



4,500 hectares are available for investment at Sohar Free Zone in phases

By Mohammed bin
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Photos by Saleh bin
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Over the past years, Sohar Free Zone has been able to settle its local and global standing as one of the free zones established by the Sultanate to attract local and foreign capitals, increase the added value of local raw materials, provide more job opportunities for citizens, develop the local economy and contribute to economic diversification.

The Zone covers 4,500 hectares and is being developed in phases. The Zone was established on December 20, 2010 by the Royal Decree No. (123/2010), and is located within the geographical boundaries of Sohar Port.

In this portfolio, **MANATQ** Supplement lists the most prominent projects in the Zone and the incentives and advantages offered to investors.

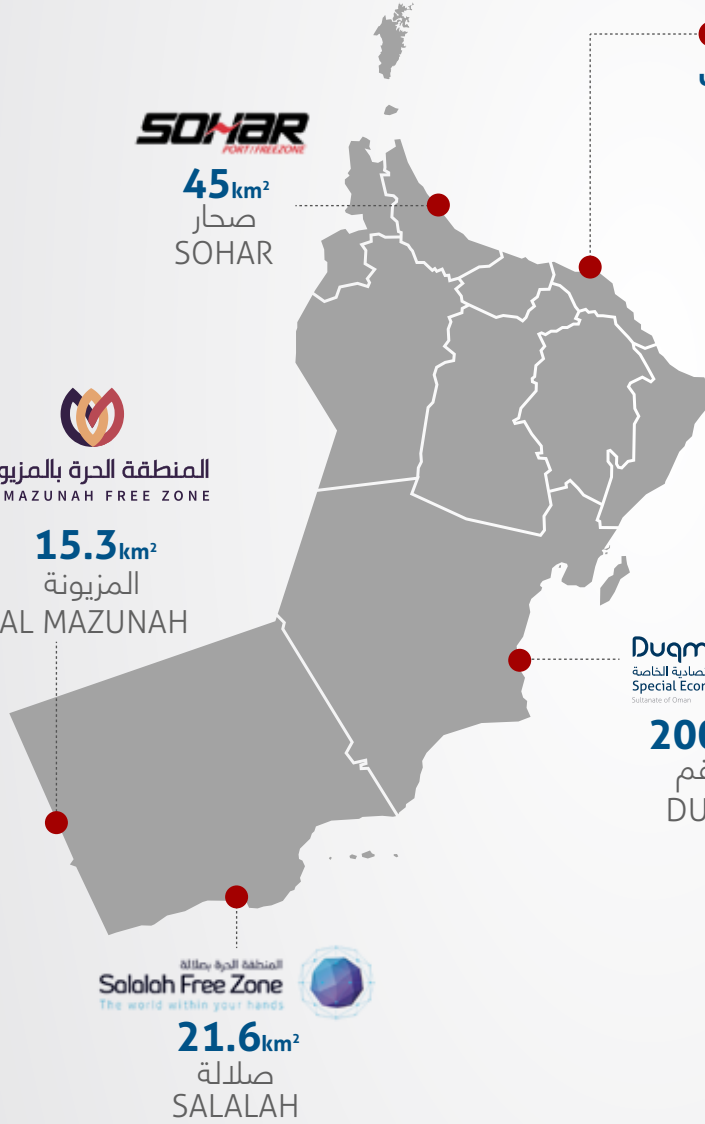


4500

Hectares of
Business Opportunities

صهار
SOHAR
FREEZONE المنطقة الحرة

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CEO of Sohar Free Zone for **MANATQ**: \$918 million is the value of existing projects and \$200 million for the under construction projects



Omar bin Mahmoud Al Mahrizi

We focus on attracting foreign investments that support economic growth

Sohar – **MANATQ:**

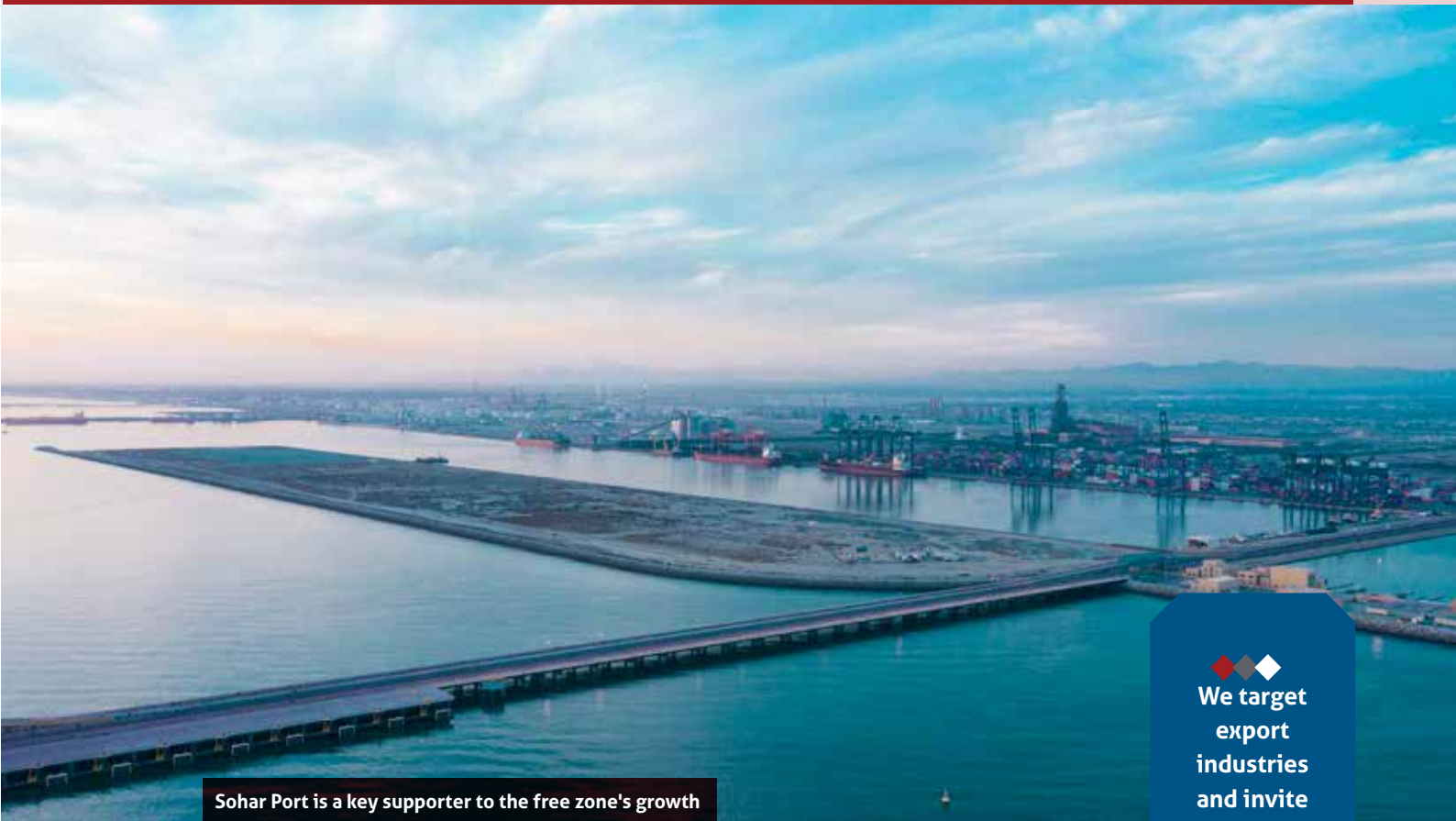
Omar bin Mahmoud Al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Free Zone, remarked that the investments volume in the existing projects stands at RO 353 million (equivalent to \$918 million), excluding the investments spared for establishing and improving the Zone's infrastructure.

In an interview with Manatq, he pointed out that the total number of existing projects in Sohar Free Zone is 44 industrial projects in various sectors such as minerals, petrochemicals, food industries, and others. The Zone also includes a number of companies leasing warehouses and offices, which are provided by the Zone as a competitive advantage.

Al Mahrizi touched on the under construction projects, including Al Hosun cold storages, Sohar Qabas Solar Power Plant, truck

restrooms, Quartz and Mineral Products Factory, in addition to Sanvira Carbon Factory. "The volume of investment in these projects is RO 76, 5 million (equivalent to approximately \$200 million). This year the Zone signed a leasing agreement with Eagle Ceramics to establish an advanced factory for producing ceramics over an area of 20,000 sqm with a cost of \$1.2 million".

"We recently signed an agreement to establish a factory for producing titanium dioxide, covering over 120,000 sqm, bringing a production capacity of 150,000 tonnes annually, at a cost of RO 43 million. Our facilities, services and infrastructure will contribute to meeting the requirements of the project by providing raw materials and export of the final product due to the port's proximity to the target markets. There are also more projects in the minerals sector that will be developed in the near future", Al Mahrizi explained.



Sohar Port is a key supporter to the free zone's growth

Diversity of projects

The CEO of Sohar Free Zone emphasised that the Zone enjoys a diversity of existing projects, where many sectors flourish, such as logistics, clean energy, iron, steel and minerals, chemicals and textiles. He noted that the Zone is rich with the diversity of investors' nationalities from the Sultanate, GCC countries, Europe, India, and South and East Asia.

Positive impacts

Al Mahrizi pointed out, "Attracting these projects is of great importance to the local business community of all kinds, creating business opportunities for local companies in financing and construction. As well, they provide operational services, which could be supplied by the companies operating in the Sultanate. This will definitely enhance the local economy cycle and local added value. Similarly, the Zone targets Omani industrialists and businesspersons to start their business from Sohar in order to maximise their benefit from the direct connection with the port, as well as the Zone's leading infrastructure and competitive rates".

Development phases

Regarding the Zone's development phases, Al Mahrizi explained, "The Zone, established in 2010, stretches over 4,500 hectares and has been divided into 5 phases. During the past years, most of the area was leased out

in the first phase, which prompted us to launch the second phase, which includes 516 hectares".

"The Zone was designed based on the system of specialised and integrated industrial complexes, where companies and factories are scattered in a manner that ensures highest level of flexibility in business. These complexes provide infrastructure and modern network of roads, water and electricity supply in the developed phases. Work has also been done to provide ideal warehouses and offices for businesses, industries and logistics service providers. The design of the free zone took into account all environmental standards that guarantee preserving environment and minimising emissions", he stressed.

Supporting facilities from Sohar Port

The CEO of Sohar Free Zone, who is also the Deputy CEO of Sohar Port, touched on the facilities and services offered by Sohar Port to investors in the Zone. "The Port is qualified to play a vital role in connecting the Sultanate with global markets, deriving strength from its strategic location in the centre of global trade routes between Asia and Europe. Another strength is reflected in the services, advantages and incentives provided to investors at a competitive rate, backed by infrastructure that enhances operational efficiency of projects. All these factors will serve attracting local and foreign investments alike".


We target export industries and invite local business community to take advantage of the opportunities


We are working to attract the biggest names in industry worldwide


We have strategic and marketing plans that enhance the growth and development of Sohar Port and Free Zone

Booming iron, steel, metals, textiles and clean energy sectors

We invite Omani industrialists and businesspersons to start their business from Sohar and maximise their benefit from the direct connection with the port

The zone is designed based on the system of specialised industrial complexes to ensure the highest level of integration between the investing companies

We started developing the second phase with the high demand for investment in the zone



High potentials of the free zone to store goods upon arrival in the Sultanate

"We offer promising investment opportunities in Sohar Port and Free Zone to potential investors. With a number of projects under construction, and operation of Qabas Solar Energy project, we strive to achieving further expansion and benefiting from regional and global markets, which will enable us to enhance our role in achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and promote logistics sector in the Sultanate", Al Mahrizi explained.

He also stressed, "Sohar Port and Free Zone offer an integrated list of advantages for major companies in the sector, including energy supply, abundance of raw materials, and world-class logistics services, complemented by multiple incentives for local and international partners. Additionally, there is a single centre and system for completing and processing government and regulatory procedures".

Promotional and marketing efforts

Sohar Free Zone is making great efforts in promoting its capabilities in order to accommodate various investment projects. Omar bin Mahmoud Al Mahrizi commented, "Our marketing plans focus on attracting investors from different countries. We recently launched five virtual seminars in cooperation with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, titled "Industrial and Logistics Solutions to Enhance Your Expansion Plans".

The first seminar, held last July, highlighted the advantages and strategic components of the free zone for Indian companies and ways to promote them to Gulf, African and American markets. It also shed light on the competitive cost of the free zone, the attractive incentives offered, rich resources of raw materials and the advantages of the free trade agreement between the Sultanate and USA.

The second seminar showcased the promising investment opportunities in the Food Industries Complex for Indian companies. In view of that, three local success stories of Sohar Mills Company, Omani Oil-Grain Milling Company and Al Hosun Company for Logistics and Storage Services were presented.

Contributing to economic diversification

Al Mahrizi explained the contributions of Sohar Free Zone in strengthening national economy and economic diversification. "Sohar Port and Free Zone contribute about 2.7% to the Sultanate's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and award 13% of contracts to local companies, with most have been awarded to SMEs. The Zone was able to provide thousands of direct and indirect jobs and support youth training plans. On the social front, Al Mahrizi remarked that social responsibility marks a priority and key to a successful future. Our social



Storage sector, one of the active sectors in Sohar Free Zone



One of the existing projects using local raw materials in its industries

responsibility efforts are based on three pillars: sustainability, commitment and transparency, reflected in supporting education and vocational training by providing scholars and development programmes for students, health and sports programmes for schools.

Future plans

Touching on the Zone's aspirations and future plans, Al Mahrizi stated, "The Zone will focus in the coming years on plastic and food industries, vehicle spare parts, renewable energy projects, mining, iron and steel, and circular economy projects. The Zone attracts downstream integrated projects that offer opportunities to establish projects that benefit from the products of existing factories".

"The Zone is currently working on attracting industries that depend on polyethylene product, which will be produced in Liwa Plastic Industries Complex. It targets industries that seek exporting their products and benefiting from the integrated logistics system of the port and free zone as one entity. The Zone attracts factories that export their products to GCC or India, so they establish their businesses in Sohar to get closer to the target consumer

markets. Accordingly, the Zone offers them competitive advantages, or invites businesspersons in these markets to visit Sohar", he added.

Sohar 2040

Al Mahrizi shed light on the future vision "Sohar 2040", stressing that its goal is to form an integrated logistics and industrial centre that to employ latest global technologies and follow highest standards of sustainability in various activities. He said that the logistics sector is one of the most prominent strengths and promising sectors contributing to diversifying national economy.

Enhancing zone's potentials

The CEO of Sohar Free Zone and Deputy CEO of Sohar Port confirmed, "There is a close cooperation between the Sohar Free Zone and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). We have been collaborating to enhance the Zone's potentials, one-stop shop services in Sohar and digital transformation to attract investments, accelerate the completion of investor transactions, facilitate the exercise of economic activities, and transform them into e-transactions".

Providing infrastructure, modern network of roads, and water and electricity supplies in the developed phases

Plastic industries, spare parts and renewable energy within our future plans

Sohar Port and Free Zone offer an integrated list of benefits and contribute 2.7% to the GDP

We focus on integrated projects for downstream that present opportunities to establish projects based on the products of existing factories





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Manufacturing prospects in Sohar

It is not difficult, for those looking at the map of the Sultanate of Oman, to realise the strategic value of the triangle whose head is Sohar, overlooking the Sea of Oman, and its base is Salalah and Duqm, overlooking the Arabian Sea and opposite the Indian Ocean, either for the Sultanate, the region or its surroundings and beyond.

More can also be spotlighted about the great importance of Oman's location, historically and at present. The current economic, commercial and investment developments and the international alliances, interactions and conflicts between East and West have increased the strength and dependence of the Omani location and its influential logistical sites on the scales of all parties, and across the back and forth lines to and from Asia, as well as the GCC.

The standing of Sohar and other Omani ports and free zones will increase after creating more connections with other GCC countries and establishing the railway network. However, by the logic of geography at all times, the place and location bring different challenges more than presenting opportunities. The current challenges include providing financing for ambitious development plans, flexible dealing with oil price fluctuations, preparing and completing modern infrastructure in all cities, ports and regions of the Sultanate, reflecting the wise Omani approach when dealing with the regional tensions, confusions of transport and shipping and their stormy transformations with and may be after Corona Pandemic.

In such situations and scenarios, the value of industry and manufacturing is more prominent than ever before. Beyond the traditional and necessary talk about diversifying the Sultanate's economy, making an appropriate aspect of the country's basic needs is a life necessity. This was presented by the lessons of the pandemic where international transport movement can stop all of a sudden, making a good use of the country's resources and maximising their value in a way that supports the well-being of its people; none has any value, but with the industry.

In this context, with all realistic and future calculations, the starting point for the industry in Oman is the triangle that we talked about, especially in Sohar. It is one of the oldest and most important cities in the Sultanate. It constitutes

a multi-purpose global port connecting the Gulf ports and the ports of India and China. Its location on a point that makes it almost as close to Dubai as it is to Muscat, the diversity of its geography between coastal, plain and mountainous and its tourist and commercial strength, as well as its proximity to areas of oil production and high minerals such as copper, chrome, zinc and gypsum are all making Sohar very promising.

Likewise, it has already established its position in industries with high added value, such as petrochemicals, aluminum, refining and energy, with the food and mining industries, and not all of this came out of nowhere, but stands behind it administrative, technical and organisational efforts at the highest level. In fact, this what attracted huge investments to its free zone, but the foreign investor in the non-aggregate industry in particular, does not come to the abundance of raw materials, nor the advantages, incentives and modern infrastructure, but most importantly of all, the existence of a comprehensive industrial policy.

Such policy in which inputs and outputs are integrated at the country level, and a minimum limit of active internal demand, and governmental and societal willingness to support the manufacturer at the time of non-commercial or irregular risks. As well, there must be a special incentive linked to the added value of the manufacturer who uses 100% local raw materials, and the incentive decreases whenever the value decreases. Actually, the public usually shows gratitude to the manufacturer who exploits local inputs and raw materials, whether foreign or national, and to those who employ the largest number of national employees and seek the help of foreigners just whenever necessary.

As they also say, "The great is great." Sohar has already established industrial partnerships with giant companies and will continue on this path with other major ones. However, some mining industries for quarry materials, in particular, may not need huge companies and here comes the role of the national manufacturer.

For the raw materials will not be manufactured in all its phases within the free zone, it is also important that the integration between what is outside and inside the zone is based on sustainable foundations.

Potentials of Sohar Free Zone to attract investments

01

It is directly linked to the port under one administration, which is positively reflected in facilitating import and export operations.

02

Designing the zone according to the system of specialised and integrated industrial complexes, where factories are distributed among these complexes in a way that ensures the highest level of smoothness in their business.

03

Availability of energy and water resources at competitive rates regionally.

04

Competitive rates for logistics and construction costs.

05

Flexible and high-quality office space for rent at reduced rates.

06

Providing ready-made warehouses and refrigerated warehouses to serve various industries.

07

Digital transformation allows investors, suppliers and service providers to submit their applications through the "Tas'heel" platform and obtain their permits at record time. They can also submit land lease applications or register companies through digital platforms.

08

Handling and warehousing solutions make the zone an important logistic gateway for the transportation of goods in the GCC region.

09

Providing easy access to raw materials.

10

Allowing food packaging companies to benefit from aluminum and plastic production companies in the zone.

Providing integrated services to investors through one-stop shop



Fahad Al Esaei: Allocating an employee for each operating company to accelerate establishing projects and overcoming challenges



Providing office and warehouse rental services and introducing investors to the steps of establishing a successful project

Sohar – MANATQ:

Fahad bin Ali Al Esaei, Acting Director of Investors Services in Sohar Free Zone, confirmed that the zone provides integrated services to investors starting from the moment of registration and continues beyond commercial operation. "Once an investor is received, the front office employees at the one-stop shop start briefing him on the investment steps to establish a successful project in Sohar Free Zone", he explained.

"We are working to encourage our investors by allocating an employee for each company operating or wishing to work in the zone. This employee follows up on all aspects of each company and supports on overcoming any problem or challenge that comes across. This has led to increase the investors' confidence on the Zone", he added.

He pointed out that the one-stop shop also includes a Government Relations Department whose mission is to

communicate with these authorities and find solutions to the challenges facing companies.

Accelerating the exercise of economic activity

Al Esaei stressed that the facilities provided by Sohar Free Zone backed the acceleration of starting economic activity. Issuing the commercial registration of the company takes place within less than an hour, after which the investor can start the business.

"The Zone provides office rental services through a company that has been awarded to provide a comfortable office environment, in which investors can start their investment activities. The Zone also brings a range of warehouses, including cold stores, which investors can rent and start their businesses. As for the investors wishing to obtain lands for investment, they can submit their request to the one-stop shop in the Zone, through which they obtain the appropriate lands for their projects", Al Esaei remarked.



An office building established by one of the companies investing in the zone

Incentives and advantages of investing in Sohar Free Zone

09

Exempting companies operating in the zone from income taxes

100% foreign ownership of projects

01

No customs duties are charged on goods arriving in the zone

08

Providing customs clearance around the clock

02

No minimum capital, so all small companies are able to set up their projects in the zone

07

Providing a corridor for customs transport between the free zone and the port, allowing goods to reach their destination in less than 14 minutes

03

06

Companies based in the zone can benefit from free trade agreements between the Sultanate and the United States and others between the Sultanate and Singapore

Providing an attractive environment for trade and business with a list of benefits and incentives

04

05

Completion of transactions through One-Stop Shop

Issue By: 



Said Al Hajri, Partner in Sanvira Carbon, speaks to **MANATQ**:
We are aiming to convert petroleum coal, produced from refineries, into a product of high industrial value



The production volume is 600,000 tonnes of calcined petroleum coal annually and the GCC demand is about 1.5 million tonnes

Sohar – MANATQ:

Sanvira Carbon Company announced that it is gearing up for the soft operational opening of its factory, located in Sohar Free Zone. It is regarded the first factory of its kind in the Sultanate to work on converting petroleum coal into a product of industrial value. The Company's investment in the project is projected at around \$150 million. Said bin Salim Al Hajri, a partner in Sanvira Carbon Company, remarked that the factory will convert the petroleum coal, produced from refineries, into a product of high industrial value that is used in aluminum industries and other industrial and mining uses. Though, this petroleum coal is considered a difficult waste in oil refining processes.

Sanvira Carbon Company is one of the companies operating in the petrochemical industries sector and was established by

Oman Investment Authority (OIA), United Business Company and the Indian company, Sanvira Industries Limited, which operates similar factories in the United States and India and owns over 40 years of experience in this industry.

Production volume

The Company works in the field of producing calcined petroleum coal, which is specialised in extracting impurities from aluminum to get it pure. The Company's production volume of calcined petroleum coal reaches about 600,000 tonnes annually, while the demand in the GCC for the product is estimated at 1.5 million tonnes.

Said bin Salim Al Hajri, who also holds the CEO position of United Business Company, said: "The GCC countries have the largest aluminum smelters in the world due to having gas. For that reason, the factory has been established in Sohar Free Zone to get



Company's factory was still under construction when visited by مَانَاتِق

the easy access to the aluminum producers in GCC on one hand and to have the factory nearby Sohar Refinery, which supplies the required raw materials.

Valuable addition to Omani industries

The CEO of United Business Company stressed that the factory is a valuable addition to the Omani industries. It highly contributes to increasing the economic value of the petroleum coal produced by Sohar Refinery, which is exported as a raw material outside the Sultanate. The refinery produces it and thus brings good returns to the national economy.

Target markets

In regards to the markets that the Company focuses on, Said bin Salim Al Hajri, noted: "We are targeting the local market through Sohar Aluminum Company, as well as the GCC and European markets. Therefore, the Company has signed a memoranda of cooperation with several companies in Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia, in addition to

BP in France. The Company also intends to export its products to a number of other European countries".

Gains for Omani companies

Al Hajri highlighted the Company's role in motivating local companies to benefit from this project. "During the construction period, we relied heavily on Omani companies. We are also focusing on qualifying Omanis to work in the Company, so we could increase the number of employees to 200 and left up Omanisation rate to 50% during the next five years. In addition to this, the factory will produce approximately 24 megawatts of electricity every year through the steam produced during the calcination process. This energy will be available to companies operating in Sohar Free Zone at a cost lower than the usual electricity cost. The Company also plans to establish a limestone factory through the Minerals Development Oman Company, with which we discussed this project and look forward to bring the project out to reality in the next few years".



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 The factory is a valuable addition to Omani industries and raises the economic value of petroleum coal

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 Establishing the factory in Sohar facilitates the access to aluminum producers in GCC

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 We target the local, GCC and European markets and we have signed memoranda of cooperation with them

Al Tamman Indsil Ferrochrome: Production volume records 60,000 tonnes

High global demand for Oman's carbon ferrochrome products



Ahmed Al Moqbali: China, USA and European Union stand as the major target markets



Sohar – **MANATQ**:

Ahmed bin Said Al Moqbali, Human Resources Director at Al Tamman Indsil Ferrochrome Company, said that the Company's high Carbon ferrochrome products are receiving a strong demand in the global markets. In an interview with Manatq, he noted that the Company's products are well received in the global markets, reflecting the Company's keenness to deliver products of high quality. "China, USA and the European Union countries are at the forefront of the markets targeted by the Company, in addition to Japan, South Korea, Canada, Brazil, India, Egypt and the Middle East," he explained. The high carbon ferrochrome is used in the manufacture of stainless steel, which gives it the usual appearance and properties. It is also used in the manufacture of tool steels

and steel alloys, as well as many other heavy industries. The Company owns two furnaces for smelting metals used in the manufacture of high Carbon ferrochrome, which are powered by electric power.

Production volume

"The Company's factory, located in Sohar Free Zone, produces 60,000 tonnes annually of high Carbon ferrochrome. The Company has a plan to increase the production to 120,000 tonnes in the future to keep pace with the increasing demand for its products," Al Moqbali stated.

Many achievements

Al Moqbali added that the factory, which began commercial production in 2014, places the Sultanate on the global map

We provide the world with high-quality products and share RO 25 million to the GDP annually



of high Carbon ferrochrome producing and exporting countries, and the first country in the GCC and MENA to produce and manufacture this product. It also contributes to strengthening the Omani industry by providing countries with high quality products.

Promoting quarrying sector

He remarked that the Company relies heavily on the raw materials available in the Sultanate, and its establishment contributed to promoting the quarries that produce the raw materials used in producing iron ferrochrome, most notably chrome, which is a major source of production. He stressed, "The Company, through its manufacture of Omani chrome, contributes to increasing its

purity and economic value".

Economic gains

Al Moqbali confirmed, "The establishing the Company achieved many economic gains and contributed to market the Sultanate as an investment destination specialised in many heavy industries. In addition to its key role in promoting the quarrying sector, the Company exports its products overseas and contributes to attracting foreign exchange to the Sultanate. The Company's contribution to the country's GDP stands at RO 25 million annually. Further, the Company awards annually many contracts to SMEs and plays a prominent role in providing job opportunities for Omanis and qualifying them to work in this vital sector".

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Promoting quarrying sector, attracting foreign exchange and providing job opportunities mark the most prominent economic gains

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Omani chrome is the main source for producing ferrochrome and we work on increasing its economic value



During metal smelting



The furnace is being fed with raw materials

Strategic and Precious Metals Processing Plant (SPMP) becomes a global pioneer Oman joins clean antimony industry

Sohar – مَانَاة:

Two years ago, in October 2019, the first shipment of clean antimony metal was released from Sohar Free Zone to international markets, placing the Sultanate of Oman among the first countries to produce antimony. Furthermore, on 18 November of the same year the first shipment of semi-pure gold bullion (gold doré) was exported from the same factory, confirming its success in this important industry, globally. Today, as the factory commemorates its third year, it confirms its ability to produce clean-source antimony with a purity rank standing at 99.8%.

The Strategic and Precious Metals Processing Plant (SPMP), located in Sohar Free Zone, is the world's first clean-source antimony factory and the largest of its kind outside of China. The factory is built over an area of 15,000 sqm, with a production capacity of 20,000 tonnes of antimony products.





Ali Al Balushi: Our objective is to make a positive impact on antimony industry globally and supply it with multiple and sustainable options

Within the SPMP plant, around 200 employees from 13 different countries gather to share their expertise in this important industry. According to Ali Al Balushi, Manager of HR and Administrative Resources, all SPMP employees are striving to achieve common objectives, and this is making a positive impact in the antimony industry at the global level. SPMP provides multiple clean-source antimony options, while producing the product according to the highest standards of occupational and environmental safety, starting from importing the resources, to disposal of industrial waste.

Strategic partnership

The SPMP factory was established in 2014, in partnership between Oman Investment Authority, the British company Tri Star Resources and DNR Industries Ltd, a subsidiary of Datco Group in Dubai. The idea behind establishing the factory dates back to 2012 when the shareholders had been stimulated by the technological development in the sector to establish a modern factory with international specifications for roasting antimony. The idea was backed by the shareholders' interest to take advantage of the paradigm shift brought about by technology and innovation in this important industry.



Abdulaziz Al Ghatrifi: We use innovative techniques and methods to ensure producing antimony at the highest environmental standards

Production

The factory converts primary sulfide concentrates into cleaner and more sustainable antimony, which is exported to regional and international markets. The Company's Chief Operating Officer, David Fourie, pointed out that the biggest applications and uses of metallic antimony are in alloying with lead and tin. Examples of antimony uses include the lead antimony plates required for lead-acid batteries, new generation batteries (liquid metal) and lithium-ion batteries. In addition, antimony is widely used as a flame retardant material, and in the plastics industry for items such as printed circuit boards, electrical appliances and electronics.

Additional products

Clean-source antimony is the Company's main product, in addition to other products, as Abdulaziz Al Ghatrifi, the Production Manager, explained. "The factory also produces semi-pure gold bars, which are bars of copper and gold alloys, in addition to environmentally-beneficial gypsum as a secondary product. Clean antimony production is achieved through the Company's willingness to import raw materials from clean resources, and through its use of innovative techniques and methods to ensure the product is produced

Antimony is widely used in plastics and other industries as a flame retardant material

By-products include impure gold bars and gypsum



Antimony alloy


 Oman's strategic location enables the minerals and metals markets to access the Company's products


 Granting SMEs preferential rates to enable them to participate in floated tenders



Kenneth Yeboah: Committed to international environmental standards and regulations and ensuring a more sustainable future for environment

with the highest environmental, health and occupational safety standards. This ensures the least possible impact on environment and society, compared to traditional methods."

Perfect location

Commenting on the selection of Sohar Free Zone for the location of the SPMP plant, David Fourie added: "Our objective is to make the most of the Free Zone's advantages such as the availability of modern logistical infrastructure and easy access to global trade routes through Sohar Port. This will allow the Company to achieve greater connectivity to its business and increase its growth and expansion opportunities. Sohar Free Zone also offers a single window service in addition to many key services under one roof. All of this provides us with an opportunity to work more efficiently and effectively and provide high quality services to customers and partners. The strategic location of the Sultanate of Oman also urges the Company to compete globally by offering a more diversified and reliable supply of clean antimony to many international markets."

Compliance with environmental standards

Kenneth Yeboah, HSE Manager, confirmed that SPMP is ensuring a more sustainable environmental future for the Sultanate, as it fully complies with global environmental



David Fourie: Being located at Sohar Free Zone allows the company to achieve greater connectivity to its business

standards and regulations, including the standards of the US Environmental Protection Agency and the European Environment Agency – as well as the guidelines and laws of the Environment Authority of the Sultanate.

Marketing products locally or internationally

David Fourie also touched on the Company's efforts to market its products locally and internationally. "The Company keeps pace with regional and global development through its commitment to establish economic relations with major foreign markets, and seeks to provide solutions focused on customers in particular. In addition, it strives to provide distinguished service and encouragement for conducting the right practices towards the environment. On the local front, the Company's production of minerals is in line with the efforts of the Sultanate's Government to strengthen the economy and make it more diversified and less dependent on oil and gas."

Building strong relations with partners

Laila Al Rashidiya, Supply Chain Manager at SPMP, spoke about the Company benefitting from the facilities available in the Sohar Free Zone and Port. She explained, "Sohar Free Zone is characterised by the availability of modern facilities and infrastructure, in addition to its proximity to the international logistics centre of Sohar Port, which enables



Furnace operator taking samples of metal



Laila Al Rashidiya: Creating favourable work environment for SMEs and developing small businesses in the Sultanate

the Company to perform its mission effectively and efficiently. The Company's location in Sohar Free Zone contributes to our building strong relationships with local partners in the industry. It also provides tax and custom exemption benefits. Additionally, the services provided by the free zone such as clearance services, transportation, logistics, 24/7 security services, storage facilities, and many other advantages, are also plus points for the Company."

Target markets

Abdulaziz Al Ghatrifi also highlighted SPMP's readiness to serve its target markets, due to its prime location: "The strategic location of the Sultanate of Oman between East and West allows many markets for strategic minerals and metals to access the Company's products. The Company is keen to establish mutually beneficial economic relations with all markets."

Omanisation

On the topic of Omanisation, Ali Al Balushi, explained: "The Company is committed to employ Omani youth to benefit from the expertise available in the company. We have about 200 employees, and as an Omani


company, we – with pride – always strive to achieve the nation's Omanisation strategy." Al Balushi added, "We have so far recorded an Omanisation rate of 44% and this is expected to reach 50% by Q1 of 2022. In addition, the Company has sought to attract global and local leaders and expertise as this ensures a real investment in building skilled employees by ensuring the transfer of knowledge from employees with industrial experience and advanced competencies to the new cadres in this industry. Also, the Company is always working on developing the competencies of Omani graduates and young professionals as well as qualifying them to work in the field of processing and producing precious metals."

Contributing to the national economy

On the Company's contribution to the national economy, Laila Al Rashidiya, remarked: "We at SPMP pride ourselves for the effective role played to achieve Oman Vision 2040 agenda, which aims to build a more productive and diversified economy, while providing opportunities to enhance economic competitiveness and stimulate economic growth. The percentage of domestic spending on goods and services, excluding raw antimony, has reached about 69% since the beginning of this year until the third quarter."

Supporting SMEs

Laila Al Rashidiya affirmed that the Company is committed to facilitating and creating favourable work environment for SMEs, while developing small businesses in the Sultanate through all its upstream and downstream operations. She added that the Company benefits from the services of SMEs in the areas of transportation, mobile phone services, workers' personal protection equipment, general supplies, and other requirements. She also emphasised that the Company grants SMEs preferential rates to enable them to participate in floated tenders.


The company plans to increase Omanisation rate to 50% by Q1 of 2022

The free zones are pioneering investment gateways

(1)

In this issue, we released three portfolios, featuring the free zones in the Sultanate. We started with the Al Mazunah Free Zone in April 2021 and then highlighted Salalah Free Zone in July issue of the Magazine. Further, this issue brings the portfolio of Sohar Free Zone, which has been able to attract various investments in different economic sectors over the past years.

(2)

Al Mazunah, located on the Omani-Yemeni borders, it is considered a gateway for the goods exchanged between the Sultanate and Yemen. The goods received by Al Mazunah Free Zone are not limited to the ones only manufactured or produced in both countries, but there are goods that come from different countries to Yemen and others are exported from Yemen to the world. Exporting all these goods takes place; either through the Port of Salalah or other ports in the Sultanate and transported via land roads, connecting Oman with the GCC countries. On both sides of the borders between the two countries, the Zone confirms its ability to develop border areas and thrives them with commercial traffic.

(3)

Salalah Free Zone witnesses another economic diversification represented in the Arab and foreign investors from different countries worldwide who regard the Zone capable of achieving their ambitions and dreams in establishing quality projects. It is reinforced by the incentives that the Zone offers to investors, the mild weather throughout the year, the autumn season that adorns Dhofar Governorate and attracts tourists, and the Port of Salalah with its high capabilities in handling goods imported to or exported from the Zone.

(4)

As for Sohar, the Free Zone was able over the past years to confirm its local and global standing as a pioneering area in increasing the added value of local raw materials such as the minerals available nearby the Zone or Sohar Refinery products. Rather, the Zone succeeded to import raw materials, which are basically not available in the Sultanate, to manufacture it and add economic value to these materials, so it could be exported afterward overseas with the mark trade "Made in the Sultanate of Oman".

(5)

All these three portfolios mark only examples of the different economic projects that we have found in the three zones. However, as we have already spotlighted the zones with their advantages and incentives, we will feature, starting from January 2022, new portfolios featuring other aspects of the free zones in the Sultanate. Likewise, Manatq Supplement will continue shedding light on more treasures that are hidden in the free zones and yet to be discovered.



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