

Oman Dive Challenge for Disabled lauded



By Kabeer Yousuf

THE Oman Dive Challenge for Disabled, the first of its kind in the region that stemmed out of empathetic care for the less-privileged, has won a European appraisal.

The project that recently held its 4th Dive Challenge in Nizwa is also going to be the topic of the next congress of the EUBS (European Underwater and Baromedical Society) to be held in Poland in August.

Dr Roswitha Prohaska, President of the

Austrian Society for Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine, said "I'm so impressed with the sports activities and the empowerment efforts of these disabled people. The sports festival for them held in Nizwa was a great experience for me because we don't have such big events for handicapped in Austria. I am going to present a report on this event at the EUBS conference in Poland".

On March 13, an international team of dive instructors, doctors and helpers arrived in Nizwa to give handicapped people the chance

to try out diving in the pool of the Golden Tulip Hotel Nizwa.

The first Dive Challenge for the disabled was held in March 2009 at the Oman Dive Centre in Muscat. Owing to its great success and the immense interest the Ministry of Sports Affairs asked the Dive Challenge team to organise such events on a regular basis in different cities of Oman.

Sur and Salalah have been the next destinations during the year 2010 and in 2011 the dive event was held in Nizwa from March 13 to 16.

Stefanie Trier, one of the founding members and diving instructors, says: "During my long time of teaching I came across some handicapped students. One of them had only one leg. Although I was sceptical in the beginning and thought that he would not be able to keep up with the other students, I was very surprised that the handicapped turned out to be one of the best students during the course, extremely disciplined and eager to do all exercises in high performance. This experience motivated me to become a diving instructor for handicapped people".

All team members are sacrificing their annual holidays to travel to the Sultanate to teach disabled people diving. The driving force is Tariq al Khabori who is supporting the society of disabled people since 1984. Thanks to his continuous efforts and initiative over the past years the team will soon be organised in



the ODDA 'Oman Disabled Divers Association', inspired by former events in co-operation with European diving organisations. This association is now under formation with a rapidly raising number of members.

"I'm attached to the disabled and I've been doing whatever I could for these specially-abled people", avers Tariq.

"The joy and excitement in the eyes of the handicapped is an extreme pleasure. Also, meeting with people who never thought in their life that they would once scuba-dive and get the chance to discover the beautiful underwater world of Oman is pure satisfaction".



Tariq al Khabori and Stefanie Trier