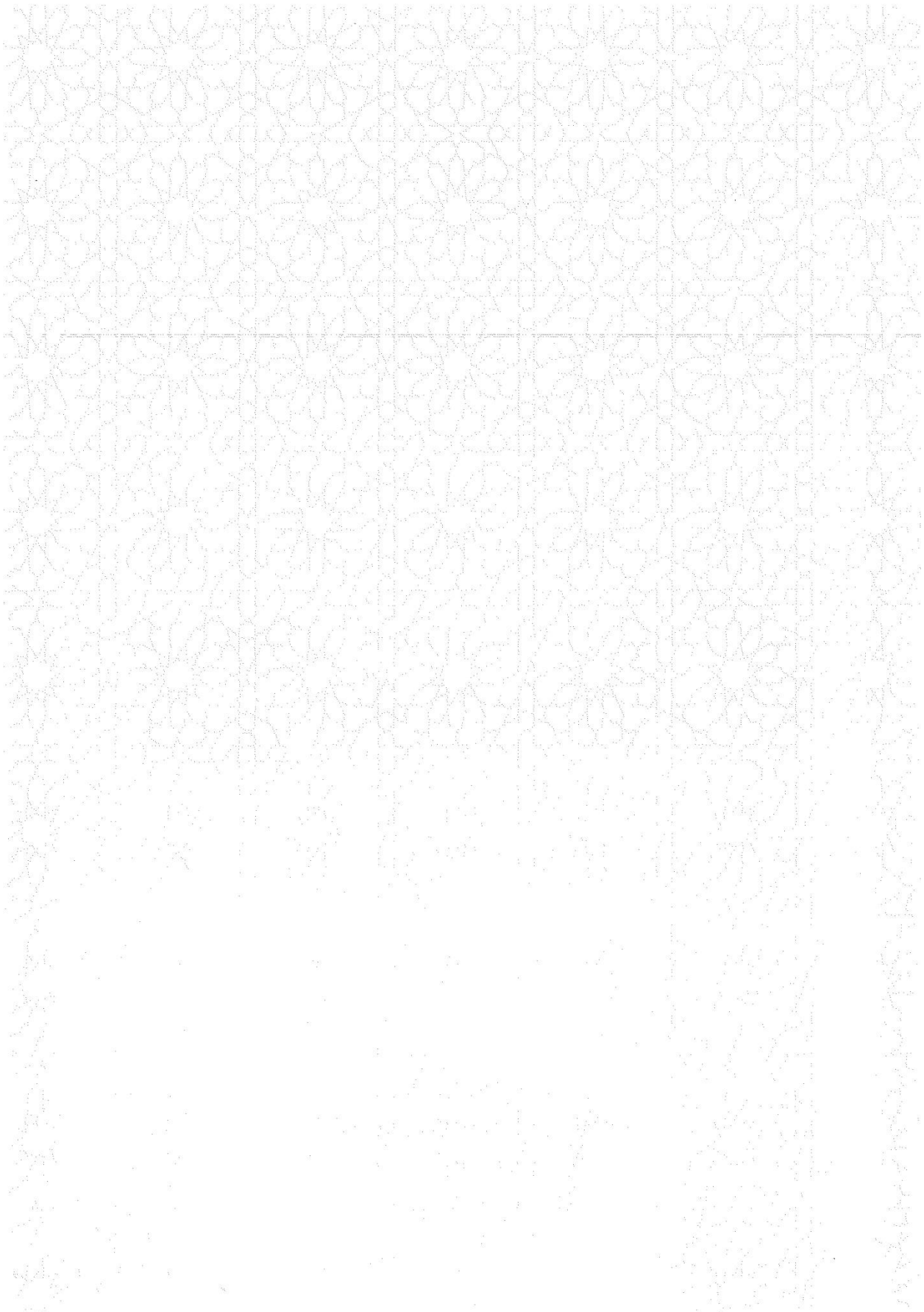


Oman 2013/2014



Oman 2013/2014

Published by
Ministry of Information
Sultanate of Oman
www.omanet.om
2013



In the name of God
the Compassionate, the Merciful

"VERILY AS FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVED AND DID RIGHTEOUS DEEDS, WE SHALL NOT MAKE THE REWARD OF ANYONE WHO DOES HIS RIGHTEOUS DEEDS IN THE MOST PERFECT MANNER TO BE LOST"

(Holy Qur'an)

Surat al Kahf (XVIII,30)

EXCERPTS FROM HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID'S SPEECHES

"The experience of Shura in Oman, as we have always stressed, is a successful one and it has been closely in harmony with the stages of the Renaissance and compatible with the values of society and its principles, besides being in line with the concept of grooming enlightened individuals who are well aware of their rights and duties and are capable of expressing their opinions and their ideas in acceptable language, sensible logic and a prudent vision based on proper assessment of matters."

"Omanis have, throughout the past stage, proved that they command a good sense of awareness, culture, insight and understanding when dealing with various opinions, types of dialogue and discussions which target the supreme interests of this country and its loyal citizens."

"As we mentioned in our speech last year and, as the necessary basic infrastructure is about to be completed, we have instructed our government to focus, in its future plans, on social development, particularly its aspects related to the daily lives of citizens. This should be achieved by the creation of renewable employment opportunities and training programmes for citizens and promoting production capacity, as well as scientific, cultural and intellectual development. We will closely follow the steps taken in this field. This matter shall also be the focus of attention of the Supreme Council for Planning."

"It is pleasing and rewarding to see that Oman is progressing in balanced steps in the direction which we regard as the right direction. We pray to the Almighty to bless us with more success for the sake of Oman and its loyal citizens."

"Hence one of the priorities of the current stage of development and the next stage which we prepare for is to revise the educational policies, its plans and its programmes, which need to be developed to keep pace with the changes that the country is going through. More attention should be accorded to the requirements imposed by scientific and cultural development towards the evolution of a generation armed with awareness, knowledge and the abilities required for worthwhile work."

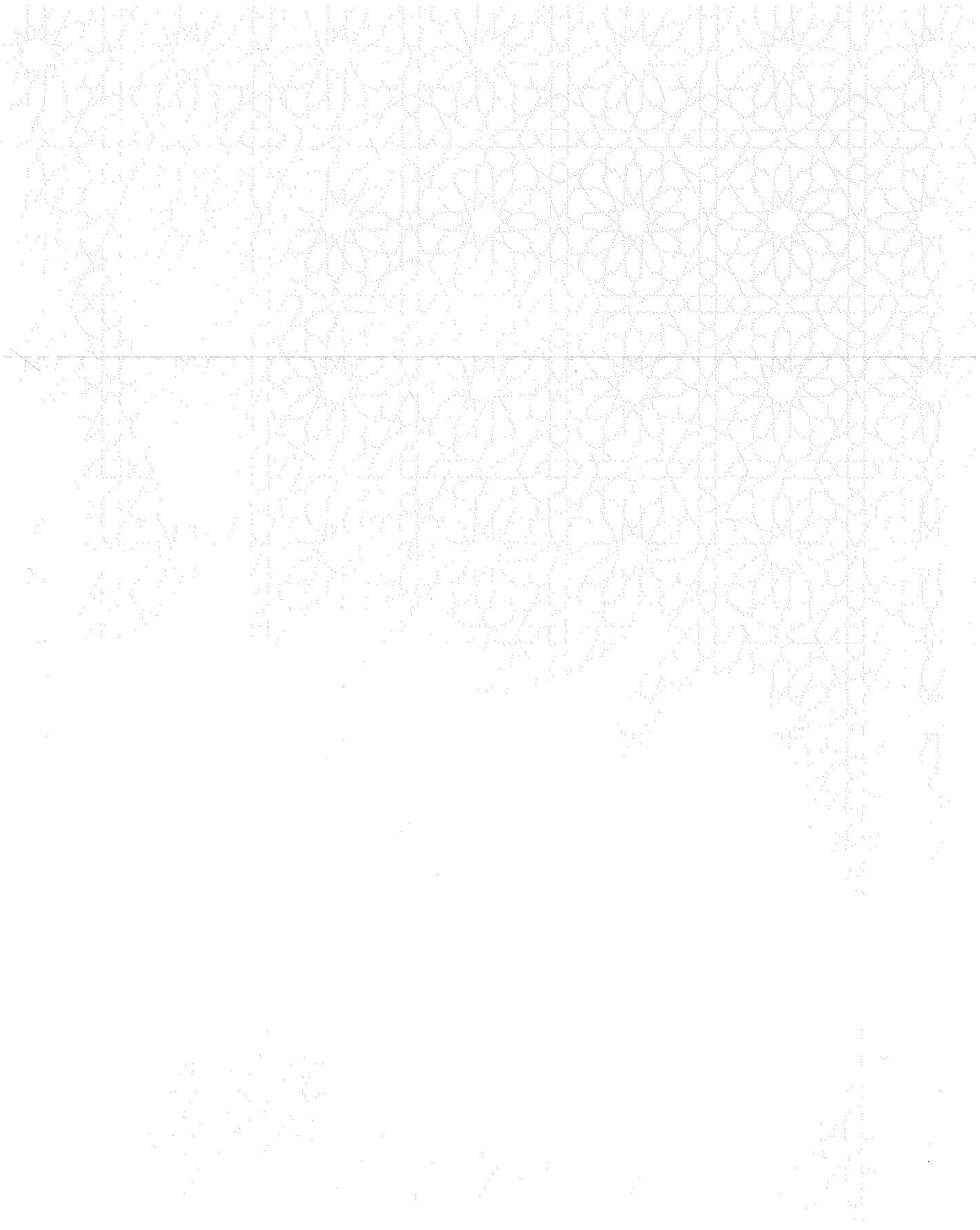
"Our domestic policy, as you have always known it, is based on constructive work in serving the public interest, keeping pace with the developments of the age while at the same time maintaining our identity, our principles and our values in which we take pride."

"As for our foreign policy, its essence is the call for peace, harmony and close co-operation with all nations, as well as commitment to the principles of righteousness, justice, fairness and non-interference in the internal affairs of others and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means to help safeguard for all mankind its security, stability, prosperity and progress."

QABOOS BIN SAID



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said



Introduction

Armed with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's enlightened thought and clarity of vision, Oman today continues to advance confidently towards its goal of further progress and prosperity for its people throughout the length and breadth of the land.

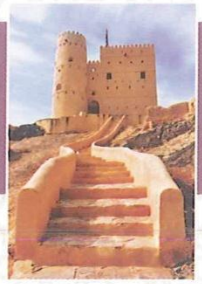
Over the years, the pace of development has been sustained at the same level and with the same sense of urgency which characterised it when Oman first embarked upon its journey nearly four and a half decades ago. Today, the Sultanate can look back with pride not only on its domestic achievements but also on the fact that – thanks to its political acumen and the credibility, transparency and consistency of its policies at every level - it has come to play an influential role in the region and the wider world. This has earned it the trust and respect of governments and peoples around the globe.

This book contains only a glimpse of the fruits of the Sultanate's Renaissance which can be seen everywhere – in the towns and the countryside, on the plains and in the mountains. Time and technology are continually moving forward toward new, exciting and unknown achievements but in the midst of these 'unknowns' one constant remains: the unique relationship between Sultan Qaboos and his people.

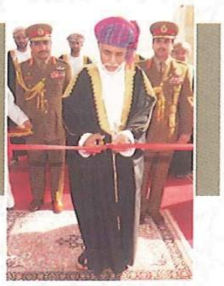
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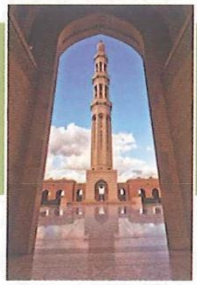
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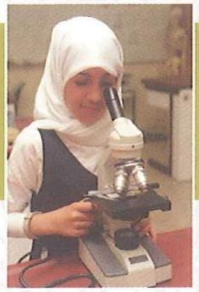
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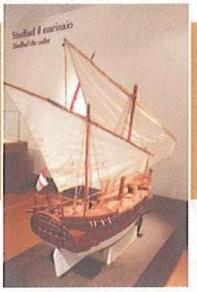
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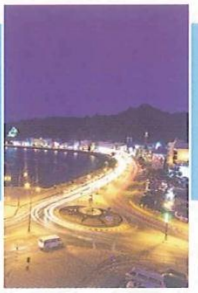
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Geography and History



1 Geography and History

While geography is essentially a question of location, terrain and land or sea borders, it also represents a kind of dialogue between nature, resources and environment and man's response to them – not only in the way he attempts to overcome any difficulties they may pose, but also in the extent of his success in converting them into material assets.

The Sultanate of Oman occupies a vital strategic location, which has always been a major factor in determining its politics, options and approach to a wide range of issues and developments.

The Sultanate of Oman occupies a vital strategic location, which has always been a major factor in determining its politics, options and approach to a wide range of issues and developments.

Situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman extends from latitude 16.40 to 26.20 degrees north and from longitude 51.50 to 59.40 degrees east. Its 3,165 kilometre coastline runs northwards from the Arabian Sea and the entrance to the Indian Ocean in the far south-west to the Sea of Oman and Musandam, where it overlooks the strategic Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Gulf.

Oman shares borders with the Republic of Yemen to the south-west, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the west, and the United Arab Emirates to the north. It has sovereignty over a number of small islands in the Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, including Salamah and Her Daughters, as well as Masirah and the Hallaniyat Islands, and some other small islands in the Arabian Sea.

Lying on the Tropic of Cancer, Oman is one of the world's hot, arid regions, though part of the south of the country has a tropical climate.

As well as dominating the oldest and most important sea trade route in the world between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean, Oman – with an area of 309,500 square kilometres – is also criss-crossed by the old north-south and east-west overland trans-Arabian caravan routes.

The Sultanate's most distinctive geographical feature is the Hajar mountain range, which extends down from the north in a great arc from Ru'us al Jibal at Ras Musandam (by the Strait of Hormuz, gateway to the Gulf) to Ras al Hadd - the Arabian Peninsula's most south-easterly point, which overlooks the Indian Ocean.

The Sultanate's most distinctive geographical feature is the Hajar mountain range, which extends down from the north in a great arc from Ru'us al Jibal at Ras Musandam (by the Strait of Hormuz, gateway to the Gulf) to Ras al Hadd - the Arabian Peninsula's

most south-easterly point, which overlooks the Indian Ocean. At its highest point in the Jabal al Akhdar region, the Hajar range reaches a height of 3,000 metres.

In the governorate of Musandam the mountains rise to a height of around 1,800 metres above the Strait of Hormuz, which runs between the Omani and Iranian coasts; the navigable international shipping lanes lie on the Omani side.

Omanis compare the Hajar mountain range to a human backbone. They call the area lying on the Sea of Oman the Batinah, or "Stomach", and the area to the west of the mountains the Dhahirah, or "Back". The Batinah - the coastal area formed by the *wadis* (dried up areas of river bed) that flow down from the mountains – is between 15 and 80 kilometres wide and over 300 kilometres long. The Sultanate's main agricultural area, which boasts farms and orchards irrigated by groundwater, runs northwards from Muscat to the borders of the United Arab Emirates. It includes the North Batinah Governorate with the *wilayats* of Sohar, Shinas, Liwa, Saham, Khabourah and Suwaiq, and the South Batinah Governorate with the *wilayats* (districts) of Rustaq, Awabi, Nakhl, Wadi al Ma'awil, Barka and Musana'ah.

Several wadis cut right through the Hajar mountains. The largest – Wadi Sumail – links the city of Muscat on the coast with the *wilayats* of Izki and Nizwa in the interior. Omanis call the mountains to the west of this wadi al Hajar al Gharbi (the Western Hajar); this region includes the Jabal al Akhdar and the *wilayat*s of Rustaq, Nakhl, al Awabi and several others.

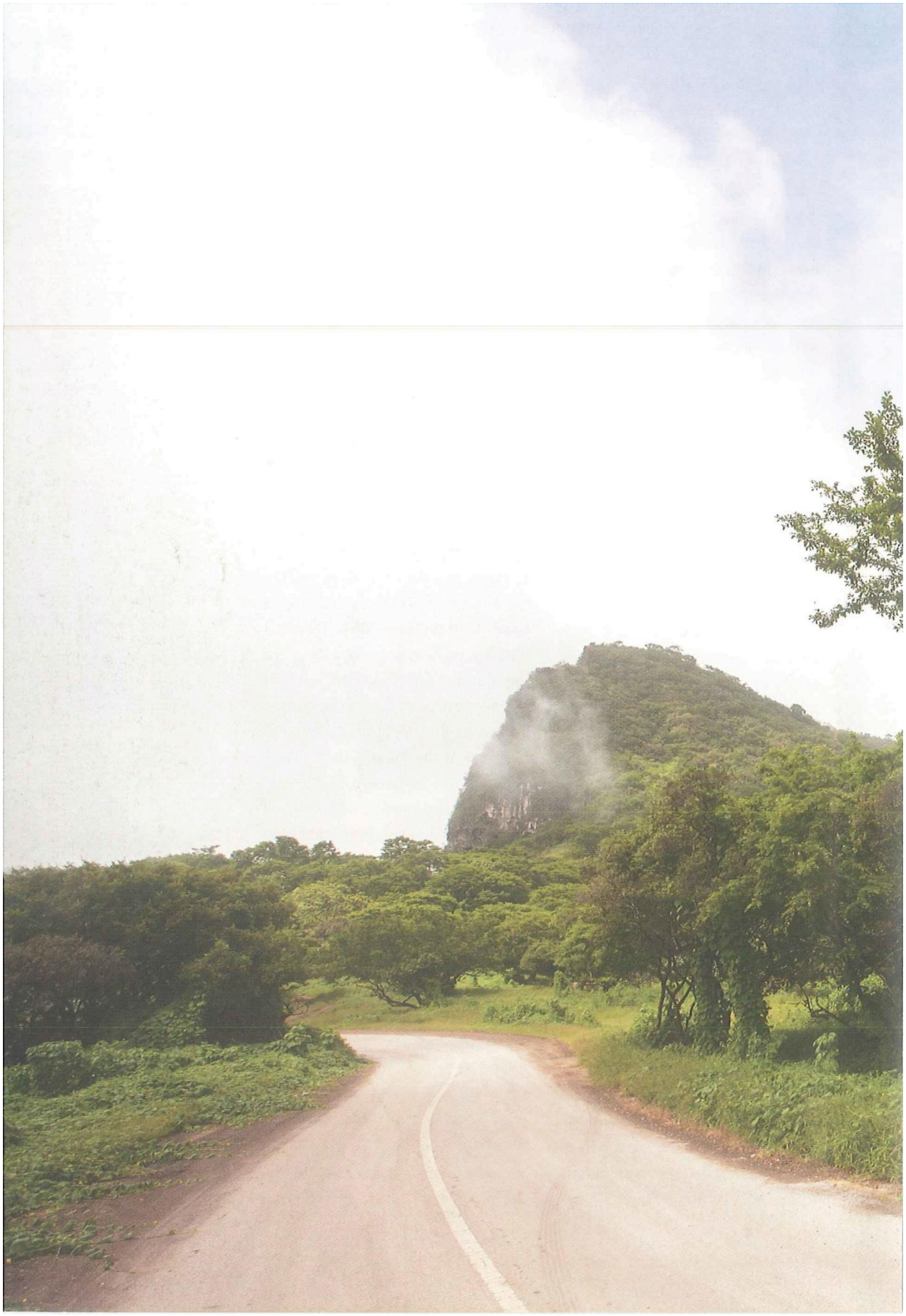
The mountain area to the east of Wadi Sumail is called al Hajar al Sharqi (the Eastern Hajar) and includes – among others - the *wilayats* of Sumail and Bidbid. The highest peak in the Hajar range is Jabal Shams in the Dakhilyah Governorate, the summit of which is around 3,000 metres above sea level.

At Qurm Heights in Muscat the Omani coast narrows and becomes rocky with numerous inlets. The shoreline from South Muscat Point to Ras al Hadd is similar. From Ras al Hadd to Filim on Masirah Bay the Sharqiyah Sands extend over a band of terrain some 160 Kilometres long by eight Kilometres wide. To the south west of Masirah Island lies a vast area of flat, stony ground known as the Jiddat al Harasis. To the west of the Sharqiyah Sands is a stretch of low-lying rocky terrain around 250 kilometres wide crossed by wadis running from north to south; these include Wadi Halfain and Wadi Andam.

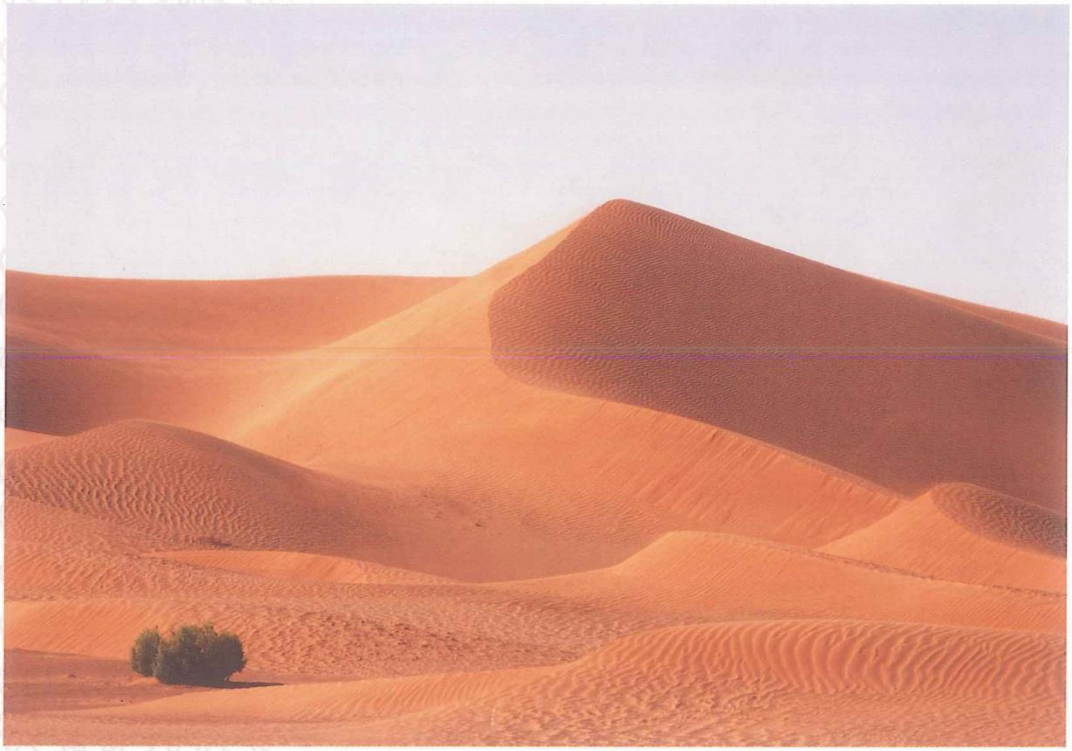
West of Masirah Island is the peninsula of Barr al Hikman, which is separated from Masirah by a channel 14 kilometres wide. It consists of salt flats, which can reach as far as five kilometres inland and, at some times of the year, are covered by the sea. The population of this area earns its living from fishing.

The Omani coast – including the Wusta and Dhofar Governorates

(Overleaf)
The monsoon *(khareef)* brings life to the Governorate of Dhofar's plants and trees







The interplay of sunlight and shadow on the sand dunes provides an ever-changing scene – here the Sharqiyah Sands

The coastal areas of the Governorate of Dhofar are rich in fish including prawns and hamour *(grouper)*, as well as sardines.

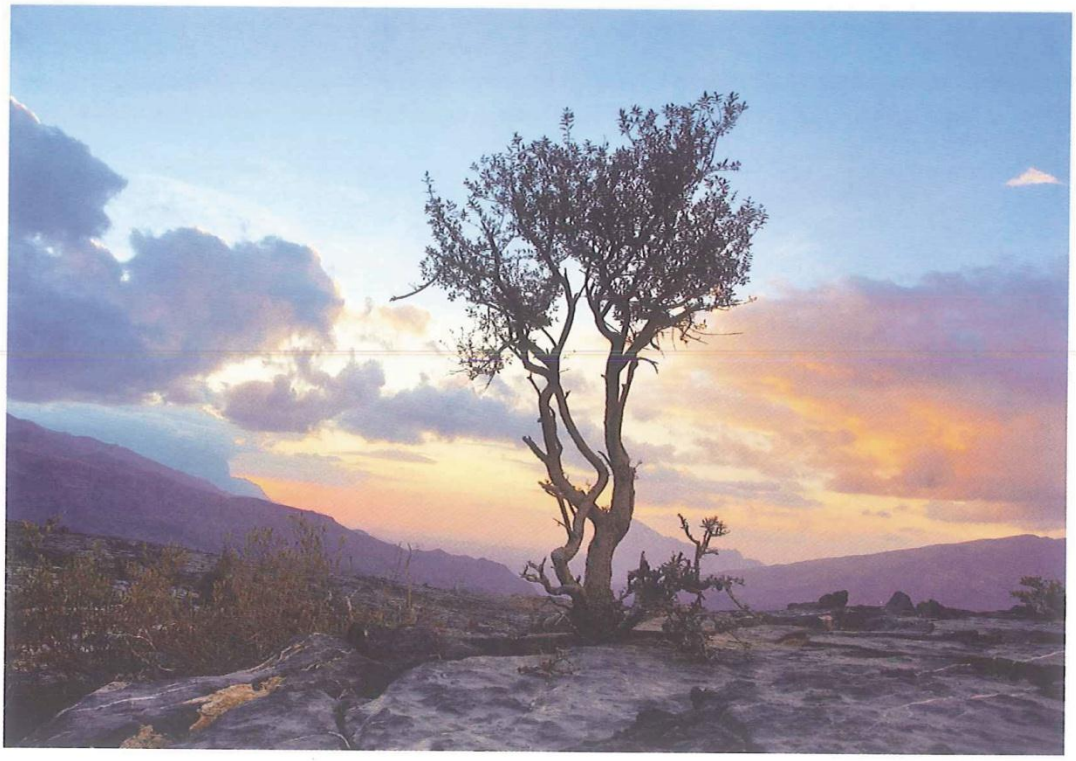
Superb rock outcrops in the mountains are a paradise for geologists from around the world. The country's rock record spans to more than one billion years.

– extends along the Arabian Sea for a distance of 560 kilometres, some 130 kilometres of which are exposed to monsoon rains. This latter stretch consists of a coastal plain between eight and ten kilometres wide and includes Salalah and several other *wilayats* such as Taqah, Mirbat, Sadah, Rakhyut and Dhalkut. The coastal areas of the governorate of Dhofar are rich in fish including prawns and *hamour* (grouper), as well as sardines, the surplus catches of which are used as animal fodder or fertiliser.

The mountain region of Dhofar extends from east to west for a distance of around 400 kilometres, from opposite the Hallaniyat Islands to the borders of the Republic of Yemen, forming a continuous chain which includes Jabal Samhan in the east and Jabal al Qamar in the west. At no point is this range more than 23 kilometres wide or higher than 2,500 metres. A 75 kilometre swathe of these mountains is cloaked in greenery from June to September each year during the *khareef* (monsoon) season, when the south-western monsoon winds give the region a very different character from the rest of the Arabian Peninsula and the rains transform the land into a delightful summer resort with rich pastures.

Frankincense trees grow in some areas – a living reminder that the region was once renowned for its trade in this substance – the main source of its wealth in ancient times.

Fresh water springs flow abundantly in Dhofar throughout the year.



Striking sunsets are often to be seen in Oman's mountains and along the seashore

Geology

The landscapes of Oman are strikingly varied and of bewildering beauty: cool lofty mountains cut by over 1000 meter deep gorges, seemingly endless simmering hot gravel planes, golden high sand dunes and grey salt-flats which all attract tourists and geologists alike.

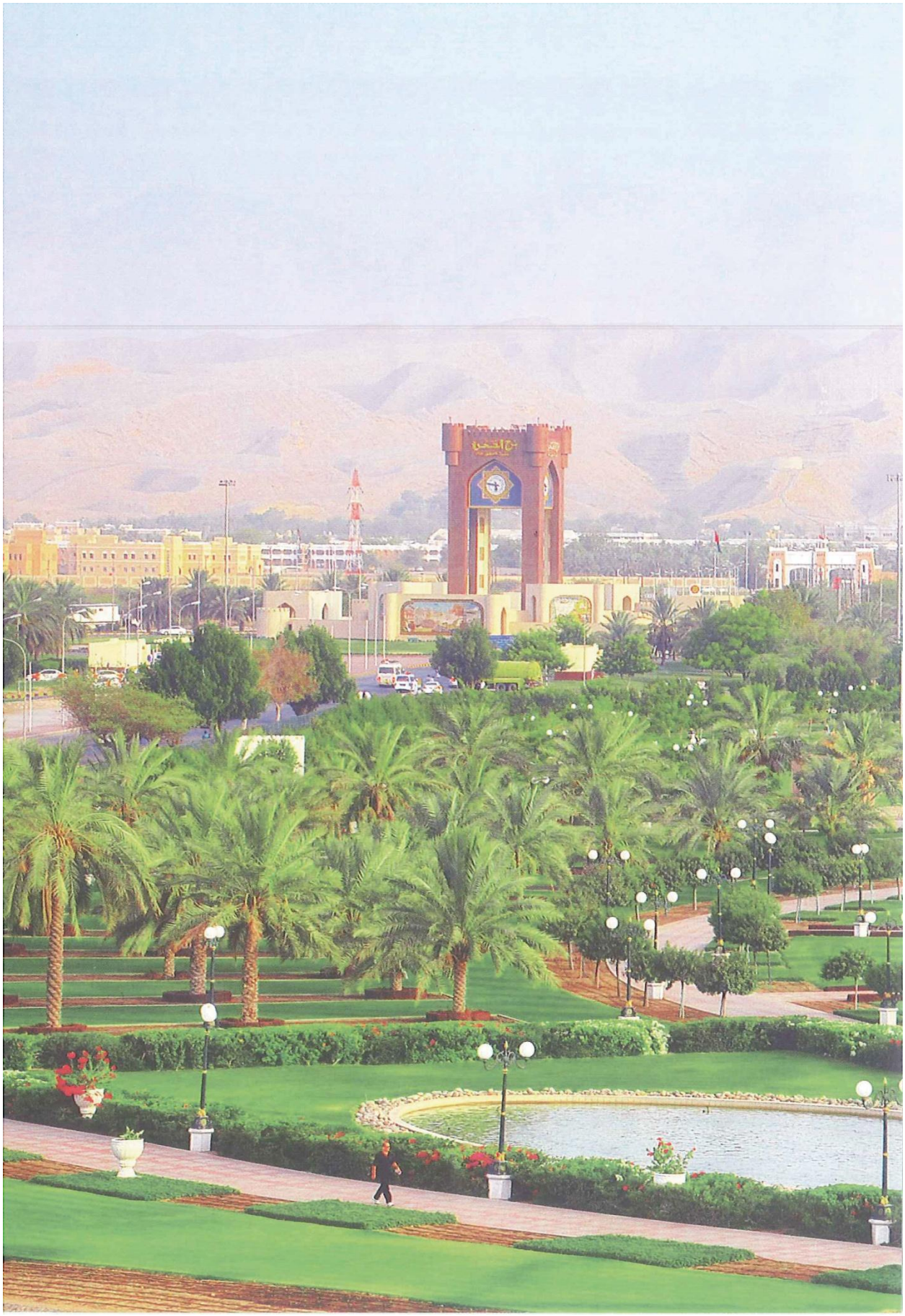
Superb rock outcrops in the mountains are a paradise for geologists from around the world. The country's rock record spans to more than one billion years. Next to thick layers of limestone, testifying to tropical conditions in the past, the rock recorded three periods when the country was ice covered, somewhat surprising given its present climate. Dark coloured Semail ophiolites, a layered mix of volcanics and rocks originating from very deep (up to 10 km) in the earth, were pushed from north to south onto the land over hundreds of kilometres 75 million years ago. These ophiolites locally can be rich in copper and chrome.

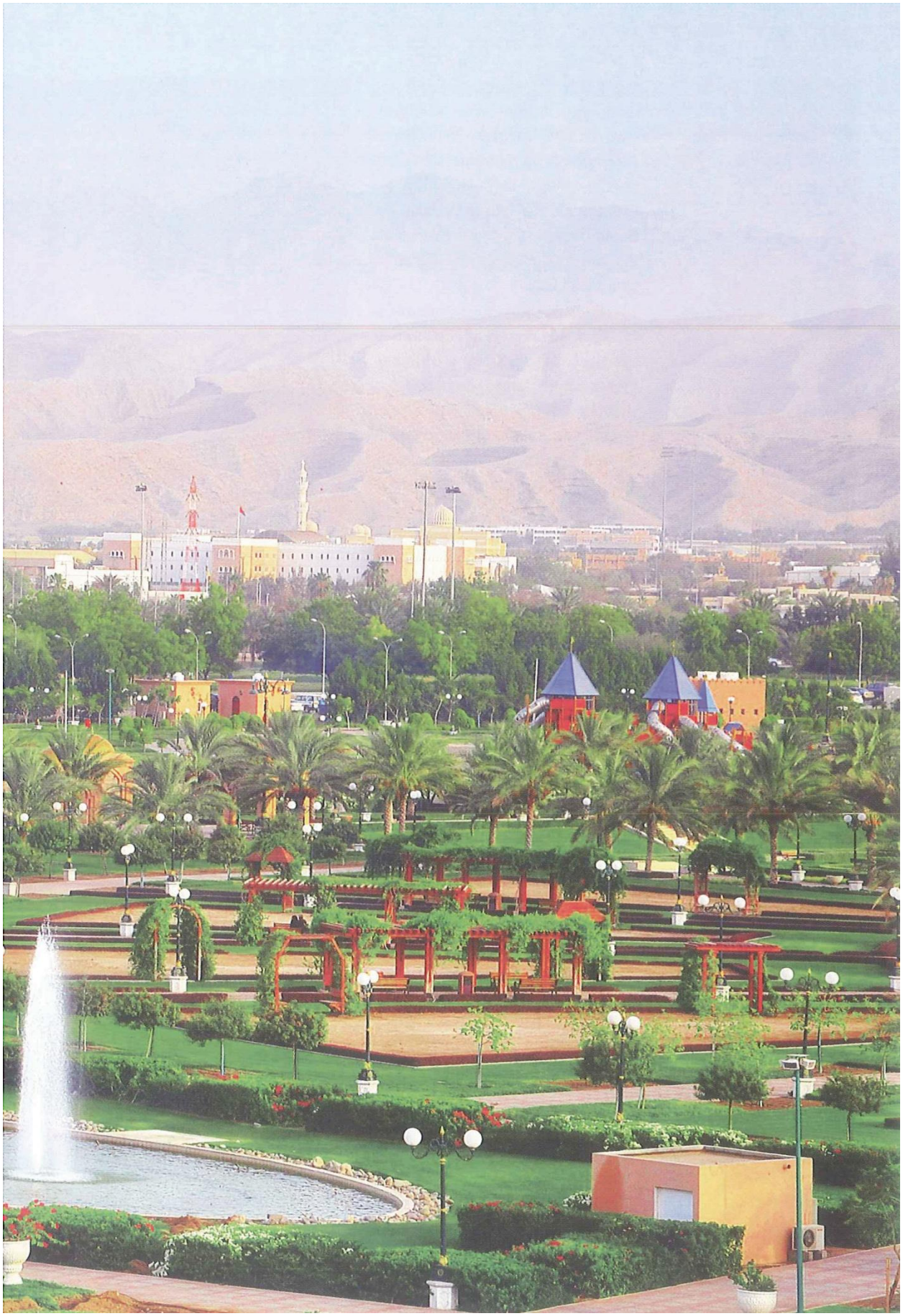
The flat Interior plains are hiding a kilometres thick stack of much older sediments that host the country's hydrocarbon resources. Ancient salt, which comes to the surface in several salt hills, such as Qarat Kibrit, has been mined in the past, but also played an important role in forming oil and gas accumulations.

The governorates and *wilayats* (districts)

The Sultanate is a modern state and in that context its administrative divisions are among its most

(Overleaf)
Vibrant greenery attracts many visitors to the Al Sahwa park situated near Muscat international airport





distinctive features. According to Royal Decree No. 114/2011, issued on 26th October 2011, Oman comprises 11 governorates:- Muscat, Dhofar, Musandam, Buraymi, the Dakhiliyah, the North Batinah, the South Batinah, the South Sharqiyah, the North Sharqiyah, the Dhahirah and the Wusta.

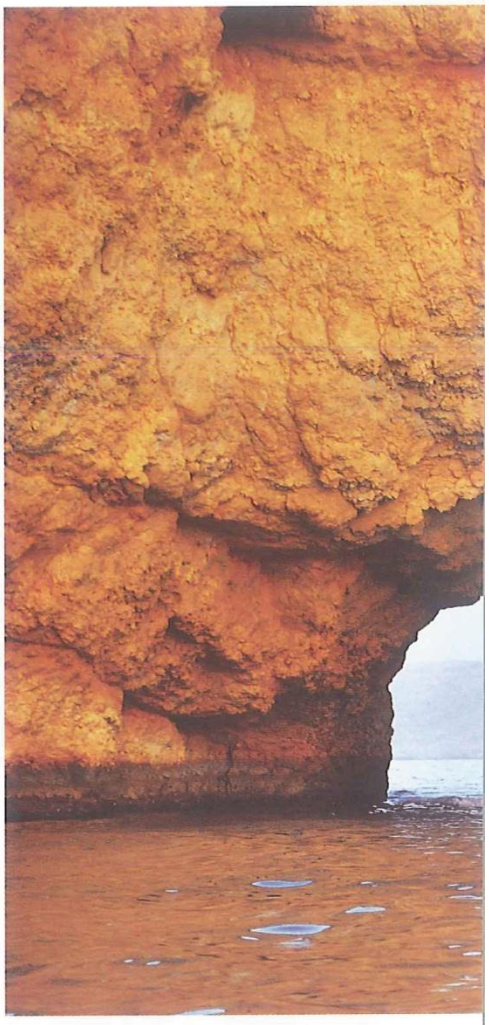
Each of these governorates has its own distinctive administrative, geographical and economic significance and comprises a number of *wilayats* (districts). (In all, the Sultanate has a total of 61 *wilayats*.) The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for overseeing the governorates, with the exception of the Muscat and Dhofar Governorates In accordance with Royal Decree No.115/2011, Sultan Qaboos appoints the governors of each of the governorates, while the *wali* (local governor) of each *wilayat* is responsible for the local administration and acts as a link between the government, its institutions and the public.

Each governorate has its own distinctive administrative, geographical and economic significance and comprises a number of *wilayats* (districts). In all, the Sultanate has a total of 61 *wilayats*.

His Majesty promulgated the Municipal Councils Law under Royal Decree No. 116/2011 on 26th October 2011 as a further step designed to streamline the administrative and municipal systems across the country and simplify procedures for members of the public.

Over a succession of development plans Oman has been able to ensure that balanced and integrated development takes place across the country's different governorates.

Over a succession of development plans Oman has been able to ensure that balanced and integrated development takes place across the country's different governorates. Major projects and industrial zones have been set up from Muscat to Salalah, from Sur to Sohar, from Nizwa to Musandam and Buraymi and from Ibri to Duqm, within the framework of an overall plan that balances the nation's priorities and the needs of the individual governorates. Different governorates take turns in hosting major national and religious events, including, in particular, the National Day celebrations.



Muscat Governorate

Muscat Governorate is the heart of the country's political, economic and administrative system, as well as the location



At low tide fishing boats can pass under this natural archway in Muscat

of the capital city – Muscat – the seat of government and the nerve centre of the state's administrative apparatus. It is also a vibrant hub of local and international economic, commercial and tourist activity.

Lying on the Sea of Oman at the southern end of the Batinah coast, Muscat Governorate borders the Eastern Hajar mountains and the North Sharqiyah Governorate to the east, the South Batinah Governorate to the west and the Dakhiliyah Governorate to the south.

Muscat Governorate comprises six *wilayats*:- Muscat, Mutrah, Amerat, Bausher, Seeb and Quriyat, each of which is administered by a *wali* appointed by the Governor of Muscat. The *wilayat* of Muscat is the governorate's main *wilayat*.

This governorate witnesses active development in all sectors, including the establishment of a modern road network linking Muscat with the other *wilayats* in the governorate and beyond, landscaping projects, parks, marketplaces, public utilities and

(Overleaf)
The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Salalah, built in mid-2009

upgrading of residential quarters and business districts.

The governorate is the administrative body responsible for providing public services within its administrative boundaries; its affairs are administered by the Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, who is appointed by Sultan Qaboos.

According to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments it has a population of 775,878. The Municipal Council of Muscat has 26 members representing the *wilayats* of the governorate.

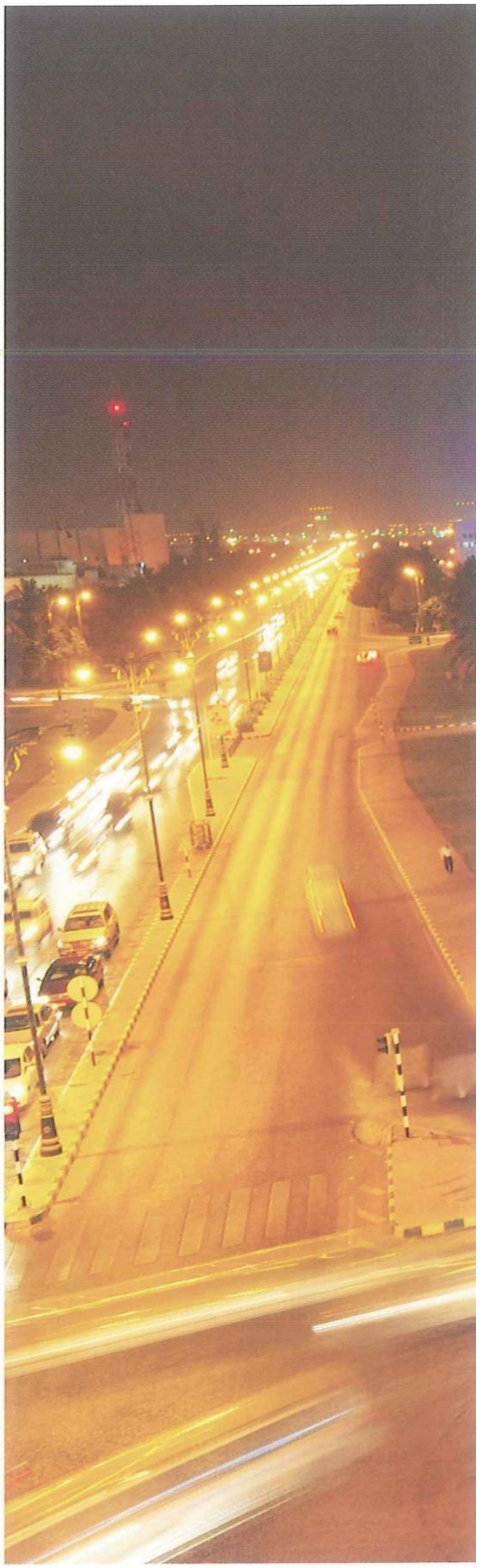
Muscat Governorate comprises six *wilayats*:- Muscat, Mutrah, Amerat, Bausher, Seeb and Quriyat, each of which is administered by a *wali* appointed by the Governor of Muscat.

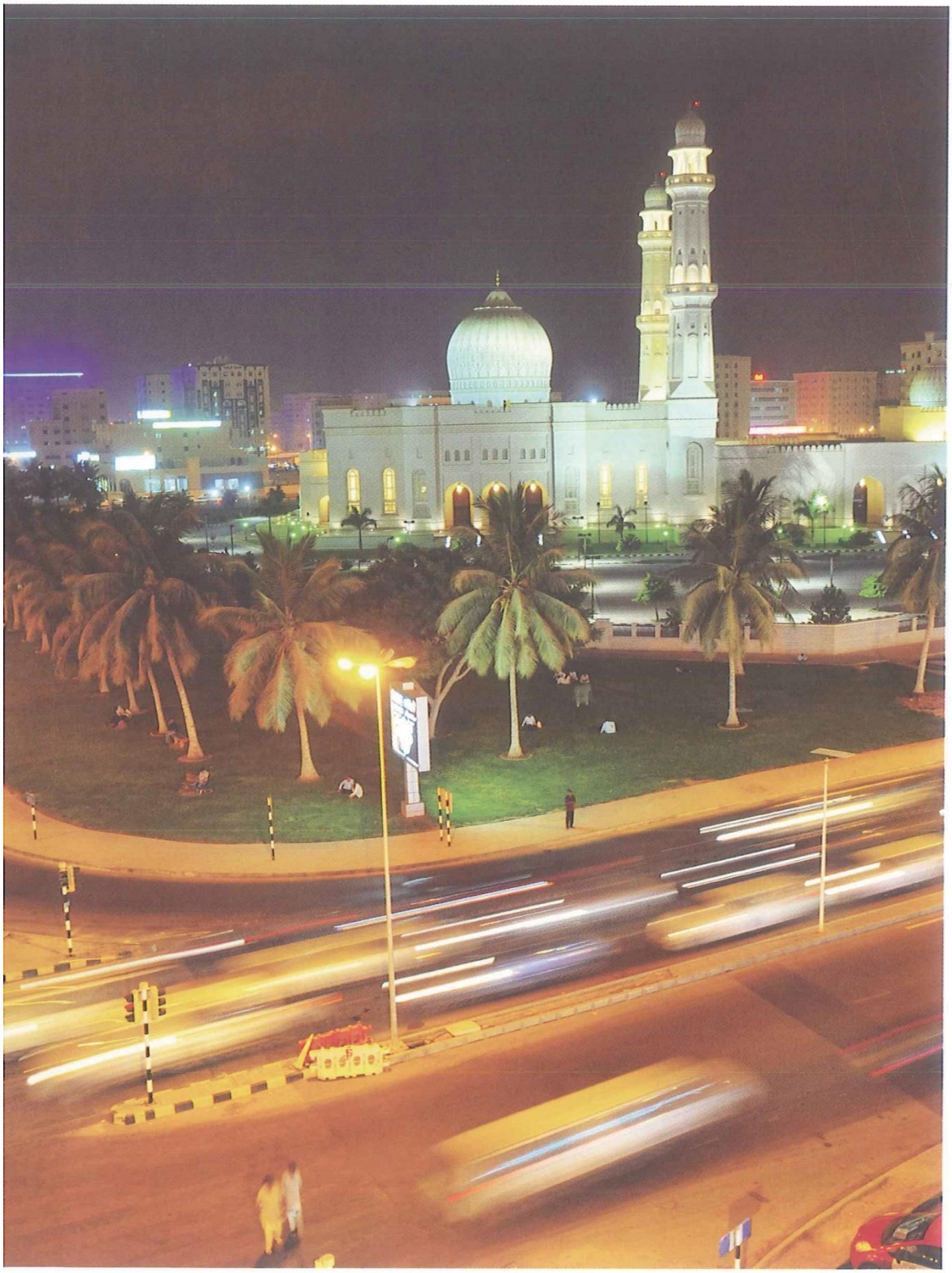
Dhofar Governorate

The Dhofar Governorate has played an important role in Oman's history, in recent times as well as in the more distant past, and it was from Salalah, in Dhofar, that Oman's contemporary era of development first saw the light of day with the birth of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's in November 1940. Historically, Dhofar – the Arabian Peninsula's Land of Frankincense – was Oman's great gateway to the Indian Ocean and the crossroads of Southern Arabia's caravan routes, while in recent times it has become the country's gateway to progress and prosperity.

Historically, Dhofar – the Arabian Peninsula's Land of Frankincense – was Oman's great gateway to the Indian Ocean and the crossroads of Southern Arabia's caravan routes.

Dhofar Governorate lies at the southern end of Oman, with Salalah some 1,000 kilometres distant from Muscat. It borders the Wusta Governorate to the north-east, the Arabian Sea to the south-east and south, the Republic of Yemen to the west and south-west and the Rub' al Khali desert, or Empty Quarter, to the north and north-west.

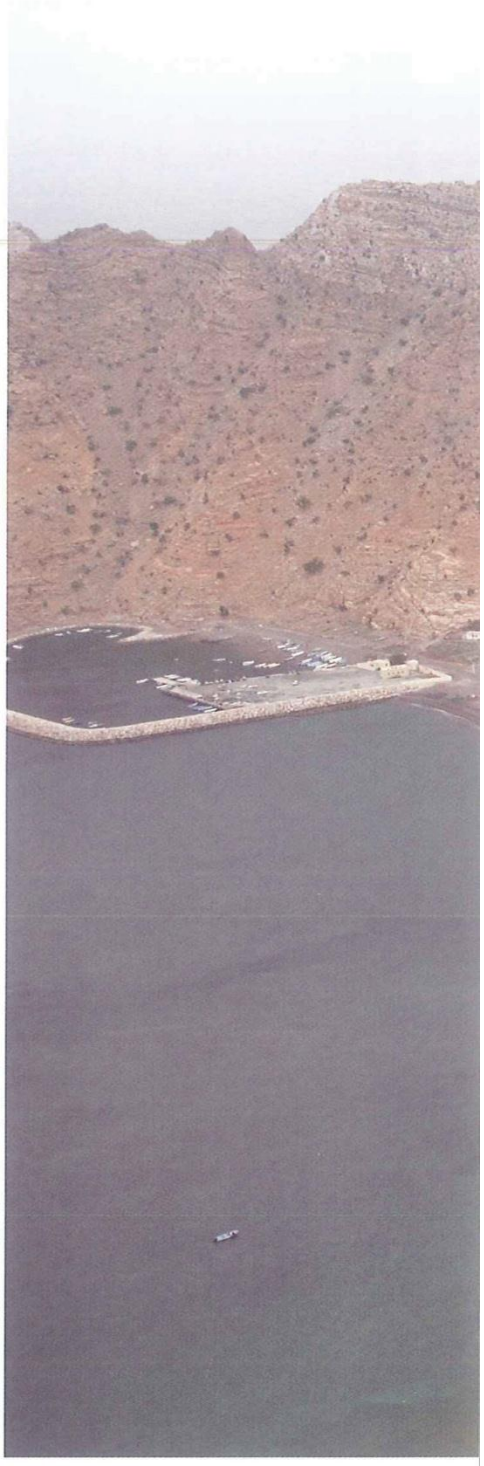




This governorate has ten *wilayats* – Salalah, the main hub, and Taqah, Mirbat, Rakhyut, Thumrait, Dhalkut, Mazyounah, Muqshin, Shaleem and the Hallaniyat Islands, and Sadah. In 2013 a number of development projects were announced as part of a preset programme. These include Salalah aiport, the port of Salalah expansion project, a set of modern roads and the development of the Free Zone and Industrial Estate of Salalah, among other projects.

The governorate's affairs are administered by the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar, who is appointed by His Majesty.

Dhofar Governorate has a population of 249,729, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. The Municipal Council in Dhofar governorate has 24 members representing the governorate's *wilayats.*



Musandam Governorate

The Musandam Governorate is of immense strategic importance because of its geographical position overlooking the Strait of Hormuz – the most important regional and international waterway for oil exports and trade; some 90 per cent of the Gulf states' oil exports pass through this waterway to the outside world.

The Musandam Governorate is of immense strategic importance because of its geographical position overlooking the Strait of Hormuz – the most important regional and international waterway for oil exports and trade.

Musandam lies at the northern end of the Sultanate of Oman, where the Strait of Hormuz forms the eastern gateway for shipping between the Gulf littoral states and the outside world, and links the





Modern developments have reached every part of Oman – here Buraymi Governorate

Buraymi witnesses the implementation of promising development projects which are meant to promote the governorate's tourism potential. These include new hotels, an exhibition and conference hall, playgrounds and other utilities.

Gulf with the open waters of the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

An historic event in the governorate's modern life was the visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos on 30th September 2012. During this visit, His Majesty the Sultan gave orders for the implementation of service and development projects in the Musandam Governorate, in addition to the projects already planned within the 8th Five-Year Plan. The additional projects include the setting up and replacement of hospitals and the completion of the road network and seaports. The Supreme Council for Planning drafted a formula for a study to implement a comprehensive economic development for the governorate, bearing in mind its location and nature and potential benefits from its tourist and commercial sectors.

The Governorate of Musandam has four *wilayats* – Khasab, the main hub, as well as Daba, Bukha and Madha – and a population of 31,425, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. Its Municipal Council has 8 members representing the *wilayats* of the governorate.

The Buraymi Governorate

The Buraymi Governorate is renowned for its strategic location in the north-west of the Sultanate. Historically, because of its height above sea level and abundant water supplies from its wadis and *aflaaj* (irrigation channels), it also became an important trading station on a major trade route and a significant



Forts, castles and towers across Oman are being restored. Here Bahla Fort, inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1987, with restoration and conservation completed in 2012

producer of wheat, dates and other fruit.

There are several forts and castles in Buraymi, including – among others - al Khandaq, al Hillah, Bait al Nadd and al Khabib.

Buraymi witnesses the implementation of promising development projects which are meant to promote the governorate's tourism potential. These include new hotels, an exhibition and conference hall, playgrounds and other utilities.

The Governorate has three *wilayats* – Buraymi (the main one), Mahdha and al Sinainah – and a population of 72,917 according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. Its Municipal Council has 8 members.

The Dakhiliyah Governorate

With its rich history, cultural heritage, location and topographical features, the Dakhiliyah Governorate is one of the Sultanate's most important governorates and forms the country's strategic hinterland. It consists of a large upland in the centre of the country; this includes the Jabal al Akhdar mountain range, the slopes of which descend southwards in the direction of the desert. A pivotal link between the Sultanate's different governorates, the Dakhiliyah borders the South and North Sharqiyah Governorates to the east, the Dhahirah Governorate to the west, the Wusta Governorate to the south and the Muscat and South Batinah Governorates to the north.

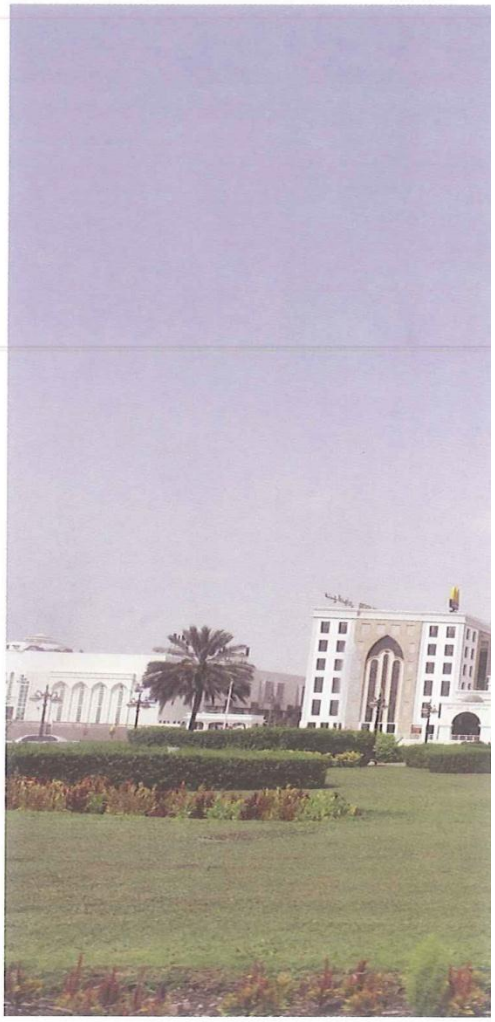
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An aerial view of the *wilayat* of Dibba, Musandam Governorate

As well as being one of the country's main agricultural regions, the Dakhiliyah Governorate has also played a prominent role in the country's history.

During a visit by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the Dakhiliyah in 2013, a number of projects were approved, including the dualisation of the Izki-Birkat al Mauz-Farq carriageway which links the *wilayats* of Izki and Nizwa; the dualisation of the Marfaa-Daris-Jibrin road which links the *wilayats* of Nizwa and Bahla; the establishment of a water supply network joining the *wilayats* of Bidbid, Izki and Al Hamra; a project to build a 145km road linking the villages of the governorate; the construction of social housing units and other projects.

As well as being one of the country's main agricultural regions, the Dakhiliyah Governorate has also played a prominent role in the country's history.

It has eight *wilayats* – Nizwa (its main hub), Bahla, Manah, al Hamra, Adam, Izki, Sumail and Bidbid – and, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, it has a population of 326,651. Its Municipal Council has 26 members.



North Batinah Governorate

The North Batinah Governorate - a coastal strip between the sea and the mountains – is geographically and economically one of the Sultanate's most important governorates. It has six *wilayats* – Sohar (the main one), Shinas, Liwa, Saham, Khabourah and Suwaiq.

Sohar Industrial Port is one of Oman's mega-projects. The Sohar Industrial Estate, which is linked to the port, continues to attract a large number of major industrial and manufacturing enterprises.

The Governorate occupies a crucial geographical location along the southern shore of the Sea of Oman. It has long been a major Omani maritime and trade link with countries bordering the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. This governorate houses one of the Sultanate's largest agricultural plains – the Batinah Plain – as well as various mineral resources, which have begun to be exploited as the basis for several vital heavy industry projects.

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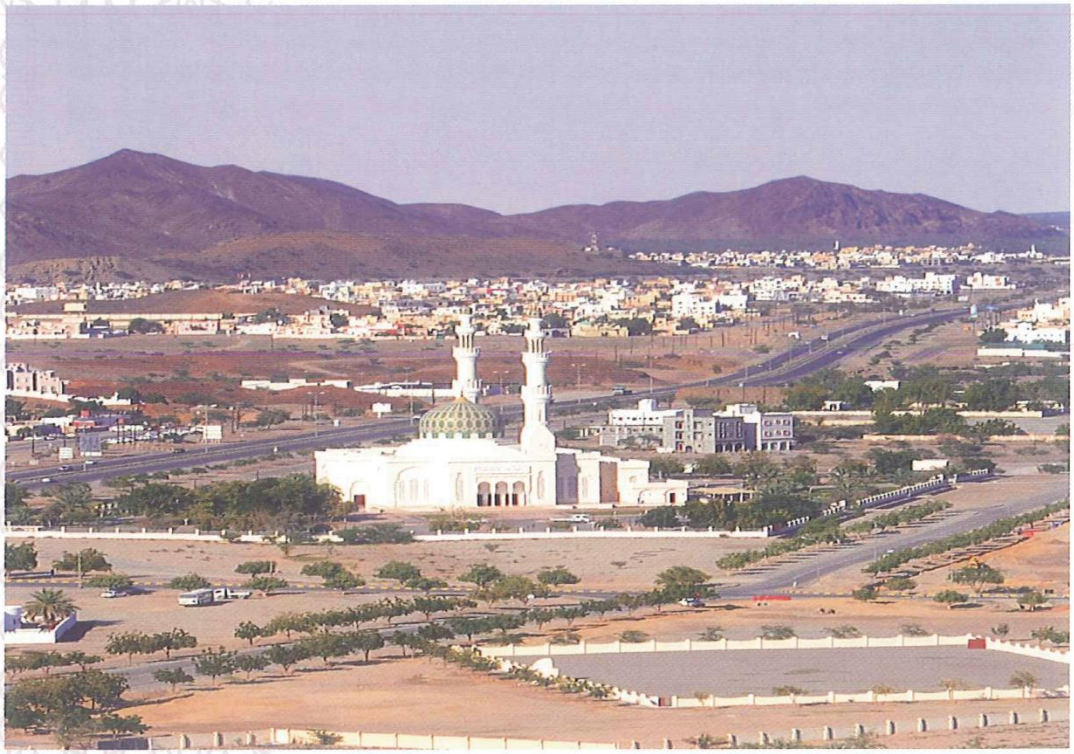
The North Batinah Governorate enjoys modern development, but at the same time it preserves its natural beauty in the wilayat of Sohar

and manufacturing enterprises, including fertiliser, petrochemicals, aluminium and iron projects. These operations have been further boosted with the establishment of the Free Zone Sohar, while work is continuing on Sohar Airport.

Royal directives were issued by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to convert the Port of Shinas in the North Batinah into a commercial port. As part of the plan, the port will be linked through maritime routes to other parts of the country.

The Oman Railway Project, which crosses the North Batinah and South Batinah Governorates, is considered an important link in the larger Gulf Rail Project alongside the Batinah Expressway.

The Governorate's population stands at 483,582, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. Its Municipal Council comprises 28 members.



The South Batinah Governorate …. urban growth in the *wilayat* of Rustaq

The South Batinah Governorate

This governorate lies between the Sea of Oman to the east and the slopes of the Western Hajar mountain range to the west. Because of its location, economic assets and large population, it has been an influential player throughout the course of Oman's history.

Due to its central position and its economic resouces, the South Batinah has always played a significant role in Oman's history.

Development projects in this governorate include the development of the natural warm water springs of Ain al Kasfah in the *wilayat* of Rustaq and Ain al Thuwarah in the *wilayat* of Nakhl.

The South Batinah Governorate has six *wilayats* – Rustaq, (its main *wilayat*,) Awabi, Nakhl, Wadi al Ma'awil, Barka and Musana'ah, and a population of 289,008, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. Its Municipal Council has 22 members.

South Sharqiyah Governorate

The South Sharqiyah Governorate, which occupies the north-eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman, borders the Arabian Sea to the east, the Sharqiyah Sands to the south and the Dakhiliyah Governorate to the west.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued orders on 4th January 2013 for the setting up of the Falah hospital, a 150-bed unit, to serve citizens in the *wilayats* of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan Jaalan Ani Bu Ali and Al Kamil



A ghanjah dhow waits for the incoming tide and her next voyage

W'al Wafi. Instructions were also given to set up a road network and tourism projects in this governorate which houses the Al Saleel Nature Reserve, an important project in eco-diversity.

The South Sharqiyah Governorate also houses major economic projects, including LNG plants, a urea-ammonia smelter and the Industrial Estate of Sur, a hub for small and medium industries.

With a population of 188,032, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, it has five *wilayat*s – Sur (the main *wilayat*), al Kamil wa'l Wafi, Ja'alan Bani Bu Hassan, Ja'alan Bani Bu Ali and Masirah. Its Municipal Council has 16 members.

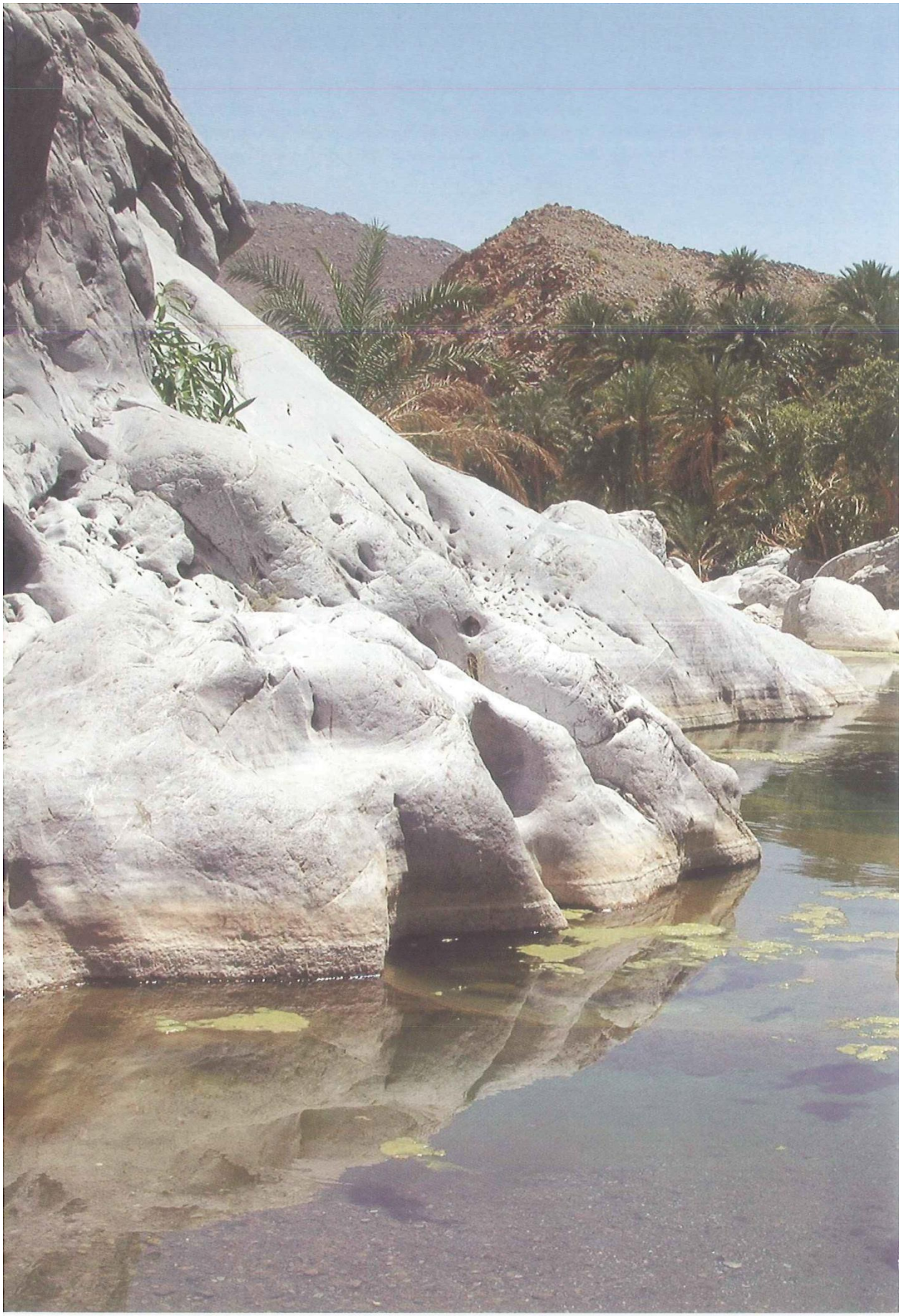
North Sharqiyah Governorate

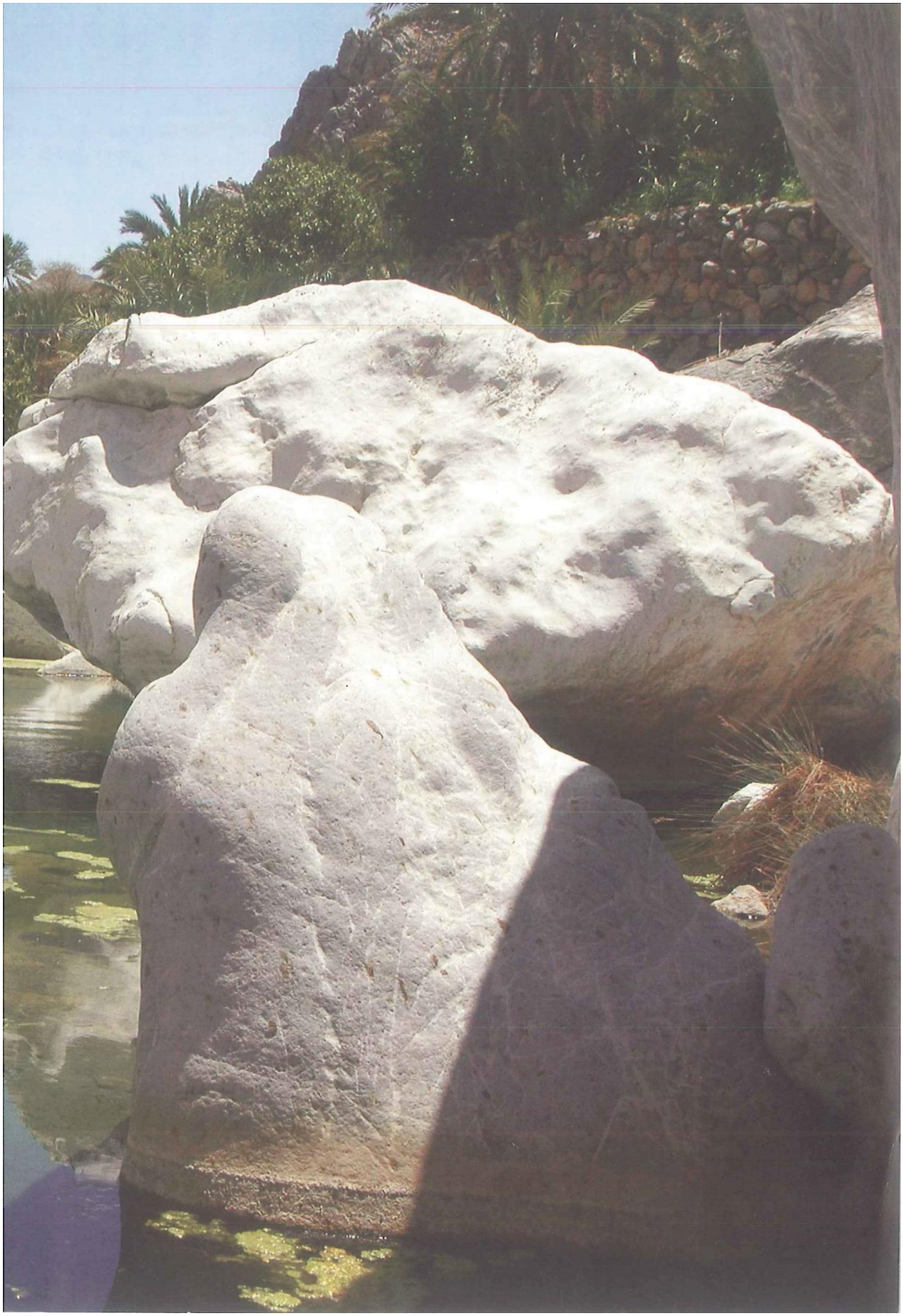
The North Sharqiyah Governorate overlooks the inner flanks of the Eastern Hajar mountain range. It shares borders with the governorate of Muscat to the north, the Dakhiliyah Governorate to the west and the South Sharqiyah Governorate to the east and south.

North Sharqiyah receives a good share of development, including educational, health, business and other projects.

With a population of 162,482, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, the Governorate has six *wilayat*s – its main one, Ibra, as well as Mudhaibi, Bidiyah, Qabil, Wadi Bani Khalid and Dima

(Overleaf)
Wadi Bani Khalid in the Sharqiyah Governorate. has large pools of water and boulders. Its stream flows constantly throughout the year







Al Dhahirah Governorate – a semi-desert area some 300 kms from Muscat, which boasts numerous modern developments

wa'l Ta'een. Its Municipal Council has 16 members.

The Dhahirah Governorate.

The Dhahirah Governorate is richly endowed with agricultural resources, history and tourist potential, and during the years of Oman's modern Renaissance it has achieved impressive development in every sphere. It consists of a semi-desert plain which slopes down southwards from the Western Hajar range towards the desert of the Rub' al Khali, or Empty Quarter, which borders its western side. The mountain of Jabal al Kawr marks its eastern boundary with the Dakhiliyah Governorate, while the Wusta Governorate lies to the south. In the past the Dhahirah was known as Tawam, and also as al Jaw.

Its most distinctive features include a high level of agricultural production and a location at the crossroads of the centuries-old trans-Arabian caravan routes. It also has several oil and gas fields.

The Dhahirah Governorate has three *wilayat*s – Ibri (the main *wilayat*), Yanqul and Dhank – and a population of 151,664, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. Its Municipal Council has 10 members.

Its most distinctive features include a high level of agricultural production and a location at the crossroads of the centuries-old trans-Arabian caravan routes. It also has several oil and gas fields.

The Wusta Governorate

The Wusta Governorate lies to the south of the Dakhiliyah and Dhahirah Governorates. It overlooks the Arabian Sea to the east and borders the desert of the Rub' al Khali, or Empty



The Port of Duqm occupies a strategic position on the Arabian Sea near the international shipping routes

Quarter, to the west and the Dhofar Governorate to the south. Its most distinctive features include a large number of oil and gas fields and a temperate climate throughout the year.

Development of the Wusta governorate has been accorded great importance by the government. During his Royal tour this year His Majesty Sultan Qaboos approved a number of projects to be set up, including the building of a 100km road between its villages; and the construction of an additional 150 housing units to be distributed equally to the governorate's *wilayats*. Earlier, 150 housing units were approved for construction in the *wilayat* of Al Duqm.

The dry dock complex demonstrates the strategic importance of the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD) which will boost the national economy and reinforce the Sultanate's international status.

The Governorate has four *wilayat*s – Haima (the main hub), Mahawt, Duqm and al Jazer - and a population of 42,111, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. Its Municipal Council has 8 members.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Oman has played an important role in the development of human civilisation since ancient times. The country has an important strategic location and was historically linked to the great civilisations of antiquity, including China, India and Mesopotamia,

as well as those of the eastern Mediterranean, the Nile Valley and North Africa. Oman's maritime history was unique among centres of trade in the Gulf region. Omani ships were larger than those built elsewhere and the country was a centre of copper production, which had important markets in Mesopotamia. Oman was a vital centre on the Silk Route which traversed the globe from the East to the West. The country was also a flourishing commercial and maritime hub on the Indian Ocean until the last years of the 19th Century.

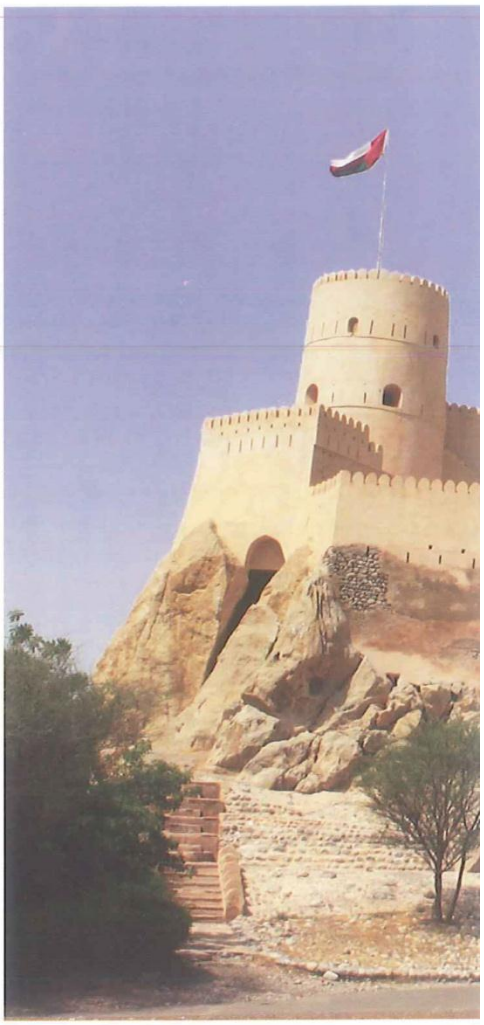
Oman was a cultural crossroad between the major civilisations of the ancient world. The Omani coastline extends along the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Gulf, including the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the most important strategic locations in the region, linking the Sea of Oman to the Arabian Gulf. The Strait of Hormuz is the gateway to the Gulf for vessels arriving from the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea.

Development of the Wusta governorate has been accorded great importance by the government. During his Royal tour this year His Majesty Sultan Qaboos approved a number of projects to be set up.

The Omanis of antiquity did not limit their activities to mining, trade and navigation, but also developed their agriculture. A diversified economy with agriculture as a basic pillar is a characteristic of any strong nation, and this was particularly so with regard to the economies of the ancient world.

The country has an important strategic location and was historically linked to the great civilisations of antiquity.

Continuing on from this rich heritage has come Oman's modern Renaissance, which started on 23rd July, 1970. The Renaissance has been built on strong foundations to create a unique experience, which links the nation's glorious past to its present in order to ensure a bright future. Its strength lies in its enlightened leadership, the loyalty of the people, and the important location of the country. These factors are intimately intertwined, and have ensured that the culture of Oman is dynamic and continues now as it did in the past and will continue into the future.





Nahkl Fort stands on a rocky outcrop. From its towers' battlements there is a superb view of the Batinah Plain

The names of Oman

Oman was known by different names at different points in history. These names include Majan, Mazoon, and Uman. Each of these names is linked to a specific civilisation or period in Oman's history. The name Majan is tied to the culture of ship-building and copper smelting described in surviving records of the Sumerian language. The ancient Sumerians had commercial and maritime links with Oman, which they referred to as the Land of Majan. The name Mazoon means a place of abundant water resources. It is related to the Arabic word Muzun, which denotes clouds or abundant, flowing water, and was used to refer to Oman in the past due to the greater abundance of water than in the neighbouring regions. This fact most likely explains the flourishing of agriculture in ancient Oman and the ensuing stability and civilisation. One explanation regarding the origin of the name Uman or Omanis is that

Arab tribes migrated to the country from a place in Yemen with the same name. An alternative account states that Oman was given this name in reference to Uman, son of Saba, son of Yaqthan, or son of Abraham. Oman was in ancient times home to numerous Arabian tribes, some of which settled in the plains and engaged in hunting and agriculture, and others which settled in the deserts of the interior and engaged in livestock farming.

Contribution to the propagation of Islam:

Historians agree that Oman was among the first countries to embrace Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. A man named Mazin bin Ghadhuba was the first Omani to travel to the city of Madinah to meet the Prophet. When they met, the Prophet praised the people of Oman. Mazin said to the Prophet Muhammad:

Historians agree that Oman was among the first countries to embrace Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

O son of a good and blessed people! Allah has shown the path of righteousness to the people of Oman through your religion. I hail from a country where prosperity and sustenance abound.

The Prophet Muhammad replied:

My religion is the religion of Islam. Allah shall double the prosperity of the people of Oman. May blessings and prosperity be granted to those who believe in me and have seen me; may blessings and prosperity be granted to those who believe in me without having seen me, and to those who haven't seen those who have seen me. Allah shall increase the faith of the Omani people.

Oman played a leading role in the spread of Islamic civilisation to other parts of the world.

The speech delivered by the Caliph Abu Bakr to the Omani delegation that travelled to Madinah under the leadership of `Abd bin Al Julanda after the death of Prophet Muhammad is an important record that tells of the good character and hospitality of the Omani people and their adherence to Islam. The Caliph thanked the people of Oman, and then other speakers followed, saying, "O people of Oman, the descendants of Azd tribes! What greater praise could be given to you than that which was given by the Prophet Muhammad!" The Muslim leader `Amr bin al Aas never missed an opportunity to commend the people of Oman and to tell of all the good things he had come to know about them.

Oman played a leading role in the spread of Islamic civilisation to other parts of the world. Omanis participated in the Arab conquests by land and sea of Iraq, Persia, the Indus valley and other places.

Omanis took Islam to East Africa, China and ports in other parts of Africa and Asia where they engaged in commerce. The Omani people are well known for their adherence to their religion and values. This has created strong bonds between the people, which they are dedicated to preserving.

The Yarubis and the expulsion of the Portuguese

By 1507, the Portuguese had



Dated from the Iron Age (1400-600 BC), the Salut archaeological site in the *wilayat* of Bahla

taken control of large sections of the Omani coastline after having faced strong resistance from the Omanis. In spite of the difficult domestic political conditions that prevailed at the time, the Portuguese and other invaders were unable to go further inland from certain coastal areas, and the Omani interior remained a stronghold from which resistance continued. Resistance campaigns were also launched from coastal areas such as Sohar. This was until the Omanis finally put an end to the Portuguese occupation altogether, which had lasted approximately one hundred and fifty years.

The appointment of Nassir bin Murshid as Imam of Oman in 1624 marked the beginning of Ya`rubi rule. Imam Nassir bin Murshid unified the country under his leadership, and so the country was united for the first time after many years of disorder. He established a strong navy which curtailed Portuguese influence and liberated some coastal cities from their grip. His successor Sultan bin Saif continued this important mission, expelling the Portuguese from all over the country, finally liberating Muscat in 1650. This spelled the demise of Portuguese influence in the Gulf region. The Omanis pursued the Portuguese all the way to the coasts of India and East Africa.

Al Busaid: The revival of Oman's ancient glory and the establishment of a modern state

Imam Ahmed bin Said led a

brave defence that successfully repelled a Persian invasion of Oman. He was the Wali of Sohar, and was made leader of the nation in 1744 in response to the wishes of the local leaders at that time.

During the reign of Imam Ahmed bin Said, Oman had for the first time in its history a central government. Imam Ahmed was able to unify the warring tribes and took the steps necessary to lay the foundations for a modern state. This involved establishing an armed force to address the defence needs of Oman, modernising commercial activities and developing a naval fleet. During the reign of Imam Ahmed, Muscat maintained its position as one of the most important trading cities in the region. The Port of Muscat became a major port on the European trade routes. Imam Ahmed revived Oman's prominent role in the region. On one occasion, Imam Ahmed sent a 100-boat force led by the naval cruiser *Al Rahmani* to the northern sector of the Gulf to break a siege set by the Persians around the Iraqi city of Basra in response to the call of the Wali of Baghdad. Imam Ahmed's mission was a success.

Muscat in 1790 became "one of the most important cities in Asia" according to a report drafted by the British East India Company.

Arab and European historians agree that a number of factors led to the Omanis playing a leading role in the region. The most significant of these factors was Oman's legacy of centuries of maritime trade, the country's geographical location, and the unique heritage, coupled with the stability that prevailed in Oman at a time when the rest of the Gulf region was gripped by chaos and continuous instability. Imam Ahmed bin Said was a great asset to the nation. He commanded a great degree of self-discipline, steadfastness and the ability to make the right decision at the right time. Imam Ahmed gained the respect of European powers, and their confidence in his leadership attracted foreigners and encouraged them to set up commercial agencies in Omani cities, particularly in Muscat which in 1790 became "one of the most important cities in Asia" according to a report drafted by the British East India Company.

Imam Ahmed bin Said died in 1775 in Rustaq, the capital of Oman at that time. He was succeeded by a number of imams and sultans of the Al Busaid Dynasty. The capital city was moved from Rustaq to Muscat by Hamad, the grandson of Imam Ahmed bin Said. He ruled from 1779 to 1792. Muscat has remained the capital of Oman until the present day.

The Omani people have a deep sense of belonging to their land, and a keen awareness of the need for unity in order to confront any challenges the country may face.

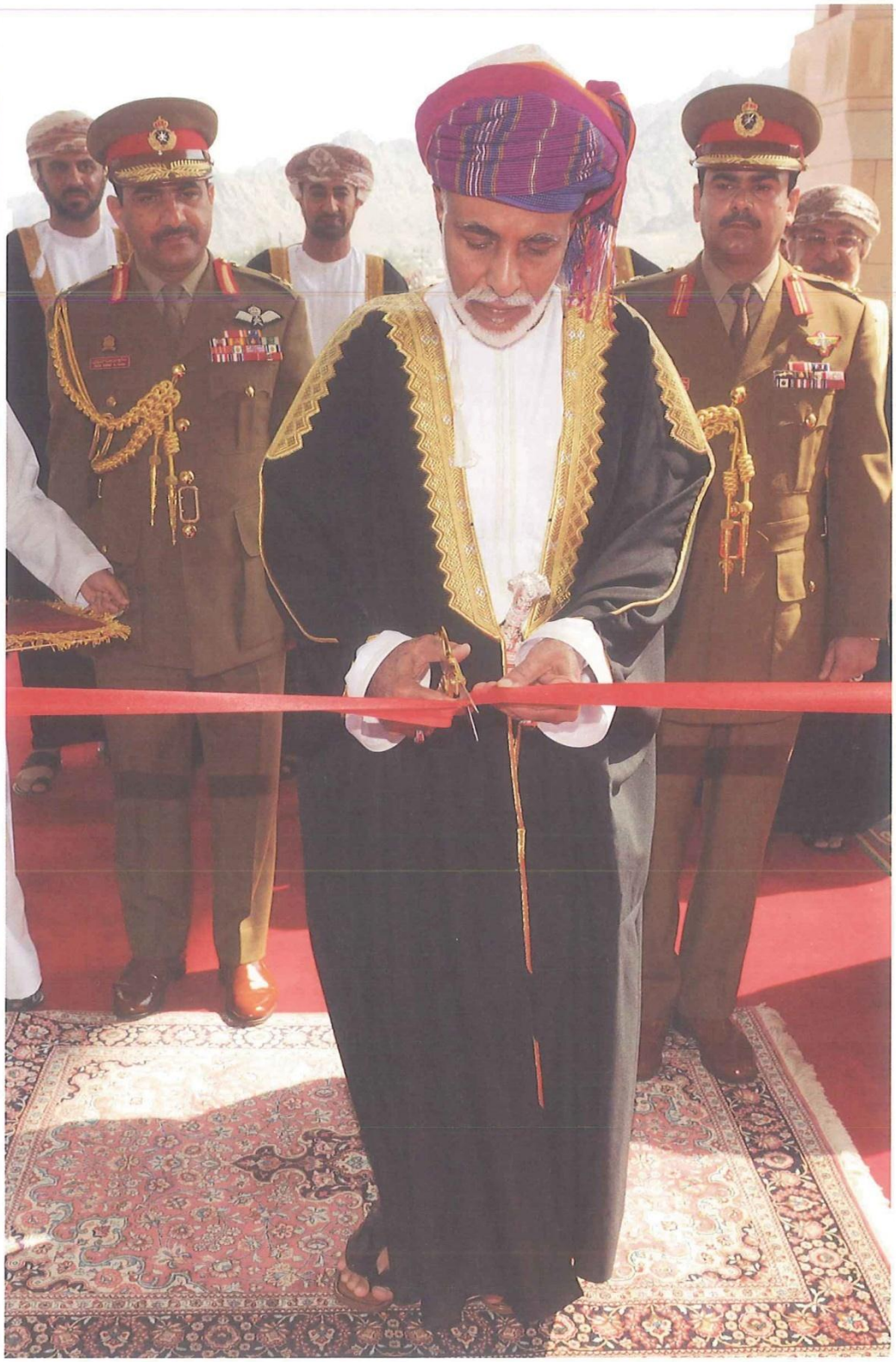
The Omani people have a deep sense of belonging to their land, and a keen awareness of the need for unity in order to confront any challenges the country may face. This sense of unity has been a consistent feature of the Omani national identity throughout the history of Oman. The Al Busaid family's continuous leadership since the mid-18th century until now has played a significant role in contributing to national unity, especially during the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (1807-

1856), and during the current reign of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the builder of Oman's Modern Renaissance. Although periods of weakness occurred from time to time, the rule of the Al Busaid Dynasty has yielded many great achievements, notably the elimination of foreign occupation and the establishment of an empire which extended to many parts of East Africa during the first half of the 19th century. This empire had a strong maritime presence in the Indian Ocean, leading to the fostering of balanced political relations with major world powers such as Britain, France and the United States. During that time, many domestic and regional challenges were overcome and solid foundations for balanced regional and international relations were established. This enabled the Sultanate to protect its national interests and emerge as a prosperous country which ensures the right of all its people to equal citizenship. With Oman's unity remaining intact as it had throughout its history, the nation has revived its former glory and continued to make a contribution to the advancement of human civilisation.

A beautifully decorated copy of the Holy Koran, a fine example of Oman's calligraphy



Qaboos the Leader



2 Qaboos the Leader

In the forty-three years since he came to power, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has been the architect of Oman's growth and progress. His Majesty's vision has seen the country develop into the vibrant 21st Century society we know today. By setting out and adhering to a number of clear goals for the nation, achieved over a series of five-year plans, Sultan Qaboos oversaw a comprehensive programme that has transformed Oman, bringing it into the modern era while remaining faithful to its heritage and traditions.

The modern Omani Renaissance, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and his deep understanding of the challenges of the future, has led to the progress and success of the Omani people. Over the past forty-three years, the Renaissance has continued to educate and qualify Omanis to think creatively to shoulder the responsibility for the planning, construction and development of their society in various fields and sectors.

The Renaissance derives its impetus from His Majesty's vision for the nation and is moving forward with considered steps, adapting to the needs of the people.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos laid down solid foundations and clear-cut principles upon which Oman's Renaissance is based and continues to progress. The Renaissance derives its impetus from His Majesty's vision for the nation and is moving forward with considered steps, adapting to the needs of the people. On this basis, Omani national and international policy rests on solid foundations. Omani national policy is not a mere imitation of the policies of other countries, but rather espouses stability and justice that has been the hallmark of Omani society since the dawn of the modern Omani Renaissance. This has earned Oman the respect and praise of the international community.

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All of these things have shown the people of Oman the wise and effective leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The citizens of the country have been blessed with the prosperity and progress that has resulted from aiming for the goals of the Renaissance. This progress has been invigorated by the aspirations of the people, their hard work, and their will and determination. Since the dawn of the Renaissance, His Majesty the Sultan has reiterated that the primary goal of the development plan is to provide the people with contented lives, to involve them in the life of the country, to enable them to shoulder their responsibilities for building their nation.

His Majesty the Sultan explained that the secret behind the success of Oman's development lies primarily in the notion that the Renaissance considers the real

situation and issues the country faces. The Renaissance should embrace this reality with the values and traditions that stem from the noble religion of Islam. Oman's Renaissance has been based on a clear vision and understanding of the country's needs both now and in the future. It is also based on the ability to combine the strengths of the nation and encourage the Omani people to direct their efforts towards developing the nation in all fields and at all levels.

Over the past forty-three years, great steps have been made toward the development of the democratic process, with greater participation of the people in decision making through the Omani Shura institutions. The year 2012 saw another development in this regard. The new building of *Majlis Oman* (Council of Oman) was inaugurated in Al Bustan, in the Governorate of Muscat. This was made possible by the patronage of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who chaired the annual sitting of the Council's 5th Term on 12 th November 2012.

The Royal speech of His Majesty the Sultan upon the opening of the Council of Oman's annual sitting conveyed a wise directive based on a clear vision of all issues relevant to the Omani people. This instilled in the people a spirit of determination to continue the success and achievements that Oman's modern Renaissance has made possible over the past decades.

In that Royal Address, His Majesty the Sultan stated:

In spite of the vast size of Oman and its harsh climate, previous development plans have underpinned the great advances made by the nation. This has led to the transformation of this country and facilitated the implementation of development programmes for both individuals and the society as a whole. It has helped extend services of all types to citizens wherever they are. You are all aware that the development of infrastructure will never cease and that this ongoing process is made necessary as a result of urban expansion and the development of society and the economy. This stems from the people's need to move forward and to fulfill their aspirations for a better, happier life.

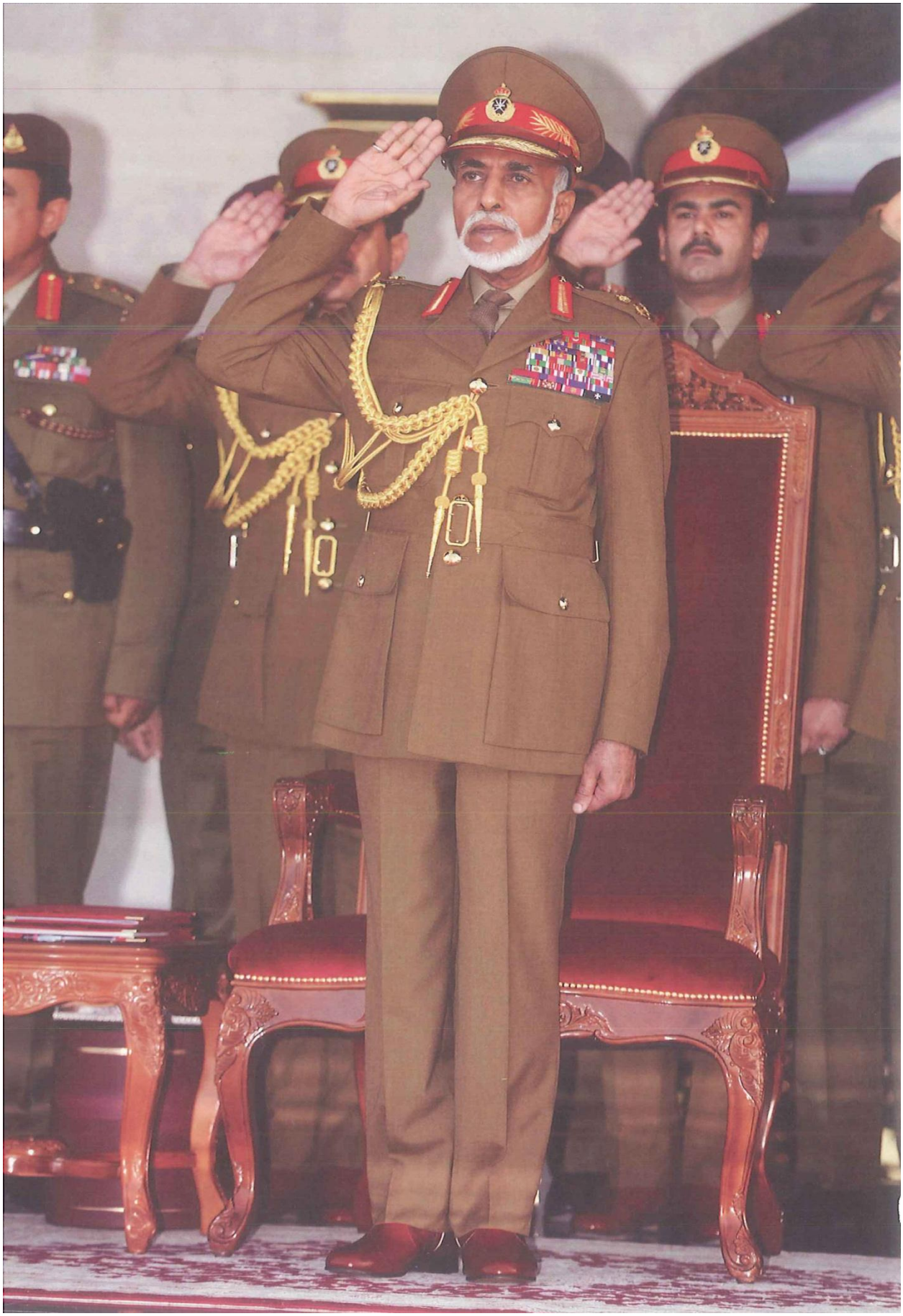
Education

His Majesty also mentioned in his Address the importance of the development of education at all levels, and the educational curricula and training programmes that have been implemented in the Sultanate. His Majesty the Sultan stated:

In recent decades, different educational curricula and training programmes have been introduced. However, greater attention must be paid to linking education to the requirements of the labour market.

He added:

One of the priorities of the current stage of development and the next stage for which we are preparing is education reform with respect to plans and programmes. These need to be developed so as to keep pace with the changes that the country is going through. More attention should be paid to scientific and cultural development, and raising







His Majesty the Sultan receives Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales

new generations of Omanis who possess knowledge, awareness, and the necessary skills for participating in the modern workforce.

His Majesty the Sultan emphasised in his Royal Address that all parties concerned with education at every level must cooperate with the Education Council effectively, sincerely, and with determination. In this regard, he called upon "the Council of Oman to present its views to the Education Council on this matter. We are confident that joint efforts will lead to the desired results."

Since the dawn of the Renaissance, His Majesty the Sultan has reiterated that the primary goal of the development plan is to provide the people with contented lives, to involve them in the life of the country, to enable them to shoulder their responsibilities for building their nation.

Human Development

The importance of human development in all fields goes hand in hand with continuous attention to development plans for the different economic sectors. At the forefront of these sectors are industry, agriculture and fisheries, tourism, transport and communications, ports, as well as service sectors like health and education, among others.

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm has emerged as one of the most important economic zones in the Sultanate as it houses the Duqm Port, Dry Dock and a number of factories which are currently under construction. These facilities complement those at industrial estates in Sohar, Salalah and Sur, all of which will bring further progress and prosperity to the country.

The government is exerting efforts to implement major production and service projects, and pays equal attention to human development. This has been achieved through increased spending on the education, health,



His Majesty receives His Highness The Emir of Qatar, Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, in October 2013

housing and social care sectors. The increase in spending on these sectors has reached approximately 22%.

The total budget revenues for 2013 stood at RO 11.2 billion against RO 8.8 billion in the 2012 budget, an increase of 27%. As much as 84% of total revenues come from oil, which were calculated at $85 a barrel on the basis of an average daily output of 930,000 barrels. Non-oil revenues stood at RO1.8 billion and these rose by 13% in the 2013 budget in comparison with the 2012 budget. Non-oil revenues constitute 16% of the total General State Budget revenues.

Meanwhile, the government is continuing its efforts to accommodate the largest possible number of job seekers. The government sector and the private sector are working jointly towards this goal and towards making tangible achievements that serve the interests of society, while at the same time reducing the level of expatriate manpower in the Sultanate. His Majesty the Sultan emphasized these points in order that the numbers of expatriates are reset to prescribed or desired limits, and in accordance with a programme of cooperation between all the departments concerned, including the Council of Oman, the private sector and the government.

His Majesty the Sultan has made every effort to bring balance to the pay and privileges of workers in the government and private sectors, and to strengthen family ties due to their positive influence. For these reasons, His Majesty has issued a directive making religious and national holidays universal, the specifics of



His Majesty receives Lt-General Sir Jerry Mateparae, Governor-General of New Zealand

The Council of Ministers has established special departments in the government ministries and government services units called 'Customer Departments'. Their job is to facilitate better interaction with the people.

which are provided in Royal decrees dealing with this matter.

To keep channels with the outside world open with respect to economic, banking, commercial, import and export issues, weekends have been made universal for workers in government and private sectors with effect from May 2013. Workers in both sectors are now entitled to weekends on Fridays and Saturdays.

Due to His Majesty the Sultan's concern with all issues affecting society and its people, he issued a directive on 6th April 2013 which aimed to invigorate the Social Loans Programme by increasing its balance to RO100 million. This is to be distributed in the years 2013, 2014 and 2015. The directive follows a Royal Decree that exempts borrowers from the Housing Bank from loan fees.

Municipal Council Elections

The Sultanate has also taken forward the development of the democratic practice process. The first Municipal Council elections were held in the history of the Sultanate were held on 22nd December 2012.

On that day, approximately half a million voters went to the ballot box to select candidates to represent them in the first sitting of the Municipal Council. These elections were held one year after the *Majlis A'Shura* elections which were held in all *wilayats* throughout the Sultanate.

Arabian horses

Omani tradition attaches great importance to Arabian horses and equestrian sports. In this light, the annual Royal Horse Racing Festival



His Majesty grants an audience in November 2012 to Professor Mario Monti, the then Prime Minister of Italy

was held within the Sultanate under the patronage of His Majesty the Sultan on 1st January 2013 in the *wilayat* of Seeb. On this occasion, His Majesty the Sultan also launched a book entitled "Desert Pageantry: The Royal Cavalry of Oman". This 352-page book depicts photos from the Royal Cavalry and horses of Oman in general.

Council of Ministers

Within the context of the comprehensive development of the Sultanate, the government's continued efforts to provide the best services to citizens in all governorates, and based on His Majesty the Sultan's vision for the improvement and development of the country, the Council of Ministers has established special departments in the government ministries and government services units called 'Customer Departments'. Their job is to facilitate better interaction with the people. The Council has also decided to increase the number of visits by ministers and under-secretaries to the different governorates to ensure a smooth workflow and to maintain communication between the government and the people.

The Council of Ministers issues regular monthly statements about the most important decisions it has taken and the issues of concern to citizens that the Council has discussed. This practice is a practical way of providing evidence of the government's efforts to improve efficiency and do everything possible to implement the national development plans.



His Majesty the Sultan receives President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, President of Yemen

Worldwide Relations

Inspired by the vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Omani diplomacy seeks to develop friendly and balanced relations with each country that takes positive steps towards establishing cordial relations with Oman. The Sultanate has committed itself to international charters and the principles of the United Nations towards global progress, prosperity and stability.

This is reflected in Oman's foreign policy stance with respect to the region and the rest of the world, which is pragmatic and wise. Omani diplomacy has resulted in no events, however volatile, to derail it from its course based on the principle of moderation.

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The Sultanate's policies and political stances are inspired by a deep awareness and consideration of the nation's history, and a belief in the need to establish the best possible climate for national development and strengthening society. Oman has built bridges of trust by means of a clear vision and frankness in its response to different situations and developments. Omani policy is based on its commitment to clear principles and unambiguous relations with all nations within the GCC, the Arab world, and the rest of the world.

His Majesty the Sultan stressed at the opening of the Fifth Term of the Council of Oman in 2012, as in all his previous Royal Addresses, that Omani foreign policy is:

...in essence a call for peace, harmony and close cooperation between all nations, and to uphold the principles of justice, fairness, and non-interference in the internal



His Majesty has discussions with the Vice-President of Brazil, Michel Temer

affairs of other nations; and to settle disputes through peaceful means in a manner that safeguards the security, stability, prosperity and progress of all humanity.

This clear policy vision is behind the success of the Sultanate in establishing and maintaining good relations with other states, and has earned the country its reputation as a peaceful nation that is committed to resolving disputes through positive dialogue and other peaceful means. The Sultanate has spared no effort in fostering peace, security and stability with other nations, and as a result has gained the esteem and trust of the other nations of the world. Oman's efforts have led to many successes in resolving disputes between countries both within the region and beyond, and have earned the Sultanate great respect on the international stage.

The Sultanate has also made significant contributions to humanitarian engagement. Stemming from the awareness that civilians can become victims in conflicts and crises between countries, the Sultanate has been acclaimed for its successful efforts that led to the release of hostages of different nationalities. Such humanitarian engagement has earned the Sultanate respect and appreciation within the region and elsewhere.

In this light, His Majesty the Sultan issued a directive that all necessary assistance be provided in response to the request of the governments of Austria and Finland in finding an Austrian citizen and a Finnish man and his wife who went missing in Yemen in December 2012. The Omani authorities acted



His Majesty receives British Prime Minister, David Cameron

in cooperation with the Yemeni authorities, and were able to find the missing people and transport them to the Sultanate, before returning them to their respective countries.

In similar situations, Omani policy and diplomacy have been behind the country's contribution to resolving problems and settling issues at the level of individuals or between states. These can be added to the efforts made earlier to win the release of American and Iranian citizens detained in the United States and in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Recently the Sultanate was engaged in considerable political, diplomatic and economic activity as part of the country's wish to further develop close ties with countries in the Arab world and elsewhere in order to develop mutual interests with other countries.

The private visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the Islamic Republic of Iran in August 2013 – and His Majesty the Sultan's talks with Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the Iranian President Dr Hassan Rohani – set a new milestone for a major step forward in cementing strong relations between the Sultanate and Iran in many fields, covering wide range of joint interests between the two friendly nations. This visit follows previous successful initiatives aimed at developing active bilateral cooperation, bringing greater prosperity to the two countries and increasing the stability of this vital region.

The private visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the Islamic Republic of Iran in August 2013 set a new milestone for a major step forward in cementing strong relations between the Sultanate and Iran in many fields.

The achievements of the Sultanate at all levels in recent years in its relations with countries in the region and further afield is evident by the high esteem accorded to His Majesty the Sultan by the leaders of the region and around the world.



His Majesty the Sultan has a high profile meeting in Tehran, in April 2013, with Iranian President Hassan Rohani

The Omani people take great pride in this high esteem. The Sultanate is highly respected on the international stage thanks to its constructive efforts in enhancing security and stability in the region, and resolving disputes which impact upon the countries and peoples of the region. This has been done in a manner that preserves the legitimate rights of the nations in the region, safeguards their sovereignty and, opens wide scopes for prosperity throughout the region and elsewhere in the world. This is particularly the case since the countries and peoples of the region desire security, peace and stability in relations between the countries of the region and with other powers across the globe.

Cultural Diversity

The Omani leadership is dedicated to seeking greater cultural, intellectual and scientific cooperation between people of different nations and cultures. This is based on a firm belief in the value of cultural diversity, as well as in the important role of communication and dialogue in developing understanding between the peoples of the world, in order to facilitate cooperation in addressing common challenges. In this light, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos took the initiative to build bridges of cultural and scientific cooperation with other nations, and this has been achieved by a variety of means.

The Sultan Qaboos Centre for Culture in Washington plays an active role in achieving cultural and intellectual contact between the Omani (and Arab people in general) and the American people through the centre's activities and programmes.

The Sultanate's pavilion at the National Library of Russia in Moscow provides visitors with a comprehensive means by which they can learn about different aspects of the Sultanate's heritage as well as the development of Oman and other parts of the Arab and Islamic world. This facilitates greater engagement and enhances good relations with the Russian people.

The Omani-Lebanese Cultural Centre in Beirut has been another successful initiative, and has facilitated greater cultural interaction both at the regional and international levels.

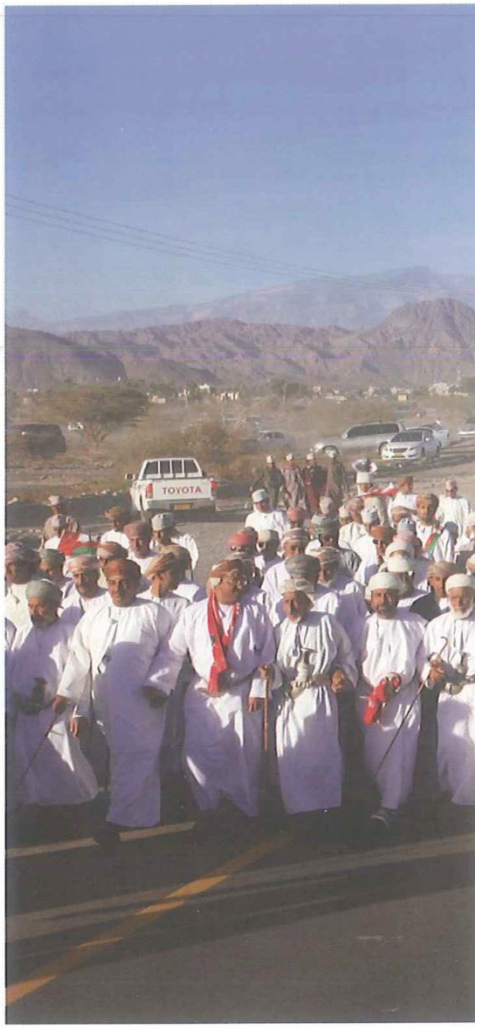
Another contribution by Oman to the promotion of culture internationally is the building of the Biruni Library at the Institute of Oriental Studies in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent. This project was initiated by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in recognition of the value of sharing knowledge and scholarship, with the aim of fostering greater cultural contact between the nations of the world.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos took the initiative to build bridges of cultural and scientific cooperation with other nations, and this has been achieved by a variety of means.

Universities play an essential role in facilitating deeper understanding between people from different cultures and societies. For this reason, several Sultan Qaboos Chairs have been established to advance academic scholarship dealing with aspects of Arab and Islamic culture and civilization. Named after His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, these Chairs are hosted by some of the world's most prestigious academic institutions: Harvard and Georgetown Universities in the United States, the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, the University of Melbourne in Australia, Utrecht University in the Netherlands, Beijing University in China, the University of Tokyo in Japan, and the University of Lahore in Pakistan, in addition to a number of universities in the Gulf States, and other Arab and Islamic countries. The Sultan Qaboos Chair is an ongoing initiative which aims to impart culture and learning for the service of humanity.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Culture, Arts and Literature fosters values of fair competition among scholars and men of letters in support of cultural and intellectual activity.

Royal Decree No 52/2012, issued on 19th September 2012, entrusted the responsibility of supervision of all academic chairs to the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, in accordance with the provision of one of the





Citizens express their loyalty to His Majesty the Sultan at the start of a Royal Tour

articles in the same decree. These include sixteen academic chairs, the oldest of which was the Chair of Sultan of Oman for Arabic and Islamic Literature at Georgetown University in the United States, set up in 1980. The most recent of these is the Sultan Qaboos Chair for Middle Eastern Studies at the College of William & Mary in the United States, set up in 2011.

His Majesty the Sultan attaches great importance to enhancing cultural and scientific activities within the Sultanate. In addition to launching the magnificent Royal Opera House Muscat in 2011, His Majesty the Sultan opened Sultan Qaboos University's Cultural Centre on the University premises during celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of Oman's modern Renaissance. The foundation stone of the Sultan Qaboos Centre in Salalah was also laid.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Culture, Arts and Literature fosters values of fair competition among scholars and men of letters in support of cultural and intellectual activity. This aims to stimulate research and innovation in various

fields, including the literary, humanitarian, social and technical fields, such as linguistics, history, poetry, the narrative, the short story, music, and other related areas.

The Prize was initiated through Royal Decree No 18/2011 on 27th February 2011, and was presented to its first round of winners on 28th December 2012.

In order to spread and deepen the culture of voluntary work and highlight its importance for serving the family and society, a ceremony was held on 5th December 2012 to honour the individuals, the establishments, companies, and social development committees whose projects won the Sultan Qaboos Prize for Voluntary Work in its second round in 2012. This coincided with the Sultanate's celebrations of the Voluntary Work Day which falls on 5th December every year.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Voluntary Work also aims to highlight the role of private voluntary societies, who are partners in the country's comprehensive, sustainable social development.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Voluntary Work also aims to highlight the role of private voluntary societies, who are partners in the country's comprehensive, sustainable social development. This also highlights the spirit of constructive competition in the service of society, a service involving institutions and individuals, in addition to stimulating different areas of cooperation and social responsibility shared by these societies and institutions.

Ajyal College would begin by accepting two hundred people for training the young men and women in the production of traditional handicrafts, which would be a means for them to develop and prosper.

In recognition and appreciation of the efforts of His Majesty the Sultan in his service to education and enhancing initiatives at the international level, the University of Cambridge granted His Majesty Sultan Qaboos the Prize for Excellence in Supporting Charity Work.

This new prize is a token of international praise and recognition, and embodies the high esteem that His Majesty the Sultan enjoys on the world stage.

Royal meet-the-people tours

Oman has developed into a state built on modern institutions with a solid foundation rooted in citizenship, equality and justice. These institutions are being enhanced every day, and the fruits of the Renaissance have extended to all corners of the country. Since the dawn of the Renaissance, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has maintained his tradition of holding direct meetings with the people where they live in the different governorates of the Sultanate.

The Royal meet-the-people tours are held over weeks and sometimes months. They are not only important for maintaining contact between the leader and his people, and to follow the progress of development projects, but are also a way to bolster the political participation of citizens in the decision-making process. They have ensured that economic and social development projects fulfil the daily needs of citizens, at the same time highlight priorities at a national level.

The Royal meet-the-people tours also have an economic and social dimension. They help in planning the addition of new projects in the health, electricity and water sectors, as well as the building of roads and other projects in *wilayats* located throughout the Sultanate.

Another important aspect of the Royal meet-the-people tours in relation to the development process is the fact that His Majesty the

Sultan issues, by Royal directives, seminars at the Royal camps to deal with matters of concern to the citizens.

On 15th January 2013, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos embarked upon a Royal tour, setting out from Bait al Barakah to the *wilayat* of Bahla in the Dakhiliyah Governorate. The people welcomed His Majesty with magnificent banners on which they expressed the great love they have for their leader.

During His Majesty the Sultan's meeting with shaikhs and dignitaries of the *wilayats* of the Dakhiliyah and Wusta Governorates on 27th January 2013, His Majesty the Sultan stated:

"It is without doubt our pleasure to meet you today in Bahla, which is known for its rich history and as being one of the most important Omani cities in Oman. It is abundant with traditional crafts and heritage that all Omanis recognise and are proud of."

His Majesty the Sultan announced the establishment of a college to be known as the Ajyal College of Traditional Industries in the *wilayat* of Bahla, which is known as the "the producer of traditional crafts and heritage". Ajyal College would begin by accepting two hundred young men and women for training in the production of traditional handicrafts, which would be a means for them to develop and prosper.

His Majesty said that the Symposium on the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises held at the Royal camp at Seih al Shamikhat in the *wilayat* of Bahla in the Dakhiliyah Governorate from 21st to 23rd January 2013 produced "good decisions....there were 14 decisions and they were binding decisions".

His Majesty also announced the establishment of Al Rafd fund, which would combine all resources from the Sanad project and other such projects, in support of the youth.

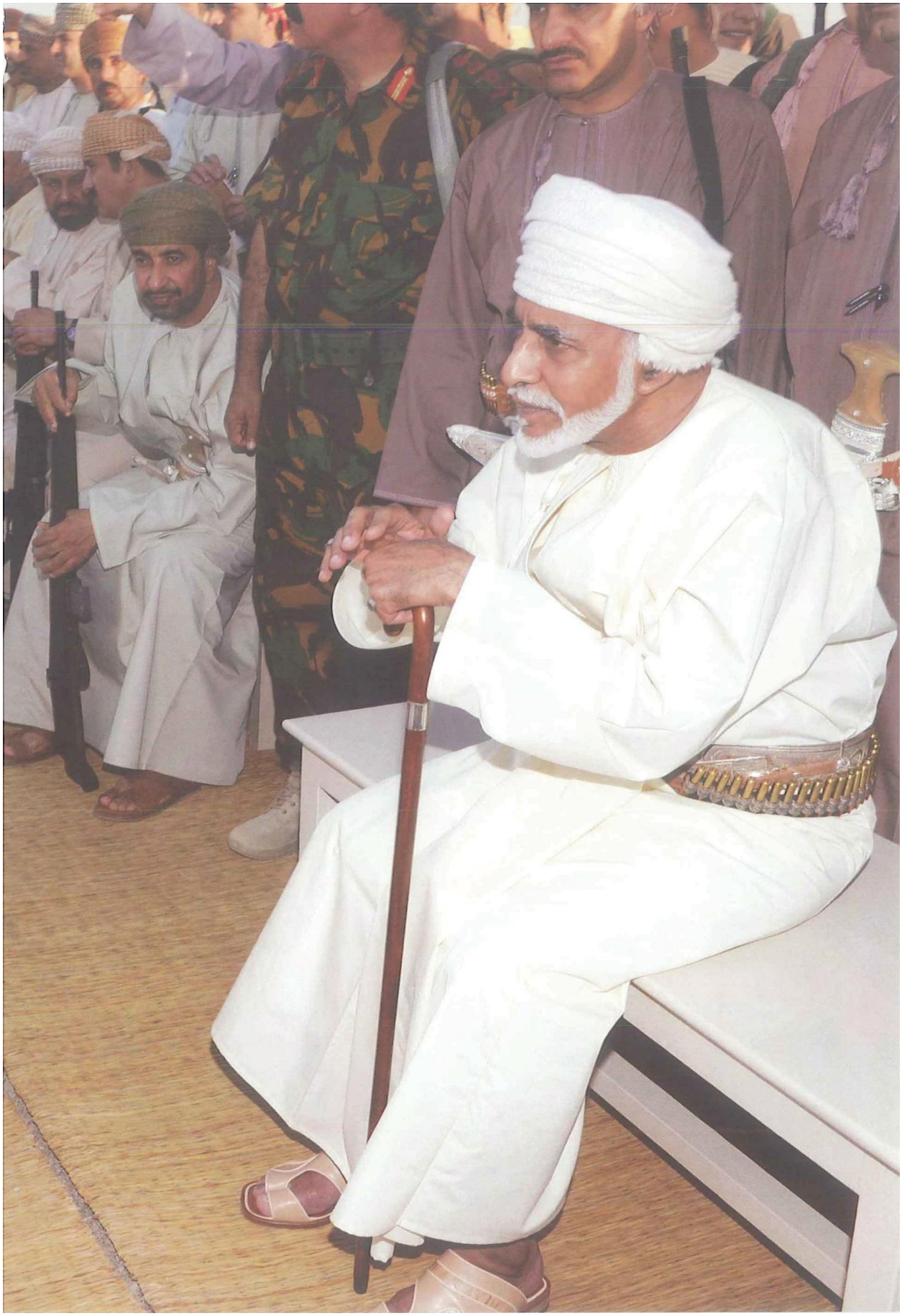
His Majesty the Sultan stated:

"We have decided to combine all these resources within a single fund called Al Rafd; and this will have a specific purpose. Al Rafd will be employed in the service of these young men and women, and will enable them to develop small and medium enterprises. We have decided to set the initial capital of the Fund at RO70 million, and this will be increased by RO7 million each year. We hope that this Fund will bring prosperity to our sons and daughters."

The outcome of the Royal directives was as follows: 95% of the decisions of SMEs development were implemented in the first half of 2013, while 25% of the target achievements in this project were realized before the fixed date, including the establishment of the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises under Royal Decree No 36/2013. The Council of Ministers received a proposal to regulate the service of government employees wishing to set up their own private businesses. The proposal states that these employees should focus on the establishment and management of their private businesses while at the same time drawing their state sector salaries for one year.

(Overleaf)
His Majesty listens to a citizen's point of view





Royal Directives

- His Majesty Sultan Qaboos approved a number of projects in the Governorates of Al Dakhiliyah and Al Wusta to a total of RO214 million.
- The Projects in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate include the dualisation of the Izki-Birkat Al Mauz-Farq road, connecting the *wilayats* of Izki and Nizwa; the dualisation of the Marfa Daris-Jibrin road, linking the *wilayats* of Nizwa and Bahla; and a project to connect the water networks of the *wilayats* of Bid Bid, Izki and Al Hamra. Other projects include the construction of roads to link a number of villages in the *wilayats* of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, with a combined distance of 145 kms, and the construction of social housing units in various villages in the governorate.
- The projects approved for Al Wusta Governorate include the construction of 100 kms of road to link a number of villages in the *wilayats* of the Governorate; the building of 150 social housing units distributed equally between the *wilayats* of Al Jazir, Mahout and Haima (in addition to the 150 residences approved previously); and the expansion and upgrading of the Haima Hospital.
- His Majesty Sultan Qaboos instructed the Supreme Council for Planning to examine a number of requests for projects in the Governorates of Al Dakhiliyah and Al Wusta, and these were deemed to be priorities. Priority is given to the projects according to their degree of urgency as stated in the next Five Year Plan.
- His Majesty Sultan Qaboos also issued a Royal directive to implement a number of road construction projects with a combined distance of 1,765 kilometres. These are to be distributed among the various governorates of the Sultanate, under the supervision of the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources within the current Five Year Plan.
- His Majesty the Sultan also issued a directive to establish Al Falah Hospital, which has a capacity of 150 beds and serves the population of the *wilayats* of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Al Kamil, Al Wafi,

in the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South. Al Najat Hospital has also been established, which lies halfway between the *wilayats* of Liwa and Shinas in the North Batinah Governorate. This hospital has a capacity of 150 beds.

- Both of these hospitals have outpatient clinics, accident and emergency departments, operating theatres, maternity halls, medical laboratories, X-ray departments, internal wards, intensive care units for premature and underweight newborns, service buildings, CT scan units, endoscopy units and dialysis units. Each hospital will be equipped with full electrical and mechanical services, air-conditioning, computer networks, and all other necessary services and auxiliary works. Enough space will be left for the future expansion of each hospital.

- His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued Royal directives to provide financial support of RO1 million to each sports club in the Sultanate under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Sports Affairs. The sums will be allocated to infrastructure projects and equipment, and will address the needs of sports activities organised by the clubs. These directives come in the light of His Majesty's care for the Omani youth and for sports in the country. This reflects His Majesty's conviction in the important role of sports clubs in honing the skills of the youth and developing their talents.

- His Majesty the Sultan issued a Royal directive to allocate RO 15 million for the improvement of service and tourism sites in the Governorate of Dhofar. These mainly serve visitors to Dhofar during the *Khareef* (monsoon) season, and the projects will be carried out with effect from 2013.

- The Military Technological College celebrated the new academic year at its premises on September 15, 2013. The College was established by a Royal directive from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, as a joint military, technical and educational institution. It houses military education and technical training units under one roof, and provides the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces with highly-qualified technical staff, and other military departments with an opportunity to train their specialised technical staff.

- By a Royal directive from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Sultanate has contributed US$5 million for the eradication of polio, through programmes organized by the World Health Organisation.

Institutions of the Modern State


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3 Institutions of the Modern State

The Basic Statute and Organisational Structure of the State

Building a modern state and establishing a "state of institutions" are fundamental aims of the Sultanate's national development programme. These aims have been achieved through the vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who laid the foundations of a modern state and ensured that the country has kept pace with modern science and progress while at the same time preserving its identity.

The significance of what has been achieved with respect to the consolidation of the modern state institutions and the improvement in their performance is a continuous process that is realised through gradual steps. It is a process that engages with Omani society and keeps abreast of its economic and social development. The process involves responding to the aspirations of the Omani people on the one hand, and the participation of the Omani people and the integration of the state's executive and parliamentary institutions and the autonomy of the justice system on the other.

The basic schema of laws in the Sultanate was completed through the promulgation of the Civil Transactions Law, by Royal Decree No. 29/2013 on 6th May 2013.

In 2012, a significant milestone was reached in the history of Oman's modern justice system through the independence of the judiciary. In 2013, the basic schema of laws in the Sultanate was completed through the promulgation of the Civil Transactions Law, by Royal Decree No. 29/2013 on May 6, 2013. This marked the establishment of the sovereignty of law and implementation of the "state of institutions".

The Basic Law of the State constitutes the legal framework within which society operates and from which the state's bodies derive the essence of their role, to which they resort as a frame of reference and a source of adjudication.

The Civil Transactions Law is the most important Omani legislation to be issued. It is important with respect to the organisation of the lives of individuals, their relationships and the interactions between them. The provisions of this legislation apply to all matters not regulated by special laws.

The Basic Law of the State

The Basic Law of the State, promulgated under Royal Decree No.101/96, issued on 6th November 1996, constitutes a strong foundation from which the Sultanate proceeds towards the achievement of greater progress, prosperity and stability. It constitutes the basis for the participation of the nation's citizens in the development process at different levels.

It constitutes the legal framework within which society operates and from which the state's bodies derive the essence of their role, to which they resort as a frame of reference and a source of adjudication. Therefore, it was no coincidence that this statute

was issued after a quarter century of work, and concerted efforts had been made to legalise many of the actions of society so that this Basic Law responds to the aspirations of citizens and meets the requirements of the next stage of national development, and so that it can answer all queries clearly, accurately and impartially.

The Basic Law of the State consists of 81 articles falling in seven parts. This historic document defines the system of government in the state and the principles guiding the state's policies at various levels. It specifies the public rights and duties of citizens and gives details of the provisions concerning the Head of State, the Council of Ministers and the judiciary. It also refers to the specialized councils, the financial affairs and the Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*). While laws must be issued on the basis of provisions of the Basic Law of the State, these laws should not conflict with the Basic Law's provisions.

In confirmation of the participation of all members of society in the march of comprehensive development towards the desired goals of progress, some of the provisions of the Basic Law were amended for the first time under Royal Decree No 99/2011 on 19th October 2011. The new amendments granted legislative and audit powers and prerogatives to the State Council and the Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*) to ensure that both conform to the decisions issued by the Council of Ministers.

The amendments also granted the State Council and Consultation Council *(Majlis al Shura*) the right to amend all laws proposed by the Council of Ministers before submitting them to His Majesty the Sultan who issues them as enforced laws. The Basic Law's amendments grant the Consultation Council alone the prerogative to propose laws. They also define terms for membership at the State Council and Consultation Council, as well as the number of members in the two councils so that the number of the State Council's members shall not exceed the number of the Consultation Council members.

Firm foundations:

The Basic Law of the State specified a set of firm foundations and specific principles for the State and the system of government. In its first article, this Basic Law states that the Sultanate of Oman is an independent, fully sovereign, Arab, Islamic State with its capital in the city of Muscat.

Article 2 states that the State's religion is Islam and that Sharia is the basis of legislation.

Part One of the Basic Law of the State also specifies the method and procedures for accession to power. Article 5 stipulates that the system of government is Royal Sultani rule that is hereditary through the male descendents of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan on condition that the one chosen as successor be a Muslim, judicious, of sound character and a legitimate son of two Omani Muslim parents.

Rule in the Sultanate is assumed in accordance with Article 9 on the basis of justice, consultation and equality. Citizens have a right to participate in public affairs in accordance with the law.

Article 59 stipulates that the

sovereignty of law is the basis of government in the State and that the integrity, impartiality and probity of the judiciary shall be a guarantee of rights and freedoms.

The Basic Law of the State also guarantees the independence of the judiciary and makes interference in legal proceedings or the affairs of justice a crime punishable by law.

All aspects of Oman's political system and the way it operates is defined by the Basic Law of the State in its Articles, which guarantee the rights and freedoms of the country's citizens as well as the functions of the State's authorities and institutions.

The Organizational Structure of the State:

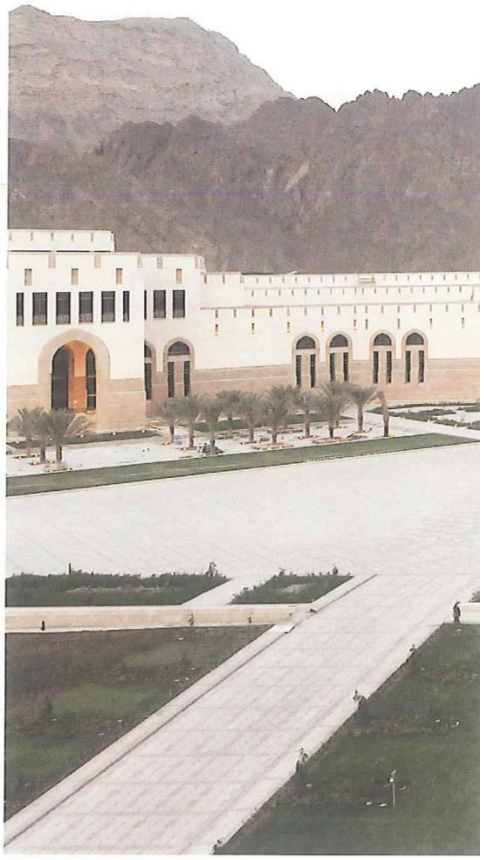
The State's organizational structure consists of His Majesty the Sultan and the councils, the institutions and authorities listed below:

First, His Majesty the Sultan:

His Majesty the Sultan is the Head of State, its paramount and final authority and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. His Majesty's person is inviolate. Respect for him is obligatory and his command must be obeyed. He is the symbol of national unity. He is the country's guardian and defender. Article 42 of the Basic Law of the State defines His Majesty's functions.

Second, the Council of Ministers:

The Council of Ministers assists His Majesty the Sultan in drawing up the general policy of the State. It is the institution entrusted with the implementation of the general policy of the State. In this context, the Council of Ministers undertakes the specific task of submitting recommendations to His Majesty the Sultan about economic, political, social, executive and administrative matters of concern to the government. This includes proposals of draft laws, Royal decrees, decisions aimed to promote the welfare of citizens or securing basic services to be rendered to them or raising the economic, health



The Council of Ministers assists His Majesty the Sultan in drawing up the general policy of the State. It is the institution entrusted with the implementation of the general policy of the State.



The new Council of Oman *(Majlis Oman)* building in Muscat Governorate's Al Bustan area

and cultural standards of citizens or determining the general objectives and policies of economic, social and administrative development or proposing suitable means and procedures to implement these policies to guarantee the proper utilization of financial, economic and human resources.

In addition, the Council of Ministers discusses the development plans prepared by the departments concerned and submits them to His Majesty the Sultan for approval. It also discusses the proposals of ministries, each in their areas of discretion, and takes proper decisions on those proposals.

The Council of Ministers supervises the smooth operation of the State's administrative apparatus and follows up the way it performs its duties and coordinates among its units. It is also entrusted with the general supervision of enforcement of laws, Royal Decrees, decisions, regulations, treaties, agreements and court rulings, in addition to other tasks or missions that are delegated to the Council by

His Majesty the Sultan or tasks entrusted to it by the power of law. The Council of Ministers has a Secretariat General which helps it perform its functions.

Membership of the Council of Ministers, under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan, is as follows:

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers;

His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq al Said, Minister of Heritage and Culture;

HE Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court;

HE General Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'mani, Minister of the Royal Office;

HE Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Hareb al Busaidy, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs;

HE Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said al Busaidi, Minister of Interior;

HE Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs;

HE Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah bin Ali al Khalili, Minister of Justice;

HE Darwish bin Ismail bin Ali al Balushi, Minister Responsible for Financial Affairs;

HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salmi, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs;

HE Dr Mohammed bin Hamad bin Saif al Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas;

HE Dr Rawiyah bint Saud bin Ahmed al Busaidiyah, Minister of Higher Education;

HE Dr Ali bin Masoud bin Ali al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry;

HE Sheikh Saif bin Mohammed al Shabibi, Minister of Housing;

HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser al Bakri, Minister of Manpower;

HE Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Obaid al Saidi, Minister of Health;

HE Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education;

HE Sheikh Al Fahdl bin Mohammed bin Ahmed al Harthy, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers;

HE Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al Shuhi, Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources;

HE Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Futaisi, Minister of Transport and Communications;

HE Sheikh Khalid bin Omar bin Said al Marhoon, Minister of Civil Service;

HE Sheikh Saad bin Mohammed bin Said al Mardhouf al Saadi, Minister of Sports Affairs;

HE Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat;

The Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council undertakes the responsibility of drafting the State's fiscal policy and all matters related to its financial and monetary system.

HE Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Said al Sa'eedi, Minister of Legal Affairs;

HE Dr Fuad bin Jaafar bin Mohammed al Sajwani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries;

HE Mohammed bin Salim bin Said al Toobi, Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs;

HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Said bin Saif al Kalbani, Minister of Social Development;

HE Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar;

HE Ahmed bin Nasser bin Hamad al Mahrazi, Minister of Tourism;

HE Dr Abdulmunim bin Mansoor bin Said al Hasani, Minister of Information.

Three - The Defence Council:

On December 28, 1996, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued Royal Decree No 105/96 structuring the Defence Council under His Majesty's chairmanship and with 8 other people selected as members on grounds of their ranks or positions. The Defence Council meets at the direction of His Majesty the Sultan to discuss issues pertaining to the Sultanate's defence and security.

Four - The National Security Council (NSC):

On 23rd September 2003, His Majesty the Sultan issued Royal Decree No 63/2003 amending the name of the National Defence Committee to the National Security Council (NSC). This Council is responsible for reviewing all issues related to national security. It convenes under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan in cases deemed appropriate by Sultan Qaboos. Otherwise, the NSC convenes under the auspices of the Minister of the Royal Office. Its members are: The Inspector General of Police and Customs, the Head of the Internal Security Service, the Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces and the Chairman of the Communications and Liaison Department. The Council may request the attendance of non-members as and when appropriate. The Council has a Secretary-General who is appointed from the Royal Office staff.

On September 22, 2010, Royal Decree No. 102/2010 was issued cancelling the State Security Court.

The Law on Combating Terrorism was promulgated by Royal Decree No 8/2007 on January 22, 2007. Article 2 of this Decree states that "The National Committee on Combating Terrorism shall be restructured and its jurisdiction defined by a decision from the National Security Council, and shall operate under its supervision."

Five - The Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council:

This Council undertakes the responsibility of drafting the State's fiscal policy and all matters related to its financial and monetary system. It drafts the annual General State Budget and studies financial allocations for

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His Majesty the Sultan chairs a meeting of the Council of Ministers





development projects, as well as anything related to domestic and external investment, its funding and other savings-related investment, financial and monetary affairs.

The Council's remit also includes the development of energy resources and their contribution to the national economy, as well as improvements to the ways in which the funds they generate are utilized.

The Council, which convenes under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan or its Deputy Chairman, was restructured under His Majesty's chairmanship by Royal Decree No 60/2011, issued on 9th May 2011.

Six - Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman:

The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman undertakes the task of drafting a suitable monetary policy for the Sultanate. It also runs the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), which was established on lst December 1974 as per the provisions of the Banking Law No 7/74, later amended by Royal Decree No 114/2000.

The Supreme Judicial Council was restructured, under Royal Decree No. 9/2012 issued on 29th February 2012, with His Majesty the Sultan as Chairman.

The Board is fully empowered to adopt all necessary measures to ensure that the CBO is properly managed. It also enjoys the full authority to issue currency, monitor the banking institutions and oversee banking operations in the Sultanate.

On 18th June 2012, the CBO Board of Governors was restructured, with His Majesty the Sultan as Chairman and comprises seven governors.

The Supreme Council for Planning drafts strategies and policies necessary for achieving sustainable development in the Sultanate. It also drafts mechanisms for implementing these strategies and policies.

Seven - The Supreme Judicial Council:

In seeking to develop the judiciary and ensure its independence, the Supreme Judicial Council enjoys a wide range of powers and prerogatives including – specifically – drawing up general judicial policy; streamlining and guaranteeing the smooth running of the courts and Public Prosecutor's Office; facilitating the litigation process and access to legal proceedings and considering nominations submitted by the competent authorities for appointments.

Promotions in the judiciary, the Administrative Court and the Public Prosecution, in cases where the law stipulates such posts should be filled by Royal Decree, also fall under this Council's remit. As well as proposing draft laws on judicial matters and expressing views on draft laws it also gives its opinion on draft judicial co-operation agreements between the Sultanate and other countries, as well as on any other matter His Majesty sees fit to put before it for review.

The Council was restructured on 29th February 2012, with His Majesty the Sultan as Chairman.

Eight - The Supreme Council for Planning:

The Supreme Council for Planning was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 30/2012, issued on 26th May 2012. The Council drafts strategies and policies necessary for achieving sustainable development in the Sultanate. It also drafts mechanisms for implementing these strategies and policies towards the achievement of economic diversity and ideal utilization of natural and human

resources. The National Statistics and Information Centre, established under Royal Decree No 31/2012 of 26th May 2012 is affiliated to the Supreme Council for Planning.

Nine - Higher Committees, Subsidiary Councils and Public Authorities:

Article No 56 of the Basic Law of the State states that "Specialized Councils shall be established, their powers defined and their members appointed in accordance with Royal Decrees".

The State's administrative apparatus comprises a number of Higher Committees, Specialized Subsidiary Councils and Public Authorities, each of which is responsible for managing or overseeing a specific sector with a view to drafting a comprehensive vision for development. In serving the public interest and to guarantee the smooth flow of work in each sector, these bodies coordinate with other relevant departments, including ministries.

The members of these Committees, Councils and Authorities include ministers and public figures according to their specialisation.

The Higher Committee for Conferences:

This Committee is responsible for preparing, monitoring and liaising on conferences attended by Oman – particularly those involving the Gulf Co-operation Council for Arab states – in coordination with the relevant ministries.

The Supreme Higher Committee for Five-Year Plans:

The Supreme Higher Committee for Five-Year Plans specifies the basic elements and guidelines for the five-year development plans. It conducts half-yearly assessments of these plans and follows up their implementation in line with the provisions of Royal Decree No 1/2006. Hence this committee plays a vital role in translating the priorites set out by His Majesty in the current phase of national development, into practical guidelines for the implementation of the 8th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015). It also takes steps to mobilise collective energies and monitor and ensure greater co-ordination between the government, the State Council and the Consultation Council in the achievement of the nation's goals.

The State's Financial and Administrative Audit Institution:

The State's Financial Audit Institution was established as a financially and administratively independent body to replace the State Audit Secretariat-General by Royal Decree No. 95/99 issued on 22nd November 1999. On 27th February 2011, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos gave orders to expand the powers of the State's Audit Institution and amend its name to the State's Financial and Administrative Audit Institution, while at the same time granting its members the quality of 'judicial inspection'.

In culmination of the development witnessed by this Institution, the State Financial and Administrative Auditing Law was

promulgated by Royal Decree No. 111/ 2011 on 24th October 2011, and the Protection of Public Funds and Avoidance of Conflict of Interests Law was issued by Royal Decree No.112/2012 on 26th May 2012.

The State's Financial and Administrative Audit Institution audits the funds of the State or the funds managed, or supervised, by the State, as well as the financial and administrative transactions. It identifies the reasons behind the deficiency in performance, production, and specifies responsibility and conflicts of interest.

The Institution's monitoring activities have extended to all governorates of the Sultanate after the opening of its branches in Salalah, Sohar, Nizwa and Sur. During the year SFAAI implemented a number of campaigns to raise public awareness of the laws and the work methodology of the Institution. Since the beginning of 2012 twenty-eight programmes have been implemented.

Research Council regulates, encourages and provides material and moral support for scientific research and is the authority responsible for liaising between the different bodies and institutions involved in the field.

In June 2013 it was announced at the United Nations Public Service Awards that the SFAAI had won first place in the West Asia region, in the category of Preventing and Combating Corruption in Public Service for their project entitled 'Complaints Window'.

On 8th April 2013, the Education Council approved the setting up of the Oman Nursing and Health Sciences College, which will grant Bachelor's degrees in nursing, physiotherapy, medical laboratory science, radiology and dental science.

The Research Council:

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued Royal Decree No 54/2005 on 22nd May 2005 establishing The Research Council (TRC) and determining its prerogatives.

The Council regulates, encourages and provides material and moral support for scientific research and is the authority responsible for liaising between the different bodies and institutions involved in the field.

As part of a national strategy on innovation, TRC launched the Industrial Innovation Centre at Rusayl Industrial Estate in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates. TRC has also launched the Educational Innovation Support Programmes in a number of schools in the governorate of Muscat. On 7th April 2013, the foundation stone was laid for the Innovation Complex Muscat Project at Sultan Qaboos University. The complex is an important project, sponsored by the Council, for the creation of infrastructure to encourage scientific research and innovations in the Sultanate.

The Civil Service Council:

The Civil Service Council undertakes the responsibility of drawing up general policies related to the civil service and related plans of administrative development. It looks into decisions, laws and procedures aimed at increasing Omanisation and upgrading performance in the State's administrative apparatus.

The Education Council:

The Education Council (TEC) was established by Royal Decree No. 48/2012 on 10th September 2012 'for the advancement of the education sector at all levels and types'. Housed in the Diwan of the Royal Court, the Education Council

serves as an umbrella organization for policy development, analysis, and implementation. The Council works to ensure that the development of the education sector falls in line with national economic and social priorities.

On 8th April 2013, the Education Council approved the setting up of the Oman Nursing and Health Sciences College, which will grant Bachelor's degrees in nursing, physiotherapy, medical laboratory science, radiology and dental science.

The Council also approved the establishment of the Higher Institute for Health Specialisations which will grant diplomas in supporting medical disciplines.

On 5th May the Council agreed to review the restructuring of various higher education institutions with a view to merging them into one institution, as per the needs of sustainable development. The Council also endorsed the preparation of a draft law for school education and a draft law for higher education in the Sultanate.

On 24th September 2013 it decided to stop issuing licences for new private universities and colleges for a period of three years, to enable government authorities concerned to assess the current status of private higher education institutions, and to identify academic programmes that are consistent with the Oman job market.

The Sultan Qaboos University Council:

The Sultan Qaboos University Council is the supreme governing body of the University. It is empowered with the formulation of the general policy of the University and its implementation. It also aims at realizing maximum uniformity between university education and the requirements of the National Development Plan. On 2nd July 2006, Royal Decree No 71/2006 was issued on the promulgation of the Sultan Qaboos University Law and the approval of the university's organizational structure.

The Tender Board:

The Tender Board was established on April 30, 1973 and in October 1984 Royal Decree No. 86/84 was issued promulgating the laws and systems of tenders.

The Tender Board undertakes the responsibility of announcing tenders, opening bids, analysing and awarding government tenders whose cost exceeds RO1 million. It handles all government projects (with the exception of those related to security and defence) and requests from civil service ministries and other government agencies.

On 24th March 2008 Royal Decree No 36/2008 was issued, promulgating the Tender Law. This law and its amendments issued under Royal Decrees No. 19/2011 issued in January 2011 and 120/2011 issued in October 2011 continue to be in force.

Oman Medical Specialty Board:

Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) was established under Royal Decree No. 31/2006, issued on 2nd April 2006. It sets up, designs, supervises and approves

postgraduate medical speciality programmes for doctors and other health professionals, as well as setting up continuous medical education programmes in health specialites

Oman Academic Accreditation Authority:

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) was initially established as the Oman Accreditation Council by Royal Decree in 2001. On 3rd May 2010, the Oman Accreditation Authority (OAAA) was established by Royal Decree No 54/2010 to replace the Oman Accreditation Council. This authority is affiliated to the Education Council.

The OAAA is a governmental independent entity responsible for accrediting and guaranteeing the standards of all government and private higher education establishments in the Sultanate.

The OAAA is a governmental independent entity responsible for accrediting and guaranteeing the standards of all government and private higher education establishments in the Sultanate and for approving the academic programmes they offer.

The OAAA's numerous achievements include a higher education quality management plan for the Sultanate known as the 'Quality Plan', based on a wide-ranging analytical study of higher education requirements.

The Public Authority for Craft Industries:

The Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) was established under Royal Decree No. 24/2003 on 3rd March 2003, while Royal Decree No. 53/2003 issued on 3lst August 2013, promulgated its charter and endorsed its organisational structure.

PACI is responsible for every aspect of the country's traditional crafts and seeks to nurture and develop them to continue to thrive as productive industries.

The Sultan Qaboos Craft Excellence competition reflects His Majesty's recognition of the value and significance of the craft industries and demonstrates his high level of commitment to Oman's crafts people.

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Attention to the Omani crafts sector culminated in the establishment of the Ajyal College for Sciences of Craft Industries and Traditional Professions, as announced by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in the *wilayat* of Bahla in January 2013. The College will aim to provide the Omani labour market with qualified artisans who will be capable of keeping abreast of the sector's development needs while at the same time maintaining the authenticity of Oman's heritage. The establishment of the College was hailed by the World Crafts Council during a visit to Muscat in July 2013.

The Capital Market Authority:

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) was established as part of the process of restructuring the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) under the Capital Markets Law in the Sultanate of Oman, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 80/98, issued on 9th November 1998.

It is a government organization enjoying a legal personality, financial and administrative autonomy. Its objective is to promote the competency and

efficiency of the capital market and insurance sector through the interests of investors, market participants and holders of insurance policies.

It ensures that the companies dealing with the stock market adhere to the provision of Article 5 of the Capital Market Law, namely the issuance of periodic reports about their activities and the results of their transactions to the CMA. The reports should include full account of transparency about the companies' financial positions.

The Oman Charitable Organisation:

The Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) was established by Royal Decree No. 6/96, and amended by Royal decree No.83/2001 on 23rd August 2001. It is a state funded charitable organization engaged in supporting and financing the social care programmes intended for the general welfare of the people, children orphans, elderly people, and the disabled.

The OCO also provides emergency relief in case of disasters or natural calamities, as in the case of earthquakes or famines in different parts of the world. For example, OCO provided assistance to the refugees of Kosovo and the Palestinian people, namely assistance in restructuring the Gaza Strip and the construction of schools in the West Bank, Palestine.

In August 2012, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued Royal orders to open three branches for OCO in Salalah, Sohar and Sur with the aim of expanding the activities and services of the charitable organization in the Sultanate.

The Information Technology Authority (ITA):

The Information Technology Authority, established under Royal Decree No. 52/2006 on 3lst May 2006, is a financially and administratively independent legal entity. The Royal Decree transferred all functions and operations of the National Information Technology Committee, established in 1998, to the ITA.

The ITA is responsible for implementing national IT infrastructure projects and supervising all projects related to the implementation of the digital Oman strategy while providing professional leadership of various other e-Governorance initiatives of the Sultanate.

In its endeavour to support the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the ITA has provided a variety of initiatives, most notably the Asas Programme for Entrepreneurship. Asas is an Arabic word that means 'foundation'. This programme, available to anyone between the ages of 18-60, was launched in March 2013 to assist SMEs in the field of information and communication technology so that they might become capable of competing at an international level.

Over the next three years, the ITA hopes to establish 60 Omani companies, 30 of which will be at the premises designated by the ITA in Muscat Governorate and the other 30 in other governorates of the Sultanate.

In January 2013, the ITA

announced the launch of a database project for establishments operating in the field of information technology. The aim was to highlight the potential of these establishments and make them known to major companies in the field.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA):

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority was set up under Royal Decree No. 30/2002, issued on 12th March 2002 to regulate the telecommunications sector. A financially and administratively independent legal entity, the Authority is based in Muscat and funded from the public purse.

The TRA received approval from ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), an internationally organized non-profit organization set up by the internet community to help coordinate IANA's areas of responsibilities, including the adoption of the generic top-level domain name "oman' for websites in the Sultanate registered under Arabic names.

In January 2013, the ITA announced the launch of a database project for establishments operating in the field of information technology.

Through a number of initiatives, TRA have begun to cover the villages not yet covered by telecom services. The initiatives include the re-planning of frequency domains in accordance with the principle of neutrality of coverage for operators. Due to this initiative, it was agreed with the operators Omantel and Nawras to set up 200 new stations to cover 250 villages in different governorates beyond the scope of the operators' obligations listed in the licences granted to them.

In November 2012, the NRAA launched its Joint Documents Classification System. The NRAA will maintain communications with different sectors of the society in order to compile these documents and to archive and report them against loss.

Oman maintained its position as 40th in the world according to the Global Information Technology Report, issued by the World Economic Forum in April 2013. The report examines 54 key indictors including the socio-economic impact of information technology (T) services.

The Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW):

The Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW) was established under Royal Decree No. 92/2007, issued on 9th September 2007, following the privatization of the electricity sector in 2004. Headquartered in Muscat, the PAEW specializes in regulating the electricity and related water sector in the Sultanate in accordance with existing laws.

The PAEW - a legal entity that is financially and administratively independent - has the right to own the funds needed to enable it to achieve its objectives. It seeks to ensure the availability of electricity and water services throughout the country, protect consumer interests and enable the privatization of the Sultanate's electricity and water sectors to be implemented smoothly. It also aims to protect the interests of subscribers, particularly people with limited income, patients and the elderly. The PAEW is tasked with implementing the general policy for this sector and preparing the plans and programmes necessary for developing that policy.

The National Records and Archives Authority:

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), established under Royal Decree No

60/2007 issued on 2nd July 2007, as a national project to preserve Oman's history and establish a comprehensive system for managing public records related to government departments subject to the NRAA Law. It is affiliated to the Council of Ministers.

The NRAA has signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the Tunisian National Archives, the Directorate General of Turkish State's Archives, as well as a contract with Cambridge's Publications Office whereby the Cambridge body will photocopy the records and documents related to the Sultanate from different British establishments. It's latest MOU, which includes cooperation in the areas of training, exhibitions, seminars and conferences, was signed on 30th October 2013 with the Kingdom of Spain.

In November 2012, the NRAA launched its Joint Documents Classification System. The NRAA will maintain communications with different sectors of the society in order to compile these documents and to archive and report them against loss. It will take two years to initiate the work methodology.

The Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development:

The Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development (PAIPED) was established in 1997 as the Oman Centre for Investment Promotion and Export Development (OCIPED). OCIPED was renamed as a government-run authority by Royal Decree No. 52/2011, issued on 27th March 2011. On 26th May 2012, Royal Decree No. 35/2012 promulgated the system of the PAIPED and affiliated it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PAIPED's main mission is to facilitate investment in Oman and develop exports of products and services of Omani origin from Oman to overseas markets. PAIPED works closely with all government agencies to ensure Oman's competitiveness as the best place to conduct business. With its network of repesentatives all over the world, PAIPED has the network to assist any business established in Oman grow in the international market.

The Authority is also concerned with attracting foreign investments by facilitating all transactions and realizing 'economic weight for the Sultanate' by following up economic developments in the world.

The Public Authority for Social Insurance:

The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) provides social insurance cover for nationals employed in the private sector. It was set up for this purpose under Royal Decree No. 72/1992.

PASI aims to improve the quality of its services and promote mutual trust and satisfaction between employers and insured employees within the available resources and in line with laws and regulations in force.

Royal Decree No.44/2013 issued on 25th September 2013 promulgated the Social Insurance System for all self-employed Omanis, whether businessmen, doctors or fishermen.

Amendments were made to some provisions of the Social Security Law by Royal Decree No. 61/2013, issued on 3lst October 2013. This raised the minimum pension from RO150 to RO202.500/US$526 per month.

The Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve:

The Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve was set up as an independent legal entity under Royal Decree No 62/1980, issued on 5th July 1980. It is responsible for storing and managing the State's basic foodstuffs as a food reserve. A plan is being implemented to increase its storage capacity.

The Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP):

On February 26, 2011 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued orders for the establishment of an independent consumer protection authority. Two days later, on 28th February 2011, Royal Decree No 26/2011 was issued setting up the Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP).

On 5th April 2011, the Authority's regulations were promulgated by Royal Decree No 53/2011.

Since being established, the PACP has introduced a series of laws, regulations and legislative measures to enforce its prerogatives, which include ensuring price stability, and educating consumers to identify and resist misleading advertising. It receives and checks up on complaints from consumers and associations, seeks to resolve them and maintains a constant watch on commercial practices and the movement of goods and services. PACP also seeks to protect and reinforce consumer rights; ensure the availability of basic commodities; encourage competition and combat fraud monopolies and other practices harmful to the national economy. It also prepares plans for action to protect and reinforce consumer's rights.

The Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm:

The Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD) was established under Royal Decree No 119/2011 on 26th October 2011. The decree defines the special economic zone as the *wilayat* of Duqm in the Governorate of Al Wusta and states that the Authority may open branches or offices in the Sultanate or abroad.

SEZAD manages, regulates, and develops all economic activities in Duqm. It plans, designs, and implements long term strategies for infrastructural development and attracts investments to promote a wide spectrum of economic activities. It also oversees the urban expansion of the modern Duqm city while protecting the environment.

The Public Authority for Radio and Television:

On 22nd October 2011, His Majesty the Sultan issued Royal Decree No. 100/2011 amending some of the provisions of Royal Decree No 180/2010 on the establishment of the Public Authority for Radio and Television (PART) and the promulgation of its bylaw and regulations.

The Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm manages, regulates, and develops all economic activities in Duqm.

PART aims to fulfil its media mission of raising the general level of public awareness, instilling noble values and embodying the citizens' sense of national identity. At the same time it seeks to enhance the Omani national's potential in all fields and expand his or her knowledge of the outside world and the events taking place in the international arena.

PART has extended the time slots allocated for live radio and TV transmissions, discussion programmes on general and specific development-related topics, and coverage of issues that are relevant to society as a whole.

The Public Authority for Manpower Register

The Public Authority for Manpower Register, which was established by Royal Decree No. 98/2011 on 18th October 2011, comes under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers and is a financially and administratively independent legal entity.

On 19th May 2013, Royal Decree No 32/2013 was issued to amend some of the provisions of the regulations for the Public Authority for Manpower Register. This Decree specifies the powers and prerogatives of the Authority, which is entrusted with the establishment of a comprehensive database of manpower in various departments within the government sector (civil, military and security) and in private sector establishments. The database includes personal details, information about employment and professional status, level of education, and practical training.

The Authority has taken the necessary steps to identify and register data on job seekers and build a database containing their personal details, education, practical experience, and other relevant information, providing data on the nation's manpower in the labour market. These steps have included online linking of all government sectors (civil, military and security) and private sector establishments.

The Authority identifies and registers citizens who have been appointed to the government sector (civil, military and security) and private sector establishments. It provides the necessary data on recruitment and employment procedures in the Sultanate to assist departments responsible for planning effective employment policies in the state sector. It also helps private sector establishments, and guides educational and training policies by calibrating education, training and professional skills and experience on the one hand with the practical needs of the labour market on the other

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation:

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation, established under Royal Decree No 33/2012 on 26th May 2012, is a financially and administratively independent legal entity based in Muscat Governorate.

The Authority's remit includes regulating the civil aviation sector and upgrading its performance in line with the rapid progress taking place in aviation and airports around the world, as well as recruiting

technical aviation expertise and improving the position of national employees in that sector.

The Authority is also responsible for determining the criteria to be used for regulating the civil aviation sector and the activities of air transport operations in the Sultanate.

The Public Authority for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises:

The Public Authority for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was established under Royal Decree No 36/2013, issued on 30th May 2013, and be affiliated to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It shall enjoy financial and administrative independence and shall be eligible to own fixed and moveable properties, manage and take action on them..

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation remit includes regulating the civil aviation sector and upgrading its performance in line with the rapid progress taking place in aviation and airports around the world.

The Authority aims to achieve overall development of SMEs, to strengthen the and role in providing more employment opportunities for the youth of Oman, reinforcing competition between established SMEs, as well as assisting SMEs in adding value to the economy and participating in economic diversification.

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance:

The Public Authority for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was established under Royal Decree No 36/2013, issued on 30th May 2013.

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance was established under Royal Decree No. 3/2013, issued on 8th January 2013. It is a legal entity that is materially and administratively independent and it operates under the jurisdiction of the Royal Oman Police (ROP). On 14th January 2013, the Authority inaugurated its first stage of traffic monitoring as part of the efforts being exerted by the ROP to achieve traffic safety for all road users alongside a programme of intensive traffic patrols.

Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences:

The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences (ONCECS) was set up under Royal Decree No 5/74, issued on 16th September 1974. Its main functions include liaising between Arab and international organizations involved in education, culture and science (UNESCO, ALESCO and ISESCO) and the educational and cultural authorities and bodies concerned in the Sultanate.

The Commission promotes and publicises Oman's heritage and the Sultanate's efforts in educational, cultural and scientific fields. It cooperates with the UNESCO, ALESCO and ISESCO in areas in the interest of mutual understanding and interaction among people belonging to different cultures.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation is awarded biennially through the UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme. The prize is given in recognition of a distinguished contribution to environmental conservation made by individuals, groups, institutions or organizations in line with UNESCO policy and programmes.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation is the first Arab award to be established

internationally for environmental conservation. It was instituted on the initiative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in June1989 with UNESCO's approval and blessing.

On 22nd October 2013 it was announced that the prize had been co-won by the National Forest Holding 'State Forests' of Poland and the Endangered Wildlife Trust of South Africa.

The National Human Rights Commission:

Reflecting His Majesty's continued commitment to the welfare of Oman's citizens and human rights in the Sultanate over the past 40 years, Sultan Qaboos issued Royal Decree No 124/2008 on 15th November 2008 setting up the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and defining its prerogatives. The Decree states that the Commission is a legal entity with operational independence. Based in Muscat, the Commission comes under the jurisdiction of the State Council (*Majlis al Dawla).*

On 20th February 2013, Royal Decree No 10/2013 was issued on the appointment of members of the National Human Rights Commission, which comprises 14 members (including 3 Omani women) representing different departments.

It was announced in October 2013 that the NHRC had received membership of the Asia-Pacific Forum (APF-NHRI), its first membership at the international level.

The National Youth Committee:

The National Youth Committee was established under Royal Decree No 117/2011, issued on 26th October 2011. The Decree defines the Committee's aims and lays down its internal regulations.

The Committee comes under the jurisdiction of the Chairman of the State Council. It is an independent legal entity which seeks to open up channels of constructive communication and productive dialogue with or between the Sultanate's different youth groups with the aim of promoting a sense of allegiance to the nation and its leader.

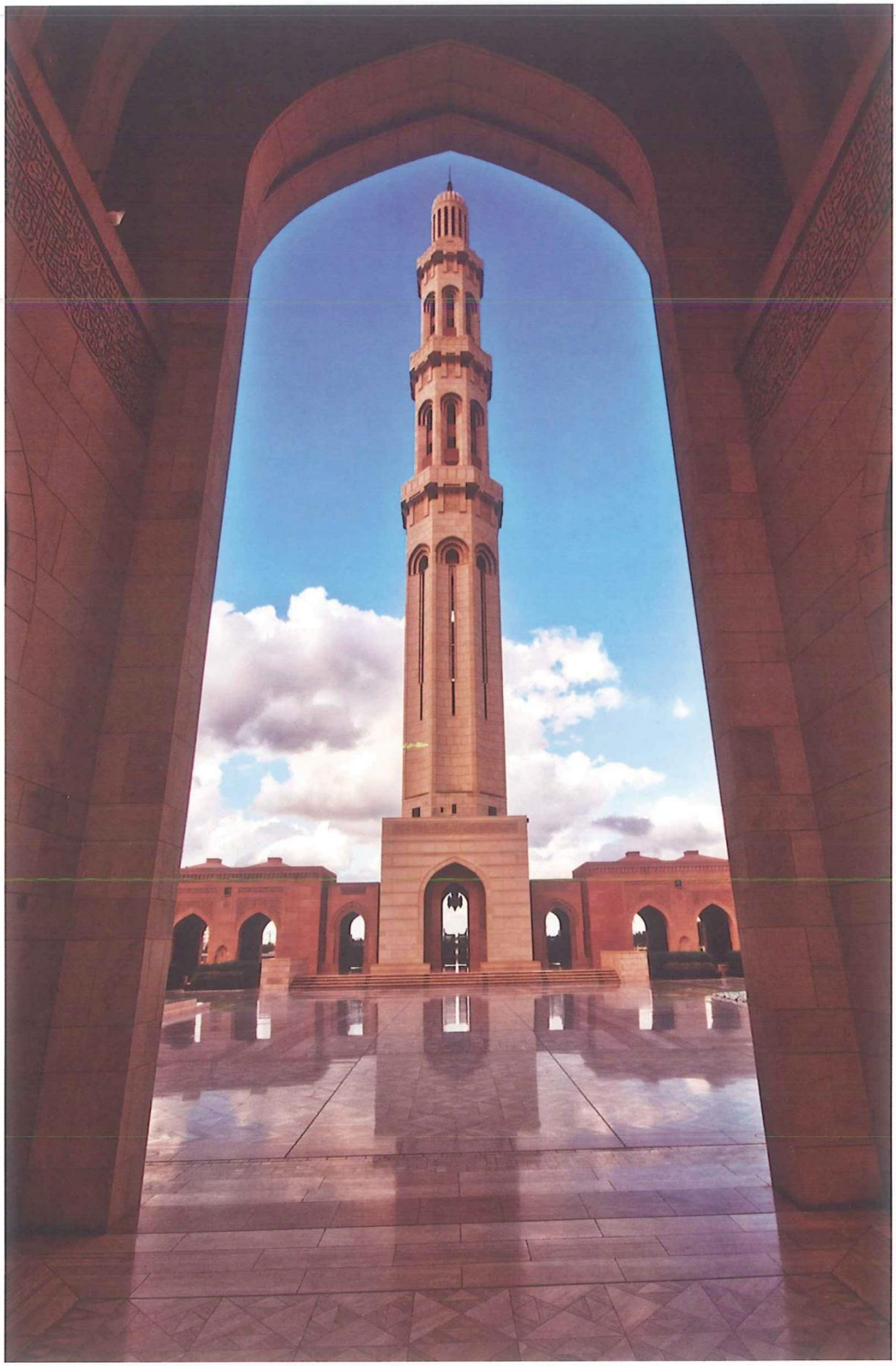
Its functions also include instilling religious values and the values of good citizenship, and promoting attachment to Oman's cultural heritage, the principles and practices of interaction and dialogue between different social groups, and the concepts and principles of social work and community service.

The Committee also seeks to raise awareness among young people about the legislative measures which define their obligations towards the State and society and guarantee their personal rights and freedoms in line with the provisions of the Basic Law of the State.

The National Crisis Management Committee:

The Crisis Management Committee was set up at His Majesty's instruction in June 2010 to manage crises and establish protocols to ensure prompt response to exceptional circumstances requiring immediate services and/or subsistence and medical assistance.

Sovereignty of The Law and Access to Legal Action



4 Sovereignty of The Law and Access to Legal Action

The establishment of the Omani judicial system is an historic achievement. This system has kept pace with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos's vision of a modern state, in which the rule of law prevails through a distinct and comprehensive system, ensuring a bright future for the nation.

The prosperous reign of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has enriched Oman's judicial heritage, which goes back 1,400 years. Over the past four decades, the Omani judicial system has been restructured into a modern institution that complies with international principles.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, as Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, has emphasised the important role played by the Council at the current stage of the Omani Renaissance.

In laying the foundations of the modern state, His Majesty the Sultan oversaw the establishment of the Omani judicial system, in his role as Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council. The Council is of central importance among the institutions of the modern state, and is a key indicator of the country's development. This Royal patronage has brought considerable esteem to the judicial system of Oman.

The enormous gains seen in the legal and judicial sector are only some of the positive characteristics of the modern state.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, as Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, has emphasised the important role played by the Council at the current stage of the Omani Renaissance. The Council is the result of the cumulative achievements of four decades of development in response to the aspirations of the people of Oman.

When chairing the Supreme Judicial Council on 1st April 2013, His Majesty the Sultan described the role with which the Council has been entrusted and its role with respect to judicial policy. The role of the Council is to ensure smooth running of the work undertaken by the courts and public prosecution departments, to streamline litigation procedures and make them accessible to litigants, and to ensure the sovereignty of the law as the foundation of governance in the State. The Council also serves to secure rights and liberties for all, and ensure that the overall process is efficient, so that justice can be served fully, and people can enjoy all of their rights.

Royal Decree No 9/2012 set out the goals that the Supreme Judicial Council was established to serve. These include maintaining the independence of the judiciary, developing its values, ethics and morals and strengthening them;



The court complex in the *wilayat* of Ibra, Sharqiyah Governorate

and maintaining its integrity. The Council enjoys full jurisdiction, shaping the general policy of the judiciary, ensuring the efficient running of the courts and the Public Prosecution Service. It also facilitates legal action and making legal proceedings accessible to litigants, and examines job nominations submitted by the competent authorities with respect to positions in the judiciary and public prosecution. This includes membership of the Administrative Court, whether by appointment or promotion, in cases involving positions which the law stipulates must be filled by Royal Decree. Other duties include proposing draft laws pertaining to the judiciary, and providing advice on all draft laws submitted by the authorities concerned, as well as on agreements between Oman and other countries, and any other subjects His Majesty sees fit to be put before the Council for consideration and comment.

Royal Decrees 9/2012 and 10/2012, issued on 29th February 2012, dealt with the Supreme Judicial Council and the regulation of judicial affairs, providing the basis for the "state of institutions and laws". The Civil Transactions Law was enacted by Royal Decree No. 29/2013 on 6th May 2013, laying a new foundation for the state of institutions and laws. This foundation was laid by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, and made the principle of justice to be the basis for government in its aims and practice.

The enormous gains seen in the legal and judicial sector are only some of the positive characteristics of the modern state. They are the outcome of the excellent planning

that was undertaken in order to establish a justice system designed to maintain the country's core values. This planning was open to modern developments, and made it a priority to raise a 'judicial generation' capable of responding to the changing needs of Oman, as it lives with the spirit of the age and interacts with its surroundings.

The judicial system has responded to the needs of modern Oman by keeping abreast of the country's growth and development. The judicial system follows the highest international standards in terms of its infrastructure and the efficiency of the staff in this sector who have taken on this noble responsibility. His Majesty the Sultan's support for the budget for the Omani justice system for a period of 10 years is testimony to his attention to the protection of the gains made within the sector.



Judicial Inspection Directorate-General

The Judicial Inspection Directorate-General is a source of great pride for the Omani judicial system. The Directorate-General is entrusted with monitoring the performance of judges and verifying litigation procedures. Its success comes in addition to the successes achieved by other institutions, and has enabled the Omani justice system to become a leading judicial system in the Arab world on the basis of its integrity and impartiality. The judicial authority in the country has selected the most competent and experienced judges, and entrusted them with the responsibility of upholding the integrity of the system, maintaining transparency and monitoring the courts and their rulings, dealing with problems if or when they occur.

The judicial system in the Sultanate enjoys full autonomy in taking decisions and issuing verdicts.

An advanced justice system

The judicial system in the Sultanate enjoys full autonomy in taking decisions and issuing verdicts. This is explained by Article 60 of the Basic Law of the State, which states that the "Judicial Authority is independent and its functions are exercised by the different types and grades of



His Majesty chairs a meeting of the Supreme Judicial Council

courts which issue judgements in accordance with the law."

The significant progress in the development of the Omani justice system in recent years has been acknowledged internationally. Oman has been recognised as having one of the best judicial systems of its kind in the world, due to its impartiality, transparency and its independent legislature.

The Administrative Affairs Council

The Administrative Affairs Council was established under Royal Decree No 90/99, which promulgated the Judicial Authority Law. Article 16 states that "The Judiciary shall have an Administrative Affairs Council headed by the Chairman of the Supreme Court; its members shall comprise the three longest-serving deputy chairmen of the Supreme Court, as well as the Attorney General, the longest-serving Court of Appeal chairman and the longest-serving Primary Court chairman."

Royal Decree No 10/2012 on

regularising the management of judiciary affairs states in Article One that "The Administrative Affairs Council, as stipulated in the aforesaid Judiciary Law, shall exercise the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. The Council chairman shall exercise the jurisdictions and powers delegated to the Minister of Justice, as stipulated in the law, except for those stipulated in Articles 78 and 99 of the law."

Royal Decree No. 54/2012, issued on 10th November 2012, established a Secretariat-General for the Administrative Affairs Council for the Judiciary. The Secretariat-General will assist the Council and its chairman in practicing their legally established powers.

During 2012, the courts heard 103,000 cases at different levels, including 68,735 cases in the primary courts alone.

The Authority for Resolving Conflicts of Jurisdiction and Provisions

The Authority for Resolving Conflicts of Jurisdiction and Provision was established under Royal Decree No 88/2008. It is responsible for ruling on conflicts of jurisdiction between the different courts and decides the ruling to be followed in the event of a conflict between provisions and rulings.

The 2012 figures indicate a growth in applications filed to Reconciliation Committees. More than 23,300 cases of three different types of cases were registered within the Sultanate.

The Judicial Authority Law provides for the structuring of this Authority within the framework of the Supreme Court. The Authority consists of the Chairman of the Supreme Court and five of his longest-serving deputies or the longest-serving among its judges, to whom is added the Chairman of the Administrative Court and the three longest-serving advisers of the court.

The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court, the highest court in the Sultanate, rules on the extent to which the laws and statutes comply with the Basic Law of the State and its provisions. In addition to overseeing the correct application of the Law by courts and monitoring judges' rulings and the administration of justice,it also rules on the appeals filed before it.

The Chairman of the Supreme Court undertakes the chairmanship of the Administrative Affairs Council in all that pertains to the occupational affairs of judges. There is also a Directorate-General of Judicial Inspection comprising judges of the Supreme Court and courts of appeal.

The Courts of Appeal

The courts of appeal hear appeals against rulings by primary courts. Each appeal court consists of three judges. There are courts of appeal in all governorates of the Sultanate.

The Primary Courts

The primary courts rule on civil and commercial cases, requests for arbitration, personal status cases and general, labour, tax, rent and other cases filed before them in accordance with the Law. The Sultanate's 42 primary courts are to be found throughout the country.

The Omani courts currently include several specialised judicial circuits that deal with rent, traffic accidents, human trafficking and other matters.

During 2012, the courts heard 103,000 cases at different levels,

including 68,735 cases in the primary courts alone.

The Notary Public Departments

The Notary Public Departments, which are covered by their own law promulgated under Royal Decree No 40/2004, play a vital role in safeguarding rights and the stability of transactions and working practices. These Departments produce documents, powers of attorney and marriage and divorce certificates and attest signatures. The Sultanate's 60 Notary Public Departments are independent departments located in all governorates.

The interactive voice response system of the Notary Public is part of an electronic package for the computerisation of the justice system. This allows the digital checking of authenticity of documents and powers of attorney, and allows for their cancellation electronically.

In August 2013 the Ministry of Justice launched the fingerprint reader service at the Public Notary offices as a step towards digital format in record keeping. The devices will ensure electronic verification of the identity of all visitors desirous of obtaining official records. Fifty-four reading devices have gone into operation in the first stage.

The Reconciliation Committees

The Reconciliation Committees were set up under the Reconciliation Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 98/2005. They were established to ease pressure on the departments normally responsible for dealing with litigation and simplifying procedures for parties engaged in legal actions. Their aim is to enable those involved in disputes to reach a compromise through means based on Omani tradition, allowing amicable relations to be maintained between the members of the community.

While recourse to these committees is voluntary and does not prevent the parties involved from applying to the courts, the law gives a committee a two-month period to effect reconciliation in resolving the dispute filed before it and also allows it to consult people with expertise in technical matters if it considers such a course of action appropriate.

The 2012 figures indicate a growth in applications filed to Reconciliation Committees. More than 23,300 cases of three different types of cases (personal status, civil and commercial) were registered within the Sultanate.

The Higher Institute of Justice

The Higher Institute of Justice was set up by the initiative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, in fulfilment of an announcement His Majesty the Sultan made in Nizwa, which is a centre of heritage and scholarship.

The Institute is designed to allow a large intake of students undertaking postgraduate diplomas in juridical sciences. The Institute also provides training programmes, specialised courses and practical on-the-job training programmes.

From the day it opened on 26th February 2011, the Higher Institute of Justice commenced its noble mission by training dozens of court employees. The first academic year that commenced in March that year saw the launch of a training and academic programme aimed at producing a new generation of judges and legal professionals to serve the noble cause of justice.

The Public Prosecution Department

The Public Prosecution Department is a pillar of the Omani judicial authority and plays a fundamental role in ensuring the independence of the judiciary by serving the public interest, accelerating litigation procedures and reinforcing the impartiality of Court rulings. Royal Decrees 9/2012 and 10/2012 reinforce this role so that the justice system is given greater independence, ensuring that it reflects international standards.

An independent Public Prosecution has been fully established, enabling the department to perform its duties as an independent department focused on protecting the rights of individuals and the public.

The independence of the Public Prosecution Department was confirmed by Royal Decree No 25/2011, issued on 28thFebruary 2011, and stating that the department shall be administratively and financially independent and that the Public Prosecutor shall exercise the powers originally entrusted to the Inspector General of Police and Customs under the Public Prosecution Law.

In this way, an independent Public Prosecution has been fully established, enabling the department to perform its duties as an independent department focused on protecting the rights of individuals and the public.

Statistics confirm that the Omani Public Prosecutor has reduced the level of crime with respect to frequency and type, and this has been achieved through modern methods and practices. In 2012, the Department of Public Prosecutions dealt with 34,480 cases.

Legal Affairs

The Ministry of Legal Affairs plays a vital role in establishing and updating the integrated Omani legal system – a system based on the Royal decrees and laws which are enacted from time to time and all of which derive their authority from the Basic Law of the State.

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The Ministry's main responsibilities include upgrading laws to keep pace with the Sultanate's progress and development, as well as preparing draft Royal decrees and laws and taking measures for their promulgation. It also reviews draft Royal decrees, laws, statutes and decisions produced by ministries and government departments before they are promulgated and published in the Official Gazette.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs also provides legal opinions and issues official approved interpretations of Royal decrees, laws and statutes when circumstances so require. These are binding on all government departments with the exception of the judiciary.

The Ministry studies and reviews draft international treaties, conventions and agreements to which the Sultanate becomes a party, offers opinions on applications to join existing agreements, conventions and treaties, and reviews contracts before they are signed if they entail financial commitments on the part of the state in excess of half a million



A fair and impartial judiciary is a vital mainstay of a modern state

Omani Rials. It also protects the government's interest in disputes arising out of the implementation of contracts to which the latter is a party.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs publishes the Official Gazette, which contains the official versions of decrees, laws, statutes and ministerial decisions, along with announcements and other materials which the law requires to be published in the Official Gazette.

To provide easy access for those with an interest in the law, a bound volume of the Royal decrees, Royal commands, laws and statutes of a legislative nature issued during the course of the year is issued annually; to date, 40 such volumes have been published.

Other publications of the Ministry include books explaining the legal principles underlying opinions on legal issues. These appear annually and contain the texts of legal opinion issued by the Ministry, together with the legal principles from which they are derived.

RELIGION

The Omanis played a significant role in spreading the faith of Islam, especially when their trading and seafaring activities brought them into contact with other people and cultures, particularly in East and Central Africa, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean littoral states, China and numerous ports on the Asian continent.

With their long experience of other civilizations, the Omanis shun all forms of fanaticism and extremism and are on the side of equanimity in all things, supporting calls for understanding and freedom

of opinion and belief. It is therefore no surprise that religious tolerance is one of the distinctive features of modern day Oman.

Speaking at the opening of the Council of Oman's fifth term on 31st October, 2011, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos noted:

"The more thought becomes diverse, open and free of fanaticism, the more it becomes a correct and sound basis for building generations and promoting the progress of nations and the advancement of societies."

This attitude does not only apply to the realm of ideas and the culture; it is equally true of the legal system that regulates behaviour and relations in Oman, and the Basic Law of the State, which guarantees personal freedoms and the right to exercise them within the limits of the Law.

Article 28 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that "The freedom to practice religious rites in accordance with established custom is guaranteed, provided that it does not infringe on public order or decency."

At the same time, Article 282 of Oman's Personal Status Law guarantees those rights to the country's non-Muslim residents provided that they do not conflict with Omani traditions. There are several houses of worship in the Sultanate where followers of other religions can practice their beliefs in freedom and safety under the protection of the Law.

In line with its traditional policy of coexistence, the Sultanate makes every effort to foster the concepts of mutual respect and tolerance,



which the world of today needs more than ever before. Its efforts are not limited to Omani diplomacy (though this is an area in which it has been strikingly successful); they also extend to the intellectual sphere in which ideas are discussed in depth with the aim of bridging the gaps between peoples, cultures and followers of different faiths and establishing common ground at a purely human level.

The US State Department's annual International Religious Freedom Report for 2012 hailed

The Omanis played a significant role in spreading the faith of Islam, especially when their trading and seafaring activities brought them into contact with other people and cultures.



His Majesty offers Eid al Adha prayers at the Sultan Said bin Taimur Mosque in al Khuwair, Muscat Governorate

the Sultanate's efforts to combat religious extremism. It noted that Oman's message is one of a "moderate and tolerant Islam," which is reflected in the freedom of belief enjoyed by members of other religions in the country, who are able to perform their own religious rites without restriction or harassment. It added that the Sultanate allows minorities to practice their faiths in complete freedom and that in this respect it is totally unlike those states which are prepared to tolerate violations of religious freedoms.

The report pointed out that in the Sultanate there is no ban on minorities wearing their own religious dress or symbols, and that this is further proof of its policy of religious tolerance.

This was not the first State Department report to hail religious freedom in the Sultanate.

At the opening of the Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*)'s fifth term on 31st October 2011, His Majesty the Sultan stated: "The more thought becomes diverse, open and free of fanaticism, the more it becomes

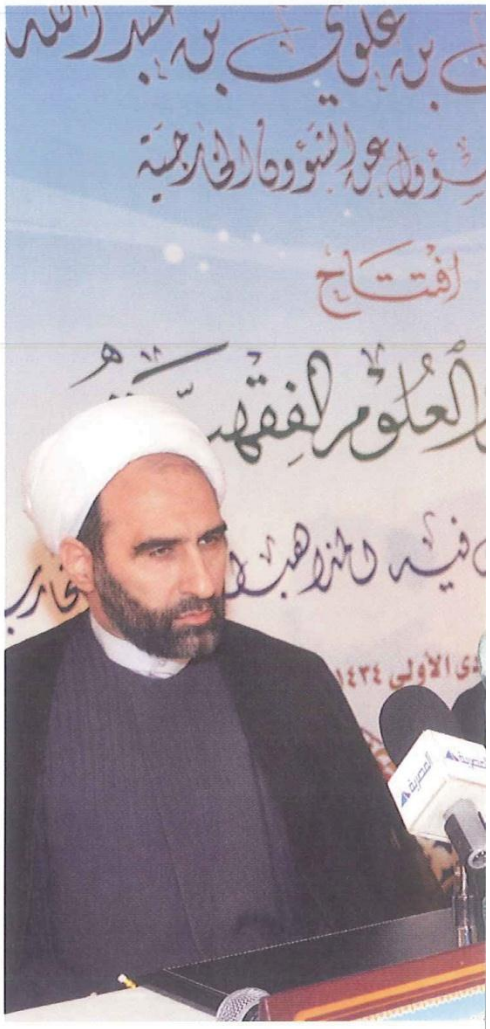
a correct and sound basis for the building of generations, the progress of nations and the advancement of societies."

The approach adopted by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs is inspired by this vision and the role played by the Sultanate over the course of its history. The Ministry promotes the true principles of our faith, supports and maintains religious institutions and trains personnel to be able to embrace the spirit of the modern age without abandoning their heritage and traditions. In addition to being responsible for regulating religious affairs in the Sultanate, its main functions also include upholding the spiritual and religious values that are rooted on the Shariah of Islam, since these provide the basis for producing good citizens who believe in God and the True Faith.

A Symposium entitled 'Islamic jurisprudence in a changing world', was held in Muscat from 9th to 12th April 2013, bringing together scholars from all sects of the Islamic nations with the aim of restoring the effective and pioneering role of Islamic jurisprudence in the field of legislation.

In this context the Symposium entitled 'Islamic jurisprudence in a changing world', was held in Muscat from 9th to 12th April 2013, bringing together scholars from all sects of the Islamic nations with the aim of restoring the effective and pioneering role of Islamic jurisprudence sciences in the field of legislation. The symposium, which was attended by more than 100 scholars, intellectuals and researchers studied and discussed 36 working papers. Subjects covered included the ability of Islamic jurisprudence sciences to deal with the realities of the world today, citizenship, immigration and patriotism, and the technological revolution.

The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs publishes a widely-read quarterly magazine entitled *Al Tafahum* (Mutual Understanding). It aims to reinforce



Islamic principles of tolerance and dialogue, and highlight Oman's role in promoting these beliefs.

A series of exhibitions on the theme "Religious Tolerance in Oman" began in April 2011. Its scope has been expanded and its name amended to "Message of Islam". These exhibitions focus on three themes: Religious Tolerance, Joint Understanding and Peaceful Co-existence.

Oman works to promote a true understanding of Islam, which is a moderate religion, to help counter the bigotry that has led to the spread of a stereotypical and erroneous view of Islam and Muslims. In doing so, it seeks to encourage greater intellectual and cultural interaction between peoples. A series of exhibitions on the theme "Religious Tolerance in Oman" began in April 2011. Its scope has been expanded and its name



Topics discussed at a Jurisprudence Symposium included Islamic Jurisprudence's ability to deal with the realities of the world today

amended to "Message of Islam". These exhibitions focus on three themes: Religious Tolerance, Joint Understanding and Peaceful Co-existence. The exhibition has been expanded to cover 16 countries in different continents of the world. It is being held in America, Brazil, Australia, Russia, Canada, Portugal, Pakistan, India, Turkey, South Korea, New Zealand, Tanzania, Indonesia and Malaysia -- and it will be in 19 languages.

In 2012, the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs produced three documentary films aimed at highlighting the different experiences of the Sultanate in tolerance, coexistence, Islamic arts and religious discourse. These films were highly commended, locally and internationally.

Also, the Sultanate continues to host a number of professors and specialists in Islamic studies annually. The programme seeks to enhance dialogue and understanding through clear-cut visions based on the other's perspective of foreign cultures, heritage and expertise.

Under the directives of

His Majesty the Sultan and in implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution No 65/5 of 2010 allocating the first week of February every year to World Interfaith Harmony Week, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences held a "Week of Rapprochement and Human Harmony" in February 2013. The programme was designed to promote religious and cultural understanding, as well as the development of increased interaction between different civilisations.

There are Sultan Qaboos academic chairs in some of the leading American, European, Asian and Australian universities, all of which promote the study of Arab and Islamic civilization and inter-religious dialogue, creating a framework for mutual understanding and interaction with other societies. The Sultanate has also set up - or supported the establishment of – several cultural centres and associations in various parts of the world to strengthen bilateral cultural ties.

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For example, the Sultan Qaboos Centre in Washington plays an active role in communication and interaction with American society. A similar role is undertaken by the Lebanese-Omani Cultural Centre in Beirut and the Liqaa International Centre for Dialogue which comes under the jurisdiction of the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

The Sultanate has also set up - or supported the establishment of – several cultural centres and associations in various parts of the world to strengthen bilateral cultural ties.

In implementation of the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and in recognition of the role of scholars, the Sultanate also set up the building of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of



Sciences (Al Bayrouni University) in Tashkent. Meanwhile, the 'Sultanate's Corner' in the Russian National Library serves as an important source for the Russian people to know about the Sultanate.

The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs is streamlining its services, including the use of modern technology to serve the public. It also develops and invests in all the different funds of awqaf (religious endowment) and assets including mosques, schools, charities and private



The 'Message of Islam' exhibitions, which are touring the world, have contributed to a better understanding of the Islamic religion

awqaf -- a total of 147,548 such properties and their investments stand at more than RO350 million.

The Zakat Fund promotes religious awareness and develops procedures for the collecting and distributing of Zakat with a view to simplifying them for the benefit of the individual and society. The Ministry oversees about 14,000 mosques and it supervises Holy Quran memorisation schools and summer centres in the governorates and *wilayats* of the Sultanate. It also publishes books on religious subjects, as well as the Holy Qur'an, the digital Qur'an and other publications.

The Office of His Eminence the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate promotes a proper understanding of Islam, based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In seeking to instil the values and principles of the Islamic faith, the Institute of Sharia Sciences works to promote the messages of tolerance and love, along with a spirit of cultural interchange and respect for other ideas, views and practices.

Consultation (Shura) in Oman
Steps towards wider participation in decision making



5 Consultation (Shura) in Oman Steps towards wider participation in decision making

Gradual and considered steps have been taken over the years towards building Oman's distinctive experience of democracy and the greater inclusion of the public in the decision-making process. This has been facilitated by means of the consultative institutions. The year 2012 saw another major development, the opening of the new building of the Council of Oman (Majlis Oman) in the Al Bustan area of Muscat. This event took place under the auspices of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, who also opened the annual meeting of the Council of Oman on 12th November 2012.

In his Royal speech at the opening of the Council of Oman's annual meeting, His Majesty the Sultan conveyed his wise directive and enlightened vision regarding matters of importance to the Omani people. He encouraged the people to be determined.

The Council of Oman meets at the direction of His Majesty to discuss matters put before it by him, and takes its decisions by majority vote.

In his Royal speech at the opening of the Council of Oman's annual meeting, His Majesty the Sultan conveyed his wise directive and enlightened vision regarding matters of importance to the Omani people. He encouraged the people to be determined to build on the successes and achievements of the Omani Renaissance that have come to fruition over the years.

The inauguration of the new building of the Council of Oman provided an opportunity to discuss Oman's experience of consultation and to evaluate this experience. After reaching its 5th term, which commenced in 2011/2012, the Council was granted a range of legislative and regulatory powers, marking a significant achievement in the history of the Council.

These legislative powers transformed the roles of the State Council and the Consultation Council. The role of the Councils had previously been to submit recommendations, proposals and studies. They now had the power to participate more widely in making legislative decisions, either through the proposal of new draft laws or the revision of existing ones. This follows the current and future stages of development, and gives a fundamental role to the Council of Oman.

His Majesty the Sultan reaffirmed in his Royal address the principles of consultation in Oman. These aim to facilitate the participation of Omanis in building the nation with competence, wisdom and effectiveness. His Majesty the Sultan's affirmation

of these principles stems from his Royal vision and commitment to the values of cooperation and the sharing of different opinions. In this light, His Majesty the Sultan stated:

"It has been a successful experience, and for this we praise God. It has developed in harmony with the different stages of the Renaissance and in a manner compatible with society's values and principles. In doing so, it has sought to produce a nation of individuals who are not only aware of their rights and duties, but are also able to express their opinions and ideas in civilized language and with sound logic and wisdom derived from a proper understanding of things as they really are."

The Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*) consists of the State Council (*Majlis al Dawla*) – whose members are appointed by His Majesty the Sultan from among distinguished Omani citizens with the highest levels of expertise – and the Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*), whose members are elected by citizens as representatives of their *wilayats*. The Oman Council was granted, in its 5th term, a new set of legislative and regulatory powers marking a significant step forward in the Omani Consultation process, which began in 1991 with the creation of the Consultation Council, followed by the State Council in 1997.

Royal Decree No 99/2011, issued on 19th October 2011, amended some of provisions of the Basic Law of the State to reflect His Majesty's goal of expanding the Council of Oman's powers as set out in Royal Decree No 39/2011, issued on 12th March 2011. Article One of this Decree (39/2011) stipulated that the Council of Oman should be granted legislative and regulatory powers in accordance with the Basic Law of the State and the laws in force, while Article Two stated that a technical committee of experts should be constituted by Royal Command to draft an amendment to the Basic Law of the State in line with the provision of Article 1 of the Decree.

Under these legislative and regulatory powers granted to the Council of Oman, the chairmen of the State Council, Consultation Council and the Supreme Court and its two longest-serving deputies are to be co-opted into the Defence Council when it meets to confirm the name of the individual who will accede to the throne. The Consultation Council Chairman will henceforth be elected and the Consultation Council will have the right to cross-examine any of the service ministers on matters relating to abuse of their powers in contravention of the law.

The Council of Oman meets at the direction of His Majesty to discuss matters put before it by him, and takes its decisions by majority vote. His Majesty opens the Council's annual sessions – which also marks the start of the annual sessions of the State Council and Consultation Council – and delivers his annual speech setting out the guidelines and priorities for national action, which are then adopted by the different state institutions and authorities. His Majesty the Sultan opened the new building of the Council of Oman

on 12th November 2012 in the Al Bustan area of Muscat and presided over the 5th term's opening.

His Majesty the Sultan stressed: "We hope that the halls of this great building, which we have opened in the name of God and with His blessing, will provide a constructive forum for discussing and dealing with issues in a wise manner, thereby demonstrating clearly to all observers – whether at home or abroad – that Omanis are clearly capable of contributing their enlightened thought and mature views to make decisions that will serve and elevate the status of their country and enable it to achieve eminence among nations. This presents no difficulties for the people of a nation recognized for its glorious past, whose brilliant present instills in them the motivation to aspire towards broader horizons of progress and development."



The State Council seeks to benefit from its structure and prerogatives to play a vital role not only with regard to comprehensive national development, but also to the progress of Omani society .

The State Council, which comprises a selection of Omanis with expertise in various different fields, is a springboard for the sharing of deep intellectual insights. It provides a forum for active contribution to legislation.

The State Council – a vital element of national partnership

The State Council (*Majlis al Dawla*) is a cornerstone of of Oman's social structure, enhancing the achievements that have been accomplished and confirming proper foundations for a consultation (*Shura*) experience emanating from the heritage of the country, its values and its Islamic religion and pride in its history, while at the same time taking what is beneficial from methods and tools of the modern age.

Through the Consultation process, the State Council seeks to benefit from its structure and prerogatives to play a vital role not only with regard to comprehensive national development, but also to the progress of Omani society towards the full attainment of the Council's goals and objectives which His Majesty the Sultan laid down at its inception.

The State Council, which comprises a selection of Omanis with expertise in various different fields, is a springboard for the sharing of deep intellectual insights. It provides a forum for active contribution to legislation based on opinions raised during



The State Council (*Majlis al Dawla*) assists the government in implementing development in the country

its deliberations, with a view to achieving the benefits of the major national goals. The Council operates in accordance with the principle of shared differences of opinion and ideas, as underlined by His Majesty the Sultan. The Council makes a vital contribution to nationwide participation in decision making through the expertise of its members, who deal with a variety of matters with full objectivity.

The State Council consists of a chairman and members (whose number does not exceed the number of Consultation Council members) who are appointed by His Majesty the Sultan. They are selected from among former ministers and under-secretaries and those of equivalent rank, as well as former ambassadors, former senior judges, retired senior officers, dignitaries and eminent personalities from the worlds of science, literature, culture, business and academia, in addition to people who have provided distinguished service to the nation and any others whom His Majesty the Sultan sees as fit to appoint.

It is a condition that a member of the State Council be Omani, aged not less than 40 years on the date of appointment, not to have been a subject of a final verdict convicting him/her of being guilty of a felony or crime of misdemeanor or dishonesty, even if reinstated, not to have been affiliated to a security or military department or legally restrained by a court decision or inflicted with a mental disease.

Prerogatives of the State Council

The State Council, according to the Regulations of the State Council and Consultation Council, is a financially and administratively independent legal entity with its premises in the Governorate of Muscat. It has an annual session lasting not less than eight months from the date of opening of the Council of Oman.

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Article 58 of Royal Decree No 99/2011, on the prerogatives of the Council of Oman, outlines the prerogatives of the State Council in order to attain its goals. These include approving or amending draft laws forwarded to it by the Council of Ministers, proposing or approving the drafts of new laws, revising or amending existing laws, discussing and issuing recommendations about drafts of development plans, the annual state budget as forwarded by the Council of Ministers, and reviewing a copy of the annual report submitted by the State's Financial and Administrative Audit Institution.

The State Council bodies consist of the Council Chairman, the Council Office, the standing committees and the Secretariat General.

The State Council's sessions and bodies

The State Council's term is for four years. Its current fifth term is from 2011 to 2015. It began its first ordinary procedural session when it was sworn in before His Majesty the Sultan – as per the conditions stipulated in Article 3 of the "State Council and the Consultation Council Regulations" promulgated under Royal Decree No 86/97. Its two deputy chairmen were chosen along with the members of the Council Office.

Each session of the State Council lasts for at least eight months per year beginning at the time of the annual opening of the Council of Oman. The number of sittings that the State Council holds is determined by the Council Office. The State Council Chairman may summon extraordinary sittings if necessary.

The State Council bodies consist of the Council Chairman, the Council Office, the Standing Committees and the Secretariat General.

The Council Chairman oversees the work of the Council, represents it in its dealings with other bodies and speaks on its behalf. He has two deputies who are directly elected at the beginning of each Council term.

The State Council Office prepares the Council's agenda and decides on its sittings, as well as the work of its committees and the rules for running and co-ordinating their activities. It also manages the Council's business between its annual sessions.

The Standing Committees:

The State Council has six standing committees, which are the Legal Committee, the Economic Committee, the Human Resources Development Committee, the Culture and Media Committee, the Education Committee and the Social Committee. The standing committees are drawn from the Council's membership. Their job is to study draft laws referred to them, in addition to the specific topics within their jurisdiction. At the beginning of each annual session, the standing committees specify the subjects that need to be studied during the session, in line with the Council's new legislative and auditing powers.

The State Council's Secretariat General consists of the Secretary-General - appointed by Royal Decree - the Deputy Secretary-General for Sessions and Committees Affairs, the Deputy Secretary-General for Information and Research Affairs and the Deputy Secretary-General for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

The Secretary-General has an organizational and administrative function and assists the State Council and its bodies in carrying out their responsibilities.

Activities affecting the daily lives of Omani citizens:

The State Council witnessed expanded discussion of a wide range of issues affecting the daily lives of Oman's citizens. In accordance with the powers and prerogatives granted to it, the State Council discussed the State Budget 2013 and put forward a number of recommendations which were subsequently approved. It discussed the draft laws referred to it by the Consultation Council, including drafts of the following: the Law of the Child, the National Law on Measurements and Calibration, the two laws on Investment of Foreign Capital and Income Tax, the Law on Extending the Licence of Offices (and their branches), the draft law on foreign accountancy companies operating in the field of accountancy and auditing, a draft law on terms for taking time off to set up Omani businesses, a draft law on preventing abuse of animals and the draft law on practising veterinary medicine.

These laws have been submitted to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos after including the remarks put forth by the honorable members of the Council.

The State Council takes a keen interest in international relations, extending bridges of communication and fostering bilateral ties both at the regional and international levels. This is undertaken through exchanges of visits and parliamentary cooperation with representative councils and special parliamentary institutions, operating in accordance with the bicameral system. The aim of these interactions is to present a true picture of the Omani Consultation process to the rest of the world with respect to the development of a balanced democratic process drawn from the nation's heritage, its values and the Islamic Sharia. It also aims to show that Omanis take pride in their history and take what is beneficial with respect to

the developments of the modern age including its technologies. In pursuance of this tradition, recent years have seen an active exchange of visits with other regional and international institutions and Consultation assemblies.

Consultation Council (*Majlis Al Shura*) ... a genuine partnership in decision-making

In its current 7th Term, the Consultation Council witnessed many significant changes and shifts towards exercising a fully-fledged parliamentary role based on the tasks entrusted to the Council under Royal Decree No 99/2011, which amended some of the provisions of the Basic Law of the State, devoting the whole of Chapter Five to the Council of Oman in general and Consultation Council in particular. This contributed to advancing the Omani experience to full parliamentary practice, and boosted the plan to enhance the "State of Institutions and Law". It also opened up wider opportunities for cooperation between the Consultation Council and the government in all that is of interest to the nation, and boosts the progress of comprehensive national development.

The Consultation Council approved a number of draft laws and international agreements which it then submitted to the government. This is one of the most salient features of the current annual sitting.

For the first time, the Council now enjoys the right to elect its own chairman from among its members, as well as additional powers when studying drafts of General State Budgets, Five-Year Plans, economic and social agreements which the government intends to conclude or join, in addition to the right to quiz ministers from service ministries on matters related to the abuse of powers in contravention of the Law.



During the second annual sitting of its 7th Term (2012/2013), the Consultation Council continued with its tasks and achievements at different levels. Parliamentary activity expanded to include both the domestic and international fronts. It held a series of sittings during which a number of ministers were hosted in order to discuss with them current and future plans and programmes in their ministries. The Council approved a new internal



The Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*) has been granted greater powers and prerogatives in its 7th Term

regulation which it drafted at the beginning of the current term to keep abreast of the development of consultation in Oman. The Consultation Council approved a number of draft laws and international agreements which it then submitted to the government. This is one of the most salient features of the current annual sitting.

Co-ordination and integration

One of the most distinctive features of Oman's Shura system is the co-ordination and cooperation that exists between the parliamentary institutions, and the different state bodies and authorities. This reflects an approach designed to serve the interests of the country and its citizens in a number of ways, ranging from the implementation of development plans and improving performance to broaden the scope of public participation in the decision-making process.

Following this approach, which was established by His Majesty the Sultan, and with

continuous communication between the Council of Ministers and the Council of Oman, a joint meeting was held on 24th April 2012 between the Council of Ministers and Consultation Council Office. The aim of this was to exchange views and formulate a joint vision for better developing capabilities that will help in the implementation of the development plans and programmes.

The prerogatives of the Consultation Council (*Majlis Al Shura*)

The Consultation Council (*Majlis Al Shura*) is a financially and administratively independent legal entity with its premises in the Governorate of Muscat.

At the commencement of the annual sitting of its 7th term, the Consultation Council entered a new stage in its service to the nation. Core legislative powers were added to the existing roles and practices of the State Council and Consultation Council. This took place under Royal Decree No 99/2011, which reinforced the work of parliament by strengthening democracy and transparency in accordance with the comprehensive development of the nation and the requirements for future wider participation of citizens in decision making.

The Consultation Council was granted the prerogative of questioning ministers on matters related to abuse of powers in contravention of the law.

The Consultation Council was granted the prerogative of questioning ministers on matters related to abuse of powers in contravention of the law. The Council is empowered to discuss these issues and submit its findings to His Majesty the Sultan. The new powers also include an obligation on service ministers to provide the Council with an annual report about the stages of implementation of projects undertaken by their ministries. The Council has the right to summon any of them to present a statement about specific matters within their ministeries, which will then be debated. The State's Financial and Administrative Audit Insitution must forward copies of its annual report to the Consultation Council and the State Council.

The Consultation Council studies and comments on draft laws and development plans, as well as draft agreements on economic and social matters. Its conclusions are then put before the Council of Ministers. The Consultation Council has the right to put forward proposals to the government on draft laws and help draft the Five-Year Development Plans. The Council's Chairman is a member of the Supreme High Committee for Five-Year Development Plans, which sets out the Plans' main features and monitors their implementation.

The Consultation Council undertakes the responsibility of discussing the Five-Year Development Plan and the General State Budget in the presence of the minister concerned, who responds to any queries the Council members raise with him before the relevant Royal Decrees are issued and come into force. The Council also studies and comments on topics referred to it by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos or the Council of Ministers, on which the Council makes

recommendations and suggestions.

The Chairman of the Consultation Council submits an annual report on the Council's activities and deliberations to His Majesty the Sultan.

Membership of the Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*)

The members of the Consultation Council represent the Sultanate's 61 *wilayats* and are elected by the public in general elections. A *wilayat* is represented by two members if it has a population of 30,000 or more and it is represented by one member if its population is less than 30,000. For each of the Council's terms, the wilayats are classified according to population and a decision to that effect is issued by the Minister of Interior.

During its 7th term (2011-2015), the Consultation Council has 84 members, including one woman, following the official results of the 15th October 2011 elections.

Sessions and bodies of the Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*)

The Consultation Council's term runs for four years beginning from the date of the declaration of the official results of its elections. The term ends on the 30th of September of the fourth year of its term. The current Council's 7th term will therefore end on 30th September 2015.

The Consultation Council has an annual session which runs for at least eight months each year. This enables the Council to hold sufficient sittings to study and debate the topics, draft laws and other matters on its agenda that are of concern to Omani society and the individual citizens. It may also hold extraordinary sittings.

The Council's annual sessions begin when His Majesty the Sultan gives his opening speech to the Council of Oman. .During the first session of the Consultation Council (2012-2013), it hosted several ministers, who delivered statements on various economic, social and service topics in open sittings that were transmitted and published via the media. The Consultation Council also studied a number of draft laws and drafts of international agreements forwarded to it by the government. It reviewed the drafts and inserted commentary, as well as proposed amendments about some provisions of the Banking Law, Foreign Capital Investment Law and the Income Tax Law, the draft law on regulating postal services, the draft of the national law on measurements and calibration, the draft law on protection of animals, and the draft law on practising the professions of medicine and veterinary medicine, besides approving a number of drafts of international laws, agreements and studies.

The Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*) bodies

The Consultation Council exercises its powers and prerogatives through its four main

bodies. They are the Chairman, the Council's Office, the standing committees and the Secretariat-General.

The Chairman oversees the Majlis's activities, manages its sittings, represents it in its dealings with other bodies and speaks on its behalf. He has the right to summon extraordinary sessions if necessary. He and his two deputies are elected at an extraordinary sitting summoned by His Majesty in accordance with Article 58 of the Basic Law of the State.

The Council Office sets the timetable and agenda for the Council's ordinary sittings in the light of the activities of the Council's committees and the topics referred to them or put before this council. It also manages the council's business between sessions.

The Secretariat-General consists of the Secretary-General who is appointed by Royal Decree and a number of employees and specialists.

The Consultation Council raised the number of its standing committees from 7 to 10. These are now the Legal Committee, the Economic and Finance Committee, the Defence and Security Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee, the Health and Environment Committee, the Education and Research Committee, the Services and Social Development Committee, the Youth and Human Resources Committee, the Food Security and Water Committee, the Media and Culture Committee and the Budget and Closing Account Committee.

The Consultation Council exercises its powers and prerogatives along recognised parliamentary lines. Its legislative and regulatory powers have been expanded since the Basic Law of the State was amended.

The Secretariat-General consists of the Secretary-General who is appointed by Royal Decree and a number of employees and specialists. The Secretariat-General assists the Consultation Council and its bodies in carrying out their tasks and facilitates all that relates to organizational and administrative procedures of relevance. The Secretariat-General plays a vital role in the success of the Council's functions. The Council debated the draft organizational structure and internal regulations with a view to developing the performance of the





The Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*) has ten standing committees

Council.

Operations and Activities

The Consultation Council exercises its powers and prerogatives along recognised parliamentary lines. Its legislative and regulatory powers have been expanded since the Basic Law of the State was amended allowing it to play a more effective part in the decision-making process and in expressing the aspirations of the country's citizens.

As well as contributing to national development and liaising with the government, monitoring the performance of the Five-Year Development Plan and involving itself in all issues of concern to Oman's citizens, the Council enjoys cordial and close relations with several Arab and foreign Islamic and international parliaments. The Chairman, or one of his deputies, takes part in the Gulf, Arab, Islamic

and international parliamentary meetings, receives senior visiting officials from abroad and undertakes visits to Arab and foreign countries to foster good relations, promote meaningful dialogue and reinforce friendly ties between Oman and the rest of the world at all levels, while at the same time highlighting the democratic development that the Sultanate continues to achieve.

Municipal Councils ... advancing public participation in decision-making

The Municipal Councils Law was promulgated under Royal Decree No 116/2011, issued on 26th October 2011. This ushered in a new era of public participation in decision making and collaboration between society and government institutions. As an additional pillar to the existing structure of consultation, Municipal Councils complement the role of the Consultative Council in drawing up development plans and serving the development interests of municipalities. They ensure that efforts exerted are in the appropriate area, reflecting the needs of each governorate. They ensure that they achieve the aspirations of Omani citizens and that these efforts support comprehensive progress in the nation's development.

The role of the Municipal Councils is rooted in the principle of partnership, cooperation and institutional solidarity.

The role of the Municipal Councils is rooted in the principle of partnership, cooperation and institutional solidarity, and in the core concept of citizen participation in building the nation and contributing to its various development programmes.

The Municipal Council Elections proceeded smoothly and no irregularities were reported.

In implementation of the Municipal Councils Law and its Byelaw No 15/2012, the first Municipal Council elections were held on 22nd December 2012, introducing 192 publicly elected representatives from across the Sultanate's 11 governorates. The distribution of elected Councillors was as follows: 26 in Muscat, 24 in Dhofar, 8 in Musandam, 8 in Al Buraimi, 26 in Al Dakhiliyah, 28 in Al Batinah North, 22 in Al Batinah South, 16 in Al Sharqiyah North, 16 in Al Sharqiyah South, 10 in Al Dhahirah and 8 in Al Wusta.

Voter turnout for the elections was 50.3%, of which 61.3% was male and 38% female, as measured by the electronic system installed in the identity card. These were the Sultanate's first digital elections and the results of the electronically counted votes were made available to the public via the internet, offering the public an opportunity to follow the process step by step.

The Municipal Council Elections proceeded smoothly and no irregularities were reported. This success represents an ideal in democratic practice, one that serves both the public interest and national spirit. Streamlined procedures, coupled with modern technology, contributed to the success with the desired objective of facilitating the participation of voters and guaranteeing the accuracy of results broadly achieved.



An Omani lady casts her vote during the Municipal Council elections in December 2012

In some *wilayats*, women led the field of candidates. Four women were elected, one each in the *wilayats* of Al Amerat, Bausher, Qurayat and Al Khabourah.

Supplementing the 192 publicly elected members, on the Municipal Councils are a number of government department representatives having grade levels no lower than director-general, or departmental director in the case of a governorate without directors-general. The authorities represented are the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, Muscat Municipality, Dhofar Municipality, and the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, Royal Oman Police and the Municipality of Sohar (for Batinah North Governorate). In addition, each Council co-opts two dignitaries of sound experience and reputation selected from citizens of each governorate by the Minister of Interior and the relevant Minister in the governorates of Muscat and Dhofar.

The Muscat Municipality Council is headed by the Chairman of Muscat Municipality and the Municipal Council of Dhofar Governorate is headed by the Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. Elsewhere the Councils are headed by the governors of the respective governorates.

Under the Municipal Councils Law the prerogatives of the Municipal Council are governed by the general policy of the state and its developmental plans. These prerogatives include contributing opinions and recommendations on the development of municipal systems and services within the boundaries of a governorate; proposing roads for construction or upgrading, as well as ideas for the enhancement of public spaces, amenities and beach areas; presenting recommendations on public health; proposing procedures for the protection of the environment from pollution; proposing projects related to water supply, waste water, lighting, schools, housing, places of worship, health centres, commercial outlets, parking lots and other utilities and public services of importance to citizens, along with development outlines for parks and entertainment areas.

The Municipal Council follows up the implementation of all these schemes in close collaboration with the departments concerned; drafting regulations for public advertisements and the positioning of commercial signboards; proposing state-of-the-art systems for the collection and recycling of waste; outlining procedures determining the use of public places, including its use by street vendors, and the oversight of restaurants, cafeterias, commercial outlets, industrial sites and areas containing hazardous materials or presenting a potential hazard to public health.

The prerogatives of the Municipal Council also include participation alongside other principal stakeholders in optimizing public benefit from development projects, as complies with the terms of the Law on Expropriation of Public Utilities; in drafting systems for the monitoring of stray animals, jointly with the departments concerned; proposing the naming of residential quarters, public spaces and roads; studying and planning urban places and presenting map recommendations for residential, commercial, industrial and tourist areas.

The Councils study proposals forwarded to them and issue decisions or recommendations on these proposals. They propose public parking, mooring and docking locations; study complaints from members of the public about issues within their jurisdiction; and mobilise the process of addressing their grievances.

The Councils determine municipality fees and their amendment, cancellation and the manner of their collection. They monitor the implementation of public services in the various governorates and provide commentary to the departments concerned. They participate along with the parties concerned in the consultation process governing the exploitation of public facilities

The Municipal Council follows up the implementation of all these schemes in close collaboration with the departments concerned.



Prior to voting citizens peruse the list of candidates contesting seats at the Municipal Council elections

within the respective governorate boundaries.

Social issues also fall within the advisory remit of the Municipal Councils, including negative or antisocial phenomena, to which they propose appropriate solutions in collaboration with the departments directly concerned. They make recommendations in relation to public transport and vehicle lease and liaise with the relevant departments. They monitor the execution of contracts related to the various governorate's financial rights and obligations.

Within a specific governorate the Municipal Councils liaise with neighbouring Councils to resolve issues related to services to villages and residential quarters. They follow up procedures to control begging and propose suitable recommendations. They suggest schemes to assist the needy and support those with limited incomes, as well as facilities benefiting orphans and the disabled.

The Municipal Councils also propose programmes to streamline relief aid to victims of fire, flooding or climatic adversity. They mobilise urgent available cash for distribution to those affected. They communicate with the local community and the private sector and hold meetings to receive development-related proposals for the various governorates.

Friendship, Dialogue and Trustworthiness Foster Development and Peace

6 Friendship, Dialogue and Trustworthiness Foster Development and Peace

The basic principles of the Sultanate's foreign policy stem from the strategic vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. This is a result of the principles of peaceful co-existence between all nations, good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and mutual respect for national sovereignty.

Since the dawn of the blessed Renaissance, the Sultanate has followed a policy of extending a hand in friendship and mutual understanding to all nations and peoples. This has earned Oman the respect and appreciation of the world. The Sultanate's foreign policy has become a school of thought in its own right and a model that is followed in international relations. This is due to the reputation Oman has gained with regard to its wisdom, good conduct, tact and consistency, and absolute confidence in taking decisions and applying them in good faith.

Since the dawn of the blessed Renaissance, the Sultanate has followed a policy of extending a hand in friendship and mutual understanding to all nations and peoples. This has earned Oman the respect and appreciation of the world.

By virtue of the wisdom and foresight of its leadership, the Sultanate has established fair and balanced relations with other countries, and has made a concerted effort to take its place among the nations of the world. Oman has played a responsible role in actively dealing with issues of international justice, solving complex international problems, and contributing to the spread of peace and security throughout the world.

Oman's internal and foreign policies reflect key aspects of the Omani national character – self-control, frankness, openness, and a willingness to engage positively with others.

Oman's internal and foreign policies reflect key aspects of the Omani national character – self-control, frankness, openness, and a willingness to engage positively with others. These policies are guided by a clear vision of how relations with other countries should be conducted. This vision stems from the wisdom and foresight of the country's leadership, as well as a sincere desire to develop friendly relations in order to bring about greater security and stability in the region, and to cultivate the best possible conditions for the development and prosperity of the people of Oman and the wider region.

In his Royal addresses, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos always stresses faith in the principles of peaceful co-existence among nations, good neighbourliness,



His Majesty grants an audience to Dr Abdul Latif bin Rashid al Zayani, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States in September 2013

non-interference in the internal affairs of others and mutual respect for national sovereignty. This stance was reiterated in his Royal address at the opening of the Fifth Term of the Council of Oman on 12th November 2012, when His Majesty the Sultan said:

"Our foreign policy is based on the call for peace, harmony, close cooperation between all nations, a commitment to the principles of righteousness, justice, equity, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means in a manner that safeguards the security, stability, well-being and prosperity of all the peoples of the world".

Within the Gulf

The strong and special relationship that links the Sultanate with its fellow member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) for the Arab states and with the Republic of Yemen is based on long-standing ties at every level, as well as the common interest these countries share in achieving a better life for their peoples now and in the future.

The Sultanate has had a positive role in promoting integration and cooperation between the AGCC states since before the establishment of the Council, and it continues to push to achieve the aspirations of its member states and peoples. This, in Oman's view, is essential for the common interests of the member



His Majesty the Sultan receives Dr Mohammed Yousef al Magariaf, Chairman of the Libyan National Congress, at Hisn al Shamoukh in April 2013

states. On a practical level it will be a further step along the road to Gulf citizenship, thereby providing better conditions for closer cooperation and coordination between the AGCC states and Yemen, as well as between AGCC states and Iran, thus enhancing stability and prosperity for all countries and peoples of the region.

His Majesty the Sultan appointed His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, to head the Sultanate's delegation on his behalf at the AGCC Leaders' 33rd Summit held in Bahrain in December 2012. HH Sayyid Fahd also headed the Sultanate's delegation at the AGCC Consultative Meeting held in Riyadh in May 2012.

In affirming its Arab identity, the Sultanate takes a keen interest in participating in Arab summits, and spares no effort in resolving differences in Arab relations, based on the belief that Oman has an important role to play in fostering Arab solidarity.

Within the Arab region

Oman's policies and stances are admired widely within the Arab region for their positive contribution to Arab causes, and for the steps the Sultanate has taken to develop bilateral relations with all Arab states for the sake of common goals and interests.

These policies are inspired by Oman's belief in the need to bolster joint Arab action and widen the scope of cooperation, while investing available resources in ensuring a better life for all Arab peoples.

The Sultanate has consistently backed efforts to strengthen the Arab League and its different operations and institutions, as well as Arab institutions in general, in a manner that responds to the



His Majesty receives Grand Imam Dr Ahmed Muhammad el Tayeb, President of Egypt's al Azhar University, in May 2013

aspirations of the Arab people and to bring about an Arab renaissance in all fields. As far as the Middle East peace process is concerned, the Sultanate supports efforts aimed at reaching a final just and comprehensive settlement on the Palestinian issue on the basis of the two-state solution. The Sultanate also supports efforts to achieve peace in a manner that guarantees peaceful co-existence between the Arab states and Israel, and an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon.

In affirming its Arab identity, the Sultanate takes a keen interest in participating in Arab summits, and spares no effort in resolving differences in Arab relations, based on the belief that Oman has an important role to play in fostering Arab solidarity. In this regard, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, took part in the 24th Arab summit held in Doha on 26th March 2013 on behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

Also, as a representative of His Majesty the Sultan, His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tareq al Said participated in the Third Arab Economic and Social Development Summit, held in Riyadh on 21st January 2013.

Ongoing activities in the international arena

Oman has not limited its attention to its contributions to the Gulf and the wider Arab region, but also engages in activities in the



His Majesty gives an audience to Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, during her visit to the Sultanate

wider international arena across Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States. The Sultanate also engages with regional and international organisations in which Oman has membership. This is based on Oman's deep awareness of the importance of close ties and cooperation between the countries and peoples of the world, and the conviction that peace, security and stability in the region are affected by events taking place in regions throughout the world.

Relations between Oman and African nations have seen a remarkable growth. The strength of these ties stems from the cultural heritage established by Omanis in East Africa long ago, which has enriched the Islamic culture of Africa. One of the fruits of this heritage is the good standing enjoyed by the Sultanate and Omanis all over the African continent, which in turn reflects positively on bilateral relations between the Sultanate and different African nations.

Within this context, Tanzanian President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete visited the Sultanate from 15th to 18th October 2012, along with senior officials from several East African countries, including Zanzibar's Minister of Labour, Employment and Cooperation, and a mediator from Burundi and a special envoy of the President of Burundi.

Meanwhile, the Sultanate enjoys dynamic and continuously growing relations with many Asian countries due to mutual interests in

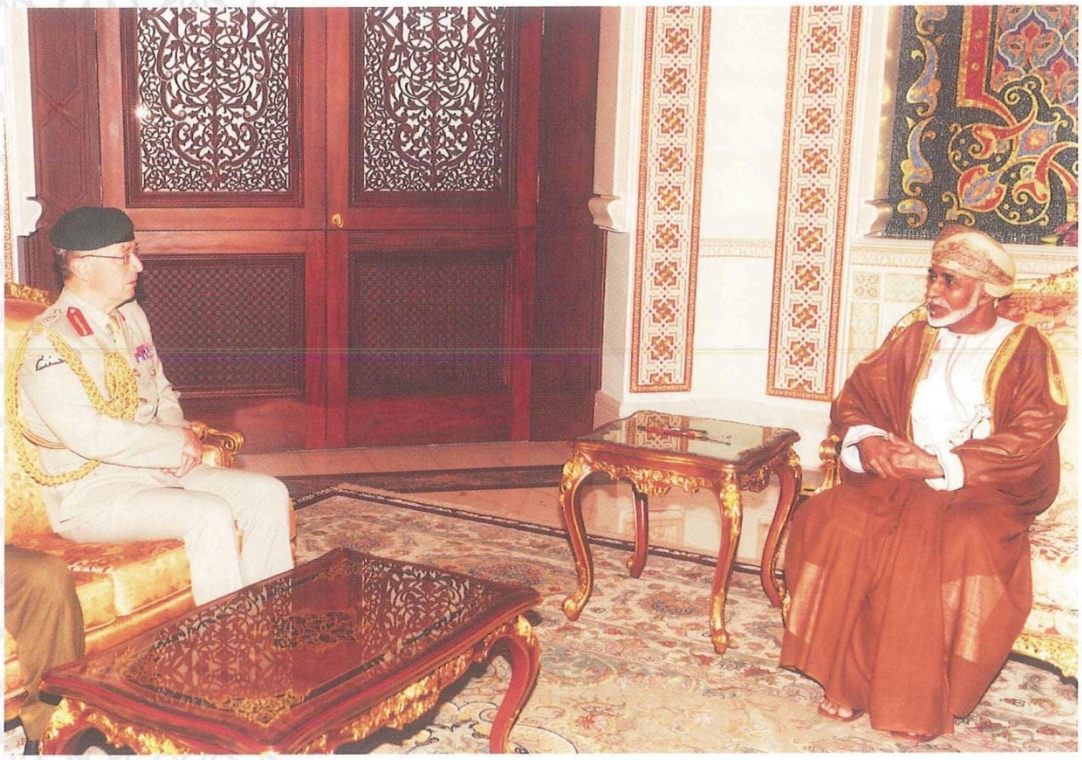


His Majesty gives an audience to Allen Duncan, British Minister of State for International Affairs, in April 2013

the fields of economy, commerce and technology, all of which are based on strong political ties. The Sultanate supported the efforts being exerted by the international community in the restoration of stability and security in Afghanistan through its participation in most of the conferences on the country. The last of these was the Tokyo International Conference held on 8th July 2012, during which the Sultanate donated $5 million in support of social and humanitarian projects in Afghanistan.

Oman has developed strong relations with the United States, Britain and other states of the European Union, as well as the Russian Federation. These relations are continuing to strengthen in all areas. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos is highly regarded by the leaders and peoples of these countries. On 21st December 2012, British Prime Minister David Cameron paid a visit to Oman, and US Secretary of State John Kerry visited the Sultanate on 21st May 2013.

The Sultanate enjoys diplomatic relations with 23 Eastern European states, in addition to memoranda of understanding (MOUs) for political consultation signed with foreign ministers of 14 of those countries with which the Sultanate also signed a number of agreements in economic, commercial, tourist and scientific fields. There are honorary consulates for the Sultanate in many capitals, including Ankara, Minsk, Kiev, Zagreb, Sophia and Budapest, and recently one has



His Majesty receives General Sir David Richards, Chief of the British Defence Staff

In the field of human rights, the Sultanate has since 1970 accorded great attention to basic human rights as laid down in international charters, declarations and agreements.

been established in Lithuania. Muscat has honorary consuls for many East European countries, including Belarus, Ukraine, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Albania and Slovakia. The Czech Republic too recently nominated an honorary consul to be based in the Sultanate. In this way, relations with countries of Eastern European states have seen continuous positive activity aimed at bolstering ties between the two sides.

The private visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the city of Dubrovnik in the Republic of Croatia from 22nd to 28th April 2012 capped relations with Croatia. This was his second visit to the country, his first being in August 2003.

The Sultanate's relations with the Republic of Hungary have begun to bear fruit in economic and commercial terms. The Oman Oil Company signed an agreement for the purchase of 8% of the shares of MOL (Hungarian Oil and Gas Public Limited Company), which operates in the sectors of oil, gas and petrochemicals. A new agreement was signed by the Government of the Sultanate and MOL on 9th September 2012, granting the Hungarian company the right of exploration and development at Site No 66, an area of 5,000 square kilometres.

A visit to the Sultanate by Brazil's Vice-President Michel Temer on 3lst March 2013 led to the signing of a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) in different



His Majesty gives an audience to General Lloyd J. Austen, Commander of the US Central Command, in June 2013

areas of common interest.

In the field of human rights, the Sultanate has since 1970 accorded great attention to basic human rights as laid down in international charters, declarations and agreements. The Sultanate has enacted legislation which guarantees human rights and the right to a decent life, for individuals to enjoy liberties such as freedom of movement and residence, and the right to privacy, freedom of expression, and numerous other rights.

The state has confirmed its commitment to these rights through the promulgation of the Basic Law of the State, which guarantees the freedom and dignity of individuals within the legal system. This statute legally prohibits interference with personal freedoms except in cases stated explicitly by the law. The principle of legitimacy has been made one of the guiding principles of criminal policy; hence no penalty is to be given for any crime except on the basis of the law.

Through the affirmation and consolidation of this approach, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) came into existence under Royal Decree No 124/2008. The fourteen members of the Commission were appointed under Royal Decree No 10/2013, issued on 20th February 2013. Civil society has a strong presence on this Committee through the Sultanate's General Labour Confederation, private societies and an independent member of the legal community.



His Majesty the Sultan receives the American Secretary of State, John Kerry, at Bait al Baraka in Muscat, in May 2013

The Sultanate has made a concerted effort to combat human trafficking in line with international efforts. The Omani legislator dedicated a special law for this purpose: the Law on Combating Human Trafficking promulgated by Royal Decree No 126/2008, issued on 13th November, 2008. Article 5-A explains to the victim his/her legal rights in clear and comprehensible language. Article 5-B provides for the protection and care of victims of human trafficking. Article 9/15 states the penalties prescribed for perpetrators of human trafficking and their associates, while Article 22 provides for the establishment of a national anti-human trafficking committee with members from the government departments concerned. Article 23 states the powers and prerogatives of this committee, including the devising of a plan to control human trafficking, the preparation of a database in coordination with local, regional and international departments, along with a programme to care for and rehabilitate victims of human trafficking. So, the national plan corresponds with the international effort and determination of Oman to combat this phenomenon. Although the extent of human trafficking in Oman is limited only to being a 'transit country', the Sultanate has made concerted efforts to eliminate this through the plan. The plan explains the methods and procedures for combating human trafficking, and



His Majesty gives an audience to Professor Nubert Lammert, Chairman of the German Bundestag in March 2013

establishing a comprehensive, integrated system that coordinates all those within Oman who are involved with this effort.

The Sultanate participated in the meetings of the 18th Conference of the UN Framework Agreement on Climate Change and the 8th Session of the Kyoto Protocol Conference held in Doha from 26th November to 7th December 2012.

The Sultanate also participated in the international conference of the Regional Organisation for the Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME) held on the Iranian island of Kish from 2nd to 6th March 2013. It also participated in the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention and Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 3rd to 14th March 2013.

The Sultanate joined many international agreements, including the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, under Royal Decree No 64/2012, in addition to various regional agreements and memoranda of understanding. It also ratified the Port State Control agreement signed with the Secretariat of Riyadh on the inspection of vessels and control under Royal Decree No 24/2012, issued on 4th February 2012.

Also, to foster its cooperation with other countries, the Sultanate signed a number of bilateral agreements and MOUs in political, economic, social, tourist and consular affairs.

Oman and the Sea Exhibition

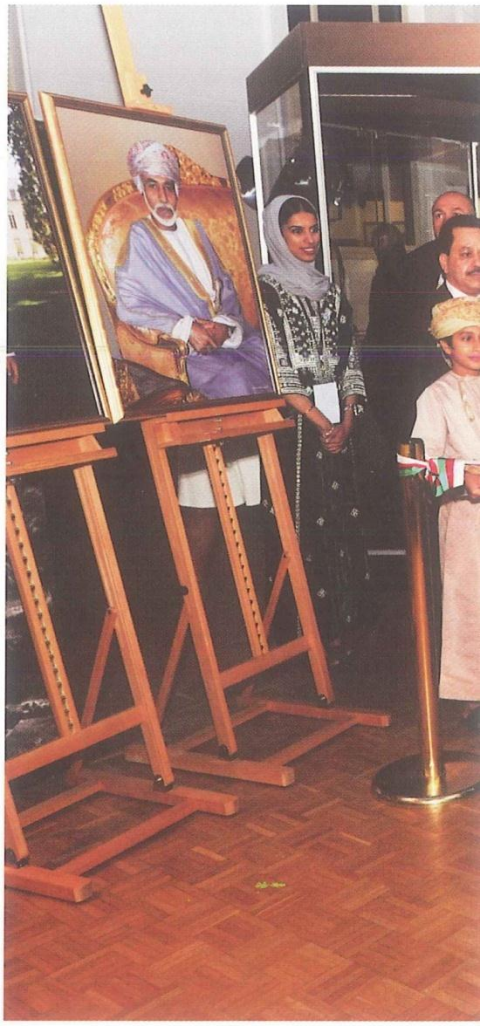
An exhibition titled "Oman and the Sea" was opened in Paris on 17th October 2013. This event is one of the outcomes of the wise vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who attaches great importance to intercultural communication and tolerance both within the Sultanate and internationally. The exhibition aims to deepen relations between cultures, strengthen dialogue, and bring the culture of the Sultanate to the rest of the world in which we live. This was discussed by His Majesty the Sultan, who stated that the Sultanate established its foreign relations on the principles of tolerance, communication, dialogue, mutual respect and positive cooperation throughout the ages.

An exhibition titled "Oman and the Sea" was opened in Paris on 17th October 2013.

In a statement which was published in the introduction of the book for the exhibition "Oman and the Sea", His Majesty Sultan Qaboos expressed his pride in the historical friendship between France and Oman since it was first established in 1660. He stated:

"It gives us great pride to express our pleasure that the Sultanate of Oman is participating in the exhibition Oman and the Sea, hosted by the Musee de la Marine in Paris. The exhibition conveys a message of tolerance, cultural interaction, dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation – values on which Oman's foreign relations have been based over the ages".

The exhibition aims to deepen relations between cultures, strengthen dialogue, and bring the culture of the Sultanate to the rest of the world in which we live.



His Majesty the Sultan added:

We would like to emphasise that we take pride in the historical relationship between Oman and France, which has remained solid since it was first established in 1660. The arrival of Admiral François-Edmond Paris on Oman's shore in 1838 undoubtedly left humanity with a rich cultural heritage, which contributed greatly to the research and documentation on Omani boats, dhows and ships that roamed the seas and oceans all along the



Cutting the ribbon at the official opening the 'Oman and the Sea' exhibition held at the Musee de la Marine in Paris, in October 2013.

maritime routes between the East and the West.

His Majesty the Sultan concluded his statement by saying:

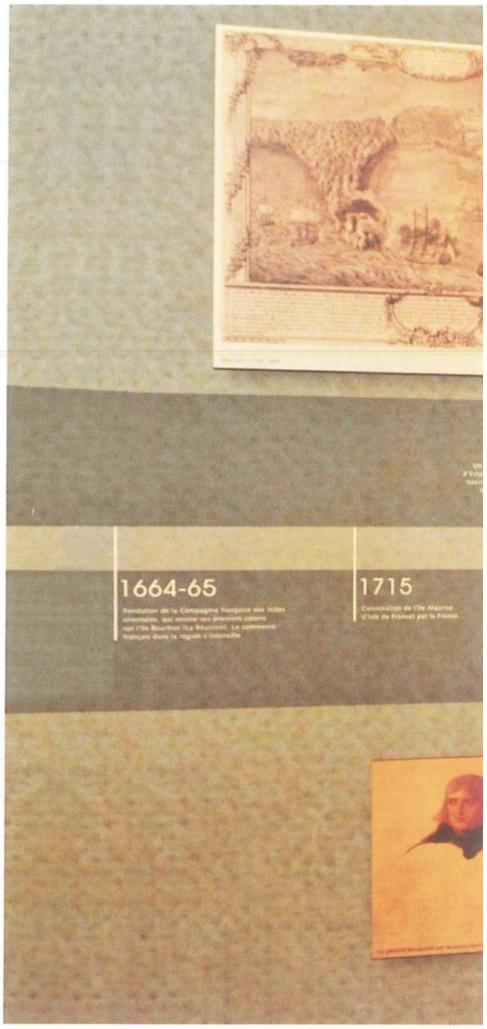
We would like to express our full appreciation and gratitude to all those in Oman and France who contributed to the organisation of this exhibition. We hope that this exhibition will help facilitate the spread of knowledge and will deepen relations and mutual understanding between cultures.

Following this, French President François Hollande remarked that the Sultanate's unique location as a crossroad on the maritime routes between Asia, Africa and Europe has been of significant advantage to the country since the third millennium BC. He stated that this deep-rooted nation, home of the ancient trade routes in frankincense and 'black gold', should take pride in the ancient heritage that has brought it great distinction over the ages. All of

this has given the country a special appeal in France.

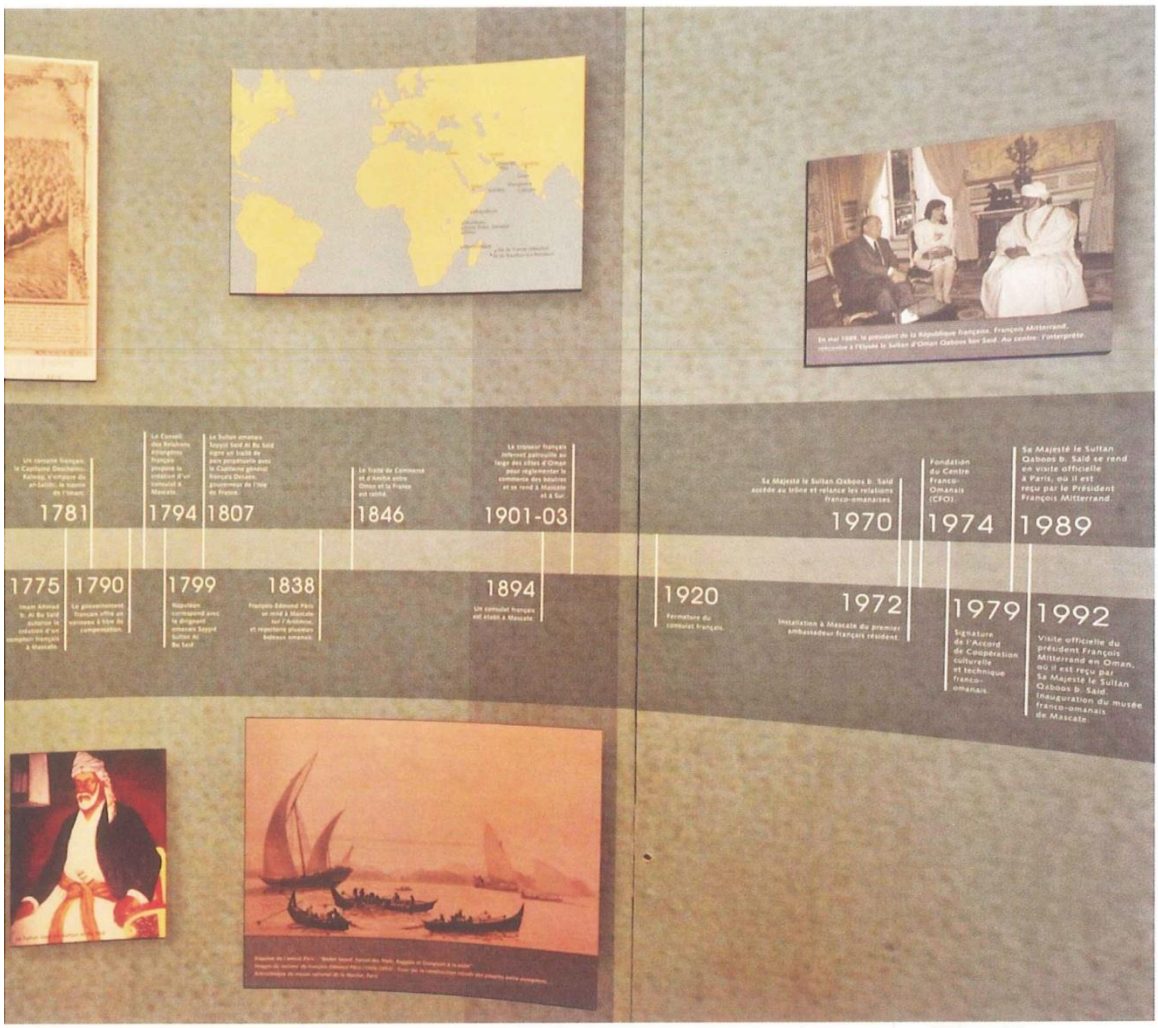
The "Oman and the Sea" exhibition presents aspects of Oman's maritime history and legacy, the role it played in building Omani civilisation, and its contact with different cultures and peoples in both the East and the West over a period of 5,000 years. It also highlights the historical relations between Oman and France which have existed since 1660. It does this partly through manuscripts and paintings of Omani traditional boats and ships drawn by Admiral François-Edmond Paris during his visit to Oman in 1838.

The exhibition consists of four stages. Visitors begin at a small majlis area, which gives them a glimpse of Omani hospitality, dress and the rich culture. Then they are taken on a tour of the exhibits, exploring the rich maritime heritage of Oman, which is represented by charts, paintings, photographs and replicas of traditional Omani ships like the *Badan* and *Sambooq*. The exhibits also include authentic models of the *Sohar* and *Jewel of Muscat* ships, which represent two of the many Omani vessels that roamed the high seas. The visitors are briefed on the ancient methods of shipbuilding, which involved ropes being sewn or fastened around planks without the use of nails. There is also a display of ancient navigation techniques



and tools such as the *kamal*. The exhibition also provides visitors with a view of Oman's prosperous Modern Renaissance and the country's future aspirations.

The exhibition reveals many secrets of the methods used by Arabs for navigation, from the simple *kamal*, which is little more than a piece of wood with a string hanging from its centre, to more sophisticated devices used by the Arabs. The exhibition celebrates



A display panel highlights Oman's maritime history and historical relations between Oman and France which have existed since 1660

the achievements of the renowned Omani sailor Ahmed bin Majid, the tools he used, and one of the most famous original manuscripts he authored, entitled *Al-Nūniyāt Al-Kubrā*. Visitors also enjoy a special audio-visual presentation, experiencing the unusual rhythms and sounds of another of the great works of Ahmed bin Majid from the 15th Century, known as *AlSūfālā*.

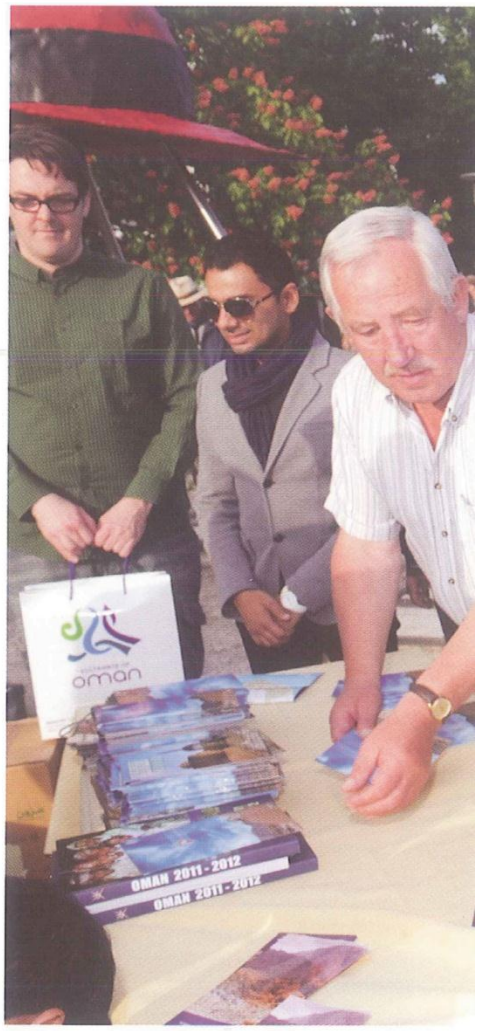
The exhibition, which runs until January 2014, aims to attract a wide range of visitors: students, academics, scholars, and people with an interest in the culture of Oman and the Indian Ocean region. Through its wide range of exhibits, the exhibition seeks to attract the general public, including tourists from both within and outside France. There is an interactive section for children in the end section of the exhibition hall.

MEDIA

The Omani media has developed steadily as an institution and the voice of a modern state. It continues to make progress inspired by the vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos who has always expressed his appreciation for the Omani media, saying: "Both within the country's borders and abroad, it is essential to speak the truth - to convey correct information that faithfully portrays what is happening in our beloved Oman and reflects the momentous tasks undertaken by our people, as well as their hopes for the future. This truth and correct information must enter our homes and the homes of others, without sensationalism and without causing alarm, consternation or despondency. We want to know ourselves and we want others to know us as we really are. For us it is of the utmost importance that the Omani people should themselves be aware of the impressive progress they have made through their determination, will and cooperation with the government.

It is first and foremost a living media system which is supported by the tremendous achievements it sees with its own eyes in this dear nation."

The Omani media has developed steadily as an institution and the voice of a modern state. Individual citizens and the private sector are playing a major and increasingly prominent role, not only in the daily production of its materials, but also as proprietors



of radio and television stations and privately-owned press establishments. At present non-government media enterprises own the majority of the Sultanate's radio, television, print and electronic media.

The Omani media has developed steadily as an institution and the voice of a modern state. Individual citizens and the private sector are playing a major and increasingly prominent role.

Active intercommunication with the outside world

The Ministry of Information publishes a range of books and other material in several languages with the aim of bringing the



High demand at an exhibition in Europe for copies of the year book, 'Oman 2011-2012', which is published in five European languages

country's development efforts to the attention of as wide a public as possible, as well as building contacts with other peoples and highlighting Oman's contribution to human civilization. The Ministry also hosts journalists and representatives of the media from around the world throughout the year, particularly on national occasions, so that they can see for themselves what has been achieved and also observe its people as they take part in the life of their nation. Such occasions include elections for the 7th Term of *Majlis al Shura* (parliamentary Consultation Council) in October 2011 – which were covered by numerous Arab and international journalists, media representatives and satellite stations – in addition to the opening of the Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*), the National Day celebrations, the elections for the Municipal Council's First Term in 2012 and other events. The Ministry also organizes or takes part in exhibitions in which it

highlights the Sultanate's security and stability, its tourist attractions and the country's promising investment opportunities.

The Ministry of Information stages the Muscat International Book Fair in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and Sultan Qaboos University. The latest (the eighteenth) round of the book fair, held from 27th February to 8th March 2013, featured 520 publishers from 26 Arab and foreign countries and over 100,000 titles, including hundreds of Omani publications.

Also, with the support of the Ministry of Information, the Omani Journalists Association organized the Omani Media Week from 19th to 21st May 2013. The programme featured an exhibition by media and press establishments, the honouring of Omani media personnel who had served the country during the first decade of the renaissance from 1970 to 1980, the launching of the journalists training programme, an exhibition of press photographs, an exhibition entitled 'Features of Oman' and other activities which highlighted the development of the Omani media.

The programme also included seminars which highlighted the reality of the Omani media in general, and the Omani press in particular, as well as the challenges posed to the sector over the past four decades.

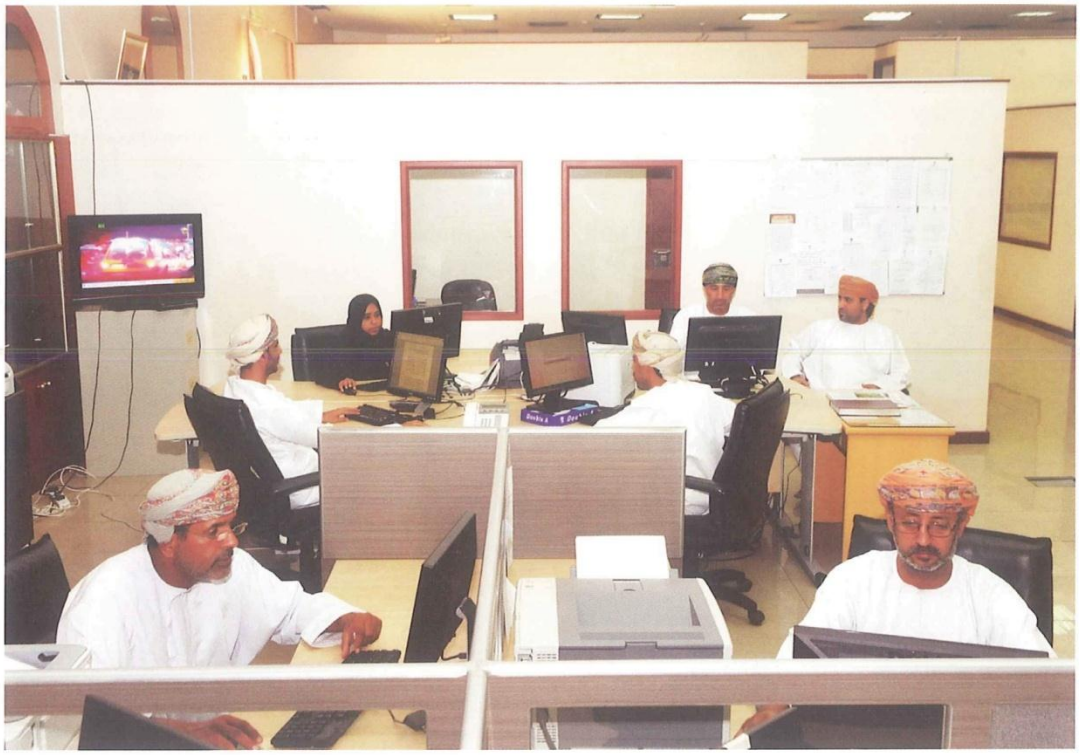
The latest (the eighteenth) round of the book fair, held from 27th February to 8th March 2013, featured 520 publishers from 26 Arab and foreign countries and over 100,000 titles, including hundreds of Omani publications.

Oman News Agency (ONA)

Oman News Agency - Oman's official news source - kept pace with developments and activities locally and abroad and produced thousands of news reports – supported with pictures – about the Sultanate's comprehensive development, as well as the most important events and activities hosted by the Sultanate or in which the country participated. ONA also covered most of the regional, Arab and international events.

ONA's bulletins are transmitted in Arabic and English by satellite and through its website: (http://www.omannews.gov.om). It uses the sophisticated FTP (File Transfer Protocol) file exchange system to send and receive news, enabling it to receive from several previously unavailable news agencies.

Within the context of continuous development of its professional performance, ONA seeks to upgrade the competence, skills and performance of its Omani staff, both in editorial and technical areas. The news agency's staff have shown a high level of reliability as they operated in the editorial, technical and electronic sectors. ONA continues to organize training courses in editing, photography and information technology. ONA also sends its staff abroad to participate in specialized courses in the media training centres of the Association of Arab New Agencies which is based in Beirut.



Staff editing the latest news at Oman News Agency

ONA continues to upgrade its news products and expand their distribution both within the Sultanate and abroad. Its "Sabq" mobile telephone SMS service provides subscribers with the latest major local, political, economic, sports and general news updates.

Additionally, ONA provides special reports about the Sultanate and makes these available to establishments to which the agency is affiliated as a member. These include the Association of Arab News Agencies (in English and Arabic), Asia Pulse (in English), and the Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OAPNA) in English. This is in addition to providing news and stories filed by correspondents, along with other means of information. ONA takes a keen interest in developing its archives, data files, and picture files about various events and activities which the news agency covers, including the annual convening of the Council of Oman, celebrations of the National Day, visits of His Majesty the Sultan abroad and his Royal meet-the-people tours, as well as visits and conferences in which the Sultanate takes part.

ONA is always eager to expand its cooperation with Arab and foreign news agencies, either bilaterally or through the news agency federations and organizations of which it is a member. It signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with a number of Arab and international news agencies with the aim of exchanging news and pictures and

enhancing ties in general, as well as developing skills and expertise.

As part of its achievements, in April 2012 ONA's website was awarded the Best Forum Award in Social Interaction from the Pan-Arab Web Awards Academy in the news agencies category. Prior to that, in 2011, ONA was awarded the Structural Innovation Prize in the category of official and government websites by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation (ARADO) for Internet Prizes in the Arab Region and the Pan-Arab Awards Academy.

As part of its achievements, in April 2012 ONA's website was awarded the Best Forum Award in Social Interaction from the Pan-Arab Web Awards Academy in the news agencies category.

Training programmes and plans are prepared for personnel of the Omani media on an annual basis, and they are then. implemented within the Information Ministry's Media Training Centre.

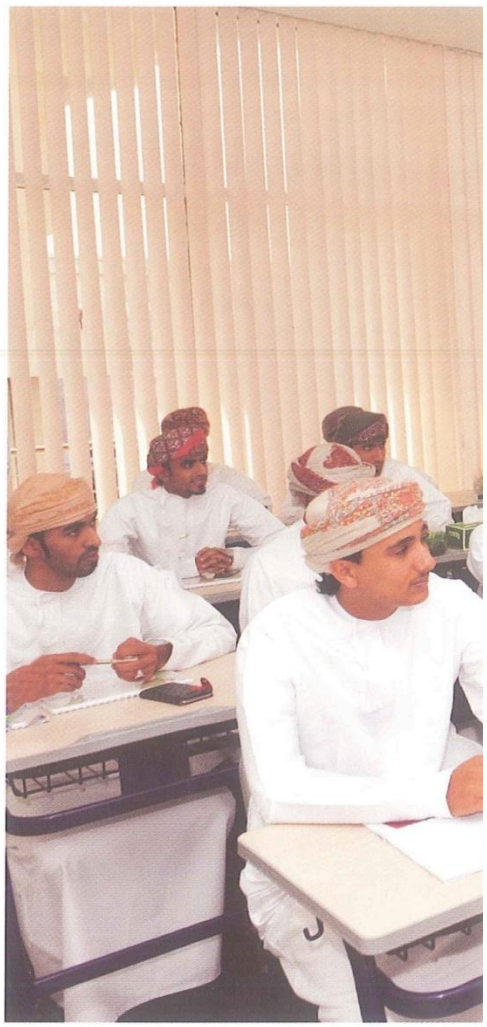
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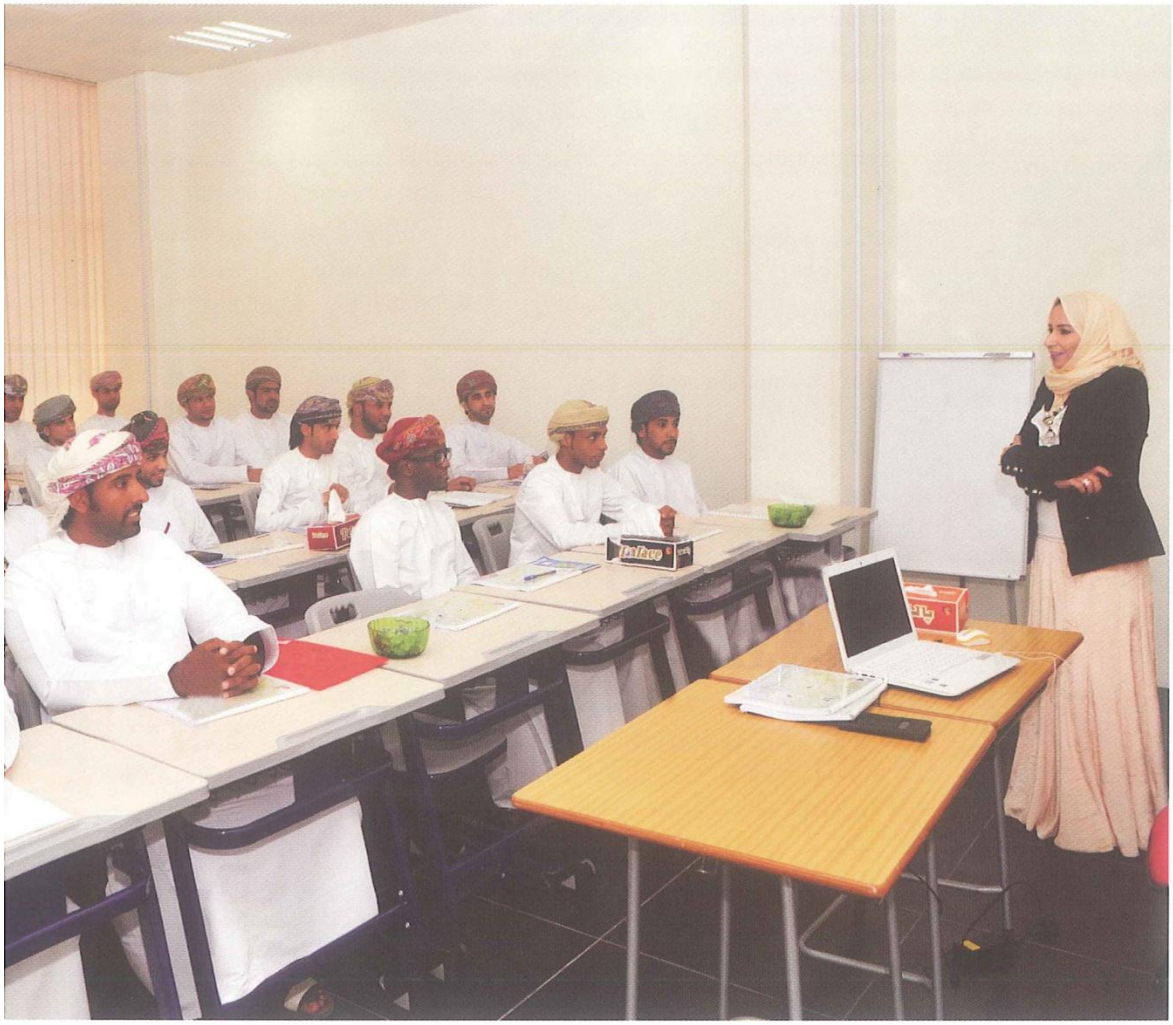
Omanet (www.omanet.om) is considered the Sultanate's news window to the world and the window through which the world sees the Sultanate. It is operated and developed by the Ministry of Information.

Omanet provides the Ministry of Information with technical support for its office systems. A data centre has been established and supplied with hi-tech systems and programmes which provide a suitable environment for electronic incubators within the information portal and the internal network.

In the meantime, Omanet provides the website visitor with a variety of digitalized news and articles covering all current events in the Sultanate, both in Arabic and English.

A new window has been added which includes excerpts from the speeches of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The Oman yearbook (Oman 2012-2013), which is published in six languages, is available on the Omanet website in Arabic and English. To maintain its contact with its visitors, Omanet also marks important occasions and events with articles on various topics. Pages regularly updated include – among others – "Nasamat Omaniyah" (Omani Breezes), "Fi Biladi" (In My Country) and "Oman bi Uyooni'l Sahafah" (Oman in the Eyes of the Press), as well as the government,





Training courses are held regularly to upgrade the competence of Oman's media personnel

local press and tourism websites.

Staff training

Training programmes for the media are designed to provide Omanis with specialist technical and editorial qualifications. Great attention has been accorded to upgrade the skills of all levels of media personnel on a regular basis.

Training programmes and plans are prepared for personnel of the Omani media on an annual basis, and they are then implemented within the Information Ministry's Media Training Centre. This includes courses conducted locally and abroad. Additionally, some trainees are sent to Arab and foreign media establishments for specific periods of time in order to gain further expertise.

In response to the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to upgrade the professional performance of Omani journalists, the Ministry of Information organized 84 training programmes

i.e. courses, seminars and workshops in 2012. As many as 453 persons at various professional levels benefited from these programmes.

The Omani press

While making every effort to keep pace with the rapid advances in the international information and communication field, the Omani press also seeks to respond more widely to the concerns and aspirations of the Omani people in a clear and transparent manner.

One distinctive feature of the Omani press is that, with the exception of the Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising, it is almost entirely owned by the private sector. The operations of its businesses and procedures for publishing newspapers and setting up publishing houses, printing presses and advertising agencies are regulated by the Law on Printed Materials and Publications (amended by Royal Decree No 87/2004), which states that newspapers, magazines and media establishments must be owned by Omani nationals.

In 2012, there were 24 press establishments and 99 printing presses in the Sultanate.

In 2012, there were 24 press establishments and 99 printing presses in the Sultanate.

Nine daily newspapers are published in Muscat in either Arabic or English, and more than 80 journals, magazines and press circulars are published daily, weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and annually, in addition to a growing number of free-of-charge sports, advertising and variety magazines. Several ministries and authorities also publish magazines and other printed materials about activities or issues of public interest.

The Public Authority for Radio and Television has recently taken steps to increase the time devoted to live radio and TV programmes.

Of the daily papers published in Muscat, five – *Oman, Al Watan, Al Shabiba, Azzaman and Al Roya* – are published in Arabic, while the other four – *Oman Daily Observer, Times of Oman, Oman Tribune* and *Muscat Daily* – are in English. In addition to these titles, there are several weekly tabloid newspapers devoted to variety, sports and advertising which are distributed free of charge, either with the papers that publish them or separately.

Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising

The Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising (OEPPA) is the Sultanate's largest press establishment in terms of its technical and human resources and the number of publications it produces.

A financially and administratively independent entity, OEPPA has the highest Omanisation level of any press establishment in the country. It publishes two daily newspapers, which are *Oman* Arabic daily and the *Oman Daily Observer*. OEPPA also publishes *Nizwa* magazine, a publication that deals with Omani, Arab and international literary and cultural topics. It enjoys a high reputation among writers, intellectuals and readers at home and abroad.



On 3rd November 2013 OEPPA launched the first issue of *Life and Law* magazine in Arabic and English, its aim being to enlighten people on the importance of law. Other OEPPA publications include *Hayaati* (Lifestyle) – a monthly variety magazine with a particular focus on women's affairs; *Oman al Raqmiyyah* (Digital Oman) – a quarterly IT magazine; and *Al Fusool al Arab'ah* (4 Seasons) – a quarterly devoted to tourism in Oman.

OEPPA's extensive nationwide network distributes its own publications, as well as other printed material for which it holds the local distribution concession.

On 10th February 2013, OEPPA celebrated its 40th anniversary and the first issue of *Oman* Arabic daily, which was published on 18th November 1972.

Nine daily newspapers are published in Muscat in either Arabic or English

The Public Authority for Radio and Television

The Public Authority for Radio and Television (PART) was established under Royal Decree No 108/2010, issued on 19th October 2011, and Royal Decree No 100/2011, issued on 22nd October 2011. The Decrees state that PART is a financially and administratively independent legal entity with the authority to manage and dispose of its own funds. PART comes under the auspices of the Council of Ministers.

The Authority has recently taken steps to increase the time devoted to live radio and TV programmes.

Discussion programmes provide an opportunity for members of the community to exchange views on political, economic or social topics, thus the Authority has extended the time allocated for programmes of this kind, e.g. *Sabah wa Masaa* (Morning and Evening), *Qahwat al Sabah* (Morning Coffee), *Sabah al Khair ya Biladi* (Good Morning My Country) and *Hadha Assabah* (This Morning).

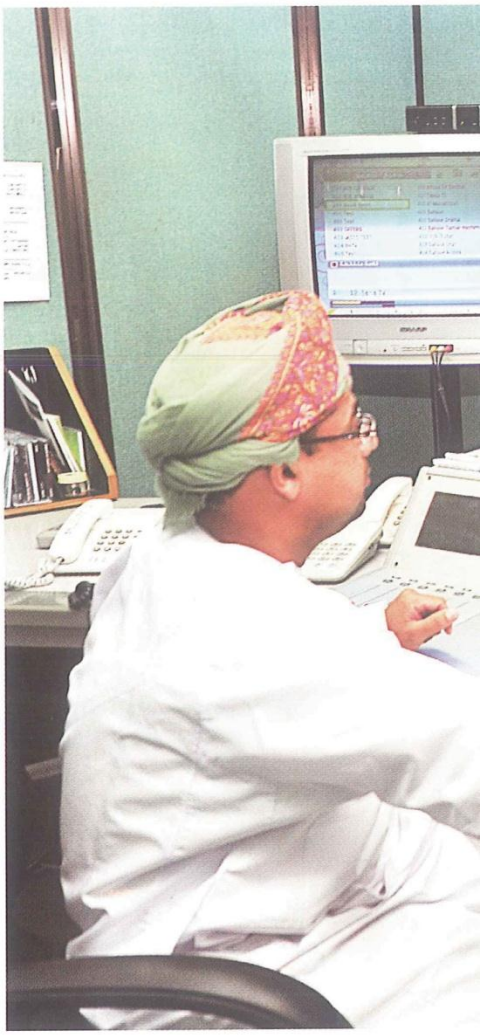
The Authority has also increased the time given to questions of concern to society and in this connection it has allocated a slot entitled *Qadhiyyat al Yawm* (Issue of the Day) in Oman TV's 10 pm news bulletin.

PART has its own pages on various social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube which provide a forum for listeners and viewers to air their views about radio and TV programmes.

To expand its scope of services, the Authority has downloaded a special application for smart mobile phones in the Android and Apple market, enabling subscribers to view live transmissions of Oman TV's General Channel and Sports Channel. There is a similar smart phone application for listeners of Radio Sultanate of Oman (General, Youth and Foreign radio services).

On 29th December 2012, the trial transmission of Oman TV's high rate of transmission, HD Channel, began, and on 2nd March 2013 the first transmission of news via HD from PART's complex of new studios was witnessed.

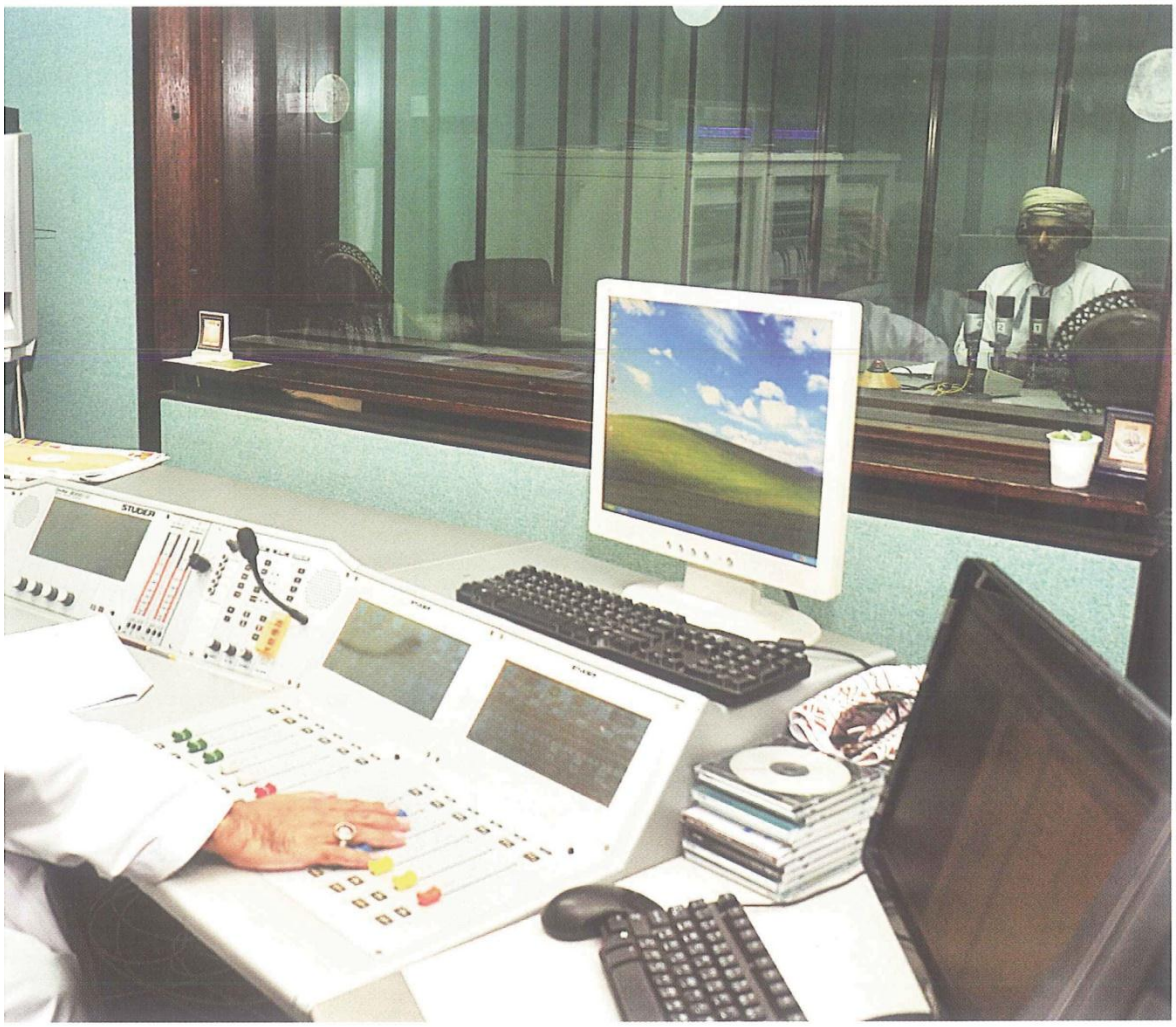
While PART opened its office in the Governorate of Musandam, Oman Radio operated a new transmission station in the *wilayat* of Mahdha, Buraimi Governorate, where listeners pick up the signal on Medium Wave 639 MHz/100kw. The station covers the *wilayat* as well as large sectors of the governorates of Musandam, Batinah North and Al Dhahirah.



Oman Radio was the first Omani media institution to be established during the reign of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Over the past 43 years, the service has become a cornerstone of the media. Its advanced technological facilities have enabled Oman's voice to be heard around the globe.

Radio Sultanate of Oman

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Many of Oman Radio's broadcasts are 'live'

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Over the past 43 years, the service has become a cornerstone of the media. Its advanced technological facilities have enabled Oman's voice to be heard around the globe.

Sultanate of Oman Radio's General Arabic Channel broadcasts round the clock either by satellite or via the Internet (www.oman-radio.gov.om). Its other services are on air for varying lengths of time depending on their broadcasting schedules and the nature of their programmes.

Oman Radio has five main channels, each of which is aimed at a particular audience, though they all fulfill the function of expressing the Omani people's identity, values and aspirations. They are the General Arabic Channel, the Youth Channel, the English Channel, the Holy Qur'an Channel and the Classical Music Channel.

Among its latest feats, Oman Radio won second prize for its programme *Virtues and Values* among children's programmes, in addition to second place for its

programme *Kun lee Watanan* (Be Homeland for Me).

The General Channel

Oman Radio's General Channel, which broadcasts round the clock, covers all parts of the Sultanate through the operation of a main station and substations of varying sizes across the country. Each of these is located to take account the nature of the Sultanate's geography and terrain.

The General Arabic Channel has four 3-monthly schedules a year, as well as special schedules for the month of Ramadhan, National Day, Eid al Fitr, Eid al Adha and various other special occasions. Some periods during the schedules are set aside for coverage of specific events such as the Muscat Festival and the Salalah Tourism Festival.

The General Arabic Channel has four 3-monthly schedules a year, as well as special schedules.

Over 90 per cent of the Arabic Channel's daily output consists of locally produced programmes, many of which focus on the country's development efforts. Some of its most popular programmes consist of live broadcasts and discussions between members of the public and officials. The live programmes are very popular.

Radio Sultanate of Oman's Holy Qur'an Channel focuses mainly on religious topics, particularly those related to the Holy Qur'an and Qur'anic sciences. At the same time, this channel seeks to promote Islam's values of tolerance, dialogue and moderation.

In its coverage of local activities and international events in which the Sultanate is involved, the General Channel seeks to respond to the concerns of every section of society. It has an extensive network of correspondents at home and in the main Arab and foreign capitals, and it frequently invites the opinions of experts who provide comment and analysis on major Gulf, Arab and international events and developments.

In addition to its entertainment programmes and material on cultural and development topics, the General Arabic Channel has three one-hour news programmes, as well as general news bulletins, two local news bulletins, an economic bulletin and an hourly news summary, in addition to many other developmental, cultural and entertainment breaks.

Many programmes presented by the General Channel are broadcast live, for example *Oman fi Usboo'* (Oman in a week), *Al Majallah al Tanmawiyah* (Development Magazine), *Al Muntada al Iqtisadi* (Business Forum) and *Fi Rihab al Masaa* (In the Open Spaces of the Evening).

The Youth Channel

The Youth Channel aims to cater for and give voice to the concerns and aspirations of the younger generation, who make up the majority of the population. In doing so, it seeks to reflect their ability to interact through modern communications technology and encourages them to play a greater role in the country's development efforts.

With its wide variety of programmes and high audience figures through the hours of its transmission, the Youth Programme is on air for 19 hours a day from 0600 hours to 0100 hours. It can be received on the FM band in nearly

every part of the country, as well as via Arabsat, Nilesat and Hotbird 4 satellite systems and the Internet (www.oman-tv.gov.om/shabab).

The English Channel

Radio Sultanate of Oman's English Channel is an important channel for communication, interaction and dialogue between the Omani community and non-Arab English speakers living in or visiting the Sultanate. It is thus considered an Omani window to the world in an international language.

The English Channel (FM 90.4 MHz) is on air for 19 hours a day from 0600 hours to 0100 hours. It is possible to follow up the English FM Programme via the website (www.oman-tv.gov.om/).

The FM band presents a wide range of materials on cultural topics, music, the heritage, tourism, development, the arts and other subjects of general interest to its listeners. It also sheds light on various aspects of the Sultanate's modern renaissance.

As well as programme exchange arrangements between Radio Sultanate of Oman's English Channel and broadcasting services in Europe and Asia, there are also exchange and cooperation agreements with radio stations in the Gulf and other parts of the Arab world.

In times of national disasters or other emergencies, this Channel broadcasts warnings to the population in Hindi, Urdu and Tagalog, as well as in English.

The Holy Qur'an Channel

Radio Sultanate of Oman's Holy Qur'an Channel focuses mainly on religious topics, particularly those related to the Holy Qur'an and Qur'anic sciences. At the same time, this channel seeks to promote Islam's values of tolerance, dialogue and moderation.

From January 2010, the Holy Qur'an Channel increased its hours of transmission from seven hours a day to 19 hours – from 0600 hours to 0100 hours – on FM band. The Holy Qur'an Programme can be received on satellite radio channels via the website (www.oman-radio.gov.om/qurn).

The Oman Classics Channel

The Omani media continues to expand the range of its services and the launch of Radio Sultanate of Oman's new classical music channel (Oman Classics) on 22nd July 2010 was part of this process.

Oman Classics broadcasts for 19 hours a day – from 0600 hours to 0100 hours on FM97 MHz in Muscat and 103.2 MHz in Salalah and via the Arabsat Badr 6 satellite.

The Oman Classics Channel presents works by the world's leading classical composers, accompanied by introductory and closing commentaries in Arabic and English. It is thus ideally placed to attract both Arab and non-Arab listeners, particularly since music is an international language that transcends geographical and linguistic boundaries.

Sultanate of Oman Television

Oman TV aims to present a complete picture of Oman's history, heritage, daily life and developments, while instilling the values of citizenship, moderation, tolerance and dialogue with others, individuals, nations and civilisations. In doing so, it seeks to promote greater mutual understanding, peace and cooperation for the benefit of all states and peoples of the region and beyond.

Oman TV's transmissions cover the whole country and can be received in the rest of the world either by satellite or via the Internet (www.oman-tv.gov.om). The General Channel (Channel One) and the Sports Channel (earlier known as Channel Two) can also be received on mobile telephone handsets round the clock.

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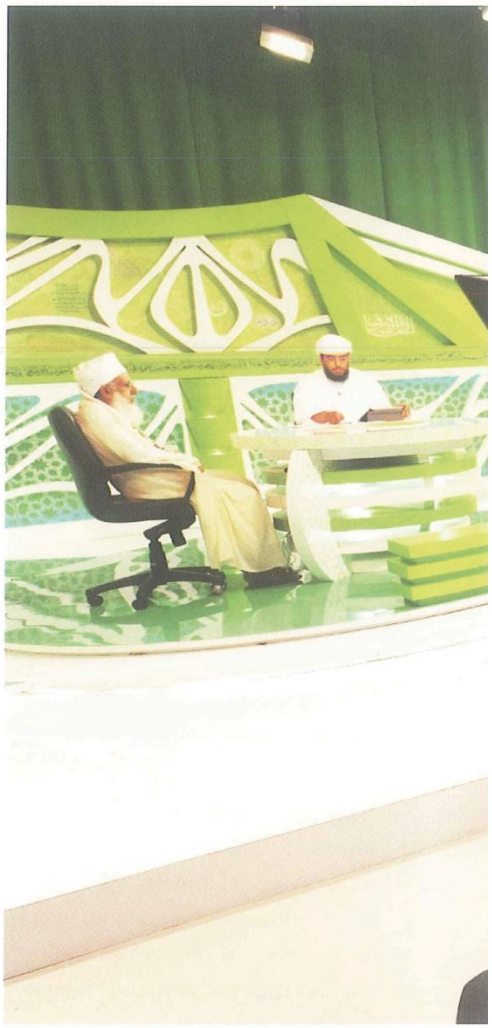
There are two main TV channels:

Channel One transmits a wide variety of programmes that cater for every segment of society and include coverage of events and national occasions round the clock.

The Sports Channel mainly targets the country's youth and its programmes are therefore designed with young people in mind. Its main focus is on sports, culture, science and other areas of interest to the younger generation.

Oman TV has 8 news bulletins in Arabic and English covering the whole day and it focuses on locally produced materials.

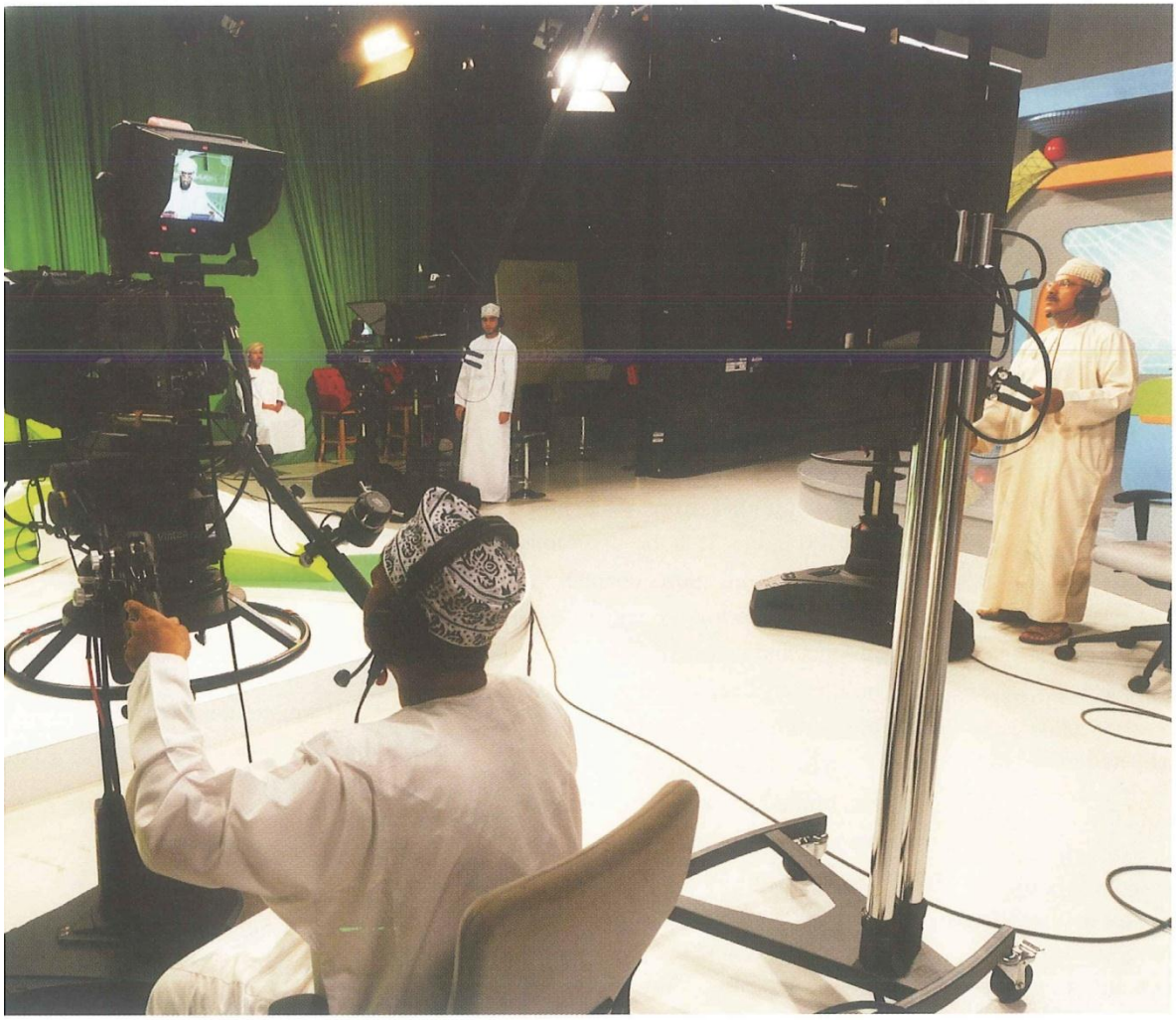
Besides covering various national, religious, economic, social, cultural and developmental activities and occasions, Oman TV covers current developments in the region and the Arab world at large.



It has a network of correspondents abroad. Its discussion programmes and coverage of important local and international issues also include analysis by expert commentators.

Oman TV has 8 news bulletins in Arabic and English covering the whole day and it focuses on locally produced materials.

In 2012 Oman TV produced a number of documentary films, including – among others, the annual film Oman 2012 *Sawt al Mustaqbal* (Voice of the Future)



Oman Television staff use the latest technology when producing their programmes

which is translated into ten different languages, the Royal visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the Governorate of Musandam, *Jusoor Thaqafiyah* (Cultural Bridges), *Aalam al Ghadd 2* (Tomorrow's World), a 12 episode serial, in addition to documentary films produced in cooperation with other ministries.

Oman TV's output, which ranges from chat shows and live interviews to programmes on development and cultural, economic and other topics, includes what translates in English as: A Question on Law, Economic View, Current Affairs, As You Wish, Pioneering and Succeeding, Musical Notes, Probe and Digital Affairs (IT).

At the Gulf Festival for Radio and Television held in Bahrain in 2012 Oman TV won two gold medals for its films: "Geological Heritage of Oman" in the documentary category; and "Oman's Sea Treasures" in

the environmental programmes category (Arabic: *Turath Oman al Geologi* and *Kunooz Oman al Bahri,* respectively).

The Sports Channel (earlier Channel Two)

On 1st January 2013, Oman TV's Sports Channel was launched as a full-fledged channel to replace the Second Programme or Channel Two which began broadcasting in 2006. It transmits its programmes from 0900 hours to 0100 hours. It is the first Oman TV specialized sports channel that focuses on follow-up and relaying of local and external sports events, besides presenting a host of other programmes.

The Sports Channel's role is not limited to football, but covers many other sports in response to the expectations of viewers who wish to see its strong presence in the sports arena. The programmes presented by this channel include *Al Barza* (The Porch), *Anaween* (Addresses), *Al Dakka* (The Bench), *Al Asayil* (Late Afternoons) and "60 Minutes of Sports".

The Omani media keeps pace with the Sultanate's progress in other fields as is reflected in the law on Private Radio and Television Stations, promulgated in 2004, which offers the Omani private sector the opportunity to own and manage radio and TV channels in the Sultanate.

Oman Digital Studios

The digital studio complex represents a major new addition to the Sultanate's radio and TV transmission service, in terms of both its size and the state-of-the-art technical equipment for its High Definition (HD) facilities – an example of the ongoing modernization of the media sector's performance, in general, and the field radio and TV services, in particular.

Incorporating the latest HD television technology, in line with world-class specifications, the complex will function with automatic programming in a tapeless environment.

A blend of Omani-Islamic and modern architectural styles, the Digital Studios Complex consists of four floors and four studios for programme production, the largest of which is Studio 1, which has an area of 700 square metres, while Studios 2 and 3 have an area of 300 square metres each. Studio 4 has an area of 200 square metres. This is in addition to three news studios, each having an area of 160 square metres, three transmission studios for each channel. Another studio is used exclusively for transmitting news within the editing suites/ dubbing halls.

The digital studios complex has three transmission studios, one studio for each channel, in addition to a studio for the transmission of news within the news editing hall. There are three studios for radio news.

The digital studios complex has three transmission studios, one studio for each channel, in addition to a studio for the transmission of news within the news editing hall. There are three studios for radio news, along with a control chamber (MCR) and a central equipment room (CTA).

The overall area of the building is 21,000 square metres. It is supplied with the latest TV facilities – High Definition (HD) of 1080p. The project is considered one of the largest of its kind at world level.



One of the interactive programmes presented by a private local radio station

Oman TV started transmitting via the HD system in March 2013 by relaying news bulletins via two satellites – Arabsat Badr 6 on 12456 horizontal frequency and Nilesat 11227 vertical frequency.

Private sector and radio and TV transmission

The Omani media keeps pace with the Sultanate's progress in other fields as is reflected in the law on Private Radio and Television Stations, promulgated in 2004, which offers the Omani private sector the opportunity to own and manage radio and TV channels in the Sultanate. This development is ultimately in the interest of listeners, viewers and Omani society in general.

Several private radio stations have been set up in recent years and are broadcasting on the FM band. They include:

- Radio Hala (Arabic), owned by the Media Entertainment Network;
- Radio Hi FM (English), also owned by the Media Entertainment Network;
- Radio Wisal (Arabic) , owned by Sabco Media;
- Radio Merge (English), also owned by Sabco Media; and
- Majan TV is a private TV channel that has been transmitting programmes round the clock since 2008.

Security



7 Security

The Sultanate continues to be a centre of stability in a vital yet often volatile region of the world. Since the onset of Oman's modern Renaissance the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the Royal Oman Police (ROP) have been accorded special attention by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Supreme Commander. This has included the supply of highly advanced weaponry and training of human resources to enable them to operate modern technology. Development has reached every part of Oman, bringing prosperity and a host of social benefits to its people.

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Global Peace Index

The Global Peace Index (GPI) rated the Sultanate 45th out of 162 countries around the world and 4th in the Middle East and Africa in its Index issued in June 2013. This is a rise from 59th in the world in 2012.

The GPI is issued by the Australian-based Institute for Economics and Peace with data sourced from organisations such as the International institute of Strategic Studies, The World Bank, various UN Agencies, peace institutes and the EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit).

The Sultan's Armed Forces

Through a series of meticulously planned and ambitious programmes, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) have made impressive advances in upgrading their training and capability, and are continually modernising their facilities. They are entrusted with defending the nation, safeguarding its security and stability and protecting its gains.

The SAF are supplied with continually upgraded advanced weaponry and equipment, including tanks, armoured personnel carriers, missile and artillery systems, armoured vehicles, fighter and transport aircraft, helicopters, landing craft and advanced sea-going vessels, to enable the armed forces to fulfil their national duties in the most efficient manner. A series of training programmes ensure that each Omani soldier is capable of handling modern technology to the highest professional standards.



The Royal Army of Oman is modern, organized, well-armed and fully equipped to the highest possible standard

The Royal Army of Oman

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) has become a highly dependable force of which the nation may be justly proud. Its infantry brigades and formations and deployment and support arms are equipped with hi-tech weapons, including armoured personnel carriers, armoured cars, modern artillery and air defence systems, signals and transport equipment – backed by specialist maintenance workshops – while its training programmes ensure its units and formations are kept up-to-date, at a high level of combat capability, and with personnel well-qualified in the scientific and technical fields.

The Firqat forces have undergone significant improvements in terms of organization, training, installations, services and utilities, and they have been supplied with advanced telecommunication systems.

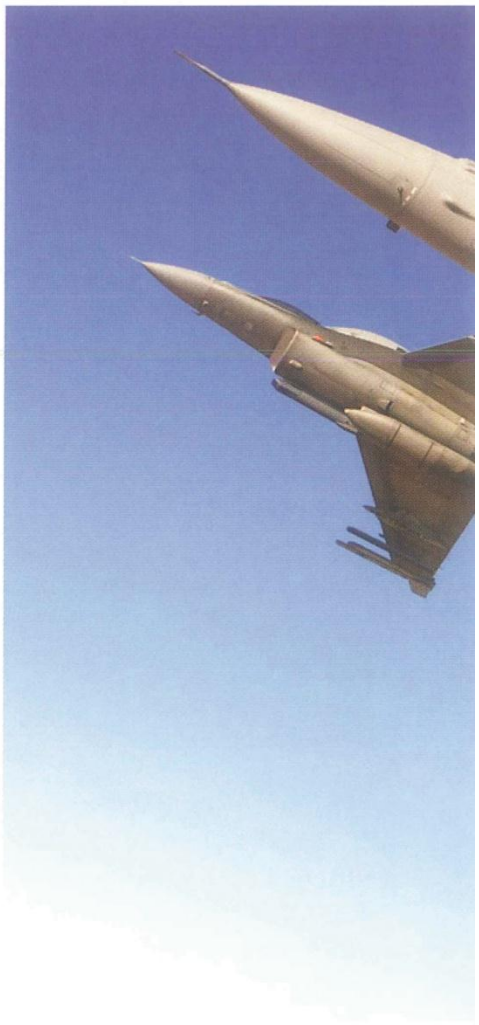
New and improved weapons are constantly being acquired for the RAO to enable it to fulfil its operational and national tasks and implement the strategy of building an integrated Omani military organisation capable of upholding the nation's security and protecting its gains.

In November 2013 the RAO launched the Border Guard Battalion. The new battalion was launched to enhance RAO's military capabilities on the one hand and securing, monitoring and protecting the land borders of the Sultanate on the other hand.

The Royal Air Force of Oman

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) enjoys a high level of human and combat proficiency and capability. It is equipped with advanced fighter, logistical transport and training aircraft, in addition to helicopters and an air defence system with anti-aircraft batteries and radar.

RAFO has signed a number of agreements for the introduction of the latest military technology, with the aim of meeting the challenges and demands of the future. At present, its air bases boast all the installations and capabilities required by an air force operating under different conditions. This is in addition to hi-tech equipment and transport facilities.



RAFO's personnel are well qualified and they are constantly being updated to ensure they remain at a high level of proficiency and readiness.

RAFO's personnel are well qualified and they are constantly being updated to ensure they remain at a high level of proficiency and readiness, should they be demanded to undertake such missions as defending Oman's skies, giving back-up to the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), carrying out search and rescue operations and providing transport and support services for members of the public in mountain areas.

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) has been playing an effective role in safeguarding the country's strategic security and economic interests.

In November 2013, RAFO received the second batch of NH90 multi-purpose helicopters. In October 2013 RAFO celebrated the arrival of the first CASA C-295, a tactical military transport aircraft as per the contract (Jibreen project) concluded in May 2012 between the Sultanate and EADS of Spain. In December 2012 a deal was signed with Britain's BAE Systems to supply 12 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft and eight Hawk trainer jets. Meanwhile, an agreement was also signed for the purchase of two more transport aircraft, one being the Lockheed-Martin C-130J Super Hercules and the other an Airbus (A320-300).



The Royal Air Force of Oman boasts artillery including modern fighter and multi-role aircraft

The Royal Navy of Oman

Due to Oman's strategic location and the fact that the Sultanate supervises one of the most important waterways in the world – the Strait of Hormuz – the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) has been playing an effective role in safeguarding the country's strategic security and economic interests through the RNO's permanent presence in Oman's territorial waters.

The RNO fleet boasts an advanced equipment and weapons capability, in addition to gunboats and fast missile support, training, cargo and hydrographical survey vessels, all of which provide back-up for its patrol boats in their mission of securing Oman's coastline and territorial waters, monitoring the safe passage of ships and oil tankers through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. The RNO provides security for sea transport for SAF units along the Omani coast, as well as lending support

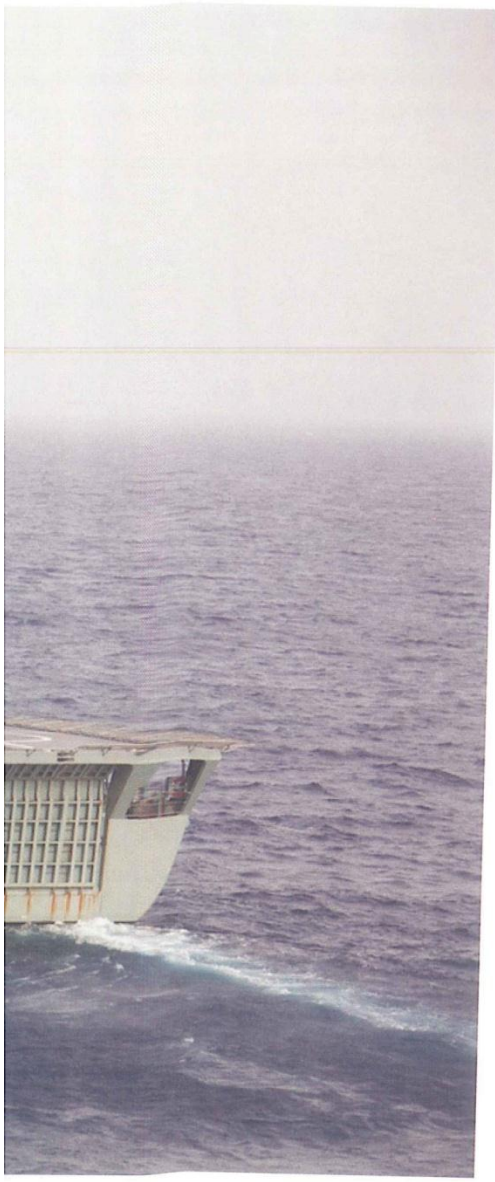


The Royal Navy of Oman's fleet of vessels protect the Sultanate's shores and territorial waters

to defence operations, protection of the Sultanate's precious fishing grounds and carrying out joint amphibious and marine transport operations.

In 2011 His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, gifted the Sultan Qaboos Trophy to Sail Training International in order to help 100 deserving young people from around the world take part in STI's tall ships races and regattas every year. The RNO is responsible for administering funding for this Trophy.

In November 2012, the RNO, in association with Oman Post, launched a 250-baiza commemorative postage stamp



titled 'Sultan Qaboos Sailing Trophy'.

Under the directives of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, an agreement was signed in April 2012 with a Singaporean company to supply the Royal Navy of Oman with four coastal patrol vessels. In May 2013 a contract was signed with a Dutch company for the construction of a 'sail training vessel', a 87-square metre square rigged, three-masted steel clipper, to replace the RNOV *Shabab Oman*.

In October 2013 the RNO received the *Al Shamikh,* the first of three vessels of the Khareef project for the building of vessels of advanced operational specifications and technical capabilities.

The Royal Guard of Oman

The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) is an important component of the country's modern military system. As with the other arms of the Sultan's Armed Forces, top priority has been accorded to the RGO by His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The RGO enjoys a high level of combat proficiency and capability and boasts infantry and support units with advanced systems and equipment, as well as educational, technical and administrative units. It attaches special significance to its training programmes, which are designed to keep personnel up to speed with handling the advanced equipment with which the RGO has been supplied.

The Royal Guard Technical College provides the RGO and other government establishments with technical personnel qualified to international standards. In addition to the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, with its complement of talented young Omani musicians,



The Royal Guard of Oman is an important component of Oman's military organization

the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was formed in 2010, and the RGO also has several military bands which perform at events at home and abroad. The Red Helmets and the RGO's Free Fall parachute team take part in public events, while the RGO's cavalry team stages displays of horsemanship and takes part in show jumping competitions, graduation ceremonies and other events of national and military importance.

The Defence Ministry's Engineering Services division backup for military exercises, as well as essential services such as water and electricity supply, sewerage systems and infrastructure utilities.

Engineering Services

The Defence Ministry's Engineering Services division is among the SAF's main support facilities. This division provides technical and engineering backup for military exercises, as well as essential services such as water and electricity supply, sewerage systems and infrastructure utilities at the camps, bases and military installations. Engineering Services are constantly increasing the output capacity of power supply stations at military sites. In addition, they prepare plans, oversee construction projects and maintenance works, including the upkeep of infrastructural facilities and utilities. As a contribution from the Ministry of Defence to the Sultanate's general development plans, the Engineering Services build roads in various regions across the country.

The National Survey Authority

The National Survey Authority



The Defence Ministry's Engineering Services plan and construct roads in remote and mountainous regions

(NSA) is the central body for the production of military and civilian maps. It also carries out aerial photography operations in the Sultanate, sets the criteria for topographical surveys, maintains the National Geographical Archive, and supplies air charts and geographical data. It has an extensive range of modern printing and programming equipment for the production of maps, charts and photographs, as well as ultra high precision satellite survey systems and standard and analytical graphic drawing facilities. The NSA maintains survey networks and provides geographical support and training in mapping and production.

The Institute of Survey Sciences and Map Production, which is based at the NSA's premises, confers national diplomas in surveying and mapping to military and civilian personnel qualified in those fields. It also holds specialist courses in the subjects.

Military Medical and Social Services

The SAF Medical Services division offers first class medical services to members of the armed forces and their families and – in addition to contributing to the development of the country's health sector – SAF Medical Services also provide medical care and support for evacuation operations, as well as for general emergency cases through their Flying Doctor

service. With state-of-the-art medical equipment, the SAF Medical Services are well qualified to carry out medical diagnoses and examinations, laboratory analyses, surgical operations and other forms of treatment.

The SAF Medical Services School also supplies the SAF with qualified medical and technical personnel.

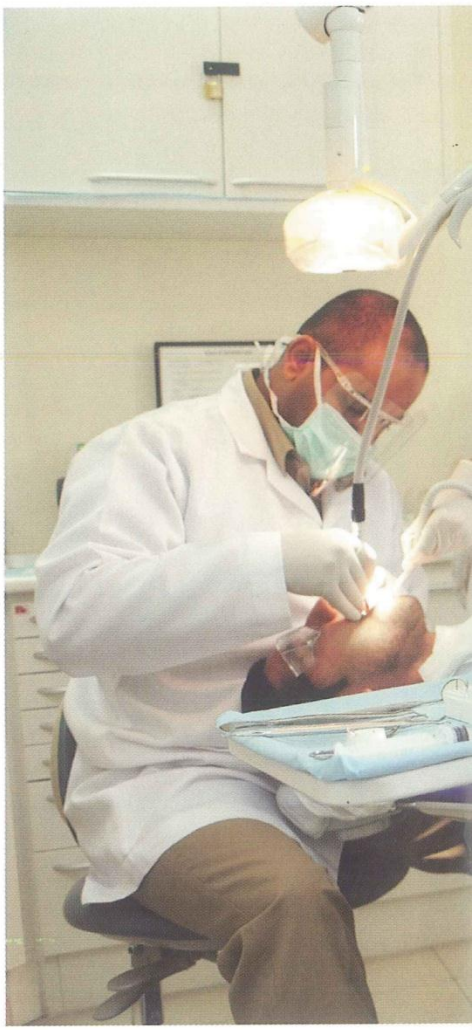
The Armed Forces Hospital in Al Khoudh is continually upgraded with the addition of a number of modern departments and services.

At the SAF Staff headquarters, the SAF Social Services provide social welfare for officers and men of the SAF and their families in the form of housing loans and the supervision of building work, as well as supplying care and rehabilitation services for disabled former military personnel, arrangements for Umrah pilgrimages and visits to veterans at Eid and on official occasions. They also organize visits to the sick, injured and families of deceased ex-servicemen.

The Al Murtafaa Mosque, situated within the SAF HQ complex, combines various designs of Islamic architecture.

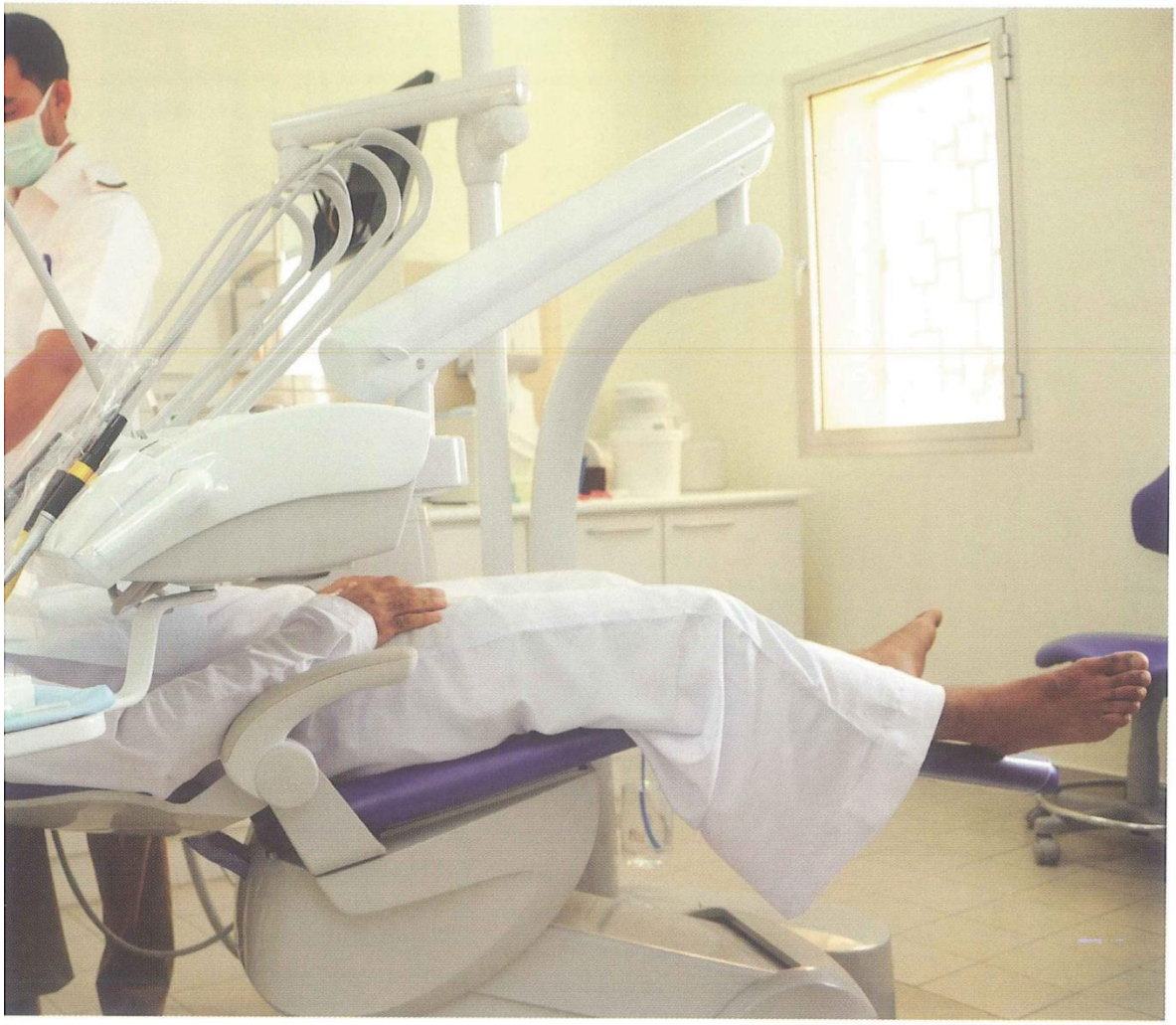
On 5th May 2013, the cornerstone for construction works on the new Military Commercial Complex, near MAM camp, was laid down. The complex includes a shopping mall, stores, restaurants, entertainment and children's games, shops, administrative offices, a prayer hall, water closets, parking lots and other standard utilities.

Information Technology Services have seen impressive progress, thanks to an effective programme of training for the military personnel it serves and the introduction of a judicious choice of IT systems.



Morale Guidance and IT Services

The Morale Guidance department is responsible for maintaining morale and highlighting the patriotic role of the SAF. Its duties cover running the military media, as well as national media coverage of social, cultural and sporting events and activities in the media, e.g. publications, radio and TV services. The Department's personnel organize visits to sick members of the SAF and their families who are undergoing



The Sultan's Armed Forces Medical Services have the latest diagnostic and treatment equipment

treatment at military hospitals.

The Morale Guidance department also coordinates the annual Military Hajj Mission and organizes cultural competitions for personnel of the Ministry of Defence, the SAF and the RGO, in addition to other public awareness events such as the activities of the GCC Traffic Week.

The Al Murtafaa Mosque, situated within the SAF HQ complex, combines various designs of Islamic architecture and houses many religious and cultural facilities.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum at Bait al Falaj in Muscat Governorate chronicles Oman's military history and the role of the SAF throughout the ages up to the present day.

Information Technology Services have seen impressive progress, thanks to an effective programme of training for the military personnel it serves and the introduction of a judicious choice of IT systems specialized



Specialist education and training institutions have been set up to train officers and men to the highest standards

in electronic administration and vital tasks such as the management of human resources, supply, purchase and finance – which have efficiently contributed to increasing productivity and speed and accuracy in completing tasks, in addition to providing data for decision makers in a user-friendly manner.

Recruitment and Training

Recruitment and the creation of job opportunities for nationals are top priorities at the Ministry of Defence, the Sultan's Armed Forces and the Royal Guard of Oman. Large numbers of young Omani job seekers are currently joining their ranks. The qualification and passing out of successive batches of officers and soldier recruits comes as an embodiment of the importance attached to human resources and the need to benefit from the outcome of general education and university education and postgraduate students in the arena of national duty.

The SAF and the RGO have several specialized military colleges, institutes and schools for training and developing the skills of armed forces personnel at every level.

The SAF and the RGO have several specialized military colleges, institutes and schools for training and developing the skills of armed forces personnel at every level. The programmes of these institutions include higher studies at home or abroad in disciplines related to military sciences and skills. The SAF's Command and Staff College provides the SAF, the RGO and other security units with officers well qualified in the field of leadership and eager to perform their duties towards a prosperous future.



The Royal Army of Oman's Free Fall team won several prizes at the Asiania Parachuting Championships held in Beijing in 2013

The College of National Defence was established by Royal Decree No 2/2013, issued in January 2013. Article 1 stipulates that it shall be a college for strategic studies in security and defence fields and operate under the Ministry of Defence with its headquarters at Bait al Falaj camp. Article 2 of the Decree states that it shall be linked academically to the Sultan Qaboos University.

In the meantime, the Military Technological College (opened in September 2013) offers a variety of qualifications towards the BEng (Hons) degree, and international civil EASA 66 licences for aeronautical engineering students. The College will provide academic training programmes based on a study of the latest training needs of all of the SAF's technical and engineering specializations.

As part of the training approaches and plans to raise the combat morale for the brigades of the SAF and RGO, many land, air and naval exercises are being conducted, besides joint exercises in which armed forces from GCC states and brotherly and friendly countries take part.

RNOV Shabab Oman

The RNOV *Shabab Oman* was inducted into the Royal Navy of Oman as a sail training ship in 1979. Over the years she has visited the ports of Arab and friendly countries as part of her training programme to promote cultural ties around the world, publicise the Sultanate, its culture and people.



The RNOV Shabab Oman, Oman's sail training vessel, seeks to promote cultural ties and stimulate world interest in Oman

Shabab Oman has also taken part in international competitions and maritime festivals. In 2010 she won the International Friendship Trophy three times: in Hartlepool (England) for the 'Tall Ships Races'; in Lavrion (Greece) for the 'Historical Seas Regatta' and in Amsterdam (Netherlands) for the 'North Sea Regatta'. It was the first time that one vessel had bagged all three International Friendship prizes in one year.

On 19th April 2013 *Shabab Oman* left Oman on her 12th international voyage to visit 23 ports in 16 European countries and in six months crossed 16,000 nautical miles. During her voyage she captured the International Friendship Cup for the 10th time in her history in a ceremony held in Poland.

The Sultan's Armed Forces attach great importance to sports as a means of ensuring their personnel maintain a high level of physical fitness and combat capability.

Taking part in regional and international events

The Sultan's Armed Forces attach great importance to sports as a means of ensuring their personnel maintain a high level of physical fitness and combat capability. It has several sports associations and facilities, many of which are currently being upgraded, and several professional military teams which represent the Sultanate in competitions at home and abroad.

In an achievement considered the first of its kind in Omani sports, the Omani military team won the Asia Military Football Cup held in February 2013. It also reached the



Physical fitness plays an important part of life in the SAF and RGO

finals of the World Military Football Trophy of the Conseil International du Sport Militaire (CISM) in July 2013 in Azerbaijan where it was runner-up, a record achievement for the team since it was the first time it had participated in such a world championship.

The National Free Fall Parachute Team at RAO clinched third place in Accuracy Landing and Rotation and a third place in the Parachuting Open competition in the Asiania Parachuting Championships held in Beijing in October 2013. For the National shooting team – see chapter on Human Resources/Sports.

The SAF and RGO include in their ranks a number of bands which have made a strong presence on national and international occasions. These include the Royal Army of Oman's Pipe & Drums Band which has won several awards in competitions over recent years. In July 2013 this band participated in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Scotland.

The Royal Air Force of Oman Pipe Band visited Germany and participated in the 'Musik Parade' held in Hamburg in March 2012. Addiitionally, the Royal Navy of Oman band worked to revive Oman's seafaring heritage through its exhibitions on board *Shabab Oman*. The Royal Guard of Oman's band is especially admired by the public attending local, national and international events.

THE ROYAL OMAN POLICE

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) is responsible for keeping the peace and maintaining security and stability throughout the country, and it receives particular attention from its Supreme Commander, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

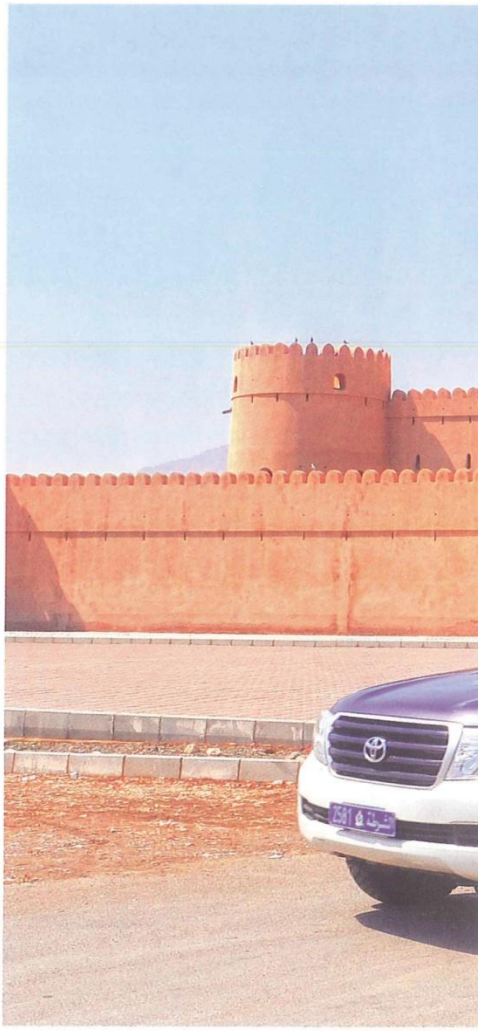
Thanks to the Police General Command's sound strategy and planning, the ROP has an impressive number of achievements to its credit. It has succeeded in keeping pace with the latest developments in the global security field while channelling its entire range of human and material resources into crime-fighting and protecting the individual and society.

Thanks to the Police General Command's sound strategy and planning, the ROP has an impressive number of achievements to its credit.

In line with the Police General Command's plan to recruit the maximum possible number of nationals, in 2013 large numbers of Omani job-seekers entered the police service to reinforce the ROP's presence throughout the Sultanate.

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The ROP has signed contracts for the construction of a Coastguard Command building in Sidab in the Governorate of Muscat, and for the completion of Phase One of the Special Duties complex in the *wilayat* of Sohar and Phase One of the new ROP Hospital on the Airport Heights. Tenders have also been invited for several additional police facilities. These measures reflect the ROP's endeavours to expand its human resources, upgrade its services to the public and improve the performance of its personnel in all police and security fields.



In 2012, the new Bidiya Police building was opened in the Governorate of Sharqiyah North, while work began on the construction of police stations in Yanqul and Mukhaizna. In the meantime, the construction of the border checkpoint of Tibat, Musandam Governorate, was



The Royal Oman Police play a vital role in serving the public and protecting the nation

completed, and work continued on the setting up of a police station at the Rub al Khali border checkpoint.

In early 2013, the ROP signed three agreements, all for the construction of police residential complexes at Al Sarooj, Qurum. This is in addition to an agreement for the setting up of a building for the ROP's second music band in the Wattayah area of Muscat Governorate.

Training

The extent and quality of the Royal Oman Police's performance reflects the numerous achievements it made over the past four decades. This applies just as much to its training programmes as it does to the expansion of its buildings and installations. The aim is to ensure that every area of the country enjoys the benefits of security, as well as a whole range of police services



The Police Women's Band performed in public for the first time in 2005 with 60 female musicians. Since then it has expanded rapidly

At the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences – one of the ROP's iconic institutions – the upholders of the nation's security acquire the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their roles as fully-fledged members of the police force, while at the same time infusing their energies with renewed vitality. The Academy provides its trainees with a scientific and academic education as well as practical training, because it recognizes that in order to perform their duties competently and efficiently members of the police force need to be armed with knowledge as well as a capacity for hard work.

The Officers Training Institute trains ROP officers and provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their duties with proficiency and prepares them to assume more demanding roles in their future careers.

The ROP is at the forefront of government establishments that support Digital Oman Society strategies and initiatives aimed at developing e-government in the Sultanate. The ROP's website (www.rop.gov.om) has been upgraded to handle services such as smart visa application forms and payment of traffic fines, as well as offering updates to visitors about the services officered by the Royal Oman Police.

The ROP is at the forefront of government establishments that support Digital Oman Society strategies and initiatives aimed at developing e-government in the Sultanate.



Members of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority have an active role to play in search and rescue operations

The e-visa, e-passport and customs projects are some of the Sultanate's more significant technical initiatives. Others include the computerisation of the police stations - which will give members of the ROP instant access to the police databases during their performance of their daily duties – as well as improved fingerprint identification systems and the introduction of geographical data system technology to assist the police force in its criminal investigations.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance service

The most significant development in the Civil Defence and Ambulance sector was the issue of Royal Decree No. 3/2013 on 8th January 2013, which established the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance. The Authority, which is a financially and administratively independent legal entity, comes under the Royal Oman Police.

The National Civil Defence Committee has prepared a study for a national crisis management plan. This is designed to ensure that the service remains at a state of maximum alert, even in exceptional circumstances and times of crisis. The plan includes proposals for the construction of a purpose-built centre and the creation of an updated database with details of



Police helicopters are essential in helping to transport patients from remote and mountainous villages to the nearest hospitals

all civil installations, roads, terrain and geographical data systems. In addition, it also provides for food reserve stores to be established in all the Sultanate's governorates, as well as mobile hospitals, emergency shelters and water cisterns for the referral hospitals to use in the event of a breakdown of the desalination plants.

In 2012, new civil defence and ambulance centres were opened in the *wilayats* of Al Buraimi, Nizwa, Ibri, Al Rustaq and Salalah. Work is under way on the construction of similar centres in the *wilayats* of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Mahdha, Mirbat, Thamrait, Bahla and Dhank.

The ROP has set up a number of specialist police units to keep pace with economic and social developments in the Sultanate and to cater for the growing needs of the Omani community.

Health and social welfare

The Directorate-General of Medical Services provides health care for police personnel and their families through the Police Hospital and its clinics, as well as through the Mobile Hospital. An Emergency Building was set up at the Police Hospital in 2012 to handle urgent cases. Work is under way on the construction of a new general hospital at the Airport Heights to meet the growing demands of police personnel and to upgrade the level of medical services.

The ROP is also keen on promoting sports in the belief that such activity has an important role

to play in ensuring ROP members are physically fit, and thus well equipped to carry out their daily tasks.

Specialist police units

The ROP has set up a number of specialist police units to keep pace with economic and social developments in the Sultanate and to cater for the growing needs of the Omani community. These include the Special Task Force, which provides security at events across the country and protects diplomatic missions, hotels and non-government public establishments. Other services include the Najda (rescue) patrols, the Vital Installations Unit patrols, the Women's Traffic Police patrols and Police Juvenile Unit.

The Police Aviation Directorate has been given enhanced status, its equipment and installations modernized and it has acquired a new fleet of helicopters.

The Mounted Police Unit carries out preventive inspection operations in which it uses police dogs for tracking and to search for explosives, drugs and other items services.

The Police Coastguard Division has been reinforced with modern, well equipped fast patrol boats to boost its effectiveness in the prevention of smuggling and illegal immigration and the protection of Oman's coasts and territorial waters.

The Directorate-General of Airport Security employs highly trained and qualified personnel to ensure the highest standards of security at the country's airports.

The National Search and Rescue Team, the first body of

Omani Achievements:



"Desert Pageantry: The Royal Cavalry of Oman" **- a book by the Royal Cavalry won the gold medal at the US-based Independent Publishers of the Year awards 2013 for the 'most outstanding design'.**

The book was awarded a gold medal after being shortlisted from 5,000 books from different parts of the world.

The prize presentation ceremony was held in New York in May 2013. The gold medal was received on behalf of the Royal Court Affairs, Diwan of the Royal Court, Oman, by Brigadier Abdul Razek bin Abdulqadir al Shahwarzi, President of the Royal Cavalry. The ceremony was also attended by Henry Dallal, photographer and author of the book.



Every effort is made to strengthen links between the ROP and the general public

its kind to be established in the Sultanate, was set up to deal with natural disasters and rescue people trapped beneath ruined buildings. This is a task that requires a high level of practical knowledge and skill as well as familiarity with the use of specialised technical equipment.

The importance attached to female police personnel

In all its aspects, police work is a mainstay of the day-to-day process of upholding the nation's security, and the role played by women in this respect is in no way less important than that of their male counterparts. This is particularly true of the Sultanate today, in which policewomen provide essential services for every sector of Oman's society.

Civil status, passports and residency

The Directorate-General of Civil Status records the civil particulars of nationals and residents. These include births, marriages, divorces and deaths of Omanis and births and deaths of foreigners resident in the Sultanate, as well as marriages and divorces involving foreigners if one of the parties is Omani. The Directorate-General also issues proof of status documents to nationals and residents including birth and death certificates and ID and residence cards.

The ROP has signed a contract for the introduction of an e-passport for Omanis which includes a number of distinctive visual security features and incorporates state-of-the-art global technology.



The Royal Oman Police – upholding security and stability across the country

In a move towards the adoption of a new generation of civil cards, in 2012 the ROP signed an agreement for the introduction of a new card for Omani nationals and foreign residents of the Sultanate which will simplify procedures for the provision of services while ensuring greater security and guaranteeing data protection.

In addition to issuing passports to Omanis and entry visas for foreigners, the Directorate-General of Passports and Residence also regulates and controls the procedures for entering and leaving the Sultanate through the official crossing points and protects the community by barring the entry of elements that could have a negative social or economic impact or pose a threat to public health.

In a move aimed at upgrading the Directorate - General's performance, the ROP has signed a contract for the introduction of an e-passport for Omanis which includes a number of distinctive visual security features and incorporates state-of-the-art global technology with facilities such as an e-verification system. It will be linked to the digital portals system. Other features will include data processing facilities at mobile units and an SMS notification system for passport receipt and renewal.

Traffic safety

The Police General Command



Keeping abreast of modern technology and using it to provide services for the public

supplies each ROP unit with the specific types of vehicles it needs in order to carry out its duties and regularly adds new vehicles to its fleet to enable the police to enjoy a higher profile presence across the country.

As part of its endeavours to reduce traffic accidents, in early 2013 the ROP introduced its second and third consignments of new vehicles under the first phase of its traffic control and monitoring programme for the Dhahirah, Buraimi, North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah governorates.

Through its criminal investigations the ROP aims to identify and arrest anyone who might seek to threaten the safety and security of members of the community or their property.

In January 2013 the ROP signed an agreement for the supply of mobile speed detection equipment which uses high quality photography and imaging and is able to determine vehicle speeds from a considerable distance.

The police have set up fixed and mobile speed detectors in various parts of the country with the aim of reducing accidents caused primarily by speeding, while cutting down the number of deaths and injuries resulting from them. These devices have proved their effectiveness, since there has been a significant fall in the number of accidents on the roads where they are located. The police are currently in the process of purchasing around 1,000 speed detection and traffic-light compliance detectors which will be installed on most of the country's

roads. New police personnel have been recruited to operate them.

Crime prevention

Through its criminal investigations the ROP aims to identify and arrest anyone who might seek to threaten the safety and security of members of the community or their property. Crime is a by-product of globalisation and the changing circumstances of modern life, and the Directorate-General of Criminal Investigations is taking all possible steps to keep the crime rate to a minimum and safeguard security.

The Arab and International Police Liaison Directorate (Interpol Muscat) at the Directorate-General of Criminal Investigations has been ranked sixth out of the world's top ten national bureaux for its proficiency in searching the database on lost and stolen travel documents and checking the documentation on fugitives from justice who are on the international wanted list. This ranking was based on an Interpol report covering the organisation's 188 member states.

In performing its duties with diligence and dedication, the ROP continues to reassert its role in upholding security and stability and as an effective force in the fight against crime of all kinds, while protecting the individual and society from the consequences of criminal activity. In doing so, it has continued to upgrade its role by adding new units, while ensuring that its ranks are filled with trained and qualified personnel, supported by the latest technology to enable them to keep pace with the demands of the world of today and provide members of the public with a wide range of prompt and efficient services.

Omani Achievements:



Ponies *Subhi* and *Zain* of Oman's Royal Cavalry (Royal Court Affairs) won first and second places in the category of two-year-olds as part of Qatar's 22nd International Horse Beauty Championships, held in Doha from 2lst to 23rd February 2013.

In 2012, an Omani pony named *Inspired Princess Natalia* won a gold medal at a similar event, while Omani pony *Ajlad* bagged a silver medal in the same championships.

Human Resources



8 Human Resources

The Omani people have been the top priority of the Sultanate's development plans and goals and every opportunity has been provided for its men and women to achieve their aspirations by developing their potential, skills, and technological expertise to make an effective contribution to the Sultanate's development. His Majesty the Sultan has repeatedly called for the people's potential to be mobilized through education and training which, along with improved living conditions and health standards, will enable them to fulfil the role entrusted to them.

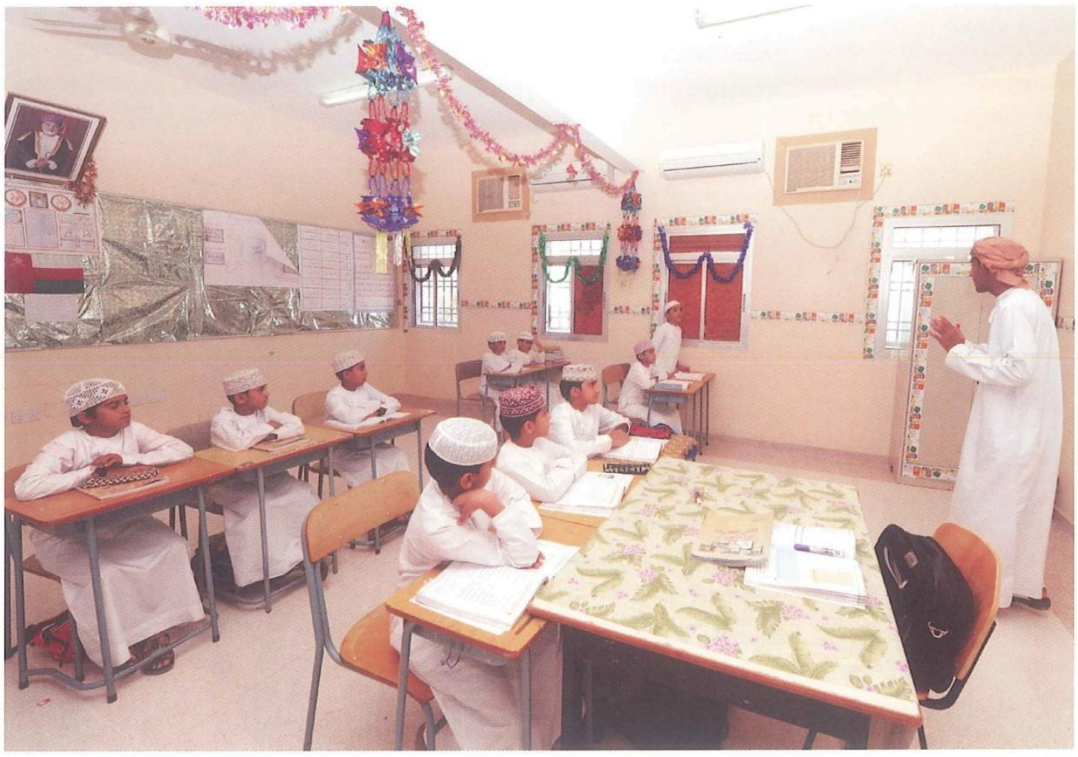
His Majesty pointed out that importance would continue to be attached to infrastructure projects, since they would continue to be vital for the successive phases of the country's social and economic development. At the same time, he stressed that human development was also a priority for the future progress of the Omani people.

The Sultanate has taken steps to establish a modern educational system which meets the demands of the culture and information age while remaining true to Oman's original values.

The people have proved to be worthy of His Majesty the Sultan's confidence in them – a fact noted by His Majesty the Sultan in his speech at the opening of the Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*)'s annual meeting at its new premises on 12th November 2012, when he said:

"Over the years the Omanis have proved that they are endowed with a high level of awareness, culture, insight and understanding in the way they handle opinions, discussions and debates aimed at serving this country's interests and the interests of its loyal people. We are certain that this awareness will increase and this confidence will grow as a result of the part that you – the members of the Council of Oman – are playing in exchanging views and ideas and, thanks to the judicious approach you have chosen to follow and, God willing, will continue to follow, in the meticulous and studied way in which you deal with different issues and views."

His Majesty pointed out that importance would continue to be attached to infrastructure projects, since they would continue to be vital for the successive phases of the country's social and economic development. At the same time, he stressed that human development was also a priority for the future progress of the Omani people. He instructed the government to focus its plans on social development, particularly those aspects of it that were related to the public's living standards, by



Attentive children listen to their teacher – hopeful of a promising future

making more job opportunities and training programmes available, raising productivity levels and working towards further scientific, academic and cultural progress.

Consequently, there have been significant advances towards greater prosperity and better lives for Oman's citizens. Today there are schools and other institutions of learning throughout the Sultanate, as well as health care and social welfare centres. More jobs are being created for young people, while sporting and cultural activities enjoy continued support, alongside the country's women, the Omani Women's Associations and other civil society bodies. This in turn has helped enable Oman to boast ever greater achievements and successes in the international arena.

Education

From the start of Oman's modern Renaissance top priority has been given to education and His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has stressed that education is the supreme goal of all the country's efforts.

Education has made impressive progress in all its different fields and it continues to form the basis for developing a generation of productive citizens capable of assuming responsibility for their nation's future. It is for this reason that the Sultanate has taken steps to establish a modern educational system which meets

the demands of the culture and information age while remaining true to Oman's original values – a system equipped to contribute to the advancement of the Omani citizen and prepare him to play his part in his country's future progress and achievements.

The Ministry of Education has sought to upgrade the educational process so that it satisfies the local community's needs. At the same time, it is implementing His Majesty the Sultan's instructions for a review of the education system to ensure that it meets the demands of both society and the labour market..

The number of government school students in the School Year 2012/2013 stood at 522,951, of whom 262,738 are males and 260,213 are females. The number of schools in the Basic Education stream (Grades 1-10) stood at 892, comprising 93% of the number of government schools in the country – an increase of 3% over 2011/2012 figures. The number of general education schools fell from 138 in the School Year 2010/2011 to a mere 64 schools in 2012/2013, representing seven per cent of the total number of schools (956 schools in all) in which there are Grades 1 to 10. At the same time, there are only 85 schools with Grades 11 and 12.

As many as 53 educational buildings are being constructed or their projects have been awarded in tenders during the current Five Year Plan, while 36 new buildings have been opened during the School Year 2012-2013. The increase in the number of school buildings being constructed or tendered aims to close evening schools, accommodate the growth in student numbers, transform public schools into a basic education system, and bring educational services closer to where the target students reside.



Measures are being taken to promote a digital culture in schools as well as the use of technology in education. Digital content is being incorporated in the school

Measures are being taken to promote a digital culture in schools as well as the use of technology in education. Digital content is being incorporated in the school curricula, while e-education systems are being adopted with the aim of streamlining and upgrading teaching methods.



The education system responds to future trends in economic and social development

curricula, while e-education systems are being adopted with the aim of streamlining and upgrading teaching methods.

Its experience of introducing e-education in teaching methodologies has met with success, proof of which was the Ministry (represented by Oman Educational Portal) winning two Sultan Qaboos Awards for Excellence in E-government services, one in the category of best eProject Individual and the second award for best eServices Government to Citizens in 2011 in the presence of former US President Bill Clinton.

The Ministry has formed teams to develop various modern curricula based on recognized principles, criteria, and observations of subject teachers and supervisors. In 2012/2013, sixth-grade maths and twelfth-grade Islamic education as well as a music teacher's guide and an information technology

programme which can be downloaded step-by-step from the Education portal, were developed.

Particular attention has been given to Islamic education, since its particular concern is with the Islamic Faith and values which promote positive behaviour, while at the same time it reinforces the younger generation's relationship with their Creator. This in turn will ensure that they become good citizens, well equipped to protect their country's achievements and promote its higher interests.

Work has begun on the introduction of several programmes designed to apply information technology to the practical aspects of learning and teaching. One of these – the Generation of Scientists project – aims to upgrade the teaching of chemistry and physics, while the Microscopic Network Project is a science education project aimed at reinforcing the school curriculum.

The German language was applied as a pilot in 2012/2013 in five schools in Muscat and Batinah South Governorates.

The Ministry teaches foreign languages in order that Omanis will be able to interact positively with current and future developments. The German language was applied as a pilot in 2012/2013 in five schools in Muscat and Batinah South Governorates. It is taught by Omani teachers who have received training in the language, for which books and teaching aids have also been produced. The French language too will be introduced in the next School Year (2013-2014) as an optional subject in the post-Basic Education stage of Grades 11 and 12. Students will be given four French lessons every week. The experiment will be implemented in four schools in Muscat and Batinah North.

The National Centre for Vocational Guidance helps students and job seekers to discover their professional orientation and personal attributes.

In an initiative to promote higher educational standards, the Staff Welfare Department has been set up to meet the needs of both administrative and teaching staff, whereby particular emphasis is laid on the cultural, sporting, recreational, social and economic aspects of their jobs. This department is one of the few ministry departments of its kind, not just in the Sultanate and the Gulf, but in the Arab world as a whole.

To limit the impact of illiteracy and bring it down to 50% by 2015, the Department of Continuing Education develops programmes and projects to reduce illiteracy within the framework of 'Education for All', which is one of the principles of UNESCO. Literacy centres were opened in various governorates, and the media outreach was intensified to raise public awareness of the overall problem of illiteracy. In 2011/2012 a programme for the eradication of illiteracy among Education Ministry personnel was implemented and it contributed to the education of 1,318 illiterate people.

With regard to Special Needs, a programme entitled "Tackling Articulation and Communication Disorders" has been in operation in the Governorate of Muscat since the 2005/2006 school year, while the Mental/Auditory Merging programme was introduced in all



Boys and girls are given equal opportunities for a good education

the Sultanate's governorates from 2010/2011. A guide was produced to the Learning Difficulties programme (Part One) during the 2010/2011 school year, as well as a set of operational guidelines for that programme. A class for pupils with dual disabilities was opened at the Omar bin al Khattab Institute for the Blind, while from the 2006/2007 school year the curriculum at the Amal School for the Deaf was extended to include Grades 11 and 12. Students at al Amal School and the Omar bin al Khattab Institute who intend to pursue their studies at university may sit for the Twelfth Grade Diploma – Special Needs.

A standardised comprehensive assessment system has been introduced to enhance the performance of schools throughout the Sultanate and ensure a steady improvement in the quality of school graduates.

The National Centre for Vocational Guidance helps students and job seekers to discover their professional orientation and personal attributes and to direct them towards educational and professional paths that are commensurate with their talents and abilities. It also enlightens them about the academic specializations available in different higher education institutions in the Sultanate and abroad. It also produces publications, together with fixed and mobile advertising posters which aim to spread awareness among school students in all governorates of the Sultanate.



The latest Education Plan emphasises scientific subjects, as well as mathematics and languages

The Sultanate has also succeeded in including the traditional dance arts of Al'azi and Al-taghrood in the UNESCO List of International Cultural Non-Material Heritage.

Private schools

The Ministry oversees private schools administratively and technically to achieve high-quality performance and to upgrade all elements in the school environment, including the management, teachers, students, and technical assistance. The private schools have been classified according to category. Some are exclusively kindergartens, some focus on Holy Qur'an memorization; some are bilingual, monolingual or international multilevel schools.

The latest statistics available for the School Year 2012/2013 indicate that the number of private schools stands at 454, of which 40 are international schools. Seventeen of the private international schools are in Muscat Governorate and the rest are distributed in other governorates.

Private schools in the Sultanate have 120,000 students against 10,000 teachers and administrators. International private schools in the Sultanate have 46,800 students, 1,984 teachers and 581 administrators.

The National Commission for Education, Culture and Science

The National Commission for Education, Culture and Science has tried to benefit from its counterparts to improve educational, cultural and scientific efforts in Oman and to highlight the role played by the Sultanate at international forums. The close ties between the Sultanate and UNESCO is a role model for other countries, which has at the same time enhanced the



Scout and guide packs across the country take part in a range of activities designed to instil in their members a positive attitude towards the community

Sultanate's international status. The Sultanate has succeeded in getting membership of various international bodies and occupying prominent positions, for example as a Governing Board Member of UNESCO's Institute for Statistics in 2013, and an elected member of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme (IFAP). The Sultanate has also succeeded in including the traditional dance arts of Al'azi and Al-taghrood in the UNESCO List of International Cultural Non-Material Heritage. Oman has hosted many regional and international meetings, conferences and seminars under the auspices of UNESCO, ISESCO and ALESCO to enrich and promote a culture of dialogue, human communication peace, and noble human values.

Scouts and Guides

The Commission for Scouts and Guides comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Thanks to the strong support the country's scouts and guides receive from Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Chief Scout of the Sultanate, the movement's leaders and members have shifted their activities and programmes into top gear which has had a signifcant impact on their domestic, regional and international profile.

In September 2013, thirty-five countries participated in the 16th International Scout Gathering for Exchange of Culture and Civilisation which was held in Salalah. And in October a number of different scout teams from within Oman participated in the 56th Telecommunications Camp



Government and private universities and colleges provide a variety of courses for the rising generation

and the 17th Internet Camp which lasted for 47 hours non-stop. Approx. 55 calls were conducted across the world.

In 2012 the Chief Scout issued orders for the construction of new premises for the scout band and the provision of all the equipment required for its future expansion.

There has been a major increase in the number of students enrolling in higher education institutions in the wake of His Majesty the Sultan's instructions for the expansion of the higher education sector and the creation of 1,500 external and 7,000 domestic scholarships.

Higher Education

Since the start of the Sultanate's Renaissance the government has attached enormous importance to education in general and higher education in particular. Numerous institutions of higher education have been set up in a wide range of fields (technical, health, banking, teaching, the judiciary, preaching etc.) to meet the labour market's needs for qualified Omanis.

There has been a major increase in the number of students enrolling in higher education institutions in the wake of His Majesty the Sultan's instructions for the expansion of the higher education sector and the creation of 1,500 external and 7,000 domestic scholarships. Today more students from the general education system than ever before are signing up for academic studies, thereby reducing the numbers of job-seekers in that category.

In the 2011-2012 academic year 9,807 domestic scholarships were awarded for BA degree studies in a range of disciplines, along with 3,173 scholarships for students to study in various Arab and foreign countries.

His Majesty also ordered that 1,000 scholarships should be earmarked for MA and PhD studies in certain specified scientific disciplines required by the Omani labour market. The scholarships will be staggered over a five-year period at the rate of 200 per year.

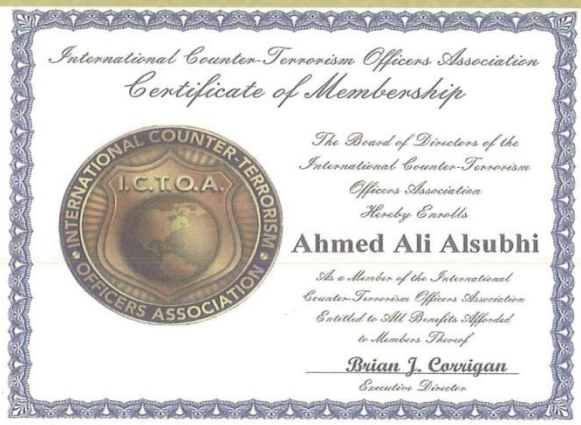
Colleges of Applied Sciences

The Ministry of Higher Education oversees the Sultanate's six Colleges of Applied Sciences in the *wilayats* of Salalah, Al Rustaq, Sohar, Sur, Ibri and Nizwa.

The Colleges of Applied Sciences operate a range of supporting activities related to the students' specialist disciplines and programmes. These are designed to help the student develop a positive attitude towards himself, his environment and his community and encourage him to bring his own skills, talents and expertise to the Omani labour market.

The Scientific Research Centre at the Directorate-General of Colleges of Applied Sciences follows up the preparation of strategic plans for scientific research. It looks after the drafting of annual plans for research projects undertaken by students at these colleges. The Centre also supervises the issuance of a magazine entitled *Journal of Applied Sciences,* which is produced at the Colleges of Applied Sciences and appears on a half-yearly basis.

Omani Achievements:



Omani student, Ahmed Ali Al Subhi, received Membership of the Golden Key International Honor Society in recognition of his academic excellence at post graduate level in the field of emergency and disaster management while studying at the American Military College.

Membership of Golden Key, which was established in 1977, is one of the major academic achievements for students globally. Membership is by invitation only, to the top 15 per cent of college/university 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students and top performing US graduate students in all fields of study, based solely on the criteria of their academic achievements.

The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC)

By the beginning of the 2013/2014 academic year – when it enrolled the eighth batch of Diploma of General Education students (and holders of equivalent certificates) at Oman's higher education institutions - the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) had been in operation for eight years since its establishment in 2006.

The number of students who registered via the HEAC for the

academic year 2012/2013 during the prescribed period (April 1 to June 1, 2012) stood at 53,879. Out of the 44,921 applicants who selected the desired study programmes, 38,774 passed the General Education Diploma examinations, and this latter figure includes those who received admission to government higher education institutions, internal scholarships in private higher education institutions, external scholarships and local and external grants up until January 2013.

The website provides a number of services to assist students in obtaining the information and advice they might require. These include visual displays with details on how to enrol and submit applications.

The admission system for the first university stage accepts several certificates, including the Diploma of General Education (obtained by graduates of government schools and private schools which come under the Ministry of Education), the International Baccalaureate, the Advanced Placement International Diploma and other international certificates, as well as certificates issued by Gulf Co-operation Council, Arab and foreign states. The website also explains the systems for assessing the marks shown on these certificates. A total of 61 higher education institutions and other government bodies use this system.

In 2013, the number of private education institutions stood at 19 colleges and 7 universities in various governorates of the Sultanate.

The government is strongly committed to upgrading and safeguarding the quality of higher private education.

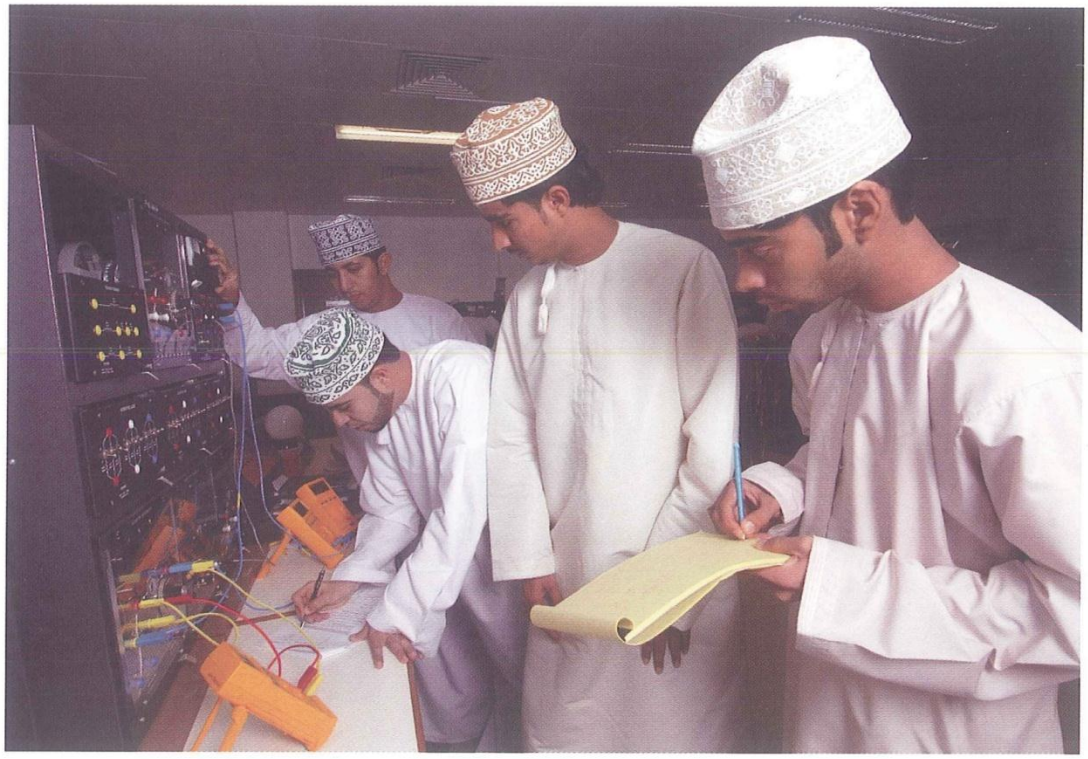
The HEAC undertakes the management of the Higher Education Statistical System (HESS) which started with the collection of data for the academic year 2007/2008. The HESS aims to provide a statistical database about higher education in the Sultanate to help decision-makers in the Sultanate and other places to devise strategies and plans which contribute to developing the higher education system in the Sultanate. This data also explains the Sultanate's position among the countries of the world through the information provided to international organizations.

Private higher education

The higher education sector has continued to undergo steady expansion and improvement. In 2013, the number of private education institutions stood at 19 colleges and 7 universities in various governorates of the Sultanate, offering a range of certificate, diploma, BA and MA courses.

According to available figures, there were 47,465 male and female students enrolled in private education institutions during the academic year 2011/2012, and the number is steadily growing.

The government is strongly committed to upgrading and safeguarding the quality of higher private education to ensure that it keeps abreast of the country's development in other fields, and it provides these institutions with direct and indirect material support



Combining the theoretical with the practical is essential in higher education, which is keeping pace with economic and social advances taking place across the country

in various forms, including land grants. Some of these institutions have already set up their own buildings on the lands allocated to them by the government.

Academic Chairs

The Ministry of Higher Education oversees seven academic chairs in the name of Sultan Qaboos. There are currently a total of sixteen academic chairs in various universities around the world, helping to spread knowledge and promote contacts between different cultures and civilisations.

Reflecting the importance attached by His Majesty to academic chairs, a committee headed by the Ministry of Higher Education has been set up to monitor the activities of the existing chairs and study proposals for establishing new ones. Its members are drawn from the different bodies responsible for overseeing the chairs.

The Ministry of Higher Education is eager to promote and raise awareness of the chairs in the academic community. To this end, several incumbent professors have visited the Sultanate to give lectures on the chairs they hold and exchange expertise and ideas with Omani officials.

Sultan Qaboos University

The intellectual and cognitive development of the Omani individual has always been a

strategic goal of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) since it first opened in 1986. From its earliest days His Majesty the Sultan has seen it as a power house of expertise and knowledge for the whole of society and its institutions, and in response it has dedicated itself tirelessly to making that vision a reality.

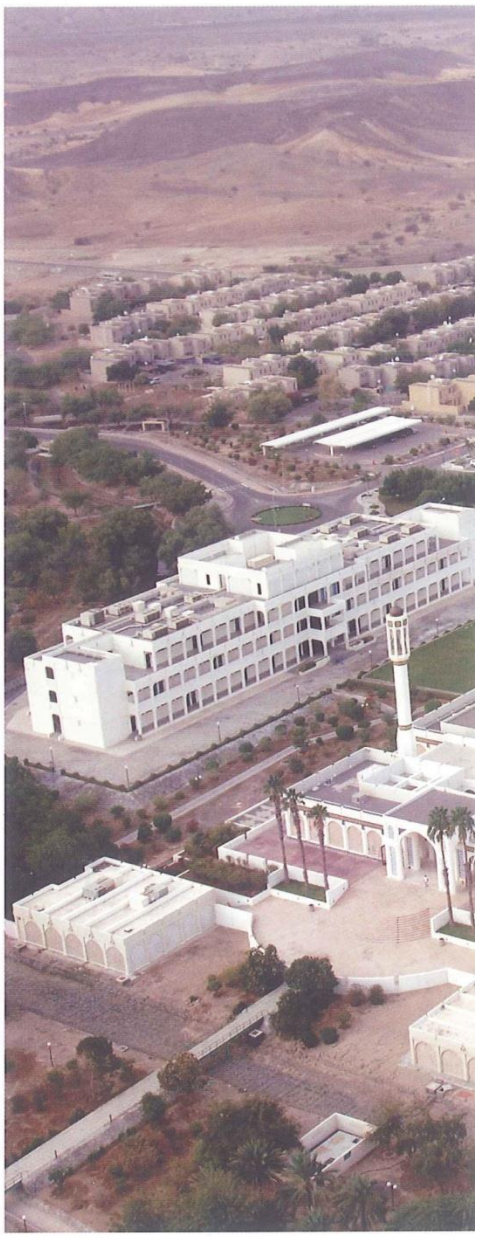
Over the years SQU has made impressive advances, implementing high level programmes and projects to produce outstanding graduates and thus making a significant contribution to the development of the Sultanate's scientific, academic and intellectual potential. Towards this end, SQU has hosted distinguished experts and academics from North America, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Arabian Gulf, inviting them to rate its progress and put forward ideas on future developments. It has also brought in external examiners and assessors to perform annual academic evaluations of its standards.

Reflecting the importance attached by His Majesty to academic chairs, a committee headed by the Ministry of Higher Education has been set up to monitor the activities of the existing chairs and study proposals for establishing new ones.

SQU consists of 9 colleges, which are the College of Arts and Social Sciences, the College of Education, the College of Economics and Political Sciences, the College of Nursing, the College of Law, the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, the College of Science, the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences and the College of Engineering.

The intellectual and cognitive development of the Omani individual has always been a strategic goal of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

The number of students admitted to SQU in the Academic Year 2011/2012 stood at 3,887 which took the overall number of students at the university to 15,521. As many as 2,667 students of the university's different specializations graduated in the same year.



The University is taking steps



Sultan Qaboos University has seen a scientific and research transformation over recent years

to upgrade and modernise its academic programmes, which it is reviewing so that it can identify the extent to which they respond to Omani society's needs and current developments in the global arena. This will ensure that its graduates are able to acquire the knowledge and skills to become proficient and fully functioning members of the community. SQU has 61 academic programmes at BA level and 58 at MA level.

The University is now running PhD programmes in several of its colleges in response



Omani citizens have access to an integrated, three-tier, public health service of the highest standard

to the community's needs and the demands of the development process for new and more advanced academic studies, and these have had a highly positive effect on scientific research. During the 2011/2012 academic year it launched a PhD programme in information studies at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, thereby taking the number of SQU's PhD programmes up to 27.

The University attaches great importance to research, which it classes as "academic", "applied" or "strategic", depending on the subject involved and funding. As well as academic staff, a number of postgraduate students and technicians take part in the research projects. In addition to hosting international conferences, SQU takes part in a variety of international conferences to encourage co-operation and exchanges of expertise as well as boosting its standing global academic and research circles.

Ever since it first opened, SQU has maintained close contacts with the wider community and, recognising that it is an integral part of it, it has always placed its educational, research and technical facilities at society's disposal.

The Centre for Community Service and Continuing Education - set up to provide the community with a link to the University's facilities - seeks to strengthen and develop co-operation between SQU and Omani society as a whole.

Future Vision for the Health System 2050 is a long-term plan. It represents a transitional stage that aims to keep the health system in pace with international medical and technical progress.

SQU has also sought to build stronger ties and expand its co-operation with some of the world's most renowned academic institutions and research centres. In doing so it has been able to reassert the excellence of its own research programmes, the high quality of its graduates and its active contribution to fostering ties of friendship between peoples around the world.

The Health Sector

The Sultanate has carried out robust planning in its Five-Year Plans for Health Development, and has done this on a continual basis since 1976. This has resulted in the provision of regular support to the health system through programmes and health services, leading to improved standards of health among the population of the Sultanate.

The year 2013 is the third year of the 8th Five-Year Plan for Health Development (2011/2015). This is a continuation of the new planning method that was adopted for the 7th Five-Year Plan. This method of strategic planning presented a clear vision and sound approach to determining the most urgent problems and remedying them.

Future Vision for the Health System 2050 is a long-term plan. It represents a transitional stage that aims to keep the health system in pace with international medical and technical progress.

The health care system consists of three integrated components: primary health care, secondary health care and tertiary health care. Primary health care is provided at health centres and local hospitals in all governorates and *wilayats* of the Sultanate. Secondary care is provided by referral hospitals in the Sultanate's main *wilayats*. These hospitals offer more skilled and specialised levels of health care. Tertiary care encompasses high-level technical health care. This is provided in the major hospitals in

Omani Achievements:



A medical team of Sultan Qaboos University Hospital removed a tumour from the abdomen of an Omani young man diagnosed with testicular cancer.

The operation was carried out by Dr Mohammed bin Salim Al Marhoon, Consultant of Renal and Urology Surgery, who was assisted by a medical team comprising four surgeons, two anaesthetists and five nurses.

The operation, the first-of-its-kind in the Sultanate, took 10 hours. Dr Al Marhoon pointed out that the patient was complaining of a swollen abdomen.

The success of the operation is an indication of SQU's keeping abreast of advances in the field of surgery.



Hi-tech specialist health services are available at the country's specialist hospitals

the governorate of Muscat, namely the Royal Hospital, Khoula Hospital and Al Nahda Hospital. All of these hospitals provide comprehensive medical treatment and act as referral hospitals to all parts of the Sultanate. Al Masarra Hospital in the Governorate of Muscat provides tertiary-level care, and specialises in the treatment of psychiatric and neurological diseases. The first National Genetics Centre was opened in the grounds of the Royal Hospital in November 2013.

The Five-Year Plan has focussed on ensuring support for the development of health services that provide highly effective and low cost primary health care.

The Sultanate has a total of 65 hospitals, 49 of which are owned by the Ministry of Health and 5 by other government institutions such as Sultan Qaboos University, the Royal Oman Police and the Sultan's Armed Forces. These hospitals provide 5,965 beds, which is a ratio of 16.5 beds for every 10,000 members of the population. Of these, 4,659 beds belong to Health Ministry hospitals, constituting 78.1% of the total of all hospitals in the Sultanate.

Visits to outpatient clinics in 2012 stood at 13.3 million. The increase in number of visits to clinics and patient admissions followed an increase in the provision of other services like medical laboratories, x-ray and dentistry services.

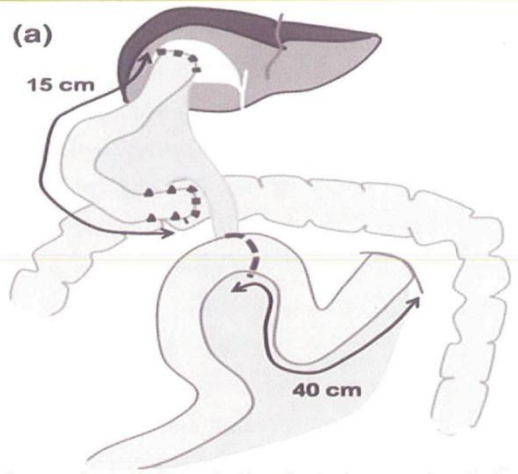
The number of patients treated at hospital departments stood at approximately 293,000 inpatients in 2012. More than 87,000 surgical operations were conducted in 2011.

The Five-Year Plan has focussed on ensuring support for the development of health services that provide highly effective and low cost primary health care. This has included an expansion in the number of establishments providing primary health care to people all over the Sultanate. Support of those institutions and their development for the provision of primary health care has ensured a high level of quality. The results of these efforts have been remarkable and there has been significant improvement in the health level of Omani society.

By the end of 2012, there were 220,000 health centres, polyclinics and local hospitals, of which 219 were run by the Health Ministry. These include 29 health centres with beds, 99 health centres without beds, 22 polyclinics and 29 local hospitals.

The health sector is the basis of all health services in the Sultanate and it is experiencing steady growth. By the end of 2011, private health institutions in the Sultanate included 10 hospitals, 430 general clinics, 224 specialised clinics, a polyclinic, 187 dental clinics, 59 clinics specialised in Chinese and Indian traditional medicine, 3 laboratory centres, 8 MRI centres and 442 pharmacies.

Omani Achievements:



A team of experts from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) performed a unique operation on a six-year-old girl who was suffering from biliary atresia, which involved connecting a part of her bowel to the biliary ducts. The operation was a medical success that was celebrated internationally. It eliminates the need for liver transplantation.

In short, the operation involved the redirection of twelve biliary ducts to from the duodenum into the small intestine, and from there it takes its natural course to the colon. This operation involved a modification which would not allow the bile enough time to be absorbed. Before commencing the operation, 40 centimetres of the beginning of the small intestine are measured, and after that 15 centimetres. This is the point where the operation is commenced.

The surgery was performed by Dr Zainab bint Nasser al Balushiyah, Consultant Paediatric Surgeon at SQUH, under the supervision of Dr Shamsuddin Mohammed Reela, Professor of Liver Surgery and Transplantation at Kings College Hospital in London.

Children's health

By international standards, Oman is one of the most advanced countries with respect to improvement in the lives of its people, and has a high ranking with regard to protecting the lives of children. In 1970, 118 out of every 1,000 live newborns died in their first year. This number dropped to 45 in 1985, and then down to 9.5 in

2011. In 1970, 181 live newborns died before the age of five years. The number dropped to 52 in 1985 and 11.9 in 2011. This reflects the extent to which the Sultanate has worked to secure children's lives and their healthy development. The achievement has been recognized at an international level.

Improvement in these indicators is due to the fact that the Sultanate implemented the expanded immunisation programme, which targets diseases like tuberculosis, polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and measles. Vaccinations were also given for hepatitis, rubella, mumps, in addition to the Hib vaccination.

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Since July 2003, a pentavalent vaccine was administered to children in the Sultanate, in line with the international standards for immunisation against dangerous diseases. In 2008, the pneumococcal vaccine was introduced, as was the injected polio vaccine. Thanks to high percentages of immunisation, at times reaching 100%, the Sultanate has remained free of poliomyelitis for 15 years in a row. No cases of tetanus have been registered among newborns since 1995, and there have been no cases of diphtheria since 1992. The number of confirmed cases of measles dropped by 5 cases in 2011, which is significant progress from the 68 cases recorded in 1995.

the Ministry of Civil Service's strategic plan (2011-2015) aimed to meet this goal by giving the Ministry a more high-profile role and streamlining its performance and services. The plan proposed policies for developing the different departments of the state's administrative apparatus.

Staffing in the health sector

As the quality of health care depends greatly on the ratio of skilled workers available with the appropriate specialisations, the Sultanate attaches great importance to coming up with strategies for supporting and developing manpower to increase the quality of health services. This has led to an improvement in health care for the population. In 2011, a total of 689 paramedics graduated from medical institutions belonging to the Ministry, taking the total of the workforce in the sector to 11,068 in recent years. This is in addition to the 2,058 medical and paramedical students who graduated from higher education institutions by the end of 2010. This has contributed to the rate of Omanisation in the sector, in view of the succession of graduating cohorts of Omani doctors from Sultan Qaboos University, as well as private higher education institutions and health and technical institutes belonging to the Ministry of Health, which train male and female nurses and paramedics.

CIVIL SERVICE

In his speech at the opening of the Council of Oman's fifth term in 2011, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos reaffirmed "the importance that continues to be attached to the development of human resources" and pointed out that it was "the ultimate priority of our plans and programmes. It is the human being that is the cornerstone of any



Courses are continuously being held for the state's administrative apparatus, in order to cater for the changing nature of the government's needs

development process and he plays a pivotal part in it, whatever form it takes, since its goal is to ensure his happiness, provide the means for him to enjoy a decent life and guarantee his security."

For its part, the Ministry of Civil Service's strategic plan (2011-2015) aimed to meet this goal by giving the Ministry a more high-profile role and streamlining its performance and services. The plan proposed policies for developing the different departments of the state's administrative apparatus, with particular emphasis on the organisational, human, procedural, legislative and information-related aspects of its functions. It also provided for close co-ordination to ensure optimal use of the available human and financial resources, while making provision for proposals and comments to be made on draft laws and statutes for the Civil Service administrative departments that are not governed by special laws.

Omanisation is the fundamental principle applied when providing job opportunities for nationals and operating the Central Recruiting System, and a plan is being vigorously implemented to achieve the state's Omanisation target, in a series of stages, over the period from 2011 to 2015.

According to the available data, Omanisation levels in the government sector are on target and proceeding according to plan.

In 2012, the number of Omanis in departments governed by the Civil Service Law stood at 128,393, or 89.2% of the total, whereas Omanis employed in the same sector only accounted for 75.5% of the total in 2000. The Omanisation target for 2020 is 95%.

In October 2012 it was announced that the Ministry of Civil Service had won the Sultan Qaboos Award for Excellence in e-Government in the 'Best e-Services' category for its Human Resources Management System (Mawrid). The jury was chaired by an official from the UNU-IIST Center for Electronic Governorance and comprised eleven international experts from around the world.

Training

The Ministry of Civil Service, in cooperation with government and private agencies, has made staff training compulsory for employees under the Civil Service Law. Therefore, all units are required to provide training opportunities for staff of all different levels and job types. The Civil Service is determined to ensure that employees are trained in a scientific and professional manner through scholarships, study grants and fully paid study leave.

A plan has been devised to incorporate an IT component in the training programmes, in order to enable the Civil Service to make effective use of IT when developing its administrative systems.

One important aspect in developing human resources is the extent to which an organization benefits from training grants offered by other states as a part of their efforts to boost bilateral cooperation. There is ongoing coordination between the Ministry of Civil Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to distribute these grants within the various units of the state's administrative apparatus.

A plan has been devised to incorporate an IT component in the training programmes, in order to enable the Civil Service to make effective use of IT when developing its administrative systems.

On-line training is a method that is widely used these days. One of the advantages it has over other types of training is the fact that material can be sent to target groups anywhere and at any time. It also gives trainees the freedom to choose the times that are most convenient for them as well as the programmes that are best suited to their needs.

Under the 2012 training plans some 126,299 Civil Service staff underwent training within the Sultanate and abroad, while 94 employees obtained university qualifications.

A symposium on 'Developing Government Performance' was held from 15th to 18th September 2012. Its recommendations have served as a roadmap for administrative development. Participants included government dignitaries, members of the business community and international experts.

The Civil Service Ministry's 'Quality Management System' project met the requirements for ISO 9001:2008, as well as for the renewal of a 3-year certificate granted to the Ministry, by the International Organisation for Standardisation, for the period from 2013 to 2015.

The Institute of Public Administration

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) is the Sultanate's main institution for administrative development. Since its establishment in 1977, it has supported efforts to upgrade the country's administrative system and practices by training and developing staff employed in the state's administrative apparatus, in response to the challenging nature of the government needs over the past three and a half decades. In 2012 the IPA ran its biggest training programme ever. The number of training courses increased by 50 per cent compared with the 2011 figure; some 5,116 employees from different government departments attended 278 courses at various levels and in a range of administrative fields, and there was a significant rise in the number of programmes held in the governorates – from 31 in 2011 to 113 in 2012. The Institute also continued to run its foundation programme for new government employees, holding 151 courses for 2,782 employees from 24 units and departments.

In the field of research, the IPA organized a number of activities in 2012, including 22 research papers which were published in the IPA Journal, *Al Idari*, the first specialized journal of its kind to focus on administrative affairs in the Sultanate. In December 2012, the IPA celebrated its 33rd anniversary. In the consultancy field in 2012, the IPA gave advice on a number of issues to the government as well as private sector establishments. These were mainly on the preparation of job descriptions, drafts on personnel matters and training programmes.

In addition to collecting 215 items of reference material for its library in 2012, the IPA also acquired 166 documents from government departments. The additions included reports, periodicals, press releases and working papers, thus bringing the total number of documents available at the Institute at the end of 2012 to 11,025.

Manpower

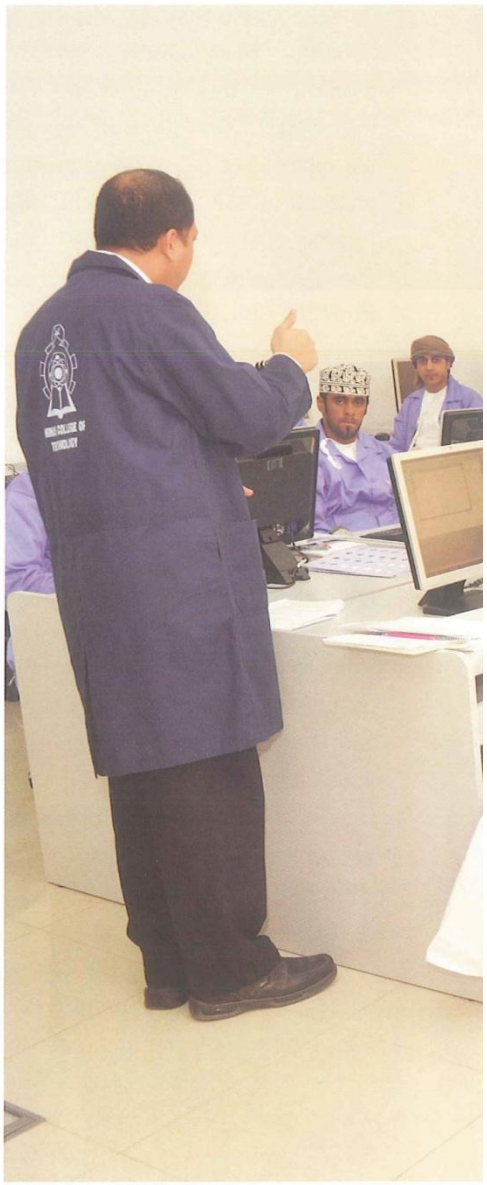
The Sultanate gives priority to developing human resources and the employment of national manpower, recognizing the crucial role this plays in bolstering the economy. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's directives have contributed significantly to the creation of wider employment opportunities for job-seekers. At the same time, they have

also helped to ensure that young Omanis are provided with the education and training they need in order to develop their knowledge and skills - particularly in those specialist fields required by the labour market – and this has led to higher Omanisation levels across the different economic sectors.

The employment sector witnessed major development in terms of providing jobs for citizens in private sector establishments. As many as 210,639 jobs seekers found jobs by the end of December 2012, ranging from specialist jobs (22,899), to technical (16,260), vocational (65,627), skilled (39,024) and semi-skilled jobs (66,829).

The employment sector witnessed major development in terms of providing jobs for citizens in private sector establishments.

As many as 40,759 job seekers found new jobs from January 2012 to the end of January 2013. Of these, 17,339 were included in the Job Seekers Inventory project of the Public Authority for Manpower Register, while another 23,420 were not covered by the survey although most of them were appointed in the private sector.



Labour

The amendments to the Labour Law also include provisions that refer specifically to women employees, as well as measures to curb certain excesses that could impact negatively upon the proper implementation of the provisions of the Law.

The labour sector has made tangible progress in areas such as legislation to regulate relations between the three sides involved in the production process (government, private sector employers and the work force), as well as the labour market in general. Particularly noteworthy are the amendments to the Labour Law promulgated under Royal Decree No. 13/20111, issued on 24th October 2011, which reinforce significant elements in the status of the private sector and help ensure stability and continuity in the workplace, while boosting productivity and creating an environment that encourages loyalty among the workforce. In



addition to exhorting employers to play their part in this regard, the amendments also include provisions that refer specifically to women employees, as well as measures to curb certain excesses that could impact negatively upon the proper implementation of the provisions of the Law.

Al Rafd Fund

The creation of the al Rafd Fund - part of an initiative to encourage young people to set up their own projects - was announced by His Majesty the Sultan at a meeting with the sheikhs and dignitaries of the Dakhiliyah and Wusta Governorates at the Royal Camp at Seih al Shamikhat in the

Technical education is developing in tandem with development in the country as a whole

Dakhiliyah Governorate's *wilayat* of Bahla during his Royal Tour. His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that the starting capital of al Rafd Fund will be RO70 million, to which RO7 million will be added on an annual basis.

Article 4 of Royal Decree No 6/2013 establishing the al Rafd Fund and promulgating its system, issued on January 28, 2013, states that it shall take over all the assets, liabilities, rights, obligations and records of the Sanad Programme of the Ministry of Manpower, as well as the Social Development Ministry's programme known as 'Generating Sources Projects (Livelihood Projects)', and the programme known as the Agricultural and Rural Women's Projects of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The al Rafd Fund is an integral part of the state's policy of encouraging young men and women to quit their jobs in the government sector so that they can work full-time in running their own projects; the Fund also provides assistance to enable young people to devote their time and energies to setting up new enterprises.

The al Rafd Fund is an integral part of the state's policy of encouraging young men and women to quit their jobs in the government sector so that they can work full-time in running their own projects; the Fund also provides assistance to enable young people to devote their time and energies to setting up new enterprises or developing existing projects. It aims to ensure that loans or grants are made available for a number of applicants up to a maximum of RO100,000, rather than the RO50,000 maximum under the Sanad Programme.

By helping school students develop their skills and creative and leadership potential, the Injaz Oman programe prepares them to enter the labour market with confidence.

Injaz Oman

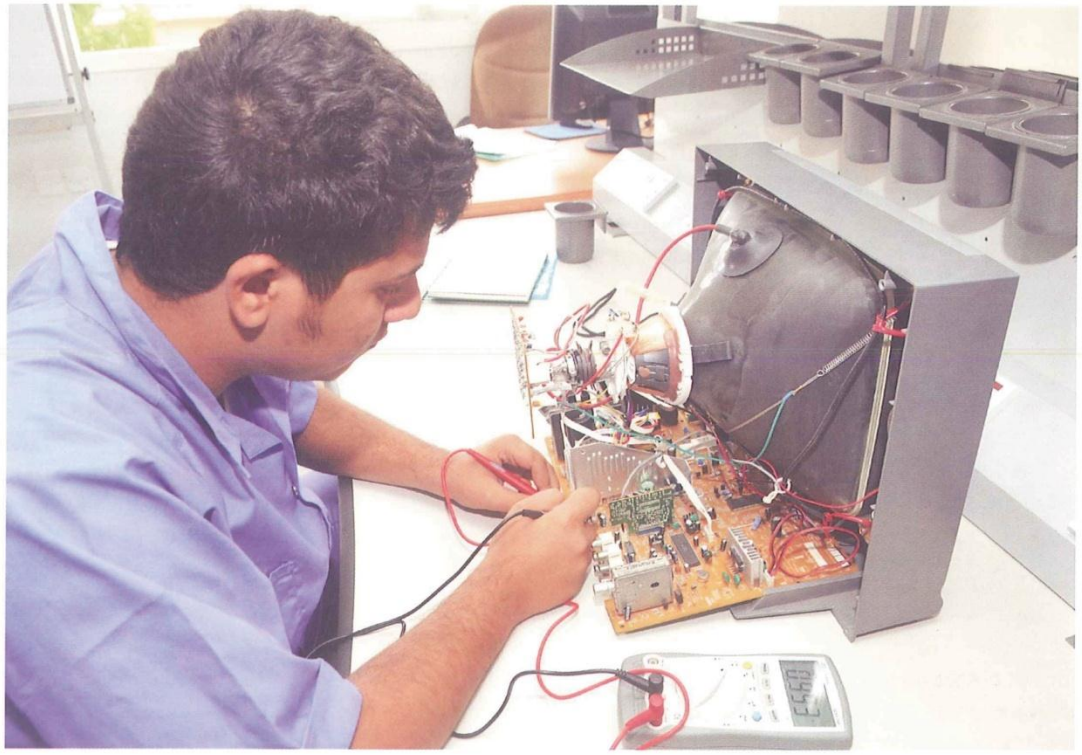
By helping school students develop their skills and creative and leadership potential, the Injaz Oman programe prepares them to enter the labour market with confidence. Through this programme, the student explores his or her talents through a series of training courses run by individuals who offer their private sector expertise and experience and explain the secrets of their success.

Technical education

In order to keep pace with the latest developments in the labour market and its need for new knowledge and skills, the technical education system has expanded its intake capacity as well as the range and levels of subjects on offer.

Vocational training in the private sector has now become more effectively regulated, while private training centres and institutes are classified according to their ability to operate programmes that are in line with Omani vocational criteria. Importance continues to be attached to employment-related programmes, with particular attention being given to the "applied aspects" of the courses through more extensive on-the-job training; this helps support the country's Omanisation plans by supplying the different sectors with the vocationally qualified manpower they require. The general framework for vocational qualifications has been laid down by an Occupational Standards and Skills Testing Centre, which seeks to ensure that they keep pace with the country's needs for qualified manpower.

In the 2012/2013 academic year the Sultanate's seven Colleges of Technology had an intake capacity of 11,300 male and female



Oman's youth now enter the labour market with skills and confidence

students and a total of around 40,000 students. Some 4,066 students graduated from them in 2011-2012, ensuring that the labour market was provided with a range of specialist qualifications.

Upgrading the curricula is an ongoing process since technology itself is constantly developing, and this in turn has an impact on the labour market. The 2012/2013 academic year saw the introduction of an Executive Co-ordinator programme in the Commercial Studies Department, an Aviation Engineering programme in the Engineering Department and an Environmental Sciences programme in the Department of Applied Sciences.

A new subject - Medical Equipment Technology - was first introduced at the Higher College of Technology during the 2012/2013 academic year in order to supply the Omani market, particularly the Sultanate's hospitals and health centres, with technicians trained to operate and maintain medical equipment.

During the 2012/2013 academic year the teaching of technological disciplines was amended to bring it into line with the labour market's demands for appropriate qualifications. There are now three levels: a Diploma in Technology, an Advanced Diploma and a Bachelor's Degree in Technology. The Induction stage was merged with the Diploma course and is now regarded as the first year of the Diploma. The statutes of the Colleges of Technology were also amended to meet market requirements and

(Overleaf)
Centres have been set up to train the disabled and integrate them into society

produce a single, standard set of regulations applicable to all higher education institutions. This new measure has helped minimise any problems that might be faced by students, while giving them the opportunity to improve their performance in their studies and reducing absenteeism.



Social development

Social welfare is His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's government's top priority. As they are the focus and goal of social development, Omani citizens have access to a wide range of social services through a system of specified procedures, legislative measures and programmes designed to guarantee their well-being and stability.

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The Ministry of Social Development constantly seeks to streamline and modernise its structure, anticipate future requirements and keep pace with the Sultanate's progress and development in every sphere. The year 2013 has been a highly significant one which saw the introduction of a totally new approach to social development and welfare in their broadest sense, as well as the launch of a number of community and voluntary initiatives which helped raise the standard of social work to a new level.

The Ministry of Social Development constantly seeks to streamline and modernise its structure, anticipate future requirements and keep pace with the Sultanate's progress and development in every sphere.

The Ministry of Social Development operates in two main areas – social development and social welfare. The first of these – social development – is based on the idea that individuals can only become properly involved



in developing their community if they are able to improve their living standards and develop their skills and potential. This will give them the opportunity to become self-reliant, which in turn will enable them to contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.

The second area – social welfare – provides incomes under the social security programme for those sections of society that are incapable of earning a living or supporting themselves. Other services under this heading include relief and emergency assistance, rehabilitation of the disabled to enable them to become fully integrated, productive members of the community, mother and child care and the rehabilitation of juveniles.

A wide range of different types of social services is available through an extensive series of programmes designed to assist specific categories of citizens (including children, the elderly and the disabled) whose circumstances – social or otherwise - have rendered them less able than others to deal with their day-to-day problems, so that they require support from the state in order to enjoy a good standard of living.

The Social Security Law is designed to implement the state's welfare policies and provide citizens in need with decent living standards. Benefits totalling RO121,947,739 were paid out between January and December 2012 to 81,014 such cases.

The Social Security Law is designed to implement the state's welfare policies and provide citizens in need with decent living standards.

A total of RO 188,066 was also paid out to 518 cases in 2012in the form of relief following disasters such as fires and other incidents resulting in damage to property and livelihoods.

Emergency assistance is provided in cases where harm has resulted from certain unforeseen social or other circumstances and the persons involved are unable to deal with their situation on their own. The Ministry of Social Development also liaises with other government authorities and private sector bodies to make facilities and concessions available for families on social security benefits – that is, the most needy section of society – and provide them with a supportive environment.

Special welfare services are provided for certain social categories in need of care and rehabilitation, including – among others - the disabled, the elderly and juvenile delinquents. These categories are covered by a range of programmes to enable them to become self-reliant and achieve their ambitions in life like other members of the community.

The "Livelihood Projects", first launched in 2004, are designed to enable families on social security benefits to set up their own projects, so that they will no longer need to depend upon the state for support.

The 61 Social Development Committees, which operate throughout the country and are the key components of voluntary social work in the Sultanate, help raise public awareness on social and development-related issues and promote a spirit of co-operation and solidarity between members of the community.

There are several social projects in the "family development" field aimed at mobilising people and channelling their energies into productive activities. They are the fruit of a series of long-term programmes and high-level training schemes designed to enable families to depend upon their own efforts and make a useful contribution to the society to which they belong.

Women and children's welfare

Oman's children are the builders of their country's future. Accordingly, great importance is attached to child care and there are numerous programmes devoted to child welfare. Orphaned children and others in similar situations are placed with suitable foster families or in the Children's Care Centre; at the end of 2012 there were 338 children (boys and girls) living with foster families and 124 children at the Children's Care Centre.

The Children's Development Homes are a cornerstone of the educational system and provide children with the opportunity to benefit from a range of educational, cultural and other activities. At the end of 2012 there were twelve such Homes attended by 1,646 children.

The achievements of Oman's women are a source of pride for every Omani, and on His Majesty the Sultan's instructions 17th October is celebrated annually as Omani Women's Day. The country's 56 Omani Women's Associations with their 5,629 members promote voluntary social work and encourage women to play their part in contributing to their country's development programmes.

The Rukn al Tifl ("Children's Corner") kindergartens, run by the Omani Women's Associations, provide social, recreational and educational services for children between the ages of three and a half and school age. At the end of 2012 there were 54 "Children's Corners" attended by 5,719 children and staffed by 395 female volunteers and supervisors.

Professional associations

The professional associations promote ties between their members and help expand the scope of voluntary activity within a professional context. At the end of December 2012 there were 26 such associations with a total of 6,210 members. There were also thirteen foreign community social clubs with 5,710 members.

Sports

A boost was given to the sports sector through the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, on 22nd July 2013 when a RO1 million subsidy for each club registered with the Ministry of Sports Affairs was announced. Around 43 clubs will benefit from the cash injection. The new funding for the clubs will be used to improve infrastructure, buy equipment and other requirements.

At present there are eight sports complexes equipped with high tech facilities. Work is also underway on the Al Buraimi sports complex, and in March 2013 it was announced



Omani girls celebrate their success at a global event

that three more complexes would be set up in Rostaq, Ibra and Khasab as well as sports centres in other *wilayats* around the country.

Royal Decree No.57/2012, issued on 10th November 2012, outlining the functioning of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) and elected sports associations, represented a major transformation in organizing the work of private sports institutions in the Sultanate. It has helped in finding harmony between Oman's national legislation and the regulations issued by international sports organisations.

The Omani Club for Sports for the Dumb in Ghala Heights provides the dumb with all their sporting needs.

The Omani Club for Sports for the Dumb in Ghala Heights provides the dumb with all their sporting needs.

Sporting achievements in 2012/2013 were diverse, here in alphabetical order:

Athletics: At the third Islamic Solidary Games held in Pelambang, Indonesia, in September 2013, an Omani sprinter claimed silver in the 100m final. Meanwhile, the Omani men's 4x100m team took the gold medal, while the women's team won bronze in the 4x100m and 4x400m. Oman also clinched a silver in the women's javelin throw.

In May 2013, at the 2013 Asian Athletics Grand Prix in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Barkat al Harthy bagged a gold medal in the 100m event, and the 4x100m Oman's relay quartet bagged a bronze medal.

In the Gulf Athletic Championships for Girls which was hosted in Muscat in February 2012, Oman won three golds,

4 silver and one bronze medal. Shinoona al Habsi won the 'lone woman participant' in the London Olympics 2012.

An international sporting event - Oman Desert Marathon - took place in November 2013, attracting strong competition from world-renowned champions. This was the first marathon of its kind in the Gulf region.

Beach Handball: In Hong Kong in May 2013, Oman's men's team finished a creditable runner-up in the final of the fourth Asian Beach Handball Championship.

Beach Volleyball: At the third Islamic Solidarity Games in Palembang, Indonesia in September 2013, the men's beach volleyball pairs took two of the three podium finishes, picking up the gold and bronze medals.

Cricket: It was announced in October 2013 that Oman Cricket will spend over RO2 million in developing cricket from its grass roots level and will also take care of cricket infrastructure. At present Oman has five astroturf grounds and one green grass ground. Oman is currently an Affiliate Member of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Cycling: The Tour of Oman took place from llth to 16th February 2013 in northern Oman with top cyclists from around the world taking part – these included Chris Froome, Alberto Contador and Sir Bradley Wiggins.

Football: Oman's Under-22 Youth team qualified for the final of the Asia Youth Championship 2014, after bagging the award for 'the Best Third Place Team'.

Omani Achievements:


في أول إنجاز عماني عالمي في الرماية

الرامي الدولي سعيد الهاشمي يتوج بالذهبية على مستوى العالم في مسابقة المسدس السريع ٢٥ مترا

The Sultanate's international marksman Said bin Musallam al Hashmi won first place and a gold medal in the 25-metre rapid-fire pistol event at the Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmed World Marksmanship Grand Prix held in Kuwait in March 2013.

Said became the first Omani and the first Arab to claim gold in this competition in which 600 marksmen from 45 countries took part.

Ali al Habsi, Oman's goalkeeper for English Championship club, Wigan Athletic, was ranked third by www.goal.com on a list of the top ten Asian players in Europe in the 2011-2012 season. He also won the 'Best Goalkeeper' of the Gulf Cup in 2011.

Go-karting: Oman Karting Team's Rawahi brothers produced impressive performances in the UAE Rotax Max Challenge Series claiming podium finishes in the fourth round, held at the Al Ain raceway in December 2012.

Golf: For the first time ever, in October 2013, Oman hosted the penultimate leg of the 4-day



The Tour of Oman in February 2013 attracted over 140 top cyclists from around the world

European Challenge Tour/National Bank of Oman Golf Classic with 114 professional and amateur players from around the world taking part.

Oman's junior national golf team (under-15s) bagged a silver medal in the nett category of the 14th Arab Amateur Championship held at Port el Kantaoui in Tunisia in September 2013. The 17th GCC Golf Championship, which was held at the Al Mouj golf course in Muscat, took place in February 2013.

Horse Racing: In September 2013 the Royal Cavalry team at the Royal Court Affairs took part in the finals of the Europe's Endurance Championships held in Most, Czech Republic.

Motor sports: Ahmed al Harthy, champion racing driver for the Oman Air team, received the Porsche Carrera Cup GB Pro-Am1 winner's trophy near Silverstone, England in November 2012. He took 12 Pro-Am1 victories and 17 podiums in total from the championship's 20 races. Ahmed also entered the history books as the first person of Arab origin to win a championship in a series the stature of Porsche Carrera Cup GB.

Sailing and Oman Sail: The Extreme Sailing Series (ESS) – for Extreme 40 catamarans - began with Muscat acting as hosts for Act 1 on 5th March 2013. After seven Acts in different countries around the world *The Wave, Muscat* clinched a memorable victory in Florianpolis, Brazil on 17th November 2013, following the closest ever races in the seven year history of the series. Oman also won this Series in 2012 – to win the Series once is tough, but two years in a row is just incredible.

The Laser World Championships

are to be held in Al Masannah, Oman, during the period 17th November 2013 to January 3rd 2014. National champions from forty-four countries will compete in three categories: Laser Standard Men's World Championship, Laser Masters Championship and the Laser Radial Youth World Championship.

In November 2013 Sailing Instructor Nashwa al Kindi was presented with the prestigious International Sail Federation (ISAF)'s President Development Award for 'outstanding achievement in the development of sailing'. She also made history when she became the first Omani woman to compete in the UK's world famous Fastnet Race aboard Oman's MOD70 multihull in August 2013.

Shooting: The National Shooting Teams participated in the International Military Shooting Championships held in Bisley, England, in July 2013, taking first place for wooden targets, electronic targets, gun and pistol shooting, and in the machine gun (5.65 mm calibre) contests. The team came second in the Asian Skeet Shooting championship held in Kazakhstan in October 2013, and also took second place in the 'double trap' category. The team also won two bronze medals in the International Council for Military Sport (CISM) championships in San Marzano, Italy in May 2012, and in March 2012 won 10 medals in the Emir Championships in Kuwait.

Swimming: At the 23rd GCC Swimming Championships held in Muscat in October 2013, Ayman al Kulaibi took gold in the open category 200-metres race, and in the 50-metres freestyle for 10 years and under, Bader Majidia snatched the gold medal. Omanis also took silver and bronze in the 1,500-metre swim.

Tennis: In the third Islamic Solidary Games held in Palembang, Indonesia in October 2013, Fatma al Nabhaniyah won the women's gold and a bronze in the doubles event with Sarah al Balushiyah.

Tent pegging: At the Asian and International Tent Pegging Championships held in Ghaziabad, India, Oman's five riders came away with four gold, six silver and four bronze medals.

Omani Achievements:



In a thrilling three-hour Blancpain Endurace Series race in June 2013 at Silverstone, England, Ahmed al Harthy and his team-mate, veteran Slovakian Miro Konopka, headed the field in the prestigious Gentleman trophy class in their No.66 ARC Bratislava Porsche. They took first place by a full lap. However, it wasn't plain sailing for the 997 GT3R - at one point Ahmed had to improvise with some rallycross skills, taking to the grass in the final corner when confronted with a gaggle of slowing cars.

Ahmed switched from sprint racing at the beginning of 2013, having sealed the Porsche Carrera Cup GB Championship Pro-Am 1 title in 2012.

He becomes the first driver of Arab origin to stand atop the championship podium.


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Heritage, Culture and Arts Windows to Oman's civilization


Sindbad il marinaio
Sindbad the sailor

9 Heritage, Culture and Arts Windows to Oman's civilization

Particular importance is attached to the Sultanate's cultural heritage in all its forms, since it plays a major role in the intellectual, artistic and creative life of the nation.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences and other government bodies involved in promoting culture and safeguarding Oman's heritage have put a range of cultural programmes in place, including practical steps to protect the country's antiquities and to ensure the proper utilization of valuable elements of the Omani heritage and culture. These departments organized many programmes on the conservation of archaeological areas and this, in turn, reflected positively on activating cultural tourism.

A distinctive feature of the Sultanate's blessed renaissance has been the importance attached to the heritage, culture and the conservation of archaeological areas. This attention stems from a deep awareness about the cultural and tourist values of antiquities which highlight the country's centuries-old civilization.

The government is taking steps to conserve, safeguard, collate and facilitate access to every element and aspect of the Omani heritage, since the Sultanate's cultural legacy is a resource of major importance. It needs to be maintained and restored in the interests of the national economy in general and the tourist sector in particular, and measures are required to ensure that it is kept within the country.

Restoration work

Restoration and maintenance work is constantly being carried out as part of a conservation programme to protect the Sultanate's ancient buildings such as forts and castles. These monuments to the country's past are protected not only as tourist attractions, but also as a valuable means of enriching the nation's cultural life; old urban districts are also being renovated and improved, while restoration work on historic buildings and sites offers opportunities for them to be documented and studied by scholars and researchers.

Along with ongoing maintenance and restoration of forts, castles, mosques, towers and archaeological sites in the governorates of the Sultanate, the areas where renovation has been

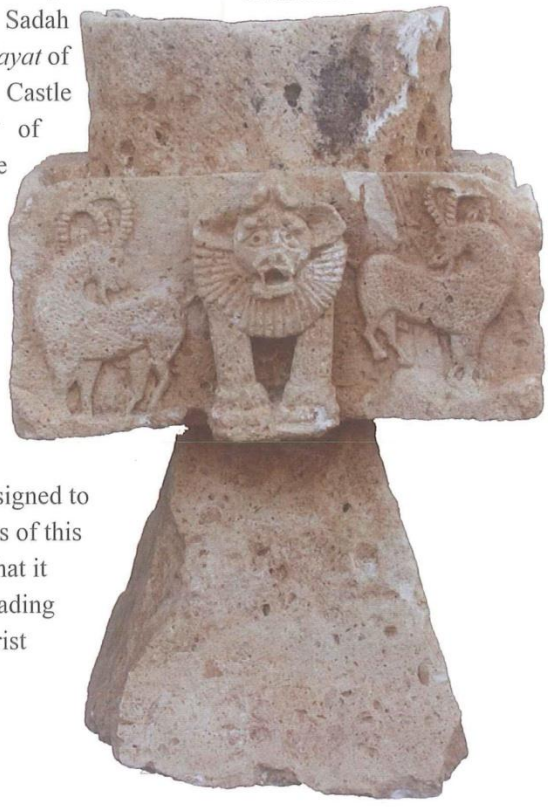


completed are now open to visitors. These include Bahla Fort, Samail Castle, Al Iraqi Castle, Bait al Maqham, Al Musanaa Castle, Al Kamazira Castle, Bait Al Marah Castle, Mirbat Castle, Al Maraziq Castle, Saima Towers in the *wilayat* of Sur and Al Barashid Mosque in the *wilayat* of Al Mudhaibi.

Work is under way on the restoration of Manah Castle, Harat al Bilad quarter in the *wilayat* of Manah, Harat al Sulaif quarter in Ibri, Harat al Busaid quarter in the *wilayat* of Adam, Aswad Castle in the *wilayat* of Shinas, Al Rustaq Fort, Imam Ahmed bin Said Tomb, Imam Saif bin Sultan al Yaarubi Tomb in Al Rustaq, Bait Al Ghasham in Wadi Al Maawil, Bahla Souq, Al Maneekh Castle in the *wilayat* of Dhank, Al Wasil Castle in the *wilayat* of Bidiya, Al Adfain Castle in the *wilayat* of Wadi Bani Khalid, Abi Said Al Kadmi Mosque in the *wilayat* of Al Hamra, Sadah Castle in the *wilayat* of Sadah, Qurayat Castle in the *wilayat* of Qurayat, the Bilad Sur Castle and Riyam Tower in the *wilayat* of Muttrah.

Surveys and excavations carried out at Qalhat are designed to reveal the secrets of this ancient city so that it can become a leading cultural and tourist attraction.

Oman's archaeological sites help promote a better understanding of civilization



Museums - windows into past glories

Museums are windows into the past where we can observe a society's heritage, culture and past history over the ages. Items destined to become museum exhibits, including artefacts, old tablets and maps, are constantly growing in number as new archaeological sites are discovered and excavated.

The Sultanate, which attaches great importance to its heritage and historical treasures, recognises the important role museums have to play in reflecting a people's contacts and interaction with other cultures, languages and societies; at the same time, museums also help reinforce a society's own culture and promote an interest in its history, while highlighting how that history is linked to the history of mankind in general.

The Sultanate, which attaches great importance to its heritage and historical treasures, recognises the important role museums have to play.

National Museum

Royal Decree No.62/2013, issued on 2lst November 2013, established the National Museum. Its Articles state that it should be set up in the Governorate of Muscat under the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, have a juristic personality and be independent both financially and administratively. It is hoped that the National Museum, upon its opening, will highlight and preserve the antiquities of the Sultanate dating back nearly six thousand years – and present visitors with a picture of the country's past and examples of its architecture, manuscripts, traditional attire, arts and musical folklore etc, as well as Oman's rich culture and arts in the 21st Century.

It is hoped that the National Museum, upon its opening, will highlight and preserve the antiquities of the Sultanate dating back nearly six thousand years.



Other Museums

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture oversees a number of museums, including the Ministry of Heritage and Culture Museum in Ruwi, which opened in 1979 and which contains displays of silver ornaments, swords and boats. The Natural History Museum, opened in 1985 at the Ministry's premises in Al Khuwair, highlights the treasures of Oman's natural environment and the wildlife of its deserts and mountains, as well as a section on fossils. The Children's



Exhibitions give glimpses into the Sultanate's history and culture

Museum, opened in 1990, is a cultural and educational project, which explains science through a series of simplified demonstrations.

Opened in 1992, the Omani-French Museum includes historic documents on Omani-French trade relations. In Sohar Fort, a museum was opened in 1993 and its contents deal with the history of the city of Sohar and its cultural and economic relations. In 2008, the Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Museum was opened inside the building of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and it contains a section on traditional weapons.

The Ministry of Defence runs the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum, which opened at Bait al Falaj Fort in Ruwi in 1988 and contains exhibits highlighting Oman's military history. These include traditional and modern weapons, as well as some documents and manuscripts. The Muscat Gate Museum, which takes the visitor on a tour of Muscat, highlights the city's growth from a commercial harbour to a prosperous capital city. It contains displays illustrating the

city's development from ancient times. Muscat Municipality runs the Bait al Baranda Visitors Centre and Museum, which presents a potted history of the city of Muscat and is also a venue for exhibitions and training courses.

The Office of His Majesty the Sultan's Advisor on Cultural Affairs oversees the Land of Frankincense Museum, which opened on 23rd July 2007 as part of Al Baleed Archaeological Park in Salalah. It has a historical hall with six sections documenting Oman's history as a whole over the ages, and another hall which exclusively highlights Oman's maritime history.

The Oil and Gas Exhibition Centre situated alongside Petroleum Development Oman's premises in Qurm, portrays the history of the formation of oil over different epochs and the stages of its extraction. It is a depiction of the journey of oil discovery in the Sultanate.

The Central Bank of Oman's Currency Museum is situated on its premises in Ruwi. It reviews the chronology of currency exchange in the Sultanate and showcases both old and modern currencies, including banknotes and coins which were exchanged during the early stages of the Islamic era.

The Maritime Museum in the *wilayat* of Sur, established in 1987, features many aspects of the Sultanate's seafaring heritage. It showcases photographs and models of different types of Omani boats, as well as portraits of boat captains, sailors, shipbuilders and ports which the Omanis used to visit, sailing and navigation equipment, charts, maps and related manuscripts.

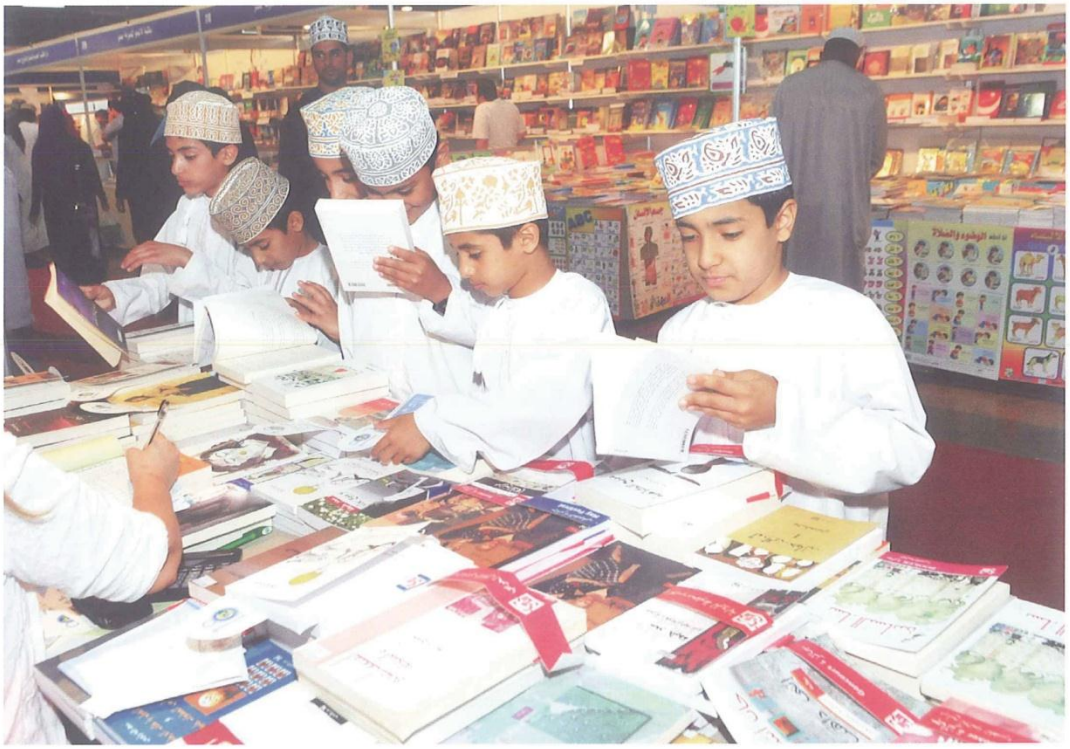
There are privately-owned museums such as Bait al Zubair Museum in Muscat, which opened in 1998 and exhibits a collection of artefacts and costumes which represent different governorates of the Sultanate. Ghaliya's Museum of Modern Art, opened in 2011 on the Mutrah corniche, has rooms representing the concept of a modern house from the beginning of the 1950s to the mid-1970s.

Cultural relations and programmes

Parties involved in the promotion of culture have a strong presence at international forums and cultural activities and programmes. The aim is to enhance and highlight the Sultanate's cultural and heritage aspects and make them known to the rest of the Arab world, the global community at large, and at home too.

Official and unofficial bodies involved in cultural activities such as the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences, the Literary Association, the Cultural Club, Omani cultural societies (such as the Oman Writers Society, Oman Theatre Society, Oman Cinema Society and the Omani Journalists Association etc, participate actively in cultural events held in the Sultanate and

Within the context of preparations for celebrating the designation of Nizwa as the Capital of Islamic Culture 2015, the Main Committee of the event held a series of meetings in 2013. Guidelines were drafted for the activities which will be held on the sidelines of the celebration.



Muscat's International Book Fair attracts young and old alike

abroad. They also promote ties between Oman's intellectuals and writers and encourage them to print and publish their writings and contribute to cultural forums and other activities.

The Sultanate fosters cultural relations with other countries within the region and beyond. It participates with its brotherly GCC states in preparing and implementing joint cultural programmes; it also participates in meetings during which plans for the continuity of GCC cultural actions are discussed.

The Sultanate signed a number of agreements, memoranda of understanding and executive programmes on cultural issues with Arab and foreign countries.

Within the context of preparations for celebrating the designation of Nizwa as the Capital of Islamic Culture 2015, the Main Committee of the event held a series of meetings in 2013. Guidelines were drafted for the activities which will be held on the sidelines of the celebration.

Book exhibitions

Book exhibitions and fairs in the Sultanate and abroad are considered an important aspect of depicting the diversity of Oman's culture. The Sultanate takes part in the most important international book fairs and its pavilions have had a strong presence at these events.

The Muscat International Book Fair is rated among the top ten Arab book fairs and the most

important cultural activity on the domestic front. The 18th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair, held in February 2013, saw the participation of over 500 publishers from 26 Arab and foreign countries. Along with the tens of thousands of titles from Omani libraries and bookshops on display, the book fair was an opportunity to organize a number of cultural activities on its sidelines, thus opening opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge.

To further highlight the Sultanate's unique cultural heritage and its distinguishing features, Omani Cultural Days highlighting the Sultanate abroad are held annually - Omani manuscripts, silverware, calligraphy, photographs, models of forts, castles and traditional boats etc are displayed as well as demonstrations of costume making and henna drawing. These are usually accompanied by cultural seminars with contributions from both Omani and foreign scholars and thinkers.

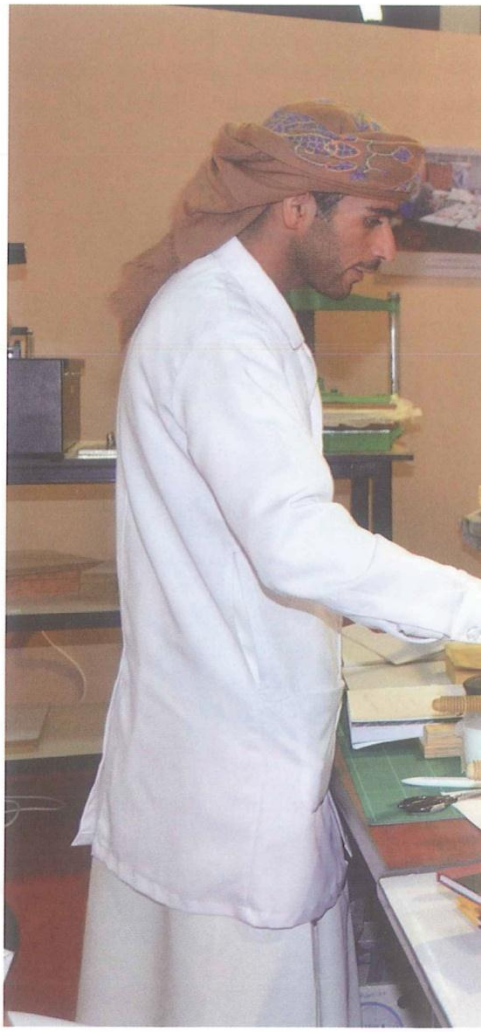
Under a nationwide project, the country's musical folklore is recorded from its original sources and traditional rhythms, tunes and lyrics are faithfully recorded.

Documenting the Omani cultural heritage

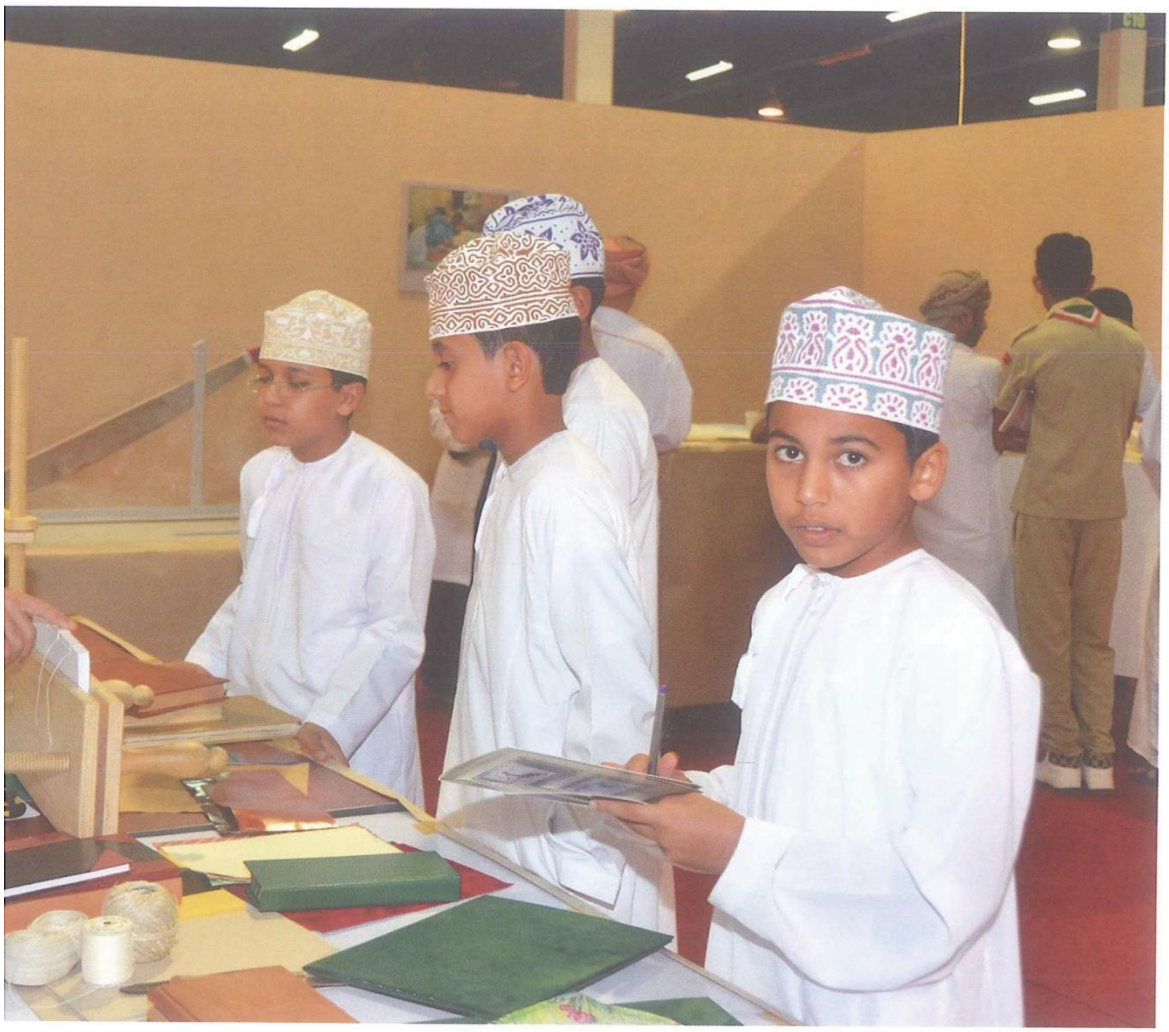
Folklore is a vital element of Oman's heritage and the Ministry of Heritage and Culture documents, prints and publishes elements of this valuable cultural asset to ensure they are preserved from extinction and can be transmitted to the coming generations.

Two oral history projects have so far been completed – one on Quriyat and Sumail, and the other on the wilayats of the North and South Batinah Governorates.

Under a nationwide project, the country's musical folklore is recorded from its original sources and traditional rhythms, tunes and lyrics are faithfully recorded. The project covers all governorates of the Sultanate and it is expected that, by the end of the project, an encyclopaedia of Oman's musical folklore will be produced and made available to researchers and as a comprehensive work of reference for scholars.



Oman's oral history is an integral part of its recorded history.



The technique of binding of documents is demonstrated to fascinated schoolchildren

Two oral history projects have so far been completed – one on Quriyat and Sumail, and the other on the *wilayats* of the North and South Batinah Governorates.

In 2011, the Ministry launched a project to collate the maritime history of the *wilayat* of Sur, which will produce detailed information about sea voyages and the area's ship-building industry. The experiences of the best-known sea captains, the folklore of seafarers and other topics will feature prominently. On completion, the project is expected to be an invaluable source of information about Omani's maritime history.

The National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage has been compiled in an e-programme. This comprehensive archive includes sections on traditional arts, games and folk tales, as well as Omani cuisine.

In Paris in December 2012, two popular forms of Omani traditional songs – Al'azi and

Al-taghrood – were included on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The Al'azi is a typical genre of poetry where the lead poet or a story teller recites stanzas which are punctuated by a loud chorus from accompanying artisans. The poetry expresses the pride of a tribe, an important person or a historical moment.

Al-taghrood is a traditional Bedouin-chanted poetry sung on horse or camel backs in the UAE and Oman, hence the reason why both countries jointly filed a nomination for its inclusion on the List. Al-taghrood starts with the creation of a short poem, which is often improvised and repeated by other travellers.

It can be noted that the Al Bara'a tradition of dance and music in the southern region of Oman was registered on UNESCO's List in November 2010.

The National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has been compiled in an e-programme.

Art festivals on specific themes

Folklore festivals are a clear example of the importance the government attaches to popular culture and reflect Oman's recognition of the fact that its folklore is very much a part of its society's cultural tradition.

In Paris in December 2012, two popular forms of Omani traditional songs – Al'azi and Al-taghrood – were included on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The second Omani Traditional Folk Festival was held in Sur over a three-day period in October 2012. It featured local dance groups, who staged some impressive performances of Al Maydan (a tradition of music and poetry which is performed for entertainment), Al Ayyalah (a form of dance and entertainment to display chivalry, courage and manhood) and the Bara'a (tradition of music and dance representing youthful exuberance).

The eighth Omani Poetry Festival, held in the *wilayat* of Sohar in December 2012, was a revolutionary new development in terms of its form, content, organisation and production, as well as in the way the public responded to it and participated in it. Its impact extended far beyond the confines of the auditorium and city in which it was held, with the result that it was able to reach literature enthusiasts both across the Sultanate and beyond the country's borders.

The twelfth Gulf Theatre Festival, which was organised by the Sultanate, was held in the Governorate of Dhofar in September 2012. All the Gulf states took part in the event.

The Literary Forum and the Cultural Club

The Literary Forum's annual programme included several seminars on literary and intellectual topics as well as poetry evenings, and in 2012 it organised a number of seminars in its series of studies on leading Omani religious scholars and their intellectual legacy. In November 2012 it held seminars on the historian Sheikh Saif bin Hamoud al Battashi and the religious scholar Sheikh Darwish bin Jum'a al Mahrooqi.

The Forum visited several *wilayats* as part of its ongoing programme of seminars on Omani towns and cities. The last of these



The Cultural Cub in Qurm hosts a variety of illustrated talks, cultural evenings and exhibitions

– "Bidiya through History" – which was held in the *wilayat* of Bidiya in the North Sharqiyah Governorate in December 2012, dealt with Bidiya's geography, historical status and intellectual life through a review of the works of its leading religious scholars and men of letters. In December 2013 the Forum planned to hold a seminar entitled "Barka through History" in the *wilayat* of Barka in the North Batinah Governorate.

The Cultural Club's role is to promote culture in the Sultanate. Its annual programmes include film shows (short or documentary films), workshops on Oman's intangible cultural heritage and a range of other cultural activities.

The National Book Support Programme offers publishing opportunities for anyone who has written a literary, intellectual or academic work of genuine merit and so far it has produced over fifty titles on various cultural and intellectual topics. In April 2013 the Cultural Club celebrated the appearance of its first batch of translated literary works published under the Programme. It also opened a bookshop for the sale of its own publications and various other books and studies, as well as a visual library showcasing its activities since it was first established in the 1980s. Meanwhile, its sites on the electronic social networks have been designed to enable it to expand its contacts with the public through the increasing use of digitalisation.

The Royal Opera House Muscat

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) is a monument to the efforts of Sultan Qaboos and his commitment to promoting Oman's cultural development, as well as his belief in the arts as a means of establishing ties with the rest of the world through inter-cultural dialogue.

The ROHM's fourth season, which began in September 2012 and continued until May 2013, was distinguished for its musical and cultural diversity and richness. It saw the staging of many international performances carefully chosen from six continents, including opera, orchestral music, jazz, special performances for children and events celebrating the role of women and the Arab heritage.

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) is a monument to the efforts of Sultan Qaboos and his commitment to promoting Oman's cultural development, as well as his belief in the arts as a means of establishing ties with the rest of the world through inter-cultural dialogue.

The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences

The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences is a cultural institution affiliated to the Diwan of Royal Court. It was established by Royal Decree No. 52/2012 on 19th September 2012. It is a legal entity which seeks to foster ties and aspects of cooperation with cultural establishments in other countries, in addition to spreading awareness of Omani culture and encouraging Omani youths to benefit from research, studies and activities that the Centre organizes.

In August 2012 the Centre celebrated the launch of the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in the wilayat of Manah in the Dakhiliyah Governorate,

Towards the achievement of these goals, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences conducts studies and scientific research and organises



conferences and seminars in areas related to culture and sciences. It also oversees the affairs of the Sultan Qaboos Mosques, Institutes of Islamic Sciences and Holy Quran Schools under the jurisdiction of the Centre. This is in addition to supervising Sultan Qaboos cultural centres and academic chairs abroad, the Omani Society for Fine Arts, the Oud Hobbyists Association, the Photographic Society, the Oman Traditional Music Centre and the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers.



The Royal Opera House Muscat stages approximately 50 events a year, featuring musicians and dancers from around the world

The Centre oversees the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, the Arts and Literature. Held for the second time in March 2013, this is an event in which Omanis compete with their fellow Arabs in three areas - contemporary thought, music and classical Arabic poetry.

The Centre is Oman's link with the UN's Alliance of Civilizations. The Sultanate is a member of the Alliance's Group of Friends and one of its main supporters, since it champions its noble goals of fostering peace and coexistence between different peoples, cultures and civilizations.

In August 2012 the Centre celebrated the launch of the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in the *wilayat* of Manah in the Dakhiliyah Governorate, when the College received its first batch of students from abroad.

The establishment of the College reflects His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's interest in promoting the Arabic language and Omani culture. Each group

of students undergoes an eight-week course, which also includes a cultural programme and various social activities that give them the opportunity to experience Omani society at first hand.

Two new Islamic Sciences Centres were opened in Ibri, Dhahirah Governorate, and Salalah, Dhofar Governorate. The institutions, which seek to meet the rising demand for Islamic sciences and Arabic language, take to six the number of such institutes – these are based in Muscat, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Al Buraimi, Al Suwaiq, Salalah and Ibri.

On His Majesty the Sultan's instructions, the Centre held a "Human Rapprochement and Harmony Week" in February 2013 to serve the cause of mutual understanding and rapport between religions and civilizations and promote contacts between human cultures in the interests of amity, dialogue and world peace and stability.

The Human Rapprochement and Harmony Week is a forum that brings together selected thinkers, intellectuals, scholars and academics from around the world who are leaders in their respective fields.

The Photographic Society of Oman, established under the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in July 2012, has had a number of international successes.

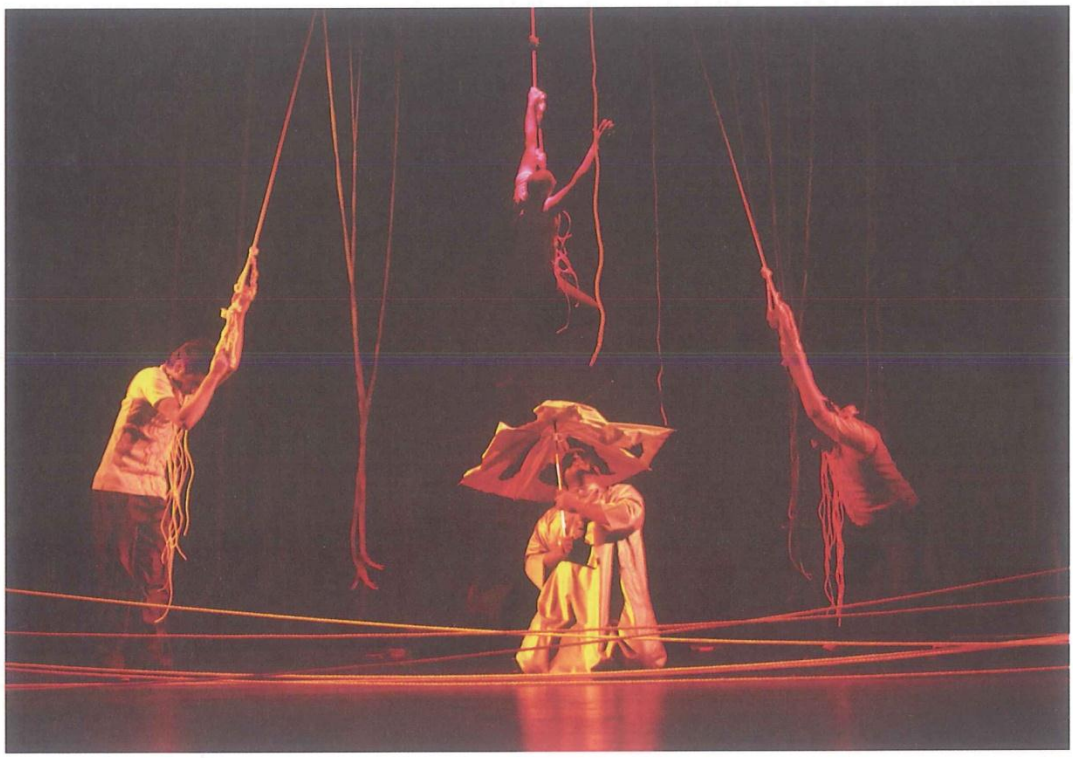
The Omani Society for Fine Arts

The Omani Society for Fine Arts helps to support and develop the fine arts in the Sultanate and raise the level of awareness in the community about the visual arts and culture. As well as protecting the arts, it also seeks to enrich them by encouraging them to derive their inspiration from the Omani and Arab cultural heritage and the intellectual and aesthetic values of the society in which they have their roots. At the same time, it aims to ensure that the artists' creative work enables them to enjoy the status they deserve in the community.

The Omani Society for Fine Arts marked its 20th anniversary in March 2013. Over two decades, the Society has presented many artistic and technical activities ranging from art exhibitions, lectures and seminars to personal and collective art exhibitions and continues to grow.

The Photographic Society of Oman, established under the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in July 2012, has had a number of international successes. These include the Society's participation in the international exhibition for photography held in Macedonia in March 2013 under the auspices of the Federation International de l'Art Photographique (FIAP). There the Omani Photographic Society bagged two prestigious awards. It also won prizes in the UAE's International Photographic Competition in its 7th round in December 2012, including eight international prizes, of which three were gold prizes.

Meanwhile, the Oud Hobbyists Association held a number of activities during the year, including musical performances and lectures in which musicians and singers from



A scene from an Al Murooj Theatre performance in Salalah

the Sultanate and abroad took part.

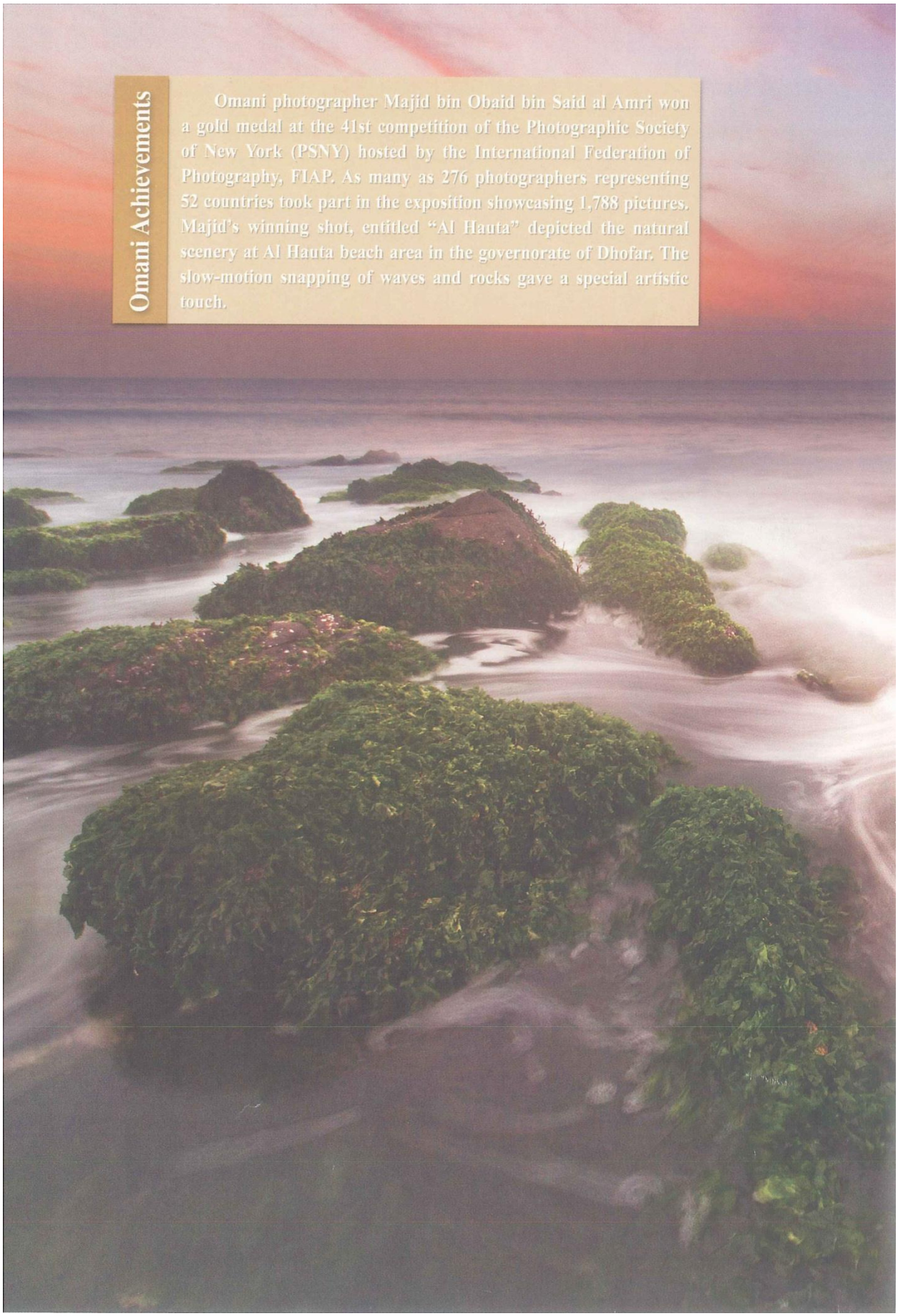
The Oman Centre for Traditional Music (OCTM), which was transferred from the Ministry of Information to the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences under Royal Decree No. 24/2013, issued on 28th April 2013, carries out research into traditional Omani music and collects, records and documents songs from the Sultanate's musical heritage. Full information about the different fields of Oman's traditional music is available for researchers and other interested individuals and institutions from the OCTM's audio and video archives. The OCTM also organises local and international forums on Omani music and publishes books and audio and video material on the subject produced by Omani and Arab researchers who have worked at the Centre.

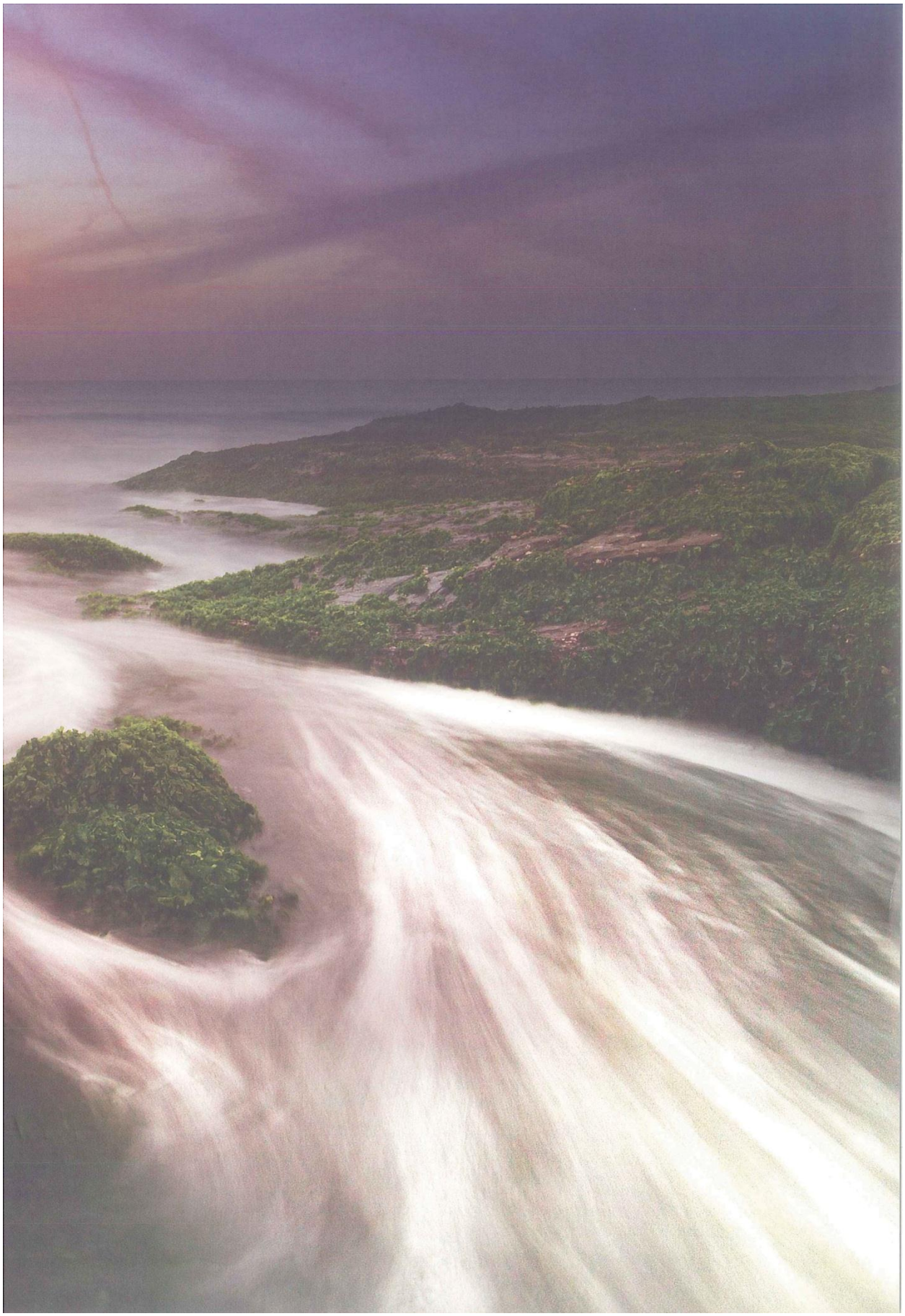
Al Fulaij and Al Murooj Theatres

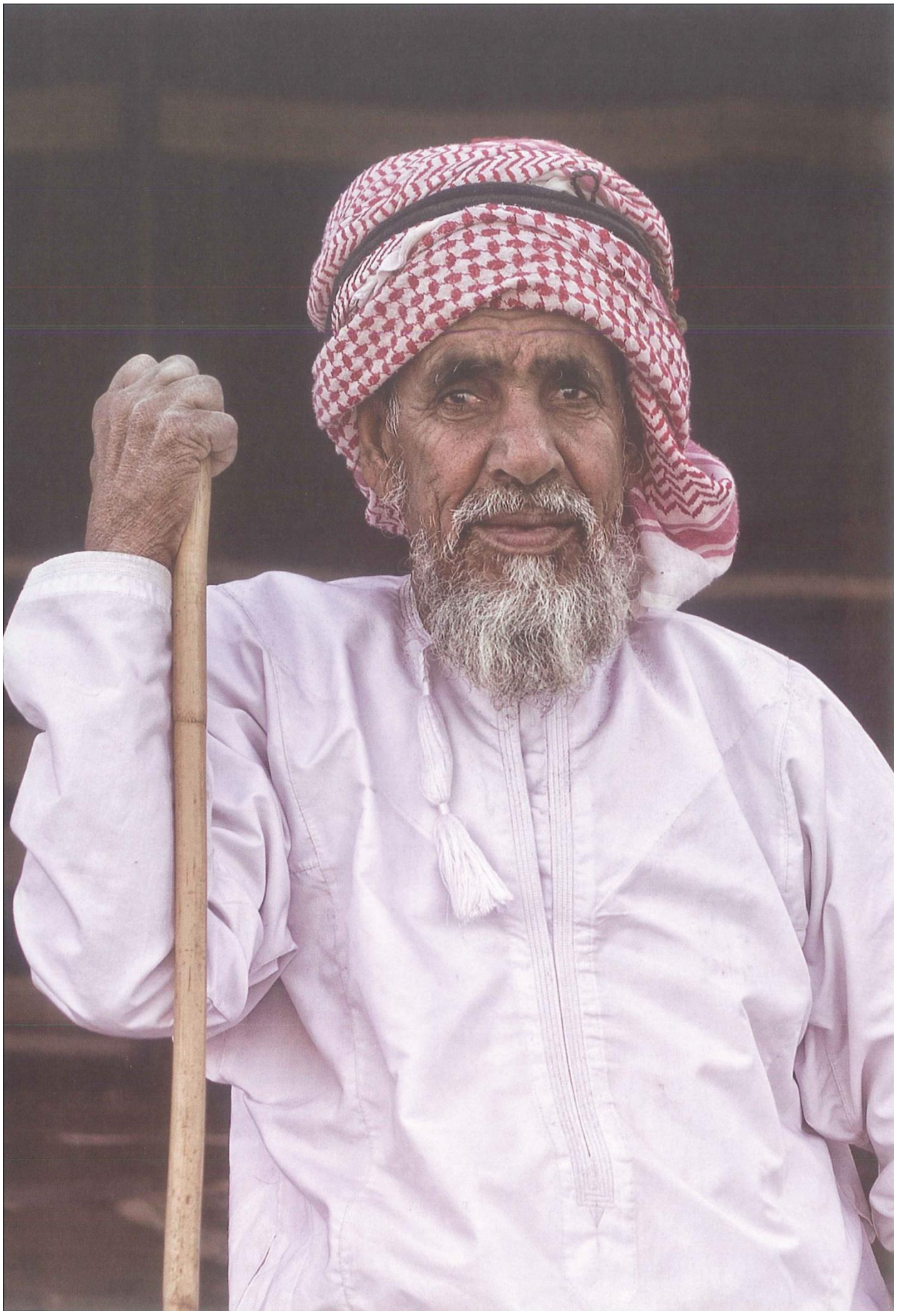
Al Fulaij Castle Theatre in the *wilayat* of Barka and Al Murooj Theatre in the city of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar, are cultural landmarks that speak the language of the arts. Their annual programmes are overseen by the Ministry of Tourism and they include evening performances by international music and theatre groups. Every year, the Ministry presents a dazzling new programme in each of the two theatres comprising an innovative blend of art, literature and music.

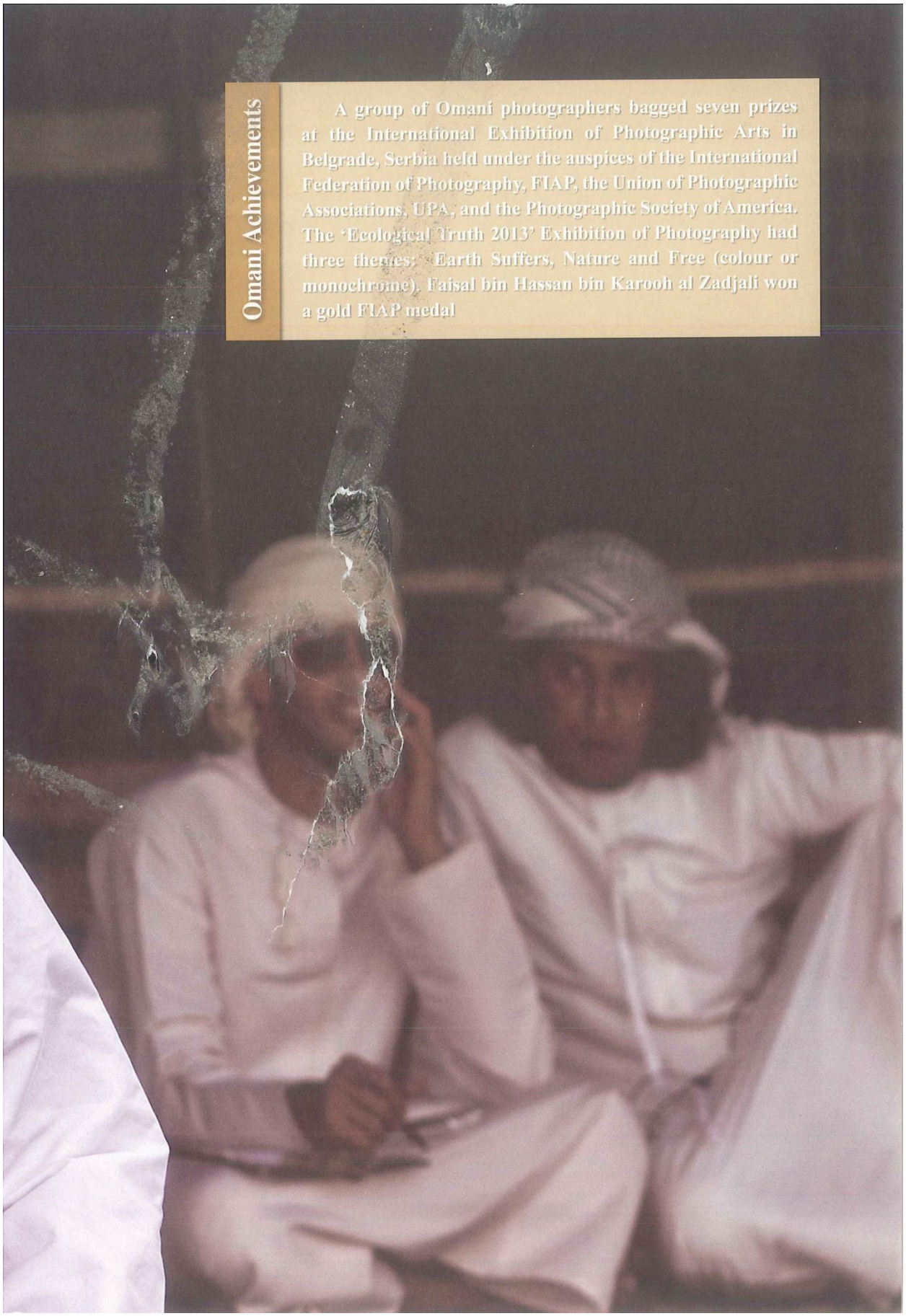
Omani Achievements

Omani photographer Majid bin Obaid bin Said al Amri won a gold medal at the 41st competition of the Photographic Society of New York (PSNY) hosted by the International Federation of Photography, FIAP. As many as 276 photographers representing 52 countries took part in the exposition showcasing 1,788 pictures. Majid's winning shot, entitled "Al Hauta" depicted the natural scenery at Al Hauta beach area in the governorate of Dhofar. The slow-motion snapping of waves and rocks gave a special artistic touch.







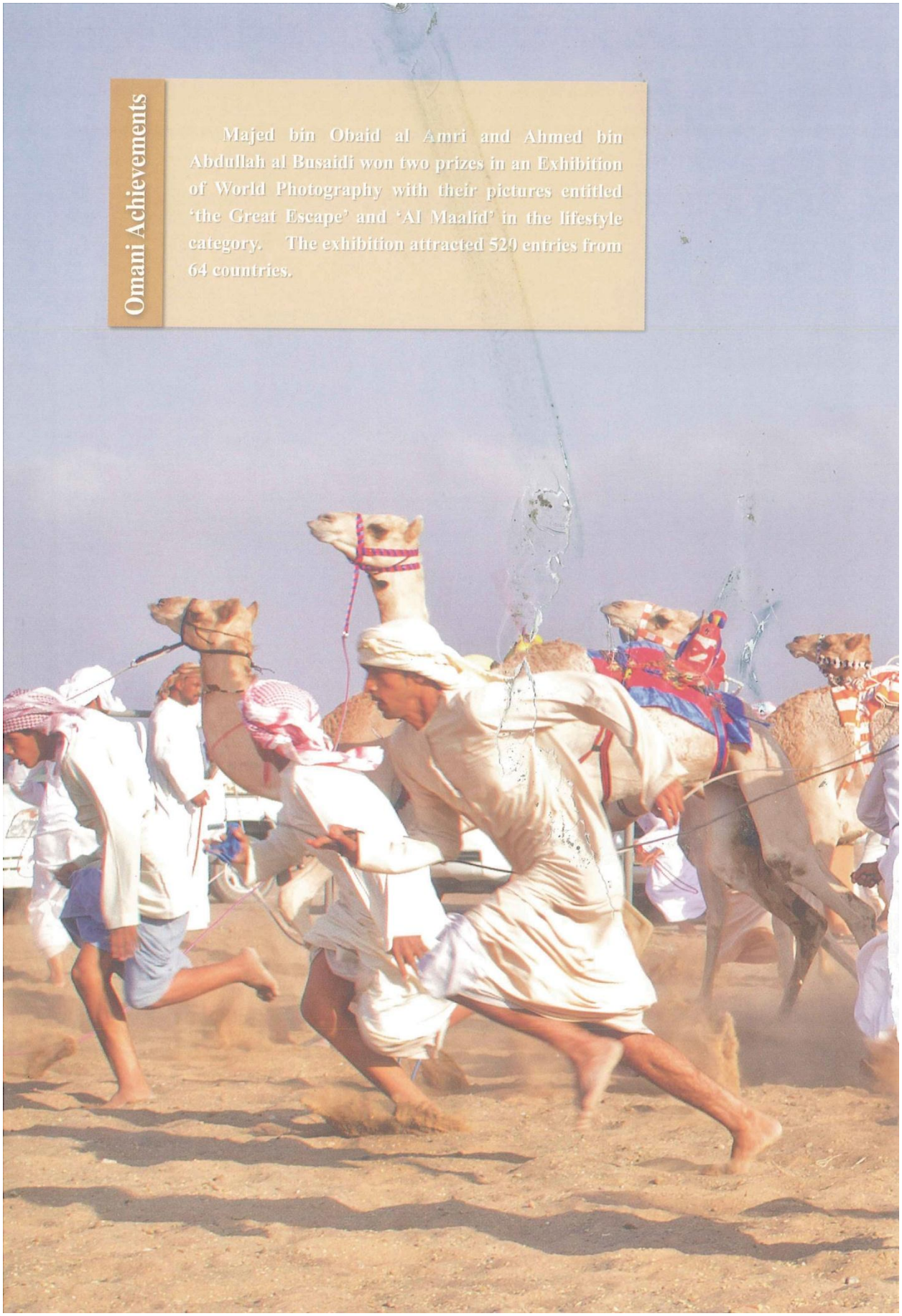


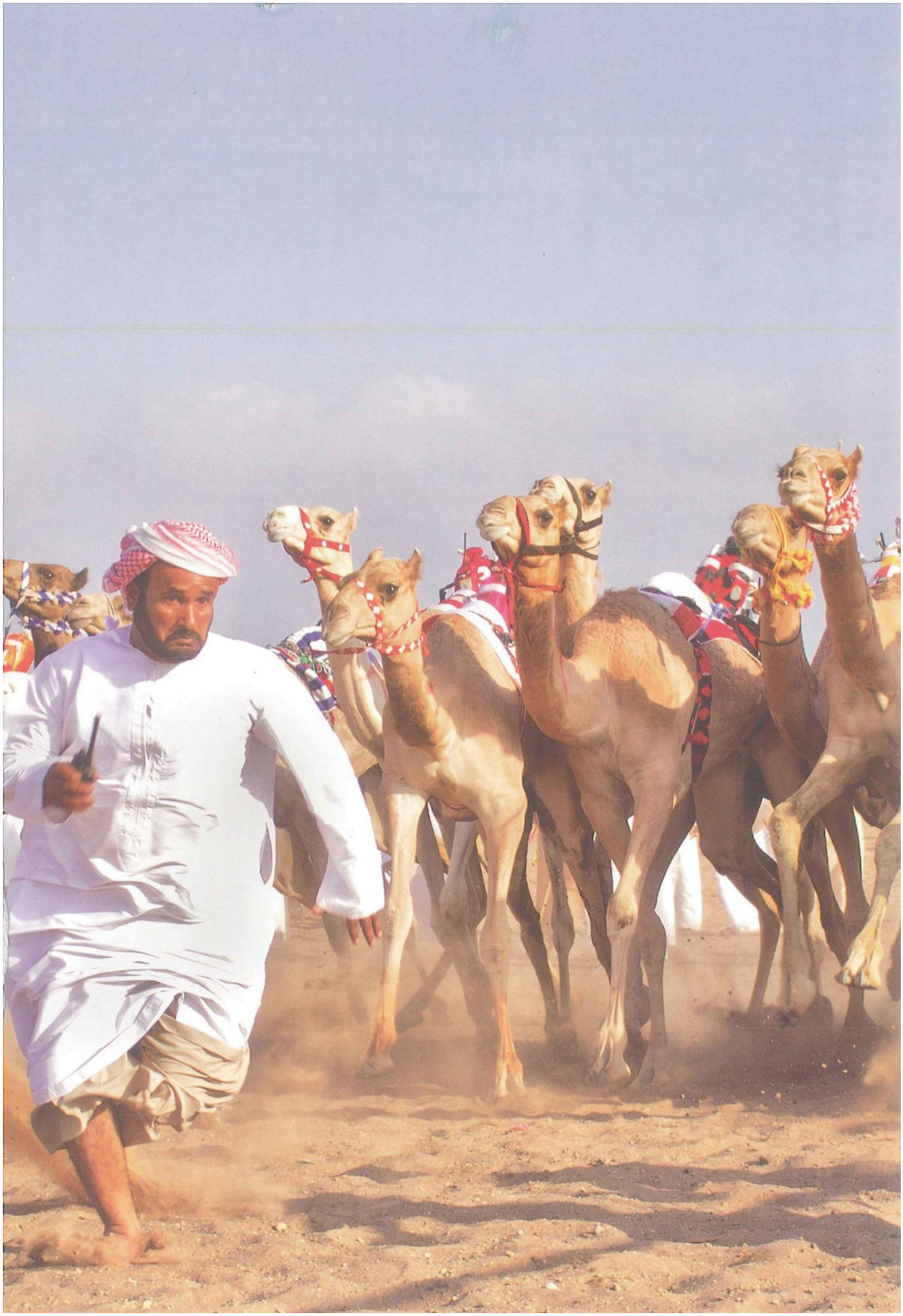
Omani Achievements

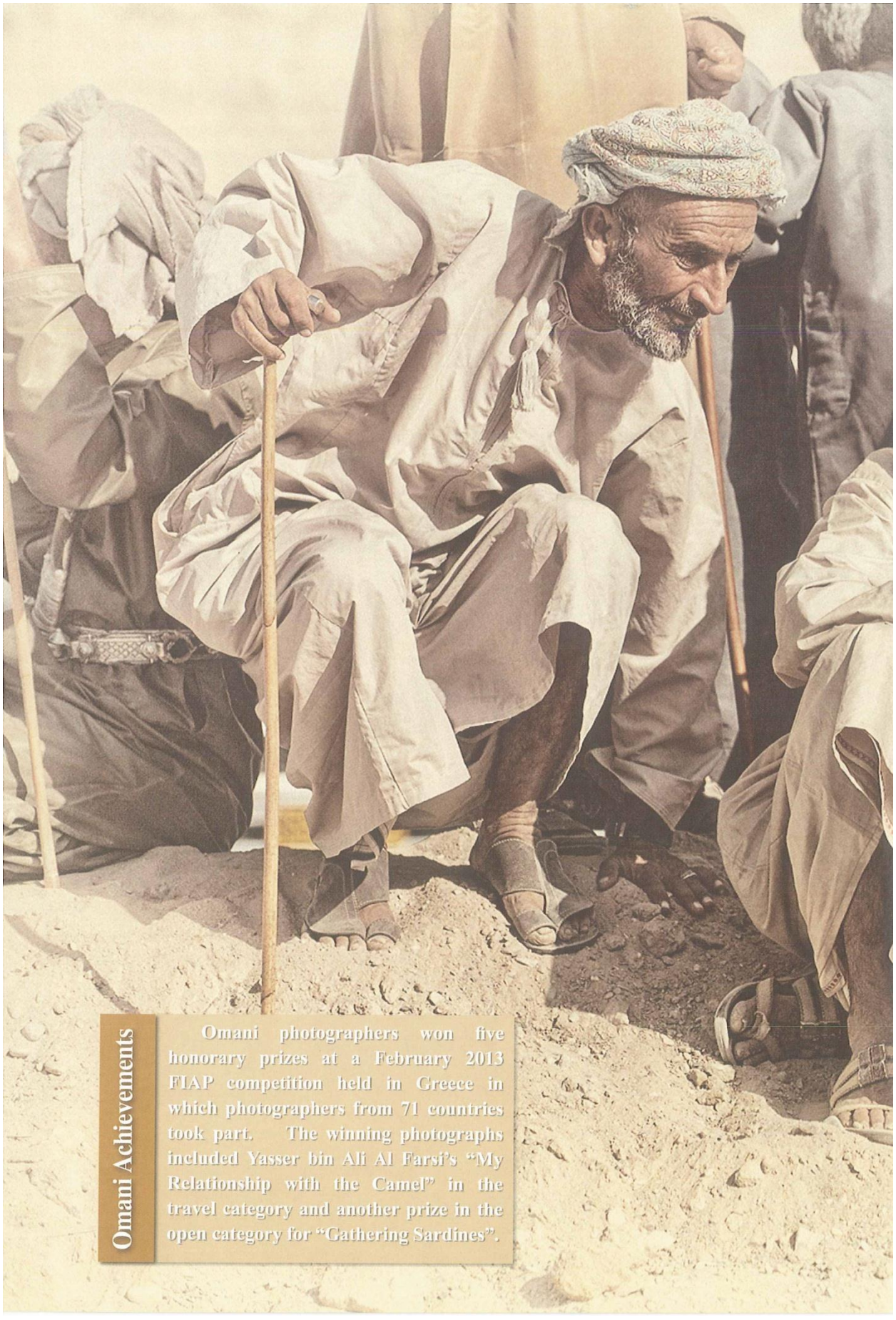
A group of Omani photographers bagged seven prizes at the International Exhibition of Photographic Arts in Belgrade, Serbia held under the auspices of the International Federation of Photography, FIAP, the Union of Photographic Associations, UPA, and the Photographic Society of America. The 'Ecological Truth 2013' Exhibition of Photography had three themes: Earth Suffers, Nature and Free (colour or monochrome). Faisal bin Hassan bin Karooh al Zadjali won a gold FIAP medal

Omani Achievements

Majed bin Obaid al Amri and Ahmed bin Abdullah al Busaidi won two prizes in an Exhibition of World Photography with their pictures entitled 'the Great Escape' and 'Al Maalid' in the lifestyle category. The exhibition attracted 520 entries from 64 countries.

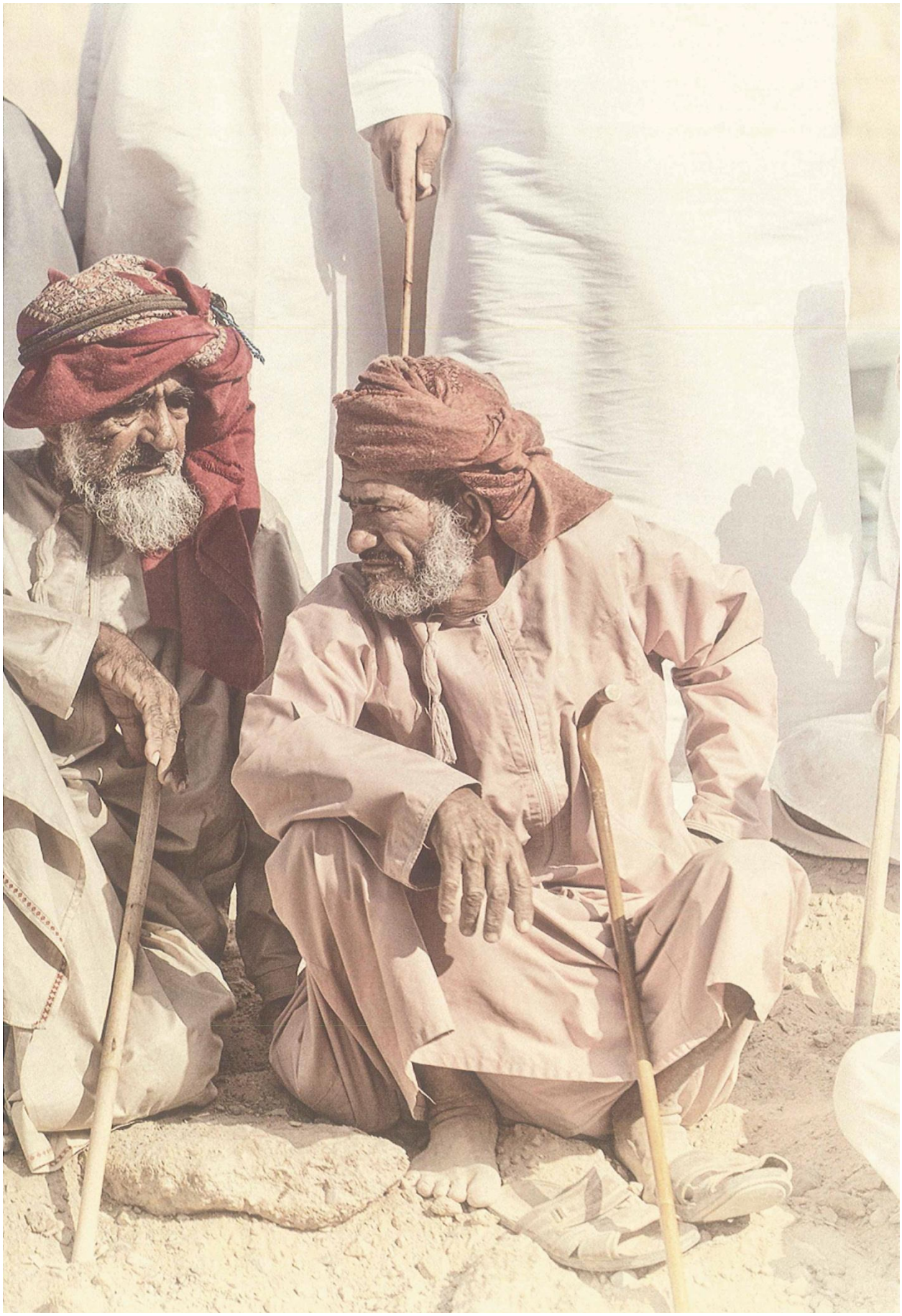






Omani Achievements

Omani photographers won five honorary prizes at a February 2013 FIAP competition held in Greece in which photographers from 71 countries took part. The winning photographs included Yasser bin Ali Al Farsi's "My Relationship with the Camel" in the travel category and another prize in the open category for "Gathering Sardines".



Economic Development Government Spending Stimulates Economic Growth


CJC-10
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MUMBAI

10 Economic Development Government Spending Stimulates Economic Growth

Government spending, which came to a total of RO10.7 billion in 2012, had a positive impact on a wide range of economic activities. It boosted imports and exports, generated a significant increase in company profits and revived the consumer sector and retail trade. Consequently, the national economy grew by 8.3 per cent, compared with the target growth figure of 7 per cent set out in the Budget.

Alongside this growth, a 4 per cent rise in domestic savings raised the volume of deposits in the commercial banks to around RO14.2 billion, up from RO12.5 billion at the end of 2011. At the same time, credit facilities increased by 17 per cent to RO14.3 billion.

The Sultanate channelled a large proportion of its spending into the creation of job opportunities in the government sector.

The Sultanate channelled a large proportion of its spending into the creation of job opportunities in the government sector. This resulted in an increase in current expenditure to RO6.2 billion compared with RO6.1 billion in 2011. Meanwhile, investment expenditure fell from RO2.9 billion to RO2.6 billion and the General State Budget recorded a surplus of RO3.2 billion.

The Sultanate set aside RO1.3 billion to support housing and development loan interest and subsidise electricity and water services, fuel and some basic foodstuffs.

Despite the rapid expansion of trade and economic activities, inflation rates remained within their target limits of 3 per cent. This was attributable partly to a fall in the prices of primary commodities in the world markets and partly to the government's price control and monitoring measures.

The 2013 General State Budget

The 2013 General State Budget was designed to meet a number of aims in response to the demands of economic growth and the general goals approved under the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) and its fiscal framework. These included promoting economic growth through increased government spending, particularly on development projects; providing the financial allocations needed to recruit new personnel in the different departments of the state's administrative apparatus and government corporations and companies; increasing expenditure on education, training, health, housing and social welfare; maintaining the current intake levels of general diploma graduates in the higher education institutions; and providing the allocations required for job-related in-house and external training programmes.

Health services across the country were also among the Budget's priorities. It also offered continued support for the housing sector through the housing

assistance and housing loans programmes, including increased funding for housing loans from the Oman Housing Bank. It allocated the appropriate funds for the social security sector and the al Wafa Social Centres, as well as subsidies for commodities and services such as electricity, water, fuel and basic foodstuffs.

The Budget also made funding provision for the completion of infrastructure projects such as airports, seaports, roads, industrial estates, and water and sewerage projects, while channelling any surplus cash from higher oil prices to bolster government savings and reserves.

According to the Budget, approved government expenditure totalled around RO12.9 billion, while revenues were estimated to total some RO11.2 billion. The projected deficit of RO1.7 billion represents 15 per cent of revenues and 5 per cent of GDP.

Oil revenues were calculated on the basis of an average price of US$85 per barrel and a daily production rate of 930,000 barrels. At an estimated RO8 billion, oil revenues represent 72 per cent of total government revenue while gas, at RO1.3 billion, accounts for 12 per cent.

Spending on the education sector, which totalled an estimated RO1.3 billion, was designed to cover the cost of providing education for 522,000 male and female Basic and general education students and 107,000 higher education students (male and female), including domestic and foreign scholarships, while financial allocations totalling RO26 million were approved for training job-seekers under the employment-related and on-the-job training programme. An estimated RO547 million – 4 per cent of total public expenditure - was allocated for the health sector and a further RO130 million was set aside for social security and welfare.

The 2013 Budget provided cash liquidity for the housing assistance programme to enable 4,000 houses to be built at a total cost of RO80 million. Provision was also made for the construction of a further 250 houses in the *wilayat* of al Mazyounah at a cost of RO8 million, in addition to 1,390 housing loans totalling RO28 million under the housing loans programme.

The Sultanate set aside RO1.3 billion to support housing and development loan interest and subsidise electricity and water services, fuel and some basic foodstuffs.

The development programme for the civil ministries

At the end of 2012 the amended allocations provided under the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) for the development programme for the civil ministries totalled RO 16 billion, up from the originally approved figure of RO12.1 billion. This increase was due to a number of additional projects in all sectors, as well as increased funding for some existing projects in the light of tender results.

The Sultanate allocated RO557.8 million for projects in the roads, airports and seaports sectors in 2013 and around RO50 million

for the construction of two hospitals – one in the Wusta Governorate and the other in the South Sharqiyah – as well as new health centres in several *wilayats*. An additional RO104 million was also earmarked for the health sector, while a further RO61 million was allocated for the water and recharge dams sector, RO87 million for the culture sector and youth centres, RO219 million for sewerage projects, and RO18 million for the agriculture and fisheries sector.

The business environment

The Sultanate has an open-door economic policy towards the world's markets. It has signed up to several regional agreements - within the Gulf Co-operation Council as a member of the Customs Union and within the Arab region as a member of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA); under GAFTA rules there are no customs duties on national products if 40 per cent of their added value originates in an Arab country. The Sultanate is also a member of the World Trade Organisation.

The Sultanate has an open-door economic policy towards the world's markets.

Oman has been highly successful in attracting local and foreign investment. This is due to a range of positive factors including security and political stability, a free economy, a system that allows foreigners to own up to 100 per cent of projects, no restrictions on exporting funds and profits, no personal income tax, a standard tax rate – 12 per cent annually – for all Omani and foreign companies and establishments, government loans at low interest rates with comfortable repayment terms for a number of projects, and attractive company tax exemptions for up to ten years.

Oman has been highly successful in attracting local and foreign investment. This is due to a range of positive factors.

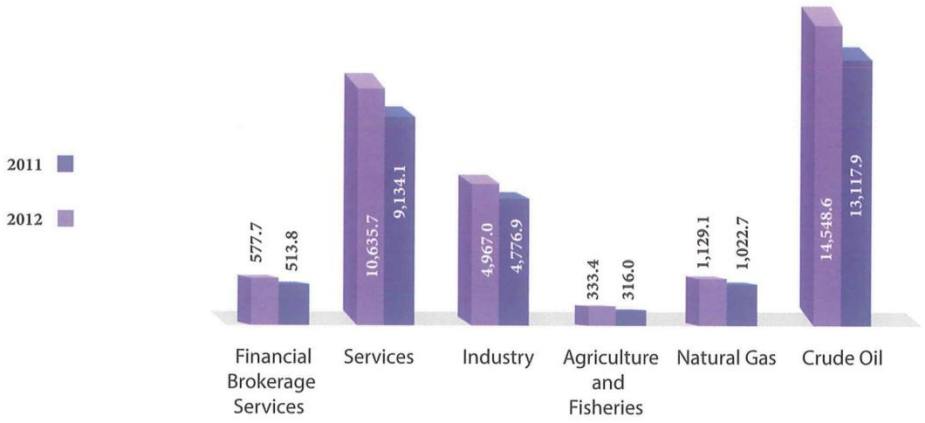
By the end of 2012 direct foreign investment had risen to RO6.4 billion, up from RO5.9 billion in 2011 – a rise of 9.6 per cent. Direct foreign investment represents 21.6 per cent of the Sultanate's GDP, which stands at RO30 billion.

The Sultanate is seeking to create an even more attractive investment environment by offering a range of additional new facilities in line with the recommendations of various international organisations and the demands of the domestic and foreign private sectors. Several government departments are working on this, in addition to the Council of Oman – which comprises the State Council (*Majlis al Dawla*) and the Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*) – and the specialised committees and municipal councils. These bodies aim to provide the needs and basic utilities required for the different economic activities and upgrade the legal framework for protecting investors' rights, applying the commercial regulations and keeping production costs down. Oman also amends legislation on foreign capital investment on a regular basis in order to make the country a more attractive destination for foreign investors.

Oman's economic policies have won worldwide acclaim. The Sultanate was ranked 26th (out of 152 countries) globally on the 2013 Economic Freedom of the World, which is published annually by Canada's Fraser Institute.

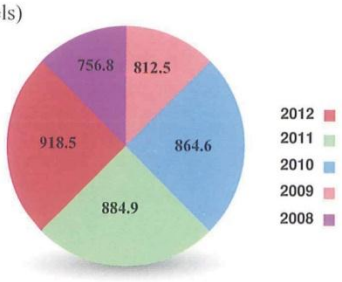
GDP AT CURRENT PRICES 2011-2012

(Million Omani Rials)



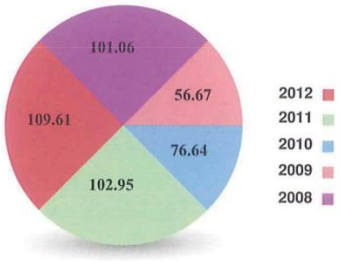
AVERAGE DAILY CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION 2008-2012

(Thousand barrels)



AVERAGE PRICE OF OMANI CRUDE 2008-2012

(US$/barrel)



Oman 2040

In 2013 the Supreme Council for Planning began setting out the initial guidelines for the Oman 2040 Vision of Oman's Economic Future for the period from 2021 to 2040, while taking into account its Secretariat-General's evaluation of the 2020 Economic Vision and local, regional and global economic and social developments. The Council's priorities are in line with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's directives on the social aspects of development over the course of the present and future Five-Year Plans.

In preparing its initial projections of Oman 2040, the Supreme Council for Planning's Secretariat-General was instructed to co-ordinate its activities with the relevant government departments, firms of consultants and educational establishments, as well as with the governorates, other councils and the private sector. Work will begin on its preparation at the same time as the preparation stages of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), while the ministries and government departments will be expected to harmonise their strategic plans in order to ensure that they are compatible with the timetable for the Oman 2040 Future Vision.

Oman's economic policies have won worldwide acclaim. The Sultanate was ranked 26th (out of 152 countries) globally on the 2013 Economic Freedom of the World.

In 2013 the Supreme Council for Planning began setting out the initial guidelines for the Oman 2040 Vision of Oman's Economic Future for the period from 2021 to 2040.

Oman 2040's main focus will be on identifying and exploiting the country's available opportunities and resources, as well as the most positive features of all the different economic sectors, particularly airports, seaports and the industrial estates. This will be done in such a way as to ensure maximum diversification of the country's sources of income, while expanding the number of "self-employment projects" and highlighting the importance of balanced development across the Sultanate's governorates in line with each governorate's needs.

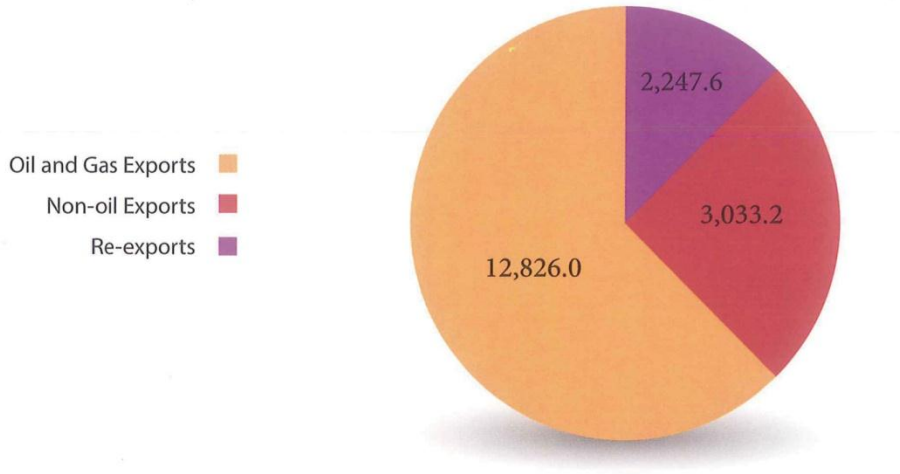
The Tender Board

In 2012 the Tender Board invited 150 tenders with an estimated cost of RO2.9 billion. It also awarded 259 tenders with an actual cost of around RO 1.5 billion. The main projects awarded during that year included: construction of Packages 1 and 2 of the Batinah Expressway (RO262.1 million); construction of an additional jetty at the general cargo terminal and a liquid cargo jetty at Port Salalah (RO 55 million); installation of 400 Kv and 220 Kv power lines from Sur power station to Izki electricity transformer station (RO42.8 million); consultancy services for overseeing the Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport upgrade projects (RO41.8 million); and the first phase of the Sinaw-Mahawt-al Duqm road improvement scheme linking Port al Duqm with the rest of the country (RO41.6 million).

While attaching importance to infrastructure projects such as roads, seaports and airports, the Sultanate's priorities also cover areas that are directly relevant to the daily lives of its population, including education, health, housing, electricity, water and sewerage. Among the main projects awarded in these sectors

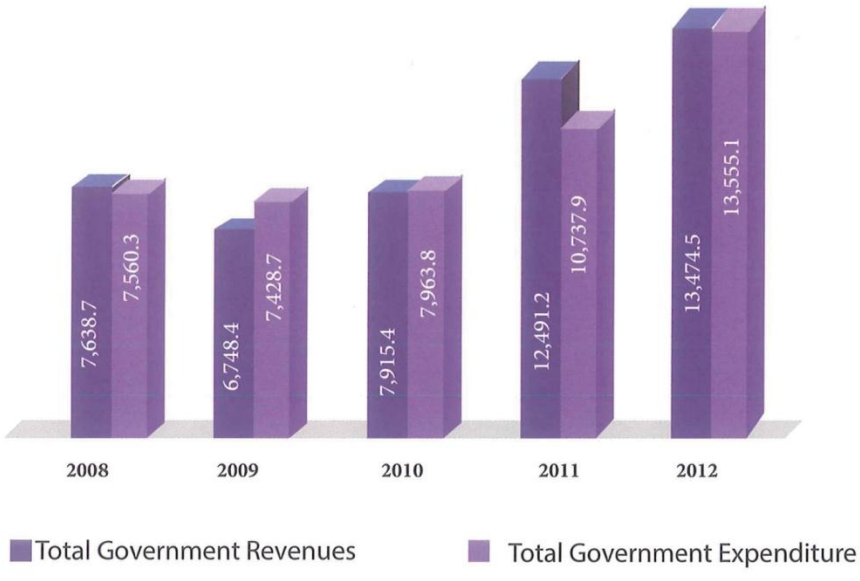
VALUE OF OMAN'S COMMODITY EXPORTS 2012

(Million Omani Rials)

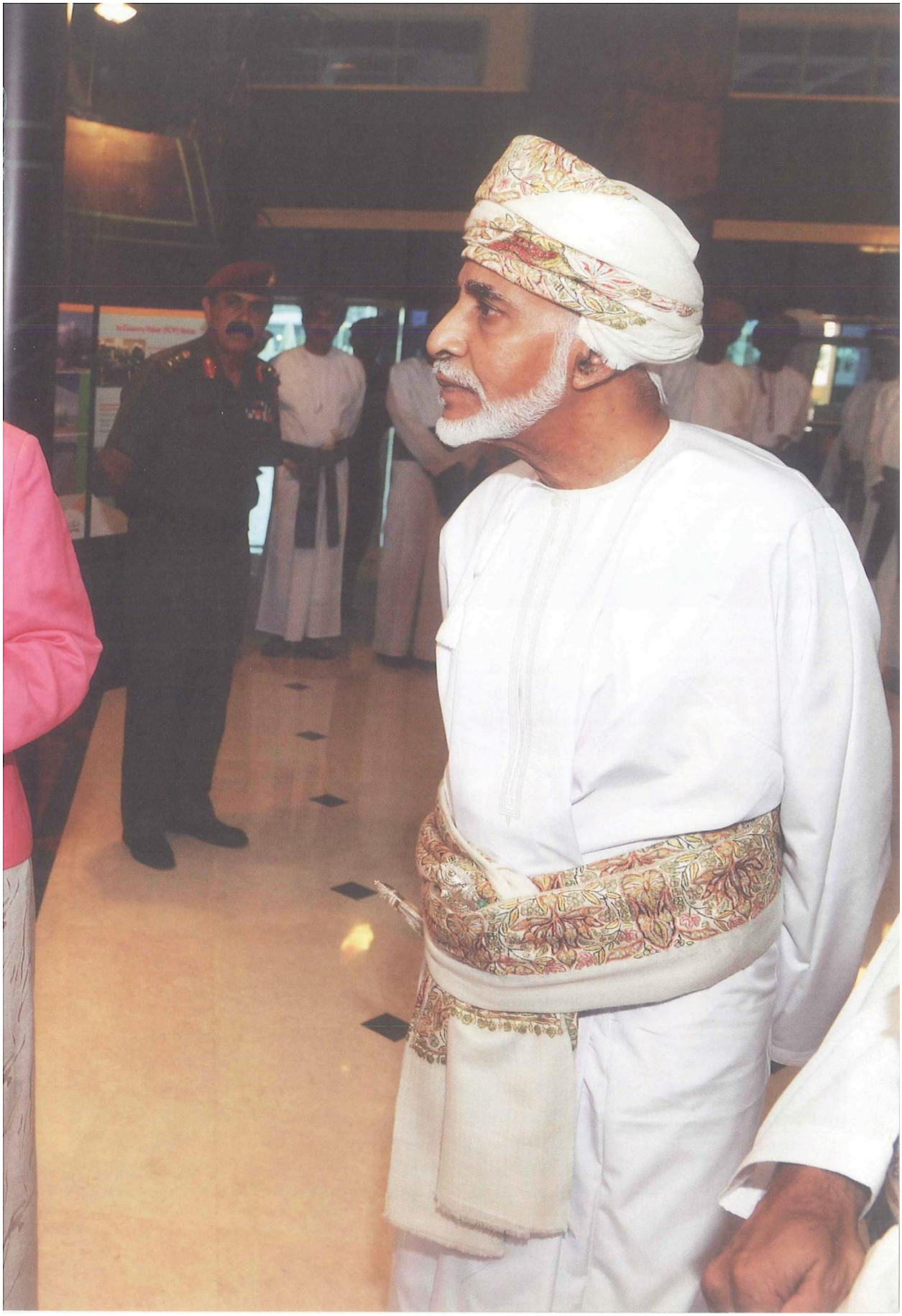


TOTAL GOVERNMENT REVENUES AND EXPENDITURE 2008-2012

(Million Omani Rials)




GAS EXPLORATION & APPRAISAL SUCCESS
Yibal Gas Plant
Compression
Mabrouk Deep
In-place volume
3 Tcf
Reservoirs & Depth
Barik & Miqrat (4000-5000m)
Successful fracture stimulation & high production rates
Largest discovery for 10 years & encouraging follow-up prospects
da Depletion Compression
Petroleum Development Oman





Government investment hasbeen increased in the oil and gas sectors with the aim of raising production

in 2012 were: construction of the Blood Diseases and Bone Marrow Transplant Centre building at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital; supply of medicines to the Ministry of Health; rice supplies; and construction of housing units and installation of water supply and sewerage systems and electricity power lines in several of the country's *wilayats*.

The Tender Board, established in 1973, is responsible for inviting tenders, opening and analysing bids and awarding all government tenders costing above RO 1 million.

In 2012 oil revenues rose by 33.8 per cent to RO10.4 billion, up from RO7.7 billion in 2011.

Oil and natural gas resources

Oil and gas revenues accounted for an estimated RO9.3 billion in the 2013 Budget, representing 83.7 per cent of overall government revenues, which stood at RO11.1 billion.

According to the Budget, oil revenues were estimated at some RO8.1 billion; this was based on an average daily production figure of 930,000 barrels and a price of US$ 85 per barrel. Gas revenues accounted for an estimated RO1.3 billion. Estimated investment expenditure on oil and gas production totalled around RO1.3 billion.

In 2012 oil revenues rose by 33.8 per cent to RO10.4 billion, up from RO7.7 billion in 2011. Gas revenues rose by almost the same percentage, from around RO 1.2 billion to RO1.5 billion. At around RO 12 billion, combined oil and gas revenues accounted for 86.3 per cent of overall government revenues of RO13.9 billion.

In 2012 oil revenues rose by 33.8 per cent to RO10.4 billion, up from RO7.7 billion in 2011.

Five new oil deposits were discovered in 2012 comprising approximately 300 million barrels of oil. A new gas field was also discovered containing reserves estimated at 2.9 trillion cubic feet.

In 2012, 41 exploratory oil and gas wells were drilled, in addition to over 1,000 wells aimed at evaluating, upgrading and increasing the productivity of the fields. The new discoveries added 389 million barrels of crude oil and condensates to the country's reserves, as well as 1.2 trillion cubic feet of gas, thereby boosting Oman's total oil reserves by the end of 2012 to 4.6 billion barrels and its gas reserves to 18 trillion cubic feet.

Average daily oil production in 2012 rose to 918,000 barrels, compared with 885,000 barrels in 2011, while the average price of Omani crude climbed from US$102.95 per barrel to US$109.61.

In 2012 Oman's crude exports rose to around 279.8 million barrels, compared with 269.4 million barrels in 2011. China, the main importer of Omani oil, purchased 50.1 per cent of the total exports, followed by Japan with 13.7 per cent and Taiwan with 11.9 per cent.

The Sultanate has two crude oil refineries. The Mina al Fahal Refinery, which began operations in 1982, produced some 30.5 million barrels in 2012. Of these, around 14.6 million barrels were processed into fuel products, while the residue was mixed with crude and pumped to the Sohar Refinery to be further refined. Part of this residue was transferred back to the export storage tanks in Mina al Fahal.

The Sohar Refinery, which opened in April 2007, produced some 45.6 million barrels in 2012. Domestic sales accounted for about 17 million barrels, while 12.7 million barrels were exported. Around 4.1 million barrels were imported to meet local demand.

Omani Achievements:



Dr. Mohab bin Ali bin Talib Al-Hinai, Assistant Professor at Sultan Qaboos University, has developed a novel genetic tool that enables the genetic engineering of Clostridium organisms for both biofuel production and basic medical research. The work has been published in the Applied and Environmental Microbiology Journal.

A provisional patent application has been submitted in the U.S.A. describing this scientific breakthrough. This novel work will enable the swift and precise genetic engineering of biofuel producing microorganisms for enhanced productivity, thus making the production of biofuels from renewable sources economically feasible.

This will undoubtedly help the Omani economy in diversifying its income as well as establishing energy security.



A project in Oman that uses solar energy to get more oil out of the ground is the first of its kind in the Middle East

The banking sector

In January 2013 Islamic banks began providing Shariah-compliant services in the Sultanate for the first time. This followed the issue of Royal Decree No. 69/2012 on 6th December 2012, which amended some provisions of the Banking Law by adding a new chapter entitled "Islamic Banking Operations". This created a more diverse Omani banking sector, so that from then on Islamic banks began operating alongside the traditional commercial banks.

In January 2013 Islamic banks began providing Shariah-compliant services in the Sultanate for the first time.

In 2012 HSBC in Oman merged with Oman International Bank to form HSBC Oman with a capital base of RO200 million. At the end of 2012 there were 16 licensed commercial banks in the country – seven national banks and nine branches of foreign banks – with 475 branches. There were also two national Islamic banks – Nizwa Bank and al Izz Islamic Bank – and two government-owned specialised banks – Oman Housing Bank and Oman Development Bank – with 22 branches between them.

At the end of 2012 around 91.5 per cent of the personnel employed by the commercial and specialised banks were Omani nationals. Omanis accounted for 85.8 per cent higher and middle-ranking administrative staff, 99.8 per cent of clerical staff and 100 per cent of the non-clerical employees. Some 53.8 per cent of the personnel at the exchange companies were Omanis, as were 67 per cent of those employed by the finance and

leasing companies licensed by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

Of the commercial banks operating in Oman, ten – including five national banks and five branches of foreign banks - are licensed to provide investment banking services. The CBO has granted them licences to finance companies and projects, and also to provide consultative services in investment management and export credit, custody and trusteeship services.

There are a large number of licensed exchange companies in the Sultanate with numerous branches throughout the country. Several of them buy and sell foreign currencies, deal in precious metals and issue promissory notes. The remaining companies are only licensed to buy and sell foreign currencies.

The CBO has licensed six companies to provide non-banking financial services such as consumer financing, hire purchase, debt collecting etc.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO)

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) plays a pivotal role in spearheading the development of the banking sector and ensuring that it functions as a strong pillar of the national economy, while maintaining the value of the national currency (the Omani Rial) at home and abroad.

Established on 1st December 1974 under Banking Law No. 7 of 1974 (later amended with the promulgation of the Banking Law under Royal Decree No. 114/2000), it began exercising its powers in full with effect from 1st April 1975 with an initial capital base of RO1 million. This figure was gradually increased until it reached RO500 million on April 1st 2010, thereby increasing the CBO's ability to carry out its functions and cope with developments in the local and global monetary and financial fields. At the end of 2012 it held assets totalling approximately RO5.8 billion.

The CBO has two branches – one in Salalah and the other in Sohar.

Commercial banks

By the end of 2012 the assets of the commercial banks operating in the Sultanate had risen to RO20.9 billion, up from RO18.4 billion at the end of 2011. Total deposits rose 12.7 per cent to around RO14.2 billion, while their core capital, reserves and undistributed profits stood at some RO2.7 billion.

Their credit balance (comprising loans and facilities provided by the commercial banks for the private sector, individuals, public corporations and the government) had increased in the region of 14.4 per cent to RO14.3 billion. In line with the Sultanate's policy of economic diversification, 59.4 per cent of these loans were used to finance productive operations and support the different economic sectors. At the same time, personal loans advanced by the banks in 2012

accounted for 40.6 per cent of the total.

In March 2013 the Central Bank of Oman's board of governors decided to reduce the personal loans ceiling provided by the commercial banks from 40 per cent to 35 per cent of the total volume of their loans and raise the ceiling for housing loans from 10 per cent to 15 per cent.

Specialised banks

The Omani government originally set up specialised banks to bolster national development efforts in certain specific fields such as housing, industry, agriculture and fisheries, in view of the economic and social importance of those sectors. However, in view of the development achieved under Oman's Renaissance, it became necessary to review the functions of those banks and improve their ability to operate in a manner more in keeping with the new situation. This led to the creation of the Oman Development Bank and Oman Housing Bank - both government-owned - which operate through 22 branches.

The CBO decided to reduce the personal loans ceiling provided by the commercial banks from 40 per cent to 35 per cent of the total volume of their loans and raise the ceiling for housing loans from 10 per cent to 15 per cent.

Oman Housing Bank (OHB)

Oman Housing Bank (OHB), established in 1977, provides housing loans to fund the purchase, construction or completion of a dwelling with the aim of making suitable housing available for Omani nationals and their families. In 2013 the Bank increased its allocations for housing loans applications to RO80 million – nearly double the 2012 allocation of around RO41 million which was used to finance the building, purchase or maintenance of 1,255 housing units.

The Omani government originally set up specialised banks to bolster national development efforts in certain specific fields.

In August 2012 all recipients of loans from Oman Housing Bank, and all those registered with the Bank up to that date, were exempted from all banking and administrative charges until final settlement of their outstanding loans. Some 11,700 citizens across the country benefited from these exemptions. At the same time, new charges for the Bank's loans-related banking and administrative services were reduced by varying amounts.

Oman Development Bank (ODB)

Oman Development Bank (ODB) was set up as an Omani joint stock company under Royal Decree No. 18/97, issued on 9th April 1997, which merged the Development Bank of Oman (established in 1979) and the Oman Bank for Agriculture and Fisheries (established in 1981).

The ODB represents a significant new departure in the policy of advancing loans and supporting small and medium enterprises. It also provides technical assistance and consultancy services to Omani companies and, on the government's behalf, hands out and recovers loans provided by the government on easy terms.

While it operates on economic principles, ODB also plays a significant social role by providing



The banking sector has achieved positive growth over recent years

support for limited-cost small and medium projects to enable their proprietors to get their businesses off the ground. The Bank has been granted exemption from all taxes to enable it to play its part in helping to fund the country's economic development. The government subsidises the interest rates on the loans provided by the Bank on easy terms.

The capital market

Muscat Securities Market (MSM) is part of the capital market sector overseen by the Capital Market Authority (CMA). Established in 1988 under Royal Decree No. 53/88, issued on 21st June 1988, it was restructured in 1998 with the creation of three separate bodies: the CMA, MSM and Muscat Depository and Securities Registration Company (MDSRC), later renamed Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCDC) under Royal Decree No.72/2010, issued on 26th May 2010.

The CMA is responsible for regulating, licensing and monitoring the issue and trading of securities within the Sultanate, and for overseeing MSM along with all its traders and listed companies. MSM records and trades in securities and operates as a bourse, while MCDC holds shareholders' registers and deposits and registers and holds the sale and purchase contracts for securities and proof of ownership transfers and issues statements on them to shareholders. It is electronically linked to MSM.

The Capital Market Authority (CMA)

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) – a financially and administratively independent legal entity - oversees the capital market and insurance sectors. Established under Royal Decree No. 80/98, issued on 9th November 1998, it began operating on 9th January 1999.

In 2012 the CMA continued its policy of introducing improvements in the legislative and monitoring fields and raising levels of awareness. It helped amend the Commercial Companies Law's regulations on Islamic financing and introduced some changes to the rules and conditions for electing board members of public joint stock companies as well as the provisions dealing with their responsibilities. It also amended the definitions of "parties concerned" and "independent member".

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) – a financially and administratively independent legal entity - oversees the capital market and insurance sectors.

In addition to taking steps to promote a culture of savings and investment in the community as a whole, the CMA also held a series of lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences to inform and educate investors and holders of insurance policies about their rights and obligations. In other initiatives aimed at raising public awareness, it took part in exhibitions, published reports, books and leaflets, collaborated with academic institutions and schools and organised a cavalcade in conjunction with MSM and MCDC to publicise the capital and insurance markets.

MSM introduced the MSM Shariah Index, which comprises 31 Shariah-compliant public joint stock companies.



Muscat Securities Market (MSM)

In 2012 Muscat Securities market (MSM)'s main index rose around 66 points to 5760.84 points. The volume of trading increased by around RO 85 million to RO 1.065 billion, while by close of trading in 2012 the market value of the listed companies – that is, total capital multiplied by share price – had climbed to RO11.6 billion, up from RO10.3 billion at the end of 2011.

During 2012 the profits of companies listed on MSM rose to RO714 million, compared with



Muscat Securities Market seeks to encourage investment awareness in the country's youth

RO582 million in 2011. Foreign investment in the market reached its highest level for ten years, climbing to 28.2 per cent compared with 23.7 per cent the previous year. With an overall value of RO821.6 million, companies listed on MSM increased their capital value by some RO268.5 million, while the Market also saw bonds listed with a value of RO303.1 million. Nizwa Bank and al Izz Bank were listed with capital bases of RO150 million and RO100 million respectively.

In mid-2013 MSM introduced the MSM Shariah Index, which comprises 31 Shariah-compliant public joint stock companies. The new index is designed to measure the share performance of these companies, whose operations are based on the standards of the Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions.

The insurance sector

In 2012 the Capital Market Authority (CMA) introduced a range of legislative measures

aimed at regulating the insurance sector in line with global practices and in response to the needs and specific conditions of the local market. Among these measures were a draft mutual insurance law, regulations for insurance brokers and amendments to some of the provisions of the standard vehicle insurance policy.

The CMA also took new steps to protect insurance policy holders and held several meetings with the Public Authority for Consumer Protection and the insurance companies and motor vehicle agencies; during these meetings discussions focused on the high cost of spare parts and labour and their possible negative impact on the cost of insurance premiums, as well as on the need to tackle the high cost of insuring commercial vehicles by obliging insurance companies to offer more competitive terms for insuring taxis, hire cars, learner driver cars, gas transport vehicles and drinking water tankers.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry increased the number of electronic services to 60.

Following approval of the Sultanate's Islamic financing and banking system, the CMA drew up a draft mutual insurance law in collaboration with a number of international experts. It also granted three provisional licences to set up mutual insurance companies in Oman.

The Authority is preparing the road map for a food security strategy and studying the possibility of making the Sultanate a major cereals storage centre in the Middle East. PASFR is also examining the need for a food security early warning system in the Sultanate.

Trade

The Sultanate's domestic trade grew significantly in 2012 due to a number of factors, including higher government spending and greater job opportunities for Omani nationals. Consequently, the wholesale and retail trade sector's contribution to the country's GDP rose to RO 2,242.8 million at current prices, compared with RO 1,945.3 million in 2011 – a rise of 15.3 per cent. Loans to that sector totalled RO 674.4 million at the end of 2012, compared with RO 646.5 million at the end of 2011, representing 4.7 per cent of the overall volume of credit (RO 14.3 billion) extended by the commercial banks up to the end of 2012.

Oman's foreign trade rose from some RO27.2 billion in 2011 to RO30.8 billion in 2012. Of this figure, commodity exports accounted for RO 20 billion, while imports totalled RO10.8 billion.

Reflecting the Sultanate's policy of simplifying procedures, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry increased the number of electronic services provided by its "one-stop shop" to 60 by the end of 2012; this marks an impressive expansion since the facility was launched in 2006. At the end of 2012 the Ministry added a self-service feature to its "one-stop shop's" website comprising four basic services: a search for the availability of trade names, enquiry about the status of an application without the need to visit the "one-stop shop," reserving a trade name, and renewing a reservation. In March 2013 the Ministry launched two new facilities: the Commercial Register renewal service and the "household works" service; these are supported by two additional services – the commercial



Modern shopping malls around the country offer local and international merchandise

establishment authorisation system and the electronic payment service. The website enables e-payments to be made with a smart card or via payment points or an electronic payment portal.

The upgraded services provided by the "one-stop shop" have produced a radical improvement in the system by speeding up the processing of applications and reducing waiting times from over an hour (as was previously the case) to less than ten minutes.

Food security

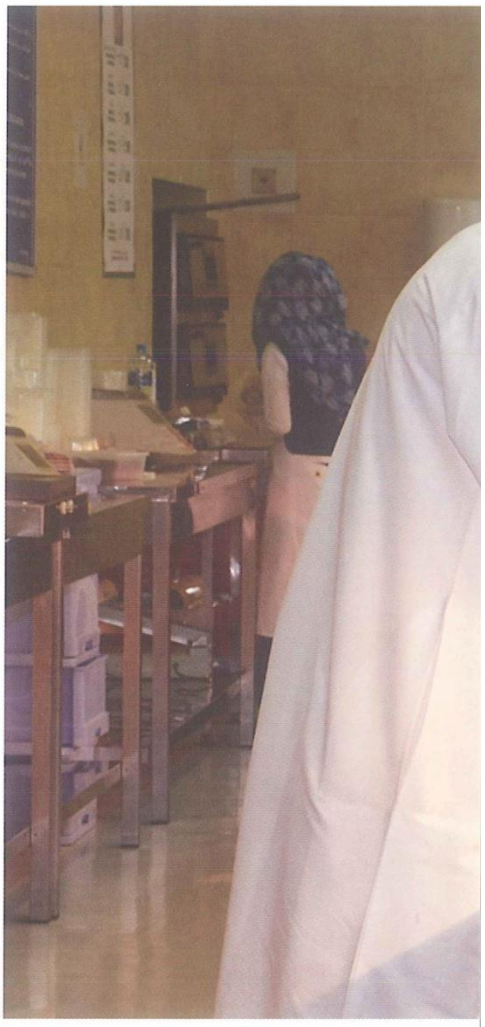
The Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserves (PASFR) is responsible for supplying staple foodstuffs such as rice, wheat, sugar, lentils, cooking oil, tea and dried milk. In conjunction with several other official bodies it has produced a national strategy for food security and – in collaboration with the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development - it has prepared the first annual report on the state of food security in the Sultanate.

In 2013 PASFR received the results of two studies - one on the annual consumption of staple foodstuffs and the quantities the government needs to store as a strategic reserve, and the other on the reopening of the quality control and sampling laboratory in the Governorate of Muscat under the Authority's management. In addition to carrying out studies on the institutional framework for food security in the Sultanate, the Authority is preparing the road map for a food security strategy and

studying the possibility of making the Sultanate a major cereals storage centre in the Middle East.

PASFR is also examining the need for a food security early warning system in the Sultanate.

At the beginning of 2013 the Authority introduced a new system for marketing commodities, in which the focus was on importing new types of Basmati and non-Basmati rice to satisfy the tastes of the local population.



Industry

As a mainstay of the national economy and a major contributor to national income, the industrial sector helps to reduce the country's dependence on oil. Moreover, in addition to being able to meet many of the needs of the local population, particularly for building materials, it is also in a position to provide extensive job opportunities.

As a mainstay of the national economy and a major contributor to national income, the industrial sector helps to reduce the country's dependence on oil.

The Sultanate has established a range of basic industries, a large proportion of which are based on gas. Over the coming years it will focus on expanding the existing industrial estates and establish new ones in the Dhahirah and North Sharqiyah Governorates. Measures will also be put in place to ensure greater integration between the ports and the nearby industrial estates, particularly in Sohar, Salalah and al Duqm, with the aim of encouraging the establishment of manufacturing industries in those areas, thereby boosting economic returns and creating new job opportunities.

The PEIE took the Sultanate's annual "Omani" brand promotion campaign beyond the country's borders.

The Sultanate is endeavouring to raise the manufacturing sector's contribution to the country's GDP to 15 per cent by the year 2020; currently it stands at about 10 per cent. Between 2011 and 2012 it rose from around RO 2,965.2 million to RO 3,040.1 million.

His Majesty the Sultan's Cup Competition for the best five factories has been held annually since its institution in 1991, to promote the goals of the government's industrial strategy and encourage Omani factories to keep up to date with the latest technology, comply with standard



Officials ensure that food stuffs meet hygienic requirements

specifications and increase the percentage of Omanis in their workforce.

The Industrial Innovation Centre was established in 2010 to improve the industrial sector's performance through research and development. Over the past two years it has made impressive progress in achieving its aims. It has carried out field visits to over 120 factories, approved 28 research proposals and contributed RO464,000 to 19 research projects undertaken by various companies and establishments with the aim of reducing costs and improving quality and productivity. The Centre has eight branches; three of these are involved in research into new products while the other five are concerned with industrial processes.

In 2012 the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates took the Sultanate's annual "Omani" brand promotion campaign beyond the country's borders and held an exhibition of Omani products in the Saudi

(Overleaf)
Industrial development strategies focus on the use of the Sultanate's natural resources. Here the Brazilian Vale Sohar plant.





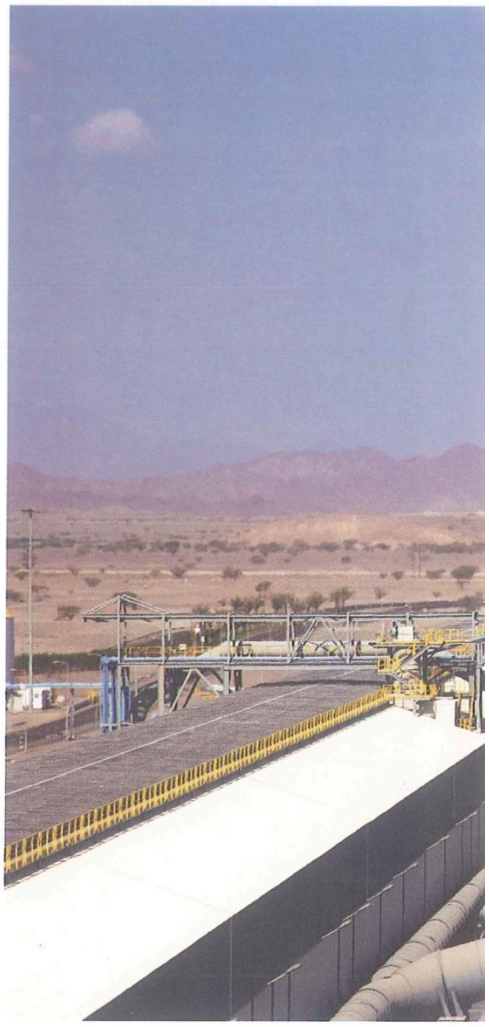
capital Riyadh in collaboration with the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Over 50 Omani companies took part from a range of commercial sectors.

The industrial estates and economic zones

The industrial estates and special and free economic zones help boost the economy by attracting foreign investment and opening up new export markets for manufacturing industries. They are also a useful tool for transferring technology, diversifying sources of income and creating jobs for Omanis.

The Sultanate's policy is to locate its industrial estates and free zones across the country in order to bring development and employment opportunities to the different governorates. The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates is responsible for managing and operating seven industrial estates – in al Rusayl, Sohar, Raysut, Nizwa, Sur, Buraymi and Sumail; the last of these is under construction. In addition to these, Knowledge Oasis Muscat specialises in information technology, while the al Mazyounah Free Zone aims to attract enterprises that will promote trade and industrial links between the Sultanate and Yemen. Two new industrial estates will be set up under the current and coming five-year plans – one in the *wilayat* of Ibri in the Dhahirah Governorate and the other in the *wilayat* of al Mudhaibi in the North Sharqiyah.

The Sultanate's policy is to locate its industrial estates and free zones across the country in order to bring development and employment opportunities to the different governorates.



Some RO 3.9 billion has been invested in the seven industrial estates to date, while the number of enterprises operating in them has risen from 304 in 2007 to 1,267 in 2012. Out of a total workforce of 33,057, these projects have created 13,400 job opportunities for nationals.

Some RO 3.9 billion has been invested in the seven industrial estates to date.

The establishment of the Special Economic Zone in al Duqm (SEZAD) under Royal Decree No. 119/2011, issued on 26th October



Omani factories are urged to use standard specifications and adopt upgrading policies in order to raise output

2011, was an important new addition to the national economy. Its facilities include Port al Duqm, a ship repair dry dock and several tourist and logistical services. The Sultanate is planning to set up a number of major projects in this area and attract investments totalling some US$ 15 billion over the next ten years. The SEZAD has been designed to grow and provide an increasing number of jobs for nationals, rising to around 20,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities by the year 2020.

Work began on developing the SEZAD in mid-2007 with the Port al Duqm project, and the Zone's management has ambitions to make it a commercial, industrial and tourist centre of global importance.

Over recent years the Sultanate has given a high priority to creating free zones, since in its view the facilities and incentives available for the projects located within their boundaries are a highly effective means of attracting investment and local and foreign capital.

The free zones, which are regulated by the Free Zones Law promulgated under Royal Decree No. 56/2002, issued in 2002, provide a raft of investment incentives and facilities including – among others - tax exemptions, simplified procedures for licences, permits and the import of goods and commodities, no minimum investment limit, no restrictions on the circulation and transfer of currencies and no income tax on profits.

At present there are three free zones in the Sultanate. The first – al Mazyounah Free Zone – became operational in November 1999 and is in the Governorate of Dhofar near the Yemeni border. There is also a free zone in Salalah, which was established in 2006 and is managed by the Salalah Free Zone Company. The third zone – the Sohar Free Zone – was set up under Royal Decree No. 123/2010, issued on 20th December 2010, and is managed by the Sohar Free Zone Company.

The Sultanate has given a high priority to creating free zones, since in its view the facilities and incentives available for the projects located within their boundaries are a highly effective means of attracting investment and local and foreign capital.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

On His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's instructions, a symposium on the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) was held at the Royal Camp at Seih al Shamikhat in the *wilayat* of Bahla from 21st to 23rd January 2013. This symposium, which highlighted the importance Oman attaches to the SME sector, produced a raft of decisions in response to the public's aspirations.



The symposium approved plans for a training programme for government sector employees whose duties involve them directly with the private sector, with the aim of giving them a deeper appreciation of the realities of the world of business so that they can improve their services to the SME sector and enable it to play a fully active part in the country's development.

The symposium agreed that, should they wish to do so, government employees should be



The Small and Medium Enterprises Symposium, held in January 2013, came up with some historic decisions which met the expectations of the people

permitted to set up and manage their own businesses on a full-time basis and (on certain conditions) continue to receive their salaries for one year. It was also agreed that a prestigious annual prize will be awarded from 2014 to SMEs and the individuals involved in them.

The symposium also agreed that plots of land should be earmarked for the construction of business centres and "SME incubators" in various parts of the country to be supported by investment from either the government or the private sector. They would be run by bodies specialised in the management of facilities of this kind. Plots of agricultural, industrial and commercial land would also be allocated for the use of SMEs under usufruct contracts and subject to conditions laid down by the Supreme Council for Planning and the Ministry of Housing.

It was also agreed that a minimum of 10 per cent of the total value of government purchases

and tenders should be earmarked for SMEs and that practical steps should be taken before the end of 2015 to enable entrepreneurs to form their own clubs; these could provide them with opportunities to exchange information and develop their expertise.

The symposium also discussed ways of developing and improving the facilities provided by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's "one-stop shop" for the benefit of SMEs and converting them into 100 per cent e-services by the end of 2013. It was also recommended that, to further protect SMEs, there should be a review of the laws on promoting competitiveness, preventing monopolies and regulating the procedures for filing for bankruptcy, and that any amendments proposed following the review should be adopted during 2014.

Royal Decree No. 6/2013, issued on 28th January 2013, established al Rafd Fund with an initial capital base of RO70 million.

The symposium agreed that the owner of an establishment who is also its full-time manager should be included in the Omanisation statistics, along with members of his family (wife and children of working age) if they are employed in it on a full-time basis and registered with the Public Authority for Social Insurance. A system should also be introduced whereby all categories of private establishments transfer their employees' salaries to their accounts at the commercial banks from the beginning of 2014; this should be arranged in co-ordination with the Ministry of Manpower and the Central Bank of Oman.

Royal Decree No. 36/2013, issued on 30th May 2013, established the Public Authority for Developing Small and Medium Enterprises and promulgated its regulations.

The symposium called for a review of financing policies, laws and procedures to bring them into line with the policies for helping and developing SMEs, and for an expansion of the credit facilities provided by the commercial banks; in this connection it was agreed that, among other arrangements, some 5 per cent of the banks' commercial loans should be set aside for SMEs and provisions should be made so that loans can be granted commensurate with the size of the establishment concerned.

In a further measure aimed at supporting SMEs, Royal Decree No. 6/2013, issued on 28th January 2013, established al Rafd Fund with an initial capital base of RO70 million and the proviso that RO7 million should be added to the Fund annually. The Fund is designed to provide loans for enterprises set up by young job-seekers and supply finance for projects that are subject to the Social Security Law. Other beneficiaries would include artisans, craftsmen, rural women and any other category covered by a decision of the Fund's board of directors.

In a fitting response to the symposium's decisions, Royal Decree No. 36/2013, issued on 30th May 2013, established the Public Authority for Developing Small and Medium Enterprises and promulgated its regulations. The Decree stated that the Authority's aims included: developing SMEs, co-ordinating and promoting



them and enabling them to obtain the funds and services they need by liaising with the relevant government and private sector bodies, instilling a culture of business entrepreneurship and self-employment projects among the younger generation, enabling SMEs to play a greater role in providing new job opportunities for young Omanis, helping male and female entrepreneurs to set up, operate, manage and develop their own enterprises, bolstering the competitiveness of existing enterprises, and helping increase the SME sector's ability to contribute added value to the national economy, promote economic diversification, and support innovation and the adoption of modern technology.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI)

In a move to streamline Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI)'s operations, in April 2013 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said directed that its Chairman and all board members should be appointed by election and that the new system should come into effect at the beginning of November 2013. Previously, the Chairman and six other board members were appointed by Royal Decree, while a further fifteen members were elected by their Annual General Meeting.

At the end of 2012 the Chamber's approximately 240,000 members included local companies, consultancy firms and multinational businesses seeking to benefit from

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry helps local and international companies to make the most of Oman's investment climate

the Sultanate's investment climate. The services it provides are designed to enable them to derive maximum benefit from the nation's economic growth.

Through its specialised committees and its representation on local economic committees and other bodies, the Chamber seeks to promote harmony between the public and private sectors in their approach to economic decisions, working practices and regulations. It also holds conferences, symposiums and forums aimed at attracting foreign investment, publicising the economic opportunities available in Oman in a wide range of fields and identifying potential areas of co-operation between business sectors at home and abroad.

In February 2012 the Chamber took over the presidency of the Federation of Gulf Co-operation Council Chambers for a two-year term. In this capacity it is helping to devise solutions to problems encountered by the private sector in the Gulf, while galvanising economic activity among the Gulf markets by providing incentives to encourage private sector companies and establishments to invest in the Gulf region.

At the end of 2012 the Chamber's approximately 240,000 members included local companies, consultancy firms and multinational businesses.

Information technology (IT)

In October 2012 the Sultanate began implementing its plan for a total transformation to e-government by the end of 2015 with the aim of providing appropriate services that satisfy the public's expectations and requirements.

In October 2012 the Sultanate began implementing its plan for a total transformation to e-government by the end of 2015.

The plan, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in June



2012, consists of four main phases: presence, interaction, transaction and transformation. Another two phases – participation and global interaction – will follow after the completion of Phase Four.

Under Phase One, government departments and institutions will publish basic electronic information on their websites in Arabic and English, including their visions, policies and certain important documents required by members of the public.

It is expected that Phase Two



The Information Technology Authority aims to turn Oman into a 'Knowledge Society' through the Digital Oman initiative

– the e-interaction phase – will be completed in December 2013. Under this phase, government departments and institutions will interact with the general public by email or the use of electronic forms. They will also operate call centres to handle telephone calls and mobile telephone text messages, and they will interact with each other electronically through the exchange of digital data.

Under Phase Three – the e-transaction phase – which is due for completion in December 2014, the focus will be on enabling the public to complete their procedures in full via the internet, including driving licence applications and the updating of personal information. It will also provide e-payment facilities and government departments and institutions will be able to use a combination of internet and telephone technologies.

Phase Four – the e-transformation phase – is due for completion in December 2015. During this phase the public will be able to access services through



Data collected during the Agricultural Census 2012-2013 will focus on developing strategies for advancements in date palm cultivation

a single website, whether the service they want involves a single government department or several different departments. At this stage careful and precise co-ordination will be required so that the system of procedures and responses to them can be restructured efficiently.

The plan comes in the wake of a number of significant steps taken over recent years with the aim of creating a "Knowledge Society" through the Digital Oman initiative; these include the Sultan Qaboos Prize for E-government Services Excellence, launched in 2010. The Prize is upgraded annually and, when it was awarded for the third time in December 2012, two awards were presented to private sector companies while 12 projects were accorded honours out of a total of 57 nominated by 30 government and private institutions.

The Asas Business Incubation Centre, opened in March 2013, is a national IT business development programme.

The Asas Business Incubation Centre, opened in March 2013, is a national IT business development programme under which the Information Technology Authority seeks to incubate growing and aspiring projects in a range of IT and telecommunications sector fields. It is aimed at students and jobseekers wishing to set up their own IT and telecommunications enterprises, as well as entrepreneurs who have started setting up businesses but are still at the early stages. The Centre provides support to help them turn their innovative ideas into realities.

The Sultanate was chosen as a data security centre for the region by the International Telecommunications Centre (ITU)-IMPACT.

In recognition of Oman's achievements in the field of data security, in December 2012 the Sultanate was chosen as a data

security centre for the region by the International Telecommunications Centre (ITU)-IMPACT. Then in March 2013 the Regional Cyber Security Centre was officially opened in Oman as the ITU's first regional data security centre. With its technical expertise and services in this field, the Sultanate is in a strong position to assist other states of the region in setting up their own national e-security centres and help enable them to join international organisations, programmes and other e-security initiatives and thus gain international recognition.

Omani Achievements:



Omani agro-technologist and Director of the Department of Agricultural and Livestock Research in Dhofar, Dr Ahmed al Shanfari, has achieved significant recognition for his research with the naming of two genes after him. These genes, designated EgMT2a and EgMT2b, are registered in the GeneBank (NCBI) under his name.

Dr Al Shanfari's research work, published in the June 2013 issue of the international journal for experimental botany *Biologia Plantarum,* has practical application in using the genes to accelerate the ripening process of the oil palm fruit.

Since the oil and date palm belong to the same family, the results of the research could have particular relevance for Oman.

Agriculture

Between December 2012 and April 2013 the Sultanate carried out its third Agricultural census. In updating the information provided by the previous census of 2004-2005, the detailed data and statistics produced by the new census will form the basis of improvement strategies in the agriculture and livestock sectors, enabling effective services, advice and guidance to be provided for farmers and stockbreeders. Its statistical and reference material will also be available for students, researchers and investors in a range of agriculture and livestock-related fields.

There were some 324,000 *feddans* (1 *feddan* =1.038 acres/0.42 hectares) of agricultural land in the Sultanate according to the 2004-2005 census, compared with some 241,000 *feddans* in the 1992-1993 census. The area under cultivation accounted for about 44.2 per cent of the total.

Agricultural production rose from around RO189.9 million in 2006 to RO267.7 million in 2010, which is equivalent to an average annual growth rate of 9 per cent.

In November 2009 the Sultanate launched its new Million Date Palm Project in several of the Sultanate's governorates and the Directorate-General of the Million Date Palm Project was set up at the Diwan of Royal Court.

The Eighth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) includes a range of programmes aimed at boosting productivity in the agriculture and livestock sectors. A project to increase wheat production is in the process of upgrading the crop by studying the different strains of wheat and identifying and improving the strains best suited to local conditions. A technical committee has been set up to administer the scheme, supply farmers with high quality fertilisers, provide technical support, monitor progress on the ground and install modern irrigation systems. The three-year project, which began in 2012-2013, aims to raise annual production from around 1,400 tonnes to 3,000 tonnes by the end of the third year. Over the years of the project, wheat production is expected to reach 6,600 tonnes and meet 3.3 per cent of the country's needs. At the same time, it will produce 300 sheaves per *feddan* of wheat stalks and leaves for use as dry animal fodder.

The Eighth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) includes a range of programmes aimed at boosting productivity in the agriculture and livestock sectors.

Other improvement programmes for the agricultural sector include the introduction of modern cultivation and harvesting technology, distribution of improved fruit seedlings, and encouraging farmers to grow high quality strains. Schemes already implemented have resulted in increased production and the successful cultivation of a range of different fruits and vegetables in various parts of the country including strawberries.

At the start of 2013 the Sultanate began implementing a strategy for developing the fisheries sector up to the year 2020.

Fisheries

At the start of 2013 the Sultanate began implementing a strategy for developing the fisheries sector up to the year 2020, including 21 projects with investment totalling around RO 509.4 million. The strategy has four main goals: upgrading and minimising loss in the fisheries-related industries that yield added value; improving the performance of the fishing fleet and developing the infrastructure; developing the aquaculture industry and increasing productivity; and improving fish marketing techniques. These goals will be achieved through three categories of projects: infrastructure





Fish are a major resource, which contributes to the country's GDP

projects, investment projects and support projects and programmes.

The strategy comprises a series of interconnected measures aimed at boosting productivity and performance in the fisheries sector in a sustainable manner, protecting natural fishing grounds from over-fishing, supplying safe fish products for domestic consumption, exploiting untapped fish stocks, increasing private sector investment and attracting investment from abroad for fishing industry-related projects, particularly the fishing industries complex in al Duqm.

The strategy seeks to raise annual fish production to around 462,000 tonnes. This will require an annual increase of 27 per cent, compared with the present 2.8 per cent. The focus will be on introducing modern systems and methods leading to improved performance by the traditional fishing sector, with a resulting increase in productivity and higher incomes for fishermen. Funding earmarked for the fishing harbours proposed under the

Eighth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) will be increased, the number of aquaculture projects will be expanded, the traditional fishing fleet will be upgraded and additional support will be provided for the inshore fishing fleet. Two national hatcheries will be established – one for fish and the other for prawns. A multi-purpose research vessel will be acquired and enter service, and model fishing villages will be set up on the Arabian Sea.

According to the 2020 Vision of Oman's Economic Future, the fisheries sector's contribution to the national economy is projected to rise from its present level of 1.5 per cent to 3 per cent.

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The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries attaches a high priority to the performance of the central fish markets such as Souq al Fulaij in the *wilayat* of Barka. It has plans to establish central markets in the main towns in governorates across the country and in this connection it signed 13 agreements with various companies in April 2013 for the construction of fishing harbours and fish markets in several coastal wilayats at a total cost of RO33.9 million. Under these agreements fishing harbours will be built in Barka in the North Batinah Governorate and the *wilayat* of Taqah in the Governorate of Dhofar. A fish market will be established at the fishing harbour in al Suwaiq and design and supervisory consultancy services will be provided for the construction of harbours in Kumzar and Daba in the Governorate of Musandam, Mahawt in the Wusta Governorate, and al Shwaimiyah, Sadah and Rakhyut in the Governorate of Dhofar. Harbours will also be upgraded in Dhalkut and Mirbat in the Governorate of Dhofar, Lima in the Governorate of Musandam and al Khabourah in the North Batinah Governorate. The Ministry also plans to complete its construction work on 30 fishing harbours by the end of the current five-year plan in 2015, thereby ensuring that there is a fishing harbour in every coastal *wilayat*.

The fisheries sector provides employment for around 48,000 people, including 42,553 traditional fishermen.

The fisheries sector provides employment for around 48,000 people, including 42,553 traditional fishermen, 2,746 fish transporters and 2,525 working in other related occupations. Over 95 per cent of them are Omanis. The sector is expected to employ more national manpower when the planned fisheries projects are up and running, particularly in the aquaculture industry.

According to the figures, in 2012 fish production rose to 191,000 tonnes with a total value of RO142 million, up from 158,000 tonnes (RO123 million) in 2011.

Livestock

Oman's livestock strategies are designed to promote food security and enable the country to achieve self sufficiency in animal products. They include projects to help small producers increase their contribution to the rural economy, such as advice programmes aimed at raising awareness among stockbreeders about the importance of using modern technology in the production, processing and marketing of meat products and the management and health care of livestock.

In March 2013 the Ministry of



Projects are adopting modern techniques to expand their productivity

Agriculture and Fisheries signed an agreement to establish 13 mobile veterinary clinics equipped with a full range of examination, treatment and surgical facilities. This RO573,000 project is part of an integrated animal health programme under which the mobile clinics will operate alongside 62 government and 44 private veterinary clinics; in addition to these, a further three clinics are currently under construction. The project is expected to help improve the living standards of large numbers of stockbreeders, protect the health of country's livestock, prevent the spread of diseases and improve veterinary services in general. This in turn will have a positive impact on the sector's development and give it a greater role in helping to achieve self-sufficiency in food.

The Sultanate has adopted a number of schemes to encourage stockbreeders to continue in their present occupations. Shelters are distributed annually under a support system to protect livestock from the summer heat, winter cold and other adverse climatic conditions, as well as from wild predators and diseases that could be caught from stray animals. A programme has also been introduced to help rural women improve their livestock production projects and embrace modern technology, while encouraging them to invest more in poultry and egg production, raise cattle, sheep and goats and set up small units for processing dairy products.

The genetic improvement programme for local breeds of cattle, sheep, goats and poultry

is designed to boost productivity and reproductive levels and ensure more effective selectivity. Field studies are carried out to promote the use of modern technology among stockbreeders and maintain and safeguard the sustainability of genetic resources through measures such as sperm banks.

There are around 2.6 million head of livestock in the Sultanate including 339,000 cattle, approximately 1.7 million goats, 396,000 sheep and 132,000 camels.

Tourism

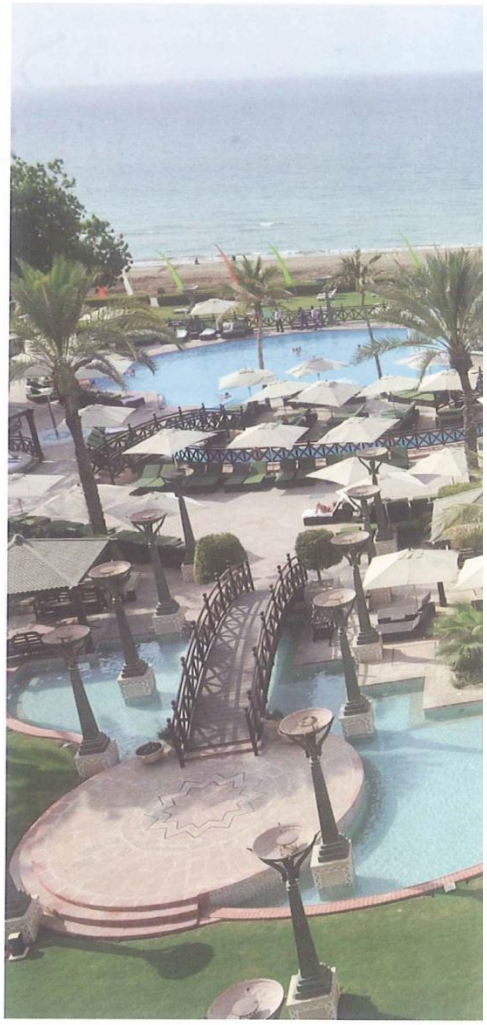
Following approval by the Council of Ministers on strategic terms of reference which took three years to prepare and are focused largely on domestic tourism, in early 2013 the Ministry of Tourism began drawing up a long-term tourism strategy.

In early 2013 the Ministry of Tourism began drawing up a long-term tourism strategy.

The strategy aims to give a new impetus to the tourist sector since it recognises that it has a part to play in diversifying the sources of national income, providing job opportunities for Omani nationals and exploiting the country's rich and varied environment. It therefore plans to introduce a range of new approaches and attractions to enable the Sultanate to compete effectively in the global tourist market and generate significant economic benefits.

The broad features of the new strategy include a study and assessment of the measures required from the government to promote investment in tourist projects, as well as a review of the facilities available and the possible obstacles involved, proposals on setting up a Tourism Ministry "one-stop shop," the creation of a system for predicting future supply and demand in the tourist sector, a plan for land to be set aside in various locations for tourist purposes, an evaluation of the country's tourist infrastructure and services and a legal and economic overview of the relevant rules, laws and agreements together with an assessment of the extent to which they meet the needs of the rapidly growing tourist sector.

The Sultanate attended the International Tourism Bourse in Berlin in March 2013 and received three international awards.



The introduction of the new strategy coincides with



State-of-the-art hotels and resorts attract tourists from across the world

an impressive number of achievements in the Omani tourist sector. The World Economic Forum's 2013 report on travel and tourism competitiveness ranked the Sultanate fourth in the Middle East in terms of the countries with the most developed tourist and aviation sector facilities. The annual financial reports of travel and tourism companies operating in the Sultanate reflect a positive view of the sector's growth and development following the significant increase in the number of tourists visiting Oman in 2012 and the subsequent positive impact on hotel occupancy and prices.

The Sultanate attended the International Tourism Bourse in Berlin in March 2013 and received three international awards: it won first prize as the tourist destination in the Arab region most preferred by German speakers (visitors from Germany, Austria and Switzerland), while Oman Air won second prize as one of the best airlines operating flights between the Arab region and Germany, and for the second year

running the Tourism Ministry's Office for External Representation in Berlin won third prize in the competition for the best foreign tourist representative office in the German-speaking travel market. The prizes were awarded following votes cast by over 2,600 experts, members and representatives of travel and tourist agencies in Germany and German-speaking countries (Austria and Switzerland). The tourist destinations, companies, airlines and other competitive categories were classified and granted awards on the basis of an annual survey of services, facilities, tourist attractions, activities, infrastructure and other criteria - including quality standards and sustainability - carried out by the Go Asia/Go Arabia Group, which specialises in tourism and travel statistics and first began awarding prizes in 2003.

The Sultanate has also been commended by the Arab Tourism Organisation for its Muscat Arab Tourism Capital 2012 programme.

The Sultanate has also been commended by the Arab Tourism Organisation for its Muscat Arab Tourism Capital 2012 programme, which succeeded in boosting the number of tourists and visitors during that year to around 1.4 million.

The Muscat Arab Tourism Capital 2012 events included conferences on tourism, as well as competitions, exhibitions and trips to the Sultanate's major tourist attractions. In December 2012 a number of open top buses began operating in the Governorate of Muscat with the aim of highlighting Muscat's main landmarks and historical sites. Starting daily at 0830 from Mutrah souq guests can purchase 24-hour passes and have the opportunity to enjoy beautiful views from the upper deck of their open bus, while a tourist guide provides them with information about the city's history and culture.

The 2013 Muscat Festival was a "panoramic tableau" comprising a huge range of local, Arab and international events.

In 2012 the Ministry of Tourism completed a number of tourism development projects. They included an autoguide to the geological trails in the Governorate of Muscat, which has been awarded the UNESCO award for best eco-friendly project and is regarded as an excellent example of how eco-friendly technology can be applied to sustainable development. The Ministry also built public toilets at several selected tourist sites, improved some areas in the *wilayat* of Dima wa'l Ta'een for the benefit of tourists and visitors and installed tourist services in the niyabat of Madhi in the *wilayat* of Thumrait.

Muscat Festival

The 2013 Muscat Festival was a "panoramic tableau" comprising a range of local, Arab and international events. It was staged at several different sites from 30th January to 28th February and attracted over one and a half million visitors.

Held under the slogan "*Al Mahrajan li Kulli'l Naas*" ("The Festival for All People") Muscat Festival aimed to enrich the social and cultural life of the community and promote tourism and economic activity. Its programme included the Tour of Oman cycle race, Muscat Fashion Week, the Oman Food Festival, the Omani Heritage Village, the International Festival of Traditional Arts and Crafts, circus displays, a carnival, a laser show, fireworks, theatrical performances, concerts and numerous other attractions.



The 2013 Salalah Tourist Festival conveys a message of friendship, and peace for all peoples

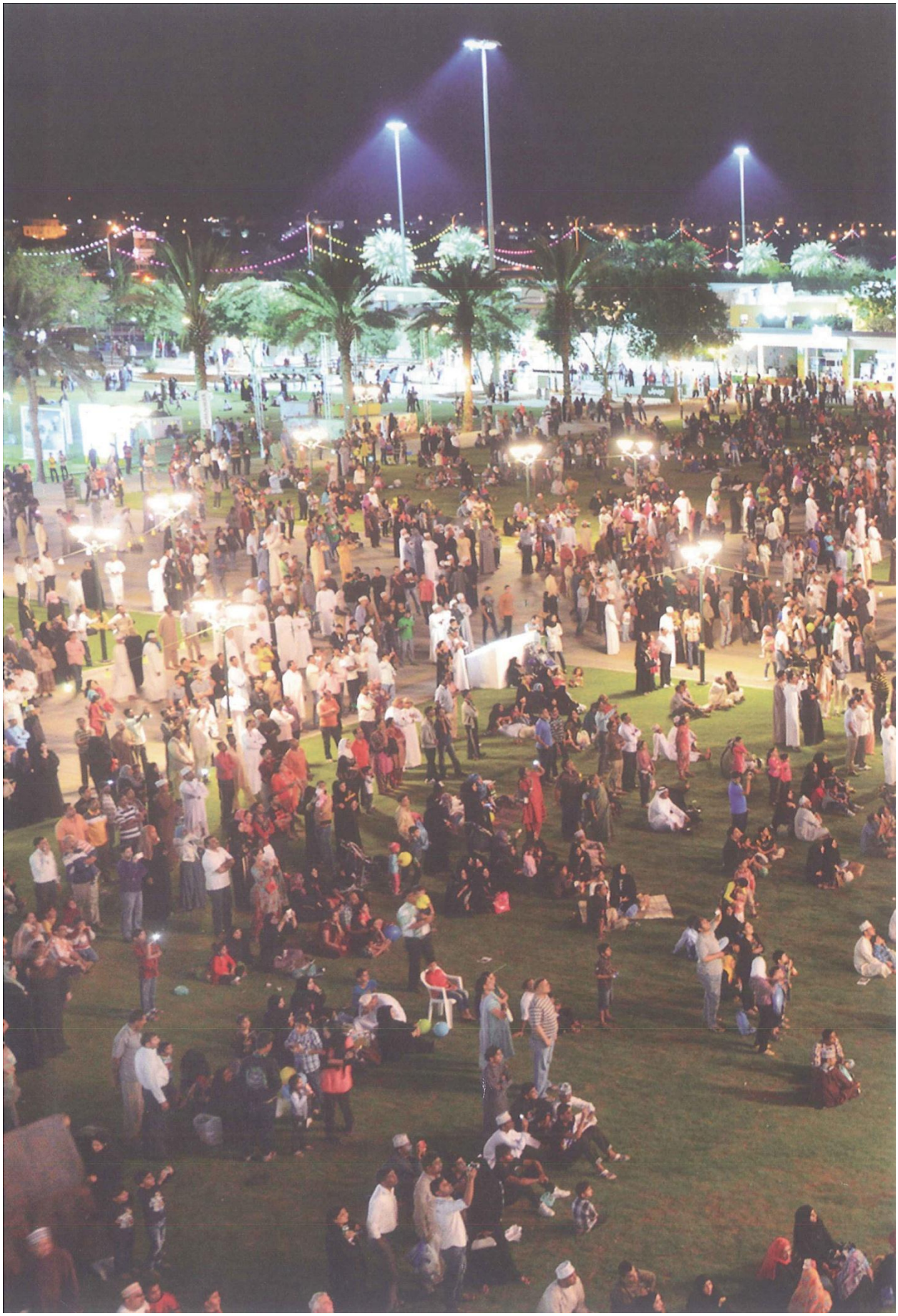
First held in February 1998 to promote tourism and Omani culture, over the years Muscat Festival has established itself as one of the Arab world's major festivals.

The Salalah Tourist Festival

With its extensive programme of events, the Salalah Tourist Festival is one of the Arab Gulf Co-operation Council for Arab states most important attractions and coincides with the peak of the tourist season, when the Governorate of Dhofar is cloaked in greenery and Omanis and AGCC citizens flock to enjoy its cool summer climate. On most days at that time of year the sun is concealed behind clouds and a gentle drizzle falls in temperatures that never exceed 22 degrees C and fall to 15 degrees C in the mountains.

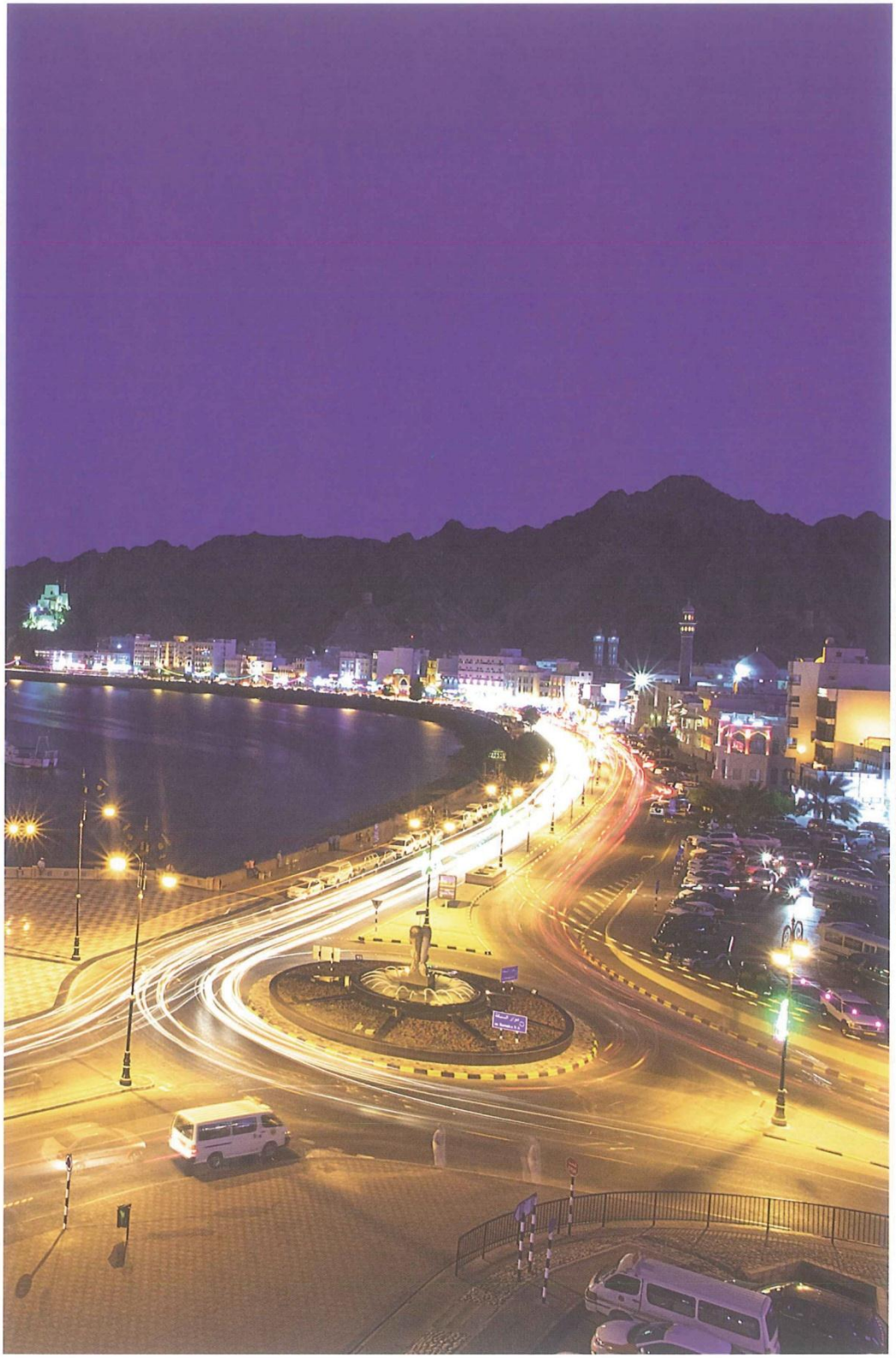
The 2013 Salalah Tourist Festival, which took place from 10th August to 6th September, was held under the slogan "*Oman 'Ata wa Wafa*" ("Oman, Giving and Loyalty") –reflecting the Sultanate's view that it should convey a message of friendship, love and peace for all peoples. While its programme of religious, sporting, cultural, artistic and recreational events attracted large numbers of festival-goers, seasonal visitors to the Governorate of Dhofar as a whole totalled around 130,000 between 21st June and 15th August, a huge increase compared with the 2012 figure of 137,000. Some 61 per cent of the visitors were Omanis , while citizens of the United Arab Emirates accounted for around 20 per cent.

(Overleaf)
Tourism festivals offer a spectrum of colours depicting Oman's heritage and culture





Environment and modern utilities



11 Environment and modern utilities

The Sultanate sees the environment as a national priority in its development efforts. Oman Environment Day, which has been celebrated on 8th January every year since it was instituted in January 1996, highlights the attention given to the environment and reflects the importance attached to it by His Majesty. The Ministry of Environment and Water Resources works in coordination with the UN Environment Programme's Regional Office for West Asia to revise and update Oman's National Strategy for the Protection of the Environment.

In 2012 two fixed stations were installed to monitor motor vehicle exhaust pollutants and measure noise levels and air quality in the Governorate of Muscat; a mobile unit was also set up to monitor air quality. These measures will enable appropriate steps to be taken to improve air quality and reduce pollution and noise in the most congested areas of Muscat if the indicators show that they are at unacceptably high levels.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation demonstrates the high esteem in which His Majesty holds those around the world involved in environmental affairs.

A nation-wide early warning system was also installed to monitor radiation and protect the country from any negative effects that might result from radiation leakage from an outside source. Natural and industrial radiation levels are kept under constant observation.

The Sultanate has many other nature reserves which provide a habitat for different forms of biodiversity.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation demonstrates the high esteem in which His Majesty holds those around the world involved in environmental affairs. The Prize was instituted on the initiative of Sultan Qaboos during a visit to UNESCO's headquarters in June 1989. It is awarded by UNESCO every two years for outstanding contributions in the management or preservation of the environment, consistent with the policies, aims and objectives of UNESCO. The winning individual, group, institute or organization is chosen by the Bureau of the International Co-ordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme.

Since the prize was first awarded in 1991, winners have included a wide range of global experts and institutes responsible for education and training or research into various aspects of the environment and natural resources.



Waterfalls represent nature at its most dramatic. This is Ain al Koor spring in Salalah

In October 2013 it was announced that the Prize had been awarded jointly to the State Forests National Forest Holding of Poland and South Africa's Endangered Wildlife Trust. The Prize was awarded for the 12th time during the opening of the World Science Forum on 24th November 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Wildlife Conservation

The Office for the Conservation of the Environment, established in 1974 under the auspices of the Diwan of Royal Court, operates wildlife and biodiversity conservation programmes in reserves and projects that fall within its jurisdiction.

There are several thousand species living on the nature reserves managed by the Office, and some are facing extinction. For example, the Wadi Al Sarain reserve, established in 1975, is the only Arabian tahr sanctuary in the world; this animal can only be found in the mountains of Northern Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The first programme for the reintroduction of the Arabian oryx to the region was started in the Natural Living Sanctuary in the Wusta Governorate in 1980, following the serious threat of extinction of the oryx, recorded in 1972.

The Sultanate has many other nature reserves which provide a habitat for different forms of biodiversity, and these include the Ras al Shagar reserve in Quryat where Arabian gazelles can be found in their natural habitat; the Khor Salalah reserve which is

one of the most beautiful lagoons in the governorate of Dhofar – is among the best places in Oman for birdwatchers, attracting large numbers of resident and migrant birds. The Al Khuwair nature reserve, in the heart of Muscat, was established to protect the local samr (*Acacia tortilis*) trees in the governorate of Muscat; the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve; the Al Saleel Nature Reserve; and the Turtle Nature Reserve are all important wildlife projects, as well as the Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve. Royal Decree No 80/2011, issued on August 17, 2011, established the Al Jabal Al Akdhar Sanctuary for Natural Scenery. Al Jabal Al Akhdar is situated in the *wilayat* of Nizwa, Governorate of Dakhiliyah, and it is part of the Al Hajar al Gharbi mountain range.

In 2013 the Office for Conservation of the Environment started a new Reem Gazelle (Sand Gazelle) breeding and settlement project in the wildlife sanctuary in the Wusta Governorate.

In 2013 the Office for Conservation of the Environment started a new Reem Gazelle (Sand Gazelle) breeding and settlement project in the wildlife sanctuary in the Wusta Governorate. Previously this species had become extinct through hunting and as a result of climate change factors such as desertification.

The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs has established a range of eco-projects to ensure that the country's resources are exploited in a sustainable manner.

The Office also runs other projects to help maintain the Sultanate's biodiversity and in this connection it carries out field studies and surveys on Oman's wild birds and animals including the Sooty Falcon and the Nubian Ibex. Another project - the Arabian Leopard survey in the mountains of Dhofar - is part of a major initiative designed to conserve the Arabian Leopard in the Sultanate.

New species - In October 2013 ornithologists studying owls in the Jabal Al Akhdar mountains discovered a new species, naming it Omani owl (*strix omanensis).* Also in 2013 the international journal *Zootaxa* published an article revealing the existence of eight new species of gecko *Hemidactylus* in the Dhofar mountains, Masirah island and on the Jabal al Akhdar.

In February 2013 the BBC aired a 3-part series entitled 'Wild Arabia' which featured many aspects of Oman's wildlife.

Sustainable Development

Along with sustainable development nature conservation, the protection of the Sultanate's environment, natural resources and biodiversity is a vital part of sustainable development and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs has established a range of eco-projects to ensure that the country's resources are exploited in a sustainable manner. These include the reclamation and recultivation of land that has become infertile as a result of salinity and overgrazing. In 2011 and 2012 two sites were rehabilitated in the Governorate of Dhofar and planted with 800 local trees and shrubs. There are also plans to rehabilitate other sites and produce a map showing the extent of land degradation in Dhofar, and several nurseries have been established for the cultivation of local flora.

The Ministry is also engaged on a project in Dhofar in which nets are used to capture fog and



Importance is attached to wildlife conservation in the Sultanate

convert it into water. Started on 20th June 2010, its aim is to combat desertification by extracting water from the dense fog which forms every year during the *Khareef* season (from June to September) and using it to rehabilitate some of the degraded areas

Climate Affairs

Since 2008, the Sultanate's general environmental strategy has been designed to incorporate climate affairs into its existing national plans and introduce new legislation, as the need arises. The Ministry's projects included a study and assessment of ways of responding to climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer, as well as a review of the options available for reducing greenhouse gases produced by Oman's different economic sectors, while taking into account local conditions and the country's sustainable development targets.

In May 2012 the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs began issuing climate permits for ongoing projects. The permits laid down certain specific environmental conditions to encourage those projects to adopt appropriate methods and technologies so that they could cut their energy consumption, improve efficiency and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Project owners were urged to plant trees, shrubs and other plants in keeping with the local environment, with the aim of reducing emissions and improving the environment in the neighbourhood of their projects.



The Food and Water Laboratories Centre is responsible for protecting public health and safeguarding food quality

From 2012 the Ministry adopted a number of measures so that the Sultanate could fulfil its commitments under the agreements on protection of the ozone layer. These included assigning import quotas for ozone layer depleting materials, amending the regulations for monitoring and managing those materials, and listing and updating the data on industrial projects requiring climate permits. The Ministry also prepared a database containing details of the private sector's efforts in that field, its observance of the relevant terms and conditions, its adoption of technology to reduce energy consumption, its use of renewable energy applications and its compliance with plans for adapting to the effects of climate change and gradually eliminating ozone layer depleting materials.

In recent years the powers of the municipal departments have increased significantly to cover numerous aspects of community life.

Regional Municipalities

Municipal and water services and projects, which in the early 1970s were limited to cleaning and waste disposal, today assume a high priority in the towns and villages of Oman. In recent years the powers of the municipal departments have increased significantly to cover numerous aspects of community life.

The primary focus of the Regional Municipalities and Water Resources Ministry's projects is on asphalting urban roads, street lighting, increasing public utilities, landscaping and parks, the setting up of souqs, and abattoirs, the expansion and upkeep of water sources and supplies, and the installation of sewerage systems and treatment plants, across all governorates.

Between 2001 and 2012, the combined lengths of internal roads constructed under the supervision of the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources stood at 7,100 kilometres in all governorates of the Sultanate, while 83,000 lamp posts were erected along the roads supervised by the Ministry.

In 2012 and the first quarter of 2013, a total of 466 kilometres of roads were asphalted and 3,092 lamp posts erected. In 2012, new public parks came up in Al Buraimi, Al Rustaq and Barka.

In recent years much of the focus has been on improving and expanding the sewerage systems to cover as many *wilayats* as possible. In 2012, the number of wastewater plants under the supervision of the Ministry stood at 60.

In response to the rapid pace of building construction in the country, the Ministry imposes strict building regulations and ensures that the appropriate legislation is rigidly enforced. It issues various categories of building permits, carries out regular inspections of buildings during the construction stage, takes action to prevent illegal occupancy of land, grants electricity and water connection certificates and provides a range of other services. As many as 26,440 construction permits were issued for large buildings and 4,121 for small buildings.

The Food and Water Laboratories Centre (FWLC) plays a major role in protecting public health. It analyses local and imported food and water samples to guarantee that they are safe for human consumption. The analyses cover pesticide residue, organic substances residue, toxic and other trace metals residue in fruit and vegetables, biota, water and waste water, air, sediments, soil, and sludge.

Omani Achievements:



The Sultanate captureed two first place United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA), 2013:

The State Financial and Administrative Audit Institute won a first place in the category 'Preventing and combating corruption in the public service', with its project entitled 'Complaints Window'.

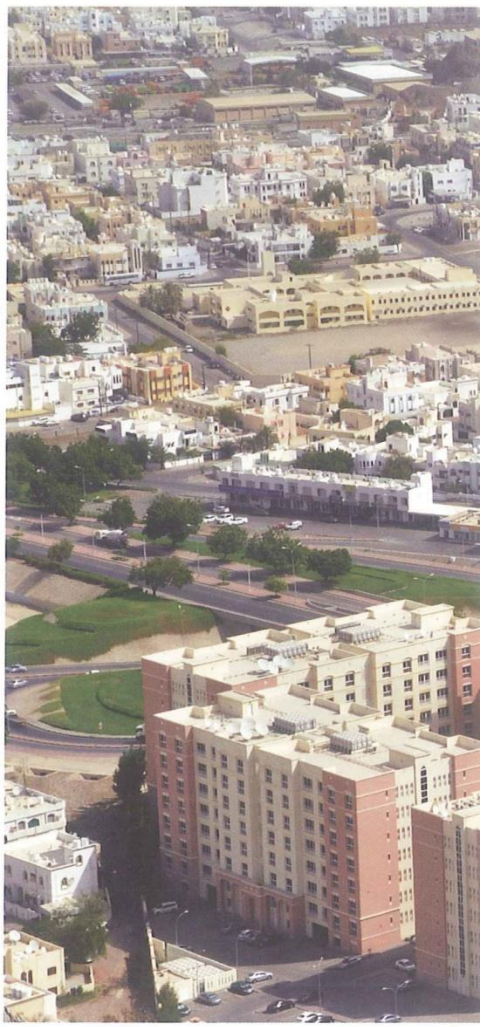
The Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources also won a first place for its project 'Injaz Hall – One-Stop-Shop Services'. This initiative enhances its customer services in the rural communities.

The UN Public Service Award recognizes the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions which lead to a more effective and responsive electronic public service administration in countries worldwide.

Oman has successfully won awards for the past five years.

Additionally, the FWLC conducts tests on the components of many industrial products and raw materials to determine the extent to which they are fit and compatible with standard specifications approved by the Sultanate. This is in addition to conducting research and scientific studies, fostering cooperation and exchanging expertise with regional and international research centres.

Eight branch laboratories in the governorates of Barka, Saham, Al Buraimi, Musandam, Ibri, Nizwa, Ibra and Sur have been set up to analyse food and water supplies and ensure standards are being upheld



Housing

Urban growth received a big boost after the establishment of the Supreme Council for Planning under Royal Decree No 30/2012, issued on 26th May 2012.

Urban growth received a big boost after the establishment of the Supreme Council for Planning under Royal Decree No 30/2012, issued on 26th May 2012.

In April 2013 the Council signed an agreement for technical supervision to be provided for the national strategy for urban development – a strategy designed to set out the general framework for the Sultanate's long-term urban development which included detailed plans for land use in the different regions, towns and cities. Its ultimate aim is to enable sustainable development to take place in all sectors across the country in line with the goals of the Oman 2020 comprehensive development strategy. The strategy is being prepared by a group of international consultancy firms specialized in the economic and urban planning fields, as well as in the environment, natural resources, the heritage, demographics, human resources, social services, transport, infrastructure, geographical and institutional data systems and the law. It is being overseen by a committee comprising undersecretaries of eleven government departments.

In 2012 maps were prepared designating 58,600 plots of land for various uses.

Where the housing sector is concerned, the Sultanate seeks to ensure that balanced development takes place in every area of the



Importance is attached to urban construction and the provision of housing for the people

country. In this connection it draws up detailed plans and designates land use in the towns and villages so that citizens can enjoy stability and continue to reside in their own communities. The Ministry of Housing grants plots of land for various uses according to the regulations laid down in the Royal Decrees and subsequent Ministerial Decisions and Orders, which explain the terms and conditions for granting land and how it should be used. The Ministry also updates and revises land-related laws to ensure that they are brought into line with improvements in the services available for members of the public.

In 2012 maps were prepared designating 58,600 plots of land for various uses, while around 37,514 plots were granted to citizens in various parts of the country. Some 100,198 plots were registered for the first time. Real estate was traded to the tune of RO 1.7 billion, while RO 25 million was collected in fees from legal transactions and 207,204 title deeds were issued.

As many as 3,690 citizens from the GCC were owners of real estate in the Sultanate in 2012.

Social Housing

The Sultanate's policy is to provide suitable housing for people on limited incomes and families on social security benefits to allow them to improve their living standards. The Ministry of Housing aims to achieve that goal hand-in-hand with other government departments concerned.

The Ministry of Housing offers three types of housing programmes: the building of houses, housing assistance and housing loans on easy terms for people with limited incomes.

Some 476 housing units were approved in various parts of the country in 2011 and 2012 under the house building programme and are currently under construction.

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Over 3,600 families benefited from the housing assistance programme during 2012. This scheme, which assists families on limited incomes and social security benefits whose monthly incomes do not exceed RO 300, consists of a one-off, non-refundable payment of RO20,000 to build a house. To cover all applications registered under the scheme, the annual allocation for this programme has been increased by RO80 million on His Majesty the Sultan's orders.

The Rural Areas Electricity Company is taking steps to exploit the Sultanate's clean energy generating potential by establishing six renewable energy projects – four powered by solar energy .

The housing loans programme is designed to provide interest-free loans for citizens on limited incomes of between RO301 and RO400 per month. It consists of a RO20,000 loan to build or purchase a new house and is paid off in monthly instalments not exceeding 25 per cent of the borrower's income. In 2012 around 1,025 cases benefited from this programme, receiving over RO19 million in loans. In 2013 the programme's allocation was increased to RO100 million over the three years from 2013 to 2015 inclusive.

The Electricity Sector

Major importance is attached by several government departments – including the Public Authority for Electricity and Water, the Authority for Electricity Regulation and the Scientific Research Council - to projects aimed at diversifying energy sources, particularly those sources that are clean and renewable. The Authority for Electricity Regulation has laid down new conditions requiring renewable energy technologies to be adopted in the rural areas, the goal being to ensure the efficient exploitation of precious renewable energy sources in the Sultanate.

The Rural Areas Electricity Company is taking steps to exploit the Sultanate's clean energy generating potential by establishing six renewable energy projects – four powered by solar energy and two by wind power. Studies have shown that the wind power available in Oman can be used to generate electricity, particularly in the Governorate of Dhofar and especially in the mountain areas north of Salalah during the summer when the winds are particularly



The Social Housing scheme for people with limited incomes has improved the livelihoods of Omani families and assisted them in achieving social stability

strong and offer an excellent opportunity for power generation.

Demand for electricity is rising by about 10 per cent annually and in recent years several new power generation projects have been implemented to keep pace. They include a RO385 million power and water desalination plant in the *wilayat* of Mirbat a joint venture between the Oman Investment Company and Sembcorp of Singapore. The plant has a production capacity of 445 Mw of electricity and 15 million gallons per day of desalinated water. In 2012, two more projects were completed, becoming operational in April 2013. They were Phase 3 of the Barka power station and Phase 2 of the Sohar power station, both set up at a cost of RO700 million, and each has a production capacity of 750 Mw.

In 2011 work began on the construction of a new RO700 million power station in the *wilayat* of Sur, Governorate of South Sharqiyah which will have an output capacity of 2,000 Mw. The private sector joint venture, funded by domestic and foreign capital investment, it is being implemented in two stages: the first part was completed in 2013 with a capacity of 500 Mw, while the second phase, expected to be completed in April 2014, will provide 1,500 Mw. The Sultanate's plan in the field of electricity includes the construction of a new 1,000 Mw power station in the *wilayat* of Al Duqm to meet demand from new projects being established in the *wilayat*.

(Overleaf)
A view of the power and water desalination plant in Mirbat, Dhofar Governorate





The water sector

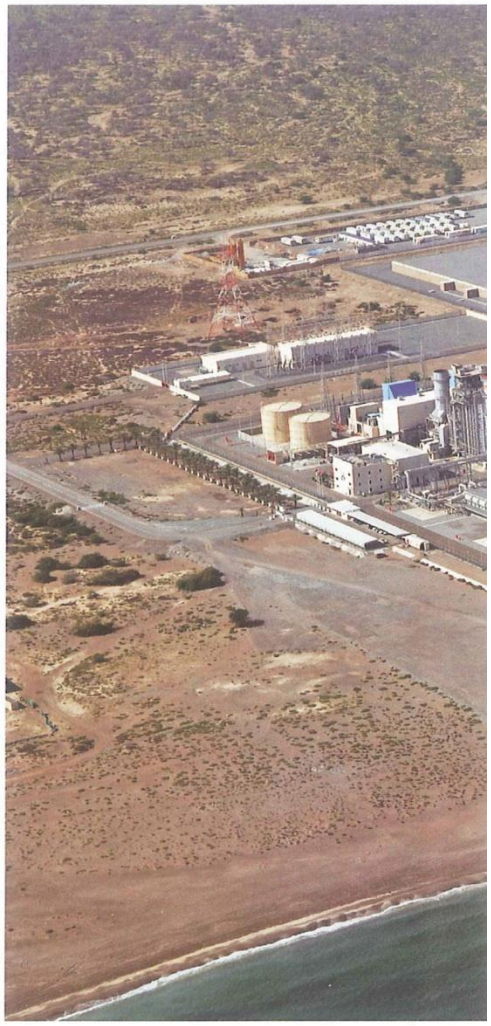
In the present situation of increasing salinity and a paucity of water resources, the Sultanate attaches major importance to ensuring the availability of potable water supplies. At the same time, every effort is being made to extend the service as widely as possible through the installation of supply networks, enabling the water tanker filling stations to be gradually dispensed with. Oman plans to keep its groundwater as a strategic reserve and gradually replace it with desalinated water as a source of daily use.

The setting up of desalination plants is one of the strategies being implemented in providing potable water in different governorates of the Sultanate. Over the past year, desalination plants have been set up in Muscat, Barka, Sohar and Mirbat, and work is under way to set up new plants in other areas. Small stations have also been set up in some coastal *wilayats*. The Sultanate has allocated a sum of RO 700 million for setting up new production plants and water supply networks during the current Eighth Five Year Plan.

The setting up of desalination plants is one of the strategies being implemented in providing potable water in different governorates of the Sultanate.

While new desalination plants are being set up, efforts are being made at the same time to manage, evaluate and assess water resources with a view to tackling the shortage of which most governorates suffer. In 2012, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources carried out the maintenance and repair of more than 120 *aflaj* as well as drilling 10 wells in various parts of the country to supply water to the local *aflaj*.

Oman has a nationwide network of modern water monitoring stations which enables it to keep tabs on the water situation in the Sultanate.



Dams are constructed, monitored and maintained to replenish groundwater stocks, boost the country's water resources and utilise water which would otherwise flow straight into the sea or the desert. Of the 135 dams built by the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, 42 are groundwater recharge dams, 90 are surface storage dams and one is a flood protection dam. To



The Barka reverse osmosis desalination plant, South Batinah Governorate

protect the aquifers from pollution and depletion, the Ministry has introduced legislation to regulate the digging and deepening of wells and it has established designated areas for the protection of water supply well fields.

Oman has a nationwide network of modern water monitoring stations which enables it to keep tabs on the water situation in the Sultanate and identify priority areas for management and development projects in the water resources field. Of the 4,681 stations that operate in various parts of the country, some use modern technology for remote data processing; this is particularly useful for measuring rainfall and wadi levels.

Omani ports

Under the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) a total of RO1,065 billion has been approved for investment in the ports sector. This figure includes RO555.1 million for projects carried over from the

(Overleaf)
Port Salalah's importance lies in its proximity to international shipping routes

previous Plan and RO501.1 million for new projects.

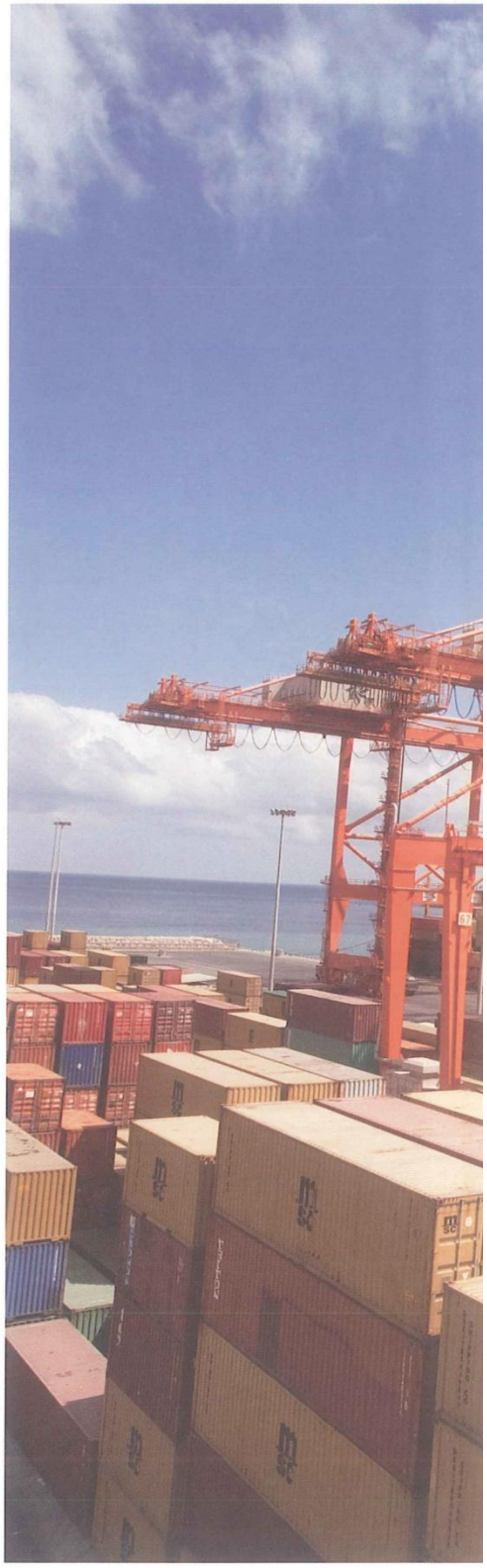
Port Sultan Qaboos

The port network in the Sultanate includes Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat Governorate. It was set up in 1974 mainly as an export-import port and it has been developed regularly so that it now includes 13 berths having a total length of 2,592 metres and depths of 4-13 metres. In July 2011 the government decided Port Sultan Qaboos (PSQ) should be converted into a fully-fledged tourist hub and that all commercial import and export operations (general cargoes and containers) should be transferred to Port Sohar in the Governorate of Al Batinah North.

In 2013 approval was given to the plan for Port Sultan Qaboos to be developed as a tourist hub and for a specialist company to be set up to carry out the work. At the same time it was agreed that one commercial/services jetty should remain for the import and export of certain goods and for emergencies. The new plan designates eight major zones for tourist activities and services, including a main plaza on the port's seafront and mooring facilities for yachts, cruise liners and small boats. The current jetties will be revamped for that purpose.

In 2013 approval was given to the plan for Port Sultan Qaboos to be developed as a tourist hub and for a specialist company to be set up to carry out the work.

The plan also provides for the construction of new jetties for modern cruise liners, as well as passenger arrivals terminals, commercial outlets and multi-purpose buildings designed to reflect the Omani architectural




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tradition and maritime history. Other features will include hotels, plazas, pedestrian walkways and leisure centres.

Under the plan the existing jetties will be given a makeover, and new jetties will be built capable of handling up to three giant cruise ships at one time with a capacity of around 11,000 passengers. There will also be a marina with floating berths that can accommodate up to 150 boats and yachts.

Port Sultan Qaboos won the award for the "Most Responsive Port in 2012". The award was granted by *Cruise Insight Magazine* of London and presented during the Cruise Shipping Convention held in Miami from llth-14th March 2013. The award is in recognition of services provided to cruise vessels and its passengers. PSC was honoured for the fifth consecutive year.

The importance of Port Salalah lies in its proximity to the international shipping routes, which enable it to capitalize on its strategic potential.

The volume of investments at the Port of Duqm is expected to touch RO 1.7 billion after the completion of the remaining infrastructure.

Port Salalah

The importance of Port Salalah lies in its proximity to the international shipping routes, which enable it to capitalize on its strategic potential. Development plans have proceeded at a steady pace in the port, which handles nearly 5 million TEU a year distributed into its 6 jetties. The Sultanate plans to expand Port Salalah by setting up commercial, service and tourist jetties and a new breakwater with a view to raising the capacity of the port to 7 million TEU a year.

On 22nd April 2012 a contract was awarded for a project to construct an additional jetty at the general cargo terminal, as well as a liquid cargo jetty (Salalah Methanol). The project is significant because it benefits the industries in the Salalah Free Zone, local businesses, traders and citizens in Dhofar Governorate, as well as providing employment opportunities.

Future programmes for the Port Salalah include the construction of jetties and provision of loading facilities for container ships and loose and solid cargo vessels; expansion of the container terminal, giving the jetties an overall length of 8 kms and increasing their annual capacity to 15 million standard containers, loading and unloading facilities for liquid cargoes; facilities for service ships, yachts, coastguard vessels, cruise liners and passenger ferries; and expansion of the general cargo terminal to enable it to handle 40 million tonnes of loose, dry cargoes and 5 million tonnes of liquid products annually.

Sohar Port

The importance of Sohar Industrial Port is expected to increase significantly following the government's decision to transfer all commercial import and export operations (general cargoes and containers) to it, making it one of the Sultanate's main industrial and commercial ports. Established in 1999 to accommodate the heavy industry projects that had started to appear there at around that time, Sohar Industrial Port boasts a wide range of industries in four main complexes; one for petrochemicals and petroleum industries, another for metal industries such as iron and aluminum, a facility for logistical industries, and one for electricity, water and gas services.

Sohar Industrial Port has 21 jetties with depths ranging from 16 to 25 metres, a combined length of 6,270 metres and an annual handling capacity of up to 3 million containers a year. In addition there is the possibility of expanding the port to reach a capacity of nearly 6 million containers a year.

The Sultanate is planning to invest over US$15 billion in the port and its adjoining industrial estate.

Duqm Port

Situated in the Governorate of Al Wusta, Duqm Port is considered to be one of the Sultanate's most modern ports. The first phase of its goods and ship handling operations began in March 2013 following the launch of its commercial operations at Berth No. 1 at the commercial terminal.

The port, on which work began in 2007, is a massive project destined to help diversify Oman's sources of income, while further developing the Wusta Governorate.

The Port of Duqm occupies a strategic position on the Arabian Sea near the international shipping routes and, in addition to attracting a sizeable chunk of regional and international trade and supporting marine transport in general, it is also expected to boost commercial and tourist traffic between Oman's ports since it lies half way between Port Sultan Qaboos in the governorate of Muscat and Port Salalah in the governorate of Dhofar.

It is also an important part of the government's plan to establish a modern city in the *wilayat* of Duqm, which will include projects such as an oil refinery, petrochemical facilities, large and medium industrial enterprises, ship repair, maintenance and tugboat services, fisheries-based industries, logistical complexes and major storage facilities. They are expected to provide the driving force behind the Sultanate's industrial development and attract local and foreign investment, thereby broadening the Sultanate's national economic productive base.

The volume of investments at the Port of Duqm is expected to touch RO 1.7 billion after the completion of the remaining infrastructure.

Other ports

The Sultanate's main ports network also includes the Port of Khasab located in the governorate of Musandam. This port is witnessing the setting up of many development facilities. It has a 300-metre long commercial jetty, a 100-metre long fishing berth, 7 floating jetties, a ferries reception facility and other utilities.

Other ports in the Sultanate include Shinas in the North Batinah Governorate, which was linked to Port Khasab with a fast ferry service in 2012. There are plans to expand the harbour's dhow trade by constructing purpose-built jetties capable of handling over 140 dhows simultaneously. Other jetties will be upgraded to accommodate yachts and sailing boats and offer related services; these will be in addition to government jetties and a fishing harbour.

The Shannah mooring facility is helping to boost the tourist industry on the island of Masirah. It also provides transport services

between Masirah and the mainland for members of the Omani public.

Roads

The Sultanate's road network is being constantly modernised in response to the growth in trade and tourism, the rising population and the expansion of the towns and cities. The road systems are being improved and converted into dual carriageways, while at the planning and construction stage top priority is given to traffic safety considerations. Asphalt roads are being constructed to link the rural areas to the main population centres and the network of unsurfaced roads is being expanded.

By the end of December 2012 the Ministry of Transport and Communications had overseen the construction of nearly 12,700 kilometres of asphalt roads, some 302 kilometres of which were completed during that year. There were around 16,866 kilometres of unsurfaced roads.

The main focus of the Ministry's plans for the immediate future is on the construction or completion of safe, all-weather expressways .

The main asphalt road projects completed in 2012 included: Phase 3 of the Nizwa-Thumrait upgrade project (134 Km), improvements to the Birkat al Mawz-Saiq (Jabal Akhdhar) road (32 Km), the Salalah-Thumrait dual carriageway (78 Km) and the Sawqarah-Sharbithat-Shaleem road (141 Km).

The railway is one of the Sultanate's most important new projects. As the latest and final component of the country's overland transport system, it will give a further boost to the Omani economy.

The main focus of the Ministry's plans for the immediate future is on the construction or completion of safe, all-weather expressways that will enable members of the public to travel quickly and easily between the different regions of the country. One of the main projects is the Adam-Thumrait dual carriageway linking northern and southern Oman. To speed up the process, the Ministry has devised a strategy whereby the project will be put out to general tender as a series of packages so that more than one contractor will be engaged in its implementation.

The coast road is expected to link the Governorates of Muscat and Dhofar by the end of 2013 with the completion of the Hasik-al Shwaimiyyah section. Muscat will also be linked to the North and South Sharqiyah by the Bidbid-Sur road - a six-lane expressway (three lanes in each direction) - via the Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Batinah Expressway & Coastal Highway

In 2012 work began on the 265-km long Batinah Expressway, one of the country's major road projects. Starting in Muscat Governorate and extending to Khatmat Malaha on the Sultanate's borders with the United Arab Emirates, the road has 242-kilometres of links to the existing Batinah Highway, as well as 22 intersections and 31 flyovers of various types, 26 wadi bridges and 1,181 culverts.

The work is being implemented in several stages. In April 2012, work began on the first 45-km stage which extends from Al Fulaij roundabout in the *wilayat* of Barka to the Abu Mahara roundabout in the *wilayat* of Al Musanaa. It cost RO139 million and it will take 36 months to complete. In April 2013, the 3rd stage was awarded at a cost of RO122.3 million. The execution



Modern road networks keep pace with commercial and tourist activity, population and urban growth

of the al Batinah Expressway is taking place at the same time as the construction of the Batinah Coastal Highway, a 240-km stretch from the *wilayat* of Barka to Khatmat Malaha in the *wilayat* of Shinas.

The governorate of Muscat has embarked upon a number of road projects under the supervision of Muscat Municipality. Projects carried out in this governorate include the Muscat Expressway, the Al Amerat-Bausher road and 23rd July Street. In 2012 work began on upgrading the Darsait-Wadi al Kabir road. With the installation of flyovers and additional lanes, as well as a new motor vehicle underpass in front of the Sheraton Oman hotel and a 4-way interchange, fitted with traffic lights, above the underpass.

The Railway

The railway is one of the Sultanate's most important new projects. As the latest and final component of the country's overland transport system, it will give a further boost to the Omani economy, bolster the country's sustainable development and reinforce the transport links between the Sultanate and the other countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council, including their seaports, airports, economic and industrial towns and production and distribution centres.

The railway will place the ports of Sohar, Duqm and Salalah in a strong position to become major gateways for the import and export of goods to and from the states of the Gulf, giving the Sultanate pole position in the marine transport industry.

The National Railway Company was established in

January 2013 to take on the main role in developing and setting up the Sultanate's rail network. Fully government-owned, its functions include overseeing all planning, design, tendering, construction and installation operations connected to the railway projects. It will be responsible for leases, purchases and sales, as well as for appointing the operators of the trains and their service facilities, investing in the transport of passengers and freight, and all other operations related to the railway system, while ensuring that they conform to the best international practices.

The line from Buraimi to Salalah will be 1,687 Kilometres long. The initial plan for the entire system was put out to tender in 2012 – from Buraimi all the way to the Governorate of Dhofar, including the branch lines. It is expected that international companies with specialist expertise in railways (planning, engineering and construction) will be invited to submit bids for the definitive detailed plan and construction work during the first half of 2014.

Muscat International and Salalah airports – along with four new regional airports - are being constructed to enable the Sultanate to keep pace with the growth in its commercial and tourist traffic.

In line with the other GCC states, the Sultanate has approved diesel as the fuel to be used for the trains. In accordance with the specifications that will be applied throughout the GCC area, the railway has been designed to handle speeds of up to 200 Km/hour for passenger trains and 80-120 Km/ hour for goods trains.

In response to the expansion of Oman's air transport, the Public Authority for Civil Aviation was set up in March 2012 to regulate the sector and improve its performance.

Air transport

Growing importance is being attached to the air transport sector in view of the Sultanate's rising population, urban development and the expansion of its trade and tourism industries. In 2005 work began on Muscat's new International Airport. Parts of it - including the runway, control tower, air traffic management complex and Public Authority for Civil Aviation building - are expected to open by the end of 2013.

During Phase One the airport will be able to handle 12 million passengers a year. Its capacity will rise gradually to a total of 48 million passengers by the end of Phase Four.

The expansion of Salalah Airport – Oman's second biggest airport after Muscat – is a significant new development for the Governorate of Dhofar. Designed to the highest international standards, it will be able to handle up to a million passengers a year during its first phase and up to six million annually when it is finally completed. It is expected to open during the first half of 2014. With construction work on both Muscat International and Salalah Airports operating at maximum capacity, the combined work force engaged on the two projects is over 32,000.

Muscat International and Salalah airports – along with four new regional airports - are being constructed to enable the Sultanate to keep pace with the growth in its commercial and tourist traffic. The airports are expected to have a combined annual capacity of fifteen million passengers during the first phase, which will rise gradually as Oman's economic and tourist sectors continue to expand.

In response to the expansion of Oman's air transport, the Public Authority for Civil Aviation was set up in March 2012 to regulate the sector and improve its performance.



Oman Air is studying plans for a 50-strong fleet of aircraft by 2017 with a view to increasing the number of its international destinations

At the same time, it will also create the conditions to cope effectively with the rapid developments taking place in the aviation field, as well as the new airport projects under construction and the increasing density of air traffic in the Sultanate's airspace and the neighbouring regions. With the backing of the integrated structure provided by the new airports, the Authority will be able to play a major role in upgrading the air transport and freight companies and their related services and in providing them with logistical support. This is turn will reinforce the concept of multiform transport and lead to greater employment and investment opportunities in the Sultanate.

In 2012, the number of flights handled by Muscat International Airport rose to 74,000, of which 66,000 flights were international, compared to 68,000 flights in 2011, of which 61,000 flights were international. The number of passengers who made transit stops at Muscat International Airport rose to 7.5 million, from 6.4 million in 2011.

At Salalah Airport, the number of flights rose to 5,911 in 2012 against 4,795 flights in 2011. The number of passengers rose from 513,000 to 1.2 million.

Oman Air, the National Carrier, managed to increase its revenues to RO347 million, posting a growth of 21% over 2011 figures. The number of passengers who travelled on Oman Air's routes rose to 4.4 million, an increase of 17%. In 2013, Oman Air assigned two studies to two international consultancy firms. The first study deals with the destinations to which Oman Air has to operate its flights over the next

10 years. The second deals with the revision of Oman Air's contribution to the national economy.

In 2013, Oman Air received two new Airbus-330 aircraft, taking the total of the national carrier's fleet to 30 aircraft. There are orders for the purchase of 20 more aircraft, of which 6 will be Boeing 787 Dreamliners which are due to be received during 2015, raising the company's fleet to 50 by 2016.

Marine transport

Since the start of its commercial operations in 2003, the Oman Shipping Company has been able to form a fleet consisting of 43 vessels operating commercially, of which 17 were received in 2012. In 2013 it received the latest giant carrier, *Vale Shinas*, from the Chinese manufacturers. The carrier will be the fourth to be used to transport crude steel from Brazil through a long-term contract with Vale Oman to the Brazilian company's factory at Sohar Industrial Port. The company expects to receive the LNG carrier *Adam* in 2014, thus raising its fleet to 44 carriers having an operational capacity of 8 million tonnes.

Since the start of its commercial operations in 2003, the Oman Shipping Company has been able to form a fleet consisting of 43 vessels operating commercially.

The National Ferries Company, founded in 2006, seeks to build a fleet of marine transport vessels to ply between the Sultanate's ports for the benefit of trade and tourism. It launched its first service between Muscat and Khasab in July 2008 with the ferry *Shinas*, the fastest ferry of its type in the world, followed by the launch of *Hormuz* and, in 2011, the third ferry *Sawqarah* entered the company's service.

In 2012, a government broadband company was established and it provides optic fibre networks for licensed operators.

Besides the Muscat-Khasab route, the company also operates ferries on the Khasab-Lima route,



which has proved to be a blessing for the people of Lima, a mountain village on the coast that is only accessible by sea or air.

More than 34,000 passengers were transported by the National Ferries Company in 2012, an increase of 15,000 passengers over 2011 figures. This is in addition to an increase in the number of vehicles transported from 2,610 in 2011 to 5,568 in 2012.

The telecommunication sector

The telecommunications sector



In mid-2013 the Port of Salalah welcomed its namesake, the APL Salalah, one of the largest container ships in the world

is the driving force behind the Sultanate's economic and social development because of the vital role it plays in improving economic efficiency and productivity as well as the pivotal role it plays in the Digital Oman and E-government Strategy and the 2020 Vision of Oman's Economic Future. Recent years have seen an increasingly supportive environment for this sector through the introduction of legislative measures and policies to encourage competition and investment.

In 2012, a government broadband company was established and it provides optic fibre networks for licensed operators. This is accepted as being one of the best means of providing access to high-speed internet. The new company will install the infrastructure for the passive fibre optic networks and provide wholesale broadband services for licensed operators on the basis of open access to the net. Basically, this means the new government company will have a complementary role to that of the licensed operators and will not be in competition with them. This will enable all to offer high quality



The telecommunications sector is a driving force behind the Sultanate's economic and social development

broadband at affordable prices.

In 2013, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) signed an agreement for the implementation of a project to conduct a field survey on measuring the quality of services rendered by Class 1 telecom companies in various governorates of the Sultanate. Fixed line, mobile and internet services offered by Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) and the Omani-Qatari Telecommunications Company (Nawras) will be assessed.

In 2013, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) signed an agreement for the implementation of a project to conduct a field survey on measuring the quality of services rendered by Class 1 telecom companies in various governorates of the Sultanate.

The telecom company Samatel also received a Class 1 licence for the setting up and operation of a system to offer general international communications for a 15-year period in accordance with the provisions of Royal Decree No 20/2011, issued on February 27, 2011. Another telecom company, Awasir Oman and Partners, obtained a Class 1 licence to set up and operate fixed line public telecommunication services in Muscat Governorate for a 25-year period in accordance with the provisions of Royal Decree No 60/2012.

Meanwhile, Al Madakhil Investment Company obtained a Class 1 Maritime Licence to set up and operate general marine telecommunication services for a 25-year period in accordance with the provisions of Royal Decree No 9/2013, issued on 9th February 2013.

Another company called Al Rabt Al Arabi (Connect Arabia International) obtained a Class 1 International Gateway Licence to set up and operate a system to offer general international telecommunication services for a period of 15 years in accordance with Royal Decree No 40/2013.

In 2012, the number of fixed telephone lines rose to 304,000 from



OmanPost issued nine sets of special stamps and First Day covers in 2013

287,000 lines by the end of 2011, an increase of 6%. The number of mobile phone subscribers rose from 4.8 million to 5.2 million, though the majority belong to the prepaid service category where the number of subscribers stood at more than 4.8 million by the end of 2012, compared to 4.3 million by the end of 2011. The number of active broadband internet subscribers rose by 52.9% by the end of 2012 to 1.6 million.

Postal services

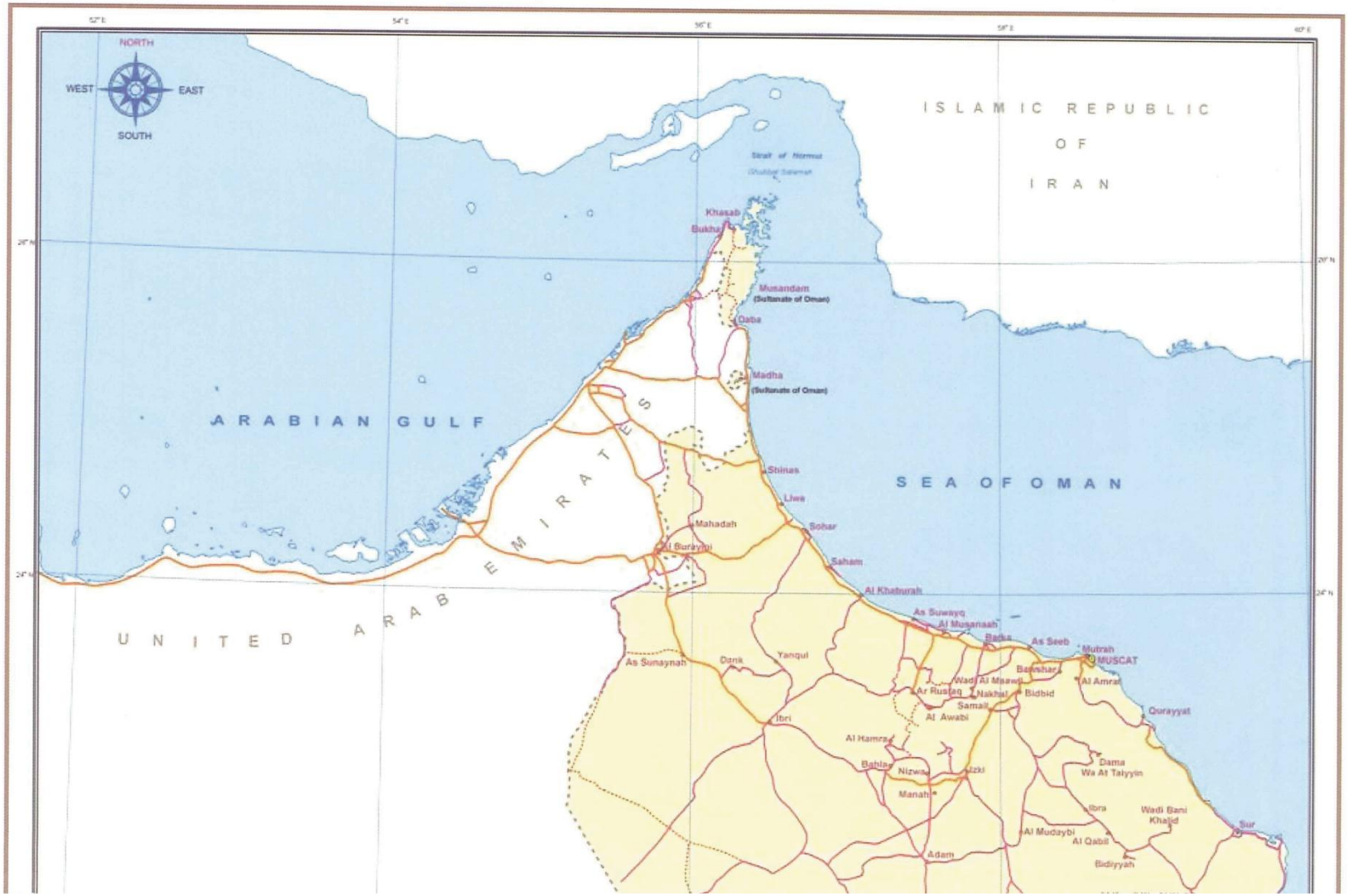
In 2013 OmanPost announced the launch of Postal SMS services for the speedy tracking of post with various notifications and reminders for collecting parcels, EMS, registered letters, renewal of postboxes etc. It also introduced a unique SMS Reminder/Alert/ Notification SMS Service, available to all, to schedule any reminders to be notified at an appropriate time of, for example, vehicle insurance, a passport expiry date, a hospital appointment or perhaps a family member's birthday.

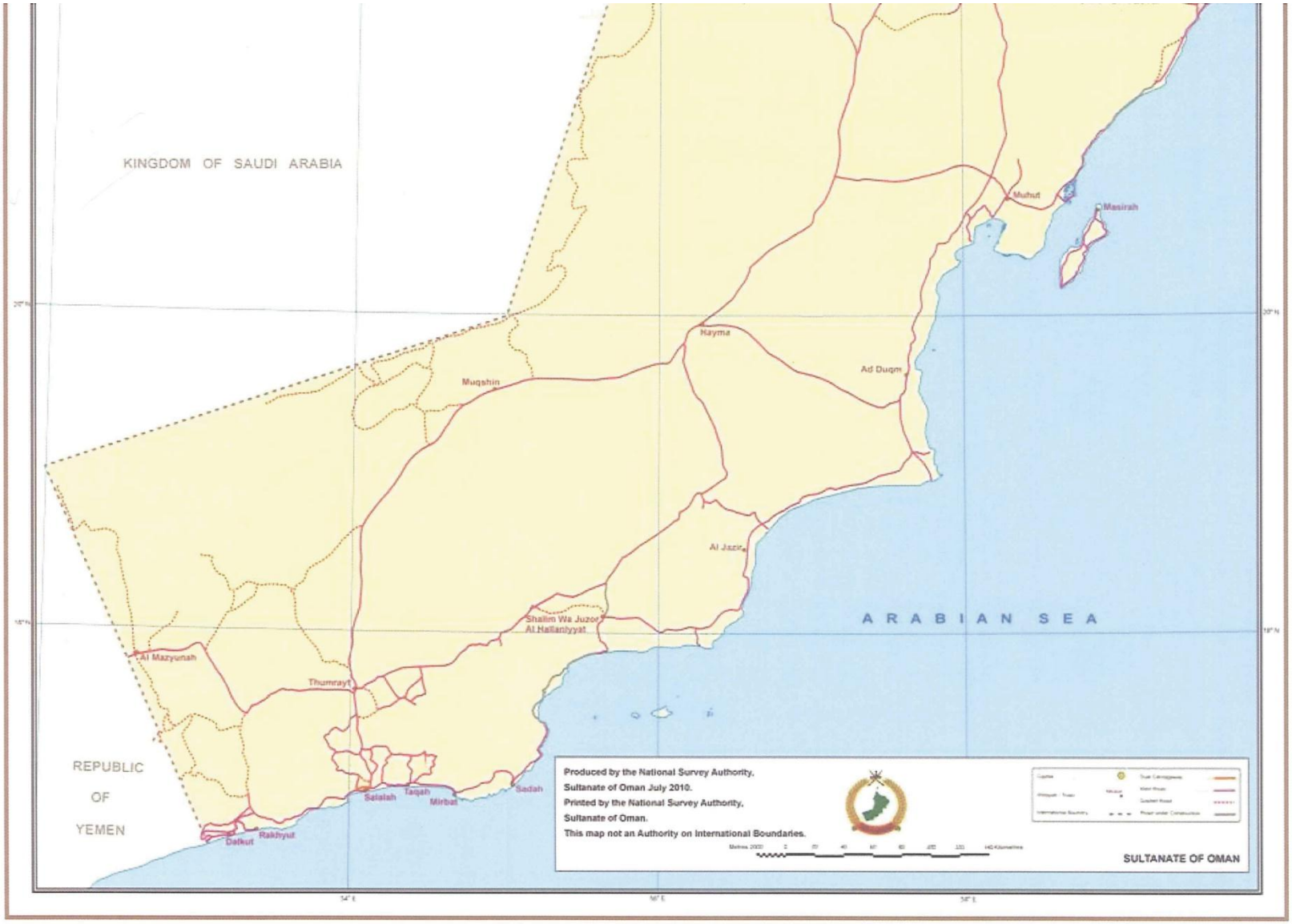
Philatelic

During 2013 the following special stamps and First Day covers were issued:

Omani Environment Day (January); Crafts of Oman (March); 35 years of diplomatic relations between Oman and China (May); The 20th Arab Regional Conference (August); the 16th International Youth Gathering for Cultural Exchange (September); Omani Women's Day and Road Traffic Safety Day (October); the 43rd National Day (November); and in December the 25th Silver Jubilee of the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum was celebrated.

SULTANATE OF OMAN




KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
REPUBLIC
OF
YEMEN
ARABIAN SEA
Muhut
Masirah
Hayma
Ad Duqm
Muqshin
Al Jazir
Shalim Wa Juzor
Al Hallaniyyat
Al Mazyunah
Thumrayt
Salalah
Taqah
Mirbat
Sadah
Dafkut
Rakhyut
Produced by the National Survey Authority,
Sultanate of Oman July 2010.
Printed by the National Survey Authority,
Sultanate of Oman.
This map not an Authority on International Boundaries.
SULTANATE OF OMAN

OMAN – FACTS AND FIGURES

Basic Information	
Area	309,500 square Kilometres
Capital	Muscat
Religion	Islam
Official Language	Arabic (English widespread in the economic and education sectors)
Time	Four hours ahead of GMT
Currency	Omani Rial=US$ 2.60 (387 baizas to the US Dollar)
Climate	Temperate (30°C) from October to March, but hot (up to50° C) and humid from April to September, except in Dhofar where it rains during the monsoon season.

Economic Indicators		
	Unit	2013
GDP at Current Prices	RO million	30,033.6
Total Government Revenues	RO million	13,474.5
Total Government Expenditure	RO million	13,550.1
Average Daily Oil Production	1,000 bbls	918.5
Average Price of Oil over a Year	US$/barrels	109.61
Total Commodity Exports	RO million	20,047.1
Including Non-oil Exports of Omani Origin	RO million	3,594.1
Total Commodity Imports	RO million	10,811.3
Total Electricity Production	Gigawatts/Hour	25,017.3
Net Electricity Distribution	Gigawatts/Hour	23,768.5
Water Production per distillation (Plants and Wells)	Million Gallons	271,018.2

Social Indicators

	Unit	2013
Total Population (Mid-year assessment)	1,000s	3,855.206
Omanis	1,000s	2,172.002
Expatriates	1,000s	1,683.204
Hospitals	No.	65
Hospital Beds	No.	2,176
Doctors per 1,000 patients	No.	2.10
Nurses (male and female)	No.	14,238
Schools	No.	1,526*
Students	No.	655,410*
Government Civil Service Employees	No.	194,326
Omanis Registered at the Public Authority For Social Insurance	No.	172,006
Expatriate Manpower in the Private Sector	No.	1,505.130**
Asphalted Roads	Km	31,365
Internet Subscribers	No.	119,398
Hotels and Accommodation	No.	238

Source: National Statistics and Information Centre
(*) Refers to the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years.
(**) Expatriate manpower figures taken from the Civil Status registers up to the end of August 2013.

WEBSITES:

State Council (*Majlis A'Dawla)* =	www.statecouncil.om
Consultation Council (*Majlis A'Shura)* =	www.shura.om
E-Government Services Portal =	www.oman.om
Royal Oman Police =	www.rop.gov.om/www.ropoman.net
Civil Status Directorate-General	www.civilstatus.gov.om
Royal Court Affairs =	www.rca.gov.om
Diwan of Royal Court =	www.diwan.gov.om

Ministries:

Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth =	www.mafw.gov.om
Civil Service =	www.mocs.gov.om
Commerce and Industry =	www.mocioman.gov.om
Endowments and Religious Affairs	www.oman.om
Education =	www.moe.gov.om
Environment & Climate Affairs	www.moeca.gov.om
Finance =	www.mof.gov.om
Foreign Affairs =	www.mofa.gov.om
Health =	www.moh.gov.om
Heritage and Culture =	www.mhc.gov.om
Higher Education =	www.mohe.gov.om
Housing =	www.housing.gov.om
Information=	www.omanet.om
Interior=	www.moi.gov.om
Justice =	www.moj.gov.om
Legal Affairs =	www.mola.gov.om
Manpower =	www.manpower.gov.om
Oil and Gas =	www.mog.gov.om
Regional Municipalities & Water Resources =	www.mrmwr.gov.om
Social Development =	www.mosd.gov.om
Sports Affairs =	www.mosa.gov.om/www.sportsoman.com
Tourism =	www.mot.gov.om/www.omantourism.gov.om
Transport & Communications =	www.motc.gov.om

Other organisations:

Authority for Electricity Regulation, Oman =	www.aer-oman.org
Capital Market Authority =	www.omancma.org
Central Bank of Oman =	www.cbo.gov.om
Consumer Protection, Public Authority	www.pacp.gov.om
Environment Society of Oman =	www.eso.org.om
Fund for Development of Youth Projects *(Sharakah)* =	www.youthfund.com.om
Geological Society of Oman =	www.gso.org.om
Hi FM Radio =	www.hifmradio.com
Higher Education Accreditation Centre	www.heac.gov.om
HM The Sultan's Profile =	www.oman-qaboos.net
Information Technology Authority =	www.ita.gov.om
Knowledge Oasis Muscat (IT Park) =	www.kom.om
Libraries – Public Knowledge and Grand Mosque =	www.publiclibrary.gov.om
Muscat Daily newspaper =	www.muscatdaily.com
Middle East Desalination Research Centre =	www.medrc.org
Muscat Festival =	www.muscat-festival.com
Muscat International Book Fair =	www.mctbookfair.gov.om

WEBSITES:

Muscat Municipality =	www.mm.gov.om
Muscat Securities Market =	www.msm.gov.om
National Centre for Stats & Info	www,ncsi.gov.om
National Human Rights Commission	www.nhrc.om
National Organisation for Scouts & Guides	www.omanscouts.gov.om
Oman Academic Accreditation Authority =	www.oaaa.gov.om
Oman Air =	www.omanair.com
Oman Botanic Garden =	www.oman-botanic-garden.org
Oman Centre for Traditional Music =	www.octm-folk.gov.om
Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry =	www.chamberoman.com
Oman's Information Attache, UK =	www.omanembassy.org.uk
Oman Daily Observer newspaper =	www.omanobserver.om
Oman Gas Co SAOC	www.oman-gas.com
Oman LNG llc	www.omanlng.com
Oman News Agency	www.omannews.gov.om
Oman Oil Refineries and Petro Industries Co	www.orpic.om
Oman Post =	www.omanpost.om
Oman Sail=	www.omansail.com
Oman Shipping Co	www.omanship.co.om
Omani Society for Fine Arts =	www.osfa.gov.om
Oman Telecommunications Co =	www.omantel.om
Oman Tourism Development Co	www.omran.om
Oman Tribune newspaper =	www.omantribune.com
Oman Television =	www.oman-tv.gov.om
Origin Oman (promoting domestic services/products)	www.originoman.om
Outward Bound Oman/Tahaddi =	www.outwardboundoman.com
Petroleum Development Oman =	www.pdo.co.om
Port Sultan Qaboos/Port Services Corp SAOG =	www.pscoman.com
Port Duqm	www.portduqm.com
Port Salalah =	www.salalahport.com
Port Sohar=	www.portofsohar.com
Public Authority for Craft Industries =	www.paci.gov.om
Public Authority for Electricity and Water =	www.paew.gov.om
Public Authority for Investment Promotion & Exports Dev	www.ociped.com
Public Authority for Social Insurance =	www.taminat.com
Public Authority for Consumer Protection	www.omanconsumer.org
Public Establishment for Industrial Estates	www.peie.om
Qalhat LNG =	www.qalhatlng.com
Radio Oman FM =	www.oman-radio.gov.om
Special Economic Zone Duqm	www.duqm.gov.om
State Audit Institution =	www.sai.gov.om
Sultan Qaboos Cultural Centre, Washington	www.sqcc.org
Sultan Qaboos University	www.squ.edu.om
Supreme Council for Planning	
-National Centre for Stats and Information	www.moneoman.gov.om
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority	www.tra.gov.om
Tender Board =	www.tenderboard.gov.om
Times of Oman newspaper =	www.timesofoman.com
World Heritage Sites Oman =	www.omanwhs.gov.om

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CREDITS:

GENERAL SUPERVISION
Majeed bin Mohamed Al Rowas

FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION
Musallam bin Masoud Kashoub, Sabah bint Nasser al Hajriyah, Omar bin Mohammed al Zedjali, Hamouud bin Hamed al Rahbi, Rosemary Hector

TRANSLATION (Arabic-English)
Abdarrahim Bishara
Domenyk Eades
Yousuf M. Budd

PREPARATION
Khalfan bin Hamed al Zaidi
Mohammed bin Ahmed al Shizawi

ARTISTIC AND TECHNICAL EDITOR
Mohammed bin Ali Al Wahaibi

PHOTOGRAPHC CREDITS
Photographs of His Majesty the Sultan by Salim Al Hashli

Ministries of:
Defence, Education, Environment & Climate Affairs, Housing, Information, Manpower, Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, social Development and Tourism

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Tooqi
Ahmed al Farsi
Bader al Butashi
Hamed al Qasmi
Ibrahim al Qasmi
Nawaf bin Hassan al Haraizi
Office of Environmental Conservation
Office of HM's Adviser for Cultural Affairs
Oman Dry Dock Co.
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Omar al Busaidi
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Sultan Qaboos University
Talal bin Ramadhan al Zedjali

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Registration No: 38/2014

ISBN: 978-99969-0-252-9

Printed by Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising





Published by
Ministry of Information
Sultanate of Oman