

Call for development of Arab e-commerce

MUSCAT — Mohammed bin Ali bin Nassir Al Alawi, minister of legal affairs, has said the Sultanate recognises the significance of e-commerce as a new inter-trade pattern, which is expected to grow to \$1,000 billion during the next year.

The minister was addressing the opening ceremony of a conference on "Meeting the Challenges of Electronic Business" at Al Bustan Palace Hotel here yesterday.

The minister said the Sultanate recognised the huge challenges in the world of business, particularly e-commerce, which became an inescapable option.

He said legislation in the Sultanate supported free trade and opened the doors for the private sector to play its role.

He said directives by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said always called for providing the atmosphere for Omani citizens to absorb technological innovations

that would bolster the country's economic strength.

The minister said the Sultanate's hosting of the conference and its timings and agenda "translated our resolve to consolidate our expert knowledge and innovative thinking to become real partners in a world of increasing inter-dependence".

Talal Abu Ghazaleh, chairman of the conference, said electronic business and globalisation are deeply interrelated. Each fed and encouraged the other, he said, adding that intellectual capital was the force driving modern businesses.

He said as trade developed it became increasingly important not only to liberalise government trade regime but also to establish better cultural, social and linguistic ties.

He spoke of an idea to form a working team to be based in the Sultanate to form a strategy for the development of an

Arab e-commerce infrastructure.

Ali bin Masoud Al Sumaidi, undersecretary for commerce and industry, underlined the importance of e-business for the region, indicating that the banking sector took the initiative in this regard, but a lot was to be accomplished.

He said the ministry had earlier adopted the principle of a one-stop office for licences before the advent of e-commerce and that a future plan was being considered to establish an IT centre at the Public Authority for Industrial Estates to serve as a nucleus for the growth of e-business.

The conference is being organised by the Arab Management Society and the International Chamber of Commerce in association with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Talal Abu Ghazaleh International. — ONA