

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Information

OMAN '93

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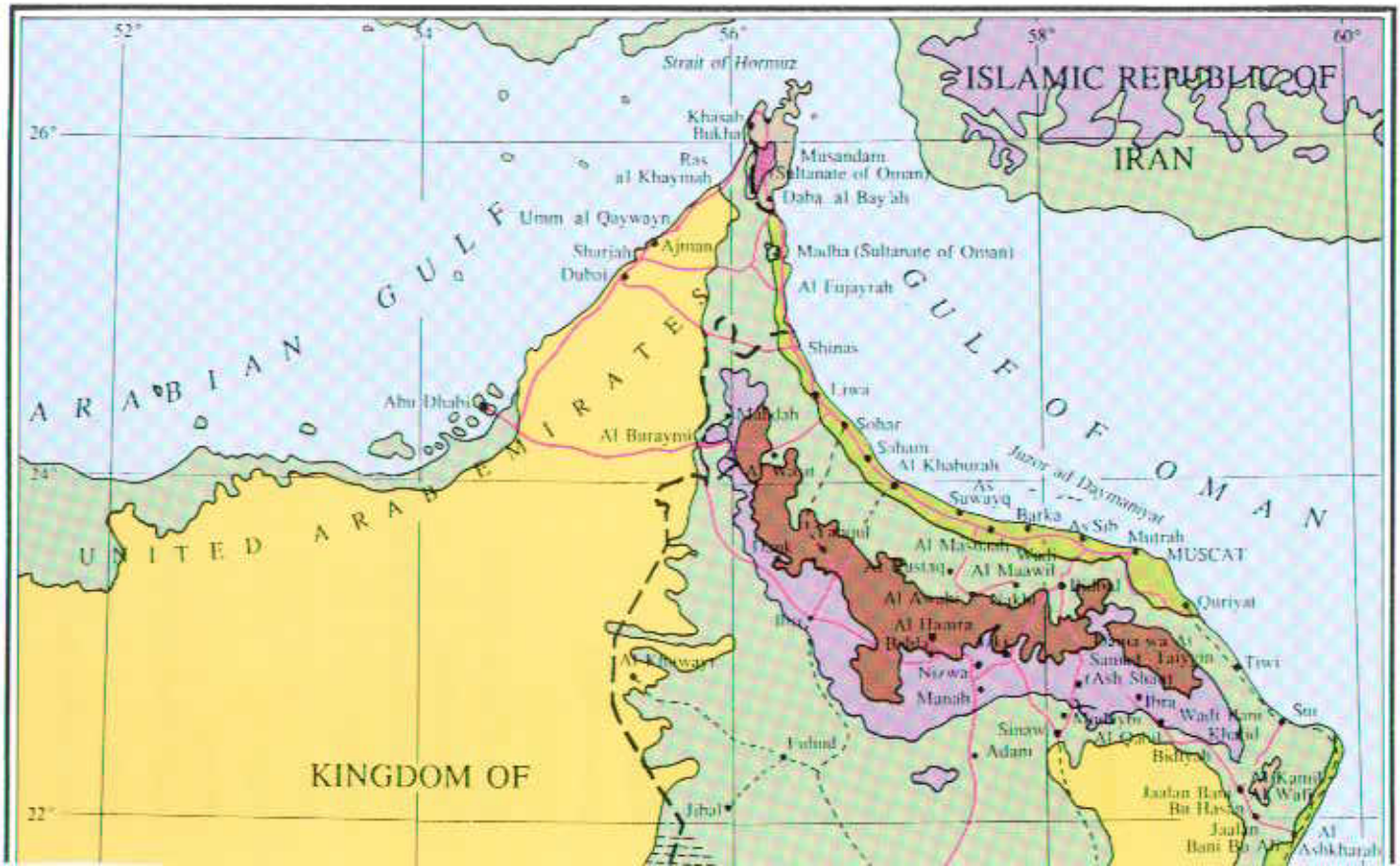


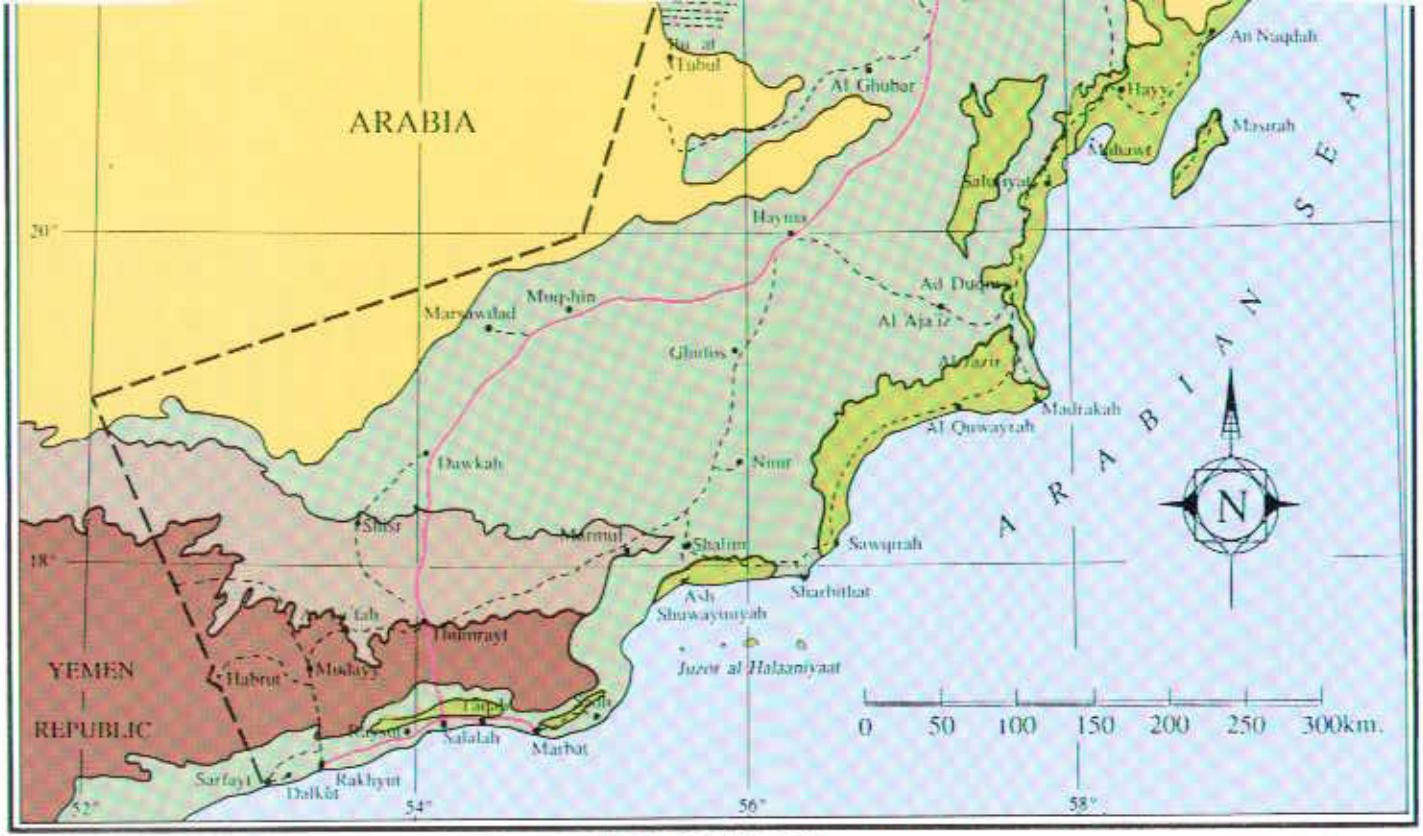
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al-Said

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SULTANATE OF OMAN





Produced by Ministry of Information in August 1993

Based on National Survey Authority ONI edition 4 dated February 1993

This map is not an authority on International Boundaries

Height in metres (over)

600
300
75
0
Sand Dunes
Salt Flats

Graded Road
Metalled Road
International Boundary

QABOOS BIN SAID AL SAID

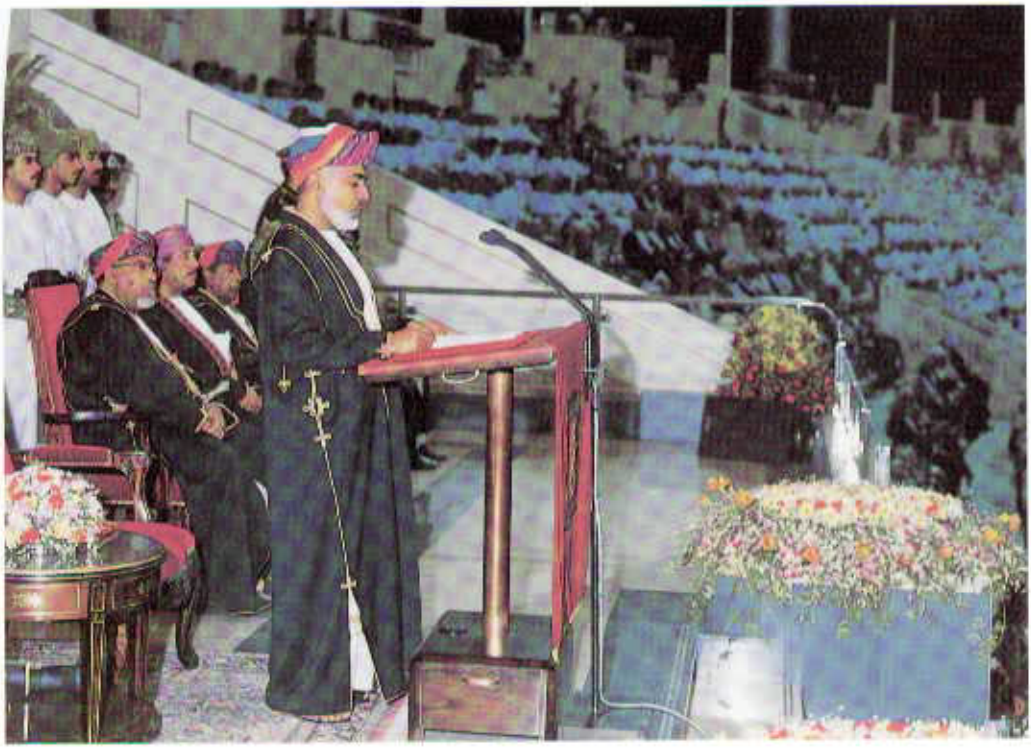
It is not possible for a first-time visitor to the Sultanate of Oman, arriving at Seeb International Airport in 1993, and driving to Muscat along the 35 kms of lighted dual-carriageway road, over fly-overs, past modern ministry buildings, schools, hospitals and commercial establishments, to visualise that only 23 years ago, none of this existed. Any Omani will tell him that this transformation is due to the inspiration and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

His Majesty was born in Salalah in Dhofar, the southern region of Oman, on 18th November 1940. He is eighth in the direct line of the Al Busaidi dynasty, which was founded in 1744 by Imam Ahmad bin Said, whose memory is still revered in Oman as a warrior and enlightened administrator who united the country after years of civil war. His Majesty's father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, died in 1972.

His Majesty spent his childhood, and received the early part of his education, in Salalah. At the age of 16, he was sent by his father to England, where he attended a private educational establishment before entering the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, as a cadet in 1960. His Majesty then served a tour of operational duty with a British infantry battalion, and on the staff in West Germany. Subsequently, he studied municipal government in England. Returning home on completion of a world tour, he spent the next six years in Salalah in accordance with his father's wishes. During those years, his time was occupied in studying Islam and the cultural and historical past of his country and people.

On the abdication of his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, and his own accession in July 1970, His Majesty flew from Salalah to Muscat to be greeted by his people. Among his first acts were the abolition of anachronistic restrictions on the lives and activities of the people, and he announced his intention in proceeding forthwith with the development of the country and providing his people with the health care, education and other social development they so sorely needed. He also called upon them to play their part in the work that lay ahead, and appealed to all Omanis abroad, wherever they might be, to return and do so. His words met with a spontaneous and overwhelming response, and Omanis came flocking back from many parts of the world.

The task that faced His Majesty was formidable. Little had been achieved in the three years since the oil revenues had



▲ His Majesty speaks to his people. National Day 1992.

started coming in. There was a legacy of more than a century of stagnation, with its accompanying lack of development, illiteracy, high mortality rate and isolation. It is not too much to say that Oman, at this time, was one of the most backward countries in the Arab World. Added to this, there was a bitter local war in the south, where, at the time of his accession, the military situation was grave.

Meanwhile, His Majesty gave high priority to the expansion of the Sultanate's international relations, which had been almost non-existent before 1970. This has been successfully achieved and diplomatic relations have been established with many countries throughout the world, regardless of their political complexions, His Majesty's policy being to extend the hand of friendship to all countries on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and good neighbourliness. International contacts through diplomatic relations and personal visits, are seen by His Majesty to be of great importance in the quest for world peace and understanding between peoples. These relations have currently been established with a total of 118 countries. His Majesty has paid state visits to brother countries of the GCC, Egypt, Jordan, the United Kingdom, United States, France, and Spain.



▲ His Majesty greets an elderly citizen.

▶ His Majesty (fourth from right, front row) leads his Ministers in prayer on the occasion of the Eid Al Adha in June this year.

▶ A memorable moment for a young boy.

His Majesty also pressed on with development planning. A list of priorities was carefully formulated: wasteful prestige projects were not considered. Advancement has been achieved through a series of Five-Year-Plans, of which the Fourth, current plan, commenced in 1991. The result has been that the major elements of the Sultanate's infrastructural programme have been virtually completed, and the emphasis has now shifted to the consolidation of the achievements that have been secured.

His Majesty has carefully combined traditional government with the inception of a modern state. The age-old system of Sultanic rule whereby individual Omanis had the right of access to the ruler – who was regarded as the father of his people – has been scrupulously preserved, alongside the evolvement of government by a cabinet of ministers with their supporting staffs and responsibilities. Thus, His Majesty attaches great importance to personal contact with his people, and this he achieves in three principal ways: one was the establishment of the State Consultative Council, with a wide popular representation of 55 members, including Government officials, at the first meeting of which, in 1981, he said "the Council shall also be a vital field for interaction and integration between the opinions of its members and full co-operation and integration between









obligations of the current stage of development".

This democratic process was carried a stage further in 1991, with the implementation of His Majesty's stated intention of establishing a Majlis Ash'Shura, a State advisory council wholly composed of representatives of the people, and with no government membership. The representatives are nominated by the people of the 59 wilayats (Governorates) throughout the country. In his opening address to the Majlis, His Majesty called upon its members to scrupulously appreciate the great responsibilities they had undertaken.

The Majlis Ash'Shura has already demonstrated its constructive role in representing the people of the Sultanate: as an example, in accordance with His Majesty's overall directives, this year the Majlis has held joint meetings with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the banks, and other concerned authorities, in order to prepare a comprehensive study towards strengthening the country's trade activities; His Excellency the Minister of Communications has held discussions with the Majlis Ash'Shura, on the invitation of the President, on his plans for developing the country's port services and reported to the Majlis on the progress that has been made; similarly, His Excellency the Minister of Posts, Telegraphs, and Telephones has submitted a detailed report to the Majlis, and had detailed discussions with it on his Ministry's extensive plans for the development of the Telecom services, while, at the same time, seeking to reduce charges to the public.

Secondly, His Majesty's annual tours of the Interior, when he is accompanied by many of his ministers, provide him with the opportunity to meet individual Omanis face to face, listen to their suggestions and discuss their problems, thus giving him a valuable means of assessing their needs. On these occasions, the appropriate minister is called in and the matter is dealt with immediately.

Also, every year on the national anniversary on 18th November, His Majesty delivers a major address to the nation when he reviews the achievements of the previous year and outlines future policies. In his National Day speech last year, His Majesty called upon his people to face the challenges of the future with hard work, effort, and enlightened thought. He particularly stressed that it was their duty to fit the youth of the country to take their rightful places in all walks of life, thus eliminating the need for expatriate assistance and creating increased working opportunities. The private sector must participate energetically with government in preparing Omanis as a productive force in the national interest.

◀ His Majesty receives a petition during his annual Meet-the- People Tour 1993.

▶ His Majesty decorates a member of the Sultan's Special Forces.





▲ His Majesty leads Oman's delegation at the AGCC Summit in Abu Dhabi, December 1992.

In his speeches and public statements to his people, His Majesty has also continued to place great emphasis and importance on diversifying Oman's economy away from total dependence on oil revenues, and on giving encouragement to the private sector. These oil revenues are forecast to continue for many years to come, but His Majesty has long recognised the need to broaden the country's economic base, not only as a precaution against possible future uncertainties of the oil market, but also as a means of providing more career opportunities for Oman's graduates and school leavers. His Majesty has also strongly emphasised the need for Omanisation, the replacement of foreign labour by Omani nationals, and considerable progress is being made in the furtherance of this policy.

The advent of the Gulf crisis in August 1990, brought unprecedented problems to every state in the region. Consistent with his policy of seeking to promote peaceful solutions to international dispputes, His Majesty supported all constructive efforts to bring about a just settlement of the crisis, essentially based upon the withdrawal of Iraq from its occupation of Kuwait, and support for the United Nations resolutions. At the same time, His Majesty provided a safe sanctuary for the many

Kuwaitis who fled to Oman. When the full outbreak of hostilities nevertheless ensued, His Majesty acted in complete solidarity with his brother leaders of the AGCC. In the aftermath of the war, His Majesty has sought to further the consolidation of peace in the region, and prevent any future threat to its stability, notably through his chairmanship of the AGCC Higher Committee for Security.

Both in his speeches, and in the active formulation and pursuit of his political policies, His Majesty has continually advocated the necessity for all countries of the world to work for better understanding and peaceful cooperation, both through support for the United Nations and other world bodies, and through their individual efforts.

An example of His Majesty's internationalist policies has been his conviction that the Sultanate, and the Arab World in general, should seek positive ways in which to develop mutually fruitful relations with Europe, particularly in the light of those events which have taken place there which offer the prospect of a new era of peaceful co-existence between the countries of that community. To this end, His Majesty took the lead in hosting an historic meeting in Muscat of foreign ministers from the AGCC states and the European Community – the first occasion when such a meeting has been held between the two communities.

In furtherance of this policy, the Sultanate became the first non-member country to hold a national exhibition at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and last year held a successful exhibition in Budapest. Also, last year, Oman participated in the international exposition at Seville, Expo '92, which was attended by thousands of visitors. His Majesty has taken a keen personal interest in all these enterprises.

Within the Gulf region, His Majesty this year successfully reached agreement with the Republic of Yemen on the border between the two countries. This followed an earlier similar accord with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Friendly relations with the United Arab Emirates have been further strengthened in the past year.

His Majesty is also deeply concerned with the protection of the environment. In a message to the international conference on the environment held in Brazil in June last year, he stressed this concern and called for energetic effort to be made by the world community to deal with this urgent problem. His Majesty has instituted an international award for the conservation of the environment, which he has presented to UNESCO for conferring on individuals or organisations that play a distinguished role in conserving the environment.

With the revival of the spirit and life of the Sultanate came a great interest in the country's origins. Encouraged by His Majesty, scholars started to investigate the remote past of this historic land where man first appeared after the last Ice Age, about 12,000 B.C. Though very little is known about the pre-Islamic past, many fascinating discoveries have been made. Archaeological sites dating back to the third millennium B.C. are believed to be contemporary with the region's Barbar culture and the great river cultures of Mesopotamia and Mohenjodaro. Evidence has been found of trade between Sumer, a land which existed before Babylon, and Oman.

Copper mining and smelting by the year 2,000 B.C. had become a sizeable industry, as revealed by excavations at locations in the Sohar area. The largest of these so far identified is at Lasail where, incidentally, copper mining has recently been resumed. It seems certain that the legendary country of 'Magan', referred to in Sumerian tablets as a source of copper, was Oman.

Frankincense, the aromatic gum used in ancient Egyptian and European rites, and traditionally offered by the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, was produced in Dhofar, in southern Oman. One of the most precious of the ancient world's commodities, it is another Omani product that is now being exploited as an essential base ingredient in a highly fashionable scent.

Although trading, farming and fishing settlements existed in Oman as far back as the fourth millennium B.C., there is no evidence of any developed urban civilisation during this early period. One of the reasons may be that there was no great river where a city society would normally be centred. Also, Oman's terrain divided the country into three very distinct sorts of culture.

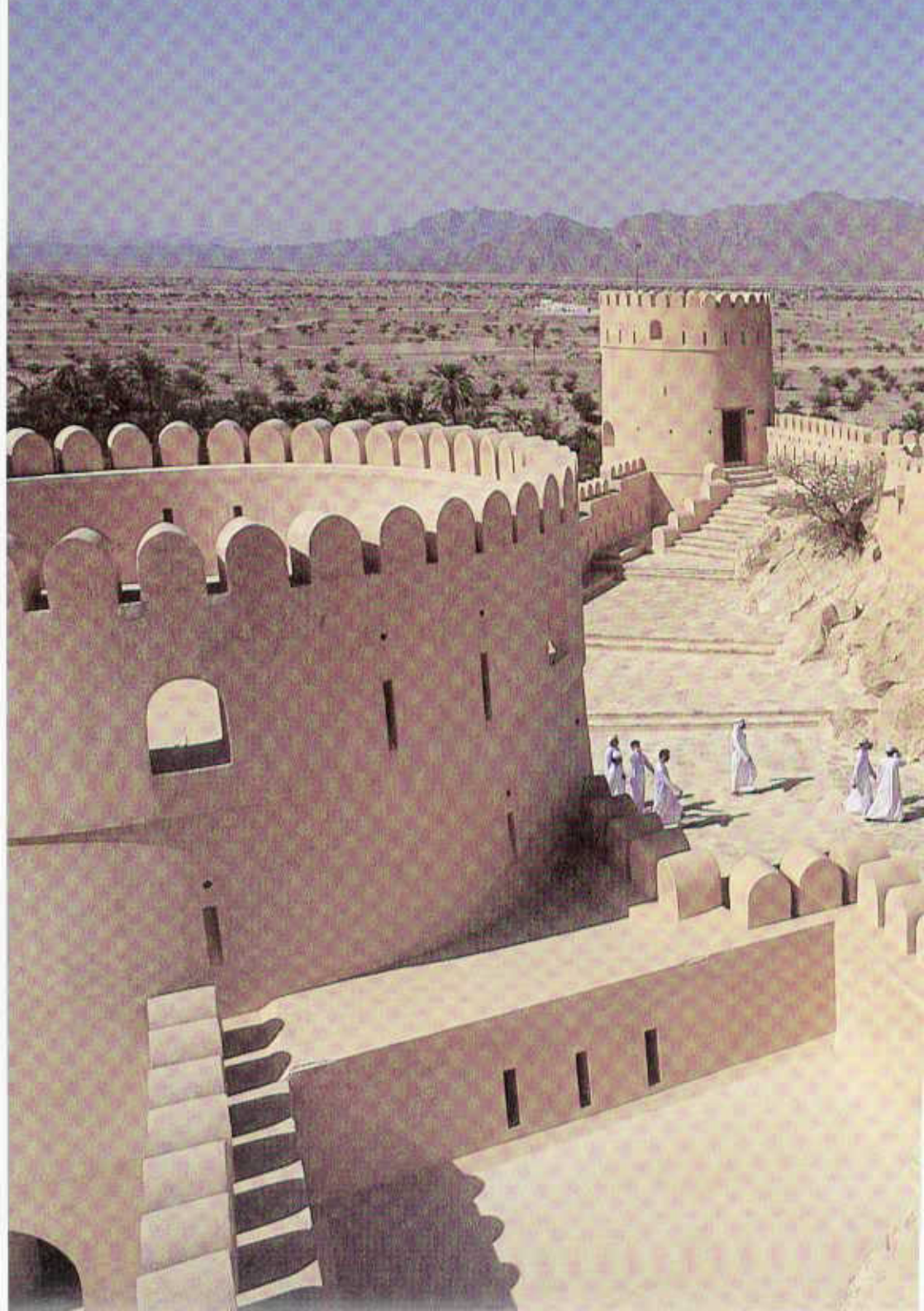
Within the rock of Oman's abrupt mountain spine existed self-sufficient, fiercely independent farming and pastoral communities that were already flourishing when the first Arab people came to Oman from southern Arabia some 2,000 years ago. In the foothills to the west and in the great deserts beyond, nomadic people led their own, very distinct life. Along the highly cultivated Batinah coast lived farmers, fishermen, merchants and sailors who were the people most exposed to the rest of the world by nature of their trades and geographical location. These ancient distinctions to some extent still exist, within the modern united Sultanate.

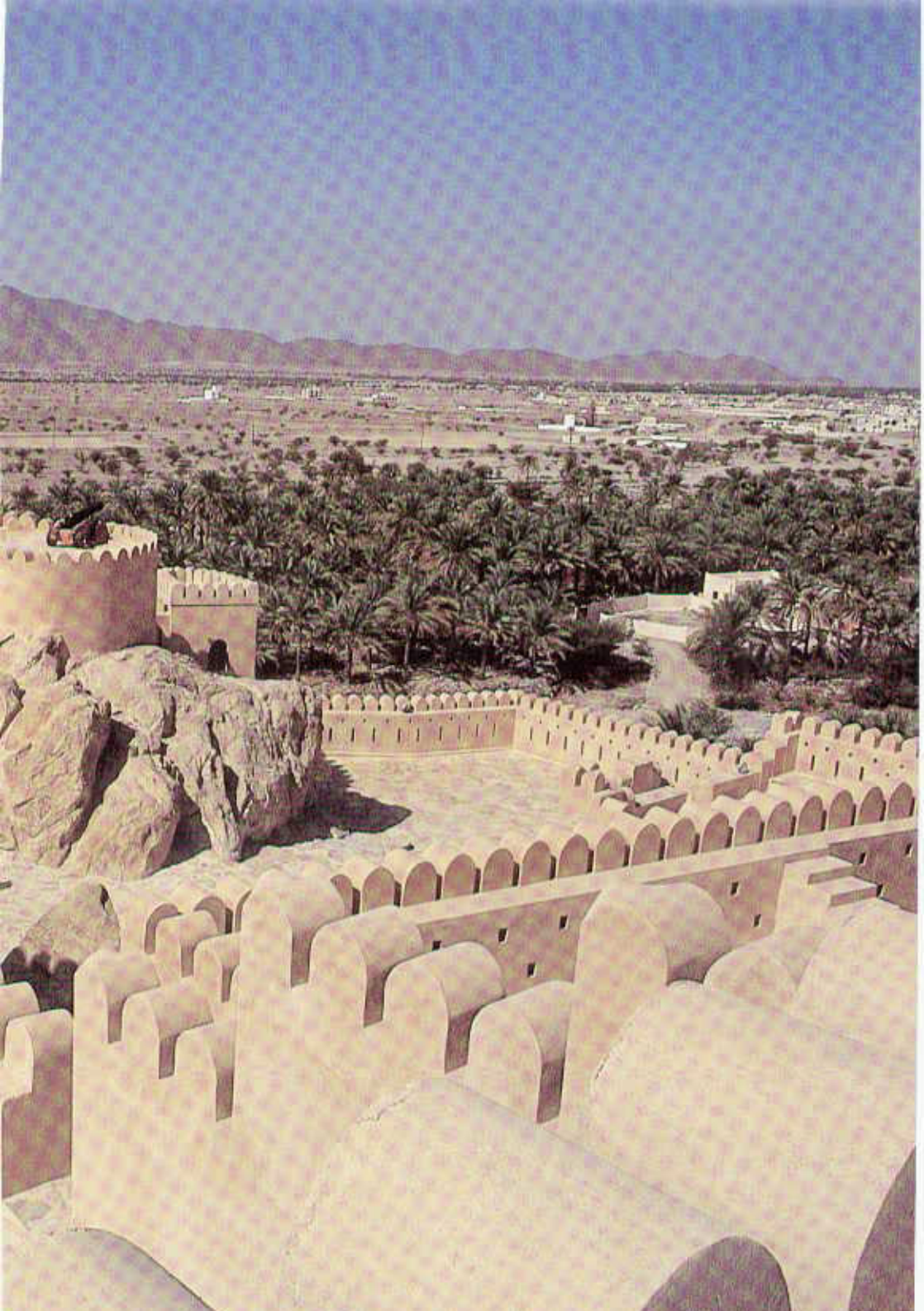
Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian empire, dominated the area in the fourth century B.C. With the consequent introduction of the famous falaj system of underground irrigation, the prosperity of the Batinah greatly increased.

Still in pre-Islamic times, tribes from the Yemen — legend has it that they came from the region of the famous Marib dam — trickled into

▶ **Since the eighth century, Omani sailors have been renowned for their wide-ranging voyages. Here, 'Sohar' – a replica of Sindbad's dhow – on display in Al Bustan, near Muscat. 'Sohar' made a return voyage to China in 1980**







is descended, entered Oman. Then Oman was under the rule of the Persians, but the Azd were able to regain Oman from the Persian rule and they spread Arab influence to all parts of the country. Islam came to Oman, and Abd and Jaifar, the sons of Julandi bin Al Mustakbar, embraced Islam.

From the seventh to the fifteenth centuries Oman's maritime trade flourished. Omani ships regularly called at ports in Persia, India, and Southeast Asia. As early as the eighth century, the fame of the great Omani seaman Abu Ubaida bin Abdulla bin al Qassim, who laid the foundations for scientific maritime navigation and made a 7,000-kilometre voyage from Oman to Canton (Guangzhou) in China, was widely known. As they travelled and traded, the Omanis spread the message of Islam as well as the Arabic language and culture.

In 1507, nine years after Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, finding a sea route to India — ironically being guided by the famous Omani navigator Ahmad bin Majid — a Portuguese fleet brutally sacked Muscat and within a year the Portuguese flag flew at several places along the coast.

Nearly a century and a half later, in 1650, Sultan bin Saif Al Yarubi reconquered Muscat. Then, having built up a powerful fleet for the war of liberation, he carried the war into the Indian Ocean, establishing a wealthy state with colonial possessions in East Africa.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan is an historically prominent Omani ruler who exercised power during the period 1807-1856. During this time Oman's influence reached Zanzibar and other parts of East Africa in addition to provinces in Persia and Baluchistan. Muscat became an important commercial centre and meeting point for the entire Gulf area. Sayyid Said concentrated his efforts on developing and improving his country's commerce and economy. It was Sayyid Said, incidentally, who introduced the clove to Zanzibar which he brought originally from Indonesia. These plantations provided a third of the Sultanate's budget. During his reign, Oman developed her relations with many parts of the world; a special envoy was sent to the United States in 1840 — the first Arab emissary to that country. Oman was thus the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. It had already concluded agreements and conventions with Great Britain, France, Holland and other countries.

Thereafter, however, there followed a period of decline and, at the time of the First World War, Oman's share of international commercial activities was very limited. Indeed, Oman remained largely isolated from the rest of the world until, in 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to power. His Majesty's reign was the beginning of a bright new era that renewed Oman's historic glories and opened a new chapter of development, prosperity, and social and economic progress.

◀ The Sultanate abounds with innumerable ancient forts, and other relics of its often turbulent past, when defence against invasion was vital. The fort at Nakhl.

▶ The beautiful mosque at Bahla. The exquisite carvings date from the 14th century.

▼ These 4,000 year-old tower tombs attest to Oman's long cultural history.





GEOGRAPHY

A map of the Arabian Peninsula rather resembles a boot with the toe pointing in a north-easterly direction. Oman, with 300,000 square kilometres of very varied, striking terrain, occupies the south-eastern part of the Peninsula, with a coastline which extends for 1,700 kilometres.

Dominated by an interior of jagged mountains simply called al-Hajr, 'the Rock,' the country is a magic tapestry of different terrains. The mountains, whose king at a soaring 3,075 metres is the terraced Jabal al-Akhdar ('The Green Mountain'), rise straight out of the coastal plains or the sea, or soar out of the gravel plateaux and shifting dunes in the Interior.

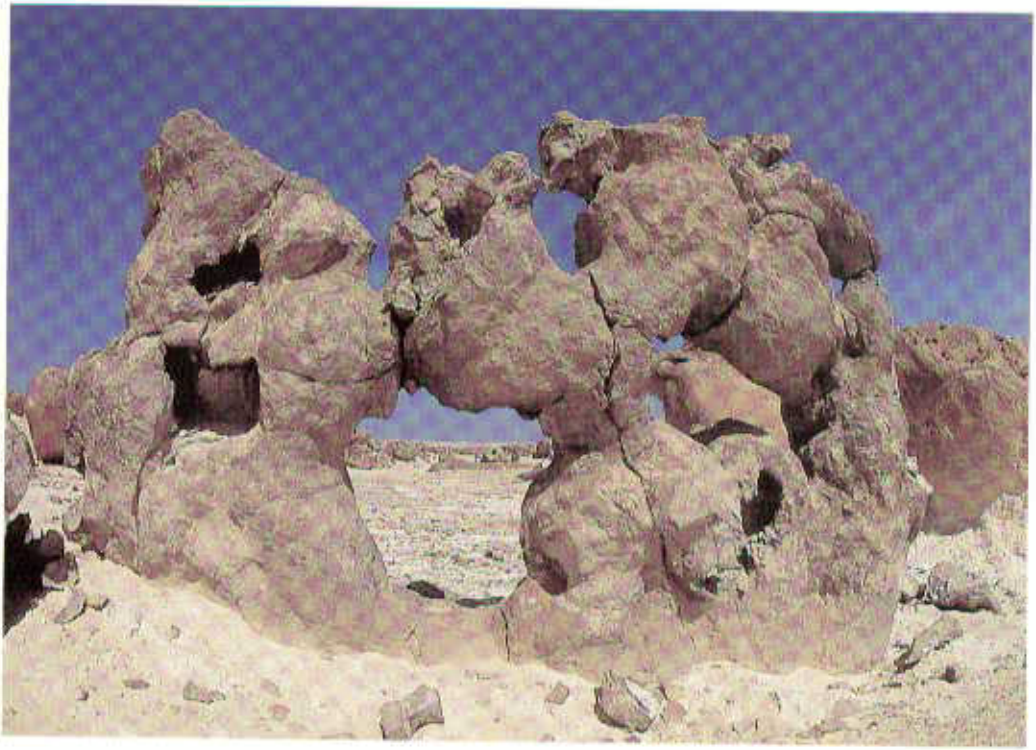
The country ranges from the fjord-like barren majesty of the Musandam Peninsula that plunges into the Strait of Hormuz in the north, to the fertile Batinah plain that inclines south-east towards Muscat, from the vast, sandy edge of the Rub' al-Khali (The Empty Quarter) through the mountains to the lush, monsoon-based near-tropical Salalah plain in the south.

To the west Oman borders Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates; to the south, Republic of Yemen; to the north the Strait of Hormuz; and to the east the Arabian Sea.

▶ The famed Wahiba Sands meet the Arabian Sea.

▶ Beautiful Dhofar.

▼ A curious rock formation at Duqm







Geographically, Oman falls into a number of distinct areas.

Muscat Area

The most important of this densely populated area are the lovely old capital of Muscat sheltered in its picturesque bay; the larger modern port of Muttrah which is surrounded by the old residential and trading town; and modern, busy Ruwi which is both a commercial centre and residential extension of the capital. Beyond this again, residential satellite townships and industrial estates have been spreading at a fast pace, changing the area beyond recognition for someone who has not visited Oman for a few years. Quriyat, which is situated on the coast midway between Muscat and Sur, is one of the major towns in this area.

Batinah Plain

The Batinah runs from the frontier with the UAE for a distance of some 270 kilometres south-east almost to Muscat. It is situated between the coast and the Western Hajar, varying from 10 to 30 kilometres in width. Cultivation is limited to a narrow coastal strip, seldom wider than three kilometres. The Batinah is one of the most populous areas of Oman; the main towns are: Barka, Masana'a, Suwaiq, Khabura, Saham, Sohar, Liwa and Shinas.

Western Hajr ('Rock') Mountains

Like the Batinah Plain, this mountain range runs parallel to the

▼ Night falls on mountains and sea.



coast from the United Arab Emirates in the north to wadi Mu'awal in the south. The highest peaks, up to 3,075 metres, lie to the south-east at Jabal al-Akhdar. There are many settlements on the Western Hajar, the most important being Rustaq, Awabi, Mu'awal and Nakhl.

The Interior (Al Joof)

This is the central plateau that slopes from the northern base of Jabal al-Akhdar southwards to the desert. It is bounded on the west by Dhahira and on the east by Sharqiya. The area has four main valleys: Anda'm, Halfein, Bahla and Samail. The Halfein and Samail valleys together form a natural break in the Western Hajar mountain range providing the traditional route between Muscat and the Interior. It is also one of the most populous areas of Oman, its main towns being: Nizwa, Bahla, Samail, Izki, Manah, Bidbid and Adam.

Dhahira Area

This is a semi-desert plain, sloping from the southern flanks of the Western Hajar into the Rub' al-Khali (Empty Quarter). It is bordered to the north by Yarfqul, Jau and Buraimi and to the south it is divided from Oman proper by Jabal al Koor (Deyar al Durooa) and from the east by Deyar Bani Hinah. The major settlements are on two principal wadis, Wadi Dank and Wadi al-Ain, the towns being Dank, Ibri and Yanqal. The northern extension of the plain of Dhahira is known as Jau. In this small area between the border of the United Arab Emirates and the Western Hajar, the population is concentrated around the irrigated date cultivation of the Buraimi oasis.

▼ Terraced cultivation on the Jebel Akhdar (the Green Mountain).

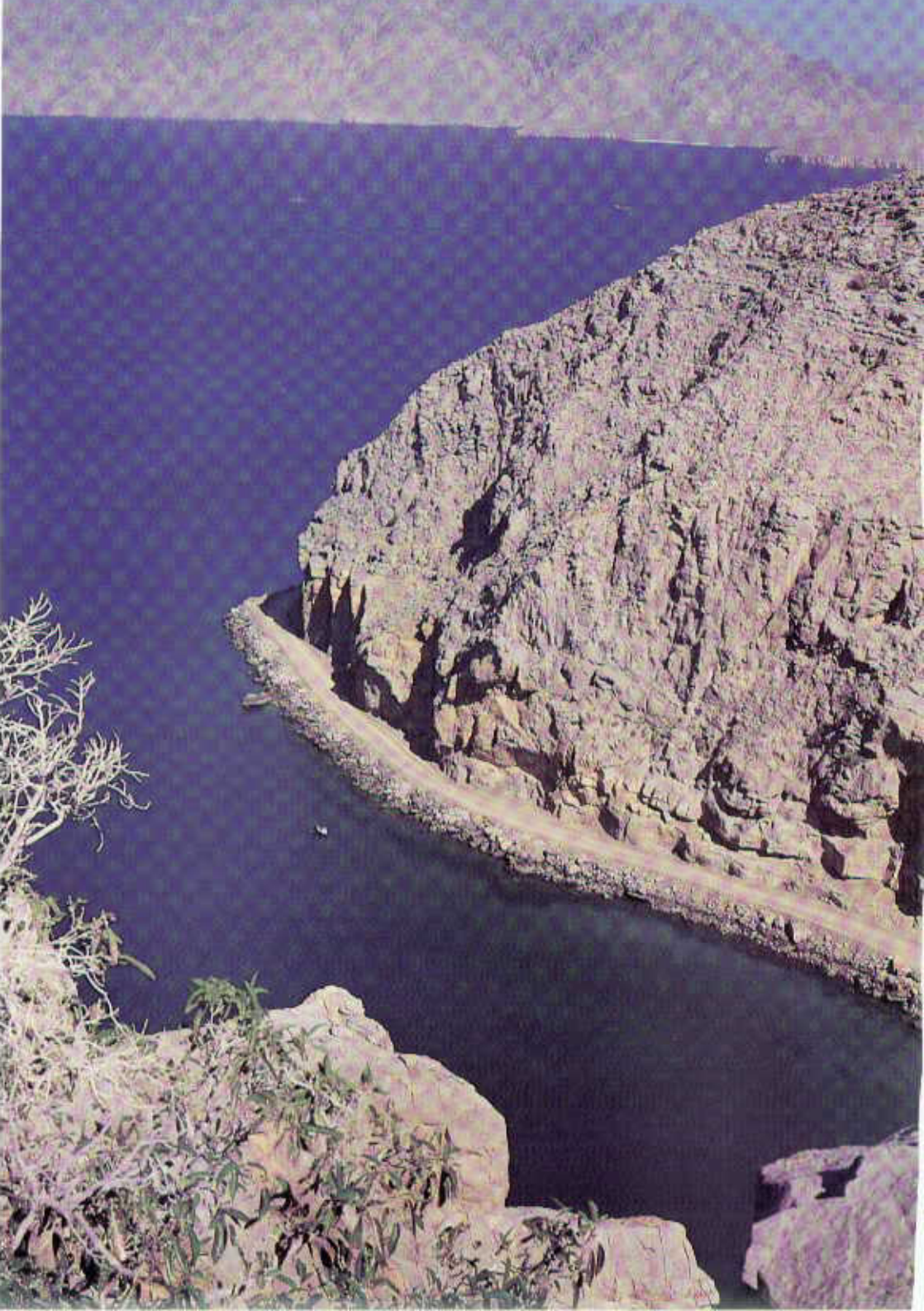


Sharqiya Area

The Sharqiyah is an area of sandy plains and valleys lying on the inland side of the Eastern Hajar. It is bordered to the south-east by the district of Jaalan and to the south by the Wahiba Sands. The Jaalan is a sandy plain forming the southern extension of the Sharqiyah and extending to the Arabian Sea. It is bordered on the northern side by the Eastern Hajar and in the south by the Wahiba Sands. The main towns are Sur, Al Qabil, Ibra, Mudairib, Samad, Mudaibi, Sinaw, Wadi Beni Khalid, Al Kamil, Al Wafi, Bilad Bani bu Hassan, Bilad Bani bu Ali, Al Ashkara and Ras Al Hadd.

Barr-al-Hekman

This is an area of approximately 650 square kilometres. Masirah Island is situated to the east, separated by a channel of 14 kilometres. The area of the Barr consists of salt flats and, on



occasion, the sea covers as much as five kilometres of the land area. Most of the population live on the island of Mahawt and are fishermen.

Southern Region (Dhofar)

The Southern Region of Oman accounts for a third of the country's total area. The coastal plain, extending from Raysut in the west past Salalah, is nowhere wider than about eight kilometres, but the fertile alluvial soil is well watered between June and September by the monsoon. The rains also irrigate the tree-dotted hills that rise 1,500 metres above the coastal plain. To the north-west, the region's border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia runs through the Empty Quarter. The main towns and villages here are: Salalah, Taqa, Mirbat, Sudh, Thumrait, Rakhyout, Dalqut, Shaleem and Maqshin.

The Musandam

Separated from the rest of Oman by part of the United Arab Emirates, this is the northernmost part of the Sultanate. Its rugged mountains rise up to 1,800 metres above sea level and the coast which juts into the Straight of Hormuz, has a spectacular, fjord-like look. The main towns are: Khasab, Bayah, Mudha, Bukha, Kumzar and Lima.

Regions

The Sultanate is divided into 59 wilayats (regions), in each of which the Government is represented by a wali (governor). Muscat has its own governor with assistants in Muttrah, Seeb and Baushar, as does the Musandam with assistants in Khasab, Bayah and Bukha. Dhofar also has its own governor with assistants.

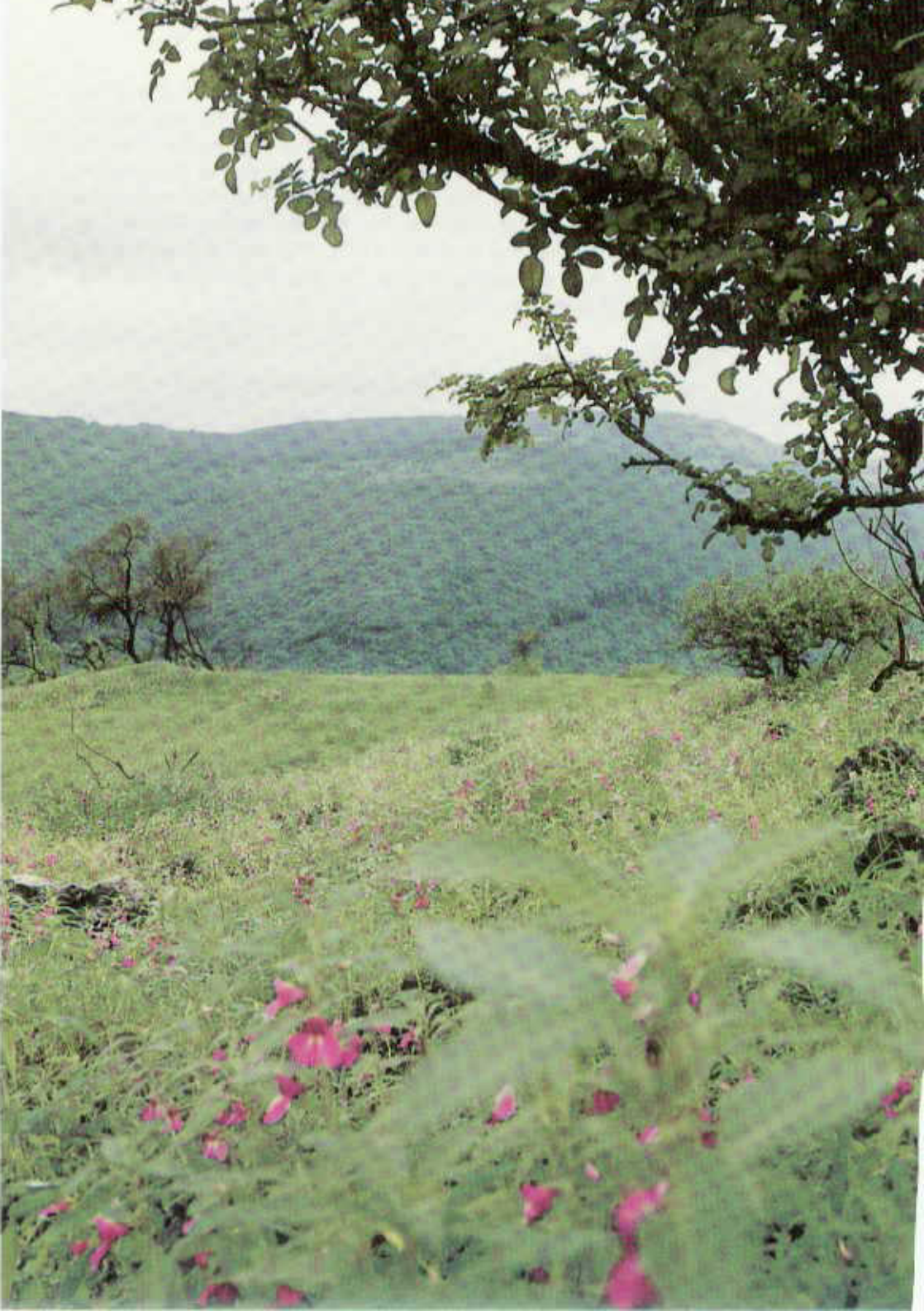
Climate

The climate varies from region to region. In the coastal areas it is hot and humid in summer. In the Interior it is hot and dry with the exception of some higher locations where it is temperate all year round. In the southern region, the climate is more benign. The country's rainfall is generally low and irregular, although heavy local rains are sometimes experienced, with the exception of the southern region where heavy monsoon rains regularly occur between June and September.

Population

The crosscurrents of history with its migrations and invasions have swept Oman since time immemorial, but its people have remained of basically Arab origin.Omani society consists of four basic categories: the people of the sea who live by fishing, seafaring and trading; the agriculturalists of the Batinah coast and the South, and those of the Interior who employ the aflaj system of irrigation; the mountain people of Dhofar and the Musandam; and the Bedouin of the desert areas. The population is estimated at 2 million.

◀ The road to Bukha skirts the massive mountains of Musandam.



GOVERNMENT

The administrative system of the State under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said consists of the Diwan of the Royal Court headed by H.E. Sayyid Saif bin Hamad bin Saud, Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court, the Ministry of Palace Office Affairs headed by H.E. General Ali bin Majid al Ma'amari, the Cabinet of Ministers and Secretariat of the Cabinet, the Specialised Councils, Governorate of Muscat and the Majlis Ash'shura.

The Cabinet of Ministers is the highest executive authority, deriving its power from His Majesty the Sultan to whom it is collectively responsible.

Laws and decrees are authorised by His Majesty. International treaties, agreements and charters signed or approved by His Majesty become law from the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.

The Cabinet of Ministers consists of:

His Highness Sayyid Thuwaini bin Shihab Al Said,
Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.
His Highness Sayyid Fahr bin Taimour Al Said,
Deputy Prime Minister for Security and Defence.
His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood Al Said,
Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs.
His Excellency Qais bin Abdul Munim Al Zawawi,
Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs.
His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said
Minister of National Heritage and Culture.
His Excellency Said bin Ahmed Al Shanfari,
Minister of Petroleum and Minerals.
His Excellency Hamoud bin Abdullah Al Harthi,
Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.
His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh Al Manthri,
Minister of Education,
Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University.
His Excellency Sayyid Badr bin Sa'oud bin Hareb,
Minister of the Interior.
His Excellency Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas,
Minister of Information.
His Excellency Sayyid Al Mutassim bin Hamoud Al Busaidi,
Minister of State and Governor of Muscat.
His Excellency Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah,
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.
His Excellency Salim bin Abdullah Al Ghazali,
Minister of Communications.

◀ Flowers bloom in profusion during the annual monsoon.



▲ His Majesty presides over a meeting of the Council of Ministers.

His Excellency Ahmed bin Suwaidan Al Balushi,
Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones.
His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali Al Qatabi,
Minister of Electricity and Water.
His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Zaher Al Hinai,
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.
His Excellency Sayyid Mussallam bin Ali Al Busaidi,
Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar.
His Excellency Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi Macki,
Minister of Civil Service.
His Excellency Malik bin Suleiman Al Ma'amari,
Minister of Housing.
His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Mohammed bin Moosa,
Minister of Health.
His Excellency Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said,
Secretary to the Cabinet.
His Excellency Sheikh Amer bin Shuwain Al Hosni,
Minister of Regional Municipalities and Environment.
His Excellency Hamed bin Said Al Oufi,
Minister of Water Resources.



His Excellency Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Salim Al Esai, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour

The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers is responsible for the smooth functioning of the Government machinery. One of its functions is to ensure that the Cabinet decisions are implemented within the given time-frame and budget.

The Governorate of Muscat is responsible for the administration of the city.

For easier administration of Oman's large land area and scattered population centres, the country has been divided into 59 Wilayats (regions) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. At the head of each Wilayat is a Wali (governor).

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs is responsible for:

(a) Streamlining procedures and systems for legislation, futwa for interpretation of the laws and contracts.

(b) Preparing and publishing volumes of laws, issued annually.

(c) Preparing and publishing the Official Gazette.

(d) Advising ministries on legal matters and drafting new legislation.



▲ His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with members of the Majlis Ash'Shura at their first session at the Al Alam Palace in Muscat.

Majlis Ash'Shura

In the course of his National Day address to the Nation in November 1990, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos announced that a Majlis Ash'Shura was to replace the State Consultative Council, originally consisting of 35 nominated members, and subsequently increased to 55 members. The main difference was to be that whereas the State Consultative Council was a nominated body, the Majlis Ash'Shura was to be wholly elected with no Government members. Each wilayat, of which there was 59 throughout the country, now sends one elected member to the Majlis. The term of membership is for three calendar years, and may be renewable for another term or more according to the respective procedures. The President of the Majlis is appointed by Royal Decree.

Each wilayat nominates three citizens as candidates for election to the Majlis. The nominations are administered by a committee consisting of respected citizens of experience and ability in the wilayat. One of the three nominees is then selected for membership of the Majlis.

Among the principal duties of the Majlis is the reviewing of all social and economic draft laws, prepared by Ministries, before



their enactment. The Majlis also participates in setting up development plans, and in the following up of their execution within the general strategy framework of the State, and in accordance with the availability of funds. It also participates in the work to conserve the environment.

The Council of Ministers arranges two annual meetings attended by the President and Bureau Members of the Majlis to follow up the coordination procedures between the Government and the Majlis. The Ministers of public service Ministries submit annual data reports in respect of their Ministries' performance, to the Majlis, whose President submits a report of its activities to His Majesty the Sultan.

Article I

It shall have an independent administrative and financial status and shall be located in Muscat.

Article II

The Council shall have 59 members, each representing a Wilayat of the Sultanate. The selection of the members is to be carried out according to the following procedure :-



▲ The people greet His Majesty with flowers during his annual tour.

A Every Wilayat to nominate three citizens, resident in the Wilayat. The nomination is carried out by a Committee consisting of dignitaries of the Wilayat and people of valued opinion and experience.

B One of the three nominees of each Wilayat is to be selected as a member of the Council.

C A Royal Decree will be issued naming the selected members.

Article III

The period of membership to the Council is three years which can be renewed for another term or more.

Article IV

A Royal Decree will be issued naming the President of the Council.

Article V

The Council members shall select two deputies for the President from among the members of the Council. This will be done during the first session.

Article VI

The office of the Council will include the President, his two deputies and five members of the Council to be selected by the Council during the first session.

Article VII

The Council shall have a Secretariat-General consisting of the Secretary-General and a number of assistant secretaries and employees.

The Secretary-General is to be appointed by a decision from the Council's office on a recommendation by the President.

The Secretary-General is to be granted the financial grade of an Under-Secretary.

Article VIII

Ash'shura Council shall assist the Government in all matters concerning the Omani Society and it shall suggest the means of reinforcing the basic structures and the original values of Omani society.

Article IX

In order to achieve its goals, the Council shall have the following powers :-

1. Review of draft legislation on economic and social matters which is prepared by the Ministries before being issued.
2. Presents its proposals on what it regards as necessary as to the development of economic and social laws that are executed in the Sultanate.
3. Providing opinion and proposals on general policies presented to it by the Government.
4. Participation in the preparation of the Country's development plans, the following up of their implementation in the context of the State's general strategy and according to its available potentialities.
5. Participation in reinforcing the citizens' awareness of the development objectives, priorities and the efforts that are exerted to carry them out. This will reinforce the link between the citizens and the Government.
6. Participation in the efforts for the conservation of the environment and its protection from pollution.
7. The study of matters related to public services and utilities and presentation of suggestions on how to develop them.
8. Studying obstacles that face the economic sector and the presentation of appropriate suggestions aimed at overcoming those obstacles.

thinks should be presented to the Council.

Article X

The Council of Ministers shall devote two meetings a year to be attended by the President and the members of the Council's office. The objective is to follow up means of coordination between the Government and the Council in the Public interest.

Article XI

The Public Service Ministers shall submit annual statements on the achievements and plans of their Ministries and shall answer questions by the Council members on these plans.

The Council has the right to call any of the Public Service Ministers to discuss matters related to the duties of their Ministries whenever this is required.

Article XII

The Government Ministries and organisations and Public Authorities shall cooperate with the Ash'shura Council so as to facilitate its mission. They shall submit to the Council any statements or information regarding matters within the concern of the Council.

Article XIII

The Council shall refer to its concerned committees whatever applications or proposals are received from citizens on general issues and then seek the Government's opinion.

The citizen shall be entitled to receive an answer to his/her request.

Article XIV

The President of the Council shall submit to His Majesty the Sultan the results of the Council's activity once a year.

Issued on 12 November 1991

Specialised Councils

The Specialised Councils were set up by Royal Decree. They are under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan and comprise some members of the Cabinet of Ministers and other officials. In addition, some of the Specialised Councils include prominent members of the community.

Some of these Councils are:

The Development Council which plans objectives and general policies for economic development, supervises projects and procedures which fall within the overall State Plan, and coordinates the activities of the different Ministries and Government departments in the execution of the current development plan.

The Financial Affairs Council which applies the financial policy of the State and draws up the national budget. Among other matters it studies the financial allocations for economic development projects.

Other Councils are:

The Sultan Qaboos University Council which is responsible for maintaining the standard of the University, and the establishment of new colleges, sections or centres. The Council is chaired by H.H. Sayyid Fahad bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs.

The Civil Service Council draws up general policies relating to the Civil Service. Among its other responsibilities is examination of Civil Service problems and finding solutions to them, taking into consideration public interests. The Council is chaired by

▼ A debate in the Majlis.



the Royal Court.

Tender Board

In accordance with directions by His Majesty the Sultan, a Tender Board was established by Royal Decree in 1973, with subsequent promulgation of the Law and Regulations for Tenders, and amendments. The purpose of the Board is to ensure the fair and equitable allocation of contracts.

The Tender Board Comprises :

His Excellency the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Development Planning Affairs, as Chairman.

His Excellency the Minister of Housing, as Deputy Chairman.

His Excellency the Minister of Electricity and Water, as Deputy Chairman.

In addition to whom there are the following Members:

His Excellency the Minister of Regional Municipalities and the Environment.

His Excellency the Minister of Civil Service.

His Excellency the Undersecretary for Financial Affairs.

His Excellency the Undersecretary for Communications.

His Excellency the Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry.

The Board is assisted in discharging its responsibilities by an Executive Secretariat that carries out studies and prepares reports on all matters related to the Board's operations. The Secretariat forms an active link between the Board and the various Government authorities that issue their tenders via the Board.

The Board's Powers and Prerogatives

The Board is responsible for all Government tenders, whether these involve assignments, purchases of items or project implementation, with the exception of contracts and projects related to Defence installations or those covered by a special stipulation in the Law or Regulations for Tenders. In addition, the Board follows up developments in the implementation of projects from their inception until their completion. This is made possible by the fact that Ministries and Government organisations regularly keep the Board informed of all problems associated with the projects' implementation. Consequently, the Board takes effective action to solve these problems by studying them and finding appropriate solutions to them in coordination with the authorities on whose behalf the projects are being carried out. When necessary, the Board also issues all circulars and directives required for regulating the progress of the work in hand.

In exercising its duties the Board complies with established and well-studied procedures. These enable it to fulfil its role in the best possible manner.

These procedures may be summarised as follows:

Before putting any project out to general tender the Board thoroughly checks the relevant documents and contracts – in co-ordination with the Government body concerned – to ensure that they are acceptable. In doing so it has the right to ask for assistance from experts, who may be employees of the State or other Omani or non-Omani technical personnel, either within the Sultanate or abroad. This stage of operation is of particular importance; a thorough check of the documents prior to putting the project out to tender assists in the elimination of any problems that might otherwise occur after the issue of the invitation to tender, or while the project is being implemented. This procedure saves considerable time and effort and ensures a high standard of work. As a result great savings are made on costs and the project is implemented in the required manner.

The Board also forms negotiating committees in cases where the nature of the work involved is such that the necessary procedures have to be completed through negotiation. The Tender Law stipulates that these committees should be chaired by one of the Deputy Chairmen, and should also include the Undersecretary for Financial Affairs and a representative from the Ministry on whose behalf the project is being carried out. The committees put their recommendations before the Board so that the appropriate decision may be made.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Undoubtedly the most important event in the field of foreign affairs in 1992 was the signing of a definitive agreement with the Yemen Republic specifying in detail the frontier between the two States. The signed document had two annexes, one of which governs regulations on the use of water resources and pasture lands in the border region in accordance with the prevailing tribal customs among the people in the area. This accord follows a similar agreement signed with Saudi Arabia in 1991 defining the hitherto undelineated borders between the two countries. Thus, all border problems between the Sultanate and its neighbours have now been settled amicably.

The Sultanate of Oman has a long history of contacts and relations with countries outside the Arab world going back many centuries. Between the seventh and fifteenth centuries it had a flourishing maritime trade with China and the Indian sub-continent and in later years with East Africa. The Sultanate was the first Arab country to establish contact with the United States of America in the first half of the nineteenth century, by which time it already had a treaty relationship with the United Kingdom and relations with France. However, with the death of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (Said the Great) in 1856, and the separation of the East Africa possessions from Oman, the country fell into a state of isolation for 100 years until 1970, when it re-emerged onto the international scene following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

It was a formidable task to make the Sultanate's presence known and felt in international circles. From the start, His Majesty defined certain principles which have been consistently followed during the past twenty-three years. These principles include good neighbourliness and non-intervention in others' internal affairs, respect for international laws and traditions, strengthening cooperation between the States of the Gulf, fortifying relations with other Arab countries, as well as supporting issues of interest in the Arab world, enhancing Islamic cooperation, supporting just African causes, exploring all avenues for increased cooperation with the European Community and other international bodies, and following a policy of non-alignment and establishing cordial relations with all friendly countries.

The Sultanate's relations with the Western Nations stretch back over 200 years, and Oman today attaches great importance to them, which is exemplified by its hosting of the Gulf-European Dialogue in 1990. This represented the first ministerial contact between the foreign ministers of the six Arab Gulf States and the European Community. Oman strongly supported this historic event in a spirit of cooperation which reflected the deep friendship linking the two communities, whose continuous relationship goes back over such a long period of time. In addition to the recent visit of President Mitterrand of France,



▲ His Majesty receives a message from the President of the People's Republic of China.

there have been visits from the President of Portugal and the Prince of Wales, as well as the foreign ministers of Russia and Ireland and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Under His Majesty's direction, energetic efforts have successfully been made to secure Oman's proper place among the nations of the world, and the Sultanate has made effective contributions towards world issues, helping to solve international problems and working for world peace and security.

Oman joined the Arab League on 29th September 1971 and the United Nations on 7th October of the same year. In 1972 the Sultanate joined the Islamic Conference Organisation and in 1973 became a member of the Non-Aligned Group. The Sultanate has also joined many specialised international organisations (see list at the end of this chapter).

In December 1989 the Sultanate played host to the Heads of State of the Gulf community, when the 10th Summit of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council was held in Muscat. The Summit marked a new phase: it was a true expression of the nature of relations between the Gulf States and reflected their endeavours to expand their goals, serve the common objectives and interests of the single Gulf family and provide a brighter future for its people.

The Sultanate has always maintained good relations with Iran in





▲ His Majesty greets the Vice-President of the Republic of Yemen.

◀ President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt is welcomed by His Majesty.

accordance with its policy of good neighbourliness, and made great efforts to bring about a rapprochement between Iran and certain of the Gulf States. In 1990 Muscat was the venue for a meeting between the foreign ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result, the two countries agreed to resume diplomatic relations following a three-year break. Currently, in the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over the ownership of the Greater and Lesser Tumb Islands and Abu Musa, the Sultanate supports the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates.

The 13th Summit of the AGCC leaders was held in Abu Dhabi in December last year. The declaration at the conclusion of the meeting included a categoric rejection of the Iranian occupation of the Tumb Islands and Abu Musa, and an urgent call to the international community of nations to take immediate steps to put an end to the acts of genocide perpetrated against the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to send prompt humanitarian relief to them.

The Palestine question is still the main focus of conflict in the Middle East. Oman has given and continues to give total support to the Palestinian peoples' right to decide their own future in their own land and establish their own independent state. Oman also supports all sincere efforts aimed at restoring Lebanon's well-being, security and stability.



▲ Delegates from the OPEC and IPEC States are received by His Majesty at Bait Al Barka.

In November 1991 the Omani Diplomatic Institute was opened on the premises of the Foreign Ministry. The aim of the new Institute is to upgrade Omani diplomatic standards. Studies at the Institute centre on topics relating to political affairs, international relations, crisis management, economy, and international and diplomatic law. Studies also include consular affairs and protocol. The history of Oman and its civilization are also included.

Countries with which the Sultanate of Oman has diplomatic relations

Albania, Republic of
Algeria, Democratic and Popular Republic of
Argentina, Republic of
Armenia, Republic of
Australia, Commonwealth of
Austria, Republic of
Azerbaijan, Republic of
Bahrain, State of
Bangladesh, People's Republic of
Belarus, Republic of
Belgium, Kingdom of



Bolivia, Republic of
Brazil, Federative Republic of
Brunei, Darussalam State of
Bulgaria, Republic of
Burkina Faso
Burundi, Republic of
Canada
Chad, Republic of
Chile, Republic of
China, People's Republic of
Colombia, Republic of
Comoros, Federal Islamic Republic of the
Cyprus, Republic of
Denmark, Kingdom of
Djibouti, Republic of
Ecuador, Republic of
Egypt, Arab Republic of
Estonia, Republic of
Finland, Republic of
France, Republic of
Gabon, Republic of
Gambia, Republic of

Ghana, Republic of
Greece, Hellenic Republic of
Guinea, Republic of
Guinea-Bissau, Republic of
Hungary, Republic of
Iceland, Republic of
India, Republic of
Indonesia, Republic of
Iran, Islamic Republic of
Iraq, Republic of
Ireland, Republic of
Italy, Republic of
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of
Kazakhastan, Republic of
Kenya, Republic of
Korea North, Democratic People's Republic of
Korea South, Republic of
Kuwait, State of
Kyrgyzstan, Republic of
Latvia, Republic of
Lebanon, Republic of
Lithuania, Republic of
Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of
Malaysia
Maldives, Republic of
Mali, Republic of
Malta, Republic of
Mauritania, Islamic Republic of
Mauritius
Mexico, United States of
Moldova, Republic of
Mongolia, People's Republic of
Morocco, Kingdom of
Mozambique, Republic of
Nepal, Kingdom of
Netherlands, Kingdom of the
New Zealand
Nicaragua, Republic of
Niger, Republic of
Nigeria, Federal Republic of
Norway, Kingdom of
Pakistan, Islamic Republic of

Peru, Republic of
Philippines, Republic of the
Poland, Republic of
Portugal, Republic of
Qatar, State of
Romania
Russia Federation
Rwanda, Republic of
Saint Lucia
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
Senegal, Republic of
Seychelles, Republic of
Sierra Leone, Republic of
Singapore, Republic of
Somalia, Democratic Republic of
Spain
Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of
Sudan, Republic of the
Sweden, Kingdom of
Switzerland, Confederation of
Syria, Arab Republic of
Tajikistan, Republic of
Tanzania, United Republic of
Thailand, Kingdom of
Tunisia, Republic of
Turkey, Republic of
Turkmenistan
Uganda, Republic of
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay, Republic of
Uzbekistan, Republic of
Vietnam, Socialist Republic of
Yemen, Republic of
Zaire, Republic of
Zambia, Republic of
Zimbabwe, Republic of
United Nations' offices in the Sultanate:
WHO – World Health Organization
UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Arab Centre for Educational Research	1.12.73
Higher Education Council	1.12.73
Gulf International Bank	1.2.76
Gulf Organisation for Industrial Investment	20.10.76
Gulf States' Health Ministers' Council	1976
Gulf States' Labour and Social Affairs Ministers' Council Continuity Office	6.2.78
Gulf Air	4.6.78
Arab Education Office for the Gulf States	1.12.79
Gulf Television Board	10.4.80
Arab Gulf University	16.8.80
Arab Gulf Co-operation Council	25.5.81
Gulf Region Permanent Communications Committee	30.5.81
Arab Gulf States' Joint Programme Production Organisations	25.3.82
Gulf News Agency	13.6.82
Co-operation Council States Specifications and Standards Board	9.11.82
Technical Office for Communications (Gulf States Co-operation Council)	1983
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations' Joint Information Organisations	
Joint Economic Organisations	
Joint Gulf Organisations in Other Co-operation Fields	

Arab Organisations	**Date Joined**
Arab Postal Union	1.7.71
Organisation of Arab Cities	24.9.71
League of Arab States	29.9.71
Arab States' Broadcasting Union	14.6.72
Arab Labour Organization	9.2.73
Arab Social Defence Organisation	26.3.73
Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation	14.6.73
Arab States' Civil Aviation Council	15.10.73
Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development	18.2.74
Arab Organisation for Specifications and Standards	6.7.74
Arab Fund for Economic Growth in Africa	1.2.75
Arab Administrative Development Organisation	4.75
Arab Centre for the Study of Arid and Desert Areas	30.4.75
Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development	30.4.75
Arab Academy for Maritime Transport	31.8.75
Arab Health Ministers' Council	4.5.75

Arabsat	10.7.76
Arab Scouts' Office	1976
Arab Guides' Office	1976
Arab Monetary Fund	5.3.77
Arab Youth and Sports Ministers' Council	1.4.78
Arab Organisation for Industrial Development	12.1.80
Arab Social Affairs Ministers' Council	26.3.80
Arab Planning Institute	7.12.80
Arab Interior Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Justice Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Housing Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Telecommunications Union	30.11.83
Arab Tourism Union	27.8.84
Arab Transport Ministers' Council	28.3.85
Arab World Institute in Paris	30.11.87

Islamic Organisations	**Date Joined**
Islamic International News Agency	1970
Islamic Conference Organisation	29.2.72
Islamic Development Bank	12.8.74
Islamic Solidarity Fund	1974
Islamic States' Broadcasting Organisation	1975
Al Quds Fund	1976
Islamic History and Culture Research Centre	1976
Islamic States' Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre	1977
Islamic Technical and Vocational Training and Research Centre	4.78
International Committee for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage	1978
Islamic Commercial Development Centre	1979
Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO)	1980
Islamic Fiqh Council	1982
Islamic Capitals' Organisation	1982

International Organisations	**Date Joined**
United Nations Organisation	7.10.71
World Health Organisation	27.5.71
UN Food and Agriculture Organisation	11.71
Universal Postal Union	17.8.71
International Monetary Fund	23.12.71
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	23.12.71

Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)	10.2.72
International Telecommunications Union	28.4.72
International (Criminal) Police Organisation (Interpol)	26.9.72
International Civil Aviation Organisation	23.2.73
Non-Aligned Movement	5.9.73
International Maritime Organisation (IMO)	30.1.74
International Satellite Organisation (INTELSAT)	3.1.75
World Meterological Organ isation	2.2.75
World Conservation Union (IUCN)	4.6.75
Afro-Asian Organisation for Legal Consultations	1.76
World Scout Bureau (WSB)	1977
Afro-Asian Rural Reconstruction Organisation	1.79
World Council for the Welfare of the Blind	1979
Regional Organisation for Protection of the Maritime Environment (ROPME)	20.3.79
United Nations' International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)	1980
International Whaling Commission (IWC)	1980
International Union Against Tuberculosis (IUAT)	1980
International Maritime Satellite Organisation	30.12.80
Afro-Asian Insurance Union	1981
International Fund for Agricultural Development	1983
United Nations Industrial Development Organisation	6.85
International Civil Protection Organisation	1985
International Organisation for Statutory Meteorology	1985
Office International des Epizootics	1985
International Institute of Administrative Science	6.9.86
International Standardisation Organisation	1986
International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration	1986
International Association of Lighthouse Authorities	25.6.87
International Hydrographic Organisation	25.6.87
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)	1987
International Organisation for Training and Welfare of the Disabled	
Asian Legal Committee for Consultations	
International Development Association	
International Fiscal Association	
International Government Office for Information Systems	

INFORMATION

The advances made in the field of information dissemination throughout the Sultanate of Oman, through the media of radio, television and the press, have been truly remarkable when one considers that in 1970 there were no newspapers, radio or television. Internal news at that time could only be spread by word of mouth and external news from foreign broadcasts picked up by transistor radios. Instructions from the Sultan in Salalah were passed by radio telephone to the Army headquarters in Bait Al Falaj and posted on the walls in Muscat.

Within a week of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, a small broadcasting station of only one Kw was installed at Bait Al Falaj, which enabled the inhabitants of Muscat and the immediate area to hear a national radio for the first time. It was by this means that His Majesty made his initial broadcast to the nation outlining his intentions for the development of the country. Two years later, in 1972, a new medium wave radio station of 10 Kw was inaugurated, broadcasting regularly 14 hours a day and 18 hours on holidays. In 1975, broadcasting commenced in Muscat on a 100 Kw medium wave transmitter and a 50 Kw short wave installation. In Salalah in the South, transmissions began in 1971, and in 1975 a new radio station was opened there, also broadcasting on medium wave at 100 Kw. Ready for National day, in 1985 the Muscat medium wave transmitter power was in-

▼ H.E. the Minister of Information makes the opening address at the Sultanate's Exhibition held in Budapest, last year. Next to the Minister is H.E. Kádár Béla, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Trade.



ly sited in Saham, Buraimi, Nizwa and Sur to strengthen and relay national broadcasts and the short wave service was extended by additional 100 Kw transmitters at Muscat and Thumrait.

In 1979 the two broadcasting studios at Muscat and Salalah were linked by space satellite to improve radio transmissions. Programmes are originated from Muscat during part of the day and from Salalah at other times, thus achieving fuller use of radio facilities. It has thus been possible to extend the contributions from Muscat and Salalah to many parts of Oman, as well as the Gulf and East Africa. Reception reports indicate that the short wave service is heard in Europe and Africa, and occasionally in North America. Broadcasts are now made in Arabic, at 1242 Khz in Muscat, 1035 Khz in Salalah and on VHF FM for 19.5 hours daily, also in the English language at 90.4 Mhz in Muscat and 94.3 Mhz in Salalah, for 15 hours. The main news in English is at 0730, 1430 and 1830 hours daily, with news highlights and headlines at 1100, 1300 and 2200 hours. Classical music is broadcast on the English service from after the news at 0730 hours until 1200 hours, and light and popular music from 1500 hours to 2200 hours daily.

Colour television was introduced in November 1974, with transmissions from Muscat covering an extensive local area. The service was subsequently improved to reach a wider audience. Transmissions commenced from a station in Salalah in 1975 to cover the entire Governorate of Dhofar. Commercial advertising has now been introduced on both television and the English language service.

▶ Oman Radio control room.

Extensive facilities for efficient outside television and radio transmissions are now employed. In order to extend and improve reception, 12 television relay transmitters have been installed: five in the Muscat area, three at Salalah, and one each at Nizwa, Sur, Saham and Buraimi. These are in addition to the solar relay stations established throughout the Sultanate North of the 22nd parallel. In October 1990 the Minister for Information, H.E. Abdul Aziz bin Mohamed Al Rowas, signed an agreement with a French group for further extension of television and radio facilities. The project involves the establishment of 16 main stations for television and radio, and 75 relay and strengthening stations which will be linked with the 16 main stations. The whole project will cost more than RO 25 million. Consultants are currently being appointed to supervise expansion of colour TV and FM radio to the area south of the 22nd parallel. Plans are in hand to extend medium wave radio coverage to the whole of the Sultanate within the next two years in line with a plan produced by consultant Engineers from the British Broadcasting Corporation. The Sultanate is a partner in the ARABSAT system and uses ARABSAT to feed radio and TV signals to main transmitters. This facility has recently been improved to enable the TV service to be received directly from satellite by those viewers with suitable equipment. From November 1992, transmission hours on television

▶ Reading the news on Oman Television.




3
BOSCH

The Sultanate's Armed Forces have attained a high standard of combat efficiency since the accession of His Majesty the Sultan. Emphasis has been placed on the creation of a defence force equipped with the most up-to-date weaponry, and on the comprehensive training of servicemen in technical and operational techniques. This efficiency has been well demonstrated in joint military exercises conducted with other GCC forces and those of various friendly countries.

The Royal Army of Oman

The Royal Army of Oman has made steady progress over the past 23 years, to the point where it is now capable of formidably opposing any threat to the security of the country.

Infantry Units

Extensive field training with support from the other branches of the Royal Army of Oman has greatly helped the infantry units to attain a high level of efficiency. Training is being conducted according to the most advanced methods at training centres and other Royal Army of Oman facilities. Physical endurance, complete mastery of personal

▼ An army patrol reconnoitres.



weapons and equipment, and the full development of tactical skills are the keynotes of the infantryman's training.

The Firqat Forces

Formed as regular forces in 1975, they have a vital role to play side-by-side with the formations and units of the Royal Army of Oman. They are made up of the Rural Security Force and the Oman Reconnaissance Regiment, in addition to appropriate units.

The Sultan of Oman's Parachute Regiment

The regiment has been provided with advanced weapons and equipment so as to be able to carry out the important roles entrusted to it in time of war.

The Sultan of Oman's Artillery

Founded as far back as 1903, the first battery was formed in 1971. Since then, this powerful arm of the Service has continued to grow in efficiency and strength through intensive training and the introduction of modern weapons.

The artillery school provides advanced training for the officers and men of the Sultan of Oman's artillery.

▼ A Javelin missile is launched from an RGO armoured carrier.



Since its creation in 1971, the Sultan of Oman's armour has become a powerful striking force in the Royal Army of Oman. The conclusion of an agreement to purchase the latest British-made Challenger II tanks will make the armoured forces among the most formidable in the world for their size. The Challengers are expected to enter service in 1995.

The Sultan of Oman's Armour trains its own personnel in its own training school, which produces crewmen fully qualified to operate their sophisticated equipment.

Signal Corps

This vital branch of the Sultan's Armed Forces has been provided with highly advanced telecommunications and other technological facilities for operational command and control. It has its own training establishment where Signals personnel receive theoretical and practical instruction in operating and maintaining their highly technical equipment.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Engineers

This branch was formed in March 1974 to provide engineering support to the Sultan's Armed Forces. Since then, it has steadily developed and is now capable of providing this support effectively in answer to the many and various calls that are made on its services.

▼ The Sultanate has recently purchased the latest Challenger tanks for its armoured force.



The Sultan's Armed Forces Engineers also play a salient role in the construction of military and civilian installations, an important aspect of which has been building of roads in many parts of the Sultanate hitherto inaccessible except by air.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Transport

The Sultan's Armed Forces Transport provides support to the various branches and formations of the Sultan's Armed Forces. It also helps in ensuring the security and safety of roads for the Armed Forces. An important part of its peace-time responsibilities is to provide transport for the inhabitants of remote areas.

Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

The electrical and mechanical engineers operate in close technical support of all army units through fixed and mobile workshops and specialised attached units. A specialised training centre is responsible for the production of the highly-skilled craftsmen needed by this branch of the service.

Supply

The supply services are vital to the subsistence of the Armed Forces in meeting their logistical requirements. Supply has undergone contin-

▼ The RGO Motorcycle Display Team.



mands of a modern army, a role which it carries out with notable success in the rugged terrain which characterises so large an area of the Sultanate.

Medical Service

The Medical Service provides medical cover for servicemen and their dependents in both peace and war up to the highest standards of any country's armed forces. Hospitals with the most modern equipment have been established. In 1970, the medical command at Bait Al Falaj camp was converted into a hospital with 36 beds. In 1972, the Umm Al Ghawaref hospital was opened; at present it has 50 beds. A 66-bed hospital was also opened at Muaskar Al Murtafa'a. In December 1985, the 172-bed Al Khod hospital was opened. The hospital is the most advanced of the Sultan's Armed Forces hospitals and has state-of-the-art modern equipment, laboratories and operating theatres, including units for endoscopy, bone and urinary tract surgery. There are also medical and environment sanitation units to provide medical support to units in the field.

The Royal Army of Oman's Contribution to Development

The Royal Army of Oman provides assistance in road building, transportation, and supply, especially in emergencies. The Army plays an effective role in combating pollution and the treatment of citizens living in remote areas.

The Royal Air Force of Oman

The RAFO is equipped with an effective range of fighter, ground attack and transport aircraft, the crews of which, together with their support personnel, have reached a very high standard of efficiency.

A contract has recently been signed for the purchase of the advanced British-made Hawk fighter aircraft, in order to enhance the effectiveness of this branch of the Air Force. The early warning and control system has been modernised to cover the whole of the Sultanate's airspace.

Training

The Royal Air Force of Oman provides its own comprehensive training for its technical personnel through specialised schools and institutes. These include the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy, which serves as the main training centre for air crew. The Academy also trains and qualifies officers for other branches of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

A Vocational Training Institute provides the Air Force's several branches with qualified technical staff. The Institute graduates large



▲ A transport aircraft of the RAFO is loaded with supplies.

numbers of technicians every year. Specialised schools enable Air Force personnel to acquire advanced scientific and practical experience.

Maintenance of aircraft and air defence equipment

Full aircraft maintenance is carried out in the Sultanate. Further modern equipment is being introduced to raise the maintenance capacity.

The Royal Air Force of Oman's contribution to development and combat of pollution

The Royal Air Force of Oman renders assistance to citizens living in mountains and remote areas. For example, it transports food supplies and other necessary items to the people of the Jebel Al Akhdar, the Governorate of Musandam and the southern regions of the Sultanate. It also operates a flying doctor service, vitally important to the inhabitants of those areas still remote from the country's road communications system. The RAFO's transport aircraft carry medical teams from hospitals of the Ministry of Health to remote areas to treat citizens living there. In co-operation with other concerned bodies, the Air Force plays an important role in searching for missing people and in rescue operations, on land and at sea.





and the combat of pollution, in co-operation with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, as well as in locust control operations and maritime air reconnaissance in co-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Royal Navy of Oman

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970, the once all-powerful Omani Navy, which had dominated the waters of the Indian Ocean in the last century, was left with just two armed 'Booms' (species of dhow). Less than two decades later, the Royal Navy of Oman has become a highly competent fighting force, capable of carrying out its modern role and responsibilities with the utmost efficiency.

During this period, the Navy has laid the firm foundations of a naval force to be reckoned with – a force with an impressive combat capability and an expanding role in protecting the country's sovereign waters. To further strengthen this capability, the RNO has recently signed a contract for two missile corvettes, equipped with appropriate combat systems. This new generation of vessels will substantially increase the fire power of the RNO fleet in support of its presence in the strategic areas of the Sultanate's long coastline.

The RNO Training Centre has played an essential role in providing the professional training for the many branches of the Navy's personneal. It undertakes the basic training of both officers and ratings, as well as advanced and specialised career development courses. Further training is provided at various RNO specialised schools and on board ship in fire fighting, warfare systems, sea and fleet training.

Extensive and frequent exercises at sea form a highly important part of the Fleet's activities.

The Training Centre also conducts purpose-designed training courses for the staff of the Royal Yacht Squadron, Royal Oman Police and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Last year, the RNO took a significant step forward when it initiated the Naval Junior Staff School.

SNV AL MABRUKAH and SNV NASR AL BAHR are two training vessels where onboard training is consolidated for officers and ratings. SNV SHABAB OMAN, a superb sail-training ship, has played a dual role in the RNO, providing sail-training to young Omanis, civilians and servicemen, and undertaking epic voyages as far as the United States and Australia.

As with other navies, RNO ships visit foreign ports from time to time, to 'show the flag'; ships of other friendly navies are frequent visitors to our ports. Such exchange visits promote better understanding amongst nations, and present the officers and ratings with new work experiences. The RNO is also active on the social, cultural and sports

◀ RNO landing craft exercise in the Musandam area.

front. This year it took part in the International Sail Race that was held in Doha, Qatar. In April, the RNO's Sailing Association organised the very successful Dubai-Muscat '93 yacht race, the second in a series since 1992. In recent years, the RNO has emerged as a first-class competitor in various yearly sports tournaments organised by the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Said bin Sultan Naval Base has been an attractive gathering point for sports clubs in the Batinah Area for a number of years now. Various tournaments and competitions are held at its sports complex. A charity marathon for the benefit of the disabled is one of the yearly events.

Last year was a milestone in the increasing cultural activities of the RNO. The first ever cultural competition was staged during this year, enthusiastically supported by RNO personnel. This was followed by the publication of the first issue of the RNO magazine, "Al Bahriyatul Youm" (Navy Day).

Royal Guard of Oman

The Royal Guard Regiment was formed in 1973 with responsibility for the security of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Majesty's guests, and the protection of Royal property. It is a corps d'élite, consisting of some of the fittest and best trained men in the Army, and is a formidable fighting force, as well as performing ceremonial and other duties. In 1981, it was expanded and reorganised into a full Brigade. IN 1985, coinciding with the celebrations of the 15th anniversary of His Majesty's accession, His Majesty bestowed on the RGB the signal honour of designating 1st November annually as RGB day. It was on that date in the same year that the Brigade received its Royal Standard from His Majesty.

In November 1976, the Royal Guard was given the task by His Majesty of establishing a school for providing advanced technical education for boys related to serving members of the Royal Guard.

The school now comprises some 200 students, all of whom follow a curriculum which is heavily biased towards engineering and technology. Although the medium of instruction for the technological subjects is English, entrance to the school is regulated by means of a competitive examination in Arabic subjects, which ensures that the facility is open to all Omanis, irrespective of their previous experience of the English language. Competition for the thirty places each year is fierce. The success of the school can best be judged by the quality of its output. Graduates are well-trained, disciplined, engineering technicians with a fluent command of technical English. Many of these ex-students can now be found in important and sensitive Government organisations, applying the technical skills they have acquired at the school. Students frequently go on to further study, so that already the school has many graduates with UK degree qualifications in engineering disciplines, readying themselves to fill the posts which are now held by expatriate employees.

study of the Arabic language and culture, in addition to a full technological syllabus held in the English medium. The school has now progressed to a stage where its certificates are officially recognised throughout the world. Students now have the opportunity to obtain a wide range of qualifications, including the School's Certificate, the Oman Ministry of Education Final Certificate, the BTEC First Diploma (Engineering), and the BTEC National Certificate of Achievement (Engineering).

The RGO has been entrusted by His Majesty with another important responsibility. In 1985, His Majesty directed that a Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra be formed, and a school was accordingly established near Muscat. The school is a unique boarding establishment which caters for all aspects of the young people's education and well-being. It is attended by young Omanis of both sexes. The orchestra has now reached a remarkably high standard of performance, acclaimed by visiting specialists from many parts of the world.

The RGO also maintains three highly-trained military bands – one of them mounted – which perform on State occasions, as well as a military choir. The bands have earned a high reputation for their performances abroad, notably at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Scotland, and at the Sydney International Military Tattoo in Australia.

The Command and Staff College

The College stands as the highest and most important learning institution of the Sultan's Armed Forces. It qualifies officers for command appointments in the Sultan's Armed Forces, the Royal Guard of Oman, and other associated bodies, through annual Command and Staff courses. It also exchanges experiences with similar colleges in friendly countries, and has a programme of visiting members of the Faculty from the Sultan Qaboos University to give lectures on economic, political and administrative subjects.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum

The historically important Bait Al Falaj fort has been converted into a military museum in order to maintain and project Oman's glorious military heritage. The superbly organised museum exhibits models, Omani historical and military documents, weapons, and many other items of military interest. It provides a graphic illustration of the progress made over the years by the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Engineering Services – Ministry of Defence

The Engineering Services of the Ministry of Defence play a basic role in providing engineering support to the Sultan's Armed Forces, such as the design and construction of infrastructure facilities for military installations. It also has its role in carrying out development plans, notably in the building of roads in difficult terrain.

ROYAL OMAN POLICE

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, many regions of the Sultanate were not under centralised Government administration. The fact that the entire Sultanate now enjoys peace and stability is in no small measure due to the Royal Oman Police (ROP), a highly modernised and efficient Force, which enjoys the confidence and support of the whole population of the Sultanate.

In 1970, the only police force in the country was a detachment consisting of one officer and 75 constables with their headquarters at the Bab Al Kabir in Muscat. Their responsibilities were confined to Muscat and its immediate vicinity. Outside this limited area, the only civil authority was that of the regional Walis or governors.

Over the ensuing years, the ROP has seen significant expansion in its functions and areas of responsibility, which are considerably greater than those of police forces in many other countries. Apart from conventional police duties, the ROP is responsible for immigration and passports, customs, civil defence, and fire-fighting, coastguard operations and the prison service. Omani women have an important role in the ROP, as in other Government organisations.

Close family ties, coupled with strict adherence to the teachings of Islam and to Omani traditions, are major factors behind the remarka-



▼ Video screens assist traffic control.

not suffer from a drugs problem, may also be attributed to these traditions, the family role in the education and upbringing of children, and the part played by the Police in protecting the country from the drugs menace by enforcing strict customs control over the air, sea and land entry points.

The Royal Oman Police Academy (ROPAN) at Nizwa was opened in 1980 to provide training in a wide range of specialised police work such as finger-printing, criminal investigation, law, driving and traffic regulations, and foreign language courses. Advanced courses in secretarial skills are also held. The Academy recruits from young Omani university students, who join it for its disciplined police training. After completing their courses, they are appointed as officers in the departments and divisions that require their specialised qualifications.

The Directorate-General of Operations is one of the main elements of the ROP. It is responsible for fighting crime, a task that it tackles by directing its efforts towards crime prevention, reducing the opportunities to commit crimes to a minimum and curtailing the spread of crime, so that the public can enjoy a sense of stability, security and peace of mind. The Directorate-General is also responsible for planning and following up administrative control procedures. It plans the security protection of VIPs, public places and official celebrations. Expansion in recent years includes the introduction of computerisation throughout the Directorate-General's departments and units, which process hundreds of thousands of cases every year. This has been of considerable benefit to the public, particularly where traffic and immigration and passports are concerned. The departments and sections of these two sectors in the country's regions are now linked by the computer network, thus enabling the public to complete their traffic, immigration and passport business in their own areas without having to go to Muscat.

▶ The ROP is responsible for the fire-fighting service.

The vital role played by the Directorate-General of Traffic is safeguarding the public and their property is well recognised. The Police are equipped with high-powered vehicles equipped with the latest means of communications, for road patrols and answering emergency calls. An annual Traffic Week is held, which takes place simultaneously in all the AGCC States. It involves intensive 'information and advice campaigns' in the form of personal one-to-one contacts between police and public in the streets and on the highways, as well as lectures, radio and TV programmes and newspaper features.

The highly efficient Customs Service at the country's points of entry has enabled the Sultanate to avoid the problem of drugs. In addition to the manual and electronic examinations that take place at entry points, the Customs also receive valuable assistance from the Mounted Unit's police dog section. Drug prevention operations and suppression of criminal activity is aided by the close cooperation that exists be-

▶ A karate class in progress.





League States, as well as with Interpol.

The Directorate-General of Criminal Investigations has a major role in crime prevention and the apprehension of criminals. It is then the responsibility of the Directorate-General of Public Prosecutions, to arrange arraignment in the courts.

The Directorate-General of Criminal Investigations possesses a highly specialised forensic laboratory with the most up-to-date equipment, including computerised finger-printing, forming part of an international police work.

The Directorate-General of Civil Defence has an important responsibility for providing fire protection for State and private property. It also provides the public and private sectors with advice and consultancy services in the construction of housing, industrial and commercial complexes.

The ROP is vitally involved in the protection of the country's oil and gas resources. This includes pipelines and other installations, and the oil rigs in the Interior and the terminal at Mina Al Fahal, from which the Sultanate's oil is exported.

The several million people who enter the Sultanate annually through its various entry points are processed by the Directorate-General of Immigration and Passports. Its operations are assisted by a comprehensive computer system, enabling the regional departments to serve the public in their own areas. Its services include the issue and renewal of passports, identity cards and road permits, and the administration of expatriate residence visas.

The Coastguard Unit possesses a fleet of modern craft for the protection of the Sultanate's coastline. It coordinates its operations with the Royal Navy of Oman. It also provides assistance to fishing vessels and other ships in distress.

The Police Aviation Directorate, with its multi-purpose aircraft, provides assistance in evacuating sick and injured people in an emergency, and in ferrying provisions to remote regions that have been subjected to natural disasters. It cooperates with the Police Coastguard Unit in rescuing seaforces in difficulties.

As part of the ROP's training syllabus, a 'practical application centre' was recently set up at the Police Academy in Nizwa. The Centre, which consists of a model village, enables students to take part in the demonstration and practice of police work in all its forms.

▼ A police dog shows its paces.



ECONOMY

At the present time, the economy is continuing an expansion which began in 1990. As a result of the oil price collapse early in 1986, Oman experienced a relatively severe recession lasting until 1988, and it was not until 1990 that a really robust recovery took place. Excluding the value of oil the non-oil sector achieved 8.8% growth in real, constant price terms in 1990, and 11.1% growth in 1991. This rapid expansion continued last year with espeically noteworthy performances by the construction, trade, mining, and oil refining sectors. Despite the vigorous growth, the economy remains in good internal balance, with no excessive domestic inflationary pressure at the present time.

Being outside the war zone, the economy of the Sultanate was little affected by the conflict at the northern end of the Gulf in 1990-91. Such adverse effects were limited and transitory. Tourism suffered temporarily as visitors from the Western world and elsewhere kept away for the duration of the crisis. However, by last year, tourism had completely recovered. In some respects, Oman benefited from the crisis as there was a sharp increase in oil prices. The risk premiums and higher charges on Gulf shipping enhanced the relative attractiveness of Oman's ports, which are situated outside the Gulf, so that non-oil trade also expanded.

The Sultanate has a reputation for running a prudent economy. However, its economy being oil-based, it is subject to the vicissitudes of the world's oil markets. The most serious of these was the collapse of world oil prices early in 1986, when, having earlier risen to US $30 a barrel, they reached a low of less than US $10 a barrel. The Government acted promptly by devaluing the Rial by 14% and adopting some measures of retrenchment in its development plans, but without seriously affecting health and education services. Oman was fortunate in that, by 1986, the construction of its domestic infrastructure had been virtually completed.

By Middle East standards, Oman's oil resources are modest. According to the latest estimates, reserves are in excess of 4.5 billion barrels and are expected to rise to 5 billion barrels in the near future. This indicates that present levels of production can be maintained well into the next century. It has emerged in recent years that quite as important to the economy of the Sultanate in the future is natural gas, which was discovered accidentally in the search for oil.

As a result of a government-financed exploration programme initiated in 1984, total reserves of natural gas have risen from 9.8 cubic feet in 1990 to 17 cubic feet at the end of 1992. This figure is expected to be increased substantially in the near future. In six years' time, gas production is expected to equal that of oil. Gas now fuels the Al Ghubrah power and desalination complex, the Industrial Estate at Rusayl, and the copper smelting complex near Sohar. Plans are proceeding for the export of Liquified Natural Gas by the construction of an LNG pro-





sion area of central Oman.

From the beginning of the renaissance era in 1970, the Government has been keenly aware of the necessity of diversifying the economy, and a considerable degree of success has been achieved in this respect. Unlike many of its neighbours, the Sultanate possesses natural resources other than gas and oil. The principal non-oil resources are agriculture, fisheries and minerals, and to these now can be added tourism. Medium and light industry is also being fast expanded. One of the first of these was a flour mill, which has since been expanded at Muttrah; a copper mining industry; an oil refinery at Mina Al Fahal to supply Oman's domestic needs, which is also being expanded; a recently completed textile mill (the first in the region); a large industrial estate at Rusayl near Muscat, and two other industrial estates at Sohar in the north and Raysut in the south, opened last year. Originally industry was directed towards import substitutes based on indigenous resources, but, with a limited home market, industrial policy has been switched towards exports. Growth in agriculture has been notably significant; in particular, the crop and livestock sub-sectors have been important areas of growth, as has the fishing industry, which now fully meets the demands of the home market. As a result, agriculture and fishing also account for an increased percentage of the GDP as compared with the earlier years of development. An important by-product of this diversification policy is the increased opportunities for jobs it is providing school-leavers.

Promotion of the commodity-producing sectors has led to corre-

◀ His Majesty presides over a meeting of the Development Council.

▶ The interior of one of the Sultanate's modern shopping centres.

▼ Amouage, the most valuable perfume in the world, celebrates its 10th anniversary at the year's end. The brand is now available in over 25 countries.





hancement and efficiency of these services is vital for the stable expansion of private sector activities in production and trading. These services are playing an invaluable role in supporting the economic progress of the Sultanate.

The rate of inflation has been well under control in the past three years. From 10.1% in 1990, it fell to 7.2% in 1991. According to the latest available figures, the price index in October 1992 indicated a rise of only 2.8% from October 1991. The cost of food, beverages and tobacco actually declined slightly in this period. Rents and household utilities registered an increase of 8.9% during the 12-month period ending with October 1992. At the present time, new construction is reducing excess demand for housing and the surge in rents is now subsiding.

The Sultanate's economy witnessed a considerable advance in the first half of 1992 as the GDP registered a growth of 10.4%. Domestic production of crude oil and natural gas increased by 5.4%. The non-petroleum sector recorded a remarkable improvement during the first half of 1992. Production increased by 13.8%. The manufacture of copper cathodes increased by 1.1% in the first nine months of 1992; the total production of cathodes in 1991 was 8,411 tonnes while the total for the first nine months of 1992 was 8,503 tonnes. The value of copper sales increased by 0.9% in the first quarter of 1992.

Exports of industrial products and fruit and vegetables increased by 32.2% and 21.7% respectively in the first eight months of 1992, compared with the corresponding period of 1991. Non-oil exports have been particularly successful, their value rising from R.O. 68.85 million in 1990, to R.O. 79.07 million in 1991. The most remarkable increase has been in the export of textiles and garments, which rose from R.O. 4.92 million in 1990, to R.O. 10.76 million in 1991. Export of mineral products also showed a major increase to R.O. 8.16 million in 1991 from 3.18 million in 1990. Exports of animal and vegetable fats and oils, plastic and rubber articles, as well as chemicals and allied products, also showed major increases.

Net oil revenues during the past two years have been steady, showing some increase, while revenues from the production of natural gas have revealed a greater comparable increase. Revenues from customs duties and company income tax have also risen. Total development expenditure for the year to July 1992 was R.O. 229,900,000 compared with R.O. 167,200,000 over the same period in the previous year.

Oman has a free market economy and the Government attaches great importance to attracting direct foreign investment, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Even in trade construction and service sectors, foreign participation up to 49% ownership is permitted. Foreign banks also operate in the country. A number of important incentives are available to industrial projects, which are described in detail in the chapter on Commerce and Industry.

Banking in the Sultanate of Oman

Institutional Background

Oman's financial system is composed of the Central Bank of Oman

(CBO), 21 commercial banks, 3 specialised banks, 9 firms engaged in money exchange and draft business, 40 establishments practising money exchange only, and 2 companies engaged in hire purchase finance and leasing activities. There are also investment banking companies and a number of pension funds and insurance firms. Among the commercial banks, 10 are locally incorporated, while the remainder consist of 11 branches of foreign banks. The domestic network of commercial banks and their branches reached 245 at the end of 1991. The three specialised banks take care of the citizens' needs in housing, industrial development, and agriculture and fishing by providing medium and long-term finance at subsidised rates.

Central Bank Operations

The Central Bank of Oman fulfills the whole range of functions traditionally undertaken by Central Banks. It is the issuer of currency, banker to the Government, lender of last resort to the banking system, and the supervisory agency of the entire financial system in the country. The total assets of the Central Bank had grown to more than a billion Omani Rials by 1992, and in November 1992, foreign assets stood at R.O. 921.2 million, representing over 90% of total assets.

The Central Bank, together with the Government, has been following a policy of broadening, as well as deepening, existing money and capital markets, in addition to promoting new instruments and institutions in the financial sector. It has issued Development Bonds on behalf of the Government to provide an investment outlet for the surplus resources in the economy, and to finance Government development projects. Denominations and maturity periods were varied for each issue to suit preferences of different saving sectors. The Bonds have been highly successful.

The Oman Development Bank (ODB), which has lent R.O. 67 million to private businesses since its inception in 1979, is doubling its share capital to R.O. 20 million. The R.O. 10 million share capital with which it has operated until now is inadequate under present circumstances. The ODB cannot lend at one time a sum exceeding one-tenth of its net worth. Its current net worth, comprising capital and reserves, is under R.O. 20 million. The Government has been requested to consider its loans to the bank, amounting to R.O. 16 million, as subordinate loans, making them part of the institution's net worth. 54% of ODB shares are held by the Government, 6% by Omani individuals and organisations, and 40% by regional and international institutions.

Commercial Banking

The commercial banks are the focal point of the financial system having two-way transactions with almost all the other entities in the system. Their function as an intermediary for private sector transactions is highlighted by the fact that their liabilities to the private sector are closely matched by their loans and advances to the same sector. Commercial banks lending is mainly channelled towards the trade and construction sectors, although, of late, the trend is towards a shift in demand for credit to personal loans, manufacturing, services and Government.

COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

December 1992 marked the end of the second Year of Industry as proclaimed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in his National Day address in November 1991. In spite of the Gulf conflict in early 1991, which turned out to be of short duration, and which had little or no effect on the economy of the Sultanate, the two Years of Industry can be summed up as highly successful. Year by year, broad-based industry is playing an ever more important role in the economy of the Sultanate.

Industry in the country was non-existent before 1970, since the Sultanate was virtually undeveloped. In the immediately succeeding years, industrial development was of necessity slow due to the immense problems involved. The Sultanate's early industrial development was mainly geared to construction support, but by 1986, most of the major projects required for the national infrastructure had been completed, and priority was then switched to consumer goods and other import-substituting industries. Oman has a small population and therefore the internal market is limited, thus the emphasis of light and medium industries is now being increasingly directed to exports.

The Government's policy is the creation of a national economy based on private enterprise, and devoid of monopolistic practices. Con-

▼ One of Oman's magnificent unspoiled beaches, with the Gulf Hotel in the background.

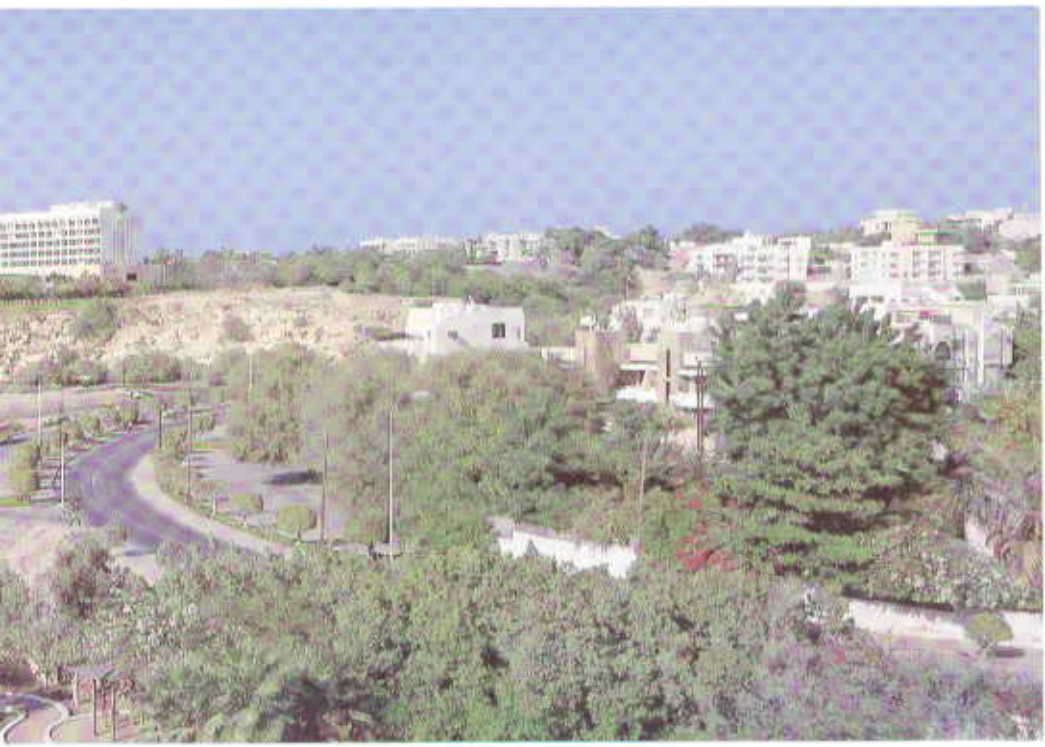


sistent with this policy is the objective of ensuring the rapid growth of viable industries utilising indigenous raw materials as much as possible. To this end, the private sector has a leading role to play on the basis of competition in a free economy.

One of the outcomes of the first Year of Industry (1991) was a fifteen year (1991-2005) master plan for industrial development, the executive agency for which is the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). The Plan projects a growth of about 12.9% per annum during the current fourth Five-Year-Plan and around 10% in the fifth Plan. The last two years have provided a forum for all those concerned with industry to work in close cooperation to accelerate industrialisation, whilst maximum support and incentives are offered by the Government.

The Government's drive to encourage businessmen to set up industrial units outside the capital has met with a very good response. At the end of 1991, the total investments in projects outside Muscat Governorate was R.O. 174.1 million, representing 43% of total investment. Nearly 60% of the envisaged investment for approved projects since the beginning of 1991 are to be established outside Muscat.

The first fully-serviced industrial estate in Oman of 100 hectares, and comprising 125 plots, was completed at Rusayl, 45km from Mus-





▲ Celebration of the Year of Industry at Sohar.

cat, in 1982. At the beginning of 1992, the estate had 50 units in commercial production, and a further eight new units were completed during the year. In February this year an agreement was signed by His Excellency Maqbool bin Ali bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce and Industry, for 13 new factories to be constructed at the Rusayl Industrial Estate. A wide range of manufactured goods is now produced on the estate, ranging from food and beverages to furniture, textiles, paper products, chemicals, fabricated metal products, and electrical goods. Following the visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the Rusayl Industrial Estate on 9th February 1991, that date is celebrated annually as 'Industry Day'. At the same time, His Majesty ordered a benefits package which included:

1. A reduction in land rent rate;
2. Additional grants and subsidies for young Omani entrepreneurs;
3. A review of the prices of utilities to industries.

Two new industrial estates were opened in November 1992 at Sohar in the north and Raysut in the south. The industrial estate at Sohar covers an area of 300,000 sq metres with all the necessary infrastructural facilities such as electricity, telephones, sewerage and roads. The response from investors has been good, and eight factories were ready



▲ A cables factory at Rusayl – part of the drive to diversify the economy.

for operation at the time of the opening of the estate. The first phase of the Raysut Industrial Estate was opened after the opening of the Sohar Estate. The estate provides a planned industrial area with a capacity for 56 industrial enterprises of which six were operational. The area also includes electricity, water, roads, communications services, and water drainage station, in addition to bank, medical and postal services. In conformity with the policy of expanding industrial development in the country, other industrial estates are planned for Sur, Nizwa, Buraimi, and Khasab in the Governorate of Musandam.

The emphasis of the fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991-96) being on the industrial sector, His Majesty the Sultan has directed that industrial development in the Sultanate must give priority to industries which rely on agricultural and fisheries products, as well as those, both light and medium, which depend on local raw materials. They must meet the basic needs of the country and provide employment for the Omani people.

He further directed the Government to provide all that is necessary to promote the vocational training programmes for the national workforce. In addition, full support is to be given to young people who are committed to the principle of self-employment as well as to those who provide jobs for Omanis.

The Government gives every encouragement to the development of



the private industrial sector by providing the following incentives:-

1. Free surveys of industrial investment opportunities and preparation of feasibility studies;

2. Provision of interest-free government loans to industry under a Royal Decree, in addition to loans provided by the Oman Development Bank (ODB);

3. Exemption from customs duties on imports of equipment and raw materials required for production purposes;

4. Tariff protection through the imposition of customs duties on imported goods which compete with local products, or prohibition or restriction of their importation, taking into consideration the quality and quantity of local production and the interests of the consumer.

5. Exemption from income tax for five years, a concession which may be renewed for another period of five years.

6. Provision of planned and serviced industrial plots for the establishment of factories.

The Oman Textile Mills, the first of its kind in the AGCC countries, went into production four years ago. It has an investment of R.O. 8 million and is the most modern of its kind. It has its own training centre for young Omanis. It is intended that the textile industry should stimulate the establishment of other related industries. The growth in the garment industry has been considerable, and there are about twenty entreprises exporting various types of garments to many parts of the world. One of the earliest industrial projects in the Sultanate was the Flour Mills at Muttrah, which have been in operation since the 1970s. Their capacity has been increased in subsequent years, and they also produce animal feed.

There are two cement plants in the Sultanate, one at Rusayl in the north, and the other at Raysut in the south. Output at the Rusayl plant has been very satisfactory in recent years. The Ministry has engaged a consultant to study the demand and supply position of cement in the Sultanate and other neighbouring areas to investigate the scope for establishing additional cement production in northern Oman. Preliminary indications are that increased production may be justified. Exports of cement have been increasing during recent years. The Government policy is to develop heavy industries if such industries are based on local resources. A major project which has been identified, is a polyolefins complex using potash from the salt deposits of the Umm Al Samim and magnesia from sea water. The initial study of the potash project is currently in progress. In addition, there are many initiatives from the private sector to establish heavy industries in the field of sponge iron, steel, copper, glass, etc.

◀ Hygienic packaging of vegetable oil at Rusayl.

Export earnings from industrial products have gone up from R.O.

porting industries in 1988; this had increased to 72 in 1990. To meet the increasing demands of the domestic market for commercial and industrial specialisations, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has issued a directive for the establishment of a new college for Commerce and Economy to be opened this year.

The Oman Development Bank (ODB) plays an important role in implementing Government measures aimed at encouraging greater private participation in the country's development. The interest rates paid by the projects financed by the Bank are subsidised by the Government. The official rate of interest is 9%, however, projects implemented in the Muscat area and the Rusayl Industrial Estate pay only 6% per annum interest, and a special rate of 4% is applied to projects established in other areas. The ODB's lending commitments for any one project must not exceed 10% of its total resources.

Two new incentives for the private sector were announced by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry at the end of 1991. The first is a non-repayable grant of 30% of the cost of an industrial project whose investment cost is less than R.O. 100,000 provided it is owned and managed by Omanis. This grant can go up to between 50% and 60% if the project is located outside the Muscat area.

▶ Antique shop in Nizwa. Omani handicrafts are a popular buy with tourists.

The second incentive relates to the participation by the Ministry in the costs of preparing industrial feasibility studies by private sector entrepreneurs. The ODB has introduced a vocational graduate scheme, whereby Vocational Training Centres which wish to open a small workshop will be able to have their project financed on a leasing basis at a special rate of 3% per annum. In the 1991 budget, direct support to the industrial sector was about R.O. 6 million, while indirectly, through the ODB, it was R.O. 2 million.

A new Commercial Law came into force in 1991, replacing the old law which dated back to 1974. It is a wide-ranging enactment, which directly affects every person and company engaged in trade or business in the Sultanate. The code's terms widely define the individuals and commercial activities to whom it applies. These include foreign businesses trading in Oman. Foreign investment in industry is welcome, and is regulated by the Foreign Business and Investment Law. The minimum Omani investment in a joint venture company should not be less than 35%. In practice, however, it is preferred that foreign equity does not exceed 49%. Industrial companies with foreign investment are exempt from income tax for five years. If the project directly contributes to economic development, the exemption can be renewed for a further five years. The Ministry is actively seeking ways of improving management and operations within industry. In 1989 the Industrial

▶ Sailing – one of the many amenities Oman has to offer to our visitors.





Development Unit was set up under the Ministry's Directorate-General of Industry.

Tourism

The Sultanate of Oman has much to offer the tourist in the way of scenery, climate, historic interest, and water sports. The mild, but sunny, winter climate is attractive to Europeans and others escaping the rigours of the northern winter, while the cooler monsoon climate of the south offers relief from the searing heat of the Gulf in summer to citizens of this region.

Tourism, which was non-existent in Oman until recent years, is now making rapid progress. The emphasis is on quality. The Government has proceeded cautiously to ensure that development is pursued in a well-planned manner calculated to encourage quality tourism. In 1970, there was only one small hotel in the Sultanate, and that was situated in Mut-

many of them of 5-star standard, as well as motels and rest houses at strategic points.

In November last year, a large attractive hotel was opened in Sohar on the waterfront. The total number of hotel rooms in the Sultanate is now 2,193 with 3,096 beds. By the year 2005 it is expected that the number of tourists will have risen to 60,000 annually. Tourism is administered by the Directorate-General of Tourism within the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Plans are being finalised for the selection of consultants and design supervision for the ambitious Sidab Marina Project close to Muscat. It will be able to handle some 550 pleasure craft of different sizes – 250 in the water and 300 in dry dock.

At the request of the Government, the World Tourist Organisation, acting as an executing agency of the UNDP, has prepared a 15-year tourism plan (1991-2005) for the development of tourism in the Sultanate. The concept presents a planning and development framework for providing opportunities for the informed traveller to experience the speical culture and environmental characteristics of Oman.

In February last year, the Ministry announced a five-year tourism development plan under which it will spend R.O. 8 million to establish tourist reception centres, picnic areas and camping grounds. Under the current Fourth Five-Year Plan, there are 33 infrastructural projects to improve and expand tourism in the country. Progress in Omanisation is steadily being made, and currently about 20% of the staff in hotels are Omani. The Government is, on its part, making available training opportunities at the Hotels and Catering Centre in Bahrain. Some of the staff in the Directorate-General of Tourism have been sent for training abroad. Due to this effort, it has been possible to raise the percentage of Omanisation to more than 30% in the Government-owned hotels.

In October last year, the Muscat International Exhibition, organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was held at the Oman Exhibition Centre at Seeb, in the wake of the Sultanate's second Year of Industry. The Rusayl Industrial Estate and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry participated in the organisation of the Exhibition. Eighty national companies took part in it, exhibiting food products, textiles, household and consumer goods, building materials, furniture and traditional Omani handicrafts. More than twenty other countries were represented at the Exhibition, which was one of the largest of its kind ever to be held in the Sultanate. The second Year of Industry Festival was held in Sohar later in the year.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI)

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry was set up in 1973

to encourage industrial and commercial development in the Sultanate. All business organisations in Oman are expected to be members. The headquarters of the OCCI are in Ruwi, near Muscat, with branches in Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa, Sur, Salalah, and Sohar.

The Chamber acts as a bridge between the Omani and foreign businessman and investors, and promotes, organises and protects the economic interests of the country. Among the services it provides are information about potential fields of operation, the categories of members, and clarification of practices and procedures governing trade and industry in the Sultanate. The Chamber also provides foreign businessmen and investors with statistical data and other details about local markets and/or potential areas for investment. Members are kept in touch with foreign markets through the Chamber's magazine.

The Chamber legalises documents, invoices, agency and labour contracts, and issues certificates required in trade and industry. It acts as arbitrator in the event of commercial disputes between local members and foreign businessmen or investors, and participants in the discussion of trade-related problems with concerned government organisations. It also sponsors and facilitates the issuing of visas to foreigners wishing to establish business relations with Oman, but who do not have contacts in the Sultanate.

The number of enrolments has continued to increase over the years, and the OCCI has expanded its activities, especially in the fields of training, diversification of the economy and Omanisation. Technical management courses were started in 1989 and have proved successful. Computerisation of the Chamber's operations and the establishment of an information centre, have been completed.

The Sultanate's Stock Exchange opened in May 1989 and got off to a good start. An important development was the opening of a chamber to regulate dealings in a new secondary market, called the parallel market, for negotiations in the shares of recently-established companies and those not having any specific characteristics which enable them to enjoy sufficient liquidity and the protection and security for operation in the Chamber of the principal market.

The market conducts its business in the mornings and has evening sessions on Mondays and Tuesdays. There is no trading in futures or on margin. Shares must be delivered in full immediately after transactions, and settlements must be made in cash. Post-dated cheques are not acceptable.

The Muscat Securities Market is being opened up for investment by non-Omanis, especially citizens from the AGCC and other Arab countries. Studies are also under way to introduce various investment instruments to provide investment opportunities in equity to expatriates.

Since the first discovery of oil in the Sultanate of Oman in commercial quantities in 1964, production had reached a record level of 750,000 b/d at the end of last year, a level likely to be maintained for the next ten years. The proven oil reserves in the Sultanate are currently 4.5 billion barrels, and are expected to rise to 5 billion barrels in the near future. New discoveries and improved methods of extraction from existing oilfields will extend the life of the oil industry in the Sultanate well into the next century.

Oil first went into production in 1967 from a group of three oilfields in the interior of northern Oman after the construction of a lengthy pipeline from Fahud, the largest field, through a gap in the Hajar range of mountains to the export terminal at Mina Al Fahal on the coast near Muscat. This continues to be the only pipeline to the terminal for all production in the Sultanate. The oil has to be pumped to the highest point in the gap, and is then gravity fed to the coast. In 1970, production was about 300,000 b/d, and reserves stood at 1.2 billion barrels. By the middle 1970s production actually fell until further discoveries were made and new oilfields came on stream.

When oil was discovered in commercial quantities in southern Oman it was decided not to pipe the oil to an outlet on the southern coast as this would have involved the construction of an artificial port, with protection from the gale-force summer monsoon winds, as there are no natural havens along the entire length of the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula east of Aden. It was more economical to construct pipelines over great distances of desert linking the oilfields of the south with the main pipeline from Fahud to Mina Al Fahal on the coast. Lying as it does outside the Strait of Hormuz, Mina Al Fahal's exports are unaffected by conflicts and crises in the Gulf.

Following the withdrawal of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) from exploration in the Sultanate, the concession was granted to Petroleum Development (Oman) Ltd. (PDO), in which Shell was the majority shareholder, the minority shareholders being Compagnie Française des Pétroles and Partex. In 1974, an agreement was signed between the Government and PDO whereby the Government assumed ownership of 60% of the shares of the Company.

In the earlier years, production of oil fluctuated due to the discoveries of new oilfields, and latterly to the world price of oil. In 1986, steeply falling world oil prices made it initially desirable to increase production to maintain oil revenues, but prices fell to such an extent that revenues declined sharply before recovering when the world price of oil improved. Oman is not a member of OPEC or OAPEC, but has always kept in step with oil prices maintained by OPEC, and, although not



▶ Drilling for oil and gas is a continuing process.

bound by production quotas set by that organisation, it has voluntarily cooperated in stabilising production. The Sultanate is active in oil affairs at a regional level, being a member of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC), several members of which are members of OPEC, so that cooperation with OPEC is achieved at this level. On the other hand, the Sultanate plays a leading role in the non-OPEC group, known as the Independent Oil-Producing Countries (IPEC), which is cooperating with OPEC to achieve stability in oil markets and prices. In recent years, Oman has twice adjusted its oil production voluntarily to assist OPEC's stabilisation efforts.

There are, at present, three other oil producers in the Sultanate besides PDO: Elf (France), Occidental (US), and Japex (Japan). Of the current rate of production of 750,000 b/d, PDO produces 700,000 b/d while the other three produce 50,000 b/d. The greatest recent success of PDO has been at the Lekhwair field in the north of Oman, one of the oldest fields in the country, which has been expanded. The expansion work has been completed, and it has been handed over to PDO for operations. It is expected that the production rate will be raised from 25,000 b/d to 110,000-150,000 b/d by 1994, representing about 15% of Oman's total output. Last year, discoveries of oil, condensate and gas were made in eleven different locations.

The search for oil offshore in the Gulf of Oman was made many years ago, but was unsuccessful. However, since then, oil has been discovered in a concession area off the west coast of the Musandam Peninsula. In 1988, PDO started exploration in three concession areas off the coast of Dhofar in the south. PDO has also been carrying out seismic tests in the difficult and rugged mountain terrain in Dhofar.

A refinery was constructed at the oil terminal at Mina Al Fahal near Muscat, and came into operation in 1982 to meet the needs of the domestic market.



▲ A panoramic view of the central Lekhwair Production Station, heart of the Lekhwair field development, the largest and most complex of PDO's production facilities.

Its original production capacity of 50,000 b/d was increased in 1987 to 80,000 b/d to satisfy the expanding domestic requirement. Now Oman is seeking a £23 million loan for a further expansion of the refinery. In October 1992, the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals signed an agreement with Mitsui, a Japanese firm, to upgrade the production process at Oman Refinery's benzine unit. Benzine production will be expanded and will be lead-free, thus not harming the environment.

The policy of Omanisation is proceeding satisfactorily in the oil and gas industry. PDO has established a large training centre which has contributed considerably to the training of Omanis to replace expatriates. At present, Omanis occupy 65% of jobs at all levels, and in all projects connected with PDO. The percentage of Omanis who occupy senior posts has reached 45%, with 73% for junior posts. By the year 2000, Omanisation of all jobs in the industry shoud reach 93-95%.

In the late eighties, the Government set up the wholly state-owned Oman Oil Company (OOC) for the purpose of investing in foreign commercial enterprises and oil trading operations. In 1991, the Sultanate signed a protocol of cooperation with Kazakhstan, whereby the Sultanate would assist Kazakhstan during negotiations with foreign oil companies. OOC has been able to provide the technical, legal and economic assistance to enable a cooperation agreement to be reached between





tion of two oilfields in Kazakhstan. Under an agreement recently signed in Bermuda, a study is to be carried out on a project to lay a network of pipelines to carry oil from Tengiz in Kazakhstan and Baku in Azerbaijan to the port of Novorossisk on the Black Sea coast. OOC and two other leading companies have been commissioned to implement the project in two phases.

Gas

Natural gas was discovered accidentally during the search for oil, and it was soon established that the Sultanate has sizeable reserves which are sufficient to supply the needs of developing industry. Demand has been rising rapidly, and output has increased correspondingly. In 1984, the Government initiated a government-financed exploration programme for a period of ten years. PDO has been conducting this programme on behalf of the Government, and so far it has proved very successful.

As a result, total gas reserves which stood at 9.8 trillion cubic feet at the beginning of 1990, have risen steeply to 17 trillion cubic feet by the end of last year. It is expected that this figure will increase substantially in the near future. In six years' time, gas production is expected to equal that of oil. The gas industry is wholly owned by the State, and operated on its behalf by PDO. The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals cooperates with PDO in the management of the gas industry.

The gas industry was started in 1978 with the construction of a gas pipeline linking the Yibal field with the Al Ghubrah power station and desalination plant on the coast near Muscat. Gas is now supplied to the power station in the Rusayl Industrial Estate and to Wadi Jizzi power station which serves the copper-smelting complex and the Sohar region. PDO is the largest consumer of associated gas, which it requires for its power plants and equipment, and for reinjection into oil reservoirs to maintain pressure and sustain oil production. In 1988, the direct use of natural gas was introduced in Oman for the first time, other than to power stations. A gas supply has been inaugurated at the Rusayl Industrial Estate for use at the vegetable oil refinery, the textile mill and other enterprises. The gas treatment plant is undergoing a massive expansion, almost doubling its present capacity of 8.5 million cubic metres a day. The 22-month project, which is expected to raise output to 16.5 million cubic metres a day is designed to meet gas requirements for power generation and water desalination, and for the industrial sector over the next ten years.

There are plans to export Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) by setting up an LNG project utilising the recently discovered gas reserves in the PDO concession area of central Oman. The project has been divided

into upstream and downstream developments. The upstream development involves the development and production of gas and condensate by PDO on behalf of the Government of Oman. The downstream development will comprise gas liquefaction shipping and marketing which is planned to be undertaken by an LNG export company currently under formation and to be owned by the Government of Oman (51%), Royal Dutch Shell (34%), Total (6%), Partex (2%), and three Japanese companies. Gas and condensate production from Saih Rawl and Barik (Saih Nihayda in future) will be treated and conditioned at a gas production plant located in central Oman of initial capacity of 775 MMSCF/D, then compressed and transported via a 42-inch pipeline to a gas liquefaction plant of an initial capacity of 5 million metric tonnes per year, located at a coastal area between Muscat and Sur. The LNG will then be exported by LNG tankers to the Far East and possibly Europe.

As part of the project, a feasibility study is being prepared to evaluate the upstream and downstream part of the project. The upstream part of the study will be carried out by PDO and the downstream study will be undertaken by the LNG company. The construction phase of the downstream facilities is scheduled to begin in 1996 and should be completed by the 1st quarter of 1999, with exports to begin soon after. A training programme for Omanis will be undertaken as a part of this project, with a view to beginning Omanisation as soon as possible.

▼ An artist's impression of the new LNG plant to be established at Bimah in 1995.



It has long been known that considerable mineral potentialities exist in the Sultanate of Oman. Three thousand years ago, copper ore was being mined in northern Oman, or Magan as it was then known, and exported to the Sumerian Empire at the northern end of the Gulf. The remains of the ancient copper workings can still be seen. Much has already been learnt from large-scale geophysical mapping surveys, which are continuing, as well as from detailed exploration in the form of geologic mapping, geochemical surveys and drillings. The accessibility of mineral deposits in a notoriously rugged region presents problems, but a considerable measure of success has already been achieved.

The copper ore deposits in the Wadi Jizzi near Sohar, mined in ancient times, are now being exploited again. The ore is processed into electrolytically refined copper cathodes in an on-site smelter, and then exported. The smelter was opened in 1983 when the first refined copper was exported. Low world prices for copper in recent years, and the exhaustion of the copper ore deposits at present being mined, faced the industry with the possibility of closure in 1994. However, further exploration has revealed 8.4 million tonnes of mineable copper ore at Rakah and Hayl Al Safil about 215 km from the smelter near Sohar. The ore from these mines will be converted into concentrate at Hayl Al Safil, and then transported to the smelter, where it will be refined into copper cathodes for export. At a production rate of one million tonnes a year, these supplies should ensure the future of the refinery into the next century. Exploration for copper ore deposits is continuing along the Batinah coast and on the Jebel Akhdar plateau.

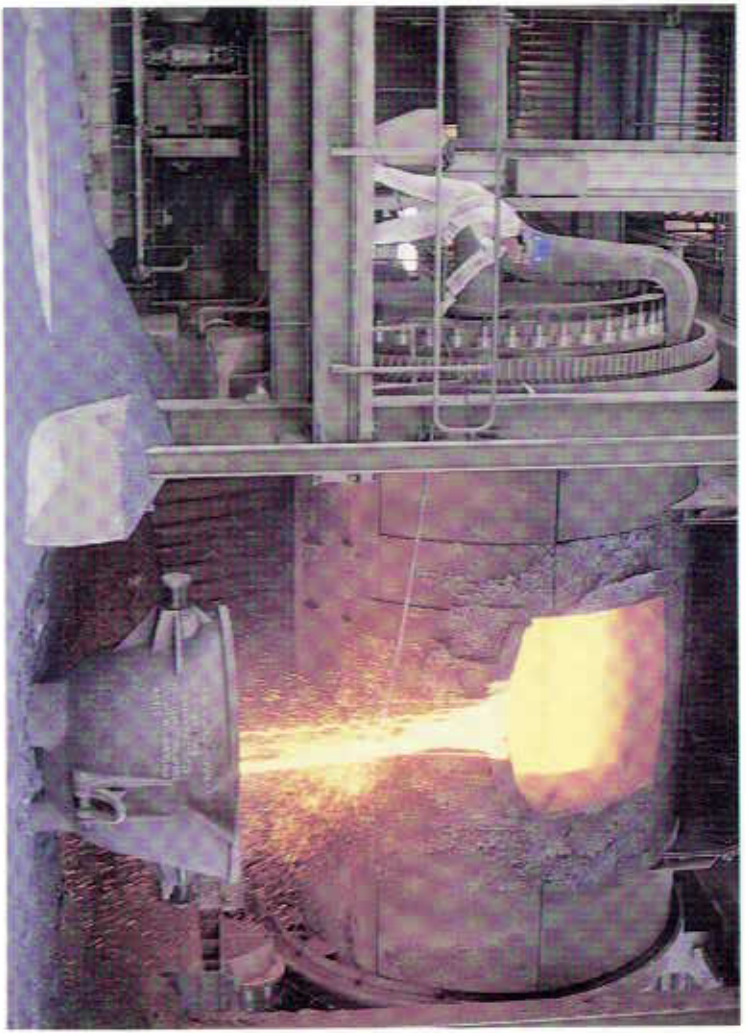
► Copper refining at Sohar.

Originally, the Government held 75% of the shares of the copper complex, but later acquired all the remaining shares, so that the whole copper industry is now state-owned. The operating company is the Oman Mining Company (OMCO). Total copper production increased by about 25% in 1992 from the previous year, and OMCO has projected another increase of 50% in 1993 with a total value of US $45 million. Gold is a by-product of the copper refining process and its contribution to OMCO's income continues to rise.

Chromite was discovered by accident in 1971 when exploration for other minerals was being carried out. Economically viable chromite reserves were found near Zaymi, and are now being mined by OMCO for the Oman Chromite Company (OCCO), which was formed in 1991. A number of private Omani individuals have applied for a license, and will be grouped together and given a site to develop.

► In addition to other minerals, coal has been located in promising quantities. Exploratory sites at Jalan.





tance. Transportation, marketing, and selling of the mineral will be managed for the group by OCCO. This is in keeping with the Government's policy of providing employment opportunities in less developed areas of the country. Japan is showing a keen interest in Omani chromite.

Extensive deposits of coal exist in the region of Sur in south-eastern Oman. Preliminary exploration work and evaluation drilling in the area have confirmed an estimated 36 million tonnes of coal. The exploration programme, which started in late 1990, is due to be completed this year, and feasibility studies should be starting shortly. An initial study by UNDP has estimated that reserves are sufficient to set up a 300-megawatt power plant, using around 100,000 tonnes of coal mined annually. This would be enough to meet the entire requirement of electricity for the whole Sharqiyah region.

Oman has large resources of industrial minerals, including silica sand and quartzite which could be used for a glass industry, gypsum for plasterboard, dolomite for magnesia, and kaolinite for ceramics and the paper industry. Plans are currently under way for establishing a glass industry. High quality marble is being mined both in the north and south of the Sultanate, some of which is being fashioned locally and some exported. The private sector is being actively encouraged to participate in the development of industrial mineral resources with considerable success. Some companies have expressed an interest in mining laterite for export to cement companies in the UAE. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in partnership with the private sector, is studying the possibility of setting up a magnesia plant either in the south or in the Quriyat area in the north, depending on the quality of dolomite available in the two areas.

AGRICULTURE

For the last quarter century, the Sultanate of Oman has had an oil-based economy, which has allowed for the development of the country in all its aspects, including agriculture. Until the development of the oil industry, agriculture and fishing had been the mainstay of the economy over the centuries. Even now, over half of the population is engaged in agriculture and fishing. A major goal of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is to increase agricultural self-sufficiency in food crops from 44% to 100% by the year 2000, by achieving an annual growth rate of 6.6%. This will involve raising crop and livestock production, improving the agricultural structure, and solving soil exhaustion and agricultural smallholding problems, as well as raising the living standards of the rural population. The private sector is to be supported in the development of agri-industry and marketing.

The Sultanate of Oman lies in an arid region of the world, but, unlike other States in the Arabian Peninsula, other than the Yemen Republic, it has considerable potential, due to its size and topography and local variations of climate. The Hajar range of mountains, which run the length of northern Oman and form the spine of the country, attract considerably greater, if sporadic, rainfall than occurs in neighbouring regions, whilst in Dhofar in the south, regular monsoon rains fall over the coastal range of mountains.

An early problem that arose affecting agriculture and fishing in the 1970s was the drift from the land and the fishing villages to the urban areas, where high wages attracted the younger men. However, during the 1980s, the Government took urgent measures to support farmers and the fishermen and thus encourage them to keep to their traditional occupations. This problem has also been ameliorated by the fact that all the major construction projects involved in the infrastructure have been completed so that the incentives to leave the land have been greatly reduced. Agriculture was given a considerable boost when the year 1988 was declared the Year of Agriculture. This proved to be so successful that it was extended to 1989. Now His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has designated two months of each year as Months of Agriculture, in order to ensure that agriculture in the Sultanate continues to make progress, and that all the relevant departments in the Ministry step up their efforts to help increase production. Another aim is to create closer cooperation between the Ministry and farmers, stock-breeders and fishermen.

The climate of northern Oman with long, hot and usually rainless summers, except over the mountains, and brief mild winters with small and sporadic rainfall is well suited to the cultivation of dates and limes.

The dates of Oman are renowned for their high quality and the yearly production is estimated to be between 150,000 and 175,000 tonnes. Twenty thousand hectares is given to the cultivation of date

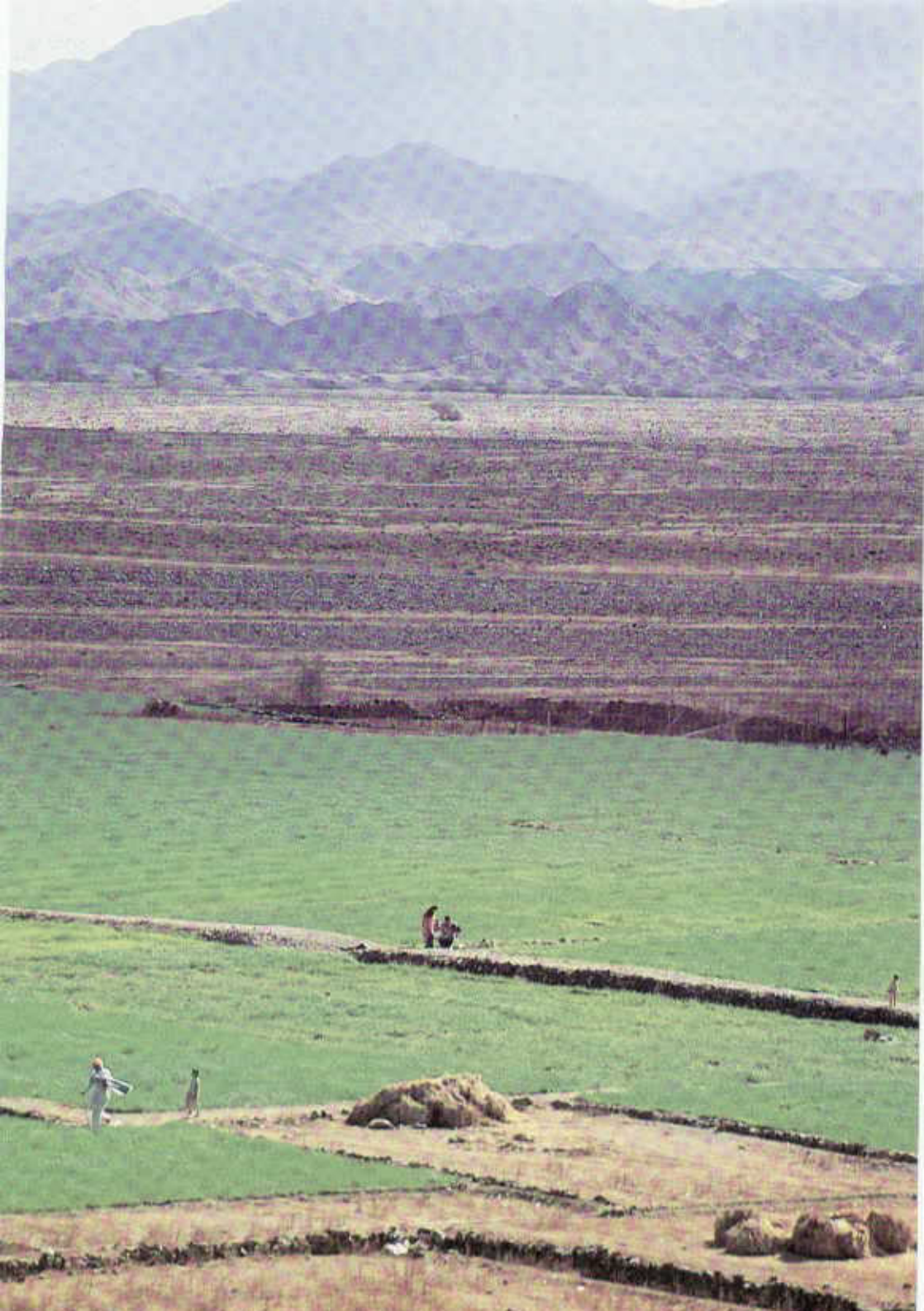


▲ Date harvesting near Nizwa.

palms numbering not less than 7 million. This is expected to rise to about 10 million by the year 1995. About 40% of date production is consumed by growers and owners, 25% consumed by livestock, and 30% is marketed inside and outside Oman. In 1992 the Ministry set up a cloning laboratory for the production of date palm seedlings. This is the most technically advanced method of producing high-quality seedlings. The first year of operation will see the production of 25,000 seedlings, which will replace old and low-productive palms. Two large farms have been established at Wadi Quriyat and Al Kamil for the cultivation of high-quality date palms, with around 5,000 date palms in each of farm. The two farms are used as model units for the study of the care and cultivation of date palms, grown with the use of the most advanced scientific methods, and research is carried out to determine how easily the different Omani strains are able to acclimatise to conditions in the different date palm-growing areas.

▶ An alfalfa farm.

Limes are grown in quantity along the Batinah Coast and particularly at the northern end. Together with dates, limes provide the major agricultural exports from the Sultanate. Also cultivated along the Batinah Coast are mangos, tobacco, tomatoes, onions, aubergines, peppers and many other fruits and vegetables, almost entirely for internal consumption in Oman. During 1992, several research programmes were carried out into ways of improving and diversifying vegetable cultiva-



were added to the recommended list. There was considerable increase in tonnage per hectare of production of tomatoes, potatoes and aubergines.

Greenhouses were constructed for the production of cucumbers and tomatoes. In addition to the programme for the improvement of date production, a programme was carried out in 1992 to improve, develop and diversify the cultivation of other fruit crops. This included research and studies of the cultivation of limes, mangos, bananas, coconuts, grapes, pomegranates and pawpaws.

Dhofar in the south has a totally different climate from that of northern Oman. Regular monsoon rains between June and September fall over the seaward-facing slopes of the mountains. Date palms are not to be found as the climate does not suit them; instead, coconut palms flourish on the coastal plain around Salalah, where bananas, pawpaws and other tropical fruits are grown extensively.

The coast-facing mountain slopes behind the coastal plain are traditional cattle-breeding areas of the Jebali tribesmen, the only ones in the Sultanate. Until recently, the Jebali only reared cattle for their milk; now, with good road communications to northern Oman where beef is in increasing demand, the Jebali are being encouraged to export their cattle to the north. This will not only profit the local population, but also relieve the pressure on the grazing lands.

Last year, the Ministry carried out a programme to improve, develop and diversify the cultivation of field crops and fodders, with the aim of identifying the best local strains and improving them. Under the programme, new types of field crops and fodders were evaluated and introduced to the Omani environment. Other objectives included the preparation of programmes aimed at increasing the grain production of the field crops and improving field crop cultivation methods. The programme covered wheat, barley, fodder, lucerne and silage.

Research has been advanced in the study of pests and plant diseases. Particular priority has been given to diseases affecting tomatoes. Attention has also been given to diseases which attack limes, date palms, coconuts and bananas. Programmes have also concentrated on biological prevention methods.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries provides the Omani farmer with a number of services for enterprises that he is unable to undertake on his own, and require high technical and other facilities. Last year, around 16,175 feddans (measurement of land) were sprayed against a damaging date palm grub (mataq). All areas of the Sultanate were covered except the Governorates of Musandam and Dhofar. The Ministry's spraying teams assisted farmers in protecting their fields with general pesticides. The Ministry also offers farmers ploughing services for nominal hire charges at its agricultural development centres.

New regulations on agricultural and livestock subsidies were issued

▶ Rose cultivation on the Jebel Akhdar for Oman's renowned rosewater.



ral mechanical equipment to encourage farmers to use it. Items covered by these include ploughs, reapers, binders, chemical sprayers, mechanical saws and small agricultural implements. Other subsides cover chemical fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, fruit seedlings, plastic covers, cloches and compost.

The Government has also reduced unit prices of electricity and diesel used for farming and agricultural industry projects.

The policy of the Oman Agriculture and Fisheries Bank is to provide loans for all categories of farmers, with priority being given to small farmers and productive agricultural projects. The Bank also administers some agriculture and fisheries loans programmes, and grants 'top up' loans in cooperation with the relevant departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In 1991, the Bank provided 159 loans totalling more than R.O. 600,000.

During the decade of 1991/2000, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has the target of increasing the production of poultry meat, eggs, and fresh milk by 100%, and production of meat from grazing animals by 48%. The ultimate aim is total self-sufficiency in all these products. To achieve these goals, it employs livestock research, livestock advice and subsidies for livestock projects. In 1992, a livestock research station was opened in Rumais on the Batinah Coast, containing a number of modern research units, including a laboratory for analysing food-

▼ Queen Bees being sold in Rostaq suq which is famous for its pure honey.



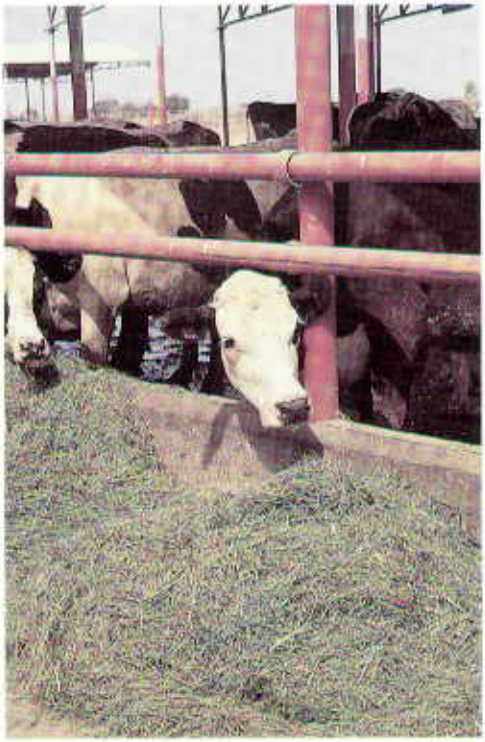
stuffs, fodders and dairy products. It also has enclosures for cows, sheep and goats, a mechanical workshop, a dairy unit, a training unit, a library and auditorium, as well as accommodation. Also last year, a new livestock research station was opened in Wadi Quriyat with similar facilities and a veterinary clinic. In Dhofar there is a livestock research station which includes a cattle research establishment, a dairy research unit and an abattoir.

In 1989 the Ministry began an intensive programme of analysis of ruminant and poultry feeds, involving experiments in the use of agricultural and animal wastes for animal feeds. The programme has already produced many positive technical and economic results.

The Ministry's veterinary laboratory carries out comprehensive studies of endemic animal diseases with the aim of eliminating them. These include infectious pneumonia, diseases in goats and camels, rodent parasites and rabies. Currently the laboratory is carrying out a programme for the production of a vaccine against infectious pneumonia in cooperation with the French Institute for the Study of Diseases in Tropical Areas. The current livestock advice programme aims to equip stockbreeders with the scientific skills required for rearing cattle, goats, sheep and poultry, and for marketing animal and poultry products. It also promotes the artificial insemination of cattle and modern methods of combating animal diseases.

The Ministry has a project for small-scale poultry farmers, which has been in operation for several years. So far, it has been implemented for 470 farms, 276 of which are for poultry meat production, and 194 for egg production. The Ministry's support provides 200 egg-laying chickens, feeding troughs, drinking troughs, nesting boxes, and veterinary and advice services. For farmers of meat-producing chickens it provides a gas-heated hatchery, feeding and watering troughs for chicks and adult birds, wire for an enclosure, and six batches totalling 3,000 chicks.

▼ Prize cattle at the Oman Agricultural Development Company's Sun Farms in Sohar, where the latest animal husbandry methods are employed.



Last year, the Oman Agriculture and Fisheries Bank financed eleven livestock production projects at a cost of R.O. 87,000.

The total area of land in the Sultanate suitable for agriculture is about 100,000 hectares, of which about 60,000 are under cultivation at present. In recent years, the cultivated areas has increased at an average rate of 7.2% per annum. However, the expansion of the area of land under cultivation is not the main aim of the current Five-Year Development Plan; it is rather the improvement of productivity from

cal advice through 2,500 extension farms. An important element of this policy is the use of irrigation water to the best advantage by employing the most modern means to cut wastage to the minimum.

The overall responsibility for water resources is entrusted to the Ministry of Water Resources, and is dealt with in another chapter. However, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is responsible for such water resources as are available for agriculture, the scope of which is considerable. Cultivation in the Sultanate is totally dependent on irrigation derived from groundwater.

In the mountainous interior of northern Oman, agriculture is largely based on the falaj system, the origins of which are lost in the mists of antiquity. It is likely that the system was introduced into Oman from Persia. Many of the aflaj (plural of falaj) in use today are 800 years old or more. This ingenious system consists of tapping the water table in the mountains and leading the water by man-made subterranean channels, often up to 10 km in length, and siphones across the wadi beds to the plains, where it is brought to the surface and used for domestic purposes and irrigation. The water is very pure and lukewarm, and the flow is steady and reliable, even through periods of drought when its volume is only slightly reduced. The use of irrigation water is very carefully controlled in the villages, where ancient sundials used for allocating irrigation periods to farmers may still be seen.

Along the Batinah coastal plain, irrigation water is obtained from wells, nowadays operated by diesel pumps, as is mostly the case of the Salalah plain in Dhofar, though there are some aflaj. In both cases the groundwater originates from rainfall over the mountains, which flow towards the coast through subterranean aquifers. In the case of the Batinah Coast, and, to a lesser extent, on the Salalah Plain, problems have arisen in recent years due to the expansion of Salalah Plain, problems have arisen in recent years due to the expansion of agriculture, resulting in the resources of the aquifers being overdrawn and an increase in salinity. Date palms have a comparatively high degree of tolerance of salinity in water, but, even, so, in some locations the level of salinity is now such that even date palms will not tolerate it. The Government has acted energetically and imposed strict controls on the sinking of wells, and dams have been constructed to help the recharging of the aquifers,and more dams are under construction. The effects of the recharge dams have been carefully assessed, and enough information has now been obtained to show positive results. This subject is dealt with in more detail in the chapter on water. The recharge dam programme is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

PAMAP

The Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (PAMAP) is playing an increasingly successful role in the marketing and distri-

bution of internal agricultural produce. It was established in 1981 with the main objectives of :-

(a) Providing a link between the farmers and the trade, through the establishment of a well-organised marketing network.

(b) Providing farmers with a market outlet and encouraging them to grow high quality produce.

(c) Improving the existing market for Omani produce in terms of quantity and availability.

PAMAP has recently branched out into the export market with successful results. Last year, exports of fruit and vegetables were worth R.O. 500,000. This year the target is R.O. 1 million. Most consignments have been going to the Gulf States, with Kuwait taking as much as 70% of the total. Exports consist mainly of tomatoes and bananas. Dried limes are also traditionally exported from Oman. Internally, potatoes are becoming an increasingly important crop, and PAMAP has been instrumental in its development.

Growers are encouraged by PAMAP's policy to take all they harvest at an attractive price. The present national production of 5,000 tonnes only meet half of annual demand, while that of tomatoes 26,000 tonnes is now enough to meet the annual demand.

▼ Oman is almost self-sufficient in agricultural produce.

PAMAP's headquarters and Central Distribution Centre are at Ghala near Muscat. Regional Distribution Centres are at Salalah, Sohar, Nizwa, Ibra, and Suwaiq. These latter also act as Collection Centres of which there are seventeen throughout the Sultanate. There are banana-ripening and packing facilities in Salalah and at the Central Distribution Centre in Ghala. A successful marketing innovation is the marketing of lime tea, made from dried and powdered limes. PAMAP was also ventured into the revival of an ancient and historic market – the export of frankincense. Omani frankincense is a multipurpose product with a high proportion of essential oils which can be used in a number of chemical, pharmaceutical and perfumery industries. The internationally famous perfume, 'Amouage', is produced in Oman from Frankincense, and marketed abroad.



The Board of Directors of PAMAP lays down the broad policies and procedures of the Authority, and the Executive President is responsible for overall management. The Board of Directors consists of 13 members, of which the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries is the Chairman.

The Sultanate of Oman with a 1,700 km-long coastline extending from the Musandam Peninsula at the entrance to the Gulf in the north to the border with the Yemen Republic in the south, has extremely rich fishing grounds, the potentialities of which have yet to be fully evaluated. A 200-mile exclusive economic zone extends to seaward from the shores of Oman.

Oman has an oil-based economy, but it has other resources, and fisheries is an important one of these. Great efforts have been made in the last two decades by the Government to develop a fisheries industry and to exploit the abundant fisheries potential. However, during the past few years there has been a decline in the stocks of certain important species, particularly lobsters, abalone and kingfish. Restrictions have had to be introduced and intensive study is being currently undertaken to establish the causes of this decline.

Fishing, together with agriculture, has been a traditional Omani occupation through the ages, and a major source of employment. Nevertheless, until recent years it only met the needs of local coastal communities. Until road communications opened up the routes to the Interior of the country it was impossible for the inhabitants of the towns and villages of the interior to obtain fresh fish. Bedu of the Janaba tribe used to trade dried fish conveyed on camel-back from the coast in the region of Masirah Island for dates from the Interior in the region of Nizwa.

More than 150 species of fish have been identified in Omani waters, ranging from sardines to tuna. Some 35 species of grouper, or hammour as they are known in Oman, are found in the waters of the Sultanate. Schools of sardines, netted off the Batinah Coast, have long been used as animal feed and fertiliser. In Dhofar, sardines are still bought by the Jebali tribesmen as feed for their cattle during the dry season when the grazing has been exhausted; although this is a dying practice as fodder becomes increasingly available from farms on the Salalah plain. Large numbers of lobsters are now caught off Masirah Island and the coast of Dhofar, and exported to the north.

During the first stages of development in the early 1970s, many fishermen left their communities for the towns where they could earn higher wages. The Government was keenly aware of the depletion of these communities and the threat it presented to the fishing industry, and took early remedial action to support the livelihood of the fisher-

men. A Fisheries Department formed in 1972 became a Directorate-General in 1974, and this was later absorbed into the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In 1980 the Oman National Fisheries Company (ONFC) was formed with Government assistance to purchase, distribute and export the catches of local fishermen. It also handled fish caught by concessionaires. In 1987 the Oman Fisheries Company (OFC) was established, into which the ONFC was merged. R.O. 30 million was received as subscriptions from shareholders.

By 1990 there were 18,546 registered fishermen, representing an increase of 6,000 over the previous five years. In 1978 the Fishermen's Encouragement Fund was introduced, under which more than 14,000 fishermen have been assisted in buying outboard engines and fibreglass boats. Much progress has been achieved in recent years in structural improvements to fishing harbours and the construction of cold-storage and processing facilities throughout the Sultanate.

The total quantity of fish and crustaceans landed rose sharply in the 1980s, reaching a peak in 1988. However, the total for 1989 showed a decline. Research carried out by the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre has indicated that over-fishing has had a major part to play in this decline. There are clear indications that stocks of certain types of

▼ **The fish processing factory at Muttrah.**



tuna and mackerel have been depleted. A similar situation has arisen over stocks of crustaceans, principally lobsters and abalone. As a result, fishing for lobsters and abalone is now restricted to two months in the year (December and January). The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre has recommended that nets should have a mesh size of at least 5-1/2 inches to allow young fish to escape and breed. Research has also shown that overfishing is not the sole reason for the decline in fish stocks. It is strongly suspected that pollution, which now widely affects the oceans, has a part in this, particularly through damage to the mangrove ecosystem, which provides a breeding ground for many types of fish and crustaceans.

Large-scale commercial fishing enterprises have also played their part in the development of the fishing industry. An original agreement between the Government and a Japanese fishing company was replaced in 1977 by a concession to a Korean company which trains Omanis on its trawlers and provides 38% of its catch to the Government in the form of royalties. The industrial fleet now consists of the National Fishing Company and the Korean Fishing Company. Fish are being exported to the USA, Japan, Australia, France and other European coun-

▼ The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre at Sidab, near Muscat, where Oman's marine life is intensively studied.



tries. Exports to France have trebled in recent years, and exports to the UK and Holland are being encouraged. Industrial companies' ships – including some from Japan with which the authorities have signed fishing concessions – caught some 10% of the total haul in 1990. All the developed ports will have enhanced processing and cold storage facilities. The work is expected to be finished in 1994.

In the Governorate of Musandam, where the region is almost totally dependent on fishing, special Government assistance has been provided to the local fishing communities. Much of the catch in this region is exported to the UAE and other AGCC States.

In 1986 the Government set up the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre near Sidab, on the coast near Muscat, with the consultative support of UNESCO and FAO. In co-operation with the Sultan Qaboos University, its role includes studies of different stocks of resources and the future development and management of the vast range of marine species to be found in Omani waters, as well as a more academic role in the general ecology of marine environment, with particular emphasis on the conservation of ecosystems and endangered species, including turtles. The Centre also houses a public aquarium and a modern library. The Centre and its aquarium has proved to be an excellent learning facility for both students and the general public.

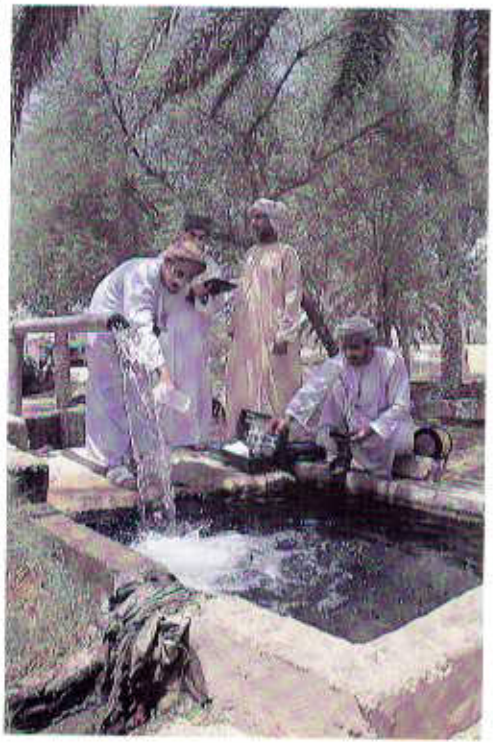
There is an allocation of RO 200 million for the fishing industry under the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1991-96), of which RO 84.1 million has been set aside for investment in industrial and traditional fishing vessels, shoreside facilities and transport. RO 75 million is allocated for resources assessment and extension services, whilst RO 25 million is to be spent on the construction of eight major harbours and 16 smaller ones. Fish processing firms will get RO 13.9 million. Large-scale port development is planned for Sur and Quriyat, enabling them to accommodate industrial vessels and ease pressure on the principal port of Mina Qaboos.

The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre is about to begin studies of breeding molluscs, including Mussel, oyster, scallop and abalone through sea aquaculture. It is intended to develop sea-based aquaculture on a large scale. In the course of time, aquaculture at sea will be extended to kingfish and hammour, and it is visualised that fishermen will then be enabled to adopt this method.

Whereas oil and natural gas are finite resources which, if extracted, will inevitably be exhausted over a period of time, water resources are replaced by rainfall. However, if drawn on excessively, problems will arise. This is the situation in which the Sultanate of Oman finds itself at the present time. The problem varies from region to region and should not be exaggerated, though in some areas on the Batinah coastal plain it is serious. In recent National Day addresses to the Nation, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has urged citizens to conserve water whether used domestically or, more importantly, for agriculture. The Government has been fully aware of the problem for a long time, and already many steps have been taken to cope with it. Further measures are under way at the present time.

The Sultanate lies in an arid region of the world, and the art of exploiting available water resources to the best advantage is not new in Oman, as exemplified by the centuries-old falaj system. However, the ease of modern methods of well-sinking and water extraction have had disadvantages, as can be seen on the Batinah coast where over-extraction from wells has had harmful results. Rainfall in Oman varies according to the geography of the country to a considerable extent, and in any case is limited. It is also sporadic and unreliable, except in a limited area of southern Dhofar which receives regular summer monsoon rains. Elsewhere rain falls most frequently over the mountains of northern Oman, often in the form of violent storms, the run-off from which has in the past been lost into the sea or the deserts of the Interior.

▼ A farmer watches while a national well inventory team takes water samples for quality testing.



The Government has long been aware that if Oman was to develop industry where none existed before, and cope with the needs of a rapidly expanding population with higher living standards, major measures had to be taken. At the same time, it is Government policy to increase the production of agriculture so as to make Oman as self-supporting as possible in food production. Whilst this can be achieved by improvements in farming methods, it will to some degree involve increasing the areas of land under cultivation, which will need irrigation. Thus it was that, in 1986, two Councils concerned with the environment were merged

into the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Water Resources, of which His Majesty the Sultan was the Chairman. In 1989 it was decided that water was of such paramount importance that a new authority, the Public Authority for Water Resources (PAWR) was established by Royal Decree and took over the functions performed by the Directorate-General of Water Resources in the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and the Council for Conservation of Environment and Water Resources. This has now evolved into the Ministry of Water Resources which incorporate PAWR, and was established by Royal Decree in 1989.

Apart from fresh water for domestic supplies obtained from seawater desalination plants (see chapter on domestic water), all water resources in the Sultanate derive from rain water. However, some ancient water, sometimes referred to as fossil water, derives from a period when the climate of Oman was considerably wetter than it is today, and is not being replenished in today's arid climate. It therefore has to be carefully husbanded. The falaj system in the Interior has been used for nearly a thousand years, and is a most efficient method utilising available water to the best advantage. (A detailed description of the falaj system is given in the chapter on agriculture). On the Batinah Coast of northern Oman, and on the Salalah Plain in the south, water for irrigation is obtained from wells.

▼ The Ministry regularly monitors water at 800 sites throughout the Sultanate.





▲ Recharge dams are also fed by aflaj.

In recent years a major problem has arisen on the Batinah Plain, the most densely populated and intensively cultivated region of the country. Here, the irrigation of date gardens and crops is supplied entirely by well water. The availability of powerful pumps coupled with the use of drilling rigs, has made water extraction easier. As a result, the number of wells has proliferated, and the land under cultivation has correspondingly increased considerably. Unfortunately, this upset the balance between extraction and the re-supply of the subterranean aquifers from which the water is drawn. Crops suffered and, in some places, died. Fortunately, the worst areas are relatively few, but there will be no single lasting solution. Rather, there will be a mixture of solutions, involving more efficient use of water, enhanced recharge where this is feasible and, not least, a general acceptance that overconsumption exists and that it must be reduced.

The main methods of reducing consumption are:

1. The use of more efficient irrigation systems
2. By growing crops which require less water
3. By regulating the amount that can be legally pumped from a well.

The main methods of increasing recharge are:

1. By bringing fresh water from elsewhere and using it directly or storing it underground for later use.

2. By prevention of unncessary water losses by reducing evaporation.

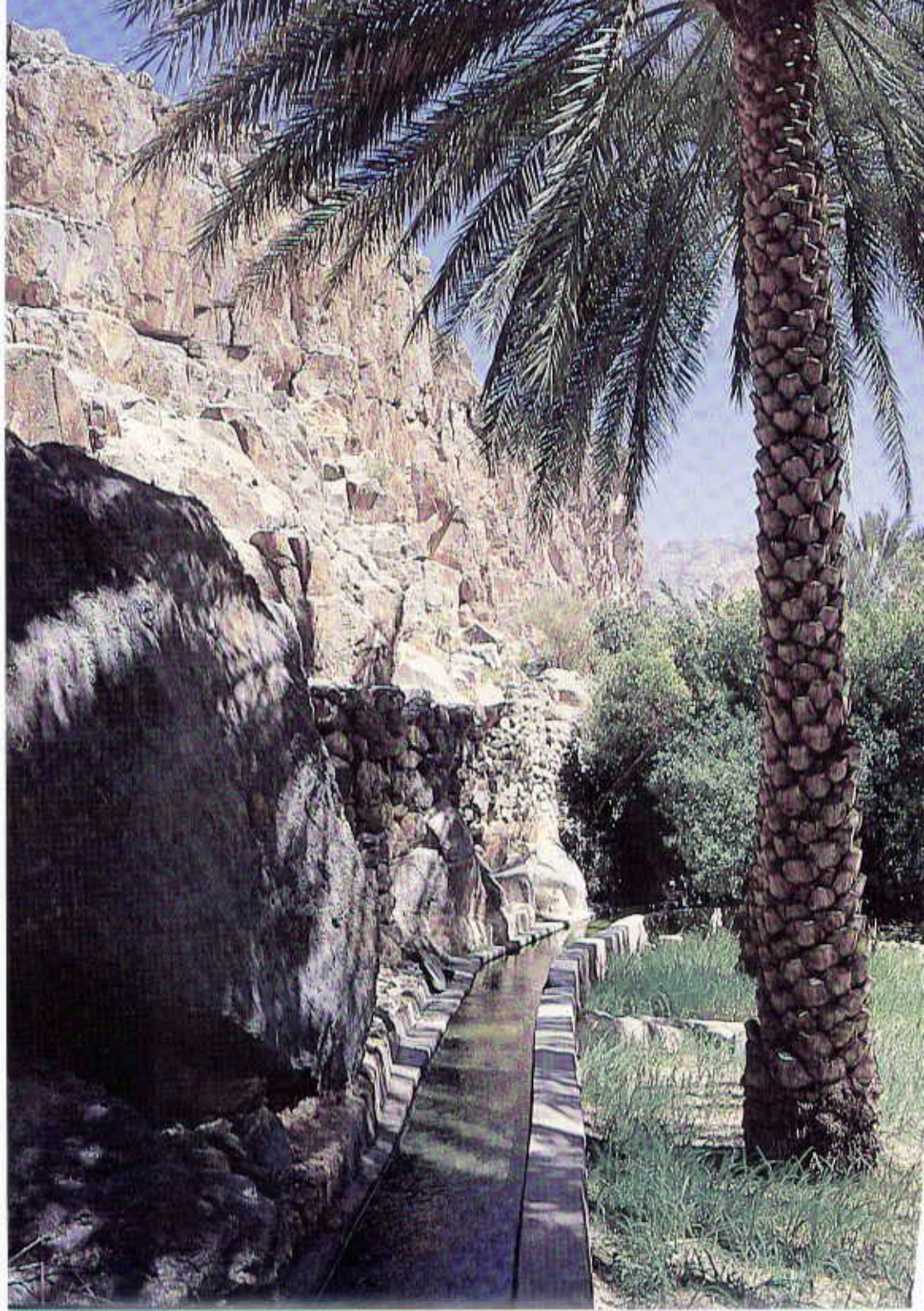
3. By construction of reservoirs in the mountains.

4. By the construction of recharge dams on the plains to trap flood waters that might otherwise be lost to the sea.

Drastic action being needed to bring this situation under control, in 1989 a National Committee for the Guidance of Water Usage on the Batinah coast was set up by Royal Decree. The 15-member committee is chaired by His Majesty's Adviser for Economic Planning Affairs, His Excellency Mohamed Al Zubair. The Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) has taken energetic action to bring well-drilling under control throughout the Sultanate. This control is now being strictly enforced, and permits from MWR are required before wells may be drilled. Registration of wells throughout the country was carried out in 1990 and approximately 167,000 were registered. Verification was started in October 1991 covering the wilayets of Birka and Buraimi as well as the province of Dhofar in the south. The national inventory of wells started at the beginning of December 1992 on the Batinah Plain, initially in the wilayets of Birka and Sohar. These are priority areas for water resources assessment and management due to over-abstraction. The existing pilot project teams in Salalah and Buraimi will continue their work as part of the national inventory. Work in the Interior of Oman is intended to start by mid-1993 in Ibra, Nizwa and Ibri. Ultimately it is planned to have 67 inventory teams in the field throughout the Sultanate. Technical data, such as the depth of wells and the amount of water extracted from them is being obtained at the same time. The whole programme is expected to be completed over a three-year period.

The assessment of water resources is achieved through detailed analysis of the data collected by the monitoring networks and through special field investigations. Assessment is approached mainly on a wadi by wadi basis because most accessible water resources in Oman are found in relatively shallow wadi gravels, and are recharged mainly from the absorption of wadi flow. Re-charging aquifers is being undertaken by the construction of recharge dams in the wadis, thus retaining flood waters which would otherwise flow to waste in the sea or the desert. The retained water will, it is planned, on being progressively released, seep into aquifers and thus recharge them.

The planning and responsibility for the construction of recharge dams is in the domain of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The first of these dams was completed at Al Khodh near Muscat in 1985. According to the master plan drawn up by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries a total of 58 recharge dams will be constructed throughout the Sultanate. The subject of recharge dams is dealt with in detail in the Chapter on Agriculture.



Another aspect of water control is the prevention of flooding, which is liable to occur after heavy downpours of rain in the mountains. One such flood-prevention dam was completed at Khasab in the Musandam a few years ago, and two were completed in the Muscat area at the end of 1991.

The maintenance and repair of the falaj system is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and considerable funds have been set aside under the Fourth Five Year Plan for this purpose. Over the years many aflaj (pl of falaj) fell into disuse for a variety of reasons, and much data has yet to be collected to get an accurate picture of the situation. This is of particular importance for agriculture in the Interior. In the south of Oman, on the Salalah Plain where there is intensive cultivation of the land, there has been a rapid increase in the extraction of groundwater over the past few years. This has reproduced the same indications of stress due to a lowering water table and an increase of salinity as has occurred on the Batinah Plain, but to a lesser degree.

The aquifer below the Salalah Plain relies for recharge on the annual monsoon rains over the jebel; all the evidence that MWR has gathered indicates that it is a very dynamic system characterised by rapid flows. This makes the area potentially susceptible to shortage after one or two years of poorer than average rainfall. MWR has initiated a pilot water well inventory project in Salalah due to the urgency of defining the total water demand and its spatial distribution. In parallel with this, MWR is conducting an assessment project to refine present estimates of groundwater availability. The results of the inventory and the detailed assessment of resources will be utilised to develop a long-term strategy for the sustainable management of the water resources of the Salalah Plain. MWR has given this a very high priority.

In the Nejd, an area north of the coastal range in Dhofar which stretches northwards to the edge of the Rub Al Khali, there are reservoirs of fossil water, the extent of which are yet to be established, and give rise to artesian water resources. These are already being used for experimental work in the cultivation of fodder and crops. These resources are of course finite and have to be carefully conserved.

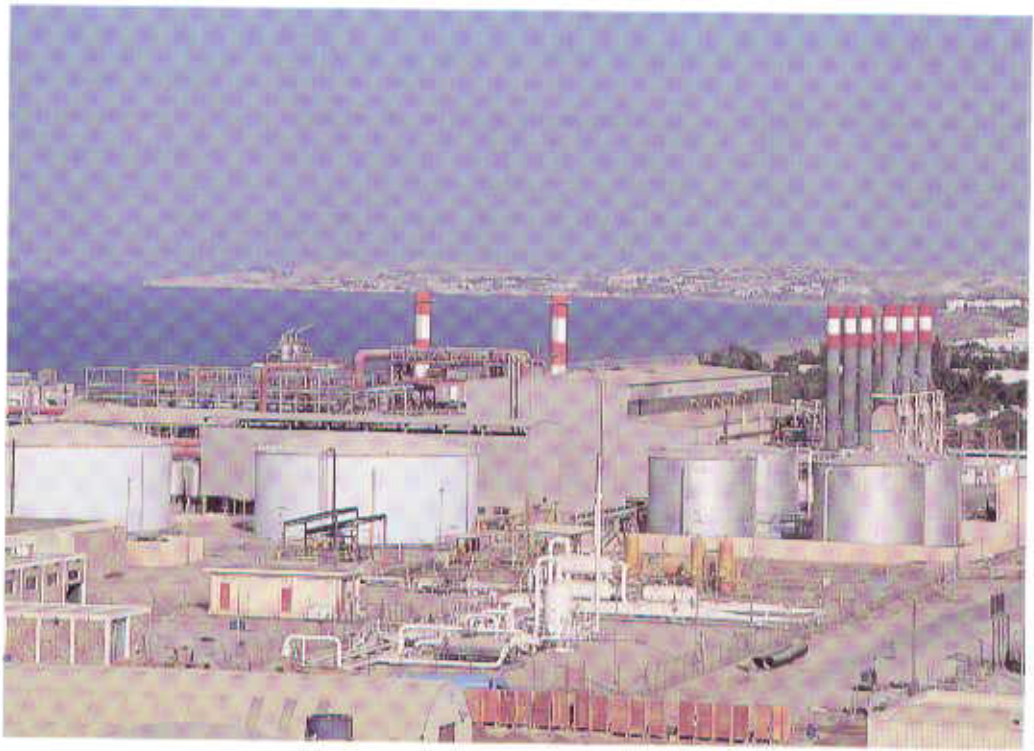
Overall, Oman shares with all arid countries (and indeed with most other countries) the need to maximise the sustainable use of its water resources whilst, at the same time, encouraging and increasing water conservation at every level. Achieving development and delivering a better standard of living and quality of life to its people within these constraints is a challenge which Oman is addressing with confidence that both can be attained.

◀ A falaj system.

DOMESTIC WATER

A rising population and a rapidly improving standard of living among the population in general has greatly increased the demand for water for domestic use. This demand continues to increase. Before 1970 the population of the Sultanate was entirely dependent on falaj water and water wells for domestic water supplies. These in turn were dependent on a sparse and capricious rainfall. In times of prolonged drought, which are not infrequent, great difficulties were experienced, and water was liable to become polluted resulting in sickness.

The first organised water project in the Sultanate was implemented in 1970, when three government wells were sunk in the al Khodh area, from where a pipeline was run to Muttra and Muscat. Water for private households was supplied through distribution points. As natural water resources were limited, and to meet the rapidly increasing demands for water for domestic purposes, a desalination plant was constructed at al Ghubrah outside Muscat, which was commissioned in 1976 with a daily production capacity of 6 million gallons. A new unit in 1982 doubled this capacity to 12 million gallons daily. In 1986-87 three more desalination units were completed at al Ghubrah bringing



total production capacity to 23.5 million gallons daily. Design is under preparation for Unit No. 6 which is expected to commence production in the early part of 1995.

At the same time, wells were sunk in the largest aquifers in the Muscat area, the number of which rose to 92 by the end of 1986. These wells are in the Wadi Adai, al Khodh and al Seeb. In normal circumstances their daily production is about 6 million gallons, but in an emergency, and over short periods, this can be raised to 21 million gallons daily. At present about 75% of water consumption in the Muscat area is provided by the al Ghubrah desalination plant, while 25% comes from ground water.

Outside the Muscat area more than 300 production wells have been sunk in the wilayets, and in 1992 there were a total of 14 desalination plants. Wherever possible, the Ministry is using brackish water for blending with desalinated water to obtain acceptable quality. Small desalination plants have been constructed at a number of towns in the Interior for treating brackish water. Recently, for Nizwa two pumping stations have been built, one at Izz and the other at Firq and a pipeline laid from Manah wellfield to Central Nizwa. Nizwa now gets its water supply from the wellfields at Wadi al Abyaddh and Manah which was developed in 1991. The Directorate General of Water supplies the city with about 150,000 gallons a day. In Sur a one million gallon a day desalination plant is expected to be completed in 1993. A network of transmission and distribution lines to carry water from the plant has already been completed. At present, Sur's demand of a million gallons daily is met by groundwater sources. A study is currently being carried out to determine whether wells should be drilled or desalination plants installed at Adam, Ja'alan Bani bu Hassan, al Kamil, al Wafi and the

◀ The desalination plant at Al Ghubrah – the latest phase was commissioned in November 1992.

▶ Clean water has enabled dramatic improvements in hygiene.



to set up desalination plants to treat brackish water in the wosta area (south Central Oman) and for the distillation of sea water at Lima in the Musandam.

Among recently completed projects on Masirah Island are a 3.5 km pipeline and improvements to the island's 250,000 gallons a day distillation plant. Desalination plants at Ras al Hadd, Ruwais and Qumaila produce a total of 77,700 gallons a day. Six desalination stations in the Wosta region produce 100,000 gallons daily.

The Minister of Electricity and Water, H.E. Shaikh Mohamed bin Ali al Qatabi, recently signed a contract with a consultancy firm for a study of the water needs of Muscat and nine towns countrywide for the period up to the year 2010. At present 70% of Muscat, Governorate is covered by a modern water supply, while areas not covered are being served by tankers.

In the Musandam Governorate water supply covers 95% of the region, while the remainder comprising mountain areas and some east coast villages are being supplied by tankers by land and by sea.

Fluoridation of potable water is to be introduced. When it is available, Oman will be the first country in the Gulf region to have this important additive. According to the World Health Organisation, maintaining the level of fluoride within proper limits ensures the dental health of the younger sections of the community.

The expectation that, over the next four years, demand for domestic water will increase by 6% has led to new projects which will extend the water network to areas not at present supplied with piped water. One project in the Muscat area will pump about one million gallons of water from Bausher and al Ansab to blend with desalinated water at the al Ghubrah plant. As part of the Fourth Five Year Plan, a RO 14 million scheme to reinforce the existing water supply system in Muscat was begun in 1991. The project will strengthen the present water supply transmission system to the distribution reservoirs and increase storage of water at al Ghubrah desalination plant. The scheme involving the construction of a new 12 million gallon reservoir at al Ghubrah pumping station and the laying of about 40 km of 1000 mm ductile iron water pipelines, will feed into the distribution reservoirs at al Seeb in the west, and Ruwi in east, and be linked to the existing transmission system.

A new pumping station, due to be completed this year, is planned to accommodate all future expansions of the al Ghubrah desalination plant, and will have four pumps, each with a capacity of 1,200 cubic metres a day. The project will be ready in time to receive water from the new unit being built at the al Ghubrah plant. The unit, with a capacity to produce six million gallons a day, will reduce pressure on the wells, which at the present time are being over-pumped.

ELECTRICITY

Before 1969 there were no power stations in the Sultanate of Oman. The only source of electricity in Muscat was a generator housed within the city walls. In that year a small power station at Riyam, between Muscat and Muttrah, came into operation with a productive capacity of 4.5mw. It had small diesel engines and its power distribution was to a limited area of Muscat and Muttrah; the total number of connections did not exceed 2,500. By the end of 1992 85% of the country was covered by electricity services.

In 1976 the al Ghubrah desalination and power plant was established near Muscat. The initial capacity of the plant was 25.5mw of electricity and six million gallons of desalinated sea water. At the end of 1983 the first extension of the al Ghubrah plant was completed raising the capacity to 287mw of electricity and 11 million gallons of water per day. In the current Five Year Plan two units will be added at the al Ghubrah power plant, one of 30,000kw capacity and the other of 95,000kw.

By 1978 the growing nation-wide requirement for electricity and water was such that a Ministry of Electricity and Water was estab-

▼ Giant generators at the Al Ghubrah desalination plant supply the capital area with much of its electricity requirement.



the first industrial estate near Muscat, was undertaken in two phases, the first of which was completed in 1984 with a capacity of 250mw; by the end of the second phase capacity had been doubled to 500mw.

There were no generating stations in the wilayets outside Muscat before 1978, but by the following year 22 were set up in the different regions with a total overall capacity of 27mw. Originally, all these stations were diesel-operated, but as production costs of diesel units is high, it is the policy of the Ministry to connect the small diesel generation stations to gas turbines and to interconnect these systems with the main power stations in the Muscat area and the Wadi al Jizzi.

The power plants at al Ghubrah and Rusayl are powered by natural gas supplied by pipeline from the gas fields in the Interior. The power plant in the Wadi al Jizzi is also operated by natural gas, and was constructed to supply electricity to the copper-refining complex in the Wadi al Jizzi and to the Sohar region. The Wadi al Jizzi station is to acquire a new unit of 28,000 kw capacity.

The Muscat area now receives its electricity supplies from the al Ghubrah and Rusayl power stations which are interconnected. This network supplies not only the Muscat area, but has reached out to Quriyat, Fanja, Sumail, Rostaq, Musannah, Suwaiq and Khabourah. The supply of electricity to rural communities is proceeding rapidly. The Muscat electricity system is to be interconnected with the Wadi al Jizzi system which provides for all the centres of population of the north Batinah. This project is expected to be completed next year.

The Manah Project is a major new enterprise which is a further implementation of the Ministry's policy of improving the economics of electricity to consumers by replacing the small power stations, which use diesel generators, by larger stations using natural gas as fuel. The power station will be built in the wilayet of Manah, close to the village of Izz, and will be interconnected by high voltage power transmission lines to the load centres in the Dhakiliya which will feed the distribution systems supplying the consumers. The site is close to the natural gas pipeline running from the Saih Nihayda gas fields to the Muscat area, so a supply of fuel is readily available to the power station. The cost of the project at 1991 prices was limited at RO 60 million. The peak demand for the area to be served by the Manah power station is expected to be 90mw in 1993. With this in mind, the installed capacity for the plant has been fixed at 120mw. It should be sufficient for many years after 1993. However, there is an important difference between this project and all the others which the Ministry of Electricity and

Water has implemented: the Manah Project is being financed by the private sector as a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) Project. The key characteristic of BOOT is that a concession is granted by the Government to an entrepreneur to develop a resource and sell the product to the Government for a fixed period of years, after which all the assets will be transferred to the purchaser (Government) at no cost. It is the entrepreneur's responsibility to obtain the finance required to build the facilities, as well as designing, procuring, constructing, operating and maintaining them during the concession period. The tariff rate at which the entrepreneur will sell the electricity to the Government will be such as to enable him to pay all his financing costs and all the operating costs during the concession period. In the case of the Manah power station the concession period is 20 years.

In the southern region work began on building the Salalah power station in 1971, when three diesel units were installed with a maximum capacity of 1,365mw. Later, other units were added and new stations were built at Salalah and two at Raysut, so that by the end of 1989 capacity had reached a level consistent with the massive growth and development taking place in the southern region. Work on improving electricity services was not restricted to Salalah, but also included the coastal towns of Taqah, Mirbat and Sadah. Electricity services have been extended to the al Halaniyah (Kuria Muria) Islands off the south coast of Oman. In 1987 a power and desalination plant was built there with a total capacity of 640 kw of electricity.

All over the Sultanate, work continued last year in reinforcing the existing power system by upgrading the capacity of distribution transformers in various areas to meet the rapid growth of load demand and service connection applications. Progress has also been made in connecting smaller power stations to the national grid, thus enabling diesel-operated power stations to be closed and saving finance.

Under the current Five-Year Plan the al Ghubrah Extensions Phase 4 is to be implemented by providing one diesel unit, with a capacity of 6 million gallons of desalinated water per day, while a steam turbine of 30,000 KVA is under study. It is planned that this project is to be completed in 1995-96. The implementation of the Manah Project will enable diesel operated power stations in the Dhakiliya region to be closed down.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOUR

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour was one of the first Ministries established in the early 1970s following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. In the early stages, its activities were circumscribed by lack of communications in every form. However, as good roads, telephone and radio spread their networks throughout the Sultanate, first in the coastal belt and then into the Interior, the Social Services expanded at an ever-increasing pace so that now the Sultanate possesses a social welfare system second to none, better indeed than many in longer-developed countries.

A system of social welfare has traditionally existed in Omani society over the centuries, as the payment of zakat is one of the pillars of Islam (zakat is described more fully in the chapter on Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs). However, this was clearly inadequate for a modern developing society, and social security has now been extended so that it provides protection for every Omani citizen who falls upon bad times.

The Ministry provides social welfare and development for individuals and families. A highly modern approach is applied through a wide range of channels. The most important of these are social security, welfare relief, special cases, livelihood projects, social studies and research, charitable clubs and associations. In addition there are the National Local Community Development Programme, Mother and Child Welfare, Omani Women's Associations, and Women's Training Centres. There are also other social welfare and development services.

Social security has been expanded so that it now covers all citizens in need with its protective umbrella. The Social Security Law entitles every national (whose eligibility has been established by social investigation) the right to a social security allowance. Those covered by the law include families that have become impoverished as a result of incapacity, loss of breadwinner or insufficient income, and include the old, orphans, widows, divorcees, those abandoned by the breadwinner and families of prisoners. By a Royal Decree issued in 1984, new categories were added to the original list. These include unmarried girls, and women who have no means of support. To mark the 20th National Day in 1990, directives were issued increasing monthly social security allowances to RO 30 per person per month, rising to a maximum of RO 80 per family. These directives were later codified in law in 1991.

The Ministry established the Special Welfare Department in 1980 to provide the physically and mentally disabled with the opportunity to enjoy a decent standard of living and earn an income within the community. The Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled was set up in Al-Khodh in 1987 and furnished with the latest educational and technical equipment to provide services for the disabled in all regions of the Sultanate and enable them to recover their potential and return to their old occupations or take up suitable jobs. The dis-



▲ The Ministry of Social Affairs building in Salalah.

abled trainees graduate from the Centre after they have been trained in skills such as typing, carpentry, domestic science and tailoring. The Ministry liaises with the competent government and other agencies and organisations to find employment for the disabled in the public and private sectors. It is anticipated that new crafts and skills will be added to the curriculum and that trainee numbers will be expanded during 1993, particularly among those categories that are not currently receiving training.

Flexibility is a necessary element in all social work, and social assistance is one example of this. Hence the Ministry is ready to assist families whose circumstances require that they should receive help in the form of immediate cash payments. Such circumstances arise when extreme climatic conditions in some areas of the Sultanate result in natural disasters. There are also 'unnatural disasters' such as fires. Assistance payments in such distressing situations provide relief for the victims, as well as compensation for their material losses.

As part of its plan to pool available resources and develop the local communities, the Ministry encourages citizens to become self-sufficient and self-reliant, and avoid over-dependence on others. The goal here is to improve families' living standards, incomes and circumstances and transform them into productive units. The Ministry endeavours to achieve this through its livelihood projects, which



▲ The handicapped are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the community.

consist mainly of small business ventures like kiosks, stalls and small shops. These projects enable people to generate their own incomes and reduce their dependence on state assistance.

Sound social planning and the elimination of social ills can only be achieved through proper theoretical studies and practical experience in the field. The Ministry has carried out a number of studies of 'negative social phenomena' with the aim of discovering their causes and finding ways of overcoming them. Studies include a survey of public opinion on currently prevailing dowry levels, a study of social and environmental motivations and their effect on the Omani farmer and agricultural development, and a number of field studies on various social and development related issues.

The Ministry is a strong supporter of the idea of voluntary social work, and encourages it whenever possible, since it makes a far wider range of social services available to members of the community. A Ministerial Decision was issued in 1990 for the purpose of regulating the activities of charitable associations, and providing members of the community with the opportunity of putting their voluntary efforts to the best possible use. This marked the beginning of the establishment of a number of charitable associations.

The local community development sector is the Ministry's main instrument for social progress and combines individual and governmen-

tal efforts in the various social fields, with the aim of creating opportunities for a better life, and through its range of programmes the Ministry has scored many successes. The most important achievement in this connection is the Local Community Development Programme, which has brought progress to the Omani citizen in every area of his life. Figures published last year show that its services have reached 358 villages covered by the programme and 124 villages outside the scope of the programme.

Last year six rural development centres were opened in the wilayets of Nizwa, al Awabi, al Qabil, Ibri, Waddi Bani Khalid and Rostaq, as well as three centres in Shahb As'eeb, Tawi A'teer and Jawfa Sadah in the Governorate of Dhofar. The main function of these centres is to improve the social and economic conditions of the rural communities and raise their levels of cultural awareness.

The National Local Community Development Programme began in 1986. A major element in its success is the fact that it is responsible for co-ordinating and expanding the services provided by the Ministries in rural development. Its main role is in the social sphere, where it endeavours to gain the confidence of the rural communities and channel their activities towards implementing and financing projects through their own efforts and contributions, in cooperation with the competent government departments. In 1992 56 social development projects were implemented under the programme at a total cost of RO 187,000, of which non-government contributions totalled RO 120,000.

The media-cultural element – the second element in the Programme – has the role of providing the public with information and advice. This includes courses, lectures and field visits and the use of the media to raise levels of social, cultural, health and economic awareness in the areas covered by the Programme. The health education part of the Programme, which educates the public to make use of the Ministry of Health's services, is implemented by development teams assisted by health workers from the Ministry of Health. As far as preventive health is concerned, in 1992 51 wells were disinfected and there were more than 10,000 mother and child counselling visits. Treatment and first aid were provided for over 16,000 patients, whilst 399 patients were referred to hospital.

Education is also an important part of the Programme, which operates literacy and adult education classes in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. Individual members of the public play a pivotal role in this, and help in providing premises and transport for teachers and students. In addition, development workers (male and female) visit individuals and groups to encourage them to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Libraries and Holy Koran schools have been established to provide students with opportunities for self-study. A number of rural development libraries have been set up and stocked with books on cultural, so-



▲ Children enjoy learning and playing at the Children's Museum in Muscat.

cial, religious and health subjects to enable the reader to satisfy his own particular interests. There are also mobile libraries supervised by staff of both sexes, which tour the villages and rural areas. According to the 1992 figures there are 41 libraries, of which most are of the mobile variety, which have been used by over 16,000 members of the public. The Programme also supervises the Holy Koran schools, which it set up in conjunction with the development teams, members of the public and the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

The Ministry also works in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in setting up demonstration fields and plots, operating pest control programmes and providing veterinary and other agricultural services. In 1992 nine wells were dug, eight aflaj repaired and 38 demonstration plots were established, as well as the provision of pest control programmes and veterinary services. Other services included seed and fertiliser distribution, and a number of other useful activities.

Omani women are already playing a vital role in the professions, government, and commerce, in addition to their traditional ones within the family.

The main aim of the rural women's development part of the Programme is to liberate women in the rural areas from negative practices and customs that are damaging to health and social well-being. An-



▲ Some of the superb dresses modelled at the Sultanate's first fashion show, held this year.

other essential aim is to eliminate female illiteracy, encourage women to join adult education classes and teach women good housekeeping. In 1992 84 rural women's development centres, and 454 women were engaged in making clothes.

Women and Children

Women and children form one of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour's most important responsibilities and its departments have instituted a wide range of social and educational activities and programmes to meet their needs and create a healthy new generation to carry the national process forward. Mothers and children took on a new importance when planners recognised that they form one of the basic elements of development, since the children of today are the men and women of tomorrow. Hence it was vital to identify the needs of these two sectors (women and children) to enable them to make progress in their health, and social and cultural lives. Careful, well thought-out planning was required in order to achieve this.

Several women's and children's welfare social centres have been set up in different parts of the Sultanate to operate welfare programmes for Omani women, raise their social, economic and cultural levels, and, by teaching them the skills needed to improve their standard of living, involve them in the country's social development programmes. At

bid, Ja'alan Bani Bu Hasan, Ras al Hadd, Quriyat and Sohar. These centres train women in needlework, embroidery, and home economics, as well as in traditional local crafts to improve their skills and protect this particular heritage from extinction. Marketing facilities are provided for these products by the centre. The centres also organise lectures, courses and literacy classes, and pay home visits to the families concerned.

The priority given to child care through the Ministry's Children's Department reflects the fact that children are one of the most important sectors of the community. In furtherance of its objective of providing children with happy and fruitful lives, the Department organises visits to ensure compliance with the Ministerial Decision regulating day nurseries. There were 16 such nurseries in 1992.

The Ministry has established Omani Women's Associations in various parts of the Sultanate to give voluntary work a more prominent role. The first Omani Women's Association was established in Muscat in 1971, and played a pioneering part in women's voluntary work in the region. In succeeding years Associations were established in Salalah, al Buraimi, Sohar, Sur, Taqah and Mirbat. More recently they have been established in al Khabourah, Ibra and Ibri, Saham, Nizwa and al Mudhaibi. In 1992 there were thirteen such associations in the Sultanate.

On a lighter note, Omani women staged an international class fashion show, based on traditional dresses from all parts of the Sultanate, in May this year. The show was attended by fashion experts and journalists from many parts of the world.

Labour Sector

The Labour Sector of the Ministry is responsible for the national work-force employed in private sector enterprises and companies as well as foreign imported labour. This is a very important part of the Ministry's work, particularly in view of the growing demand for manpower and the consequent need for increased efforts to protect that manpower both legally and socially. The Ministry approaches the task through a number of channels. The main ones are:- local recruitment, work permits, training subsidies, labour inspection, employee welfare, statistics, computers, occupational health and safety, and external labour relations.

The Ministry's policy is to increase the recruitment of local labour for private sector companies and enterprises, because it is committed to the principle of replacing foreign manpower and supporting Omanisation. Omanisation is making steady progress, and all possible steps are being taken to ensure that rewarding job opportunities are available for every Omani who is willing and able to work. The Ministry's figures indicate a significant increase in the Omanisation of the private sector during 1992. Successes along the road to Omanisation are a result of

constant government moral and material support for the achievement of this goal. By far the most important example of this was the announcement by the Supreme Committee for Vocational Training and Labour to the effect that private sector employers would receive substantial compensation for salaries and allowances paid to employees and those taken on from October 1991 for a period of up to three years.

The great advances achieved by the country since the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos created an urgent need for imported labour from Arab and other countries, in order to enable the goals of the Development Plans to be met, since the available national manpower was insufficient to cover all the country's needs. In this situation it became the Ministry's function to reconcile the manpower requirements of the Development Plans with locally available labour, and to supervise the importation of foreign workers needed to bridge the gap.

In ensuring that both employers and employees comply with the provisions of the Omani Labour Law and Ministerial Decisions implementing it, the Ministry endeavours to ensure that the law serves the interests of both sides. According to 1992 figures, over 14,000 establishments were inspected that year.

To guarantee stable employer-employee labour relations under the provisions of the Omani Labour Law, the Ministry's Labour Welfare Services work to resolve problems that might disrupt production in private sector enterprises and companies. In doing so, these Services endeavour to achieve a balance between the two sides. In this connection 2,928 claims were filed in 1992. The most important of these involved appeals against dismissal, termination of service or cancellation of contract between employer and employee.

Computerisation was introduced in 1991 in order to achieve maximum speed, accuracy and flexibility in dealing with the public's business. The Ministry computer organisation has a fundamental role in collecting and collating data about the movement of national and foreign labour in the private sector, to produce quarterly and half-yearly reports on the size of the workforce in that sector, and to produce statistics on a monthly basis for the Ministry of Finance and Economy's Research Department and the Development Council's Manpower statistics Department.

The protection of the workforce from occupational hazards is one of the Ministry's main responsibilities. Through its occupational safety and health regulations the Ministry encourages employers to provide medical care and appropriate healthy housing with all modern conveniences, and to ensure that the work environment contains nothing that is likely to cause occupational diseases or accidents. The Ministry keeps abreast of all industrial and other developments taking place in the country, and through its frequent inspection campaigns, it ensures that the highest standards of occupational safety and health are maintained.

An imaginative plan to raise the standard of living and provide job opportunities has been put into operation on the Jebel Akhdar, or Green Mountain, a high mountain plateau about 7,000 ft above sea level, in the Hajar mountain range, which provides an example of the impressive social development that is taking place in the Sultanate. Until recent years the Green Mountain was inaccessible except by aircraft or on foot. It has a cooler climate than the remainder of the country – in winter at night the temperature can fall to freezing point. Temperate climate fruits and vegetables are grown on its slopes.

The development plan will cost R.O. 36 million and will be completed by the year 2000. The main feature is the building of a road from Birkat Al Mawz, at the foot of the Hajar range, to Saiq, the main centre of population on the plateau. This will provide an essential means of communication with the remainder of the country. Work on the construction of this road is due to start this year. There will be a network of internal roads on the plateau linking the surrounding regions.

The plan provides for an electricity service, the expansion of the primary and intermediate schools in Saiq, and the opening of a hostel for girls in Saih Qatna (primary, intermediate and secondary), with a primary school in Ghielail. The plan also includes a study for a modern irrigation scheme for numerous villages and protection walls for the farms against erosion. There will be subsidies for small farms, the establishment of a veterinary clinic, a project to develop a rose-water industry, and assistance for the inhabitants in marketing their products.

The plan includes exploration for minerals, and studies for the introduction of handicrafts. Forts and towers in the area will be restored, and tourist facilities outside the villages will be built. In order not to harm the environment and the social life of the communities, the region will not be opened to general tourism, but will have a gradual opening for internal tourism.

A hospital will be built at Saih Qatna and there will be a mobile clinic to serve the villages in the area. Plots will be distributed for building houses with all service facilities, and the inhabitants will be offered easy loans without interest. Markets and a sports club will be constructed, as well as mosques.

Police stations will be built for the Royal Oman Police in Saiq and Saih Qatna. The plan includes offices for the Ministries of Regional Municipalities and Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries and Water Resources.

A number of wells will be sunk to increase the flow of the aflaj, which will be maintained along with the launch of 27 water supply schemes.

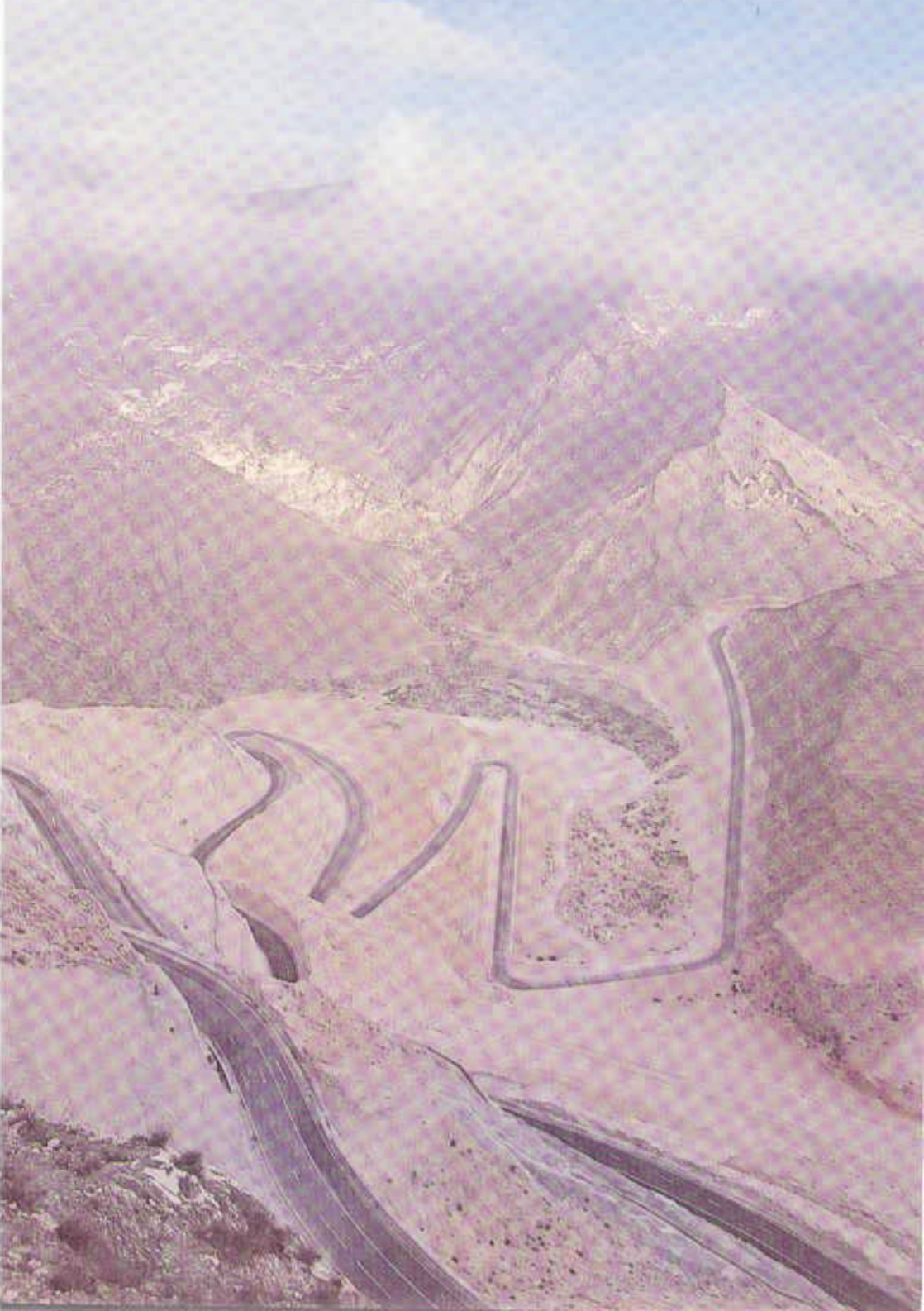
COMMUNICATIONS

Good communications by land, sea and air, were a key element in developing the basic infrastructure of the Sultanate of Oman. Until 1970, all three were almost entirely lacking. The only paved road in the country was a stretch connecting the capital, Muscat, via Muttrah, with the airfield at Bait Al Falaj, a distance of less than 10 kilometres. Otherwise, apart from a graded road along the Batinah Coast to Sohar, maintained by the Government, and another to Fahud in the Interior, maintained by PDO, the oil company, there were only tracks. There was no port where ships could berth alongside. Cargo and passenger ships had to anchor off Muttrah, where cargoes were offloaded into lighters to be ferried ashore, and again offloaded across the beach. The only airfield in the country was at Bait Al Falaj, used both by civilian and military aircraft. Surrounded by high hills, landings could be hazardous in bad weather.

Necessarily, the construction of a good system of paved roads throughout a country the size of Oman, has taken some years. It was not only a question of distances, but also of natural obstacles in the form of mountain ranges that have had to be overcome. Priority had to be given to the coastal strip of northern Oman, the most thickly populated region of the country. It was only later that road construction to the Interior and other regions of the Sultanate could be undertaken. It was a very considerable achievement that, by 1986, a period of only 16 years from when road construction was started, a network of paved roads connecting all the main centres of population throughout the country had been completed. It is now possible to travel by air-conditioned coach from Muscat in the north to Salalah in the south, along a paved road with petrol-filling stations and a motel at Haima along the route. The road system also connects with that of neighbouring states so that it is now possible to travel by airconditioned coach to Dubai in the UAE.

In the second half of the 1980s, some spectacular road construction was achieved in the mountainous regions of the country, connecting isolated communities with the main centres of population and making them accessible to the benefits of modern development. These included roads through the rugged and precipitous mountains of the Musandam peninsula at the northern trip of the Sultanate, and to the top of the Jebel Akhdar plateau, virtually inaccessible until then except by air. Most recently, an impressive paved road has been completed in the south, linking Salalah with Sarfait near the border with the Yemen Republic. It zigzaps up from the coastal plain to the summit of the Qamar range of mountains and along the top to the border.

During last year, a further 238km of new roads were completed. This included the dualisation of the Salalah-Raysut road along the coast in Dhofar. Future road construction during the Fourth Five-Year



Plan includes the first stage of the rehabilitation of the Nizwa-Thumrait road, the rehabilitation of the old Batinah Highway and Ibri-Dank road, the dualisation of the Rusayl-Nizwa road, the Khasab coastal road in the Musandam, the first stage of the road from Birkat Al Mawz at the foot of the Jebal Akhdar to Saiq on the Jebel Akhdar plateau, as well as 142km of internal roads.

The state-owned Oman National Transport Company (ONTC) runs a fleet of more than 240 buses and coaches, which serve the Capital area and the other main towns. The company also operates six air-conditioned luxury coaches, fitted with long-distance fuel tanks, television and toilet facilities. The Company has presented its own development plans to the Ministry of Communications to run parallel with the Sultanate's Fourth Five-Year-Plan. The proposals include detailed recommendations for expansion of the public bus service network, as well as the replacement of older buses by new, more comfortable and reliable modern vehicles. The plans also include the re-development of the Azaiba headquarters to improve technical and administrative support for the company's expanding operations. The aim is to link Muscat with all regional centres and most key towns at least once daily, and to introduce new routes when further major roads are constructed.

Seaports

It is a reflection of the large-scale development that has taken place in the Sultanate of Oman over the last 23 years, that the selection of the site of a new port is now under active consideration. It has been accepted that the requirement exists, and that its location will be in northern Oman at a suitable site between Sohar and Sur. It has also been agreed that the actual construction of the port is not envisaged in the current Five-Year-Plan (1991-96), but will be included in the next Plan. However, it is expected that tenders will be issued for detailed studies and design consultancy work within the current Plan.

By 1970, it was appreciated that the construction of a modern seaport with deepwater berths was an urgent necessity, and it was therefore given priority in development plans. It was a considerable achievement that Mina Qaboos at Muttrah was completed in 1974, geared to handle two million tonnes of cargo annually.

The ever-increasing volume of imports and exports in succeeding years has entailed continual expansion with additional facilities such as the construction of a container terminal, modern warehouses, engineering workshops, and deepwater wharfage. At present, Mina Qaboos has thirteen berths, of which nine are deepwater, and four are shallow water berths. It has a transit shed area of 27,000 sq metres and an open storage area of 150 sq metres. The container terminal has an area of 4.7 hectares with storage capacity for 2,700 TEU loaded/empty containers. A fleet of six tugs, fitted with the most modern equipment, serves the port. The port is equipped with 2 x 25 tonne gantry cranes and thirteen other cranes of varying capacities for handling containers and other cargo.

◀ A remarkable feat of engineering – the fantastic convolutions of the roads through the mountain ranges.



▲ The port of Mina Qaboos.

▶ The headquarters of the Port Services, Mina Qaboos.

To cope with the growing cargo traffic, particularly containers, a decision has been taken to develop Mina Qaboos to the optimum requirement in the following areas:-

(a) Main maritime civil works;
(b) Dredging of the access channel;
(c) Buildings and other infrastructures;
(d) Procurement of equipment.

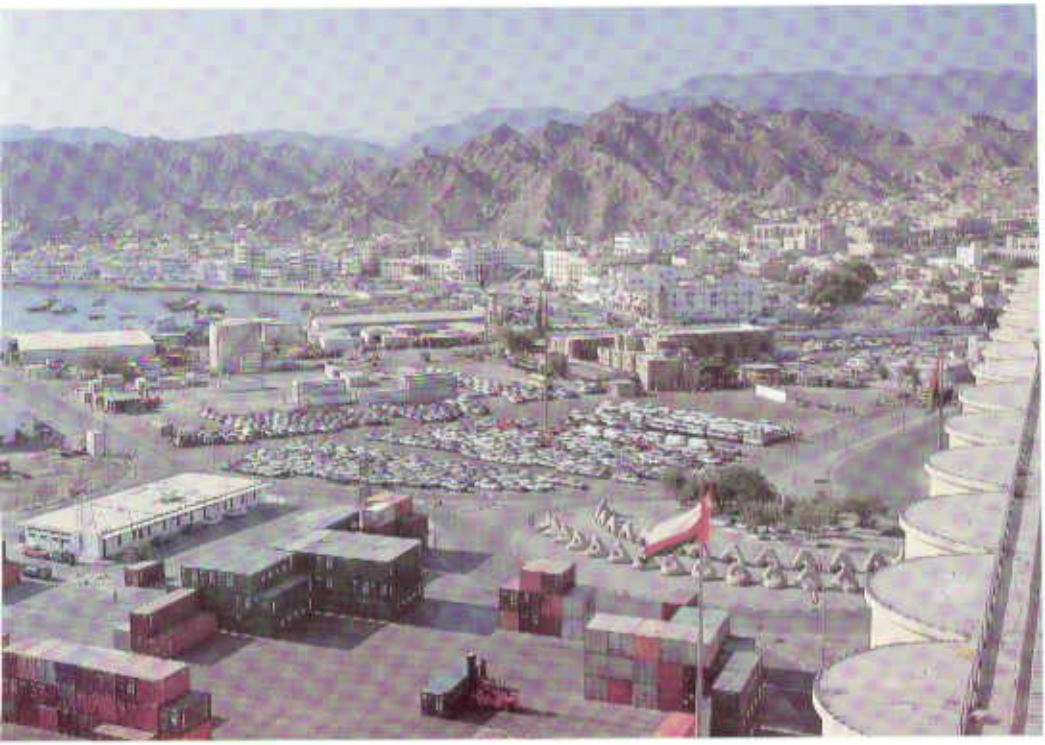
The work on main maritime civil works has already commenced and is expected to be completed by March next year. The main components of this project comprise the following development works which are already in hand:-

(1) Conversion of the existing berths with sufficient depths into container berths. These berths will be provided with two quayside handling gantry cranes of 40 tonnes capacity;

(2) Zoning of the available area and re-allocation of the available space by dismantling/re-erecting sheds, container freight station, terminal offices and other buildings, including cold storage buildings;

(3) The channel and harbour basin will be dredged to a depth of 13 metres. Dredging work will continue simultaneously with the main development project;

(4) Reclamation and development of Shutaify Bay adjacent to Mina Qaboos. As a result of this reclamation, about 15 hectares of storage area for containers will be created;




PORT SERVICES CORPORATION
مؤسسة خدمات الموانيء

two quayside container handling gantry cranes has already been signed, as well as the contract for the procurement of 8 rubber-tyred container handling gantry cranes. This equipment will be operational by next year;

(6) A modern maintenance workshop is to be constructed, in addition to other buildings, and the computer system is to be modernised to cope with the new Port's development.

Mina Raysut, in the south of Oman, serves Salalah and the Governorate of Dhofar. The Ministry of Communications is currently conducting a comprehensive port development plan study including a 'Master Plan' for Mina Raysut. The study will produce recommendations for development options for phased implementation up to the year 2015. Ministry plans for making the port attractive for shipping lines may include re-structuring the tariffs, the installation of modern equipment, round-the-clock operation, and the reduction of waiting time to a minimum. The principal town in the Musandam, Khasab, has a small port with two berths, with a water depth alongside of only 3.5 metres. There is a future need for increasing the number of these berths and the water depth. The Ministry is working on a development plan for the period until the year 2010.



▲ Oman's long-distance coaches have international telephone facilities.

Airports

The construction of a new international airport was high on the list of priorities in the development plans for the Sultanate. A site was chosen on the Batinah Plain near the town Seeb, 17 km from Muscat. It was completed with commendable speed and was inaugurated in December 1973. Since that time, the airport has undergone a series of renovations and improvements. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation and Meteorology has prepared new plans for further extensions to the airport's terminal area and for providing more facilities for the increasing number of travellers.

The Sultanate now has four civil airports: at Seeb, Salalah, Sur, and Dhaba in the Musandam. Seeb and Salalah can handle all types of aircraft, while Sur and Dhaba are open for light aircraft only.

Seeb International Airport receives and dispatches more than 20 weekly scheduled flights by international airlines, and over 30 non-scheduled flights. Aircraft passenger and cargo movements have shown rapid increases since 1990. Since then, several bilateral agreements have been reached with the civil aviation authorities of other countries which will result in a further increase in the number of international airlines using the airport. Until now, the airport has been able to ac-



▲ Oman Air has recently commenced regular services to Dubai.

commodate the parking of 12 wide-bodied aircraft. However, due to the continual increase of aircraft movements, six more parking positions for these aircraft have been under construction, and are due to be completed by next year. These aprons will cater for cargo as well as passenger operations. Work is also under way on re-surfacing the asphalt runways and taxi-ways, and the re-sealing of concrete apron hard-standing areas.

A 3-phase project for doubling the size of the aircraft parking area so that it can accommodate six aircraft, instead of three, is in progress. The Fourth Five-Year Plan includes the extension of the airstrip by 595 metres so that its total length will be 3,330 metres. Studies are being carried out to replace the primary and secondary radar systems at Salalah airport, in addition to providing the airport's runway number 25 with an Instrument Landing System.

Oman Aviation Services (OAS), an Omani joint stock company, was established by Royal Decree in 1981 to operate domestic airline services and charter aircraft, and to provide other airline-related services on a 20-year franchise. This includes aircraft, passenger services and cargo handling, catering, and other facilities. By this year, well over half the company's employees are Omani nationals. OAS now has Omani pilots and second officers and its own programme for training pilots and engineers. Oman has a 25% share with the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain in the international airline, Gulf Air, which operates services to Western Europe, the Gulf, the Indian sub-continent, Africa, the Far East, and the United States of America.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The latest advance introduced by the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, was the inauguration of 'Voice Mail' paging service as part of the National Day celebrations last year. The Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, H.E. Ahmed bin Suwaidan Al Balushi, said that the Sultanate was the first Middle East country, and only the second in Asia to have 'Voice Mail'.

The first post office in the Sultanate was opened in Muscat in 1856, and, until 1947, Indian postage stamps were used for the sake of convenience. After Indian independence in that year, the British General Post Office was given the responsibility for postal agencies in the Gulf region, and over-printed British stamps were used. The first Omani postage stamps were issued in 1966 when the Government took over the postal services. However, in spite of the fact that the Sultanate has a postal history of almost 150 years, in 1970 there was still only one post office in existence, which was in Muscat. Outside Muscat, the conveyance of letters was entirely dependent on the goodwill of travellers.

After 1970, new post offices incorporating the latest technical procedures began to be established in several areas of the Sultanate, so that by the end of 1992 there were 71 main and branch post offices, and

▶ The public telephone system covers most of the Sultanate.

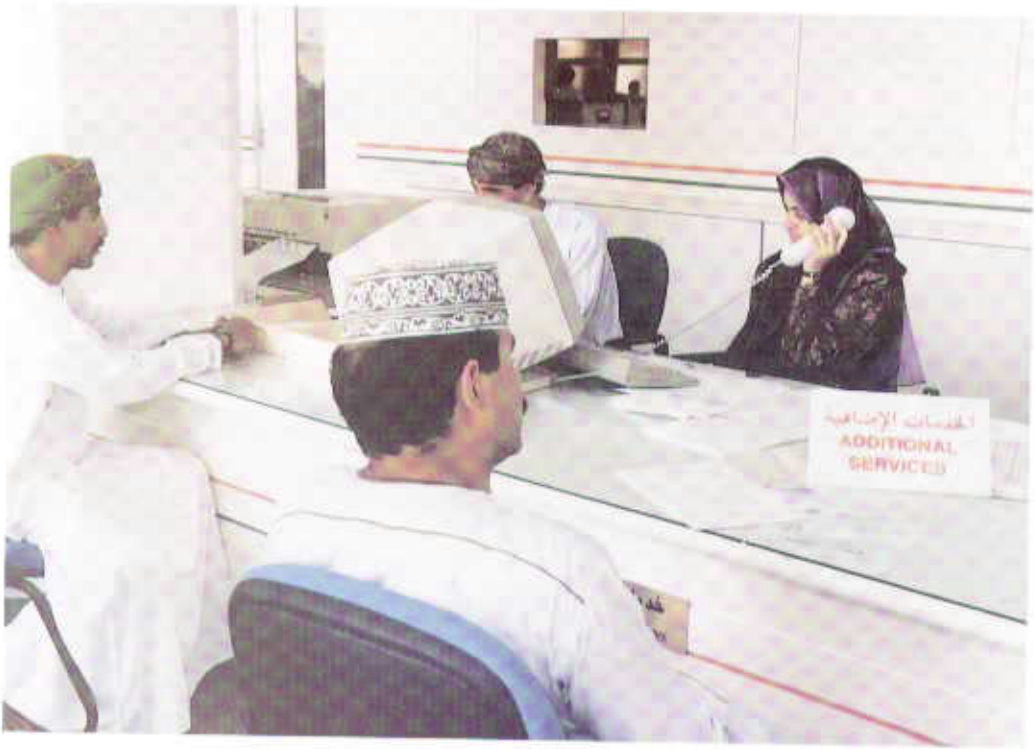
▼ The Sultanate's telephone cards are popular with collectors.






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وزارة البريد والبرق والهاتف


ADDITIONAL
SERVICES

around 40 postal distribution agencies throughout the Sultanate. Several new post offices were opened last year, among them two in the Musandam Governorate at Mad'ha and Bukha. By the end of the current Five-Year Plan in 1996, a further 34 post offices will be built and functioning. Mobile post offices, which were originally allocated to heavily populated areas, have now been replaced by permanent post offices. There has been a vast increase in the turnover of letters and parcels in the last 23 years. In 1971, there was a total of seven and a half million incoming and outgoing letters. By 1992, the total had reached 50 million items. This volume is expected to increase by 3% to 5% annually due to the rise in the population. A comparable increase is reflected in the number of parcels. A fleet of vehicles now moves post rapidly between Muscat and the provinces. EMS, the Express Mail Service, manned by specially trained staff for fast and reliable postal handling, was introduced in 1985. At first limited to the Muscat area, it has been extended to all the main centres of population.

The Ministry has established direct mail despatch links with more than 37 countries. This is in addition to those Oman has with almost every country through the exchange offices. There are now more than 41,000 private post boxes in the country. A home delivery service is being planned for implementation soon, largely depending upon the completion of the naming of streets and roads. Delivery of mail to the more remote regions, such as the Musandam and the offshore islands, is carried out by the domestic airline. Mail for the Al Halaniya (Kuria Muria) islands is delivered via the central post office in Salalah.

◀ Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones – Muscat.

A postal training centre has been set up in Muscat, where 160 Omanis have already been trained. Others are sent abroad for specialised courses. It is expected that 95% Omanisation will be achieved next year.

Telecommunications

The General Telecommunications Organization (GTO), established in 1980 as a fully-owned Government entity, is now self-financed. GTO is responsible for the infrastructure of the telecommunications network and the extension of a modern telephone service network throughout the Sultanate.

During 1984/85, a new Telecommunications Centre was constructed at Bait Al Falaj near Muscat, and twelve digital exchanges were commissioned in the Muscat area. GTO's equipped capacity rose from 500 lines in 1970, to 179,189 lines by the end of last year. The total number of working lines reached 129,360 by the end of the year. In 1991, three digital exchanges were commissioned in Salalah, increasing capacity in Dhofar to nearly 15,000. Subsequently, expansion has continued with projects covering the Interior (centred on Nizwa, Ibra,

◀ GTO Customer Services desk.

Batinah coastal region.

GTO introduced the mobile telephone service in the Sultanate in 1985, with an exchange capacity of 5,000 lines (capable of expansion) so as to allow for a future increase in the demand for this service. The number of subscribers totalled 4,721 at the end of 1992, compared with 747 in 1986. To extend the range of this service, GTO regularly provides additional Radio Base Stations to the mobile system. The future plan is to expand the capacity of transmission stations for the further improvement of the performance of this service.

A feasibility study will soon be carried out for the introduction of global mobile system (GMS) into the Sultanate. The future trend is to have mobile subscriber handsets which are linked internationally.

In line with the expansion of the conventional telephone network throughout the country, GTO introduced public payphones in 1980, to make the telephone service available over a vast area of the country, even where the conventional service was not immediately available. GTO started initially with coin payphones and subsequently, in 1986, card payphones were installed in different parts of the Sultanate. By the end of last December, the number of installed payphones reach 1,905, of which 214 are coin-operated, and 1,691 are card operated payphones. Card operated payphones are more popular, since they make accounting easier and more convenient to the public. In addition, GTO is also engaged in the phased installation of more telephone booths throughout the country. This is expected to be completed by the end of the year 1993/early '94. A plan has already been prepared for the installation of 3,500 additional public payphones, to be distributed throughout the Sultanate, in order to meet increasing demand.

GTO provides telex, telegraph and data services domestically and internationally. The capacity of the telex exchange reached 3,052 lines last year, compared to only 14 lines in 1970. Telegraph services were also made available all over the Sultanate, whereas, before, the service was only available in Muscat. The facsimile service is now widespread all over the country and is provided by GTO whenever a demand arises. GTO has now established, in its offices throughout the country, a facsimile service available to the public.

The public can make their international telephone calls by direct dialling via their ordinary or mobile telephones, and through public payphones or with the assistance of GTO operators. GTO has established numerous earth stations for satellite communication. One of these is a standard 'A' station working with Intelsat over the Indian Ocean at Al Amirat Satellite Communication Complex. This station provides international direct links with countries outside the Arab world. The Sultanate was among the first countries to complete its

earth station, operating through Arabsat in 1985. With the inauguration of this station, GTO diverted its traffic to Arab countries via Arabsat instead of Intelsat. The Arabsat system is also utilised locally in a Domestic Satellite Communications Network (DOMSAT). DOMSAT is a national satellite communication network which serves to support the terrestrial and national network and to connect the various regions and areas in the Sultanate with TV and telecommunication services.

A new digital earth station is soon to be completed at Ibri and will operate via Intelsat Atlantic Ocean Region (AOR) to enable direct links to North and South America without the need for transit access.

With the completion of this station, the Sultanate will have an additional international outlet with the outside world, in addition to the Al Amirat Satellite Complex and the terrestrial links between Oman and the UAE.

By December 1992, the total number of international circuits operating via Al-Amerat Satellite Complex reached 427, of which 306 circuits are operating with Intelsat Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and 121 via Arabsat. The available capacity on the international exchange is 1,000 circuits, of which 619 are currently in use, making it possible to dial directly to most countries of the world.

GTO introduced the paging system in the Sultanate at the end of 1991. The system control terminal was equipped to accommodate 10,000 subscribers. The system has met with great demand by the public, consequently GTO is increasing the control terminal capacity to accommodate 20,000 subscribers, along with the expansion of the radio transmission, with the aim of improving the coverage of this service throughout the Sultanate. GTO has completed the necessary preparations to extend the service to cover many wilayats and villages.



▶ Omani field technicians carry out maintenance work.

A contract has been signed recently for the expansion of voice mail service. A new independent system is under installation to accommodate

East and will be available to anyone who wishes to make use of this service, and not restricted to paging subscribers only, as is the case at present.

GTO continuously undertakes studies to review tariffs for different services with the object of offering competitive prices to the public and to reduce tariff charges wherever possible in compliance with the directives of His Majesty the Sultan. Accordingly, the tariffs for international telephone calls were reduced by 25% to 44% effectively from November 1991. GTO has also reduced its charges for mobile telephone equipment and paging instruments' costs which resulted in greater expansion of these services.

A number of steps have been taken to achieve cooperation and integration in the field of telecommunications within the GCC countries, which has already resulted in the standardisation of tariffs for some telecommunication services.

The Sultanate has participated actively at International level in the field of telecommunications, through its active membership in the activities of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International Telecommunication Satellite Organization (INTELSAT) and International Maritime Satellite Organisation (INMARSAT).

The public are now able to install TV dishes to receive international programmes direct from satellites.

In compliance with His Majesty's directives regarding the development of the national manpower, GTO is undertaking the training of Omani nationals within the Sultanate and abroad in different specialisations for the purpose of creating a highly qualified and experienced cadre. A training centre has been established to qualify Omani staff in up-to-date telecommunications systems with the latest technologies. Good results have been achieved in the Omanisation of staff, which has reached more than 80% of the total workforce.

Future projects include the extension of telephone services, the replacement of the Al Amirat Standard (A) Earth Station, and the construction of a new earth station on the Al Halaniya Islands, increasing the number of public payphones, and the expansion and upgrading of the Microwave link between Khatmat Milaha and Khasab in the Musandam.

The coverage of the paging system is to be increased, and a video conference service is to be introduced shortly. Worldwide data-base, using Global Network Services (GNS), will be provided shortly in collaboration with British Telecom.

EDUCATION

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, the two priority needs for the people of Oman were for health services and education. Other aspects of development could be hastened by means of the injection of finance and expatriate assistance, but education has to be allowed time to become effective. Thus it was that an urgent start had to be made with primary education for both boys and girls.

Before 1970 there were only three schools for boys in the whole of the Sultanate: at Muscat, Muttrah, and Salalah. There were no girls' schools. Otherwise there were only the Koranic schools providing instruction in basic reading and writing, often conducted in the open under the trees. Ambitious youngsters seeking education had to leave the country illegally to be educated abroad. So great was the public need for education in the early stages that, in many cases, schools had to be set up in tents and classes held in shifts. There was also a total lack of qualified and experienced Omani teachers, so that large numbers had to be recruited from other Arabic-speaking countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Sudan. Although priority had, of course, to be given to children, there was, at the same time, a pressing demand for adult education. Textbooks had to be compiled and published, curricula formulated, and examination standards set.

Primary school education in Oman normally starts at the age of six

▼ Boys and girls in a primary school art class. Omani children won 42 medals in the 6th Arab Art and Cultural Competition for children at the end of last year.



between the ages of twelve and fourteen, the pupil progresses to the preparatory school. Students passing the general preparatory certificate examination are then admitted to the first grade of secondary schools between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. Here they are selected for the appropriate type of secondary education, in accordance with the results of their preparatory examination. Now, of course, with the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University in 1986, it is possible for students to go on from secondary education to advanced training and qualifications in their own country at the University and other institutions of specialised training.

In the 1992-93 academic year, there was a total of 878 schools for general education: technical, Islamic, private, and intermediate colleges for teachers. The total number of students in schools and other educational institutes, in the current year is 424,962 (girls make up 47.35% of this total), compared to 909 students in 1969/70. The Minister of Education, H.E. Yahya bin Mahfudh Al Mantheri, who is also Vice-Chancellor of the Sultan Qaboos University, has announced that in the current Fourth Five-Year Plan, 65 additional schools, and 79 new school premises will replace unsuitable buildings currently in use.

Training of Omani Teachers

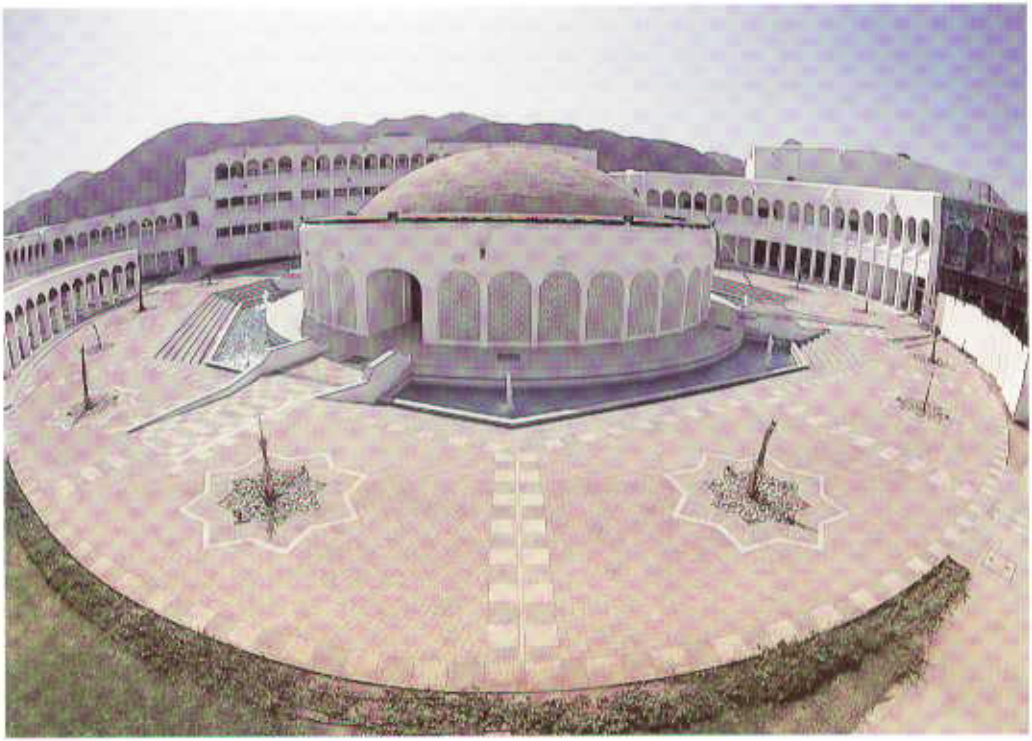
In the first years of educational development, nearly all the teachers were expatriate Arabs. The first Teacher Training Institute started courses for Omanis in 1977. In 1984/85, the male and female Teacher Training Institute system was abolished and its place was taken by the Intermediate Colleges. There are currently eight Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges in the Sultanate, of which five are for male students and three for female students. Currently there are 1,704 male and 1,321 female students at the colleges. With the opening of three new Teacher Training Colleges in Sohar, Nizwa, and Ibri, the annual output of trained teachers will increase considerably. A new Teacher Training College is to be built in Ibra in the current Five Year Plan. An Institute to train graduates as teachers is to be established to increase the numbers of Omani teachers to replace expatriates, and, at the same time, to expand the educational network. The proposed Institute is intended for preparatory and secondary school teachers, and will be established in cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos University. At the end of 1992, there were about 18,853 teachers in the Sultanate, of which 11,989 were expatriates, and 6,864 were Omanis. In the same year, the educational system received its first batch of graduates from the Faculty of Education and Islamic Sciences at the Sultan Qaboos University. From now on these numbers will be augmented by qualified graduates from the Faculty of Science and Arts.

Teaching of English has assumed increasing importance in recent years, particularly with the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University, where the science-based courses are conducted in English. In 1987, the Ministry of Education initiated a major project in order to achieve this

▶ A small pupil leads the singing by a girls' choir at a school concert.

▶ A recently-constructed Vocational Training Centre in the Interior.





ject was given to the Ministry's English-language Teaching Department. The major focus during the first phase of the project has been the development and production of English-language learning materials which are specially designed for the Omani school system. These materials have been produced and printed entirely within the Sultanate.

In addition, this has enabled the system to provide some basic health and environmental education through the medium of English. Teacher training is seen as an essential part of the general aim of improving the standard of English teaching and learning. There are additional programmes for Omani teachers of English which provide both language improvement and techniques, and which aim to raise the general calibre of these teachers.

The eradication of illiteracy in the Sultanate has been one of the major tasks of the Ministry of Education. This has been a particular problem among older women who had no opportunities for any education until 1970. The Sultanate was able to begin to tackle the problem during the 1973-74 academic year, with around 3,000 male and female students. At first, the areas involved were limited, but as the years passed, literacy classes were set up in most of the towns and villages of the Sultanate. In the academic year, 1992-93, about 8,906 are benefiting at 240 centres, in addition to members of the Sultan's Armed Forces. The Ministry is actively working with international and regional organisations such as UNESCO, with the aim of eliminating illiteracy before the year 2000.

Adult education has been operating in parallel with the literacy programme since 1973-74, in order to provide opportunities for those who had not received education during their youth, or had to drop out of school early for one reason or other. Mature student numbers at 178 centres increased from 1,352 at the beginning of 1974 to 9,930 in the latest academic year. The University Council of the Sultan Qaboos University will introduce post-graduate studies this year in the Faculty of Education and Islamic Sciences and the Faculty of Science and the Arts. The Ministry has also decided to establish a modern Centre for research and educational development with the aim of raising the standard of educational services in all institutions. The project will be implemented during the current year.

Sultan Qaboos University

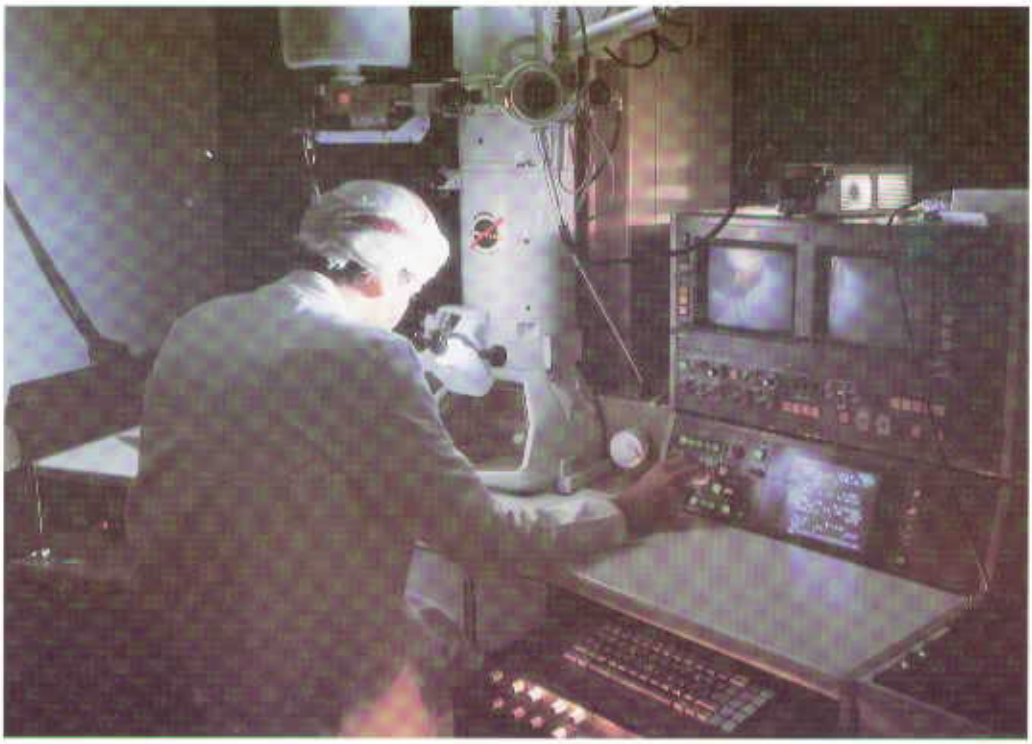
The crowning achievement of the development of the educational system was the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University at Al Khodh near Muscat in September 1986. The University comprises six colleges or faculties: Education and Islamic Sciences, Science, Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine, and the Arts. It was originally anticipated that the University would take about 3,000 students in the various faculties and specialisations. However, currently there are more than 3,600 students. Girls have done well in admissions to the University, taking 65% of places overall. The support centres of the University include the

Computer Centre, the Library which contains advanced technology information systems as well as printed material, a Language Centre, a Teaching Hospital, and a Centre for Education Technology. The medium for instruction in the University is Arabic, except for the science-based courses. All students are, in any case, given comprehensive courses in the English language.

The University has a 500-bed Teaching Hospital, with an establishment of over one thousand, composed of 200 academic medical staff and over 800 nursing support staff. Admission to the hospital is by referral only. The hospital has advanced diagnostic equipment, and specialised sections for pediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics, internal diseases, surgery, psychiatry, cardiac diseases, and an outpatient clinic. It serves as a centre for training Omani doctors in specialisations.

Separate residential accommodation for young men and women is provided in the form of small communities instead of hostels, each accommodating about 150 students drawn from all the colleges, with a supervisor acting as a counsellor in social, religious and moral matters. Non-resident students are included in these communities. A College of Commerce and Economy is being established, which will receive its first students this year. In addition to the state schools, there are about 8,000 students in private schools in all three stages of general education. The Ministry supervises private schools to ensure that standards are up to those in state schools.

▼ SQU laboratories are fully equipped with state-of-the-art facilities.



YOUTH

In his address to the nation on National Day in November 1992, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos announced that 1993 was to be the Year of Youth. It is exactly ten years since he announced the first Year of Youth, a clear indication of the importance that His Majesty attaches to the development of the youth of the nation, as representing the future of the Sultanate, and of the personal interest he has shown in the nation's young people and the role he plays in their advancement.

The combination of a high birth rate with rapidly rising health standards, and a corresponding fall in the infant mortality rate, means that the youth of the country represent an increasing proportion of the total population of the Sultanate. Those who knew Oman before 1970 and visited the towns and villages of the Interior, will recollect the sight of youngsters half-blinded by trachoma, spread by flies and infected dust, whilst the mortality rate amongst children from malaria and dysentery was grievously high. The contrast now could not be greater; apart from the recorded tremendous improvement in health standards, the evident fitness and alertness of the young is most noticeable. Physical fitness is now widely popular amongst young people, with their keenness on every form of sporting activity. In 1982, the responsibility for supervision of all youth affairs was entrusted to the Ministry of Education, and in 1986 its title was amended accordingly. In 1989, the Higher Council for

▼ Our youth have the opportunity to participate in many of the world's youth activities. The 'Ship for World Youth' is welcomed to Muscat.



Youth approved an integrated nation-wide plan for expanding and improving youth facilities, including the construction of sports and youth centres, support for the expansion of existing clubs, and the organisation of national sporting and recreational activities, to which His Majesty personally donated half a million Rials. By a Royal Decree of 1991, Sports and Youth Activities were placed under a General Organisation for Sports and Youth Activities (GOSYA), supervised by the Council of Ministers, and the President of which is H.E. Ibrahim bin Hamoud Al Subhi.

In outlining the programme for the Year of Youth, H.E. Ibrahim Al Subhi announced that it is to provide a strong incentive to organise an effective strategy for the next decade. It will be an opportunity to upgrade sports, as well as cultural, social and artistic activities. He revealed that a two-pronged strategy was being prepared. Firstly, sports clubs and facilities would be completed, and secondly, the young people themselves would be trained and developed to make proper use of the facilities available to them. He went on to say that youth training and development was a joint enterprise to be shared among several different bodies, and coordinated by GOSYA, which would submit its draft youth policies to the Council of Ministers.

H.E. Ibrahim Al Subhi said that more sports facilities are to be built during the current Five-Year Plan. It is probable that all the sports associations will be housed in a single building, with separate buildings for the Olympic Committee and GOSYA. There are proposals

▶ His Majesty takes a keen interest in Oman's young people. Here, he presents the Sultan Qaboos Cup to last year's winners of the soccer championship.

▼ Two little girls, dressed in traditional style pose for the camera at an international fashion show of Omani dresses held in the Sultanate.







adjacent to the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. There are also plans to construct a youth complex at Nizwa, similar to those at Sohar and Salalah. Work is to begin this year and is expected to be completed next year. Consideration is being given to building two other sports complexes in the Sharqiya and Dhahira regions, as well as a number of new clubs and sports grounds. There are also plans to expand the sports complexes in Sohar and Salalah.

The Sultanate was chosen, in December 1992, as the venue for the famous annual international 'Raid Gauloises' competition which was held under the auspices of GOSYA. A battle of wits and brawn in which teams of five persons, from a large number of countries, each including at least one woman, traversed a variety of difficult terrain totalling a distance of 300-400 km to reach the finishing post first. Mountains had to be scaled, deserts crossed on camel-back, horses ridden across country, and kayaks used to navigate water obstacles. Young Omanis are now distinguishing them-





selves in a wide range of sports in regional and international competitions, notably in swimming, tennis and karate. An Omani team acquitted themselves creditably in the paralympics, which followed the summer Olympics in Barcelona. Omani teams will be competing in the GCC Olympic Games to be held in Saudi Arabia this year.

Scouting

The history of scouting in the Sultanate of Oman goes back to 1948 when the first scout pack was formed at the Saidiya school in Muscat. Shortly afterwards, packs were formed at the boys' schools in Muttrah and Salalah. Guiding was not introduced until after 1970 when it began to be organised in the new girls' schools.

In Oman, guides are normally referred to as girl scouts. The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides was established in 1975 by Royal Decree, with the aim of inculcating young people with a sense of service and of developing their sense of self-reliance, responsibility and public spirit. In 1983, in recognition of the keen interest that he has shown in the scouting movement in the Sultanate, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was installed as Chief Scout during the National Celebrations.

◀ A young Royal Guard of Oman technician repairs a musical instrument played by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra.

Scouts and Guides are encouraged to participate in projects which aid society, one of the most rewarding of which is the organisation of an annual course for the handicapped under the auspices of the Oman National Committee for the Care of the Handicapped, part of the State effort to enable the handicapped to undertake work which will give them a secure and dignified life and help them make a positive contribution to society. These courses have been so successful that handicapped people from other member States of the AGCC are now joining them.

The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides is keen to increase membership and encourage the formation of Scout and Guide packs in schools at all educational stages. The Organisation provides uniforms, badges and other requirements, and supervises leadership training and development. Statistics show that numbers are growing in both sections of the movement, which now have over 10,000 members.

Oman participated in the 32nd World Scouts Conference in 1990, which was attended by over 1,000 scouts from 132 countries, and won high praise at the 19th Arab Scouts' Conference in Cairo. In February 1992, the fourth Ship for World Youth, organised by the Japanese Government, called at Mina Qaboos with 185 youngsters, including 20 Omanis, on board. As part of their programme for seeing places of interest in the Sultanate, the youth groups visited the Sultan Qaboos University, where they joined in sports and cultural activities.

◀ Omani Girl Scouts at the International Jamboree camp in England last year.

The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides is establishing a camp at Al Mladah in the Wilayat of Musana'a. A committee has been assigned the task of planning and supervising the execution of the various phases of the camp, including utilities, services, activities centre, and a headquarters. Work has already started to prepare the camp for over 1,000 scouts in the annual camps during the mid-year vacation.

In 1970 Health Services in Oman were limited to one fee-paying hospital in Muttrah, run by an American Mission and a few simple clinics scattered round the country. There were no Omani doctors, the only qualified Omani doctor was practising outside the country, and he returned following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to become the first Minister of Health. Now, 90% of the population is directly covered by a comprehensive health service, while the remainder is cared for by mobile clinics. The aim is that within the next seven years the entire population will be directly covered.

By 1993 there were hospitals in all the main centres of population, amounting to a total of 49 hospitals and 96 health centres. An innovation is the provision of polyclinics, which provide a combination of primary care and specialist out-patient services. Polyclinics have recently been established at Musannah, Birka, Shinas and Suwaiq. By 1992 12,636 people were working in the Health Service, of which 52% were Omanis. In the same year there were a total of 1,167 Omani doctors. Meanwhile, the Faculty of Medicine at the Sultan Qaboos University is training medical students to become the next generation of Omani doctors. The first batch of these students will graduate from the University this year. These, added to those already training abroad, will produce about 50 new doctors each year. This number will rise to 80 per year by 1997, and it is expected to reach over 100 per year by the year 2000.

In September 1991, five new nursing schools were opened at Nizwa, Salalah, Sohar, Sur and Tanam to provide training courses for secondary school graduates of each region. They have proved highly successful in attracting students from their local areas who would not otherwise have had an opportunity to join the nursing profession. Also, the intake of nurses in the newly-extended Institute of Health Sciences in Muscat increased to 70 last year. Thus from 1994 onwards, over 200 nurses will graduate annually. The target of Omanisation among nurses is thus 17% by the end of 1995 and 40% by the year 2000.

In the field of pharmacy, an Institute of Assistant Pharmacists was established in 1991 with an initial intake of 30. The first of these will graduate early in 1994. The level of Omanisation for pharmacists is expected to reach 30% by the end of 1995. The Oman Health Institute began to train sanitarians in 1991 with an intake of 30; these will graduate early in 1994. By the end of 1995 the Omanisation rate is expected to reach 82%. For other pharmaceutical professions (laboratory technicians, radiographers, and physiotherapists) the Institute of Health Sciences will continue to produce between 15 and 25 of each profession every year. The targets set for Omanisation by the end of 1995 are thus 33% for laboratory technicians and 39% for radiographers.

In 1970 trachoma, dysentery, tuberculosis and malaria were rife as a result of a lack of basic hygiene. The mortality rate, especially among

► An Omani technician at work in a laboratory at the Royal Hospital.

six transplants a year at the hospital, totalling 21 by the end of September 1992. In October 1992 the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital carried out its first kidney transplant operation as part of a joint national programme by the University and the Royal Hospital.

As regards mental health services, until 1991 inpatient psychiatric care was only available at the Ibn Sina Hospital in Muscat, with outpatient care also available at the Qaboos Hospital in Salalah, and since 1990, at regional centres periodically to provide a second consultation and advisory service. Several developments have been planned for the improvement of psychiatric services including the new polyclinics which will have psychiatric outpatient clinics staffed by the regional psychiatrist. The Ibn Sina hospital is being rebuilt this year to become a highly specialised, custom-designed 260-bed psychiatric hospital. This hospital will have specialised wards and units and will also be a centre for undergraduate and post-graduate teaching for psychiatrists, medical and nursing students. A 25-bed psychiatric unit is planned for the Qaboos Hospital in Salalah. Acute and emergency cases from the Governorate of Dhofar can then be treated locally.

Under the Fourth Five Year Plan (1991-95), a new 200-bed regional hospital at Ibri is currently under construction, and is scheduled for completion next year. Detailed plans have been completed and construction will begin in 1993 of a 300-bed regional hospital at Sohar and a 250-bed regional hospital at Nizwa. The construction of a 200-bed regional hospital at Sur will begin in 1994. Two of the existing regional hospitals will be extended, with a further 50 beds for the Khasab hospital in Musandam. Work on this will begin this year. The expansion of the Qaboos Hospital in Salalah, with an extra 150 beds will begin next year. An extension of the Masirah hospital, to allow for an additional 30 beds, has already been completed. The Plan includes the construction of 12 new health centres, seven with maternity beds, and the addition of maternity beds to nine of the existing health centres. Three new health centres have recently been completed at Wadi Hitam, Wadi Aahin and Wadi Al Ain. Plans have also been prepared for an extra 150 beds in the Khoula Hospital in Muscat, to cater for the increasing demand on the burns and neuro-surgery units. A new 24-bed hospital is to be built for the Jebel Akhdar, a 30-bed hospital at Mirbat in Dhofar and a 50-bed hospital at Dibba in Musandam. Work has already begun on the construction of the Jebel Akhdar hospital, and work on the other two will begin in 1995.

▼ A little girl undergoes remedial treatment as she convalesces.



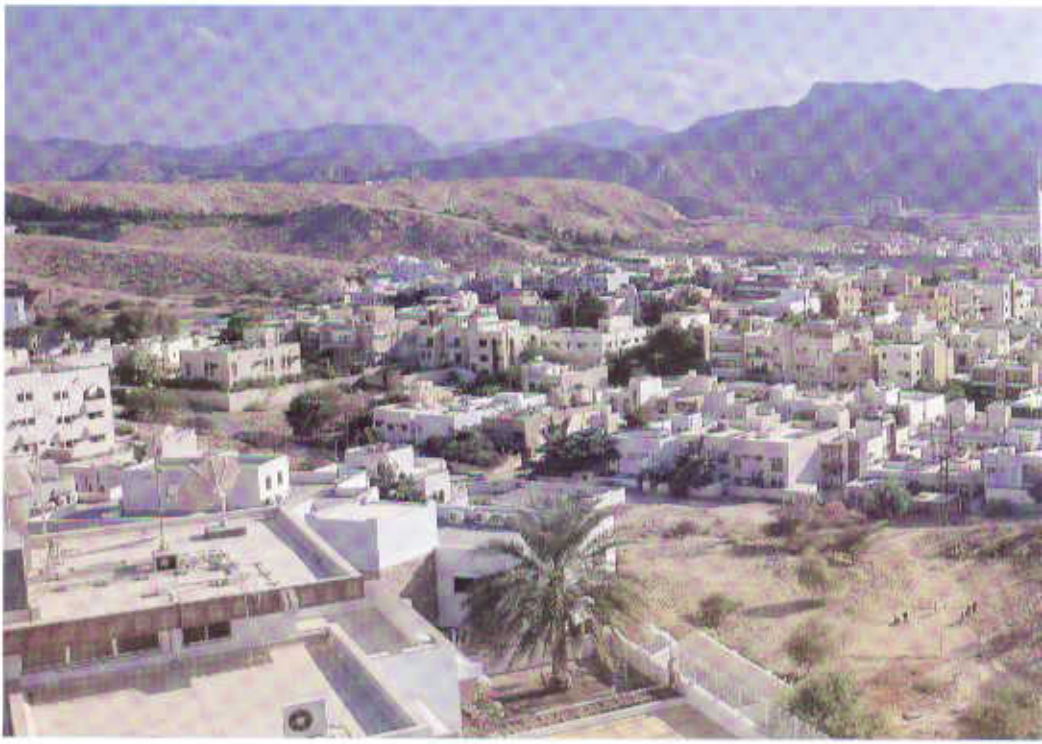
HOUSING

The standard of housing is a reflection of the standard of living of a country, and the well-being of its people. Nowhere is this more self-evident than in the Sultanate of Oman. Housing has been, and still is, one of the top priorities of the Government of HIs Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The Government has insisted, from the start of housing development 23 years ago, that it should be constructed according to well-studied plans, and in a traditional yet modern style, thus conforming with the policy of preserving Omani culture, while, at the same time, offering the benefits of modern facilities to Omani citizens. Evidence of this can now be seen throughout the Sultanate.

Originally, housing was the responsibility of the Ministry of Lands and Municipal Affairs, but, at the end of 1984, a Royal Decree was issued setting up a Ministry of Housing to fulfil these functions. The Ministry, at present situated in Ruwi, will shortly be moving to a handsome new building nearing completion at Al Khuwair, where it will be adjacent to other Ministries with which it works closely.

The rate of construction of housing increased rapidly after a modest start in 1973, when 73 houses were completed. By the end of the Third

▼ A panorama of modern houses. All conform to traditional Omani design.



Five-Year Plan in 1990, 7,754 houses had been completed. From the outset, there has been close cooperation between the various Ministries concerned with housing policy, and particular emphasis has been given to the provision of housing for the lower income groups.

An applicant for housing must fulfil the following conditions:-

1. He must be of Omani nationality, or have been naturalised at least three years before making the application.
2. He must be not less than 21 years of age, and not more than 50 years of age, unless it is established that he is the family's sole provider.
3. He must not be a participant in any other scheme in the Sultanate which entitles or enables him to build, purchase, or obtain, housing, and he must not have obtained housing through any other scheme operating in the country.
4. He must not be the sole owner of any other dwelling.
5. He must be a citizen of the wilayat or governorate in which the dwelling is located.
6. His income must not be in excess of R.O. 3,000 per annum.
7. He must not have been granted land for housing by the State.

Between January and September 1992, 164 social houses were dis-



A further 266 houses were allocated in other areas to mark National Day in November. Under the Social Housing Scheme, the Government provides the infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity, while the residents only pay a monthly instalment of R.O. 25 towards the cost of the house. The average cost of each house works out at between 14 and 16 thousand Rials. Oman has the goal of providing housing for all by the year 2000. To meet this target, strategies and policies for housing have been prepared for implementation during the current Fourth Five-Year Plan.

Between January and the end of September 1992, 52,000 plots of land were surveyed, marked out, and distributed to the public for a variety of uses. The Ministry has also put out 22 tenders to consultancy offices and companies specialising in aerial photography, mapping, marking, survey planning and levelling.

As part of the programme for providing houses for families with limited incomes, the Omani Housing Bank – a joint stock company – was set up in 1977. The Bank's activity is concentrated mainly on granting loans to nationals for the purpose of construction, purchase, improving, and adding to, residential properties, and for the purchase and comple-

▼ **Newly constructed housing for bedouin families.**



tion of unfinished houses. Persons with incomes of between R.O. 131 and R.O. 250 monthly, may obtain interest-free loans up to a maximum of R.O. 15,000 to enable them to build modern housing for themselves, and non-repayable grants of up to R.O. 6,000 are available to citizens whose monthly income does not exceed R.O. 130. The loan regulations are flexible enough to enable families to build suitable residences in approved locations in the style that suits them. A citizen who is unable to acquire housing on the grounds that he has already obtained a plot of housing land, can now obtain an interest-free loan to enable him to build a residence on his land. The response to these opportunities has been very good.

The Oman Housing Bank is planning to raise the maximum loan limit to R.O. 40,000 from the current limit of R.O. 35,000. There are also plans to increase the Government's annual loan allocation to the Bank by R.O. one million above the amount approved under the current plan, to raise it to R.O. 25 million by the year 2000. The Bank plans to lower its interest rates on loans to between one and seven per cent, depending on the borrower's monthly salary, in place of the present rate of two to nine per cent. The repayment period would be standardised to 19 years for all borrowers whose monthly incomes did

▼ Classical Omani architectural design is carefully preserved.



ceeded that figure, would be 14 years, as at present. There would be a new system of calculating interest which did not include compound interest. The Government would guarantee an annual dividend of 6% on capital, and would undertake to cover any shortfall, in the event that the Bank failed to realise sufficient profits to cover the amount. The Fourth Five-Year Plan has approved R.O. 30 million in subsidies to the Bank to enable it to cover the interest rate difference.

One of the tasks of the Ministry of Housing is to restore and improve old and dilapidated houses through the Housing Assistance Programme. By this means, the Ministry is helping those categories of nationals, who, owing to their non-eligibility, do not benefit from the entitlements of the housing assistance regulations or the Housing Bank's loan system. In granting assistance, these regulations give priority to heads of families which have suffered from natural disasters, and then to families dependent on social security incomes from the Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as those on limited incomes not exceeding R.O. 150 per month. The assistance is given in the form of a grant from the State, up to maximum of R.O. 6,000. Old buildings can be particularly important historically from the point of view of the national heritage, such as architectural examples with special characteristics. These are carefully preserved.

To enable citizens living in the wilayats to complete their business efficiently and easily, it has been essential to adopt a decentralisation policy, hence the Ministry has set up Directorates in the various regions of the Sultanate. There is also a Directorate-General of Housing in Dhofar. The Directorates of Housing in the regions contain land survey and planning sections for population projects, and financial and administrative affairs, as well as the Real Estate Register.

In 1992, the Housing Bank, for the first time, offered loans to employees of the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Oman Police.

Careful planning is, of course, essential in land development for housing. In pursuance of this policy, experts in the Ministry of Housing are being given further training in Oman and abroad. An expert from UNESCO has conducted a course on the conservation and replanning of old towns in the Sultanate.

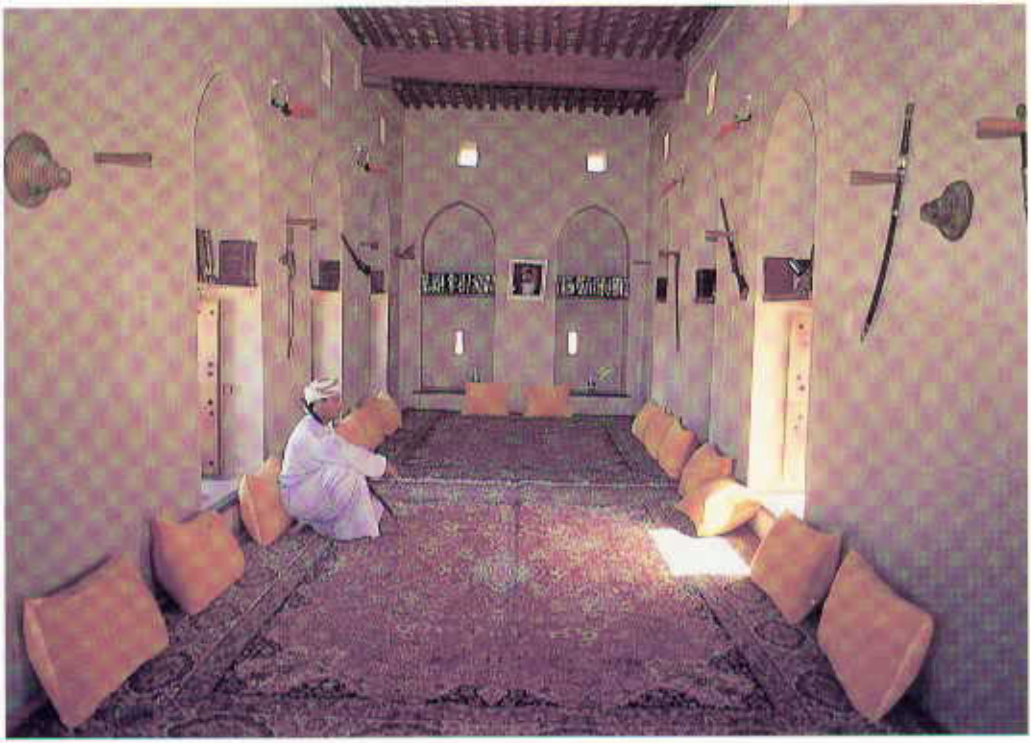
NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Omanis have always been deeply aware of, and proud of, their national heritage. An indication of this is that, following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970, he established a Ministry of National Heritage (almost unique in the world) with a member of the Royal Family, His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said, as its Minister.

The responsibilities of the Ministry include the preservation and renovation of historic buildings, with which Oman is well endowed, the encouragement of traditional crafts, the collection and collation of historical books and manuscripts, the establishment of museums, and the investigation of historical sites. The Ministry keeps in close touch with international organisations such as UNESCO, which has listed the massive fort at Bahla and the Necropolis of Bat as world heritage sites. Application has been made for the site and remains of the ancient city of Qalhat and the Jidat Al Harasis, where the oryx has been reintroduced and successfully bred, to be so listed.

The successful restoration of historic citadels, forts and ancient buildings, has been a considerable undertaking, which ranks among the Ministry's most outstanding achievements. Many of these are now

▼ The interior of the recently restored fort at Nakhl.





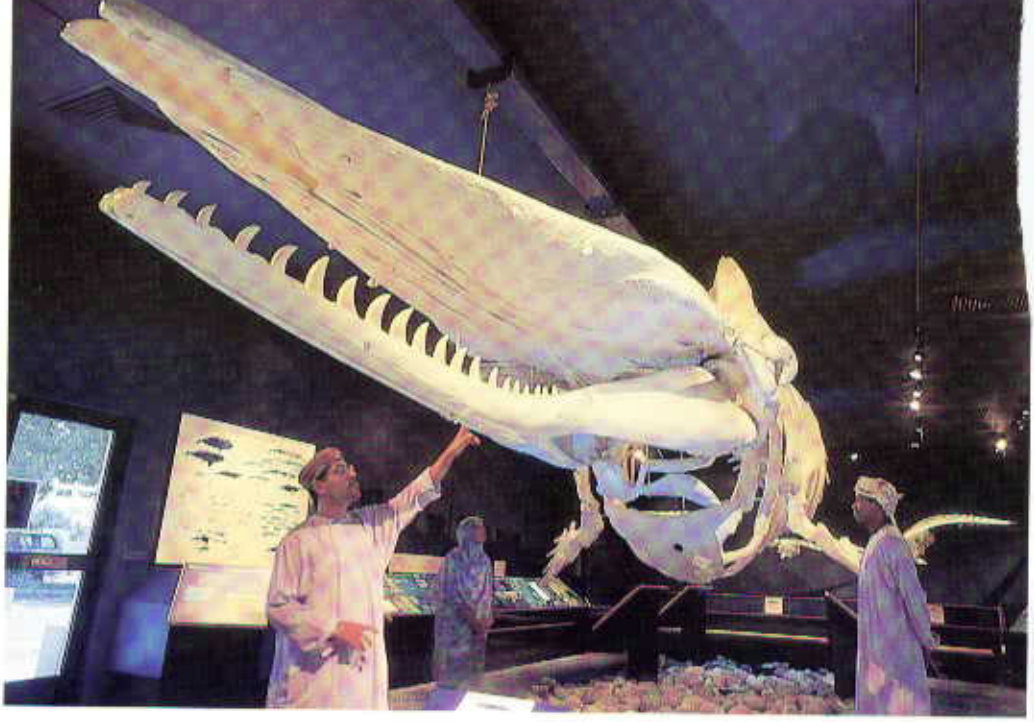
major tourist attractions, a notable example being the castle of Jabrin, originally built by Bilarub bin Sultan in the 17th century as a residential palace. It is one of the treasures of Omani architecture, which has been carefully restored. Others include the historic fort at Nizwa, a former capital of Oman, and the magnificent fort at Rustaq, also a former Omani capital, which stands in a commanding position guarding the approaches to the great massif of the Jebel Akhdar. In Muscat, the two great forts, Mirani and Jelali, poised on lofty crags overlooking Muscat Bay and the walled city, have also been restored to their original glory, as has the fort on the rocky pinnacle overlooking the neighbouring town of Muttrah. Along the Batinah Coast, the fort at Sohar, with its large square tower, has now been restored to its original state, when it played a vital role in the history of Oman. Many other forts throughout the Sultanate have been restored in recent years, and work is continuing on others. The Ministry is undertaking restoration of a number of them, with help from the Moroccan Government, under an agreement signed in 1983. Notable amongst these is the magnificent fort at Bahla.

◀ An old window in Salalah.

Oman has many other fine buildings worthy of preservation. Among those already restored are the Sayyid Nadir and the Sayyida Muzna mansions within the walls of Muscat, as well as the Bait Fransa, which has been restored and reopened last year as an Omani-

▼The fort at Sohar, newly opened as a Museum earlier this year.





▲ Skeleton of a hump back whale in the newly-opened Whale Hall at the Natural History Museum

French museum by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and President Mitterrand of France. Another fine building, recently brought back to its former glory, is the one-time residence of Suleiman bin Himyar, lying at the foot of the Jebel Akhdar at Birkat Al Mawz.

The Ministry is also actively engaged in the acquisition and preservation of ancient manuscripts and documents. It now possesses more than 4,000 manuscripts dealing with jurisprudence, interpretation of the Holy Koran, poetry, astronomy, literature and history. The oldest of these dates back to the year 1240 AD. Many such valuable old documents are still held by families who, in some cases, are loth to let them leave their possession.

Among the museums for which the Ministry is responsible, is the National Museum at Qurum near Muscat, which attracts many thousands of visitors each year. Another is the Natural History Museum, adjacent to the Ministry, which had more than 18,000 visitors last year, a high proportion of them children. Splendidly designed, the museum, which was established in 1985 and which has only just been completed, lays stress on the preservation of the environment. There are displays of the varied wildlife of Oman, including leopards and caracals, as well as a whale hall, a fossil tree, and a shell collection. A mu-

seum of a different type, for which the Ministry is also responsible, is the Children's Museum, opened at the end of 1990; a children's science centre, to which children are brought individually and in organised parties. It is immensely popular, attracting some 3,000 children every month.

Significant amongst the Sultanate's museums in the fort at Sohar. Its exhibits highlight the role Sohar has played in the history of navigation, as well as in Oman's overseas trade.

Another success of the Ministry is the Salalah Cultural Centre, opened in 1990. It has a 10,000 volume library and organises art exhibitions and competitions. Schools organise visits as part of their academic activities. Handicraft exhibitions are held at the Centre and a literature circle meets regularly.

To encourage the reading habit, and to facilitate access to literature by Omani citizens, the Ministry has put mobile bookshops into service. Air-conditioned vans, completely equipped as libraries, tour the country's regions, the aim being to provide books to citizens at their doorsteps, thus avoiding lengthy journeys to the nearest major town.

The Ministry is energetically involved in promoting Oman's heritage abroad by means of Cultural Weeks. Exhibitions are mounted, displaying Oman's artefacts, archaeological objects, handicrafts, manuscripts, etc. These Cultural Weeks have been successfully held in several Arab, European and Asian countries.

The Sultanate's contribution to Expo '92 drew much appreciation from the crowds which visited it at Seville in Spain. It took the form of a 2000 sq metre pavilion divided into two domes. One was called the Heritage Dome, and the other the Renaissance Dome. The former consisted of eleven sections: Pre-history, Early Ships, Famous Ships, Navigational Methods, Trade Routes, the Treasures of Trade, Frankincense, Forts and Architecture, the Falaj, the People, and the Land. The Renaissance Dome was a reflection of life in Oman today. It presented the visitor with an overall picture of the phenomenal development achieved by the Sultanate under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

Last year, many discoveries of major archaeological interest were made throughout the Sultanate, but the greatest of these, without doubt, was the discovery of the site of the ancient city of Ubar, buried in the sands at the edge of the Empty Quarter in Dhofar. The existence of Ubar was known through historical records dating back thousands of years, and much has yet to be learnt about it through more archaeological research, but it is believed to have been the headquarters of the frankincense trade, where the caravans assembled at the start of their long journey overland to Mesopotamia and Syria.

INTERIOR

The Ministry of the Interior is the oldest Ministry in the Sultanate of Oman. In fact, before 1970 it was the only Ministry. It was situated within the walls of Muscat, and was known as the Al-Dhakhiliya (Supervision of the Interior). It was responsible for administering Interior affairs through the Walis – the regional governors appointed by the Sultan. The Ministry of the Interior exercises the same responsibilities today. The situation that existed up to 1970 evolved from events following the death of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (Said the Great) in 1856, and the subsequent division of the Sultanate which separated the East African possessions from Oman. The country, deprived of the wealth emanating from the East African empire, withdrew into reclusive isolation and internal division until its renaissance following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who inspired the modern development of his country.

His Majesty established a strong central government to lay the foundations of stability and security. This included the major task of re-establishing control of the Province of Dhofar, which is now a Governorate, and ending the conflict there which was a serious problem at the time of his accession. This was brought to a successful conclusion by the end of 1975. The country was opened up, internal and external trade flourished, good land and air communications were developed, public and social services became progressively available, the benefits of modern technology were harnessed, and the appropriate aspects of

▼ Traditional dances are performed throughout the wilayats to mark National Days and other special occasions.



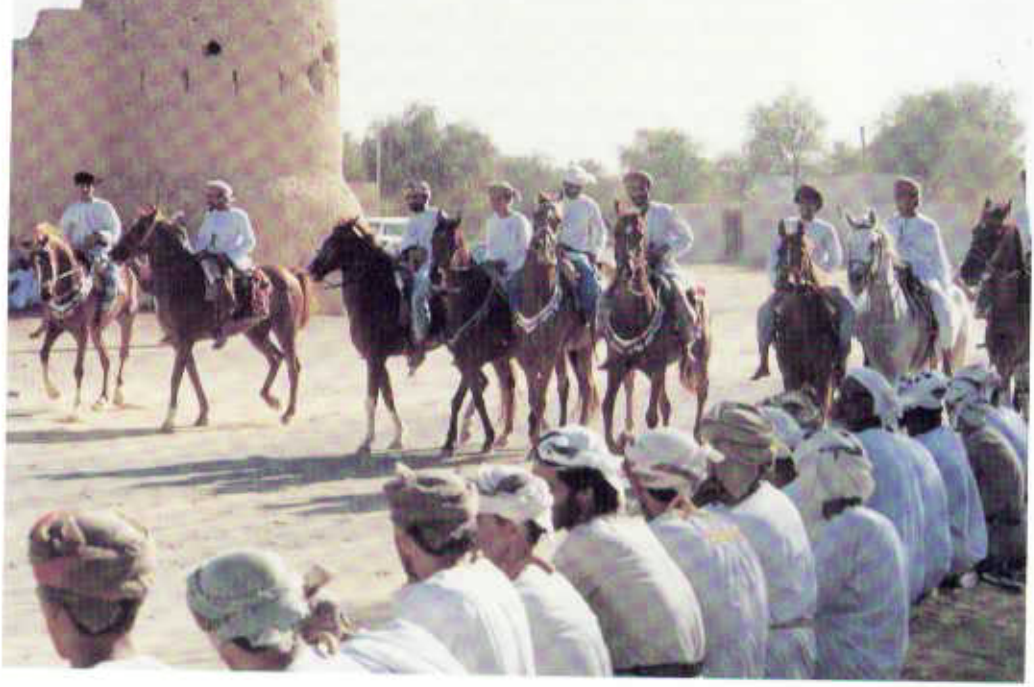
development and progress were adopted. The Ministry of the Interior has fully participated in the development process and combined the best aspects of both modern administration and traditional systems. The Sultanate is divided into seven main planning regions, which are themselves divided into wilayats (governorates) and centres. These latter include the Governorate of Muscat, which is administered by a governor at ministerial level. There are also eight centres in Dhofar, which come under the Governor of Dhofar, who is also a Minister of State, and four in the Musandam Governorate. Other wilayats within the Sultanate are administered by the Ministry of Interior.

One of the Ministry's notable successes has been its ability to maintain the traditional links between the tribal authorities and the wilayat administrations. The Sheikhs of the tribes are traditionally responsible to the Walis, who are appointed by the Government. The Walis consult with the Ministry of Interior on important matters affecting their wilayats, and pass on government policy received through the Ministry to the Sheikhs of the tribes, which is then communicated to the public.

The Walis traditionally enjoy the respect of members of the public in view of the direct ties that have historically linked them together. They perform an important role in supporting the development process through their meetings and consultations with the directors of government bodies, and through their supervision of the progress of projects, co-ordination of activities between the different bodies in their wilayats, and their chairmanship of numerous local committees concerned

▼ The Wali's office at Sohar, with the museum on the left of the picture.





▲ Fine Omani-bred Arabian horses show their paces during the annual race in Al Kamil.

with development – notably their chairmanship of local municipal committees. Their distinctive status enables them to remove any obstacles that may stand in the way of those projects.

A democratic institution soon to be introduced is the revival of the Barzah, when the Wali will hold monthly audiences in his wilayat. The Barzah will start as soon as the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture has completed the restoration of the traditional forts, where the Barzah will be held as in former years. The Qadi, or judge, of the Shariah Court in the wilayat will also be in attendance. The Wali will receive members of the public, speak with them face to face, consider their cases and direct the relevant staff to complete their business promptly for them. Cases involving legal rulings will be referred to the Qadi. The Wali will also discuss wilayat affairs with the local Sheikhs at the Barzah. All this will take place at the same location. The introduction of the Barzah has been warmly welcomed by the public.

The progress achieved by the Ministry of the Interior is not limited solely to the administrative and organisational aspects. Recent years have witnessed the introduction of a number of development projects, the most important of which has been the construction of the General Diwan of the Ministry, and administrative accommodation for the Walis, thus providing an efficient structure from which to operate. The Ministry has also been provided with the most advanced equipment to meet its requirements. It is now maintaining the momentum of its progress with plans designed to ensure that it will continue to support

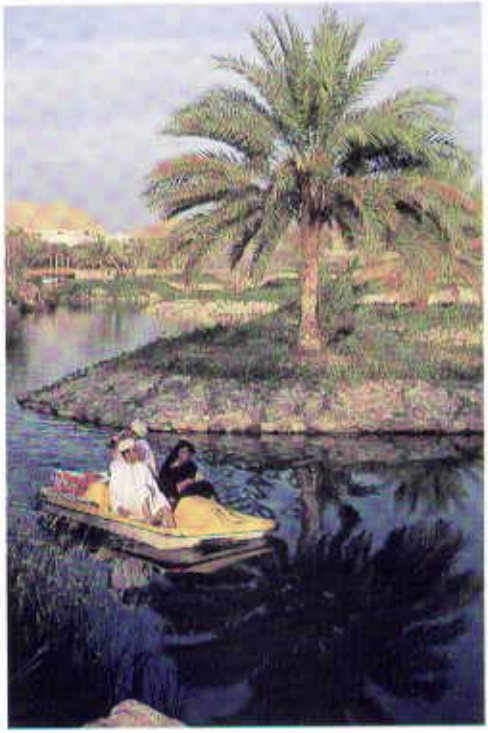
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

The Ministry of the Environment was established in 1984, and the Ministry of Regional Municipalities was set up in the following year. By 1991, their responsibilities had become so inter-related that it was decided to merge the two Ministries. The new Ministry is situated in the building in Al Khuwair, which used to house the Ministry of the Environment. Development in the Sultanate in the early stages of the renaissance was, of necessity, largely confined to the coastal regions. In recent years, one of the principal responsibilities of the Ministry has been the development of municipal services in the towns and villages of the Interior. Much progress has now been achieved, and the Ministry is actively engaged in the planning and implementation of further projects.

In 1990, the Ministry embarked on a comprehensive plan for naming villages, streets and roads in the various wilayats. Municipal committees were formed to make their suggestions concerning the names while seeking the help of scholars, historians and other qualified persons to preserve historical connections.

Municipal services include specialised responsibilities such as environmental health, public hygiene, housing hygiene, ensuring that water and food are healthy and safe to consume, meat inspection, pest control, and generally improving the quality of life. The services also include the removal of refuse and food condemned as unfit for human consumption. Inspections of food shops and hygiene regulations for employees have been comprehensively implemented, aflaj (water channels) are cleaned and water quality is checked. The number of inspectors is being increased and the Ministry is conducting a number of staff training courses. The staff of veterinarians is being expanded to ensure the rigorous checks of animals before and after slaughter.

▼ An Omani family enjoys one of the many parks.



A Municipalities Month is held annually each October when various events are organised to increase the awareness of the people of the importance of cleanliness, hygiene and the need for wholesome food. Last year Saham, on the Batinah Coast, was the winner of the 'Best Municipality' award, receiving His Majesty's Cup and a sum of R.O. 9,000. One of the projects which contributed to the award-winning was a four-kilometer road, built entirely by the people of Saham.



▲ Modernisation is carefully planned to preserve historic buildings. The ancient fort at Nizwa dominates the town's new roads and car parks.

▶ One of the Sultanate's modern hygienic souqs (markets).

Nizwa came in second place, and Khasab in the Musandam, third. A new contest for individuals for their contribution to the preservation of the environment was won by one citizen for the marine environment, and another for the protection of wildlife and birds.

A major achievement of the Ministry last year was the completion of Nizwa's beautification and improvement project at a cost of RO 5 million. Part of the project was the construction of a new souq, built to the latest technical standards, while at the same time preserving the Omani indigenous design and characteristics. It is in harmony with the archaeological buildings on the same site, such as the famous Nizwa fort. A bridge has also been built over the Wadi Al Abyadh, and a ring road has been constructed as an alternative highway.

The Ministry is actively implementing Omanisation of jobs by increasing the number of training courses, and upgrading performance standards of its staff, so as to enable them to meet the responsibilities of the posts that are targeted for Omanisation. Personnel are sent abroad for courses in food hygiene, health and sanitation. Staff members also attend seminars and conferences abroad on environmental health and other subjects to keep abreast of latest developments.

Environment

Oman has set an example to the world by maintaining a judicious balance between the needs of development and the environment. The





country's sound environmental protection and conservation policies have gained international recognition. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has cited Oman as a country with one of the best records in environmental conservation and pollution control measures geared to protect the land, air and water, and maintain the ecological balance.

The first law concerning environmental affairs was issued in 1974. This was followed in ensuing years by several other decisions and laws designed to secure the territorial waters of the Sultanate. In 1979 the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution was established with His Majesty as Chairman. A further step was taken in 1984 with the establishment of the Ministry of the Environment, which was assigned the responsibility of implementing the national plan for the environment and the Law for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution. In October 1990, a seven-year coastal zone management project was completed in re-



▲ Wildlife guards patrolling in the mountains of Wadi Al Asserin.

sponse to the threat posed by rapid urban development. This project, which covered the entire 1,700 km-long coastline of the Sultanate, involved detailed ecological surveys of the coastal regions, the sea and offshore islands, with the result that the Sultanate has one of the most intensively studied coastal environments in the world for management purposes. All the information obtained is logged into a comprehensive computerised environmental database. The project has contributed much to regional scientific knowledge through its findings, including the discovery of new species of fish and corals, new turtle nesting and feeding areas, some of which are of global importance, as well as bird-breeding and feeding sites. Together, these coastal and regional plans will help appropriate development of the coastal zone. As a result of this project, and its many findings and recommendations, the Sultanate has a secure basis from which to proceed with the safeguarding of its valuable coastal resources for future generations to come.

All projects launched in the country are required to have a 'No Environmental Objection' certificate from the Ministry. By this method, the Ministry controls plans for new industrial enterprises and other structural projects. Before issuing such certificates, the Ministry takes into account possible environmental effects and the necessity for using all possible means to minimise pollution caused by the emission of waste products.



▲ A mountain gazelle at Wadi Al Asserin.



▶ A bee-eater.

In June 1989, on the day that an honour was conferred on His Majesty at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, marking the climax of a series of achievements that have brought Oman to the prominent position it now enjoys in the international environmental sphere, it was announced that His Majesty was donating a prize to be granted every two years for the conservation of the environment. On the last occasion it was awarded to the Mexican Institute for Environmental and Natural Researches. The Sultanate has been appointed a member of the governing



▲ Oman's unpolluted waters have the most diverse marine life in the region.

body of UNEP for the third time, and UNEP has adopted a number of the Sultanate's proposals on subjects such as a ban on exporting waste to the developing countries, and the need to ensure that it remains in the countries that produced it.

The Sultanate gives a very high priority to the conservation of Oman's rich flora and fauna. This involves the protection of the latter's habitats and breeding sites, providing them with the proper conditions to enable them to breed successfully. To this end, the Ministry has set up wildlife reserves, notably the sanctuary in the Jidat Al Harasis, where the re-introduced oryx now breed in their own environment after being wiped out in 1972 as a result of illegal hunting. Hunting is strictly forbidden throughout the country.

A major transformation has taken place in the towns and villages of the Sultanate during the past 23 years. A great part of this derives from the cooperation between local authorities and the Ministries, and the coordination of their efforts. An important contribution has come from local communities and individuals using their own initiative and efforts in the improvement of their environment. This is a process which will continue to be encouraged in the years to come. The resulting total absence of squalor, slums and litter, is immediately evident to the visitor, whether driving through the main urban areas, or travelling through the towns and villages of the Interior.

JUSTICE, AWQAF AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

Islam is the religion of the Sultanate of Oman, and under Islam, religion and law are interwoven. Thus Shari'a Law is the law of Oman. Awqaf are donations and bequests to religious foundations and charities. It was only natural, therefore, that following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the processes of religious affairs and of the law should be conducted by the same Ministry. Consequently, the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs was established.

In spite of the great distances and wide deserts which separate Oman from the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, Oman was one of the first countries to embrace Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet, by acceptance rather than conquest, a faith to which it has staunchly held over the ensuing centuries.

The Ministry provides some of the most important social and religious services, and endeavours to ensure justice for every citizen who has suffered injury to his person or his property, or in any of the rights guaranteed to him under the Islamic Shari'a Law or Royal Decrees. As far as social work is concerned, the Ministry provides religious services, spiritual guidance in the form of preachers and counsellors in the mosques, and the training of and appointment of Imams. In addition, it takes care of the properties of orphans and bequests left to them, investing them so that they produce the best possible growth and returns. It also collects the zakat and distributes it to those entitled to it., teaches the Holy Koran, and looks after the Waqf (plural Awqaf) properties. Zakat is a religious tax, originally representing 5 or 10 per cent of earnings from the land. Today, revenue from zakat go the Ministry, which organises zakat revenues and expenditure.

The Ministry is divided into two main sections, namely Justice and Awqaf, and Islamic Affairs. Each section is headed by an Under-Secretary, who is responsible to the Minister for the running of his section, which has its own prerogatives and functions. Under the Justice section are the Sharia'a Courts, of which there are 45 in Muscat and other principal towns in the wilayats. Each court has at least one judge (qadi), an assistant judge and his deputy, with a team of clerks responsible for documents and court records.

In the Shari'a courts, each judge is responsible for hearing civil and criminal cases filed by citizens against each other, reaching judgements on and solutions to disputes, and how to settle them.

The Court of Appeal, in Muscat, considers judgements by the Shari'a courts when appeals are lodged against them. At the highest level is the Complaints Committee to which there is recourse by those who are not satisfied by the judgements given at the two lower levels. Rulings given by the Complaints Committee are final.

Studies at the Institute of Shari'a Jurisprudence, Counsel and Guidance, consist of two stages: students who have qualified for the



▲ The elegant Muhalab bin Abi Sufra mosque at sunset

Mosques' Preparatory Certificate, or at an equivalent level, undertake a general Shari'a course of three years length. Those completing this stage may then continue to the specialisation stage. Alternatively, they may be appointed to appropriate posts in the Shari'a courts or the Ministry. Students are accepted for speicalisation in Shari'a jurisprudence if they have attained a minimum of 60% in the examination at the previous stage. After graduation, they are appointed as deputy judges or to appropriate posts at the courts or the Ministry. Students who wish to specialise in Counsel and Guidance are accepted for this if they have been successful in the final examination of the Shari'a studies stage. After graduation they are appointed to Counsel and Guidance posts as Imams and Preachers.

The Awqaf and Islamic Affairs section of the Ministry is responsible for :-

1. Spreading the teachings of the True Islamic Religion within the Sultanate through counsel, guidance and the various media, and setting up Islamic libraries.

2. Taking part in Islamic activities abroad, through organisations, conferences and seminars, and exchanging visits with members of the Islamic community and brotherly Arab states.

3. Making preparations for the Haj (pilgrim) season in coordination with the Saudi authorities and relevant local organisations.

4. Establishing, restoring, maintaining and administering mosques.



▲ Village children study the Holy Koran

5. Organising zakat revenues and expenditure.

6. Overseeing and maintaining all types of awqaf, and endeavouring to increase their revenues, develop them, and regulate their affairs.

7. Taking charge of Bait Al Mal (Public Treasury) properties, and setting rules and regulations for maintaining them and developing their resources.

8. Looking after and maintaining the property of orphans and bequests for them, implementing Shari'a court decisions related to these bequests, and the regulations dealing with them.

The Holy Koran schools are the basic source for those wishing to absorb the teachings of the Holy Koran and learn the elements of reading and writing, especially in the more remote areas. These schools, of which there are currently more than 500 in the Sultanate, played an important role in training many generations before secular modern schools became widespread. Today they still play a vital role and attract numbers of boys and girls each year. The Ministry also operates summer holiday centres throughout the Sultanate for teaching the Holy Koran and to ensure that students from regular schools have access to Koranic studies when the schools are in recess.

The Grand Mufti of Oman, His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalili, has revealed a plan to set up an Islamic university in the Sultanate. He has said that once the final decision has been taken, and the university has become a reality, all the existing Islamic institutes in the country could be incorporated into it.

CIVIL SERVICE

Before 1970 no Civil Service as such existed. The functions of government, limited as they were, were performed by a small number of officials. As the development policy initiated by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos proceeded, the number of personnel employed by the Government increased to meet the needs of expansion. In 1975 the Law for the Organisation of the Government Administrative System was enacted to establish a rational system of organising the machinery of government. Likewise, a Civil Service Law was passed to provide the expanded service with qualified personnel, and to implement the services needed for the development of the nation. The Law enacted in 1975 was replaced by a new law in 1980.

Until the Ministry of Civil Service was established in 1988, personnel matters were administered by the Establishments Bureau under the guidance of the Civil Service Commission. In October 1992 a Royal Decree was promulgated defining the functions of the Ministry of Civil Service, which included implementation of general approved policy, proposing draft civil service laws, preparing standard salary and allowance regulations and schedules, planning administrative changes, preparing training plans in conjunction with the competent authorities, studying problems faced by the Civil Service, providing assistance for government personnel departments, simplifying organisational and training procedures, ensuring application of pension and end-of-service benefit laws, and appointing graduates to suitable posts compatible with their qualifications and serving the State's development goals.

In 1992 the Ministry published regular figures on Civil Service employees and prepared studies and statistics when requested to do so by government authorities. In addition, its half-yearly statistics on Civil Service employees up to the middle of 1992 show the employee grades in every government unit governed by the Civil Service Law. The Ministry also implements the government sector Omanisation plan.

The Ministry is responsible for ensuring that all government departments comply with Civil Service Laws and Regulations and follows up their implementation to ensure that they meet the purpose for which they were intended. In this connection, the following-up department made 36 visits to government units during 1992. By way of assisting government units in re-organising their organisational structures and simplifying their procedures the Ministry studied the administrative structures of eleven government units.

The Ministry appoints university graduates and those with similar qualifications to government posts. In 1992, 470 university graduates and 99 education institute graduates were appointed. Other applicants have been referred to Government units in need of staff. 433 government employees have applied to study as Arab University of Beirut extramural students.

The Ministry of Civil Service's Directorate-General of Pensions monitors the circumstances of retired employees and those entitled to retirement pensions under the Pensions and End-of-Service Benefit law. Up to the end of September last year, 749 employees were on retirement pensions, bringing the total number of retired Civil Service employees to 6,769. Computerisation has recently been introduced to enable pensioners to receive their pensions with the minimum of inconvenience, and all pensioners' file details were computerised by the end of last year.

The Fourth Five-Year Plan provides for the construction of a single permanent Ministry of Civil Service building. Final drawings, architectural plans and specifications were completed in 1992, and the project is expected to go out to general tender shortly.

Great care is being taken to avoid increasing the number of civil servants without affecting efficiency. This is mainly intended to curb redundancy that would affect the working of the service and to utilise the existing manpower to the full extent. New methods and techniques for performance evaluation have been introduced. Individual performance was evaluated rationally on the basis of achievements and special training programmes by way of enhancing overall performance.

One of the main objectives in the administrative reform has been the introduction of position classification, approved by the Council of Ministers. The first phase of outlining the legal framework for the project has been fulfilled. The scheme is to be implemented centrally in collaboration with the different units, which is aimed at generating a unified system applicable to the whole Civil Service. The system selected is a combination of the advantages of different evaluation methods to suit the needs of the civil system in the Sultanate. Further steps are being carried out including the formulation of the different necessary forms, training of Omani executives in the field of position classification, and collecting data regarding present positions, titles and functions, as necessary steps for the second stage of evaluating positions. The Ministry has introduced a new technique for processing personnel information by implementing the human resources data base for meeting Civil Service needs. The data provided covers a wide

Civil Service memory and records in all activities pertaining to personnel management.

The first-ever national census in Oman is to be carried out at the end of 1993. The census will begin on 1st December and continue for ten days. A pilot census was carried out in December 1992; about 3,500 enumerators are being trained for census duty. The count will cover both citizens and expatriates as well as establishments of all kinds. In September 1992 the Ministry of Civil Service embarked on a course for civil servants in accountancy and census. The project is receiving help from the UN Population Fund with which a technical agreement has been signed. Also helping are the Omani-American Joint Commission and the Population Census Bureau of the USA.

Omanisation Plan

The sum of RO 10 million has been allotted in the 1991-95 Development Budget to the Omanisation Plan. Accordingly, the Ministry's Technical Office was established for implementing the Plan, and has set out systematic procedures for the replacement of expatriates by Omanis in conformity with the policy that such replacements must be



▼ The Ministry operates the nation's Vocational Training Insitutes.

carried out without impairing the efficiency and productivity of the Service.

The guidelines for Omanisation are:

1. Candidates for higher qualifications or specialised training are to be selected by competitive examinations.
2. Those requiring training or education abroad should be sent to reputable institutes of learning.
3. The required academic qualifications or relevant training in different fields of specialisation are to be based on the job description of the positions to Omanis on the successful completion of their studies.
4. In some cases, training will be followed by a period understudying the expatriate before taking over.

At the end of 1992 the Minister of Civil Service, H.E. Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, announced that 161,000 new jobs would be generated for Omani nationals by the end of 1995. During the Fourth Five-Year Plan period the national labour force is expected to grow at an annual rate of 8.3% from 207,000 in 1990 to 368,000 by the end of 1995. The Minister was speaking at a two-day human resources development conference organised jointly by the EC and the Omani Government when he gave a number of proposals for collaboration between the EC and Oman for the development of a highly skilled and qualified national workforce, through training programmes, internships and visits. The Sultanate is also exploring ways to meet the demands of technical assistance that could be provided by the EC to enhance the capabilities of polytechnics in Oman.

The Institute of Public Administration

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) came into existence by Royal Decree in 1977. Originally, it was an autonomous body with the Ministry of Royal Diwan Affairs. After the dissolution of that Ministry, IPA was placed under the supervision of the Minister of National Heritage and Culture until the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Service. In accordance with a Royal Decree, the Director-General of the IPA is appointed by the Minister and Board of Directors. He works closely with the Ministry in preparing the National Training Programme, prior to its submission to the Board of Directors. He also prepares IPA's annual plan for the various administrative levels, for presentation to the Board.

Currently the academic sections of the IPA consist of the Departments of Personnel Management, Local Administration, Financial

tions, English Language, Research and Consultancy, Clerical Training, and Computers. This arrangement is subject to change in the light of the Royal Decree.

During the period 1989-90 the IPA introduced a unique programme for training senior civil servants, including Under-Secretaries and Directors-General, in addition to training lower-level personnel. This programme synchronised with the beginning of the Fourth Five-Year Plan and takes into account the Omanisation of the Civil Service now under way. Over 1000 personnel are being trained, through fifty different courses, with a view to revamping the public administrative system and providing a more efficient and productive Civil Service. The programme also includes courses for improving the proficiency of civil servants in the English language.

In a similar vein, special emphasis has been placed on offering long term diploma courses in the fields of accountancy and statistics. Continuous effort has been made to enhance the professional competence of Omanis in both the private and public sectors to accelerate Omanisation. Apart from these diplomas, IPA is considering other long-term 1993 courses, in a number of related fields according to the needs of the labour market.

In the face of the changing situation, it has become imperative for IPA to keep abreast of new trends in the areas of public administration. Thus, great emphasis has been placed on strengthening ties with similar institutions at the Arab and international level. An example of this was two joint programmes with RIPA on 'The Analysis of Training Needs' during 1992.

In addition to its training programmes, IPA also provides research and consultancy services. These are two essential factors for identifying, assessing and solving administrative problems.

IPA maintains a specialised library for the academic staff, the regular participants in IPA programmes and researchers into administrative development. The library keeps close contact with publishers, acquires new publications, and subscribes to periodicals, journals and daily newspapers. It has a collection of 13,600 books, of which 10,500 are in Arabic and 3,100 in English. IPA also has 6,500 documents, of which 5,500 are in Arabic and 1000 in English. The documentation and publication section also has the responsibility of publishing the journal Al-Edari, a specialised periodical in administrative sciences. It is hoped that after the completion of its new buildings, IPA will be in a position to increase and strengthen its manpower capabilities and extend its activities to meet a variety of training needs in Muscat and the regions.

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