



● Batelco group general manager Ahmed Al Janahi, centre, presents wheelchairs to Bahrain Association for Parents & Friends of the Disabled chairman Jassim Seyadi, at the association's premises



● Youth and sports...high on Batelco's list for annual support

Putting people first...

"People first" is the motto that is driving Batelco forward, with customers and community service topping its priorities.

The emphasis on delivering relevant products and services has never been sharper, as the company continues to address the challenges of competition in the local market, says chief executive Bahrain Gert Rieder.

"Our customers talk and we listen! They asked for higher speed and lower priced broadband and we delivered, by redesigning our broadband packages which now offer unmatched choices from 256 Kbps up to 10 Mbps, with our basic services retailing at only BD10 monthly," he says.

"Our business customers' roaming needs have also been in our focus this year and we delivered new, unified high-speed data roaming charges throughout the GCC and a number of Arab countries.

"This was another first in the region, enabling our customers to always stay connected. With a low rate of only 600 fils per megabyte for data

roaming, our customers can today benefit from substantial reductions in charges, as the previous rate was between BD5 and BD7 per megabyte!"

Batelco is also playing its part in protecting the environment by being the first telecom company in the kingdom to launch e-billing.

With 'Go-E, Save a Tree', Batelco's customers can access their bills at any time online, as well as receiving their monthly bills directly through their email account and select to stop their printed bills through the post.

"This initiative has been a resounding success! Our customers' response has been fantastic. Environmental issue are a hot topic these days and clearly everyone is trying to play their part," says Mr Rieder.

Batelco relies on the creativity and efforts of its workforce of over 1,550 men and women, the majority of whom are Bahraini.

"Our dedicated staff are key to us maintaining market superiority and therefore Batelco invests over BD1.2 million annually in training and development, to ensure they have

the most relevant and up-to-date skills," adds Mr Rieder.

"The world of telecommunications moves at a rapid pace, with constantly changing technologies and new modes of operation being an almost daily occurrence.

"We strive to be at the forefront of our industry in Bahrain, so any investment in human resource development is always money well spent."

Batelco is also involved in the training and development of workers outside the company, in accordance with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030.

"Private sector companies have a huge role to play in developing a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce to propel the Kingdom into greater economic success in the future," says Mr Rieder.

"In this regard, Batelco recently signed an agreement with Tamkeen (formerly the Labour Fund) for the training of 83 unemployed university graduates, to deliver important technical skills and guidance for them in training programmes lasting from between six months and two years."

Batelco also reaches out to

support the country through its Corporate Social Responsibility programme which gives back a percentage of profits annually to sports, health, education and cultural initiatives.

"Private sector involvement is a cornerstone of a progressive society, and large enterprises such as Batelco seek out different ways to give back to the community, whether by backing sporting events, investing in educational programmes, supporting health initiatives, sponsoring individual or group humanitarian needs – there are many ways, and we at Batelco are very proud of our track record," says Mr Rieder.

"Bahrain has a young population and we actively seek different ways to engage them. Batelco's sponsorship of sporting events is intended to encourage Bahraini athletes to achieve their full potential and become regionally and internationally competitive.

"Fine examples of this are our sponsorship of the Batelco Karting Team, which has had impressive success at home, in the region and internationally. Additionally, our sponsorship of the Batelco 2000cc Challenge

offers opportunity for up-and-coming drivers to showcase their talents."

One of the major news stories of the year in Bahrain has been the spread of the H1N1 swine flu virus and Batelco was quick to respond by donating thousands of masks to the Health Ministry and the Bahrain Defence Force Hospital.

The company also donated hundreds of Thermoflash devices to the Education Ministry, which are being used daily at schools to identify students who could be carrying the virus.

During Ramadan, Batelco distributed 22,000 Ramadan Baskets to those in need via the Kingdom's charitable institutions. Each gift basket weighed about 10 kg and included essential foodstuffs that are traditionally in high demand during the Holy Month.

"Among other major donations this past year was our contribution of BD10,000 to the Palm Association in support of its invaluable work in the community. The Batelco donation has been used to

rebuild and refurbish dilapidated houses belonging to Bahraini families with limited incomes," says Mr Rieder.

"We are very impressed with the range of work the Palm Association carries out in the Bahraini community and are delighted to know that our contribution will make a change for the better in the lives of some Bahraini families."

Among the many other beneficiaries of Batelco's support this year are the Bahrain Association for Parents & Friends of the Disabled, which received specially-ordered wheelchairs and the Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa Cardiac Centre, which receives an annual donation of BD200,000.

"Batelco is as committed to its social responsibility as it is to ensuring that the Kingdom continues to lead in telecommunications. Batelco, on an ongoing basis supports the community in all aspects of lifestyle, not just in ensuring that the national telecommunications experience is second-to-none," concludes Mr. Rieder.



● Mr Rieder, right, and Public Relations Specialist Osama Al Saad with some of the Ramadan baskets