

AHMADIAH: Setting The Standards In Construction Excellence

From the modest beginnings in the mid 1950's Ahmadiyah has evolved itself into one of the largest, and most respected construction companies in the region.

Mr. Ayad A. Al-Thuwaini,
Vice Chairman of
Ahmadiyah Group

The Kuwaiti construction sector demonstrated inherent strength and resilience amidst global economic crises, and only experienced a minor slow down, followed by strong growth. Further to this, solid economic performance and the government's commitment to reform have sustained demand for residential, commercial and retail construction projects. In particular, the new law on public-private partnerships (PPPs) will have a transformative impact on the local construction industry.

If one company stands up in the building of the new Kuwait, it is Ahmadiyah: Kuwait's leading name in the construction industry. Ahmadiyah takes pride in being one of the pioneer contracting firms in Kuwait having achieved remarkable growth over the last six decades and contributed significantly to the development of the country. The Company has attained prominence as a leader in the field of construction through competence, competitiveness and timely delivery with highest quality standards and recognized safety performance.

WE TALKED TO AYAD AL-THUWAINI, VICE CHAIRMAN OF AHMADIAH:

AHMADIAH has lived through several global crises but has been able to survive and thrive. How does Ahmadiyah see this challenging economic scenario the world is currently facing?

Mr Al-Thuwaini: The construction sector has always been very challenging. Whether you are in a crisis or not, there is always a stiff competition. During crises, governments usually cut down budgets which thereby decreases the number of projects. This makes it even harder for contractors to survive if they are not financially and technically strong and prepared. Being a leader in the field is all about being able to rise to the occasion during difficult times. It's the ability to always step up, anticipate and prepare for the difficult times. Our style of leadership, management and culture played and will keep on playing a vital role in the growth of our business.

Ahmadiyah was established in 1954 by two ambitious entrepreneurs with the strong conviction that building projects starts with building relationships. Since then, Ahmadiyah became Kuwait's leading Construction company. What would you say Ahmadiyah's main competitive advantages are?

Mr Al-Thuwaini: Definitely, our human capital is our most important asset. Especially in the construction sector, it is all related to people. We are focused on recruiting and retaining the very best people to allow us to meet and exceed our clients' expectations.

As technology proliferates and environmental realities and socio-political trends shake the foundations of established business models, large-scale innovation is the key ingredient for companies to survive the next wave of mega-change. How does Ahmadiyah define innovation?

Mr Al-Thuwaini: Companies in every industry and every country face disruption in every aspect of their business. From designing, to making and marketing products and services constant change is no longer the exception but the norm. Increasingly, innovation is not just about the product but about the company as a whole.

Construction projects are getting larger in scale, more complex and technically challenging by the day. The future will belong to the agile and lean, and to the platforms and ecosystems they empower.

Looking ahead, what are the strategies to further strengthen Ahmadiyah's balance sheet and take it forward?

Mr Al-Thuwaini: The recent amendment of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) law reflects a welcome improvement in the Kuwait legal regime: One of the fastest and healthiest ways to achieve long term sustainable growth is to pave the road for private sector further development and the PPPs are an important way to take the huge burden off the government's shoulder.' With the streamlining of the Direct Foreign Investment Law and the latest amendments to the capital market and the companies' law, Kuwait will see more involvement from the private sector through different projects, while diversifying sources of national revenues. It is also crucial for the government to open other sectors to the private sector such as health, education, oil & gas and so forth.

As far as Ahmadiyah is concerned, the next 5 years are going to be interesting. Other than the oil projects and the PPP projects, we look forward to the housing projects too. The housing projects will continue for another 10 years at least. I see that there will be a lot of opportunities in this sector.

Transparency, integrity, and accountability are the pillars of corporate governance. Although we are not yet a public company, Ahmadiyah has always been committed to these principles in the way we direct and control our business and in the way we conduct our relationships with our clients, both in the private and public sectors. We understand that it is not enough to perform well; we must conduct our business in a way that promotes investor confidence and attracts new investors. We see opportunities in both government and private investment in the construction field and thus, when reflecting on the success of the last 60 years we are looking very positively on our future within Kuwait