

Govt should deregulate petroleum industry – Zeeshan Tayyeb

*Exclusive interview of Group Chief Operating Officer,
Gas & Oil Pakistan Ltd, (GO)*

EU: Would you please brief about yourself, your education, qualification and experience?

ZT: I was trained as a Chartered Accountant from PwC, one of the “Big 4” auditing firms and after a brief stint in its Technology practice, I joined ICI Pakistan Limited in 2002. After spending time in a few roles based out of Karachi, I was seconded to ICI’s Global Headquarters in London and held various Finance Director roles in different Business Units and continued to work there after its acquisition by AkzoNobel.

Afterwards, I joined DeBeers Industrial Diamonds, which included a large Oil & Gas portfolio, to lead the transformation of its finance function. Later, I also worked for Valiant Petroleum, an offshore E&P company operating in the North and Norwegian Seas as Finance Director. Before coming back to Pakistan, I spent considerable time in the software industry working with private equity firm Hg Capital as Finance Director and with several other businesses in Finance Director and Chief Operating Officers roles.

While away from Pakistan, I also became a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales and completed my Executive MBA from Harvard Business School in America. In 2018, following my desire to move back to Pakistan, I had the chance to meet the Chairman of GO, Mr Tariq Kirmani and CEO, Mr Khalid Riaz in London. The rest, as they say, is history.

EU: What are the major operations / activities of your company in the petroleum sector, electric vehicles & renewable energy in Pakistan?

ZT: GO is the fastest growing OMC in the country with a network of over 700 retail outlets in providing Petrol, Diesel, Lubricants, and other allied services. The company has oil storage depots and terminals across Pakistan amounting to approx. 200,000 MTs., the largest oil storage capacity by an OMC in the private sector. GO is supported by a fleet of over 700 tank trucks equipped with Satellite Tracking System that ensure round the clock deliveries to our retail outlets whilst keeping our customers informed of the journey’s progress. GO offers Corporate, Fleet and Prepaid Cash Cards to companies and individuals enabling a convenient way of fueling and expense management.

As a corporate citizen operating in the energy sector, GO is conscious of its responsibilities to the environment and in line with recent regulatory changes, the company has introduced Euro-5 compliant fuels across its retail network, enhancing engine performance and providing a cleaner environment.

On the transformation of the mobility and transport sector around the world, GO is proud to be the first Oil Marketing Company (OMC) in Pakistan to introduce Electric Vehicle Chargers. This charger is installed at one of our Company Owned Company Operated (COCO) retail outlet in Lahore

■ **By Engr. Nadeem Ashraf**



and continues to serve customers who would like to rapidly charge their EVs.

GO plans to cover strategic routes in our network, such as motorways, highways, and key city sites all the way from Karachi to Peshawar, to serve our EV customers, to help them overcome range anxiety and provide a greener way of travelling. We are also working on multiple projects such as EV Charging facilities for smaller vehicles, conversion of retail outlets to solar energy and various tree plantation drives.

Furthermore, to lessen the burden on environment and to provide fuel efficiency to our customers, we have partnered with a renowned global chemicals company to introduce efficiency enhancing additives in our fuels. These additives will also help with reducing the environmental impact of fossil fuels.

EU: What are the aims and plans of your company to expand its operations in Pakistan?

ZT: Having started a little over five years ago, GO’s early focus was to develop storage facilities in the country in line with our ambition. Initially, GO setup retail sites in rural and sub-urban areas and in the last couple of years has started to make its presence felt in bigger cities. With over 700 GO Retail Outlets operating in Pakistan, we are now a truly national



company with a market share of approx. 10% and enjoying 3rd position in 2020 (Petrol, Diesel and HOB products). By 2022, GO plans to have over 1,200 retail outlets across Pakistan by having presence on motorways and highways, solidifying GO's overall position as one of the top 3 players of the petroleum industry.

EU: To what extent the business and operations of your company were affected due to the coronavirus emergency and also its solutions?

ZT: Health, Safety, Security & Environment (HSSE) is of prime importance at GO and is a prerequisite to any part of our business. When COVID-19 hit the world including Pakistan, the Management took immediate steps to first protect its employees and customers. During the first lockdown, almost all of GO's office-based staff was asked to work from home. This involved a big exercise from a technology and communications perspective to help people understand and process the change to a new way of working. From an HR perspective, it was a major exercise to not just ensure that our staff was able to work from home but also taken care from a mental health point of view as well as supporting those who got infected. From an operations perspective, GO implemented strict procedures to ensure social distancing, hygiene and use of masks to maintain supplies and to continue to serve our customers. Our retail outlets also distributed masks to the incoming customers and took care to minimize contact points. The use of latest technology such as the use of video

conferencing, VPNs for remote working, internet connectivity, mobile devices and laptops is now well embedded in the company along with SOPs in case the situation deteriorates.

EU: To what extent regulatory and business environment is favorable in Pakistan you're your company?

ZT: The regulatory and business environment continues to improve in the country with the government addressing various issues faced by the petroleum sector. The recent change from monthly to fortnightly pricing is a step in the right direction and with recent and upcoming changes being introduced, we hope that the industry will flourish and not only be able to improve the existing service offering but also launch new products such as EV charging stations, environment friendly fuels as well as allied services for customers visiting the retail outlets.

EU: What reforms and improvements should be brought in petroleum sector to attract more foreign and local investment?

ZT: With increasing income levels, increase in personal mobility and general economic growth, the petroleum industry is continuing to grow in the country. Although, Electric Vehicles have now entered the Pakistan market, it will take considerable time before it offsets the growth in demand of refined petroleum products. To ensure that the petroleum industry survives this transition and continues to invest in the retail network in the country, it is important to deregulate the industry. This will ensure that quality retail outlets operate in the country providing best service without compromising on quality and quantity and also prepare for the ultimate transition to ecofriendly modes of transport.

It is important to understand that retail outlets/petrol pumps are not just providing fuel to motorists but are a lifeline in some of the smaller communities where they operate and offer other allied services on highways and motorways. Without adequate investment in this area, it would also be difficult to improve the life of these communities and provide the facilities expected on modern motorways and highways.

The petroleum sector in Pakistan is one of the largest vehicles for tax collection. Any steps that make it easier to invest and operate in the country and allow the petroleum sector to offer competitive shareholder returns will encourage local and international investments. This can only be fully achieved through deregulation and encouraging competition.

EU: What are your CSR activities (tree plantation, etc. of your company).

ZT: Our CEO, Mr Khalid Riaz, a veteran of the sector and founder of GO is a firm believer in fulfilling our Corporate Social Responsibilities and the whole company plays an effective part in ensuring this.

GO's CSR efforts include contributions to the Kausar Majeed Foundation, which runs a Girls School for more than 500 students in Burewala and a Dialysis Centre in Vehari among other projects. The company also runs a food bank for the underprivileged and actively participated in COVID-19 relief efforts including a Rs12 million donation to the Prime Minister's COVID Relief Fund. GO has also setup a Nursery Project at Renala Khurd, a contribution to Sarsabz Pakistan. Under this project, the company plants, and nurtures 100,000 saplings per year and works with various bodies to ensure that these are planted appropriately and taken care of to ensure that we fully realize their benefits. ■