator programme based at Rusayl Technology Park, Knowledge Oasis Muscat, not to mention enterprise-friendly loans by banks in Oman, are all encouraging entrepreneurship in a big way, and more and more women are venturing out to test the waters. And no one is disappointed.

Women like Zulfah Al Barwani who owns the popular beauty parlour Al Lilac in Qurum, are eager to share the story that changed their lives. It all began with a dream. A dream to succeed. A dream to make a mark. It was tough going initially, but the results are there for all to see, and the women are nothing but proud. Says Zulfah: "It was tough in the beginning: right from getting permission to start the business, down to getting professional Omanis to help me out. And to prove myself, I have had to constantly update my knowledge about beauty and beauty products, stay abreast of the latest trends in the field and learn how to handle customers. But that was four years ago. Today, looking back, I can say it has been worth every effort."

Concurring with her is Amna Balushi, whose nursery Happy Smile in Azaiba, is thriving: "My fascination for kids led me to set up the nursery. Initially I had problems settling down. But today, I'm happy that I started out on my own. I feel content and independent. I only wish there were more opportunities available for specialised training and development, though. But I'm sure that will happen with time."

Women entrepreneurs in Oman have come a long, long way. And they have a long way to go. But they've arrived, for sure. And are here to stay.

New-look Salam store opens

Source: *Times of Oman*, 22 August 2007

Salam, the high-end fashion store in Qurum has opened its doors with a new and renovated look and the latest international brands and fashion collections.

To coincide with the refurbished look, Salam has launched an attractive sale offer of up to 60 per cent discount on all fashion items including clothes and accessories except perfumes.

With the shopping area exuding a certain calm with bright white colour, the store makes shoppers feel at ease to see and buy what they need.

And with a full-fledged perfumery and men's fashion forming a big part of the shop, Salam is eager to let its customers know that the store represents the Salam concept like everywhere else in the AGCC.

This was revealed by Joseph Faddoul, general manager of Salam who was speaking at the inauguration of the store in its new 'avatar'.

Being the only high-end luxury and fashion store for men, ladies and kids with over 25 international brands under

one roof, Salam is the only department store in Muscat which caters to the exclusive upmarket clientele.

Salam also boasts of home decoration items like table ware, linen and home gifts; accessories like eyewear, jewellery; along with a big chunk of perfumes, cosmetics, shoes and bags.

Some of the international brands and fashion houses which are retailed at Salam include Hugo Boss; D&G; Moschino; JustCavali; Escada etc.

The store which was actually supposed to re-open its doors in the month of June had to postpone the event due to Cyclone Gonu.

Like most of the shops which suffered losses and damage in the Qurum shopping district, Salam too was affected, but it was only minimal as the store operates on two levels. "The renovation of the store began in September last year and we were about to open in June but then Gonu happened and the inauguration had to be put off for a couple of months. But thanks

to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the government authorities took swift action and restored the roads and infrastructure. This has been very helpful for us," said Joseph.

He was also all praise for the security provided during the aftermath of the cyclone, which he said was very important and crucial and enabled them to come back faster and easier.

According to Joseph, even Salam's international suppliers and designers were very supportive as they knew the situation and they really put in a lot of efforts to send the new collections.

"It is all because of the long and loyal relationship we share with them," Joseph added.

Salam has for the last couple of years been witnessing big progress, growing in double digit figures, and has been getting bigger international brands into its fold. Now the store is all set to open two niche stores (Hugo Boss and PlusIT) at City Centre, besides adding a perfumery chain. A big surprise is also being planned for its customers in the near future also.

Dazzling display of designer wear from Francois

Source: *Times of Oman*, 1 August 2007

In a power-packed fashion show that mesmerised guests, a worldwide launch of two international Autumn Collections was held at Al Nahda Resort & Spa in Barka on Monday night.

Guerlain Paris revealed its latest range of cosmetics while Francois Desroches unveiled his trendy chic kaftans. The collection will see a September launch in Belgium and Mauritius.

It was a dazzling display of

impressive designer wear, gorgeous models and make-up that was witnessed by high-profile socialites from Muscat and some who had flown in from Dubai for the special occasion.

Guerlain Paris's new range saw the return of the eye shadow 'Ombre Eclat Duo' and liner is a sultry palette of two complementary eye shadows and one eye liner housed in a chic gold compact.

Six different combinations of monochrome browns, greys, coppers and blues feature tones from deep to light to create an array of looks. In addition, there are six new delicious shades in KissKiss lipstick. The line also features new blushes and lip pencils.

Francois Desroches's 'Kool Kaftans' collection undoubtedly spelt the end of dullness. The designer, who is also the training

and PR manager (Middle East) for Guerlain Paris, has steered clear of haute couture that looks good only on supermodels.

Speaking about his new collection, Francois said: "I wanted something that enhances the body of a woman and flows gracefully around her irrespective of her lifestyle."

And to that end he believes he has created an awesome ensemble of delicate kaftans that will be flattering to any woman regardless of her body shape.

The crowd looked clearly charmed by the French designer who looked stunning himself

wearing an Indian style kurta-pyjama dress.

With a kaleidoscope of colours, Francois' collection was very vibrant and cheerful with the materials standing in perfect harmony with striking floral and geometric prints.

The added pleasure of buying his new range of fun-to-wear creations is that each piece is a one-off design never to be repeated again with the kaftans starting from as low as RO25.

When asked to describe the collection, Francois said: "It has a very relaxed resort mood. At the same time it is very versa-

tile. When worn over a bathing costume a 'kaftan' can look very charming yet the same can look very hot and enticing in the evening. It all depends on what you pair it up with."

The designs have a universal appeal. Says Francois: "Even though the outlook of the collection is very Oriental, it will seduce the Europeans as much as my Oriental clientele."

Also, my outfits are not meant for any specific age group. Young and mature women would both be comfortable in these. Once size fits all and makes each one look stunning."

Programme on leadership for women concludes

Source: *Times of Oman*, 28 July 2007

Competence HR in association with Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIM-A), has successfully conducted a certificate management development programme on enhancing leadership capabilities and potential among professional women.

The programme was attended by women delegates from prominent banks like HSBC, BankMuscat, NBO and from Oil and Gas (O&G) sector. Participants were impressed by the overall programme objectives, methodology and practical activities.

Newer techniques like medi-

tation, self-healing and artwork were introduced to the participants and they enjoyed the novelty and complimented highly the difference in approaches from other leadership programmes.

The programme was conducted in Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissa Resorts and Spa. The participants were given gift vouchers, courtesy Kaya Skin Clinic and gift hampers courtesy MHD, Avon to celebrate being a progressive, modern and a woman with a deep set of values.

The programme was aimed at providing an opportunity for professional women in all do-

mains to reflect on their leadership potential and innate gifts, the balance between personal and professional lives, internalised constraints, and future directions for a richer, more fulfilling and meaningful professional and personal life. This was a safe opportunity for a woman to set aside her everyday concerns and take on a learning journey along with women from diverse backgrounds.

Competence HR will bring more programmes in August and September to cater to the evolving training needs of the people of Oman.

'Cricket for Women' project launched

Source: *Times of Oman*, 5 June 2007

June 4, 2007 will be marked bold in the history of Oman cricket as chief guest Siham bint Ahmed bin Yusef Al Harthy, general manager, Directorate-General of Planning and Studies at the Ministry of Housing, Electricity and Water, de-

clared open the 'Cricket for Women' project by cutting the ceremonial ribbon at the PDO ground in the presence of Ministry of Sports Affairs official Khalifa Al Jabri, OCC board members, well wishers and distinguished guests.

The chief guest was greeted upon her arrival at the PDO ground by Kanak Khimji, OCC chairman and other board members. Later Madhu Sampat welcomed the chief guest and in his address to distinguished guests explaining how the project was

mooted.

The OCC, he said, had ambitious plans to start the new venture. Vaishali Jesrani then conducted a softball inter-school cricket tournament for girls during December 2006, which attracted several school teams in Oman.

The encouraging response to Vaishali's pioneering effort prompted the OCC to appoint Vaishali and Ranjit Kaur Matharoo as coordinators for the project. The Ministry of Sports Affairs then gave the green signal upon which the OCC invited registrations from prospective girl/women candidates.

The OCC then appointed qualified coaches Hemin Desai,

Rakesh Sharma and Nilesh Parmar to take charge of the training needs of the registered players. Madhu mentioned that a total of 40 girls had registered their names, which included Omani girls.

He further stated that the ultimate aim of OCC was to develop a national team and junior teams — Under-15, Under-17 and Under-19. He also indicated that a national Oman women's cricket team is also likely to participate in a forthcoming ACC tournament for women. OCC also have called for more applications from the lady players for which age is no bar.

Currently the three coaches will continue with the coaching

but if the strength of the players increases more coaches would be inducted.

He thanked Khalifa Al Jabri on behalf of the OCC for the support rendered by him in starting the project. He also thanked Khalid Khabouri of PDORC for permitting the OCC to use the facilities at the PDO ground. Later, the OCC thanked Shaukat Khan for lending a hand from the start to make this project a possibility.

All the enrolled players were provided with T-shirts for the sessions, which will be held thrice a week at the PDO ground on Saturdays, Mondays and Wednesdays from 5pm to 6.30pm.

First Women in Business Conference opens today

Source: *Times of Oman*, 2 June 2007

Under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Aliya bint Thuwaini Al Said, the first Women in Business Conference opens at Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa today for two days of inspiring programme attended by outstanding leaders and successful businesswomen from around the world.

The primary purpose of this conference is to explore and exchange experiences of the successes and constraints facing women in business and to come up with strategies for enabling women to articulate their business concerns. The conference starts at 9am with the opening ceremony, followed by a speech by Her Highness Shiekha Hissah Al Sabah, president of Arab Businesswomen Council, on how to prepare young women for global changes.

Anousheh Ansari, the first female private space explorer, will enlighten the participants on overcoming obstacles and prejudices while in pursuits of one's

dreams; Isabel Aguilera; CEO - Google Spain and Portugal, will talk about women in business empowered by technology and Malak Al Shaibani, GM corporate affairs, Sohar Aluminium, will make a valuable point about how to develop a W-Omanisation strategy in Omani companies.

The other noted speakers for the day are Farhana Huq and Karin Askerfelt.

In the evening, the Women in Business Awards will be launched at Al Bandar Ballroom, Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa. The awards aim at recognising the success of women in business, thereby creating female role models whose achievements will inspire other women to raise their sights and reach their goals.

The key speakers tomorrow are Aneth Arosemena, Michelle Mone, Aisha Al Kharusi, Zahraa' Taher, Claire Cabanel Rey, Samantha Robinson, Anita Ahuja, Dr Zahra Al Rawahi and Abeer Al Mukhieny.

Through a generous support of the US Embassy, scholarships are provided for young businesswomen in Oman to attend the event and develop their professional skills during the conference.

"We are pleased to be sponsoring the participation of 10 Omani businesswomen and young professionals at this event, said US Ambassador Gary A. Grappo.

"The US Embassy actively supports a variety of programmes that enable women to build their management and leadership skills and we are delighted to be partner in highlighting the successes and the potential of businesswomen in Oman through this conference."

A day before the event, in an ideal and welcoming atmosphere, the VIP guests and speakers for the conference were taken on a sightseeing tour of Muscat. The guests strolled

past the elegant and significant places of Muscat, including the prestigious Bait Al Zubair Museum, The Wave and the Grand Mosque and were enriched by the heritage of the city.

Salma Kikwete, first lady of the United Republic of Tanzania, accompanied by Her Highness Sayyida Aliya bint Thuwaini Al Said, visited the Bait Al Zubair Museum.

Speaking to Times of Oman, Anousheh Ansari, chairman and co-founder of Prodea Systems, Inc. and the first female private space explorer, said that she was quite impressed by the breathtaking beauty of Muscat. "Though this is my first visit to Oman I feel so comfortable being here. Even the sweltering heat hardly bothers because being in the city of

Dallas I am used to such extreme climate," she said.

Talking about the conference Anousheh Ansari said that she was looking forward to addressing the participants and hoped that attendance would be good.

Anita Ahuja, writer, designer and the president of Conserve and creative head of Conserve HRP, is also on her first visit to Oman. She said that she had recently attended a conference in Doha and was looking forward to share her acumen to the young entrepreneurs in Oman, too.

Michelle Mone, award-winning and leading entrepreneur from the UK, summed up her first impression of Muscat by the word 'incredible'. "I learnt so much about the culture and the people of this beautiful country

in just one day," she added.

Referring to the conference, Michelle said that such conferences provide the right platform to do professional networking, establish business contacts worldwide. She hoped that women in Oman would benefit immensely. "I would go back to the UK and tell all my acquaintances to visit Oman," she said with a smile.

Tena Peldan, workshop leader from Sweden, said she was bowled over by the way Omanis preserve their heritage. With some of the most prominent speakers in the world gathering in the country at one time, this occasion heralds the beginning of an annual event. The organisers, Envent, are expecting 300 delegates to attend the inaugural conference.

Women given their due at Nawras

Source: *Times of Oman*, 2 June 2007

Nawras accords considerable significance to the growth of women in the company. No wonder, women constitute 32 per cent of the workforce at Nawras.

Women at Nawras are entrusted with key responsibilities in departments such as sales, IT, procurement, finance, marketing, customer service and networks, says Ross Cormack, CEO, Nawras.

Amaal Al Lawati is a shining example of a woman occupying high position. Amal joined Nawras in the billing department and now she heads the department handling a wide array of portfolios. Amal is proud to be part of Nawras and its success story.

"At Nawras, working is a pleasure, she says. The enthusiasm and the spirit of camaraderie that prevails among the employees make it a wonderful place to work," she quipped. Ac-

cording to Cormack, 'Women are given equal responsibilities in Nawras. And that's the reason we have women occupying significant positions in all the departments ... Nawras is playing a major role in the National Human Resources Development of the Sultanate by giving women their due. 'We believe that efforts to empower women will be a success by providing the right opportunities for them,' he explained.

One may ask what has made Nawras the employer of choice? The answer is not far to seek. When Nawras was launched in 2005 with a workforce of 250 dedicated professionals, 235 of them had never worked in a mobile company before. Today, the company employs over 470 people, who are among the finest mobile professionals anywhere. Nawras contributed to providing a whole generation of Omani talents with

expertise in telecommunications or more specifically in mobile telecommunications.

Nawras is proud of enjoying around 80 per cent Omanisation and, 99 per cent Omanisation at its call centre. Nawras believes that investing in employees is investing in the future — for the employee, for the company and for the country. And ultimately, everyone benefits. Not everyone can make it to the top positions, but by assisting everyone to reach their potential, Nawras will continue to be a responsible 'Employer of Choice'.

Ever since its launch two-years ago, Nawras has completely changed the telecommunications landscape in Oman. And by doing so it has supported the Sultanate's targets for Omanisation and the government's drive to encourage widespread development of technology for the growth of e-business in the Sultanate.

Women in Majlis Al Shura — a step forward

Source: *Times of Oman*, 30 May 2007

The essence of the Majlis Al Shura is to enable Omani citizens to take part in the process of decision-making and nation-building. At Majlis Al Shura, there is no difference between males and females as the ultimate objective is to yield promising benefits for the nation.

The Government of Oman views the potential role of women in decision-making by opening the doors for them to participate equally with their male counterparts in the Majlis Al Shura. However, the number of female members in the Majlis is small.

As of now, there are only two female members — Raheela Amoor Al Riyami and Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish, among 82 male members.

Approximately 50 per cent of the nation's population is female. Then why after six sessions of Majlis elections, we still have only two females representing Omani women in the Majlis?

Omani women have made rapid progress in the field of education in the recent past, and many of them are highly educated. Education, definitely, is a requirement for women to actively participate in nation-

building.

Oman is the only government in the Gulf, which appointed four women in ministerial positions — Dr Rawiyah bint Saud bin Ahmed Al Busaidiyah, minister of higher education; Dr Rajiha bint Abdul Amir bin Ali, minister of tourism; Dr Sharifa bint Khalfan bin Nassir Al Yahyaeyah, minister of social development; and Sheikha Aisha bint Khalfan bin Jumail Al Siyabiah, president, Public Authority for Craft Industries. This indicates that Omani women have enough potential to be an effective component of modern Oman.

There are several issues who discourage women from participating in Majlis Al Shura. Firstly, the cultural and traditional mindset of the Omani community holds back women from moving forward. Recent changes in perspective, however, have brought many changes in other aspects in Omani life, but political participation of women is not very much welcome.

Secondly, Omanis are experiencing new concepts through voting and going to the polls. Thus, time is ripe to identify and

absorb the basics of the culture of elections. Many educated people look at Majlis as an establishment that would serve the purpose of establishing modern democracy in Oman.

Thirdly, Omani women gained good education through the past 36 years, and this needs to be seen as a source of strength.

However, it has not been used to empower female position in the Majlis Al Shura. To raise awareness on the importance of this issue among citizens, government has made several attempts.

The objective, indeed, is to enhance women's participation in Majlis Al Shura, Omani media and women's associations.

The result, however, is very insignificant. Raising awareness among women on the rules and regulations of Majlis Al Shura is the key component that will help women move forward in Al Shura elections and participate actively in the nation-building process.

On the other hand, men should encourage women to come forward. The need of the hour is to ensure the best opportunities for women to accomplish success.

Asgharali comes to Oman

Source: *Times of Oman*, 1 May 2007

Asgharali, Bahrain's leading retailers of Arabic scented cosmetics - eastern perfumes, oud and bukhur - has recently opened its doors to Oman.

Having opened its first showrooms in the traditional souq of Seeb and a new showroom in Markhaz Al Bahja shopping centre recently, it is ready to attract its Muscat customers.

Asgharali provides a variety of exclusively traditional and

specialised Oriental premium, which has over 60 years of marketing experience.

Asgharali has been wooing customers all over the Middle East with its rich fragrances and exclusively antique and crystal packaging, which in a way reflects the Middle East tradition, culture and contrast.

Asgharali offers a wide selection of sensational products at prices that are truly 'value for

money'.

Asgharali has 10 showrooms located in all of Bahrain's prestigious malls and prominent landmark locations.

Also the management has carefully targeted prestigious malls of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Pakistan and Oman. In addition, Asgharali has 300 dealers network in the Middle East, which is promoting and taking the brand name places.

Expansion plans for Asgharali retail showroom are on the way. The company will be

opening its retail showrooms in Salalah, Sohar, Nizwa, Sur and traditional Muttrah souq to cater

to the needs of its valuable customers in the forthcoming months.

Jewellery show at Alasfoor Plaza

Source: *Times of Oman*, 1 May 2007

An exhibition featuring a wide range of jewellery manufactured in Dubai was opened yesterday at the Omega showroom of Alasfoor Plaza, Qurum. The exhibition will be open till May 10.

The morning session of the exhibition on May 2 will be for ladies only.

A celebration of creativity in art, craft and design, this exhibition is displaying a spectrum of wide range of jewellery collections.

"What we have got is a wide range of jewellery collection manufactured in Dubai. What we are showcasing is 18-carat diamond and semi-precious studied jewellery. It is a brand new collection and we have more

than 65 pieces at the exhibition," said Ramesh Khimji, chairman, Ramesh Khimji Group of Companies.

The aim of the exhibition is to make a strong case for jewellery as one of the creative industries with strong potential for cultural expression and commercial growth.

Talking about jewellery on display, Hamir Desai, Le Brilliante, Dubai said:

"We have a wide display of various collections in terms of rings, earrings, bangles, bracelets and huge necklaces.

What we are trying to do is display various styles including daily wear collection as well as bridal collection."

The daily wear collection

jewellery includes pendant, earrings and rings which have the general public as the target audience. "We have got daily wear collection with a range starting from RO150," Hamir informed.

The bridal collection features exclusive necklaces. "The bridal collection could cost upto RO10,000," Hamir added.

The jewellery being exhibited is not branded jewellery but a new collection manufactured from Dubai. "We have exclusive pieces, our speciality is long chandelier earrings. We have introduced this keeping the culture of the Gulf in mind," Hamir said.

Rajen Desai, director, Sterling Jewels, Mumbai and Atul Kothari from Mumbai were also present.

Centrepont opens new outlet in Salalah

Source: *Times of Oman*, 19 April 2007

The lifestyle-shopping store Centrepont was inaugurated in Salalah by Eng. Abdul Khader Ahmed Al Haddad, vice-chairman, Dhofar Municipality.

In Salalah, the Landmark Group opened its fourth Centrepont store on April 15. Spread over 49,000 square feet of retail space, Centrepont, Salalah is the largest in the governorate and will house some of the finest brands and products. Bringing a vast collection of some of the best brands from around the world, Centrepont packs in great surprises for the shoppers than ever before.

With the arrival of Centrepont, shoppers of Salalah can experience a family-friendly environment, competitive prices,

and a wide array of brands. Centrepont is innovative and unique, mainly because it provides the newborns and trendy teenager, families and women of all ages, one destination, for a wide choice of in-house and international retail brands. This has also helped the store build a loyal customer base.

Centrepont is a convenient combination of four trendy brands - Babyshop, Splash, Lifestyle, and Shoe Mart - these brands are already a hot favourite in the region. It boasts of one of the largest distribution and logistics network with excellent delivery arrangements to cater to the whole of Salalah.

The group has a presence across the retail categories of:

Fashion clothing and garments; kidswear, toys and baby needs; cosmetics, accessories and lifestyle products; footwear, leather and accessories; hospitality and more. Be it Babyshop's quality clothes for children of all ages, or Shoe Mart's trendy foot wears, or Splash's haute couture, every shopper will have something more to choose from today, tomorrow and beyond.

Babyshop makes the trendiest children's wear and accessories. The Babyshop chain caters to the newborn to 12-year-olds by providing an extensive range of children's wear, infant basics, toiletries and feeding accessories, shoes, toys and nursery furniture. Shoe Mart stocks a

range of affordable word-class international brands of shoes and accessories for men, women, and children - Juniors, Bare Feet, Klin and Pampili, Ecco, Bata Italy, Paprika, Lewre, Filanto, Duchini, Reebok, Adidas and more.

Splash is the leading fashion retailer in the AGCC. Each season, Splash introduces the hottest fashions, drawing its inspiration from global catwalk trends. Its team of creative in-house designers weaves these styles into lighter fabrics and cuts suitable for the regional climate.

Centrepoin's success is based on the core values as an organisation - Carefully listen. Constantly adapt. Always deliver. On these three pillars the

Landmark Group continues to grow successfully. Venturing into new markets. Capturing greater market share.

The group's key strengths include its ability to handle diverse products and market segments, competitive global sourcing capabilities, efficient supply chain management with well-established infrastructure and cost-efficient operations and productive use of resources.

Centrepoin boasts of state-of-the-art IT systems and solutions, strong focus on customer development and retention through successful loyalty programmes, investment in research and development enabling constant innovation and decentralised decision-making with hands-on management ca-

pability. The work force is a blend of multi-national, multi-cultural professional skills.

Centrepoin continuously invests in human resource development and training and records consistent annual growth rate of over 25 per cent.

From its first store in Bahrain in 1973 measuring all of 5,000 sqft., the Landmark Group has now has a retail presence of over six million square feet and a footprint that spans across the Middle East, India and Spain. The group currently operates more than 500 stores across 10 countries, with concepts and business interests that attract an ever-widening customer base, representing varied nationalities, cultures and economic profiles.

Amouage launches new 'Reflection' fragrances

Source: *Times of Oman*, 3 April 2007

Amouage, one of the leading luxury fragrance houses in the world that is deeply rooted in modern Arabian opulence, has launched its new fragrances, 'Reflection Woman' and 'Reflection Man' in Oman.

Founded 25 years ago by the Omani Royal family to sustain the millennia-old traditions of Arabian perfumery, Amouage is one of the leading luxury fragrance houses that is deeply rooted in modern Arabian opulence and creates some of the most finely crafted fragrances in the world. The only globally distributed luxury brand from Oman, Amouage's distinctive bottles were created by Asprey of London.

The two fragrances celebrate the power of the individual and were created to inspire quiet introspection and a sense of one's true self and inner inspiration.

As a pair, the two fra-

grances are united by cool, vibrant florals in their top and heart notes, which are in turn balanced by the warm, rounded, woody notes in the base.

"The Middle East is especially receptive to fragrances as they are ingrained in rich Arabian tradition," expressed David Crickmore, Amouage CEO. "The new fragrances represent the company's progressive nature by preserving the past in modern times, where the importance of appreciating inner beauty should never be overlooked especially in the fast-paced and ever changing world we live in today," he said.

"This is an exciting time for Amouage. As we prepare to celebrate our silver jubilee, we ourselves are reflecting on our true heritage and essence in our quest to preserve and pioneer the Arabian perfume industry." 'Reflection Woman' was created by legendary perfumer and nez,

Maurice Roucel.

His creations have included perfumes for Gucci, Donna Karan, Helmut Lang, Castelbajac and Kenzo, as well as cult fragrances such as Hermès 24 Faubourg, Rochas Tocade and Guerlain Insolence. Roucel has won almost every award afforded to a great perfumer, including American, European and French FiFi Awards, French Oscars and the prestigious Coty prize. 'Reflection Man' was created by Lucas Sieuzac, a renowned young perfumer who has already had great success with perfumes he has created for Givenchy, Emporio Armani, Mavive and Biotherm. Sieuzac is renowned for his sophisticated fusions and engaging dualities. Reflection Women will retail at RO55 for 50ml Eau de Parfum and Reflection Man at RO50 for 50ml Eau de Toilette and is available at Amouage boutiques located in Sabco Cen-

tre and City Center, Muscat Pharmacy, Gift Stores in Al Masa Mall, Khimji in Salalah and Hatta Duty Free in addition to prestigious perfumeries and department stores around the world.

The epitome of luxury, Amouage has stellar worldwide following including royals, global

leaders and celebrities. A light, spring-like fragrance with notes inspired by a secret garden. Water violet, purple freesia and tropical green leaves in the top notes, sit above cool white flowers such as magnolia and jasmine in the heart. Warmth is injected in the base notes with the use of amber, cedarwood and sandalwood.

Amouage's current portfolio includes the Heritage Collection, Gold, Dia, Ciel, Eau d'Amouage, Esprit d'Amouage, Arcus, Cirrus and Silver Cologne in addition to the newly launched Reflection.

Amouage perfumes are available at prestigious perfumeries and department stores around the world.

Sharifa hails woman's high status in Oman

Source: *Times of Oman*, 8 March 2007

In her speech on International Women's Day, Dr Sharifa bint Khalfan Al Yahyaeyah, minister of social development, hailed the high status achieved by the Omani woman in all walks of life under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The speech comes within the celebrations of the event. The Sultanate's celebrations coincided with remarkable achievements achieved by the Omani

woman particularly in the field of comprehensive development and the blessed Renaissance, she said.

"We were proud of the achievements made by the Omani woman, thanks to the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, the builder of the Renaissance of the nation," she added

It was a source of pride that the Omani woman was able to

ascend to prestigious scientific status since the dawn of Renaissance and to actively involve in leading positions in the Majlis Al Shura and the State Council to serve citizens and the nation, she said.

"We were also proud with the significant role played by the housewives and mothers in looking after and nurturing the new generations," the minister observed.

Come out from behind clouds, women urged

Source: *Times of Oman*, 8 March 2007

Every year on International Women's Day thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate their achievements. While there are many large scale-ideas dedicated to women like political rallies, business conferences, government activities, theatric performances, fashion parades and more, there are individuals who make it a point to celebrate the day in their own small way.

It is Women's Day today, an occasion to celebrate and reflect. Women in Muscat who are geared up for the day spoke to the Times of Oman.

Henna Imran, Sales & PR Executive, Radisson SAS Hotel,

Muscat explains: "Like everybody else I would like to join the rest of the world in celebration of this special day for women. It is the time of the truly empowered women and there is no reason why we shouldn't celebrate this day. I want to spend time with my mother today. I am excited because I have planned to take my mother out for dinner. I have also brought her a present."

According to Henna, Women's Day should be dedicated to the women we love. "I think today we should take the opportunity and pronounce mothers as the head of the family," she declares.

While Henna wants to spend

time with her mother, Amna bint Suleiman Hashim Al Balushi, director of Happy Smile Nursery, wants to be grateful to all the women of this world.

"As we are celebrating Women's Day today, I feel that it is my duty to express my gratitude to all the women in my life, beginning with mother Eve, my mother, my grandmother, my sisters and cousins, aunties, teachers, friends, peers and also to all known and unknown women," she says.

Amna has a message for women too. "I request women to do their work with mastery like the moon. I want women to come out from behind the

clouds and shine. Keep your face always towards the sun. A special happy Women's Day to all of you," she wishes.

Susan Mullins of GMA wants to do something different from the conventional celebrations. "I want to take the day off and read a book. My choice is Jane Jaffer's *Scent of a Rose*. At the end of the day I plan to have a romantic dinner with my husband. I recommend all women do the same," Susan says.

Student Tejaswini wants to remember achievements of women and make a list of all the

great women. "We should remember them because they will help us feel more confident," she says. "Today the influence women wield is immense. She is a president. She is a CEO. She is a Nobel laureate. She is a humanitarian. She is a decision-maker who can make and break countries. She is a financial strategist. She is an incredible sports person. I want to list them all and feel good about them and perhaps be like them," she says.

Ann Beshara, follow-up manager, National Securities Companies has some serious

plans lined up. "I will be working till 3.30pm. After that I will get busy because I want to update my knowledge as a graphic designer. I have already brought the required gadgets for that. After all as a woman it is going to help me if I am better equipped, isn't it? Perhaps in the evening I will get together with my friends and have a blast," she says.

As we too wish you a happy Women's Day we also ask you to sit back and reflect on the lengthy and shaky road that still lies ahead for the majority of women before they can be secure and confident.

Omani women enjoy rights on a par with men, says Indian activist

Source: *Times of Oman*, 8 March 2007

Oman is an outstanding example of women's emancipation, a leading women's activist from India said in the context of the International Women's Day.

While women in other parts of the world are still fighting for equal rights, women in Oman have occupied top corporate positions; more ladies drive their own cars and, in general they seem to enjoy life on a par with their men, observed Mahejabeen Khan, who holds a key position in the women's wing of the Congress, the ruling political party in India.

Mahejabeen, who is also a guest writer for *Hindustan Times*, one of the leading newspapers in India, is very vocal about women's rights and also takes up women-related issues as the general secretary of All-India Mahila Congress in India.

In a candid chat with the *Times of Oman* on the occasion of the International Women's Day, Mahejabeen, who is on a short visit here, said that the international community should

follow the example of Oman because of the way in which the women have been granted their due place in society thanks to the wise policies of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

When asked for her opinion about International Women's Day, Mahejabeen said that everyday should be a celebration of womanhood because there is not a single day without the mother in a home.

She also feels that celebrating Women's Day is inappropriate in the present time because globally women have not achieved their goal of getting equal opportunity alongside men.

"This does not mean that women should stoop low to lower their dignity and gain an upper hand over the men. I mean that women should get their rightful place in all sections of the society, and they should be allowed to work in all economic sectors," Mahejabeen said.

As general secretary of the women's wing of the Congress

Party, Mahejabeen is also actively involved in attempts to secure 33 per cent reservations for women in the Parliament, the elected council of the Indian government.

"There are so many wrongs being done to women in India so we have to keep fighting," she observed, while praising Oman for striking a right balance between tradition and modernity despite being an Islamic society.

"Women have to maintain their 'maryada' and should not cross the limits of decency to claim women's liberty," Mahejabeen opined. Mahejabeen was also deeply saddened by controversial author Taslima Nasreen's article in a prominent weekly in India titled *Burn the Burkha*.

"Islam is the first religion in the world which preached about giving respect to women more than 1400 years ago.

"So we need to maintain our morality, our modesty and tradition. We need not burn our culture to show that you are progressive," she said.

Alshamsi forays into Oman retail market

Source: *Times of Oman*, 19 December 2006

Alshamsi Holdings, franchiser of international fashion brands like Parfois, Vincci, Oakidi and Obaibi, is entering Oman retail market with the opening of its concept store at Muscat City Centre.

"The Oman market is all set to witness a revolution in retail trade. By welcoming Alshamsi Holdings for the first time in Oman, we once again bring the best to our customers with the latest in fashion accessories and kids wear," said Ibrahim Al Qasmi, general manager, Muscat City Centre.

The group, established in 2000, has had phenomenal success with their retail outlets in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

"We are delighted to bring

Vincci, Parfois and Okaidi to Oman's increasingly fashion-conscious market. We have the latest in fashion to offer various age groups and are really looking forward to a successful stint in Muscat," said Jamila Zahir, business development manager of the group. Its concept stores promise attractive displays, minimalist and fuss-free layouts and friendly assistance.

The store will have a wing for Okaidi and Obaidi brands. Okaidi offers trendy garments for practical use for children up to 14 years and Obaidi ready-to-wear garments are for kids aged five and below and baby care products like bed linen, rolling products, furniture and accesso-

ries.

The wing for Parfois, a Portuguese brand, will have handbags, jewellery, watches, sunglasses, hats, belts and hair accessories. Another exclusive store for Vincci range of footwear, bags and other accessories will also be part of the wing.

Muscat City Centre, a part of the Majid Al Futtaim shopping malls, maintains its position as a major player in Oman's retail sector and is currently the biggest shopping mall in Oman, with over 80 international, regional and local stores. The centre has destination stores such as Carrefour hypermarket, Magic Planet, family entertainment centre and an international food court.

Kaya Skin Clinic offers new benchmark in beauty care

Source: *Times of Oman*, 30 September 2006

Kaya Skin Clinic, which made its mark in beauty care, has teamed up with Khimji Ramdas, a leading conglomerate in the Sultanate, to open franchise outlets in Oman.

The first Kaya Skin Clinic targeted at upmarket customers will come up at Shatti Al Qurum by December. Two in-house dermatologists will be available to offer personalised beauty care solutions, mainly to women customers, at the clinic which will have 10 treatment rooms manned by highly qualified international staff, Samir Srivastav, Business Head, Middle East and North Africa, Kaya Skin Clinic, said.

Beauty products today comprise the fastest growing segment among consumer products, Pankaj Khimji said, adding that looking good significantly contributed to the confidence

levels and personality of people. KR has had a long and fruitful relationship with Marico, promoter of Kaya Skin Clinic and owners of the popular Parachute brand of hair care products.

Kaya is being brought to Oman in response to a growing need for highly advanced and safe treatment under the best of medical care and supervision. KR's deep insight of the market, honed over decades, coupled with their ability to mobilise resources most efficiently, made it the logical choice as a partner in this new venture, he added.

The skincare solutions business is growing fast with increased awareness and demand for cosmetic enhancement. With advancements in medical technology, safe and effective procedures are available that enhance the look and feel of the skin. Kaya Skin Clinic offers scien-

tific, unisex dermatological procedures, most of them using US FDA approved technology in an environment that is serene and Zen-like.

Kaya offers an ideal combination of aesthetic and clinical care. Kaya was an entrepreneurial leap of faith marking the \$200 million Marico's entry into skincare solutions business. It was a true reflection of uncommon sense for a company in hair care products to move, instead of merely logical product extensions, straight into skincare services. It attempted to leverage Marico's strengths in the personal care business and in-depth understanding of the needs of the consumer and their desire to enhance natural beauty with the best cosmetic dermatology procedures available internationally, Srivastav said.

Kaya Skin Clinic is

recognised as a pioneer in skin care and has become a benchmark for efficacy and client care. In just over two years, Kaya now spans 42 clinics in 18 Indian cities, in addition to four in the UAE. Over 40,000 customers now pledge their trust in Kaya. Kaya seeks to create a differentiation as a safe, efficacious and credible skin care ser-

vice provider at multiple locations. This would be in contrast with the large number of small singular clinics currently present in this segment.

Kaya targets high-end customers in the age group of 16 to 60 years. The objective is to provide result-oriented, personalised, non-surgical skin solutions in a serene Zen-like

environment. Kaya constantly innovates and offers services, including Kaya advanced facial with no re-use and 100 per cent disposable elements. Another service on the anvil is the Kaya age control non-surgical solution. It adopts a holistic approach that delivers visible results in helping the skin to look younger and healthier.

Capital Store launches Insolence fragrance

Source: *Oman Observer*, 30 September 2006

Capital Store has announced the launch of Insolence, a new fragrance from Guerlain characterising panache, verve and spirit. Insolence is a two-handed score played by Maurice Roucel, who created L'Instant by Guerlain, and Sylvaine Delacourte, high priestess of the Guerlain legacy. The open structure of this, unconventional fragrance is unique.

"Insolence does not belong to the chypre, oriental, woody or aldehydic families, nor is it a conventional floral. As for its structure, the olfactory pyramid has been 'deconstructed' to reveal an open construction. Immediately, you are swept straight to the heart of the fragrance, with a violet note in the foreground," explains a Guerlain press statement.

"This new interpretation of

violet is dazzling, wildly exuberant, electric and triumphant. Nothing could be further from the traditional interpretation of this note, which often renders it soft and diminished, a timid whisper, like a shrinking violet hidden in the shadows. Here, it seems familiar yet incredibly different ... transformed, transfigured! The violet note is accompanied by jubilant red berries, including raspberry, used for the first time in a Guerlain fragrance. These supporting notes accentuate the blithe, contemporary character of the composition, with a hint of orange blossom and rose to impart voluptuous intensity.

The final bouquet is composed of tonka bean, resins and a wonderfully sensuous note of iris. Iris is related to the violet through the methylionone branch

(methylionone being the molecule common to both species). This note, dignified and profound, makes Insolence the ultimate luxury fragrance." The face of Insolence is double Oscar winner Hilary Swank, who embodies the independent woman with her non-conformist beauty and vibrant personality. Not to mention her intelligence, which helped her select her roles and film directors.

Hilary considers her Guerlain role as important as her other performances. The advertising film is the work of the English Director of Photography, John Mathieson, nominated for an Oscar for the cinematography of Ridley Scott's film *Gladiator*. The press campaign visuals are by celebrated international fashion photographer Vincent Peters.

Touch Skin Care launches 'El Hajj'

Source: *Times of Oman*, 25 September 2006

Touch Skin Care products, a division of Touch Group of Companies launched an exclusive range of skin care products at the Crowne Plaza Hotel recently. Under the brand name of El Hajj, this exclusive range of products are alcohol and perfume free, especially formulated for the use during pilgrimage

while in the holy land.

The function was inaugurated by the famous and renowned make-up artist, Sahar Al Azawi, owner of popular 'Glamour' beauty saloon. She has also done stints as a TV presenter not just in Oman but Middle East as well.

Diana Somar, a renowned

fashion designer in the city, famous for her designs and work not only in Oman but throughout the Middle East was the other chief guest at the launch.

"I take great pleasure in introducing Touch Skin Care as a sole representative and agents for El Hajj Skin Care Products for the Middle East. At Touch

Skin Care, we are taking this initiative to promote not only something unique but to focus on the Halal Skin Care business in Oman which is growing day by day," said Adeel Irshad, CEO, Touch Group of Companies.

"Our products are also for everyday use, ESP for those who do not use any cosmetic/skin care at all which are avail-

able in the market due to the factors of unwanted preservatives, perfumes, alcohol, chemical additions and for those who are allergic to perfume and alcohol," he added.

The products are water-based and it is easily washed off prior to wudhu. As Muslims are prevented from using fragrance while performing the holy

rituals, El Hajj products contain no fragrance & alcohol so that it can be used while in Ihram too.

At Touch Skin Care, the main objective is to "plan earlier, prepare longer and perform better for ever lasting results".

Therefore a lot of teamwork has gone behind the successful launch of El Hajj products into the market.

Avon launches 'Crystal Aura'

Source: *Oman Observer*, 23 September 2006

Avon has celebrated 120 years of its establishment and empowerment to women in a glittering ceremony held at Crowne Plaza Hotel Muscat.

This was also an occasion to launch 'Crystal Aura', its new fragrance in Oman.

Every Crystal Aura bottle is bejewelled with a Swarovski creation and the fragrance captures the sophistication, luxury and brilliance of crystals, softened

by the velvety addictive texture of feminine petals. This perfume is now available in the Sultanate through Avon's unique concept of direct selling, i.e. you have to purchase Avon products only through the appointed Avon members.

Exotic dance routines underlining various aspects of a woman were the theme of entertainment for the evening, which was well-attended by Avon's

sales team from all over the country.

Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, a symbol of empowerment for women in the Sultanate of Oman, was the special guest. Also present were Avon's representatives Edwina Sorkin, director distributor markets; and Steve Jacquine, marketing manager. The well-known local partner MHD is the sole distributor for Avon since 2004.

Leon Hatot unveils special collection

Source: *Times of Oman*, 17 September 2006

Le Temps d'Aimer special collection Nelly Makdessy' from Leon Hatot, the international jewellery maker was unveiled yesterday under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, minister of national heritage and culture.

Leon Hatot, a contemporary brand is inspired by 'Art Deco' and 'Belle Epoque'.

The exclusive unveiling ceremony was held at the residence of Ramesh Khimji, Oman dealer of Leon Hatot. The event was attended by ministers, diplomats, and Leon Hatot customers besides Arlette-Elsa Emch, president of Leon Hatot and Nelly Makdessy, brand ambassador for Leon Hatot.

The Maison Leon Hatot pays homage to Nelly

Makdessy by dedicating three special versions of its Le Temps d'Aimer collection. A magical phrase, timeless words expressed in diamonds, garnets or sapphires for an independent woman who is both beautiful and strong.

The stunning collection is suave and perfect for everyday wear. The creation evokes the magic and sublimation of matter and signals the transformation of the man's lifetime of work into an enduring work of art.

Le Temps d'Aimer collection touches hearts, dazzles the gaze, and stirs deep feelings. Each set comprises a pendant, a pair of earrings and a ring.

An Iribe rose, embodying an eternal symbol of passion and a classic feature of Art Deco Cre-

ations, thrones in the centre of each creation.

Whether as a dedication or a declaration, Le Temps d'Aimer is spelled out in the form of a poem delicately inscribed as a calligramme on 18-carat gold.

To complement each version of the jewellery set, the Maison Leon Hatot has created three exquisitely elegant oval shaped watches that gently embrace the wrist. Graced with a white mother of pearl or pink lacquered dial, these time pieces feature a steel case set with eight diamonds, eight orange garnets or eight pink sapphires.

In an ultimate touch of refinement, the crocodile strap echoes the colour of the stones. Two Coup de Foudre diamonds adorn each model.

Oman Dress Project continues to make big strides

Source: *Times of Oman*, 04 September 2006

The Oman Dress Project (ODP) has taken some interesting turns since its inception and has gone from being a small project to something much more dynamic. Originally set up to collect, research and document about Oman's national dress on behalf of the Textile Research Centre in the Netherlands, we can now say that the ODP is working in several directions and namely for Oman at large with the TRC being one of the beneficiaries of the work rather than the sole beneficiary.

As many already know, the ODP has begun a home collection through the generosity of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands. By this we mean that we have established the roots of a basic collection which will remain here in Oman and grow to over one thousand pieces by completion. This is in addition to the collection taking place for the TRC in the Netherlands, generously funded by Muscat Press and Publishing House.

In the course of our work for the Ministry of Tourism at Al Hazim, we were fortunate enough to meet several of the local people through our community work. As a result we are working on the production of our first educational video documentary highlighting the making of *hatheeya*, for which filming will begin shortly, thanks to the International Information Technology Co. LLC and their generous donation for this body of work. In addition to this rose the opportunity to acquire an old, authentic loom for the future plans of the ODP which will be discussed shortly.

This older loom is in keeping with the traditional design and authentic wood and will be part of a display in the future.

This has been made possible once again by the generosity of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands.

Summer of 2006 was spent working on a project for the Historical Association of Oman. The ODP agreed to assist the HAO in producing next year's calendar, 2007, featuring Oman's dress and dress identity. It was a very enjoyable project and one that we hope is enjoyed by all who pick up a copy.

Nearly completed is our first publication on Oman's traditional dress; an introductory look at dress for Omani women.

No such publication yet exists and we are very excited about this not only for ourselves but to finally have a publication on the shelves dedicated to Oman's dress identity at long last. It will be informational for all; professionals and experts, students, tourists, etc. Three other booklets are currently in the works.

As one can see, the ODP is no longer simply and solely about a dress collection and documentation process. We have successfully branched out to other areas and have much more 'branching' in store for the future. It is because of these new directions that the ODP is able to announce the decision to open up a centre for Omani dress. Such a centre will be inclusive of all of the activities already mentioned; collecting, documenting, research, educational filming, writing and publishing, assisting other organisations in and outside of Oman and the community work. In addition to these activities will also be displays for visitors to view various pieces of our collection, none of which will be on permanent display as we have

planned exhibitions in order to put all of our collection on display at different times throughout the year.

This new centre for Omani dress will also seek to lend its services in the area of teaching; visiting schools, guided tours of our own displays, hosting seminars and lectures which will be open to the public on the subject of cultural dress, within and outside of Oman.

The ODP is very excited about these plans and wish to give a special thanks to all those who have brought us this far. We wouldn't have gotten as far as we have without the numerous volunteers who have given so generously of their time to help us put together the wealth of information that we have thus far about Oman's dress identity. And, to that point, we wish to thank one and all throughout the entire country for their unending patience and dedication. We extend the same thanks to those outside the country who continue to share their expertise and advice in addition to those supporters already mentioned earlier, including Bait Adam Museum who played an instrumental role in the historical research conducted.

We have only touched the tip of the iceberg as much remains to be discovered. And so we look forward to future explorations with your help!

So on that note, if you wish to volunteer your time, share knowledge of your own collection with us, donate to ours in one form or another or if you would like information about our work, please feel free to contact Julia Al Zadjali at ODP@soukofoman.com.

Al Zahra Gift Centre opening on Sept. 10

Source: *Times of Oman*, 03 September 2006

Al Zahra Promotions and Marketing LLC is all geared up to open an all-new Al Zahra Gift Centre — a gift shop for corporate gifts and garments at the Lima House in Muttrah on September 10. The shop will showcase a wide range of corporate gifts ranging from pen sets to leather items, even perfumes, watches, table décor etc.

“The new gift showroom is targeted at corporate clients as well as individuals and buyers have the option of even placing orders via internet. Gifts are very important for expressing our gratitude as well as our sincere feelings to others. Hence, we have put up a showroom where the choice of gift items is endless. One can also

customise a gift as per his own choice,” said Arfan Hussain Abdullah Al Lawati, managing director, Al Zahra Promotions and Marketing LLC.

The Al Zahra Gift Centre will have on display crystals, classic desktops accessories, corporate promotion items, leather goods, electronic items like calculators/digital diaries, watches, perfumes, fancy items, table décor etc.

The company also has its own garments manufacturing unit abroad and supplies to most supermarkets/hypermarkets in Oman. It has outlets in Al Fair and Supa Save at MBD, Ruwi, Qurum, Al Khuwair and Al Khoudh. It also has tie-up with home textiles manufacturing unit

in Pakistan for the supply of bed linen, curtains etc.

Al Lawati also said that the company supplies its goods to Carrefour outlets in the UAE and is in the process of signing agreements for supply of similar in Qatar and Kuwait as well. There has also been an invitation from Ociped where Al Zahra representatives have been invited to join a trade delegation to Iran to study the market there for possible joint ventures.

Dominic Joseph, marketing manager, said: “The company’s intention is to bring all the services concerning gifts from selection to printing and packing under one roof so that the clients can get all their needs met at one spot.

Website puts Omani women entrepreneurs on track

Source: *Oman Tribune*, 23 August 2006

Take a stroll in the basement of the mall, Markaz Al Bahja, and you will come upon a group of enthusiastic women entrepreneurs who have set up temporary shop there.

A young lady, Sara Zadjali, approaches with a smile of welcome and in perfect English invites us to look around. She points out the wares that have been spread out, ranging from abayas, perfumes, handmade soaps and headscarves to hand-crafted quilts, bags and various trinkets and charms.

While Sara is just out of school, her younger cousin, still studying in the 10th grade, is also helping out an aunt who is selling clothes and perfumes. On any given evening, mainly women shoppers of various na-

tionalities stop by to browse.

And often, charmed by the friendliness and convincing power of those behind the counter, they end up taking something away with them.

Though most present behind the counters are local Omani women, women from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Syria have also participated, says Zahra Al Abrai, the brains behind the exposition that started on August 12 and will continue until the 26.

An art teacher at a school in Muscat, Zahra has been a regular visitor to the Internet site Hawaa World which deals with Arab women’s issues and interests (www.hawaaworld.com).

The website is counted as one of the most popular among Arab women. The online commu-

nity website features feminine and family-related issues including health, cooking, beauty, fashion, kids, dating, marriage and more. And shopping too, which is how Zahra got in touch with women entrepreneurs in other Arab countries.

“My idea was that the entrepreneur friends I made through the website should all come together to hold an exhibition. I am very happy that we have been able to do it,” says Zahra.

It happened with a little help from friends. Says Safiyah Al Shakir, vice-president of the Omani Women’s Association (Muscat chapter): “Zahra approached us with applications of about 50 women entrepreneurs who wanted to participate in an exhibition. Some of those par-

ticipants were from abroad. So we extended our support and arranged with the management of this mall to give us this space.”

The women sponsored themselves while the Omani Women’s Association invited a minister to inaugurate the exhibition. Not all of the original appli-

cants turned up, however, and only about 20 women actually took part. But those who did also brought along their school-going daughters and nieces who could help, not only at the counters but also, to communicate in English with shoppers who showed an interest in the goods on display.

Says Safiya: “It is a wonderful initiative, and I think it is the first time some women entrepreneurs have got together on their own for an exhibition. Our association would like to expand on this and perhaps bring a bigger exhibition from women entrepreneurs in the future.”

Centrepoin**t**: New fashion hub

Source: *Times of Oman*, 20 August 2006

Salem bin Said Al Ghattami, president of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has inaugurated Centrepoin**t** fashion and apparel store at Fahad Plaza in MBD.

Officials and representatives from the Landmark Group, to which Centrepoin**t** belongs, were in attendance during the inauguration. Centrepoin**t** has come up in the place where the old Lulu Shopping Centre existed. Already people have been

thronging the place, proving the popularity of the store.

With its up-to-date fashion for adults and children, footwear, etc. Centrepoin**t** is expected to be the new fashion destination for many. It is an ideal halt with an amalgamation of four popular brands that include Babyshop, Splash, Lifestyle & Shoe Mart.

The Landmark Group, founded in 1973 with a single store in Bahrain, has grown into one of the largest retail

organisations in the AGCC and continues to expand rapidly throughout the region. It currently operates over 400 stores in the AGCC and has recently started operations in Jordan. In addition to its retail sector, the group has also diversified into leisure, food, hospitality, and electronics and has a comprehensive infrastructure, including its own logistics and distribution division, to support its retail operations and other businesses.

Oasis Lifestyle opens shop at Markaz Al Bahja

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.

Dr. Rawiyah wins Arab Women's Award 2006

Source: *Times of Oman*, 25 July 2006

Dr Rawiyah bint Saud Al Busaidiyah, minister of higher education; and Reem bint Omar Al Zawawi, chairperson of Oman International Bank's board; have won Distinct Arab Women Award 2006.

Dr Karim Farman, chairman of the board of the Arab Women Contribution Centre, has expressed his appreciation over the winning of the award by two Omani women.

"This represents a significant achievement by the Omani women. This achievement is maintained through the active participation and contribution of women in the community," Dr Karim said.

There were 633 candidates from various parts of the world for the award, out of which nine emerged winners.

Dr Rawiyah won the prize in

the field of higher education while Reem won the award in the field of banks and economy.

A celebration to honour the winning women would be held in Damascus in mid-August, under the auspices of Syrian President Bashar Al Assad and in the presence of the secretary-general of the Arab League and senior officials from the Arab countries, according to Dr Karim. — ONA

Lecture on legal awareness among Omani women

Source: *Times of Oman*, 28 May 2006

The Omani Women Association in cooperation with the Legal Affairs Ministry will be organising a series of lectures today to orientate women legally.

The lectures are envisaged at enriching legal awareness among Omani women.

Researcher Ahmed bin

Khalifa Al Hosni will deliver the first lecture, in which he will outline the aspects of legal protection guaranteed for women by the civil status law issued by Royal Decree No. 32/97, which addressed her rights in marriage, expenditure, divorce and guardianship.

Lectures organisation stems from the role played by law to spread awareness among citizen and expatriates in the Sultanate and in pursuit of the efforts being exerted by the Legal Affairs Ministry to spread legal culture. - Oman News Agency (ONA)

Zara and Zara Home to make debut in Sultanate at MCC

Source: *Times of Oman*, 04 July 2006

As Muscat City Centre plunges into a gargantuan expansion mode, the popular shopping destination gets even more stimulating for shoppers in Oman.

The MCC is soon going to be the base for Azal Group's first Zara and Zara Home branch

in the Sultanate.

Zara is steadily becoming the world's largest fashion house. At a time when many competitors are working hard to retain market share, Zara has consistently exceeded expectations. Striding step by step with the international fashion scene

will now no longer be a matter of globetrotting, as Zara comes home at the MCC.

Since its launch in 2003 Zara Home has established itself as a serious contender within the home furnishing market, continuing to maintain the winning formula of the hugely

successful Zara brand. Zara Home is rapidly becoming a key name in innovative interior design solutions. Inspired by a strong design team, Zara Home offers a wide range of distinctive creative concepts providing high quality contemporary home furnishings at competitive prices.

The Zara and Zara Home housed at the MCC will be expanding over a 2,000 square metres area.

Whether you want to shop for the finest furniture, everyday home accessories, upholstery, kitchenware or garden furniture, Zara Home will have it all on offer. Zara Home is sure to bring a creative new look to your hearth.

Zara Fashion on the other hand promises to make you look better than ever before. With the latest in men, women and children's wear, Zara also comes with a range of swish cosmetics. Zara's formula for success is no secret: by retaining complete control over the design, manufacture, distribution and retail of its products, Zara stores are full of the very latest fashion designs. Items not sold after two

weeks are removed from the shelves. Such rapid rotation of stock and new ideas keeps fashion conscious shoppers returning to stores an average of 17 times a year, whereas most of Zara's competitors receive an average of three visits annually.

"The Oman market is all set to witness a faster revolution in retail trade. By welcoming the Azal Group, we continue to provide impeccable standards to our discerning customers. Zara and Zara Home will be brimming with the latest that lifestyle has to offer. The innovative creations assure to inspire the designer in you and offer a distinctive style for those who expect the best," said Ibrahim Al Qasmi, general manager of the MCC.

The endeavour will also provide numerous job opportunities to Omanis. Azal Group has a system of inter-training wherein their staff is trained in several countries rather than only one country alone. This allows a staff member to gather international work experience and ethics.

The Azal Group, operating some 99 stores in the AGCC, is

expanding at a rapid rate and the AGCC region is their latest focus. Zara and Zara Home launched last year in Dubai is increasingly becoming their most popular shopping destination.

This large-scale venture by the Azal Group is going to be another effort by Muscat City Centre in boosting the shopping phenomenon in Oman and in turn be the precursor of a new lifestyle trend.

The MCC, part of the MAF shopping malls under the Majid Al Futtaim Group, maintains its position as a major player in Oman's retail sector and is currently the biggest shopping mall in Oman, with more than 80 international, regional and local stores.

The centre features destination stores such as Carrefour hypermarket, Magic Planet, family entertainment centre and an international food court consisting of 14 food outlets and cafes.

The MCC also acts as a town centre and the social hub of the society by participating in community activities and public events.

E-Max, Max Fashion to open stores at MCC

Source: *Times of Oman*, 04 July 2006

If you thought the best brands and value-for-money shopping were available only in Dubai, think again. Shopping in Muscat is geared to get better than ever before. The Landmark Gulf Group, one of the biggest retailers in the AGCC and India, is now extending its base to Oman soon. And the popular shopping spot, Muscat City Centre, is where their focus lies.

The shopping bonanza begins with Landmark Group's first

E-Max store which will launch at the MCC. Willie Dreyer, the group's country general manager, confirms the size of the store to be whopping 2,789 sqm.

E-Max stores are already very popular in other AGCC countries. With their Emax Electronics, they aim to revolutionise technology retail with overwhelming product diversity from the best brands, coupled with customer-friendly services at astonishing value.

The MCC will also have the first Max Fashion store sprawled over an area of 2,775 square metres. A pioneer in the Middle East, Max is well known for its global trends at attractive prices. Max retails its own branded clothing for men, women and children as well as furniture and house ware.

The most-popular Landmark stores Centrepoint and Home Centre are also in the offing. Centrepoint is going to be the

culmination of the Landmark Group's four, leading retail concepts — Babyshop, Splash, Lifestyle and Shoe Mart. All these major brands are going to be unified into a single destination store known as the Centrepoint.

The Centrepoint store at the MCC will be spread over an extensive 4,599 square metres. A spanking new brand identity, upgraded store design and value-added customer service will ensure quality shopping for the entire family under one roof. The Home Centre will be the biggest in the region, expanding over a mammoth 5,791 square metres. Be it a one room bachelor's pad, a studio apartment, a villa or a palatial mansion, Home Centre will be your one stop for the finest furniture, upholstery, home accessories, kitchen ware, and garden furniture, all available in the latest designs. Not only

brimming with international ideas for your own home, but Home Centre will also offer lots of gifts for your loved ones' home and hearth.

"With this mega proposal we are trying to make shopping worry-free, comfortable and an absolute delight for our customers," said Willie Dreyer. "Not only will this large scale venture by Landmark Group propel the shopping phenomenon in Oman, but it will also be the precursor of a new lifestyle trend," he further adds.

"With such developments, we are ushering yet another period of retail evolution. By welcoming the group, the MCC continues to epitomise the distinctive style of those who expect the best. The endeavour will also provide numerous job opportunities to more than 500 Omanis. They will be offered world class training facility in Oman and the

UAE," said Ibrahim Al Qasbi. The new stores will be situated in the west wing of Muscat City Centre that is currently under construction and will be operational by January 2007. Landmark is presently operational at City Plaza and 11 other stand alone stores in Oman.

The MCC, part of the Majid Al Futtaim shopping malls, maintains its position as a major player in Oman's retail sector and is currently the biggest shopping mall in Oman, with over 80 international, regional and local stores. The centre features destination stores such as Carrefour hypermarket, Magic Planet, family entertainment centre and an international food court consisting of 14 food outlets and cafes. The MCC also acts as a town centre and the social hub of the society by participating in community activities and public events.

Choice of wedding gifts at Khimji's Bait Al Ahlam

Source: *Times of Oman*, 01 July 2006

Khimji's Bait Al Ahlam brings a perfect choice of wedding gifts that would make the journey of the couples on the threshold of starting a new life and an unforgettable adventure filled with priceless memories.

"Wedding is a start of togetherness... of walks in the rain, basking in the sunshine, shared meals and caring for one another in a journey of discoveries, dotted with decisions all along the way. Decisions that influence our way of life such as building the perfect home, finding matching furniture and then right kind of appliances to live comfortably. And while combing the market for products that will make the newly weds house a home, couples, their friends and

families are always on the lookout for a personalised, yet practical, gift and in this season of love and commitment, Khimji's Afrah introduces a wedding celebration offer," said a press release from Bait Al Ahlam.

With their wide range of Siemens home appliances, General air-conditioners and trendy home furniture, Bait Al Ahlam has everything that would help couples kick-start their new life in style. It is not only offering this range at very attractive prizes but also the couples get a chance to win a dream home raffle which would stock their home with an envious range of Siemens home appliances, General ACs and their choice of bedroom set or dining table with

buffet hutch or a living room set.

In total there are 27 prizes to be won under Khimji's Afrah offer. Any buyer of Siemens home appliance or General ACs or Khimji's furniture from any of KR's outlet or dealers' outlet would be entitled for a raffle coupon on a minimum purchase worth RO50 and multiples. This means more you buy higher the chances to win the raffle. This offer is valid till August 16, 2006. Draw date for the raffle is August 23, 2006.

Popular in the Sultanate for their umbrella of high-end consumer and life style brands, Khimji's products uphold proverbial quality backed by professional service and offer value for money to the customers.

Nothing to match benefits of breastfeeding: Expert

Source: *Times of Oman*, 28 June 2006

Breast-feeding is the gold standard for nutrition and there is nothing to match the benefits of it", said Christa Muller Aregger, lactation consultant, IBCLC, Switzerland. She was speaking at the Breast-Feeding Symposium organised by the Muscat Pharmacy at the Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Giving insight into the benefits and challenges of breast feeding, Christa stressed on the not-so-well-known facts about the benefits of breast milk. She said apart from optimal nutrition, breast feeding ensured prevention of several diseases, lowered risk of neonatal jaundice, supported speech development and also development of self confidence.

She said breast-feeding is a learned behaviour and suckling is instinctive. Explaining the

common breast-feeding difficulties, she gave reasons on why they can occur and the possible solutions. Speaking to *Times of Oman*, Christa said that it is necessary to encourage and motivate mothers to breastfeed their little ones, and make them understand that human milk has anti-infective properties, unlike any other milk.

She lauded the efforts of the Oman's government in popularising breast-feeding.

Stressing that awareness is growing around the world, Christa said worldwide there is a higher breast-feeding culture than before, which is a good sign. According to Christa, a host of misconceptions about breast-feeding is prevalent among women from all walks of life. One of them is centred around colostrum, the milk se-

creted for the first few days after childbirth.

"Though it is the first immunisation a child receives from the mother and is highly nutritious and contains anti-infective substance, some consider it dirty and indigestible. A difference in colour and consistency of this milk — which is yellowish and sticky — could be one of the possible reasons of such a misconception," she added.

Breast-feeding may not be always easy and simple, sometimes may even be painful, but overall it is a wonderful experience and has more advantages than disadvantages, she said.

Breastfeeding products from Medela, the leading company in the field of breast-feeding were introduced during the symposium. These products are available at the Muscat Pharmacy.

Badr Al Samaa starts cosmetology division

Source: *Times of Oman*, 24 June 2006

Badr Al Samaa Polyclinic LLC, a well-known private sector clinic in the Sultanate, is spreading its wings to cosmetology division too. As a part of expansion of its dermatology-cosmetology division under Dr Abdul Nissar, the doctor explained about the new venture: "Our dermatology department was started in Ruwi in 2003, and as a part of our expansion plans from the day of inception, we now have a full-fledged Department of Dermatology functioning at the Al Khuwair branch since last year."

Explaining on the new cosmetology division, Dr Abdul Nissar said: "I am happy to inform you that we are now

equipped with laser hair-removal system, radio frequency surgery unit, microdermabrasion, cryotherapy unit etc."

On the laser unit, Dr Abdul Nissar said: "There are a few centres equipped with laser. But the point which needs attention is the fact that this is the latest machine and is exclusively used for removal of unwanted hairs from the body for both men and women. It is a diode laser system, which probably only we have in the Sultanate."

Talking about the feasibility, Dr Abdul Nissar said: "It is highly economical and hence we will be able to cater to all individuals irrespective of their economic status.

"Radio surgery unit can be used to remove skin tags without bleeding and blackening at the site which was the drawback of earlier equipment like electrocautery. It is also used to remove black moles from the face and other parts." Regarding microdermabrasion, Dr Abdul Nissar explained: "It is right for all skin types and for anyone interested in improving the appearance of scarring, fine lines, wrinkles, dull, and sun-damaged skin. Depending on the area treated you will notice an improvement in your skin's appearance. Acne scars will be less obvious. Many patients say that their skin seems to be softer, smoother and younger looking."

JK Enterprises unveils Faconnable watches

Source: *Times of Oman*, 06 June 2006

JK Enterprises has unveiled the latest line of watches from reputed Faconnable brand to its collection at its showroom in Alasfoor Plaza in Qurum. Announcing the new brand, Ramesh Khimji, chairman of Ramesh Khimji Group of Companies, said: "Faconnable is a reputed and sought after brand which we feel will attract our customers here in Oman.

"They have fantastic range, predominantly for the ladies, and at very affordable prices. These jewellery watches will certainly be a valuable addition to our existing range of brands at our showroom".

Michel Benatar, designer and international consultant, made a presentation on the

brand and said: "Faconnable offers in Oman, five lines of ladies watches and two lines for men. These are exclusive jewellery design watches and have been very successful in the global markets. And the Middle East region contributes to nearly 30 per cent of our business and is indeed a valuable market for Faconnable brand. Being a designer, international consultant has given me the advantage of clubbing creative inspiration to market demand and feedback resulting in better and trend-setting designs. The current trend is to merge classic tradition with design, which is displayed in our watches."

Under the Faconnable 2006 range comes the fabulous range

— Time Off Gent, Time Off Diamonds, Hydra Petite, and Hydra Titanium line of watches.

Faconnable S.A.S. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nordstrom, Inc. The Faconnable brand is known for its impeccably crafted, high quality men's and women's apparel and accessories with a distinct French sensibility.

In Europe, Faconnable can be found at department stores and specialty retail shops, as well as 32 company-owned boutiques. It is carried exclusively at Nordstrom stores across the US, as well as five freestanding boutiques. In addition, there are 25 franchised Faconnable boutiques in other international locations.

Al Hayat introduces 4D imaging for pregnant women

Source: *Times of Oman*, 01 June 2006

Four-dimensional (4D) imaging is something new, which has become popular in the last few years.

Al Hayat Polyclinic is the second private clinic in the Sultanate to introduce 4D imaging. With many highly qualified gynaecologists and obstetricians working in Al Hayat Polyclinic, this facility is going to be a boon to womenfolk of Muscat, according to the medical director and cardiologist Dr K. P. Raman.

The 4D ultrasound scanning (US) offers several advantages over conventional US. With the advent of 4D US recently, it is possible now — for the first time — to see the baby in the womb with all its movements as if we have taken a video clipping of the baby after delivery, doctors at Al Hayat have said.

During pregnancy, 4D ultra-

sound is an extremely promising imaging tool to image the baby in the womb and is useful to detect defects involving the face, hands, legs, chest, spine and the head. The 4D ultrasound is also known as 'Real-time 3D Ultrasound' — It gives us the video clipping of the baby's movements. If the movements are normal such as sucking the thumb, it gives extreme confidence to the parents that every thing is okay, if the movements are abnormal, it prompts the doctor to investigate further for possible birth defects the baby might have.

The 4D ultrasound during pregnancy makes birth defects easier to recognise, facilitates mother-baby bonding, and helps families better understand the baby's appearance and the defects if any. It provides addi-

tional diagnostic information for the diagnosis of defects in the face such as cleft lip, evaluation of defects in the spinal cord, and deformities in the bones.

The 4D imaging has advantages over the 2D imaging which is commonly available in every clinic for evaluation of facial dysmorphism (deformities of the face) e.g. low set ears, flat nose, slanting eyes etc. The 4D technology is also useful for non-pregnant women in diagnosing diseases in the uterus and ovaries.

The 4D imaging is also superior to conventional imaging in accurately assessing the enlargement of the prostate gland in men and also to image mass in the breast, to better delineate the margins of the breast lump and thereby helping to distinguish between cancer or non cancer breast lumps.

Muscat Pharmacy unveils new fragrance

Source: *Times of Oman*, 10 June 2006

Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC, in association with Estee Lauder, launched Youth New Amber Nude — the latest fragrance created by world-renowned designer Tom Ford in collaboration with Estee Lauder — at a function held at Barr Al Jissah Resort on Thursday.

Estee Lauder announced the collaboration with Tom Ford in April 2005. The Tom Ford Estee Lauder fragrance is a re-interpretation of select iconic Estee Lauder products including its famous Youth Dew Fragrance and the brand's original gold-fluted makeup packaging.

Estee Lauder spokesmodel Carolyn Murphy is featured in a

sensational advertising. Tom Ford's visionary perspective and ability to influence cultural trends make him one of the world's most sought-after designers. In the past, Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent and now he has conceptualised the ultimate in luxury beauty for Estee lauder.

Speaking about the new fragrance, Tom Ford commented: "For me, Youth Dew is an iconic scent. It is the scent that built the house of Estee Lauder. I took the original Youth Dew fragrance, which is my favourite Estee Lauder fragrance, and changed it slightly. I also modernised and streamlined the pack-

aging. When you have a wonderful classic like this, you want to keep it pure and true to its heritage. Youth Dew Amber does this in a way that will seduce a young contemporary woman".

"We are thrilled that Tom Ford Estee Lauder Fragrance is available here in Oman. Tom Ford is a fashion industry icon in the same way that Estee Lauder is a beauty industry icon. It's a perfect match of luxury, style and beauty, which we are confident, will resonate with our customers here in Oman and the wider Middle East region" said Steven Coates, Estee Lauder training manager, Middle East & Africa.

Damas opens Les Exclusives Boutique outlet at Sabco

Source: *Times of Oman*, 21 May 2006

Fauziya Ghazi Al Araimi, chairperson of Omani Women's Association inaugurated the first outlet of Damas Les Exclusives Boutique in Oman at the Sabco shopping mall in Qurum yesterday. This elite boutique forms the cream of Damas' retail chain and showcases spectacular international brands catering to sophisticated clientele.

"The decision to add a boutique to Damas' existing 22 stores retail chain in Oman recognises the demand for high-end gold and diamond brands in the country and increased refinement in customer tastes," said Mohammed Tamjid Abdullah, deputy managing director, Damas.

"The growth of the boutique denotes the increasing sophistication of jewellery lovers in the region who now look for high-end branded jewellery that promise

exclusivity and style, in line with the latest trends," said Abdullah.

"The global growth for Damas was between 18-35 per cent while we are proud to say that in Oman Damas saw a growth of 28 per cent, which is indeed a great achievement. Damas will always strive to provide the best value addition a customer can get and through this Les Exclusives Boutique we will be catering to those customers who demand exclusive collection of designer wear. We assure you that all the designs displayed at Les Exclusives are one of a kind and is not available anywhere else. Our designs are created by our own team of 18 designers and are patented for rights and are unique in its own way."

"Very soon Damas will be opening up factories in almost all of the AGCC countries, with one due in Oman by October

this year."

The first Damas Les Exclusives Boutique opened in Burj Al Arab in Dubai in November 1999 and since then 24 such boutiques has been opened in the region. Damas Les Exclusives in Sabco mall currently has international jewellery brands of the likes of Roberto Coin, Leo Pizzo, Marco Bicego, Raima, Annamaria Cammilli, Laurentia and Swiss watch brands like Parmigiani, Montega, Varotti, Jorg Hysek and Ball. More brands will be introduced in a phased manner based on customer feedback.

The inauguration of the new shop will be followed by a gala dinner and jewellery fashion show for VIP guests and Damas customers at the Al Bustan Palace today. The event will see models walking down the ramp wearing the latest in gold and diamonds.