

Govt has option to weigh Haya Water privatisation in 2014

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Total investment in Muscat Wastewater Scheme to top \$4.3bn

MUSCAT -- Privatisation of Haya Water, which is developing a world-class wastewater system across Muscat Governorate, is an option the government can exercise in the year 2014, according to a senior official of the state-owned entity.

Abdullah al Hashimi, General Manager -- Projects, said a 2006 concession agreement awarding Haya Water the mandate to develop and operate the massive scheme, grants the government the option to consider the privatisation route eight years into the 30-year concession. That milestone looms in 2014 when the government has the prerogative to exercise its option to privatise -- fully or partially -- the multi-billion dollar project.

Haya Water, the rebranded name of Oman Wastewater Services Company, plans to invest an estimated \$4.3 billion in the implementation of a modern wastewater collection, transmission and treatment system covering the breadth of the capital city. The project is among a raft of big-ticket infrastructure schemes, among them a mega seaport at Duqm, modernisation of Muscat and Salalah airports, and the Batinah coastal road, currently being executed by the government.

Haya Water's vision, according to Al Hashimi, is to put in place a state-of-the-art system that addresses the complete wastewater cycle: collection, treatment, reuse, billing and revenue collection. Eighty per cent of Muscat Governorate's population will be covered by the network by the year 2014, with coverage boosted to 90 per cent by 2017. When fully completed, the network will cover an area of some 3,900 sq kilometres, he said.

Significantly, 85 per cent (equating to \$3.64 billion) of the total project cost will be invested in the development of wastewater networks in each of the six wilayats that make up Muscat Governorate, Al Hashimi said.

Seeb, the biggest of the capital region's wilayats, will host a total of five network packages accounting for roughly 30 per cent of the total investment in networks. Bausher has three network packages under various stages of development, while one network will be built for Muscat and Muttrah wilayats. Future developments envision a total of 11 new network packages to be built in Bausher, Muttrah/Muscat, Amerat and Qurayat.

In addition, Haya Water has earmarked \$634 million towards the construction of new Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs). The biggest of these facilities, with a capacity to process 60,000 m³/day of sewage, will come up in Seeb.

In Bausher, the company recently commissioned a 55,000 m³/day STP based on Membrane Bio-Reaction (MBR) technology, which is the biggest of its kind in the world. A contract for another STP at Darsait, also based on MBR technology, was awarded recently to a Spanish contractor, the official said. Future developments envisage an expansion of the Seeb STP, a new MBR-based plant in Amerat and five small STPs in Qurayat and some outlying villages of the capital.

Importantly, every building and house in the capital city will be hooked up to the network, said Al Hashimi.