

Spotlight on Gulf Air customer service feats

Manama

Gulf Air is sharing its experience in customer service excellence at an international forum being held at the Intercontinental Regency Hotel in Bahrain. The forum started yesterday and will conclude tomorrow.

The airline's Chief Services Officer Marcus Bernhardt will deliver a key note speech today at the 'Customer Excellence Forum'. Mr. Bernhardt will share with the audience the innovations and achievements Gulf Air made, under the topic 'Triangle of Excellence' focusing on the three elements, customers, employees and owners.

"Customers are our primary reason for us to be in the business and it is of paramount importance that we not only impress cus-



● Mr. Bernhardt

tomers with our service but also excel in what we do so that we have customers coming back to us. At Gulf Air, we consider customer service excellence as the core element of our business and therefore, brought about significant changes in the way we approach and

deliver services to our customers," he said.

"All our efforts have yielded positive results; customer complaints have reduced dramatically while compliments rose significantly. Above all, our cabin crew was rated 'Excellent' by travellers in an independent survey conducted by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), reflecting our consistent and diligent work towards our customer service quality and delivery," he added.

"It is a great opportunity to share our experience at the forum with a wider range of audience from different segments of business," concluded Mr. Bernhardt.

Gulf Air Senior Manager Customer Care and Services Quality Control

Kavita Al Jassim will also be a speaker at the forum, where she will speak on, 'Recognising your customer: Breaking the customer barriers.'

Gulf Air established a new Services Division about 15 months ago - the first of its kind in any airline in the Middle East/Asia - bringing together several service elements functioning in different departments to focus on improving all aspects of a customer's experience and to deliver consistent services.

The airline also introduced several services and products both in the air and on the ground; internally, it strengthened its systems and procedures and introduced advanced training for staff to serve its customers better.

Alba sales jump 8.4% in Q3

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Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) yesterday announced its sales for the third-quarter went up by 8.4 per cent compared to Q3-2010 figure, ahead of the company's own forecast for the period.

According to a statement issued by the company yesterday, sales for the third-quarter of 2011 rose to 220,608 metric tonnes versus 203,474 mt in Q3 2010.

Production figures for the same period of the current year were up by 5pc from 21,854 mt in Q3 2010 to reach 22,552 mt.

In addition, value-added

sales represented 67pc of the total sales in Q3 2011 versus 62pc for the same period in 2010.

Overall, the increase in sales came as a result of higher production by the company thanks to the continuous improvement of its operational efficiency.

In his comments, Alba's Chief Executive, Laurent Schmitt said: "The success Alba has delivered in Q3 2011 is primarily due to the

dynamic teamwork shown by Alba workforce in enabling the company meet its goals."

"We are confident that with the continued support of our loyal employees, Alba

remains well placed in sustaining a positive outlook for the company through the remainder of 2011," he added.



● Mr. Schmitt

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New Delhi to bolster ties with GCC

India and the GCC are natural allies and the emerging economic superpower is expected to engage more vigorously to further enhance its interests in the region, says an expert.

According to leading Indian financial newspaper *Business Standard's* Editor Dr. Sanjaya Baru, while so far the excellent bilateral people-to-people ties have not elevated to better business-to-business and government-to-government relation, there is reason to believe that the situation of 'because there's no tension therefore not much attention' will change. Geo-politics and geo-economics will see India playing a more crucial role.

Dr. Baru was speaking at an interactive session on 'India and the Gulf - Bridging the Gulf', organised by International



● Dr. Baru with Mr. Al Sho'ala

Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) at the Capital Club in Manama yesterday. Bahrain India Society Chairman Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala introduced Dr. Baru and spoke on the high potential of bilateral trade.

Responding to a comment

from Bahraini businessman Dr. Yousef Mashal, Dr. Baru said: "India has initiated steps to engage GCC countries politically and strategically in a more rigorous manner. The Government of India has appointed a senior diplomat Chinmaya Gharekhan

as its special envoy to the Gulf region to promote cooperation in trade and investment, Information Technology, education, culture and tourism."

"In recent times, India has taken decisions that broaden the horizon of its engagements with the GCC, including support for Palestine."

"Bilateral visits of leaders and officials need to be increased between India and GCC. It has been observed that leaders from GCC states have taken greater interest in India and are visiting India more often than vice versa, which would be addressed," he hoped.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Al Sho'ala said there can be no doubt that India is becoming stronger and would soon take on more responsibility on the global stage.

Reverse migration

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The out-migration of skilled labour and professionals from India is set to reverse with the country's growth engine creating more well-paying jobs domestically, feels Dr. Baru.

Responding to a comment on changing demographics and rising unemployment in certain markets that relied on expat labour, Dr. Baru said: "Also, the tradability of services implies that now even the jobs of low-skilled (and even some higher-skilled) white collar workers are subject to international competition. So jobs will go where people are."

India's integration with the global economy is consumption-driven. The middle class is also growing, which leads to more people not just purchasing cars, phones and TVs, but also being able to have better personal and professional lives.

I would say that there may be a shift of non-resident Indians returning to India, as if the country can produce jobs, more people will stay at home.

India-GCC bilateral trade, estimated to grow to \$130 billion by 2014, may get a 30 per cent impetus after the free trade agreement (FTA), an expert said.

Bahrain India Society Chairman Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala and Indian newspaper *Business Standard's* Editor Dr. Sanjaya Baru concurred that the FTA is key to maximising the trade opportunity. This happened during an inter-

India-Gulf trade to hit \$130bn

active session at the Capital Club yesterday. The total potential market is estimated at \$5 trillion with \$4trn in India's favour. Today, GCC is the second largest trading partner of India, after the United States.

"GCC-India trade exceeded \$80bn during the three quarters ending

December, 2010, and is seen at \$100bn for the year 2010-11."

A framework agreement for the FTA has already been signed. The FTA will remove restrictive duties and push down tariffs on goods being traded.

The GCC countries - Oman, the UAE, Bahrain,

Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have identified various sectors such as petroleum oil and energy, gas and fertilisers, information technology, higher education, civil aviation and agriculture for potential co-operation with India.

According to Dr. Baru, the current levels of for-

eign direct investment from GCC to India are unreasonably low and India being a capital deficit country needs an expansion of the contribution by the Gulf.

Dr. Baru who is one of India's most respected and influential commentators on political and economic issues, will join

IISS as Consulting Senior Fellow for Geo-Economics and Strategy shortly. The Middle East office of IISS opened in May 2010 in Manama. Located in GBCorp Tower, IISS-Middle East will serve as a base for the institute's many research programmes and activities throughout the region. It will also act as a connection to IISS initiatives in Europe, North America and Asia.