



DUQM

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Ayşe Valentin

Regional Director
Elena Barreiro

Country Manager
Andrea Tsiachtsiri

Country Editor
Adriana Romero

Assistant Country Manager
Teresa Prado

Editorial
Terry Whitlam, Aidan McMahon

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READY TO PASS IT ON

Duqm is looking to establish itself as a global force in transshipment needs.

SOMEWHERE in the middle of Oman's long southeastern coastline lies the port city of Duqm. The port directly faces the endless waters of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean beyond that. Despite Oman's image as a Gulf state with its industrial enterprises clustered across its northern shores facing the Gulf and the Sea of Oman, the southern port of Duqm enjoys a maritime access to a completely different set of destinations. Duqm is ideally located for the berthing of ships coming from East Africa—including from Kenya, Tanzania, and Madagascar.

The port of Duqm is equally ideal for the berthing of westbound cargo ships sailing from India, the ASEAN region, and the rest of Asia. Conversely, ships setting sail for the East from Europe by the way of the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, too, can conveniently stop by Duqm before resuming course to their final port of call. Duqm is, in short, ideally located to be the maritime hub that connects Asia, Africa, and Europe better than any other connecting hub in the region if not in the world. Quite a few logistic hubs have claimed to be the bridge between the East and the West over the years, but a passing, unbiased look at the world map shows that Duqm truly is the best imaginable maritime connecting point in this regard. In fact, the port's location is so perfect that if Duqm did not already exist, it would have made economic sense to build it from scratch.

Given Duqm's strategic location, it surely can serve as a safe-haven for oceangoing vessels to drop anchor to refuel, make emergency stops, and carry out maintenance operations—to say nothing of the port's potential to create a hub-and-spoke maritime logistics system. Duqm Ahlia Development S.A.O.C is one of the Sultanate's largest companies offering ship repair and maintenance services. The company offers all sorts of services including but not limited to engineering, repainting, and steelwork, and it describes itself as “a team of experienced engineers & technicians from the marine and offshore sectors in Sultanate of Oman.”

Any comprehensive repair and maintenance of ships requires a dry dock and a shipyard. And, Duqm's newly-built and publicly-owned dry dock has been quite busy recently. “As many as 115 vessels from different countries of the world dropped anchor at the dry dock in Duqm, which serves as a key hub in the region visited by major shipping liners,” according to Oman News Agency in 2021. Duqm's twin dry docks are regarded as one of the best in the world, being equipped with 14 heavy-duty cranes, high-pressure water pumps, and a state-of-the-art ship repair workshop operated by highly skilled technicians and engineers from Oman and abroad. With the rising demand for maintenance services in Duqm, another workshop is already under construction to meet the demands. The facility has successfully overhauled or refurbished some 1,000 ships

of various classes between 2013 and 2022. The figure is expected to more than double over the next decade.

Before turning to Duqm's potential to practically reform the hub-and-spoke structure of international shipping routes, let us have a look at another set of businesses which are turning Duqm into an enroute port of call for ships sailing between Asia, Africa, and Europe. ASYAD Shipping and Drydock Services is yet another company involved in the development of maritime activities. Launched in 2006, ASYAD was inaugurated even before the special economic zone authority of Duqm (SEZAD).

Although ASYAD's operations initially began with the loading of liquified natural gas (LNG) into tankers, it has now become a more diverse business. Ibrahim Al Nadhairi, CEO of ASYAD, recently sat down with TBV, observing that since the company's inception, they have come a long way, while noting that the company has “experienced difficult times in the beginning, like any other project,” but on the plus side, “Duqm Drydock sits within the port basin, and it came before the port of Duqm. That is how dry dock is important and how it added value to the whole area.” Speaking of added value, the Duqm mega-project also has a sizable container storage yard which is strengthening Oman's role as a transcontinental shipping hub.

Since 2020, the Port of Duqm Company (PODC) has been looking for a world-class terminal operator to efficiently run its container storage yard, launching a tender in July 2021. With the port and shipyard being fully functional, the next step for Duqm to truly become a global transshipment hub is expanding the container terminal. The storage terminal can currently handle some 200,000 TEUs per annum. However, the objective is handling over 1.5 million TEUs—and preferably as many as 1.7 million each year.

Most of the infrastructure, including crane rails, container yard, and administrative buildings are already completed or nearing completion. The company winning the tender will receive a thirty-year license agreement to manage the terminal. Several global industry players have responded to the invitation to prequalify (ITP), and promising contractors have been shortlisted by the port of Duqm authorities. With the port of Duqm's ideal location as a transshipment hub, the speed of progress in construction work, and the Duqm's priority in Oman as a mega-project of national importance, it is fair to say that Duqm will likely make a difference in global maritime transportation in 2022-2023. If the port manages to launch its second dry dock and raise the capacity of its container yard to at least 1.5 million by the end of 2022, it will make economic sense for many Asian, African, and European maritime giants to rethink their current routes, employing a hub-and-spoke model in which Duqm will play the most central role. ✕



ZOOMING IN

Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy
CHAIRMAN,
PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR SPECIAL
ECONOMIC ZONES AND FREE ZONES
(OPAZ)

OPAZ is a key player in the facilitation of FDI into Oman's free zones.

BIO

Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy holds a PhD in economics from the University of Hull in the UK, an MBA from the University of Bristol, and a bachelor of science in industrial engineering from the University of Miami. He was previously minister of commerce and industry, deputy chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning, and minister of sports affairs and president of the Olympic Committee. He was also previously chairman of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estate, the Information Technology Authority, the board of directors of OMRAN Group, the board of directors of the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development, and the board of directors of Al Raffid Fund.

Which strategies is the authority applying to attract international companies to invest in Oman's special economic and free zones, and which sectors are playing a key role in this enhancement?

OPAZ was established with a mandate of four primary functions: planning, facilitating, regulating, and operating in the case of Duqm. OPAZ works closely with the management of each free zone and any future zones in terms of facilitating FDI to each respective area. We have carefully crafted incentives that work toward developing long-term partnerships with our strategic investors, while driving sustainable growth for the economy. The incentives vary in each zone but are overall aligned with 100% foreign ownership, no income tax for periods from 20-30 years depending on the zone, no custom duties, long-term lease tenancy agreements up to 99 years, grace periods for construction, consideration for allowing high percentage of international workers, and, we have seen, in the more matured free zones, an increase in companies attracting skilled local workforce. The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), the largest among all, has its own set of management that oversee the investor journey from initial investment studies to the one-stop shop where licenses, permits, visas, and other documentation are required. The government has so far invested over OMR2.5 billion (approximately USD6.49 billion) within SEZAD to ensure infrastructure readiness to accommodate a wide variety of investment activities within the economic zone. Such major infrastructure projects include Duqm Airport, Port of Duqm, a multipurpose fishery port, over 12 telecommunication towers with high-level networks, and roads. Meanwhile, PPPs include two power stations producing with a capacity in excess

of 400MW and 20,000 m3/day and a variety of sewage treatment plants.

How is OPAZ planning to support SMEs and maximize their role in the public-private projects at the free zone?

SEZAD has formally introduced Riyada representation through the office that has opened, indicating its importance and role within the development of the SEZ. Similarly, the Tawasul Fund, a fund that was developed to bridge the gap between the public, private, and charitable organizations within the Al Wusta Governorate to support the local community, has conducted courses to promote the entrepreneurial spirit in Duqm. The role OPAZ has within each and every zone across Oman is clear concerning the importance SMEs have in developing the economy. Riyada's presence in Duqm acts as a model that needs to be replicated across all the free zones in Salalah, Sohar, and Al Mazunah. OPAZ continuously checks that companies are adhering to the minimum purchase of 10% of goods and services set by the government and, in turn, SMEs are encouraged to innovate and conduct R&D tests in newly developed areas such as the AI Zone, where experiments can be conducted on technologies such as drone devices.

How are your main aspirations for the current and next year aligned with Oman's Vision 2040?

A major drive for the authority is to ensure that Duqm and the other zones are a host to renewable energy development projects, which is in line with the Vision's target of renewable energy consumption percentage of total consumption being 35-39%. In fact, we have already seen the first project in Sohar Free Zone, Sohar Solar Al Qabas, a 25-MW solar plant project. Meanwhile, at least 200sqkm of land has been dedicated to house two major green hydrogen and ammonia projects in the SEZ at Duqm from both local and international players. Currently negotiations are underway to introduce a third project aimed to produce energy from solar power and transmit to an area nearby the Port of Duqm for exporting purposes to the international market. SEZAD, Sohar Free Zone, Salalah Free Zone, and Al Mazunah Free Zone continuously aim to increase their contribution to the GDP of each area that they are located within in line with Oman Vision 2040. ✖



ATTRACTIVE ZONE

Yahya Bin Khamis Alzadjali
OPERATIONS MANAGER,
SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AT DUQM
(SEZAD)

SEZAD is working on developing the free zone to its full potential, focusing on emerging industries such as green energy as well as focusing on improving the quality of life in the area.

BIO

Yahya Bin Khamis Alzadjali holds a master's degree in urban planning and land administration from the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) in the Netherlands and a diploma in civil engineering from Oman Technical Industrial College. He was previously deputy CEO of planning and engineering at SEZAD and Urban/town planner with the Supreme Committee for Town Planning.

How did the establishment of SEZAD change the way business is done in the free zones?

We used to call ourselves the Duqm Special Zone Authority, though currently, due to the new structure of the government, we established what we call the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ); special economic zones and free zone are now under one umbrella. It is an excellent location for a project based on the ratio of land to utilities for heavy or light industrial, logistics, or minerals sectors. OPAZ is highlighting the unique potential of locating a project in green energy or logistics here because Duqm is a gateway to GCC countries. With the new system, the government has provided many incentives to attract investment. Duqm has 0% VAT and no customs taxes as well. This gives us an incentive. OPAZ has solid links to the market and international business practices. Through our experience, unrelated to Sohar, Al-Mazunah, and Salalah, we can help attract businesses where their conditions are no longer suitable.

You are currently working on the creation of a leisure center in Duqm. How important is it to have the right living environment in the zone?

Quality of life is extremely important for businesses. We are focusing heavily on developing a leisure center to attract and retain investors who have projects in Duqm. Maysan had the idea to create a leisure center with offices with many amenities, utilities, and infrastructure in Duqm, and the project is currently in its first phase. We are also encouraging another investment to benefit from this leisure idea. We are also considering creating a tourism leisure center. We want to create a zone within tourism where we

can have a business district center with offices and leisure facing the sea with unique architecture and water features. It will also include seafront and landscaping. It will be a facility where people can both work and enjoy the zone.

SEZAD has allocated 150sqkm for clean energy projects. What mechanisms do you have in place to attract new projects and investors?

Duqm has great potential for green energy due to its sunny climate, wind, and its seafront. These three parameters are fundamental when talking about producing green energy. We have reserved a large parcel of land for green energy and have signed an agreement with DEME Concessions, from Belgium, to install a plant for green energy and electricity. The project has kicked off, and the offtake of this energy will start by 2028. We are also linking this green energy to our national grid as well. One of our aims in Oman is to have fewer carbon emissions from electricity and have 20-30% of our electricity come from renewable energy such as solar and wind. We have another project with the ACME Group, to produce green ammonia from solar and wind. We also have an agreement with a company from South Korea that is interested in solar electricity. There are small projects where we will use their small power green energy. Currently, more than 250sqkm of land is already reserved for green energy, and there is great potential demand for such technology and energy source in Duqm.

How do the incentives and competitive advantages of Duqm compare to those offered in other economic zones?

There is a great deal of competition between all the free zones globally. Duqm is in a prime location, and it has a large amount of land available with all the necessary infrastructure. Certain industries can be isolated from more populated areas. It is an integrated zone with multi-transport systems with the airport, port, and land transportation. We also zero VAT. Oman's natural resources also set us apart. We are rich in fish and minerals. There is excellent weather, we have a lot of natural gas, and we are not too far from oil. We also have modern infrastructure and a dry dock. ✕



FROM A TO Z

Abdullah Al Hashimi
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
MARAFIQ

To satisfy all the needs of its residents and industrial clients in the Duqm Economic Zone, Marafiq counts on ongoing and effective engagement and communication.

BIO

Abdullah Al Hashimi is a civil engineer with an MSc in construction management. He has a wide breadth of experience in both public and private sectors managing major infrastructure projects and utilities in the public and oil and gas sectors. His experience covers the establishment, implementation, and management of new businesses including the selection of international partners. He served as chairman of the board of Majan Electricity Company and Oman Sustainable Water Solution Company and as board member of Majis Industrial Services Company.

Marafiq was established in 2013 and is Oman's first private integrated power and water utility company. Under which foundations does the company operate?

The name Marafiq means utilities and, as a centralized utility company, that suggests synergy and optimization. This in turn translates into a reduction in costs. Our current main focus is the Duqm Special Economic Zone, as the company signed a centralized utilities services agreement for 25 years with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). This agreement gives Marafiq the exclusive mandate to develop, own, operate, and provide a full spectrum of utilities in the zone, including but not limited to, all types of industrial water, industrial gases, industrial waste management, and electricity in line with applicable regulations. The company was also granted a 25-year exclusive license from the regulator for a drinking water business in Duqm, the first of its kind in Oman. Marafiq has emphasized the importance of the complementary work between the competent authorities to achieve the national strategic goals. The focus of the company is to not only serve the zone investors in Duqm, but to also provide utilities for the entire OQ Group, who own 51% of Marafiq.

Duqm SEZ is one of the biggest industrial zones in the MENA region with mixed-land use. How does Marafiq deal with the different requirements?

This is a large economic zone with almost 2,000sqkm. We have residents living inside the zone area, which is challenging as their utility requirements are completely different to our industrial customers. Furthermore, in terms of industrial customers we have heavy industry, with refineries and future petrochemicals, as well as medium and light industry requirements. To satisfy all these customers, ongoing and effective engagement is a standard re-

quirement. We are committed also to fulfilling their requirements and meeting their expectations. This is a challenge, as different stakeholders have different mindsets and expectations. We continuously strive to find that happy balance at the right cost.

How will the Duqm Integrated Power and Water Plant (DIPWP) support the sustainable future of Oman?

We have been able to do this in part with our Duqm Integrated Power and Water Project. This project consists of a 326-MW gas-fired power plant and a 36,000-cbm per day reverse osmosis plant for water desalination. There is also a huge facility of seawater intake to serve future zone customers with supply capacity of 1.5 million cubic meters per day. Moreover, Marafiq has built an 80-km 132kV transmission line from Duqm to Ras Markaz serving our affiliate Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO), a crude oil storage facility. This is all to support the zone, which is an isolated area. We do not have access to the national grid, so we operate in island-mode. Therefore, our plant is crucial to help OQ8 (Duqm Refinery) and other energy and industrial associated projects.

Marafiq has signed a Potable Water License with the Authority for Public Services Regulation. How will this benefit the community and investors in Duqm?

Marafiq is now responsible for production, transmission and distribution, customer service, billing, and collection for potable water. Since signing the agreement, Marafiq has almost tripled the water production capacity in the zone serving approximately 1,300 customers, expanded storage capacity and setting up a tanker filling station serving an additional 250 registered drivers. We have established a customer service office to facilitate new connection requirements and day-to-day customer relationship. In addition, the company is currently expanding the distribution network in the Rock Garden area, developing additional production capacity to serve the fisheries and cement zones, and introducing the latest technology solutions for customer care. Marafiq is also developing a master plan for the provision of wastewater services. A reputed international consultant to develop the master plan and identify priority areas for development has also been engaged. In collaboration with SEZAD, Marafiq continually monitors the demand requirement for all other utilities in the Duqm zone. ✖

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK



Hussain Al-Zadjali
ACTING CEO,
THE OMAN COMPANY FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL ECONOMIC
ZONE AT AL-DUQM SAOC (TATWEER)

Responsible for the infrastructural development of the specialized economic zone at Duqm, Tatweer has made dramatic progress in boosting the zone's competitiveness and growth in the last few years.

BIO

Hussain Al Zadjali is the Acting CEO of Tatweer. He is a civil engineer by background with over 20 years of experience in the field of infrastructure projects management, assets management, and investments in different sectors in the Sultanate of Oman. He started his career at the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources before joining Tatweer in 2014 as a project manager. Al Zadjali was promoted to senior projects manager in 2018 and acting CEO in late 2021.

Which requirements are essential to carry out the construction, supervision, and execution of projects in Duqm?

Tatweer has an assigned role of project management for all the infrastructure projects that have been executed to date since 2014 at the Specialized Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). Tatweer has completed major projects that have economically benefited the economy of Oman. The company has completed the largest strategic port projects in the SEZAD. The Port of Duqm is Oman's new commercial and industrial gateway, due to its prime location in the Arabian Sea. It is a point of pride for us to complete this Port, from which Sultanate of Oman connects to other global ports. Tatweer has also successfully completed the marine work on the Duqm Multipurpose Fishery Port, which will provide exciting opportunities for the fisheries, fruits and vegetables, livestock, and tourism sectors. We recognize the importance of experienced, committed, and self-motivated human capital as the major requirement for the success of our business. We have invested and will continue to invest in building our human capacity through trainings, empowerment, and role enhancement. Skills development has emerged as a key strategy to realize the potential of our Omani workforce. Through skills building initiatives, Tatweer has successfully acquired the suitable human resources capabilities to improve the zone's competitiveness and growth in the areas of project management and other areas that fall within the mission and vision of Tatweer.

To what extent are the infrastructures of Duqm sustainable and technology driven?

Tatweer is instrumental in ensuring that all Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) infrastructure projects in Duqm are constructed efficiently on time, quality, and cost aspects. Overall, we have always been keen to implement new technologies involving sustainable energy, ensuring safe and efficient operations of the facilities. One example is the automatic LED street lights at SEZAD roads. The SEZAD HQ building is also constructed following green building standards by considering credits of LEED green in account to save energy and mitigate environment issues and reduce the carbon footprint. It uses renewable solar energy for the parking area, solar LED lights, motion sensor office space lighting design to save energy and reduce the building thermal load, and reduces potable water consumption demand for the building. Finally, a new sewage treatment plant was designed based on sequencing batch reactor (SBR) technology to treat the wastewater generated from domestic wastewater, fishing industries, and industrial wastewater. The treatment plant basically consists of a three-step treatment process to treat the waste from fishing industries. Future plans include integrating the existing treatment process with advanced membrane technology to supply the water to chiller plant to reduce the demand for potable water consumption.

How relevant have become the green hydrogen and green ammonia projects in the zone?

SEZAD will be a magnet for renewable energy ventures. On top of the abundance of sustainable green energy sources such as wind and solar, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has dedicated a vast land area for such projects. Additionally, location of Duqm is helping it to be considered as a supply point in the proposed global green power transmission network. So, the green ammonia projects are extremely relevant in SEZAD as this will put Duqm and Oman in the world map for renewable energy. ✖



A NEW ERA

Dawood Al Wahaibi
CEO,
AL WUSTA FISHERIES

Given the immense potential from organized fisheries, artisanal fishing, and downstream processing, Al Wusta Fisheries is keen to attract even more investment and develop the sector further.

BIO

Dawood Al Wahaibi is CEO of Al Wusta Fisheries Industries & Chairman of Oriental Oceanic Shrimp as well as the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Iceland. He held several leading roles prior to joining Al Wusta Fisheries Industries in 2019. He is the original founder of Five Oceans in 1997. He has over 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors. He was a marine specialist with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as well as a marine environmental consultant in the private sector.

What strategies is the company focusing on to boost Oman's fisheries industry and contribute to the Sultanate's economic diversification?

Oman has always been a fish-producing nation and a net exporter. In 2014-15, Oman partnered with the World Bank to conduct a study on Oman's fisheries potential, both in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman, or Oman Sea. This survey, which involved both a qualitative and quantitative scientific research, indicated that around 7.5 million tons of biomass are available in our waters. Following the studies, the Oman Investment Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources decided to collaborate as they saw the immense potential in initiating a commercially mandated fishing fleet. This is how Al Wusta Fisheries Industries was established. We considered historical data, survey reports and the World Bank's advice to concentrate on planning more than on diver-

sity of species. This way, we have managed to keep the biomass functions neutral. It is well-utilized and fished by artisanal fishermen. We started with the macros. We tried to establish a relationship between the updated data from the surveys and the actual situation on the ground. We have found a solid correlation between the study of 2007-08 and the one carried out in 2019, despite a 10-year gap. We started from there and began operations in the Dhofar region. As the plan proved successful, we moved the entire operation into Duqm Commercial Port. Currently, all our operations, staff and vessels are based out of the port premises, which in turn, is bringing good business to the Special Economic Zone in Duqm. Our other mandate is to uncover other species, such as lantern fish, which currently is not fished, but is a great candidate for fish oil, fish meal, and other industries. We will start this project this year by deploying one more vessel into this biomass. It will be a source pilot project for a year, and then a decision will be taken on commercial viability. This biomass on its own amounts to 4.3 million tons and is the second largest biomass between the Oman Sea and the Arabian Sea. Our mandate here is to be a catalyst. We create opportunities and then move on to the second and third location. Hopefully, we will get involved in other fisheries over time. Our role is to show investors that there is potential revenue from organized fisheries, artisanal fishing and disorganized fisheries. Hopefully, this will result in an inflow of related technologies to Oman and ultimately have a beneficial social impact as the fisheries industry expands.

What rewards will your agreement with SEZAD bring to the Sultanate, and how will the multi-purpose fishing harbor in Duqm compete with other investment hubs in the region?

First, we should start with a definition of the concept “downstream” because it is a rather a vague one. Fishing companies are producers of raw materials. This is what they are good at, and that’s their core business. Thereafter, investment is required for fish processing. The aim now is to identify the qualities and quantities of what we have in our own waters—in the Arabian Sea in particular—both in the EEZ of Oman and the Indian Ocean because we are expanding our efforts beyond the EEZ. The Port of Duqm will hopefully become a more organized hub for all of these fishing efforts. The corridors are to be created to receive the raw materials from the fishing fleets, be they national or international fleets. A few investments are already happening, such as freezing of primary production. Our new subsidiary, International Seafood Water, is a canning company that will take species like sardines, mackerel, tuna, and can them for the international market. We have introduced the food component to the

fisheries sector with our presence as an exclusive fisheries or multipurpose port. This is also attracting raw materials from African countries that could visit the Duqm port or discharge and supply all these materials downstream. We forecast an investment of around USD120 million in Duqm port itself, and it will be operated by a consortium, which Fisheries Development Oman is currently leading. Oman Food Investment Company and Oman Fisheries Company are also subsidiaries. We have brought on SEM Lorient-Keroman to lend technical know-how to the fisheries port. We are currently in the master plan phase and hope to start the pre-operation phase in the next few months to secure the involvement of fishermen. The real role of this port is really to help organize the fisheries sector. We are also looking to support SMEs by providing them with equipment and vessels. We are considering various designs and hoping to have up to 200 new coastal fishing boats deployed within the next 10 years. Fish landing, including from aquaculture and natural fishing, is estimated to reach 1.3 million tons by 2025. When we talk about tonnage, it gives a perspective of the earnings per tonnage. ✖

Oman is a net exporter of fish, 7.5 million tons of stock in national waters

Duqm is the largest fishing port in the Arabian Sea

Sustainable practices: less fish for more value

FDO شركة تنمية أسماك عمان ش.م.م.
Fisheries Development Oman S.A.O.C



Duqm – Gateway to the Arabian Sea

and home of Al Wusta Fisheries Industries commercial fleet, exporting Omani fish to the world

Benefits of Duqm:

- Deep water sheltered harbour with 24 hour operations
- Direct transfer of frozen fish from fishing vessel to reefer containers for export
- Well organized port services for quick turn round of fishing vessels
- Many vessel services available including bunkering, provisions, crew change, customs and shipping agencies

- Weekly feeder services for connection to worldwide container routes
- Warehouses and office space available on quay side for operations and vessel support
- Excellent connectivity with Oman and the world – air, road and sea
- Large vacant land areas close to port for future development – all inside special development zone benefitting from tax and labor promotions



omanpelagic.co

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FOCAL POINT

Ibrahim Al Nadhairi
CEO,
ASYAD SHIPPING AND DRYDOCK
SERVICES (OMAN SHIPPING COMPANY
AND OMAN DRYDOCK COMPANY)

ASYAD Drydock seeks to take full advantage of Duqm's strategic position along major shipping routes to provide shipbuilding and repair facilities at its shipyard.

BIO

Ibrahim Al Nadhairi is a marine professional with a marine engineering background and an MBA and PhD in shipping logistics. He has headed ASYAD Shipping and Drydock Services since 2020. Previously, he was the COO of Oman Ship Management Co. He recently received the Outstanding Achievement Award for the Middle East, North Africa, and Indian subcontinent at the Maritime Standard Awards.

How does ASYAD Drydock contribute to the time and cost-efficiency of the projects in Duqm?

ASYAD Drydock was the first project in Duqm area, even before OPAZ or SEZAD. The project kicked off in 2006, and operations started in 2011. Since then, we have improved significantly. We experienced difficult times in the beginning, like any other project. Duqm Drydock sits within the port basin, and it came before the port of Duqm. That is how Drydock is important and how it added value to the whole area. Many SMEs were established in Duqm because the Drydock was there, and there is a huge amount of businesses that can be done with ASYAD Drydock.

Why have you chosen Duqm Economic Specialized Zone as the right location to install your facilities?

In the Arabian Gulf area, there are many facilities in the area already. However, the number of shipyards on the eastern Indian Oceanside is limited, which provides a great opportunity for us as the market is still open to business. Another reason is the trade road between east and west through the Suez Canal crosses more or less next to Duqm. It is extremely convenient for shipowners to divert their ships here for repairs. Duqm is extremely strategic in terms of reach. It is convenient and cost-effective, and it covers a huge area. Thousands of vessels pass this area every year, and there is no repair facility for such

a gathering. The idea of a shipyard in Duqm is innovative because we are assured of a large volume of customers.

What are the main challenges?

Duqm is a new area coming up. Normally for a shipyard, it is a labor-intensive business. Here sometimes, we have up to 4,000 employees for the shipyard. When the market is low, the number drops to between 1,500 and 2,500 to utilize our needs to our fixed cost. Normally, many shipyards have subcontractors to do the job when required. That was a challenge in Duqm. The situation has changed now, and we have created opportunities for local companies and businesses like SMEs. Now, SMEs in Duqm provide the workforce. We also had logistical challenges. We have established a daily shuttle service between Duqm-Muscat and Duqm-Dubai. Then, the opening of Duqm airport connected everything urgent to the airport. We also started to use the port of Duqm when it opened. More recently, there is another challenge, which is the lack of entertainment options. However, OPAZ is working aggressively on this sector, and we are contributing to improving the quality of lifestyle in the area.

Is there any plan for further expansion of your services, and how do you aim to diversify in the logistic sector?

The drydock area is about 1.2sqkm, and we have utilized 50%. Even if we double the size of the shipyard, we are still able to do so. Our new approach to expand is to buy floating docks to cater to our expansion plan. Now, we have two major drydocks in the Middle East, and each can take up to 600,000 tons of dead weight, which can fit three or four ships at a time. Our current capacity is 200 ships, and we will be able to meet that figure soon. We will purchase floating docks that will provide flexibility to accommodate smaller ships and therefore increase the number of projects we can do annually. ✖



CREATING GREATER VALUE



Mohiuddin Mohamad Ali
CHAIRMAN,
ALPHA FISHCO LLC

Alpha Fishco has been part of Oman's growth in the last 50 years and continues to play a part in developing best practices for the sector and boosting its human capital at the same time.

BIO

Mohiuddin Mohamad Ali is a civil engineering graduate from Carnegie Mellon University in the US. He is the Chairman & Managing Director of Alpha Fishco LLC, a fisheries sector investment in SEZAD. He is also the Vice Chairman of Galfar Engineering & Contracting SAOG and Vice Chairman of PMA International LLC and MFAR Group of Companies. He is also a member of the board of directors and board of trustees of National University of Science & Technology and a member of the board of directors in various other companies in engineering and construction, drilling, hospitality, and manufacturing.

What strategies does Alpha Fishco LLC employ to boost the fisheries industry in Oman?

We have been part of different pillars of the renaissance especially in infrastructure development, oil and gas, ports, roads, hospitals, and stadiums. In the 1990s, we directed efforts toward education. Today, there is a National University of Science and Technology from the merger of three colleges. For the renewed renaissance under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, one of the key areas of Oman's economy is identified as the fisheries sector. We invested in this sector with fish meal and oil factory. We are also looking at developing value-added products down the line. This is one of the most untapped resources that our country is blessed with, besides our coastline and existing infrastructure. Oman has potential to be one of the international players in this industry. One of our group companies, Galfar, recently executed its fishery harbor project in Duqm, the largest of its kind in Oman and the region. We expect a great deal of activity to be stimulated by opening this harbor to the world, and fisheries zones will be one of the key components inside Duqm's special economic zone.

How does the fish meal factory contribute to the development of the local production in Duqm?

Most of our raw materials come from the surrounding landing areas. We are reaching out to the network of fisherman and logistics existing within the region. We are also looking to organize

the segment's value chain and supply chain to create value for all stakeholders. Currently, there is some fragmentation from the landing areas to the factory, considering an ecosystem that will be developed and organized further, informing and educating the stakeholders on best practices of ensuring quality and sustainable practices.

To what extent is the Made in Oman domestic campaign essential to showcase marine wealth to the international community?

Our primary goal is to establish this factory in the company. I hope to see Omani marine products become a global benchmark. Additionally, we aim to enforce sustainable harvesting practices, a strong and efficient supply chain network, and, most importantly, higher quality products generated in this sector. Today, at least for the fish meal sector, there are great opportunities to model ourselves on from more mature fisheries markets and sectors worldwide. It could be Peru, New Zealand, or Scandinavia, where we can take what is best and adapt it to the local environment.

Which are the company's long-term aspirations?

When we first started in the fishery sector, our goal was to group and lay the foundations as a private sector. In the last five decades, we have been part of Oman's growth and development. The fishery sector is one of the most important aspects from a global food security perspective, and Oman has an important role to play. The most important aspect is to take the learnings and the best practices in other sectors and apply them in our early stage of fisheries development in the fisheries sector. We have a great opportunity, the natural resources are there, and there is a healthy ecosystem and developed infrastructure, and the coastline in Duqm, so we must make the best out of this blessing and natural resources. As a sector, it is critical to ensure we are sustainable and that we are following the best practices. We ensure there is human capital development in the process as well. I look forward to achieving a win-win for all our stakeholders and investing in opportunities to ensure all our objectives are achieved. ✖

A RESOURCE HUB

With its strategic position, the futuristic port and free economic zone of Duqm will soon be the preferred port of call for oceangoing ships powered by green ammonia.

WHEN THE SPECIAL Economic Zone at Duqm was launched as a mega-project some years ago in Al Wusta Governorate, its aim was to give Oman—a land historically associated with seafaring—a hub of maritime business activities fit for the 21st century. And things have by-and-large gone according to plan. Duqm now boasts a modern multifunctional port, a dry dock which is big enough for oceangoing vessels of most classes, and much else related to maritime logistics and businesses activities.

However, little did anyone expect in the beginning that Duqm will also turn into a hub of green fuels for long-haul shipping. The Sultanate of Oman and its allies in the GCC control some of the largest hydrocarbon reserves in the world and do not have any urgent need to switch to green fuels for shipping. The majority of what they transport, after all, is petroleum products. However, the Omani leaders have realized the importance of going green despite their wealth of petroleum, and the Duqm special economic zone (SEZ) is in the process of developing a truly innovative fuel for long-haul seafaring.

Almost all cargo ships and tankers are powered by diesel propelling engines and diesel generators for onboard electricity. Given the growing volume of traffic in the countless shipping routes of the world, this leads to the emission of a huge amount of carbon dioxide as well as a mess of dubious nature called black carbon (BC)—which is a byproduct of a heavy diesel engines. As Duqm's importance as a maritime hub in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean increases, several enterprises in the port city are working on the manufacturing of a green alternative to diesel. Although the chosen alternative may be a little unexpected, it is highly effective.

Many experts believe that green ammonia is an ideal carbon free fuel—perhaps not for your car—but for gigantic diesel engines which propel ships forward across the ocean. Stuart Macfarlane, director of Clean Energy Investor Group and a proponent of the idea, believes that “ammonia is liquid energy,” calling it the greenest possible choice for cargo shipping. And he is not wrong in calling ammonia a great source of energy. Ammonia, in its liquid state, contains 50% more energy than liquified hydrogen—itsself a highly combustible energy source.

If you know a thing or two about chemistry, however, you may be a little puzzled at this point. Ammonia is widely appreciated for its uses in agriculture as a fertilizer, but as flammable materials go, it is perhaps not the most readily combustible of substances. The twist is that ammonia can store hydrogen atoms and their energy, and later burn in a fully emission-free manner—even cleaner and safer than how liquified hydrogen itself burns. Nevertheless, “efforts are also underway to combust ammonia directly in power plants and ship engines,” according to the American Chemical Society.

The same society also observed in an article that “chemical companies smell an opportunity. Several firms are developing green ammonia, a route to ammonia in which hydrogen derived from water electrolysis powered by alternative energy replaces hydrocarbon-based hydrogen, making ammonia production virtually carbon dioxide-free.” As it happens, some such pioneers are setting up shop in Duqm. If Oman's new port is to become a shipping hub worthy of the 21st century, then it should also be able to fuel ocean-going vessels of the future. ACME Group, a renewables company, and the Oman Company for the Development of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm are on a mission to localize the green ammonia technology in the futuristic port of Duqm. An American energy company, KBR, has been chosen to transfer the technology of green ammonia to Oman.

It was announced in 2021 that a production facility was planned to be launched in as early as 2022 in Duqm, with an investment of around USD3.5 billion. The sophisticated green ammonia plant will be powered by solar panels to synthesize just under a million tons of ammonia; thus, having a zero-carbon footprint: hydrocarbon fuels are neither used in the green ammonia production facility nor any pollutants are released into the atmosphere when the produced liquid is burned to turn the propellers of ships.

In the first phases of the project, only 300 metric tons are produced, based on the contract with KBR, although the managers of Oman's first green ammonia facility are keen to ramp up production as soon as possible to meet the rising demands from Asian and European markets, strengthening their presence in the emerging market for green ammonia as a fuel for maritime transportation. ✖

ALL HANDS ON DECK



Ard Van Hoof
CEO,
OMAN TANK TERMINAL COMPANY
(OTTCO)

OTTCO currently operates and maintains a network of pipelines and assets in Oman. It is currently focusing heavily on Duqm and Ras Markaz, where it sees immense potential.

BIO

With 25 years of international and commercial experience in the energy industry, Ard is responsible for implementing OTTCO's strategy and positioning the company as Oman's independent tank storage network company, serving 3rd party customers and creating in-country value for Oman with the development of cost competitive storage infrastructure. Prior to joining OTTCO, Ard held several management/leadership positions in the tank storage industry, across various countries, of which the last 12 years were with Royal Vopak. Ard holds a master's degree in Economics and International Business Management from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

OTTCO and Port of Duqm Company (PODC) have signed two agreements to upgrade storage infrastructure in Duqm. How will this strengthen the economic zone's status as a regional hub for petroleum and petrochemicals? The two agreements signed with the Port of Duqm are related to securing land and berth operations, two critical elements, to support our ambition of developing a cost-competitive storage solution in the port. The Duqm Special Economic Zone provides guarantees, incentives, exemptions, and facilities, which supports our ambition and provides the foundation to create a regional hub for liquid and gaseous products to serve regional and other nearby markets in East Africa and Asia Pacific.

How do you plan to support the development of hydrogen in Oman in the future?

The Oman Hydrogen Summit, held in Muscat, saw great interest in hydrogen developments in Oman whereby a large part of produced volumes of green ammonia and hydrogen are targeted for export. As these products will be stored in a liquid and/or gaseous form before export, we are keen in having a role in these green developments, supporting the energy transition, doing our part toward Oman's Vision 2040, and establishing Oman as a cost-competitive location for green ammonia and hydrogen through our ambition of providing an integrated storage solution.

What have been OTTCO's primary objectives over the past few years?

OTTCO was established in 2013 with the purpose of developing a crude oil park in Ras Markaz. The decision was driven by the fact that the refinery was being constructed, the supply could be secured, and at the same time the refined products could be exported. OTTCO has transformed from a project company to one operating, owning, and maintaining a network of pipelines and assets in Oman. With that change of positioning, our main focus is in Duqm and Ras Markaz. Nevertheless, we also still have an ambition to look at other terminals in Oman. In the past, our terminals have accommodated liquid or gaseous flows for a plant, a dedicated infrastructure, though there is an opportunity to optimize the use of those facilities and commercialize them. We want to achieve cost optimization through general costs' sharing. We are looking into combining products into one terminal each with their dedicated infrastructure but, at the same time, sharing the costs. Our offshore facilities were completed recently in Ras Markaz. The other big achievement of 2020 is that we reached 5,000 million free hours of lost time injury (LTI). It also shows that a facility like Ras Markaz can be built in a safe and efficient way.

How do you plan on gaining recognition internationally as the leading storage facility in the region?

We have a solid geopolitical location and offer security of supply. There are many initiatives and tax incentives to attract businesses that will benefit our customers, which one cannot find in other ports. In that sense, we have a unique selling point. In addition, our vision is to operate from an extremely cost-efficient perspective. As part of the government, in terms of permits and tax incentives, the risks for us are more manageable. In Ras Markaz, we have 1 SPMS, but we can expand up to 5 SPMS. The competition in the Gulf is fierce, and our biggest challenge is to inspire trust as a reliable port for Duqm and Ras Markaz. We store liquid or gaseous products, mainly in the oil side, though with the whole new green developments in alternative energy there are many opportunities. Oman is one of the five countries that have the perfect conditions for hydrogen, which is generated by solar and wind. ✖



STRATEGIC VISION



Pradeepkumar Nair
CEO,
SEBACIC OMAN AND SKYLINE DUQM

Believing in the true potential of Duqm from the very beginning, Sebacic Oman has grown its operations there to become the largest bio refinery in the world to manufacture bio-nylons from castor oil.

BIO

Pradeepkumar Nair is deeply committed to sustainable development and consistently encourages innovations for a greener future. An electrical engineer by qualification, he has 18 years of expertise in engineering procurement and the construction of chemical industries in India and the Gulf. He is also the promoter and managing director of Sky Line Duqm LLC, the first integrated tourism complex in Duqm. In response to his contributions to the industry, he was voted one of the 100 most powerful CEOs in Oman for two consecutive years in 2017-18 and 2018-19 by Oman Economic Review. He has also received the Most Innovative Industry in Gulf Award - 2019 by Al Roya and Global Indian - Businessman of the year 2021 Award by Asia One, India.

What investment opportunities does Duqm offer, and what are its comparative advantages?

Duqm is strategically located in proximity to the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. Apart from being a tax free zone, the advantage is that this will become the main transit hub for all shipments going from East to West. Especially for companies located in Jebel Ali Free Zone, which has been used only as a transit hub, the shipping cost will be low as ships can avoid going through Strait of Hormuz.

What has been Sebacic Oman's trajectory in this zone?

Sebacic Oman is the first mover, and we started the factory construction in 2016 when there were no roads, electricity, or gas. We believed in the potential for Duqm. We started construction and commissioned the plant in 2019. Despite COVID-19 challenges, we have continued production and presently export to the US, Europe, Japan, China.

How does Sebacic Oman contribute to a greener future in Oman?

We make a product called sebacic that is derived from castor oil, a green vegetable oil. Sebacic is used to produce nylons, lubricants, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and antifreeze. Today, this is the only product of agricultural origin that ends up in

polymers and all major applications. Our initiative is to start farming in Oman, and this will lead to greater greening of the environment supported by the increasing awareness of using agro-chemicals and green chemicals along with sustainable energy. We have a wonderful product and are contributing to making the Earth green.

Why have you chosen this specialized economic zone as the right location to develop Skyline Duqm?

When you are the first mover, you also see understand the commitment of the government, which had already had an ambitious vision for Duqm. I always wanted to be a part of the vision of the largest free zone as an industry investor. I also envisaged a huge opportunity in the real estate market and ITC. Sebacic Oman SAOC moved into this venture as a diversification project. And having successfully executing a project with an investment of USD62 million, I consider this to have been the right business for Oman, as our business has opportunities for expansions in backward and forward integration in the chemical industry. We also saw opportunity in the need for residences and commercial complexes that we also intended to build independently. It was a logical choice for Skyline Duqm LLC to be present in real estate also.

Which investment opportunities is Skyline Duqm set to generate?

Skyline Duqm is actually a masterplan, and we are master developers. We have already developed the designs and all the drawings for the entire project, which sits on a 600,000sqm land. We are inviting developers to work alongside us and will provide opportunities to develop commercial complexes, apartments, and other residential schemes. In the future, there will also be a marina. Duqm is a truly an appetizing investment proposition. Furthermore, as the drawings and designs are in place, no time is lost in obtaining approvals. Our project provides faster access to development and hence a faster return on investment. ✖

QUALITY SERVICE



Majid Al Kharoosi
CEO,
OMAN TOWER COMPANY (OTC)

OTC provides the infrastructure to wireless telecommunication for service operators and government entities.

BIO

Majid Al Kharoosi graduated with a bachelor's degree in communications and electrical engineering from the UK, after which he obtained a master's in executive engineering for space management from the International Space University and a second master's degree in command and control from China. He has a career of more than 27 years of extensive training and has worked locally and internationally in managing various communications fields.

What strategies did it follow to build this in an open access manner?

OTC works to provide the suitable infrastructure for licensed service operators Omantel, Ooredoo, and Vodafone. OTC builds heavy structures that can accommodate three operators in its towers and ensures all the service operators have a space in its towers and treats them all equally in terms of conditions and pricing. On top of that, OTC still reserve space in its towers for other government entities that have licenses to install wireless equipment. Moreover OTC is always consider future demand, and IoT and the fourth industrial revolution will require more space in its towers. Accordingly, OTC has taken into consideration future demand and is ready to accommodate any new technology that might require the use of its towers.

How does OTC play a vital role in the telecommunications sector of the special economic zone at Duqm?

For the special economic zone in Duqm, OTC has received requests from service operators to enhance their network coverage, as well as network capacity. Four to five months earlier, OTC started building towers, most of which have been delivered to the operators. Currently, OTC is building some 17 sites in this economic area in Duqm to ensure the network as well as the capacity can cover the entire economic zone, in addition to the port of Duqm.

How will your agreement with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones (OPAZ) enhance Duqm as an innovative hub in the region?

For most of the investors who would like to invest in a certain area, the most important factor is telecommunications and the network and whether they can communicate easily with their headquarters around the world, their suppliers, and their clients, so providing the telecoms infrastructure for service operators has become mandatory to rollout the telecom network. The new technology of 5G will play a vital role in the future of the telecoms sector due to its capacity and advanced technology used in 5G technology. Therefore, it is extremely important to ensure that SEZAD in Al Duqm is well covered with telecoms, and OTC's goal is to provide the required passive infrastructure to all service operators equally.

How does Oman Tower support and provide opportunities for small and medium enterprises in the SEZ?

All this is part of our social and community responsibility as well as the ICV mandate. Oman Towers' projects are conducted by its main contractors and cascade down to SMEs. There are many SMEs currently working in Al Duqm to construct OTC's towers. Meanwhile, there are many other SMEs also providing different services to OTC, and OTC is planning to provide even more opportunities to SMEs as part of its ICV strategy.

What are the main challenges when it comes to materializing innovative projects?

For Al Duqm in particular, there are not many challenges because the processes between the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) are well coordinated, and therefore we do not face major difficulties in rolling out these towers. In addition, OTC works closely with Tanweer to connect the towers to the electrical power required. Typically, it takes some time to connect the power due to the location of the grid. However, Tanweer supports OTC by making grid connection to its towers its priority. The delivery of our towers took only 45 days from the date OTC received all the required permits. ✖

BUILDING BLOCKS



Othman Al Mandhari
CEO,
INNOTECH

InnoTech has grown from a one-man show to one of the largest 3D printing labs in the GCC and the largest in Oman today.

BIO

Othman Al Mandhari graduated from Sultan Qaboos University, College of Engineering as a mechatronics engineer. He worked for Schlumberger as a contractor in various GCC countries. He later founded InnoTech with two other co-founders and won the Riyadh award for the best entrepreneur in Oman in 2017. He has participated in several start-up training programs including the 500 start-ups six-months intensive program, the C3 social impact accelerator in Dubai, the Dubai-London entrepreneurial boot camp, and the Khazzan program for SMEs by BP Oman.

How does InnoTech contribute to research and development within the Sultanate?

Our whole business is about R&D. Since its inception, the idea behind InnoTech was to seek gaps in the market and to do the R&D to determine if there are technologies that can solve problems. The first thing that came up was 3D printing. If you want to manufacture a spare part in Oman made of plastic or metal, you must do it in other countries and ship it to Oman. We saw that gap and decided to bring some of that technology to Oman. We went around the world to find the best 3D printers and then started our R&D process, which includes creating one complete concrete 3D printer from scratch. It is one of the largest R&D projects in Oman today, done in collaboration with Galfar and PDO.

What have been the major advancements over the last few years?

We started in 2013, though we only became full time entrepreneurs in 2016. The last three years were the most important because we received two investment rounds—OTF and Mubadrah Investments—totaling around USD440,000. The most significant development was moving into our new headquarters. We were also able to expand our capacity of 3D printers. We used to have only a few 3D printers but now have more than 30. We also expanded our team and hired new talent. We currently have 15 full-time engineers. We also introduced new 3D printing technologies

for the first time in Oman.

You have expanded into the construction and real estate sectors. What have been the main challenges?

The main challenge is the ecosystem of manufacturing in Oman. Most of the components needed for most R&D projects are not available locally and have to be shipped from around the world which makes our progress slower. There is also the challenge of finding the right sub-contractors to do some machining jobs with the needed specifications. Regulations are another challenge, not only in Oman but also in the countries that we visited. There were 3D printers inside of universities and in labs, though getting this approved for living construction is a challenge. Another challenge is that the technology itself is complicated. It took us 18 months with eight full-time engineers working on the materials and the 3D printer. Also, it was a challenge getting funding for those projects; it is all funded by the company and investors.

What are the company's objectives for the next 12 months?

Our number-one objective is to 3D print our first building. It is a large milestone. Right now, our 3D printer is in the beta version, and after that, we will work on developing our final version, which would have some upgrades in addition to some new features. We are also working on getting investment. In 3Q2022, we are looking to acquire our next round of investments. We are in a Series A right now. Our plan is to expand the investment in order to hire more talent and invest more in the concrete 3D printer to improve it further. Another milestone is entering the Saudi and GCC markets. I believe in those markets, and that there is great potential. One of the challenges that we face as a start-up is acquiring talent. We cannot compete with big companies, which keep taking the talents. We train and invest in them heavily, but in two to three years they are gone. It is a challenge for us and most Omani startups. One of our policies is to keep the team 100% Omani, contributing to the development of human capital of Oman. ✖



DEVELOPING A FOOTPRINT

Khalid Said al-Nabhani
CEO,
SABEEN GROUP

Sabeen Group is looking farther afield after its successes in Oman and planning innovative projects in Dubai and Saudi Arabia as well.

BIO

Khalid Al Nabhani is the CEO & Co-Founder of Sabeen Group.

How does the group contribute to the diversification of the economy in the Sultanate?

We do the administration of the fields that Sabeen Group invests in because Oman has great potential in new scopes and new scales of business within the country and beyond. Each of these companies adds unique value to the Omani economy, as well as the society. Each company aims to not only generate profit or proliferate subsidiaries but also to innovate and create something new that will bring about a change, even if it is trivial. The economy of Oman depends on such changes in terms of new business models. We believe in the ability of the teams in each company to make innovative and unique contributions that will ensure we are in safe hands and that our investment will have great potential as we design Sabeen Group's broader strategy.

How much potential does Duqm have to become a world innovative hub?

Duqm is a port town with significant geographical importance and potential that Oman needs to develop and share with the world. Duqm is located in a prime area that can connect global shipping routes. Considering the dynamic relationship Oman holds with other countries, and its progressive Vision 2040 in terms of developing the country, Duqm has become an attractive hub for the highest-potential investments. These plans take time to come to fruition. It may not be successful in the first year, or not even the next 10 years, however, success is evident. Many GCC countries, especially Saudi Arabia, see Duqm as a unique opportunity for investment and an area of great potential for their logistics. This paved the way for us to create a footprint there despite knowing that we may not see a return on our investment as quickly as we would from other projects. We believe this will boost the development of Duqm,

as private-sector involvement is vital in the development of the economy of any country.

How will the commercial-entertainment center add value to the SEZ?

There have been many agreements, including industrial agreements and residential developments; however, anyone traveling to or working in Duqm will need entertainment. An entertainment center always plays a pivotal role in the development of an economy. There are examples around the world of how entertainment is the foundation of the economic development of a city. In addition, the huge number of employees in Duqm need a place where they can spend their free time, gather, have a coffee, or go shopping. This mall and entertainment center will add great value for its residents, and this is just the beginning. We expect this project to lead to many such developments, even from investors outside the country. If foreign investors observe that there is potential for people to live and lead a high quality of life, that will draw in more businesses.

Would you be working in partnership with local SMEs to develop the center?

At Sabeen Group, we always believe in local SMEs. We usually conduct internal evaluations to ensure they are capable of doing such projects. Currently, we are individually approaching many contactors who we think are capable and competent, including locals from Duqm. We will split the project so each one can participate and contribute in their own way. All of them will benefit and gain experience in their chosen area of work.

What are the group's main goals for the next 12 months?

Right now, we have a new vision for Sabeen Group that we hope to finalize by early 2022. This new vision will allow us to announce new projects that will take place inside Oman, as well as Dubai and Saudi Arabia. We are focusing on innovation and creativity. We are working on some interesting, state-of-the-art projects right now, some will even be the first of their kind in the GCC. We hope we can turn it into reality by the beginning of 2022. ✖

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