

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Information

OMAN'92

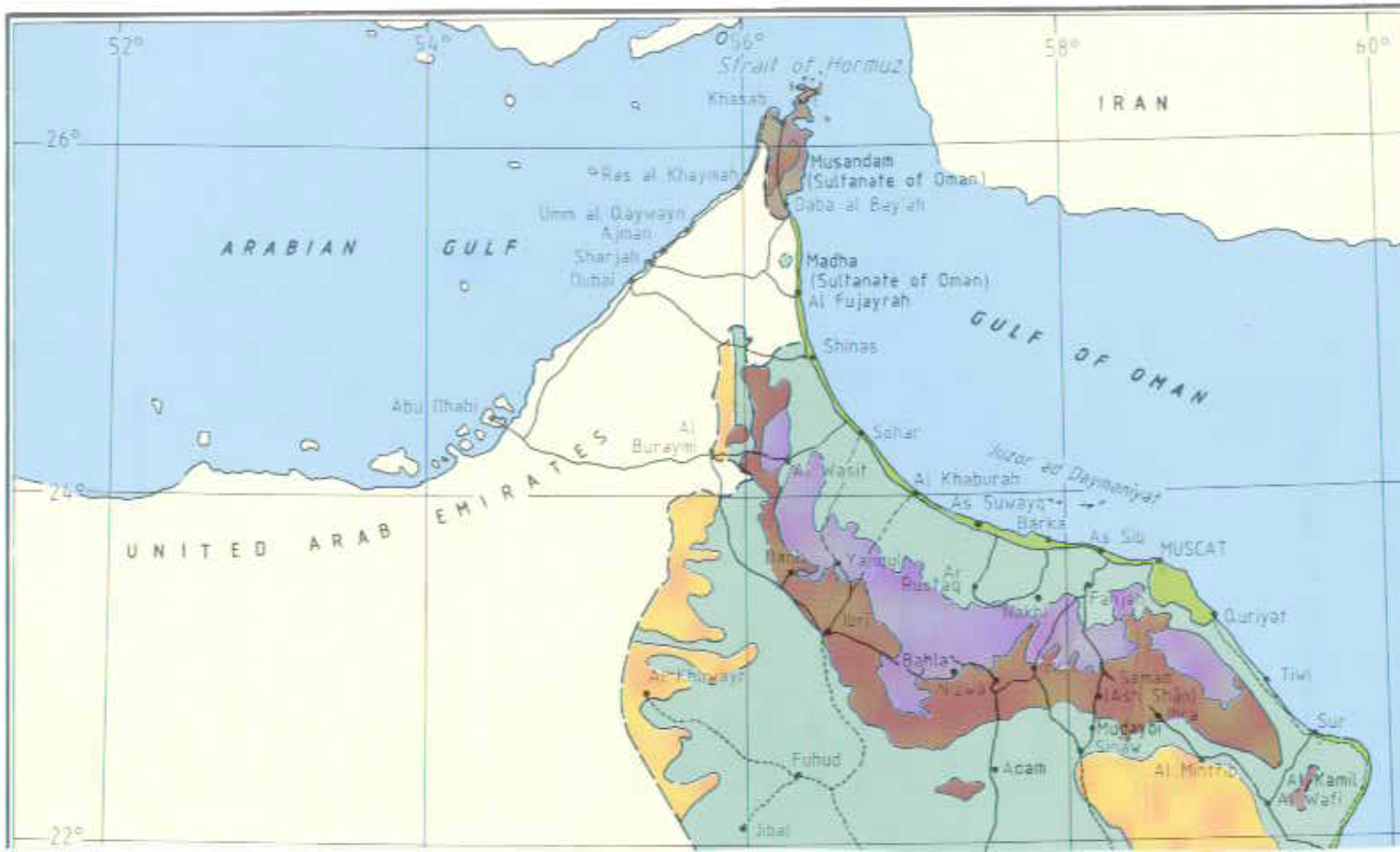
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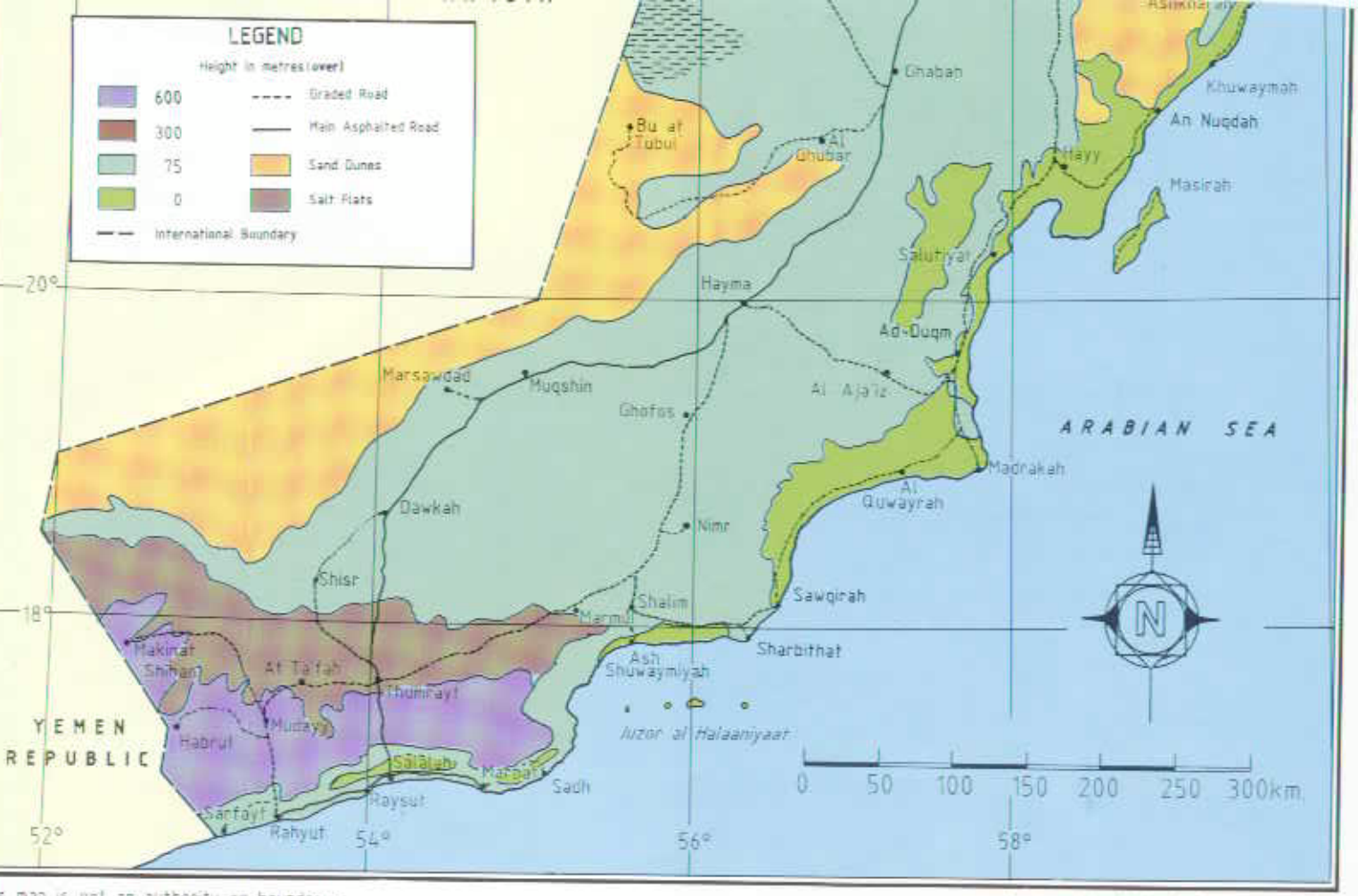


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THE SULTANATE OF OMAN





map is not an authority on boundaries

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SULTAN 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 1992, 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 22 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 Busaid 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 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 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

His Majesty with brother monarch, His Majesty King Fahad bin Abdul Aziz, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.





His Majesty receives HRH The Prince of Wales during a visit by the latter to the Sultanate.



His Majesty reviews the guard of honour, accompanied by President Hosni Mubarak, on his State Visit to Egypt.

quest for world peace and understanding between peoples. These relations have currently been established with a total of 101 countries. His Majesty has paid State Visits to brother countries of the GCC, Egypt, Jordan, the United Kingdom, United States, France and Spain. This year, His Majesty has welcomed to Oman a number of distinguished world leaders including His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan, President Hafez al Assad of Syria, President François Mitterrand of France and President Mario Suarez of Portugal.

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 commenced last year. 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 cooperation



President Mitterrand of France receives a ceremonial sword from His Majesty during the former's visit to the Sultanate.



and integration between the Government and the citizens in carrying out the duties and obligations of the current stage of development."

This democratic process was carried a stage further last year 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 has already demonstrated its constructive role in representing the people of the Sultanate: as an example, at its Session in May this year, it approved recommendations by its Education and Culture Committee for the educational and cultural development of Omani children and received reports from the Ministers of Information, Health, and Commerce and Industry on the work of their Ministries and questioned them on matters of detail.

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



(Above) His Majesty the Sultan with visiting President Mario Soares of Portugal. (Left) His Majesty confers with his people during his annual "Meet-the-People" tour.



His Majesty delivers his National Day address to his people.

policies. Last year, His Majesty emphasised in his speech that industry is the corner-stone of the country's development, telling his people that "It is only through hard work, perseverance, continuous effort and resolute national spirit, that nations can be built and attain their highest aspirations." He also congratulated his people on their enthusiastic participation in the elections to the Majlis Ash'shura "which confirmed our country's march towards comprehensive development."

In his speeches and public statements to his people during the past year, His Majesty has 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 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 disputes, 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 High 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 this year is holding another in Budapest. Also this year, Oman has participated in the international exposition at Seville, EXPO '92. His Majesty has taken a keen personal interest in all these enterprises.

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 this year he stressed this concern and called for energetic efforts 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 awarding to individuals or organisations that play a distinguished role in conserving the environment.

The Year of Industry. His Majesty presents the Cup of the Year of Industry to one of the Chief Executives of five winning Omani companies.



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, aboutt 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 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 Also, Oman's terrain divided the country into three very distinct sorts of culture.

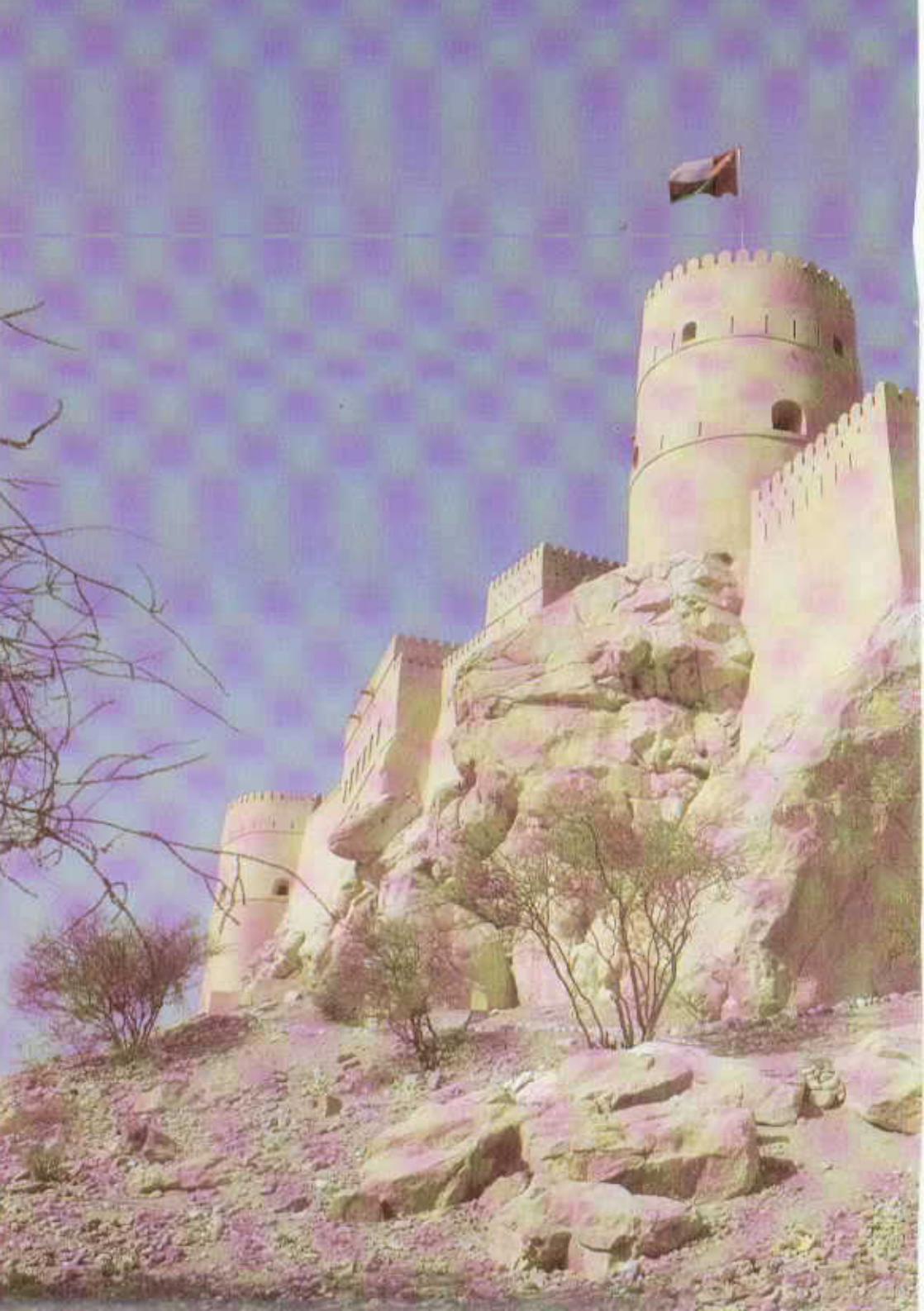
Within the rock of Oman's abrupt mountain spine existed self-sufficient, fiercely independent farming and pastoral communities that were already flourishing when the first Arab people came to Oman from southern Arabia some 2,000 years ago. In the foothills to the west and in the great deserts beyond, 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 faiaj system of undergound 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 Oman. Later, the Azd tribal group, from which the present ruling family 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.

Five-thousand-year-old "beehive" tombs. Tangible proof of Oman's early civilisation.







The Impressive Nahkl Fort.

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



Sayyid Said bin Sultan (1807-1856).

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.



Muscat – the ancient city redolent of the Sultanate's rich 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 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, Yemen; to the north the Strait of Hormuz; and to the east the Arabian Sea.

THE REGIONS

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



(Above) The Musandam peninsula. (Right) The Al Hajar mountains.



The Wahiba Sands meet the Arabian Sea.



A view of Muscat with Al Alam Palace in the background.

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: Birka, Masana'a, Suwaiq, Khabura, Saham, Sohar, Liwa and Shinas.

WESTERN HAJR ('ROCK') MOUNTAINS

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



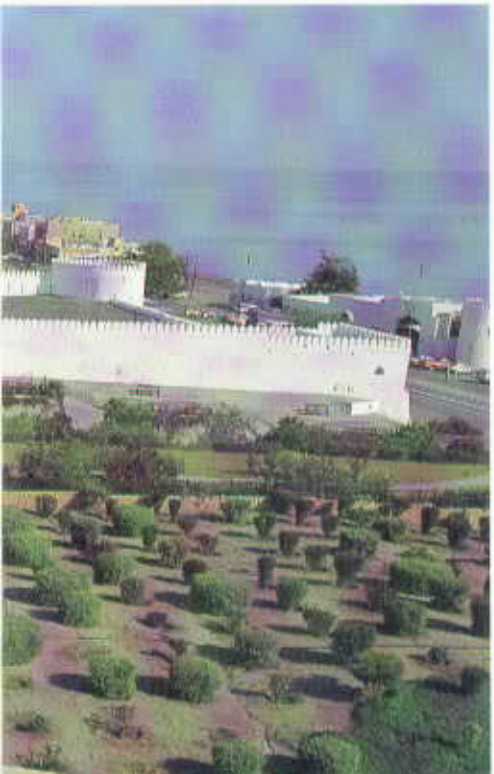
The Central Business District of Ruwi.

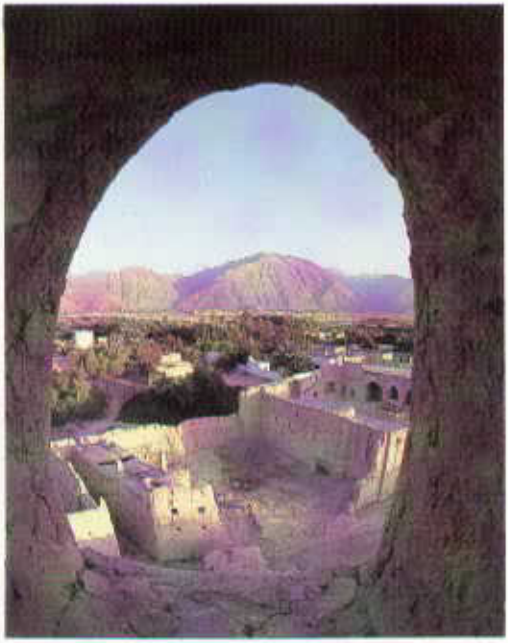


(Above) The Daymaniyat Islands.
(Below) The famous fortress at Sohar.



Shinas, a town on the Batinah coast.





One of Wadi Mawal's many villages.





Crystal clear water flowing through one of our country's many wadis.



Bahla Fort rises commandingly over the surrounding date plantation. (Below) An antique dealer in his shop at Nizwa souq.





A proud farmer with a harvest of oranges.

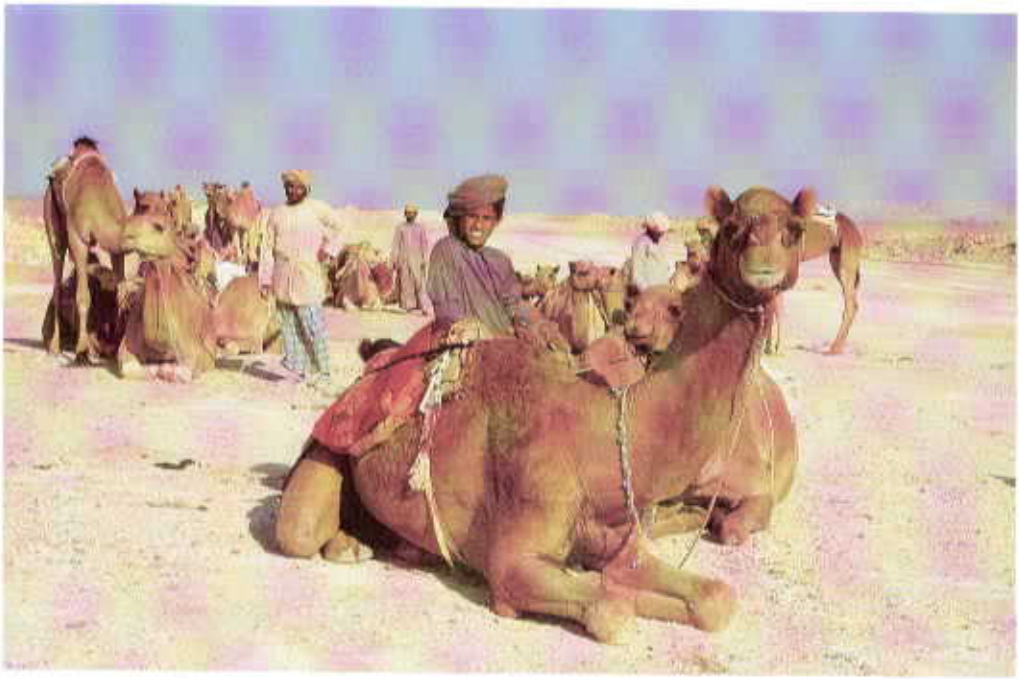
Halfein and Samail valleys together form a natural break in the Western Hajar mountain range providing the traditional route between Muscat and the Interior. It is also one of the most populous areas of Oman, its main towns being: Nizwa, Bahla, Samail, Izki, Manah, Bidbid and Adam.

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 Yanqul, 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.

SHARQIYAH 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.



Getting prepared for a camel race near Ibri.





Traditional Omani boats at Khor al-Batah in Sur.



A camel race in progress at Al-Kamal wa Al-Wafi.



Traditional boats at Musandam.

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 Strait 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



Frankincense trees which provide the base for the famous Amouage perfume.

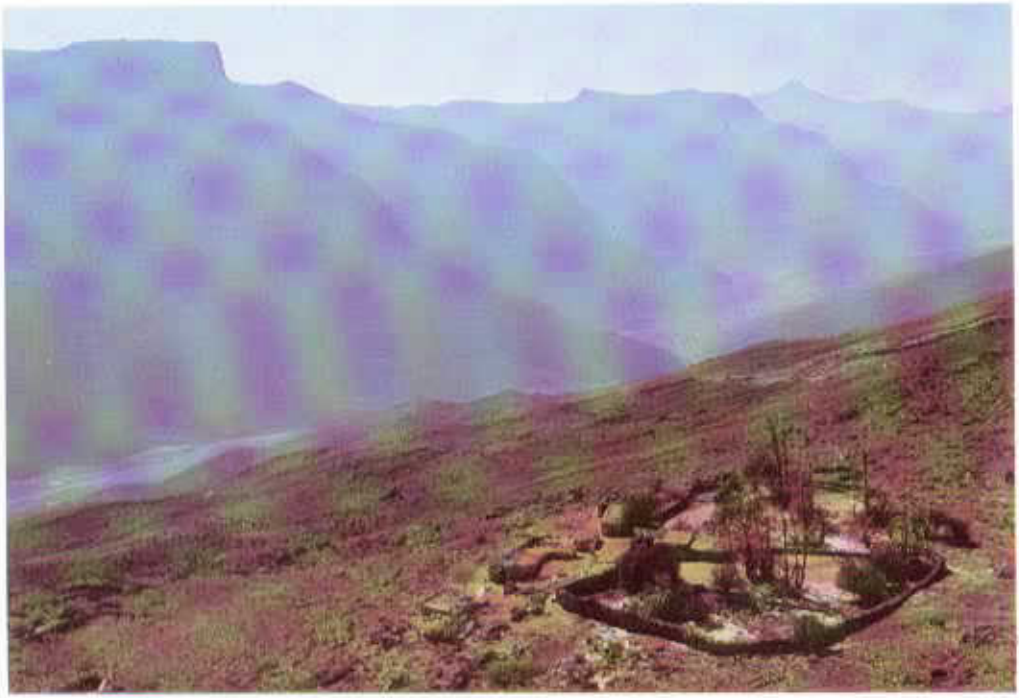




Mist shrouds the mountains of Dhofar at the time of the monsoon.



The Wali (Governor)'s offices in Dhofar.



The mountains of Musandam.

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 sun sets over one of our tranquil bays.





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 Secretariate 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 Abdulmunim 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 Sayyid Saif bin Hamad bin Saud, *Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court.*

His Excellency Fareeq Awal Ali bin Majid al Ma'amari, *Minister of Palace Office Affairs.*



A Cabinet meeting presided over by His Majesty.

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 Mahfoudh Al Mantheri, *Minister of Education and Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University.*

His Excellency Sayyid Badr bin Saoud 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 Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, *Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.*

His Excellency Salim bin Abdullah Al Ghazali, *Minister of Communications.*

His Excellency Ahmed bin Suwaidan Al Balushi, *Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones.*

His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed bin Ali Al Qatabi, *Minister of Electricity and Water.*

His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah 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.*

Al Hosni, *Minister of Regional Municipalities and Environment.*

His Excellency Hamed bin Said Al Aufi, *Minister of Water Resources.*

His Excellency Maqbool bin Ali bin Sultan, *Minister of Commerce and Industry.*

His Excellency Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Salim Al Isa'ee, *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.

MAJLIS ASH'SHURA

His intention to establish the Majlis Ash'Shura, a state advisory council, was announced by His Majesty the Sultan in his speech to his people on National Day 1990. This has now been implemented, the Majlis taking the place of the original State Consultative Council, in an important extension of the democratic process.



The Majlis is wholly composed of representatives of the people nominated by the 59 Wilayats (governorates) throughout the country. There are no Government members. The following is the substance of the Royal Decree establishing the Majlis:

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:-

A Every Wilayat to nominate three citizens,



The Cabinet building, Muscat.

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

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 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



His Majesty with his people during the annual "Meet-the-People" tour.



His Majesty leads his Ministers and people in Prayer.



His Majesty the Sultan listens intently as one of his people explains his problem.

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.
9. Giving opinions on other subjects which His Majesty 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.

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

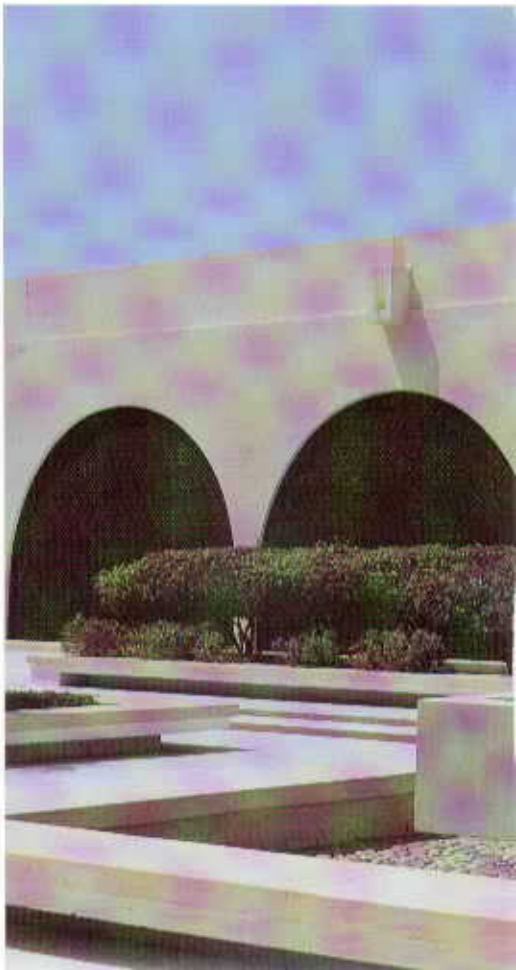
Issued on 12 November 1991

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





The Majlis Ash'shura in session. (Below) The Majlis Ash'shura building.



The Sultan Qaboos University.

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 Fahd 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 H.E. Sayyid Saif bin Hamed bin Saud, Minister of the Diwan of 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 Under-Secretary for Financial Affairs.
His Excellency the Under-Secretary for Communications.
His Excellency the Under-Secretary 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 coordination 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 of 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 Under-Secretary 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.

The Sultanate of Oman was the first Arab country to establish contact with the United States of America in the first half of the 19th century, by which time it already had a treaty relationship with the United Kingdom and relations with France. However, following the death of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (Said the Great) in 1856 and the separation of the East African 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-two years. These principles include: good neighbourliness and respect for international laws and traditions, strengthening cooperation between 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 international prize-winning Ministry of Foreign Affairs building, Al Sarooj.



Under His Majesty's direction, energetic efforts have 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 Gulf community for the second time, when the 10th Summit of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council was held in Muscat. This 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 final communiqué and the Muscat Declaration were a reflection of the Gulf people's hopes and aspirations towards security, stability and the development of a strong, continuing cooperation that would further economic unity and constructive

progress towards a brighter, more prosperous future for the region and its people. An example of this was the Omani-Saudi agreement on the borders between the two countries, which was concluded between His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and the Custodian of the Two Holy Places, King Fahad bin Abdul-Aziz, during His Majesty's visit to Saudi Arabia at the end of March 1990.

The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait faced the Gulf States with their most dangerous crisis. The Sultanate gave full support to rejecting the occupation and demanding an unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. When international efforts to reach a peaceful solution failed, the Sultanate gave prompt support by sending a contingent to assist the Coalition forces.

The Sultanate has always maintained good relations with Iran in 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.

The Palestinian question is still the main focus of conflict in the Middle East. Oman has given and continues to give total support to the Palestinian people's right to decide their own future in their own land and establish their own independent state. The Sultanate has given full backing to the Madrid Conference and the subsequent negotiations. Oman supports Lebanese legitimacy and has repeatedly declared that it is in favour of all sincere efforts aimed at restoring Lebanon's well-being, security and stability.

The Sultanate hosted the Gulf-European Dialogue in 1990. This represented the first collective 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 more than five centuries.

In recent years relations with the countries of both western and eastern Europe have continued to expand in all fields — particularly the economic field. Oman now enjoys diplomatic relations with most countries in western and eastern Europe at either resident embassy or non-resident embassy level. Oman also has good relations with many States in the North and South American continents, and with most African States. A number of African leaders and senior officials have paid official visits to the Sultanate for the purpose of strengthening these relations. The Sultanate has consistently supported the African people's just causes, and has recognised the independence of Namibia, whilst urging the South African regime to abandon its racist policies with apparent success.

Relations between the Sultanate and the Asian continent have also continued to develop in friendship and constructive cooperation. The Sultanate fully supports ASEAN and UN efforts to reach a peaceful outcome of the Cambodian problem, and appeals for a just solution resulting in a system of government acceptable to the Cambodian people themselves. The Sultanate supports the Geneva agreements on the Afghan question in the hope that all parties concerned will succeed in forming a government comprising all sections of the Afghan people, which will follow a policy of uninterrupted good neighbourliness and cooperation.

In November 1991 Yusuf bin Alawi bin



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with other Heads of State of the GCC.



Affairs, opened the Omani Diplomatic Institute at the premises of the Foreign Ministry. The aim of the new Institute is to upgrade Omani diplomatic standards. Studies at the Institute will centre on topics relating to political affairs, international relations, crisis management, economy, and international and diplomatic law. Studies will also include consular affairs and protocol. The history of Oman and its civilization will form part of the curriculum.

COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Algeria, Democratic and Popular Republic of
Argentina, Republic of
Australia, Commonwealth of
Austria, Republic of
Azerbaijan, Republic of
Bangladesh, People's Republic of
Bahrain, State of
Belgium, Kingdom of
Bolivia, Republic of
Brazil, Federative Republic of
Brunei, Darussalam State of
Bulgaria, Republic of
Burkina Faso, Republic of
Burundi, Republic of
Canada
Chad, Republic of
Chile, Republic of
China, People's Republic of
Comoros, Federal Islamic Republic of
Colombia, Republic of
Cyprus, Republic of
Czechoslovakia, Federal Republic of
Denmark, Kingdom of
Djibouti, Republic of
Ecuador, Republic of
Egypt, Arab Republic of
Finland, Republic of
France, Republic of
Gambia, Republic of
Germany, Federal Republic of
Ghana, Republic of
Greece, Hellenic Republic of
Guinea, Republic of
Hungary, 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
Kenya, Republic of
Korea, Republic of
Kuwait, State of
Lebanon, Republic of
Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of
Malaysia
Maldives, Republic of
Mali, Republic of
Malta, Republic of
Mauritania, Islamic Republic of
Mauritius, Republic of
Mexico, United States of
Morocco, Kingdom of
Netherlands, Kingdom of the
Nepal, Kingdom of
New Zealand
Niger, Republic of
Nigeria, Federal Republic of
Norway, Kingdom of
Pakistan, Islamic Republic of
Peru, Republic of
Philippines, Republic of
Poland, Republic of
Portugal, Republic of
Qatar, State of
Romania, Republic of
Russian 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, Kingdom of
Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of
Sudan, Republic of the
Sweden, Kingdom of
Switzerland, Confederation of
Syria, Arab Republic of
Tanzania, United Republic of
Thailand, Kingdom of
Tunisia, Republic of
Turkey, Republic of
Uganda, Republic of
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay, Republic of
Venezuela, Republic of
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of
Yemen, Republic of
Zaire, Republic of
Zambia, Republic of
Zimbabwe, Republic of

United Nations' offices in the Sultanate:
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
WHO – World Health Organisation
UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

GULF ORGANISATIONS	DATE JOINED
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

League of Arab States	29.9.71
Arab States' Broadcasting Union	14.6.72
Arab Labour Organisation	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

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
United Nations Educational, Scientific and 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 Meteorological Organisation	2.2.75
World Conservation Union (IUCN)	4.6.75
Afro-Asian Organisation for Legal Consultations	1976
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	

Before 1970, there was no means of disseminating information within the Sultanate, other than by word of mouth or by broadcasts heard by radio from abroad on transistor radios. There were no newspapers, radio or television. Instructions from the Sultan in Salalah were passed by radio-telephone to the Army headquarters in Bait Al Falaj and promulgated by means of typed notices posted on the walls of Muscat. Thus the provision of an information service for his people was high on his list of priorities when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970, recognising as he did the importance of projecting his policies and news about Oman objectively and accurately to them, and to the world at large.

Within a week of his accession, a small broadcasting station of only one kw was installed at Bait Al Falaj which enabled the inhabitants of Muscat and its 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 radio station of 10 kw was inaugurated, broadcasting regularly 14 hours a day and 18 hours on holidays. In 1975, broadcasting commenced 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, broadcasting on the same wavelengths. Additional transmitters were subsequently sited in many parts of the country to strengthen and relay national broadcasts to the entire Sultanate.

In 1979, the two broadcasting stations at Muscat and Salalah were linked by space satellite to improve radio transmissions throughout the country. Programmes are and from Salalah at other times, thus achieving fuller use of radio facilities. It has thus been possible to increase daily broadcasting from Muscat and Salalah to all parts of the Sultanate, as well as to the Gulf, East Africa, and the USA.

Broadcasts are now made in Arabic for 19½ hours daily and in the English language for 15 hours. The main news in English is at 0730, 1430, and 1830 hours daily, with news highlights at 1100, 1300, and 2200 hours. Classical music is broadcast from 0700 hours to 1200 hours, programmes in English from 1200 hours to 1500 hours, and light and popular music from 1500 hours to 2200 hours each day.

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



Oman News Agency spans the world.



A play is rehearsed at Oman Television studios.



An announcer studies her script.

a year later to cover the entire Governorate of Dhofar. Commercial advertising has now been introduced on both television and the radio English language service. Television broadcasting has naturally greatly extended the ability to provide information, entertainment, and education for the people, and additional studies for broadcasting and recording programmes, and for the filming of plays and serials, have been developed. Extensive facilities for 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. In October 1990, the Minister of Information, His Excellency Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas, signed an agreement with a French group for the 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 project will cost RO25,645,641 and will be completed in 32 months.

In 1979, the space satellite-linked stations at Muscat and Salalah enabled daily transmissions from the studios of both stations to serve the maximum number of viewers. The television service has been particularly effective in providing information and guidance in such matters as health, education, agriculture, industry, and family affairs and child care, in close co-operation with the relevant Ministries.

Television broadcasts are transmitted for ten hours daily on weekdays from 1500 hours to 0100 hours, and from 1000 hours to 0100 hours on Thursdays and Fridays. There



Editing and dubbing programmes for Radio Sultanate of Oman.

is a daily English language news bulletin at 2000 hours.

Television staff receive similar training to their colleagues in radio broadcasting, but because of the more exacting requirements of television, the senior and more highly skilled personnel are sent abroad for courses of up to five years, during which they qualify in all branches of their profession. From the inception of television in 1974, the emphasis has been on Omanisation: today 90% of the 450 staff members of the television stations in Muscat and Salalah are Omanis.

The high percentage is all the more notable when one considers the highly specialised and technical work performed at television stations. There are Omani engineers, technicians, producers and newsreaders, for both Arabic and English news, and, currently, 13 Omani producers. In the English news station, five Omanis serve on the editorial staff.



The Ministry of Information, Qurm.

A handsome new headquarters for the Ministry at Al Qurm was opened at the end of 1989, which contains the radio station and studios, in addition to the administrative staff. This comprehensive complex also provides residential accommodation as well as recreational and cultural facilities, including a swimming pool, tennis and squash courts, and cafeteria.

Also part of the Information complex is the Oman Centre for Traditional Music. Founded in 1985, the Centre is responsible for the collection and documentation of the traditional folk music of Oman. It houses video-tapes, sound recordings, still photographs and colour slides, together with field records of the songs and dances which have been handed down over the years from generation to generation.

From only one newspaper in the early 1970s, a wide variety of political, social and specialised journals have developed, independent of Government publications. There are now two Arabic daily newspapers and two English-language dailies. There are also four Arabic social and political weekly magazines for women, published monthly. The Oman News Agency, established in 1986, carries news about Oman and the region to many countries world-wide.

During the past year, government has regularised arrangements to enable persons to acquire satellite dishes to receive international television programmes.

Following its successful Sultanate of Oman exhibition which was held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in September 1990, an exhibition covering the whole range of the Sultanate's life and achievements under His Majesty's leadership over the past 22 years, is being held in Budapest in October.



An Omani colour scanner operator at work in Oman Newspaper House.



The control console, Oman Television.

DEFENCE

For one hundred years, the Sultanate of Oman was a great nautical power in the Indian Ocean, from the mid-18th century until the death of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (Said the Great) roughly a hundred years later, and the subsequent division of Oman from its East African possessions. For the next century, Oman fell into obscurity as a military power in the region. However, during its heyday, the strength of the Omani empire had been based almost entirely on seapower.

It was not until 1921 that the first regular military land force was formed with the recruitment of the Muscat Force of company size. By 1955, with the meagre resources available, it had grown to regimental strength, and been named the Muscat Regiment, and by 1970, with the increasing disturbance in the south, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) had been expanded by the addition of the Northern Frontier Regiment, the Oman Gendarmerie (a para-military force for frontier and coastal protection), the Mountain Regiment and the Desert Regiment. However, at that time, the SAF still only possessed outdated weapons and equipment. It is only since that time that they have been developed into a highly-trained and well-equipped fighting force for the maintenance of the security of the Sultanate, second-to-none in the Arabian peninsula. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, as an experienced military officer, takes a keen personal interest in the efficiency of his Armed Forces and their general well-being, and he regularly attends their military manoeuvres on land, at sea, and in the air.

The achievements of the Sultan's Armed Forces — that is, the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) — clearly illustrate the attention they have received from His Majesty as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, with the result that today these forces are able to perform with the utmost efficiency, as recently demonstrated during the liberation of Kuwait. Manpower training concentrates on developing the Omani serviceman's proficiency and potential so that he can carry out his responsibilities with skill and competence. The required level of skills can only be attained if the manpower is educated, trained and provided with the proper breadth and depth of experience. The Sultan's Armed Forces play an important — indeed, pioneering — role in training young Omanis to play their part in serving their country ably and responsibly within their respective fields of specialisation.

ROYAL ARMY OF OMAN

Every component of the Royal Army of Oman, which comprises its combat formations and units, support services, and training establishments, has undergone impressive, methodical development during the 22 years since the beginning of Oman's renaissance. Particular emphasis has been given to achieving quality rather than quantity, with the result that efficiency has increased and the Army is now capable of carrying out all the combat duties and tasks assigned to it, with high professional ability.

The Sultan of Oman's Armoured Corps has been greatly expanded and equipped with the advanced weaponry it requires to enable it to keep pace with the demands of modern warfare. The Sultan of Oman's Artillery has also progressed along similar lines with up-to-date land and air weapons systems. Advanced weapons have also been introduced into the Sultan of Oman's Parachute Regiment to enable it to perform effectively. The infantry brigades and other units have also been developed, modernised,



Abroad, the Ministry maintains representatives and offices responsible for the following countries:- Egypt, United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and the United States.

Traditional music is still a popular form of entertainment.





Armour of the Royal Army of Oman on exercises.

and equipped with sophisticated weaponry and vehicles to enable them to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The support services, which consist of the Forces' logistic services, play a prominent role, thanks to the development and modernisation that have taken place in the supply systems, and in view of the vital role they play in times of war and peace. This has been clearly demonstrated in the Royal Army of Oman's exercises.

Signals have also been developed and been provided with high proficiency communications facilities; signals personnel are trained at the Signals School. The Sultan's Armed Forces transport has also been developed and provided with equipment and vehicles to enable it to play its vital role in supply and provisioning. The Electrical and Engineering Corps provides highly proficient, skilled, technical support.

The Forces' Medical Services have undergone similar development. The hospitals and fixed and mobile medical centres have been modernised, staffed with doctors, consultants and specialists, and supplied with up-to-date medical equipment. A Medical Training Centre has been set up to train members of the Medical Services in Military medicine.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Engineers have also been up-dated to enable them to perform their demanding tasks in carrying out their highly specialised role. Special training courses are held at the Sultan's Armed Forces School of Engineering.

The Sultan Qaboos Military College was established in response to His Majesty the Supreme Commander's recognition of the importance of training. The officers who pass out annually from this College are trained to perform their duties in the different units of the Royal Army of Oman.





Jaguar ground-attack aircraft of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

The Royal Army of Oman's exercises demonstrate its high level of combat proficiency and are a practical application of battle methods with modern weapons carried out in conjunction with other arms of the Sultan's Armed Forces.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE OF OMAN

The Air Force also receives a high level of priority from His Majesty, and its equipment and material have been constantly modernised and updated. With its fighter aircraft, transport aircraft, modern missiles, early warning systems, and advanced radar, it is well-equipped to protect Oman's air space. The air defence systems have also been modernised. Now, for the first time, long-range moving targets are used in training. These fly at different altitudes, and successful strikes against them require a high degree of skill and training.

As its aim is to provide highly qualified national cadres, the Air Force gives considerable attention to the training and skills development of technical personnel. This year, a number of technicians, in a variety of specialised fields, have graduated from the Vocational Training Institute, and are providing the Air Force's several branches with qualified technical staff. In addition, a number of the Force's students graduated from the Faculty of Engineering of the Sultan Qaboos University after passing out from the Sultan's Armed Forces School. After graduation, these students were sent on specialised qualifications training courses to fit them to carry out their advanced duties in the Royal Air Force of Oman.

1991 saw the formation of the free fall parachute team, which took part in the 21st National Day celebrations. The 'Nusur' (Eagles) mobile base also visited several of



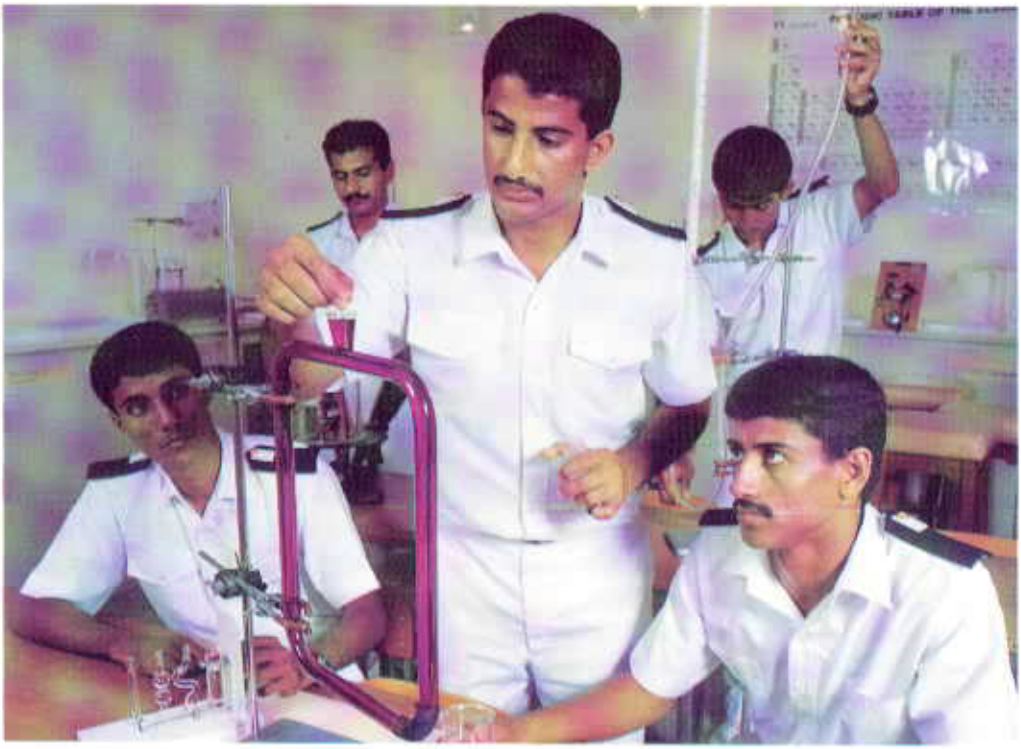
the Sultanate's regions and held open days to acquaint the public with the achievements of the Air Force and the development in every area of its activities.

His Majesty the Supreme Commander believes that the Royal Air Force of Oman has a vital role to play. Hence the priority given to the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy and to the training of Omani fighter transport aircraft, and helicopter pilots and navigators. This year, His Majesty presided over Air Force Day and the passing out ceremony from the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy for the 'Nusur Al Jaw' (Air Eagles), and parachutists, and other personnel. His Majesty awarded these men their wings, several of whom received swords of honour.

ROYAL NAVY OF OMAN

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos 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 had become a highly competent fighting force, capable of carrying out its functions with the utmost efficiency.

During this period, the Navy lay 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 territorial waters. To boost this combat capability, a number of missile-equipped, fast patrol boats, fast-attack craft, a landing and supply ship, coastal and deep-sea patrol boats, transportation and marine survey ships, and a sail-powered training ship joined the Fleet. Constant improvements were introduced to the facilities at command and control headquarters to keep them in line with the



(Left) His Majesty decorates an Omani officer. (Above) Scientific training forms an important part

Navy.

The Royal Navy of Oman set up the Said bin Sultan Naval Base, recently transferred from Muscat to a new modern base at Wudam, to provide support for its organisation and operations. It also established a sophisticated naval training centre at Wudam, and sections for diving, deep-sea medicine and marine surveys. These will play a prominent role in providing the specialised services of the future. The Ras Musandam naval base has also been improved.

The Royal Navy of Oman is now in the process of acquiring two corvettes equipped with the latest weaponry, and has also drawn up plans to expand the maintenance services at the Said bin Sultan Naval Base and provide appropriate engineering and maintenance services for the new generation of larger ships. The other naval bases in the north and south of the country are also being developed.

Recognising the importance of training national naval cadres, the Royal Navy of Oman set up the Naval Training Centre to train naval officers and ratings in marine navigation. Training takes place at the Centre and on the training ships, including the SNV Shabab Oman. This ship, which is used for sail training, was given a complete overhaul in dock outside the Sultanate this year, following which it made a number of long voyages in order to strengthen the ties of friendship between Oman and the other nations of the world. Currently, it is taking part in the celebrations being held on both sides of the Atlantic — in Spain and the United States of America — to mark the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of the American continent.

In 1991, the Royal Navy of Oman took a significant step forward in the specialised training field when it started a small staff

in the near future, it will be possible to accept naval officers from the RNO's different specialised branches.

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



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos is briefed on a military exercise.



Desert manoeuvres by the Royal Guard of Oman.

Royal Guard of Oman mounted band.



Supplies are delivered to a remote Army post.

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. All students follow the same curriculum, which includes a rigorous 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.

COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

The Command and Staff College, situated at Bait Al Falaj near Muscat — the highest military training institution in the Sultan's Armed Forces — runs courses to train officers for positions of leadership. The syllabi for these courses include modern combat methods, leadership, administration, and staff duties, and the most up-to-date teaching methods are used. Several staff courses have graduated over the past few years

THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES MUSEUM

The Sultan's Armed Forces have taken a great interest in their military museum in order to revive Oman's military heritage and preserve the memory of achievements of earlier generations. His Majesty the Sultan opened the military museum in December 1988. Since then, it has been a 'shop window' of the Sultan's Armed Forces, visited by foreign VIPs and nationals. The museum's exhibits include models and Omani historical and military documents from pre-Islamic times to the present day. The museum courtyard contains several examples of old weapons formerly used by the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces.

THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES' CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT

As directed by His Majesty, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, the Sultan's Armed Forces make an important contribution to the country's Development Plan. The Royal Army of Oman helps in building roads, digging wells, and constructing aircraft landing-strips in the remote and rugged areas. It also provides medical services for citizens in the remote mountainous and desert regions. The Royal Air Force of Oman contributes to the development process by providing a range of services for people living in remote and mountainous areas, including ambulance services and the transport of provisions and foodstuffs. The Royal Navy of Oman plays its part by protecting fishing grounds, mineral resources, and the marine environment, by guaranteeing the safety of international shipping, and by firefighting at sea. It also helps in carrying out coastal surveys and, in conjunction with other competent state authorities, protects the marine environment and removes oil pollution. The Ministry of Defence's Engineering Services also make a major contribution to road-building in the remote and rugged mountain regions, eg the mountains of Dhofar, maintaining the important roads in the Jebel Al Akhdhar and the roads in Musandam.

OMAN POLICE

The stability which prevails throughout the Sultanate of Oman is in a large measure attributable to the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the confidence it inspires amongst the General Public. This is no mean achievement considering that in 1970 no police force existed in the country other than a detachment consisting of one officer and 73 constables with their headquarters at the Bab al Kabir in Muscat. Their responsibilities were confined to Muscat and its immediate vicinity. Since its establishment in the latter part of 1970 the Royal Oman Police has developed into a highly efficient modern force which now covers the entire country. The basic policy of the ROP is to gain and maintain the confidence of the public through co-operation and assistance, and the education of the young.

The ROP is now an advanced and highly proficient organisation, equal to the most up-to-date police forces in the world. Its deployment throughout the country is a major factor in establishing security and confidence. This is reinforced by the modern equipment with which it has been provided and the range of purposes for which it can be used. The ROP has also 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 the remarkably low crime rate in the Sultanate. The fact that the Sultanate does not suffer from a drugs problem may 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 military and police training. After completing their courses they are appointed as officers in the departments and divisions that require their specialised qualifications.

The ROP is engaged in Omanisation of all its posts, particularly the technical ones, such as aviation, computers, medical services, civil engineering, architecture and in other engineering fields. ROP provides employment opportunities for young Omanis who have graduated in these disciplines as part of a well-prepared phased plan. Some arts graduates are also accepted; a number of graduates of the Sultan Qaboos University's Faculty of Education and Islamic sciences have been recruited. Officers are also sent abroad to study at specialised security institutes in Arab States and some friendly foreign countries.

ROP personnel of the Directorate-General of Immigration and Passports and the Directorate-General of Customs are responsible for controls at airports, seaports and border crossings. These Directorates-General issue passports,



Weapon training for women police officers.



Motorcycle police on patrol.

visitors' visas and land passes. They also process naturalisation applications and other matters relating to immigration and passports. As with other ROP departments, they have established sub-divisions in several wilayats and regions of the Sultanate in order to save people the trouble of travelling to Muscat to obtain services from the Police. They also monitor and follow up the implementation of decisions and instructions concerning export and import transactions. Customs duties are a significant source of national income. The Directorate-General of Immigration and Passports has a modern computer system to document and store information, in view of the large number of individuals, companies and official establishments with which it has to deal. Through its headquarters and branches at all entry and exit points the Directorate-General prepares customs

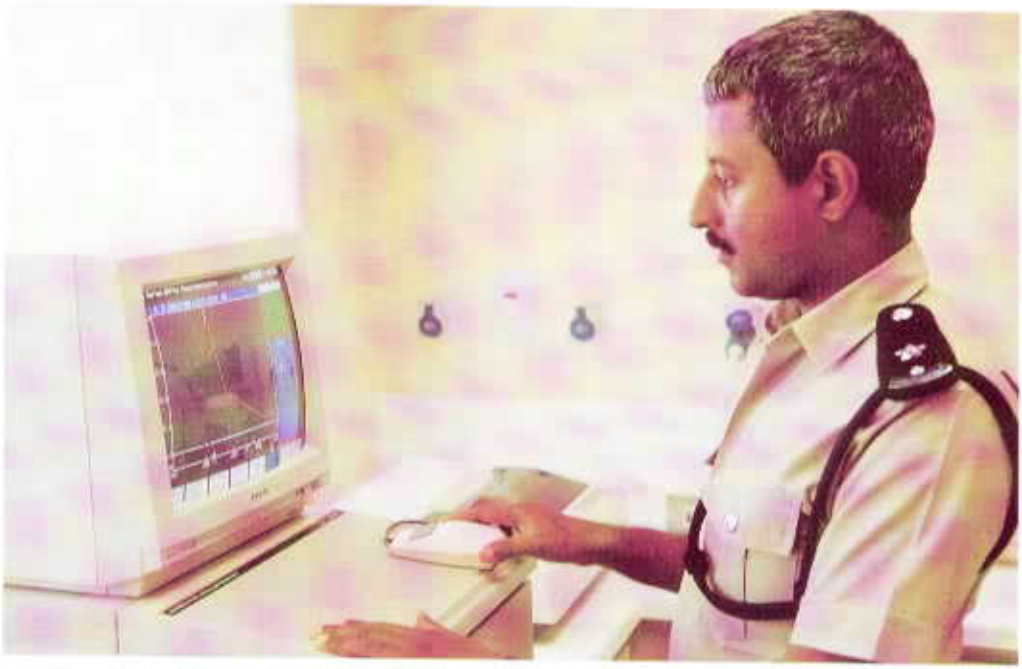
the laws, rules and regulations in force. It is also responsible for overseeing and following up the implementation of these matters, and to ensure that the community is protected from prohibited goods and materials entering the Sultanate which might threaten the safety and security of society.

The Coastguard Division — an important unit of the Police organisation — keeps watch over Oman's 1,700 km of coastline. It is equipped with fast patrol boats to prevent illegal immigration and contraband, as well as for combating drug trafficking. The duties of the division include visiting isolated coastal villages, delivering food and medical supplies, searching for overdue fishing craft and pleasure boats, and the evacuation of the inhabitants of coastal villages in an emergency.

The ROP also provides protection for visiting heads of State and senior foreign



The ROP Coast Guard practise rescue operations.



The Royal Oman Police operates "state-of-the-art" technical equipment.



Old meets new.

Duties Unit is a cornerstone of the ROP and guards vital installations, important persons, and foreign embassies and diplomatic missions. This unit is supplied with the modern equipment it needs to enable it to carry out its duties efficiently, and its members receive special training.

The Police Aviation Directorate is equipped with helicopters that respond to emergency calls to evacuate injured and sick persons, and transport relief supplies to remote regions when natural disasters occur. Hence the helicopters are equipped with full medical facilities capable of going into operation at a moment's notice and known as the Flying Medical Service. These helicopters have trained crews who provide patients with treatment en route to hospital.

The ROP has an Oil Installation Division, with its headquarters at Mina Al Fahal, the oil terminal on the coast, and subdivisions at Fahud and Marmul, the oilfield centres in the interior. The Division provides security coverage for the whole oil industry, and is responsible for patrolling the pipelines and other installations, ranging from oil rigs in the desert to the terminal at Mina al Fahal.

The Directorate-General of Civil Defence has the highly important responsibilities not only for civil defence, but also fire-fighting and the protection of lives and property against the dangers of fire by educating the public and advising them on how to prevent fires. By means of comprehensive training and use of modern equipment the Directorate has developed its services to high international standards.

A natural result of steady economic growth and the extensive improvement of the road network has been the great increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. This in turn, has increased the burden on the Directorate-General of Traffic, which is responsible for all operations relating to vehicles and their use, traffic regulations such as vehicle inspections, licensing, investigation of accidents and resulting damage, and the siting of traffic signs and lights, and their installation in co-ordination with other responsible state authorities. The Division organises courses of lectures on traffic laws, general safety principles and basic mechanics for instructors and pupils.



ROP helicopters respond to emergency calls.

The Sultanate's active participation in various AGCC security-related meetings has helped in producing positive results as well as in fostering inter-AGCC security co-operation. Since it joined Interpol, the ROP has also played a notable role at its international conferences and other meetings. The ROP's crime prevention performance and its record of co-operation with Interpol in all security spheres has received high commendation.





Mounted members of the Royal Oman Police on patrol.

Being outside the war zone, the economy of Oman was not seriously 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 as they did from elsewhere in the Middle East for the duration of the crisis. However, by 1992, tourism had completely recovered. In some respects the economy of Oman benefited from the crisis as there was a sharp rise in oil prices, Oman blended crude oil jumping to $26.10 in August from $15.85, and thence to $32.85 in the following October of 1990. These price rises increased Oman's budgetary revenue significantly. Oil revenues rose from RO1,197.4 million in 1989 to RO1,701.6 million in 1990, while total revenues increased from RO1,483.1 million in 1989 to RO2,039.9 million in 1990. 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 continued to expand. Non-oil domestic exports plus re-exports rose from RO168 million in 1989 to RO176 million in 1990, which together with oil exports, brought total exports in 1990 to RO2,110 million from RO1,556 million the previous year. Although imports also rose from RO910 million to RO1,076 million, Oman ended the year with a trade surplus of RO1,034 million and a balance of payments surplus of RO444 million, both the largest on record. These effects produced a wave of private sector confidence; private investment increased by more than 30% in 1990. This expansion is continuing.

The Sultanate has acquired 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. world oil prices early in 1986 when, having earlier risen to US $30 a barrel, they reached a low of less than $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 resources of oil are modest. According to the latest estimates, they are in excess of 4.4 billion barrels, which indicates that present levels of production can be maintained well into the next century. Exploration for new deposits of oil and gas is being pursued with vigour, and prospects are promising, but from the beginning of the renaissance era, the Government has been keenly aware of the necessity to diversify the economy, and a considerable degree of success has been achieved in this respect.

Major cement plants have been constructed, and a thriving copper mining industry developed, on oil refinery for the Sultanate's domestic needs, a flour mill, a state-of-the-art textile mill (the first in the region) and a flourishing industrial estate for a wide variety of light industries have been established. Two other industrial estates at Sohar and Raysut are currently under construction. 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



The Ministry of Finance building, Muscat.

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 job opportunities it is providing for school-leavers.

Promotion of the commodity-producing sectors has led to corresponding expansion in trade, finance and related services. The enhancement 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 FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The inception of the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1991-96) has been an important step in the further development of the national economy. The Plan consolidates the sustained and dramatic achievements of the past twenty-two years under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. It lays great emphasis on macro-economic equilibrium and sound fiscal and monetary management, while targeting a GDP annual growth rate of 6.3%, a rate well in excess of Omani population growth, estimated to be 3.5% annually.

A number of new policies have been instituted to achieve the Plan's objectives. One of the most innovative is the setting up of a contingency reserve. As oil prices are chronically unstable, the creation of this reserve will enable additional resources to be set aside when oil prices are high, to be used for budget stabilisation when prices are low.

Access to these relatively liquid contingency reserves can provide the short-term flexibility needed for fiscal management, and thus ensure a steadier role of Government spending, through both good times and bad, than otherwise would be the case.

fund will also be increased, whilst withdrawals will take place only in case of emergencies. This fund will become a resource for ensuring the future welfare of the country.

The primary roles of the 4th Five-Year-Plan include:-

(a) diversification of the sources of national income in order to reduce dependence on oil as the dominant source of income. This is to be undertaken by restructuring Oman's economy and directing appropriate levels of investment to non-oil income-generating sectors, especially agriculture, fisheries, industry, mining and services. Average annual GDP growth rates are estimated at about 11.1% for non-oil sectors and about 6% in service sectors;

(b) emphasising and enhancing human resource development in order to expand the participation of Omani nationals in economic and social activities, and the establishment of a balance between the manpower requirements of various sectors of the economy and the output from the various educational training establishments;

(c) the reinforcement of regional development and allocation of investments to the various regions of Oman, especially those outside the Muscat area. The objective is to achieve balanced development, and to reduce regional disparities by directing about 60% of Government investment during the 4th Five-Year-Plan period to regions other than the Muscat area.

To achieve the Plan's objective, total public and private expenditure will rise by 39% in the 4th Five-Year-Plan to RO4,097 million from RO2,943 million in the 3rd Five-Year-Plan. Private sector investment will rise to RO1,319 million, recording an increase of 47% over the 3rd Five-Year-Plan.

The economy at the end of 1991 was generally in a sound condition. In the first half of the year, it grew in excess of 5% a year in real terms, and a substantial trade surplus continues. Development expenditures increased by nearly 15% over the first half of the year. Last year, employment income and liquidity continued to expand. With recovery from the oil price recession of the 1980s, the private sector remains in a confident and expansive mood. To ensure that the labour requirement for expansion is increasingly met by employment of Omanis, the Higher Committee for Vocational Training and Labour plans to stimulate private sector training and employment of Omanis by paying 50 to 80% of the costs of training for 18 months to 3 years. It has also been decided to improve the quality of technical training offered by the Vocational Training Institutes. The Higher Committee will define the principles needed to link education and training to the manpower requirements of the economy, specify the policies needed for Omanisation in both the private and public sectors, and approve the manpower plans prepared by the relevant Government agencies.

To encourage private investment, incentives are being made available to entrepreneurs whose projects meet certain minimum standards, including production for export, import substitution, use of local materials, employment of Omani labour, contribute to domestic value-added production of inputs for other domestic firms, and to the needs of a broad spectrum of the population. In addition, the Government offers entrepreneurs technical help in project preparation, market

assessment, and product marketing, as well as concessional loans, tax exemptions, 85% payment guarantees for exporters, and concessional utility rates.

Assistance is also being made available to those in the professions. To encourage professional practice, the Oman Development Bank is offering concessional financing for Omani engineers, lawyers, doctors and other professionals, should they otherwise lack the resources needed to start a practice. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour has a fund to assist graduates of the Vocational Training Institutes and the Oman Technical and Industrial College in acquiring their own equipment and workshops for self-employment.

The Government is to raise RO429 million through the issue of development bonds over the next five years to finance part of the RO879 million resources gap in the 4th Five-Year-Plan. The first issue of RO10 million in July last year was over-subscribed, as was the second issue of RO10 million in the following October. A welcome feature of the second issue is the participation of non-Omani resident individuals.

THE BUDGET, 1992

The Government budget for 1992 anticipates moderate increases of 5.21% in net revenues and 8.2% in total expenditure over the corresponding budget estimates of 1991. Net revenues are expected to increase to RO1,627.7 million in 1992 from RO1,548.9 million in 1991 while total expenditure is expected to rise to RO1,932.7 million from 1,785.6 million during the period. Consequently, the budget deficit is estimated to increase by 32.6% to RO248 million in 1992 from RO187 million budgeted for 1991. While budgeted revenues for 1991 and 1992 and budgeted expenditure for 1991 conform broadly with the corresponding levels envisaged in the 4th Five-Year-Development-Plan, expenditure budgeted for 1992 is higher by 8% than what was planned. As a result, the deficit estimated for the budget stands higher by 46.7% than the Plan estimate. The ratio of deficit to net revenues works out higher at about 15% in 1992, as against 12% in 1991. In terms of total expenditure, the deficit is estimated to be about 13% in 1992 and 10% in 1991. In the Plan, the deficit was estimated to form about 10% of revenues and 9% of total expenditure for 1992. On current account a surplus position which is the excess of current revenues over current expenditure is observed in both the years. This is considered as Government's own savings which is utilised towards financing development and other capital expenditure. 1992 current account surplus budgeted is found to be lower at RO93.3 million compared with either RO152 million budgeted for 1991 or RO213 million envisaged in the Plan. Oil revenues, the main source for Government, and estimated to rise by 4.7% to reach RO1,275.4 million in 1992 (net of the allocations to SGRF and the Contingency Fund) over those budgeted for the previous year. Gas revenue, on the other hand, is expected to register a substantial growth of 14.8% of RO68.9 million while other revenues are to grow by 4.7% to RO278 million. Oil still remains the largest contributor to Government income which in 1992 accounts for 78%, while gas revenues and other current revenues are foreseen to contribute 4 and 17% respectively. Current expenditure is budgeted to rise by almost 10% (RO137.6 million) in 1992 to reach RO1,529 million.

Spending on defence and national security is budgeted to rise by 16.2% (RO92.5 million) to reach RO664.5 million. Civil current expenditure is budgeted at RO682.0



The Central Business District, Ruwi.

million which is 4.2% (RO27.6 million) higher than in the previous year.

Support to the private sector in the form of lending and equity participation is placed at RO20.9 million in 1992. Direct support to the industrial sector is set at RO11.5 million, RO6 million to Oman Housing Bank, RO3 million to the Bank for Agriculture and Fisheries, and RO2.5 million to the Development Bank. Loans and equity participation to domestic, regional and international institutions is budgeted at RO2.5 million. Capital redemption is estimated at RO26.7 million. Most of the deficit envisaged in 1992 is expected to be financed by withdrawal from SGRF and issuance of development bonds. It is expected to receive net grants of RO16 million. Government Development Bonds, which were introduced in 1991, are expected to fetch RO132 million during 1992. Government is expected to repay RO63 million of approved short-term loans. The remaining deficit of RO163 million will be financed through drawdown from reserves.

Indications are that year-on-year inflation in 1991 was at a rate of 4.3%. Although a weak dollar contributed towards inflation, the primary cause in the past two years has been the sharp rise in rents. The index of rent and utility costs in September 1991 was 54.4% higher than it was on average in 1988, and most of this increase occurred in 1990. The upward pressure on rents subsided in 1991. Despite its sensitivity to exchange rate fluctuations and increasing foreign supply prices, the index for food, beverages, and tobacco rose by only 3.6%

between September 1990 and September 1991. Other categories of consumer expense show little or no inflation.

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 remaining 11 are branches of foreign banks. The domestic network of commercial bank 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 fulfils 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 grew over the years to over a billion Omani rials by the end of 1991. Foreign assets constitute over 90 per cent of total assets. The net worth of the Central Bank reached RO379 million at the end of 1991. The capital of the bank stood at RO175 million, general reserves at RO23.6 million and other reserves at RO180.4 million.

The Central Bank together with the government have 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. A recent institutional development of important significance was the establishment of the Muscat Securities Market in 1989. The Market witnessed substantial expansion and diversification since its inception. The most important financial development during 1991 was the issuance of medium and long term public debt instrument. The Central Bank issued Development Bonds on behalf of the Government to provide an investment outlet for the surplus resources in the economy and to finance development projects of the Government. Denominations and maturity periods were varied for each issue to suit preferences of different saving sectors.

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. Bank credit to the private sector reached RO948.8 million in 1991 while private sector deposits totalled RO945.4 million. Credit to the Government including in the form of treasury bills and development bonds reached RO124.8 million while their deposits with banks amounted to RO147.8 million. Commercial banks lending is mainly channelled towards trade and construction sectors although of late the trend is towards a shift in demand for credit to personal loans, manufacturing, services and Government.

AND INDUSTRY

Undeterred by the conflict at the northern end of the Gulf in early 1991, the Sultanate of Oman went ahead with 1991 as the Year of Industry as proclaimed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in his National Day address in November 1990. In the event, the conflict turned out to be of short duration, and the Year of Industry proved to be so successful that it was decided that it should be extended through 1992.

Before 1970, there was no industry in the Sultanate, as the country was virtually undeveloped. In the immediately succeeding years, industrial development was of necessity slow due to the immense development and educational problems involved. The Government's policy is the creation of a national economy based on private enterprise, and devoid of monopolistic practices. Consistent with this policy is the objective of ensuring 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.

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 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 being increasingly directed to exports. Most of the factories on the Rusayl Industrial Estate are now exporting, and whereas five years ago only 12% of total output was exported, by 1990 this production had risen to a hefty 48%.

Industry was a fifteen year (1991-2005) master plan for industrial development, for which the executive agency is the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). Although still only representing a small share in GNP — 4.5% — Oman's industrial sector has already grown from a tiny base by well over 20% since 1978. Some new projects have been identified by the UNIDO report which need further study before being implemented. Estimates have also been made of the special funds needed for the promotion of small-scale rural industries, including the development of common regional industrial services and entrepreneurship training centres.

With regard to foreign investment, the report suggests policies to attract such investment in the form of joint ventures. Other policy issues covered are Omanisation, with special reference to funding on-the-job training and payment of wage subsidies, the creation of new institutions and training centres to spur industrial growth, and a special industrial development fund which will assist in export promotion and other development efforts, and the Omanisation process.

The emphasis of the current Fourth Five Year Plan (1991-96) is on the manufacturing sector, and His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has directed that industrial development in the Sultanate must give priority to industries which rely on agricultural and fisheries products, as well as those industries, 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

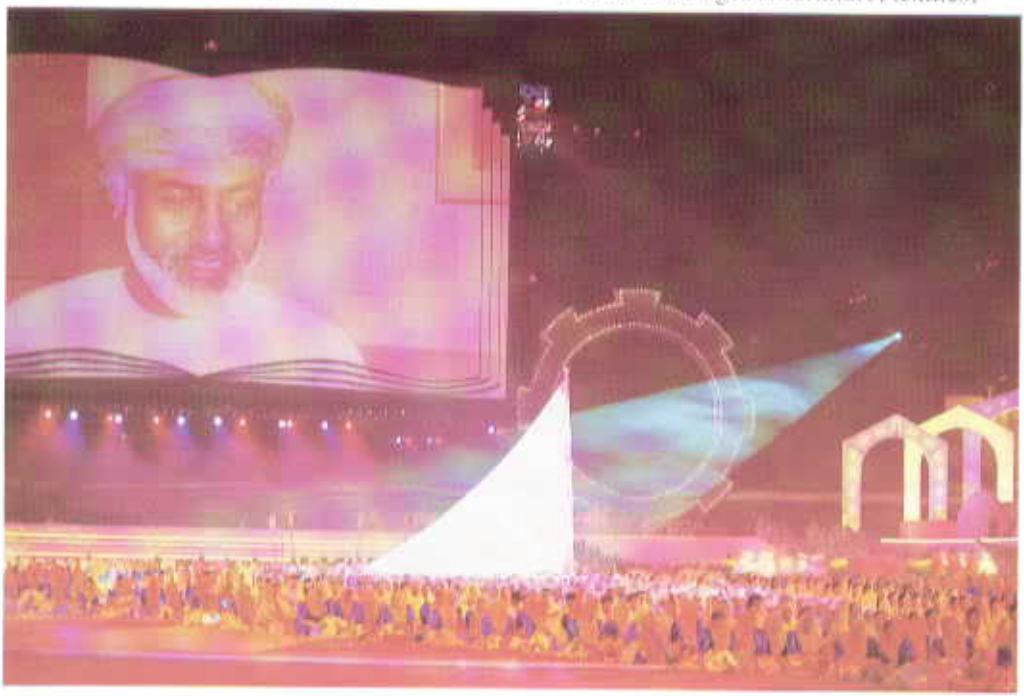
is to be given to young people who are committed to the principle of self-employment as well as to those who provide jobs for Omanis.

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 first fully-serviced industrial estate in Oman of 100 hectares and comprising 125 plots, was completed at Rusayl, 45km from Muscat, in 1982. At the end of last year, the estate had 50 units in commercial production. Currently eight new units are under construction and ten more are under proposal. Approval has been given for the estate to be expanded by 600,000 sq metres.

A wide variety of manufactured goods is now produced on the estate, ranging from food and beverages to furniture, textiles,



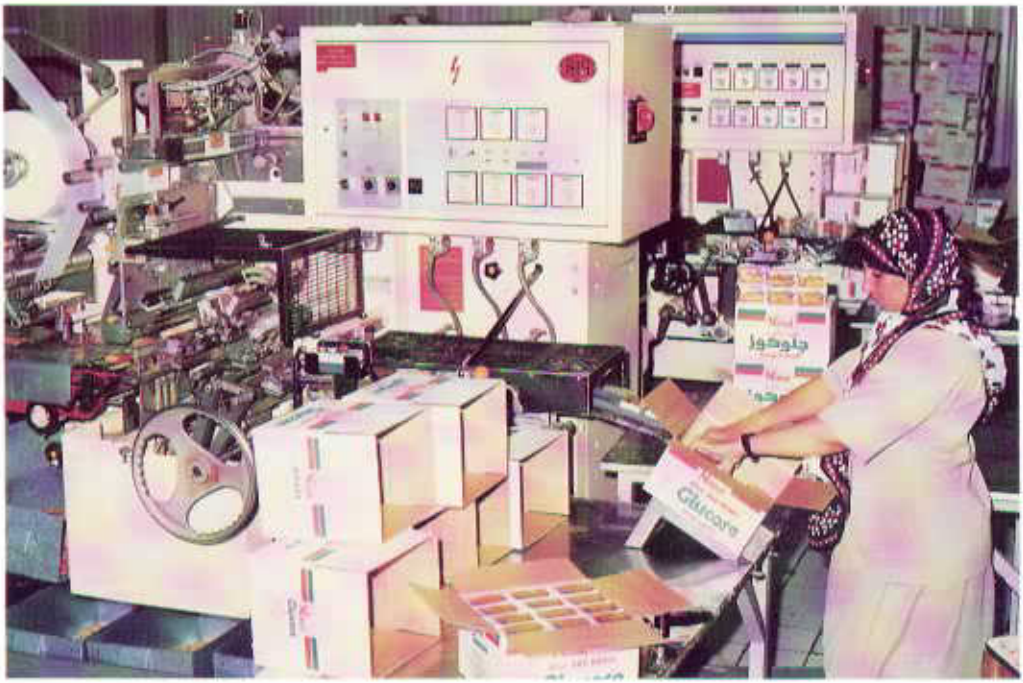
Year of Industry celebrations in the Muscat Stadium.

products, non-metallic mineral manufacturers and electrical goods. Two new industrial estates are being constructed at Sohar in the north of Oman, and near Raysut in Dhofar in southern Oman, the first stages of which were commenced in November 1991. A location study for industrial estates at Nizwa, Sur, Buraimi, and Khasab was started in October 1991. On completion of identification of appropriate locations and the formalities relating to land registration, master plans will be prepared for these industrial estates. After the preparation of the master plans, detailed design followed by implementation will take place.

The Oman Textile Mills, the first of its kind in the AGCC countries, went into production three years ago. It has an investment of RO8 million and is the most modern of its kind. It has its own training

the textile industry should stimulate the establishment of other related industries. The growth in the garment industry has been phenomenal; there are about 16 enterprises exporting various types of garments to many parts of the world. Another 56 projects have recently been licensed. One of the earliest industrial projects was the Flour Mills at Muttrah, which have been in operation since the 1970s. Their capacity has been increased over the succeeding 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; in 1990 total sales amounted to 786,000 tonnes, and in the first six months of 1991 they were more than 512,000 tonnes. The Ministry has recently engaged a consultant to study the demand and supply



Biscuit packing for export.

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. At the Raysut plant, production in 1990 was 193,000 tonnes, and for the first nine months of 1991 it was about 149,000 tonnes. The Company has also succeeded in increasing its exports during the past three years.

One of the Government's objectives is to encourage the people of the Interior to remain in their homelands. One way of doing this is by encouraging the development of rural industries in the Interior by means of private investment. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken the following steps to encourage investors to set up industrial projects in the Interior regions:-

1. Differential treatment in sanctioning soft loans so that an investor who sets up his factory outside the Muscat area receives a soft loan equivalent to 125% of his equity capital; one who sets up his factory in the Muscat area receives only an equivalent of 100% of his equity capital.
2. A reduction in the interest rate on ODB loans to 4% per annum compared to 9% for projects in the Muscat area.
3. The setting up of offices outside Muscat to deal with small industrial projects in the regions.
4. A higher rate of grant to Omani owners and managers who set up projects outside the Muscat area.
5. The construction of modern industrial estates outside the Muscat area.
6. By enhancing the authority of the Directors of the Ministry's offices in the regions to license a wider range of industrial projects with capital investment of up to RO100,000.

To meet the increasing demands of the Omani 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 in 1993.

The 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 charged by the Bank 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



Traditional silverware is still highly-prized.





One of Oman's peaceful beaches.



(Left) The Al Bustan Palace – one of the world's most sumptuous hotels. (Above) Girls resplendent in their traditional dress.

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 RO100,000 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. The second incentive relates to the participation by the Ministry in the cost 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 RO6 million, whilst indirectly, through the ODB, it was RO2 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 will directly affect 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 will apply. 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 Ministry's Directorate-General of Industry.

TOURISM

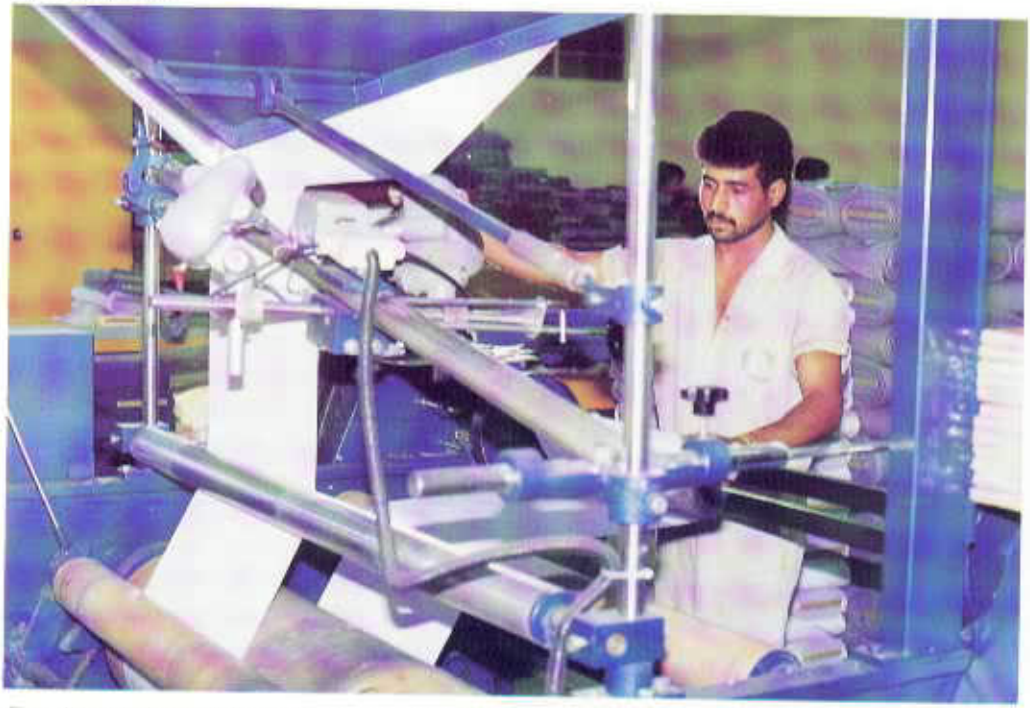
The Sultanate of Oman has much to offer the tourist in the way of scenery, climate, historic interest and water sports. The mild, but sunny, winter climate is attractive to Europeans and others escaping the rigours of the northern winter, whilst the cooler monsoon climate of the south offers relief from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

Tourism is still in its early stages in Oman, since the country was not geared or equipped to receive tourists until recently. Having adopted a policy of encouraging quality tourism, the Government proceeded cautiously to ensure that it is pursued in a well-planned manner, so as to blend with the culture and heritage of the country, whilst at the same time keeping up with Oman's rapid development. In 1970 there was only one small hotel in the Sultanate, in Muttrah. By the end of 1990 the number had risen to thirty, many of them of 5-star standard, as well as motels and rest houses at strategic points in the country. By the year 2005 it is expected that the number of tourists will have risen to 60,000 annually, of whom 51,000 will be foreign tourists, whilst the remainder will be local. The Gulf conflict naturally had a major adverse effect on tourism to the Sultanate. In 1990 no tourist groups were registered in the Directorate-General of Tourism, compared with 8,000 tourists in group tours in 1989. However, it is now confidently expected that tourism will recover rapidly.

The Ministry coordinates with various government bodies for the facilitation of entry of tourists, promoting internal and external tourism with travel agencies, of which there are now seven in the country, tourist offices and hotels, informing them of



The cement factory at Rusayl. All of Oman's diversified industries are directed towards the export markets.



The ultra-modern textile mill, Rusayl Industrial Estate.



(Above) Spring water is hygienically bottled at Tanuf. (Below) The world's most expensive perfume.



the approved procedures for tourist groups' entry, and preparing programmes for international tourists' itineraries. At present the concentration of tourism is in three regions — Muscat, Nizwa, and Salalah. These regions have excellent tourist attractions with their natural beauty, magnificent cultural heritage and unique places of interest. Prior permission is required to visit some carefully preserved natural or historic sites, such as the Ras Al Hadd area, where turtles breed, the Jidat Al Harasis area where there is an Arabian oryx breeding centre, and some villages in the Interior.

In February 1992, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced a five-year tourism development plan under which it will spend RO8 million to establish tourist reception centres, picnic areas and camping grounds. Under the Fourth Five Year Plan (1991-96) there are to be 33 infrastructural projects to improve and

expand tourism in the country. The most prestigious of these is to be a yachting marina at Sidab, adjacent to Muscat, which will have berths for 250 pleasure craft of different types, and facilities for boat repair and other allied services. The Plan proposes to develop first the European markets, to be followed by the USA and, finally, Japan. The marketing is to be done by television, films, pamphlets, etc. The tourist industry is playing its part in the Omanisation process. By 1990, nearly 20% of employees in hotels were Omanis, and the number is being constantly increased. The Sultanate took part in a major international tourism exhibition in London in November 1991, and there will be an Omani pavilion at Expo '92 being held at Seville, in Spain, this 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 businessmen 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 participates 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. At present the average daily circulated shares are around 216,280 with an average circulation value of RO241,125. In the ordinary market, the Banking sector tops the list with about 90% of the total volume of circulation.

Oil was first discovered in commercial quantities in the Sultanate of Oman in 1964, and went into production in 1967. At first, production was limited to three oilfields grouped in an area in the Interior of northern Oman. In 1970, this 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. By 1991, the number of oilfields had risen to 76 with a production of 700,000 b/d. Thirty more oilfields are not yet being exploited, awaiting favourable economic conditions which will make it feasible. At the beginning of this year, production had reached 720,000 b/d, and it is anticipated will reach 750,000 b/d by the end of the year; proven reserves were 4.55 billion barrels. Currently, more oil is being discovered than is being exported so that proven reserves are still rising.

Originally, a pipeline was constructed from the largest oilfield at Fahud, through a natural pass, the Sumail gap, and thence through the Hajar range of mountains to the oil terminal on the coast of the Gulf of Oman at Mina Al Fahal, a few miles north west of Muscat. Oil from the two smaller oilfields was fed in to the main pipeline at Fahud. In succeeding years, other oilfields were discovered in central Oman and, later, in the south. It was decided not to pipe the oil from the southern oilfields to an outlet on the southern coast of the Sultanate, as it would have necessitated the construction of an artificial port, providing protection from the gale-force monsoon winds which sweep the south coast in the summer months, as there are no natural havens along the entire length of the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula east of Aden. Pipelines have therefore had to be constructed over great distances of desert linking the oilfields of the coast. Thus the entire oil output of Oman is exported through this terminal at Mina Al Fahal. Lying as it does outside the Strait of Hormuz, Mina Al Fahal's exports were unaffected by the Iraq/Iran conflict and the more recent conflict at the northern end of the Gulf.

After the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), a consortium of oil companies, withdrew from Oman after several years of unsuccessful exploration, the concession was granted to Petroleum Development (Oman) Ltd (PDO), in which Shell was the major shareholder, the minority shareholders being Compagnie Francaise des Pétroles and Partex. In 1974, in an agreement with PDO Ltd, the Government assumed ownership of 60% of the shares of the Company.

Over the years, production of oil has fluctuated according to the discoveries of new oilfields in the early years, and latterly according to the world price of oil. In 1986, steeply falling 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 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, now known as the Independent Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (IPEC), which is cooperating with OPEC to achieve stability in oil markets and prices. In recent



The petroleum installation at Fahud.

years, Oman has twice adjusted its oil production voluntarily to assist OPEC's stabilisation efforts. Oman is certain of a production rate of around 720,000 b/d for the next twenty years; with good prospects of more finds in the Interior. The Sultanate's internal consumption of oil is about 27,000 b/d.

Currently, there are ten groups of foreign companies operating in 11 concession areas, but PDO is by far the largest producer, accounting for 670,000 b/d out of 720,000 b/d of current oil production. PDO's production is expected to reach 700,000 b/d this year. Occidental of USA and Elf Aquitaine of France are small producers, and Japex of Japan joined operations in 1990, and is currently producing 8,300 b/d, which is expected to rise to 12,000 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, and is being expanded. It is expected that the present production rate of 25,000 b/d at the Lekhwair field will be raised to 110,000-150,000 b/d by 1994, representing about 15% of Oman's total output.

The search for oil offshore in the Gulf of Oman was commenced many years ago, but was unsuccessful. Since then the International Petroleum Company, also known as the Lundin Group, has discovered oil in a concession 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. It has also been carrying out seismic tests in the difficult and rugged mountain terrain in Dhofar. At present, these tests are also taking place along the Salalah plain and in the urban areas.

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



The oil industry is totally computerised.





(Above) Two technicians discuss a problem.
(Left) Drilling rig – Al Khuwair oilfield.

demands of the domestic market. Its original production capacity of 50,000 b/d was increased in 1987 to 80,000 b/d to satisfy the expanding domestic requirement.

Much emphasis is now laid on the Omanisation policy in the oil and gas industry to replace foreigners. PDO has established a large training centre which has contributed considerably to the training of Omanis to replace non-Omanis. The number of Omani trainees is expected to reach 1,070 in 1995, compared with the present level of just less than 1,000 trainees. PDO also sends Omani university graduates to obtain post-graduate degrees abroad. The number of Omani graduates working for PDO is expected to reach 204 by 1995. The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals plans to achieve a level of Omanisation of 93% by the year 2000.

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. Démand 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 is conducting this programme on behalf of the Government, and so far it has proved to be a success. As a result, total gas reserves which stood at 9.8 trillion cubic feet at the beginning of 1990, had risen steeply to 17 trillion cubic feet by the beginning of this year. It is estimated that currently the Sultanate is using 400 cubic feet daily for industry, electricity generation and utilities. In six years time, gas production is expected to equal that of oil.

During 1989, a major gas find was made at Saih Nihayda in the Andam formation, which was the largest for 22 years. Estimates place recoverable reserves at 10 billion cubic metres. It also contains a relatively high condensate element. Large quantities of natural gas have since been found at Saih Rawl in the Wusta region in an area of 87 sq km.

In February of this year, the Government signed a memorandum of understanding with PDO for a giant $9 billion project aimed at producing five million tonnes of liquified natural gas (LNG) a year by the end of this decade. Depending on new discoveries, prodution could reach 7.5 million tonnes of LNG a year. With the local demand for natural gas already being met, the entire production from the new project will be exported, mostly to Japan.

The gas industry is wholly owned and operated by the State. The industry was started in 1978 with the construction of a gas pipeline linking Yibal with the Al Ghubrah power station and desalination plant on the coast near Muscat. Gas is also supplied to the power station in the Rusayl Industrial Estate and to Wadi Jizzi, which serves the copper-smelting complex and the Sohar area, as well as the Sultan Qaboos University. 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 of the vegetable oil refinery, the textile mill and other enterprises.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals cooperates with PDO in the management of the gas industry. This includes the production and distribution of gas, and the operation and maintenance of the system. Since gas is an important source for the generation of electricity in the Muscat and



The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals presides over some of the most modern installations in the world. The Natural Gas plant at Yibal.

other areas as well as in the development of industry, the Government has continuous plans, which are carried out in stages, for its development. The Government gas treatment plant at Yibal is undergoing a major expansion, almost doubling its present capacity of 8.5 million cubic metres a day. The 22-month project to raise output to 16.5 cubic metres is designed to meet gas requirements for power generation and water desalination and for the industrial sector over the next ten years. In November 1990, the Minister of Petroleum and Minerals signed an agreement for a US $31 million gas injection project in the central part of the Barba oilfield. After completion of the project, and other modernisation and development programmes, the oilfield is expected to produce 20,000 b/d, thus contributing to the overall oil production and the preservation of oil reserves in the Sultanate.

During the current Five Year Development Plan (1991-96), efforts will be made to:-

(a) Continue to develop the Yibal-Natih gas reservoir;
(b) Expand the gas treatment plant at Yibal;
(c) Install additional compression equipment at a cost of US $80 million;
(d) Increase the capacity of the Batinah Coast pipeline by either looping or installing additional compression equipment, or both;
(e) Supply gas to the new power plants at Manah and Birka;
(f) Supply gas to the Sharqiyah region.

MINERALS

Exploitation of the mineral resources of the Sultanate of Oman has an important role in the economic diversification policy of the



The ancient copper mines at Lasail are now the scene of hi-tech modern production.

Government. It has long been known that the mountains of northern Oman are rich in mineral deposits. 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 some measure of success has already been achieved.

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. Now, the same deposits are being exploited in the Wadi Jizzi near Sohar. The ore is processed into electrolytically refined copper cathodes for export in an onsite smelter, opened in 1983 when the first refined copper was exported.

The annual production of copper cathodes fluctuates, and in 1990, total production was about 12,000 tonnes. Pre-feasibility studies indicate that this production level can be maintained for a further five years. Gold and silver are being produced in small quantities as by-products of these operations. 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).

Further exploration for minerals has revealed 8.4 million tonnes of mineable copper ore at Rakah and Hayl Al Safil, about



(Above) Early Islamic copper-smelting site in Wadi Jizzi. (Below) Copper smelting in Wadi Jizzi today.



215 km distant from the refinery near Sohar. Mining operations for the extraction of ore at these two locations are expected to begin in 1993. The ore from both mines will be transported to the crusher concentrate site near Hayl Al Safil. The concentrate will then be taken to the Sohar refinery, where it will be refined into copper cathodes. On an average, a total of 60,000 tonnes of concentrate will be transported yearly to the refinery. At a production rate of about one million tonnes of copper ore a year, supply for another 8.5 years is ensured for the refinery. This will extend the life of the refinery to 13.5 years. The total of refined copper and gold from both mines over a period of 8 years will be about 110,000 tonnes and 2,400 kg respectively. They will both be opencast mines.

Exploration for copper deposits along the Batinah coast started at the end of 1990. Ophiolite rocks, associated with copper, underlie the soil and wadi gravels in this region. Because of this overlay, the potentialities of the area were overlooked in the early stages of mineral exploration. In November 1990, exploration was started for lead and zinc deposits in Saih Hattat and on the Jebel Akhdar plateau.

Chromite was discovered by accident in 1971 when exploration for other minerals was being carried out. Production has varied considerably over the years. Exploration has revealed that there are estimated reserves of two million tonnes of chromite in the Sultanate at a number of sites, the biggest of them at Ghashabi-2, containing about 120,000 tonnes. Eight other prospects for chromite are being explored in northern Oman. At the end of 1991, the Oman Chromite Company was established with a capital of RO 3 million divided into 3 million shares, each share valued at one Rial. Only Omanis are eligible to subscribe, with a maximum of 500 shares. The corporate office of the Company will be situated in Muscat, whilst the operations base will be in the wilayat of Liwa, where Ghashabi-2 is located. The initial output will be 15,000 tonnes annually, but this could be revised up or down according to the Company's discretion. 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, was designed to last 36 months. This is due to be completed this year, and feasibility studies should be starting shortly. An initial study by a representative of 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.

Other non-metallic minerals such as marble, gypsum, iron laterite, salt and silica sand are found in Oman. These are already being exploited by local industries for making cement, pottery, terrazzo tiles and for local construction. Marble chips and powder, as well as tiles and slabs are being exported to AGCC countries, and dolomite, found in both northern and southern Oman, is used in the glass and chemical industries.

It was announced in March this year that Oman has embarked on a systematic long-term programme to evaluate the country's gold deposits, while two foreign companies have shown keen interest in the project. The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals has started a detailed analysis of rock samples to assess their potential for gold, but it will take at least ten years from grassroots exploration level until the mining stage.

AGRICULTURE

Over the centuries, agriculture and fishing have been the mainstay of the economy of the Sultanate of Oman. Even now, when the economy is over 90% based on the production of oil and gas, over half the population is engaged in agriculture and fishing. One of the long-term aims of the Government is to achieve self-sufficiency in the production of food, and much has already been achieved in the last two decades. Considerable success has been realised in the production and marketing of farm produce through the modernisation of agricultural methods and encouragement of farmers. However, agricultural expansion has to be carefully balanced against increased water consumption. This fact has been given additional emphasis by some important problems which have arisen in recent years. Food consumption is also increasing with a rapidly growing population. Rising standards of living have meant greater demand for quantities and varieties of foodstuffs.

The Sultanate of Oman lies in an arid region of the world, but unlike other states in the Arabian Peninsula, other than Yemen, it has considerable agricultural 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 encourage them to stay on the land. This problem has also been ameliorated by the fact that almost 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 boost when the year 1988 was declared the Year of Agriculture. This proved to be so successful that it was extended to 1989.

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 quality, and the yearly production is estimated to be 154,000 tonnes. Twenty thousand hectares is given to the cultivation of date palms numbering about 7 million. This is expected to rise to about 10 million by the year 1995. There are about 200 varieties of dates, of which 20 are commercially viable. 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 mangoes, tobacco, tomatoes, onions, aubergines, peppers, and many other fruits and vegetables, almost entirely for internal consumption in Oman.

Dhofar in the south has a totally different climate to that of northern Oman, along its coastal belt, which receives regular summer monsoon rains between June and September. 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, papaya 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.

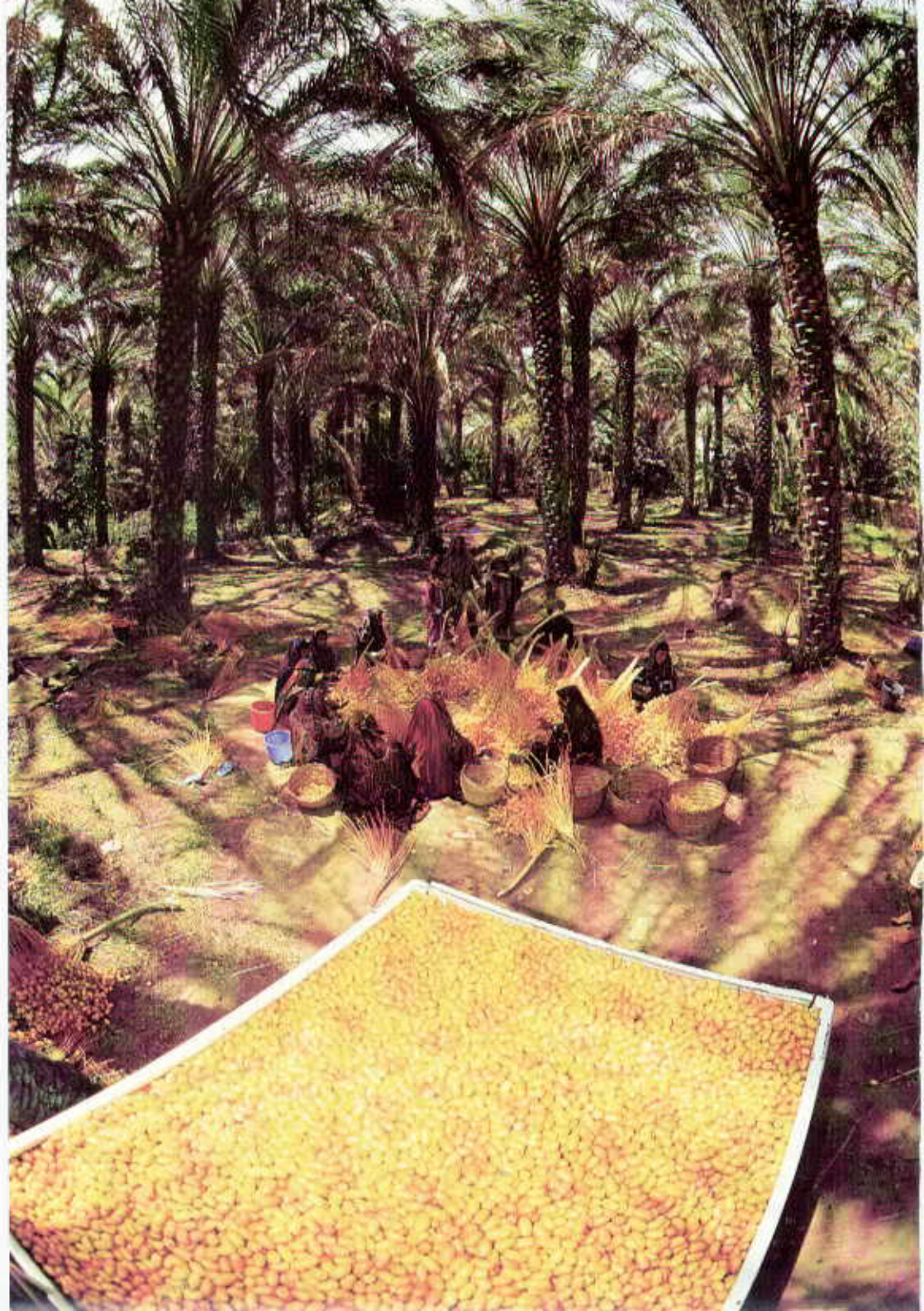
As has been noted, the principal limitation on agriculture is the availability of water, a precious commodity in this land. This has become increasingly relevant as more wells and boreholes have been sunk in recent years. New regulations to deal with this problem have been introduced, and these are dealt with in detail in the chapter on Water. Cultivation 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, although the system was probably 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 10km long, and siphons 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 periods of irrigation to farmers may still be seen.

Along the Batinah coastal plain, irrigation water is obtained from wells, nowadays operated by diesel pumps. The water originates from rainfall over the Hajar mountains and flows towards the coast through subterranean aquifers, being forced to within a depth of about 8 metres when it reaches the seawater at the coast. Date palms have a comparatively high degree of tolerance of salinity in water, but in some places on the Batinah coast this has now reached such a level that the palms are endangered. This has been caused by overdrawing groundwater from the aquifers. The Government has acted energetically and imposed strict controls on the sinking of wells, and dams are being constructed to help the recharging of the aquifers. This subject is dealt with more fully in the chapter on Water.

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. According to estimates, the cultivated area increased at an average rate of 7.2% per annum during the period 1984-89. However, expansion of the land under cultivation is not the main aim of the current Five Year Development Plan, it is rather the improvement of productivity from land already under cultivation by a programme of support and technical advice through 2,500 extension farms in the country. During recent years, the drive to improve agricultural methods has been intensified in order to increase the quantity and quality of produce from land already under cultivation, and to use irrigation water to the best advantage by employing the most modern means to cut wastage to the minimum.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has an agricultural Research Centre at Rumais near Seeb on the Batinah Coast, where during the winter of 1990 nearly 400 new varieties of vegetables and fruit were grown. There are also two other Centres at Nizwa in the Interior and Salalah in the south. In order to provide better coverage





(Above) Cattle grazing near Salalah. (Left) The date plantation in Sumayl.

and strengthen and upgrade research facilities, the Ministry is setting up new agricultural research stations. In this connection, it should be mentioned that there is now a Faculty of Agriculture at the Sultan Qaboos University.

There are now around 100,000 farms in the country, most of them small holdings. In the Fourth Five Year Development Plan, the Government is providing farmers with subsidies, ranging from 50-100% for the purchase of tractors and other modern farming equipment. In 1991 there were 14 projects aimed at maximising yields by means of modern technology involving 1,000 small farmers. A large number of farmers have received a 50% subsidy for the purchase of seed, fertiliser and pesticides. A special insect has been introduced to combat blackfly, which has adversely affected the citrus trees over many years. Two date packaging plants in Nizwa and Rostaq have been operating for several years.

In recent years, the Ministry has embarked upon the implementation of a plan to ensure self-sufficiency in red and white meat, dairy products, chickens and eggs. It has approved numerous private commercial projects in these fields and has taken direct responsibility for implementing a number of poultry projects and local schemes for the breeding of goats and sheep. These projects involve small farmers within the context of an incentive programme, according to which the Ministry provides them with the necessary resources free of charge. Development of poultry production is being promoted by the encouragement of both large-scale and small-scale units throughout the country, realistically aiming at total self-sufficiency in poultry products in the medium term. The plan is to retain a balance between large and small farmers, with the latter producing some 25% of broilers and



The ancient falaj system is still in tact for agricultural irrigation.

30% of the eggs required by the nation. In 1991, 86 million eggs and 8,500 tonnes of broilers were supplied locally to the market. By the year 2000 it is estimated that the demand for eggs will be approximately 280 million annually, and this will all be supplied locally. In the case of broilers the demand then is likely to be about 32,000 tonnes and this also should be obtained from local resources. The Ministry will assist farmers with the capital investment required for buildings and water supplies, and will also share the production costs during the first year of operation. The government assistance will also include the provision of three batches of day-old chicks and broiler feed to broiler producers, and lay pullets and feed to egg producers.

At present, demand for beef is 6,057 tonnes annually, and the local supply is 2,757 tonnes. Local beef production is almost exclusively from the Jebali cattle in the south, where the problems of stocking and low take-off rates are well documented.

The solution is seen as one whereby sustainable systems of management are achieved by reducing the cattle population to an economic level, together with an organised marketing system based on realistic prices, that incorporates an increased use of young animals raised and fattened outside the Jebel. The sociological implications of introducing controlled range management, the establishment of improved extension support and the methods of marketing have still to be assessed. The recent planning study for the development of Dhofar province contains project proposals for implementation in the Fourth Five Year Plan.

The current demand for mutton annually is 16,828 tonnes, and the local supply is 3,806 annually. In order to increase sheep and goat meat production, emphasis is

currently on the intensification of the small farmer production system to encourage the raising of reproductive levels, reducing slaughter age and achieving lower mortality rates. A development project involving some 300 goat farmers in northern Oman has been the first move by the Ministry to introduce intensive goat production. The number of farmers participating in this project was increased in 1991. Fifty-five more farms have been under construction to meet the rising demand.

The indigenous sheep of Oman are relatively small in size, but with adequate levels of feed they can produce liveweight gains that are equal to and even better than those obtained from local goats at the same level of feeding. There is a need to exploit this potential, both in terms of production and improvement of the breed.

Traditionally, rangeland grazing has been the accepted method of feeding both goats and sheep. Recently, increasing numbers have caused deterioration to the rangelands due to over-grazing. In order to reduce this pressure, the Ministry, as part of the agreement with the farmers in the development schemes, provides the farmer with a shed, a sprinkler irrigation system (through a loan from the Oman Bank for Agriculture and Fisheries) sufficient to irrigate up to one hectare of land, Rhodes grass seed sufficient to plant 0.4 hectares, together with the fertiliser needed for the establishment of the crop, concentrated feedstock to assist in providing the initial feedstuff for the new system, and veterinary support (in the form of routine vaccinations and treatments and extensive advice on feeding and management). By the end of 1995, it is hoped that there will be 1,000 sheep and goat farms.

Milk production is to be encouraged. Milk from project farms is bought by Oman National Dairies. Milk from the Jebali cattle of Dhofar is receiving special attention.

In November 1990, a RO1.5 million animal wealth research centre to improve and increase meat and poultry production and reduce dependence on imports was inaugurated at Salalah. This centre is regarded as one of the most important projects undertaken in Dhofar. The new project includes veterinary services, accommodation, a model farming centre for fodder research, the use of modern irrigation techniques, quarters for milking cattle and a slaughter house. There are now 68 veterinary clinics in the country, and there have been very few epidemics in recent years.

With a view to making Oman self-sufficient in food production in the long-term, the Agriculture and Fisheries Bank was set up in 1981 with a capital of

Bee-keeping at Nizwa.



of interest to both companies and individuals. The Bank also arranges technical assistance, identification of projects and feasibility studies. It extends loans for the development of new farms and the improvement of existing ones, as well as for the procurement of agricultural equipment such as tractors and water pumps. The Head Office is in Ruwi, and there are fifteen branches throughout the Sultanate.

PAMAP

The Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (PAMAP) is playing an increasingly successful role in the marketing and distribution 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) encouraging them to grow high quality produce;
(c) improving the existing market for Omani produce in terms of quantity, quality and availability.

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. Banana-ripening and packing facilities are operating in Salalah and at the Central Distribution Centre at Ghala. In 1990 a Government study was instituted to determine whether producers of two traditional Omani products — dry limes and frankincense — need subsidies to develop their market potential. A successful marketing innovation is the marketing of lime tea, made from dried and powdered



A coconut grove near Salalah.

limes which are grown in quantity on the Batinah coast. Previously, all dried limes were exported for processing abroad. Several years ago, PAMAP ventured into the revival of an ancient and historic market — the export of frankincense, which is harvested in Dhofar. Omani frankincense is a multi-purpose product with a high proportion of essential oils which can be used in a number of chemical, pharmaceutical and perfumery industries. PAMAP purchases frankincense from producers, processes and packages it for sale on the internal market and for export. An internationally famous perfume, 'Amouage', is produced in Oman from frankincense, and marketed abroad. In 1991 Amouage was presented with the Star Product of the Year Award at the Tax Free World Exhibition at Cannes, French industry's most prestigious annual event. This is the first time that any country in the Third World has received the award in the Exhibition's seven-year history.

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 and supervision of the Authority. There are thirteen members on the Board of Directors, of which the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries is the Chairman.

FISHERIES

The exploitation of Oman's rich fisheries' potential is already playing a major part in the diversification of the Sultanate's economy, and has an even bigger role to play in the future. Fishing, together with agriculture, has been a traditional occupation of Omanis through the ages, and a major source of employment. Nevertheless, until recent years, it only met the needs of the local coastal communities. Until road communications opened up the routes to the Interior it was impossible for the inhabitants of the towns and villages there 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 around Nizwa.

The Sultanate of Oman has a 1,700 km-long coastline extending from the Musandam Peninsula in the north, at the entrance of the Gulf, to the border of the Yemen in the south, along which there are immensely 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.

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



A fisherman proudly displays his catch.



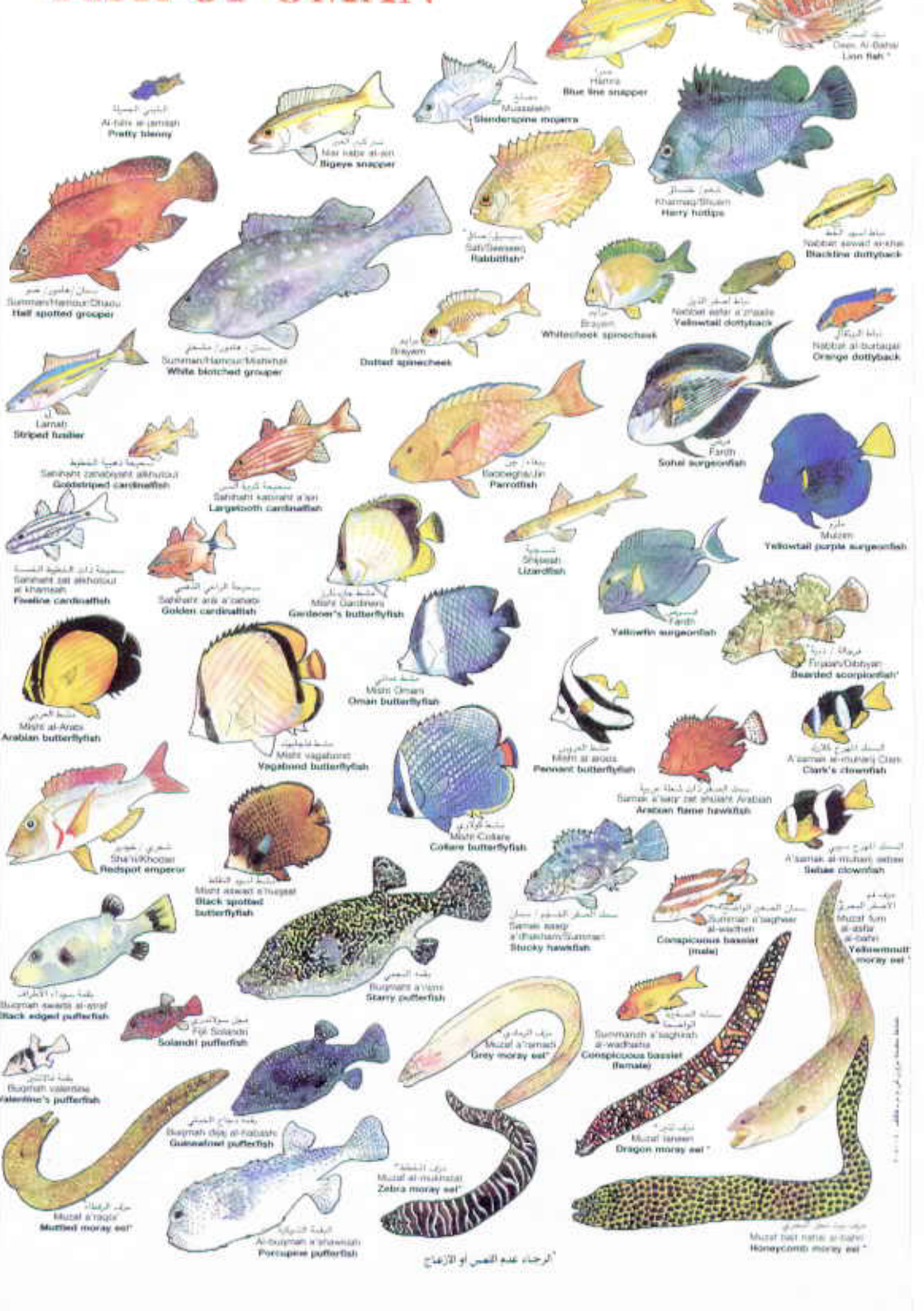
(Above) Fishermen in Sur loading ice. (Right) A fine catch.

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 fishing profession. A Fisheries Department formed in 1972 became a Directorate-General in 1974, and 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 a Royal Decree established the Oman Fisheries Company (OFC), into which the ONFC was merged. RO30 million was received as subscriptions from shareholders. The Government, which holds 24% of the shares, has given assurances that the new Company will operate in such a way as not to stifle other fisheries' firms. OFC has six board members from the private sector and from the Government.

The total quantity of fish and crustaceans landed rose sharply in the 1980s, reaching a peak of 166,100 tonnes in 1988. However, the total for 1989 showed a sharp decline, the total catch being only 117,536 tonnes.




Al-hibi al-jamsah
Pretty blenny
Nai kabr al-ain
Bigeye snapper
Mussaleh
Slenderspine mojarra
Hamra
Blue line snapper
Sabi/Seesee
Rabbitfish*
Khamag/Shuain
Harry hotlips
Nabbat sowad al-khat
Blackline dottyback
Summan/Hamour/Chaou
Half spotted grouper
Summan/Hamour/Mishnah
White blotched grouper
Brayem
Dotted spinecheek
Brayem
Whitecheek spinecheek
Nabbat asfar a'ziyada
Yellowtail dottyback
Nabbat al-burtugal
Orange dottyback
Farsh
Sohal surgeonfish
Baobegha/Jir
Parrotfish
Muzam
Yellowtail purple surgeonfish
Shisesh
Lizardfish
Farsh
Yellowfin surgeonfish
Firqan/Obbyan
Bearded scorpionfish*
Mishi Gardners
Gardener's butterflyfish
Mishi Omani
Oman butterflyfish
Mishi al-Arabi
Arabian butterflyfish
Mishi vagabund
Vagabond butterflyfish
Mishi al arous
Pennant butterflyfish
Sumak a'warp zat shuara Arabian
Arabian flame hawkfish
A'samak al-muhairij Clark
Clark's clownfish
Mishi Collare
Collare butterflyfish
A'samak al-muhairij sebae
Sebae clownfish
Sha'rkhoosi
Redspot emperor
Mishi abwat a'nuqat
Black spotted butterflyfish
Sumak asarp a'Pakham/Summar
Stocky hawkfish
Summan a'sagheer al-wadhah
Conspicuous bassiet (male)
Mizat fum al-asfar al-bahri
Yellowmouth moray eel*
Bugmah swans al-ajnaf
Black edged pufferfish
Bugmah a'nims
Starry pufferfish
Fijii Solandri
Solandri pufferfish
Summanah a'saghirah al-wadhaha
Conspicuous bassiet (female)
Mizat a'ramadi
Grey moray eel*
Bugmah valensea
Valentine's pufferfish
Bugmah daij al-Fabashi
Guineafowl pufferfish
Mizat a'raqta
Mottled moray eel*
Mizat al-mukhatat
Zebra moray eel*
Al-bugmah a'shawkah
Porcupine pufferfish
Mizat tarash
Dragon moray eel*
Mizat bait nahle al-bahri
Honeycomb moray eel*
*الرجاء عدم اللمس او الازعاج

The total for 1990 rose slightly to 118,639 tonnes. Research carried out by the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre indicate that the original reasons given for the sharp fall in catches were not accurate, and that over-fishing has had a large part to play in this. There are clear indications that stocks of certain types of popular fish such as kingfish, hammour, tuna, and mackerel have been depleted. An even more serious 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. The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre has recommended that nets should have a mesh size of at least 5½ inches to allow young fish to escape and breed.

Large-scale commercial fishing enterprises have also played their part. 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, which consists of the National Fishing Company and the Korean Fishing Company, landed 18,842 tonnes in 1990. Fish are now being exported to the USA, Japan, Australia, France, and other European countries. Exports to France trebled in 1990, and exports to the UK and Holland are being encouraged.

In 1990, there were 18,546 registered fishermen; this represents an increase of 6,000 over the previous five years. In 1978 the Fishermen's Encouragement Fund was introduced, under which 14,348 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.

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

In 1986 the Government set up the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre near Sidab, on the coast near Muscat at a cost of RO1.5 million, with consultative support from UNESCO and FAO. In cooperation 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 RO200 million for the fishing industry under the Fourth Five Year Plan (1991-96), of which RO84.1 million has been set aside for assistance to Omani firms for investment in industrial and traditional fishing vessels, shoreside facilities and transport. RO75 million is allocated for resources assessment and extension services, whilst RO25 million is to be spent on the construction of eight major harbours and 16 smaller ones. Fish processing firms will get RO13.9 millions.

The Sultanate of Oman is now self-sufficient in the provision of fresh fish for its population, and plans that fisheries will become one of the major export contributors to the national economy in the years ahead.

The Sultanate of Oman lies in an arid region of the world, where water conservation has always been a problem, but no more so than at the present time. The increasing demands of agriculture for water, as well as for potable water for domestic use, have in recent years put an increasing strain on the available limited supplies, (see also chapter on Domestic Water). In some places the demand has been excessive with adverse results. The art of exploiting available water supplies 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 coastal plain where over-extraction has had harmful results.

The Government has long been aware of the need to conserve and increase supplies of fresh water as a matter of urgency. 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 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 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 incorporates PAWR, and was established by Royal Decree in 1989.

Apart from fresh water for domestic supplies obtained from sea-water 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 of 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.

Rainfall is limited in Oman, and varies according to the geography of the country to a considerable extent, but it is generally 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.

In recent years, a major problem has arisen on the Batinah Coast, 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 proliferated, and the land under cultivation correspondingly. Unfortunately, this upset the balance between extraction and the re-supply of the subterranean aquifers from which the water is drawn. Seepage of sea water into aquifers increased to such an extent that in some areas the salinity rose to a level which could no longer be tolerated by date palms, which can only live with a degree of brackishness, and other crops. Drastic action was 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.



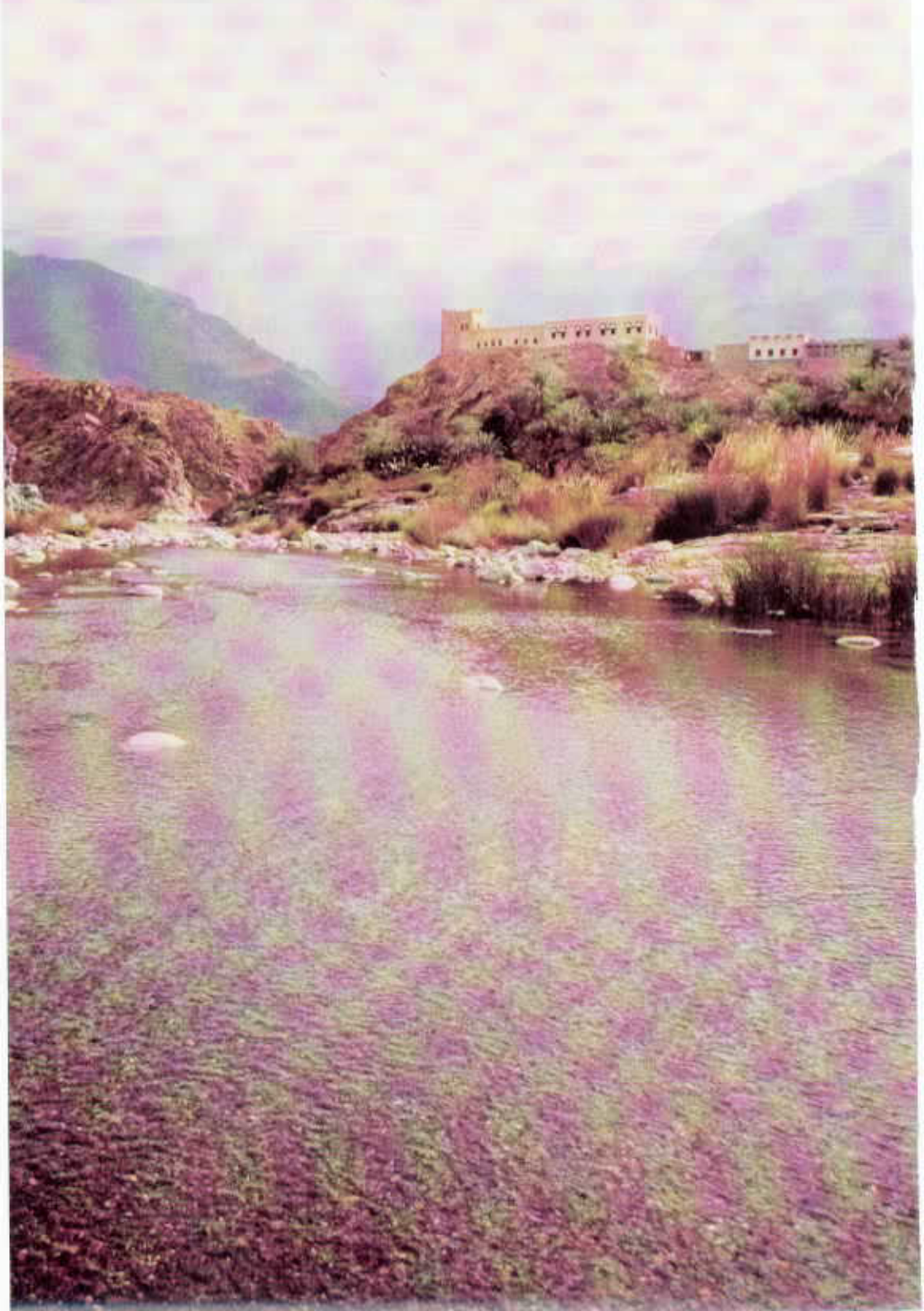
Pure water and quantity control are vital to the life of Oman.

Control of well-drilling is now being strictly enforced, and permits from MWR are required for doing so. 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 wilayats of Birka and Buraimi as well as the province of Dhofar in the south. 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 of 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 hoped, on being progressively released, seep into aquifers and thus recharge them.

The first of these dams was completed at Al Khodh, near Muscat, in 1985. Ten recharge dams had been completed throughout the Sultanate by 1991. At the end of that year, work was in progress on the construction of recharge dams at Wadi Al Kabir in Ibri, Wadi Ma'awil in Birka/Rumais, and Wadi Sahalmawt near Salalah. In August 1991, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries signed an agreement for the construction of a recharge dam at Wadi Al Farai in Rostaq wilayat. According to the master plan drawn up by the Ministry of Agriculture, a total of 58 recharge dams will be constructed throughout the Sultanate. Early indications are that this method of water conservation is likely to be successful, but much more data has yet to be collected over the long term. One important factor is that rainfall is sporadic and varies greatly from one year to the next.

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 due to be completed in the Muscat area by 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.



(Above) Re-charge dams conserve Oman's precious water at Tanuf. (Left) Al Mazarah, Wadi Daiqah.

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 on irrigation as occurred on the Batinah coast, but to a lesser degree.

In consequence, water levels in the freshwater zone dropped substantially, and MWR's monitoring of groundwater conditions indicates active saline intrusion along the coastal belt. 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 because of the urgency to define 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 because of the importance of the Salalah plain.

In the Nejd, in the south, there are reservoirs of fossil water, the extent of which have yet to be established, which give rise to artesian water resources. These are already being used for experimental work in the cultivation of fodder and crops. These

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.

DOMESTIC WATER

Until 1970 the Sultanate of Oman was totally dependent on wells and aflaj (plural of falaj) for its domestic water supplies, and these in turn were dependent on a capricious and sparse rainfall. In times of prolonged drought, which are not infrequent, great difficulties were experienced, and such water as was available was liable to become polluted. Now with a continuously rising standard of living, and a rapidly increasing population, great efforts have to be made to meet the demands for domestic water supplies. Over the next five years, domestic requirements for water are expected to increase by 6%.

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 Muttrah 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 was added in 1982

which doubled the 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.

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. At present the desalination plant at Al Ghubrah supplies 80% of the fresh water requirements of the Muscat area, and the well-fields the remaining 20%. The pumping station at Mawaleh is one of the major water projects to be implemented by the Ministry of Electricity and Water. It supplies water from the western well-fields through a pipeline to the Al Ghubrah desalination plant where it is mixed with water from the eastern fields and desalinated water for distribution in the Muscat area.

Output from the Al Ghubrah desalination plant is to be increased shortly as the third phase expansion of the plant gets under way. Under these plans, one unit of 6 million gallons a day capacity will be installed, and is likely to be commissioned in the middle of this year. Work on another unit is planned towards the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan, around late 1995.

Outside the Muscat area, more than 300 production wells have been sunk in the wilayats, and there are now a total of 14 desalination plants in the country. 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. At Nizwa, seven wells are being drilled and pumps installed in a water-supply extension programme, which will include two pumping stations. At Sur, a one million gallon a day reverse osmosis desalination plant has been completed this year. On Masirah Island a desalination plant has been installed at a cost of RO 700,000. In the Musandam, there are bore-well based water supply systems at Khasab, Bukha and Dibba, and desalinated water is also supplied by ships and tankers to the coastal villages and some of the settlements in the Interior. In the more remote regions of the Sultanate, small desalination units have been established to provide the population with water. Supplies have also been provided for the inhabitants of the Al Halaniyah (Kuria Muria) Islands, off the south coast of Oman, with a desalination plant, built in 1987, which has a daily production capacity of 29,920 gallons.

Fluoridation of potable water in the Sultanate has been proposed and is under active discussion at the present time. If it is introduced, Oman will be the first country in the Gulf region to do so. According to the World Health Organisation, maintaining the level of fluoride within proper limits ensures the dental health of the younger section of consumers.

The expectation that, over the next five years, demand for domestic water will increase by 6% has led to new projects which will help extend the water network to areas not at present supplied with piped water. There is also a project in the Muscat area to 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 Development Plan, a RO 14 million project 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

involving the construction of a new 12 million gallon reservoir at Al Ghubrah pumping station and the laying of about 40km of 1000mm ductile iron water pipelines, will feed into the distribution reservoirs at Seeb in the west, and Ruwi in the east, and be linked to the existing transmission system.

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

ELECTRICITY

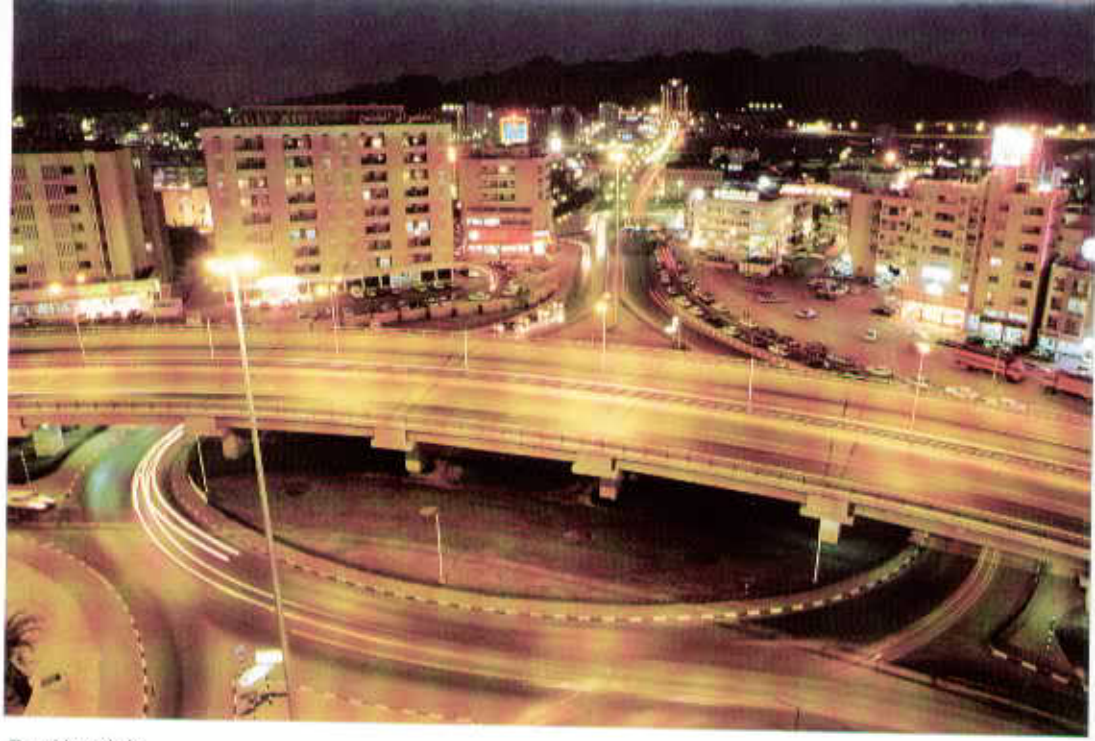
Until 1969 the only source of electricity in Muscat was a generator housed within the city walls. In that year a small power station at Riyam, between Muscat and Muttrah, came into operation with a productive capacity of 4.5mw. It had small diesel engines and distributed power to a limited area of Muscat and Muttrah; the total number of connections did not exceed 2,500. By 1990, the total installed power capacity in the Muscat area had increased to 787mw and the number of consumers increased to 82,375. In 1970 the responsibility for the Riyam power station was assigned to the Ministry of Communications and Public Services. In view of the upsurge in demand the Ministry decided as a temporary measure to expand the station's capacity by the purchase of more powerful diesel engines. This, new electricity/desalination plant went into operation at Al Ghubrah near Muscat in 1976. The plant had an initial capacity of 25.5 mw of electricity and 6 million gallons of desalinated sea water. By the end of 1993, on completion of a new plant currently under construction, the capacity of the Al Ghubrah complex will be 317 mw.

By 1978 the growing nation-wide requirement for electricity and water was such that a Ministry of Electricity and Water was established. The construction of another power station at Rusayl, the site of the first industrial estate outside Muscat, was undertaken in two phases, the first of which was completed in 1984 with a capacity of 250 mw; by the end of the second phase capacity had doubled to 500 mw.

There were no generating stations in the wilayats outside Muscat before 1978, but by the following year, 22 were set up in the different regions with a total overall capacity of 27 mw. Their capacity has since been raised to 360 mw. Originally all these stations were diesel-operated, but as the production costs of diesel units is high, it is the policy of the Ministry to try and connect the small diesel generation stations to gas turbines and to interconnect these systems with the main power stations in Muscat and the Wadi Al Jizzi. A gas turbine station has now been installed in the Wadi Al Jizzi, which provides electricity for the copper refining complex. A new gas turbine unit with a capacity of 28 mw will be completed at the Wadi Al Jizzi power station this year. This unit will raise the capacity of the power station from 194 mw to 224 mw.

The Muscat area now receives its electricity supplies from the Al Ghubrah and Rusayl power stations which are interconnected.

This network comfortably supplies not only the Muscat area, but has reached out to



Ruwi by night.



Electricity grids now span the Sultanate.

Suwaiq, and Khabourah. The supply of electricity to rural communities is proceeding rapidly: in 1990 electricity was supplied to an additional 1,750 houses in the Interior. In the period 1990-91, 49 more villages were connected to the grid.

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 1,365 mw. Later, other units were added and new stations were built in 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

Gas facilities at Ghubrah power-station.



Halaniyah (Kuria Muria) Islands off the south coast of Oman. In 1987, a power and desalination plant was built there with a total daily capacity of 640 kw of electricity.

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 wilayat of Manah, close to the village of Izz, and will be interconnected by high voltage power transmission lines to the load centres in the Dhakhiliya which will feed the distribution systems supplying consumers. The site is close to the route of 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. 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.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOUR

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). Nevertheless, it was clear at the beginning of the new era, on the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, that there was a requirement for a social security system within a developing modern society. Thus a Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour was established in the early 1970s.

In the early years of development it was only possible to set modest targets for the expansion of social welfare, since the activities of the Ministry were circumscribed by the lack of communications in every form. However, as good roads and telephone communications spread their networks throughout the Sultanate, 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.

Social Security has been extended so that now it provides protection for every national who falls upon bad times. The Social Security Law provides for every deserving citizen to receive an income from the State. Royal Decree 87/84 was of particular benefit to families whose social and economic circumstances threatened to deprive them of a decent standard of living owing to disability, loss of breadwinner or unavailability of an adequate income, i.e. the aged, orphaned, widowed, divorced women, those abandoned by the breadwinner, or the families of persons in prison. It was this Decree that added unmarried and abandoned girls to the categories of those entitled to benefit. There are currently 39,736 Social Security cases, receiving monthly payments totalling RO 1,536,409. During 1991, a total of RO 18,436,915 was paid out in benefits.

The principle of equality of opportunity for all requires that the disabled should be provided with suitable opportunities for training. The social affairs sector has given this area a high priority through its Special Welfare Department, which was set up in 1980 to provide for this category of citizens. 1987 was an important year for the disabled. The Centre for the Welfare and Training of the Disabled was opened at Al Khodh, and provided with the latest scientific and technical equipment to enable it to perform its designated role, provide services for the disabled throughout the Sultanate, and help them to become active again, return to their original work, or perform jobs appropriate to their situations. 1988-89 saw the graduation of the first batch of male and female students from the Centre.

Up to 1991, 95 students had graduated. The students graduated after being trained at the Centre in various skills such as typing, carpentry, family care, and tailoring. The Ministry works with government authorities and other bodies in finding jobs for the disabled in both the public and private sectors. An agreement has also been signed to expand the Centre. This will enable new subjects to be introduced into the training programme and increase the number of trainees, particularly from among those categories who are not currently receiving training.

In the case of disasters where severe personal loss is involved, the Ministry does everything within its power to provide assistance — some regions, for example, suffer from severe weather conditions during some seasons of the year, which can produce natural disasters, such as floods. In these



Trade training provides opportunities for Oman's youth.

cases appropriate assistance is provided by departments and branches of the Directorate-General for Social Affairs, with the aim of reducing the effects of their misfortunes and compensating them for damage to their property. Such situations demand flexibility and, in this connection, the regional departments provide assistance to families whose circumstances require that they receive immediate cash payments. In 1991, there were 235 individual disaster cases, who were paid approximately RO 54,766.000 During the same year, 320 communal disaster cases were paid RO 34,144.000 There were also four general disasters, which received payments from the Ministry. The payments for all categories totalled RO 88,910.000

The Ministry has issued a Ministerial decision containing regulations for the provision of assistance for needy families and individuals. This includes temporary cash assistance or assistance in kind, as well as special or emergency assistance. Examples of this are: payment of water and electricity connection charges for families covered by the Social Security Law, payment of electricity and water bills within specified limits, and the provision of assistance to families with children at school. The Ministry aims to achieve community development through the local community development sector, by establishing links between individual contributions and government activities in the social fields, and providing opportunities for the people to achieve a better standard of living. To this end, the Ministry has achieved considerable success through its development programmes; the main one of which has been the National Programme for Local Community Development, which began in 1976, and has since undergone considerable expansion.

Its main functions include co-ordinating and expanding the services of the Ministries involved in rural development, improving the living standards of rural communities and developing the Omani citizen's human potential. Up to the end of 1991, 616 villages, with a total of 204,594 inhabitants, were being served by the Programme. In addition, 1,644 visits had been made to villages outside the Programme.

The Programme operates at a number of levels. One of the most important of these is the 'social level'. This is based on gaining the confidence of the people of the rural community and channelling their energies towards the implementation and financing of projects through individual efforts and contributions, in co-operation with the competent government authorities. During 1991, a total of 59 social development projects were approved by the Programme; 54 of these have already been implemented, whilst five are still under way. Non-government contributions to these projects totalled RO 174,482 in 1991.

In view of the importance of providing the population with education and advice, information and culture also receive priority. Study-groups, lectures and visits are organised and a range of information aids are used to raise levels of social, cultural, health and economic awareness. During 1991, 495 study groups and lectures were organised, attended by 14,567 people. 75 cinema shows were also held, and stickers, wall-magazines, and educational leaflets are distributed in the areas covered by the project.

Education is one of the Programme's high priorities. In co-operation with the Ministry of Education, the National Programme for Local Community Development runs literacy and adult education classes. These are all the result of individual contributions from members of the public, who help in setting up study premises and in transporting teachers and students from their homes to their classes. The development sector also encourages citizens to acquire an education, and male and female social workers to hold individual and group meetings for this purpose. During 1991, 78 literacy centres were opened, with a total of 1,391 students of both sexes. Also, 57 classes were opened in Rural Children's Development Homes; these were attended by 2,462 children.

Public libraries and Koran memorisation schools aim to encourage students to educate themselves. Several rural development libraries have been set up and supplied with books on culture, social subjects, religion, and health. In addition, there are mobile libraries supervised by male and female workers, which tour the villages. Altogether there are 22 libraries, most of them mobile. The programme also supervises the Koran memorisation schools, which were set up on the initiative of the programme, backed by



Children at a day nursery.

the public and the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

On the health front, the aim is to educate the public so that they can benefit from the services provided by the Ministry of Health. To this end, development teams in conjunction with workers from the Ministry of Health, work together to raise levels of public awareness. On the preventive side, in 1991, 195 wells were disinfected, 1,709 mother and child cases underwent health education; there were also 2,239 cleanliness campaigns, and 3,726 house visits. On the treatment side, 8,353 cases were treated, whilst first aid was given to 2,138 cases and 721 cases were referred to hospital.

In co-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Directorate-General of Local Community Development sets up experimental farms, organises agricultural pest control and provides veterinary and agricultural services. Last year, five wells were dug, five aflaj restored, 22 experimental farms set up, and 82 pest control campaigns launched. Other agricultural services include seed and fertiliser distribution and veterinary and other assistance.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The Directorate-General of Women's and Children's Affairs, as part of the Ministry of Social Affairs, provides assistance to Omani women for the purposes of improving their economic and social circumstances. It operates largely through the Omani Women's Associations, of which there are now 13 throughout the Sultanate, with more than 2,500 registered members. Seven more branches of the Association are to be set up in other localities. Special attention is given to young working mothers, who have been given particular protection under the laws relating to employment; these include provision of one or two years' leave to look after their children, and the opening of nurseries and kindergartens.

In the interests of the parents and children, the Government has banned baby-sitting, and only licensed nurseries are allowed to operate under the supervision of the Directorate-General.

Before granting licences to nurseries, the Ministry checks their suitability, including accommodation, standard of education of those in control, safety standards, fees etc. Regular inspection visits are made to kindergartens.

In order to enhance the socio-economic and cultural standards of women, social-care centres have been established to enable them to acquire special skills and the experience needed to help them improve their standard of living. There are at present six of these centres, where women are trained in



A young Omani is fascinated by a model of the solar system at the Children's Museum in Muscat.

tailoring, embroidery, household management, and traditional crafts to preserve the national heritage. The centres are also organising lectures and seminars on various subjects of interest to women, as well as conducting literary classes and the investigation of family conditions.

The national programme for local community development is one of the cornerstones for the advancement of rural womanhood. It aims to eliminate female illiteracy, encourage female education, and provide guidance in the upbringing of children and other domestic matters. This is done through Rural Women's Development Centres, of which there are now approximately 70 throughout the Sultanate. Their programmes are being supported through the introduction of new activities aimed at providing rural women with economic, social, health, and cultural services. These include poultry-rearing, food production, preservation of foodstuffs, weaving, and the revival of traditional Omani handicrafts. Training is also given to Omani cadres to enable them to play an effective role in leading and directing these development processes.

LABOUR

Educated and skilled Omanis capable of developing the country were almost totally lacking in the Sultanate in the years before 1970. Most of those Omanis who went abroad during these years for education and skilled training remained there since there were no prospects of employment for their skills at home. Many others left Oman to work as unskilled labour in the Gulf States, long-term unemployment being endemic.

Following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, the situation altered dramatically. Omanis flocked home in large numbers following a call from His Majesty



A domestic education class at the Omani Women's Association.

country. A natural result of this was an urgent requirement for the means of educating and training Omanis in their own country. A simple Labour Office was set up in 1970, and ten years later a Directorate-General of Labour was established within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. In the early years of development, Oman was heavily dependent on expatriate skilled and semi-skilled labour, mostly Indian and Pakistani, as well as Europeans in managerial posts, for lack of a skilled Omani workforce. Now, as young Omanis graduate from schools, institutes and the Sultan Qaboos University, Omanisation is taking place in every field at an ever-increasing pace. His Majesty has repeatedly emphasised the need to reduce Oman's dependence on foreign workers, and has reminded the country's youth that academic qualifications are meant to equip them to work effectively in the country's service and are not an end in themselves. He has prompted the private sector to do more to replace foreign employees with Omanis. The combined effects of encouragement and legislation are now being seen to have palpable results.

The rapid development which the country has undergone since 1970 has made it necessary to plan and regulate relations between employers and employees in order to guarantee the interests of both parties. To this end, the Oman Labour Law came into force in 1970. The Law affirms the principle of equality and impartiality in the treatment of employees; it forbids the employment of non-Omanis without prior permission from the Ministry, unless they fulfil the conditions of residence and have specialist qualifications that cannot be found among Omani nationals. The Law thus obliges employers to engage Omani employees as far as possible. It also authorises the Omani to foreign employees in an establishment, and lays down rules to achieve this objective.

Omanisation is proceeding steadily and methodically, and all facilities are made available in order to provide every willing, able Omani with rewarding job opportunities. Ministry figures indicate that the Omanisation rate increased in 1991. Up to the end of last year, 8,335 people were registered as applicants for jobs in the private sector. Success on the Omanisation front is due to the ceaseless moral and material support provided by the Government.

One of the most important examples of this was the declaration issued by the Committee for Vocational Training and Labour, stating that owners of private sector companies would receive high levels of compensation for salaries and allowances paid to their employees, with effect from 1st October, 1991.

The Ministry recognises the importance of helping to produce individuals capable of making positive contributions in every area, by providing them with technical, vocational and administrative training. Hence the provisions of Article 22 of the Omani Labour Law, which stipulates that every employer who employs twenty or more staff must contribute to the vocational training of Omanis. These contributions are collected from employers for vocational training projects run by the Ministry.

To ensure that employers and employees comply with the provisions of the Labour Law and the Ministerial decisions implementing it, the Ministry endeavours to operate in the interests of both sides, whilst adhering to the spirit of the Law. A total of 17,757 establishments were inspected in 1991.

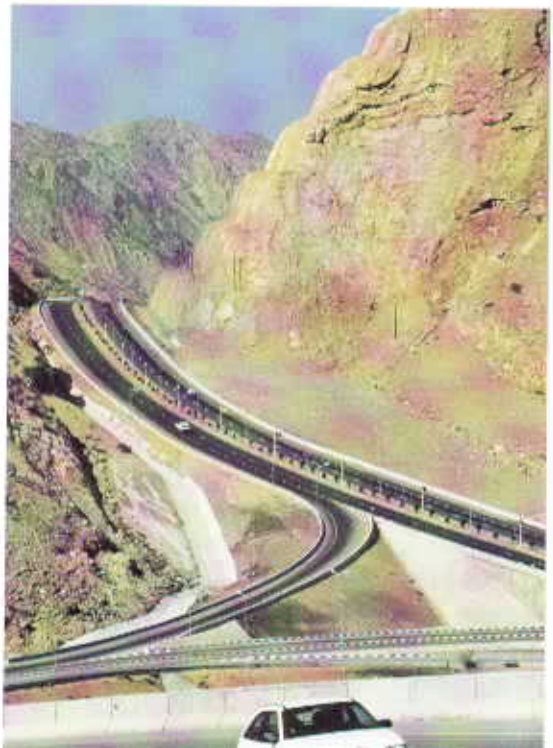
COMMUNICATIONS

Over a period of twenty years, an excellent road system has been completed, linking all the main centres of population throughout the Sultanate of Oman. Considering the size of the country and its topography of mountains and desert, this has been a very considerable achievement. Appreciating that the development of Oman and its infrastructure were dependent on good communications, the Government, under the guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos from the time of his accession, has given high priority to the development of a good road system, efficient and well-equipped sea ports, airports and telecommunications. In the case of road construction, in 1970, the year of His Majesty's accession, there was only one paved road in the country linking Muscat with the airfield at Bait Al Falaj, a distance of 10 kilometres. There were two graded roads, one of which linked Muscat with Sohar along the coast, and the other linking the coast with the oilfield at Fahud in the interior. Otherwise there were only tracks, passable by landrovers and light trucks. By the end of 1991, 4,722 km of paved roads and 13,320 km of unpaved roads had been completed — no mean achievement. Until a deepwater port was constructed at Mina Qaboos in Muttrah in the early 1970s, all cargos for Oman had to be offloaded from lighters in Muttrah bay. A deepwater port has also been constructed at Raysut near Salalah in the south. The only airport in the Sultanate in 1970 with a hard surface runway was at Bait Al Falaj outside Muscat, situated between high rugged hills, where landings in poor visibility could be hazardous. This has long since been replaced by a large modern international airport at Seeb.

ROADS

In 1970 two major problems confronted those responsible for the roads' development in Oman. The first was the size of the country, 300,000 square kilometres, and the second was its topography. A high range of mountains running parallel to the coast in the north of the Sultanate effectively cut off the interior from the coastal belt. The population is also unevenly distributed, largely located in the northern coastal regions and the extreme south. It was inevitable therefore that, in the early stages, road construction was concentrated along the coastal belt in the north, connecting the main centres of population with each other and with the seaport and airport.

The development of roads throughout the interior came later. During the 1980s, both phases of road construction were completed, and now a network of paved roads covers the entire country and linking it with its neighbours; a major achievement was the



The road from Al Bustan to Qantab



Roads have been driven through "impassable" mountains.

building of a paved road, 800 km in length, from Muscat to Salalah in the extreme south. The economic and social benefits derived from the laying out of this road network are now evident and highly significant.

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. Among these achievements were roads through the rugged and precipitous mountains of the Musandam peninsula at the northern tip 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 on the Yemeni border, which zigzags up from the coastal plain to the summit of the Qamar range of mountains and along the top to the border.

During 1991, about 117 km of single



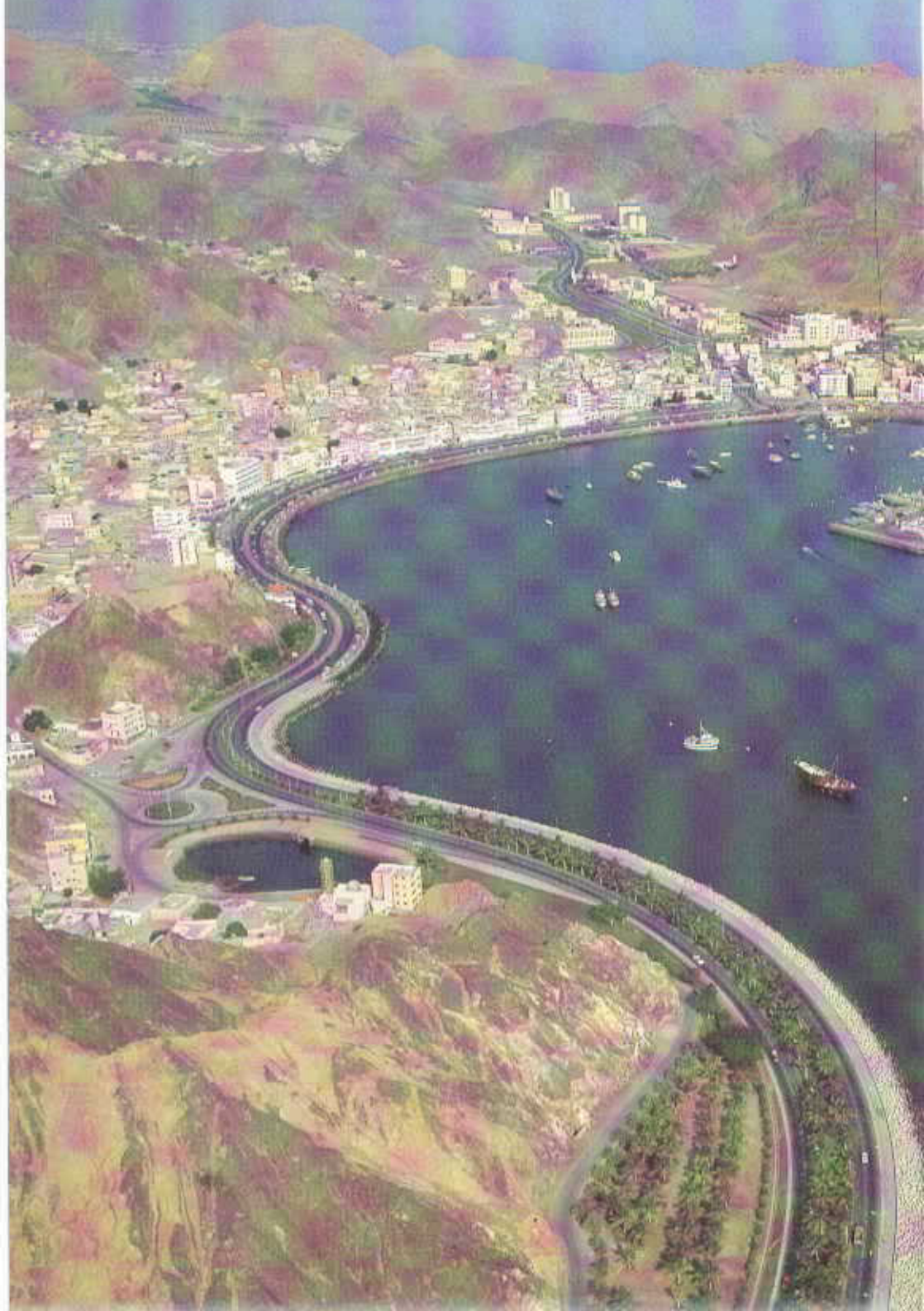
paved roads were completed in the Wilayats of Dakhiliya, Dhahira, Sharqiya and Batinah regions, and 14 km of dual carriageway roads in the Salalah area. Another 104 km of paved roads are presently under construction, and are expected to be completed by the end of 1992. In 1986, the Directorate-General of Roads started construction of low traffic roads by the double surface treatment, designed and built by its own engineers and labour force. During the Fourth Five Year Plan (1991-96) the emphasis is on further road construction and routine maintenance of existing roads. Also included in the Plan is the dualisation of the Muscat to Nizwa road as far as Bidbid, the remaining part of the Salalah-Raysut road, and part of the Salalah-Thumrait road in the south.

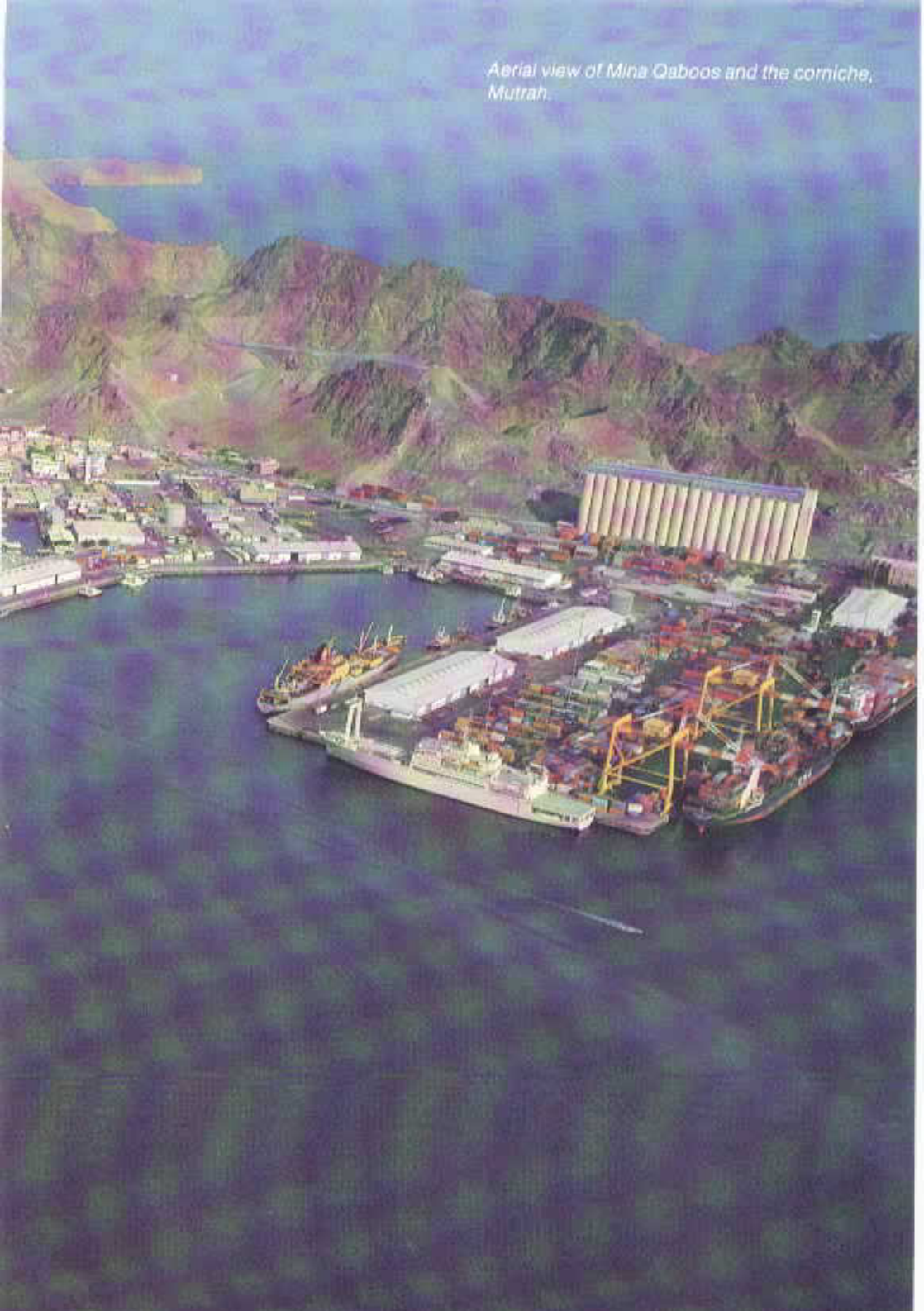
The state-owned Oman National Transport Company (ONTC) runs a fleet of more than 240 buses and coaches, which serve the Muscat area and the main towns. The company also operates six air-conditioned luxury coaches, fitted with long-distance fuel tanks, television and toilet facilities, which run on the Muscat-Salalah route.

There is also a long-distance coach service to Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates. 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 redevelopment of the Azaiba headquarters so that it is best able to provide 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 major road links are constructed.

SEAPORTS

The construction of a modern seaport with deepwater berths was recognised as being an urgent necessity from the beginning of the national development programme. To meet the growing demand for modern port facilities, Mina Qaboos was completed in 1974, geared to handle two million tonnes of various types of cargo annually. The





Aerial view of Mina Qaboos and the corniche, Mutrah.

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. Mina Qaboos has thirteen berths, of which two have a draft of 34 feet, seven of 30 feet, and the remaining four are shallow water berths. It has a transit shed area of 27,000 sq metres and an open storage area of about 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 35 tonne gantry cranes and thirteen other cranes of varying capacities for handling containers and conventional cargo.

In order to identify the development/improvement required in Mina Qaboos, at least until the year 2000, the Ministry of Communications commissioned JICA of Japan to carry out a comprehensive study. The study has revealed that the following key development should be implemented:-

1 Zoning of the available stacking area.
2 Dredging of the harbour basin to accommodate at least a second generation of fully-loaded container ships.
3 Conversion of two existing berths into a container and multi-purpose berth, and the procurement of two quayside container-handling gantry cranes.
4 Reclamation of adjacent Shutaify Bay to create about 15 hectares of container stacking area.

The Mina Qaboos Development Project is expected to be completed in two years from date of commencement.

All systems at the port, which have been computerised, are working successfully, and 77% of port employees are now Omanis.

with protection against the seasonal monsoon winds, which blow at gale force for several of the summer months. A port with container facilities has been constructed at Raysut, 8 km to the west of Salalah, to serve the region. The first phase was completed in 1974, and the second phase, to expand the harbour for larger vessels, was completed in 1980. The present enlarged harbour has been designed to handle an annual cargo of one million tonnes. In 1982, a container terminal with a 35 tonne container handling gantry crane was commissioned to deal with the increasing container traffic. The port has eight deepwater berths and an oil pier for tankers up to 35,000 DWT. In addition, there is one small water berth.

At the northern end of the Musandam Peninsula is the small port of Khasab. It has two berths of limited depth, which are inadequate for future requirements. The Ministry of Communications has commissioned a study, for which the final report has now been received. It is expected to complete the detailed design (pre-contract phase) for the improvement of the port by 1993, and the construction and completion of the project is scheduled between 1994 and 1997.

The Ministry of Communications has conducted a very comprehensive study of the need for another commercial port for the Sultanate. It has revealed that in the long term, beyond the year 2000, a new port will be essential to meet traffic demand.

The construction of a new port is not included in the current Five Year Plan, but is expected to be included in the next. The possibility is that it will be at Sohar. Even if a new port is commissioned, Mina Qaboos will continue to play an important and essential role in the economic activities of the country.



Cargo is unloaded at Port Raysut in the southern province.



The end of the day – fishing boats at anchor in Khasab.



The Seeb International Airport.

AIRPORTS

The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation has four civil airports under its control 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.

The Seeb International Airport, near Muscat, was among the first major projects ordered for implementation by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos following his accession in 1970. Since its inauguration in December 1973, the airport has undergone a series of renovations and improvements. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation and Meteorology is preparing new plans for further extensions to the airport's terminal area and for providing more facilities for the increasing numbers of travellers.

Seeb International Airport already receives and dispatches 21 weekly scheduled flights by international airlines and 30 non-scheduled flights. The aircraft, passenger and cargo movements have shown rapid increase since 1990. The year 1991 witnessed several bilateral negotiations with civil aviation authorities of other countries in order to establish agreements for air transport between the Sultanate and those countries. The result was the initial signatures on six agreements, and one finalised with the Republic of Bulgaria. It is anticipated that these agreements will result in an increase in the number of international airlines using the Airport, with a consequent increase in flights, passengers and cargo movements which will have positive effects on the economy of the Sultanate.

One of the projects completed in 1991 was the Airport's new cargo complex, which has added a covered storage area of 4,000 sq metres to external storage yards of 17,000 sq metres.

Also in 1991, airfield surface improvement projects were commenced; and were completed earlier this year. The



Oman Aviation services the oil industry with daily flights to the Interior.

infrastructure of civil aviation in the Sultanate is to be considerably developed in the Fourth Five Year Development Plan (1991-96) to adapt to the technological innovations. The area control centre is to be improved and extended, radar installations are to be replaced by new modern ones, satellite fibre optic links are to be established, and fire, crash and rescue systems are to be further developed and renovated.

Within the framework of a 3-phase project, work started in 1990 at Salalah Airport to double the size of the aircraft parking area so that it can accommodate six aircraft instead of three as at present. In addition, the whole airfield lighting system will be replaced. These works are expected to be completed by December this year. 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 within an Instrument Landing System.

Oman Aviation Services (OAS), an Omani joint stock company, was established by Royal Decree in May 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 1990, over half the company's employees were 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.

COMMUNICATIONS

In December last year, His Excellency Ahmed bin Suwaidan Al Balushi, Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, announced the introduction of the paging system in the Sultanate. The posts and telecommunications services have come a long way in Oman since the first post office was opened in Muscat in 1856. From that date until 1947, Indian postage stamps were used for the sake of convenience. In 1948, the British General Post Office was given responsibility for postal agencies in the Gulf region, and overprinted 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 1991, there were 77 main and branch post offices, and around 40 postal distribution agencies throughout the Sultanate. By the end of the 4th Five-Year-Plan (1991-96) a further 34 post offices will be built and functioning. Mobile post offices, which were originally allocated to heavily populated areas, have since been replaced by permanent post offices.

The rapid development of the Sultanate over the past 22 years has been reflected in the massive increase in the turnover of letters and parcels. In 1971, the total of incoming and outgoing letters was about seven and a half million. Currently, mail volume varies for incoming and outgoing mail. 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. Datapost, 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 now 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 nearly 34,000 private post boxes in the country.

A home delivery service is being planned for implementation in the not-too-distant future. 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.

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

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

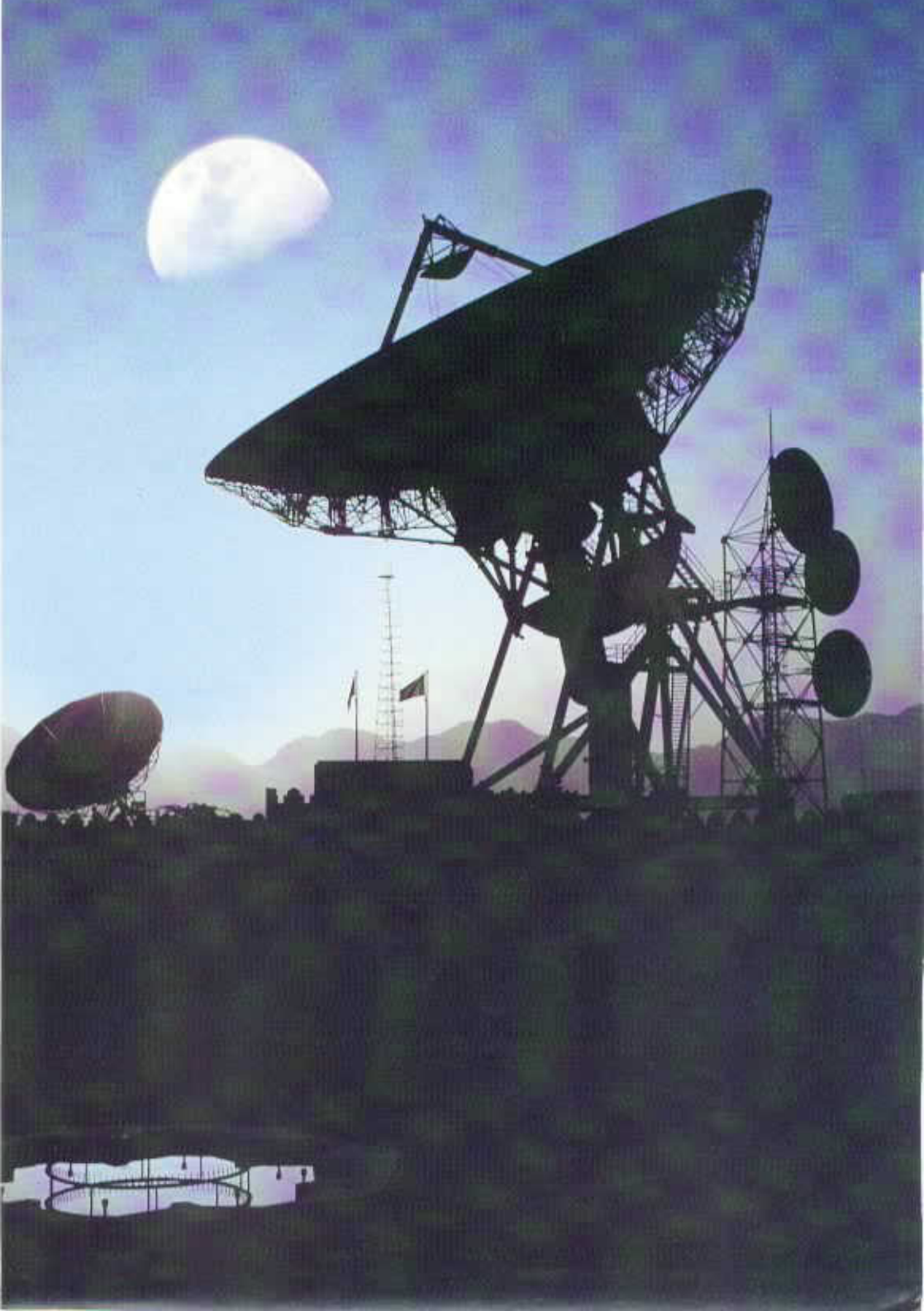
The General Telecommunications Organisation (GTO), incorporated in the Ministry, was established by Royal Decree in 1980 as a fully-owned Government entity, and is now self-financing. During 1984/5, a new Telecommunications Centre was constructed at Bait Al Falaj near Muscat, and 12 digital exchanges were commissioned in the Muscat area. GTO's equipped capacity rose from 500 lines in



A busy post office.



A selection of recently-issued Omani stamps.



1970 to 158,000 by the end of last year. At the same time, three digital exchanges were commissioned in Salalah, increasing capacity for this region to nearly 15,000. Subsequently, expansion has continued with projects covering the Interior (centred on Nizwa, Ibri, Ibra, and Sur), Buraimi, Masirah, the Musandam Peninsula, and Batinah coast region. Public payphones were introduced in 1980, and cardphones in 1986.

The progress of the telecommunications sector in the Sultanate is reflected in both the quality of the services provided, and the quantity of subscribers served. The GTO not only provides a modern telephone service, but also employs the latest technologies offered by the global telecommunications industry. The result is that GTO subscribers throughout the Sultanate enjoy a multitude of facilities which make calling next door — or around the world — easier and faster than ever before.

When expanding the network, the GTO was fortunate in that digital telecommunications technology had recently become available. This technology and a carefully selected equipment architecture, enable GTO to employ systems best suited to serving both urban and remote areas.

In May 1985, a mobile cellular telephone exchange with a capacity for 4,500 lines was installed, along with a number of radio-base stations in Muscat, Dhofar, and other parts of the Sultanate. This service is widely appreciated by the public. It is also used in various applications, such as the provision of public telephones using the mobile telephone network. Among GTO's notable recent achievements is bringing to some of the Sultanate's remote villages the capacity to contact other areas by the installation of specially converted cardphones linked to the mobile telephone system network.

Last year, GTO completed several important projects. The year began with the introduction of a new organisational structure to reflect and respond to the expansion and development that has taken place in the communications network. Its external system was expanded during the year into the various regions of the Sultanate to meet the growing number of applications for telephone services. By the end of 1991, the exchanges had an increased capacity of 9% over that at the end of the previous year. New exchanges were set up during the year to cope with the increased demand. GTO is continuing to increase the number of its public telephones, following the proven success of the existing ones. At the end of 1991, there were 1,170 public telephones, 253 coin-operated, and 917 card-operated. Card-operated public telephones have recently been installed in some buses. Charges on international calls were reduced substantially in November last year, and charges were also reduced for car-phones. A unique new paging system was introduced by GTO in December 1991 to cover the Muscat area in its first stage. During this year, it will be extended to the Batinah region, Dhofar, Buraimi, Nizwa, Ibri, and Sur. The service will be made available to all other regions in 1993.

In 1975 international communications were upgraded when a standard 'A' Satellite Earth Station was erected at Al-Ameerat which has operated via Intelsat above the Indian Ocean and with Arabsat since 1986. In order to improve these services further, a new earth station is under construction in Ibri, which will operate via the international satellite Intelsat stationed over the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1977, GTO established a training centre which, after several moves, is now located in Ruwi. GTO is intensively engaged in the Omanisation of its workforce, with the immediate aim of achieving a target of 80%.

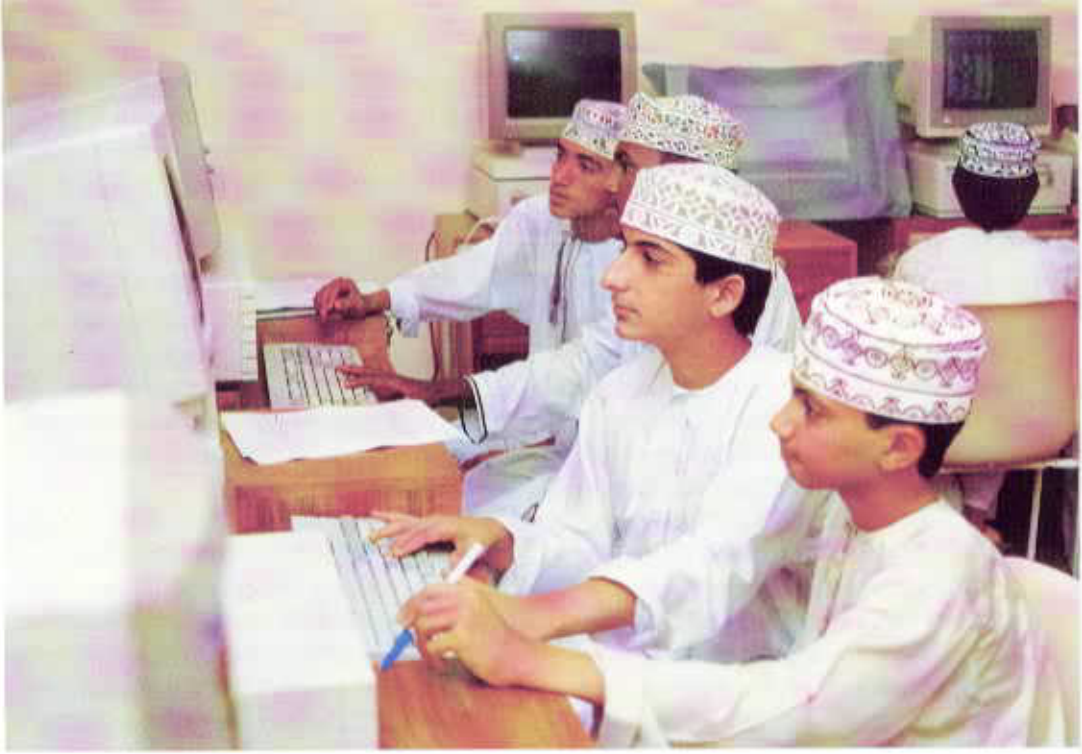
At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in July 1970, there were only three boys' schools in the whole of the Sultanate: in Muscat, Muttrah, and Salalah in the south. There were no girls' schools. Those for boys had a total of 909 students. Apart from that, there were only Koranic schools, in the towns and villages, which could provide any proficiency in reading and writing, and these were often held under the shelter of trees. Before 1970, ambitious young Omanis who wanted a modern education and training had to go abroad illegally and seek a living outside Oman as there was no potential for their skills within the country. It was clear therefore that, as well as health services, education needed high priority in the development plans of the country. So great was the public demand for education, that in the early stages schools had to be set up in tents, and classes held in shifts. There was also a total lack of qualified and experienced teachers. Large numbers had to be recruited from other Arabic-speaking countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan. Although priority had of necessity to be given to the children, there was also 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 years. On passing the examination at sixth primary grade, generally 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 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.

At the beginning of 1992, there was a total of 823 schools for general education in the Sultanate, with 387,289 students (boys and girls). This consists of 381 primary schools with 272,068 pupils, 359 preparatory schools with 84,128 students, and 83 secondary schools with 31,092 students. In addition to general education, there are also other types of education, namely: seven Islamic preparatory institutes in the mosques with 566 students, and one Islamic secondary institute with 264 students; technical education consisting of one commercial secondary school with 359 students, one industrial secondary school with 163 students, and one agricultural secondary institute with 146 students.

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 males and three for females. Currently there are 1,610 male and 1,213 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



Students learn the use of computers.



Eagerness to learn – schoolboys at work.

be set up to increase the numbers of Omani teachers replacing foreigners, and at the same time expand the educational network. The proposed Institute is intended for potential preparatory and secondary school teachers, and will be established in co-operation with the Sultan Qaboos University. At the beginning of 1991, the total number of teachers in the Sultanate was 15,187 of which 11,190 were expatriates, but this year the educational system will receive its first batch of graduates from the Faculty of Education and Islamic Sciences at the Sultan Qaboos University. From the 1992/93 academic year, these numbers will be augmented by qualified graduates from the Faculty of Science and the 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 the English language. In 1987 the Ministry of Education and Youth initiated a major project in order to achieve this objective. Responsibility for supervising the various aspects of the project 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 order that their content and quality is as high and appropriate as possible, and also they reflect Omani and Islamic culture and the social values which Omani pupils should develop in order to become good citizens.

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 and learning. In-service teacher training programmes are therefore integrated with all phases of the materials' development. All teachers attend courses which expose them to the philosophy underpinning the materials, and which provide practical demonstrations of the techniques required. 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.

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY

The crowning achievement of the development of the educational system was the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University at Al Khodh outside Muscat in September 1986. The University comprises six colleges or faculties; Education and Islamic Sciences, Science, Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine, and Arts. The students are approximately equal in numbers between the sexes. It is anticipated that the University will ultimately accept about 3,000 students in the various faculties and specialisations.

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, built at a cost of RO 52 million, 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



Oman's young people enjoy Olympic-standard sports facilities.



established, it was possible to devote increasing attention to the broader aspects of the training and upbringing of the youth of the country, a priority that has been constantly reiterated by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who presented the nation's young people with an Olympic-sized sports stadium covering 44 hectares of land at Bausher near Muscat, the main features of which are a seating capacity for 35,000 spectators and facilities for more than twenty different sports. Sporting activities are recognised as playing a major role in the character-building of the country's boys and girls.

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 Youth approved an integrated national plan for expanding and improving youth facilities, including construction of sports and youth facilities, support for the expansion of existing clubs as well as for the organisation of national sporting and recreational activities, to which His Majesty personally donated half a million Omani Rials. By a Royal Decree of December 1991, Sports and Youth activities were placed under a General Organisation for Sports and Youth Activities, supervised by the Council of Ministers.

This body will co-ordinate the implementation of future programmes, applying existing performance criteria and precedents as indicators of progress achieved in its work. It will also draw up appropriate annual plans to ensure that its operations function smoothly, effectively and efficiently.

During the last four years, youth centres have been completed at Sohar and Salalah, and under the current Five-Year-Plan (1991-96) similar centres will be built in the Dhariya regions. There are altogether twenty individual projects in the current Plan. The first phase of the construction of a new sports complex at Salalah was completed in 1991 and the second phase has been started this year. In addition, preparations are being made for installing and expanding sports facilities in a number of clubs and constructing and equipping sports grounds in schools.

Organised sporting activity now embraces a wide range. It is an interesting fact that for many years hockey was the only organised sport played in Oman, long before football was introduced. As long ago as 1914 it was being played extensively, probably introduced from India. Today, apart from Egypt, Oman is the only Arab country in which the game is popular. Other than Egypt, Omani hockey teams have to go as far as Malaysia for foreign fixtures. Hockey is increasing its following in the country and ice hockey has recently been introduced, but now football is undoubtedly the most popular sport. Oman's first participation in the Gulf Soccer Cup was in 1974, and the Oman Football Association was formed in 1983. The Sultanate has subsequently hosted the Gulf Cup, and performed creditably in the World Cup and the Asian Games. From a humble beginning, athletics in Oman have become very popular, and the country now has an athlete who has achieved notable international status, Mohammed bin Amor Al Malki, who won the Asian Games 400 metre gold medal in Beijing in 1990. Other popular organised sports in the Sultanate include basketball, cycling, swimming, equestrian sports, shooting, volleyball, and handball.

Sport for the disabled is strongly encouraged in Oman, and a team of Omani paraplegic athletes participated in the World Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair games in



The Boy Scout movement is enthusiastically supported in Oman.

1987, and then went on to the Seoul Paralympics in 1988. They are planning to participate in the Barcelona Paralympics in September this year.

SCOUTING

Scouting plays an important part in organised activities for boys and girls. The Scouting movement was first introduced into Oman in 1948 at the Saidiya school in Muscat. Shortly afterwards, Scout packs were formed in boys' schools in Muttrah and Salalah. In 1970, when many more schools began to be opened, the number of Scout packs increased accordingly. At the same time, Guiding was introduced for the first time in the new girls' schools. The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides was established by Royal Decree in 1975 with the aim of inculcating young people with a sense of service and of developing their self-reliance, sense of responsibility and public spirit. To this end, annual camps were started the following year. In 1983, during the National Day celebrations, His Majesty the Sultan was installed as Chief Scout in honour of his support for the movement.

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. This is part of the State effort to enable the handicapped to undertake work which will give them a secure and dignified life and help 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

furtherance of this aim, the Organisation provides these packs with uniforms, badges and other requirements as well as with leadership training and development. Statistics show that numbers are growing in both sections of the movement, so that there are now about 10,000 members.

Oman played an active role at 32nd World Scouts' Conference held in Paris in July 1990, which was attended by over 1,000 scouts from 132 countries. The Sultanate's Scouting movement won high praise at the 19th Arab Scouts' Conference at the International Arab Scouts' Centre in Cairo, where there was an Omani pavilion with slide shows and lectures.

In 1991, the Rover Scouts from the Sultan Qaboos University, together with their counterparts from the UAE University, organised a summer camp in August in Salalah to mark the Year of Industry. Part of



Junior scouts help at summer camp.

and commercial data in association with the Directorate-General of Commerce and Industry in that region. In July this year the 16th Summer Youth Camp was held at Nakl in the Interior.

In February this year the fourth Ship for World Youth called at Mina Qaboos. On board were 185 youngsters including 20 Omanis. Apart from seeing places of interest in the Sultanate, the youth groups visited the Sultan Qaboos University, where they took part in sports and cultural programmes.

HEALTH

At the time of his accession in July 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos gave the highest priorities to the health services and education. At that time, there was only one hospital in the whole of the Sultanate, run by an American Mission in Muttrah, and that was fee-paying. Apart from that, there were a few clinics scattered around the country, including one run by PDO in Ibri. There was only one qualified Omani doctor, who was practising outside the country until 1970, when he returned to become the first Minister of Health. By 1992, there were 49 hospitals, 91 health centres, 3 maternity centres, 96 preventive health centres and 5 rural mobile health centres in the Sultanate. By 1991, the Ministry of Health had a total of 11,743 personnel, including 994 doctors. 7,740 of the personnel were medical staff, of whom 36% were Omanis. 52% of all staff were Omanis. Today, over 90% of the population is covered by the Ministry's health services, there are hospitals in all major centres of population and more are to be constructed under the current Five-Year-Plan.

In 1970, trachoma, dysentry, tuberculosis, and malaria were rife as a result of a lack of basic hygiene. The



Health for all – all Omanis enjoy a comprehensive health service.

mortality rate, especially among children, was very high owing to the almost total absence of medical facilities. Epidemics of diseases such as influenza and measles were a scourge to whole communities, particularly the bedu tribes. Now, such is the importance given to health, that when financial constraints on public spending had to be imposed as a result of the collapse of world oil prices in 1986, the Health Service was virtually unaffected.

Prevention is regarded as of paramount importance by the Health Service. Great strides have been made in child immunisation. Under the expanded immunisation programme, 95% of children below one year of age were immunised last year against diptheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles and tuberculosis. In the case of polio, the incidence was steadily reduced during the period 1982 to 1987, but in 1988 there was an unexplained outbreak when 117 acute cases were reported. However, only three cases have been reported since 1988, and the health authorities are confident that the disease will have been completely eradicated by 1995. The Health Ministry recently announced plans to achieve 95% control of measles and elimination of neo-natal tetanus by 1995. The number of cases of measles has now dropped to around 400 a year, compared with more than 40,000 ten years ago. There has not been a single case of neo-natal tetanus reported in the Sultanate during the past two years.

The Sultanate's achievement in the field of immunisation was highly praised by a World Health Organisation meeting in June last year.

One of the successes of the Department of Preventive Medicine in the Ministry of Health has been the prevention of blindness programme, launched to combat trachoma,

blindness unless treated, and which used to be rife in villages in northern Oman, affecting children at an early age. The programme identifies victims through comprehensive school and community-based screening programmes. Steady progress is being made towards the eventual eradication of this disease. In the first six years of the Eye Health Care Programme, the prevalence of mild trachoma fell from 35% to only 10% in the community and from 32% to 8% in schoolchildren. Moderate and severe trachoma have also fallen in the community from 10% in 1984 to 7% in 1990, and in schoolchildren from 9% to 3% over the same period.

Due to its geographical position and climate, Oman is vulnerable to malaria, particularly following heavy rains, and the Ministry therefore regards the campaign against this disease as an important aspect of its work and responsibilities. Malaria is one of the few health problems remaining in Oman. The provision of water supplies and agricultural development in rural areas has encouraged the breeding of the malaria-bearing anopheles mosquitoes, and hence brought an increased risk of the disease. Intensive spraying campaigns by the Malaria Control Department, in co-operation with the World Health Organisation, have eradicated or greatly reduced the incidence of this disease in the main towns and cities, and the cases brought to hospital have fallen considerably in recent years. However, in the countryside and the main agricultural areas, the preventive campaign is still being pursued, and there are nine malaria control centres operating throughout the countryside. As part of the Ministry's plan to eradicate all diseases, a nationwide project to defeat malaria has been executed in the eastern region. This will be implemented in the rest of the Sultanate's regions later.

been prevalent in the past, particularly amongst the three and four year-olds, and this is a problem which is now being energetically tackled. Investigations have indicated that about 15% of children of pre-school age have been suffering from malnutrition due to a lack of a protein energy diet.

It appears that one of the major causes is 'junk food'. To counter this problem, the Ministry of Health introduced a children's health card in 1990 which records the growth of the child in such a way that any level of malnutrition will immediately be obvious.

In the first years of its renaissance, Oman was totally dependent on expatriate doctors and nurses to staff the hospitals, and generally run the Health Service. In 1990, nine doctors were sent abroad to obtain fellowship and PhD certificates in various specialisations. Now, with the establishment of the Medical College of the Sultan Qaboos University, Oman will shortly be providing more of its own doctors, in addition to those who have been sent abroad for training.

The first Omani nursing school was opened in 1971, and this responsibility was subsequently taken over by the Institute of Health Sciences in Wattayeh, which opened in 1982. To speed up Omanisation in health establishments, the Ministry has set up five general nursing institutes in Salalah, Sur, Nizwa, Ibri, and Sohar. Graduates of secondary schools study there for three years. Then they obtain diplomas and get jobs in health establishments in the country. The Ministry has also set up two more institutes with a variety of specialisations: the Oman Institute of Public Health, and the Assistant Pharmacists Institute. These work with the Institute of Health Sciences in Wattayeh. The Institute of Health Sciences also trains sanitary assistants and other para-medical staff as well as running courses



The Royal Hospital at Ghubrah.

in physiotherapy, laboratory work and radiology. The Institute is currently under expansion at a cost of one million Omani rials, which will enable it to double its intake of students.

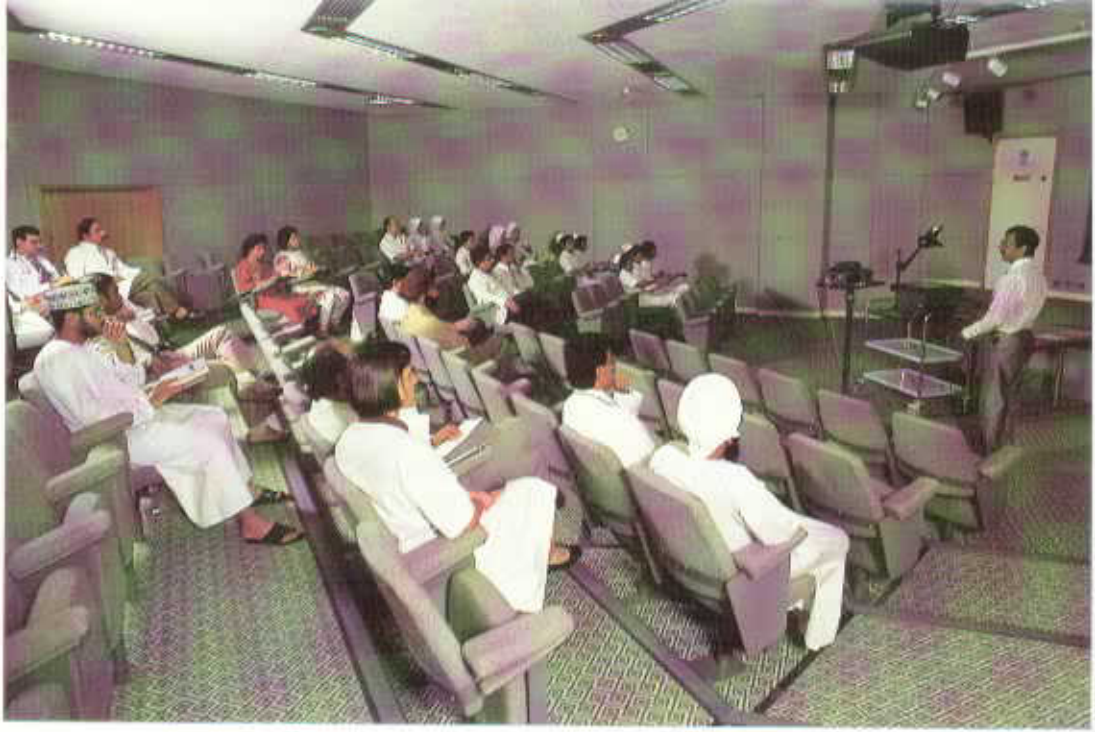
The jewel of the Health Service is the superbly equipped Royal Hospital, which was opened by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1987. This was a gift from His Majesty to his people. The hospital provides the people of Oman with the very latest in sophisticated health care. It has 630 beds, including 30 special-care baby units, and a large modern accident and emergency department. Its clinical departments include obstetrics, gynaecology, medical and surgical paediatrics, general surgery, nephro-urology, general medicine, cardiology, gastroenterology, endoctrinology and orthopaedics. The hospital also has comprehensive radiodiagnostic, pathology, physiotherapy and rehabilitation supporting services. There is also an open-heart surgery unit where the first successful open-heart operation was carried out on a 12-year old child in December 1990.

It is expected that the unit will operate on about 250 cases a year, and eventually increase to 500 cases a year.

In the Muscat area, the Ibn Sina hospital, opened in 1983, with 60 beds, specialises in psychiatric medicine, while the Al Nahda hospital concentrates on dermatology, ophthalmology and ENT, in addition to possessing a comprehensive dental unit. The Khoula hospital has 365 beds for general surgery, neuro-surgery, plastic surgery, burns, obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics, intensive care and day care.

Medical services in four major hospitals in Sumail, Bahla, Tanam, and Ibra have recently been expanded. In May 1991, the first knee-cap surgery was carried out in the





(Above) A medical lecture given in the Conference Hall at the Royal Hospital. (Left) A patient nears convalescence.

Khoula hospital. Also in 1991, work began on several health projects costing nearly RO 17 million, part of Oman's expenditure on further development of health services during the period of the 4th Five-Year-Plan. In October 1991, work began on the construction of a new hospital in Buraimi with 100 beds, and costing RO 8.4 million. Work has also commenced on the construction of a new hospital in Rostaq with 200 beds. The hospital will replace one which will now be used as a reference hospital for the region. Another important project which was started in 1991, was the Royal Hospital Polyclinic, located opposite the hospital. It will be completed by October this year, and will replace all outpatients clinics at the Royal Hospital. The Royal Hospital can then concentrate on dealing with complicated cases which require advanced specialised care. The Polyclinic will have outpatient clinics for children, women and men, in addition to eye and ENT clinics. The complex will also include a specialist clinic, diagnostic X-ray rooms, a large medical laboratory, and other services such as a pharmacy and stores.

In September 1991, construction work began on the Musannah Polyclinic, and will take a year to complete. Work is also in progress on the construction of a Polyclinic at Birka. Bids have been invited for the construction of a new hospital at Tanam near Ibri. Work is due to be completed this year on extensions to the Institute of Health Services in Wattayeh and health centres at Al-Ain, Al-Hajr, Shinas and Suwaiq.

Another recent advance was the introduction of a National Diabetes Programme to plan, monitor and evaluate diabetes treatment and prevention. The programme has prepared educational material and undertaken a national community-based survey to assess the

The survey has revealed that 9.8% of the adult Omani population are suffering from diabetes, and over one fifth of the total population have a real or potential diabetic problem. Diabetes is most prevalent amongst the elderly, and is almost certainly a negative by-product of a rapid rise in the standard of living, resulting in increased longevity and also, in many cases, an unbalanced diet.

The recently instituted National Women and Child Care Plan will pay special attention to the needs of handicapped children. The aim is not only to care for them, but also to prevent handicaps, and education. The eventual goal is to rehabilitate these children by providing jobs when they become adults. The Plan is a joint programme of the Ministries of Health, Education, Information, Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Interior, Regional Municipalities and Environment, Muscat Municipality, Oman Women's Association, PAMAP, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sultan Qaboos University, WHO and UNICEF. The programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Health.

During the 4th Five-Year-Plan (1991-96), the Ministry of Health intends to carry out the following improvements in the Health Service:-

1 To develop regional hospitals in each of the eight health regions, which will provide specialist in-patient and out-patient services at a regional level, similar to that currently given by the specialist hospitals of Muscat and Salalah. The regional hospital in Salalah is also being further expanded by 150 beds to provide a total of 450 beds.
2 To establish a specialist hospital for ophthalmology which will act as a national referral hospital. Also to extend the existing psychiatric hospital by an additional 200 beds, and provide improved equipment and facilities to meet modern specialist psychiatric requirements.
3 To establish polyclinics in both Muscat and other regions, in order to provide a combination of primary care and specialist outpatient services.
4 To renovate and, in some instances, totally rebuild the older hospitals.
5 To establish permanent health centres in several areas currently served by mobile health units.
6 To provide health centres in remote areas with beds for maternity delivery.

Nursing is to the highest standards at the Royal Hospital.



HOUSING

Housing is one of the top priorities of the Government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Oman is thus one of the few countries of the world with a well-defined housing policy for its citizens; in the words of the Housing Minister, Malik bin Suleiman bin Said Al Ma'amari: "borne by its belief that people should live in comfortable houses if they are to be productive and creative". The Government also has insisted from the start of housing development, 22 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.

Consideration has had to be given to the improvement of existing housing throughout the country, which was often overcrowded, inadequate, and unhygienic. From the outset, there has been close co-operation between the various Ministries and Departments concerned, and particular emphasis has been given to the provision of housing for the lower income groups.

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, is shortly to be moved to a new building, currently under construction, in Al-Khuwair, where it will be adjacent to other Ministries with which it works closely.

A modest start was made in housing construction in 1973 when 73 houses were completed. The rate of construction after that was increased rapidly so that by the end of the Third Five-year-Plan in 1990, 7,754 houses had been completed. An applicant for



Modern housing by the sea.

conditions:-

1 He must be of Omani nationality by birth, or have been naturalised for at least three years before making the application;
2 He must not be 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 RO3,000 per annum;
7 He must not have been granted land for housing by the State.

During 1991, the first year of the Fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991-96), a total of 402 social dwellings were distributed to members of the public in all regions of the Sultanate. Under the Social Housing Scheme, the Government provides the infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity, while the residents pay only a monthly instalment of RO25 towards the cost of the house. The average cost of each dwelling works out at RO14,000 to RO 16,000. Oman has the goal of providing adequate 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.

As part of the programme for providing houses for families with limited incomes, the Oman Housing Bank — a joint stock 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 completion of unfinished houses. Persons with monthly incomes of between RO131 and RO250 may obtain interest-free loans up to a maximum of RO15,000 to enable them to build modern housing for themselves, and non-repayable grants of up to RO6,000 are available to citizens whose monthly income does not exceed RO 130. The loans 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 new regulations has been very good.

The Ministry of Housing has been drafting a new law to regulate land use, strengthen land registration procedures, and redefine landowners' rights. Reconsideration is being given to make ownership organisation more comprehensive regarding the number of lots nationals may acquire and for what use.

The Ministry also deals with land registry and estate proprietorship protection. By the beginning of 1991, the Real Estate Register Secretariat had opened branches in all the housing directorates to enable members of the public to complete their business with the secretariat without having to travel to Muscat. A new Ministerial decision, issued in 1991, fixed the fees for every category of registration. The Secretariat's branches throughout the Sultanate — including Muscat and Dhofar Governorates — issue approximately 2,000 deeds of ownership per month. The ultimate aim is to register all owned land in the Sultanate. This should



The Diplomatic quarter, Qurm. All new building conforms to traditional standards of Omani architecture.

result in stability in land ownership rights, and, consequently, in social stability. This should encourage investment, development and economic growth.

One of the tasks of the Ministry of Housing is to restore and improve old and dilapidated houses, through the Housing Assistance Programme. By means of this programme, 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 Oman 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 to those on limited incomes not exceeding RO150 per month. The assistance is given in the form of a grant from the State up to a maximum of RO6,000. Old existing 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 of Housing has set up Directorates of Housing in the various regions of the Sultanate. In the Sharqiyah, Directorates have been established in Sur, Ibra, Al Mudhaibi, Masirah, and the Ja'alan. In the Batinah region, there are Directorates in Al Musana'h and Sohar. In the Dhahirah region at Buraimi and Ibri, and in the Dakhiliyah region at Nizwa, with a Housing Office at Suma'il, and in the Musandam Governorate at Khasab, with Housing Offices at Bai'ah and Bukha. There is also a Directorate-General of Housing in Dhofar. The Directorates of Housing in the regions contain land survey and planning sections

administrative affairs, as well as the Real Estate Register.

The Directorates of Housing in the regions have been given greater powers to implement plans on the spot, prepare surveys, and register properties in the Real Estate Register. In this connection, their technical and administrative apparatus has been reinforced to enable them to provide the public with proper services in their regions and spare them problems that might arise in their dealings with the Ministry.

In 1988, a Ministerial decision was issued to enable the Muscat Land Affairs Committee and the local committees in the Wilayats to perform the roles designated for them in the relevant laws and decrees. This decision provides the regulations implementing the formation, prerogatives and claims procedures for the Land Affairs Committees and the Appeals Committees.

The Housing Bank has approved a loan budget of RO16 million for 1992. For the first time, loans are to be offered to employees of the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Oman Police. During the period from 1977 to the end of 1991, housing loans worth nearly RO209 million have been issued to 14,455 people.

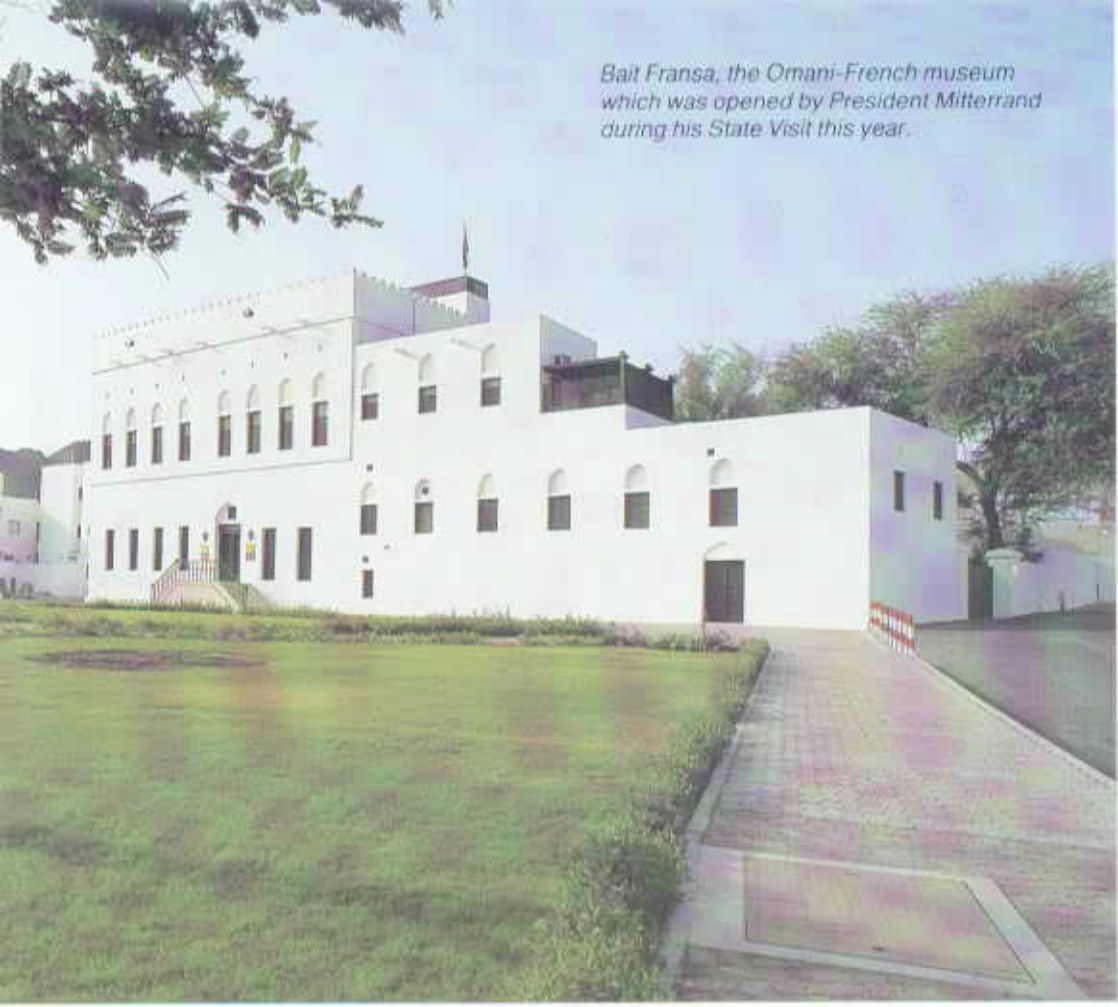
Careful planning is, of course, essential in land development for housing. Experts in the Ministry of Housing are being given further training in Oman and abroad. Two Omani town planners were recently sent to the USA to obtain masters' degrees in this subject, and twelve surveyors were also sent for a three-month course. In-house courses on the application of computers to planning have been held. An expert from UNESCO has conducted a course on the conservation and replanning of old towns in the Sultanate. Replanning of urban areas will cover Nizwa, Buraimi, Ibri, Ibra, Sur, and Rostaq.



NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The Ministry of National Heritage and Culture gives particularly high priority to the protection of Oman's heritage, including the renovation of historic buildings, encouraging traditional crafts, establishing museums and investigating archaeological sites. It also gives due attention to culture and recognises the role it plays in enriching the thoughts of the Omani citizen in the modern era — the era of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The Ministry has achieved much in the heritage area of its functions. It has

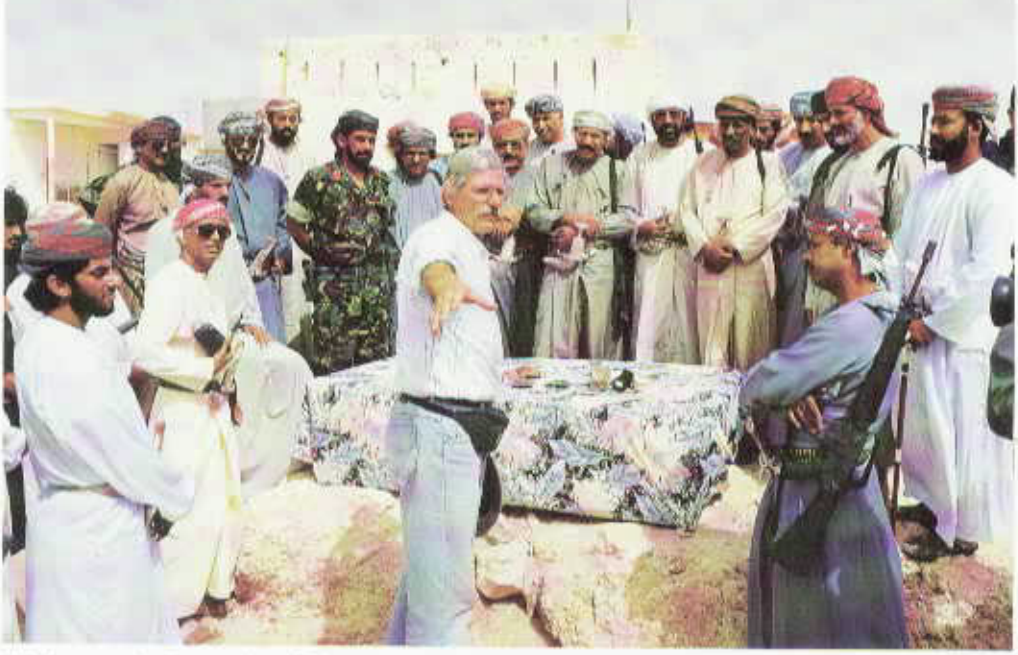


Bait Fransa, the Omani-French museum which was opened by President Mitterrand during his State Visit this year.

established museums, such as the National Museum, the Natural History Museum, and the Children's Museum, and recently the Omani/French Museum, which was opened under the auspices of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the French President Francois Mitterrand. This museum contains a valuable collection of documents, pictures, antiques, handicrafts, model ships, navigational equipment, and national costumes of Oman and France, as well as other exhibits expressing the historical cultural links that have existed between the two countries since the beginning of the 18th century.

The Ministry's activities are not limited to museums. It also collects Omani manuscripts and documents, which it prints and publishes. It encourages traditional Omani crafts by purchasing them, holding arts and crafts competitions, marketing the products and displaying them at exhibitions held by the Ministry at home and abroad. The objective behind these activities is to increase production and ensure that these crafts — the crafts of our fathers and forefathers — are passed on to the coming generations.

During 1991, the Ministry renovated the fort at Bidiya, the old souk (market) at Nizwa and the fort at Khasab. It also trained a number of Omanis in renovation skills and in providing tourist information about the main forts already refurbished by the



Ministers and other senior officials accompanying His Majesty Sultan Qaboos on his annual "Meet-the-People" tour visit the site of the Lost City of Ubar.

Ministry such as Jabrin, Nizwa, Nakhl and Rostaq forts. In 1991, 50,000 tourists visited these forts — an increase on previous years.

Work has continued on archaeological sites. During the 'excavation season' this year in the Sultanate, a German archaeological team has been searching for antiquities in Samad Al Shaan, where ancient copper mining and smelting sites and settlements have been found dating from the third millenium BC. There is also a joint Franco/Italian team working in Ras Al Junaiz, and a British team at Ras Al Hadd in the Sharqiya region.

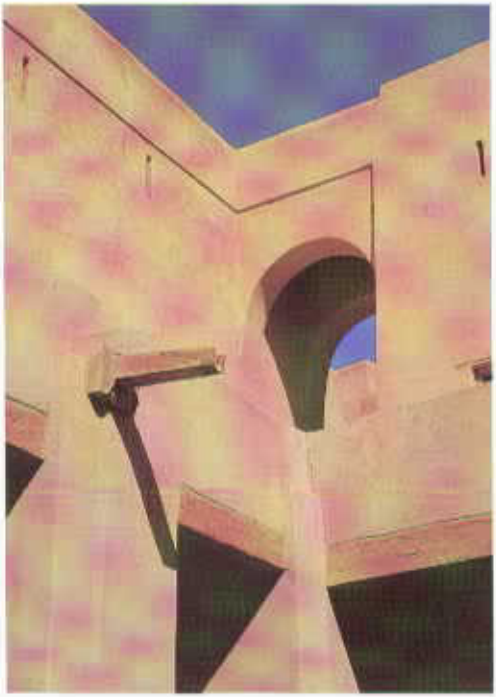
The discovery of the ancient city of Iram (Ubar) this year in the Governorate of Dhofar in the south of Oman, 90km north of Salalah, was an archaeological event of world-wide importance. The city of Iram is mentioned in the Holy Koran as 'Iram of the columns'. The discovery of this city with its 5,000 year-old history, which was regarded as an important centre for the trade in frankincense and other ancient merchandise, was of immense significance. The merchandise used to be transported across the desert to the markets of Alexandria and Rome. In Iram the archaeologists discovered pottery vessels from the second millenium BC.

The discovery of Iram establishes a link between the ancient Omani Empire and the Roman Empire. Satellite photographs helped in the discovery of the ancient city, which has attracted the attention of numerous international institutions involved in the study of antiquities and the world cultural heritage.

There is a continuing range of cultural activities within the Sultanate and abroad, such as lectures, symposia, exhibitions, and cultural weeks, which have played a major part in strengthening relations between the Sultanate and Arab and non-Arab countries,



Bait Al Rudaidah, Birkat Al Mawz.



The Interior – typical Omani architecture. Fortress-style buildings abound throughout







(Left) A view of a traditional Omani majlis (reception room). (Above) A model of a traditional dhow being made by a craftsman. (Below) Superb Omani doors illustrate Oman's ancient cultural richness.





Oman's exhibit at Expo '92 at Seville, Spain.



Princess Margriet of the Netherlands opens the Sultanate's Exhibition at The Hague, accompanied by His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said.



During the year the Sultanate took part in many book exhibitions in Asia and the Middle East.

and have made Oman's cultural heritage known to the outside world.

The Sultanate took part in the Islamic Book Exhibition in Brunei from the 7th to 17th May 1991, the Teheran International Book Exhibition at the same time, the Sharjah International Book Exhibition from 13th November to 25th November 1991, and the Cairo Book Exhibition in January this year.

In order to expand cultural co-operation with the outside world, the Ministry, in July 1991, celebrated the tenth anniversary of the arrival of the vessel 'Sohar' in the harbour of Kuang-Chou, China. An Omani cultural week was held in China, comprising a full programme of Omani cultural activities in Beijing and Kuang-Chou. These included folkloric artistic gatherings, a cultural exhibition, an Omani book exhibition, and cultural lectures and symposia. A Chinese cultural week held in the Sultanate in October 1991, included Chinese folkloric gatherings and an exhibition of Chinese pictures and handicrafts.

In pursuit of cultural exchanges between Oman and the outside world, a concert was held in the Oman Hall of the Bustan Palace Hotel on 19th June 1991. There was also an exhibition of water-colours in January 1991, and a concert in the Ministry's auditorium at Al Khuwair on 23rd February 1992.

An exhibition of photographs by the famous British explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, was held in October 1991, and an Austrian cultural week in the same month. In April 1991, an Egyptian Book Exhibition was held, and a symposium on the future of Arab culture at the Bustan Palace Hotel from 12th to 14th October 1991. The Ministry also held an exhibition at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris in November 1991, and took part in the Doha Art Exhibition in January 1991 and the Gulf Children's Art Exhibition in December 1991. In February this year, the Ministry held an Omani Cultural Exhibition in The Hague under the auspices of Sayyid Faisal bin Ali bin Faisal Al Said, the Minister of National Heritage and Culture, and Princess Margriet, sister of the Queen of the Netherlands.

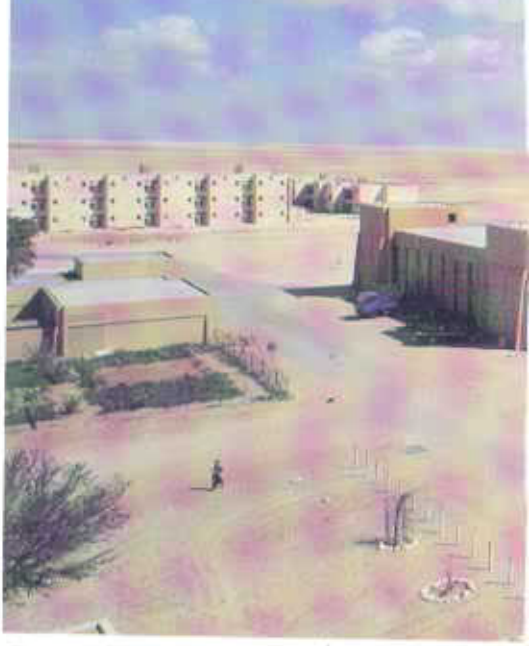
The basic aim of all these activities is to inform the world about the Sultanate's role in, and substantial contribution to, the human cultural heritage. Another objective is to maintain cultural links with Arab and non-Arab countries, in order to increase mutual understanding between the peoples of the world.

Twenty-two years after the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, it is difficult to envisage former administrative conditions within the Sultanate, rudimentary as they were. Before 1970, the Sultanate did not have a governmental structure in the modern sense. Indeed, some regions such as the Musandam in the north, and the lands of the Bani Bu Ali in the south-east, were entirely without any regulated governance.

At that time, only one Ministry had been established — the Ministry of the Interior. It was called the Al-Dhakhiliya (Supervision of the Interior), and 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 for more than 100 years, 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



The Administration Centre at Haima.

social services became progressively available, the benefits of modern technology were harnessed, and the appropriate aspects of development and progress were adopted.

The Ministry of the Interior fully participated in this development process and combined the best aspects of both modern administration and the 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 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 the 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 Shaikhs of the tribes are responsible to the Walis, who are appointed by the Government to assume responsibility for their regions. The Walis consult with the Ministry of the 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 with developments — 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 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 worthily to support the country's overall progress and development.

MUNICIPALITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

The overall responsibility for all aspects of municipal services and standards is entrusted to the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Environment which was created in 1985 (Environment was included in 1991) to replace the Directorate-General of Rural Municipalities, which itself was part of the former Ministry of Land Affairs and Municipalities. In addition to maintaining the existing municipal services, the Ministry is now entrusted with widening and promoting these services, establishing Local Municipal Committees, representing Municipal Affairs at regional and international conferences, establishing training facilities, and co-operating with other government organs in carrying out municipal functions effectively.

In 1990, the Ministry embarked on the implementation of a comprehensive plan for naming villages, streets and internal roads in the various wilayats. Municipal Committees were formed to forward their suggestions concerning the names while seeking the help of scholars, historians and other qualified persons to preserve historical connections. The project is due to be completed by the end of this year.

Municipal Services include specialised services such as environmental health, public hygiene, ensuring that water and food are healthy and safe to consume, meat inspection, pest control, and generally improving the quality of life, and ensuring that the individual enjoys safe food, drink and housing. The services also include the removal of refuse and food condemned as unfit for human consumption. Inspections of food shops and employees have been 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.

The Ministry continues to work for the 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, without sacrificing the efficiency needed for the performance of their work. Personnel are sent abroad for training to such countries as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia, 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.

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. The seventh Municipalities Month in 1991, held under the slogan of 'the removal of eyesores', involved the cutting down and removal of a quarter of a million dead date palms and the demolition and removal of shacks and unsafe buildings. Trees were planted and gardens created to increase the number of 'green' areas.

Inevitably, in the early stages of the Sultanate's development, the emphasis was on the coastal regions in both northern and southern Oman, where the greatest concentrations of population are to be found. Now the emphasis has been shifted to the towns and villages of the Interior, both to bring them as far as possible up to the standards achieved on the coasts, and to encourage the inhabitants to remain where



Road construction in the municipalities.



(Above) "Green Oman" – tree planting is an



densely populated regions. A programme of improvements and beautification is now under way in the Interior. The Nizwa beautification project is now in its fifth phase, and the Buraimi beautification project is almost complete. Similar projects are being planned for Rustaq and Sur. At Nizwa, separate souks (markets) are being constructed for the retail and wholesale trade, and a 140 metre-long bridge is being built over the wadi. The Ministry has also taken a decision on further development and beautification at Buraimi, Rustaq, Sur, Ibra, Suwaiq, Musana'a, Al Qabil, Ibri, Izki, and Bahla.

ENVIRONMENT

From the time of its inception in 1970, the Government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has been keenly aware of the need to protect the environment in all its aspects. The Government has had one particular advantage in this respect, in that it has not been faced with the problem of rectifying the ravages of industrialisation which had taken place before that date. In the succeeding years, it has been possible to monitor closely the progressive development of industrial plants throughout the Sultanate, and control any possible pollution of the environment.

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. In 1982, all the ordinances covering the environment and prevention of pollution were codified in one law. In 1984, a further step was taken with the establishment of the Ministry of the Environment, which was assigned the plan for the environment and the Law for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution. Last year, the Ministry of the Environment was merged with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities with which its responsibilities were so closely inter-related.

In October 1990, a seven-year coastal zone management project was completed in response 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. The surveys were undertaken to determine and map the distribution of coastal and marine resources and activities, and to identify management issues. All this information 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. The plans emphasise the special organisational and management needs for nature conservation and recreation areas and identify critical management issues. They also recommend specific actions and responsibilities and the guidance and control of coastal developments. The coastal zone management plans complement existing ones for land usage and policies. They were prepared in full co-operation with all concerned Government authorities, and have been submitted to the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Environment which is charged with co-ordinating coastal





Wildlife of Oman – Left – Spotted Thick Knee. Right – A juvenile Golden Eagle.



A female turtle returns to the sea, having laid her eggs.

and regional plans should 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 of Omanis.

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.

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 environment sphere, it was announced that His Majesty was donating a prize to be granted every two Last year, the award was given to the Mexican Institute for Environmental and Natural Researches.

The Sultanate has been appointed a member of the governing body of the UN Environmental Protection Programme (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 is also a participant in numerous specialised international organisations and bodies, including the World Union for the Protection of Nature and Natural Resources.

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 and providing them with the proper conditions to enable them to breed successfully. To this end, the Ministry has set up wild-life reserves, notably the sanctuary in the Jiddat Al Harasis where the oryx breed in their own environment after being wiped out in 1972





as a result of illegal hunting. The laws currently in force strictly forbid the hunting of wild animals anywhere in the country, and a number of areas have been set aside as

(Above) African small-spotted genet (Below) Sand gazelles racing across the desert.

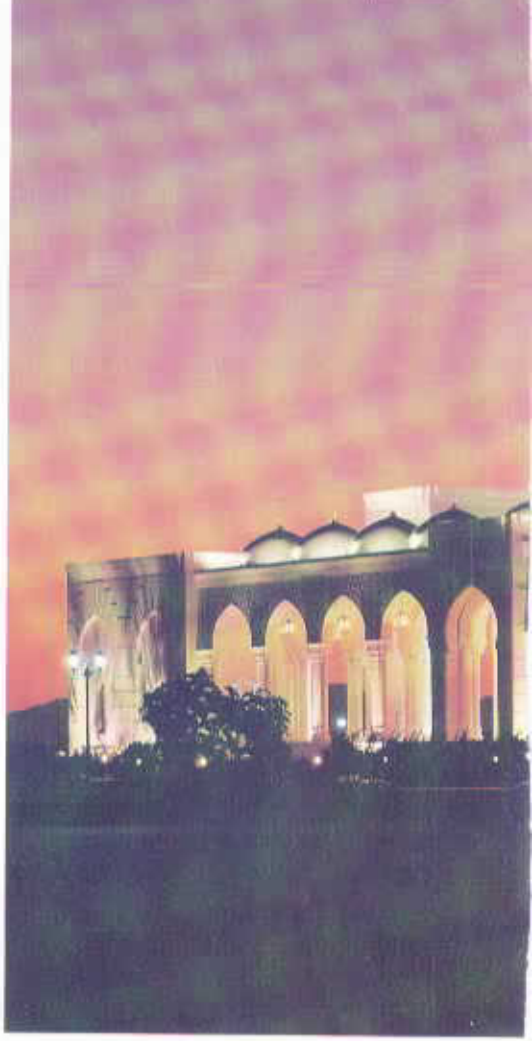


also been drawn up to protect the turtles at Ras Al Hadd and Ras Al Ruwais in conjunction with the Diwan of the Royal Court and other Ministries.

A major transformation has taken place in the towns and villages of the Sultanate during the past 21 years. A great part of this derives from the co-operation between local authorities and Ministries, and the co-ordination 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 total absence of squalor, slums and litter is immediately evident to the observer, whether driving through the main urban areas, or travelling through the towns and villages of the Interior.

The Sultanate was an active participant at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Brazil this year. In a written address to the Conference, His Majesty the Sultan called upon the world community at large to recognise that conservation of the environment was the responsibility of everyone — a responsibility that knows no political boundaries, and that all must contribute his efforts to this responsibility. His Majesty particularly urged the industrialised nations to court heedless technological rivalry that directly contributed to the dangers the world ecology faced. He pledged Oman's energetic efforts to play its part against pollution and in the protection of the environment.

His Majesty's Summit address was honoured by UNESCO in being chosen as the representative statement on behalf of the Arab World. The address was screened by 99 television networks world-wide.



JUSTICE, AWQAF & ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

In spite of the great distances and wide deserts which separate the Sultanate of 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, a faith to which it has staunchly held over the ensuing centuries. Islam is therefore deeply influential in all aspects of life and society in the Sultanate. Under



Islam, religion and law are interwoven and thus the Shari'a Law is the law of Oman. 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.

The Ministry provides some of the most important social and religious services, and endeavours to ensure justice for every citizen who has suffered injury with regard 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 and appointment of Imams. In addition, it takes care of the properties of orphans and bequests for 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.

It should be explained that zakat is a religious tax, originally representing 5 or 10 per cent of earnings from the land. Today, revenues from zakat go to the Ministry, which organises zakat revenues and expenditure. Awqaf are donations or bequests to religious foundations and charities, which are also maintained and regulated by the Ministry.

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 Shari'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. In Muscat is the Court of Appeal which 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 dissatisfied by the judgements given at the other two 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 Mosques' Preparatory Certificate, or at an equivalent level, undertake a general Shari'a course of three years' length. Those completing this stage may 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 specialisation 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 cultural 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.
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

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 525 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. There are 541 teachers at these schools, including 37 counsellors in the remote regions, whose job it is to teach children and older people everything that they need to know about their religion. The Ministry also operates summer holiday centres throughout the Sultanate for teaching the Holy Koran and to ensure that students who study in the regular schools have access to Koranic studies when the schools are in recess.

CIVIL SERVICE

The Ministry of Civil Service, established in 1988, was a comparative latecomer in the institutional development of the country. However, it was the culmination of a process which started with the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Before 1970 the functions of Government were performed by a small number of officials. No Civil Service as such existed. 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. One of the principal steps taken to establish a rational system of organising the machinery of Government was the enactment in 1975 of the Law for the Organisation of the Government Administrative System.

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.

Before the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Service in 1988, personnel matters were administered by the Establishments Bureau under the guidance of the Civil Service Commission. Among the functions assigned to the new Ministry were the recommendation of laws related to the Civil Service, and the preparation of regulations and standardised schedules, allowances and grants and their referral to the Civil Service Council; the implementation of the laws on pensions and end-of-service benefits, and the regulations relating to them; the allocation of graduates who have been on scholarships or who have received study grants and assistance in accordance with the law on scholarships and study grants.

Another of the Ministry's principal responsibilities is the allocation of graduates and other qualified young people to Ministries and the private sector, according to their specialist qualifications and the needs of employers. An additional budget has been provided for the Ministry by the Government, thereby enabling the disabled to be placed in employment.

During the past year, the following progress has been achieved in the work of the Ministry:

1 The new Civil Service Law has been submitted to the legislative authorities as a prerequisite step for its issuance.
2 The redrafting of a new Pension Law is in active progress. (Additional privileges for pensioners are one of the main aims of the new Law).
3 A pension fund authority and its organisational structure, with a board of directors has been established. Its main



A lady instructor with two of her students at Oman Technical Industrial College.

objective is to utilise the pensions contributions and accumulated assets in economical projects.

4 A special committee is preparing a five year training plan for the whole service.

OMANISATION PLAN

The Omanisation Plan has been agreed, and the sum of RO10 million was allotted to the Ministry for its implementation in the 1991-95 Development Budget. The Ministry's Technical Office which was established for implementing the Plan, has set out systematic procedures for the replacement of expatriates by Omanis in conformity with the policy that such replacements must be 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 open to Omanis on their successful completion of their studies.

4 In some cases, training will be followed by a period understudying the expatriate before taking over.

On these bases, post-graduate studies and training courses have already commenced in different fields of specialisation. In addition, an Omanisation Plan has been approved for the Ministry of Electricity and Water. Its ultimate aim is to Omanise 95% of its staff in six years.

During the past year, training courses have been started in accountancy, commerce, executive and medical secretarial studies, storekeeping, electronic

diploma courses in accountancy in Saudi Arabia. Two hundred positions for clerks, accountants and typists in Ministries have been Omanised.

The Ministry is to introduce a "position classification" project. The object being to enhance the efficiency of the Civil Service by applying a rational scientific classification system for career appointments to the Service. The system will be in concert with the educational system. It will also replace the present system of fixing pay structures on the basis of educational qualifications only.

Continuing progress is being made in computerising the Ministry. Training courses are being held for the staff. Officials are also being trained within the Ministry in personnel management and related subjects, to keep them abreast of contemporary fields of specialisation appropriate to the Ministry's requirements.

The Ministry has continued to execute its major function of applying the Civil Service Law and Regulations, providing professional advice for Government departments in organisational developments, recruitment of graduates, manpower planning, and the improvement of administrative systems.

THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) came into existence by Royal Decree in 1977. During its first eleven years it came under the Ministry of Royal Diwan Affairs. After the dissolution of that Ministry, the IPA was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, until the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Service, which then absorbed it. Under the provisions of Royal Decree 42/90, the Director General of the IPA is appointed by his supervision and the Board of Directors. The Director General works closely with the Ministry in preparing the national training programme. He also prepares the general plan for the research programme, as well as the general administrative training programme, for submission to the Board of Directors.

Currently the academic sections of the IPA consist of the Departments of Personnel Management, Local Administration, Financial Management, Organisation and Methods, Documentation and Publications, English Language, Clerical Training, Computers, and Research and Consultancy.

During the period 1989-90, the IPA established a unique programme for training senior civil servants, including Under-Secretaries and Directors General, synchronised with the beginning of the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan and the Omanisation of the Civil Service. Over 1,000 personnel are being trained through fifty different courses with a view to revamping the Public Administration 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. Last year, 39 training programmes with 810 participants were completed.

During 1990-91, the IPA also responded to the needs of the several public sector organisations. Fifty programmes were completed last year with 1017 participants. The most noteworthy among them were two symposiums for Under-Secretaries on "Utilisation of Human Resources" and for Directors General on "Development of Human Resources."

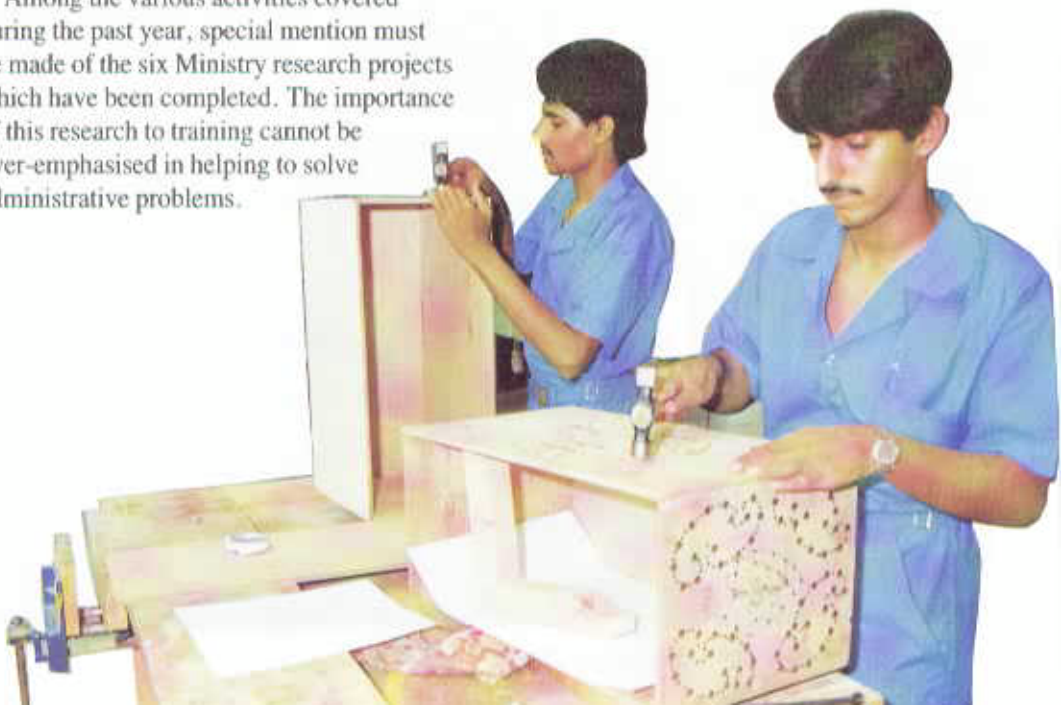
Special emphasis has also been given to providing long diploma courses in the fields of accountancy and statistics — all part of the continuous effort to enhance the



professional competence of Omanis in both the private and public sectors in order to accelerate the pace of Omanisation.

Among the various activities covered during the past year, special mention must be made of the six Ministry research projects which have been completed. The importance of this research to training cannot be over-emphasised in helping to solve administrative problems.

(Above) Institute of Public Administration computer operators. (Below) A Vocational Training Institute – a carpentry class.





Chemists under training at a Vocational Training Institute.



Technical training is available to all young Omanis.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AUTHORITY

In 1991 the Vocational Training Authority was set up as a separate entity (under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs), having previously been part of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. The Education and Vocational Training Council was founded in 1978 with the aim of developing a national workforce to provide the necessary skilled labour for the national economy. Before 1970 there was only one technical training centre, originally established by PDO. The ultimate aim is to achieve the Sultanate's goal of replacing expatriate with national manpower.

The Authority has now established programmes based on what is known as ''regular training programmes'' and ''irregular training programmes''. The ''regular training programmes'' are run by the Oman Technical Industrial College, which comes under the Authority, and nine Vocational Training Institutes situated in Darseit and Seeb in the Muscat Governorate, al Musanna'ah and Saham in the Batinah Region, Nizwa in the Dakhiliyah Region, Ibri in the Dhahirah Region, Sur and Ibra in the Sharqiyah Region and Salalah in the Dhofar Governorate.

In 1991 739 young Omanis became students at the Institute — 429 students in the technical stream and 310 in the commercial stream. During the current academic year, 1991-92, it is expected that approximately 445 students will graduate from the different sections, which include accounting, administration, secretarial, mechanical, architectural drawing, surveying, electricity, automobiles and construction.

The Oman Technical Industrial College aims to produce young people with technical skills who can meet the labour market's needs for high-grade technical and administrative personnel. During the 1991-92 academic year the College's intake totalled 300 students (male and female). Over the coming years this intake is expected to rise to 500 annually. 1992 is expected to see the graduation of approximately 195 students of both sexes. Specialisations available at the College include technical subjects such as computers, mathematics, chemistry, electricity, electronics, surveying, civil engineering, and mechanical engineering.

The Vocational Training Authority also helps in training Omanis employed in the private sector, by offering reductions on the training fees paid by companies and private establishments. This applies to training both at home and abroad.

The Vocational Training Authority believes that women in Oman have an important role to play in serving their community in every walk of life. Hence it endeavours to train women by providing evening courses in Arabic and English typing, secretarial skills, computer skills and other technical subjects at the Vocational Training Institutes, as well as receiving their share of training courses at private institutes.

The ''irregular training programme'' comprises evening courses held at the Vocational Training Institutes. During the 1991 academic year a total of 1,319 trainees graduated from Institutes and from courses held at private training institutes. These courses are held for employees and are run on a continuous basis, to provide them with the opportunity to take up posts in private sector establishments. These courses cover a wide range of technical and administrative fields including accounting, secretarial skills, typing, computers, automobile maintenance and repair, and electricity.

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