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MOE'S GOT MAIL

The Ministry of Education's ongoing ICT implementation initiative is expected to bring about a big change



Our Correspondent
theweek@apexstuff.com

An ambitious initiative of the Ministry of Education is endeavouring to implement information and communication technologies (ICT) in the educational sector in the country. The ministry employs 65,000 people who account for close to a third of the public sector employees in the country. A recent milestone in the Ministry of Education's (MOE) ICT implementation was the allocation of email addresses to every single of its 65,000 employees, working as teachers, and administrators and technical staff in the MOE and its regional offices.

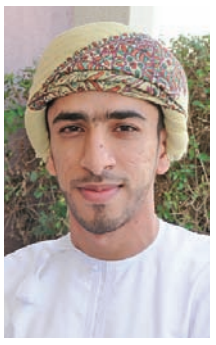
Elaborating on the objective behind this initiative, Khalid al Siyabi, Director General of Information Technology, MOE, said, "The Ministry of Education is one of the main organisations in the country with a solid impact on society. Thus, teachers are consistently advised to integrate ICT in their daily activities and practices for a more productive and efficient platform. At the same time, technology will enhance students' knowledge, skills and experiences preparing them to be the workforce of future."

The creation of the email IDs was one of the first stages of the MOE's ICT implementation initiative. Of the 65,000 email IDs created, 35,000 have been activated. "The ministry staff are using their emails to facilitate their work far more actively than the teachers," said Moza al Mugheiry, Assistant Director General of Systems Affairs, IT Directorate of the MOE.

Speaking of the roadblocks to this initiative, Moza said that the most significant of these was the low level of awareness on the benefits of ICT among the targeted users. "Unawareness leads to resistance," she said adding that the users' limited access to Internet facilities was another impediment to this initiative that has been supported by Microsoft.

The next phase of the initiative is expected to see parents regularly using and relying on email for circulars and notifications sent by school authorities or the MOE. Some parents like Amal al Farsi are already using the facility. Amal's children are enrolled in the primary section of Ibda Private School. "The facility will be very handy to inform parents about vaccination schedules, holidays, special programmes to raise skills, additional classes, competitions and student exchange programmes, not just to let us know about our children's absence from school and grades. Currently, I get most of my information from the MOE's portal," Amal said.

The portal (moe.gov.om) will receive the next big thrust of the ministry. Though launched in 2008, its full potential is yet to be realised. Hamad al Khayari, educational system supervisor at the ministry's IT Directorate, said that the portal's functions will soon include student enrolment, school transfer, announcement of results and will also allow parents and students to choose subjects for annual curriculum.



"Thanks to the facility, we don't have to call off a class to attend a meet notifying us about some change in curriculum or new policy, or stay late after school to attend these meetings. Now all the information is sent through email, which I can access anytime I want. It saves time and money.
Abdulaziz Sulaiman al Rawahi, Teacher at Abdullah bin Wahab High School, Barka



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Amal al Farsi
Parent of children studying in Ibda Private School

LIC LAUNCHES NEW JEEVAN AASTHA

LIC of India, through its subsidiary headquartered in Bahrain, has launched new Jeevan Aastha – an investment plan offering guaranteed returns for non-resident Indians in Oman. The company has a track record of stable, outstanding and trustworthy performance, a press release said. "The product is close ended and will be available for only two months (until March 27)," R Thamodharan, CEO and MD of LIC (International) – the subsidiary in Bahrain – said while launching the product in January.

Prem K Mankad, managing director of Gulf Insurance Agencies, the chief agents for LIC (International); Sameer Korde, manager; and Peter K M, manager of LIC Oman, were also present at the launch.

"The new Jeevan Aastha offers insurance and guaranteed returns to the policy holders by paying a single premium. Customers can choose between three, five or ten-year terms and the guaranteed returns range from 4.5 to 5.5 per cent. The policy, which has already been launched in Bahrain, Dubai, Qatar and Kuwait, has received excellent response. We expect the same from Oman too," Thamodharan said. The plan has flexible features like withdrawal facility after two years with the provision for availing loans if required during the term of the policy. Administrative conditions are applicable.

Sultan Center has new CCO



Makram Malaeb has been named the new chief commercial officer of Sultan Center Oman. Makram, who has been with the company for six years, assumed roles in corporate strategic development, international procurement, and new products development and innovation. Simultaneously, former chief commercial officer Ramzi el Khateeb has been relocated to lead the Sultan Center operations in Lebanon. Ramzi was one of the cofounders of the Sultan Center operations in Oman in 1999. Sultan Center employs more than 7,000 people in Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, Lebanon and Bahrain.



AL HASSAN WINS SALES AWARD FROM HAGER

Al Hassan Electricals (AHE), part of the Trading SBU of Al Hassan Group, has received a business excellence award from Hager Middle East for outstanding sales achievement in 2009. This is the third year in a row that AHE has bagged this recognition. The 1.3bn euro Hager Group, based in Europe with sales presence in 55 countries, offers a complete range of systems, solutions and services for energy distribution. AHE is the sole distributor for Hager products in Oman.

The award was presented by Daniel Hager, CEO of Hager Group, to Talal al Assaad, CEO of manufacturing and trading of Al Hassan Group of Companies, in the presence of Peter Davies, MD of Hager, and Sean Cain, MD of Hager Middle East.