

# Oman's mining firms look at international conference in January to ignite industry

**Our Correspondent**

Muscat

Mining officials are preparing for an upcoming international conference they hope will ignite the industry.

The second Oman Minerals and Mining Exhibition and Conference will be held from January 16-18, 2017. Officials said they are still awaiting government regulations for the sector.

Dr Salim al Busaidi, CEO, Maadin Enterprises said, while some locations in the country have been studied and mined, others are still waiting for approval. He said the government must make potential mining areas clear to investors.

"Investors don't want to wait for years. They want to know

within three-six months, if it is a yes or no," he said at a pre-conference meeting at Grand Hyatt Muscat on Thursday. "We all realise, whether in the government or the private sector, this industry has to be taken care of in a more focused [way]".

The meeting on Thursday was attended by officials from the Public Authority for Mining, Mining Development Oman, Ithraa, Kunooz Oman Holding, Oman Oil Company, Sultan Qaboos University, and various company representatives.

Officials said Oman has the potential to develop copper, chromite, limestone, magnesium and gypsum. They are also looking to export the minerals to areas such as East Africa and India. Magnesium can be used for

manufacturing in both automobile and aviation industries.

Officials said there must also be a focus on using minerals to create downstream industries.

Dr Busaidi said this will also help create more job opportunities. "If you add value to that and you export it, you open up opportunities for Omanis. I think this is also in national interest."

At the January conference, organisers are seeking to share experiences from countries worldwide such as Saudi Arabia and Ghana.

"The duty is on us to think out of the box of how to learn from best practices, how to take best advantage of Oman...the strategic location of the country, the position we have," said Dr Busaidi.



The pre-conference meeting was held at Grand Hyatt Muscat on Thursday (Muscat Daily)



# Oman's mining industry seeks speedy processing of licences

Top officials said that mining firms do not want to wait for years to get approval, rather they expect clearance for mining project concessions within three to six months

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**MUSCAT:** Oman's mining industry has urged the authorities to incorporate clear clauses in the proposed mining law for speedy processing of mining licence in a move to avoid project delays and the possibility of losses arising from wide fluctuation in metal price in the global markets.

Top-level officials of min-

ing firms, who are members of a steering committee for finalising programmes for the forthcoming Oman Minerals and Mining Exhibition and Conference in January, said that mining firms do not want to wait for years to get approval, rather they expect clearance for mining project concessions within three to six months so that the companies can take the right decision or move to another location.

The mining industry needs

a clearly defined timing for approval in the proposed law and more clarity on the milestones to be achieved within the time frame. This is important in view of the fact that the commodities are vulnerable to wide price fluctuations and the companies can forecast prices only for a three-year time frame. Therefore, if it takes two years to get a licence, then the feasibility study may become irrelevant. For instance, the metal prices have undergone wide fluctuations since 2008.

## Metal prices

Mining firms and investors generally look at several opportunities in different countries or locations and the companies carry out screening, pre-feasibility and feasibility studies to take a right investment decision at the right time.

In fact, mining industry officials said that the business is a risky

business, vulnerable to wide fluctuation in metal prices. All these decisions are taken after taking into account the global price for commodities.

The Sultanate has ample scope to develop copper, chromite, limestone and gypsum, thanks to availability of raw materials, better infrastructure and port facilities, strategic location and proximity to countries that import such minerals and metals. Some of the locations are being studied, while others are waiting for approval.

The private sector companies have to add value to the minerals, before exporting so that the country can take full advantage.

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## Second mining conference from January 16 to 18

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate will conduct the second Oman Minerals & Mining Exhibition and Conference from January 16 to 18, 2017. The conference and exhibition is organised by Omanexpo, with an active support from different government agencies and mining firms.

The first edition, which was held in November last year, was welcomed with enthusiastic response by individuals

and companies from the mining sector.

## Presentations

The steering committee of the conference met at the Grand Hyatt last week to finalise the conference and presentations. It was attended by top-level government and private sector entities, including Mining Development Oman (MDO), Ithraa, Kunooz Oman Holding, Oman Oil Company and Sultan Qaboos University.



# Delays risk mining investment

**CONRAD PRABHU**  
MUSCAT

**July 24:** At a time when global commodity markets are hurting, Oman risks turning away prospective investors if it doesn't act quickly enough on mining-related licenses and permits.

This was one of the key messages emanating from a meeting of mining industry stakeholders who met at the Grand Hyatt Muscat at the weekend to finalize the programme agenda of the next edition of the Oman Minerals & Mining Exhibition and Conference due to be held in Muscat next January.

In attendance were top officials representing a number of government and private sector organisations. They included Ibrahim Said al Amri, Project Manager of Minerals Development Oman (under formation); Henry Antwi — Head of Mining at Oman Oil Company; Dr Salim al Busaidi, Founder of Awtad / Madaen Projects; Dr Nasir Sobhi of Sultan Qaboos University, as well as representatives from ITHRAA and Kunooz Oman Holding.

Later, in a briefing to journalists,



officials voiced hope that the much-anticipated new Oman Mining Law would address many of the shortcomings currently plaguing the industry.

Articulating one such concern for investors, a representative said: "Private investors would like to see clear decisions and speedy actions by the government on their applications for licenses and permits. If I wish to apply for a mining licence, I don't want to wait for years for a response. Investors want to know where they stand with regard to that application

within 3-6 months. If they don't receive a response within a reasonable period of time, they will go elsewhere with their investment."

An official representing a public sector entity added: "Mining investors are risk takers given the risky nature of the business. Commodities are susceptible to price fluctuations. In the circumstances, investors look at no longer than three-year projections when planning their investments. But if they have to wait for two years or more for a licence, all of the feasibility

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# Delays risk mining investment

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studies and projections they have done come to nothing.”

He further added: “We hope the revised mining law will specify precise timelines and milestones for the processing of applications. This is imperative. We would also welcome clarity on issues to do with royalties, taxation, tax exemptions, and so on, in the new mining code.”

On the question of incentives for mining investors, the stakeholders stressed that the industry was not looking to be coddled by the government.

“Official support is always welcome, but we do not want anything more than what is already offered to other economic activities of a comparative nature. Incentives should be decided by the Public Authority for Mining (PAM) based on the merits of each

project. For example, if a mining venture is located far away from logistics infrastructure, then it's only fair that it receives some support in the form of incentives, as opposed to one that is located next door to a port, for instance.”

Officials also stressed the need for investors to be made suitably aware upfront of the challenges that may crop up during the implementation and operation of a mining project.

“You don't want someone to launch a quarry project and then suspend it midway, only to relaunch it later. We need continuity of operations in the national interest, and not to have projects switched on and off like a tap.”

Well-known event management firm Oman Expo is organising the Oman Minerals & Mining Exhibition and Conference, which will take place at Oman International Exhibition Centre during January 16-18, 2017.