Special Economic Zones and Free Zones Law boosts investor confidence in the Omani economy





A Quarterly magazine issued by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones

Total investment in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities exceeds RO

billion in 2024

H.E. Eng. Salim Al Aufi: The 'Energy Hub' is an integral part of a new industrial complex



Since furnishing a proper investment and commercial environment constitutes a fundamental pillar in the country's development, we have instructed the government to provide more advantages, extend competitive incentives and establish a supportive environment for investments in order to facilitate business doing, ensure the diversification of our national economy, achieve sustainable growth and provide more employment opportunities across various economic and service sectors, so that the country could become an attractive investment destination and be more integrated into the global economic system. To achieve this integration, our government has sought to build a large network of ports, free zones, special economic zones and integrated industrial zones. It also extended support for innovation and entrepreneurship programmes and investment funds, both national and joint funds shared with Arab and friendly countries.

From the speech of

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

may Allah protect and preserve him –
 on the 11th of January 2025



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At the crossroads of global trade, SOHAR empowers business growth and investment. With integrated services and world-class infrastructure, we connect you to global markets.



2024: A year of achievements

The year 2024 witnessed significant achievements, from new investments to the expansion of existing projects, reflecting growing confidence in this integrated economic system.

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) continues to strengthen its position as a key driver of economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman. Through intensive efforts to attract investments, localise strategic projects, and provide a comprehensive system of incentives and facilities for both local and international investors, the Authority plays a crucial role in shaping the country's economic landscape.

Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, economic zones, free zones and industrial cities have emerged as strategic hubs for attracting capital. These zones leverage their prime geographic locations, advanced infrastructure, and flexible regulatory framework provided by the Authority. The year 2024 witnessed notable achievements, from significant new investments to the expansion of existing projects, reflecting growing confidence in this integrated economic system.

Over the past year, major investment agreements were signed with regional and international companies, alongside the attraction of innovative industries that contribute to economic diversification and the enhancement of local value-added. Business environments within the economic zones and free zones also improved, with the introduction of new incentives, including reduced fees, streamlined licensing procedures, and the development of infrastructure that boosts operational efficiency for investors.

The Authority launched the Integrated Economic Zone Infrastructure Project in Al Dhahirah and collaborated with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) to develop new industrial cities. These initiatives aim to expand industrial establishments, localise investments, increase the industrial sector's contribution to GDP, and create more job opportunities for Omani youth.

Additionally, the Authority formed a specialised task force to conduct field visits to economic zones, free zones and industrial cities. These efforts are part of a broader initiative to encourage Omani companies and factories to reduce carbon emissions and obtain renewable energy certificates issued by private-sector companies through competitive bidding processes managed by Nama Power and Water Procurement Company.

These initiatives reflect the Authority's commitment to fostering an attractive and sustainable investment environment that supports Oman's economic diversification strategy and enhances its global investment competitiveness. As this ambitious journey continues, economic zones, free zones and industrial cities remain fundamental pillars in building a more prosperous and sustainable future.

Editorial Team



The first factory in Oman specialized in the production of industrial salt.

> **Focus on ICV** and national products



1.000.000

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العالمية المتكاملة للهندسة ش.م.م GLOBAL INTEGRATED ENGINEERING LLC

Over the past year,

major investment

agreements were

signed with

regional and

international

companies,

alongside the

attraction of

innovative

industries that

contribute

to economic

diversification and

the enhancement of

local value-added



الهيئة العامة للمناطق الاقتصادية الخاصة والمناطق الحرة

Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones

ate of Oman لنة عمان



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The magazine welcomes specialised researches and academic studies



H.E. Eng. Salim Al Aufi, Minister: The 'Energy Hub' is an integral part of a new industrial complex that will support the localisation of manufacturing at SEZAD

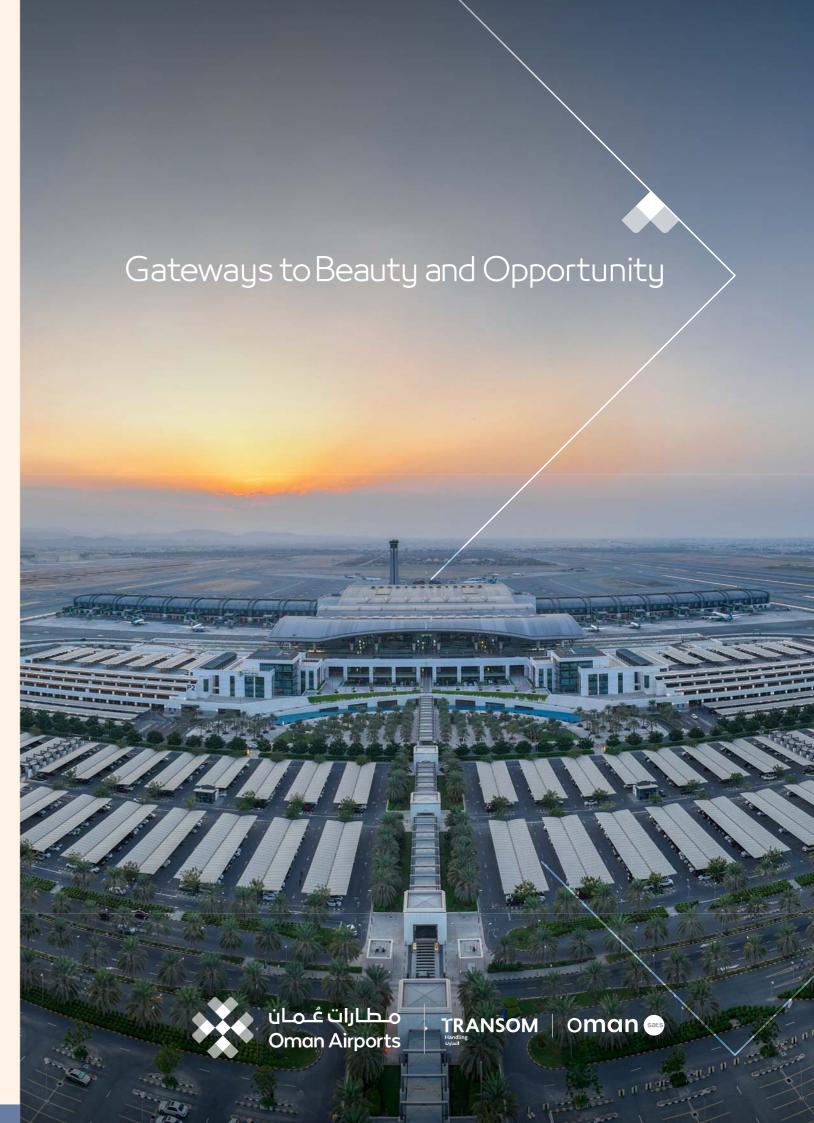


Total investment in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities exceeded RO 20.9 billion by 2024





Port of Duqm strengthens regional position with record growth in operational activities for 2024







Issued under Royal Decree No. (38 / 2025)

Special Economic Zones and Free Zones Law boosts investor confidence in the Omani economy

H.E. Sheikh Dr. Ali Al Sunaidy stated that the new law aims to boost investor confidence by unifying the legislative framework, guarantees, incentives, exemptions, and facilitations granted to economic activities in these zones

Muscat - ويقطا :

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) affirmed that the issuance of the Special Economic Zones and Free Zones Law, promulgated by Royal Decree No. (38 / 2025), is in line with the efforts exerted by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman to enhance the investment climate and make these zones more attractive for the localisation of high-value projects.

H.E. Sheikh Dr Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of OPAZ, stated that the new law aims to strengthen investor confidence by unifying the legislative framework, guarantees, incentives, exemptions, and facilitations granted to economic activities in these zones. It also offers additional privileges to strategic projects, making them more flexible and attractive for high-value investments.

He added that the new law keeps pace with developments in the special economic zones and free zones sector, which is expected to reflect the aspirations of investors. The law allows for the simplification and facilitation of procedures through the One-Stop Shop system, through which all approvals, permits, licences, and certificates related to conducting economic activities within these

zones are issued.

He explained that the new law provides effective tools for linking tax exemption phases with employment, increasing local content, and attracting projects with high added value.

He confirmed that the law introduces new provisions concerning the regulation of real estate development projects in special economic zones, allowing developers to offer residential units for sale under the 'freehold ownership' system. This represents a new addition to the various economic sectors in these zones and contributes to their revitalisation by attracting more residents and expanding public services and facilities.

Objectives of the Special Economic Zones and Free Zones Law



Enhancing investors' confidence in the business environment in the zones by unifying the legislative system of the zones in one law



Streamlining and facilitating procedures by applying the one-stop system enabling investors to obtain all the necessary services easily and conveniently



Provide additional benefits for strategic projects



Linking tax exemption to achieving economic goals



Regulating real estate development in the Special Economic Zones to allow real estate developers to sell residential units on a "freehold" basis



Enhancing the investment environment and raising its attractiveness in special economic zones and free zones



Enabling the Authority to regulate and monitor the investment environment by setting provisions to regulate and monitor the investment environment in the zones



Unifying the benefits, incentives, exemptions and facilities granted to economic activities in special economic zones and free zones, with the possibility of granting additional advantages to some zones, especially emerging ones, based on their specific needs and development requirements



During its first meeting of the year

OPAZ Board approves rent cuts, investment incentives in industrial cities



Muscat - ຄູ່ວັນໄຊ້ :

The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held its first meeting of 2025, chaired by H.E. Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, with the presence of esteemed members

The OPAZ Board approved additional incentives for investors, including rent reductions for several years for new projects in Ibri, Sur and Mahas Industrial Cities. It also approved rent reductions and exemptions for the initial years of new projects in under-construction industrial cities, including Al Mudhaibi, Al Suwaiq and Madha.

The board also introduced

The board also introduced amendments to the real estate development regulations in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), making them more attractive to developers and property owners by streamlining procedures in the real estate sector

amendments to the real estate development regulations in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), making them more attractive to developers and property owners by streamlining procedures in the real estate sector.

Additionally, the board reviewed the plan for regulating Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City, managed by Madayn, aiming to improve infrastructure and update investment regulations in line with Muscat Municipality's guidelines.

The board also examined the restructuring progress of Oman Investment and Development Holding Company (Mubadrah) and its subsidiaries, in coordination with the Oman Investment Authority.

Furthermore, the board provided feedback on several projects and their progress as part of OPAZ's ongoing efforts to drive economic growth in special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities.



9

Key outcomes of OPAZ Board meetings in 2024

First Meeting - 20 March 2024

- Reviewed performance indicators of zones under OPAZ supervision.
- Followed up on the implementation of the authority's system and progress in establishing new
- Approved exemption from the insurance requirement for projects in line with the tender board's exemption regulations.

Second Meeting - 20 May 2024 •

- Discussed the restructuring of subsidiaries under the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).
- Reviewed the implementation of the Ministry of Economy's study on integrated industrial clusters in: Shaleem for industrial minerals, Cold chain and food industries in SEZAD, Aluminium-based industries in Sohar Free Zone.

Third Meeting – 10 June 2024

- Reviewed developments in Khazaen Economic City.
- Assessed progress in infrastructure, roads, and flood protection in Mahas Industrial City.
- Approved rental incentives for Al Mazunah Free Zone.
- Reviewed the implementation of the visual identity for SEZAD.
- Granted incentives and benefits for selected lifestyle projects in SEZAD.

Fourth Meeting - 9 October 2024

- Renewed the incentive package for Al Buraimi Industrial
- Allocated 1% of the total annual production of mining and quarrying companies within OPAZ-supervised zones for local community development.
- Approved the implementation of OPAZ service fees in Khazaen Economic City, aligning with other supervised zones under Decision No. 63/2023.

Fifth Meeting - 9 December 2024

- Approved the 2025 operational budget for the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and its sub-
- Discussed and endorsed the institutional transformation programme for SEZAD
- Reviewed the progress of infrastructure development in Mahas Industrial City, Musandam.
- Assessed improvements to the visual identity of SEZAD.



The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones 'OPAZ' launched the "Jesser" program focused on internal communication, under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of OPAZ, and in the presence of His Excellency Engineer Ahmed bin Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of OPAZ, along with several officials and employees of the Authority and representatives from various government and private institutions.

The launch of the "Jesser" program comes as part of the OPAZ's commitment to fostering a work environment based on values of responsibility, cooperation, transparency, and creativity. This contributes to improving the efficiency of internal communication among employees, reinforcing the OPAZ's image as an innovative, transmechanisms.

in the importance of internal communication and practice it effectively, which helps build strong relationships between management and employees, promotes teamwork, and supports employee engagement, enhancing their connection to the organization.

"Jesser" also works on

creating internal and external communication channels that strengthen cooperation and effective communication between employees and help address challenges related to communication effectiveness. This is in line with OPAZ's commitment to providing a healthy work environment based on the principles of constructive dialogue and teamwork.

Abdul Majid bin Abdullah Al Ansari,

clude several interactive platforms and activities that allow all employees to participate, express their opinions, and provide suggestions, which will contribute to the development of the institutional work environ-Abdul Majid Al Ansari

Al Ansari added that through this program,

OPAZ seeks to establish modern institutional practices based on transparent communication and active participation, which positively impacts employee performance and contributes to achieving the strategic objectives of OPAZ and the zones it oversees.

The "Jesser" logo embodies multiple management levels that reflect different forms of communication, whether leadership, upward, or horizontal, all





Dialogue

H.E. Eng. Salim Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, to

The 'Energy Hub' is an integral part of a new industrial complex that will support the localisation of manufacturing at SEZAD



Muscat - ကိုယ္ခ်က္ကို :

H.E. Eng. Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, confirmed that the Sultanate of Oman is steadily moving towards optimally harnessing its natural resources by focusing on diversifying energy sources and supporting related sectors, including renewable energy and hydrogen, with the aim of achieving economic sustainability and enhancing its position as a regional energy hub.

In a special interview with Aid, His Excellency explained that the ministry is working on several key pillars to support this direction. These include developing investment policies, encouraging research and exploration, and enhancing the downstream industries linked to the energy and minerals sectors. He noted that these efforts are in line with the strategic directions of Oman Vision 2040.



Special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities

Regarding the localisation of projects within special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, H.E. Al Aufi confirmed that the Ministry is facilitating the establishment of downstream projects, such as refineries and petrochemical plants. These projects, whether based on Omani crude oil and gas or reliant on imported oil, are being developed within special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities to support the country's petroleum industries.

Furthermore, there are ongoing plans to localise industries in economic zones such as Duqm. One key initiative is the creation of an industrial cluster dedicated to the Energy Hub sector, spearheaded by Energy Development Oman (EDO). This initiative aims to establish a centralised industrial ecosystem to support the energy sector, with defined steps and targeted industries to be integrated within the hub.

Promising projects

H.E. Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, announced that the Sultanate of Oman is currently working on several new energy and mineral projects, including:

Offering new concession areas, covering both offshore and onshore locations, through the introduction of a royalty system and integrated projects. This initiative is being implemented in collaboration with OQ Exploration & Production and Scotiabank Canada, with the aim of enhancing the market value of these areas.

Train 4 of Oman LNG, along with several new petrochemical sector projects.

Expansion and development of the national gas network to improve supply efficiency and infrastructure.

Launching new mining concession areas for investment, covering the entire value chain from exploration and surveying to full-scale mining operations.

Transition to clean energy

Regarding Oman's efforts to capitalise on

and associated condensates have reached record levels with the commencement of production from multiple fields in Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), BP Oman, and Shell International's Mabrouk North-East field.

Facilitating the development of refineries and petrochemical projects in special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities.

Discovery of exceptional gas reserves in the Bu Shaer formation, with enhanced exploration efforts in the Amin and Gharif sandstone formations.

global trends in clean energy and renewable energy projects, H.E. Al Aufi, stated that Oman is making significant progress in adapting to the global shift towards clean energy. The country is actively working to develop its energy sector by leveraging its abundant renewable resources to support sustainable growth and achieve environmental goals.

With the global push to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and decarbonize energy systems, Oman is moving swiftly in this direction. The country aims to diversify its energy mix by investing in solar and wind energy, which will reduce its carbon footprint and facilitate a comprehensive energy transition.

H.E. Al Aufi emphasised that countries rich in renewable energy resources, such as Oman, have a strategic advantage in the energy transition process. These resources provide greater flexibility and a clear pathway to establishing sustainable energy systems, allowing Oman to undertake large-scale solar and wind energy projects. This strengthens its ability to meet carbon reduction commitments and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

The growing global demand for clean energy, combined with Oman's strategic location and extensive expertise in the energy sector, positions the country to become a major hub for energy-intensive industries. Additionally, Oman is preparing to play a pivotal role in global energy markets by exporting clean energy in various forms.

He further stated, "Oman's commitment to renewable energy is reflected in ambitious strategic plans aimed at developing this vital sector. These plans include establishing multiple solar and wind power plants with varying production capacities over the coming years to increase the contribution of clean energy to the national energy mix. Oman aims to achieve a 30% share of renewable energy in its energy mix by 2030, increasing to 60% by 2040. This clear vision underscores the country's commitment to sustainability and meeting the growing demand for clean energy. Our efforts go beyond achieving national targets; they also contribute to the global energy transition. Through these initiatives, Oman





Oman is invest-

ing in solar and

wind energy to

drive a compre-

hensive trans-

formation in the

energy sector

Oman is

preparing to

become a key

hub for energy-

intensive

industries and

clean energy

exports.

Oman's energy

strategy aims for

30% renewable

energy

contribution

to the national

energy mix by

2030, increasing

to 60% by 2040

is reinforcing its position as a leading and pioneering nation in clean energy, actively contributing to addressing global environmental challenges and combating climate change."

Oil price volatility

Regarding oil prices, H.E. Al Aufi stated that predicting or forecasting future oil prices is impossible, as there are key variables and factors that affect price trends, whether upward or downward. Current data indicates that oil price volatility will continue at least in the short term, given the many influential factors, such as geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and globally, the balance of supply and demand, and the decisions of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Additionally, economic recovery or contraction in some consuming countries may also play a significant role.

Revenue stability

On the subject of revenue stability, H.E. Al Aufi emphasised that oil remains one of the most important drivers of both global and national economies, with the volume of global oil consumption directly affecting the revenues and financial stability of nations. Although many of the influencing factors are external and beyond control, the Sultanate of Oman continuously seeks solutions to maintain the global balance of supply and demand, thereby contributing to fair oil prices. In this context, Oman is working with its global partners, including its participation in the Cooperation Charter that brings together OPEC member countries and non-member countries. This alliance aims to monitor the global balance of crude oil supply and demand and to intervene, either by reducing or increasing production, if this balance is disrupted.

Oil reserves and exploration

Regarding oil reserves and exploration, H.E. Al Aufi explained that it is well known that oil reserves naturally decline by the amount produced each year. However, due to the Ministry's commitment to working closely with operating companies to implement a policy of compensating for extracted reserves through exploration, evaluation, and development acenhanced its oil reserves.

Oman's oil reserves over the past years have remained stable, as reflected in official annual reports and bulletins, showing that reserves stood at approximately five billion barrels (4.97 billion barrels) at the beginning of 2024. This stability has been maintained despite continuous production levels averaging around one million barrels per day, with slight fluctuations depending on voluntary production cuts coordinated with OPEC+ members.

tivities, Oman has successfully sustained and

New oil discoveries play a crucial role in preserving Oman's oil reserves, as continued exploration efforts help maintain reserve levels and production rates. These discoveries vary in success across different concession areas due to geological conditions. One notable example is Block 56, where a commercial declaration was made, transitioning the area from a 13-year exploration phase to a 20-year development and production phase. Similarly, successful exploration in Block 62 has opened the possibility of transforming the area from a natural gas development zone into an oil and gas-producing region.

Oil and gas production

H.E. Al Aufi revealed that Oman's crude oil and condensate production reached 987,000 barrels per day in December 2023, as per the non-binding OPEC+ agreement.

He also highlighted that gas production and associated condensates have reached record levels, with the commencement of production from multiple fields operated by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), BP Oman, and Shell International in the North-East Mabrouk field. The average daily domestic production of natural gas in December 2024 was approximately 146 million cubic meters per day.

Natural gas exploration

Discussing natural gas discoveries in 2024, along with future exploration and drilling plans, H.E. Al Aufi emphasised that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals places great importance on the gas sector, given its role as one of Oman's most vital energy sources. Natural gas is essential for electricity generation,

water desalination, and the sustainability of industrial projects across economic zones.

As a result, exploration efforts continue across multiple concession areas, with several successful discoveries. Among the most significant results in 2024 was the exceptional gas discovery in the Bu Shaer formation, along with ongoing exploration in the Amin and Gharif sandstone formations, reaffirming Oman's rich and diverse geological potential. These findings increase the likelihood of further successful discoveries that may extend into other concession areas, ensuring longterm production sustainability.

Additionally, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has developed strategic plans for gas exploration and drilling, leveraging advancements in seismic survey technology. Oman is also focusing on both conventional and unconventional gas exploration, presenting promising opportunities for the future of the sector.

of Oman's investment in solar and wind energy to achieve a comprehensive transformation in the energy sector

The Sultanate

New projects currently underway in Oman

Expansion and development of the national gas network Train 4 of Oman LNG, along with

Offering new concession areas, including offshore and onshore locations, through the introduction of a royalty system and integrated projects in collaboration with OQ Exploration & Production and Scotiabank Canada to enhance the market value of these areas

Launching new mining concession areas for investment, covering the entire value chain from exploration and surveying to full-scale mining operations

several new

petrochemical

sector projects

Total investment in economic zones, billion free zones and by industrial cities exceeded RO

nomic Zone at Dugm (SEZAD) saw notable growth, with the commencement of construction for the ACME project.

Investment in zones

The 2024 annual report of OPAZ highlighted that SEZAD recorded RO 300 million in additional investments, bringing total committed investments to RO 6.3 billion, with 22 new investment agreements signed during the year. The Sohar Free Zone recorded the highest growth rate at 118 per cent, with new investments exceeding RO 712 million and nine investment agreements signed, raising total committed cumulative investments to over RO 1.3 billion by the end of 2024. In the Salalah Free Zone, additional investments amounted to RO 567 million, with 16 agreements signed, bringing total committed investments to RO 5.1 billion. For the Al Mazunah Free Zone, committed investments in 2024 reached RO 745,000, with eight investment agreements, raising total cumulative investments to over RO 140 million. At Khazaen Economic City, investments grew by 18.8 per cent, surpassing RO 510 million, with additional investments in 2024 amounting to RO 80.9 million, signed across 39 agreements. In the existing industrial cities, total cumulative committed investments exceeded RO 7.5 billion by the end of 2024, with additional investments during the year reaching RO 244 million, supported by 231 new investment agreements.

One-stop services

OPAZ has worked to enable the zones under its supervision to offer direct onestop services to investors, enhancing the investment environment and attracting new projects. In 2024, a total of 2,648 new commercial registrations were issued across economic zones, free zones, and industri-

16 existing zones, including two economic zones, three free zones in Sohar, Salalah and Al Mazunah, and 11 industrial cities

OPAZ oversees

Among the key automated services for investors are:

Project plan submission service





Registration of documents and files for disposal

> Request for intermediary document transfer





Registration of file and document data in each department

Strategic project tracking service through the Authority's and zones' investor monitoring platform (Odoo platform)





Environmental impact assessment and approval service

Building permit request service (new, renewal, or modification)





Building completion certificate service Workforce in the zones



al cities, along with 1,595 public service licences and 2,610 economic activity licences. Additionally, 309 building permits were granted. The year also saw 1,443 investment applications, while 11,849 work permits and 369 investor visas were issued, reflecting the growing demand for investment in these zones.

In the field of health, safety, security, and environment, the Authority conducted 4,590 field inspections and issued 603 environmental permits and licences as part of its efforts to ensure compliance with environmental standards and promote sustainability in ongoing projects.

The number of services developed and automated during this year reached 12 investor services, bringing the total number of automated services provided by the Authority to 35.

The total number of employees in the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities under the Authority's supervision reached 78,091 in 2024, with an Omanisation rate of 37.36 per cent of the total workforce. The industrial zones recorded the highest Omanisation rate among these zones, reaching 40.4 per cent.

OPAZ has successfully localised jobs in special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities through its efforts in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding

Muscat - চিত্তুল :

The total investment in Oman's special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities exceeded RO 20.9 billion by the end of 2024, marking a 10 per cent increase compared to 2023. This growth was driven by RO 1.9 billion in additional investments and a total of 325 investment agreements signed last year, reflecting investor confidence in these zones as promising investment destinations.

Sohar Free Zone recorded the largest share of new investments last year, accounting for over 37 per cent of the total committed additional investments. This was largely driven by the signing of a usufruct agreement to establish a polysilicon plant with an estimated investment of RO 600 million. Following this, the Special Eco-

Sohar Free Zone recorded the largest share of new investments last year, accounting for over 37% of the total committed additional investments





(MoU) signed with the Ministry of Labour to provide ministry services in the zones under its supervision. As a result, 3,597 Omanis were employed across the Authority's various zones.

New Economic and free zones

In 2024, construction work began in the free zone at Muscat International Airport, and the infrastructure tender for Phase 1 of the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahirah was launched. Regarding Al Rawdah, the Authority received all detailed designs for the Phase 1 infrastructure and completed the preparation of the tender for surface water drainage infrastructure. On 29 November 2024, an initial agreement was signed between the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Ministry of Finance to finance the project.

Zones under OPAZ's supervision

The Authority supervises 16 existing zones, including two economic zones, three free zones in Sohar, Salalah, and Al Mazunah, and 11 industrial cities. Additionally, seven new zones are under development, including an Integrated Economic Zone in Ibri (Al Dhahirah Governorate), an Economic Zone in Niabat Al Rawdah (Al Buraimi Governorate), a Free Zone at Muscat International Airport, and four industrial zones. This brings the total number of zones under the Authority's supervision, including existing, planned, and under-development zones, to 23.

Environment and natural resources

As part of its commitment to environmental priorities and natural resources, the Authority is completing the consultancy study for the renewable energy infrastructure corridor in Duqm, specifically in the Green Hydrogen Zone. Additionally, the Green Belt Project in Sohar Industrial City has been completed, aiming to establish green spaces that help reduce carbon emissions.

The environmental sustainability plan

new zones are under development, including a fully integrated economic zone in Ibri (Al Dhahirah), an economic zone in Niabat Al Rawdah (Al Buraimi), a free zone at Muscat International Airport, and four new industrial cities

2024 Performance indicators for zones under OPAZ's supervision



for the Sohar Free Zone has also been implemented, featuring several initiatives, including the Air Quality Monitoring Network, the annual greenhouse gas report, the closure of the greenhouse gas emissions project, and measures for carbon offsetting. Furthermore, SEZAD launched the Duqm Refinery Beach Cleanup Initiative as part of its environmental efforts.

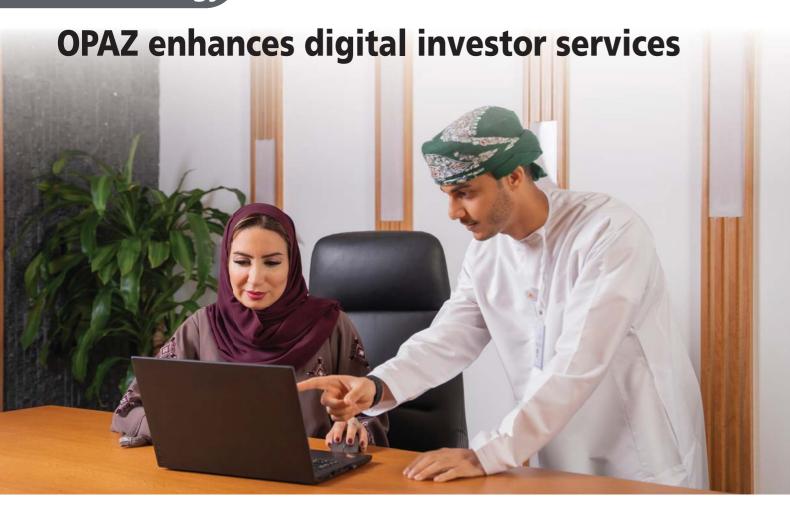
Renewable energy and green hydrogen projects Several renewable energy a drogen projects have entered tion phase, most notably the

Several renewable energy and green hydrogen projects have entered the construction phase, most notably the Falcon Green Steel Project and the ACME Renewable Energy Project in SEZAD. The Falcon project has reached 18 per cent completion, while the ACME project stands at 3 per cent completion.

Digital transformation

The Authority has made significant progress in its digital transformation efforts, achieving an 86 per cent rating in digital transformation excellence and a 95 per cent rating in government compliance in the second half of 2024. Among its ongoing projects is the continuous development of the OMAP geographic mapping platform. Additionally, the Authority has begun developing a Central Investor Services Platform, aimed at automating all investment services within its supervised zones to provide a unified digital service platform for all investors. Another key initiative is the Statistical Database Project, which seeks to establish a comprehensive data platform for accessing and extracting statistical information on the zones under the Authority's supervision, in collaboration with relevant government entities.





Muscat - مرابع :

Mahmoud Hamoud Al Rawahi, Director General of Planning and Information Technology affirmed that the Authority remains committed to advancing digital transformation in alignment with its strategic goals and future directions.

Digital transformation achievements in 2024

Al Rawahi highlighted that the Authority is implementing several projects and initiatives to enhance digital transformation. The key achievements in the Government Digital Transformation Programme for 2024 include:

1. Aligning with Strategic Goals

– Advancing digital transformation in line with the Authority's strategy and future directions by executing various projects and initiatives. This includes assessing digital readiness, identifying gaps and opportunities, and



The Authority launched the Central Platform for Investor Services development project in October 2024 to provide government and operational e-services across the economic, free, and industrial zones under its supervision

- shaping the Authority's digital transformation roadmap.
- Simplifying and Enhancing Services – Streamlining priority services, continuously improving e-services, and ensuring high-quality service delivery for an enhanced user experience.
- 8. Annual Service Automation Plan – Developing a structured plan for automating services, including internal services for employees, to boost operational efficiency and digital readiness.
- Leveraging Advanced Technologies Enhancing service efficiency and fostering innovation by implementing digital solutions that utilise advanced data analytics, IoT, and cloud computing.
- Change Management Strategy Promoting a culture of digital transformation by engaging stakeholders and implementing a structured change management plan

to ensure the success of digital initiatives.

- Digital Engagement Plan Strengthening community participation through digital tools to enhance e-services, improve service quality, and support informed decision-making.
- Open Data Accessibility Ensuring the continuous publication and updating of open data on the Authority's website, making it available for investment, commercial, and research purposes.

Central Platform for nvestor Services

Al Rawahi stated that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) launched the Central Platform for Investor Services project on 6 October 2024. The platform aims to provide government and operational e-services across the economic zones, free zones and industrial cities under the Authority's supervision. It will serve as a one-stop digital gateway for investors, offering all necessary services while ensuring integration with national platforms and relevant government entities.

He emphasised that the project represents a strategic step

The Authority continues its digital transformation journey in line with its strategy and future vision

Currently, the
Authority offers
essential e-services

in enhancing digital readiness to attract more investments and improve the investment environment in special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities. By automating and streamlining procedures, the platform will contribute to investment growth and reinforce Oman's position as a preferred investment destination.

He described the platform as a centralised digital hub where investors can access all e-services related to their businesses. It will also facilitate data centralisation, enabling the Authority to track performance indicators across the zones. Additionally, the platform

will integrate government services with operational services in the supervised zones, ensuring efficient service governance, regulatory oversight, and cost reduction by consolidating multiple digital channels.

He further highlighted that the platform will significantly reduce the time and effort required for investors to complete services. Investors may no longer need to visit service centres in person, as all requirements and processes will be clearly outlined, allowing for faster service completion and enhancing the overall quality of government services provided in the zones.

Towards integrated digital services

Regarding the services currently offered, Al Rawahi noted that the Authority provides 86 essential e-services and is continuously working on process re-engineering and service enhancement to ensure a seamless and efficient digital experience for investors. Efforts are also underway to strengthen electronic integration with relevant institutions, supporting the competitiveness of Oman's economic and free zones as an ideal investment destination.



SEZAD unveils 2025-2030 strategy

الدقع - Dugm - الدقع

The Special Economic Zone at Dugm (SEZAD) has launched its 2025-2030 strategy as part of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) efforts to enhance the region's capabilities and attract investments.

The strategy focuses on positioning SEZAD as the preferred strategic hub for renewable energy and sustainable industries, creating numerous business opportunities, boosting the tourism sector, and developing a balanced lifestyle. This vision aims to make Dugm a preferred destination for living, working, and investing for local and international investors, residents, and visitors.

During the launch event, attended by H.E. Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of OPAZ, SEZAD officially introduced its institutional transformation programme and enhanced identity.

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has launched its 2025-2030 strategy, along with its institutional transformation programme and enhanced identity, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the zone's capabilities and attractiveness to investors.

Eng. Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of SEZAD, stated that this strategic launch builds on the zone's previous successes, leveraging its strategic location, advanced infrastructure, and investor-friendly incentives to enhance its competitive edge.

He explained that the new strategy adopts a vision for creating a sustainable city and business ecosystem within SEZAD, offering practical business solutions, guidance, and essential support to both local and international investors. The strategy is rooted in the values of responsibility, transparency, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring a dynamic and investor-friendly environment.

Localising investments across diverse economic sectors is a top priority under the new strategy. Eng. Akaak emphasised that SEZAD's management will focus on accelerating the development, marketing, and activation of sector-specific zones to meet the evolving needs of both current and prospective investors.

During the launch event, Huda bint Abdullah Al Habsiya, Head of Institutional Transformation at OPAZ, presented an overview of the strategy development process. She explained that the strategy was formulated through a

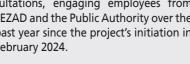




Eng. Ahmed Akaak: The new strategy adopts the creation of a sustainable city and business ecosystem within the Special Economic Zone at Dugm, providing real business solutions, support, and guidance for local and international nvestors to grow their businesses

Huda Al Habsiya: The strategy aims to increase investments in the Special **Economic Zone at Dugm** while focusing on enhancing investor satisfaction and boosting Duqm's competitiveness

series of intensive workshops and consultations, engaging employees from SEZAD and the Public Authority over the past year since the project's initiation in February 2024.



Strategic Objectives:

Achieving institutional

Effective operation and management



investments across various

Developing a balanced lifestyle



Launching the region's institutional transformation programme and enhanced



She highlighted that the vision and mission statements developed as part of this process will provide clear direction and purpose for SEZAD, while the core values will serve as a guiding framework for institutional behaviour. The strategy is structured around five key objectives: localising investments across various sectors, enhancing operational efficiency and management, developing a balanced lifestyle, attracting tourists and strategic partners, and achieving institutional excellence.

She further explained that the strategy aims to increase investments in SEZAD while prioritising investor satisfaction and strengthening Dugm's competitiveness. This will be achieved through high-quality, sustainable infrastructure and services, as well as initiatives to enhance Duqm's appeal as a preferred destination for living, working, and in-

She also underscored the strategy's focus on attracting tourists and business partners, positioning Dugm as a unique tourism and business hub through targeted investment incentives and diverse visitor experiences. Institutional excellence will also be a key focus, ensuring that SEZAD has the culture, talent, and systems necessary to successfully implement its strategic vision. Each of the strategic objectives includes clear performance indicators to measure progress and effectiveness.

2012 industrial facilities in special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities by the end of last year

الدقورة : Muscat

By the end of 2024, the number of establishments operating in the manufacturing industries sector reached 2,012 industrial facilities across various zones supervised by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). These industries include food production, bus manufacturing, pharmaceutical and veterinary industries, textiles, ceramics, building materials, petrochemicals, iron and metal industries, plastics, packaging, water production, and many others.

Small enterprises accounted for the largest share, making up 65 per cent of the total establishments. These facilities employ more than 42,000 Omani and non-Omani workers, with an Omanisation rate of 24 per cent in this sector.

The Special Economic Zone at Dugm (SEZAD) stands out as a key hub for industrial investments, hosting the Dugm Refinery, the crude oil storage facility, and providing a promising environment for the growth of green industries and the fisheries sector.

Industrial sector investment opportunities

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) offers a range of investment opportunities in the industrial sector across all its industrial cities. Over the past years, Madayn has successfully attracted numerous investments in building materials, food industries, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, iron and metal industries, and plastics manufacturing.

In the Al Mazunah Free Zone, import and export is one of the most prominent investment sectors due to the zone's strategic proximity to the Republic of Yemen. In recent years, investors have also been increasingly drawn to food industries, water production, packaging, and other manufacturing activities.

The Salalah Free Zone hosts a variety of investments in pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, mining, and food industries. Meanwhile, the Sohar Free Zone is recognized for its leading industrial projects in mining, pharmaceuticals, veterinary products, textiles, ceramics, and building materials.

Industrial licenses

In 2024, notable industrial activity was witnessed across special economic

in Omar Key pillars for advancing the industrial sector in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities

zones and free zones in the Sultanate of Oman, with the number of industrial licenses rising to 183 across various regions. Industrial cities led the way, securing 125 licenses, which accounted for 68 per cent of the total licenses issued in areas under the supervision of

This growth reflects the strong interest in the industrial sector in the Sultanate of Oman and the incentives provided by the Authority to attract investment.

Special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities offer extensive investment opportunities in the industrial sector, supporting industrial development and contributing to the objectives of the Industrial Strategy 2040. This strategy, approved by the Council of Ministers last year, aims to boost economic diversification, enhance the quality of Omani industrial products, and establish a modern manufacturing base driven by technology.

The zones under the Authority's supervision are equipped with essential infrastructure to support the industrial sector, including ready-toinvest land plots, diverse spaces accommodating heavy, medium, and light industries, available gas supply, investment incentives, tax and customs exemptions, and other facilities. Additionally, their strategic connectivity to ports and airports facilitates the import of raw materials and the export of finished goods.

In recent years, industrial invest-









Sohar - ဥଦ୍ଦୁଲ୍ଲା :

Sohar Port demonstrated accelerated growth and operational flexibility in 2024, receiving over 3,000 ships. General cargo handling increased by 77 per cent compared to the previous year, while container handling recorded a 15 per cent rise, and transshipment operations grew by 19 per cent.

Sohar Freezone

Sohar Freezone continued to strengthen its position as a preferred destination for industrial and logistics investments, with land occupancy reaching 85 per cent. This reflects the increasing demand from both existing and new investors.

Investments in Sohar Port

Total investments in Sohar Port reached approximately RO 11.5 billion (USD 30 billion), marking a

the attraction of new projects valued at over RO 1.5 billion (USD 4 billion). These projects include an RO 519 million (USD 1.35 billion) agreement to establish the largest polysilicon production facility in the Middle East, an RO 615 million (USD 1.6 billion) project to supply ships with LNG using solar energy, and an RO 230.7 million (USD 600 million) agreement to establish Oman's first iron ore concentration plant. These projects reflect Sohar Port's commitment to fostering innovation and adopting clean energy technologies, reinforcing its position as a strategic hub for sustainable industries in the region.

significant milestone in 2024 with

Commitment to innovation and sustainability

Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of Sohar Port, affirmed that the port and freezone serve as a logistics hub for economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman and a global platform for innovation and sustainability. He reiterated the commitment to advancing sustainable development and exploring new opportunities that will further solidify Oman's position as a leading global economic destination.

Attracting high-value investments

Mohammed Ali Al Shizawi, Acting Head of Sohar Freezone, emphasised that Sohar Freezone is a key pillar in attracting high-value investments, offering a dynamic environment that enables businesses to thrive within an interconnected and advanced ecosystem. He highlighted the signing of 9 agreements covering 130 hectares of land, with total investments amounting to RO 692 million (USD 1.8 billion). This reflects the strong confidence investors have in the integrated investment environment of the freezone.

The 9 agreements Land occupancy Sohar Port received have a total in the freezone investment of RO over 3,000 ships reached 85% 692 million Total investments RO 519 million investment General cargo in Sohar Port to establish the largest polhandling at the port amounted to RO ysilicon production facility increased by 77% 11.5 billion in the Middle East New projects Container RO 615 million project attracted investments handling exceeding RO 1.5 to supply ships with recorded a 15% LNG using solar energy billion in Sohar Port increase RO 230.7 million 9 agreements Transshipment agreement to signed covering 130 operations rose establish Oman's hectares of land in first iron ore by 19% the freezone concentration plant

Operating on a leased area over 6.2 square kilometres

41 Industrial projects operating in Salalah Free Zone



Salalah - كَالْمُوْمُ :

Dr Ali bin Mohammed Tabouk, CEO of Salalah Free Zone, stated that the Zone is committed to empowering national industries and enhancing their ability to expand into regional and global markets. This is achieved through hosting leading Omani companies in production and manufacturing. He highlighted that the Zone currently accommodates 41 industrial projects operating on a leased area exceeding 6.2 square kilometres, reflecting the significant expansion of the industrial sector, which accounts for 60 per cent of total investments in the Zone.

He made these remarks during the 'Made in Salalah Free Zone' exhibition, held at the Zone's headquarters in February. The event featured 32 specialised industrial companies from the pharmaceutical, food and petrochemical industries, showcasing their latest products and innovative solutions. The exhibition aligns with the Zone's efforts to boost industrial investments and enhance the competitiveness of Omani products by offering advanced infrastructure and a flexible, business-friendly environment. Dr Tabouk further noted that Salalah Free Zone plays a vital role in Oman's manufacturing value chain, contributing to the transformation of natural resources into high-value industries. This maximises the benefits of national resources and supports export growth, thanks to its proximity to key raw material sources, including natural



Dr. Ali Tabouk: The
Zone aims to empower
national industries and
enhance their expansion
into regional and global
markets

gas, minerals and fisheries. These factors create an integrated environment for manufacturing industries reliant on local raw materials, thereby developing industrial production and enhancing its global competitiveness.

He added that the total investments in Salalah Free Zone amount to RO 4.7 billion, with a compound annual growth rate of 40 per cent over the past five years. The Zone has attracted approximately 3,096 direct employees, with a 9 per cent annual workforce growth rate and an Omanisation rate of 34 per cent, reaffirming its commitment to providing job opportunities for Omani talent.

Industrial investments in Salalah Free Zone span various sectors, including food industries, logistics, petrochemicals and mining. The key investors in the Zone represent diverse nationalities, including India, Mexico and Yemen, alongside Omani investors.

According to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the manufacturing sector contributed approximately 10.5 per cent to Oman's GDP, with a total value exceeding RO 2.19 billion. This underscores the sector's growing role in driving economic growth.



Establishment of dry port facilities in the Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah

Muscat - الْدِقْرِينِي :

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has announced the establishment of dry port facilities and a veterinary quarantine as part of the development projects for the Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah (EZAD). The zone covers an area of 388 square kilometres and is located 20 kilometres from the Empty Quarter border crossing.

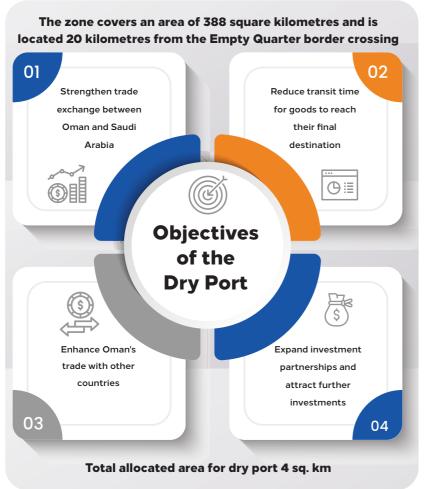
The establishment of the zone aims to boost interregional trade, support development and economic diversification efforts, and open new horizons for both the Omani and Gulf economies. It also seeks to leverage the region's competitive advantages and strategic geographic location to attract further investment and growth.

The dry port is set to become the driving force behind the Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah, located near the Omani-Saudi border (Empty Quarter crossing). The zone is being developed through a collaborative effort between the Sultanate of Oman and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The total area allocated for the dry port is 4 square kilometres, with the first phase covering 1 square kilometre. The project tender also includes the construction of the veterinary quarantine facility.

Eng. Ibrahim Yusuf Al Zadjali, Project Manager for EZAD, stated that this new tender will enable the zone to achieve its objectives of enhancing trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia. The port's design incorporates state-of-the-art facilities and will be implemented to the highest standards while considering the requirements of all relevant entities. He further emphasised that the dry port, in conjunction with the border crossing, will significantly reduce transit times for goods moving to and from the Sultanate of Oman, minimising the number of transit points and thereby accelerating delivery to final destinations.

The dry port is expected to facilitate the flow of goods between the Sultanate of Oman and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, strengthen bilateral trade, increase investment partnerships, and attract further investments. The project encompasses civil, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and structural works for both the dry port and the veterinary quarantine facilities. As part of the tender, key infrastructure will be developed, including a customs gate and inspection platforms, customs clearance areas, substations for electricity supply, main-





tenance workshops, laboratories, water storage facilities, fire protection systems, and X-ray scanning equipment. The development will also include the construction of an administrative office building, mosque, staff accommodation, rest areas, perimeter fencing, and surveillance systems.

A noteworthy aspect of the project is that the dry port will be operated by Asyad Group, a subsidiary of Oman Invest-

ment Authority, leveraging its expertise in managing and operating such facilities. Last year, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones awarded the consultancy tender for the design and supervision of phase one infrastructure in the Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah to a consortium comprising an Omani and a Saudi company. The first phase spans 20 square kilometres.

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FOR REGISTRATION







The number of local and foreign food security projects localised in the Food City of Khazaen Economic City, located in Al Batinah South Governorate, reached 37 by the end of last year. These projects represent a total investment of RO 164 million (equivalent to \$427 million).

Barka - 🎎:

Engineer Salem bin Sulaiman al Dhahli, CEO of Khazaen Economic City, stated that among the food security projects is the 'Food City' initiative, which is one of the key efforts aimed at enhancing Oman's ability to achieve self-sufficiency in food products. Additionally, the Silal Central Fruit and Vegetable Market stands out as an international platform for the marketing, distribution, storage and export of Omani agricultural products, as well as serving as a global marketing gateway.

Attracting investments

He added that the Food City in Khazaen is one of the key pillars of Oman's strategy to enhance food security by attracting local and foreign investments. The city focuses on developing various sectors, including food security, food industries, and logistics, as part of the Oman's economic diversification efforts. He emphasised that efforts are centred on achieving the highest levels of operational efficiency through strategic projects aimed at advancing supply chains, improving product quality and optimising operational processes.

Investor partnerships signed

The CEO of Khazaen Economic City



Eng. Salem Al Dhahli: With the increasing number of localised and planned projects, Khazaen Economic City in Al Batinah South Governorate is expected to become a leading regional hub for food security

stated that partnerships have been signed with local and international investors in the food manufacturing sectors. These include the Yasmeen Al Sharq project, which is considered the largest food manufacturing centre in the region; the Biogreen Oman for

the production of animal feed and aquaculture; the Salalah Mills project for baked goods and frozen foods; and Zircon International, a comprehensive industrial complex specialising in refining, sorting, and packaging rice, sugar, and spices, in addition to integrated units for storing strategic food reserve products.

Other partnerships include the Gulf Modern Trading and Marketing Company, specialising in food and beverages; the Sun Age project for juices and beverages; and Faisal Al Rashdi Global Projects, which is the first factory for producing fresh and frozen healthy meals. These, along with other innovative food industry projects, aim to enhance the added value of food industries and reduce waste in these sectors.

Regional food security hub

He explained that with the growing number of localised and planned projects, Khazaen Economic City in Al Batinah South is expected to become a leading regional hub for food security. This will support the national economy, enhance Oman's ability to achieve self-sufficiency in the food sector by reducing reliance on imports, and encourage the export of value-added food products.



... and 9 healthcare projects localised at a value of RO 156 million

Barka - مراجعة :

By the end of 2024, the number of local and foreign healthcare projects localised in the integrated 'Medicine City' within Khazaen Economic City in South Al Batinah Governorate reached nine projects, with a total investment of RO 156 million (approximately USD 405 million).

Khazaen stated that these investments include specialised pharmaceutical industrial projects such as human vaccine production, pharmaceutical and medical supplies manufacturing, in addition to facilities for storing and importing medicines and medical equipment.

Eng Salem bin Sulaiman Al Dhahli, CEO of Khazaen Economic City, affirmed that Medicine City in Khazaen is one of the key pillars in Oman's strategy to enhance the healthcare sector by attracting both local and international investments. He pointed out that several foreign and local investments contribute to strengthening Oman's pharmaceutical security and localising medical industries. Among these projects are the insulin manufacturing facility by Biogenmix, the pharmaceutical complex by Aviso Pharmaceuticals, Opal Biopharmaceutial Company's factory and a specialised titanium dental implants factory. Recently, an agreement was signed with Advanced Technologies Company to establish a veterinary vaccine manufacturing plant.

He added that Khazaen Economic City aims to boost investments in the healthcare sector by providing a fully integrated environment for investors



Specialised pharmaceutical industrial investments, including human vaccines, medicines, and medical supplies, along with facilities for storing and importing pharmaceuticals and medical equipment

in pharmaceutical industries and medical supplies.

He pointed out that the designation of an integrated zone known as Medicine City aims to achieve comprehensive medical and healthcare services while attracting local and foreign investments in this vital sector.

ised logistics facilities will be added to support the healthcare supply chain.

It is worth noting that Khazaen Economic City continues to attract more foreign investments in advanced medical industries, with a focus on strength-

He explained that throughout this year, new projects will be announced as the development of Medicine City in Khazaen continues, covering pharmaceutical and medical equipment manufacturing. Additionally, some existing projects will be expanded, such

as Opal Biopharmaceuticals' factory, which has entered its second phase, alongside new projects that will enhance production capacity in the pharmaceutical sector.

The CEO of Khazaen Economic City stated that new healthcare projects will be inaugurated, including the expansion of pharmaceutical production facilities and the launch of new projects related to medical supplies and advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing technologies. Moreover, specialised logistics facilities will be added to support the healthcare supply chain.

It is worth noting that Khazaen Economic City continues to attract more foreign investments in advanced medical industries, with a focus on strengthening Oman's pharmaceutical security. This includes efforts to integrate medical education and training with industrial needs, support health research and development, and expand opportunities for investors seeking to benefit from the city's investment incentives.



OPAZ enhances investor services through a package of simplified procedures

Muscat - الدقوم :

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has enhanced its investor services by unifying the service pathway, enabling investors to conduct economic activities across all areas under its supervision. This streamlined process allows investors to access all incentives, privileges, and facilitations offered by the Authority through a single registration when starting their projects.

Dr. Said bin Khalifa Al Quraini, Director General of the Investment Development Sector at OPAZ, stated that the package of simplified procedures was launched in conjunction with the unification of service procedures and fees across all special economic zones and free zones under the Authority's supervision. This initiative contributes to encouraging investment in economic and free zones as well as industrial cities, leading to an increase in the number of investors. He explained that these measures aim to enhance the investment environment, facilitate economic activities across



Dr. Said Al Quraini: these measures aim to enhance the investment environment, facilitate economic activities across different zones, and enable investors to diversify and expand their investments in various locations

different zones, and enable investors to diversify and expand their investments in various locations.

Dr. Al Quraini further explained that the unified service pathway is part of an integrated service system offered by the Authority through the One-Stop Shop. This platform allows investors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman to submit investment applications, open commercial registrations, and obtain the necessary licenses electronically.

He pointed out that the unified pathway offers significant flexibility for investors, enabling them to expand their economic activities in any of the areas under the Authority's supervision without the need to obtain a separate commercial registration for each zone. This system has reduced administrative and financial burdens on companies, enhancing their ability to grow and expand.

Dr. Al Quraini also added that the adoption of the unified service pathway has helped the Authority streamline commercial registration procedures and collect accurate data on economic activities in different zones. This supports future development plans by maintaining a unified database that includes all commercial records and economic activity licenses issued in cooperation with relevant entities.

Objectives and benefits of the unified service pathway

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has enhanced its investor services by unifying the service pathway, enabling investors to conduct economic activities across all areas under its supervision. This streamlined process allows investors to access all incentives, privileges, and facilitations offered by the Authority through a single registration when starting their projects.















Initiative

'Duqm Now': A gateway to investment opportunities

الدقرة : Duqm - الدقرة :

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has launched the 'Duqm Now' initiative, an integrated media platform designed to highlight current investment opportunities in Duqm and showcase its dynamic community. The initiative features live discussions, reports, podcasts, interviews, and documentaries on inspiring success stories, making it a vital channel for attracting the attention of decision-makers, investors, and business leaders in the Sultanate of Oman and beyond.

The initiative aligns with Oman's support for the green transition, with a strong focus on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which account for 99.7% of all businesses in the country and provide over 75% of private-sector employment.

Eng. Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of SEZAD, emphasised that these enterprises are not only the backbone of Oman's economy but also its driving force. He noted that their shift toward sustainability would have a far-reaching impact. With their agility and capacity for innovation, these businesses are well-positioned to lead the emerging green economy in the Sultanate.

Major investments and promising opportunities

Oman has set ambitious targets for a sustainable future, aiming to generate 30% to 40% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and become a leading green hydrogen producer by 2050. SEZAD successfully attracted \$16 billion in investments, including major projects in green hydrogen and steel production.



Eng. Akaak highlighted that these investments go beyond large-scale figures; they encompass a comprehensive ecosystem of opportunities, ranging from solar plant maintenance and wind turbine assembly to component manufacturing and specialised training. This creates a broad spectrum of prospects for businesses of all sizes.

Driving innovation and sustainability

The CEO of SEZAD emphasised that the success of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) reflects the overall success of the economic system. To support these businesses,

an integrated network has been established in Duqm, featuring advanced infrastructure and international partnerships, enabling them to thrive and contribute to Oman's sustainability vision.

He further explained that joining the green economy is not limited to renewable energy projects but extends to adopting responsible environmental practices in supply chains, aligning with global market requirements such as those of the European Union.

Challenges and opportunities in sustainability

Despite challenges related to financing, technical expertise, and regulatory frameworks, both the public and private sectors are actively working to overcome these barriers. Institutions such as the Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability and the newly established Oman Net Zero Centre are playing a crucial role in addressing these obstacles. Additionally, training programmes like Majd, designed for young professionals, aim to equip SMEs with the essential knowledge to succeed in this evolving sector.

Towards sustainability

Experts believe that strengthening collaboration between government entities, industry associations, and financial institutions will foster a supportive environment for sustainable business growth. As Oman advances its innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, expands industry-education partnerships, and strengthens its commitment to sustainability, the country is steadily progressing towards a green and sustainable economic transformation.



SQU students from the College of Economics and Political Science:

Economic zones, free zones and industrial cities are keystones of economic diversification and investment attraction

Muscat - ក្រុំ :

The "Economic Dugm" recently toured the halls of the College of Economics and Political Science at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), engaging with students from various economic disciplines who represent the foundation of the future and the hope of development. Discussions revolved around the role of economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in enhancing economic diversification and attracting investments. The students shared insights and ideas on the importance of these zones in driving economic development, achieving sustainability, and attracting major investment projects that strengthen Oman's position in the global economy.

The students expressed their appreciation for the critical role these zones play in creating job opportunities and diversifying national income sources. They highlighted that these zones serve as ideal platforms for fostering a business-friendly environment and attracting both foreign and local investments. They also emphasised the importance of equipping these zones with skilled talents to contribute to achieving Oman Vision 2040 economic goals.

Furthermore, the students stressed the need to strengthen partnerships between academic institutions and economic zones to ensure the integration of academic knowledge with practical application. They also underscored the significance of focusing on technological solutions and addressing environmental and social aspects to achieve sustainable development.

Strategic platform for economic diversification

The tour began with a meeting with Razan Al Wahaibiah, a student at the College of Economics and Political Science at SQU, majoring in Operations Management. She said that economic zones and free zones in the Sultanate of Oman are among the key drivers supporting Oman Vision 2040. She explained that these zones serve as strategic platforms for attract-

They expressed their appreciation for the vital role played by economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in creating job opportunities and diversifying national income sources

They highlighted the need to strengthen partnerships between academic institutions and economic zones, free zones and industrial cities to ensure the integration of academic knowledge with practical application

ing foreign investments and enhancing economic diversification by focusing on various sectors such as logistics, medical manufacturing and renewable energy, which help reduce reliance on the oil and gas sector.

She added that Oman's unique geographical location, overlooking major international maritime routes, enhances the appeal of these zones. The Sultanate of Oman offers a distinctive investment environment supported by political and economic stability, along with incentives such as reduced taxes and free trade agreements. She emphasised that these advantages position the Sultanate of Oman as a regional hub for commerce and industry.

Al Wahaibiah also highlighted that the facilities provided in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities include advanced infrastructure and logistical support that meet the needs of global companies.

These zones also

contribute to fostering innovation by supporting technology-driven projects and smart solutions, thereby boosting Oman's competitiveness both regionally and internationally.

Al Wahaibiah emphasised the social and economic impact of these zones, stating that they contribute to creating job opportunities for Omani youth and promoting sustainable development. She described these zones as the cornerstone for achieving the Sultanate's economic ambitions and expanding its role as a global hub for trade and investment.

Infrastructure development

Abdullah Al Julandani, a student at the College of Economics and Political Science at SQU, majoring in Finance, pointed out that the economic zones and free zones in the Sultanate of Oman have witnessed significant development in their infrastructure and facilities, reflecting Oman's commitment to advancing this vital

> He emphasised the importance of aligning this development with the global shift towards a green economy and sustainability. He called for continued investment in research and development initiatives in clean technology and the establishment of innovation and sustainability centres. He explained that these centres could serve as platforms for collaboration between researchers, innovators, and startups, contributing to the development of environmental solutions such as improving energy efficiency and smart resource management.





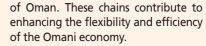
Proposal for establishing advanced laboratories

Al Julandani proposed setting up advanced laboratories for research and development within these zones, fostering collaboration between local and international companies. These labs would support innovation in sustainable product development, aligning with global trends in green economy and sustainability.

He emphasised the importance of investing in clean technology research and development and creating innovation centres to enhance energy efficiency and resource management. Such initiatives would strengthen Oman's position as a regional economic hub while contributing to the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Supply chains

Al-Zahraa Al Jaamaiah, a student at the College of Economics and Political Science at SQU, majoring in Operations Management, explained that supply chains are the cornerstone of the modern economy in the Sultanate



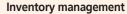
Al-Zahraa Al Jaamaiah

With the rapid advancement of technology, supply chains now play a pivotal role in improving commercial operations, reducing costs, and increasing responsiveness in both local and international markets. In this context, advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics contribute to improving the flow of products, thereby enhancing the ability of Oman's economic zones and free zones to meet the needs of local and global markets.

She pointed out that the advanced infrastructure in the fields of transportation and storage is a key factor in facilitating the flow of goods and improving operational efficiency. Developments in logistical systems help enhance the competitiveness of economic zones and free zones, making them attractive environments for investment. Additionally, the effective adoption of modern technologies, such as smart tracking systems and

advanced warehouses, enables these zones to achieve competitive advantages in goods transportation and cost reduction.

Abdullah Al Julandani



Al Jaamaih pointed out that it is a fundamental component of supply chain strategy, contributing to maintaining the balance between supply and demand. With the growing reliance on speed and efficiency, ensuring the availability of products at the right time and place becomes critical. By utilising modern technologies, companies can accurately forecast demand and avoid unnecessary overstocking, which enhances operational efficiency.

She added that digital transformation has become essential for ensuring the efficiency of supply chains and logistics in the Sultanate of Oman. Leveraging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and real-time shipment tracking systems improves transparency, accelerates processes, and reduces costs. These technologies not only optimise the flow of goods and inventory



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management but also enhance the resilience of supply chains in responding to crises and sudden changes in supply and demand, ensuring the sustainability of business operations and strengthening Oman's appeal to investors.

Integration between supply chains and logistics

Al Jaamiah affirmed that the integration of supply chains, logistics and inventory management, supported by digital transformation, constitutes a fundamental pillar for achieving a more efficient and sustainable economy. This integration enhances Oman's ability to address future challenges and ensures a flexible and attractive investment environment. Through this approach, Oman can strengthen its position as a leading economic hub in the region, contributing to sustainable development and reinforcing the role of economic zones and free zones as a primary driver of economic growth.

Pivotal role of Zones

Osama Al Mahrouqi, a graduate of the College of Economics and Political Science at Sultan Qaboos University, majoring in Operations Management, stated that free and industrial zones play a pivotal role in enhancing the Omani economy. They are considered fundamental pillars for national development and attracting foreign investments.

He added that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) currently oversees 23 zones, including established ones and others under development and study. Among the most notable is the free zone in Sohar, which is considered Oman's integrated gateway with Sohar Port, hosting various industries including metals and petrochemicals. The free zone in Salalah is another major economic and logistical gateway to the Arabian Sea. Furthermore, the free zone at Muscat International Airport (under construction) is emerging as a



promising area, offering cargo services to over 99 countries with a cargo terminal capable of handling 350,000 tonnes annually, along with tax exemptions of up to 15 years.

Al Mahrouqi explained that these figures reflect the promising growth of this vital sector and its importance in supporting the national economy and enhancing Oman's attractiveness for foreign investments. He attributed this success to the government's focus on strengthening Oman's position as a major investment destination in the region, benefiting from its strategic geographic location overlooking the Arabian Sea and Oman Sea, and its proximity to the United Arab Emirates and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In this context, he emphasised the need to prioritise this sector to enhance Oman's regional and global standing in industries and logistics services, and to provide more incentives and facilities to attract foreign investments, es-

They presented insights and ideas on the significance of these zones in driving economic development and attracting major investment projects that enhance Oman's position in the global economy

They emphasised the importance of equipping these zones with the talents and skills needed to contribute to the realisation of Oman Vision 2040 economic goals

pecially in the Duqm area, which could benefit from connecting local industries to the operational needs of major projects such as the dry dock and the Duqm refinery. He also called for completing infrastructure projects, such as the road linking Duqm and Mahout, which will further enhance the area's attractiveness for investment.

Human development

Al Mahrouqi suggested launching educational and training programs aimed at high school and university students to familiarise them with this sector and integrate it into the curricula. He stated that investing in the qualification of national workforce from the early stages of education will contribute to creating future leaders who are well-versed in the sector's requirements, thereby supporting its sustainability and development.

He concluded by pointing out that the free zones and industrial cities sector is a key tool for achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. It contributes to diversifying sources of income, enhancing non-oil sectors such as global trade, logistics services, and manufacturing industries. It also plays a pivotal role in attracting foreign investments, increasing the contribution of these sectors to the gross domestic product (GDP), creating new job opportunities, developing human capital and fostering innovation and economic sustainability.

Favorable investment environment

During the tour, Shahad Al Harthiyah, a student from the College of Economics and Political Science at SQU, majoring in Finance and Economics, emphasised the importance of industrial cities and free zones in the Sultanate of Oman and their role in attracting investments. These zones are characterised by advanced infrastructure, including roads and ports, along with government incentives such as customs

and tax exemptions, making them a favorable environment for investment in modern and innovative sectors like manufacturing and renewable energy.

She added that these efforts lead to the creation of new job opportunities and the enhancement of workforce skills through training programs and support for innovative ideas. Furthermore, she emphasised that industrial cities contribute to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship by offering financial incentives and facilities that encourage startups to grow and expand. Additionally, they promote trade exchange with neighboring countries and increase exports, contributing to reducing reliance on oil and achieving sustainable development.

Digital transformation and modern technology adoption

Al Harithiyah believes that the efficiency of economic zones, free zones and industrial cities can be enhanced through digital transformation and the adoption of modern technologies. Digital transformation improves operational efficiency and increases productivity by digitising business and administrative processes, reducing costs, and improving the speed and quality of service delivery. She mentioned the potential use of technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics to improve supply chain management and enhance efficiency.

She also highlighted the importance of developing digital infrastructure, such as high-speed internet networks and e-commerce platforms, to attract investments in sectors like fintech, e-commerce, and digital services. These sectors offer innovative financial solutions like digital payments and e-wallets, accelerating payments and improving international and local trade, while also creating job opportunities in programming and data analysis. Furthermore, smart city technologies, such as smart lighting systems and Al-powered traffic management, can improve quality of life within economic zones



Mohammed Al Omairi

and increase their appeal to local and international investors. Al Harithiyah emphasised that digital transformation could boost economic performance and investment opportunities, making economic zones and free zones more competitive and attractive to investments.

Sustainable growth pillar

Mohammed Al Omairi, a graduate of the College of Economics and Political Science at SQU, majoring in Operations Management, emphasised that the special economic zones and free zones in the Sultanate of Oman have become a key driver for enhancing sustainable economic growth. He pointed out that these zones serve as a magnet for both local and international investments and play a strategic role in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040 by diversifying sources of income and reducing reliance on oil. These zones also contribute to the growth of non-oil sectors and increase their contribution to the national economy.

Operational efficiency

Al Omairi highlighted that advanced infrastructure is a key factor for the success of economic zones in the Sultanate of Oman. He stated that modern logistics networks, advanced storage facilities and smart transportation systems have contributed to improving the efficiency of business operations, creating an attractive and effective

economic environment.

He also emphasised that digital transformation has become an essential part of Oman's strategy to enhance supply chains. He explained that technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics help improve the flow of products and information, enabling companies to make accurate decisions, enhance inventory management, and predict demand more efficiently.

Tech-driven sustainability

Al Omairi pointed out that digital transformation enhances the sustainability of supply chains by increasing transparency, speeding up procedures, and using technologies like the Internet of Things and real-time tracking systems. He noted that this has improved the flow of goods and increased the flexibility of business operations in response to economic changes. He explained that innovation in storage and distribution systems is a key factor in enhancing Oman's ability to achieve sustainable development goals. He also emphasised that the use of modern technologies helps Omani companies expand internationally, improve their competitiveness and reduce waste, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the national economy.

Enhancing investment environment

Al Omairi affirmed that investment in infrastructure development and digital transformation enhances Oman's attractiveness for both local and international investments. These efforts have positioned the Sultanate of Oman as a leading economic hub in the region, opening new avenues for growth and development. He added, "The integration of advanced infrastructure and technology forms the foundation for a sustainable Omani economy capable of facing future challenges." He pointed out that these strategies support the achievement of sustainable development goals, ensuring continued economic growth and increasing longterm investment opportunities.

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Professor Leon Barkho University Professor in Sweden

When and how do countries achieve the status of being innovative?

There is extensive discussion about the nature of innovation, the requirements for measuring it, and how to achieve it. Today, global institutions assess the extent of innovation in different countries, ranking them progressively from the most innovative nations to those where innovation is virtually non-existent.

Innovation is one of the most fundamental pillars of modern life. Without innovation, society stagnates. Any new product that lacks innovation is merely a repetition, and repetition stifles creativity and halts progress.

Imagine if Apple—the world's largest company today, with a market value of \$3.67 trillion—had not continuously developed its iPhone through numerous innovations since its launch 18 years ago.

Through sustainable innovation—introducing new concepts, components, systems, and designs—Apple has successfully marketed 16 different versions of its smartphone, with each iteration featuring innovations absent in the previous model. More importantly, innovation is what keeps a product—such as Apple's iPhone—in constant competition with its market counterparts.

In today's world, no company or institution can survive and achieve sustainable growth without innovation. This is why countries and corporations allocate vast resources to innovators, support them, and actively seek to recruit

But what are the requirements or conditions that enable a country, society, company, or institution to lead in innovation? And what criteria can be used to measure the level of innovation across different fields of life?

One of the primary criteria is the presence of foundational infrastructure that fosters innovation. This goes beyond traditional infrastructure—such as buildings, roads, transport, resources, communication networks, sanitation, and education—which are considered a given.

The first indicator of innovation is leadership, particularly in industries and products based on artificial intelligence, as well as autonomous and automated industries.

Measuring innovation in these fields depends on the underlying infrastructure that supports it, including legislation, regulations, policies, and incentives that facilitate the establishment and continuous development of these industries.

In this context, knowledge production and scientific and technological output are also essential. Some experts argue that research and educational infrastructure—especially at the university level—is one of the most significant indicators of innovation.

However, scientific research alone is not enough. It must be followed by practical application. Every innovation today is backed by a researcher, an innovator, or, more precisely, scientific research

Innovation should not be confined to companies and institutions alone. If it is not an integral part of society and daily life, it will not be sustainable. The most innovative countries have fostered an environment of collaboration and creativity that starts from the streets and preschools, extending to businesses and uni-

For example, at the science park of the Swedish university I belong to, there are 500 companies founded by students while they are still in education. This science park is one of many similar hubs managed by universities across

There are 50 universities in Sweden, each with its own science park, housing thousands of high-tech start-ups founded and run by

This illustrates my point: the presence of infrastructure that supports innovation is indispensable in a world advancing rapidly through scientific and industrial revolutions. Imagine the scale of infrastructure, incentives, and support provided by the state to enable 500 students at a small Swedish university to establish officially registered companies.

This brings to mind a report I recently read on scientific output in Arab universities. The figures were encouraging, as it stated that Arab researchers published around 250,000 scientific papers in reputable academic journals last year.

However, I felt a deep sense of sadness upon realising that most of these significant research papers were published in English. As a result, it is rare for an Arab company or institution to develop an innovative product based on the conclusions, findings, or insights of these studies.

In today's world, no company or institution can survive or achieve sustainable arowth without innovation. For this reason, countries and companies allocate vast amounts of resources to innovators. support them, and actively seek to attract them for employment







Auf Al Aufi: Nizwa's youngest entrepreneur turns his passion into a promising business venture

Nizwa - الدقية :

In the heart of Nizwa's historic market, where the sounds of traders intertwine with the aromas of spices and coffee, Auf bin Abdullah Al Aufi, 14 years old, grew up. Still a ninth-grade student, he drew inspiration from the daily life of the market and the conversations of its traders.

Fueled by his early passion for entrepreneurship, Auf successfully launched his own business, 'Miglay Al Hara', located in Al Agur, Nizwa, in collaboration with his father, Abdullah bin Zahran Al Aufi. The venture offers a diverse selection of dishes and beverages, including Rikhal, sandwiches, coffee, and desserts, making it a distinct destination for food and drink enthusiasts.

Simple idea to a thriving business

The idea was no coincidence. Auf began his journey into the world of commerce at the age of seven, driven by a passion for buying and selling. However, his actual business venture took off just a year and two months ago when he received a modest initial funding of RO 40 from his father. He quickly turned a profit and repaid the amount, reflecting his seriousness and ability to manage his business wisely.

Challenges and aspirations

The journey was not easy for Auf, as he faced several challenges, the most notable being a lack of fund-



ing and difficulty expanding due to limited resources and equipment. However, he overcame these obstacles through his marketing and innovation skills, focusing on attracting customers with new approaches rather than relying on traditional promotion.

Although he rates the success of his business 5 out of 10 due to the challenges he faces, he believes his media success has been much higher, reaching 8 out of 10 thanks to his wide reach on social media, which has significantly boosted his recognition.

Vision towards a unique brand

Auf does not stop at his current success; he aspires to launch his own brand, inspired by his unique ideas and personal identity. He believes that learning from others without blind imitation is the key to distinction, encouraging young people to

explore opportunities and embrace new experiences. He says, "Pursuing passion, exploring talents and having a unique vision are what create true success."

Advice for young entrepreneurs

Drawing from his own experience, Auf Al Aufi advises aspiring entrepreneurs to learn business through hands-on practice in commercial shops, as real-world experience is the best teacher. He emphasises the importance of continuously developing ideas, being patient through challenges, and not fearing failure, as every experience carries an opportunity for learning and growth.

With this entrepreneurial spirit, Auf Al Aufi continues his journey in the business world, focusing on expansion and innovation, aiming to be an inspiring role model for the next generation of entrepreneurs.





In collaboration with global partners

Karwa Motors explores expansion opportunities in EVs and green hydrogen applications



الدِقْم : Dugm - الدِقْم :

Dr. Ibrahim bin Ali Al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors, affirmed that the company is moving forward with ambitious strategic plans for the next five years, aiming to strengthen its presence in existing markets and expand into new ones across the region.

In an exclusive interview with Economic Dugm, Al Balushi explained that Karwa is committed to providing comprehensive transport solutions that cater to diverse customer needs, with a strong focus on developing new bus models aligned with market demands, enhancing its regional and international competitiveness

Dr. Ibrahim Al Balushi: Karwa is committed to producing 1,000 school buses annually for the Ministry of Education, alongside manufacturing other types, including Hajj transport buses, worker transport buses, and medium and small buses



He highlighted that the company is exploring expansion opportunities in electric vehicles and green hydrogen applications through collaborations with international partners. Karwa aims to build strategic partnerships with technology and energy companies to develop innovative and sustainable solutions. Additionally, the company places great emphasis on localisation in the automotive industry, investing in developing national talent, while maintaining its commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

Boosting manufacturing and local economy

Regarding Karwa's role in supporting the manufacturing sector in the Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Al Balushi stated that the company is a pioneer in this field, directly contributing to the growth of the sector through various initiatives, including promoting local manufacturing and reducing reliance on imports, which enhances the production and technical capabilities of Omani factories.

He added, "We are committed to creating job opportunities in the manufacturing sector, improving workforce efficiency, and driving economic growth. We also focus on bringing the latest technologies to Oman, such as advanced welding, coating, and testing techniques, to elevate quality and efficiency in the industry."

Dr. Al Balushi further emphasised that Karwa places great importance on training and professional development, working to train and qualify national talent in manufacturing, maintenance, and engineering, in collaboration with suppliers and international partners. The company also invests in research and development to foster innovation



in the automotive industry, enhance production efficiency, and promote the use of sustainable materials.

Major achievements since production

Since launching production, Karwa Motors has achieved several milestones that have strengthened its position in the local and regional markets. In the fourth quarter of 2021, the company produced the first fully Omani-made bus, marking a historic achievement for the national manufacturing sector. Additionally, Karwa participated in Expo Dubai 2022, where the Omani-made bus was showcased at Oman's pavilion, receiving widespread recognition from visitors and international entities.

In 2022, Karwa successfully manufactured and delivered over 100 medium-sized buses to Qatar, adhering to the highest quality standards and strict delivery timelines. The company also continued supporting the local and regional markets by producing various buses and transport vehicles, helping meet the transportation needs of Oman, the wider region, the United States, and other international markets.

Dr. Al Balushi highlighted that Karwa has built a robust production infrastructure, incorporating advanced technology and global quality standards, enhancing its ability to meet the growing market demand. The company has also invested in training Omani talent, resulting in a highly skilled national workforce in bus manufacturing.

"At Karwa, we focus on innovation and sustainability, adopting advanced manufacturing techniques and sustainable materials," Dr. Al Balushi said. "We have

Karwa has successfully built a strong production infrastructure, backed by advanced technology and global quality standards, enhancing its ability to meet growing market demand

tional companies to transfer technical expertise and develop production in line with global standards." In the coming months, Karwa will launch its first Omani-designed and fully Omani-made bus.

Market expansion, increased production and safety standards

Dr. Al Balushi reaffirmed that Karwa is continuously expanding its production capacity, with a commitment to manufacturing 1,000 school buses annually for the Ministry of Education, alongside other models such as Hajj transport buses, worker transport buses, and medium and small buses.

"The demand for electric buses has increased recently, and we anticipate further growth as Oman continues implementing its Oman Vision 2040 strategy," he explained. "We are prepared to expand in this sector if there is substantial market demand." He also noted that Karwa is actively exploring new markets and developing advanced transport solutions to meet the evolving needs of these regions.

Regarding safety standards, Dr. Al Balushi emphasised that Karwa school buses are equipped with state-of-theart safety systems. "Our buses feature smart tracking devices, surveillance cameras, and automatically locked safety doors," he said. He further re-

safety features, including Advanced Emergency Braking (AEB), Forward Collision Warning (FCW), and advanced sensor systems to prevent students from being left inside buses.

Karwa has also strategically planned to expand its exports to GCC countries, Arab markets, and international destinations. Dr. Al Balushi pointed out that the U.S. market is a key target, alongside Africa, which presents significant growth potential.

Commitment to environmental sustainability

On sustainability, Dr. Al Balushi highlighted that Karwa follows environmentally friendly manufacturing policies, including the use of recyclable materials, efficient waste management, and compliance with global environmental standards. "We are developing integrated renewable energy solutions for transport, such as smart charging technologies powered by solar energy, helping reduce reliance on fossil fuels," he added.

After-sales and reliability

Dr. Al Balushi stressed that Karwa places great emphasis on after-sales services, offering comprehensive maintenance through state-of-the-art service centres, continuous technical support to ensure seamless operations, and spare parts availability for up to 10 years, enhancing bus investment reliability.

Vision for innovation

Concluding his remarks, Dr. Al Balushi reaffirmed that Karwa remains committed to developing innovative transport solutions, focusing on enhancing Al-driven bus systems, exploring new clean energy technologies, and improving manufacturing efficiency to align with global market demands.

"We are dedicated to transforming the transport sector by prioritising innovation, quality, and sustainability," he said. "This commitment solidifies Karwa Motors' position as a leading provider



Sohar Airport received 66,719 passengers, and **Dugm Airport received 61,137 passengers in 2024**

The two airports are key pillars in supporting economic and investment activity, as they form part of the integrated logistics system



31.8% increase in the total number of flights

638 international and domestic flights

495 international flights, a 31% increase

48.4% increase in the number of passengers

43,445 international passengers, a 59.8% increase



Air traffic at Sohar and Dugm airports in 2024 recorded varying indicators, reflecting the dynamics of supply and demand in Oman's aviation sector. Sohar Airport witnessed notable growth, driven by an increase in flights and passengers, strengthening its position as a promising logistical gateway that supports economic and commercial activities in the region.

Sohar Airport

The statistical bulletin issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicated that the total number of flights at Sohar Airport increased by 31.8 per cent to reach 638 flights, compared to 484 flights in 2023. This growth was driven by a significant rise in international flights, which surged to 495 flights, marking a 31 per cent increase.

This growth directly impacted passenger numbers, with the airport receiving 66,719 passengers, recording a 48.4 per cent increase. The rising demand for international travel was evident, as the number of passengers on international flights reached 43,445, reflecting a 59.8 per cent increase. Meanwhile, the number of domestic flight passengers increased by 31 per cent to 23,274.

Sohar Airport is experiencing a strong recovery, supported by the expansion of international flight operations. This has strengthened its role in facilitating trade and investment, not only in northern Oman but also in Sohar Free Zone and surrounding industrial cities by providing air connectivity that enhances the flow of goods and services.

Dugm Airport

Conversely, Dugm Airport recorded stable performance with a slight decline, attributed to the settlement of most workers in the Special Economic Zone at Dugm due to the availability of daily life necessities and an integrated infrastructure. This has reduced the need for frequent travel to and from

As a result, the number of domestic flights saw a slight decrease of 0.6 per cent, reaching 622 flights. The airport also experienced a 5.8 per cent decline in passenger numbers, with 61,137 passengers compared to 64,884 in 2023. This decline was distrib-

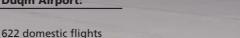
uted between arriving passengers, whose numbers dropped to 31,918, marking a 4.3 per cent decrease, and departing passengers, whose numbers fell to 29,219, reflecting a 7.3 per cent decline.

Airports' role in economic growth

These figures reflect the vitality of domestic flight activity, as both airports remain key elements in supporting economic and investment growth. They are integral parts of the integrated logistics system that connects Sohar Port, Sohar Free Zone, the Special Economic Zone at Dugm, and Sohar Industrial City with both local and international markets.

The shared role of Sohar and Dugm Airports in facilitating economic, industrial and commercial activities positions them as strategic pillars in enhancing sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman.





31,918 arriving passengers

29,219 departing passengers

Credit Oman insures over RO 376 million in exports and sales

Muscat - الجِثِم :

Credit Oman reported a solid performance for 2024, insuring a total of RO 376.41 million worth of Omani exports and local sales marking a 5.4% increase from RO 356.96 million in 2023. The company's annual profit stood at RO 381,412, down from RO 719,185 a year earlier, despite maximising the use of its available resources.

According to CEO Khalil bin Ahmed al Harthy, insured export sales accounted for 8.22% of total insurable Omani non-oil exports — a result of concerted efforts to support exporters and manufacturers. This led to a 9.53% increase in total insurance premiums, which reached RO 1.28 million in 2024, compared to RO 1.17 million in the previous year.

Al Harthy noted that Credit Oman continues to allocate investments towards highly liquid instruments with balanced returns, including deposits, financial bonds, and corporate shares. The company's investment value reached RO 17.4

RO 17.7 million, and remains well above its original capital of RO 10 in 2023. The number of insured million. Total assets exceeded RO 19 million.

The total credit ceilings granted to policyholders also saw notable



Khalil Al Harthy: reaffirmed **Credit Oman's commitment** to bolstering both domestic sales and Omani exports through its diverse insurance offerings

million, close to its 2023 figure of growth, rising to RO 257.66 million in 2024 from RO 221.89 million buyers increased by 5%, reaching 3,577, up from 3,407 the previous

> Sector-wise performance varied. The petrochemicals and plastics sector posted a strong 20% growth, with insured sales of RO 54.26 million. In contrast, the mining sector declined by 10%, with insured sales of RO 3.6 million, while the building and construction materials sector fell 15%, with sales reaching RO 106.99 million.

> The food and consumer goods sector experienced a 13% rise, whereas the clothing sector plunged 89%. Meanwhile, the packaging sector grew significantly by 27%.

Al Harthy reaffirmed Credit Oman's commitment to bolstering both domestic sales and Omani exports through its diverse insurance offerings. These services, he said, not only secure local transactions but also enable access to new international markets.



Innovative Project

'Wakud' factory in Khazaen City is the first of its kind in Oman for producing biofuel



The 'Wakud' factory for producing biodiesel from used cooking oil is one of the most promising projects established in Khazaen Economic City, Barka, in Al Batinah South Governorate. The factory spans an area of 5,000 square metres, with the first phase costing over RO 1 million. In 2024, the factory achieved a production of 2.5 million litres of B5 biodiesel, with projections to reach 5 million litres in 2025.

What sets the factory apart is that it is the first in the world to operate using solar energy for biofuel production, with a daily capacity of 20,000 litres. This initiative reflects Oman's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and advancing the use of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, hydrogen and biofuels, all of which represent promising investment and economic opportunities.

The project focuses on recycling used cooking oil to produce biodiesel, which can be directly used in various applications, including truck fuel, power generators, and ships. This contributes to added value both environmentally and economically.

Production capacity

Speaking to Economic Duqm, Maher bin Mohammed Al Habsi, CEO of

duction factory is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman. Powered by solar energy, it has a production capacity of 20,000 litres per day of biodiesel derived from used cooking oil." He further noted that the factory began commercial production with an initial output of 100 tonnes, within a total



Maher Al Habsi: One of the main objectives of Wakud factory is to establish a used oil collection sector in the Sultanate of Oman. We have supported several small and medium-sized enterprises to supply the factory with raw materials.

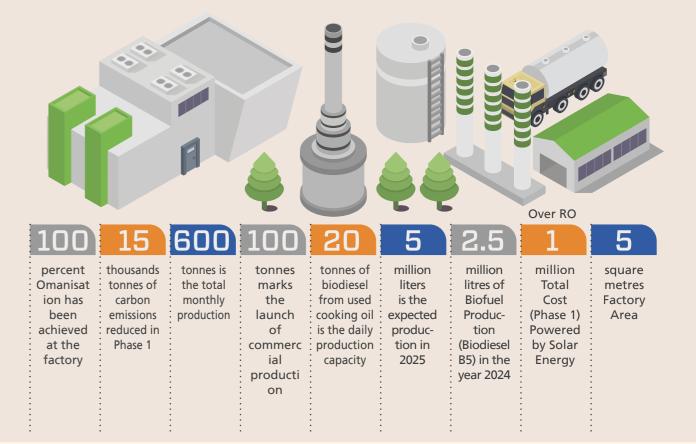
Carbon emission reduction

He added that the benefit of using biodiesel lies in its ability to directly reduce carbon emissions. Burning one litre of regular diesel produces 3.2 kilograms of carbon, whereas using one litre of biodiesel emits only 0.16 kilograms – a 93 per cent reduction in carbon emissions.

The CEO of Wakud noted that, in its first phase, the factory aims to reduce 15,000 tonnes of carbon emissions by producing biodiesel (2.5 kg per litre). In the second phase, the factory will expand to meet 5 per cent of the local market's biofuel demand, resulting in a reduction of 265,000 tonnes of carbon emissions through the production of 8.75 million litres of biodiesel. Furthermore, the factory will expand and secure additional raw material sources, such as extracting oils from fish waste, algae, and palm kernels, to recycle and produce biodiesel.

Product testing

He confirmed that the product has been tested by several companies, including Al Shawamikh Oil Services, Port of Salalah, Schlumberger, ARA Petroleum, and Oman Flour Mills, in collaboration with Oman Oil Marketing Company, which is currently marketing



biodiesel in the Sultanate of Oman. The product was also tested in the maritime sector, where it proved its efficiency in ships and its ability to directly reduce carbon emissions.

He further noted that the company has signed its first local sales contract with the Oman Aluminium Rolling Company, located in the Sohar Industrial Area, under which all equipment will be operated using biodiesel.

Scientific research agreements

Al Habsi stated that a research and development agreement has been signed with Sultan Qaboos University, the German University of Technology, and, more recently, with the Global College of Engineering and Technology. The aim is to develop the sector, provide solutions to enhance production, and train students at the factory, including sending them to the factory's partners in the United Kingdom to gain insights into advancements in the biofuel sector.

The initiative also focuses on continually improving the final product by encouraging students to explore innovations in biodiesel through the factory's laboratories and joint scientific research.

Factory objectives

April 2025

The CEO of Wakud highlighted that one of the main objectives of the biodiesel production plant is to establish a sector for collecting used cooking oil in the Sultanate of Oman. The factory has supported several small and medi-

um-sized enterprises specialising in collecting used oil to ensure a steady supply of raw materials. It also aims to promote a culture of oil collection within the community, encouraging these enterprises to collect oil from cities, towns, and homes by providing them with contracts with companies possessing used oil and guaranteeing fair prices that ensure profitability for these businesses.

Al Habsi further explained that used cooking oil poses significant risks, including being a major cause of certain types of cancer. Additionally, improper disposal of such oils negatively impacts the aesthetic beauty of Oman's cities. For this reason, the factory plans to launch a large-scale campaign across the Sultanate to engage the community in proper disposal practices and to encourage young people to start collecting used cooking oil.

Omanisation Rate

He confirmed that the Omanisation rate in the factory has reached 100 per cent, stating that all positions are held

by young Omanis. Starting from the laboratory, which forms the core of the factory, samples of used cooking oil are analysed to measure acidity, impurities, and water content, determining the required quantities and ratios of chemicals before proceeding to the production phase. This also applies to other roles such as engineering, management, logistics, and more, where the Omani workforce has demonstrated remarkable efficiency and capability in their roles.

Awards and recognition

It is worth noting that Wakud factory received the award for the best renewable energy factory in 2022 at the Al Roya Economic Awards. In 2021, it was honoured with a special award celebrating the trade relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, in 2023, the factory was recognised with the Youth Excellence Award, presented by His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said









Mohammed Al Balushi Economic writer and journalist

Sur Industrial City and Sultan Haitham Port

The roles of industrial and economic cities vary depending on their locations. Cities established on the shores of seas and rivers derive their strength from the presence of a commercial port, while industrial areas developed in inland and desert locations gain their advantage from strategic positioning along major routes and proximity to key enablers and logistical services that support their success.

In the Wilayat of Sur, located in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, Sur Industrial City, under the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), possesses several key elements that enhance its economic, commercial, and investment potential. The city benefits from a competitive edge due to its strategic location, deep waters, proximity to regional market ports, access to international trade routes, and central position between the ports of the East, West, and South. Additionally, it enjoys relative advantages, including its vast area of 36 million square metres, availability of energy services, well-developed logistical support, robust infrastructure, and proximity to internal trade routes that connect it to major markets such as Muscat, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Wusta, Al Batinah North and South, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi.

Reports issued by Madayn indicate that Sur Industrial City has successfully attracted 113 projects across industrial, commercial, service, residential and academic sectors, with cumulative investments reaching approximately RO 2.3 billion. The city provides employment for 2,737 workers, with an Omanisation rate exceeding 55 per cent.

It goes without saying that the success, uniqueness, and distinction of Sur Industrial City today are highly dependent on the presence of a commercial seaport. This presents a significant opportunity for this promising industrial, economic, and investment hub to attract further economic investments, whose success is closely linked to the existence of a commercial port. In this context, it is worth recalling what Dr Mohammed bin Saeed Al Amri highlighted in his doctoral research, documented in his book 'Omani Customs and Their Systems in Modern and Contemporary History (1861-2003)', where he emphasised that "the people of Sur took advantage of their country's location along maritime and communication routes across the Indian Ocean, linking its Asian and African shores."

Reflecting on the contents of this valuable book, it is essential to highlight that Sur Port played a significant role in transporting Indian products and industries to the world, while at the same time, Indian merchants heavily relied on the ships of Sur's seafar-

ers to transport African goods to India on a regular basis. Some may wonder about the most significant goods historically associated with Sur Port. The research identifies these as Gulf pearls, diamonds, gold, iron, ivory, leather, African livestock, rice, spices, ginger, camphor, Indian oud, and rubies from Serendib Island (modern-day Sri Lanka). Furthermore, as Nizwa became the capital of Oman's interior region, it maintained strong trade ties with Sur Port through valley routes to import essential goods.

There is no doubt that commercial ports play a fundamental role in the prosperity of the cities they serve, whether as points of departure or arrival. As Al Amri's research confirms, the ports frequented by Sur's traders on their journeys between Asia and Africa included Basra Port in Iraq, Bandar Abbas in Iran, and the ports of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Dubai along the Arabian Gulf coast. Additionally, they travelled to Karachi Port in Pakistan and several ports along the Indian coast, such as Bombay, Malabar, and Bangalore. Their routes also included Gwadar, Muscat, Quriyat, and Mirbat ports in Oman, as well as Mukalla, Aden, Hodeidah, and Massawa ports in Yemen. On the African coast, key destinations included Mogadishu and Berbera in Somalia, along with Lamu, Mombasa, and Zanzibar on the eastern coast of Africa.

Al Amri further notes in his book that foreign ships using Port of Sur mainly came from India, Kuwait, Dubai, and Yemen. Indian traders transported Indian goods such as timber from Malabar, coal, oils, and textiles from Bombay and Bangalore to Oman via Sur Port, while also importing Omani products, particularly dates and salted fish. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti and Dubai-based ships used the port as a resting point for refuelling with water and firewood or for importing essential commodities such as sugar.

The historical legacy of Sur Port, as chronicled in Al Amri's unique and invaluable book on Omani customs history, would not be complete without acknowledging that Port of Sur rose to prominence during World War II, becoming the most crucial port in the entire region for re-exporting goods—particularly food supplies—to all Gulf countries, especially Dubai and Kuwait, whose ships regularly docked at the port, as Al Amri highlights.

Accordingly, the historical momentum and the commercial, economic, and civilisational role that Port of Sur has played since that era must be revived through a developmental project that aligns with the renewed renaissance of the Sultanate of Oman in its prosperous and blessed era under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik – may Allah pro-

tect and preserve him. This vision calls for the establishment of Sur Commercial Port, which we hope to see realised soon within Sur Industrial City. This port would serve as a crucial link between the ports along the shores of the Sea of Oman and the local markets eager for economic and commercial activity. The rich history of 'Sikka Al Boush' lingers with the fragrant memories of Sur's legendary commercial ships.

We firmly believe in the importance of establishing a commercial port in Sur Industrial City that befits Oman's commercial stature. We look forward to seeing this major commercial, economic, and investment project in the governorate bear the name 'Sultan Haitham Port', renewing with its noble and auspicious name Oman's maritime and trade legacy. This port would stand as one of Oman's most significant maritime hubs, reviving its historical glory and adding strategic value to Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

With the port reinstated in its rightful location, the Silk Road of trade would be revived, making Sultan Haitham Port a central link that revitalises commercial activity across Oman's governorates, particularly those close to Al Sharqiyah South. This port would also enhance the governorate's local added value, reinforcing its economic significance in a tangible manner. The re-establishment of the port may enable the achievement of even greater economic, investment, and commercial gains, as it would open new horizons for reviving history once again.

The presence of a commercial port within Sur Industrial City would attract high-value industrial and commercial pro-

jects, strengthening the city's economic role. These projects would increase economic returns for the governorate, create additional employment opportunities for job seekers, and provide growth prospects for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Moreover, this port would stimulate commercial and economic activity in Sur and the surrounding governorates, significantly reducing import costs from nearby ports

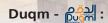
nearby ports. I conclude my article with the insights of researcher Fouz Maan, as presented in her study titled 'The Spatial Importance of Port Cities and Their Impacts', published in the Gulf Journal, Volume 74, 2019. She states, "The presence of a port in a coastal city makes it distinct from any other city, as the city's growth primarily depends on port development, economic revenue, and the roads and infrastructure that connect the port to the city, influencing the shape and stages of urban expansion." She further explains that "the link between ports and urban growth is shaped by both form and function, varying across locations. However, in all coastal regions and cities, a common factor remains—the role of the port, which dictates physical, social, and economic expansion. The port's function is a dominant factor at local, regional, and international levels. However, at the local level, a port's function significantly impacts the city's economy. If compared to other cities, the port is often the leading industry, as described by the 'Growth Pole Theory,' where this industry is highly concentrated, highly responsive to domestic demand, and exhibits a dynamic nature."

The success. distinction and uniqueness of Sur Industrial City today depend on the presence of a commercial seaport. There is a significant opportunity for this promising industrial, economic, and investment hub to attract more economic investments, whose success and excellence are closely linked to the existence of a commercial seaport



Duqm

Port of strengthens regional position with record growth in operational activities for 2024



The Port of Dugm continued to solidify its position as a vital regional hub, experiencing significant growth in operational activities. In 2024, the port received 1,204 ships, up from 933 in 2023, marking a 29 per cent increase. It also expanded its logistics services and enhanced its infrastructure, further strengthening its role as a key trade gateway and boosting operational efficiency.

This growth was driven by a sharp rise in cargo handling volumes, with liquid cargo increasing by 169.2 per cent, dry cargo by 86.2 per cent, and general cargo by 81.6 per cent.

The port's rapid expansion underscores its pivotal role in the Special Economic Zone at Dugm (SEZAD), enhancing its appeal to investors and fostering a business-friendly environment across various sectors, including heavy industries, refining, and renewable energy.

This surge in cargo handling capacity further reinforces the economic zone's ability to attract new investments while supporting infrastructure and logistics expansion strategies, positioning Duqm as a premier destination for business and sustainable development.

Enhancing infrastructure and logistics services

The Cargo Services and Customs Station and the Fishing Port were inaugurated under the patronage of H.E.

Lieutenant General Hassan bin Mohsin Al Shraigi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, enhancing the port's ability to attract local and regional in-

Local and international engagements

The Port of Duqm strengthened its presence at local and international forums through:

China International Import Expo 2024: The port showcased its strategic position as a global logistics hub and presented investment opportunities to Chinese and international companies.

Breakbulk Middle East Conference: Highlighted its advanced logistics capabilities in supporting supply chains for the oil, gas, and energy sectors.

MENA Hydrogen Global Conference 2: The port presented its role as a key hub in the hydrogen value chain, shedding light on the required investments and infrastructure to develop this sector.

NET ZERO - Hydrogen MEA Conference: Participated in a panel discussion on integrating regional hydrogen markets, sharing insights on enhancing trade and exports, further positioning the port as a logistics hub for clean energy.

International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) Conference 2024: Focused on strengthening international cooperation and leadership in the maritime transport sector.

World Seafarers' Day Celebration: The Port of Duqm took part in the event organised by the Ministry of Transport and Communications, where the vital role of seafarers in enhancing maritime trade was highlighted, and several maritime industry professionals were honored in recognition of their

5th Dugm Forum: The Port of Dugm participated in the fifth edition of Dugm Forum, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The forum provided an important platform for stakeholders from various sectors to exchange ideas and discuss ongoing developments that contribute to transforming Dugm into a global hub for industry and logistics.

Maritime Incident Response Drill: To enhance preparedness for maritime incidents, the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, in cooperation with the Port of Dugm and relevant authorities, conducted a tabletop drill to improve coordination, address challenges, and adopt best practices for effective and rapid response.

Development and training

As part of its commitment to human capital development, the Port of Dugm invested 6,943 training hours to enhance the skills of its employees across various operational and administrative fields. The port also launched several specialised training programmes, including a Power BI course and workshops on first aid and occupational safety. Additionally, the port strengthened its partnerships by signing a Memorandum of Understanding

with Middle East College to develop training programmes and attract talent. It also collaborated with Port of Antwerp-Bruges in Belgium on port strategy development programmes.

Supporting local community in environment, education and sustainability

The Port of Dugm reinforces its commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) by supporting initiatives in environmental protection, education, and sustainability, including:

Environmental initiatives:

- Oil Spill Response Drill: Conducted in the presence of H.E. Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of OPAZ, to enhance emergency preparedness.
- E-Waste Recycling Programme: Launched in collaboration with local entities.
- Earth Hour Participation: Promoted environmental awareness on climate change.

Educational initiatives:

- Student Recognition Support: Sponsored awards for outstanding students in Wilayat Dugm.
- Environmental Awareness Campaigns: Organised sessions for school students on marine conservation and waste recycling.

Community initiatives:

- "Your Safety is a Priority" Initiative: Conducted special safety training sessions for students on occupational safety and accident prevention.
- Cross-Country Race Sponsorship: Supported a race organised by the Directorate General of Education in Al Wusta Governorate, with 100 students from 16 schools participating.
- Girls' Handball League Sponsorship: Promoted women's sports activities.
- "Sustainable Energy Challenge - Vision 2040" Workshop: Sponsored by Port of Dugm, this interactive workshop, organised by the SOON initiative, targeted women working in both public and private sectors. The event featured unique activities and rich environmental insights, focusing on Goal 7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Clean Energy, in line with women empowerment and environmental sustainability.

Recognition and achievements

The Port of Dugm received official recognition during His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's visit to Belgium last year, where its pivotal role in supporting the Omani economy was highlighted.

In appreciation of its accomplishments, the Port of Dugm was nominated for the Excellence Award at the Oman Economic Magazine Business Summit 2024, acknowledging its contributions to strengthening the nation-

Additionally, the port signed a new agreement to develop a Vessel Traffic System (VTS), further enhancing maritime safety in the region.

Supporting hydrogen and future energy projects

The Port of Duqm remains committed to supporting future hydrogen projects, working to enhance infrastructure, provide technical support, and offer specialised consultations that will enable these projects to become a reality in the near future.

By offering technical studies, the port fosters an ideal environment for developing the hydrogen and clean energy sector, reinforcing Duqm's position as a strategic hub for sustainable energy.

Future outlook

As the port continues to pursue its ambitious vision, it remains dedicated to infrastructure development and operational efficiency to fully capitalise on its strategic location, aiming for a more sustainable and prosperous

6943

training hours to enhance employees' skills across various operational and



increase in

%81.6

general cargo

ships received by the port in 2024

1204

%86.2

rise in dry cargo



%29

increase in ship arrivals



April 2025

From an Idea to an Integrated Factory

Entrepreneur Manar Al Jahwari innovates eco-friendly filament, pioneering success in 3D printer ink manufacturing from sea algae



Muscat - الدقية :

Manar Al Jahwari, Entrepreneur, has emerged as a source of inspiration, establishing the first specialised factory in the Arab world for producing 3D printer filament from eco-friendly materials. Her pioneering venture, Royal Filament, was not just an idea but an innovative model that challenges traditional industry boundaries, leveraging sea algae to create sustainable plastic alternatives.

Entrepreneurial journey

Manar's journey into entrepreneurship began when she was a student at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Musannah. Her first experience came through her sister's entrepreneurial project, unaware at the time that this experience would be the launchpad for an extraordinary career. However, the real turning point came when she participated in the Injaz Oman

With her determination and excellence, she carved her own path, becoming a symbol of inspiration. She proves that success does not come easily, and every step carries a new lesson



competition, where the idea for Royal Filament was born—an initiative that integrates technology with sustainability, providing an eco-friendly solution for manufacturing filament used in 3D printers. This filament can be utilised in producing industrial parts, educational models, and artistic structures.

Product development and global ambitions

The journey was not easy. Developing the product took nearly two years of research, experiments, and overcoming challenges, but determination made the difference. Through relentless efforts, the project won more than 12 local and international awards, including the Best Promising Project award in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it secured a patent and quality certifications, affirming its ex-

cellence in the market.

From an Idea to an Integrated Factory Al Jahwari project focuses on

The product's development took nearly two years of research, experiments, and challenges, but perseverance made the difference

The project has won
more than 12 local and
international awards,
including the Best Promising
Project award in the Kingdom
of Saudi Arabia

The project revolves around developing bio-plastic filaments from sea algae for use in 3D printers, enabling the production of high-efficiency products without harming the environment

developing bio-plastic filaments made from sea algae, designed for use in 3D printing to produce high-performance products without harming the environment. Today, Royal Filament is no longer just a startup idea—it has evolved into a fully integrated factory providing comprehensive 3D printing solutions, from printers and raw materials to specialised design services. With this expansion, the goal is clear: to enter global markets with an innovative Omani product that embodies sustainability and technology.

Inspirational message

April 2025

Manar Al Jahwari concludes her story with an inspiring message for entrepreneurs: "Success does not come easily. Every step carries a new lesson, and challenges are part of the journey that shapes your story."

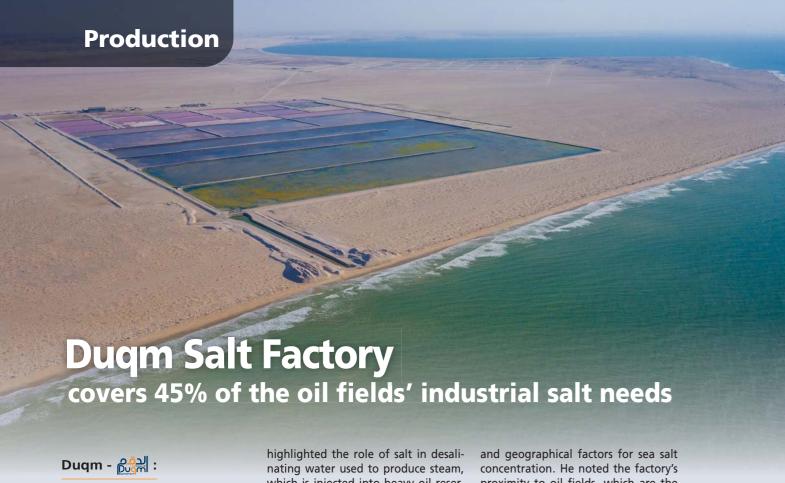
With this vision, Royal Filament continues to shape the future of industry, where innovation meets sustainability and ideas transform into achievements that place the Sultanate of Oman on the global map of advanced industries.







Manar Al Jahwari



Located on Bantawt beach in the Wilayat of Mahout, approximately 80 kilometres from Port of Duqm Port, the Duqm Salt Factory is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, producing raw and industrial salt tailored for companies operating in oil fields. The factory boasts an annual production capacity of 135,000 tonnes, with an impressive purity rate of 99.99 per cent.

These strategic projects provide added value to the national economy by strengthening the presence of Omani products in local and global markets. Therefore, supporting the factory by encouraging government and private consumer companies to prioritise its products over imported salt is essential. Future plans include expanding the factory's activities and introducing new products to meet local market demands and global export opportunities.

Khalid bin Ali Al Junaibi, CEO of Global Integrated Engineering company, explained to "Economic Duqm" that the idea of establishing the factory emerged in response to the growing demand for industrial salt from oil companies, which use it in drilling operations. He emphasised that salt is a crucial component of drilling fluids, which ensure the stability of excavated sections and prevent their collapse while maintaining pressure levels inside the well. Additionally, he

highlighted the role of salt in desalinating water used to produce steam, which is injected into heavy oil reservoirs to enhance production through a technique scientifically known as Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR).

Al Junaibi added that the selection of the Wilayat of Mahout in the Al Wusta Governorate for establishing the factory was due to its proximity to Duqm Port and the economic projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). The location also benefits from favourable environmental



Khalid Al Junaibi:
The company has invested
approximately RO 12 million
in the project, which spans an
area of 1.7 million square metres
and produces 135,000 tonnes of
industrial salt annually

and geographical factors for sea salt concentration. He noted the factory's proximity to oil fields, which are the primary consumers of its products, and expressed gratitude to government entities for providing the project land under usufruct and investment arrangements.

Investment and expansion

Al Junaibi stated that the company has invested approximately RO 12 million in the project, which spans an area of 1.7 million square metres and produces 135,000 tonnes of industrial salt annually. The production capacity can be increased to one million tonnes per year by extending operational shifts and expanding certain facilities within the factory.

He added that the company seeks to expand into downstream industries by utilising minerals associated with salt production, such as bromine and sodium bromide, as well as industries reliant on raw salt, such as chlorine and alkali compounds.

Economic feasibility

Regarding the economic feasibility of the project, Al Junaibi emphasised that industrial salt was previously imported from several countries in quantities exceeding 90 million tonnes annually, with substantial local consumption. The factory currently covers 70 per cent of local market needs, with the potential to increase this proportion based on the requirements of oil fields. He highlighted that the

salt produced boasts high quality and a purity level of 99.99 per cent, meeting the specifications demanded by oil companies.

Production and advanced technology

On the factory's products, Al Junaibi explained that salt production relies on natural evaporation using sunlight in saltwater drying ponds (both marine and groundwater). The salt is gradually concentrated through these ponds under specific environmental conditions, and in the final stage, raw salt is harvested and purified from impurities such as sand and dust.

He added that the factory uses advanced technology to ensure the salt meets global standards. The production process involves multiple stages, including filtration, crushing, screening, packaging, and distribution. The factory currently supplies industrial salt to three major oil companies: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Occidental Oman, and Halliburton, with plans to expand into downstream industries in the future.

Enhancing economic activity

Al Junaibi affirmed that Duqm Salt Factory contributes significantly to the nation's economic activity by encouraging the establishment of various related projects. The availability of raw materials locally reduces the cost of setting up these projects compared to reliance on imported salt. Additionally, such industries enhance added value within the local market by creating new job opportunities for citizens and utilising local manufacturing materials and services.

Omanisation rate

Regarding Omanisation, Al Junaibi noted that by the end of 2024, the factory employed 25 workers, 14 of whom are Omanis. There are plans to hire more Omani youth during the expansion phase, which is expected to commence in 2025.

Social responsibility

لدِثِم April 2025

Al Junaibi highlighted the company's various social initiatives, including supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the region by awarding them several contracts. The company also prioritises employing individuals from communities near the factory and organises voluntary campaigns focusing on environmental care, such as beach cleaning. Additionally, it supports local sports teams and home-based businesses.









FLAG Logistics" Starts Operations to Enhance Supply Chains in "Khazaen"



Barka - Pula :

FLAG Logistics, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Gulf Warehousing Company Q.P.S.C (GWC), has begun its operations in Khazaen Economic City in December 2023. This step is part of the group's expansion in the Gulf region and enhancing its logistics presence. The new facility spans 50,000 square meters, divided into specialized areas to meet various storage needs, including dry, air-conditioned, and cold storage, in addition to records management. The warehouse and main distribution center cover an area of 27,500 square meters.

Strategic Location to Enhance Trade Connectivity

FLAG Logistics is the first company launched in Khazaen Economic City, which boasts a strategic location close to ports and border crossings, enabling easy access to approximately 80% of the Sultanate's population within just two hours. Sheikh Abdulla Bin Fahad Bin Jassim Bin Jaber Al Thani, Group Managing Director of GWC Group, affirmed that this step represents an important milestone in the group's expansion journey in the Gulf, noting that Oman will serve as a pivotal hub linking the Gulf and global markets.

Supporting the Omani Economy

For his part, Engineer Salem Al-Dhahli, CEO of khazaen Economic City, stated that "FLAG's presence in Khazaen will support supply and refrigeration chains and provide logistical solutions for companies and investors." He added that the project aligns with the objectives of the Omani logistics strategy, which

aims to transform the Sultanate into a global logistics hub contributing 14% of the GDP by 2040. Ranjeev Menon, CEO of GWCS Group, said: "FLAG will benefit from over 20 years of market experience earned by GWC, in line with achieving the strategic goals for Oman." Menon added: "Our aspirations are for FLAG to become a bridge connecting businesses to markets, producers to consumers, and Oman to the global economy. Through its innovative logistics supply solutions, it aims to facilitate trade, ensure its seemlessness, and thus contribute to the prosperity of the Omani economy, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040."

The first company
launched in the Khazaen
Economic City and
is distinguished by
its strategic location
near ports and border
crossings

Investing in Omani Talents

FLAG Logistics has also announced its commitment to attracting Omani talents and providing training and mentorship to enhance their capabilities in facing the challenges of the logistics sector. The company plans to build long-term partnerships with various entities in Oman to support the growth of the logistics ecosystem.

It is worth noting that FLAG Logistics is an operational arm of GWC Group, which was established in 2004 and is one of the fastest-growing logistics service companies in the Middle East and North Africa. The group provides integrated supply chain solutions, ranging from storage and distribution to transportation, customs clearance, and value-added services, with a focus on operational excellence and customer satisfaction. This new step through FLAG Logistics embodies an ambitious vision towards enhancing regional and international trade, with an effective contribution to supporting the economic growth of the Sultanate of Oman in line with Oman



Drawing on Its Extensive Operational Experience in various Ports at Muscat, Salalah, and Sohar

Hormuz Marine Expands its Operations at Duqm Port to Bolster Maritime and Logistics Services

الدورة : Duqm - الدورة :

In a strategic move to strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's maritime infrastructure, Hormuz Marine, a leading Omani company specializing in marine fuel supply, has expanded its operations at Dugm Port.

With this milestone, Hormuz Marine becomes the first Omani SME-registered firm to secure a license for bunkering operations at the port—an advancement that aligns with national efforts to localize maritime services and empower homegrown enterprises in the logistics and shipping sectors.

This expansion marks a pivotal step in the government's broader vision to elevate the role of local companies in key economic sectors. By deepening its footprint in Duqm, Hormuz Marine not only contributes to the port's transformation into a regional hub for marine services but also paves the way for enhanced national competitiveness and investment appeal in the global maritime industry.

Building on Proven Expertise

Backed by extensive operational experience in Muscat, Salalah, and Sohar ports, Hormuz Marine is well-positioned to raise the bar for efficiency and service quality at Duqm Port. The company is leveraging its international shipping line partnerships to attract a wider range of commercial vessels to the port.

A Full Suite of Services

Hormuz Marine offers a compre-

hensive portfolio of marine services that adhere to the highest global standards in environmental and operational performance. These include

The company seeks to strengthen the efficiency of marine operations and attract more international and commercial vessels to the port, leveraging its global partnerships with major shipping lines.

Hormuz Marine delivers integrated suite of services aligned with the highest international environmental and operational standards, including the supply of marine fuel, lubricants, bio-fuels, and full marine agency support.

bio-fuels, in addition to ship agency services—bolstering Duqm Port's readiness to deliver integrated, world-class logistics solutions.

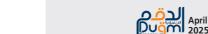
This milestone aligns with Oman's

the provision of fuel, lubricants, and

This milestone aligns with Oman's ongoing initiatives to enhance the national business environment and unlock high-potential investment opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises. It also supports the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040, reinforcing the strategic role of domestic companies in driving sustainable economic growth and integrated logistics development across the Sultanate's ports.









IMF expects global economic growth to reach 3.3% in 2025

Washington -

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released optimistic projections for global economic growth, particularly in the Middle East and Central Asia, while highlighting a potential decline in energy prices due to reduced demand in China.

The IMF expects global economic growth to rise to 3.3 per cent in 2025 and 2026, although this remains below the historical average of 3.7 per cent recorded in 2019 and 2000.

These insights were included in the IMF's report on the World Economic Outlook Updates, titled 'Global Growth: Divergent and Uncertain.'

The projected global growth rate for this year has been revised upward by 0.1 percentage points compared to the IMF's October 2024 World Economic Outlook report, while forecasts for the next

year remain unchanged from the previous assessment.

The IMF estimates that global economic growth slowed to 3.2 per cent last year, compared to 3.3 per cent in 2023.

Middle East region

The IMF has predicted a recovery in the growth rates of economies in the Middle East and Central Asia, with the region's growth expected to rise to 3.6 per cent in 2025, compared to 2.4 per cent in the previous year, 2024.

Global inflation is expected to decline over the current and next years, reaching 4.2% in 2025 and further dropping to 3.5% in 2026

The IMF also anticipates that the region's economic growth will continue to increase, reaching 3.9 per cent in 2026.

Despite the potential recovery, the growth rate remains 0.3 percentage points lower than projected in the World Economic Outlook report published in October 2024.

The IMF attributed this to a downward revision of Saudi Arabia's economic growth forecast by 1.3 percentage points in 2025, due to the extension of oil production cuts by the OPEC+ alliance.

Inflation rates

The IMF expects the global inflation rate to decline over the current and next years, reaching 4.2 per cent in 2025 and continuing to drop to 3.5 per cent in 2026.

The IMF noted that the global average for core inflation has recently been slightly above 2 per cent.

Although inflation in commodity prices has eased, inflation in ser-



vice prices remains above pre-pandemic levels in many economies, particularly in the United States and the Eurozone.

Energy prices

The IMF projects a 2.6 per cent decline in energy prices in 2025, reflecting lower oil prices due to weak demand from China, strong supplies from non-OPEC+ countries, and rising gas prices driven by cold-

er weather and supply disruptions.

OPEC+ refers to the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and select non-member countries, including Russia.

Global growth in Q3 2024

Global GDP growth in Q3 2024 was 0.1 percentage points lower than projected in the IMF's October 2024 World Economic Outlook. This adjustment followed disappointing data from some Asian and European economies.

China's growth rate of 4.7 per cent year-on-year fell short of expectations. The slowdown in consumption, linked to delayed stability in the real estate market and persistently low consumer confidence, was only partially offset by a rise in net exports.

India's growth also slowed more than anticipated, driven by a sharper-than-expected decline in industrial activity.

The Eurozone experienced weak economic growth, particularly in Germany, where the manufacturing sector and goods exports underperformed despite recovering consumption and improved real incomes.

Japan's growth contracted slightly during this period due to temporary supply disruptions, while the U.S. economy maintained strong momentum, growing by 2.7 per cent year-on-year in Q3 2024, supported by robust consumer spending.

China, US and Eurozone growth projections

China's economic growth is ex-

Energy prices are forecasted to decrease by 2.6% in 2025, reflecting lower oil prices driven by weakened demand from China

pected to decline to 4.6 per cent in 2025 from 4.8 per cent in 2024, with a further drop to 4.5 per cent in 2026. Similarly, the United States is forecasted to experience slower growth, decreasing to 2.7 per cent in 2025 from 2.8 per cent in 2024, and continuing to decline to 2.1 per cent in 2026. Meanwhile, the Eurozone's growth is projected to improve slightly, reaching 1 per cent in 2025, up from 0.8 per cent in 2024, and further rising to 1.4 per cent in 2026.

Global trade volume

The IMF slightly lowered its estimates for global trade volume in 2025 and 2026. This revision reflects heightened uncertainty regarding global trade policies, which is expected to disproportionately impact investment in trade-intensive industries.

The IMF warns that the intensification of protectionist policies, such as a new wave of tariff impositions, could exacerbate trade tensions, reduce investment, lower global market efficiency, distort trade flows, and disrupt supply chains.





Duqm - Pugal :

One year after achieving full operational capacity, Duqm Refinery (OQ8) has successfully increased its refining capacity from 230,000 to 255,000 barrels per day, marking 10 per cent of its maximum refining potential. This milestone highlights the refinery's commitment to driving growth, enhancing sustainability, and improving operational efficiency in the energy sector.

David Bird, CEO of OQ8, stated, "Since taking on this project, Duqm Refinery has demonstrated exceptional resilience and a clear strategic vision. Today, we can confidently say that our growth reflects the dedication of our team, the strength of our partnerships, and the unwavering support from our shareholders, OQ Group and Kuwait Petroleum International, as well as our suppliers and contractors, OQ Trading and the Oil Trading Division of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. Without the continuous commitment of these companies, reaching this critical milestone would not have been possible."

Refinery key developments

Among the key developments in

Duqm Refinery's journey is its successful completion of the Lenders' Reliability Test just ten months after completing mechanical works, reinforcing its technical efficiency, operational readiness, and reliability. Additionally, Duqm Refinery is the first commercial refinery in the Middle East to demonstrate expertise in sourcing and processing various types of crude oil, highlighting its flexibility and strong commercial presence in a rapidly growing global market.

Omanisation rate

Duqm Refinery has made significant

The refinery has achieved a

Omanisation rate

in its workforce

progress in workforce development, increasing its Omanisation rate to 68 per cent, up from 60 per cent at the start of operations. This achievement reflects the refinery's commitment to nurturing national talent and supporting broader objectives through the advancement of Oman's workforce.

Enhancing energy security

Duqm Refinery's achievements go beyond operational success; it has also established itself as a reliable partner and a catalyst for economic growth in the region. Since the launch of full operations, the refinery has prioritized efficiency, reliability, and high safety standards, contributing to enhancing regional energy security and solidifying Oman's position as a global energy hub.

Future vision

As Duqm Refinery continues to uphold safety, stability, and reliability in its operations, its future vision remains centered on achieving sustainable growth, driving technological innovation, and enhancing commercial flexibility to adapt to the ever-evolving market demands.





Saleh Nabhan Al Maamari

Editor-in-Chief of Dugm Economist Magazine

Renewed vision for sustainable development

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik – may Allah protect and preserve him – affirmed in his speech marking the fifth anniversary of his accession to power on 11 January, the importance of developing the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman, considering it the cornerstone for driving development and achieving sustainable growth. In his Royal Speech, His Majesty focused on stimulating investment by providing facilities and economic incentives, in addition to improving the regulatory environment, in a way that enhances the Oman's competitiveness and attracts more local and foreign investments.

In his Royal Speech, His Majesty the Sultan said: "Developing the investment and commercial environment is a fundamental necessity for driving development in the country. Therefore, we have directed the government to provide the necessary facilities, offer competitive incentives, and create a supportive investment climate that facilitates doing business, ensuring the diversification of our national economy, fostering sustainable growth, and generating more job opportunities across various economic and service sectors. This will position Oman as an attractive investment destination, more integrated into the global economic system. To achieve this integration, our government has sought to build an extensive network of ports, free zones, special economic zones and integrated industrial cities, while supporting innovation programmes, entrepreneurship and investment funds, both national and those in partnership with sisterly and friendly countries."

These Royal directives come as part of an ambitious vision for a brighter future, one that centres on people, sustainable development, political stability, and economic prosperity. His Majesty the Sultan also affirmed the importance of achieving a balance between economic, social, and environmental development, within a promising vision that seeks to solidify Oman's position as a leading investment destination in the region, supporting sustainable growth and keeping pace with global economic changes.

The Royal Speech highlights the importance of improving administrative procedures within government entities related to investment, by offering more facilities, competitive incentives, and a supportive environment that simplifies doing business. These efforts aim to ensure the diversification of the national economy and the achievement of sustainable growth.

There is no doubt that the strategic direction towards economic diversification reflects the Sultanate's commitment to reducing reliance on traditional sectors such as oil and gas, one of the key goals of Oman Vision 2040.

As part of these ambitious plans, efforts have been directed towards developing modern infrastructure that meets the requirements of a dignified life and encourages businesspeople and investors. This has been realised through the establishment of an extensive network of ports, free zones, special economic zones and industrial cities, all of which offer an ideal environment for business and investment.

To enhance Oman's appeal as a globally integrated investment destination, ongoing work is focused on promoting innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting innovation programmes and establishing investment funds.

The focus on improving the investment environment also serves as a positive driver for the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities across the Sultanate of Oman. These zones play a crucial role in attracting investments, with their total value estimated at around RO 21 billion. They also contribute, both directly and indirectly, to expanding employment opportunities and increasing Omani exports to global markets.

His Majesty the Sultan also emphasised the importance of building and empowering the Omani individual to actively contribute to economic development. A significant portion of his speech was dedicated to the Omani youth, stressing that the advancement of economic sectors cannot be achieved without providing appropriate education and training opportunities that prepare young people to take part in major and innovative projects. His Majesty the Sultan further underscored the importance of aligning economic development plans with the needs of youth, stating that human capital is the central driver of development.

In conclusion, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik – may Allah protect and preserve him – reaffirmed the need to continue working diligently to achieve the nation's ambitious goals, with a focus on economic transformation that enhances Oman's leadership across various sectors. He noted that involving everyone in this national endeavour contributes to the advancement of the country and the development of an integrated system that unites economic progress with social stability.

the Sultan affirmed the **importance** of balancing economic, social and environmental development within a promising vision that positions **Oman** as a leading regional investment destination supporting sustainable growth and aligning with global economic shifts

His Majesty



Private sector investments in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in 2024

The economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in the Sultanate of Oman, overseen by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), witnessed a significant increase in private sector investments committed in 2024. This reflects the attractiveness of these zones to both local and international investors. These investments were distributed across various sectors, including industry, trade, logistics, clean energy, real estate, and services. A total of 325 investment agreements were signed, contributing to the enhancement of the business environment and supporting sustainable economic development.



Unspecified: RO 1,500,000

استثمارات القطاع الخاص في المناطق الدقتصادية والحرة والصناعية في عام 2024

شهدت المناطق الاقتصادية والحرة والصناعية في سلطنة عُمان والتي تشرف عليها الهيئة العامة للمناطق الاقتصادية الخاصة والمناطق الحرة تطورًا ملحوظًا في حجم استثمارات القطاع الخاص الملتزم به خلال عام 2024، الأمر الذي يعكس جاذبية هذه المناطق للمستثمرين المحليين والدوليين. وقد توزعت هذه الاستثمارات على قطاعات متنوعة، تشمل الصناعة، التجارة، اللوجستيات، الطاقة النظيفة، العقارات، والخدمات، حيث تم توقيع 325 اتفاقية استثمارية، ما أسهم في تعزيز بيئة الأعمال ودعم تحقيق التنمية الاقتصادية المستدامة.

