

The Authority for Electricity Regulation Launches 'Sahim': A New Renewable Energy Initiative

With a strong commitment to promoting an eco-friendly lifestyle, creating a greener future for generations to come, and contributing to the development and prosperity of Oman, the Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER) has launched 'Sahim', a renewable energy initiative. Taking advantage of the country's abundant year-round sunshine, Sahim, which means 'contribute' in Arabic, will introduce rooftop solar panels to buildings across the country to generate sustainable and affordable clean energy. This home-generated electricity will reduce the reliance on local power networks, as well as produce a surplus of power that can be shared for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Qais Al Zakwani, Executive Director of AER, said: "A momentous advance in the deployment of renewable energy applications in Oman, Sahim is an initiative of tremendous national significance. Not only will we reduce our dependence on traditional sources of energy, but also reduce our carbon footprint, protect the quality of our air, and help preserve our precious water resources. As the Sultanate diversifies and strengthens its economic base, solar power will play a vital part in spurring the creation of businesses and generating a wealth of employment opportunities for our young people. The Authority has consulted and collaborated with Riyada, the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, to ensure Sahim has the maximum possible impact in this regard."

Giving further details of the Sahim initiative, Engineer Hilal Al Ghaithi, Sahim Project Manager at AER, added: "Sahim uses photovoltaic (PV) solar panels to generate electricity in homes as well as public and private facilities. To support the safe and efficient implementation of the panels, we have developed a strong regulatory framework that covers all aspects of their use including the connection of the panels to local electricity and distribution networks. Anyone, or any company, taking part in Sahim must strictly adhere to these regulations at all stages of their involvement, from obtaining of the necessary permits through to the final operation phase."

The Authority began to study the introduction of renewable energy and its incorporation into future electricity requirements in 2008. Following this, AER worked intensively and extensively with global experts, highly specialized consultants, and stakeholders, to assess the feasibility of the introduction of solar panels in the Sultanate. With a focus on sustainability, the organization then formulated the technical controls, procedures and standards for the implementation of the panels according to international best practice.

The results of AER's investigations into the introduction of the eco-friendly panels and the plans for the launch of Sahim were presented at a workshop in earlier this year. Attended by over 50 participants including members of government entities, distribution and supply companies, and respected leaders in the field, the event also provided an opportunity to gain further feedback on the proposed system, as well as to garner suggestions for further enhancements.