

Oman plans to further develop high-potential limestone industry

Muscat: Limestone industry in Oman has immense potential and there are plans to develop it further and target new export markets, said a senior official.

There are huge reserves of limestone in Oman, with the best limestone being found in Salalah, Hussain Al Zubaidy, director of Exploration Department at the Public Authority for Mining, told the Times of Oman.

Limestone can be used in many industries so there are plans to boost the sector and help develop different industries, Al Zubaidy said on the sidelines of the first Oman Minerals and Mining Exhibition and Conference held at the Oman International Exhibition Centre on Wednesday.

Target markets

Asked about the export markets that Oman is targeting, the official said India is one of the target markets given the huge consumption of limestone in its growing steel industry.

Iran and Africa are other potential markets, he noted.

The potential of the limestone industry in Oman was also discussed by a number of experts at the conference, who said the Sultanates well-positioned to be a major player in this sector.

Indian market

Dean Cunningham, chief executive officer of Kunooz Oman Holding, spoke about the limestone industry in Oman from an investors' perspective and said Oman is strategically positioned to serve India, which is poised for a high growth rate requiring major consumption of steel and cement for infrastructure demand.

Developing the mining sector would have long-term benefits for the local economy, he said, adding that the Sultanate has many advantages, including the fact that it is the epicenter of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region and areas of significant gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

Oman has a ring side view of the highest growth areas on the planet, Cunningham noted.

Various applications

Commenting on the importance of limestone, he said it is a remarkable and versatile mineral, with a long tradition of use in a wide variety of industries, such as farming and agriculture, cement, sugar manufacture, paper, glass production, chemicals and high quality steel.

Luc Hance, group head of Geology at Carmeuse Coordination Centre, said the lime market is evolving and Oman is an attractive market. He also discussed the limestone and lime industry in Oman from producers' perspective.