



Duqm

a touristic
destination
resting on
the ocean's
shores





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- On February 10, 2016 CGC signed an agreement with Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm to execute the fourth phase of Duqm port involving constructing the basic structure of government quay. Execution period will be 30 months from the date of awarding the project in addition to 30 days for preparation works.



شركة المجموعة المشتركة للمقاولات
Combined Group Contracting Co.



18
November

On the occasion of 46th National Day
we at SEZAD Congratulate

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

– May Allah protect him –

& pray to Allah almighty to perpetuate his Majesty the Sultan continued health and wellness. We also congratulate the people of Oman on this occasion and renew our pledge of loyalty to continue giving and constructing towards a vibrant future for the people of Oman.

الدقم Duqm

هيئة المنطقة الاقتصادية الخاصة
Special Economic Zone Authority
Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان





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Investment-Stimulating Environment

The sixth issue of Duqm Economist coincides with the celebration of the Forty-Sixth National Day, this dear occasion to our hearts, which has written a new history of Oman and renewed the cultural glories achieved by Omanis over thousands of years. While celebrating this auspicious occasion, the Authority of the Special Economic Zone (SEZAD) presents to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may Allah protect him, its sincere congratulations and prays to Allah Almighty to save His Majesty in good health and wellness. SEZAD also prays to Allah to maintain Oman safe and stable and achieve for the Omani people the glory they strive for under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

Based on the foundations laid by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to build a strong and stable economy, SEZAD has been keen, since its inception on 26 October 2011, to provide a stimulating environment for local and foreign investment. It is appropriate to point out here that this year witnessed many activities in this framework. In May, SEZAD signed the Cooperation, Usufruct, and Development Agreement with the Chinese side for the construction of the Sino-Omani Industrial City in Duqm. Wan Fang Oman began its work in SEZAD immediately after the signing of the agreement asserting that its investments in Duqm will amount to about USD 10.7 billion. Last June, SEZAD granted Karwa Motors the land usufruct to build a car assembly plant with joint Omani-Qatari investment estimated at OMR 160 million.

This year also saw attracting a variety of investments from domestic and foreign private sector, including the construction of an international school, logistics services center, hotels and tourist facilities, malls, amusement and water parks, in addition to other projects.

Complementing the remaining work in Duqm Port, SEZAD signed the agreements of the third and fourth packages of this vital project. SEZAD also assigned advisory services contract for the preparation of the detailed scheme of New Duqm City, which focuses on strengthening urban planning standards within SEZAD borders.

This year has also witnessed the operation of Boeing 737 aircraft on Muscat-Duqm route to provide additional seats for passengers. Moreover, SEZAD signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Oman Arab Bank (OAB) under OAB will facilitate funding for private sector companies and establishments to execute their projects in SEZAD. This is one of the MoUs signed by SEZAD with the commercial banks and their Islamic windows during the past two years.

There are many actions taken by SEZAD to attract investments and create the enabling environment for their growth pursuant to the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may Allah protect him, to achieve economic diversification, attract foreign investments, and provide an appropriate environment for private sector investment.

May Allah grant us success!



Yahya Bin Said Al Jabri
General Supervisor



Based on the foundations laid by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to build a strong and stable economy, SEZAD has been keen, since its inception on 26 October 2011, to provide a stimulating environment for local and foreign investment

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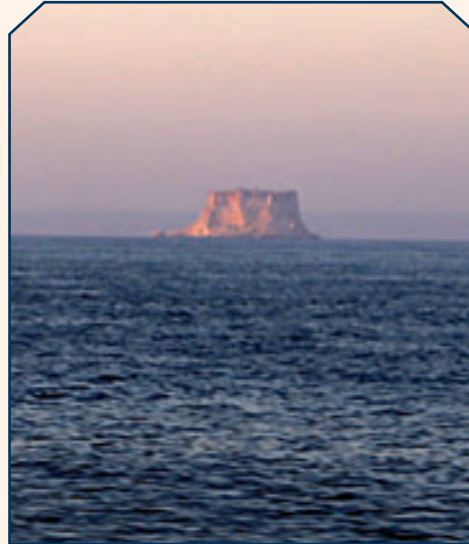
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The magazine welcomes
specialized research and
academic studies

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الدقم Duqm

هيئة المنطقة الاقتصادية الخاصة
Special Economic Zone Authority

Sultanate of Oman

سلطنة عُمان



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the owners of the
property and the
tenants

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municipal
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industrial,
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environmental
registration

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technical
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It covers 150 square kilometers including five different districts

Consultancy Services Agreement Signed for Detailed Master Planning of Duqm City

Duqm - 

The Special Economic Zone Authority of Duqm (SEZAD) today awarded the consultancy services for the detailed master planning, market and feasibility study, design and preparation of tender documents for the development of Duqm City Phase (1) to WS Atkins International.

The contract was signed on behalf of the Authority by H.E Yahya bin Said al-Jabri, Chairman of Board of Directors of the Authority whereas on behalf of the company by Marco G. Malpiedi, General Manager of the company in the Sultanate.

In an effort to continue the development of Duqm City and to enhance the standards in relations to urban planning within the Zone, SEZAD carries on the details on the initial concept master plan for Duqm City, which was completed in 2014. This will enable the Authority to provide a sound and a detail plan as to how it wishes to develop the future city of Duqm, which represents a total area of 150 square kilometers. This area is comprised of 5 distinct neighborhoods inclusive of existing and upcoming residential, commercial, mixed-use, logistic and tourism developments.

Detailed Master Planning the future city of Duqm is critical to the development of the infrastructures and understanding how

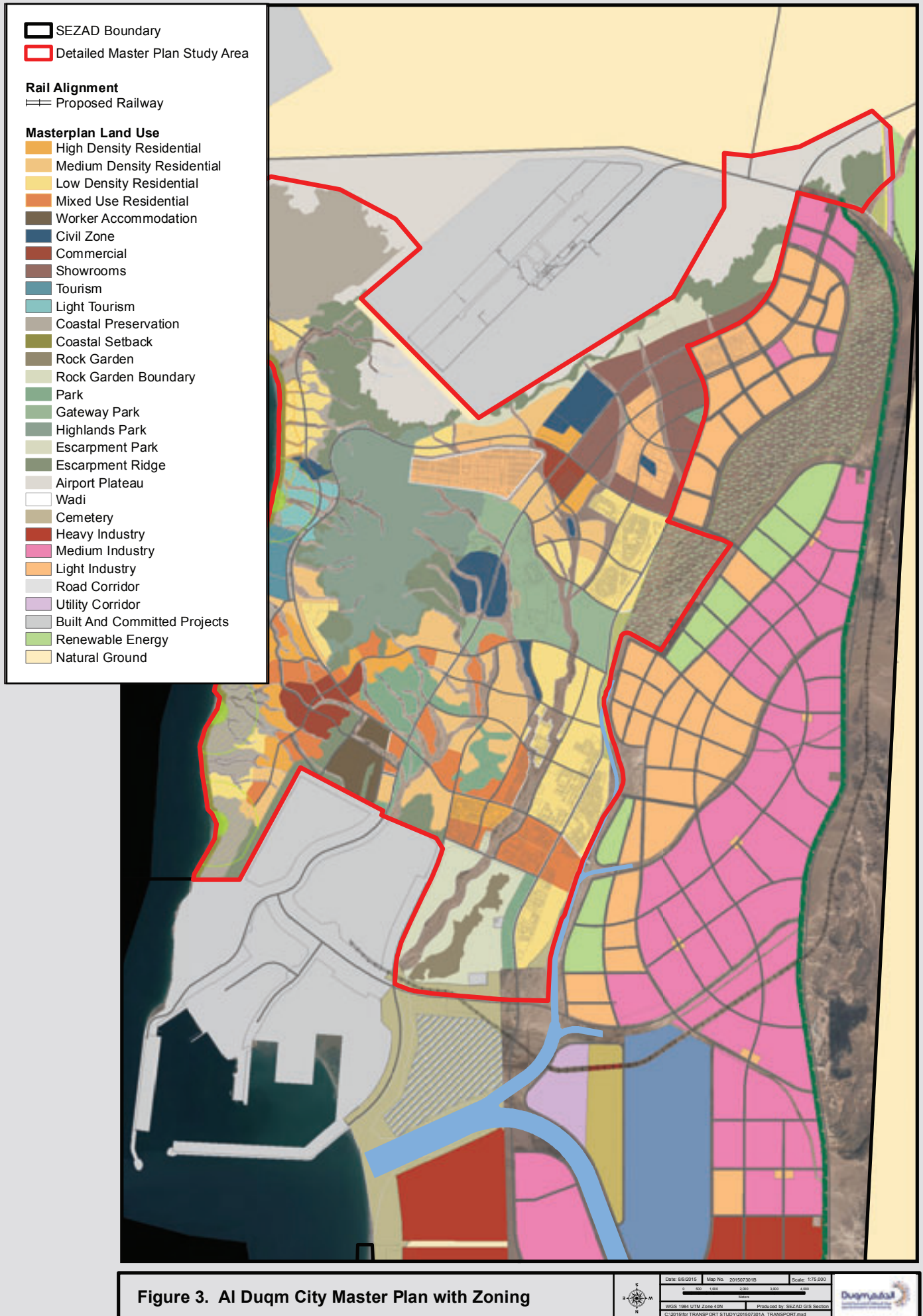
and when to develop in sync with the market requirements. This will enable the government of Oman to ultimately reduce infrastructure cost by applying smart planning principals and designing the required infrastructures to attract both local and international investors to cater to the needs of the future population of Duqm City.

WS Atkins International & Co shall be the lead consultant to work hand in hand with the urban planning and engineering department of SEZAD and many other related departments, authorities and various stakeholders in the development of Duqm. The lead consultant will be joined by sub-consultants, such as Deloitte, Five Oceans Environmental Services, Kamel Establishment, Driver Consult and Design Urban.

The first phase of this project shall be divided in 4 stages and last 30 weeks and shall start this October. This study will include the detailed master plan of Duqm City, a market study and technical feasibility study, a strategic environmental assessment, sustainability assessment, concept design with engineering fit, tourism strategy, transport master plan, drainage master plan and so much more.

The SEZAD looks forward to develop this exemplary detailed master plan for the future city of Duqm.

Plan focuses on strengthening urban planning standards and considers the future development of the city





Wan Fang Oman prepares for the first phase of Sino-Omani Industrial City

Preparation of detailed schemes of main and secondary roads



Duqm - :

Wan Fang Oman began to pave the workers' housing site in the Sino-Omani Industrial City in Duqm upon the arrival of an initial set of drilling and settlement equipment in preparation for the start of the Sino-Omani Industrial City project over an area of 1,172 hectares equivalent to (11.7) square kilometers.

Wan Fang Oman stated that it works with SEZAD to finalize the detailed schemes for the first phase of the project on an area of about one million square meters, indicating that the first phase would include the detailed schemes of the main and secondary roads. It also includes schemes of the area of light and medium industries, residential and commercial areas, and logistics and offices area. The company schedules to carry out the first of

the three projects by the end of 2017.

Funding the projects of Sino-Omani Industrial City will be from Chinese banks and investors.

The Sino-Omani Industrial City in Duqm includes three main categories of projects. The first will be on an area of approximately divisible 870 hectares and will be for heavy industries and areas of medium, light, and mixed use. The second category will be on an area of about indivisible 10 hectares allocated for a tourism project. The third category will be on an area of about 292 hectares allocated for the creation of a petrochemical industry complex and an oil refinery with a capacity of approximately 230 thousand barrels per day. Wan Fang Oman is the main investor in the project and the party responsible for operation and maintenance of the infrastructure on site.

Schemes of light and medium industries area underway



Duqm

Duqm -  :

The Willayat of Duqm is located on a coastal strip on the Arab Sea open to the Indian Ocean and is about 550 km from Muscat Governorate. Duqm is one of the Willayats of Al Wusta Governorate and is distinguished by the rich fisheries and oil resources.

The Willayat of Duqm, known for its beautiful beaches and moderate weather, is an ideal tourist destination for those looking for tranquility and peace of mind during summer where the temperature drops to as low as 25°C. The wilayat has a number of beautiful and virgin beaches the most notable of which is Al Shuwaier. Ras Madraka beach, 80 km away from the wilayat Center, is also one of the main tourist destination for those interested in camping beside the beachfront overlooking the Arabian Sea.

Complimented by the availability of various touristic resources, SEZAD has taken a number of initiatives to create an environment that is conducive for the growth of tourism investments.

Besides the beaches, soft sands and mountain chains overlooking the Arabian Sea such as Ras al Duqm, Ras Markaz, and Ras Madraka, the wilayat of Duqm has many other attractions such as the rocks park, which hosts a number of geologically rare rocks that portray together a unique and charming picture of culture.

In-line with the growing importance of the tourism sector and the expected role it will play in realizing the aspirations of the nation, SEZAD has prepared a master plan for the tourism, business and service areas inside the urban area within the urban area at the coastal strip. A number of areas of different sizes will be provided under this project to investors with interest in setting up hotels and beach resorts. SEZAD is also making endeavors to improve and diversify means of access to the area. It has completed the construction and operation of Duqm domestic airport, which started early operation on 23 July 2014 to connect Muscat to Duqm through four flights per week.

Moreover, SEZAD is completing the works to operate the cruise ships and sea transport dock, which will be part of the public berth at Duqm port. At the same time, SEZAD is conducting a number of campaigns to promote the potentials of the area. To this end, it inked deals with tour operators in Oman and outside to increase the number of tourists visiting Duqm and enhance the occupancy rate at hotels throughout the year.


a touristic
destination
resting on
the ocean's
shores

Duqm is a perfect destination for relaxation and enjoying the beaches

fishermen in a trip at sunset



Interviewer: Saleh Al-Mamari

Ismail bin Ahmed Al-Balushi the Deputy CEO in the Duqm Special Economic Zone Authority announced that the area had attracted till end of September 2016 touristic investments worth 766 million Omani Rials, pointing that the number of existing and under construction and approved touristic projects is of 16 project including hotels of 3, 4 and 5 stars, hotel apartments, resorts and varied touristic establishments including restaurants, clubs, cafeterias, shops, water parks, apartments and residential villas. In an exclusive statement to  he said that touristic factors existing in the area has already attract several local and foreign investors, assuring that the Duqm Special Economic Zone has worked on providing a convenient environment to increase the touristic investments in the zone.



A touristic area and a seafront

The complete plan of the Duqm Special Economic Zone consists of a number of varied investment areas including a touristic area of 26 square meters. Ismail bin Ahmed Al-Balushi said that the Authority works on providing the zone with all infrastructure facilities like electricity, water, roads and telecommunications. The touristic areas has a seafront that extent to 19 kilometers, in addition to the plan of constructing a public beach on a large area suitable for different kind of beach and water activities to meet the needs of residents and visitors, and creating entertainment, relaxation and camping areas, all that comes as a part of the urban planning programs of the touristic area in Duqm.

A continuous growth in the touristic sector

The Deputy CEO of the Duqm Special Economic Zone Authority assured in his interview that "the area has already achieved many gains within the touristic sector in the Sultanate and contributed in investing capitals locally, in addition to attracting foreign companies to work in the Sultanate. It also contributed in stimulating economic growth in Al-Wusta Governance generally and in Duqm particularly; describing that the Airport of Duqm was inaugurated in 23rd July 2014 has facilitated the passengers transportation between Duqm and Muscat, just as the Port of Duqm which

will be welcoming touristic tours once all the adjoining facilities are completed, in addition to the terrestrial road which connect Duqm with the rest of the Sultanate's governance."

Optimistic investors

Regarding the investors' vision, Al-Balushi said: "we sensed during our visits and participation in local and international events, the investors' interest in the zone which enjoys relative and competitive advantages that qualifies it to become a touristic destination during the coming period of time."

And he added: "There is a satisfaction and interest of local and international investors in the touristic area and the geological location of Duqm. They expressed their wish to extend their works in this side and take advantage of the area and the moderate weather."

And he emphasized that the area is witnessing an increasing demand on investment in the hotel sectors, as a consequence of several elements, mainly the investment climate and the easiness of submitting an application adding that the area will witness an economical growth during the upcoming years, pointing that there are currently 3 hotels in Duqm, notwithstanding that achieving the objective growth requires constructing new hotel establishments.

Hiring Omani youth

And in regards of hiring Omani youth in

**Attracting
touristic
investment
worth 766
million
Rials**

**Creating a
convenient
environ-
ment to
increase
touristic
environ-
ment in the
zone**

**26 square
kilometers
is the
touristic
zone's area**





Rocks Garden

**The
touristic
area has a
sea front
that extent
to 19
kilometers**

**Providing
scholar-
ships and
training
programs
to encour-
age the
youth to
work in the
touristic
sector**

**A preposi-
tion to start
exhibiting
tours to
Duqm in
coopera-
tion with
the
Ministry of
Tourism**

touristic projects, Ismail Al-Balushi said: “the Authority in coordination with the Ministry of Manpower and companies of the sector, are all trying to give a priority to the youth to work in the touristic and hotel industry. As part of it, the Committee of Developing Local Communities has previously financed scholarships for the hospitality and touristic sector. Also, the Authority through the Department of Social Responsibility has constantly tried to involve the youth of Al-Wusta Governance in educational program for them to be easier to get jobs in this sector.”

He added: “the Authority has already gone far in the social responsibility aspect to develop the youth’s skills to make it easier for them to enter the job market. Those programs are continuous and were met with acceptance and success.

No delays in projects

And in regards of the effect of the current economic situation and the fluctuations of petroleum prices on touristic investments in Duqm, Ismail bin Ahmed Al-Balushi said: “the area is not isolated from the rest of the world and it is affected by the surrounding economic and politic circumstance. Nevertheless, the Authority is still executing infrastructure projects which are considered as an engine for the touristic investment in the zone. Assuring that the Authority has a Tender Committee which was never late in awarding projects or delaying any planned project.”

The Omani Strategy for Tourism

Ismail bin Ahmed Al-Balushi praised the Omani strategy for tourism 2040 saying: “Duqm has achieved a distinguished place in the Strategy which considered Duqm as a promising entrance to the Sultanate and for

commercial activities and a perfect destination for relaxation and enjoying the beaches.”

He added: “the strategy suggested the development of touristic complexes area in Duqm during the upcoming years, these touristic complexes are one of the basic components of the tourism development plan recommended by the Omani Strategy for Tourism, along with having the needed infrastructure for visitors, which is considered as an attracting element in addition to provide well managed special activities, services and facilities.”

Promoting and marketing

About the Authority’s efforts in promoting and marketing the area, Al-Balushi said: “in the first half of 2016, we have executed a marketing touristic program with the aim of promoting it locally and regionally, and collaborating with touristic tours organizers on both levels, locally and regionally, to increase the number of incoming tourists along with the hotel occupancy rate all year long.”

He added: “the Authority represented by the Marketing Department has prepared a proposal to start exhibiting tours to Duqm in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism so Duqm might become one of the promising destinations to the exhibiting tours from different countries of the world. That is through identifying the zone’s economic potentials and logistic capabilities to accommodate this kind of tours. Also identifying the most important future touristic projects that will be constructed in the zone, in addition to that the Marketing Department is focusing on attracting local and foreign investment to construct touristic resorts that serve the expected touristic movement during the coming period of time.”





A study to conduct charter flights to Duqm

Muscat - Saleh Al-Mamari :

A study confirmed that conducting charter flights to SEZD would contribute to the revitalization of tourism investments there.

Charter flight is a term used to refer to flights rent for tourist groups. Companies rents private jet to reach the required destination in specific seasons. They take this name because of the lack of regular lines or dates like regular flights. Charter flights provide low-cost programs and packages that include tickets, hotel accommodation, and tours. Therefore, the success of charter flights depends on the presence of advance group bookings preceded by intensive promotional efforts.

The study, prepared by SEZAD in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, confirmed that conducting charter flights to SEZD would contribute to the promotion of tourism investment and stimulate the hotel sector and other sectors related to tourism sector, such as land transport and aviation. It also indicated that that conducting charter flights to SEZD would create a variety of tourist segments and hence diversity in the purchasing value from tourism.

The importance of the charter tourism lies in promoting and publicizing tourism destinations located far from the major cities. It is also one of the most important means employed by States wishing to develop the tourism sector, promoting themselves as attractive tourist destinations throughout the year, and trying to increase the number of tourists through operating charter flights directly from the tourist exporting countries. This method contributes in promoting the new tourism destinations and promote tourism investments there.

Meetings with Ministry of Tourism

Given the importance of charter tourism, the relevant officers in SEZAD held several meetings with the stakeholders in the Ministry of Tourism during the current year to discuss conducting charter flights and maximize the unique tourism potentials of SEZD.

The two sides agreed that they would

submit a proposal to make SEZD one of the most promising destinations for charter tourism from various world countries through the identification of SEZD potentials and logistics capabilities to accommodate this kind of flights as well as he most important future tourism projects there. They agreed as well developing a promotion mechanism to attract local and foreign investments to establish tourist resorts that serve tourist traffic expected during the next phase.

Creating new jobs

According to the study, this type of tourism will provide job opportunities for Omani youth by expanding the work of trip organizing companies that will increase the number of its employees to provide the best services for tourists, coordinate trips, make hotel reservations, prepare tour programs, and operating additional bus services. Charter tourism will also raise the demand for tourist guides hence the benefit of the local community from the tourist traffic.

Recommendations

The study recommended the invitation of charter companies to visit SEZD to get to know it closely. It also recommended the participation in the events related to charter tourism outside the Sultanate and implement promotional campaigns in the world media while providing some financial support initially to attract these companies. The study also indicated the significance of implementing awareness campaigns for tourism establishments and the local community on the importance and benefit of this type of tourism.

The study indicated that there are needs to be provided to charter companies, such as the presence of an international airport so that they can operate charter flights directly between the various countries and Oman. Add to this providing exceptional support for these companies, such as reduction or cancellation of landing fees at airports, ground services, and visa fees along with discounted rates by hotels, restaurants, and tour companies.

Conducting charter flights will promote tourism investments

Creating new jobs and stimulation of hotel sector


Recommendation to invite companies to visit SEZD to get to know it closely

Hilal Al-Busaidi, Director General of Passports and Residence

ROP provides all facilities for SEZD

Interviewed by Saleh Al-Mamari :

Obtaining a visa to visit any country in the world goes through several stages and a series of security measures. Therefore, the authorities concerned with issuance of visas seek to facilitate the process in terms of procedures and period.

For further clarification on the issuance of work and residence visas related to SEZD, we met with Colonel Hilal bin Ahmed Al-Busaidi, Director General of Passports and Residence, Royal Oman Police. In an exclusive interview to , he sheds light on many aspects in this regard in pursuit of realizing the desired goals of the establishment of SEZD and facilitating investors and businesspersons' flow to it.

Duqm Police Complex offers varied services



Provision of services to citizens at Duqm Police Station

Investor visa

» **Royal Oman Police offers the service of issuing visas for investors in SEZD. What are the procedures of investor visa? How long does it usually take for issuance?**

As is known to all, foreign investment in the Sultanate relates to several bodies, including the Royal Oman Police, represented by this Directorate General, whose role complements the roles of these bodies. Once the foreign investor has completed the preliminary procedures with other government agencies, the procedures for obtaining an investor visa are easy and do not take much time. We issue some of them on the same day, which in itself is a great facility.

E-visa

» **What are the electronic services ROP provides to investors? Do they include e-visa? How long does it take?**

The e-visa project is underway and once completed, all applicants, including of course investors, can apply online for visa without the need to go to the General Directorate of Passports and Residence.

Numerous facilities

» **Are there certain features offered to investors in SEZD?**

Royal Oman Police has sought to provide all facilities to SEZD to achieve its desired objectives. It has opened its service center in Duqm, which offers a variety of services to the investors in SEZD, such as issuing visas, renewal of residence cards, issuing ID cards, and other services.

Family visas

» **How do you handle investors' requests wishing to bring their families to SEZD? Are there any conditions for that?**

Regarding family visas, they are available for the expatriate who works in the Sultanate under certain controls, most notably he should have a senior job, such as physician, engineer, lawyer, or the like, or a technical profession, such as a mechanic, electrician, and the like. His minimum monthly salary should be (OMR 600) so that he can provide a decent life for his family. He should also have a lease in his name to provide an appropriate accommodation for the family.

As for the people who are eligible to receive a family visa, they are the first-degree relatives, such as wife, children of not more 21 years old, and the parents, provided either of them is of the care age.

As for the visit visas, they are available to the expatriate's relatives on a case-by-case basis.



Investor visa issued on the same day



E-visa project will enable investors to apply online



No obstacles on issuing visas and focus on achieving balance in the expatriate labor force composition



Express visa in the least time possible and tourism visa directly from the entry checkpoint

Sultanate is keen to create an enabling climate for investors and our role complements other government agencies



An expatriate receives residence services at Duqm Police Station

There are no obstacles

» There are some nationalities not eligible for visas. However, if there are high-worth investors that can benefit national economy from these nationalities, how do you deal with that?

In fact, there are no obstacles or reservations. The issue is that there is a regulation of work visas in terms of the nationalities appropriate to fill specific functions and professions from various labor-exporting countries. Therefore, this Directorate General has the duty to mind a number of considerations and find some kind of balance in the composition of the expatriate labor force in the Sultanate taking into account the circumstances surrounding each country, which of course cast a shadow on visa conditions.

Express visa

» In some cases, some foreign companies need a short visit to inspect SEZD. How do you deal with these applications? How much time do they take to have a visa?

The foreign investors who want to conduct quick visits to inspect SEZD can come to the Sultanate either by applying for an express visa through one of the companies operating in the Sultanate or through a tourist visa if the investor holds a nationality eligible to tourist visa. The express visa takes the least possible time, while he can get the tourism visa directly from the entry checkpoint.

Marketing the Sultanate abroad

» Is there any coordination between Royal Oman Police and government agencies concerned with marketing the Sultanate abroad?

There is a continuous coordination with other government agencies. Royal Oman Police also markets the services it provides while other government agencies undertake their roles in their respective fields.

Facilities for investors

» In light of the Sultanate's efforts to increase foreign investment in the country, what are the facilities Royal Oman Police provides in this aspect?

There is no doubt that the authorities concerned in the Sultanate are keen to provide the favorable climate for investors. Royal Oman Police spares no effort to simplify the procedures that will encourage the flow of capital into the Sultanate. There are investment controls that clarify the role of each entity. As the investment activity relates to several authorities, including Royal Oman Police, represented by this Directorate General, the role of this Directorate General is complementary to the roles of these authorities through its employee at the one-stop shop at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, who is in charge of issuing visas for investors. Issuance of some of these visas takes place on the same day, which is a great facility per se.



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Tourism in Duqm and the alliance with the evening

I know the advantages - or at least some of the advantages of Oman tourism, because I have already visited it many times, and lived days in Muscat and Salalah.

We speak of the beauty of the sea and the ocean, the shadows of the history that shine over the water sheets where the Omani Marine did and still charts luminous lines. We speak of the clean, sophisticated and attractive beaches; caves, forts, aflajs, valleys, springs and the splendid mountains covered with greenery, of the rare species of birds, fish and animals, of the pure sand, of the glamour of spring of Salalah which is called autumn (khareef) perhaps as a camouflage for fear of envy.

We speak of all that but we do not owe Oman's charm its right. Each visitor to sultanate becomes inevitably captivated to its charm till the day he leaves this life. We speak of all this, not ignoring an indispensable tourism attraction factor, which is the wisdom and poise displayed by the people of this Arab ancient country, which makes the guest feels - in the hotel or the street or any gathering - the rhythmic life which is rarely found in any other country in the world. This factor, which entrenched in the people's lives, the country's march and its urbanization by the wisdom of the leadership acknowledged by all, and became a symbol of the highest political wisdom in a world rocked with disturbance. With all of the above, a question arises: if all these are advantages of the Sultanate, what would distinguish the tourism activity in Duqm particularly?

Creating touristic development in zones of desert and mountain dimensions requires a particular thinking, and this distinctive way of thinking becomes more demanding when the desired development is in a unique site like Duqm and its huge project by the Arabian Sea as a zone of logistics, ports, marine, services and industrial works of huge size.

Based on the raised ideas in Egypt to create a touristic development in the Suez Canal zone, and by witnessing patterns of hospitality and touristic activity in areas of desert and mountainous background in Egypt, and after my stay for intermittent periods in the Sultanate of Oman (Muscat - Dhofar) I would like to highlight the following:

The responsible of planning touristic development in Duqm should take into consideration that a significant number of tourists will flow-in, business owners in the zone, consequently there is something farther than tourism or hotel accommodation connecting them with the place, this requires providing practical services of international standards from one part, and a good level of attractive and smart entertainment on the other; that would leave an impression on those who stay for shorter periods, and attract them to the zone again as tourists and not businessmen.

The title of this article is making a creative alliance with the evening, which means to understand the increasing human needs in the moments of meditation in the purity of the

night in zones of desert and mountainous backgrounds. I attended many dinner parties in open areas in the depth of Sharm Al-Sheik Mountains, organized by Bedouins residing in these areas... it was generally good, but I felt that there was a missing part to make the experience richer and more interesting, as well as the importance of the heritage fact embodied in the traditional food and cloths. The outdoors parties require enabling the tourist to be able to look over history and nature together, taking into account satisfying modern needs in a careful and thoughtful way (for example, bathrooms in outdoors areas should be of highest quality and below vision level), also the adequacy of light should be calculated according to the guests' desires as they prefer to experience a natural atmosphere particularly on moony nights.

And by the way, there is a steady increase in the number of tourists inflowing to Egypt to visit the desert of "Siwa" and oases to meditate for hours looking at the night sky.

I have many times said, quoting the deceased great doctor Rushdi Said the father of geologists in the world, that desert is a very fragile environment, unlike the common thought. The late doctor was extremely annoyed by the expression used: "invading the desert", clarifying that the desert must be treated gently, and pointing that even the slightest mistakes, like waste dumping even if it was just a few plastic or paper bags, will turn the area into an intolerable place. That's the reason why the sustainable development component and maintaining the cleanliness of the surrounding sites and not allowing to transform them into dumping sites, is a very important job for maintaining the competitive touristic level and preserve the beauty of the desert.

I also believe that an increasing number of tourists will be coming from Asia and Far East countries generally, so it is recommended to organize training programs to learn about customs, traditions and cultures of people coming from these countries to provide them with best options from accommodation, food, drinks and entertainment; and luckily the open-minded life in Oman will make this quest easier.

And it might better to start thinking from now of creating types of festivals to be connected with Duqm like "Duqm's Festival" for best commercial ships in the world, or best passenger ship or fuel tankers, etc. or a festival for marine engineering, or organizing "the International Conference for Logistic Areas in Duqm", etc.

Also establishing specialized academies (like the International Institute of Logistics and Marine Engineering etc.) of high-level which will increase the demand on touristic activity in the site.


I believe that the officials in charge of Duqm are aware of all that, and generally speaking, the integration of the economical, educational, training and touristic activity in Duqm must proceed within a tangled and creative system.

Mohamed Alkhonji, Chairperson of “Aqar” to  :

Construction work in Duqm project starts next year

MUSCAT - Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Shezawi:

Mohamed bin Abdullah Alkhonji, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Alkhonji Real Estate & Development LLC “Aqar” announced that the company would begin next year the implementation of construction works in its tourism project in SEZD.

In an exclusive interview for , Alkhonji indicated that the company would sign the management and operation agreement of a 3-star hotel it shall establish in SEZD by the end of the current year within the first phase of its tourism project there.

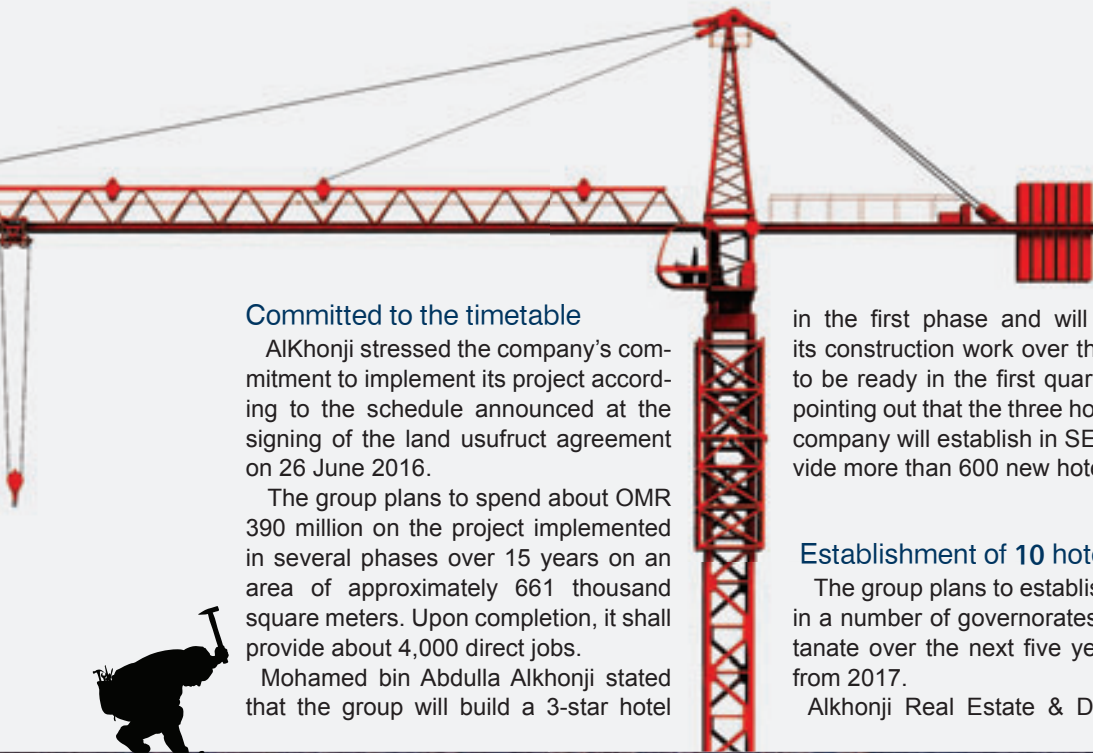
Although Alkhonji did not reveal the name of the company selected to manage and operate the hotel, he stressed that it is a recognized global company with considerable experience in the management and operation of hotels.

The company plans to build three hotels within its tourism project that also includes residential and commercial complexes, green areas, and many other facilities.





Mohammed Al-Khunji during his conversation with the editor



Committed to the timetable

AlKhonji stressed the company's commitment to implement its project according to the schedule announced at the signing of the land usufruct agreement on 26 June 2016.

The group plans to spend about OMR 390 million on the project implemented in several phases over 15 years on an area of approximately 661 thousand square meters. Upon completion, it shall provide about 4,000 direct jobs.

Mohamed bin Abdulla Alkhonji stated that the group will build a 3-star hotel

in the first phase and will commence its construction work over the next year to be ready in the first quarter of 2019, pointing out that the three hotels that the company will establish in SEZD will provide more than 600 new hotel rooms.

Establishment of 10 hotels

The group plans to establish 10 hotels in a number of governorates of the Sultanate over the next five years starting from 2017.

Alkhonji Real Estate & Development

Signing management and operation agreement of a 3-star hotel by the end of 2016

Committed to implement the project according to the proposed plan of action

Construction of Apartment buildings and offering them for sale for citizens and foreign investors





◆◆◆
OMR390 million is the total project cost and implementation is in phases

◆◆◆
Our plan includes establishment of 10 hotels in the Sultanate within the next five years

◆◆◆
“Aqar” offers more than 600 hotel rooms in its hotels in Duqm

LLC “Aqar” emerged during the past few years as one of Oman’s leading real estate development companies and established a number of commercial and real estate complexes in Muscat Governorate, notably “RIMAL 1”, “RIMAL 2” and The Office Project.

Project financing

The group has appointed KPMG, a global company specialized in consultancy studies and financial audit, for the preparation of financial feasibility study and means of financing the project. Alkhonji explained that the group would finance the project in two ways, self-financing and financing from the Sharia-compliant banking sector.

He explained that the company’s project would keep pace with the economic, population, and urban growth in SEZD, adding that the project consists of a commercial complex and residential apartments that will be offered

for sale for citizens and foreign investors. In this way, this will be the first project of its kind in SEZD whose units are offered for sale.

Walkway and green yards

He stressed that the company is currently preparing drawings and detailed studies of the project according to creative ideas so that it includes many services and facilities that make it a distinctive tourist project in SEZD, noting that these facilities include a walkway according to the European style, in addition to the green yards.

Mohamed bin Abdulla Alkhonji expressed optimism that SEZD would achieve good success, pointing out that the massive government, private sector, and foreign investments, such as the Chinese Industrial City, are positive indicators that confirm SEZD ability to be a global investment destination.

Car rental offices in Duqm expects good future with the increase in projects



Al-Habsi: we negotiate with OAMC opening a branch in Duqm Airport



Arshad Pasha: Duqm tourism potentials encourage us to expand our business, and organize cruises and land tours

Survey by Saleh Al-Mamari :

Car rental offices in Duqm provide important services for those coming to SEZD. Duqm has two offices car rental offices while there is interest from some local investors to open other offices to provide rental services of all kinds of vehicles.

Car rental sector is witnessing good growth benefiting from the increasing numbers of investors and tourists who visit SEZD. Moreover, the events organized in Duqm raise the demand for car rental.

Office owners predict that the sector would achieve good growth in the coming years with the increasing number of projects implemented in SEZD and growth in the numbers of tourists.

Increased demands

Mohammed bin Homoud Al-Habsi, 25, Manager of North Wonders Rent-a-Car Office, stated that SEZD grows rapidly as reflected in the increased demand to rent cars of all kinds. We now have 12 cars and seek to increase the number of vehicles of various types during the coming period. We also have a plan to rent motorbikes and Banshees.

North Wonders Rent-a-Car Office is the first office that provides car rental service in SEZD. "We are discussing with Oman Airports Management Company to open a branch in Duqm Airport," and Al-Habsi stressing that the rent prices of the company are "reasonable".

Organizing cruises and land trips in the future

Arshad Pasha, reservations employee at Al-Madina Travel Company, Duqm Branch stated: "We have 10 vehicles and demand is good, continuous, and growing."

"We will expand our business to include organization of cruises and land tours in the future. We also have experiences in the sector in several governorates of the Sultanate. There are tourist places close to SEZD that can be destinations for tourists and visitors," added Pasha talking about business expansion in SEZD.

He pointed out that the work of Al-Madina Travel Company are various and include flight reservations from Muscat to Duqm and abroad in addition to our activities in the field of car rental, travel insurance, and holiday packages in the Sultanate and abroad.

Increasing numbers of tourists raises demand for car rental



The sunset at Duqm Port from the Hormuz ferry during its trip from Muscat

Operation of a maritime line route between Muscat and Duqm is part of the company's plan to link

12 local ports

 Interviewed by: **Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Shezawi:**


Mehdi bin Mohammed Jawad Al Abduwani, CEO of the National Ferries Company (NFC), indicated that connecting Duqm Port with Sultan Qaboos Port is part of the company's plan to link 12 local ports. However, he stressed that operating such the operation of this line depends on the level of demand. "Once the company ensures the economic feasibility of the line, it will not hesitate to operate it," stated Al Abduwani.

During the current year, the Special Economic Zone in Duqm (SEZAD) signed the an agreement for the implementation of the fourth package of Duqm Port. This includes the infrastructure of the a governmental pier, which includes facilities for rapid fast ferries. The 980-meter government pier in Duqm Port is the first integrated pier implemented in the Omani ports to serve government agencies.

"Through its current lines, National Ferries Company contributes to the revitalization of commercial traffic and supporting the economic growth in the coastal Wilayats. Launching regional lines to the Iranian ports would increase boost trade between Oman and Iran and we hope that Omani companies benefit from the new lines. Launching these lines also aims to operationalize Ashgabat Agreement that allows Omani goods and products to reach Central Asia through the international transport and transit corridor," added Al Abduwani in an exclusive interview for Duqm Economist.

He turned to the growth achieved last year by the company in terms of passengers and cargo, explaining that the company was able to transport more than 205,000 passengers in 2015 compared to 92,000 in 2014 and recorded an impressive growth in shipping vehicles and goods.

He called on the traders to use the facilities provided by the company in the field of transport of goods and also confirmed that the company discussed with the UAE side operating a maritime line linking Khasab and Dubai.



A view of Muttrah when the ferry was leaving Sultan Qaboos Port heading towards Duqm

Our goal is to support economic growth and promote trade between among the coastal governorates

We focus on enhancing the performance of tourism sector performance and allowing people to explore the marine treasures of the Sultanate

Muscat - Khasab line encouraged tourists to see the picturesque sights in Musandam Governorate

Supporting economic growth

» **National Ferries Company is a state-owned company established recently within the Sultanate's efforts for economic diversification and development of maritime sector. What has the company achieved in this aspect?**

The maritime transport is one of the economically important sectors. The company's establishment in 2008 was to support economic growth in the Sultanate, stimulate trade between the coastal governorates, and promote the performance of the tourism sector. The company aims as well to achieve regional development through the delivery of providing its services to the small coastal population centers.

Given these goals, we can say that the company has realized many significant achievements and connected Musandam Governorate with its towering mountain ranges to with the rest of the governorates of the Sultanate through regular maritime lines. These include Muscat - Khasab, Khasab - Shinas, Shinas - Dibba, Lima - Shinas, and Lima - Dibba. This is in addition to the lines that connect ports in Musandam Governorate, such as Khasab - Dibba, Khasab - Lima, and Lima - Dibba. The company has also transported vehicles and cargo and thus contributed to the revitalization of the commercial traffic.

Moreover, the company has a regular line between Shannah and Masirah Island Harbors through Halaniyat Landing Craft two purpose built ferries "Shannah and Jawharat Masirah", supported by the landing craft Halaniyat. The launch of this line in 2014 was part of the company's efforts to provide an additional service to support the existing services to the private sector

between Masirah Island and Shannah Harbor.

The company won the world Responsible Tourism Award in 2013 and the Middle East Responsible Tourism Award 2012 and the Middle East and the world leading sustainable Tourism Award in 2012 within the World Travel Awards reflecting its achievements in this field. World Travel Awards, founded in 1993, honors the best institutions and entities in the travel industry at the world level worldwide in the light of the views of experts and specialists in the travel industry, based on a global voting that includes 171 countries. Wall Street Journal calls this award "travel industry Oscar."

At the regional level, the company launched its operations between Khasab Port in Musandam Governorate and Bahman Port in Qeshm Island, in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in July 2016. In September of the same year, it NFC launched its second regional destination to the city of Bandar Abbas, Iran. The coming period shall witness adding new destinations, such as a Shahbar City Port. The launch of these lines conforms to the company's vision to provide advanced shipping services to transport passengers, cargo, and vehicles between local and regional ports to enhance trade movement, increase trade exchanges between the two countries the Sultanate and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and promote tourism.

» **What is the company's role in the promotion of the tourism sector?**

Tourism sector is one of the sectors of focus for the company whose slogan is "Cruising with Nature". Muscat - Khasab route contributed to familiarizing citizens, residents, and investors with the touristic richness of the Sultanate

The company transported more than over 205,000 passengers and 52,000 vehicles in 2015

We call on businesses to take advantage of the shipping facilities provided by the company along this route

We look forward to the benefit of to provide opportunities for Omani and Iranian companies to the benefit from the shipping lines between the two countries



along the line route and in Musandam, which includes many tourist sites. This link between the two ports has encouraged many tourists to go to Musandam and get to know its touristic richness.

We also have short trips organized by the company in Muscat Governorate aimed at highlighting Muscat beaches and their breathtaking beauty. We organize these trips for interested students, government agencies, and companies.

205 thousand passengers

» This leads us to wonder about the level of demand for travel across the lines operated by the company.

Statistics reflect an exponential growth in passenger traffic. During 2015, the number of passengers aboard the company's trips rose to more than 205,000 passengers compared to 92,000 in 2014. This rise was due to the launch of the lines of Dibba-Khasab and Dibba -Lima in addition to increasing the number of trips during religious and national holidays. In addition, the number of vehicles transported by our shipped on the ferry fleet rose to 52,771 compared to 21,048 in 2014 while the volume of freight rose to 8,232 tons.

This growth continued during the current year. NFC The company transported more than 145,000 passengers in the first eight months of this year compared to 132,000 in the same period last year. The vehicular shipping transport traffic has grown by 3% to more than 34,000 vehicles while cargo and equipment traffic grew by more than 200% to 11,856 tons against 3,760 tons in the corresponding period last year. These figures confirm emphasize the developmental and economic role played by the company NFC referred to earlier.

Encourage internal trade

» How far has the private sector benefited from freight transport services of the company?

Encouraging internal trade is one of the NFC's main objectives of the company. Therefore, the ferry fleet is equipped with cargo-loading facilities and NFC the company provides this service free to its passengers. The company also has an

agreement with a major commercial mall for the transport of goods from Muscat to Khasab. Despite the continuing rise in cargo shipping, the appeal drive by of big companies to take advantage of this service is still not up to our ambitions.

Connecting 12 local ports

» The company has recently linked Sultan Qaboos Port and Khasab Port, and inaugurated trips to Shinas, Dibba, and Lima and between Shannah and Masirah. What is your plan to connect the rest of the ports of the Sultanate?

The company plans to operate trips to six ports in the coming period after it has linked a number of ports of the Sultanate over the past years within a plan to connect 12 local ports. NFC The company will complete its plan in this area in the coming years when the necessary infrastructure for its operations in the target ports is complete, namely: Salalah, Hasik, Al-Hallaniyyat, Al Shuwaymiyah, Sur, and Duqm.

Linking Muscat and Duqm

» In 2013, the company operated a trip from Sultan Qaboos Port to Duqm Port to transport the participants in the Fifth Muscat International Youth Forum held in Duqm. What is your opinion of this experience? Does the company have a plan to operate a line between the two ports during the coming period?

The experience was very successful. During the trip, the participants saw beautiful areas, notably Masirah Island. We were able to provide the ferry services adequately as many of them expressed.

As for linking Sultan Qaboos Port and Duqm Port, it depends on the level of demand. Once there is a high sufficient demand, we will not hesitate to operate that line.

Activating Ashgabat agreement

» Referring to your remarks on connecting the Sultanate to the Iranian ports, what are the economic benefits that can accrue to both countries of from the launch of these lines?

The inauguration launching of maritime lines



Mahdi Al-Abduwani speaking with the editor

Ashgabat Agreement facilitates the arrival export of Omani products to Central Asian markets

We discussed operating a line between Dubai and Khasab with representatives of the UAE side

Omanization is 76% and greater employment opportunities for the local community

between the Omani and Iranian ports is part of NFCThe company's plan to activate Ashgabat Agreement, which provides for the establishment of an international transit hub connecting the Omani ports to the countries of Central Asia. Oman, Iran, Qatar, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan signed the agreement in 2011 and Oman ratified it under Royal Decree No. (108/2011) issued on 24 October 2011. The agreement, signed in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, aims to create an effective hub for regular transport and transit of goods and passengers between the Central Asian countries and the ports of the Gulf and the Sea of Oman. It also aims to export and import exchange goods over the international hub and facilitates access to global markets through using maritime and land transport means through via that hub.

We expect that these lines would contribute to the implementation of the agreement and the promotion of trade exchange between among the Sultanate, Iran, and other countries that signed Ashgabat Agreement. These lines would also offer good opportunities for the Omani companies and factories to reach the Iranian market that includes 80 million consumers. In addition, the Omani companies will have an opportunity to import goods, agricultural products, and sheep livestock from the Iranian market.

Khasab - Dubai

>>> Can the company expand its operations through operating a regular maritime line between Khasab and Dubai?

This topic is of interest to the company and we discussed it with the UAE side because of the large gains that would accrue to the two countries in terms of trade and tourism.

The company's fleet

>>> Can you please highlight the company's fleet and plans to increase it?

The company's fleet consists of seven ferries in addition to the landing Craft "Halaniyat ". The ferries Shinas and Hormuz are among the fastest diesel ferries in the world with 56 knots/ hour. Each has a capacity of 208 passengers and 56 vehicles.

As for the ferries Sawqrah, Al-Hallaniyat, and Masirah 4, their speed is 40 knots/ hour with a maximum load of 116 passengers and 22 vehicles each. The speed of the two ferries Shannah and Jawahrat Masirah is 18 knots/ hour and the maximum load is 154 passengers and 38 vehicles each.

NFCThe company also manages Halaniyat landing Craft for the shipment of food, goods, and equipment. This fleet is suitable for the current operations of the company but operating new lines would require building new ferries.

Omanization

>>> What are the job opportunities that the company provides for Omani youth? What is the Omanization percentage? What are your plans in the field of national labor training?

NFCThe company increased the Omanization percentage gradually to reach 76% until by June 2016. The company continues its efforts to absorb more citizens within the technical staff of the ferries once they fulfill the requirements of qualification and necessary certifications. The company also recruited and trained 70 employees, including 45 in the technical department. It also appointed employees from the regions served by ferries to provide greater employment opportunities for the local community.





Economic Importance of Tourism Development in Duqm

The tourism sector in many countries such as Spain, France, Italy, Greece, the United States of America and Egypt, is considered to be one of the most important economic sectors that have various and numerous positive effects on many levels, due to its contribution in generating income, creating jobs, urban expansion and development.

The generated income by the tourism sector is the sum of what is spent by the tourists in the country of tourism, in exchange of what they receive of numerous services during their tourist trip; starting with using means of transportation to travel from one place to another and that include: airplanes, ships, railways and cars, also accommodation in hotels, tourist villages and resorts of different rankings, and having meals in restaurants and internal transfer between different places and touristic attractions and the fees paid to enter these sites, adding to all above amounts paid in exchange of services, entertainment activities, souvenirs, gifts and stuff which tourists buy in the country they visit.

On the other hand, it should be pointed that a significant part of the earned income in the country of tourism is generated of the exchange of currencies, especially the main international currencies such as the American Dollar, the European Euro, the Sterling Pound, the Japanese Yen and other currencies which are considered as a source of income for the country of tourism.

And here, it might be needed to create an account to compare the earned income by the foreign currencies spent by the incoming foreign tourists, and what is spent in foreign currencies for the importation of the supplies and needs used by touristic establishments; and in the case that revenues in foreign currencies exceed expenditures, then this would be reflected as a surplus in the balance of payment of the country of tourism.

In addition to generating income to the touristic establishments and projects, the touristic activity is considered to be as an important financial resource to the state treasury of the country of tourism through the taxes applied on these touristic establishments and projects, even though many governments do exempt these projects from taxes or they reduce the applied rate to encourage them. Also the importance of the touristic activity should be highlighted in the field of employment and generating job opportunities in the tourism field and in all sectors related directly or indirectly to the tourism sector and its activities, through the economic, operational and marketing integration with activities, foremost among transportation, hospitality, banking, insurance and leisure activities.

Many studies indicate that many tourists allocate the majority of their travel budget to spend on their purchases in the countries they visit, mostly on local manufactured goods of high quality and competitive price, also on souvenirs and products of historical or heritage character of the country they visit, like handicrafts and folk crafts. This kind of spending is considered as a type of exporting of local products without the need of foreign marketing or international freight and its procedures, taking into accounts that this kind of exportation doesn't face the existing competition in international markets.

In addition to all above mentioned, the touristic activities play a significant role in the urban and development expansion in the

touristic countries. Generally, it is noted that the execution of development projects is mainly done in capitals and main cities with high population density, on the expense of smaller and rural cities with smaller population, which might desperately need modern and development projects. And here arises the role of touristic projects in achieving urban and economical and social development in these parts that are considered as important sites to the touristic activity for its characteristics and advantages which are based on geographical location or weather or history or any of the other tourism potentials that qualify these cities to be located on the touristic map of these countries, which obliges governments to consider them by drawing the needed development plans and direct investments to infrastructure projects like airports, ports, roads, power generation plants, water desalination plants, distribution networks, transportation and telecommunication, paving the way to the construction of the superstructure of urban and social buildings and facilities.

The government of the Sultanate of Oman, recognizing the importance of the touristic sector on many levels, especially in serving the Omani economy and the economic and social development, has taken upon itself taking care of this sector and develop it in different parts of the Sultanate through proper scientific planning, and allocating and directing and attracting investments, and constructing projects to achieve optimum utilization of natural and human resources in the context of preserving the environment and heritage. The willayat of Duqm had a significant part of this approach through the Authority of the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, which is responsible of the development projects according to this enlightened vision.

The willayat of Duqm is located on the Arabian Sea. Its beaches are known for their clear water, soft sands, and pure air which tends to be slightly cold. Al Shuwaier, is one of its most famous beaches, on 20 kilometers of the willayat center, and Ras Madraka beach famous for its camping sites, on 80 kilometers of the willayat center, where tourists come in their cars to pass their vacation and enjoy the wonderful weather and the moderate temperatures throughout the year, particularly in the period between June and September, which is the summer season when temperatures soar throughout the Gulf region, but in Duqm it stays relatively low at 25 degrees, permitting to a high tourism possibility of the area. Duqm is also characterized by beaches of diverse terrain; as it is sandy in "Nafoon Village", rocky in "Ras Duqm" and "Ras Markaz" and "Ras Madraka". Adding to these beaches, the existence of a special natural reserve which is a reserve of natural creatures and fungal life near Duqm, and the Rocks Garden which is considered as a touristic attraction characterized for its geological and archeological location that contains distinctive and rare rock collection, in addition to the mountainous highlands that contain many valleys and bays, and which represents a unique natural environment. Duqm is known for its traditional handicraft industry, giving the state a historical and enchanting touch.

Duqm is now witnessing the execution of numerous promising touristic projects that bode well and thrive, so it is expected to be a promising and distinctive tourism destination in the near future by God's help.

The hospitality sector seeks to place Duqm on the map of local and international tourism



Duqm – Mohammed Al-Shezawi:

Officials in the hospitality sector in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm assured that the area possesses numerous qualities and potentials to become a distinctive touristic area, not only domestically within the Sultanate but also internationally.

In exclusive statements to the Duqm Economist, they invited investors to create new touristic project and to provide entertainment services which will contribute in attracting tourists; pointing that the sea and the splendid beaches are convenient to setup numerous marine touristic activities to attract tourists such as speed boats and windsurfing along with other activities. Nevertheless, it is impossible to setup these activities without establishing a breakwater to reduce the intensity of waves' action inshore, which is considered a distinctive characteristic of the Arabian Sea due to its adjacent location with the Indian Ocean.

They also declared that setting-up varied marine activities will forge a competitive quality in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm resulting

in the attraction of more tourists from inside and outside of Oman.

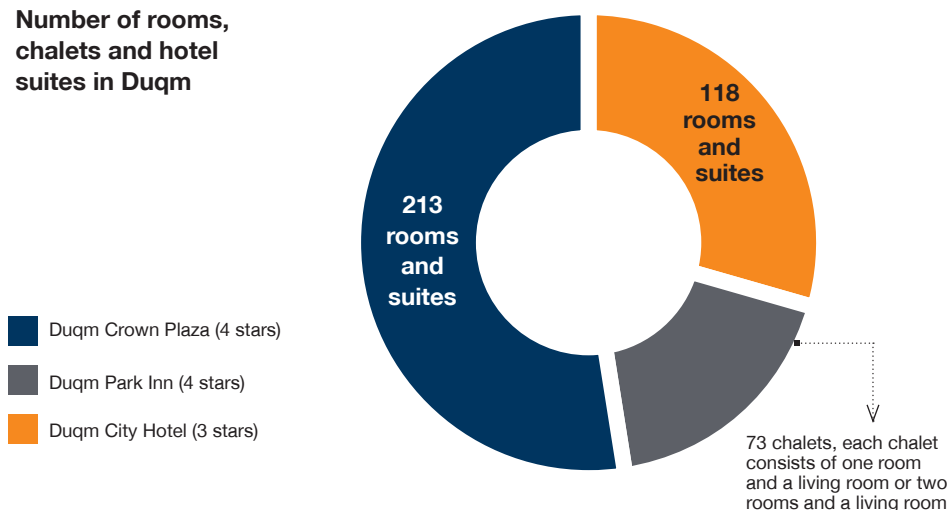
Currently there are three hotels in Duqm, those are: Duqm Crown plaza Hotel with a capacity of 213 rooms and suites; Duqm Park Inn Hotel and Resort with a capacity of 73 chalets; and Duqm City Hotel with a capacity of 118 rooms and suites.

The Special Economic Zone in Duqm is characterized by its closeness to the Reserve of Natural Creatures and Fungal Life and the Reserve of Wetlands, in addition to the Rocks Garden which is considered as a rare geological and touristic attraction site.

The officials of the hospitality sector have expressed their optimistic vision toward the touristic future of the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, pointing that the forthcoming two years are going to be very positive, expecting that new projects will increase the demand on hotels' rooms, assuring that activating the touristic attractions elements as the sea, the beaches, the Rocks Garden, etc., will contribute in the development of the tourism sector and increase the occupancy rate of hotels which is currently of 40% to 50%.

The sea, the Rocks Garden, the Reserve of Natural Creatures and Fungal Life; All are elements of touristic attraction that need to be activated.

Number of rooms, chalets and hotel suites in Duqm



An optimistic future vision along with the increasing number of projects.

The Hotel Manager of Park Inn by Radisson Hotel and Residence Duqm:

We invite
families
to visit Duqm and enjoy its
moderate weather



The Hotel Manager of Park Inn by Radisson Hotel and Residence Duqm, Ahmad Daghmash, invited families to visit Duqm and enjoy its moderate weather throughout the year, pointing that the resort that was officially inaugurated in late January 2015, provides a high level of privacy to its guests particularly to families.

He declared that they take advantage of Eids and official holidays to organize varied activities for children which contributes to enrich their visit to Duqm, also pointing out that these shows organized by the hotel aiming to encourage families to come and visit Duqm and enjoy its moderate weather, along with other touristic elements.



A bright future is awaiting Duqm... and we have an optimistic vision towards 2017.

We participate in the program of the Ministry of Tourism to encourage internal tourism.



Promoting

He emphasized that the hotel promotes its services inside and outside of the Sultanate via numerous channels, and he declared that they participate in promotions under the umbrella of the Ministry of Tourism, within the Ministry's efforts to promote internal tourism, they also had their own promotions for families, investors and companies already operating in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, they also promote the hotel within a big network of hotels within their International Group: The Carlson Rezidor Group. The group has more than 1.3 million member within the "Carlson Club Program" only in the Middle East and Europe, which helps them in promoting their services to this huge number of members, and in fact, the received a number of the members of this international program during this year.

He added: "we also ensure in promoting our offers in local and regional newspapers and through social media"; expressing that these offers contributed during the last period to en-

courage Dhofar visitors to stop by Duqm on their way to Salalah and on their way back.

Varied services

He pointed that the hotel offers numerous services and facilities along with chalets of one and two rooms with living rooms, where the couches in each living room can be turned into beds. In the chalets there are also designated areas to laundry (washing machines & dryers), a kitchen with equipment's, and a private parking area; making the hotel an excellent choice for families and persons intending to stay in Duqm for a long period of time, particularly the companies that are executing projects of one year or more, and indeed the hotel has numerous contracts with government organizations and companies within this frame of work.

Rehabilitation and training

He also assured the attention lent by the hotel to training and rehabilitation programs and providing convenient job opportunities to





Our connection with The Carlson Rezidor Group, allows us to attract tourists from all over the world.

Omanis, pointing that a number of Omanis from Duqm and other Wilayats are currently working with the hotel, and there are varied training programs to the employees along with a number of incentives to encourage them to work in the hospitality sector.

Good growth

Ahmed Daghmash, The Hotel Manager of Park Inn by Radisson Hotel and Residence Duqm, referred to the growth achieved by the hotel since its inauguration, pointing to the growth of Duqm and the increasing number of companies investing in the zone, and the ships anchoring in the port and the dry-dock, resulting in increasing number of hotel guests and contributing generally to the growth of the hospitality sector.

A bright future

He expressed his optimization to the future of tourism in Duqm, saying: "our vision toward 2017 is positive. Duqm is a promising area and

has a lot of potentials to be a touristic destination", pointing that the current occupancy rate is within 40% to 50%, but he expected that this rate will rise within the next two coming years, in parallel with the inauguration of many projects in the zone and finalizing the current projects.

Challenges

And regarding the challenges currently facing the hospitality sector, Ahmed Daghmash said that hotels in the zone are still catering from Muscat which results in huge transportation costs, which finally and consequently result in increasing costs and affects profits. And we see that attracting major logistic companies and hotel services companies will diversify the available options for hotels, resulting in decreasing costs and consequently decreasing services fees provided by hotels, particularly accommodation and meals. Also the preparation of the beach for varied activities will contribute in attracting more tourists to Duqm.

We encourage the local community to work in the hospitality sector.



Cluster General Manager of City Hotel, Duqm:

**Duqm
will soon
convert
into a
modern
city**





Duqm - :

Vijay Handa, Cluster General Manager of Duqm City Hotel, praised the development of the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, and he said that the Duqm port, the dry dock and other projects executed during the last period in the zone and new projects, are main factors to the growth in the hospitality sector, assuring that current projects have contributed in reaching a good occupancy rate in the hotels operating now in Duqm.

And in an exclusive statement to the Duqm Economist, he expected that Duqm will soon convert into a modern city; "I expect that Duqm will convert within a period of 5 to 7 years into a modern city, that can satisfy and fulfill the needs and expectations of its residents and making available all the necessary services to tourists", pointing that the hotel is receiving a good number of tourists, investors and workers in the zone.

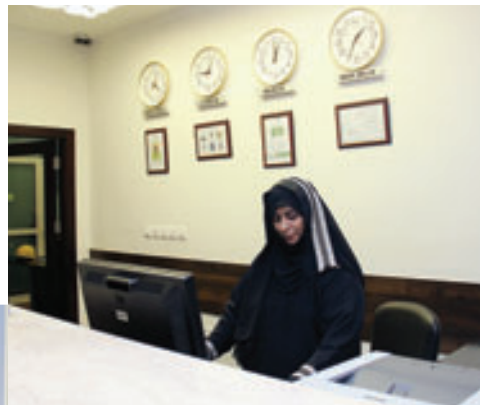
Projects are a main development factor to the sector

And he added: "we expect that hotel's per-

formance will improve during the next two years, whereas the new projects announced for this and the coming two years will be a main development factors to the hospitality sector. And from our part we try to keep pace with Duqm economic growth by introducing new services, such as new a meeting room that can fit up to 75 to 100 persons. This will be a new addition to the services and facilities already available in the hotel like the Restaurant, Takeaways, Health Club, Ample parking lots, the current meeting room and other services.

The first hotel in Duqm

He expressed his happiness that City Hotel was the first hotel in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, which was inaugurated in 2012, and



The port, the dry-dock and the new projects are all main factors to the development of the hospitality sector

We are proud to be the first to operate in Duqm... and we seek to provide best services to our guests.



Adding new services to keep pace with the economic growth.

Omanization rate is of 35% along with the executing of rehabilitation programs.

Providing touristic services and constructing public parks will have a positive outcome on the hospitality sector.



he said "we are proud of that and we seek to provide best Food & services to our Residents & Non-Residents and to take care of families staying with us and to provide them a relaxed atmosphere with high quality services, we also provide numerous promotional offers to investors, companies and families" round the year.

And he explained that promoting the hotel and its services is done through various online channels, Sales & Marketing team based out of Muscat including the Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN) which owns several hotels in many provinces of Oman and consequently it promotes the hotel within its own chain. We also promote our hotel through our own website and through participating in regional and international tourism exhibitions/ Travel Marts.

Training programs

He addressed the performance level of the Omani employees, and said "our Omanization rate has reached 35% and we are sincerely trying to increase it during the coming period, with continuous training programs to our employees, also we send some of our employees to other hotels run by OMRAN for more rehabilitation, cross training exposures and exchange of experience.

We give a lot of priority to training our team members by our own training personnel & external trainers as well.


Vijay Handa, The Cluster General Manager of Duqm City Hotel, assured that providing touristic services and constructing public parks and children parks is essential to residents, and this will have a positive result on the hospitality sector.



Providing first class services for businessmen and investors

Duqm - :

The General Manager of Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel, Fakhri Hindiye, assured that Duqm enjoys touristic and economical qualities that promise the city of a bright future, the city that became the focus of attention of investors from inside and outside of Oman, pointing that Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel is contributing in enriching the touristic aspect through its services to investors and tourists visiting the zone.

He said in an exclusive statement to the  : We try to provide first class services for businessmen and investors. We also take care of tourists visiting the hotel for relaxation and enjoying the beautiful weather of Duqm. This city that overlooks the Arabian Sea and is located half way between Muscat and Salalah, is characterized by its golden beaches and beautiful nature in addition to the economic activity of the zone, in which the hospitality sector plays a significant part.





We promote our services in international exhibitions, internal advertising media and social media.

Encouraging internal trade and launching promotional campaigns throughout the year.

We are working on increasing the omalization rate to support the local community.

Special Services

He praised the services provided by the hotel to its guests, considering that Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel which is owned by Tourism Development Company (OMRAN) and was inaugurated in April 2014, is the leader in services of hospitality and relaxation offered to businessmen and investors, announcing that guests being businessmen or tourists, will find all means of sophisticated comfort like high speed & free internet services, health club, businessmen's center, restaurants and others services, in addition to its unique view on the Arabian Sea.

He added: "the rich colors and the Omani architectural designs add a warm and welcoming atmosphere in all of the 213 rooms and suites, where all its windows and terraces overlook the

Arabian Sea". The hotel is considered as the optimum option to organize conferences and forums in different halls of different sizes, all equipped with video and audio systems of up-to-date technology, taking into consideration that the "central" hall can accommodate 300 persons.

Activities and entertainment programs

The General Manager of Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel, Fakhri Hindiyyeh, noted the activities and entertainment programs organized by the hotel to create a cheerful atmosphere for visitors, providing bicycles for persons of all ages in addition to the services of the health club, the swimming pool, the beach boardwalk and walking over the picturesque sands of the sea. The restaurant "Alsouq" serves the most delicious daily meals and varied buffets all week long, like Indian, Asian, Arabian and seafood.

Internal and international promotion

He noted the hotel's efforts to promote and attract businessmen and tourists from inside of Oman, regional and European countries. He said that: "we try to promote our services in international exhibitions, internal advertising media and social media. Taking into consideration that Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel is part of the International Intercontinental Hotels Group, which also promotes to the hotel worldwide.

Promoting internal tourism

He declared that Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel





promotes internal tourism in the domestic tourism exhibitions in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, also it launches promotional offers throughout the year.

He pointed that the occupancy rate in the hotel is currently of 45% and it varies from one month to another depending on the market movement and tourism seasons, considering that summers' months from June till August witnesses huge turnout from tourists, coinciding with Khareef Salalah, whereas Duqm is considered the connecting point between the two cities and many tourists stop-by Duqm for relaxation and enjoying the splendid natural beauty.

Rehabilitation and training

As of the rehabilitation and training programs and the omanization in the hotel, Fakhri Hindiyyeh assured that Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel is always seeking to rehabilitate and develop the workforce, and said that: "the administration of the hotel prepares a yearly training program for employees of all departments, as it is keen to guarantee the workers efficiency and making sure of their development in order to provide best services to guests, in addition to the Academy of the International Intercontinental Hotels Group to develop their skills, where each employee follows a training plan to improve his/her efficiency and develop his abilities to provide best services to the guests.

And he added: The administration of the



hotel is working on increasing the omanization rate in order to support the local community, and recently the hotel signed an agreement with the Authority of the Special Economic Zone in Duqm to train and prepare the younger generation for the hospitality sector.

Importance of tourism sector

The General Manager of Duqm Crown Plaza Hotel, Fakhri Hindiyyeh, assured the importance of the tourism sector to the local economy and generating job opportunities, pointing that strengthening the added value of the tourism sector requires that all efforts of different institutions of government and private sector, come together, in addition to increasing the touristic investment and promoting the sultanate as a touristic destination.

And he expected lastly, a bright future for the tourism sector in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, considering that projects that are currently being executed like the Chinese city, the Duqm port, the dry-dock, the refinery, the airport... are all important factors to increase the demand on the touristic services and contributing in the enrichment of the sector.

Visitors of Khareef Salalah stop-by Duqm for relaxation and enjoying the splendid natural beauty of the area.

Promoting and increasing touristic investment are key elements to the development of the tourism sector.





“Mowasalat” Launches Muscat-Duqm Route by the end of this year

The new line keeps pace with population and urbanization growth in SEZD



Muscat- :

Oman National Transport Company “Mowasalat” shall launch Muscat-Duqm route by the end of this year as part of its plan to link the various Wilayats of the Sultanate through a modern road transport network.

Duqm is about 550 km from Muscat. “Mowasalat” lines at the moment reaches up to Sinaw, about 350 km from Wilayat of Duqm. The new line shall provide a good service to the people of Wilayat of Duqm and workers in SEZD, which witnesses a population and urban growth.

In November 2015, “Mowasalat” launched its new branding for public transport in the Sultanate, which focuses on the establishment of an integrated network of public transport lines to serve all segments of society while providing a high standard of services for passengers.

The focus of public transport strategy is to

reduce traffic congestion and promote economic gains for the use of public transport, namely providing new jobs, stimulating commercial and tourist traffic, reducing traffic jams, and facilitating the movement of citizens, residents, and tourists within the same city and from one city to another.

Current “Mowasalat” fleet consists of 40 buses inside the city and 37 outside, but it plans to add 118 new buses, including 85 buses in the city and 33 outside and provide buses to other cities.

Mowasalat” has seen good growth in the number of passengers since the launch of its new identity in November 2015. The number of passengers until last July was 2.2 million passengers, and the estimated number of passengers per day was about 10 thousand.

The company is working on a long-term plan that will last until 2040. It shall announce it by the end of 2016.

“Mowasalat” new branding focuses on the establishment of an integrated network of public transport to serve all segments of society

Happy Line General Manager:

Two daily journeys from Muscat to Duqm



A bus of the Happy Line Fleet leaving Muscat on its way to Mahut and then to Duqm

Economic growth in Duqm raised the demand for our services

We welcome "Mowasalat" and the competition will not affect us

Transfer of about 13 thousand passengers in 2015

Duqm- :

Nasser bin Said Al-Hosni, General Manager of Happy Line Transport Company, said that the company operates two daily journeys from Muscat to Duqm and one journey from Duqm to Salalah, pointing out that there is good growth in passenger numbers and freight.

The journey from Al-Sahwa Tower Roundabout in Muscat Governorate to Duqm takes about 7 hours and passes through a number of Wilayats and communities before stopping in Duqm. "The first journey departs Ruwi station in Muscat at 5:45 am, stops in Al-Sahwa Tower Station until 7:00, and arrives in Duqm at 2:00 pm. The second leaves Al-Sahwa Tower Station at 10:00 am to reach Duqm at 5:00 pm and then continues to Al-Lakbi in the Wilayat of Al-Jazir about 250 kilometers from the Duqm," said Al-Hosni.

"As for Duqm-Salalah journey, it departs at 6:30 am to stop in Al-Jazir, then Al-Lakbi, Soukrah, Cherbatat, Shalem, and Marmoul to reach Salalah at 6:00 pm spanning more than 600 km," added Al-Hosni.

Services for workers in SEZD

Happy Line Transport is the only company, which operates daily journeys between Muscat and Duqm and between Duqm and Salalah. "The company targets the workers in SEZD and workers in the area of fisheries in Al-Wusta Governorate. This is the reason that the ticket prices are very competitive," asserted Al-Hosni.

Al-Hosni ruled any negative effects on the company after the inauguration of the

Muscat-Duqm route by Oman National Transport Company "Mowasalat" expected in the fourth quarter of this year. "The new route will not affect us. Mowasalat is a state-owned company that does not target the private sector and has its customers. For our part, we seek to satisfy our customers and provide them the best services at competitive prices," explained Happy Line General Manager.

Many gains

Happy Line Transport Company, an SME, benefited from the establishment of SEZD. "The economic growth in SEZD increased traffic on Muscat-Duqm route, which began in 2008 with one daily journey. However, the increasing number of passengers and growth of freight movement led us to add a second daily journey in 2015. Passenger numbers vary from day to day, but the freight traffic grows," elaborated Al-Hosni.

He said the company transported about 13 thousand passengers last year and expected an increase in numbers in the coming years in line with the economic growth and the increase in the number of projects in SEZD.

Diversification of services

On the diversification of services offered by the company, Al-Hosni stated that they got this year a contract from one of the major companies operating in SEZD to transport its employees between Duqm and Muscat by eight journeys a month. "We are ready to meet the demands of companies operating in SEZD that want to move their



the staff of the Happy Line Company
in one of the factories in China

employees or guests within SEZD and beyond," added Al-Hosni.

"The tourism attractions of Duqm are various. I suggest that SEZD companies organize recreational trips for their employees monthly to tourist areas or the sea to break the daily work routine. We are ready to provide equipped buses for such occasions," said Al-Hosni.

Fleet development

Nasser bin Said Al-Hosni, General Manager of Happy Line Transport Company, referred to the company's plan to modernize its fleet. "The growth in SEZD in terms of projects and the number of companies and investors requires us to develop the fleet. Last year, I visited the factory of Yu-

tong Company in China and a number of other companies in China and South Korea. We discussed the possibility that the manufacturers can add the facilities we need, including electric charging points for computers and other electronic devices, notice of occupied seat, (WI-FI) system, sensor for technical malfunctions, central media system to show movies, audio clips, navigation maps and many other ideas welcomed by the companies.

"We do not consider the bus as only a means of transport but also an entertainment tool for passengers. We can also use it to promote the Sultanate and its touristic attractions and broadcast many awareness messages for the foreign workforce in the country," concluded Al-Hosni.

*We visited
China and
South Korea
within our
plan to
modernize
the fleet*

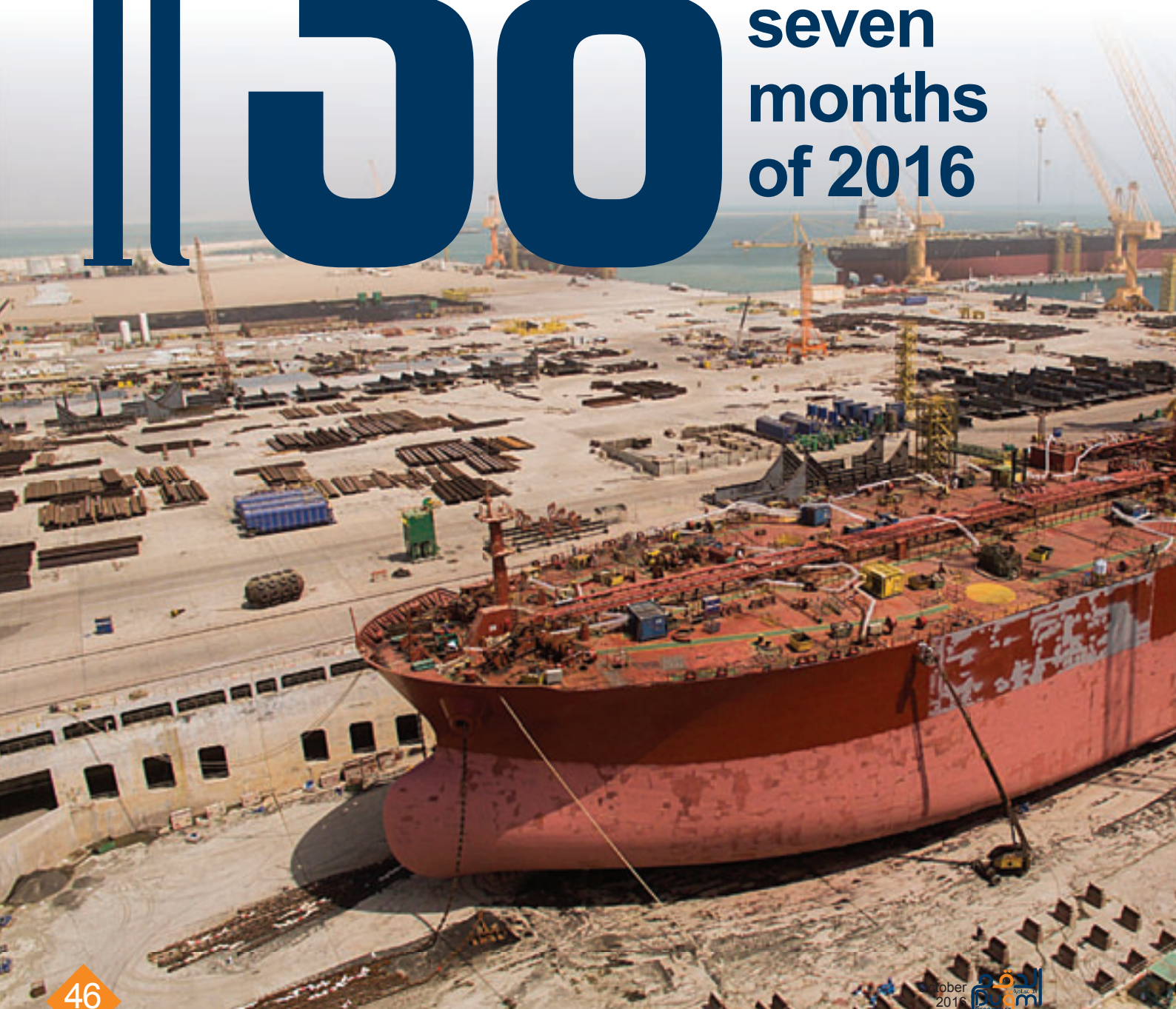
*I suggest
that large
companies
organize
recreational
trips for their
employees
and we are
ready to
provide the
appropriate
buses*

*Bus is
not only a
means of
transport but
also an en-
tertainment
tool for pas-
sengers and
promotion
for tourism
elements in
the Sultanate*



Local and international interest in the services provided by Oman Dry Dock Company

Repair of 138 vessels in the first seven months of 2016





Duqm - :

The services provided by Oman Dry Dock Company have gained local and global interest. During the first seven months of this year, the company received 38 vessels for which it conducted general repairs and renovated some consumer parts along with different technical works. The company also converted ships from one use to another, one of the company's priorities in the period next.

The importance of the dry dock increased locally during the first half of this year through the maintenance of many vessels of the Omani marine companies. This is one of the visions of the company with a view to creating a genuine partnership between Oman Dry Dock and the State-owned companies in the field of ship repair and maintenance and providing technical and logistical support to giant vessels and fast ferries.

The Dry Dock consists of the two basins, the

first 410 × 95 meters in length, the second 410 × 80 meters and a depth of up to 14 meters for both basins. The dry dock can receive various types of ships and provide its services to them, such as oil and gas tankers, commercial and tourist vessels, container ships, equipment vessels and other vessels.

Environmental Management System Certification

The company has strengthened its position by obtaining global awards and certificates. During the current year, the company obtained the environmental management system certification (ISO 14001: 2004). This system is one of the most important criteria adopted by the International Organization for Standardization and awarded to the companies and organizations that meet all system requirements, which aims mainly to minimize the negative effects of the company's activities on the environment.

Obtainment of this certificate in addition to those of quality and occupational health and safety among the factors that attract shipbuilders when comparing different dry docks. In other words, this contributes to the realization of the company's vision to become the best company in the Middle East in this field.


Induction Meeting for Support Companies


On 1 March, the company organized an induction meeting in cooperation with SEZAD for the companies that support construction, repair, and maintenance of ships locally and globally. During the meeting, it highlighted the capabilities of the dry dock in the field of ship repair of various kinds and the possibilities available in the field of steel structures industry. The company also presented the opportunities available to the private sector in the areas and activities of support and assistance to ship repair.

Promotional Visits

During the first half of 2016, the company conducted six promotional visits that included Greece, Cyprus, India, Singapore, and Dubai to identify the specialized companies that possess global ships, build bridges of communication with the global ship owners globally, and introduce them to the services provided by the dry dock. This forms part of the marketing strategy of the company, which focuses on increasing the number of customers from local and international companies.

The Posidonia Exhibition in Greece in which the company participated last June is the largest community of ship owners in the world and one of the most famous specialized exhibitions for shipbuilding, repair, and dry dock sector. The Greek maritime sector is a huge market for many specialists in this field.


Forging a partnership with the State-owned companies in the field of ship repair, maintenance, and technical and logistical support is underway


Implementing a marketing strategy to increase the number of customers from local and international companies

The Special Economic Zone Authority in Duqm highlights the environmental aspects of “Wadhah Initiative

Duqm -  :

The Special Economic Zone Authority in Duqm during participating in “Wadhah Initiative”, presented awareness programs of the environment. Zainab bint Abdullah Al-Kharusi-ah – Head of Natural Preservation and Heritage Conservation within the Authority, concentrated in her presentation during the initiative on the Duqm’s environment and ways to preserve it.


And it highlighted the environmental problems occurring in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, kinds of existing and potential environmental pollution, the plastic dangers and the hazards of burning residues, pointing out the scientific methods to eliminate these problems, and the woman’s vital role in raising awareness of children, family and local society with the importance of preserving the environment.



Zainab Al-Kharusi-ah while speaking in a presentation

Within the Duqm Refineries Social Responsibility Program

Wadhah Initiative: A new vision to reinforce the women’s capabilities in Al-Wusta Governance

Duqm -  :

“Wadhah Initiative” launched, in its second version, a new vision to reinforce the women’s capabilities in Al-Wusta Governance through focusing on providing them with the basics of project management, marketing, and customer service, in addition to reinforce the leadership skills they have, in addition to providing them with decision making and team work skills.

“Wadhah Initiative” is one of the Duqm Refineries’ initiatives within the social responsibility domain, and it aims to support the projects and programs suggested by the women of Duqm particularly and of Al-Wusta Governance generally. The initiative has been launched in 2015 in collaboration with the Omani Women Association in Duqm, and during the current year, “Royat Shabab Organization” has collaborated in enriching this initiative through focusing on reinforcing and developing the abilities and skills of the participants in all different aspects of business management.

The training program dedicated to the members of the Omani Women Association in Al-Wusta Governance and that lasted for 3 days, focused on different topics, mainly: the basic steps to start a small and innovative business

projects, ways and methods to electronic marketing, the art of customer service through a series of interactive training sessions.

The training programs assigned for the 12th grade students, focused on reinforcing personal development for the participants girls with the aim of giving them a serious professional vision to the future. The training sessions included a series of topics that concerns this category of the population to sharpen leadership skills and values they already have, decision making, troubleshooting and self-motivation in order to move forward in the scientific approach.





**Al-Anoona
Porject**



**Leveling
the land in
the Duqm
Refinery's
area**



**Al-Nahdha
Village in
Duqm**



Spacek Factory Oman



**Premises of
the Authority
of Special
Economic
Zone in Duqm**



**Construction
works in the
Duqm Airport**



Medical clinic



The New Dual way



Traffic lights organize the traffic in Duqm



Natural

reserves support ecotourism in Duqm

Duqm - :

There are many natural reserves throughout the Sultanate that are a fertile ground for eco-tourism, where tourists enjoy visiting natural unpolluted sites whose natural balance is still intact.

Al-Wusta Governorate is famous for the Living and Fungal Organisms Reserve founded in 1994 under the name of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary amended later in 2011. The reserve is in Jalouni Area, Jeddah Al-Harasees Wilayat of Hima, about 100 km from the center of the Wilayat.

Environmental Conservation Bureau, Diwan of Royal Court, manages the reserve. The Environmental Conservation Bureau, represented by the reserve management, is keen to hold various activities and events, and organize visits, especially for students in the schools surrounding the reserve, to enhance knowledge and awareness of natural resources and create a conscious generation of the importance of a balanced and safe environment.

Arabian
Oryx

The visitor can arrange earlier and get a permit to enter the Reserve by directly calling the Reserve's administration on phone number 99213388

One type of butterflies in the reserve



Living and Fungal Organisms Reserve is a destination for tourists from within and outside the Sultanate

Duqm - :

The Bureau provides management and staff in reserve to ensure the implementation of all environmental laws and regulations in the Sultanate to safeguard wildlife of various kinds as a civilized legacy given the important elements the reserve has. The reserve has also a veterinarian, consultants, and two specialists who work around the clock to provide health care for the animals within the reserve and record data and statistics on a regular basis. Dispatched are also a number of daily patrols for usual monitoring inside the reserve. They have the judicial arrest powers. They do not allow any strangers to enter the reserve without a permit. The Environmental Conservation Bureau is also responsible for reserve management, supervision, and coordination with the concerned governmental authorities to provide protection for wildlife in the reserve, such as Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Public Prosecutor's Office, Royal Oman police and various other entities.

Tourist destination

The Living and Fungal Organisms Re-

serve is an essential destination for many tourists from within and outside the Sultanate in spite of its hot desert weather due to its exceptional ingredients that make it a tourist attraction. It contains reproduction hangars of Arabian Oryx, Arabian gazelles, and Rhim Gazelle. It also includes water, natural and geological resources, rock formations, and meteorite craters since time immemorial. Together, they form the most beautiful natural paintings, notably in Al-Jeddah Plateau, Al-Huqf Area, and Wadi Ashnan.

The population in the areas surrounding the reserve are Bedouin characterized by Arabian hospitality, an incentive for tourism. They retain their old customs and traditions inherited from their parents and grandparents and consider them a valuable part of their originality. The locals communicate in Al-Harsousi dialect, which is a non-written dialect of their own that differ categorically from Al-Mahariya or Al-Jibali dialects and is one of the very difficult dialects hard to learn because of its difficult articulation points.

Largest natural reserves

The Living and Fungal Organisms Reserve is the largest natural reserves in the

Providing a favorable environment for Arabian Oryx, Nubian Ibex, Rhim Gazelles, and Arabian gazelles



Direction sign in SEZD indicating the reserve location

Environmental Conservation Bureau provides protection for wildlife in the reserve



Watching wild animals through the telescope

Population of the areas surrounding the reserve are Bedouins characterized by Arabian hospitality

Sultanate of Oman with an area of about (2824) square kilometers. The priority of the reserve is to resettle and safeguard Arabian Oryx estimated at more than 500. It is also concerned with the preservation of biodiversity of other endangered organisms in the desert environment, most notably: Rhim, Arabian gazelle, Nubian ibex, lynx, hare, hedgehog and many other types.

The Living and Fungal Organisms Reserve has a unique diversity in terms of plants, insects, terrain, water and geological resources that have retained the authentic ingredients of Omani nature and environmental balance. Many wild animals live there and statistics indicate that there are approximately 15 species of mammals and 4 species of hoofed mammals, which have resisted all forms of extinction. The most important types of endangered animals in the reserve includes Arabian Oryx, Nubian Ibex, Rhim gazelle, and Arabian gazelle. The reserve also contain many predators, such as Arab wolf, red fox, lynx, sand

fox, and striped hyena, which feed on small animals, such as hares, jerboas, and young deer, which help preserve the ecological balance in the reserve.

Variety of plants

The recent field study indicate that there are about 39 species of wild plants in the reserve. The vegetation in the reserve is of great importance for wildlife because it provides food and safe havens. It is also the water source for the other organisms that live in the reserve through dewdrops and fog formed early morning on the on the leaves of some plants. Despite the harsh desert environment, the plants have a superior ability to adapt to remain in perpetual greenness.

Many birds and reptiles

There are over 50 species of birds in the reserve, both immigrant and settled. Their numbers change constantly depending on the richness of the season. The most important birds that exist in large numbers

Organizing visits for students in the schools surrounding the reserve to promote knowledge of environmental awareness



Arabian gazelles



Egyptian vulture

in the reserve include sandgrouse as its swarms land daily on the water ponds next to reserve center to drink and collect water for their young. Some statistics indicate that there are about 21 species of reptiles in the reserve, such as dabb lizards (mastigures), monitor lizard, and several species of snakes, such as cobra and pseudo cobra.

Geology and rock formations

Geographically, the reserve consists of two parts:

- 1) Al-Jeddah plateau: a pebbly plant punctuated by sandy tracts locally called Al-Heelat, which collect rainwater and form water ponds that remains for several weeks.
- 2) Al-Huqf area: consists of Al-Huqf rock cliff with a depth of more than 100 meters and Al-Huqf depression, which includes salt sandy marshes. Al-Huqf area is a geologically unique landmark in the world because it contains fossils and rocks popped up from the depths of the Earth that date back to more than 800 million years.

A tour in Al-Huqf area would make you see concrete evidence of life before the ex-

istence of man. It is rich in monuments and fossils. You will find meteorite rocks, lava rocks formed of volcanoes that were active millions of years ago, and fossils of snails and slugs that witness to this abysmal period of time when all this area was under the sea.

Reserve climate

The reserve has a unique climate that is quite different from most other desert climates because of its proximity to the sea from which wind laden with water vapor blows. This forms heavy fog, which is one of the important resources for wildlife in the reserve.

Temperature varies throughout the day, i.e. it falls at night and rises during the day. In the winter, temperatures in the afternoon may reach more than 30° C, but drops at night to below 15° C. In the summer, it rises during the afternoon to more than 45° C and decrease at night to below 25° C.

The rain rate on the reserve is very low at less than 50 millimeters of water per year. It is in the form of fleeting showers on some places in the reserve only and not on all parts. In the summer, dust storms that obstruct vision abound.

Registration of 50 species of birds and 39 species of wild plants in Living and Fungal Organisms Reserve

Al-Huqf area contains fossils and rocks popped up from the depths of the Earth that date back to more than 800 million years



Hare

Sunrise

Wet Land

Reserve, home to the Migratory birds

**Recording
7 species
of whales,
8 species
of dolphins,
and 140
species of
marine birds**

**Wetlands
reduce
erosion of
beaches and
contribute
to the
renewal of
groundwater
supplies**

Duqm - **الذقمة** :

Wetlands Reserve in Al-Wusta Governorate is home to many types of winter migratory birds for their mating. More than (140) species of birds were registered there.

Founded in September 2014 by Royal Decree No. (51/2014), the reserve covers an area of (1222) square kilometers and overlooks the east coast of Al-Wusta Governorate. It has three island, namely Mahout, Maoul, and A'b, each with its own nature.

The reserve has many ingredients that make it a distinctive tourist destination in Al-Wusta Governorate. Visitors can enjoy its pleasant weather through camping on the shores of the islands in summer and watching the flocks of birds at dawn and at sunset.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs sees to the achievement of the reserve goals. The specialists monitor the status of terrestrial and marine wildlife through protection teams. There are efforts made to cultivate mangroves in the areas that need such growing. There are many research and monitoring projects aimed at wildlife, such as monitoring migratory birds, whales, and dolphins.

Largest natural gathering of mangroves

Geologically, the reserve consists of plains of gravel, coastal and interior plains

of salt (marsh), huge flats of silt, and some salt-water lakes. It has the biggest natural gathering of intact mangroves in the Sultanate along Mahout Island coast. It also has several types of depth marine weeds that contribute to the balance of the environmental and chemical system of coastal water and are food for shrimps, which is the most important income source for fishermen in the area. It has the most important and largest collection of algae in the semi-flat territory, which is of great importance because it is essential to food and production process chain in the region.

Suitable environment for dolphins, whales, and birds

Wetlands Reserve in Al-Wusta Governorate is a suitable environment for dolphins and whales due to its richness in fish and various characteristics that distinguish it. Registered were seven species of whales and eight species of dolphins in the reserve so far.

The reserve is also an attractant environment for birds with about (140) species of marine birds recorded found on land and water bodies, such as seagulls, terns, and flamingos.

Moreover, the reserve is one of the most important sites for turtle feed and breed.

Environmental importance of wetlands

Wetlands are the areas where water is the primary factor that controls the environment and related plant and animal



life, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, and whether the water is stagnant or flowing, fresh or otherwise.

Wetlands include natural and artificial marshes, coastal areas nearby, islands, parts of marine environment more than six meters deep at low tide, rivers and lakes environments, mangroves and coral reefs.

Wetlands are among the most productive environments in the world and a source of biodiversity through the availability of water and raw materials required by countless numbers of plants and animals for their survival. Wetlands are among the most important elements that enrich biodiversity because they include many aquatic and semi-aquatic plant types that provide a home to many micro-organisms, aquatic insects, amphibians, and fish. They are also one of the most important habitats for migratory birds thus contributing to maintaining the ecological balance between the varied animal and plant species.

Reducing coastal erosion

Wetlands reduce erosion of beaches. It is also a natural system for protection against storms and mitigation of floods. They can absorb rainwater thus reducing the amount of water that reaches rivers,



Mangroves

streams, and valleys, which naturally reduces the risk of flooding. In addition, wetlands can purify water through capturing pollutants into the soil and vegetation.

Wetlands contribute to the renovation of underground water supplies (water moves downward from wetlands into groundwater). Wetlands also drain groundwater (water moves upward to form surface water in wetlands). Wetlands has another environmental importance in terms of their ability to retain nutrients (carbon storage) and sediments, and to maintain the stability of the local climatic conditions, particularly rainfall and temperatures.

*It includes
3 islands
and it is
considered
as a touristic
destination*

*Features
the largest
natural intact
collection of
mangroves
in Oman*



**Mohammed bin
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Editor-in-chief



*This is how Duqm
seems to us today
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the future of this
city located on
the shores of the
Arabian Sea and
Indian Ocean*

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A New Touristic Destination

I often remember June of 2008 when I first visited Duqm in a press tour to prepare a report of starting the construction works in the Port of Duqm.

And perhaps the first that caught my attention in that visit was the moderate weather of the city that started to write its new history from that point. Duqm seemed to me as a new touristic city that is able to compete with many touristic destinations, not only in Oman but also on the regional and international level. But how can it be part of with the international competition without having any touristic project?

Maybe that was the reason why Duqm was not on the Local Tourism Map, as good weather alone cannot attract tourists who need a hotel to stay, touristic and entertainment activities, restaurants, shopping centers, and other facilities which the tourists expect in any city they visit.

But situation has changed, today we find 3 hotels in Duqm with more than 400 room, suite and chalet. These hotels offer facilities to its guests. The city has become easier to reach through direct flights to and from Muscat – Duqm Airports. Notwithstanding the increasing commercial activity in Duqm which encourage the private sector to invest in major shopping, touristic and entertainment activities.

As Duqm has witnessed this huge transformation in less than 5 years (the first hotel was inaugurated in 2012), we expect the upcoming years to witness even larger touristic development, specially that the new map for touristic investment shows a clear approach to execute unconventional projects that will achieve a quantum leap in the zone, in a way that allows the tourist to enjoy the beautiful nature and the exceptional weather with a big bunch of entertainment facilities.

This is how Duqm seems to us today and that makes us optimistic for the future of this city located on the shores of the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. And we believe that the development that the Special Economic Zone in Duqm has witnessed since its establishment in 2011 till now, qualifies it to become a distinguished touristic destination, as it has complete infrastructure like the Airport of Duqm, the port, the dual ways which connect the area and enable the tourists to easily enter the touristic areas. Also considering that the investment projects of public establishments and the private sector are maximizing the touristic importance of the area.