

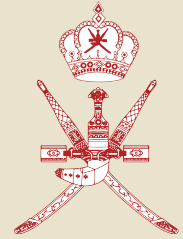


The National Field Research
Centre for Environmental
Conservation

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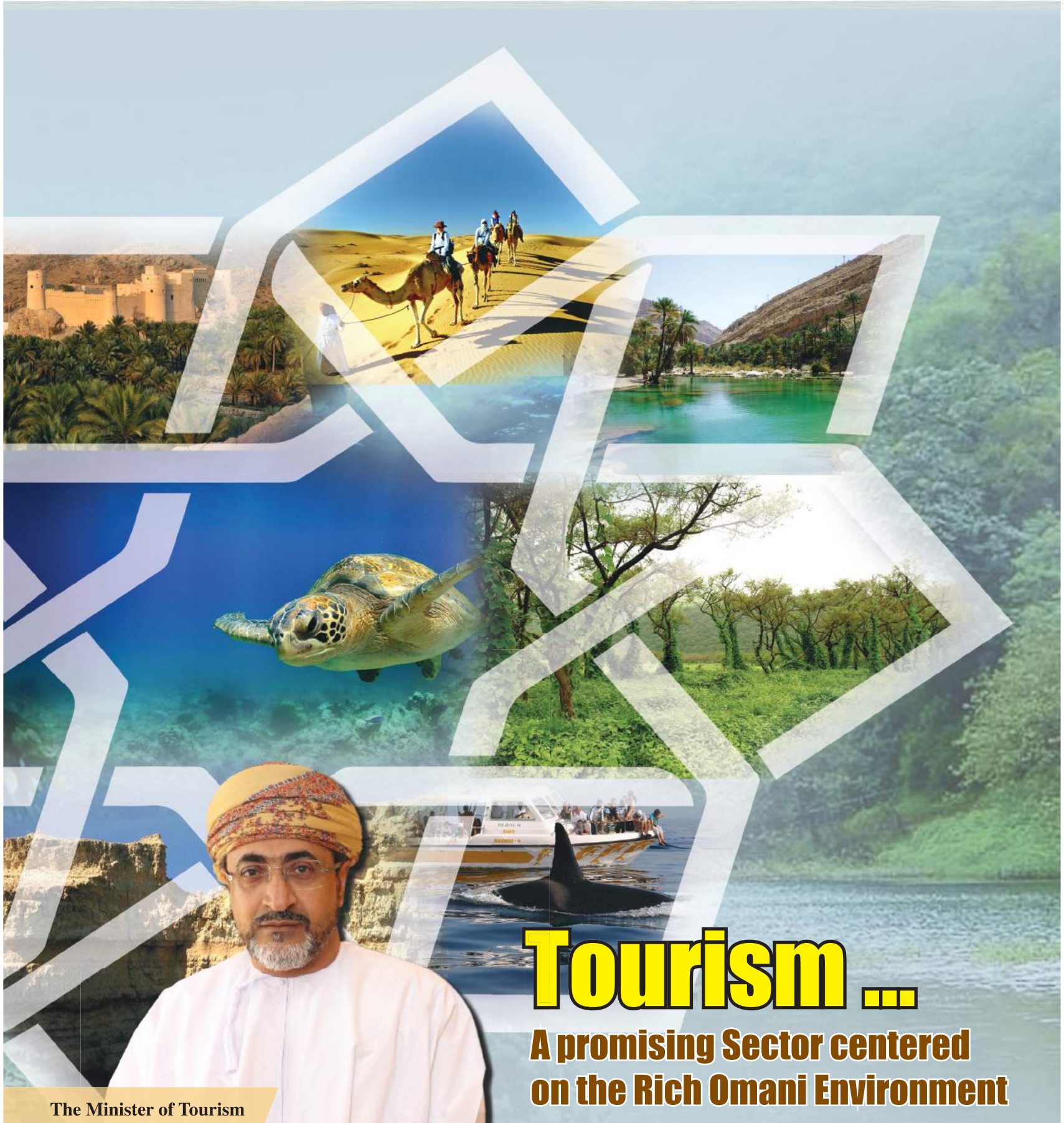


Environmental monthly newsletter issued by the National field research centre for environmental conservation



Sultanate of Oman
Diwan of Royal Court

Issue 7



The Minister of Tourism

Tourism ...
**A promising Sector centered
on the Rich Omani Environment**



point of view

Environmental Coordination at the GCC Countries

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Riyadh Declaration, issued in the thirty sixth session of the Supreme Council at the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in December 2015, stressed on the necessity of increasing the environmental coordination in the GCC countries. It also highlighted the importance of integrating the efforts of such countries in some significant environmental issues. These issues include the environment protection, sharing expertise among the GCC countries and the respective regional and international organizations. The declaration recommended suggesting policies and decisions for protecting the marine environment at the Gulf Countries, as well as addressing the deforestation issue, depletion of ground water, and climate change. The assertion of Their Majesties, and Highnesses, leaders of the GCC Countries on the necessity of promoting the joint environmental actions in the gulf countries is extremely important. It comes out of their own convictions and direct attention to the environmental issues. Therefore; they recognize the necessity of addressing the environmental challenges and finding suitable solutions for them in a way that is commensurate with the current environmental situations at the gulf countries. Joint environmental coordination among the GCC Countries is a civilized basis through which our countries seek to ensure the environment conservation so as to achieve a sustainability of natural resources at the gulf countries and protect the human health against all pollutants.

Strenuous environmental efforts are being exerted at the GCC Countries, yet the current environmental situation requires more coordination and integration in various environmental aspects and issues between various governmental and private entities, as well as the civil community organizations operating in the environmental field. The Gulf countries are in a dire need to unify their environmental legislations, as well as activating their mutual programs and issues in all environmental fields. These programs include the environmental management, sustainable development for natural resources, protecting the human health against all environmental pollutants, whether they are industrial, chemical or radiological. They also include conserving the biological and physical resources of natural, wild and marine lives.

Furthermore, the awareness programs and activities that instill positive values and principles at the individuals about the importance of protecting the environment and conserving its natural resources should be activated. Attention should be paid to the climate change topic and its future effects on the gulf environment. The successful experiments and environmental experiences of the international organizations should also be utilized. May Allah protect Their Majesties, and Highnesses, leaders of the GCC Countries, prolong their lives, and grant them good health, well-being and long life.

The Ozone protects the Earth and we destroy it

The Sultanate joins Vienna Convention

By virtue of Royal Decree no. (73/98), the Sultanate joined Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer on 28/9/1998. It has also ratified Montreal amendments made in 1997, and Beijing amendments effected in 1999 on 10/10/2014 by virtue of Royal Decree no.: (106/2004). The Sultanate has managed to fulfill the requirements of complying with Montreal protocol. It has also benefited from the national capacity building and training projects, in addition to the studies, technical support, devices, and equipment that encourage the use of alternative technique, with a financial and technical support from the multilateral fund of Montreal Protocol. The list of monitoring and managing the ozone depleting materials has been updated.

The Ozone layer carries this name because it contains the Ozone gas, and exists in the Earth's stratosphere layer. The ozone, symbolized as O₃, is composed of three interconnected oxygen atoms. The most important functions of the ozone layer is to protect the earth's surface against the harmful rays of the Sun like the Ultraviolet B rays that cause great harms to human beings. These harms include skin cancers, harms to the eyes, and negative effects to the immune system. Such rays cause also great harms to biodiversity on the earth because there many species of plants that have great sensitivities to such type of rays. In addition, these harmful rays result in many catastrophic damages to the marine environment, and many other environmental systems. Scientific facts have proven that some chemicals used in many industrial applications result in destroying the stratospheric ozone layer. Scientists have warned against the increasing space of the hole that affected the ozone layer, which protects the earth against the solar and cosmic radiations. This hole results in the increase of such rays that cause harms to all forms of life on the earth. A study that measures the temperature of the earth's surface during the last five hundred years showed that the earth's temperature has increased with a rate of a single Celsius degree. 80% of such increase occurred since 1880, while 50% of the increase happened since 1900. Studies have shown that the thaw season period has prolonged; while the period of snow freezing season has decreased. The

timing of thaw season has advanced with a rate of 6.5 days/ century; while the timing of the snow freezing season has advanced with a rate of 5.8 days/ century, during the period between 1846 and 1996. This means that the air temperature has increased with a rate of 1.2 Celsius degrees/ century.

The World Reacts

After scientific facts warning against the current deterioration of the Ozone layer are published, the world started to search for a suitable and urgent solution for this serious phenomenon. These efforts started with signing the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer in 1985. The convention stressed on the necessity on creating a protocol that identifies the countries' commitments with regard to the ozone depleting materials. This opened the window for ratifying Montreal protocol with regard to the ozone depleting materials in 1987. Such protocol became effective in 1981 AD.

Many amendments have been made to the last protocol, with the objective of achieving the purpose for which it has been signed. These amendments included London amendments effected in 1990, Copenhagen amendments effected in 1992, Montreal amendments effected in 1997, and finally Beijing amendments effected in 1999. Montreal Protocol is considered to be one of the most successful international agreements due to the positive results it has achieved in the field of reducing the consumption of ozone depleting materials.

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In a lecture delivered by Dr. Saif Al-Shaqasi

The NFRCEC highlights environmental biodiversity the Sultanate in the Anglo-Omani Society “London”

Pursuant to an invitation from The Anglo-omani Society in London, Dr. Saif bin Rashid al-Shaqasi, CEO of the National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation (NFRCEC), delivered a lecture about biodiversity in the Sultanate. The lecture was attended by HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al-Hinai, the Omani Ambassador at the United Kingdom, members of the The Anglo-omani Society, some British academics specialized in biology, natural history and environment, in addition to officials at some leading British museums. During the lecture, a documentary film was broadcasted for the first time about birds in the Sultanate.



The lecture included many important themes about the ecological and biodiversity in the Sultanate. In his lecture, Dr. Saif has highlighted the Royal Attention paid by HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said, May Allah keep and protect Him, for the Omani environment in particular and the global environment generally by devoting an award for the environment protection entitled “Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Protection”. The prize is being allocated through the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) every two years.

His Majesty has donated a prize for the Human and Environmental Affairs at the Secretariat General for the Gulf Cooperation Council. Our beloved Sultan always pays attention to the global environment, and seeks to bring about an environmental harmony internationally.

The lecture has also addressed HM’s attention to the Omani environment through creating the first Ministry of Environment at the Arab Countries level in 1984. It highlighted the many environmental rules and legislations promulgated by HM to regulate the environmental work at the Sultanate. During his lecture, Dr. al-Shaqasi has also shed light on the myriad international environmental protocols and agreements ratified by Sultanate. The lecture has also addressed the legislative and regulatory construction of the environmental work in the Sultanate, in addition to the most important environmental laws issued to ensure protecting the health of human

beings and the environment surrounding him. It has also tackled the most important environmental projects and programs conducted by the various governmental entities operating in the Sultanate in the environmental field.

Dr. Saif spoke about the projects and activities of the civil community institutions in environmental aspects, the most important components of bio and wild diversity in the Sultanate, and the most important nature reserves, as well as their role in protecting the ecosystems in the Sultanate. He also exposed the most important challenges face by the Omani environment, and the efforts exerted to protect the environmental framework inside Oman.

Dr. Saif al-Shaqasi identified the attendants with natural elements of the Omani heritage, the biodiversity of the Omani environment, and the efforts exerted by the Sultanate to conserve these elements. The lecture has also shed the light on some applied researches carried out by the NFRCEC in the Sultanate. “Birds in the Sultanate”, one of the most important documentary film produced by the NFRCEC recently, has been displayed for the first time after its production in the lecture. The film has attracted the attention of British scientists and researchers to the rare natural attractions enjoyed by the Omani environment. It has also showcased the efforts exerted by the Sultanate in conserving the various species of resident and migratory birds that flock to the Sultanate annually through the birds migration lines.

The Centre displays a Documentary film on Birds in Oman



In an Interview with Al-Washaq, the Minister of Tourism says:

Tourism

A promising Sector centered on the Rich Omani Environment

Tourism is a promising sector that contributes into developing the national economy. It is one of the sectors whose growth rates harmonize with the rates of conserving the environment, considered to be one of the most important features that distinguish tourism from one country to another. The growth rates of the tourism sector are also commensurate with the tourist achievements made in the Sultanate. These achievements were primarily based on the early Royal Attention paid by HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said, May Allah keep and protect Him, to the Omani environment. Sultan Qaboos linked the attention to the environment with the sustainable development plan. This has contributed into conserving the pristine nature of the Omani environment. We have conducted the following interview with HE Ahmed bin Nassir al-Mahrazi, Minister of Tourism to be acquainted with the Ministry's strategy to develop the tourism sector, and how to benefit from the natural and environmental sites, in light of this promising national strategy. The interview addressed the efforts exerted by the Ministry of Tourism to develop the Tourism sector, and its coordination with the various environmental entities in order to create a sustainable development in the ecotourism sites.



The Sultanate is distinguished by the beauty of its nature, and pristine sites, what is the vision of Your Excellency regarding the Ministry's orientations towards promoting such sites?

The Sultanate has many constituents that make it a unique destination for the fans of ecotourism. The early attention paid by His Majesty, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, May Allah keep and protect Him, to the Omani environment, constituted the foundation and pillars of the environmental framework in the Sultanate. The Sultanate has brought about a close link between the course of development and the environmental conservation objectives. It included the environmental considerations in the planning and implementation stages of all the development targets and the touristic objectives in particular. This turned the Omani environment into a very pristine one that contains all types of tourist attractions, including mountains, seas, coasts, and nature reserves. All these elements are characterized by their healthy atmospheres that relieve its visitors from the burdens of modern life.

This harmonizes also with the Royal directives of HM that pay a great attention to developing the promising tourism sector to achieve the desired economic diversification, particularly in light of the fact that there

is an increasing demand on this type of tourism. Ecotourism is gradually and noticeably growing to an extent that it becomes the fastest growing sector in the tourism industry. The contribution of this sector is assessed to be about 10 – 15% of the total global tourist spending.

The Sultanate has many touristic attractions that enjoy a great position on the international tourism map. How do you assess the development of Tourism Industry?

During the past years, the tourism sector in Oman has witnessed an enormous development depending on the breathtaking sites, pristine nature and ancient history of the Sultanate. We understand that the tourism sector has many potentialities, accompanied by a lot of aspirations. Therefore; in our national strategy 2040, we seek to provide distinguished services that result in positioning the Omani tourism at the top of the international tourism map, and making the Sultanate a Mecca for tourists at the international level. Our national strategy covers all the governorates and Wilayats of the Sultanate. It is supervised by the Ministry of Tourism as an entity responsible for the tourist sector. The MOT coordinates with all the competent stakeholders and relevant entities. The promising tourism sector has potentialities that drive the national

economy towards the desired economic diversification. The sector creates also many job opportunities for jobseekers. The strategic location of the Sultanate, as well as the exceptional security and social peace status, drive us to provide a leading experience in tourism that pays attention to the culture, habits, and traditions of the Omani community. The Ministry exerts great efforts to maximize the benefit to cover all corners of the Sultanate so that the populations of the areas that have tourist attractions might be the biggest beneficiaries. Therefore; the Ministry encourages local companies to manage and carry out tourism enterprises.

The Ministry of Tourism works on effectively developing some ecotourism sites. What is your vision regarding the contribution of these sites into promoting the tourism sector?

The basic frameworks of environmental tourism lie in conserving the environmental and biodiversity of the Sultanate by employing them for touristic purposes according to the sustainability standards. They involve the local community to be a real partner in this development and to achieve economic returns, whether on the local or international levels. Therefore; the MOT's vision with regard to ecotourism is clear. All tourist products carried out by the Ministry





Al-Mahrazi:

- ◆ **The Early Royal Attention to the Omani Environment constituted the Key Pillars for conserving it**
- ◆ **The Sultanate has many Constituents that make it a Unique Destination for Ecotourism Fans**



are based on maximizing the utilization of various touristic constituents, whether they are biodiversity, environmental diversity, geological diversity or cultural heritage. On the other hand, the Ministry of Tourism also supports the Small and Medium Enterprises, one of the civil community entities, by approving the creation of touristic projects. Of course, this stresses on the real partnership between the Ministry of Tourism, other governmental entities, private sector and local community members. Consequently; such partnership will be reflected in conserving the constituents of ecotourism. It is worth mentioning that the Ministry of Tourism organizes and takes part in many conferences, forums and workshops that

- ◆ **The Products of Green and Legacy Hostels support our approaches to establish eco-friendly hostels**
- ◆ **We collaborate with the NFRCEC in identifying the bio and natural diversity at the Sultanate.**



focus on some issues and important challenges in the ecotourism sector, as part of its basic approach for ecotourism. These issues include, very often, displaying the successful international experiences in the management and planning for ecotourism.

What is the expected percentage of ecotourism's contribution in the annual revenues of tourism in the Sultanate?

We can't give a specific percentage because the Sultanate has many cross and interlocking constituents including ecological constituents, human heritage, and modernity factors that keep pace with the renaissance age, in addition to the security & safety peculiarities. However, we aim that the tourism sector would contribute with 6% in the national economy. However, we reiterate that the pristine Omani environment is one of the most important tourist attractions. Therefore; we always pay attention to supporting the investment projects related to environmental hostels. We put the environmental standards on the top of our priorities on approving the plans of tourist projects. We pay a particular attention to the tourist camps encompassed by the enchanting nature of the Sultanate. During the past year, a final approval has been issued for 6 tourist camps that would provide 118 lodging units, in addition to many environmental hostels.

Environment conservation is considered to be a basis for a sustainable utilization of the ecotourism sites. How does the Ministry coordinate with the environmental entities in the Sultanate?

Coordination became a priority that must be taken into consideration while planning and managing the ecotourism. Undoubtedly, there is a continuous coordination between this ministry and other entities like the Ministry of Environment & Climate Affair; the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; the Ministry of Heritage & Culture, The Research Council; Sultan Qaboos University and the National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation (NFRCEC), with regard to contributing and participating in studying some specialized aspects relevant to biodiversity, geological diversity or cultural heritage. There are many sites of environmental and tourist identity under the responsibility of these entities. Consequently, there is a direct coordination methodology. There are previous productive experiments in coordinating with these entities, particularly

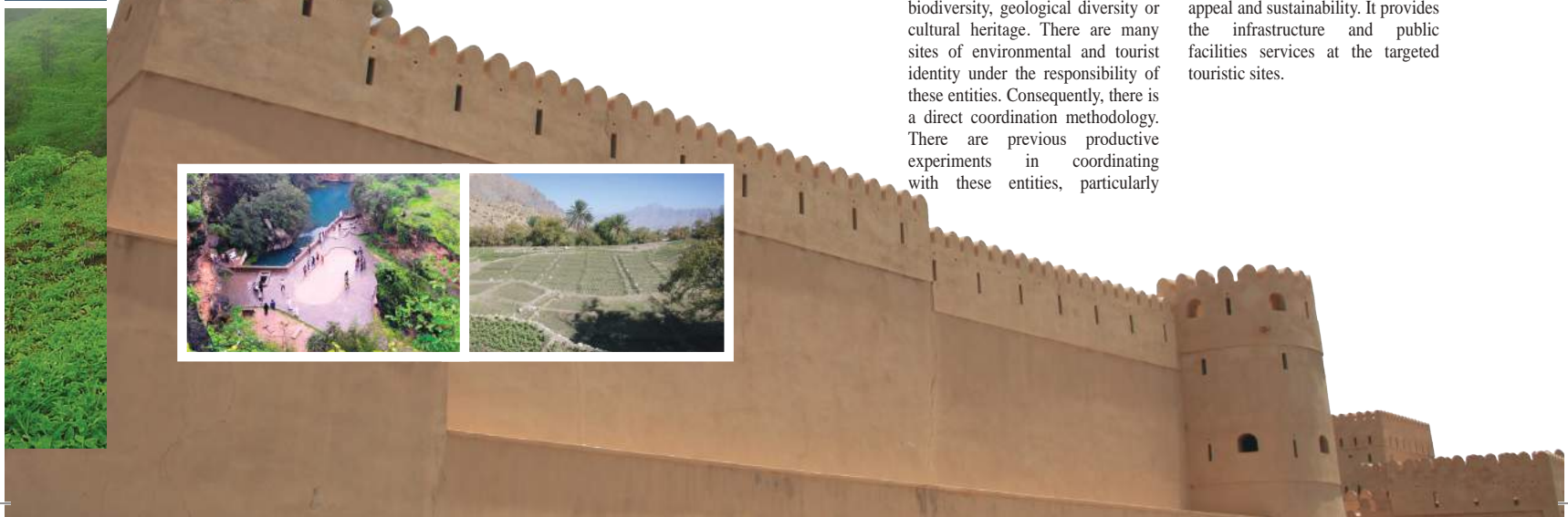
in providing the necessary consultancies and suggestions on conserving the biodiversity of the Sultanate.

The National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation (NFRCEC) is an entity aiming to conserve the Omani environment, and to raise the public awareness about protecting it regularly. How do you perceive the future of collaboration with the Centre?

Undoubtedly, one of the most important methodologies of the MOT's strategy is to identify the natural and biodiversity of the Sultanate. This strategy explains the suitable and scientific methodology in surveying, assessing and studying the natural resources so that they might be developed and utilized as an integrated tourist product that ensures conserving such environmental constituents in the first instance, in addition to generating returns through the development of such product. Therefore; collaboration with the NFRCEC is very important for achieving the ministry's plan due to the research potentialities it entertains. The Centre also contains very effective researchers in field environmental researches. The Ministry of Tourism's strategy highlights the necessity of knowing the viewpoints and impressions of tourists, planners and developers about the ecotourism products that should be developed. It is worth noting that the strategy has addressed the necessity of involving all the stakeholders respective of the environmental and tourist affairs in the tourist development process in a way which ensures that the development will be done according to the best quality and methodology.

7- What are the constituents required by the Ministry to declare a certain site in the Sultanate as an ecotourism site? How does the Ministry of Tourism coordinate with local residents?

The Ministry of Tourism seeks to achieve a sustainable development for the natural ecotourism resources and potentialities, as well as protecting the same against robbery, growling, and misuse. In addition, the MOT endeavors to protect such resources against pollution and climate change threats, as well as maintaining and conserving its appeal and sustainability. It provides the infrastructure and public facilities services at the targeted touristic sites.

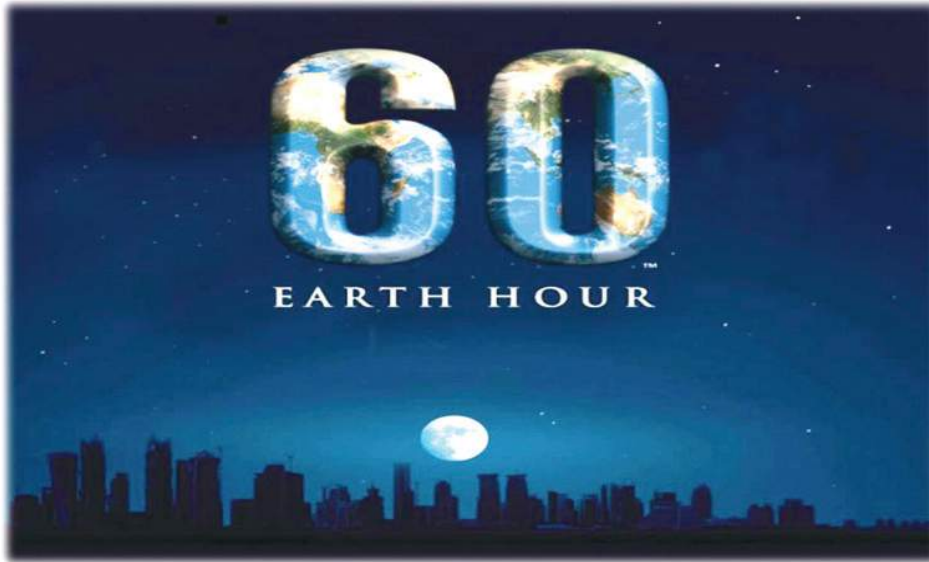




ESO fixes Tracking Devices on two endangered Birds

The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has recently succeeded in fixing solar powered transmitters on two chicks of the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) in May 2016, as part of a research project that aims to getting a better understanding for the environment of these endangered birds. This achievement was made by the Egyptian vulture protection project, launched by ESO as part of its continuous efforts to identify the propagation sites of these birds, the main dangers that threaten them, and the necessary protective measures to maintain them. On 16 February 2016, one of the transmitters indicated one of the two birds stopped flying. This drove a team from the ESO to search about it. After locating its place, the bird has been found dead without identifying the reason of its death.

The NFRCEC celebrates the Earth Hour



The National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation (NFRCEC) has shared the world its celebration of the international event "Earth Hour 2016", which is celebrated the world at the end of March each year by switching off the lighting of the Centre completely for one hour. This step reflects the approach adopted by the NFRCEC to raise the public awareness among the Omani community members, drive it to take positive and serious procedures for decreasing the consumption rates and stopping the wastage of resources through switching off the lighting for one single hour at least. The "Earth Hour" is the biggest international environmental event that seeks to encourage the individuals, communities, house owners, and companies to switch off their unnecessary lights and electronic devices for one hour at least to

reduce the dangers of climate change. It also aims to highlight the importance of conserving the environment and protecting it against every forms of pollution. The event endeavors to instill the culture of rationalization in using various types of energy, as well as promoting and developing the positive environmental behavior. It is worth noting that this initiative has been launched from a single city in 2007. It has expanded gradually to reach more than 178 countries, and seven thousand cities across the world. Millions of people are now taking part in this environmental celebration. This initiative aims to remind people that the energy we consume has a cost to the earth. It also seeks to urge the governments and individuals to exert their utmost to protect the climate. The sources of fossil energy including the coal, gas, and oil that are particularly used in electricity generation are responsible

Scientific Endeavors to generate Electricity from Fruits & Vegetables

American scientists seek to devise new solutions to confront the electricity crisis, and to find alternatives that may seem strange and not applicable in reality to some people. According to scientists, it has been proven that rotten fruits and vegetables can be used to generate electricity. As a result, such usually discarded wastes can be used in biological fuel cells to provide green energy. Through genetic engineering, plants would not be green only, but they would also be luminous. American scientists have managed to manipulate the genes of some plants that can be kept at houses to replace electricity and enlighten houses. These plants can perform the same role played by conventional lights.

Experts expect a Severe Food Crises within 30 Years

Experts at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) expect that the world would face a severe shortage in food within 30 years. Scientists explained that about 800 million persons are currently deprived of getting enough portion of food. They think that such matter is attributed to two reasons including the rapid population growth and the misuse of food. The results of studies conducted by experts indicated that no less than 31 percent of the earth's populations misuse the available food products as they spoil the food that is still edible. The size of food wastage within a single year reaches 1.3 billion tons. A quarter of this quantity is enough to feed all the hungry people around the world. It is worth noting that disposing of food occurs so often in the developed countries.



Scientists: Life would have become impossible on the Earth without the Magnetic Shield

Some scientist said that their monitoring for Kappa Keita Star enabled them to conclude that the existence of magnetic shield is what made life possible on the earth's surface. They added that but for such shield that protects the atmosphere against solar wind, and prevent the volatilization of the atmosphere and water, life would not become possible on the earth's surface. Due to the importance of this magnetic shield, scientists have been trying, since so many years, to determine the time when this shield has been formed for the first time. This discovery can provide evidences about the period in which the tectonic plates started to move and how the planet managed to stay viable. Determining the time in which this magnetic shield appeared is still impossible because no remains of the earth's surface from that time are found. Some geologists expected that the appearance of magnetic shield may have accompanied the earth's formation.