

Elematic, 37801 Akaa, Finland

Alrashid Abetong Co. Ltd. takes precast to new heights in Saudi Arabia

Several megatrends are driving growth in the precast market in Saudi Arabia. At the forefront of these developments is Alrashid Abetong Co. Ltd., which has built an impressive 40-year legacy and become a premier precaster in the country.

Over the past several decades Saudi Arabia has undergone a huge development. Much of this has been fuelled by the country's massive oil reserves, but there are also other important factors at work. First of all, the country has a very young and growing population, which according to some estimates is expected to double by 2050. In addition, the government has been supporting an increasingly strong private sector with active housing, employment and industrialization policies, opening big opportunities for investments in housing, schools, universities, ports and similar.

So strong is the underlying demand that the Saudi construction market has continued to prosper even in the wake of the global financial crisis. And with a steadily growing portfolio of precasting success stories to showcase in the country, precast is becoming an increasingly popular choice across a wide spectrum of projects – from residential housing to public sector and commercial.

Shining bright in Riyadh

Alrashid Abetong Co. Ltd. has built up an impressive resume of projects in Saudi

Arabia since the company's foundation in 1977 and is today one of the largest precasters in the country. In five factories in Riyadh, and one in Jizan, the company produces all types of precast products needed by the construction industry. This includes columns, slabs, beams, boundary walls, water tanks and other products. In addition, the company provides a wide range of services from predesign support and design of precast products through to erection, transportation and retouching.

"In our business it's important to understand and meet client expectations, take on proj-

ects that fill up resources and maximize factory utilization," says Mikael Karlsson, Executive General Manager at Alrashid-Abetong.

At the moment Alrashid Abetong has several important projects underway with customers in real estate and in the food, trading and manufacturing sectors. As Mikael explains, success is about building trust over the long haul. "The construction business in general tends to be conservative and it is the same here. It takes time to convince clients and their consultants about new or alternative building systems."



Casting machine at Alrashid Abetong

That's why Alrashid Abetong considers it very important to meet clients at an early stage of new projects. "In this way clients can judge for themselves what precast and our company can provide them with. Success in Saudi Arabia, too, is very much about having the right soft values in place, and we are proud of our employees and the knowledge and experience that they represent," says Mikael Karlsson.

Ramping up with Elematic

Given Alrashid Abetong's strong order base and a big new order for villas in Jubail, the company decided recently to expand its Riyadh factory with a new wall panel line. The partner chosen for the delivery was Elematic, the Finland-based supplier of precast machinery and production plants.

As a result, Alrashid Abetong's newest factory in Riyadh now houses four production halls, three for walls and one for DoubleT-slab and prestressed beam production. The new wall panel line included the delivery of Elematic's hydraulic casting tables (20 tables of approx. 4.5 x 12 meters hydraulic tilting moulds - size tailored for the customer, casting machines (sector gate casting machine, 27 meters), concrete distribution system (concrete transportation system with automatic E9 shuttle with 2 cubic meters of wet concrete or 1,6 cubic meters O-slump concrete) and proprietary fastening method FaMe, which is a fast, precise and easy-to-use magnet solution for sideform fastening.

"With the new line, everything has been streamlined to the very last detail. This covers all facets of the operation, from automation to machine operation, recycling and beyond," says Curt Lindroth, Elematic's key contact with Alrashid Abetong during the line's commissioning.

The choice of Elematic reaffirmed a long-standing partnership. Elematic shipped its first machines to Alrashid Abetong more than 30 years ago, and since then cooperation has deepened, sometimes involving individual equipment and sometimes entire production lines.

Deliveries over the years have included machinery for hollow-core production, battery moulds, casting machines, concrete transportation shuttles and hydraulic tilting tables. A service agreement signed with Elematic ensures that machines are kept performing at optimal levels, with a smooth flow of wear and spare parts, regular inspection of machines, annual maintenance, repair and troubleshooting. "In the last decade Alrashid Abetong has grown strongly, both financially and in terms of capacity. This has meant investing in existing facilities and sometimes new production facilities. Whenever we do this we look to the market to see who is the right partner for the investment. Elematic is one of these partners," explains Mikael Karlsson.

Combined with strong investment in product development, technology and production capacity, Elematic trusts that it can offer the full extent of precasting technology. "We are capable of delivering an overall design including high-quality machinery and equipment for precast factories, with everything built for the customer's needs and requirements," Curt Lindroth emphasizes.

Shaping the future

Both companies agree that the future of precast in Saudi Arabia is very much in the hands of the precasters themselves. The demand is



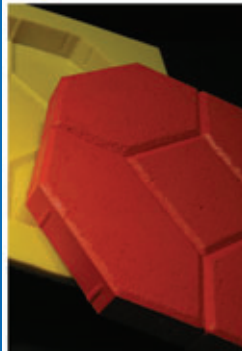
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Ma'aden villa project Jubai

there, but it is still up to the precast companies and equipment providers to build up trust so that the end customer can rely on them.

"When our customers realize that they can take on big projects and share responsibilities without putting in a lot of their own resources, they will opt for precast and hopefully choose us. Whenever there is a big project, I would like customers to approach us first to see what kind of solution we can provide and offer them," Mikael Karlsson envisions.

Given developments so far, the precast sector is poised to continue growing and gaining market share from traditional methods in Saudi Arabia. It is clear that the quality and efficiency provided by precast are needed to comply with the urgent need for new buildings and housing solutions.

"We will continue to contribute to sustainable development by providing high-performing precast concrete machinery, equipment and complete factories. With support provided by our local staff, customers will continue to benefit from more efficient production, better building quality and a faster return on investment," Curt Lindroth concludes.

Focus on human resources and employment will also be key factors. "For us this involves the challenge of continuing to create a company that is attractive to work with. In the future the focus will be much more on utilization and productivity of existing resources, and here I'm thinking more of our employees and not so much machines and equipment," Mikael adds.



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Alrashid-Abetong
Rashid Tower, 3rd Floor, Dhabab St., Al
Maather Area
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
T +966 1 464 5541
F +966 1 461 4905
info@alrashidabetong.com
www.alrashidabetong.com



Elematic
Aiolantie 2
P.O. Box 33
37801 Akaa, Finland
T +358 3 549511
F +358 3 5495300
sales@elematic.com
www.eleumatic.com