



Investments
totaling
RO

17

billion recorded in
economic, free,
and industrial
zones

**A Year Brimming
with Achievements**



خزائن
khazaen

Khazaen Economic City

Emerges as a Lucrative Hub for Investments and Business Ventures

A Prime Pick for Investors with a Strategic Location at Global Trade Map



Unmatched Destination for Investments with Unparallel Freedom in Project Management and Development



Enhanced Attractiveness Through Appealing Long-Term Investment Contracts



Promising Quality Investments in Global Priority Industries



Promising economic sectors



Clean
energy



Technology
and business



Pharmaceutical



Industrial



Food
industries



Logistics



استكشف المناطق
الاقتصادية الخاصة والمناطق
الحرة في عُمان
وجهاتكم الأمثل للإستثمار

EXPLORE OMAN'S SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES AND FREE ZONES

DESTINATIONS OF CHOICE

المنطقة الحرة بالمزينة
AL MAZUNAH FREE ZONE

15.3km²

المزينة
AL MAZUNAH

SOHAR
45km²
صهار
SOHAR

خزائن
khazaen

52km²

خزائن
KHAZAEN

الدقم
Special Economic Zone
Sultanate of Oman
سلطنة عُمان

2000km²
الدقم
DUQM

المنطقة الحرة بصلالة
Salalah Free Zone
The world within your hands

21.6km²

صلالة
SALALAH

مدائن
madayn 163km²

مدينة شناس الصناعية
Shinas Industrial City

مدينة البريمي الصناعية
Al Buraimi Industrial City

مدينة صهار الصناعية
Sohar Industrial City

مدينة عبري الصناعية
Ibri Industrial City

مدينة الرسيل الصناعية
Al Rusayl Industrial City

واحة المعرفة مسقط
Knowledge Oasis Muscat

مدينة سمائل الصناعية
Samail Industrial City

مدينة نزوى الصناعية
Nizwa Industrial City

مدينة المضبيبي الصناعية
Al Mudhaibi Industrial City

مدينة صور الصناعية
Sur Industrial City

مدينة ثمريت الصناعية
Thumrait Industrial City

مدينة ريسوت الصناعية
Raysut Industrial City

استثمر في أرض الفرص
INVEST IN THE LAND OF
OPPORTUNITIES



سلطنة عُمان
OMAN

Armed with high ambitions, quality standards, and a dedicated team, we are assured that, our capabilities and resources can bring long-term and sustainable benefits to all our stakeholders across different industries and subindustries and all supply chain activities.



A year full of success

During 2023, special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities achieved notable successes across diverse investment sectors. This is evident in the statistics released by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), revealing a growth in the cumulative investment volume exceeding RO 17 billion by mid-June 2023.

The crucial aspect lies in the establishment of high-quality projects within economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities. These projects not only align with investor expectations but also address the needs and ambitions of the Sultanate of Oman. This encompasses endeavors in green industries, achieving carbon neutrality, fostering the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), promoting local capital investment within the Sultanate, and attracting foreign investments to meet their growth and sustainability requirements.

In 2023, Royal Decree No. 44/2023 was issued, establishing the Khazaen Economic City and outlining its regulations. The year also witnessed a heightened focus on promotional and marketing initiatives for economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities, coinciding with the expansion of the zones under OPAZ's supervision, reaching nearly 30 investment zones, of which 8 were announced in 2023. Among these is the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahirah Governorate, which has garnered special attention from both Omani and Saudi stakeholders, serving as one of the zones aimed at fostering intra-trade and encouraging investment partnerships.

Furthermore, a concession agreement was signed for the management and operation of the free zone at Muscat International Airport in 2023. Anticipated outcomes include the enhancement of Oman's stake in the transit and transshipment services trade, along with a significant contribution to the advancement of multimodal transport services.

Despite numerous accomplishments, the year 2023 presented its fair share of challenges which were diligently addressed by OPAZ by focusing on institutional development, leveraging electronic technology, and executing various electronic transformation projects. The primary goal was to enhance the working environment and streamline investment procedures.

In the past year, significant milestones were achieved as part of OPAZ's institutional transformation plan which is developed in collaboration with an Irish expertise house. This plan entails crafting a national strategy for the advancement of economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities. The focus is on collaborating with partners to expedite the delivery of tailored solutions aligned with investor requirements. Additionally, the plan involves the examination of new zones, master plans in strategic locations, and the pursuit of various objectives aimed at bolstering the competitiveness of OPAZ and the zones under its supervision.

The trajectory of economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities heading into 2024 is marked by resilience, determination, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Despite challenges, the unwavering efforts of both the zones and their workforce have yielded remarkable achievements, setting the stage for further success to align with the aspirations and ambitions of investors. As these zones evolve into dynamic investment hubs, they stand poised to play pivotal roles in driving economic growth, attracting investments, and fostering innovation.

Editorial



With more confidence and determination, economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities are entering 2024, while their workforce are making every effort to speed up work and keep up with the aspirations of investors

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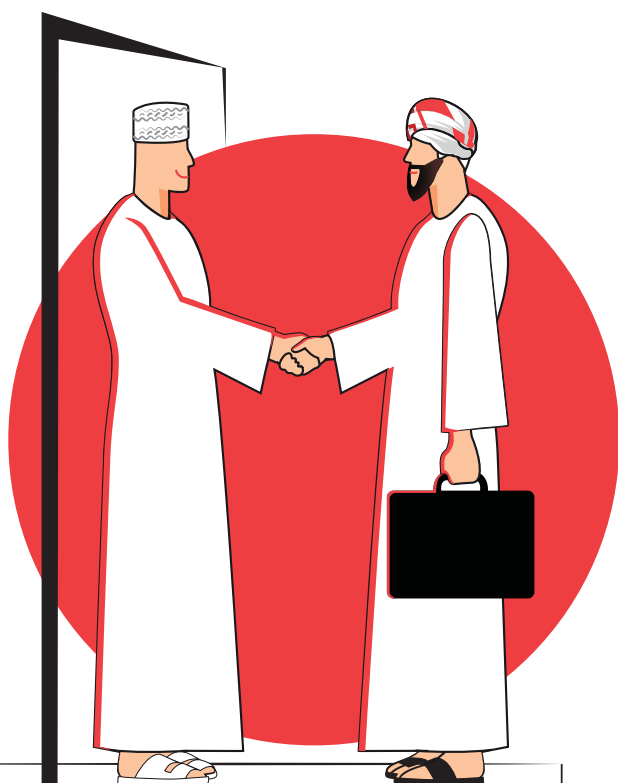
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OPAZ and Asyad Group Sign Landmark Concession Agreement for the Strategic Muscat International Airport Free Zone



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Sayy Commercial District... a vibrant investment destination



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Investments totaling RO 17 billion recorded in economic, free, and industrial zones



Duqm Refinery: In 2023, the Refinery underwent a trial operation, with initial exports of high-sulfur fuel and high-quality diesel marking the first shipments

Muscat -

The total invested capital in special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities overseen by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) surpassed RO 17 billion by June 2023. These statistics demonstrate substantial interest in investing in Oman due to its favorable investment climate, diverse incentives, and extensive facilities. Additionally, administrative and technical teams are actively aiding investors, helping them navigate challenges and providing support.

The volume of investments in existing industrial cities totaled RO 7.3 billion, with Salalah's free zone attracting investments worth RO 4.5 billion. Additionally, the SEZAD saw investments surpassing RO 4.2 billion, while the Sohar Free Zone and Al Mazyouna Free Zone secured investments of RO 570 million and over RO 139 million, respectively. Meanwhile, the cumulative investment committed in Khazaen Economic City reached RO 323 million until the last quarter of 2023, according to OPAZ's statistics.


Green Industries

The green industries sector stands as a focal point for OPAZ, aligning with Oman's commitment towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Throughout 2023 and preceding years, OPAZ successfully attracted cutting-edge initiatives within the renewable energy, green hydrogen, and green steel domains. This accom-

plishment stems from leveraging the conducive investment climate and multiple conducive factors vital for project success, including expansive land areas overseen by OPAZ available for investment, abundant solar and wind energy resources, well-developed logistical infrastructure supporting project investments, as well as investment-friendly regulations and incentives.

To activate this role, the Duqm Economic Forum, held by the SEZAD on October 16 and 17, 2023, saw the signing of several agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoU) in the green industries sector. These agreements involved significant local and international entities such as the OQ Group, Shell Development Company, DEME Concessions from Belgium, BP Alternative Energy Investments, and Vulcan Green Steel. In addition, several Korean and French companies under the Engie-Posco consortium aim to establish a green ammonia production plant in Duqm with an annual production capacity of up to 1.2 million tons. The primary objectives of these agreements are to bolster economic diversification endeavors and fulfill Oman's targets for achieving zero neutrality.

The Duqm Economic Forum is the first of its kind to be organized in the Duqm Special Economic Zone to discuss investment issues in the green industries sector, renewable energy and green hydrogen. The Forum contributed to introducing this sector and emphasizing the role of Duqm in leading the green industries sector.


Offering favorable investment atmosphere, diverse incentives, and technical as well as support to tackle hurdles

2023

A year brimming with achievements

Partnership and Development Forum discusses opportunities to enhance In-Country value, Social Responsibility and support institutions

January 31

February 1

OPAZ signs a MoU is signed with the Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority (ECZA) in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia

OPAZ grants the supervised zones the authority to issue and renew environmental permits and licenses for all projects in accordance with Resolution No. (37/2023) on the regulation of environmental procedures

March 31

May 6

OPAZ wins the Government Achievements Award at the Arab Digital Government Awards 2023

OPAZ organizes the annual media meet

May 7

OPAZ's Chairman and the Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources discuss the general plan of the Integrated Economic Zone Project in Al Dhahira Governorate, and ways to encourage Omani & Saudi Industrial and logistics companies to invest in the zone

May 10

OPAZ celebrates its distinguished employees according to the Individual Performance Measurement System (Ejada)

June 19

May 27

OPAZ wins the 3D Printing Technology Award at the COMEX Awards 2023

May 22

OPAZ displays its latest electronic services within its participation in COMEX 2023

May 16

OPAZ organizes a meeting to introduce Al Rawdha Economic Zone in the Wilayat of Mahdah

June 21

A training program on the Strategic Community Partnership for Sustainability is organized as part of OPAZ's efforts to promote the concept of voluntary work among its employees

July 1

«Paperless» initiative kicks off

July 3

A Royal Decree No. 44/2023 establishing Khazaen Economic City and stipulating its regulations issued

July 12

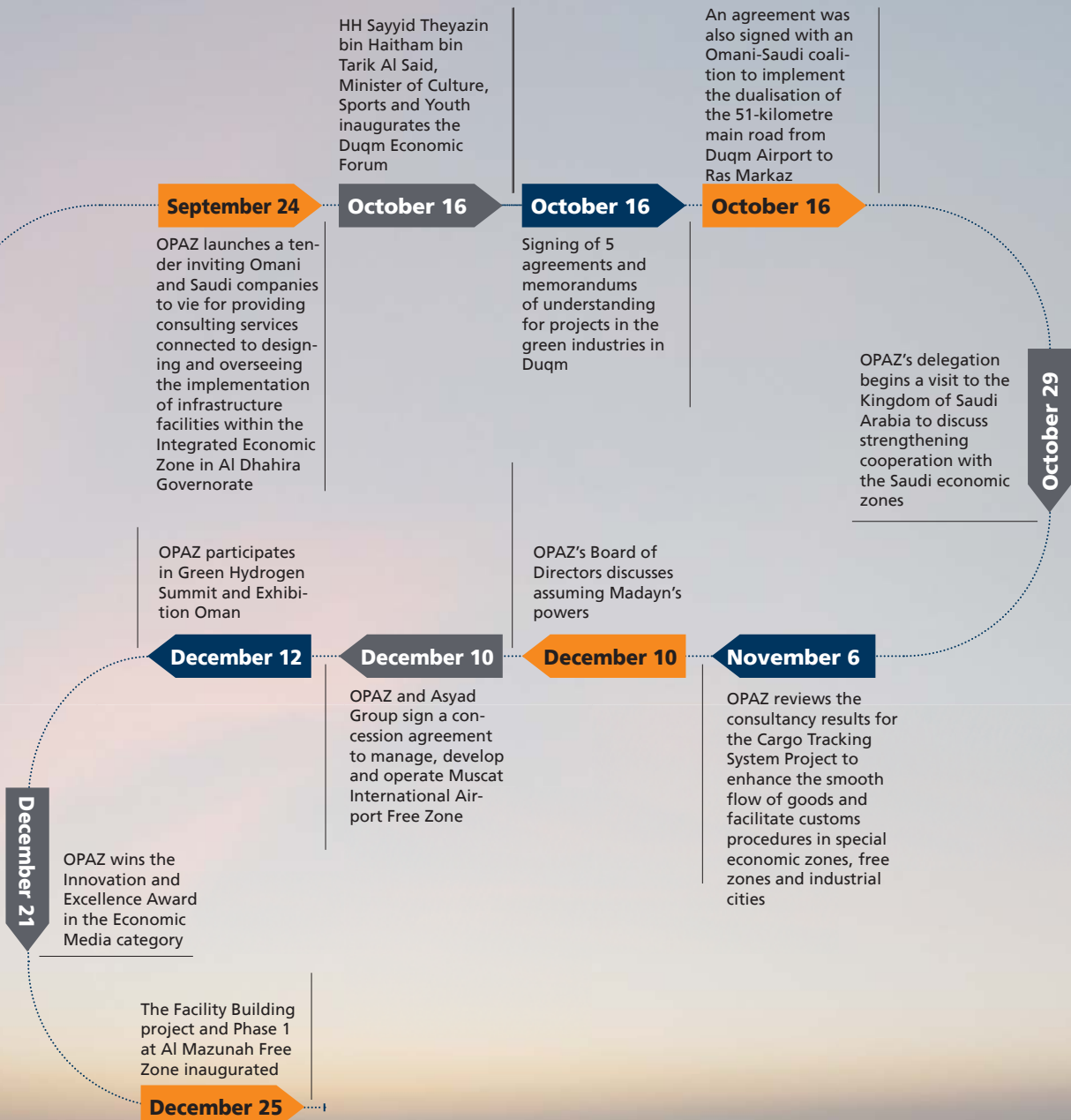
OPAZ's delegation in Dublin discusses the benefits of the Irish experience in the management and development of economic zones and industrial cities

August 1

The decision on the reduced fees of more than 80 services provided by OPAZ takes effect in its various special economic zones and free zones

September 20

OPAZ's Board of Directors approves the general framework of its annual plan and the zones it supervises for the year 2024



Drawing in fresh investments in the green industries to align with Oman's endeavors toward achieving zero neutrality

Organizing promotional visits abroad and encouraging investment partnerships between Omani companies and their foreign counterparts

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) holds a prominent status as one of the most extensive investment zones in both the Sultanate of Oman and the region. This is attributed to its adeptness in drawing diverse investment projects across industrial, commercial, tourism, logistics, real estate development, and other sectors. In the first half of 2023, the zone notably attracted new investments totaling RO185 million. Moreover, the administrative body of the zone formalized 16 new investment agreements and processed 111 investment applications during this period. The expansive 2000 square kilometer within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm accommodates the needs of investors seeking substantial land for their investment ventures. This ample space caters to developers aiming to execute diverse projects by providing them with appropriate areas, along with offering supplementary benefits.

Boosted Promotional Campaigns

In 2023, there was a significant escalation in promotional and marketing endeavors aimed at economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities. This surge coincided with the expansion of zones overseen by OPAZ, totaling around 30 investment zones. Notably, eight new zones were announced in 2023, comprising areas in different stages such as under construction, undergoing study, or in the planning phase. These encompassed the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahira Governorate, the Muscat International Airport Free Zone, and Al Rawdha Special Economic Zone in Buraimi Governorate, collectively spanning over 2,200 square kilometers.

To bolster the significance of these zones, OPAZ hosted numerous economic delegations from overseas in 2023. It also arranged visits to economic zones abroad, aiming to gain insights from their practices, explore potential areas for collaboration, and foster investment partnerships between Omani enterprises and

international counterparts. The zones under OPAZ's supervision play a pivotal role in realizing Oman's ambitions for economic diversification and employment generation. Approximately 75 thousand workers are employed within these zones, according to statistics.

Business Development

In 2023, OPAZ finalized its endeavors focused on the enhancement and management of business operations within its jurisdictions. The first half of the year saw several initiatives aimed at enhancing and refining the services offered to investors. These efforts were geared towards invigorating the investment climate, including measures like a 50% reduction in service fees for SMEs, establishing fees for over 80 services, consolidating multiple services provided by OPAZ and decreasing their costs, as well as restructuring import and export procedures. Moreover, OPAZ has diligently worked towards ensuring the contentment of service beneficiaries within its supervised zones. As a result of these endeavors, the satisfaction rate among beneficiaries of the authority's services reached 86% by the end of June 2023.

Digital transformation

In the field of digital transformation, OPAZ launched the Omap platform, which includes integrated geographical maps of the zones. The platform enables users to access the services and detailed information of the areas through digital maps and tools available, and thus is a pioneering step to choosing the land electronically.

OPAZ has also activated the Central Inspection System (Eltizam), which aims to automate inspection procedures, control and commitment with regard to the environment, workers, buildings, projects, health and safety. Also, OPAZ succeeded in its green initiative to stop receiving paper transactions within the «paperless» campaign which have been implemented Successfully by the beginning of July



2023, with the exception of some paper transactions with private entities and some types of classified mail to and from government entities

In the realm of digital transformation, OPAZ introduced the Omap platform, integrating comprehensive geographical maps of the zones. This platform facilitates user access to services and detailed zone information through digital maps and tools, marking a pioneering step toward electronic land selection.

Furthermore, OPAZ activated the Central Commitment System (Eltizam), aimed at automating inspection procedures, ensuring environmental compliance, monitoring worker safety, overseeing buildings and projects, and upholding health and safety standards. OPAZ also achieved success in its green initiative by implementing the «paperless» campaign, effectively eliminating paper transactions by the start of July 2023, except for specific paper transactions involving private entities and

certain types of classified mail exchanged between government entities.

In 2023, OPAZ clinched the Arab Digital Government Award 2023 in the Government Achievements category, recognizing its dedication to innovation, progress, and the utilization of cutting-edge technologies. This accolade acknowledges OPAZ's continuous efforts to enhance the experiences of investors and beneficiaries of its services by adopting modern practices to elevate its services.

During the same year, the Authority secured an award for its utilization of 3D printing technology at the COMEX Technology Fair Awards 2023. It was acknowledged for its application of three-dimensional printing technology in constructing a Commercial Cafe and its facilities. It was further recognized for employing this technology to build a residential unit with its facilities in the fishermen's village inside the Tourist Zone of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Reduction of fees for services rendered and re-engineering of import and export procedures

Providing investors with access to services and detailed information of the zones via digital maps

Providing land selection service electronically and activating "Eltizam" System

The volume of cumulative investment in economic and free zones and industrial cities until June 2023

*Numbers in OMR





OPAZ's Board of Directors during its fourth meeting in 2023

OPAZ Board of Directors considers assuming Madayn's powers

Reviewing the overall framework of risk management and emergency protocols

Muscat -

The Board of Directors (BoD) of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held at its HQs in Muscat its fourth meeting for 2023 under the chairmanship of His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy OPAZ Chairman.

OPAZ BoD reviewed the executive steps to transfer the powers of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) to the Board of Directors of OPAZ

OPAZ BoD also scrutinized the institutional risk register, the general framework for risk management and emergency situations, and the risk management policy and emergency situations in economic zones, free zones and industrial zones supervised by OPAZ.

The BoD also delved into the executive

procedures of the Muscat International Airport Free Zone venture undertaken by ASYAD Group, a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority OIA. The usufruct contract was signed with the Group and the tender for the infrastructure of the area within the boundaries of the airport was floated. The BoD also discussed other topics and took appropriate decisions thereon.

It is noteworthy that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) was established by Royal Decree No. 105/2020 dated 18 August 2020 to oversee the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, the free zones in Sohar, Salalah, Al Mazunah and any other special economic zone or free zone in the Sultanate of Oman. OPAZ also supervises the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) as per Royal Decree No. 53/2022 and Khazaen Economic City as per Royal Decree No. 44/2023.

Board of Directors

H.E. Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy

President of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones - Chairman

H.E. Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef

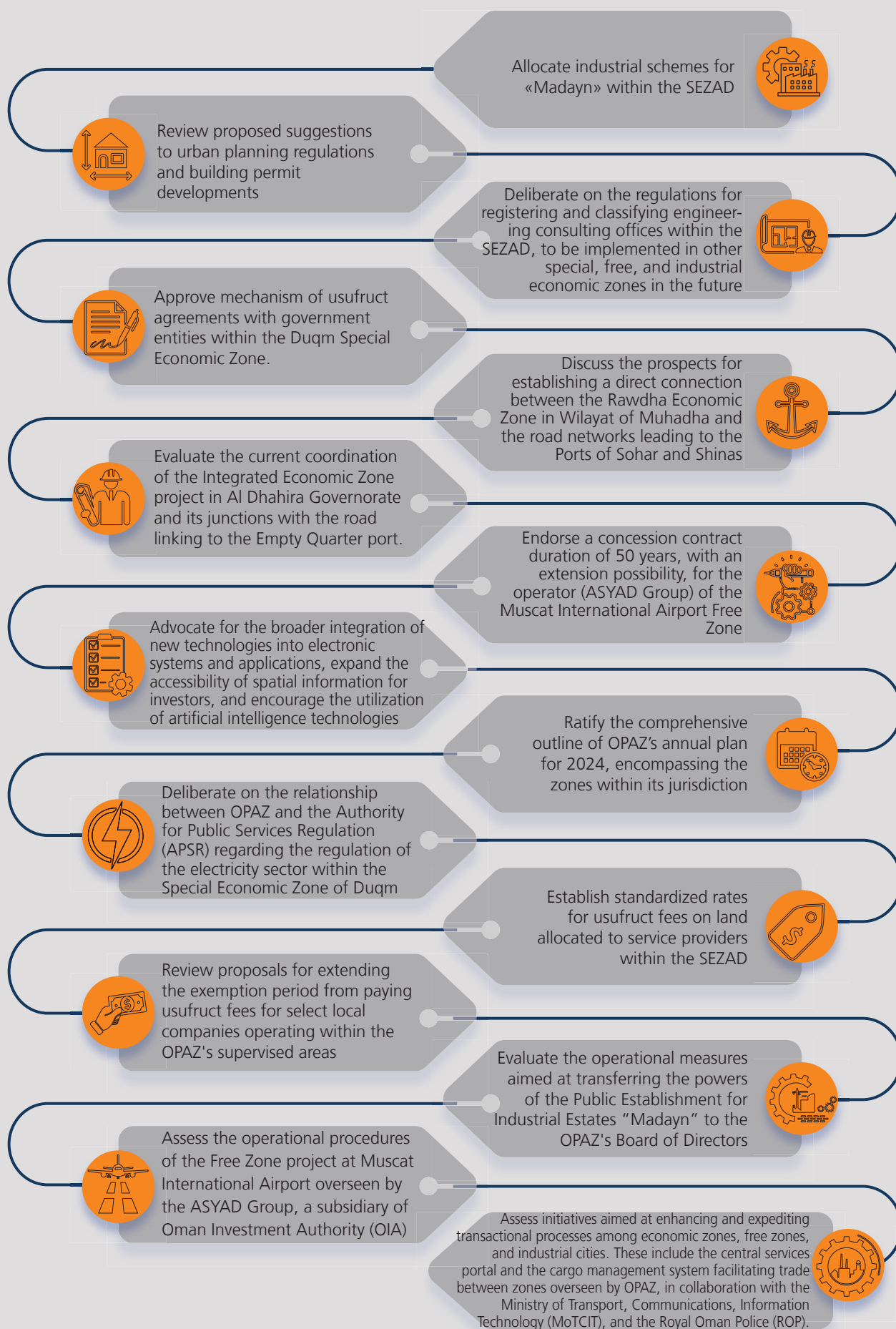
Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion - Chairman Deputy

- **Major General Abdullah bin Ali al-Harthy**
Assistant Inspector. General of Police and Customs for Operations
- **H.E. Dr. Nasser bin Rashid Al Mawali**
Undersecretary of Ministry of Economy
- **H.E. Mohsin Hamad Saif Al Hadhrami**
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals

- **Sheikh Nasser bin Sulaiman Al Harthy**
Vice President, Operations Affairs, Oman Investment Authority
- **Zayana Bint Mohammed Al Rashdi**
Technical Affairs Advisor at Minister of Finance Office
- **Mr. Mohammed Taqi Al Jamalani**
- **Dr. Ahmed bin Said Kashooob**

Evaluating the operational procedures of the Muscat International Airport Free Zone project

Key highlights of the Board's meeting in 2023



OPAZ discusses cooperation with Saudi economic zones and industrial cities



Dr. Ali Al Sunaidy and Nabil Khojah during the meet

Dr. Ali Al Sunaidy: We pay close attention to the needs of Saudi businessmen and the facilities required in the economic zones

Oman and Saudi Arabia emphasize the importance of framing their business relationship through electronic platform

Al Riyadh- Al Jubail -

A delegation from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with the aim to enhance cooperation between economic zones and free zones of the two countries, and to discuss prominent investment opportunities in the target sectors between Omani companies and their Saudi counterparts.

The visit, carried out in the fourth quarter of 2023, was headed by Dr. Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), accompanied by a number of CEOs and officials from the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Khazaen Economic City, in addition to officials from Sohar and Salalah Free Zones.

During the visit, Dr. Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy, and his accompanying delegation met with Nabil Khojah, Secretary General of Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority of the KSA. The two sides reviewed cooperation between economic zones and free zones of the two countries. They also highlighted potential investment and the incentives that are proposed for the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahirah.

The Omani and Saudi officials discussed the significance of establishing a common electronic platform for the Omani and Saudi

companies to leverage the value-added projects including food and fisheries industries, pharmaceutical industries, technology, logistics, renewable energy, petrochemicals, and oil and gas spare parts industries. The meeting also shed light on the importance of attracting investors to the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahirah, and the procedural steps for the next stage.

The meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Faisal Turki Al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and several officials from both sides.

Opportunities for economic integration

During his meeting with the members of the Saudi-Omani Business Council and representatives of major companies and businessmen, Dr. Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy said that there are many opportunities for integration available in the economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in Oman and Saudi Arabia. He added that this meeting represented a continuation of the Omani-Saudi Joint Forum held earlier. "A memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between OPAZ and its Saudi counterpart, which covers a number of aspects of cooperation and operational objectives aimed at enhancing the possibilities of increasing intra-trade and exports of the two countries through their economic zones. The direct trade exchange between the two countries witnessed a qualitative shift, which amounts to about two billion Omani riyals" he confirmed.

Al Sunaidy also added OPAZ accords great



Meeting the officials of the Integrated Logistic Zone

attention to the needs of Saudi businessmen and the facilities required to be provided in the economic and free zones and industrial cities in the Sultanate of Oman. Besides, the Authority has taken a number of measures to achieve the comparative advantage and competitiveness of the investment environment; in line with the directives of the leaderships in the two countries. Al Sunaidy explained that there is a responsibility on businessmen in the two countries to enter into joint partnerships and enhance added value projects.

New phase of partnership

Waleed bin Hamed Al Orainan, Acting Secretary-General of Federation of Saudi Chambers, confirmed that the Omani-Saudi relations are deep-rooted into history, and today the kingdom's Vision 2030 and Oman's Vision 2040 intersect in essence and pillars, specifically in the components of global competitiveness, economy and contribution of non-oil sectors to GDP.

Within the joint meet, he added that the two brotherly countries are witnessing a new stage of cooperation and partnership, reflected in the volume of trade exchange between 2021 and 2022 which increased to more than three times from US 3 billion to more than US10 billion. Saudi exports to the Sultanate of Oman have increased

more than 5 times from US 1.2 billion to US 6 billion. Likewise, the Omani exports to the kingdom surged from US 1.8 billion to US 4.2 billion.

Al Orainan expressed his aspiration to positive investments partnerships between the Omani and Saudi sides in various tracks adopted by the future vision in the two countries in light of the growing supporting elements, the most important of which is the system of special economic zones and free zones.

Promotion of investment relations

Visual presentations on the economic indicators and the most important investment opportunities available were shown by OPAZ, the Saudi Ministry of investment and the Saudi Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority.

The two sides looked into prospects of enhancing economic and investment cooperation relations and investment opportunities available in the economic and free zones and industrial cities in Oman, as well as the most important incentives and facilities provided to investors. The officials discussed the most important economic sectors targeted by the OPAZ which are food, fisheries, pharmaceutical, technology, logistics, renewable energy, petrochemicals and the added-value projects. The Omani delegation also held meetings with

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Waleed al Orainan: The high volume of trade exchange indicates a new stage of co-operation and partnership between the two countries

◆◆◆
Discussing ways to attract investors to the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahira and its integration with Omani and Saudi economic zones



Meeting the Federation of Saudi Chambers



The delegation during the presentation of International Maritime Industries (IMI)

OPAZ reviews the target sectors, incentives and facilities provided to investors

Introducing programs in the industrial cities and exchanging experiences related to industry empowerment

representatives of Saudi companies operating in areas of industry, real estate development, imports, clean energy projects, logistics services and ground handling.

The two sides considered ways to benefit from the expertise of those companies in establishing similar projects in economic and free zones and industrial cities. The proposals covered entering into the purchase and ownership of some Omani companies operating in the same sectors

Joint cooperation with «MODON»

The Saudi capital Riyadh, witnessed a number of meetings between officials of the two countries. The OPAZ's delegation held a meeting with officials of the Saudi Authority for Industrial Cities and Technology Zones «MODON» and discussed aspects of joint cooperation and ways to benefit from industrial programs and experiences. The meet aimed to create investment opportunities for investors from the two brotherly countries, including young companies with an interest in supply chains, value and production inputs in peer industrial cities, and to benefit from specialized

information platforms.

The meeting included the introduction of the experiences and programs provided in the industrial cities of the two countries and the possibility of exchanging expertise related to industry empowerment, the innovation of services, products and technical and logistical solutions provided in the industrial cities, to attract local and international value-added investments. This will accordingly result in achieving the objectives of the national strategies of industry in line with the Oman Vision 2040 and the Saudi Vision 2030. At the end of the meeting, both parties agreed on the procedural steps for the next stage of cooperation.

Cooperation with the SFD

During his visit, the OPAZ's delegation met with His Excellency Sultan Abdulrahman Al-Marshad, CEO of The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD). The meeting discussed enhancing opportunities for cooperation with the fund in various economic and investment fields, especially in the field of project financing in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in Oman, and the most important sectors targeted





The delegation looks at the model of Al Jubail Industrial City

by the fund during the next stage, such as the fishery and food industries sector. The meeting also reviewed the opportunities available to Saudi companies to invest in this sector.

Cooperation in logistics

The OPAZ's delegation also met with the officials from the Integrated Logistics Zone in the Saudi Arabia, where they discussed cooperation in various fields and programs provided to the logistics sector that attract investors and enhance the sectoral value of the investment environment.

The delegation got acquainted with the business model of the Integrated Logistics Zone, legislation, programs, services, incentives, facilities, the quality of projects, targeted economic sectors, technologies and electronic tools used to benefit from the experience in managing and operating the free zone at Muscat International Airport.

Leverage available opportunities

During its meeting with Khalid Al Salem, the President of the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, the delegation discussed strengthening trade, industrial and investment relations in the economic zones of the two sides, opportunities for integration, and framing opportunities for the expansion of projects through initiatives that make it easier for investors to take advantage of the available opportunities. They also highlighted aspects of integration in shipping lines and logistics companies to enhance import and export operations in the economic zones and reviewed the experience of managing and operating facilities and service lines.

Ras Al Khair Special Economic Zone

The OPAZ's delegation visited Ras Al Khair Special Economic Zone located on the coast of

the Arabian Gulf, specifically, the International Maritime Industries (IMI), a joint venture between recognized global industry leaders like Saudi Aramco and Hyundai Heavy Industries. The IMI officials gave a visual presentation about the zone's facilities and services. The attendees, after that, had a tour to the marine and ship industries area and the dry dock area.

Al Jubail Industrial City

Moreover, the delegation visited Al Jubail Industrial City, affiliated to the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, aiming to leverage its experience of implementing infrastructure and managing economic cities. Established in 1975, the city succeeded to enhance the life-style and attract individuals and families to live in it and benefit from the quality of modern life such as a Model School, parks, afforestation, as well as, entertainment, cultural and sports activities compatible with the nature of the place and the needs of the population. This can be beneficial for the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and the economic cities being developed in the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Jubail Industrial City is the world's largest petrochemical complex with investments exceed more than 110 billion US dollars.

During the visit, the OPAZ's delegation met with a number of investors and businessmen in Al Jubail Industrial City and discussed the most important incentives and facilities provided by economic and free zones and industrial cities in the Sultanate of Oman for investors and the most important investment opportunities available in each economic and industrial zone.

A visual presentation was given about OPAZ, touching upon the most important cities supervised by the Authority, the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahira Governorate, Madayn, Khazaen Economic City, the Salalah Free Zone and the SEZAD.

Reviewing opportunities for Saudi companies to invest in the fisheries and food industries sector

Learning about Al Jubail City's experience in implementing infrastructure and managing economic cities



The volume of investment in the zone surges to RO 139 million

Over RO 128 million is the value of imports and exports through Al Mazunah Free Zone

Al Mazunah - :

The value of imports, exports and re-export traffic through Al Mazunah Free Zone in the first half of 2023 amounted to more than OR 128.5 million, including OR 102.8 million for imports, OR 12.9 million for exports and OR 12.8 million for re-export traffic.

spanning 15.3 square kilometers, Al Mazunah Free Zone, is a commercial gateway between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen. It includes a land port that provides customs inspection services for imported and exported goods through the Zone, enhancing the trade exchange between the two countries.

Al Mazunah land port is connected to the Salalah port and airport, which contributes to achieving multiple gains for exporters and im-

porters from the Sultanate of Oman, the Republic of Yemen, and other countries of the world.

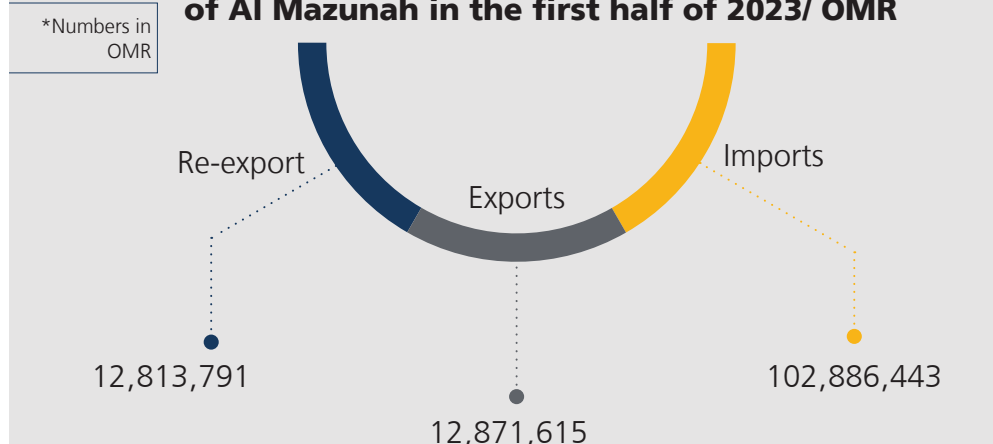
New investments

In the first half of 2023, Al Mazunah Free Zone witnessed new investments worth OR 1.3 million, raising the cumulative investment volume in the zone to OR 139 million.

Also, the number of investment requests in the first half of the same year amounted to 25, including 15 in the commercial sector, 7 in the logistics sector, and 3 in the industrial sector. The zone issued 19 business licenses, and 50 investor licenses and work permits. It also issued three construction permits, two of which is in the logistics sector and one in the industrial sector.

25 requests for investments and 19 business licenses issued

The value of goods through the Land Port of Al Mazunah in the first half of 2023/ OMR





The Facility Building and the Al Mazunah Free Zone Development projects inaugurated

Al Mazunah - :

Oman's Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) inaugurated the Facility Building Project and the Al Mazunah Free Zone Development project under the auspices of Ahmed bin Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). The project comes within the Secretariat General of National Celebrations' program for opening key projects in the different governments across the Sultanate.

These milestones reflect Madayn's ongoing commitment to attract more investments to the zone and facilitate trade activities between Oman and Yemen.

Speaking at the event, Said bin Musallam Zabnoot, Director of Investor Services at Al Mazunah Free Zone, said that the project was implemented by Madayn and it encompassed infrastructure milestones, covering a total area of 1.5 million sqm, with a total cost of RO 6 million. "The developed area of the free zone now spans 3 million sqm out of a total area exceed-


ing 15 million sqm. The developed lands are ready for investment and equipped with basic services," he stated.

Said Zabnoot added that the project includes the development of a 15.5-km road network, a 20.1 km sewage drainage system, water supply networks, fire extinguishing systems spanning 13.6 km, and water tanks with a capacity of 1900 cubic meters. The project also incorporates the installation of street lighting with electrical connections for 402 columns, and the construction of a building dedicated to truck drivers rest facilities.

Facility Building

Ahmed bin M. Al Balushi, from Shumukh Investment and Services Company, the investment arm of «Madayn», elaborated: "The cost of the project is more than OMR 3.5 million. The building has been designed to be a future industrial interface to provide the best services to investors, business owners, companies operating in the zone and visitors. The building area is estimated at 11 thousand square meters and it consists of 4 floors, and 300 external parking lots."


Construction of 15.5-km road network and sewage drainage networks


The Facility Building provides the best services to investors and business owners





Aerial view of Sohar Industrial City

Industrial cities attract at RO 7.3 billion in investment volume

Promoting industrial innovation, applied research and national capacity building

843 licenses for economic activities issued in the first half of 2023

Musacat -

By the end of June 2023, the total volume of investment in the industrial cities managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates «Madayn» increased to OMR 7.3 billion, considering the new RO 89 million investments embraced by the cities in the period from January to June 2023.

Eng. Dawood bin Salim Al Hadabi, CEO of Madayn, said that the Establishment works on creating an integrated infrastructure, providing an attractive environment for investment in the Sultanate of Oman, and accelerating development aspects in various governorates.

“The number of new projects implemented by Madayn in its industrial cities amounts to 30 projects with a total cost exceeding OR 70.9 million. These projects are diverse encompassing consulting services and infrastructure and facilities such as roads, water and sewage networks, irrigation systems, rainwater drainage channels, road lighting, surveillance cameras and security fences.” He explained.

The total number of industrial cities overseen by Madayn is 12, covering a total area of 163 square kilometers. According to OPAZ, industrial cities received more than 140 new investment requests, and issued 843 licenses to practice economic activities in the first half of 2023.

Eng. Dawood bin Salim Al Hadabi added: “Through the Industrial Innovation Academy, Madayn’s development arm, we strive to promote industrial innovation and applied research, as well as building national capacities



Dawood Al Hadabi:
Madayn successfully implements 30 projects with more than RO 70 million

in the industrial sector, by prioritizing industries emanating from various economic sectors in the lower tier. We also look into identifying industrial investment opportunities, developing and incubating them as innovations or applied research, to become an added value that enables national capabilities, services, products and assets in the industrial sector. Madayn is keen to adopt automation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIR) technologies, in line with the strategic objectives of Oman's Vision 2040, which place innovation, scientific research and optimal use of technology among the main factors common to all its strategic goals.”

Salalah Free Zone Draws in investments worth \$165 million



Salalah - :

In December 2023, the Salalah Free Zone secured fresh investments totaling \$165 million. The zone entered into a usufruct agreement for the establishment of a plant to manufacture hydrogen peroxide and formic acid, with an investment of \$100 million. This project is slated to be developed on a land parcel spanning 174,000 square meters. The zone also inked a usufruct agreement in the same month, with a total investment value of \$65 million, to establish a factory for the production of caustic soda, calcium chloride and ammonia chloride that are used in various industries, such as the production of paper, glass, detergents and agricultural fertilisers. The project is to be set up on a total area of approximately 55,000 square metres.


These two agreements come within the zone's endeavors to draw in fresh investments aligned with its objectives to be a global trade hub connecting East and West. The zone also aims to emerge as a prime investment destination, leveraging its advantageous location and providing attractive incentives for investors.

The Zone's performance in 1st half of 2023

During the first half of 2023, the zone signed many agreements with investors from the Sultanate of Oman as well as from brotherly and friendly countries. The total volume of investment committed under the usufruct agreements inked during this period reached approximately RO 727 million, taking the cumulative investment up to RO 4.5 billion by June 2023.

The Salalah Free Zone is actively engaged in offering a multitude of services to entrepreneurs and multinational corporations aiming to broaden their businesses in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. This strategic initiative is fueled by the zone's close proximity to these regions and the convenient transportation of goods facilitated through the Salalah Port to diverse countries across the globe.

Covering a total area of 21.6 square kilometers, the Salalah Free Zone offers a comprehensive range of services. These encompass essential support to fulfill the establishment and management needs of businesses, aid in securing visas for employees, issuance of government permits, and provision of services to various offices and facilities.


Two facilities for the production of hydrogen peroxide, caustic soda and calcium chloride are set to be established



Eng. Salim Al Thuhli to the  :

Khazaen Economic City ... Promising Investment Hub Progressing Towards Success

 **Barka -  :**

Khazaen Economic City is an integrated economic city being developed in Wilayat of Barka, South Al Batinah Governorate. It is the first integrated economic city and free zone in the Sultanate of Oman to be developed in partnership between the public and private sectors.

Eng. Salim Bin Sulaiman Al Thuhli, CEO of Khazaen Economic City, welcomed Royal Decree No. 44/2023 establishing the city, which is of high national importance and works to achieve the Government of Oman's national development objectives.

Speaking to the Duqm Economist, he said that the project is expected to attract foreign investments as well as local investments. "The Royal Decree stipulates that an economic city in the South Al Batinah named the "Khazaen Economic City" is hereby established and shall be subject to the supervision of the Public Authority for Special Economic

Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). The decree also states that two free zones have been established in the Khazaen Economic City. It approves the development agreement and usufruct agreement for the Khazaen Economic City, assigning Oman Logistics Company LLC as the operator of the City and its two free zones, and assigning Khazaen Economic City Company LLC as the developer of the City and its two free zones," he explained.

Al Thuhli commended the competitive benefits brought about by the Khazaen Economic City through Royal Decree No. 44/2023. He mentioned that this decree enhanced the city's competitive edge and fostered an attractive investment atmosphere by implementing a one-stop station, along with providing specific perks like customs exemptions and tax privileges. The decree also helps attract and localize international companies in the city due to its attractive and encouraging investment environment. CEO of Khazaen Economic City stressed the importance of establishing two free zones in Khazaen to stimulate economic activities and allow the City to attract quality investments, explaining that the first free zone is dedicated to light and medium industries and logistics activities, while the second free zone is dedicated to business and trade to target international companies working in the fields of technology, finance, and insurance companies.





The general diagram of Khazaen

Volume of investments

Eng. Salim bin Sulaiman Al Thuhli revealed that the total investments in Khazaen Economic City will reach approximately one billion US dollars by the end of 2023. This underscores the significant interest shown by foreign investors in contributing to the city's growth, with foreign investments amounting to around \$583 million, constituting 57.7% of the total investment. Simultaneously, local investments stood at \$483 million.

He highlighted that the substantial investments in a burgeoning economic city reflect the favorable investment atmosphere in the Sultanate of Oman and the strong interest shown by both local and international companies. He emphasized that Khazaen Economic City offers comprehensive support essential for the success of investors, commending the relentless efforts of companies operating within the city and the efforts of partners in diligently working towards achieving the city's objectives.

"Those investments are distributed over 4

Total investments in Khazaen Economic City distributed by sectors

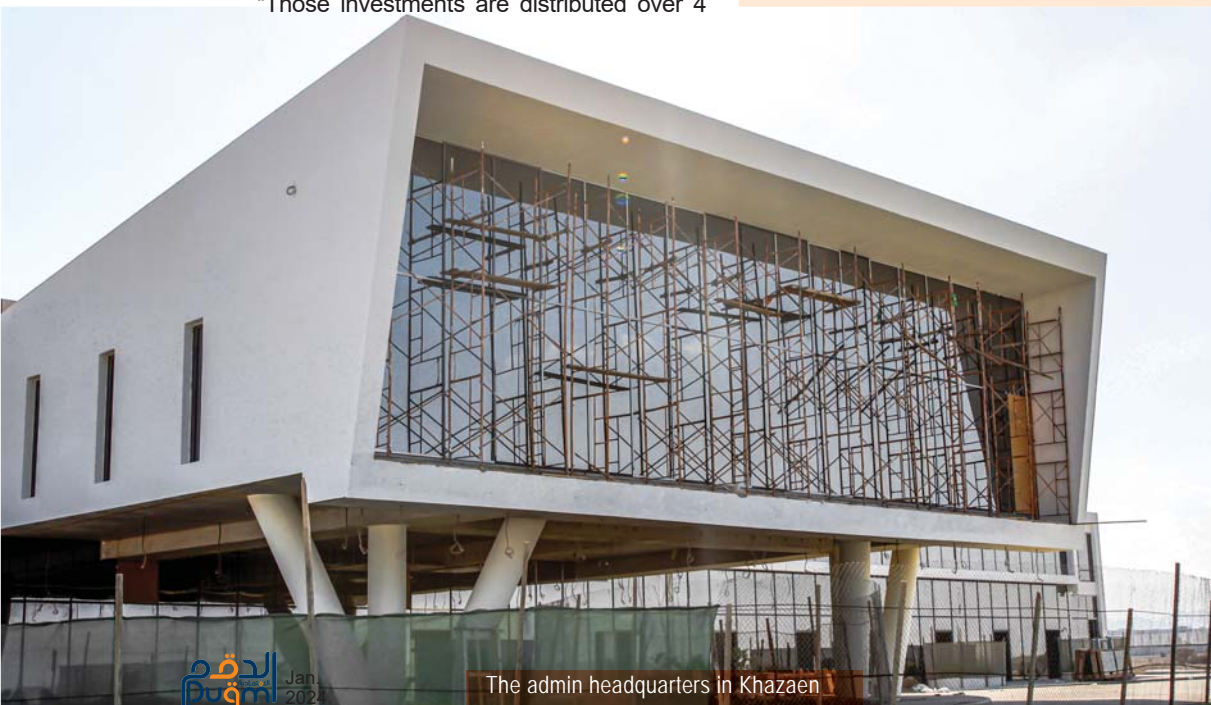


● Numbers in Million Dollar

The Royal Decree establishing the City has enhanced its investment potential and its local and international presence

Targeting international technology, financial and insurance companies through the free zone for business and trade

The city is designed according to international standards and modern trends



The admin headquarters in Khazaen

The city contributes to enhancing cargo traffic between Omani airports and ports

One billion US dollars is total volume of investments by the end of 2023



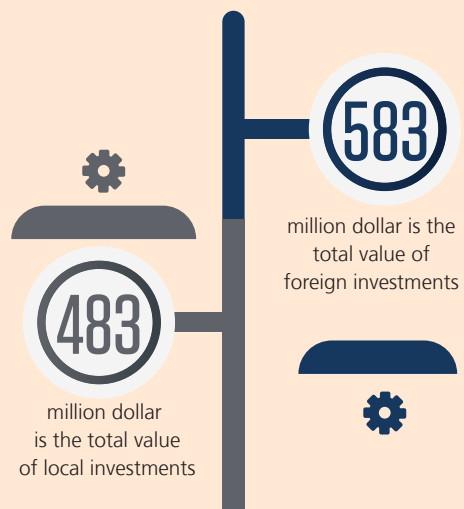
main sectors. The volume of investments in the industrial sector reached \$345 million, \$273 million in the food sector, \$301 million in the pharmaceutical sector, and \$122 million in the logistics sector.” he added.

Strategic location

The CEO of Khazaen Economic City described the city's location as strategically significant, highlighting its prime position along the Al Batinah expressway. It's recognized as an extension of the expanding population and urban development in Muscat Governorate. Situated merely half an hour from both Muscat International Airport and Suwaiq Port, and approximately two hours from Sohar port, the city plays a pivotal role in bolstering the movement of goods among Omani airports and ports. This advantageous placement also leverages the available storage facilities within Khazaen Economic City.

He said: “This geographical positioning enables approximately 80% of the Sultanate of Oman's population to access the city within a mere two-hour timeframe through an extensive dual road network linking it to different governorates. This advantage significantly boosts

The volume of investments in khazaen stands at a billion US dollars





the potential success of investors' projects. Moreover, the location facilitates convenient access to roads leading to international land ports and the domestic road network. Positioned within a logistics network, the city enjoys direct connectivity to diverse airports and ports across Oman. Its infrastructure has been prepped to incorporate a future railway system, further strengthening its logistical ties with both land and sea ports".

Desirable business environment

He mentioned that Khazaen City offers a comprehensive investment atmosphere and an appealing business environment for investors. It's recognized as a promising city built in accordance with international standards, boasting a sophisticated and complete infrastructure designed in a contemporary manner to align with the latest trends and requirements of major sustainable economic cities. He highlighted

the city's diverse array of integrated investment sectors encompassing logistics, food, pharmaceuticals, industrial ventures, technology, business sectors, and clean energy, as well as supportive sectors within commercial and residential domains.

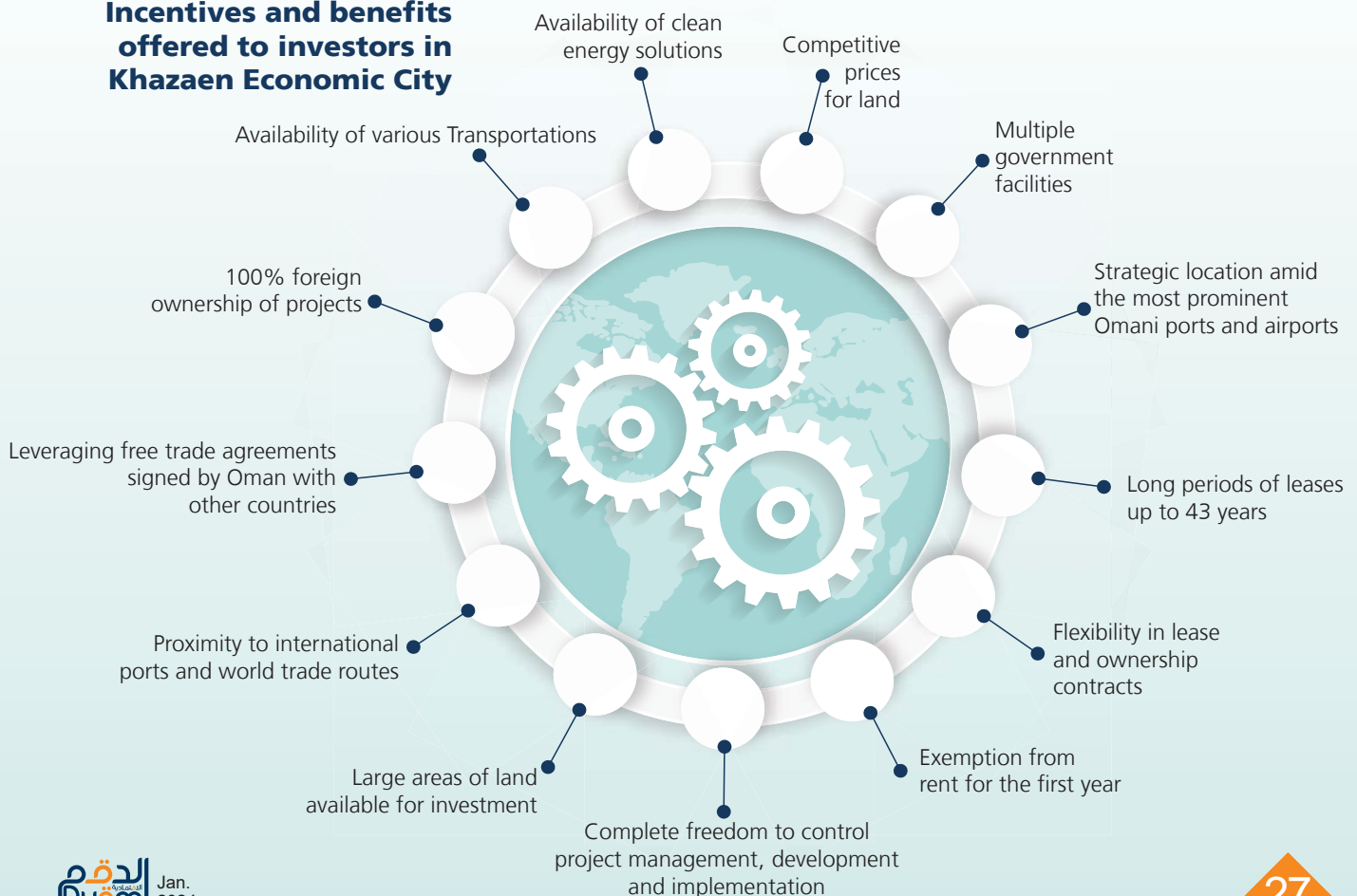
Diverse investments

Eng. Salim Al Thuhli emphasized that the high-quality projects within Khazaen serve as significant attractions for investors, including the Food city, the Khazaen land port, the staff housing, the International Logistics Center, and the one-stop shop for licensing. "The Food City encompasses a central market for vegetables and fruits within Khazaen. Meanwhile, Khazaen land port - the first international land port in Oman - offers comprehensive logistical solutions tailored for investors within the city. Also, the first comprehensive staff housing is currently under development within Khazaen.

We focus on keeping abreast of the latest developments in prominent sustainable economic cities

The future plan entails building integrated residential units embodying the idea of harmonizing living, working, and entertainment

Incentives and benefits offered to investors in Khazaen Economic City



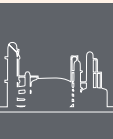
The pilot operation of the Saudi Arabia's Al Watania Al Khalijyah for Paper Products



The pilot operation of Al Zayzafon Factory for Sanitary Materials



The second phase of the Industrial Logistics Complex



The second phase of the Infrastructure Project



The construction works of the Salah Mills factory



The most prominent developments in the main projects in Khazaen

Completion rate of the Central Market for Vegetables and Fruit is 90%



Completion rate of the headquarters of the city administration is 95%



Operational works at the Oatar's Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC)



The second phase of the Opal Biopharma (OBP)

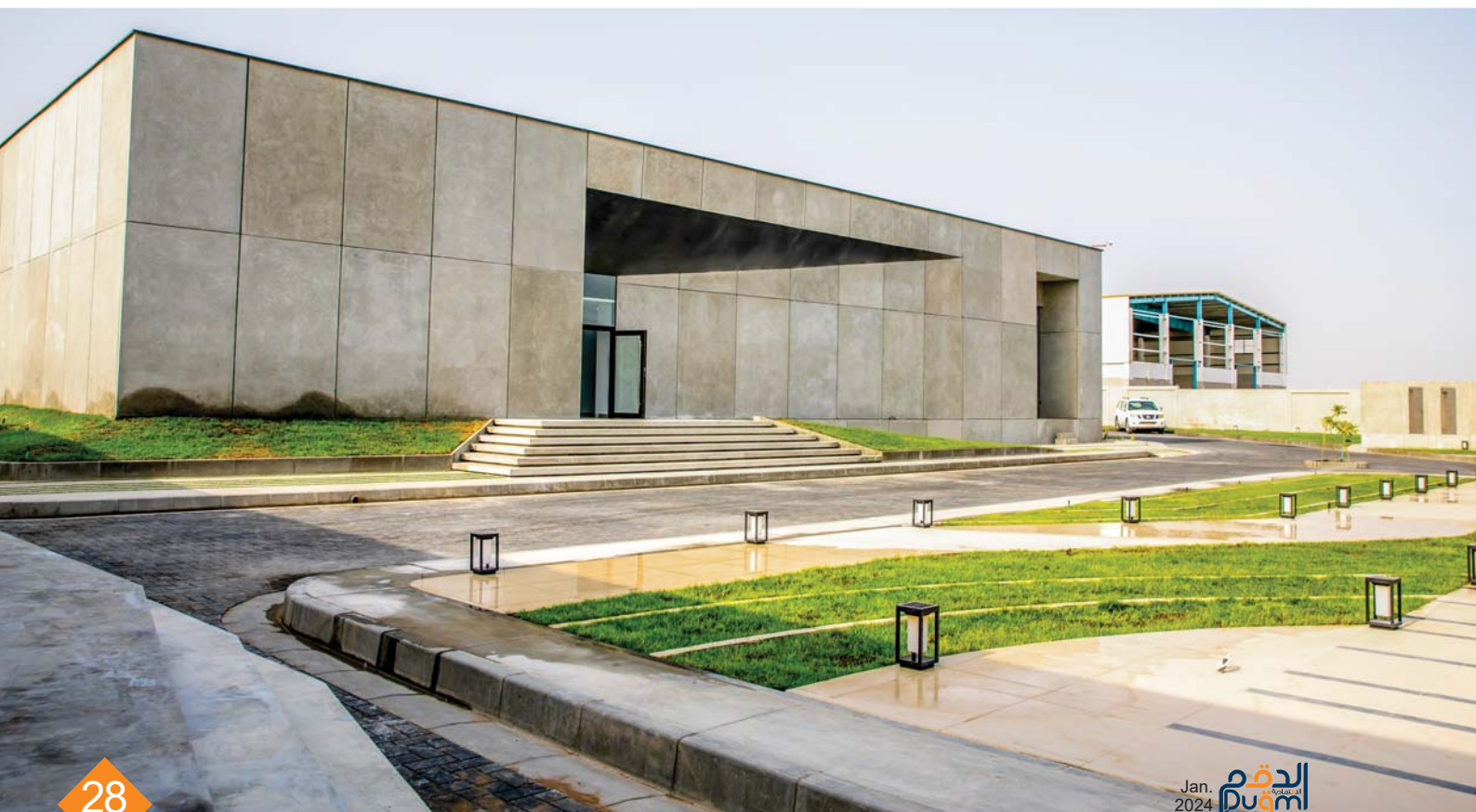


The future plan for Khazaen City incorporates the establishment of integrated housing units aimed at fostering a seamless blend of living, working, and entertainment aspects within the city, catering to all investors”.

Khazaen's objectives

He mentioned that the strategic goals of Khazaen City revolve around bolster-

ing economic diversification, increasing GDP, enticing top-tier local and foreign investments, maximizing the private sector's role in economic advancement, boosting local expenditure on goods and services, fostering opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, and generating job opportunities for national talents across diverse sectors.





Strategic objectives of Kazaen



Progress in construction works

He elaborated that significant strides have been made in various investments within Khazaen Economic City, with progress evident across over 30 logistics and industrial projects. By the end of 2023, the completion rate for the Khazaen Central Market for Vegetables and Fruit had surpassed 90%, while the headquarters of the city administration was 95% complete. Moreover, a number of projects were commenced in 2023, like the operational activities at the Oatar's Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC), the second phase of the Opal Biopharma (OBP), the pilot operation of the Saudi Arabia's Al Watania Al Khalijyah for Paper Prod-

ucts, the pilot operation of Al Zayzafon Factory for Sanitary Materials, the second phase of the Industrial Logistics Complex, the second phase of the Infrastructure Project, and the construction works of the Salalah Mills factory.

Concluding his interview with the Duqm Economist, Eng. Salim bin Sulaiman Al Thuhli, CEO of Khazaen Economic City, re-invited both local and international investors to consider investing in Khazaen Economic City. He emphasized that the city stands as an ideal investment hub within the Sultanate of Oman, portraying itself as an investment sanctuary steadily progressing towards success and aiming to maximize the economic value of invested capital.

90 % is the completion rate in the Central Market for Vegetables and Fruit, and 95 % in the city administration headquarters

Construction work at the Salalah Mills factory kicks off

Construction commences in the second phase of the Logistics Industrial Complex and the Opal Biopharma (OBP) plant



Provides integrated services for inspection of food shipments

Sohar Logistics Station expands business opportunities in economic and free zones

Inspection of foodstuffs, goods, frozen, refrigerated and fresh products in suitable environment

Strengthening the logistics system and fostering integration within supply chains

Liwa - :

Situated in the Willayat of Liwa and in close proximity to the Port of Sohar and the Free Zone, the Sohar Logistics Station performed well throughout 2023, offering a comprehensive array of services to both importers and exporters. This station, inaugurated officially in August 2022, serves as an extra entry point to the Port of Sohar and the Free Zone. It was established as part of joint efforts between the government and the private sector, aiming to bolster the logistics infrastructure and foster seamless integration within supply chains.

The station aims to provide an ideal environment for the foodstuffs, goods, frozen, refrigerated and fresh products of various kinds to maintain their quality and ensure they are fit for human consumption. It also provides integrated inspection services for agricultural, fishery, food and animal shipments outgoing and incoming.

The Sohar Logistics Station, which was established in cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Al Madina Logistics Company, is the first integrated logistics station in the Sultanate of Oman. Parallely, new integrated and specialized logistics stations are expected to be established in the governorates located near the seaports and land ports to inspect agricultural, fishery, food and animal shipments outgoing and incoming to ensure their safety and quality.

The stations are also planned to apply standards and inspections in an appropriate environment considering the diverse phases of both food chains and supply chains. starting from the production pro-

cess, extending through the transportation and distribution of food, and ending up with the ultimate consumer.

Single station

The Sohar Logistics Station is a single station encompassing all the competent authorities, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Directorate General of Customs, in addition to a cadre of specialists, control staff, doctors, technicians and customer service.

The station, which operates 24 hours a week, is also characterized by its ability to receive and handle hundreds of shipments and trucks per day. It is also deals with rejected and inapplicable shipments that need to be reprocessed or require corrective actions in the data of food products from the country of origin before release.

The Sohar Logistics Station includes a number of accredited laboratories to conduct various analyses of samples and issue reports and results in no time. It has cold stores to preserve products that require certain temperatures. The station also has a large number of inspection platforms at different temperatures depending on the type of shipment and the product. It also includes scales to confirm the cargo load.





**Accredited
laboratories
to conduct
analyses and
issue results
in no time**

Multiple services

The station provides many services to companies, importers and exporters, including: services for printing labels and data for various food products in accordance with the procedures followed, besides providing crushed ice for fresh fish shipments.

Among the services provided by the station is the follow-up services for damaged products and materials through approved landfills and the application of related procedures. The station has special parking for refrigerated trucks equipped with electric feeding and accommodate more than 250 trucks. There is also restrooms for drivers and visitors, in addition to many other facilities and services.

Focus on national skills

The Sohar Logistics Station is managed entirely by local talents from nearby wilayats, who were trained according to top-notch standards by Al Madina Logistics Company.

The Sohar Logistics Station showcases the government's commitment to advancing the logistics sector and its related infrastructure. This sector stands as a key pillar for economic expansion and diversification as national logistics firms are pivotal in boosting investments and assets to align with the government's ambitions of enhancing the sector's role in bolstering competitiveness, easing trade, and generating employment opportunities within governorates, economic zones, and free zones.

Al Roya Economic Award for the top private sector investment project in the Sultanate of Oman was clinched by the Sohar Logistics Station. Mahmood bin Sakhi Al Balushi, the CEO of Al Madina Logistics Company, received the award during a ceremony held in December 2023 and was presided over by His Excellency Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

**Receiving
and handling
hundreds of
shipments
daily**

Competitive feature of the station

1

Accredited laboratories to conduct analyses and issue reports & results

2

One single stop for the concerned authorities

3

Receiving and handling hundreds of shipments daily

4

Working around the clock all week

5

Cold stores with multiple temperatures

6

Dealing with rejected and inapplicable shipments

7

Printing labels and data for various food products

8

Advanced computer system to manage all the works

9

Surveillance cameras to follow up shipments during handling, inspection, storage, etc.

10

Large number of inspection platforms at different temperatures depending on the type of shipment and product

Dry Ports and its role in International Transport and Trade

Growth in global trade and multinational corporations vast activities worldwide, increased the need to develop highly standard transport and logistics services, related to supply chains and distribution centers, where logistic services are provided through a worldwide integrated system of multimodal transport operations.

Distinction between a dry port and a logistic center

A dry port is connected to the seaport with the aim of relieving port congestion by pulling goods and containers out of the seaport area to the dry port, while a logistic center is considered a geographical gathering of companies in a certain location to serve the transportation of goods, such as freight forwarders and land transport companies.

Dry ports operation is interrelated to the logistics centers' efficiency and ability to meet the requirements of its customers. The different types of logistics centers vary in their objectives according to its activities and the entities and markets they serve. Through diversification in activities and expanding the dry port area, a dry port would have developed to include logistics service providers and value-added activities.

The basic elements of a dry port include the following:

- Customs: "Efficiency of customs and port clearance procedures"
- Infrastructure: "Level of port infrastructure".
- International Shipments: "Ease and availability of organizing shipments."
- Logistics Competency: "Logistics Competitiveness of Different Service Providers"
- Tracking & Tracing: "Ability to track and monitor shipments."
- Domestic Logistics Costs: "Cost of Transportation, Storage, and Handling".
- Timeliness: "Dates of shipments arrival at their final destination."

Location of dry ports

There are multiple factors that determine choosing the location for a dry port; the first is the location at a focal point that represents a major distribution/assembly center within the local or regional supply chain network, so that the connection between logistics centers and dry ports is taken into account to facilitate exchange and distribution operations between them. Main distribution centers have large areas, high-standard infrastructure and a modern superstructure, multiple of activities, large markets and related services.

The second factor is that a dry port should be established in a location that allows exchange between the different modes of transport, accordingly, there are multiple modes of transport in the supply chain depending on the types and quantities of goods arriving at the seaport.

Production centers and markets relate to dry ports by land, rail transport, river transport and air transport, ac-

cordingly, choosing a dry port location should allow the transport of goods by more than one integrated means of transport between them.

The third factor is that the location of the dry port should allow a direct connection between distribution centers, in order to allow the transport and distribution of goods in the right time and at the lowest cost.

The fourth factor is that the dry port should be located near a high-traffic seaport, so that it contributes to solving problems of seaport congestion, as it facilitates the transport, withdrawal, and exit of goods and containers from the seaport, so that they are deposited, stored and processed later in the dry port.

As for the fifth factor in choosing a dry port location, it is preferable that the chosen site enjoy integrated transportation network, so that goods and shipments can flow to and from it without clashing with daily local traffic, getting there in the shortest time and with the most efficient and safety requirements.

The sixth factor relates to the possibility of horizontal expansion in area, parallel with the increase in industrial and consumer demand and expansion of markets; accordingly, when a dry port reaches its maximum operational capacity, those in charge of must-do what is necessary to expand its area and support its infrastructure.

The seventh factor in choosing a dry port location is that it the dry port should be in an environmentally friendly area, especially with regard to the activities of food, medical, pharmaceutical and electronic industries. The more the site is in a pollution-free area, the more it will attract environmentally friendly industries with high added value.

Economic advantages of dry ports

The dry port adds a competitive advantage to seaports by expanding its land area capacity, in addition to providing shippers and customers with lower costs and better service resulting from reducing waiting time and eliminating congestion problems in seaports.

The establishment of dry ports also enables the integration of land transport and railways transport between dry ports and seaports, in addition to achieving economies of scale based on of full exploitation of the carrying and operational capacity.

Dry ports also produce indirect benefits for transporters and truck operators, by reducing waiting time, congestion and traffic disruptions, in addition to facilitating their work in serving hinterland port areas.

Global Examples of Dry ports

Dry ports in China

In China, dry port concept have been applied there 25 years ago. Dry ports in China witnessed rapid developments in the context of the enormous growth of the Chinese econ-

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omy and the tremendous growth in Chinese foreign trade.

In most cases, seaports invest in establishing and operating a dry port for reducing the operational overload on the seaport itself, for example: one of the huge Chinese ports, Xiamen, is integrating with a number of dry ports established in the Chinese hinterland, the most important of which are Jinjiang, Dehua, Longjiang, Nanping, and Sanming. As for Tianjin seaport, number of Chinese Dry ports are integrating with it, such as Pudding, Handan, Zhengtai, Hebai, and Zhengzhou.

In Northwest China, the dry port of KTZE-Khorgos Gate connects Kazakhstan and China, Khorgos is the most important center for transportation and logistics services in East and Central Asia. It also connects the markets of China and Europe, passing through the countries of Central Asia towards Eastern Europe.

The dry port of Khorgos is the largest dry port in the world, and the furthest dry port from the sea/ocean coast in the world. The railway border crossing in Khorgos handles about 30 million tons of cargo annually.

Dry ports in Europe

Europe contains many dry ports, such as the dry port of Duisburg, Germany, where more than 3 million TEU and 130 million tons of cargo are handled through this dry port every year. Coslada Dry Port provides efficient multimodal transportation and logistics services to its customers.

The dry port of Duisburg is located at the intersection of both the Rhine and Ruhr rivers, Duisburg has excellent connections to highways, railways and river transport, as the port handles cargo from approximately 20000 river ships annually, it serves cargo transport to the port of Rotterdam, Europe's largest port by river, land and rail.

To the southwest of Europe, the dry port of Coslada near the Spanish capital, Madrid. Coslada is the first land customs port within the European Union. Coslada is a multimodal terminal and a dry port located in the town of Coslada, which has an excellent network of land roads, railways to and from the Spanish seaports associated with it such as Algeciras, Bilbao, Valencia and Barcelona.

Dry ports in the Arab region

The Dry Port of the 10th of Ramadan in Egypt was a pioneering project that was established to provide transport services to the industrial city in that region.

The 10th of Ramadan dry port serves the handling of containers for incoming and outgoing cargo. The port provides services for receiving packed containers and storing them in its yards, filling empty containers with export goods at the port or transporting empty containers to the factory to be filled and moved to the seaports.

This dry port also has all the regulatory agencies that serve the work, including control over exports and imports, agricultural quarantine, as well as customs clearance services, financial and insurance services, and logistical services.

Omani pioneering experience

In the Sultanate of Oman, a pioneering experience was accomplished by establishing Khazaen dry port, within the strategic logistics plan for the Sultanate of Oman. It aims to facilitate Omani domestic and foreign trade, linking industrial and urban areas with the transportation network in the Sultanate of Oman.

Business strategy of Khazaen dry Port is based on serving industrial facilities in the oil, gas, chemical and manufacturing sectors, food sector, fishing sector, automobile sector, building and construction sector.

Khazaen dry Port is planned to perform an active role in increasing the level of economic, industrial and service activities, as its integration with the Omani sea ports would enhance the competitiveness of transport and logistics sector in the Sultanate of Oman on regional and global levels.



Inspiring and successful stories for



Preparing
Omani
cadres to
manage
various
projects in
electricity
and water
sectors

Muscat -

In 2013, The Centralised Utilities Company (Marafiq), a subsidiary of OQ Group of companies, affiliated with Oman Investment Authority (OIA), began its first investments in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm by an agreement signed with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (formerly the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm) to provide utility services that include electricity, drinking water, industrial water, cooling water, industrial gases and sewage services to investors in the zone. According to this agreement, Marafiq established the Duqm Integrated Power and Water Plant (DIPWP) with a capacity of 326 megawatts of electricity and 36,000 cubic meters of industrial water per day. The Plant includes a seawater intake facility with a supply capacity of 1.5 million m³ per day, in addition to a water outtake line with a capacity of up to 1 million m³ per day. The plant began in 2021 providing power and water to Duqm Refinery (OQ8) and power to OTTCO in Ras Markaz.

At the same time, the Company established two other projects; one of which is a power plant with a production capacity of about 80 megawatts generated by gas turbines to meet the growing demand for electricity in Duqm. The second, however, is the management of the water and wastewater business in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and the establishment of a potable water desalination plant with a production capacity of about 9,000 cubic meters per day to meet the zone's potable water needs.

Aligning with the expansion of projects,



Hawraa Al Zadjali:

My journey in Marafiq is rich and full of knowledge experience

there was another team working to prepare Omani youth to manage such qualitative projects and enhance their capabilities to continue the path of success; not only to provide services to the projects managed by the company, but also to contribute to attracting new strategic projects by providing the services that companies need.

Distinguished Work

Hawraa bint Mohammed Al Zadjali, Project Engineer at Marafiq, have experienced firsthand some of the stages of this growth and the challenges that beset the implementation of the Duqm Integrated Power and Water Plant (DIPWP) project and subsequent projects.

Hawraa has Bachelor Degree in Chem-

Omani youth in Marafiq Company



Zamzam Al Siyabi:
Proud to participate in setting up
& enhancing Quality, Health and
Safety system

ical and Processing Engineering from Sultan Qaboos University. She joined the Company in 2009 and has gained experience, as same as her colleagues, from the various projects implemented by Marafiq in Duqm. At the same time, the Company provided them with specialized training courses inside Oman and abroad. As a start, Hawraa was responsible for technical review of documents and designs deliverables related to the Duqm Integrated Plant. According to her, this job acquired her with good experience in the field of technical review of designs and follow-up on the progress of implementation of power and water projects.

At that time, several local and international companies were working on two

projects; the construction of 132 kv Power Transmission System to the Ras Markaz Crude Oil Storage project. She said that the local team has gained good experience from working with international companies. The Power Plant operates by a combined cycle system and natural gas with a capacity of 326 MW, while the Seawater Desalination Plant operates by reverse osmosis with a capacity of 36 thousand cubic meters per day. This represents an additional facet of the team's acquired expertise.

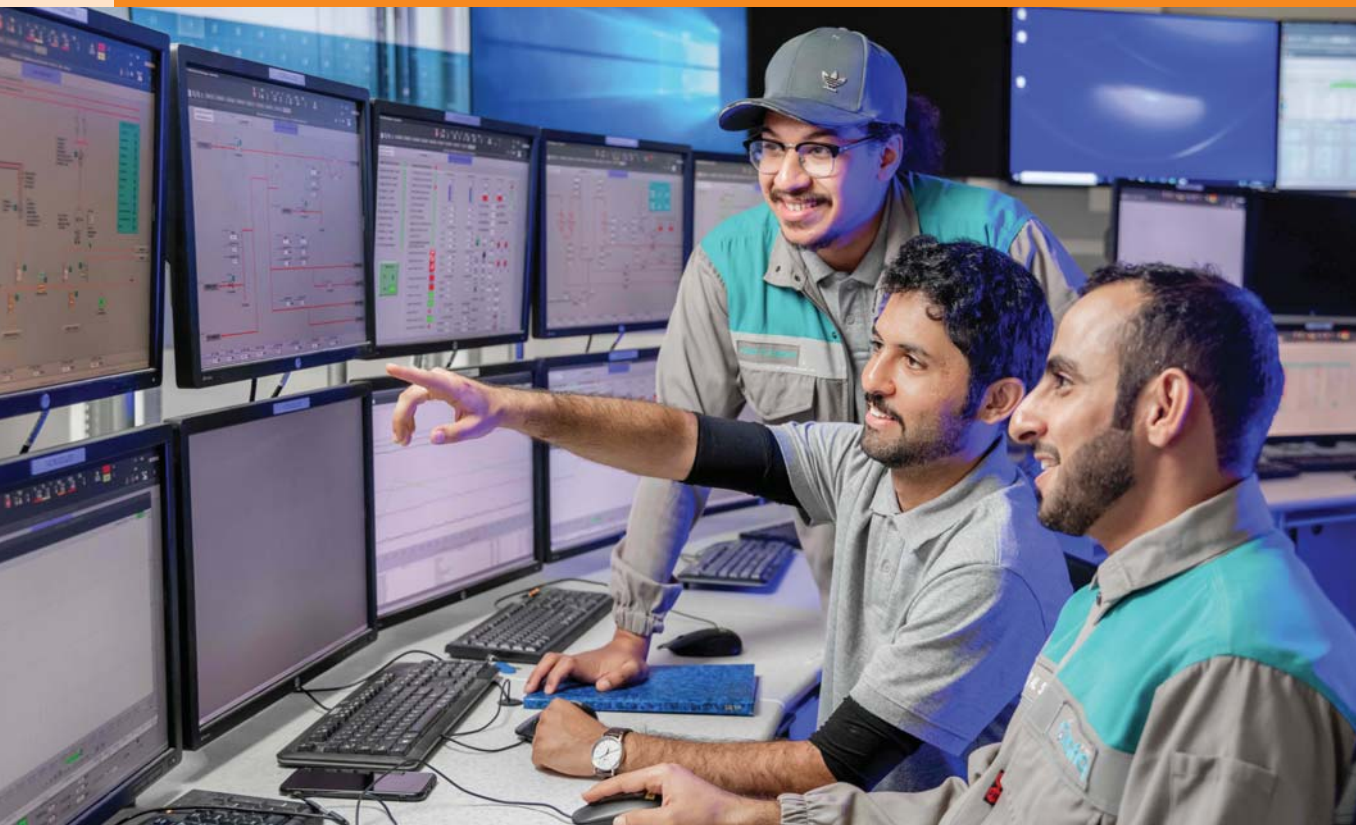
When Marafiq was preparing for Duqm Water Network took over from Public Authority of Water (PAW) in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm in August 2020, Hawraa moved to work as a project engineer in the water and wastewater department. Hawraa supervised several water network expansion projects, and also managed the execution of other projects, such as the construction of water tank with a capacity of 500 cubic meters in the industrial zone of the Port of Duqm, the water supply network to Fisheries Industrial Zone (FIZ). In addition, she contributed in waste water development plan in the zone.


Hawraa also works on following up the In-Country Value (ICV) in the potable water projects through monitoring the performance of the Contractors in order to support small and medium enterprises, contribute to enhancing the use of local products in projects and provide job and training opportunities for Omanis.

Hawraa and her team participate in the preparation of plans for the development of the potable water sector in Duqm. The four years she spent in Marafiq has been a rich journey full of knowledge and success and a source of pride for her. During this period, she has been an eyewitness to laying

**Enhancing
skills of
young
people and
enabling
them to lead
and grow**

**Preparing
plans to
support
SMEs and
enhance
enterprises'
contribution
to In-Country
Value (ICV)**





**Involving
youth in
the water
development
plan and
strategy for
residential
buildings
and projects**

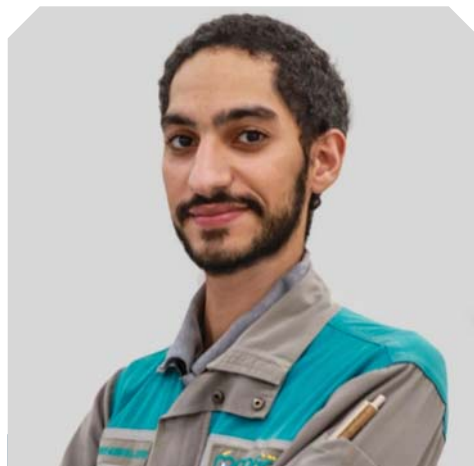
the foundation stone for the Duqm Integrated Power and Water Plant, the expansion of the potable water network, and the development strategy for water distribution networks in conjunction with the Special Economic Zone at Duqm for attracting new projects.

Quality Management & Assurance

Zamzam bint Mohammed Al-Siyabi, who serves as a Quality Assurance Engineer, embarked on her journey with Marafiq in 2022, contributing with her colleagues to build a comprehensive system for quality, safety, health, and the environment. This effort played a pivotal role in the company obtaining several international certifications. In 2022, Marafiq achieved ISO 45001 for Occupational Health and Safety Management, ISO 14001 for Environmental Management, and ISO 9001 for Quality Management in 2021. Zamzam said that these certifications are a global recognition of the company's commitment, along with its employees and contractors, to meet all quality, health, and safety requirements.

The Quality, Health, and Safety team at the company focus on enhancing the company's performance by meeting requirements effectively and efficiently. The team conducts periodic and continuous monitoring to ensure compliance with all requirements through workshops, awareness campaigns, and internal and external audit processes.

Zamzam also commended the company's efforts in empowering and developing its employees, especially through training courses in areas such as auditing and project management. These courses have empowered Zamzam and her colleagues to monitor projects and measure the level of compliance. Zamzam gained additional



Daoud Al Asfor:

We focus on ensuring the provision of top quality services according to the highest standards

experiences in time management and prioritization of tasks, particularly given the diverse projects executed by Marafiq in the energy and water sectors.

Zamzam expressed deep pride in being part of the Marafiq family, where this pride is manifested in the strong connections between her personal values and the company's strategic vision. She emphasized that she does not consider herself just an employee but an active partner seeking to achieve mutual success.

Between Duqm and Muscat

Although some of the Company's employees go to Duqm from time to time to carry out their field work, most of the employees work in Duqm, where the company's projects are located. Dawood bin Mashhour



Ahmed Al Shaqsi:
Our main objectives are to maintain the Company's assets and extend its life span

Al Asfoor, an employee who was returning to Duqm from his weekend, describes working in Duqm as "fun". Dawood and his colleagues work in the operation and maintenance departments on a shift basis to ensure that the Company's services are uninterrupted, whether in the electricity sector or the water sector.

Dawood Al Asfoor completed, along with 30 trainees, a two-year training course in Takatuf Petrofac Oman which was funded by Marafiq. Afterwards, the team assumed their duties in the Duqm Plant where they have to ensure providing high quality services with no interruptions. As for Dawood's part, he is responsible for monitoring all readings in the plant, record them, inspect the equipment and make important decisions in this regard.

Asset Maintenance

Many talented young Omanis work in the maintenance departments in the Company. Ahmed bin Said Al Shaqsi, a Mechanical Engineer, explained that one of the prominent responsibilities of the department is to maintain the Company's assets and extend its life span. This is done through daily monitoring of the condition of equipment and other assets and preparing weekly, monthly and annual plans for maintenance requirements and equipment needed.

Ahmed is moving later to the Water sector to gain more experience. He said: "my job has acquired me with good experience as the Company has contracts with international corporates, which has contributed to enrich expertise of Omani youth working in Marafiq. We all contribute to raise the performance of the Company and keep pace with the growth of the electricity and water sectors and with the increasing number of projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm."

He also added that "advanced professional development is one of the ambitious goals for Marafiq employees which they are aiming for from the beginning of their journey in the Company. However, this is one of the objectives that the Company has set within its annual plans since its inception in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. As a result, the Company has developed a variety of training programs for 60 Omani youth in various technical fields, many of whom were assigned to work at Duqm Integrated Power and Water Plant. Marafiq also executed on-the-job training programme for Duqm citizens and provided them university scholarships. It also implemented a training programme in UK for a group of Al Wusta school students, in addition to other on-the-job courses for its employees which are updated constantly.

Training courses for Marafiq team to empower them in different business functions

Air Liquide and Marafiq sign an MOU to develop a partnership for the production and supply of industrial gases in Duqm

Reducing the financial and logistical burden on companies and enabling them to focus on operational business

Studying the best alternatives and building advanced industrial gas systems managed by specialized companies

Muscat - 

Air Liquide and Marafiq have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop a partnership for centralized production and supply of industrial gases in Duqm via a dedicated infrastructure. Duqm is expected to host a number of industries requiring industrial gases and focused on sustainable growth.

Under this agreement, Air Liquide and Marafiq will study the most efficient and low carbon solutions to produce and supply industrial gases to a variety of industries planned for Duqm. End-users such as property developers and industrial customers in Duqm will benefit from this partnership, including economies of scale, synergies, world-class technologies and operating expertise related to industrial gases.

Monica VARAGNAT, Large Industries Business Line VP, Africa, Middle East & India "Air Liquide is very pleased to join Marafiq as a strategic partner who is aligned with our growth ambitions in the Duqm industrial basin. In the context of this partnership, Air Liquide will leverage its world-class technologies and expertise in the supply of industrial gases to contribute to the industrial development in Duqm."

Enhancing services to industrial projects

For his part, Abdullah Al Hashimi, Managing Director of Marafiq, welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding with Air Liquide. He said: "The memorandum of understanding will enable Marafiq to enhance its services to industrial projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and contribute to providing integrated services to companies operating in the zone, including electricity, water, industrial water, and industrial gases".

He added: "Air Liquide is one of the companies specialized in the industrial gases sector, and we expect that the memorandum of understanding will contribute to achieving mutual benefits for the two companies and at the same time contribute to serving and attracting many industrial projects to the Special Economic Zone at Duqm."

It is worth noting that Marafiq manages the power and water sectors in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) under a long-term agreement and enjoys the capability to produce power to serve OQ8 (Duqm Refinery), OTTCO (Crude Oil Storage Park in Ras Markaz). In Addition, Marafiq is supplying electricity to the zone through the zone distribution company to serve industrial, commercial and tourism projects, as well as residential properties in the Zone. Moreover, Marafiq operates a potable water desalination plant to serve different industries in the Zone. This includes residential, commercial, and industrial projects in the Zone.

Marafiq also provides industrial cooling water for OQ8 and has the capacity to provide for future industrial projects at SEZAD through an industrial water desalination plant. Furthermore, Marafiq operates seawater intake facilities with a supply capacity of 1.5 million cubic meters per day and a water outfall line with a capacity of 1 million cubic meters per day.

Air Liquide; A world leader in gases, technologies and services for Industry and Health, Air Liquide is present in 73 countries with approximately 67,100 employees and serves more than 3.9 million customers and patients.

Air Liquide's revenue amounted to more than 29.9 billion euros in 2022. Air Liquide is listed on the Euronext Paris Stock Exchange.

**Supply of Industrial Gas at the Special Economic Zone of Duqm
between Marafiq and Air Liquide**

 **Air Liquide**  **marafiq**





Expanding over an area of 70k sqm

SOHAR Freezone Elevates its Automotive Logistics Operations

Sohar -  :

SOHAR Port and Freezone is pleased to announce the signing of an expansion agreement with The Middle East Group (SFZ) LLC for the expansion of their Open Yard Car Storage Hub in SOHAR Freezone. This expansion demonstrates SOHAR Port and Freezone commitment to strengthening logistics capabilities and enhancing import and re-export operations.

Originally established as a dedicated hub for automotive brands, this project has evolved to prioritize logistics excellence. By importing vehicles from renowned manufacturers from countries such as Thailand, Japan, Mexico, China, Egypt and South Africa, and subsequently re-exporting them to international markets in North Africa, SOHAR Port and Freezone is positioned to play a pivotal role in facilitating global trade.

Mr. Mohamed Abdulla Aghil, Chairman of The Middle East Group SFZ LLC, emphasized the significance of this expansion, stating, «Our partnership with SOHAR Freezone has

been instrumental in our journey to enhance our automotive logistics operations. We believe that this expansion will attract a broader customer base and foster valuable business relationships.»

Commenting on this milestone achievement, Omar Al Mahrizi, CEO of SOHAR Freezone and Deputy CEO of SOHAR Port, highlighted the project's contribution to the integrated logistics system. He stated, «This expansion significantly enhances our ability to meet the growing demand for top-notch logistics solutions within the SOHAR Port and Freezone ecosystem. We take pride in our ability to attract more tenant companies, reflecting investor confidence in our logistics capabilities. Our commitment to industry diversification and strategic collaborations reinforces SOHAR Freezone's competitiveness and further contributes to Oman's ongoing economic diversification.»

With this expansion, the automotive cluster in SOHAR Freezone has expanded its footprint to encompass a substantial area of 70,000 sqm, strengthening its position as a logistic hub in the automotive business landscape.

**Importing
vehicles
from manu-
facturers for
re-export to
global mar-
kets**



Sohar Free Zone has huge potentials in the automotive storage business

OQ, Madayn and Sohar Free Zone confirm support to new industrial projects

Local and International Projects Worth \$88 Million Set to Launch in Ladayn Polymer Park and Sohar Free Zone



Hilal Al Kharousi:
OQ Group committed to purchase products manufactured in Ladayn

Muscat -

OQ Refineries and Petrochemical Industries, a subsidiary of OQ Group, signed nine investment agreements encompassing 7 projects to be established in the Ladayn Polymer Park in Sohar Industrial City and 2 in Sohar Free zone.

The agreement signing ceremony, which took place in the 10th of December 2023, was signed by Hilal Ali Al Kharousi, Chief Executive Officer of Commercial & Downstream at OQ Group.

In the same context, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) signed 7 land usufructs (land lease) for the seven projects that will be implemented in the Ladayn Polymer Park in Sohar with a duration of 33 years (extendable). The pacts were signed by Dawood Salim Al Hadabi, CEO of Madayn.

Further, Omar bin Mahmood Al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Free Zone and Deputy CEO of Sohar Port, signed two usufruct agreements with the MAK Germany GmbH for the production of specialized plastic composites valued at US \$11 million and with Gemini Corporation for a \$3 million venture focused on plastic recycling.

Volume of Investments

The combined investment sum of the nine projects reaches US \$88 million, with US \$74 million allocated for initiatives within the Ladayn situated in Sohar Industrial City and US \$14 million designated for projects within the Sohar Free Zone.

These agreements are geared towards augmenting the value of petrochemical projects, fostering the expansion and advancement of local companies. Anticipated outcomes from these new agreements include the generation



The pacts and volume of investments





With Mohammed Riaz & Sons



With Napco National

Dawood Al Hadabi:
Ladayn aims to create In-Country value for local industries and localize specialized plastic industries

Khalid Al Shuaibi: A plan is implemented to attract investors in cooperation with OPAZ and OQ

of approximately 290 direct and 600 indirect job opportunities. Moreover, they aim to bolster human capital development by fostering skill enhancement, innovation, fortifying local capacities within the plastics industry, and generating business prospects for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Ladayn Polymer Park in Sohar

The Ladayn Polymer Park in Sohar is a key project aimed at propelling Oman towards self-sufficiency in plastic products and carving out a niche for the country in the international plastics market. It is expected that Ladayn will bolster the In-Country value of industrial products, facilitate the localization of specialized plastic industries, incorporate state-of-the-art technology within this sector, offer incentives to investors, and establish an appealing investment environment on both local and international fronts.

The establishment of the Sohar plastics industries park comes in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed

in May 2022 between the OQ Group and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), supported by the Follow up and Implementation Unit of the Oman Vision 2040 and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Under the MoU, Madayn allocated a land area of one million sqm in the Sohar Industrial Zone (Phase VII) to establish a complex for the production of plastic products with high added value, at reduced prices. Through Liwa Plastics Industries Complex O, Q Group serves as the major provider of high-quality raw materials for plastic-based products needed for sustainable packaging for specialized uses in healthcare, fiber, textiles, agriculture, construction, furniture and many other uses.

Development of manufacturing industries

Hilal Ali Al Kharusi, Chief Executive Officer of Commercial & Downstream at OQ Group said: "These agreements showcase the Group's commitment to fortify the Sultanate of Oman's standing in developing manufac-



With Jil Technology



Inking pact With Madayn Plastic Company



With Jacoplastics Middle East



With Al Farida
Industry & Trade

turing industries and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly those focused on the industrial sector. The goal is to establish top-tier national industries across various domains, fostering product self-sufficiency, and positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a significant exporter in these sectors.

He emphasized that these agreements will aid in establishing an industrial atmosphere conducive to small-scale investors, both within the Sultanate of Oman and internationally, while fulfilling the Sultanate's demand for plastic products. He expressed optimism about the prospective surge in investment levels within this sector in the upcoming years.

Furthermore, he highlighted that OQ Group intends to procure goods produced in Ladayn, such as plastic pallets and packaging bags for polymer granules. This underscores OQ Group's dedication to endorsing plastic recycling facilities equipped with cutting-edge technologies aimed at minimizing adverse usage and environmental effects.

Localization of specialised industries

Dawood Salim Al Hadabi, CEO of Madayn, commented: "The Ladayn Polymer Park in Sohar Industrial City is geared towards fostering added value through the localization of specialized plastic industries and the integration of advanced technology within this sector. Additionally, it aims to offer incentives to investors and cultivate an appealing investment environment on both regional and international platforms.

Attracting investors

Khalid bin Saeed Al Shuaibi, Head of the National programme for Investment and Export Development (Nazdahir) - one of the programs emanating from Oman's Vision 2040- said: "There is a cooperation between the programme, OQ Group and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) to form a joint team and work to attract investors through a marketing plan targeting a number of countries. He explained that the team succeeded in attracting a number of investors who already inked pacts to set projects in Sohar Ladayn Park..



With Gemini
Corporation



With MAK
Germany GmBH



With National Wood
Plastic Company

**Raising ICV
of petro-
chemical
projects and
contribut-
ing to the
growth of
local compa-
nies**

**The new
agreements
to provide
290 direct
and 600
indirect job
opportuni-
ties**

**Focus on
building
local ca-
pacities in
the plastic
industries
and creating
business op-
portunities
for SMEs**

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Remarkable transformations to attract foreign investments

Economic predictions across various countries, regions, global sectors are progressively growing more intricate by the day. It's foreseeable that complexity will eventually become so ingrained in the collective consciousness of business communities, economists, governments, and consumers that it will cease to be a topic of discussion, simply regarded as a familiar aspect.

The conviction in the forecasting procedure and its intricacies will become deeply entrenched in all aspects concerning financial transactions and investment. This naturally intertwines with numerous factors including growth, inflation, taxation, business facilitation, competitiveness, liquidity, risks, opportunities, and more.

However, the latest revelation comes from the Investment Policy Framework of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), shedding light on the escalating utilization of investment screening mechanisms and the growing trends of numerous countries to establish regulatory frameworks specifically designed for this screening, aiming to fortify the safeguarding of sensitive sectors against foreign acquisitions. The organization further emphasizes that investment screening is increasingly employed for national security purposes in Europe.

Other regions have seen a limited uptake of the remaining schemes. This suggests that countries embracing free-market principles, economic liberalization, and competitive environments prioritize evaluating both new and existing investments through the lens of national security. Conversely, it's commonplace for developing countries to place greater emphasis on security concerns associated with investments.

Reports indicate that the 2008 global economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic intensified apprehensions regarding potential foreign takeovers in critical sectors. Recently, the definition and extent of «national security» have broadened, resulting in the inclusion of numerous additional economic sub-sectors as strategic areas warranting scrutiny for any investments. This expansion also encompasses crucial scientific and technological knowledge domains, along with business sectors involving access to sensitive personal data or having capacity to shape public opinion.

To summarize the idea, there is now an obligation to embrace a well-calibrated approach in crafting investment policies. This approach aims to enhance the government's capability to address fundamental security issues without undermining its endeavors to promote foreign direct investment. This becomes particularly crucial given the ongoing geopolitical and security upheavals, alongside an unpredictable economic climate that has significantly diminished FDI inflows across nearly all global regions.

Everyone is aware that there is a global and also regional atmosphere, considering the aftermath and implications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza—that isn't favorable for foreign direct or indirect investment. However, the key for any country's success lies in its capacity to identify, uncover, or seize opportunities amidst the intricate web of ongoing economic and social changes.

Various perspectives emphasize the importance of thoroughly assessing the potential in engaging with green finance, green hydrogen, and the practical and creative aspects of artificial intelligence. It's crucial to delve into these areas in a sophisticated and comprehensive manner. There are facets within these investment domains that require more extensive evaluation than what is currently offered on a global scale.

Enhancing Oman's investment collaboration with Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait could represent a straightforward

method to sustain elevated levels of direct investment. The primary focus would involve attracting increased investments from the BRICS alliance, leveraging its pivotal resource—the New Development Bank—and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Notably, it's observed that annual foreign direct investment directed towards the BRICS countries surged more than fourfold between 2001 and 2021. This surge significantly contributed to the overall formation of fixed capital during this period.

The BRICS economies also continued to move in the general direction of a more open and supportive investment policy environment, according to UNCTAD's assessment.

The current data of 2024 underscores the necessity for collaborative efforts among various Omani institutions dedicated to enticing foreign direct investment. It calls for the Duqm Special Economic Zone and all free zones to tailor specific incentives for individual large-scale projects or sectors. This approach builds upon the established perception of streamlined business operations in Duqm and similar zones while introducing fresh value in leveraging Oman's strategic location—a crucial intersection by both sea and land.

Recent developments have amplified the significance of this location. Owing to its judicious and well-balanced policies, Oman has an optimal opportunity to objectively capitalize on the Chinese Silk Road and the Indo-Arab-American-European Silk Road.

The forthcoming phase appears to lean towards favoring the investment agreements involving major corporations or state-backed funds with both Duqm and the free zones. The Duqm Oil Refinery's model stands out as a significant illustration of this trend.

The collective experiences of numerous countries suggest an unavoidable necessity during the stage of economic growth for both companies and the nation itself to expand their exports while also tending to the needs of the domestic market. To achieve this balance, there is a crucial need to equip the bureaucratic machinery within the executive authority, including banks, customs, and tax authorities, with fresh expertise and intricate digital coordination mechanisms. This step aims to match the increasing complexity of the economy and address the future requirements of the Sultanate of Oman.

Occasionally, I come across the perspectives of Egyptians, Arabs, and Africans regarding a place like Duqm, and I am aware that each visit leaves them astounded. However, as with all things in life, sustaining progress demands increased effort because the initial construction started from ground zero. Nevertheless, every ongoing development contributes to enriching an already thriving reality.

It is important to intensify and modernize technical and vocational training initiatives in order to effectively accomplish Omanization goals and cultivate skilled personnel. There might be a need for a significant advancement in hotel construction and the training of hotel staff to adequately support the substantial growth in tourism investment within the Sultanate of Oman. This sector stands as a potential catalyst for showcasing the country's heritage, natural beauty, and pristine landscapes.

The actual reality in both business and social domains, rich with profound values and significance, merits additional promotional efforts. The Omani «lifestyle» holds a broad appeal across numerous parts of the world. It remains crucial, in every scenario, to bolster the national system in managing emergency risks until its full establishment—or more accurately, until the profound sense of security felt by investors and citizens within the Sultanate of Oman amid an extremely turbulent global landscape.



Consultancy study for cargo tracking system in economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities

Muscat -  :

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has reviewed a consultancy study that aims to improve the tracking of goods and shipments, as well as customs clearance procedures in the special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities in Oman. The study aims to put into practice advanced digital solutions that will enhance the smooth management of goods movement and customs clearance in these areas. These solutions will be in line with international best practices and procedures and will comply with globally recognized process manuals.

The review workshop was attended by His Excellency Eng. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Deeb, OPAZ Deputy Chairman, as well as representatives from the Directorate General of Customs, Royal Oman Police, and the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology. Additionally, officials from the zones supervised by the Authority were present at the workshop.

The workshop focused on reviewing the current procedures for the movement of goods and shipments. The proposed modern procedures for managing shipping and customs procedures in the zones supervised by the Authority were also discussed. The evaluation of these procedures identified the accompanying challenges, and solutions were devised to improve the efficiency of goods transportation

between customs ports and zones supervised by the Authority. These solutions aim to reduce the financial and administrative burdens associated with traditional means, control the customs movement of goods between different regions in the Sultanate, and create a strong database that enables competent authorities to know the volume of trade exchange.

Documentation of procedures

OPAZ conducted a consultancy study in collaboration with Crimson Logic to document the existing procedures for managing and shipping goods. The objective of the study was to streamline the movement of goods while maintaining proper control. Additionally, it aimed to integrate with national digital platforms to maximize their utilization. The study involved conducting visits to various regions, holding coordination meetings with relevant authorities including the General Administration of Customs at the Royal Oman Police, and reviewing customs procedures and regulations. The Authority will now finalize the requirements with the relevant authorities to implement the project.

OPAZ is currently prioritizing its digital transformation initiative and efforts to enhance the investment climate. The ultimate goal is to establish the zones under its management as the primary destinations for investment. To achieve this, OPAZ is working on organizing and developing the areas under its supervision while simultaneously establishing an attractive and sustainable investment environment.

Developing sophisticated protocols and digital solutions to streamline goods transportation and customs clearance

Elevating the efficiency of goods movement between customs ports and zones overseen by OPAZ



«Vulcan» Lays Foundation Stone to Establish Integrated Green Steel Factory

Investments exceed \$3 billion, and production begins in 2027

Duqm - :

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), celebrated on the 27th November 2023, laying the foundation stone for the establishment of an integrated green steel factory with a production capacity of about 5 million metric tons annually. The unit generates investments exceeding \$3 billion. The project, being implemented by Vulcan Green Steel, a subsidiary of Jindal Shadid Steel Group, is built on an area of about 2 square kilometers in the port of Duqm.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and in presence of a number of officials from the public and the private sectors.

The project is scheduled to be completed by 2026 and to begin production in 2027. It will cut down carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 85 percent below the current global average. Being one of the world's largest projects

for the production of green steel, the project comes in line with the Sultanate of Oman's goals to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, in accordance with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. This will make the Sultanate of Oman tops the list in the production of green steel. The establishment of the factory is also in line with Oman's commitment to sustainable and eco-friendly industrial development.

Dr. Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of OPAZ, stressed the importance of establishing an integrated green steel factory in Duqm, which will contribute to the production of steel for the automobile sector, electrical tools and windmills, needed for renewable energy projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

His Excellency stressed that this factory's products are already sought out by one of the international companies specialized in sectors related to this project, hoping to reach an agreement with this company to be one of the main clients to purchase green steel. "Selecting Duqm Special Economic Zone to establish

The factory depends initially on natural gas .. And on green hydrogen in the future



Officials of OPAZ, Vulkan, and the Port of Duqm following the unveiling of the commemorative plaque of the project

the project came due to the fact that there are two projects under construction to produce renewable energy in the zone. There are also a group of projects in the vicinity of the zone aimed to send energy to Duqm and then converting it for the purposes of exporting green hydrogen" Al Sunaidy added.

Promotion of eco-friendly industries

For his part, Venkatesh Jindal, Vice Chairman of Vulkan Green Steel, said: "This advanced facility will revolutionize environmentally friendly industrial processes and will meet the needs of the automotive, wind turbine and consumer goods sectors. We expect that the project will achieve huge savings amounting to 12 million tons annually in carbon dioxide, and thus will have a significant positive impact on reducing global emissions.", noting that the factory will provide the flexibility to move from 100% reliance on natural gas to 100% reliance on green hydrogen.

He added: "The Sultanate of Oman, with its

ideal components, has allocated vast areas for green energy projects, which will be essential for our future vision, in Vulkan Green Steel, planned to start at the end of this decade".

Additional green energy storage options

Venkatesh Jindal continued: "Besides the fact that wind and solar energy provide about 16 hours of electricity, Vulkan Green Steel is making tireless efforts to explore additional green energy storage options around the clock, all days of the week, to cover the remaining 7 to 8 hours. This will be done in partnership between the Company and OQ Alternative Energy, who signed an agreement to explore joint development of an "Integrated Energy Valley", the first of its kind project in the GCC countries. This particular project combines solar energy, wind energy, and energy storage to provide competitive green energy around the clock, meeting the growing decarbonization needs of large industries in Oman such as Vulkan Green Steel."

The produced steel will be used for the automobile sector, electrical tools and windmills

The project supports global efforts to reduce emissions and achieves savings of 12 million tons per year in carbon dioxide



Asyad Drydock achieves numerous successes in 2023



1,600
maintenance
projects
implemented
since 2011

Full
partnership
with
government
and private
agencies to
promote the
shipbuilding
industry

Duqm - :

Dr. Abdul Salam bin Omar Al Rabani, Acting Chief Operating Officer at Asyad Drydock, explained that the Asyad Group invested more than 6 million Omani Riyals to purchase the floating dock, which went into operation in the first quarter of this year 2023. It is projected to contribute to raising the capacity by 20 percent in the maintenance and repair for various sizes and types of ships, noting that the location and area of the current dry dock allows it to accommodate three floating docks in the future,

Asyad Drydock Duqm is a global provider of maintenance and repair services for giant ships, and has established leadership and competitiveness in its maritime services and solutions in the Middle East and North Africa.

According to Dr. Abdul Salam bin Omar Al Rabani, the number of projects implemented by Asyad Drydock in Duqm, since its launch in 2011 until September 2023, amounted to more than 1,600 maintenance projects for more than 550 local and international commercial clients from about 70 countries. He explained that during the first nine months of 2023, the Dock



Dr. Abdul Salam Al Rabani:
*The floating dock is operational,
resulting in a 20% capacity increase*

witnessed an increase by 20% in the number of ship maintenance and repair projects to reach 158 compared to 128 projects during the same period of 2022.

Various potentials

The Drydock owns an industrial workshop with an area of more than 400 thousand square



Competitive average ship repair and maintenance period

meters equipped with all logistical capabilities and various technical equipment. This has made it a logistics center that meets the needs and requirements of its clients from the local and regional markets for many industrial projects, including shipbuilding of various sizes and uses that are sustainable and environmentally friendly. The Drydock berth is 2,800 meters long and its depth ranges from 9-10 metres, and has 14 jib cranes, two shipyards and a world dock that enable it to receive ships with a deadweight capacity of up to 600 thousand tons.

Asyad works in full partnership with various government agencies and the private sector to advance the shipbuilding industry in The Sultanate of Oman provides and meets all the needs of the local markets for ships and boats of various uses, whether for shipping operations, navigational services, or fishing and hiking boats, in addition to providing maintenance services.

Competitive average

Dr. Abdul Salam Al Rabani added that Asyad Drydock attained a competitive average ship repair and maintenance duration of 14 days, surpassing the regional docks' average of 18 days.

He pointed out that Asyad Drydock added to its business portfolio the shipbuilding service, as it was able to provide its services to the regional market by building ships with standard specifications for various uses, such as shipping and navigational services, to meet the growing needs of its clients.

He added that the Drydock recently applied the "nano epoxy" silicone coating technology in ship maintenance operations for the first time regionally and the second globally, in line with the Asyad Group's sustainability strategy, and its commitment to adapting the latest innovative, environmentally friendly technologies. The unique coating is one-of-its-kind at the regional level that provides many economic and environmentally friendly advantages.

Al Rabani stressed that the capabilities of Asyad Drydock and the reliability of its services allow it to attract the largest operators and leading companies in the sector, hailing the competitive advantages that the dry dock enjoys, which include the strategic location, prices, high quality services, and carrying out the work in the shortest possible time while adopting the highest environmental, occupational health and safety standards.

We have successfully added shipbuilding service to our business portfolio catering the growing needs of our clients

Silicon coating technology «nano epoxy» applied in ship maintenance operations for the 1st time regionally and the 2nd globally



They provide services for retail and corporate customers

Bank Muscat and Meethaq Branches in Duqm mark significant advancement in the banking sector

Providing
various
banking
solutions
while ensuring
convenience
and swiftness

Improving
services
catered to
government
institutions,
companies
and SMEs

Duqm -

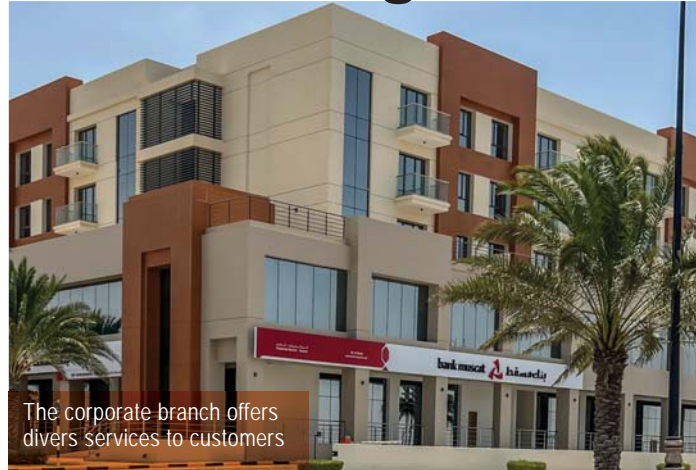
Bank Muscat- the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate - strives to maintain its leadership position in the banking sector throughout its branches spread across the country. It launches initiatives on ongoing basis to provide the best banking services catering to meet customers' needs and aspirations.

Duqm, which is experiencing notable economic, commercial, and population expansion, has become a significant hub boasting various economic and tourism aspects. Numerous companies across diverse sectors, alongside government offices and authorities, have established themselves there, placing Duqm prominently on the economic zones map and attracting foreign investments to the region.

Leveraging this fact, Bank Muscat opened its first branch in Duqm, reaffirming its position as a leading provider of diverse banking solutions. The branch offers a comprehensive range of services and products tailored to suit all segments, ensuring convenience and satisfaction at the same time. These offerings encompass opening savings accounts, applying for auto finance «Sayyarati», and housing finance «Baituna,» as well as applying for a variety of Bank Muscat cards (including debit, credit, and prepaid cards), in addition to delivering other banking solutions to cater the needs of all its customers.

New branch for corporates

To fortify its prominent position in delivering



The corporate branch offers
divers services to customers

top-notch banking services and stay updated with the ongoing developments and expansion in Duqm and adjacent areas in Al Wusat Governorate, particularly within the corporate sector and small to medium-sized enterprises, Bank Muscat recently inaugurated a dedicated corporate branch in Duqm. This establishment supplements the existing network of 5 corporate branches strategically located across significant areas in the Sultanate. The newly launched branch is meticulously designed to meet various banking sector standards, prioritizing security measures, technological advancements, and ensuring streamlined and rapid transaction processes for the utmost customer convenience. Furthermore, it caters to government institutions and businesses by offering a spectrum of services, such as global trade services, project financing, opening accounts, fund transfers, check issuance and deposits, payroll statements, and an array of electronic services facilitated through ATMs and CDMs.

The new branch is a perfect choice for corporate customers in Duqm wishing to benefit from a wide suit of modern banking services. It is manned by Omani highly-trained cadres, and special relationship managers to provide the best banking solutions meeting the various business needs and requirements.

Meethaq Islamic Banking

On the same context, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, opened this year its first branch in Duqm, the first to provide Islamic Banking services in Al Wusta Governorate. This came in line with its strategy to enhance financial inclusion and provide easy access to banking and financial services to Meethaq Customers, including individuals, corporates or government institutions, in the governorate. With a total number of 27 branches across Oman, Meethaq confirms its pioneering stance in delivering Islamic banking services.





Meethaq branch in Duqm has many divisions offering different Sharia-compliant services for retail and corporate customers including capital finance, term and project finance, contract finance, trade services, currency exchange services and tailored financing solutions for corporates based on their business needs. The services also cover opening current accounts, deposits and corporate purchase cards. Moreover, Meethaq offers special services related to transfers, collection of cheques, digital services, payment and currency services.

Developing skills of employees

Bank Muscat branches are manned by qualified Omani youth who represent the essential asset in the Bank and contribute to its success. Since the very beginning, the Bank has been keen to develop its employees' abilities, train them and honing their skills so that they can perform their duties perfectly. The employees undergo different training opportunities that enhance their capabilities in their current jobs and also future jobs. The Bank allocates an annual portion of its budget for human resources training programmes which are implemented in cooperation with certified centers and credible colleges and universities regionally and internationally.

Distributed across all willayats in the Sultanate, branches are considered the Bank's interface and an important channel to connect with customers. The Bank has prepared a long-term branch strategy in opening these branches, equipping them with the best standards of security and occupational safety and providing them with the latest modern technologies that keep pace with various developments. The new branches are featured with their spacious area and special desks for various financing products. They are also carefully designed to suit people with disabili-



ties and make different banking services accessible to them. Today, Bank Muscat boasts an extensive network of 178 branches, including 27 branches dedicated to Meethaq Islamic Banking, and more than 820 ATMs and CDMs available in these branches and other locations covering all parts of the Sultanate.

Being the leading financial institution in Oman, Bank Muscat has contributed in supporting national economy through corporate and business sector where it has provided multiple options of financial services. The bank will continue its march towards catering different needs of customers and provide world-class solutions adopting with the latest trends.

Reaffirming its leadership position, Bank Muscat has been awarded locally, regionally and internationally. Recently it won the Best Corporate Bank Award and the Best ESG Bank Award from Euromoney. It also was recognized by Global Finance Institution as the Best Consumer Digital Bank in Oman, the Best Corporate Digital Bank in Oman and the Best Digital Islamic Bank in Oman 2023.



The newly established branches are spacious and have dedicated desks for financing products

Meethaq offers a wide range of banking options tailored to the needs of individuals, companies and government institutions

Achieving numerous milestones in sectors development, project financing, and elevating customer experience

OPAZ and Asyad Group Sign Landmark Concession Agreement for the Strategic Muscat International Airport Free Zone



Muscat International Airport

Salalah -


The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and Asyad Group signed a momentous agreement to kick off the development of the highly anticipated Muscat International Airport Free Zone. Under the landmark concession agreement, Asyad – Oman's global integrated logistics provider – will develop, manage and operate the Sultanate's first airfreight-focused free zone.

The agreement, signed on December 10, 2023, aims to enhance the status of the Muscat International Airport Free Zone, which was established in accordance with Royal Decree No. 10/2022, stipulating the establishment of 3 free zones at Muscat International Airport, Salalah Airport, and Sohar Airport. This comes as part

of the government's efforts to develop the special economic zones and free zones sector and enhance their role in economic diversification by optimizing the Sultanate of Oman's share of transit trade, transshipment services as well as multimodal transport services.

Signed by H.E. Eng. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Deeb, OPAZ Deputy Chairman, and Eng. Abdulrahman Al Hatmi, Asyad Group CEO, this agreement aims to help deliver the government's masterplan and objectives for the free zone and special economic zone sectors and strengthen their vital role as levers of economic diversification.

The 1.7-million square meters of the Muscat International Airport Free Zone will be developed over multiple phases, with Asyad Group in charge of developing, operating and managing Phase I (370,000 sqm) of the project. The


The zone prioritizes optimizing financial gains through logistics and value-added activities



حفل توقيع اتفاقية الامتياز للمنطقة الحرة في مطار مسقط الدولي

Signing Ceremony for The Free Zone Concession Agreement at Muscat International Airport

During the digital signing of the concession agreement

first package of the development will consist of land and construction works and power and lighting installations, and it will feature a host of diverse facilities and services.

The planned free zone is set to become a global hub for logistics, optimizing returns from innovative solutions, creating value, offering market-leading transshipment services, and fueling multimodal transport and logistics in Oman.

Localization of a variety of industries

Along with its vast area, the free zone will capitalize on its strategic location at Muscat International Airport to facilitate the localization of a variety of industries and enable players to add value to imports before re-exporting and distributing them. The free zone will also offer world-class logistics facilities to support the

burgeoning express shipping and e-commerce industries.

Through its advanced facilities and state-of-the-art infrastructure, the free zone will provide the ideal business-friendly environment that light industry can leverage companies to boost their growth and access global markets through seamless logistics integration with Muscat International Airport, as well as Oman's vibrant seaports and land ports.

Incentives and facilities

In addition to this synergy with air, sea and land ports and the Sultanate's other freezones, the Muscat International Airport Free Zone will boast a wide range of tailored investment solutions, including logistics and commercial plots, ready-to-use warehouses, premium office spaces, and a variety of shipping options.

The zone prioritizes optimizing financial gains through logistics and value-added activities

Incentives and facilities offered at the Muscat International Airport Free Zone

No minimum capital



Waiver of import and export duties



100% foreign ownership



One-stop system for licenses, permits, approvals and visas



Up to 15 years of income tax exemption, renewable for another 5 years



Promotion of transshipment services, multimodal transport and localization of economic activities

The zone's proximity to Muscat Airport provides a competitive advantage and preference for certain business activities

The free zone will also offer a multitude of attractive incentives, such as 100 percent foreign ownership, zero import and export duties, no minimum capital requirements, up to 15 years of income tax exemption, and a single point of contact for all permits, licenses and approvals.

This milestone development deal, with Asyad as a major logistics powerhouse, is yet another strategic move that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones is taking to fulfill its vital national role as the leading entity responsible for organizing, supervising, facilitating, operating and accelerating business, marketing, and attracting investments to Oman's industrial cities and free zones.

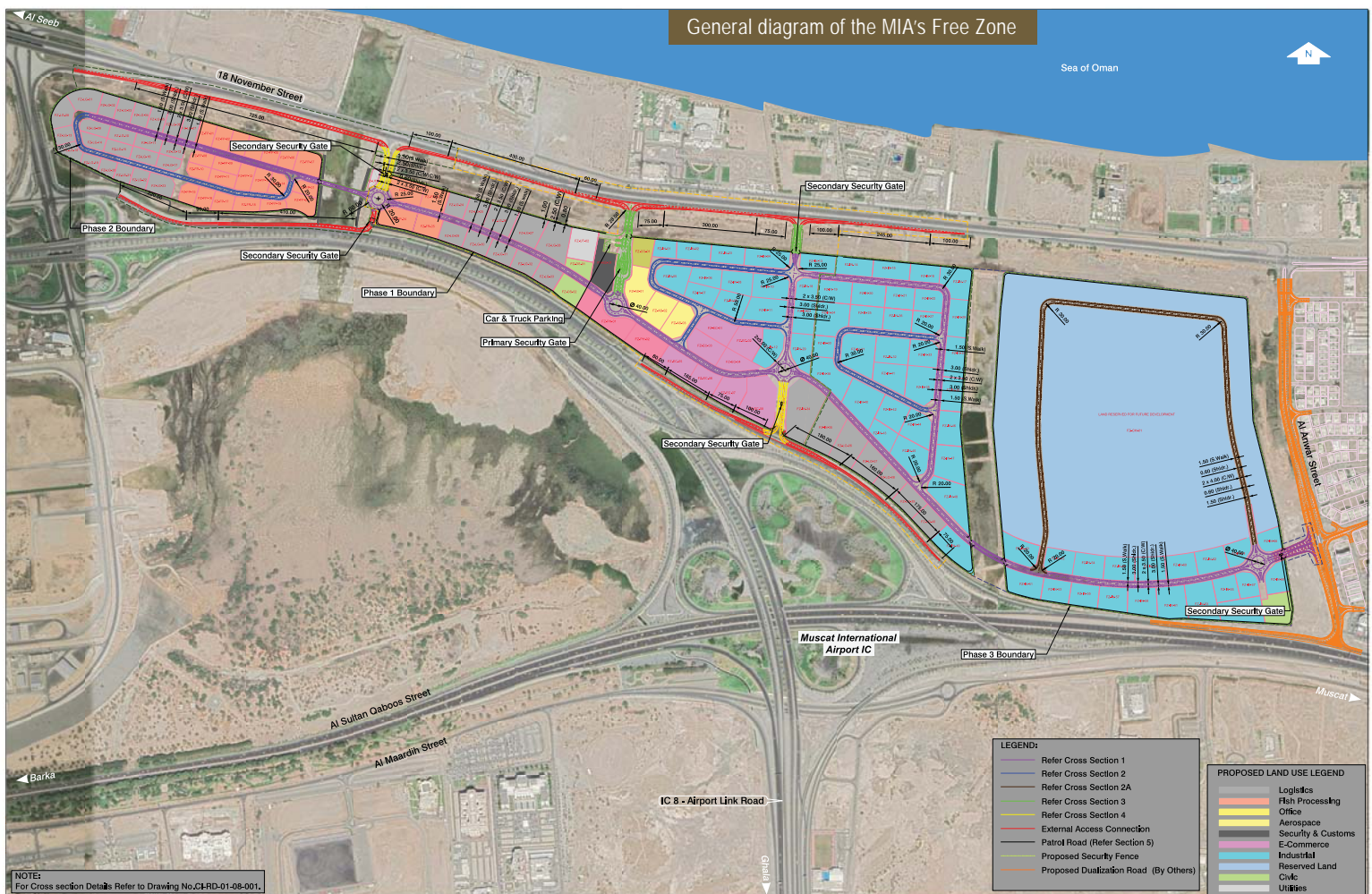
Attracting investments to the zone

Faisal bin Ali Al Balushi, Project Director of Muscat Airport Free Zone at Asyad Group, commented that the agreement aligns with Oman's Vision 2040 to diversify the national economy, enhance the status of economic zones and free zones, attract investments and promote freight traffic in the Sultanate of Oman, explaining that Asyad Group, the operator of the project, will work to draw in investments. "Muscat International Airport Free Zone is projected to contribute to the integration of logistics services and multimodal transport between ports, airports



Faisal Al Balushi:
Asyad strives to attract investments to the zone

and land transport. Its proximity to Muscat Airport offers a competitive advantage and preference for some commercial activities such as e-commerce, pharmaceutical and food industries", he added, pointing out that Asyad is the integrated provider of logistics services in the Middle East and therefore; it will seek to find integrated products that benefit investors.



Sayy Commercial District... a vibrant investment destination



Duqm - :

The Sayy Commercial District is one of the new areas to be developed within the comprehensive plan of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). The statistics issued by the administration of SEZAD indicate that the new commercial district is witnessing a good turnout from investors in various economic sectors, especially the commercial sector and the real estate development sector.

The new vibrant downtown located in the center of the zone witnesses the implementation of many infrastructure projects and service facilities, reflecting its investment growth.

The total number of lands allocated for investment and development in Sayy Commercial District stands at 205 plots, 70% of which (i.e., 144 plots) have been granted under the


usufruct contract system, according to data by SEZAD.


Besides, a number of 93 building permits have been issued until the end of 2023, 45 of which are completed projects, while work is still underway for the rest.

Integrated Development Plan

Prepared by the OPAZ and implemented by SEZAD and Tatweer Company, the Authority's investment arm in the fields of infrastructure, investment and asset management, the Integrated Development Plan focuses on the establishment of a number of parks, projects and service facilities. The project also includes internal roads connected to main roads in the zone, in addition to sewage networks, rainwater drainage channels, a public garden, and a mosque that accommodates more than 1,500 worshippers.

Sayy Commercial District also includes sports and entertainment centers such as


**Building
permits
issued for
over 93
projects**


**Establishment
of a public
garden,
parks and
multi-service
facilities**



Sayy Commercial District ... passion that transfers the future



Mosque accommodating more than 1,500 worshipers

HOTEL



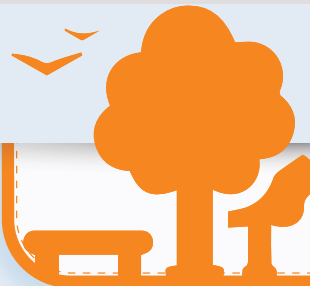
Hotels



Medical complex working around the clock



Playgrounds



Public garden



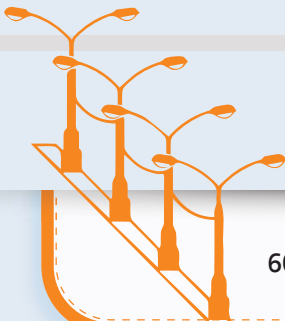
Sports centers



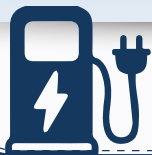
Apartment Hotels



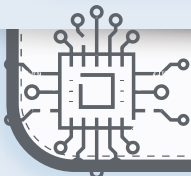
International school



600 lighting poles



(EV) charging stations



Technologically advanced environment



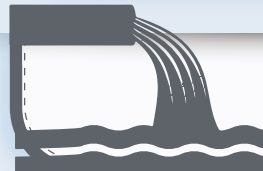
Special lanes for bicycles and electric bikes



Green spaces



Internal roads network



Sewage network



Water drainage channels



the Oman Bowling Center, as well as a number of hotels and hotel apartments of various levels. The project encompasses a medical complex that operates around the clock and Al Saad International School, an international school which already began receiving students several years ago.

Cutting-edge infrastructure

The development project in Sany District costs more than OR 13 million. The planned public garden, expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024, is being built on an area of 13 thousand square meters, containing playgrounds, a walkway and green areas.

The development of the district entails building dual roads with a length of 4.2 km and two lanes in each direction; single internal roads with a length of 9.4 km and one lane in each direction; and the establishment of 10 links connecting the internal road network with the main roads next to the commercial district, in addition to 7

intersections with pedestrian traffic lights and a 600 lighting poles.

Sewage system and drainage channels

The infrastructure of Sany Commercial District also includes a sewage network and surface water drainage channels to work during rainfall, in addition to the construction of a number of other service and investment projects. The length of the sewage network is more than 15 kilometers, while the length of the rainwater drainage channel network exceeds 12 kilometers. Currently, work is underway to connect the existing facilities and buildings to the sewage network and implement a 1.2-kilometer earthen barrier to protect the area from possible surface water.

The plan also encompasses electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, and the allocation of places to provide USB outlets for charging phones, tablets and electronic devices in pedestrian corridors, rest areas on both sides of the road, safe and paved bike lanes, electric bicycles, and smart signals.

Building typical internal roads connected to the main roads

Establishment of a 27km-long network for sewage and surface water drainage channels

Installation of Electric Vehicles (EV) charging stations in many locations





Saleh Al Maamari
Editor-in-chief



Aligned with an era marked by fast global shifts and consecutive substantial changes at the organizational level, notably among service providers, numerous government and private service organizations have formed organizational transformation teams

Organizational Transformation...A future vision to achieve excellence

Tweaking is an unavoidable norm throughout life's journey. It's essential to acknowledge and embrace it across diverse facets of life, be it economic, social, environmental, or organizational. Embracing change, transitioning, and transforming from the present reality towards a more qualitative, swift, and intelligent future is crucial, and we should actively seek to derive benefits from this evolution.

A contemporary concept of Change known as « Organizational Transformation» emerges today within the business sphere among groups or organizations. It stands as a pressing and essential requirement for survival, fostering prosperity, enhancing performance, and nurturing an enterprise culture, particularly amidst intense and prompt competition in service provision.

Aligned with an era marked by fast global shifts and consecutive substantial changes at the organizational level, notably among service providers, numerous government and private service organizations have formed organizational transformation teams.

Considering the significance of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) as a key government body in Oman and its crucial role in fostering the country's economic diversification, it has implemented the concept of organizational transformation. A three-year implementation plan was devised, crafted by an international expertise selected by OPAZ itself.

The transformation plan encompassed six primary pillars: planning and development, organization and oversight, facilitation and post-service provision, as well as operation and expediting business, marketing and investment attraction, and organizational excellence. Additionally, the transformation plan comprised 28 sub-goals aimed at realizing the vision of special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities evolving into the premier investment destination. The mission was to cultivate an appealing and sustainable investment environment, enticing both local investors and those from diverse global locations. This effort also aimed at achieving strategic objectives in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 programs.

By staying updated with the Authority's activities, I observed advancements made in 2023 by the Organizational Transformation Team, comprising global expertise. They accomplished several tasks, notably conducting an in-depth analysis of the current market conditions in investment attraction and post-service facilitation areas. Their efforts included formulating recommendations, hosting multiple workshops to deliberate strategic plans, devising a comprehensive database project encompassing all investors, managing change processes, and preparing progress reports.

The team also dedicated efforts to craft the yearly plan, outlining organizational segments and harmonizing it with the strategic and operational focal points for 2024. The plan encompassed significant development initiatives and investment attraction endeavors within the OPAZ's supervised zones. They also designed a tool for efficient electronic tracking of all activities and communications.

Ultimately, we look forward to the ongoing progression of the organizational transformation plan within OPAZ and the rest of the public service organizations, leading to fruitful outcomes that demonstrate positive impacts on both internal and external environments. This will be evident through its practices and duties, embracing modern technology and innovations, enhancing experiences for international and local investors by leveraging information technology. Furthermore, we aspire for a culture that welcomes change and exhibits flexibility to rapid local and global transformations.