

Sohar antimony project eyes annual production of 50,000 ounces of gold

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By Conrad Prabhu — MUSCAT: Sept 10: London-based Tri-Star Resources, a major investor in an antimony roaster project under development at Sohar Port and Freezone, announced at the weekend the award of new contracts for the procurement of key plant equipment, underscoring efforts to accelerate the execution of the landmark venture. Oman-registered Strategic & Precious Metals Processing LLC (SPMP) is investing around \$65.5 million in establishing the 20,000 tons per annum capacity antimony and associated products plant at Sohar, billed as the world's first major antimony roaster outside of China in several decades.

While half of this output is envisaged for conversion into value added antimony trioxide products, the integration of a gold recovery plant in the roaster will also facilitate the production of an estimated 50,000 ounces of gold per annum — a valuable byproduct that significantly enhances the project's overall value proposition. Tri-Star Resources, an integrated mineral processing & minerals technology company, has a 40 per cent stake in SPMP. The balance is held by Oman Investment Fund, a sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate with a 40 per cent equity, and DNR Industries Ltd (20 per cent), a private company with interests in the mining and energy sectors. The latest contracts come on top of last month's award of a contract for furnaces that will form the centrepiece of the project.

Confirming the new procurements, Tri-Star Resources said SPMP has been “making significant progress as it moves further into the procurement phase” of the project. “Further to the recent ordering of furnaces, as announced on August 9, 2016, SPMP has awarded further key contracts to deliver the main antimony roasting equipment including the rotary kiln and dry and wet gas handling circuitry, representing the core operational equipment packages for the Oman Antimony Roaster (OAR),” the company stated. Importantly, the high-tech metal oxide reduction technology incorporated into the project will allow for SPMP to also recycle calcines to recover gold from the ore concentrates. “The inclusion of the calcine recovery furnace and the associated plant for gold recovery, has allowed the project to accept a wider range of feedstock sources, which also improves the operational flexibility and economics, increasing the plant revenue opportunity by 50 per cent compared with antimony alone,” SPMP's Chief Executive Officer, Ismail Emin Eyi, stated.

A critical metal, antimony has wide application in a variety of important electronics related plastics, notably as a catalyst in flame retardants for printed circuit boards for computers and servers. It is also used in everyday items from car batteries to catalysts for polymer fibre facilities.

The Oman Antimony Roaster is scheduled for commissioning in Q4 2017.

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