

# 'Need to get EU-Gulf region closer in media, academics'



**CHANGING TRENDS:** Education expert Ahmed Al Mukhaini and journalist Fatma Al Aarimi at the workshop. — TIMES OF OMAN

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**MUSCAT:** Two Omani researchers presented their ideas on how to strengthen relations between the European Union and the GCC with regard to higher education and the media at a workshop hosted by Taswul and Sharaka yesterday.

The event, 'Dialogue on Opportunities for Enhancing Understanding and Cooperation in the Media and Communications and Higher Education in EU-GCC relations', brought together diplomats and policymakers from Oman, other GCC states, and EU nations to hear from education expert Ahmed Al Mukhaini and journalist Fatma Al Aarimi.

Al Mukhaini said there is a definite need for a stronger partnership and more financial investment in higher education between the two regions.

He pointed out that many Arabs are studying in Asia, Eastern Europe, and North America, rather than in Europe, and the EU could work harder to change that. Given the increasing number of higher education institutions being established in the GCC, the EU could also provide more support, he remarked.



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"In EU-GCC relations, higher education hasn't been given its due attention. People have very high expectations, and they speak about them, but when it comes to reality, they don't nail their goals down into quantifiable objectives," stated Al Mukhaini.

Business journalist and researcher Al Aarimi presented her research on how journalists in both the EU and the GCC have misconceptions of each other and don't trust each others' coverage, and she explained why this is problematic for the

regions' bilateral relations.

"EU journalists tend to lump the GCC in with the rest of the Arab world, except when it comes to economic issues, when these countries are portrayed as frontier countries with wealthy citizens, who can be targeted as potential tourists and investors. GCC journalists, meanwhile, see the EU as an extension of the American agenda and as a non-Muslim entity, which is also highly developed and a source of tourists. Such simplifications are limiting," Al Aarimi asserted.

**PACT INKED FOR EXPLORATION IN TWO BLOCKS FOR OIL, GAS**

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Oil and Gas yesterday signed a new exploration and production sharing agreement (EPSA) with Petro Tel Oman Onshore LLC.

The agreement was signed in Muscat on behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman by Dr Mohammed bin Hamad Al Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas and Dr Anil Kumar Chopra, Chairman of the Company.

Under the agreement the company will explore for oil and natural gas in Blocks 39 & 67 which occupy an area of 13,379 sq km located within Dhofar Governorate.

The commitments of the company under this agreement are to reprocess old 2D Seismic, acquire new 2D Seismic and conduct Geological and Geophysical studies. Based on the result of the seismic programme and the studies the company will drill wells during exploration periods.

The Ministry of Oil and Gas hopes that the company's efforts will be crowned with success in discovering hydrocarbons which will increase reserves and production rates in the country. — OMA

## INFRASTRUCTURE

# Tender Board okays projects worth OMR24.3m

**MUSCAT:** The Tender Board yesterday held its seventh meeting for 2013 under the Chairmanship of Dr Rasheed bin Al Safi bin Khamis Al Huraibi, chairman of the Tender Board.

During the meeting, the board awarded OMR24,320,603 worth of tenders for the following projects:

Construction of two transformer plants in Barka City and Al Khadhraa and the associated works (OMR11,735,100).

Provision of production service for the temporary power for the main grid in 2013 (OMR4,066,927).

Supply of rice for the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserves (OMR3,229,291).

Construction of 11/33 KV feeder units at Quriyat main power plant to shift the loads from Jahlout main plant (OMR2,206,556).

Expansion of Shaleem Health Centre in Dhofar governorate (OMR1,130,713).

Construction of basic education school (18 classrooms for females at Hail Ashour in the wilayat of Al Hamra in the Dakhiliyah governorate (OMR1,084,533).

Additional works for the insurance on the state properties for 2013 (OMR362,182).

The meeting also opened bids for the flood protection system in Sur and Wadi Dhaigah Dam's water purification and transportation plan

Supply of spare parts for the steam turbines (5-6) at Al Ghubra plant (OMR245,301).

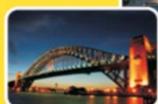
Production of TV serial for the Public Authority for Radio and TV (OMR260,000).

The meeting also opened bids for a number of service and development projects.

The most important of the proposed bids is the flood protection system at the wilayat of Sur and the provision of the consultancy services for the supervision of the Wadi Dhaigah Dam's water purification and transportation plan. — OMA



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