



IPA board reviews training programmes for 2016

MUSCAT: The Board of directors of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) held its fourth meeting for 2015 at the Ministry of Civil Service under the chairmanship of Shaikh Khalid bin Omar al Marhoon, Minister of Civil Service, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of IPA.

The meeting reviewed the follow-up report on the implementation of the decision taken in the third meeting and the current meeting's agenda.

The meeting also reviewed a report about the training activity in the institute in 2015

and the efforts exerted to meet the various-level training needs of employees of the administrative apparatus of the state.

The board reviewed the institute's plan for 2016 in the areas of training, which includes 126 programmes that cover the needs of many units of the administrative apparatus of the state. The meeting was attended by Sayyid Salim bin Mussalim al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Civil Service for the Administrative Development Affairs, IPA Deputy Chairman, and members of IPA Board. — ONA

Al Siyabiyah honours social responsibility ambassadors

BOOSTING TIES: PACI chairperson meets Sudan president, exchanges greetings

KHARTOUM: Field Marshal Omar Hassan al Bashir, President of Sudan, yesterday received Shaikha Aisha bint Khalfan al Siyabiyah, Chairperson of the Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI), after she has been awarded with the Presidential Order of Merit "Premium-Class" as International Ambassador for Social Responsibility.

Al Siyabiyah conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos along with his best wishes of continuous health and happiness to President al Bashir and the friendly Sudanese people further progress and growth.

On his turn, the Sudanese President asked Al Siyabiyah to convey his greetings along with his best wishes of good health and long life to His Majesty and the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

The meeting comes on the



sidelines of the 2nd Regional Forum for International Social Responsibility themed "United Nations Goals of Sustainable Development in 2030... Transforming Our World".

The President of Sudan hosted a dinner on the honour of the international ambassadors of social responsibility. Commemorative gifts were exchanged. Al Siyabiyah handed over a commemorative gift to the

president.

Earlier, Shaikha Al Siyabiyah honoured the ambassadors of social responsibility on the sidelines of the concluding ceremony of the forum.

The PACI Chairperson praised the positive participation of the international ambassadors, as well as the initiatives launched by them during the two-day forum. She pointed out that these meetings

would contribute in pushing forward work towards developing social responsibility programmes for sustainable development.

The PACI Chairperson took part at the concluding session of the forum that gathered international ambassadors of social responsibility.

She also visited institutions concerned with community service in Khartoum. — ONA

Tourists seek better facilities in Salalah

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
SALALAH

Dec. 28: Tourists coming to Salalah from across the world are seeking better facilities and services in terms of transport, guide service and entertainment avenues in and around the locations of their stay. The demand is being raised by a large number of tourists who are coming to Salalah from European countries like Germany, Italy and Scandinavian countries.

Two tourists from Germany raised the issue of guide service in Salalah. They wanted to have customised guide service to see places around Salalah. They searched on Internet before starting for Salalah and found a local tour company, which agreed to take them for tour. They were upset to know after coming to Salalah that not all the tour operators were allowed to take them for tour despite the fact that they were registered and showed credentials from the Ministry of Tourism.

"We had tentatively booked a mountain tour with National Tours Oman for a particular day. But we could not be picked up by the tour operator from our hotel in Mirbat. The hotel staff told us not to go with them, as they had exclusive tour operators to take them out and the tour agency, which we had hired, was not allowed taking us out," said Jane Drexler and Eileen Juergens Jeske.

"We were very disappointed due to the fact that we had booked the service in advance through Internet and we wanted to visit places on our own, not as part of the group in buses. As a tourist we should have liberty to go and see places



Tourists visit banana farm in Salalah.

of our choice. ... The only alternative we had to see anything of the country would have been to take a bus tour... That too we missed 15 per cent of the tour. There were guests who had booked an overnight camping tour in the desert, but when they were waiting to be picked up no one showed up to collect them," they said.

The tourists were also upset over the fact that their complaints were not heeded by the assigned tour representative. "We spent several hours on two afternoons standing in a long line to complain to the tour representative who just collected the complaint forms and otherwise did nothing. They were really only interested in selling their tours."

Transport in Salalah, according to some tourists, is a major issue. Apart from hotel pick and drop service, the only service left for them are taxis. Since

their prices are not regulated, the tourists feel uncomfortable while negotiating with the taxi drivers.

"Most of the tourists coming to Salalah talk about this issue overtly or covertly. Some of them have also mentioned issue on various blogs. Thus I request the authorities to address the issue because there are many good things about Salalah and due to such small issues a destination should not get affected," said a tourist from Italy.

Marco Capitani, Contracting Manager of Veratour, sought new facilities added to Salalah to entertain the tourists. "Like, I would suggest introduction of some water sports activities due to the fact that Salalah and Mirbat have beautiful beaches. They can easily think of surface water sports, barefoot skiing in waterskiing without skis. Boating, boat racing etc, are other options and I would

highly recommend beach ATVs because tourists go anywhere to have fun."

"We find Mirbat special for tourists from Italy due to its landscape, marvellous colour of the sea etc. The destination is emerging as an important destination in the GCC. It has huge potential to serve the commercial needs of the country. The potentially could be tapped fully with facilities like 18-hole golf course, sand motor bikes etc. The destination has beautiful sunset view. As such some sea activities to fulfil the needs of the tourists should be developed here," he said.

He suggested some easy entertainment facilities in Mirbat. "Because the desert is too far from the city, and everyone is not interested in doing long tiring excursions. There should be something 'short and smart' keeping in mind individual and family tourists," said Capitani.

Wall to protect agricultural land in Wadi Al Ma'awel

WADI AL MA'AWEL: The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is implementing the protection wall project for the agricultural lands in Mesalmat village in the Wilayat of Wadi Al Ma'awel in the Governorate of South Al Batinah.

The project aims to protect farms of citizens located on the banks of the wadis from floods resulting from rains. Nabil bin Hassan al Bahrani, Director of Irrigation and Agricultural Lands Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, said the project is worth RO 233,000 and extends up to 1,420 metres.

The project is designed according to technical specifications suitable to the nature of the location, which aims to protect the agricultural lands against

land degradation, as well as protecting agricultural crops particularly date palms.

Amer bin Saif al Barhi, Director of Agricultural Development Department in Barka, said that implementing the project protects the agricultural land against the harms resulting from rains and overflow of wadis.

Mohammed bin Hamoud al Owaisi, Head of Land Protection Walls Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, said the engineering designs and technical specifications of the project were selected to suit the nature of the wadi and climatic conditions of the region. He pointed out that natural stones available in this region were used for the project. — ONA



This is the third successful tagging conducted by ESO since their project to study and preserve endangered whales began in 2011

Satellite-monitoring tags placed on 3 Arabian Sea humpback whales

MUSCAT: The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has successfully completed tagging three Arabian Sea humpback whales as part of the second phase of its satellite tracking project along the coast of Masirah Island.

The project, supported by the Renaissance Group and Duqm Port, aims to study the habitats of the Arabian Sea humpback whales. The tags will allow the public to track their movements and the research team to further define habitats important to their survival.

The project is being accomplished in collaboration with a number of global entities and government agencies including the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Institute Aqualie, Five Oceans Environmental Services, the Wildlife Conservation Society and the University of Exeter.



Suaad al Harthy, ESO's Program Director, said, "Obtaining a better understanding of these whales will play a key role in order to boost their welfare and efforts to conserve them. Saving wildlife is at the core of ESO's vision and this positive step takes us closer to that goal at a critical time, with less than 100 Arabian Sea Humpback Whales left."

Moving forward, I firmly believe that with the continued support of all

stakeholders we will be able to save these very special animals and pass another one of Oman's natural treasures to the next generation."

The tagging, the first to be done in the Gulf of Masirah, was conducted by a ten-person team comprised of ESO staff, partnering agencies and freelancers. Originally launched to understand where these elusive whales spend their time, the tags will transmit their



location several times a day allowing for the development of detailed habitat utilization maps.

The landmark whale tagging project, the first of its kind in the region was initiated in 2014, with the team providing annual reports to the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee to support conservation efforts.

"I would like to thank our sponsors

Renaissance Services SAOG and Port of Duqm for funding and supporting this project. I would also like to acknowledge our valued partners for their help, hard work, and commitment. It is only through a united front and strategic approach that we will be able to provide the ecosystems within the Sultanate with the support they need," Lamees Daar, ESO's Executive Director.

Andrew Willson, Senior Marine

Ecologist and Field Project Manager at Five Oceans Environmental Services, also commented, "This has truly been a successful breakthrough as we tagged each whale in only the first three days of our expedition."

Over 26 groups of whales were sighted over the survey with more than 21 of these groups identified as humpback whales.

The tags are already showing the animals moving through areas facing rapid industrialization including active oil and gas exploration. This makes our efforts twice as vital in supporting government and industry efforts to find suitable management and mitigation measures for this species.

This was the third successful tagging conducted by ESO since their project to study and preserve the Arabian Sea Humpback whale began in 2011. The two previous tagging expeditions were undertaken in the Governorate of Dhofar.