

OVER

# Dossier

July 2007

AN INDUSTRY REPORT - PROPERTY & INTERIORS

## PROPERTY

### The Boom Continues in Oman

- Property Market in the Gulf
- International Property Market Overview
- The Wave, Muscat – Oman's Mega Real Estate Project

An

**Arabian Economic Review**

Presentation



## INTERIORS

### The Matter of Design

- Designing Trends in the Gulf
- Smart Home Systems

**Inside** | Real Estate • Paints • Furniture • Semi-Precious Stones • Interior Decoration

# TWO TO TANGO!

**T**his issue of OER Dossier on property and interior designing couldn't have come at a better time than in the boom currently sweeping the property market and interior designing business in Oman as well as the Gulf region.

The property market in the GCC is growing at breakneck speed and Oman is fast catching up with this upswing. The Sultanate of Oman has undertaken several real estate projects, both residential and commercial, riding on the back of strong oil and gas prices. The expansion and diversification of the economy has also seen higher inflows of foreign capital, fuelling the demand for more residential, retail and office space. A boom in new hotels and corporate offices is set to fuel construction activity further, boosting cement production, employment opportunities and infrastructure. OER Dossier gives an overview of the real estate market in Oman.

The GCC as well as the global property markets continue to be bullish. As OER Dossier shows, the world's major economies are all poised for continued sustained growth in 2007 that bodes well for the real estate sector. The global property market overview gives an insight into the factors behind the boom.

The next half of the OER Dossier analyses the latest trends of the interior designing and decoration industry in the Gulf as well as Oman. Home decoration is one of the most effective ways to achieve beauty and harmony in your living environment. From newly painted walls with soft furnishings and attractive flooring to home accessories ranging from flowers to pictures, home decoration adds personality to your home. It will also give your own personal touch to make your home look more unique, comfortable and inviting to you and your family. It is often said that a person's home is a reflection of the person himself/herself. We all love our home and want to do it up in a way that reflects our personality, our ideas and our creativity. The OER Dossier presents an insight into the interior designing market in Oman as well as in the Gulf region with a special feature on the 'Smart Home' concept.

The Dossier also gives an overview of the furniture industry in the Gulf, which has been seeing rapid expansion due to growth in its real estate market.

Happy reading!

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To know more about the Dossier series  
and business enquiries contact:  
Shivkumar 99 267159

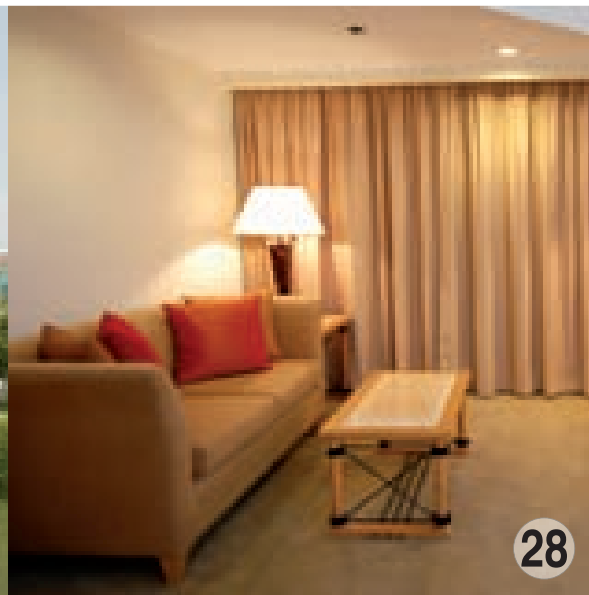
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Correspondence should be sent to:  
**Oman Economic Review**  
United Media Services  
PO Box 3305, Ruwi 112  
Sultanate of Oman  
Fax (968) 24707939  
Email: [editor@oeronline.com](mailto:editor@oeronline.com)  
Website: [www.OERonline.com](http://www.OERonline.com)



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### **Corrigendum**

In OER Dossier on Construction, the facts stated in the article 'Innovative Coatings' on paints are as per the information provided by respective industry players. We take no responsibility for their factual accuracy. In case, the article has hurt any company or individual's interest, the error is regretted.

– Editor

# THE BOOM CONTINUES



The Sultanate of Oman has been witnessing a spate of real estate projects across residential and commercial property markets.

## OER Dossier reports

Oman is steadily catching up with the rest of the GCC states in investments in mega projects, through strengthening its infrastructure that will hold the Sultanate in good stead over the years to come. The Sultanate's private sector is propelling the construction industry forward with billion-dollar real estate

projects. Recent studies have shown that with more than \$17 billion worth of construction projects are in the pipeline, many of them residential, tourism, commercial and retail developments, along with planned improvements to the country's infrastructure.

Oman's property market has seen de-

mand soaring even as prices climb, especially in the Sultanate's residential property, which is now into its third year of growth. According to an Oxford Business Group report, Oman's property boom, like that across most of the Gulf region, is being driven by a mixture of factors – an expanding economy, easing of restrictions on for-

eign property ownership and strong state investment.

Underpinning most of this is the flow of cash to fund the acquisition of properties and the construction of developments. Strong oil and gas prices has been feeding Oman's appetite for real estate. With greater affluence comes the demand for improved residential developments; more and larger retail complexes; and, accompanying the push to diversify the economy, more office and industrial space, the report says. The expansion and diversification of the economy has also seen higher inflows of foreign capital, again fuelling the cycle for more residential, retail and business space. The state has been releasing much more land in the past few years, opening up regions across the country for development, especially for residential use. Recently issued figures show that the increase in the number of residential plots made available grew 600 per cent from the year 2003 to 2005.

Across the market, home ownership has become more accessible, with the Central Bank clearing the way for commercial banks to make up to 5 per cent of their funds available for residential loans, the report adds. With Alliance Housing Bank, the first private sector

housing bank established by a member state of the GCC, offering home loans at an interest rate of just 6.55 per cent, the domestic market has never been more active. Oman's property boom has seen the real estate industry mature, moving away from speculative projects towards becoming a more market-oriented sector.

No doubt, a boom in new hotels and corporate offices is set to fuel construction activity further in terms of cement production, employment opportunities and infrastructure. Many international businesses are exploring the idea of building their own offices, and a few have already started to do so.

The Royal Decree issued in 2006 allowing non-GCC nationals to own property in integrated tourist complexes came just two years after restrictions on GCC ownership to three plots of land of restricted size – in place since 2000 – were relaxed.

These moves have attracted GCC investors such as Kuwait's Al Argan International Real Estate, which has now partnered with the Oman's Towell group. Although the decree for non-GCC ownership has yet to become law, local real estate projects have already started catering to the demand.

### **Increased government support**

The Ministry of Housing, Electricity and Water approved financial allocations of RO 6.5 million for construction and maintenance of 1,032 residential units across the Sultanate during 2001-2005. During 2006 alone, the ministry embarked on construction of 1,399 residential units using financial allocations of RO38 million. The ministry had also distributed 174,815 plots for different purposes during 2004-2006 and 22,445 plots for residential and commercial use in implementation of the Royal grant for social security families across the Sultanate in 2005. Recently, HE Dr Khamis bin Mubarak al Alawi, Minister of Housing, Electricity and Water also declared that the property cash value in the Sultanate during 2006 stood at a significant value. The Ministry of Housing, Electricity and Water has also recently increased the housing assistance to RO15,000 from RO10,000 following an increase in prices of building materials.

The liberalisation policy adopted by the government over the last few years has also given a good thrust to the real estate sector. The Central Bank of Oman's move to allow commercial banks to lend 5 per cent of their total portfolio for housing purposes has resulted in a flood of housing loan

options. The rate of interest has gone down steeply, making housing loans an attractive proposition, especially at a time when land values are appreciating very fast.

### Major projects

Take the case of The Wave, Muscat, the idyllic waterfront project in Muscat. Spread along seven kilometres of natural beach over 2.5 million square metres, The Wave, Muscat, is a 50-50 joint venture between the government and the private sector. Fifty per cent is held by Majid Al-Futtaim Investments (MAFI). The remaining 50 per cent is divided among Waterfront Investments, a government-owned company (40 per cent) and 10 per cent by National Funds Investments Company (an amalgamation of local pension funds).

The project envisages completion of four complexes. The first is the tourist complex, which include construction of three or four hotels. Two of these hotels, namely the Fairmont (golf resort hotel) and the Kempinski (the beach hotel) have already been signed up. The tourist complex also includes an 18-hole golf course designed by Greg Norman, the golfing legend, and a 300-berth marina. The second complex includes about 4,000 residential units which offer a good mix of residential choice, ranging from one-bedroom apartments to townhouses, villas and six-bedroom mansions. Even in those there is a mix of waterfront units, oceanfront units, marina-facing apartments, or garden-view apartments. For the marina area, about half-a-million square metres of land had to be reclaimed apart from about two million square metres on the mainland.

The third element of The Wave includes the retail or commercial complex. A large part of the commercial element is focussed on the marina walk itself. It includes cafes, restaurants, outlets,



**Number of Plots Distributed by Type of Use**

Type of use	End 2005	2004	2003
Residential	321,276	30,384	10,294
Commercial	15,009	2,693	444
Commercial/ Residential	10,383	399	224
Residential/ Agricultural	81	–	–
Industrial	8,022	899	130
Agricultural	8,463	63	46
Govt. Residents*	7,138	749	616
Government**	1,131	227	135
Total	371,503	35,414	11,889

\*Housing units that are built by the government and distributed to social security families free.

\*\*Government includes mosque, school and other government uses.

*Source: Ministry of National Economy*

boutiques, alfresco dining, among others. The fourth and last element of the project is infrastructure like electricity, parking, cabling, water and open green spaces. The first phase on the western side of the main entrance was sold out early last year. It included around 220 units comprising townhouses, small and large villas, waterfront as well as garden-facing units. The second release of residential units was then made, which included an area slightly west of the first release. It also included townhouses, waterfront and garden-front units.

Thereafter the release of only townhouses was made which were sold out in just two days. About a month ago the first residential island – Sinesla Island – was released that lies further west of the entrance and north of the 18th of November Street. Sinesla Island had about 79 residential units which were sold out

the same day. Model villas and apartments of The Wave are ready, along with the foundation works of around 60-70 residential units. Tenders have also been awarded for the first, second and third releases, Sinesla Island and some townhouses. In addition, about 100,000 square metres of land has already been reclaimed. The townhouses are being constructed by Carrilion Alawi, villas by Al Turki and the marina by a joint venture between the local company and a Beirut-based company. The handover of the first residential units will start by early next year.

Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa, opened recently, is set in 124 acres of distinct scenery. A five-star resort complex comprising three hotels with a total of 680 luxurious bedrooms, and a large variety of food and beverage outlets, the property is currently undergoing expansion. All residences are

within easy reach of Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa. These include three world-class hotels, nineteen exclusive food and beverage outlets, a deepwater marina, sailing and water sports, snorkelling and diving, tennis courts, CHI spa, a 500-metre lazy river, a shopping centre, Omani heritage village, amphitheatre, entertainment spots and nightlife, private beaches, total security and lush landscaping. Recently, Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa's two magnificent villas at Barr Al Jissah Residences were auctioned. Villa Plot 1, situated to the north of the six-star Al Husn Hotel overlooking the sea on three sides and with mountain views, comprises a main villa of 928 square metres, a guest villa of 185 square metres and a swimming pool. The two-storey main villa has two sitting rooms, a dining area, study, large kitchen and laundry room on the ground floor, with five





large bedrooms, all with their own en suite bathrooms, and a sitting room with its own balcony on the first floor. The guest villa, which is attached to the main residence by a walkway, comprises a spacious sitting/dining room, kitchen, two double bedrooms with en suite bathrooms.

Villa Plot 2, located west of Villa Plot 1, is a spacious three-storey residence (total area 866 square metres). The ground floor is designed to enjoy outside living and, apart from a large swimming pool and shaded terraces, has a sitting/dining room, two bathrooms, kitchen and a laundry area. The first floor has a second sitting room with its own balcony, dining room, kitchen, study with en suite bathroom, two bedrooms with en suite bathrooms and a total of 49 square metres of balconies and terraces. The second floor, which has 63 square metres of balconies and terraces, has two bedrooms with en suites and one with dressing room attached,

a sitting room and a study. Both villas are equipped with LexSystems Smart Homes features.

Other properties at Barr Al Jissah Residences are under construction and will be available for sale soon.

Further, plans for the proposed US\$1.6 billion Omax real-estate development project near Muscat are expected to move ahead following the signing of a definite agreement by its developer Journey of Light (JOL) and Greece-headquartered contracting firm Ioannou & Paraskevaides (J&P). The Omax proposal involves a development of one million square metres of beachfront land near Seeb International Airport. The project is planned to be an integration of cultural, heritage, educational, entertainment and residential components, including: a 'high-culture' theme park containing seven pearl-shaped buildings known as the Pearls, each approximately 60

ft in diameter, associated exhibition buildings collectively known as the Landmark; a five-star resort hotel; a four-star hotel; a boardwalk; an open air amphitheatre and stage; a canal and enclosed harbour area; boat slips; commercial office buildings; shops; restaurants and open space green areas. Also, Omax – as presently conceived – includes the construction and sale of about 3,900 residences consisting of a combination of villas, town homes and apartments.

Work on Oman's US\$20 billion Blue City (Al Madina Al Zarqa) is now set to go full steam ahead following the signing of \$925 million financing with international investors for the first phase of the development. In addition, Hill International, the construction-consulting firm, has also been appointed under a six-year contract to provide lender's technical advisory and oversight services for the ambitious residential-cum-resort development. The





project, the Sultanate's largest-ever real estate development and one of the largest tourism projects in the GCC, is being spearheaded by Oman's Al Sawadi Investment and Tourism Company (ASIT) and the Bahrain-based AAJ Holdings.

According to AAJ Holdings, the contractor – a joint venture between Turkish contractor Enka Insaat ve Sanayi AS (Enka) and Aktor Ate (Aktor), Greece's largest construction company – has been mobilising for the project and setting up site camps and is now expected to start work on site access roads. The joint venture was awarded the US\$1.9 billion main contract to launch the first phase of the project early last year.

Phase 1 is primarily a residential tourism development with leisure and retail elements, and is expected to involve construction of over 200 villas, over 5,000 apartments, four hotels with a total of 670 hotel rooms, five

individual retail areas together with two golf courses and a clubhouse, with a total gross floor area of about 1.7 million square metres. Construction of Phase 1, covering an area of 5.4 square kilometres, is scheduled to be completed in six years. Upon full completion in 2020, the project is expected to be home to more than 250,000 permanent and visiting residents and will become a major tourism and business destination. The total projected investment for the project is US\$20 billion.

Majan Gulf Properties (MGP), an Omani real estate company, has tied up with International Gulf Development and Contracting Company (IGDC) for the development of the one million square metres Sohar Residential and Commercial Project. The project – the first major development of its kind in Sohar comprising commercial, industrial and residential components – includes the Al Bustan furnished deluxe

apartment complex and residential villa compounds.

Saud Bahwan Group is constructing a greenfield township project at Sohar to tap the growing demand for residential properties. Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Oman has won contracts for two packages in the township with a combined value of US\$120 million and are expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2008. They include the construction of 288 two and three-bedroom apartments and 149 three and four-bedroom villas.

Diar Real Estate Investment Company of Qatar is developing the US\$300 million Ras Al Hadd project. The local Tilal Development Company (TDC) is constructing Oman's largest shopping mall as part of its Tilal residential complex, located in Muscat's Al-Khuwair district. Muscat City Centre is also expanding at an estimated cost of US\$50 million.

# OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED



As GCC economies continue to be hot, triggered by high oil prices, the region's real estate sector is fast moving forward.

OER Dossier takes a look at the developments

Studies and observations of the construction market conducted recently for countries in the Gulf indicate that the accelerating pace of building and construction in Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, UAE, the eastern province of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

is powering a project and infrastructure boom. The mega developments taking shape are also creating massive demand for fixtures, fittings and furnishings.

Experts say that the GCC is in the

midst of a massive construction boom with nearly 2,000 projects under way, with a combined value of over US\$1 trillion. And industry experts anticipate the current level of growth of the interior design and furnishing industry to continue, and even accelerate,

over the long-term, with commercial, residential and infrastructure projects as the key driving forces.

According to a research report by Era Real Estate, the GCC market has woken up to the benefits of allowing foreigners to purchase property in the region, which has led to one of the most extraordinary property booms ever. Despite some differences in each country's policy concerning freehold property ownership, the results have been extraordinary with major developments selling out in only a few days. Although the main hub of freehold investment is Dubai, competition from Oman, Qatar and Bahrain is catching up. While the market has risen steadily since 2004, major investors have begun to speculate on the potential risk of a pricing bubble burst in the Dubai market due to oversupply. Despite this, reports issued in Q4-2006 have indicated that the market is still under supplied, although specific figures have not been released.

#### **Real estate market in Qatar**

Qatar's booming economy is the key factor triggering real estate demand in the country. High growth in population, very high per capita GDP and rapid industrial expansion have all been vital to the growth of the sector. The government has been very supportive of the real estate market issuing various laws that allowed foreign ownership in designated areas in Qatar. Besides the law announced in June 2004 that allowed non-Qataris to own real estate properties in any of the three projects - Pearl Island, West Bay Lagoon and Al Khor Resort, Kuwait also announced a new law in February 2006 related to the sale and lease of properties to foreigners. GCC nationals can now own land and residential units in three designated areas namely Lusail, Al Kharayej, and Jebel Thiyab. Non-GCC nationals can lease proper-



**Burj Dubai project under construction in UAE**

ties in 18 specified areas for a period of 99 years on a renewable basis.

There is hectic construction activity in the country at present, most of it by private developers who buy land from Qatari individuals or foreigners who were holding it indirectly. A lot of construction activity is also initiated by the government which has been buying land for various infrastructure related and other projects. Activity in the Qatari real estate market was greatly influenced by preparations for

the Asian Games, which was held in Qatar in December 2006. According to Global Investment House report, considering the economic boom that the country is currently experiencing, and the huge inflow of expatriates, supply is extremely deficient in the residential sector at present. Higher wealth and spending capacity of the population have also allowed for appreciation of house prices and rents.

#### **Real estate in Bahrain**

The Bahraini real estate sector has



The Kuwait real estate market has done exceedingly well in recent years

emerged as one of the most active and lucrative sectors due to growing demand for residential, investment and commercial property. The government of Bahrain has enacted various laws to give further boost to the burgeoning real estate market in the country. Laws have been passed allowing nationals from other GCC countries to own property in Bahrain. The country has also been very flexible in enacting laws allowing foreign property ownership. Another decree was passed recently, allowing foreigners and foreign investors 100 per cent ownership of land in pre-determined areas. This law sets out areas where non-Bahrainis can own land, property and type of property.

The Bahraini real estate market and construction industry has witnessed frenetic activity in recent years. Low interest rates, higher liquidity in the region due to higher oil prices and increasing number of building permits are expected to further contribute to the development of the real estate sector in the near future. As per data available from the land registry directorate

of Bahrain, there has been a consistent rise in real estate transactions in the past few years. Global Investment House estimates that the property market in Bahrain is set to grow exponentially in view of the number of high profile projects in the pipeline coupled with increasing foreign investment, ample liquidity and government's liberal policies towards non-Bahrainis to own property in the country.

#### **UAE's property market**

The real estate sector in UAE was buoyed by the increasing investment in infrastructure, due to the country being positioned as a tourist destination in addition to the increase in residential and non-residential units. The sector's key drivers include, among others: growing population especially due to expatriates' influx, ample liquidity and friendly regulatory environment. Moreover, being a regional hub for investments, UAE attracts international companies to establish offices.

The changes and the approach towards revamping real estate regulations in

the UAE have been positive from the investors' point of view. Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah have issued new property laws for their respective emirates. Sharjah's existing law allows limited foreign ownership of properties, extended only to Arabs. The emirates of Umm Al Quwain, Ajman and Fujairah are expected to issue new property laws as some developers are already offering freehold ownership to expatriates. Dubai, the most important market for foreign investments, has made some important changes over the last few years. After allowing 100 per cent ownership for foreigners in designated areas in 2002, there have been a few more changes including the property registration law (Law No. 7) issued by the government on March 13, 2006 that legalises freehold ownership of land and property to UAE and GCC nationals, while allowing the same rights to non-GCC expatriates in designated areas. Rentals have increased by 40-50 per cent over the last few years in Dubai. As a result, the Dubai government introduced its first and second rent cap laws – during

2006 and early 2007 – capping any rent increase to 15 per cent and seven per cent respectively.

### **Real estate in Saudi Arabia**

According to a Saudi economic survey, Saudi Arabia intends to build one million new housing units in the next five years to provide adequate housing to about five million citizens, through participation by the government, as well as national and welfare organisations. The Ministry of Social Affairs and some welfare organisations are also building about 35,000 Saudi traditional houses in various regions of the Kingdom.

The new 2007 budget's capital expenditure includes construction of 2000 new schools, opening of four new universities in Tabuk, Albaha, Najran, and girls university in Riyadh; new university hospital (in addition to five university hospitals under construction); and building of 56 colleges, and opening of 19 new colleges. This will also give a fillip to construction companies in the country. Other major projects include Bena City (\$533 million), Jabal Khandama Real Estate Project in Makkah (\$1.71 billion), Jamarat Bridge Project (\$1.28 billion), Jowharah Real Estate Project in Jeddah (\$598 million), King Abdulaziz International Airport (KAIA) Expansion Project (\$1.3 billion), Meridian Hotel Towers in Makkah (\$278 million), Asia-Africa bridge in Tabuk (\$1 billion), Saudi Construction Group's housing project on the outskirts of Riyadh (\$16 billion), Saudi Landbridge Project (\$3 billion), Wali Al Ahad Development in Makkah (\$5 billion), King Abdullah Economic City (\$27 billion), etc.

### **Property market in Kuwait**

Real estate sector in Kuwait can be broadly divided into three main segments: residential, investment and commercial. Although other segments such as agricultural, industrial, warehousing

and public property also exist, negligible activity in these sectors makes them less attractive. Owing to the resolve of the Kuwaiti government to provide a house to every citizen and concrete steps towards achieving the goal, the residential segment is the most important market segment of the real estate sector in Kuwait. Investment segment represents investments in land and construction of either villas or buildings for the purpose of rent. Commercial segment represents the construction of commercial complexes and sale or rent of spaces for offices and/or shops.

Preliminary figures point to the fact that the majority of real estate in Kuwait is owned by individuals and not companies. Companies are estimated to own only two per cent of total tradable land. Kuwait has had a booming real estate market for the last few years. The rise in house prices has been a windfall to current owners who have got good returns on their housing investments. Under the current economic conditions, the Kuwaiti real estate market has performed exceptionally well, and since the economy continues to rapidly expand, it is the common prediction of experts that the buying boom in the domestic real estate market would continue, albeit at a slower pace. High oil prices, moderate infla-

tion, abundant liquidity, political stability and repatriation of funds have all taken the real estate market to unprecedented levels over the last few years.

As compared to its other GCC counterparts, laws allowing foreigners or expatriates to purchase property in Kuwait are not in place yet. Moreover, market players are not seeing it coming in the near future although almost all of them are calling for it. Currently, foreigners are only allowed to own units through the real estate portfolio of a financing company where the property is under the company's name. According to industry sources, opening the sector, through allowing ownership to foreigners, would have a positive impact on the real estate sector as well as on the economy, supporting the government's plans to transform Kuwait to a financial and trading hub of the region.

# SYNCHRONOUS GROWTH

Global economic expansion is having a positive bearing on the worldwide boom in office, retail and industrial space.

OER Dossier takes an overview



**W**orldwide every region and major country is experiencing economic growth. Europe and Japan have seemingly entered a period of self-sustaining expansion with recovering consumer demand growth complementing strong gains in exports. Latin American economies powered by high commodity prices and generally healthy domestic spending, continue to post solid growth. The slowing U.S. expansion has yet to have any observable impact on the break-neck growth of the world's two largest emerging economies, China and India. The outlook for continued global economic expansion in 2007 too is generally positive.

## **Global office property**

The strong demand for prime office space led to double-digit growth in rentals in 2006 in the majority of Asia Pacific cities as corporate expansion continued in Asia's major business hubs in 2006. Low availability of prime office space and rising occupancy costs have become causes of increasing concern for corporate occupiers in many cities such as Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore, Manila and Ho Chi Minh City that all recorded vacancy of less than two per cent in Grade A facilities as of year end 2006.



However, China's leading business centres – Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou – are still in the midst of office construction cycles, and corporations wishing to expand in these cities can expect a wider choice of premium facilities as completions come on line in 2007.

Demand for office space was strong across Europe as well in 2006 with take-up reaching 9.5 million square metres in the core western markets. This is an increase of 18 per cent year-on-year and the second highest level ever, surpassed only in the year 2000. Throughout 2006, availability followed a downward trend. The strong leasing market resulted in rental growth in Europe of 6.9 per cent year-on-year. The vast majority of European markets are now in the rental growth phase, with many forecast to see further accelerations in the rate of growth in the short-term. The driving force behind the marked increase in rents continues to be strong demand and relatively subdued development. Looking ahead, the outlook for leasing activity is broadly positive in the context of favourable economic growth, although employment growth remains modest.

Overall, the North American office markets remain healthy. In 2006, corporate profits continued to be strong, consumer confidence was high, and worldwide trade continued to set new record levels. Positive net absorption in the U.S., the best measure of the overall health of a market, was seen in 42 of 50 markets, with a national total of 26.7 million sq. ft. in the fourth quarter, pushing full year absorption for the country to 83 million square feet in 2006. Construction in

the U.S. totalling 33 million sq. ft. did little to slow the tightening markets, allowing rental increases to continue. At the same time, demand for construction materials in the rest of the world, especially China, has increased the cost of construction, damping the development of new office space.

Latin America has entered its fifth consecutive year of economic growth. The region's continued positive economic performance has fuelled steadily declining vacancy rates and, in most cases, increasing lease rates in the region's major office markets. Construction activity has yet to keep up with demand, particularly in those markets which previously experienced a long recession. With prospects continuing to remain promising for most regional

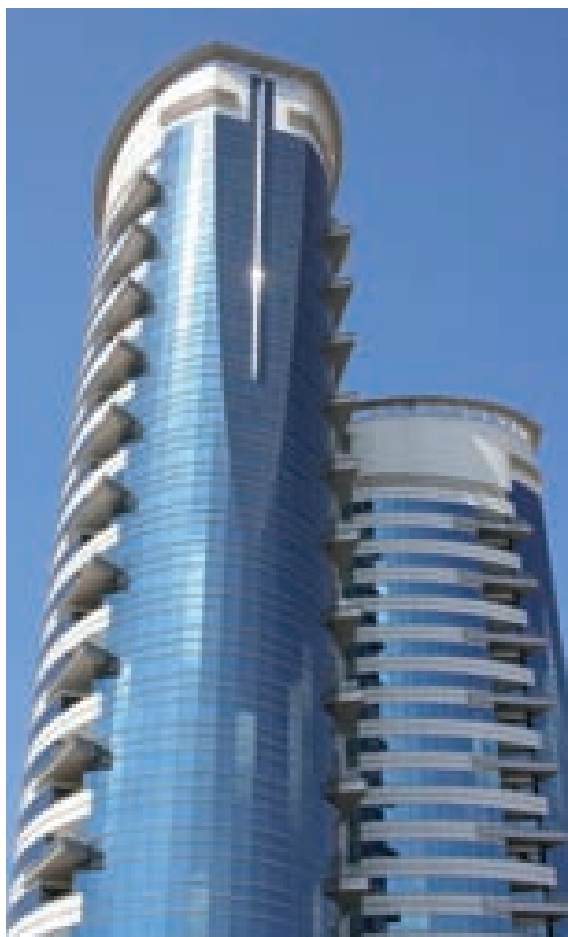
economies, their respective office markets are expected to continue recovery during 2007.

### **Global commercial property market**

Asia-Pacific retail space markets were robust throughout 2006 as a result of strong consumer confidence across the region and continued retailer expansion. New large-scale shopping malls – the focus of activity in many markets – were the locations of choice for retailers opening new outlets and this trend is set to continue in 2007. A number of cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore and Bangkok, saw high levels of new supply in 2006, the majority of which was absorbed amid robust market demand. In emerging markets Vietnam and India, although keen interest

is seen among international retailers, lack of quality space has restricted the pace of expansion.

The European retail property market too was a strong performer throughout 2006, with positive growth in consumer spending across the continent. According to a CB Richard Ellis report, demand for high-street retail units across Europe was substantial in 2006. In many countries, strict constraints on development combined with robust demand for prime high-street space exerted upward pressure on rents. The European retail rent index grew by 13 per cent year-on-year over the course of 2006. Although many markets recorded double-digit growth in prime rents, the highest increase was seen in Madrid, where prime high-street rents picked up by 27 per







cent year-on year in 2006, reflecting a shortage of prime high-street space. Given the positive economic outlook for Europe, retail activity should remain strong over the course of 2007, with consumer spending growth of about two per cent for the Eurozone and reviving employment growth in many countries.

In the U.S., construction was initiated on 7,226 retail projects (new starts and additions to existing properties) in 2006, according to McGraw Hill Construction's Pipeline database. These projects had an estimated combined value of \$22.2 billion and will add 308.6 million sq. ft. to existing stock once completed.

#### **Global industrial property market**

The majority of Asia's industrial property markets continued to perform well in 2006. Investment interest was especially strong in Tokyo, Singapore and Hong Kong on the back of robust demand, especially for logistics facilities.

With continued growth in international trade and global outsourcing, multinational corporations continued to set up manufacturing bases and business processing centres in Asia, boosting demand for build-to-suit factories and industrial parks. China's further deregulation of its logistics sector in 2005 under WTO commitments provided strong support for the country's growing logistics property requirements.

As the drivers of demand for industrial property are changing, the profile of occupiers is also changing. Pan-European players are entering the distribution market, which in turn is shifting the traditional owner-occupier trend in this sector towards leasing. Take-up increased across the region, with the exception of Spain and Italy where levels remained stable. A further increase in demand for industrial space across Europe resulted in a fall in the vacancy rate in most countries. In terms of prime rents, the performance was mixed. However, the European industrial rent

index showed a 4.1 per cent increase year-on-year, the fastest rental growth since 2001. As the European economy sustains its recovery throughout 2007, the industrial sector is expected to benefit. The impact, however, is likely to be moderate because of the speed at which it is possible to construct new facilities.

Overall, the North American industrial market is healthy. International trade continues at record levels as the North American ports struggle to keep pace. Productivity and gross domestic product changes are positive in most world regions, financial markets have rebounded, and bio-tech companies are expanding as new research results in entirely new classes of drugs and medical devices. All these factors indicate continued demand for distribution, manufacturing and lab space.

In many markets larger, older spaces are sitting empty while newer, strategically located space is at a premium, particularly on key logistics routes.

## AL HABIB & CO. LLC

# FUELLING REAL GROWTH

Al Habib & Co LLC was started in 1978 as a small real estate service provider and today it has grown to be one of the largest real estate companies in Oman

Al Habib's clients for services include the Ministry of Defence pension fund, PDO pension fund, civil service employees' pension fund, ROP pension fund, Ministry of Justice, Alliance Housing Bank, and several leading banks. The company employs over 600 people that include a number of engineers and professional managers. Al Habib's area of expertise spans the entire spectrum of real estate products and services that put the company in a unique position to have the best perspective of the real estate industry in Oman.

### Property development

Al Habib is one of the largest property developers in Oman. Its property development division is into develop-

ing both commercial as well as residential buildings and villas amalgamating technical innovation and aesthetic appeal. A few examples of the properties developed by Al Habib are City Plaza, Ernst & Young building, Centre Point, Salalah among others. Presently, the company is involved in developing various residential and commercial buildings in Oman.

### Property management services

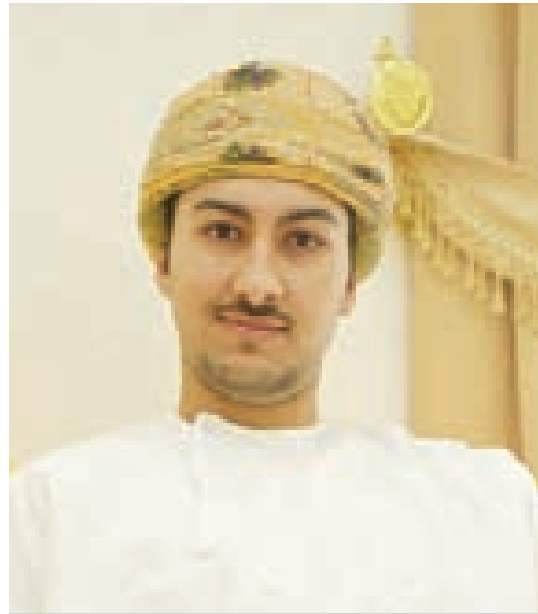
The company manages over 4,500 units with assets valued at over US\$ 70 million. A few examples are the Al Khuwair House, Bait Miskin, City House etc, while its clients include Ministry of Defence pension fund, civil service employees' pension fund, ROP pension fund, Ministry of Justice, PDO Pension Fund and several eminent property investors.

### Property valuation

The Company has valued over 10,000 properties in the Sultanate of Oman. Valuation volume, presently, exceeds 1,000 per annum. Alliance Housing Bank and other banks are leading clients for this service.

### Electro-mechanical and civil contracting

The company has contracting Divisions, which mostly work for Government Ministries and are profitable in an intensely competitive field where contracts are almost always awarded to the lowest bidder. Its ongoing contracts in-



**Hayyan Ali Malallah Al Lawati, Executive Investment Officer, Al Habib & Co. LLC**

clude about 20 substation buildings for Bechtel/Sohar Aluminium and headquarters building for Salalah Sanitary & Drainage Services.

### Brokerage

Al Habib was the first company in Oman to obtain a brokerage license from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as per company sources.

### Interior decoration

In interior decoration, Al Habib's portfolio includes office interior decoration, retail interior decoration as well as food outlets decoration. The company has done interior designing of some of the leading buildings, banks, shopping malls, and stores that include stores of Giordano, KFC, Hardee's, The Baby Shop, Costa Coffee, the landmark group in Salalah, Centrepoint at Ruwi, City Centre, and Centrepoint at Al Khuwair, Nando's Restaurant, and Shoe City.

Contact:  
[www.alhabibonline.com](http://www.alhabibonline.com)

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## BAZAAR PROPERTIES LLC

# PROVIDING INTEGRATED REAL ESTATE SOLUTIONS

Bazaar Properties LLC is a leading real estate company in Oman, having commenced operations at the beginning of last year, with its offices strategically located at Qurum, opposite the Capital Commercial Centre

Over a short period, the company has managed to establish wide name recognition and a good reputation in the local market. In fact, in less than two years, the company has acquired a wide customer base of loyal clients to be almost at par with the well established major real estate businesses that have been in existence for many years.

Nasser Hamzy, owner and Managing Director of Bazaar Properties, attributes the company's success to the quality of services it delivers to all its clients that

include property owners, sellers, buyers and tenants. Whether serving private individuals or large corporations, the company attaches immense importance to customer satisfaction, and continually strives to improve its services to meet

even the most demanding customer expectations. Hamzy adds, "Other than service quality, our business strategy also places significant emphasis on service diversity. We have built-up a diverse service portfolio that transcends the core activities of property sales and rentals. This enables us to provide integrated real estate solutions to meet different customer needs. In other words, we offer a one-stop-shop for all real estate related services."

Other than property sales and rentals, the array of services offered by Bazaar Properties LLC includes property valuations, property management, property finance/mortgage consulting and building maintenance. In addition, the company is promoting the concept of 'corporate estate services' that entails complete handling and management of estate services for businesses & institutions. This allows large organizations to out-source all their real estate services in a cost-effective manner – saving money and avoiding the hassle.



Bazaar Properties LLC posts most of its properties on its state-of-the-art website [www.BazaarProperties.com](http://www.BazaarProperties.com). The site offers a host of user-friendly features to make it easy for a person to search for properties at the comfort of his/her home or office. A user can browse hundreds of properties for sale or rent, search for specific properties, save his/her searches for quick access, request automated email alerts for properties that meet specific criteria, or register for SMS alerts for some specific properties. As part of an ongoing improvement effort, users are also encouraged to enter their feedback in the site's Guestbook about the website quality and functionality as well as overall company services.

Contact:  
[Info@BazaarProperties.com](mailto:Info@BazaarProperties.com)  
[www.BazaarProperties.com](http://www.BazaarProperties.com)



# ERA REAL ESTATE - OMAN

## HAVING GLOBAL NETWORK

Established in 1972, ERA Real Estate is one of the world's leading real estate services franchise companies, with 30 years of experience, a network of more than 3,500 offices worldwide spanning 40 different countries, in addition to a Middle East network spanning 13 countries

ERA is currently operating in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait and is targeting the launch of the remaining Middle East and North Africa market by the end of 2007. ERA-Oman was established in 2005 as a limited liability company under the registration of Al Osool Real Estate LLC. The company's areas of operation include valuation, residential and commercial brokerage, property management, feasibility studies and consultancy.

### Residential and commercial brokerage

Through its vast franchise network and team of highly trained and capable sales agents, ERA offer the largest selection of properties available. By exclusively listing the property with ERA-Oman, the company prepares a good-faith estimate of property, internal communication and GCC referral service, direct marketing, property exhibition, advertisement in local media, internet-based marketing, 3-Dimension image, access to investors, back-office support, etc. Some of the recent projects being marketed are Port Ghalib project in Egypt, Nile Tower project in Egypt, The California Residences, and a residential project at the Pearl, Qatar & Al Irfan project in Muscat.

### Valuation

ERA provides its clients with reliable real estate valuations available in accordance with valuation methods and standards set by International Valuation Standards Committee and The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, UK. "Ours is a research oriented organisation and we believe in a scientific approach to suggest the best course of option to our clients and that is one of the reasons we have a very large number of clients whom we have been able to retain over the years," says Hassan Mohammed Juma, Managing Director & President, ERA Real Estate-Oman.

### Feasibility and Consultancy

This division offers a broad range of services supporting clients in every ground of real estate decision making. It offers real estate consulting services to developers, investors, advisors and lenders seeking assistance with feasibility studies, investment advice,



Hassan Mohammed Juma, MD & President,  
ERA Real Estate - Oman

market research and analysis, demand forecasting, financial modelling and project structuring exercises.

### Property management

ERA Property Management is in the process of adopting the international standards of IREM (Institute of Real Estate Management) and few of the staff members are already members in IREM Institutions and participating in the CPM Qualifications.

As a result of vast experience in managing different kinds of properties with different types of mixed units, which are diversified in various areas of Oman geographically and the excellent ability to create the synergies of different functions of the property management service delivery channel, allows the management to adopt international standards, methods and helping the client in reducing the maintenance cost from 5% to 10%, increasing rental value of the properties from 20% to 50%, maximized collection and minimized outstanding etc.,.

Contact:  
hassan@mjsoman.com  
www.era-oman.com

Advertorial

## HILAL PROPERTIES

# CUSTOMER COMES FIRST

Hilal Properties is a 100 per cent Omani company that has been operating in the Sultanate of Oman's real estate market since 1984

The major areas of operations of the company cover the Governorate of Muscat and neighbouring towns. The company caters to the whole range of real estate demands of expatriate as well as local communities ranging from

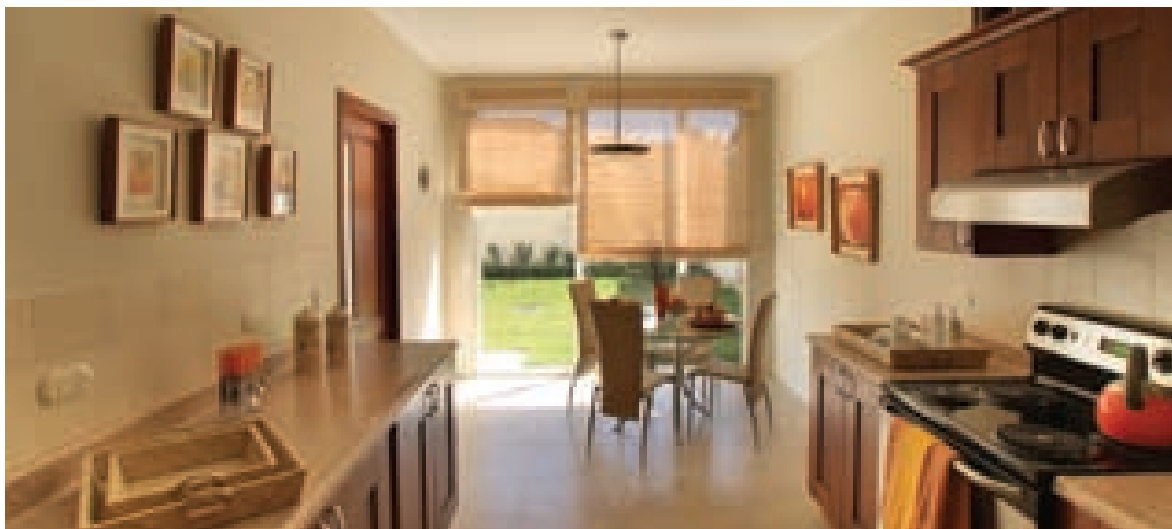
rental of all kinds of properties i.e. commercial, residential and industrial in and around Muscat.

The Post Let Management includes lease management, legal advisory, all kinds of maintenance support, supply of complete range of furnishings, and rent collection. As a team the company is directly involved in the day to day activities of the company, having a well established reputation with a credible identification in the real estate market of Oman. The office is centrally located at a reputed area of Shatti Al Qurum in the capital of Oman which is easily accessible for all newcomers to Muscat.

The services of Hilal Properties go

beyond finding the perfect home to suite a customer's requirements. The company also assists newcomers in familiarising them with the day to day living of Muscat. The company's services also include airport/hotel pick up (having been given sufficient notice).

Contact:  
[hilalprp@omantel.net.om](mailto:hilalprp@omantel.net.om)  
[www.hilalprp.com](http://www.hilalprp.com)



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## NAGARJUNA CONSTRUCTION CO. INTL. LLC

### MARKING ITS PRESENCE

Nagarjuna Construction Company International LLC, the overseas arm of India-based Nagarjuna Construction Company Limited (NCCL), is completing two years in Oman

In Oman, Nagarjuna Construction Company International LLC is registered as a foreign investment company and is involved in undertaking various infrastructure projects. Recently, the company has moved into property development and marketing its Indian properties for the expatriate community. In infrastructure development and contracting segment, the company has more than 2,000 employees on its payroll in Oman. As Madhusudhan P., General Manager, Nagarjuna Construction Company International LLC says, "So far, we have invested more than RO 17 million in buying brand new construction equipment to be used in different infrastructure projects in Oman". NCC has been awarded major projects in Oman that include: Water supply project at Sohar; Dualisation of



**Abdul Nasser, Manager - Property Development, NCC International LLC**

the 72-km Al Amerat-Quriyat road involving RO 63 million; Rock filling and access road projects for Dubai Resort & Spa Yiti Omani Resort developed by Sama Dubai; and Upcoming sewage treatment plant at Raysut.

In the property development segment in Oman, Nagarjuna Construction Company International LLC is making its first venture by planning to develop a premium 4-storey luxurious hotel-apartment at Sohar that will include spa, pool, and other amenities. In recent months, the company has also embarked on the venture to attract Indian expats who are interested in investing in the company's upcoming property projects in different parts of India. Recently, the company has opened a new office at Madinat Sultan Qaboos, near the British Council. The property development and services division is operating from this office, giving assistance to those who are looking for properties on rent in Oman. It is also helping the expatriate Indian community who want to buy Nagarjuna Construction Co properties in India. Moreover, this office also offers all types of real estate services to local property owners.

In India, Nagarjuna Construction Company which is an ISO 9001-2000



**Madhusudhan P., General Manager, NCC International LLC**

certified has undertaken many projects in construction and sale of independent houses, multi-storeyed apartments and commercial complexes in different cities. Based in Hyderabad, NCCL has various regional offices spread across different cities of India that include Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Delhi, Guwahati, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Ranchi, and Visakhapatnam, while its overseas offices are in Oman and Dubai.

Major ongoing projects of Nagarjuna Construction include Nagarjuna Green Valley at Kakkanad, and Nagarjuna Pearl Bay at Kadavanthra, Cochin. Nagarjuna Maple Heights at Marthahalli-KR Puram Ring Road, Bangalore; Nagarjuna Premier at JP Nagar, Bangalore. The price range of these flats start from Rs 24 lakh and they offer facilities such as swimming pool, modern gym, billiards and table tennis area, party area etc. Says Madhusudhan P. "Nagarjuna Construction Company stresses on quality, trust and timely completion of projects at affordable rate. And we ensure that the customers get maximum value of their hard-earned money by investing in our properties."

Contact: Abdul Nasser  
nccprop@omantel.net.om  
Tel: 24695213/214

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## QAIS OMANI ESTABLISHMENT LLC (Muscat Overseas Group)

# A LAND-MARK IN PROPERTY

Qais Omani Establishments LLC is part of the Muscat Overseas Group, established in 1974 that has been in the forefront of the Sultanate of Oman's economic activity

Qais Omani Establishment LLC was formed in 1974 to handle property and real estate. In a very short time, it created a niche for itself with a strong presence in the market. At the time of inception of the company, the Sultanate was also in its initial stages of progress with the enormous task of building up its infrastructure lying ahead. Over the next few decades, the company made tremendous contributions in this direction, changing and edifying the face of the country by developing modern architecture and utility buildings. The advancement of the company has run alongside that of the Sultanate, a fact that is a great source of pride to the group. Qais Omani Establishment LLC's professional strengths lie in professional and dedicated service with the objective of satisfying customer's requirements.



"The main thrust of the company's business has been to envisage projects in Oman related to the acquisition of properties to make available quality real estate that is professionally managed," says Ali Abdul Latif, Manager Property. The company has on its register a wide range of professionally supervised real estate comprising of luxury villas, commercial complexes, residential apartments and institutes, which it lets out to discerning clients.

Qais Omani Est. employs the best architects for trendy designs of its structures and uses excellent quality material for the buildings. The company is involved in the project from start to finish. Among the projects can be mentioned the Commercial Complexes for Centre Point in Sohar and at prominent locations as well as residential complexes that will be ready for possession in March next year. Other projects include residential and

commercial complexes in Salalah, commercial and 2-tower residential complex near Azaiba Roundabout, which will be ready for occupation by the end of this year, multi-purpose properties in CBD, residential complexes in Qurum and two complexes in Madinat Illam with all facilities.

The properties are professionally maintained offering 24/7 service for which the company is dealing with best service providers in the country who offer excellent technical support for electromechanical and other maintenance works. The properties are reasonably priced and located at convenient locations. The company carries out feasibility studies to assess the viability of projects before it advises on all matters of design and effective management and maintenance of the property.

Contact:  
[musovrco@mantel.net.om](mailto:musovrco@mantel.net.om)  
[www.muscatoverseas.com](http://www.muscatoverseas.com)



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## THE WAVE, MUSCAT

# ON A HIGH TIDE OF SUCCESS

Amer Mustafa Al Fadhil, Vice President, External Affairs, The Wave, Muscat, shares the strategies behind the success of Oman's first freehold beachfront property project, in a chat with Sunil Kumar Singh

*How did the idea of developing beachfront property in Oman come into existence?*

Oman has a coastline of about 1,700 km and is enriched with natural beauty. It was natural, therefore, for a beachfront property development to come up in Oman. The Wave, Muscat site was the last parcel of available beachfront land in Muscat that was not designated for other development. This idea was particularly appealing as we set out to deliver Oman's first fully master-planned freehold community.

*What is the strategy behind developing the project in phases?*

There are three reasons why we're going ahead in phases. The first is the volatility in the construction material



Amer Mustafa Al Fadhil, Vice President - External Affairs, The Wave, Muscat

prices in the market. Therefore, in order to be in line with the fluctuating price levels of the construction materials we award tenders in phases. If we sell all the properties at today's construction prices and start constructing later, we might find that the construction prices have spiked and we would be at a loss then. The flip side of this, of course, is construction prices actually decrease in the future, in which case, we'd like to pass on the advantage of reduced prices to the customers. The third advantage of proceeding in phases is that it keeps us updated on the market feedback and customers' responses and demand.

*What freehold ownership rights does the project provide to the buyer?*

The freehold legislation in Oman came into existence as a result of royal decree 12/2006. The Wave, Muscat was honoured with a further project specific royal decree 09/2007. The governing rules and regulations associated with freehold legislation are yet to come out as the royal decree has mandated the Ministry of Housing, Electricity & Water to come up with the framework of regulations in coordination with the Ministry

of Tourism. Furthermore, according to 12/2006, residency rights for the owner and immediate family together with the inheritance law should be detailed in these regulations that are imminent.

*Do the properties being sold at The Wave, Muscat only target the high-end income groups or are they affordable to middle income groups as well?*

The properties at The Wave, Muscat are available to whoever can afford them but the affordability is not restricted to the ultra-rich only. We started selling two-bedroom townhouses, with 200 square metre built-up area and personal parking at only OMR 85,000. That aside, we have apartments that will start from OMR 75,000 when launched later this year. So, the properties at The Wave, Muscat are quite affordable.

*If a buyer of the property at The Wave, Muscat opts to rent his property out, what security does The Wave, Muscat provide to the owner as well the tenant?*

The securities and assurances provided to landlords and tenants are the same as those all across town. The Wave, Muscat

is a private community, with a plethora of nationalities making it their second home in Oman. As such, security would be designed in such a manner that it maintains its exclusive nature. A buyer can rent his property out to anyone regardless of the nationality of the tenant, and The Wave, Muscat fully protects the interests of the owner as well as the tenant. These interests are regulated and governed by the Muscat Municipality as the tenancy agreement would still need to be registered at the Municipality.

*Of all the buyers who've had a chance to buy at The Wave, Muscat, what is the break up in terms of their nationalities?*

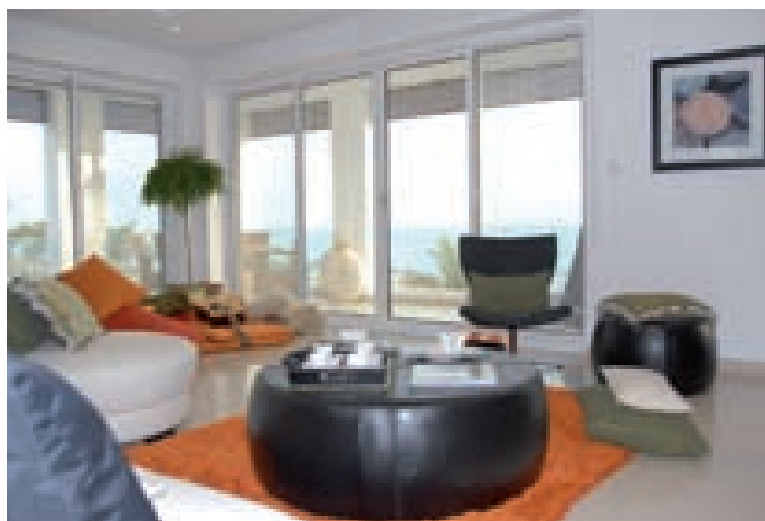
We have a very good cross-section of nationalities as buyers. So far we've buyers from about 34 different nationalities. About half of our buyers are Omanis, and from the remaining half the three top nationalities are British, Indians and GCC nationals. Apart from these nationalities, we've buyers from Australia, Far East, America, etc.

*Do you offer any mortgage solutions?*

The mortgage solutions we offer are one of the key success factors of our project. We have signed up with four major banks, namely HSBC, Bank Muscat, National Bank of Oman and Alliance Housing Bank. However, it doesn't mean that a buyer can't apply for mortgage in other banks. Our arrangement with these banks facilitates faster mortgage processing and the buyer gets preferential loan rates (ranging from 7 per cent to 8 per cent).

*How do you think projects like The Wave, Muscat are geared up to take a slice of the mature real estate market that is happening in neighbouring countries?*

The success of any development lies in mainly three aspects. The first, and perhaps by far the most important, is the location. With over six kilometres of



**Elegantly decorated living room of a villa at The Wave, Muscat**

natural beach along Muscat's pristine coastline, we surely have this bit covered. Second is credibility of the developers. With this venture being held 40 per cent by the Government of Oman, 50 per cent by Majid Al Futtaim Group, and 10 per cent by National Investments Fund Company, this is one serious development with very credible developers. Third is the product mix. With an 18 hole links golf course designed by Greg Norman, 300 berth marina, four luxury hotels, and over 4,000 residential units, this makes us quite an attractive destination. All these elements combine to make us one of the topmost developments in the entire region. The result, as you probably know, is sell-out releases in record timing.

*In view of the fact that most of the freehold properties in this region are seafront, how do you think the recent cyclone is going to impact the regional freehold property market?*

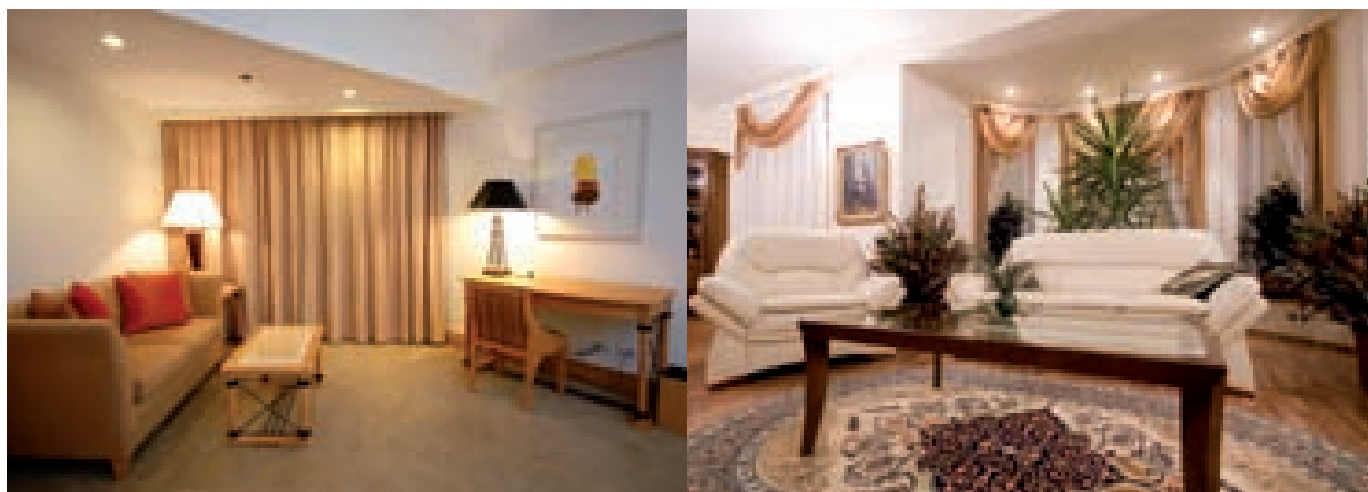
I don't think it affects the market in any manner as beachfront properties have been and will always continue to be at a premium in the medium to long term. Such natural occurrences like cyclone, etc. have a negligible bearing on the high demand of oceanfront properties both regionally and internationally.

However, there are ways to mitigate the risks accruing to such properties due to natural catastrophes. Technically speaking, The Wave, Muscat is designed to withstand a one-in-250-years storm. Besides, we're constructing a two-km long breakwater that sits mostly under the sea but rises to about four metres above Highest Astronomical Tide (HAT). Nevertheless, it is about a kilometre away from the natural beach line so as to not ruin the beautiful views of the sea. Thirdly, we've made provision of artificial lakes in our project. Whilst these provide for beautiful lakefront properties, they also double up as a flood-absorption system. These lakes have been designed to absorb the floodwater and then discharge it into the sea through pre-designated paths. During the recent cyclone that hit the Sultanate, these lakes worked tremendously and our construction site remained untouched by the wadi waters.

*What future plans you have apart from the present project?*

Currently, we are only mandated with developing and delivering The Wave, Muscat. This allows us to remain focused on delivering the project to the highest standards and, of course, on time.

# THE MATTER OF



# DESIGN

In Oman, the interior designing and decorating industry is cashing in on the Sultanate's booming property market. OER Dossier takes an overview of some of the major players in the interior designing industry in Oman

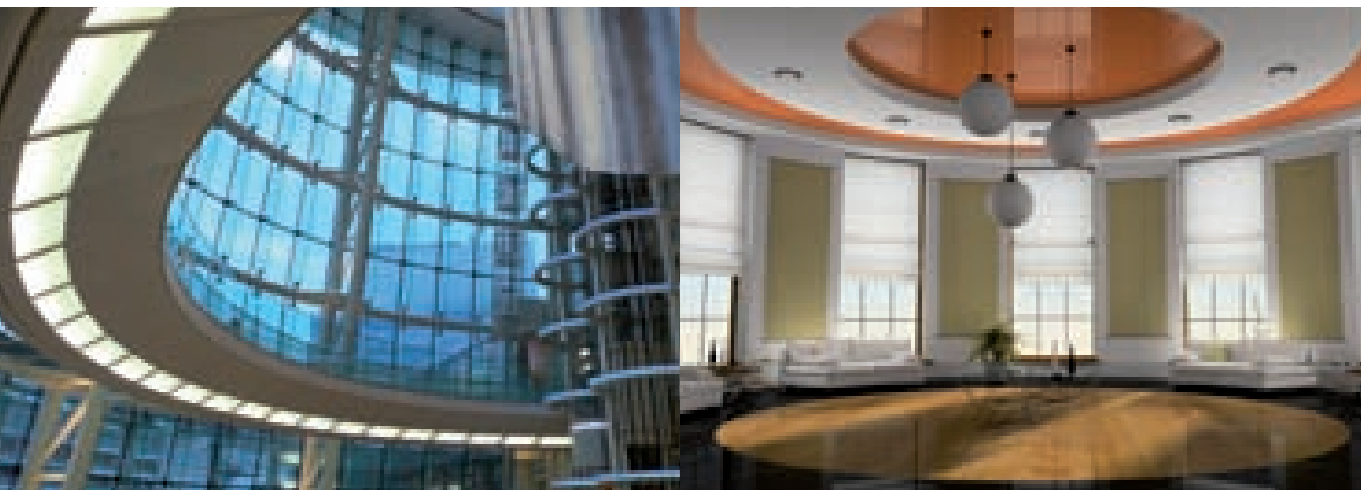
Oman is rapidly emerging as a key real estate investment destination for regional and foreign investors. According to market analysts, the real estate boom bodes well for the construction sector as well as the interior designing industry. Studies also confirm that the property boom has triggered high demand for interior furnishings and decorations and that the market for interior products is growing steadily with the construction of new hotels, luxury villas

Khuwair for 80 staff (2,200 square metres), Salman Stores at CCC, and office of Daleel Petroleum for 100 staff. Design Consultants has also done a few interior designing projects in the villas and houses at north Ghubra.

Commenting on the interior designing trend in Oman's residential segment, S. R. Ranade, Technical Director, Design Consultants, said, "There is a growing preference for the traditional Omani cultural theme and people want their

Workstations are getting more open and airy and emphasis on lighting, ventilation (air-conditioning) is increasing, he adds. Provision for prayer rooms in offices is essential along with pantry room, apart from utilising space for adequate electrical points and points for data networking. In offices, gypsum board partition and glass doors with part visibility are trendy, he says.

In showroom designing, emphasis on adequate lighting provision is very im-



and apartments, modern industrial facilities, and prestigious properties in various parts of the Sultanate.

Given the present property boom across all sectors in Oman, there is huge potential for interior designing and decorating firms. Among the leaders of the interior designing industry are Design Consultants, one of the leading architects, engineers and planners in Oman. Set up in 1980, Design Consultant is mainly in architecture and planning and organising interior decoration, focussing on commercial interior design. The recent notable office interior designing projects accomplished by Design Consultants include MB Petroleum's office at Al Athaiba (4,500 square metre area); office of Electricity Holding Company at Al

building to blend with Oman's culture. Very few people like western style and the trend is towards oriental style. They like to display their antique pieces and furniture in their homes. In residences, direct access to any room of the house is generally discouraged and entrance should only be from the main door to maintain privacy. Secondly, the latest fashion is that people like multi-coloured walls in the same room. Further, use of spotlights, gypsum false ceilings, decorative lighting, etc in interiors is also growing. There is also a growing demand for central air-conditioning away from split ACs or duct ACs."

In office architecture, low partition and workstations are more common than cabin structure, he says, as it is not cost effective and occupies more space.

portant to highlight the product. Generally, he says, wall washer, spotlights and overall lights are the three types of lights used in showrooms. Secondly, display area and storage area have to be balanced in showrooms. Flooring tiles have to be heavy-duty, and false ceiling with acoustical properties is essential to absorb sound, Ranade adds.

Fareeda Design is another major firm that specialises in interior decoration and design. Established in 1994, Fareeda Design has carved a niche for interior and architectural consultancy in Oman. As Fareeda Al Battashy, Managing Director, says, "Interior design is no longer just about the art of decorating settings and bedrooms, but has evolved into an art, which also involves the science of utilising the space

available at its best efficiency, and securing the productivity of those using its environment.”

Having projects ranging from major hospitals to hotels, commercial and residential, Fareeda Design has in its portfolio clients including four of Oman’s leading banks and prominent national and international companies. For instance, it has completed a number of branches and ATM outlets for BankMuscat having seated service desks combined with traditional cashiers and open tellers. From BOBK merger with Combank (Commercial Bank of Oman) to eventual merger of Combank with BankMuscat, Fareeda Design undertook all new and refurbishment projects.

The first task set was design of a ‘model branch’ to be implemented throughout the network. The brief called for clearly defined areas within branches for each major function including welcome desk, individual customer service desks, cash and ATM with night lobby. This concept had not been implemented previously in Oman and was welcomed by all.

Fareeda Design is into offering services such as feasibility studies, concept design, cost advice, contract documentation, tendering, contract supervision and administration. It has done projects like Training Centre & Administration of NBO, Majan International Bank head

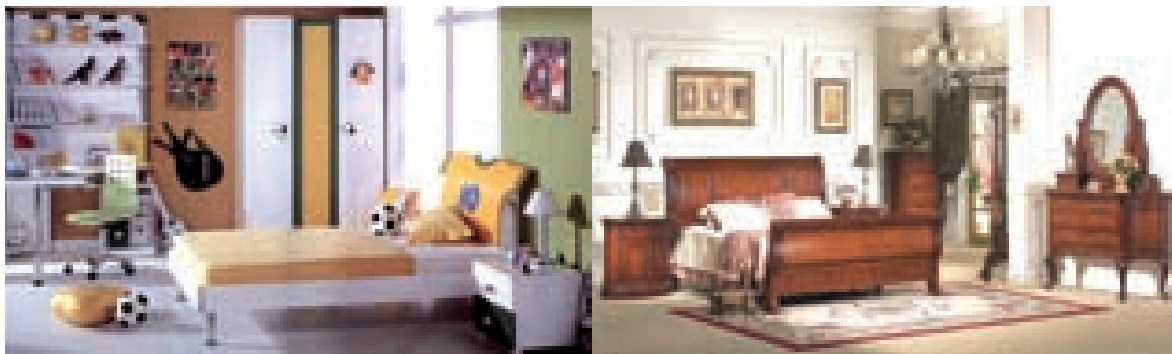
Club interiors at Al Khuwair, Occidental Oman office interiors, PDO control room interior, RAFO Defence Studies Centre interiors, office interiors of Gulf Air Worldwide Call Centre at IT Park, Rusayl, and many more. Fareeda Design has also completed a number of private villa interiors at Athaiba, Madinat Al Illam, etc, combining traditional and contemporary styles.

office, Phillips Petroleum, Sheraton Beach Resort’s Oriental Restaurant, Ice Cream Parlour at Al Araiimi Shopping Centre, Qurum, Golden Gate Restaurant at Al Araiimi Shopping Centre, Infiniti car showroom at Darsait, General Electric Showroom at Qurum, Learning Zone for British Council, car showroom for Oman Trading Establishment, interiors of Crowne Plaza Hotel at Salalah. Some of the recent projects are Oiltanking Odfjell Terminals, interior design of Safeer International Hotel and Safeer Continental Hotel at Al Khuwair, Omantel office refurbishment at Al Khuwair, various branches of Bank Dhofar, BankMuscat, NBO, Standard Chartered Bank’s Oman premises, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic

nis M. Baulk as partner and CEO, IDC works with its UK-registered international partners – Traer-Clark architects.

The two partners in the Sultanate have extensive knowledge of working within the capital area and wilayats of Oman since 1976, both in the private and public sectors.

IDC provides a design and supervision package for interiors and furnishings including fitted furniture and its knowledge of specialist decorating, stained glass, marble and granites, etc has been applied extensively on behalf of its clients. IDC has undertaken a variety of residential projects throughout the Sultanate including villas, town-



houses and garden villages.

Projects by IDC principals also include The Hilton Hotel Salalah, Grand Hyatt, Muscat, Sohar Beach Hotel, tourist village, Salalah, (leisure projects); Jawaharat Al Shatti shopping complex at Shatti Al-Qurum, corporate headquarters for Towell Group at Azaiba, corporate headquarter facades of MB Petroleum, Oman Refinery Company headquarters (commercial projects), and Bait Al-Zubair, Oman Heritage Village, Barr Al-Jissa (heritage projects).

IDC’s Bait Al-Zubair museum at Muscat also won the inaugural HM Sultan Qaboos’ Architectural Excellence award.

# ROOMS OF THE FUTURE



OER Dossier takes an overview of the latest trends in interior designing in the GCC region, where regional interior design and furnishing firms are fast growing on the back of the building boom

The Gulf region boasts a rich cultural heritage that spans the traditions of antiquity to the design aesthetics of the twenty-first century. The construction boom in various Gulf countries, which will reach US\$9.2 billion this year, is expected to provide billions of dollars worth of business for interior design and furniture products. Analysts say the skylines of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain,

Qatar, Kuwait and Oman will be as crowded as Dubai's. The demand for property is expected to accelerate in the Gulf countries until it reaches maturity in about 12 to 15 years time, and is also expected to boost other industries, including the interiors and furniture sector, with more efficient interiors to be in demand in the decades to come. In fact, more players are finding

it feasible to invest in this industry for the markets of this region, which is experiencing an unprecedented demand for construction materials and interior décor expertise.

## **Design dominating construction**

Art and design are now at the forefront in the construction arena in the Gulf and the Middle East even as the region



turns a corner in its frenetic building activity. Design as a tool for shaping living environments is now recognised as a crucial factor in enhancing the urban experience. The philosophy of 'design dominating construction' is anchored on the creative use of the latest technology and service concepts to measurably enhance quality of life for the inhabitants of its buildings, whether a home or a work place.

Design industry leaders and experts agree that design plays an integral role in the economic development of nations and they emphasise the need to create a solid integrated platform.

An example of that is the company's use of the Oyster concept for office design developed by Omniyat, the real estate developer and a part of Dubai-based Almasa Holdings. Oyster is an acronym for Offices Yielding Superior

Targets through Efficiency and Relaxation. Buildings based on this concept focus on integration of state-of-the-art lifestyle elements combined with technologically-advanced working environments, allowing people to escape the rigours of the office in set up 'relaxation zones', which ultimately aid employee relaxation, productivity and efficiency. All Omniyat property developments are infused with state-of-the-art technology – technology that optimises manpower and minimises wastage. Voice over Internet Telephony (VoIP), radio frequency identification and biometric access, intelligent lighting and energy management systems are a few examples of this technology that will allow for an efficient, secure and high-tech work environment. The technology is integrated in each project from design to completion, which allows for its efficient upgrade and ensures that all properties

always offer the latest as soon as it becomes available.

### **Office furniture**

Design awareness is growing rapidly in the Middle East and it can be seen in the greater demand for internationally-reputed design brands. In the furnishing sector where numerous franchises and furniture and accessories brand names are being rolled out across the Gulf, office furniture is getting serious attention. There is growing importance of both good space planning and the growing significance of ergonomics in the workplace puts the accent clearly on well-designed office spaces with an emphasis on designer furniture that respects both form and function.

### **Hotel design**

With the rapidly increasing number of hotels in the Gulf – many managed by international hotel groups – the interior





design industry has seen a progressive shift towards not only producing exquisite interiors in very tight time frames, but also providing innovative, culture-sensitive, unique and eco-friendly solutions. Even before the design revolution began in the office terrain, it was being used as a differentiator in hotels. Here too, good interior design will continue to push the envelope as even more hotels are slated to rise in the near future in the GCC. Every hotel, restaurant, suite or spa is looking to offer an unforgettable experience to its customer by incorporating into impressive architectural spaces truly unique features, dramatic lighting, lavish fabrics and custom-made furniture pieces. In view of this, it is inevitable that the race to ensure consumer loyalty and a greater holiday experience will be enhanced only through the use of design. Hence, using design as a differentiator has assumed great importance in the hotel industry.

There is a conscious effort in the Gulf to provide quality interiors in a cost-effective way and hence value engineering

is key to any project, no matter the size. Sleek and modern interiors, luxurious fabrics, elegant finishes and dramatic lighting bring sophistication to a unique design. The Burj Dubai Lake Hotel located in the exclusive downtown Burj Dubai area is a prime example of how the design industry has progressed over the years, where creativity and culture are combined to create exquisite interiors. Another new project in the UAE is the Sofitel Jumeirah Beach Residence, a 450-room luxury hotel whose elegance, sophistication and warmth are reflected in the stylish interiors. A contemporary theme with an Arabian influence allowed elements from the region to be incorporated into the design.

#### **Wood set to floor**

The floors market is growing exponentially with the boom in construction activity in the GCC, with the latest trend being towards wooden flooring, thanks to its timeless elegance, classy finish and insulative properties, according to leading suppliers and manufacturers of these products.

Wooden floors have recently gained popularity throughout the Middle East, replacing the use of traditional products such as marble and ceramic flooring. Many of the major property developments in the region now incorporate wooden floors as a sign of prosperity, modernity and elegance. Wooden flooring has become popular and is used in many hotels, restaurants and shops throughout the region.

Take the case of UAE alone. According to one industry source, the estimated market for wooden flooring in the UAE is Dh 24 million (\$6.5 million) annually and the trend for wood floors is catching on despite stiff competition from ceramic tiles which has cornered a sizable chunk of the flooring market. There is stronger demand for wood and woodworking products in the Middle East, mainly due to sharp increase in construction activities across the region. The UAE alone imports \$87 million worth of ceramics a month from across the globe.

# Home security @ fingertips

A smart home enhances the value of a home where hi-tech systems are interconnected to allow the automatic or remote control of the home to save energy, improve comfort, safety and convenience for the homeowner

At 6:30 am your bedroom shades open and a soothing voice bids you good morning. As you roll out of bed, last night's headlines and sports scores are read to you along with today's weather forecast. The bathroom lights flip on. As you climb into the shower, the coffee begins to brew downstairs. Another day begins...

Think of all the repetitive things you

do in your home every day. Turn lights on, turn lights off, set thermostat up, set thermostat down, arm the security system, disarm the security system, water the lawn, etc. Now add to this all the things you have to remember to do. Pay the bills, change your oil, take your medication, pick the kids up from soccer, get the car inspected, etc. Wouldn't it be great if you had a little help with all this? That's what home automation is all about.

Albert Einstein minimised his wardrobe to avoid wasting time thinking about what to wear. Simplifying his life gave him more time and energy to focus on his work. Home automation works the same way. It simplifies your life by shifting the more mundane and tedious tasks from you to your home. With a 'smarter' home, you can focus more of your time and energy on the people and things that matter most to you. Home automation (also called



domotics) is a field within building automation, specialising in the specific automation requirements of private homes and in the application of automation techniques for the comfort and security of its residents. Although many techniques used in building automation (such as light and climate control, control of doors and window shutters, security and surveillance systems, etc.) are also used in home automation, additional functions in home automation include the control of multi-media home entertainment systems, automatic plant watering and pet feeding, and automatic scenes for dinners and parties. When home automation is installed during construction of a new home, usually control wires are added before the drywall is installed. These control wires run to a controller, which will then control the environment.

### **Standards and bridges**

Nearly thirty years ago, there was only one technology for home automation (X-10) and a very limited number of companies who made devices for this 'defacto' standard. Today, newer technologies (like Z-Wave, UPB and Insteon) have joined X-10 and there is a bewildering array of devices for the home owner to choose from. Specific domotic standards include INSTEON, X10, Universal powerline bus, KNX (standard), Domintell, Cardio, System Box, LonWorks, Creston, UPnP, ZigBee and Z-Wave that will allow for control of most applications. In a retrofit situation, or when installing control wiring is too expensive or simply not possible, some of these standards are wireless or powerline protocols. Some appliances include USB that helps to control it and connect it to a domotics network. Bridges translate information from one standard

to another (eg. from X10 to EIB).

### **Effects**

In very advanced installations, rooms can sense not only the presence of a person but know who that person is and perhaps set appropriate lighting, temperature and music/TV taking into account day of week, time of day and other factors. Other automated tasks may include setting the air conditioning to an energy saving setting when the house is unoccupied, and restoring the normal setting when an occupant is about to return. More sophisticated systems can maintain an inventory of products, recording their usage through an RFID tag, and prepare a shopping list or even automatically order replacements.

Some practical implementations of home automation are, for example, when an alarm detects a fire or smoke,

all lights in the house will blink to alert occupants. If the house is equipped with a home theatre, a home automation system can shut down all audio and video components to alert the user to a possible fire or a burglar.

### **Home control via cell phone**

The home remote system features Z-wave technology and enables users to control automation devices throughout the home, including lighting systems, security, appliances, heating, and more. The system comes with a remote control for in-home management of the system; users can also access and manipulate the system through web-based browsers and cell phones. Particularly attractive features include the ability to receive emails and text messages when motion detection devices are triggered in the home, and the ability to access and view home security cameras through a cell phone.

In an age when everyone owns a cell phone, the integration of this device into the control of a home's automation system seems worth the price. No home control system would be complete without the ability to create settings and scenes — home remote can do this too, for example, scheduling lights to turn on and off to give the appearance of an occupied home when on vacation.

A technology known as Powerline Carrier Systems (PCS) is used to send coded signals along a home's existing electric wiring to programmable switches or outlets. These signals convey commands that correspond to 'addresses' or locations of specific devices, and that control how and when those devices operate. A PCS transmitter, for instance, can send a signal along a home's wiring, and a receiver plugged into any electric outlet in the home

could receive that signal and operate the appliance to which it is attached.

One common protocol for PCS is known as X10, a signaling technique for remotely controlling any device plugged into an electrical power line. X10 signals, which involve short radio frequency (RF) bursts that represent digital information, enable communication between transmitters and receivers. In Europe, technology to equip homes with smart devices centres on development of the European Installation Bus, or Instabus. This embedded control protocol for digital communication between smart devices consists of a two-wire bus line that is installed along with normal electrical wiring. The Instabus line links all appliances to a decentralised communication system and functions like a telephone line over which appliances can be controlled.

# GLOBAL BRANDS FIND HOMES

International furniture giants are increasingly making inroads into the Middle East and the Gulf markets



There is an increasing degree of openness in the furniture sector world-wide. The growth in world furniture trade has two determinants: the increasing openness of the markets and the growth in world consumption, with the emergence of hundreds of millions of consumers. Emerging markets are therefore potential customers for middle and upper-middle range of furniture produced in industrial countries.

The world market for office furniture is estimated at US\$35 billion, whereas world furniture production is worth

about US\$270 billion. About 30 per cent of the total is produced by major furniture manufacturers based on the volume of their sales. These furniture companies have headquarters in 29 countries across Europe (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom), North America (Canada, USA), and Asia (China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand).

As regards the furniture market in the Gulf region, the growth in real estate has triggered the rapid expansion of the furniture market in recent years. The famous Italian luxury brand Selva has entered the Middle East market in a grand way with the signing up with Dubai Properties to showcase its range of custom-made furniture. As part of its plans for the Middle East, Selva opened a showroom in Dubai, offering a vast array of timeless furniture creations and ideas.

Another major player is Al Aqili, which

has emerged as one of the leading shops for furnishing needs, providing turnkey solutions to furnishings industry, carpets, curtains, fabrics, furniture and lighting – be it for residential, commercial, hospital, airports or hotel projects. Having captured a sizeable share of the UAE market, the company has penetrated Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Being a major organisation undertaking projects of virtually any size and kind, the company has divided its activities under various divisions including contracts, distribution, design divisions and Crestwood interiors, Office Land, Curtain Land and BeLight (lighting division) and the recently-added Rug-Land. The company has brought some exciting and modern furnishing products to the Middle East market – the most recent being innovations from Mutra, a leading manufacturer of curtain tracks from Spain and the Trimland

range of trimmings from Turkey.

Among leaders in the office-furnishing sector is the UAE-based Juma Al Majid's Office Furniture Department, which continues to maintain its market leadership through its association with strong principals and the launch of new product lines. Another player pushing forward the cause of high-end design furniture is Al Shamsi Enterprises' Designers' Hub. Founded in 2004, the Designers' Hub was initially established as an office furniture company with one famous brand: Knoll-USA. It has since evolved to become a lifestyle company for furniture and interior design. Designers' Hub has strengthened its product portfolio and now represents a number of exclusive and prestigious furniture brands such as Republic of Fritz Hansen (Denmark), Cassina and Edra (both of Italy), Thonet and Hacker Kitchen (both of Ger-

many) and Grupo Permasa (Spain). This year, Designers' Hub will begin a rollout of offices/dealers in at least 10 key markets in the Middle East. From Dubai, Al Shamsi will take its furniture lines to Abu Dhabi, then beyond the UAE to Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

Office interior design in UAE has changed remarkably in the last decade as more and more companies move their head office to UAE. With major expansion seen in the UAE, the office furniture market is set to improve as the government has been working on number of residential and commercial office projects for companies yet to come to UAE. This would be quite beneficial for interior designers as they will be able to participate in the competition to promote their collection of office interior designs in UAE.

## INTERNATIONAL GOLDEN FURNITURE COMPANY

### A CLASS APART

International Golden Furniture Company (IGF) is one of the leading furniture companies in the Sultanate of Oman

It has many showrooms and divisions, which cover a wide range of world class and exclusive furniture that include home, office, garden, school, and college furniture, in addition to electronics, home appliances, office equipment and variety of furniture accessories. IGF complex is conveniently located at Madinat Sultan Qaboos at a short distance from the ministries and embassies. The complex is one of the most prestigious and largest home & office and electronic showrooms in the Sultanate of Oman. IGF complex consists of many divisions in its three-floor showroom.

By starting this division, IGF has broadened the scope of office furnishing and brought in the latest and the best of international designs and contemporary styles of office furniture in the local market. The office furniture division is situated at Golden complex in Madina Sultan Qaboos. The wholesale division of IGF is one of the biggest in Oman, dealing with a wide range of dealers all over the country. This division is specialised in home and office



furniture and electronics wholesale and caters to a wide number of clients in Muscat and other governorates and wilayats in Oman. To keep abreast of the developments in the international arena, IGF participates in the local and international fairs and exhibitions. IGF is well-known to many leading furniture manufacturers all over the world such as US, Italy, Germany, Malaysia, China, Taiwan, among others. IGF represents many reputed furniture manufacturers and keeps a list of well-known international brands, such as LAS, Upper, Doimo, Dino, Ta, Boston, Demyere, Bassette, Jackson, Broyhill, Point, B&C and many more.

IGF Salalah branch is located on the 23rd July Street in the commercial district area in Salalah. IGF Salalah branch is one of the most prestigious and largest home & office and electronics showrooms in the Dhofar region. Hayat Furniture was established to cater to the ever-increasing demand in the area of home and office furniture in the Sultanate of Oman. IGF is always cautious to protect the interests of its customers by avoiding unnecessary price wars and providing the customers with the most possible lowest prices round the year.

Contact:  
[igfoman@omantel.net.om](mailto:igfoman@omantel.net.om)  
[igfoman@yahoo.com](mailto:igfoman@yahoo.com)  
[www.golden-furniture.net](http://www.golden-furniture.net)



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## KHIMJI RAMDAS - FURNITURE DIVISION

# WORK-PLACES REDEFINED

KR's Furniture Division has been a pioneer in furnishing and is one of the leading furniture houses in Oman. The office furniture division is one of the leading players in the Sultanate providing a wide range of office furniture solutions with products sourced from across the globe

The showroom displays some of the finest brands like Della Valentina, Italy for modern office deskings, Sokoa of France and Global of Canada for seating solutions & Koas of Korea for both deskings and seating solutions. Also offered are steel furniture and security items like lockers, cupboards and filing cabinets manufactured by Godrej-Khimji Oman at their Sohar facility. The furniture division also provides full interior solutions with the help of their highly skilled team of interior de-

signers. As Anand Venkat, who heads the division says, "KR undertakes full turnkey contract from floor to ceiling and offers the customer total solutions in terms of furnishing of the office. The company has created one of the best environments as far as the office furniture are concerned. It is this capability of providing both office interior design and office furniture solutions from one place in the shortest possible time that makes them leaders in this field."

Last year Khimji's Furniture won one of the biggest contracts in Oman, the supply of furniture and interior works to Sohar Refinery. There are three distinct categories of furniture that are preferred in Oman from Europe, Korea and China. The trend is to go for office furniture in an appealing combination of wood, metal and glass and one of the most extensive arrays of all these types of furniture is displayed in the showroom at Bait Al Ahlam, Al Noor Street, Ruwi. As Anand Venkat says, "The trend in office furniture is more inclined towards the western style. Corporates are more concerned about the maximum utility of space and the aesthetics. Work-stations are getting more popular as they offer more transparency to the set-up and ease of mobility."

"In the government offices and ministries the traditional style with a heavy solid wood finish is still a preferred choice. The colour combinations and the sleekness of the design is an important component as it directly affects the psychology and the effectiveness of the employees. The function of each employee and the area of operation are important points to be considered while designing an office floor," he adds.

In addition to office furniture, the furniture division also deals with Security



**Anand Venkat, Head - Office Furniture & Projects**

products from Godrej, warehouse racking and mobile filing systems, laboratory furniture, auditorium seatings, stadium seatings and library furniture. Some of the prestigious installations recently completed are furniture and interior works for the Fincorp office, centralised warehousing facility at Ghala measuring 10,000 square metres for Centrepont, and seating for the ROP stadium at Wattayah.

Contact:  
venkat.kfd@  
khimjiramdas.com  
www.khimji.com

The furniture division represents following global brands:

- Della Valentina, Italy
- Teknion, Canada
- Global, Canada
- Sokoa, France
- Koas, Korea
- Godrej India & Oman
- Dexion, Australia
- Bruynzeel, Holland
- Aresline, Italy
- Nilkamal, India
- Cummins, USA
- Flex, Malaysia
- Lion, Malaysia

## SWEET HOME (A Division of Al Jabalain Enterprise LLC)

# MAKING SWEET DREAMS COME TRUE

Sweet Home, the importer of hand-picked quality wooden furniture, is part of Al Jabalain Enterprise LLC. The company started its operation from Ruwi, and currently has its warehouse facility and showroom in Mabelah

Sweet Home sources out and imports elegantly crafted, excellent quality furniture from Malaysia. It offers its corporate and residential customers an on-site installation of its furniture. The main features of Sweet Home furniture are that the furniture is of good finish, rigid and strong.

Sweet Home promises a faster and on-time delivery as well as installation of furniture. Apart from ensuring high quality the company operates on low profit margins. "We keep our profit



margins low as our priority is customer satisfaction and delivering quality products" says Vijay Shankar, Sales Manager - Sweet Home. The company

can cater to any requirements of corporate as well as residential customers.

Contact:  
Vijay Shankar  
Tel: 24454752  
GSM: 99321622

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# TEEJAN FURNISHING LLC

## VALUE FOR MONEY

Teejan Furnishing LLC, is a part of the reputed Teejan Group of Companies established almost three decades ago

Over the years, Teejan Furnishing has established itself and developed a reputation of quality, fair pricing and reliability. Teejan Furnishing is an importer, wholesaler and retailer of a large range of household, office and children's furniture & furnishings. The company has six showrooms strategically located at Al Khuwair, Nizwa, Al Hail, Ruwi, Barka and Sohar.



According to N. Aseem, General Manager, Teejan Furnishing LLC, "Teejan Furnishing is amongst the leaders in the furniture and furnishing industry of Oman and offers services to people of all walks of life with a spectrum of furniture and soft furnishing from around the world for home and offices." The company offers a wide range of household furniture like bedroom sets, living room sets, dining sets, wall units, coffee tables, and a complete solution to office furniture requirements and a wide collection of children and youth furniture. In addition, it executes projects for major clients like the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, Government departments, major private companies and universities.

According to N. Aseem, "Customer satisfaction being our prime importance, we offer an excellent after-sales service which is backed by a team of trained and high calibre workforce. We also offer consultation in interior designing and layout plans for the benefit of our customers. New concepts are continuously introduced keeping in step with forthcoming trends."

Teejan Furnishing's project section caters for projects in the government as well as private sectors. Its marketing department caters to the needs of dealers throughout the Sultanate of Oman for their requirements for carpets, curtain fabrics, curtain accessories, mattresses and divan beds.

Other items are regularly added to meet the growing demands. Teejan Furnishing has achieved a revolutionary breakthrough in sleep technology with the Firmapaedic range of mattress developed with the unique 3RS & MCS system combined with CSS, MSS, WSS, & BSS supports. Moreover, the company is geared to spread into other countries of the GCC region.

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teejanf@omantel.net.om  
Tel: 24489209 - 24489326

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## TEEJAN FURNISHING LLC - SHIFA MATTRESS

### A NEW SHAPE OF COMFORT

The quality of your sleep has a direct effect on your life, therefore your choice of sleep products is an extremely important decision

Considering this in mind, Teejan Furnishing LLC has launched Shifa series of beds and mattresses in Oman. Shifa Mattresses provide specific features to fulfil the quest for a perfect night sleep by gently conforming to every contour of the body, with superior back support and outstanding pressure relief.

Shifa series of beds and mattresses are growing



in popularity in Oman market with its uncompromising quality and competitive prices. The mattresses are a perfect blend of quality spring, high resilient foam, combined with good workmanship. The company is introducing special fabric treated against house dust-mites to provide more hygienic sleeping environment to customers. The company manufactures a wide range of orthopaedic, medical and pocketed spring mattresses for the home and hotels.



Shifa series of beds and mattress are manufactured in a well-equipped factory with latest machines, trained & experienced technicians to produce high quality products that meet international standards. The factory is located at PEIE's Nizwa industrial estate spreading over 100,000 square feet. Shifa mattresses are made available to almost 50 furniture dealers in Oman and the company has been exporting to other GCC countries too.

Shifa series of beds and mattress are manufactured in Oman by Teejan Furnishing LLC. Teejan Furnishing LLC is a part of the reputed Teejan Group of Companies established almost three decades ago. Over the years, Teejan Furnishing has established itself and developed a reputation of quality, fair pricing and reliability. Teejan Furnishing is an importer, wholesaler and retailer of a large range of household, office and children's furniture & furnishings. The company has six showrooms strategically located at Al Khuwair, Nizwa, Al Hail, Ruwi, Barka and Sohar.

Contact:  
teejanf@omantel.net.om  
Tel: 24489209 - 24489326

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## SEEB INTERNATIONAL COMPANY LLC

# FOCUSSED ON QUALITY & CUSTOMER NEEDS

Amar Singh, the first Punjabi businessman in Oman, founded Seeb International Company LLC in 1971. Initially, the office of Seeb International Company LLC was located at Ruwi High Street

In 1985, the company's operations shifted to Wadi Kabir area and since then the company has been undertaking various projects. "We strongly demand great versatility and certainty in our designs, strict quality control in our products, complete customer's satisfaction and well-planned lead time, which ultimately upholds our well-kept strong reputation for many more years to come," says Jagdev Singh, partner, Seeb International Company LLC.

The core areas of activities of Seeb International Company are:

- Services and maintenance works;
- Turnkey projects for offices, banks, showrooms, etc;
- Partition and porta cabins;
- Civil, electrical, and electro-mechanical works and fabrication;
- False ceiling, joinery, GRP, vertical/Venetian blinds;
- Furniture manufacturing;
- Lathe works, milling, boring, crank grinding, steel fabrication, etc;
- Crane and HIAB hiring.

The company has steel fabrication unit at Ghala and has overseas offices in Canada, and Jalandhar (India), apart from the Muscat office. Among the major interior decoration projects undertaken by the company are for Golden Tulip hotel and Sohar Beach hotel, various banks, office of Khimji Ramdas, etc. Seeb International Company is also the official fabricator of Corean Dupont products in Oman and is proud to be the company to have done the first carpentry work of Galfar Engineering company in 1970s. The company also set up stage for a quiz session in Muscat Festival in 1999. Moreover, the company has also got a certificate of appreciation from Bank Muscat for on-time finishing of interior

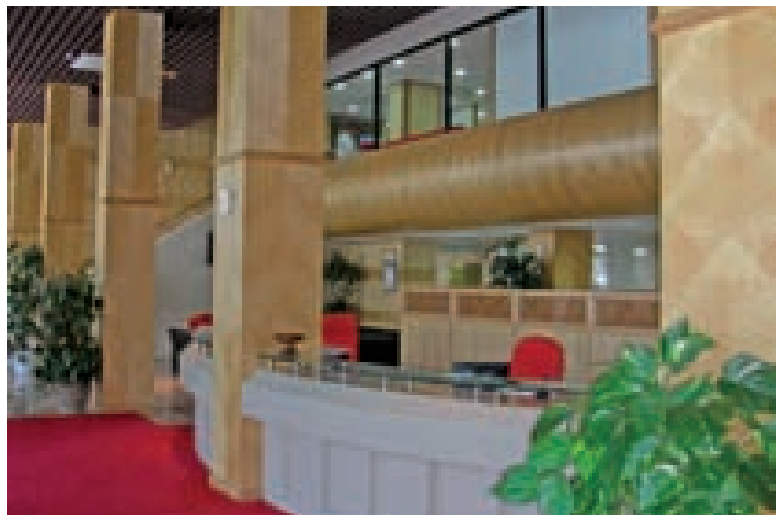


**Jagdev Singh, Partner, Al Seeb International Company LLC**

decoration contract with excellence.

Specialist in double-glazed partitioning, Seeb International Company is now being managed by Jagdev Singh and Jaswinder Singh, sons of Amar Singh and who belong to the second generation running the business in Oman. "For over three decades, we have been serving as well as retaining our customers, as well as adding new base of customers ensuring complete satisfaction," said Jagdev Singh.

Contact:  
[jagdev@omantel.net.om](mailto:jagdev@omantel.net.om)



Advertisement

## JOTUN PAINTS COMPANY LLC

# JOTUN PAINTS LAUNCHES THE 'LADY'

Pioneering move utilizes the latest paint technology to offer home consumers luxurious emulsion paints that are washable, neutral-scent and long-lasting

In a move that reflects the increasing participation of ladies in their homes, Jotun Paints, one of the world's leading producers and suppliers of paints, coatings and powder coatings, has launched the 'Lady' interior brand into the Middle East market. The pioneering move introduces the interior paint brand, which utilizes the latest technology in emulsion paints, to cater to a growing niche market in the Middle East looking for high-quality and versatility in interior paints for home decoration.

The launch of the interior brand follows two years of extensive research in the regional Dubai-based R&D laboratory in close collaboration with Jotun

Norway to come up with an interior paint brand which provides unrivalled home painting solution. Discerning female consumers and families now have high-quality acrylic paints in a beautiful matt finish that offers unique benefits that no other paint in the market can provide – easy clean, neutral scent and color last. Cleaning stains and dirt off painted walls will not leave any spots or affect the quality of the paint finishing. Further, the solvent-free



paints do not leave any trace of odor after six hours of application, and the colors are guaranteed to last for years.

"Jotun allocated a significant amount of our annual budget to R&D last year to come up with the Lady brand, and for the first time here in the Middle East an interior paint specifically aimed at ladies and their families offers a convenient and cost-effective tool to change the look of their homes as often as they want," said Linda Tarifi Kender, Regional Interior Brand Manager, Jotun UAE.

"We recognize the ever-increasing role

of ladies in their homes; they take a more active part in deciding the painting of their houses and are more informed and skilled in home decoration. We have also witnessed an increasing number of end-users visiting our website for information or asking our sales team to help them make decisions on their painting needs," added Kender.

'Lady Essentials' adds to a distinctive range of paint products Jotun has brought to the Middle East region.

The product has been specifically developed to cater to the preferences of home consumers in the Middle East, who want high-quality finishes with the convenience of washable and odor-free paints. Other Jotun paints previously introduced in the region such as the Jotun Pearl and the recently repositioned Fenomastic have been met with positive response. Jotun Pearl boasts of a pearl-like sheen, a first-of-its-kind special effects paint in the market. Carrying both enamel and emulsion options, the Fenomastic range caters to stringent professional needs for consistency, sustainability and quality.

"Jotun has become synonymous with innovation and groundbreaking concepts in paint manufacturing, and the launch of the Lady brand in the Middle East market is a reflection of our ability to identify unique needs and offer solutions to specific market segments. We are confident that the Lady brand will meet the expectations of our customers who have used Jotun's range of quality paints over the years, and we look forward to eventually exceed our targets for this new interior paint range," concluded Kender.

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www.jotun.com

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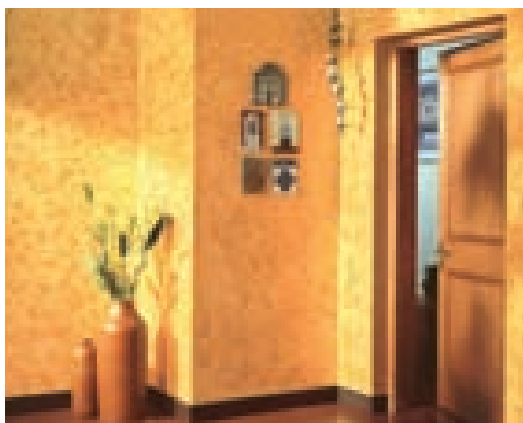


## BERGER PAINTS

# ADD LIFE TO YOUR WALLS WITH BERGER XPRESSIONS

Life is all about expressing oneself; and your home is the place where you can express yourself best

Berger Paints now brings to you a range of exciting and fascinating finishes, Berger Xpressions, which help you create the home of your dreams. The range of products offered by Berger Paints includes clear and metallic glaze finishes, and the ever-popular Italian Stucco.



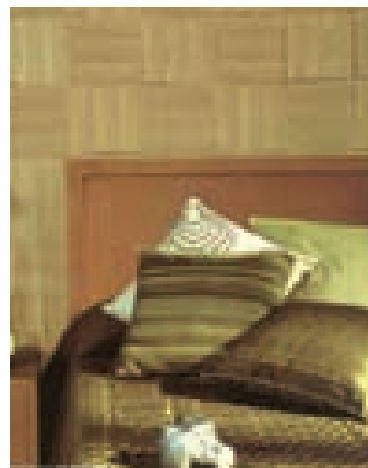
Berger Xpressions is available with special effects tools and tips, creating dream designs or creative patterns on the walls were never so easy. Customers can create several different effects like Spatula, Sponge On, Ragging, Combing, Dragging, etc.

Glaze finishes are like semi-transparent paint, using which one can create various designer effects on the walls. Of course, most often skilled application is required to create these effects. Some of these effects can however be easily learnt and to enable this, Berger Paints is also distributing through their outlets a set of application guides and applica-



tion tools to help create these effects.

Special effects need not be done throughout your home, and can instead be done in only some focus areas. These effects can really make your home look distinctive from the others, and each effect can bring out yet another dimension of your personality. The Spatula Effect, for instance, can be seen as a rather dynamic effect and be used in the liv-



ing area to literally liven up the atmosphere. The Sponging Effect and the Colour Washing Effect, on the other hand, can be rather subtle effects and used in bedrooms. Each of these special effects used along with a combination of colours expand the possibilities available to you beyond anyone's imagination!

Painting is often seen as a tedious activity. However, when one gets fully

involved in it and looks at it as an opportunity to make your home speak for you, it can become quite interesting! Do not see the process of painting as adding just another coat of colour, but see it as breathing fresh life to your walls!

So let fly your creativity and go ahead and express yourself with Berger Xpressions!

Further information about Décor effects may be obtained by contacting Berger Paints at 24596709.

Contact:  
customerservice.oman@  
asianpaints.com  
Tel: 24596709 Fax: 24501531

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## AL-ROOFOOF TRADING LLC - AMAZING STONE

### PRECIOUS INNOVATIONS

Al Roofoof Trading LLC. is one of the leading dealers in the natural stone industry and is a well reputed name in the corporate sector in Oman

Al Roofoof Trading was established in 1985 and has been into the business of cement, concrete and crushers products. In this period, it has been able to establish its name in the industry and now it has diversified into the business of hard surface choices and is redefining the finest both nature and man has to offer.

The company has acquired the sole dealership of Amazing Stone for Oman and is representing A & M Gulf Services which is operating through its headquarters in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

"We have identified the niche for this product in this country and that it has good potential. It's a one of its kind of product and caters to the premium strata of the market. We are very confident that Amazing Stone will make a place for itself in the high end decorative segment very soon," says Afshin Mohammadi,

Director-Al Roofoof Trading LLC.

Amazing Stone's collection of semi-precious gemstones, petrified wood, unique precious minerals and rare ammonite fossils draws on millions of years of the natural history of earth creating a product that brings nature's art into our very own surroundings. Dating back over 240 million years, Amazing Stone's Classic Petrified Wood has been sliced on the vertical to create its contemporary (retro) design. All stones are hand selected, assembled with less than 9 per cent epoxy binder by expert craftsmen and machine polished to absolute mirror perfection.

Al Roofoof Trading has recently opened its showroom in the Azaiba for stocking and display of Amazing Stones and other products. The showroom is strategically based at a junction and the display elements will clearly create a high recall value in the minds of the people visiting and working in the area. Amazing Stone maintains its commitment to preserving the inherent beauty of semi-precious gemstones, taking conventional marble and granite hard surfaces to another level. The company offers more than 40 solid semi-precious stone variations in a wide range of products including technological enhancement features such as (glow) and fibre optics to further heighten the translucence and ethereal nature of semi-precious gemstones. Products include the newly introduced tile line, tabletops of various shapes and sizes, cut to size products on demand and 400-kg semi-precious stone slabs.

Riverstone is a composite material made up of marble pebbles or pieces of natural stone in different sizes, bound together with a transparent white or coloured resin. The surface



**Afshin Mohammadi - Director, Al-Roofoof Trading LLC, exhibiting at a trade show**

is highly undulating, where the resin is lower than the pebbles that come to the surface. This characteristic makes Riverstone an aesthetically beautiful floor treatment and substantially improves its functionality in its uses in flooring as the resin remains highly resistant to surface abrasions. The surface of the stones is completely free of paints or resins since they are treated with a water-repellent waxy surface that protects the material from stains and it's extremely easy to maintain. Natural stones absorb very little liquid and the resin is virtually impervious to liquids.

Al Roofoof's major breakthrough has been in supplying the PDO (Petroleum Development of Oman) with the biggest piece of fossil "Ammonite" available in the entire region. This same has been supplied to install at the Royal Oman Police's Safety & Traffic Institute and which has been lighted up from beneath with fibre optic lights making it an exquisite blend of the ancient fossil & high technology that makes an awesome visual at the Institute.

Contact:  
roofoof@omantel.net.om  
Tel: 24506000 - 24591303

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