

INTERVIEW



TBY talks to **Hassan Al-Qahtani**, Chief Executive of Technical Development (TD), on the company's growth and the privatization of Saudi's construction sector as per Vision 2030.

BIO

Hassan Al-Qahtani is Chief Executive of TD and plays a key role in developing the strategic thinking and governance framework of the organization. He provides leadership for its long-term planning, business and leadership development, and capital planning.

BETTER together

What was behind the creation of TD and how has the company evolved over the years?

Engineering has been my passion from an early age and it was the driving force for me to major in mechanical engineering. After my graduation from college I had the opportunity to work for major and reputable Saudi construction and maintenance companies, and during my employment I realized that there is an overwhelming demand for energy due to the country expanding and accelerated increase in population; therefore, I was certain that electro-mechanical works was a profitable future business and I should plan for my future company accordingly. After thorough market research Technical Development was born in the spring of 2002 with a vision to specialize in electro-mechanical works with a leading role in the market; our mission, goals, and objectives were centered on our vision. The Saudi market is such a vast and complicated market; therefore; it was essential for our expertise to be comprehensively aligned with business demand and for us to be able to deal with our projects from the ground up. This gave us the opportunity to work with more experienced local and international partners on major government projects—the insulation of diesel generators and gas turbines for building, subways, and airports. This went on until the end of the 2015 fiscal year. 2015 was the piv-

otal year for the company, and with audacity the company established a reputation for high quality and precision. This success helped the company expand and gain more business ground. In 2015, Zahran Holding requested Technical Development to join Zahran Holding group of companies and after some difficult negotiations we believed it was not a hasty decision but rather it was a decision with prowess, and it was in our best business interests to join such a mammoth group of companies for it is in line with our long-term business plan.

Where do you see the current state of the local construction sector?

For the past 30 years the government has been the sole supplier of electrical power for all its citizens and in charge of all related aspects of power providing from infrastructure, power generators, power grids, and connectivity to the end user. This philosophy was working when the population was 7 million; now the game has changed and the population has increased dramatically. Now it is around 30 million and expected to reach 40-45 million in the next 10 to 15 years. These statistics alone made the decision makers think seriously that this current practice cannot go on forever for it is very a expansive market with vast areas to cover and far more complicated than ever. It was decided that the govern-

ment should not be totally in charge or the sole provider of electricity. In 2013 the government made the decision to invite the private sector to join in as a partner with the aim to improve services, generate income, and open new business opportunities for the private sector and employment opportunities for young Saudi engineers and technicians. This government's business-oriented policy will eventually eliminate the long and bureaucratic government project budgeting process and award decision-making. This is all important for the private sector to be able to take the initiative and align itself with the new era. I am happy to say that we are currently ready to accommodate these new opportunities.

Regarding the government's Vision 2030, which aspect of the reforms will impact the industry and TD the most?

The 2030 country vision laid the groundwork for government project processes that are less bureaucratic and more transparent, in addition to the privatization of some sectors and agencies. The endless opportunities for private-sector involvement in infrastructure—roads, dams, power stations, airports and sea ports, hotels and resorts, railways, medical cities, and industrial cities—along with government partnerships will ensure the country has a bright and promising future. ✖