

Quick credit, export matchmaking, skill building, and an information platform

New services by the Association of Industrialists

The Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) has launched a series of measures to support its members by offering lucrative financing facilities, opening up new export markets, introducing a customized on-job training program, and improved statistics gathering and dissemination. Early last month (April 4), the ALI signed memorandums of understanding (MoU) with BLOM Bank, the Lebanese American University (LAU), the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS), and the World Trade Center-Beirut (WTC). ALI board member and head of the Industrial Indicators and Services Committee, *Chaker Saab*, said that the new services were developed according to industrialists' needs: "We held discussions with stakeholders for over a year to find out the actual requirements of the industrial sector, and we then tried to formulate services tailored to these needs."

CREDIT FACILITIES FROM BLOM

In partnership with BLOM Bank, the ALI will offer its members 24-hour loan approval for the BLOM Business Loan. This loan is offered exclusively to ALI members with no file fees. Normally, file fees for the BLOM Business Loan are one percent of the loan amount, and such fees could reach as high as \$1,800 per loan. BLOM bank also offers industrialists the Banque du Liban (BDL) subsidized loan in cooperation with Kafalat, with preliminary approval for the loan in just two days. Approval for this loan normally takes around one month. BLOM will also offer ALI members other SME services at a reduced file fee. The bank will also offer ALI members (credit/debit card) point-of-sale machines without any installation fees. The salaries of industrialists' employees that are domiciliated at BLOM Bank will benefit from a range of free banking cards, and may take out a personal loan up to 16 times their salary. BLOM Bank and ALI will develop two co-branded platinum cards for industrialists.

MATCHMAKING FOR EXPORT

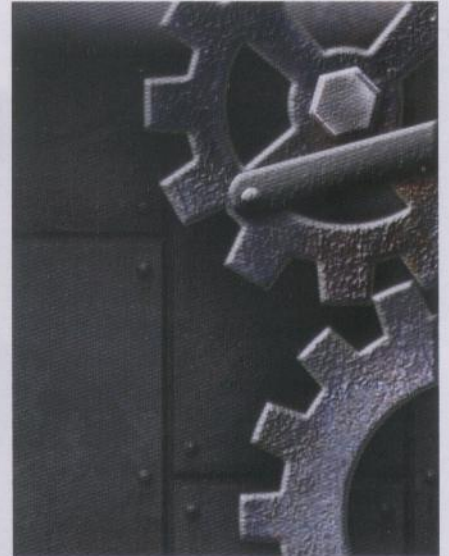
Through its association with the WTC Beirut, the ALI will help its members find export opportunities in new markets. The WTC will also extend research and business matchmaking services to industrialists. An industrialist who wants to find an export market could approach the WTC it will provide industrialists looking for export markets with the details necessary to help them export their products abroad. The WTC will also offer business-to-business meetings to help industrialists find partners in export markets. The WTC will provide ALI members with the information they require on the standards adopted by the countries they are planning to export to. "This is a two-way process as it will introduce local industrialists to potential markets abroad and introduce foreign investors to the opportunities here," said Saab. The WTC's services will be offered at reduced fees.

LEARNING PROGRAMS

In partnership with the LAU, the ALI will provide its members with an educational program customized to their needs. "Capacity building is vital to enhance productivity and to grow the industrial sector as a whole," said Saab. The program will help industrialists develop knowledge and skills which are vital for improving competitiveness. Through LAU's Continuing Education Program (CEP), the ALI will host at its premises monthly training sessions for industrialists. The ALI has planned a number of workshops that industrialists can sign up for at their convenience, at low registration fees.

INFORMATION PLATFORM

As part of its new services, the ALI is cooperating with the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS) to improve the quality of statistical information available to the sector. The CAS will be launching regular surveys to generate an Industrial Index that will be published quarterly. This index will



help industrialists monitor variations in the local market. "We cannot improve what we cannot measure, we need statistics to find out the weaknesses and work to improve," said Saab. The CAS will collect, produce, and disseminate social and economic statistics at the national level.


ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT


The ALI's Environment and Energy Department (EED), established in 2009, will support ALI members on issues related to environment conservation and energy efficiency. "The department will offer direct assistance to industrialists to help them pursue a sustainable production process," said *Rana Saliba*, head of the EED. She said the department will act as a link between industrialists, the Ministry of Economy, and the Ministry of Environment, in order to ensure industrialists are part of the formulation process of energy conservation regulations. The ALI is also planning to sign a memorandum of understanding with the ESCWA to develop a Green Production Help Desk, the objective of which is to enhance the capacities of the department.


Reported by Hanadi Chami


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