Oman

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

2021

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of information

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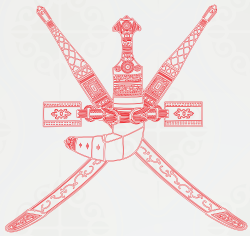


Oman

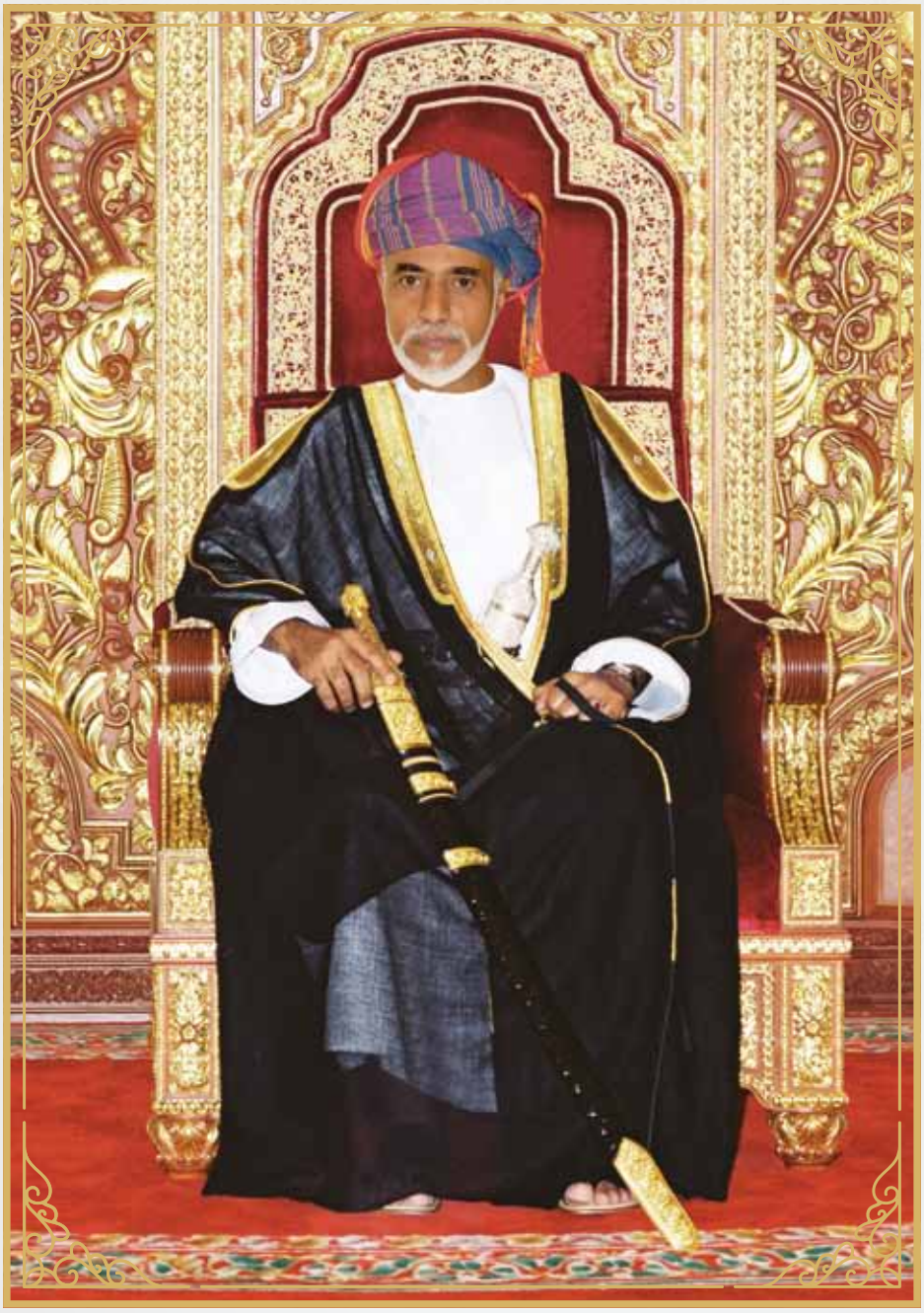
A VISION OF THE FUTURE

In The Name of God
The Compassionate, The Merciful

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

Great Truth of God

Surat al Kahf (XV111,30)



His Majesty the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said

May he rest in peace

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

May God bless and protect him

Introduction

There is a draught of new energy sweeping through Oman, a rush of reawakened hope and aspiration for the future. The two years since His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik assumed office on 11 January 2020, years assailed by dramatic, unforeseen challenges, have brought out qualities in the Omani character, and in the leadership, that refuse to be deterred, that are resolved more than ever to move forward with speed.

The past year was in many respects a ground-breaking one, not least with publication of the Basic Law of the State, promulgated by Royal Decree No 6/2021 as the founding constitution of the renewed modern renaissance. Its transformative spirit will see the country securely propelled towards the abundant gifts of Oman Vision 2040. In more immediate terms, 2021 was a year when the first rewards of our country's fiscal spring-cleaning manifested, confirmed by key economic indicators. Public debt was down, and with it the debt-to-GDP ratio, thanks to prudent measures taken without hesitation. A recovery in oil prices helped, as did the decline in external financing pressures. The result was a welcome return of the Sultanate's credit rating to 'stable' and with the outlook 'positive'.

Although the Covid-19 crisis caused major social and economic upheavals across the globe, the Sultanate managed to deal with, and then move past, the worst of the pandemic by closely following the recommendations of the Supreme Committee entrusted with identifying the most effective approach to handling the disease. The Committee's advice was to proceed with moderation, to take decisions that recognised the social and economic, as well as the public health, consequences of the choices made. Prevention and precautionary measures, were its prime areas of focus and this approach was validated epidemiologically, with significantly low statistics of mortality and severe injury, low hospitalisation figures and a high recovery rate. On rollout, the national vaccination campaign was inclusive of most social groups, and extended to citizens and residents.

This book provides an updated review of the Sultanate's landmark accomplishments over the past year. It offers glimpses of the lesser and greater milestones that mark the way forward and conveys something of the energy that is driving the renewed Omani renaissance. We pray to the Almighty God that He may bless His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with the gifts of strength, good health and long life, and the people of Oman with the lasting benefits of harmony and prosperity.

Ministry of Information

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Sultan Haitham - A Broad and Enlightened Perspective

Since formally assuming office on 11 January 2020, at a joint session of the Oman and Defence Councils, as prescribed by Article 7 of the Basic Law of the State, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has been marshalling national energies in the service of a renewed Omani renaissance. As the infrastructure of Oman Vision 2040 is established, layer by layer, the goals of the renewed renaissance are merging with that vision. Oman 2040 was launched at the start of 2021, alongside the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). Together these three strategic and mutually supportive projects can be seen to come together in the sweeping vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham. In an early and ground-breaking address, delivered on 23 February 2020, the far-reaching extent of that vision were made clear in his pledge to overhaul the state's administrative apparatus , broaden the access of young people by expanding opportunities for their contribution to the development efforts. Women could expect greater empowerment, and a more prominent position in the action and consequences of the changes to be brought in by Oman Vision 2040. Supporting these major shifts would be a legislative infrastructure that would see through the reforms into a future of sustainable and comprehensive development.

His Majesty has already seen through to reality many of these ambitious pledges, fully committed as he is to sustaining the momentum of the renewed renaissance through the next phase of the national plan, while preserving the accomplished phases of that plan. The endeavour is one that demands engagement by the public, who will benefit from its successes, harvesting the rewards of progress manifested in their beloved country in a

climate of territorial security and social stability.

Sultan Haitham has taken a direct interest in the rollout of Oman Vision 2040, which will consume four five-year development plans on the path to its full fruition. The first of these, launched in January 2021, outlined ambitious national goals, linked directly to specific executive projects set within strict time frames. They are projects intended to restore the momentum of economic growth and achieve balanced economic and social objectives. His Majesty has carefully vetted these initiatives, examined their structure, measured their feasibility within the stated time schedules and will monitor their implementation as they are set in motion, adapting them to emerging realities as necessary.

Oman Vision 2040 revolves on four main axes. The 'creative human society' envisioned will value and enhance education, learning, scientific research, national capabilities, health, citizenship, identity, heritage, national culture, welfare, social protection and youth development. The 'economy in a competitive ethos' incorporates concepts of economic leadership, management and diversification, financial sustainability, the labour market, employment, the private sector, investment, international cooperation, development within the governorates, sustainable cities, and information technology. The third axis, the 'environment of sustainable resources' concerns itself with aspects of the environment, with its natural resources; and the fourth axis, the 'state of responsible institutions,' covers matters related to legislation, the judiciary, control and governance within the state's administrative apparatus, resources and projects. All four axes are consistent with

the strategic direction that is taking the Sultanate to a place where its citizens can be proud of their identity and culture, and committed to their homeland.

In demonstrating the seriousness of his intent to secure the future of Oman's great project, its well-grounded domestic ambitions as well as the protection of its local, regional and international standing, His Majesty Sultan Haitham initiated a radical examination of every component of the state infrastructure, including its very constitution. The exercise resulted in reforms that brought new clarity to the underlying principles of the half-century old renaissance, principles that define the social and cultural ethos of the Sultanate itself and its message to the world beyond: a striving for justice, truth, security, stability and peace within and among communities at home and abroad, and a determination to continue efforts to shape a better future. The Basic Law of the State was promulgated by means of Royal Decree No 6/2021, to be a cornerstone of the continuing effort, to lock in the structure of the renewed renaissance and expand its forward horizon. The Basic Law consists of 98 articles that are collectively supportive of the state's institutions, protective of the homeland, of its territory, its unity, and its social fabric. It stands for the nation's evolved culture, enhances the rights, duties and freedoms of its citizens. It establishes a stable mechanism for the transfer of government, providing a reassurance which will be positively reflected in many sectors of national activity, notably those of a political and economic nature. It affirms the principle of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary as bases for governance in the state. It mandates education ''up to the end of the basic education phase", and advocates for "the implanting of the scientific method in thinking, and the development of intrinsic gifts." It encourages innovation, a component indispensable to the vision of Oman 2040.

To cement into place the pillars of the renewed renaissance and allocate to best effect its individual projects to the parties who will be responsible for implementing them required a reassessment of performance, of competencies, and of the legislation that underpins public authority. The latter was examined, and adjusted as necessary for greater efficiency or transparency. Oman Vision 2040 envisages a transformed landscape of smart and sustainable cities across the Sultanate, cities characterised by social justice, and social and economic prosperity, where economic growth is paralleled by social welfare; where flexible and responsible state organs enjoy governance with effective oversight. The reorganisation of the state's administrative apparatus, announced on 18 August 2020, was accompanied by a review of certain ministerial portfolios, which were as a consequence abolished, expanded, renamed or merged. Several specialist councils and entities were dismantled, others created. The Council of Ministers was itself restructured as part of the overhaul of the state administration to better align with the demands of the upcoming phase and better guarantee the anticipated rewards of development.

The general budget for 2021 focused on securing the sustainability of basic social services and maintaining a level

His Majesty the Sultan affirmed his resolve to surmount all challenges to sustained forward progress.

of expenditure in the provision of these services of no less than 40% of allocations. His Majesty Sultan Haitham, presiding over a cabinet meeting in December 2020, noted that he had followed with close interest the incremental preparatory phases that led up to announcement of the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025) and the state's general budget for the fiscal year 2021. These combined strategic acts of government represented the initial steps along the path to Oman Vision 2040. They were drafted with reference to the financial circumstances which the Sultanate was and is undergoing, where focus must be on ensuring financial sustainability by a process of increasing revenue and rationalising spending.

His Majesty approved the recommendations proposed as a result, which included the establishment of two retirement funds, the first for the benefit of the civil and private sector, and the second for members of the military and security services. The minimum service requirement for qualification for early retirement in all applicable systems was set at 30 years. Meanwhile, a harmonised retirement system for all new employees in government departments and the private sector was created, with retroactive effect on employees who had completed fewer than ten years of the mandated period for entitlement to the retirement pension.

Sultan Haitham has frequently expressed his preoccupation with the outlook for young people, for creating a future that can offer them the fulfilling lives and rewarding employment opportunities they deserve. He is uncompromising in his commitment to this ideal, and to ensuring that they participate actively in its achievement. The younger generations are, in his words, "the inexhaustible wealth and resource of nations, the human engine that builds the nation's present and its future." His Majesty returned to this theme in his address to the Council of Ministers on 10 December 2021, emphasising the importance of maintaining open channels of communication with young people, to make clear to them the endeavour to keep the development process on track,

to hear their voice and know their dreams. He has instructed the creation of qualified panels to address their concerns through a schedule of recurrent meetings with this intent, where they may introduce matters of particular interest to them, where their views may be heard and respected, and where a uniquely young perspective can be added to the process of building, with their assistance, the nation which they and future generations will inherit.

As a reflection of His Majesty's concern for the younger generation, and in exercise of his focus on employment as being at the heart of this concern and the need for new departures in this area, a pioneering set of initiatives was launched in May 2021 in the shadow of the contracting global economy. The repercussions of major global shifts have led to a downturn in the labour market, both domestically and elsewhere, and this has been compounded by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The initiatives were designed to provide upwards of 32,000 job opportunities in 2021, including 12,000 jobs in the civil and military governance sectors, allocated in line with their respective needs.

His Majesty presided over a meeting of the Supervisory Committee of the National Employment Programme on 5 July 2021, where he accented the urgency of the youth employment pillar. He urged all public and private sector employers to cooperate in finding solutions to the labour dilemma, to expedite valuable research of relevance to the matter, to confront challenges head on with practical strategies to employ young Omani job seekers in all market sectors. Jobs must, he stressed, be sustainable, adequate, worthwhile. They should be

compatible with the vision of Oman 2040. He pledged his continued close support and patronage to ensure that these initiatives were taken seriously and brought to fruition.

The National Employment Programme was introduced by His Majesty during a meeting of the Council of Ministers over which he presided on 15 June 2021, and constitutes one of the most important national programmes emanating from the Oman 2040 vision. It seeks out sustainable solutions to job provision in all sectors of state and private sectors, using data analysis to identify unemployment blocks in certain sectors, to bridge knowledge and skill gaps with a view to facilitating entry to the job market, and to do so

His Majesty the Sultan chaired the meeting of the National Employment Programme Supervisory Committee, confirming that employment is a top government priority.

in a structured manner that monitors performance and outcomes.

Education is key to the success of this process, ensuring that job applicants are properly prepared to enter a competitive labour environment. The system is fully supportive of this objective, promoting empowerment as an aspiration in education and across the workforce. His Majesty announced on 1 November 2020 that the Diwan of the Royal Court would be financing the construction of six priority schools during the coming phase, at an estimated aggregate cost of around RO8.85 million.

Sultan Haitham is strongly supportive of a decentralised approach to development and is anxious to ensure a fair allocation of development projects and services across the governorates. The government shares this approach, as represented for instance in the vast network of publicly financed roads that crisscross the Sultanate and extend to its farthest corners. On 4 February 2021, His Majesty gave the go ahead to the Dibba-Lima-Khasab road project and urged the concerned authorities to seek such alternative means as can expedite the completion of this road, given the urgent need for its construction. The road will link villages and wilayat within the Governorate of Musandam, facilitating mobility and a smooth flow of traffic for residents and visitors, as well as serving

the purposes of much needed and beneficial economic growth in the area and in the Sultanate as a whole.

The rapid transition to e-government continues to advance. His Majesty, presiding over the Council of Ministers meeting of 15 December 2020, pledged an undertaking to follow up on the efforts made by the government in this field, with emphasis on accelerated rollout of all services that improve the lives of citizens and residents, businesses and investment interests. These enhancements are key to the health of the economic and development sectors. His Majesty directed that implementation of the unified national portal for e-government services be expedited, to become a unified platform for the delivery of government services.

At a recent Council of Ministers meeting over which he presided on 9 November 2021, His Majesty underlined the necessity for all state institutions to re-engage their efforts to advance government e-services, to continue implementation of digital transformation initiatives, find comprehensive solutions to challenges, and to use all available energies and resources to this end. A dynamic approach is necessary if government strategy is to keep pace with current and future circumstances, and maintain clear communication and interaction with the community and its aspirations.

In order to achieve better performance and better service levels that keep pace with developments and further the public interest, His Majesty announced that an independent unit will be established under his oversight to measure performance within government institutions on a continuous assessment basis. The outcomes would be used to suggest mechanisms for greater efficiency, measured by consumer satisfaction ratings. The Sultan directed that a decision-making support unit be affiliated to the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers that would have the task of elevating performance by way of more efficient decision-making protocols.

His Majesty has directed much of his attention to employment practices within the public sector. He has advocated for higher efficiency levels within the units of the state administrative apparatus, urging public sector employees to engage with the urgency of external realities and incoming trends. His Majesty gave directions for the promotion of government employees attached to the civil service system and who were eligible for seniority in 2011, to take effect as and from 2022.

In lockstep with the government's social and economic initiatives and state-supported services to citizens, Sultan Haitham directed that the price of vehicle fuel be fixed with the October 2021 average as a maximum, with the government subsidising any upward differentials that might arise from fluctuating oil prices. The fuel support would remain in place up to the end of 2022. His Majesty cancelled a package of charges associated with specific sector activities and reduced others, all with a view to stimulating economic activity and revitalising the investment environment generally.

The relief effort following tropical storm Shaheen demonstrated the finest qualities of patriotism and individual heroism in the Omani character.

The weather emergencies undergone by the Sultanate in October 2021 caused severe injury and damage to lives and property. At the same time, they revealed many stories of heroism and courage demonstrated by Omanis in "a national epic of resilience, patience, cohesion and solidarity," that greatly facilitated the government's relief efforts. The National Committee for Emergency Management appointed to deal with the effects of tropical storm Shaheen was spurred to rapid response by the Sultan's energetic insistence on early damage assessment. His Majesty instructed that a ministerial committee be immediately created for this purpose, so that the damage to homes and public properties could be quickly surveyed and addressed and supportive measures enacted in the earliest possible time frame.

The focused response from His Majesty was reflected in the tireless work sustained by the ministerial committee, acting in collaboration with the response sectors of the National Committee for Emergency Management. The result was a rapid return of most basic services to 100% normal levels in the affected wilayat. Tenders were awarded for the repair of affected roads and of 328 buildings. His Majesty ordered the "establishment of a national emergency fund to deal with the repercussions of the current weather emergency, and of any future weather or other natural disaster that might occur in the future."

The Sultanate of Oman, as it proceeds with rejuvenated energy towards the vision of Oman 2040, armed with confidence in His Majesty Sultan Haitham's determination to bring that vision to fruition, can be reassured of a future that resonates with abundance. For the Omani people, for their fortitude in difficulty, for their loyalty and for their part in its creation, it will be the manifestation of a future long dreamed of and well deserved.

Oman – Land and People - Landmarks in a Glorious History

History and Civilisation

Throughout its long history, Oman has been a nexus of civilisation, of exotic ideas and commodities assembled from other cultures by its fabled navigators and sea merchants and nurtured and blended in the tolerant climate of home. As an influential naval power, Omanis interacted with the civilisation centres of the ancient world. Its ships plied the Indian Ocean, crossing the Arabian Gulf to the ports of southern Persia, or sailed north to Iraq, or west to the maritime trading posts of East Africa, then down the coast from Somalia as far as Mozambique.

To the Sumerians, Oman was 'Magan', or Copper Mountain. Magan was referenced in hundreds of Sumerian and Akkadian records, rendered in cuneiform script and indicating its importance in terms of strategic location and natural resources, in particular copper and precious stones.

Historical sources describe a steady migration of Arab tribes in the direction of Oman, where they settled from earliest times. The first major organised migration, at the end of the first century AD, was coordinated by Malik bin Fahm, a tribal leader of the Azd.

Oman was one of the first countries to embrace Islam, and did so voluntarily in the lifetime of the Prophet, who dispatched Amr Ibn al Aas to Oman's two kings (Jaifer and Abd, sons of Al Julanda ibn al Mustakbir) to invite them to adopt the new faith. They did so enthusiastically and Oman would become both a fortress of Islam at home and a powerful force in its propagation abroad, particularly in East and Central Africa.

During the early years of the da'wa, or call to Islam, Oman was prominent in the apostasy wars that emerged after the death of the Prophet, and participated in the great Islamic land and sea conquests in Iraq, Persia and Sindh, and subsequently much further afield.

The Ya'rubi State is immortalised not only in Omani history, but in the history of the Gulf region and among Arabs in general, for it was the powerful Ya'rubi rulers who succeeded in expelling the Portuguese not only from the Omani coast, but from the coasts of the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean all the way to East Africa.

The Al Busaidi State, founded in 1744 by the Imam Ahmad bin Saeed Al Busaidi, ancestor of His late Majesty

Sultan Qaboos bin Said, further enhanced Oman's status as an influential force in the region, where it founded an empire in the first half of the nineteenth century that extended to portions of East Africa. This newly confident power recovered its naval primacy in the Indian Ocean and established balanced political relations with the great powers of the time.

By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the country had once again retreated into isolation, weakened by internal division and external influence. But 23 July 1970 saw an end to this reversal with the advent of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Once again, Oman banished misfortune to emerge from stagnation into a new era of self-mastery, with all its inherited aspirations intact and its prominence among nations restored.

The success of this chapter of exceptional growth and stability persists undimmed today in the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who at his inauguration on 11 January 2020 pledged unequivocally to sustain it. "Oman remains the supreme goal in everything we do, in everything we strive to achieve. We call upon every citizen, without exception, to safeguard the gains of the renaissance and contribute effectively to maintaining its triumphant forward progress, with the Assistance and Blessings of God."

Impressive monuments tell a story of Oman's ancient and illustrious past.

Names of Oman

There is no prevailing viewpoint as to the origin of the name 'Oman', some tracing it to 'Uman of the Al Qahtani tribe, others to a linguistic derivation meaning 'staying' or 'settling.' Ibn al Qabi writes: "Oman means those who occupy a place, as in the adjective a'amen, or amoun i.e. a settled man. From this was derived Oman." He continues: "If a man is a'amen, this means he settled in Oman. "Al Zujjaji, meanwhile, says Oman was named after Oman bin Ibrahim al Khalil, while Ibn Kalbi says it was after Oman bin Siba' bin Yaghthan bin Ibrahim Khalil al Rahman "because it was he who built the city of Oman."

The Azd are said to have called Oman 'Omana' because they originated from a valley in Maarib which went by that name and which resembled their new home. Yalainus was one of the earliest Roman historians to mention Oman, in the first century of the Christian era. A century later, the name recurs in Ptolemy. A. Grohimann in the 1936 Encyclopaedia of Islam (Brill, Leiden) was of the view that the Omana described by these two historians was in fact Sohar, the predominant regional economic centre of the Classical Age.

Oman was known by other names. The Sumerians and Mesopotamians called it 'Magan' and the Persians called it 'Mazoon', a derivative of the root muzn, meaning 'clouds and abundant flowing waters'. The latter attribute might be a reference to the early rise of settled agriculture in Oman, creating the grounds for a stable and prosperous society.

Arab sources referred to Oman as an independent territory. Al Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal concurred that Oman was 'a sovereign land with a sovereign people.'

Ibn Khaldun had the clearest definition of all, describing Oman as one of a group of Arab districts in the Arabian Peninsula which had emerged as independent states, viz. Yemen, the Hijaz, Hadhramawt, Shihr and Oman, ruled separately as sovereign territories.

Whatever the exact interpretation, there is no doubt but that the name Oman is an ancient one and one with profound Arab and Arabian cross-links from time immemorial.

Geography and the Vitality of Place

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 uniquely important location strategically and this fact has been reflected time and again in the choices it has made, along with its policies and style of execution, dictating how it interacts with issues and developments affecting it.

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. 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. 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.

In the striking landscape of Oman, the Hajar Mountains stand out, extending from Ras Musandam to Ras al Hajar along the full north to south length of the Arabian Peninsula.

Several wadis cut right through the Hajar mountains. The largest – Wadi Samail – links the city of Muscat on the coast with the wilayat 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 Akdhar and the wilayat 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 wilayat 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 km long by 8 km 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 km 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 km wide. It consists of salt flats, which can reach as far as 5 km inland and which, 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 – extends along the Arabian Sea for a distance of 560 km, some 130 km 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 wilayat 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 km, 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 km wide or higher than 2,500 metres. A 75 km 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.

The Governorates and Wilayat (Districts)

The administrative sub-division of the Sultanates delineated under the modern state was approved by Royal Decree No. 114/2011 of 26 October 2011 and Royal Decree 101/2020 of 18 August 2020. It describes 11 governorates, namely: Muscat, Dhofar, Musandam, Buraimi, Dakhiliyah, North Batinah, South Batinah, South Sharqiyah, North Sharqiyah, Dhahirah and Wusta.

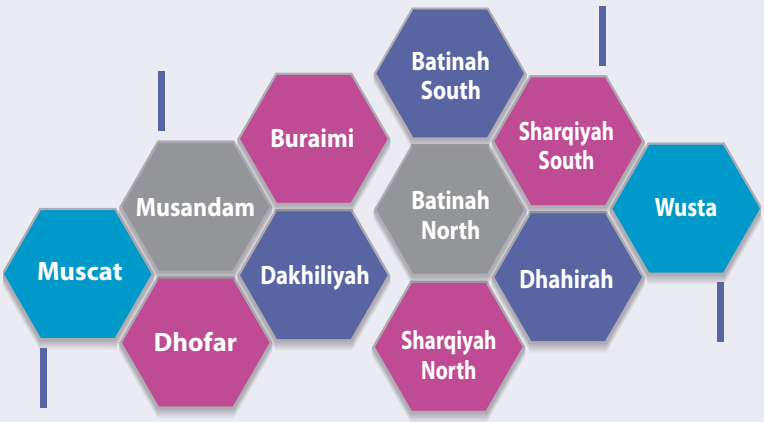
Each of these governorates has its own distinctive administrative, geographical and economic significance and comprises a number of wilayat (districts). In all, the Sultanate has a total of 61 wilayat.

Royal Decree No. 101/2020 defines the administrative systems operating at governorate and municipal affairs levels, with governorates enjoying separate legal status having the capacity to own, manage, and dispose of fixed and moveable property.

The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for overseeing the governorates, with the exception of Muscat, Dhofar and Musandam, and His Majesty the Sultan appoints governors, in line with Royal Decrees No. 115/2011 and 101/2020. Governors are responsible for managing the affairs of the territory under their jurisdiction, and serving as its representative in interactions with others and before the judiciary. They supervise the district administrators, or walis, and manage the design and execution of important development projects and goals.

The district administrator or wali is responsible for such functions as maintaining public order within the geographic scope of the wilayah, following up on tribal affairs, and chairing local and development committees within the wilayah.

The Municipal Councils Law promulgated under Royal Decree No. 116/2011 on 26 October 2011 streamlined the administrative and municipal systems across the country and simplified procedures for members of the public.



Muscat Governorate

Muscat is at the centre of the country, politically, economically and administratively. It is the capital of the Sultanate, the seat of government and the administrative centre of the State. Muscat is a vibrant domestic hub of economic, tourism and commercial activity, as well as of the Sultanate's relations with other countries.

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 has the highest population density of all the provinces in the Sultanate, with a population of 1,302,440 residents, according to the 2020 census of Population, Housing and Establishments, and 1,293,235 per the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information published in December 2021.

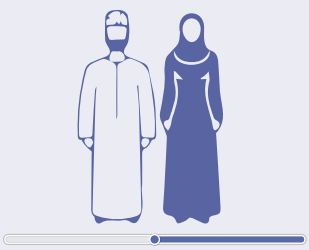
Muscat Governorate comprises six wilayat: Muscat, Mutrah, Amerat, Bausher, Seeb and Quriyat, each of which is administered by a wali appointed by the Governor of Muscat. The wali of each district is appointed by the Minister of State and the Governor of Muscat.

The governorate serves as the administrative authority for all citizens residing within its borders, its affairs falling within the jurisdiction of the Minister of State and the Governor of Muscat. The Municipal Council of the Governorate of Muscat has 26 members, representing its various wilayat.

The Governorate of Muscat is a vital hub of economic, tourism and commercial activity.

Wilayat (6)

- Muscat
- Muttrah
- Al Amerat
- Bausher
- Seeb
- Quriyat



Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
1,302,440	1,293,235

Dhofar Governorate

Dhofar – the Arabian Peninsula's Land of Frankincense and Oman's great gateway to the Indian Ocean - was once the crossroads of Southern Arabia's fabled caravan routes. Today, in the enlightened half century of the modern Renaissance, it has served as an important gateway to Oman's progress and prosperity.

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, to the north and north-west, the Rub' al Khali desert, or Empty Quarter, renowned for its seasonal climate, or khareef, as it is known locally. This is when lush plateaux lie cloaked in the rolling white mist that moistens and cools the air.

This governorate has 10 wilayat – Salalah, the main hub, and Taqah, Mirbat, Rakhyut, Thumrait, Dhalkut, Mazyounah, Muqshin, Shaleem and the Hallaniyat Islands, and Sadah.

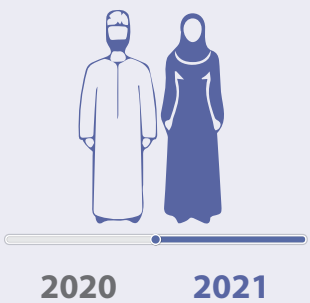
The population of Dhofar Governorate is 416,458 according to the results of the General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments for the year 2020 and 415,587 people according to the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information for December 2021.

The governorate's affairs are administered by the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar. The Municipal Council of Dhofar has 24 members representing the governorate's wilayat.

Dhofar Governorate is famous for its seasonal khareef weather, when a curtain of green spreads across the land and the hilltops emerge from a dense white mist.

Wilayat (10)

Taqah
Rakhyut
Mazyounah
Shaleem and Hallaniyat Islands
Salalah
Mirbat
Thumrait
Dhalkut
Muqshin
Sadah



Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
416,458	415,587

Musandam Governorate

Musandam is of great strategic importance, as it overlooks the Strait of Hormuz, the most important international waterway. It is important for oil exports and trade, both at the regional and international level, through which 90% of Gulf oil exports go to the outside world.

It is also the eastern gateway to the trade and navigation movement to and from the Gulf States. Musandam, located in the far north of the Sultanate of Oman, serves as the gateway between the Gulf and the open sea in the Sea of Oman and Indian Ocean.

The Governorate of Musandam has four wilayat – Khasab, the main hub, as well as Daba, Bukha and Madha. The affairs of Musandam Governorate are managed by HE the Minister of State and Governor of Musandam.

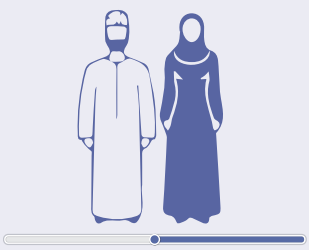
The population of the province was 49,062 in the 2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishment, and 49,423 in the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information for the month of December 2021.

The Municipal Council has 8 members representing the various wilayat.

History merges with pristine beauty amid the serene contours of Musandam.

Wilayat (4)

Khasab | Daba | Bukha | Madha



Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
49,062	49,423

Buraimi Governorate

Buraimi Governorate is renowned for its strategic location as a commercial hub 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 producer of wheat, dates and other fruit.

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

Buraimi is seeing implementation of promising development projects which are meant to promote the governorate's tourism potential. The new tourism and development schemes offer a pronounced and very promising advance to a level of development sophistication that will reflect not only on Buraimi, but on the Sultanate as a whole.

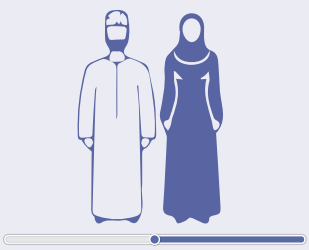
The Governorate has three wilayat – Buraimi (the main one), Mahdha and al Sinainah – and a population of 121,802 according to the 2020 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, or 122,031 in the December 2021 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Its Municipal Council has 8 members.

Al Buraimi Governorate... where tourism and development are spurring new and energetic growth.

Wilayat (3)

Buraimi | Mahdha | Sinainah

Population



2020	2021
121,802	122,031
2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021

Dakhiliyah Governorate

Dakhiliyah Governorate, consisting of a large upland block in the centre of the country, could be described as the Sultanate's 'strategic depth.'

From the Jabal al Akhdar or Green Mountain range, its terrain slopes southwards in the direction of the desert. A pivotal link between the Sultanate's different governorates, 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.

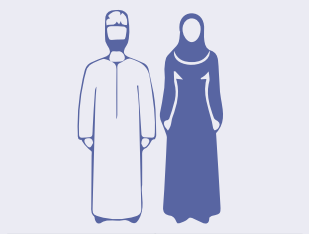
As well as being one of the country's main agricultural regions, Dakhiliyah Governorate has also played a prominent role in the country's history.

It has eight wilayat – Nizwa (its main hub), Bahla, Manah, al Hamra, Adam, Izki, Sumail and Bidbid – and, according to the 2020 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, it had a population of 478,501, or 483,681 per the December 2021 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Its Municipal Council has 26 members.

The location and topography of Al Dakhiliyah, with its point of access to other governorates, have earned it its reputation as "the Sultanate's strategic depth".

Wilayat (8)

Nizwa | Bahla | Manah | Al Hamra | Adam | Izki | Sumail | Bidbid



2020 2021

Population

478,501
2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments

483,681
National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021

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 wilayat – Sohar (the main one), Shinas, Liwa, Saham, Khabourah and Suwaiq. Its administrative capital is Sohar. 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.

A visual representation of this governorate's major economic potential is the broad Batinah Plain, one of the Sultanate's largest agricultural plains. It is also rich in mineral resources, which are currently being exploited as a basis for several vital heavy industry projects.

Sohar Industrial Port is one of Oman's mega-projects. The Sohar Industrial Estate, which is linked to the port, continues to attract major industrial and manufacturing enterprises, including fertiliser, petrochemicals, aluminium and iron projects. These operations have been further boosted by the Sohar Free Zone and Sohar Airport, a new portal to the Sultanate. The Al Batinah Expressway, another major infrastructural project and a key component of the national road network, will facilitate rapid access to and from this busy industrial area.

The population of North Batinah Governorate stood at 784,681 in the General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments of 2020, and at 790,678 in the December 2021 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The North Batinah Municipal Council has 28 members.

Al Batinah North is distinguished for its breadbasket status, encompassing as it does the Sultanate's most extensive agricultural plains.

Wilayat (6)

Sohar | Shinas | Liwa | Saham | Khabourah | Suwaiq

Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
784,681	790,678

South Batinah Governorate

South Batinah consists of six states, namely Rustaq, Awabi, Nakhl, Wadi al Ma'awel, Barka, Al Masna'a, and Al Rustaq. The Governorate had a population of 465,550 in the 2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments for the year 2010, and 470,557 in the December 2021 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

It 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.

Many achievements have been logged in the public service areas in this governorate, including road infrastructure, telecommunications, extensive public parks and other urban planning and amenities to keep pace with the development of economic and social life in the Sultanate.

Specific attention has been focused on the development of the natural warm water springs of Ain al Kasfah in the wilayah of Rustaq and Ain al Thuwarah in the wilayah of Nakhl, in addition to extensive public parks. The Municipal Council of South Batinah has 22 members representing the various wilayat.

The Governorate of Al Batinah South has used its location and economic potential to sustain a consistently influential role throughout Omani history.

Wilayat (6)

- Rustaq
- Awabi
- Nakhl
- Wadi al Ma'awel
- Barka
- Al Musannah

Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
465,550	470,557

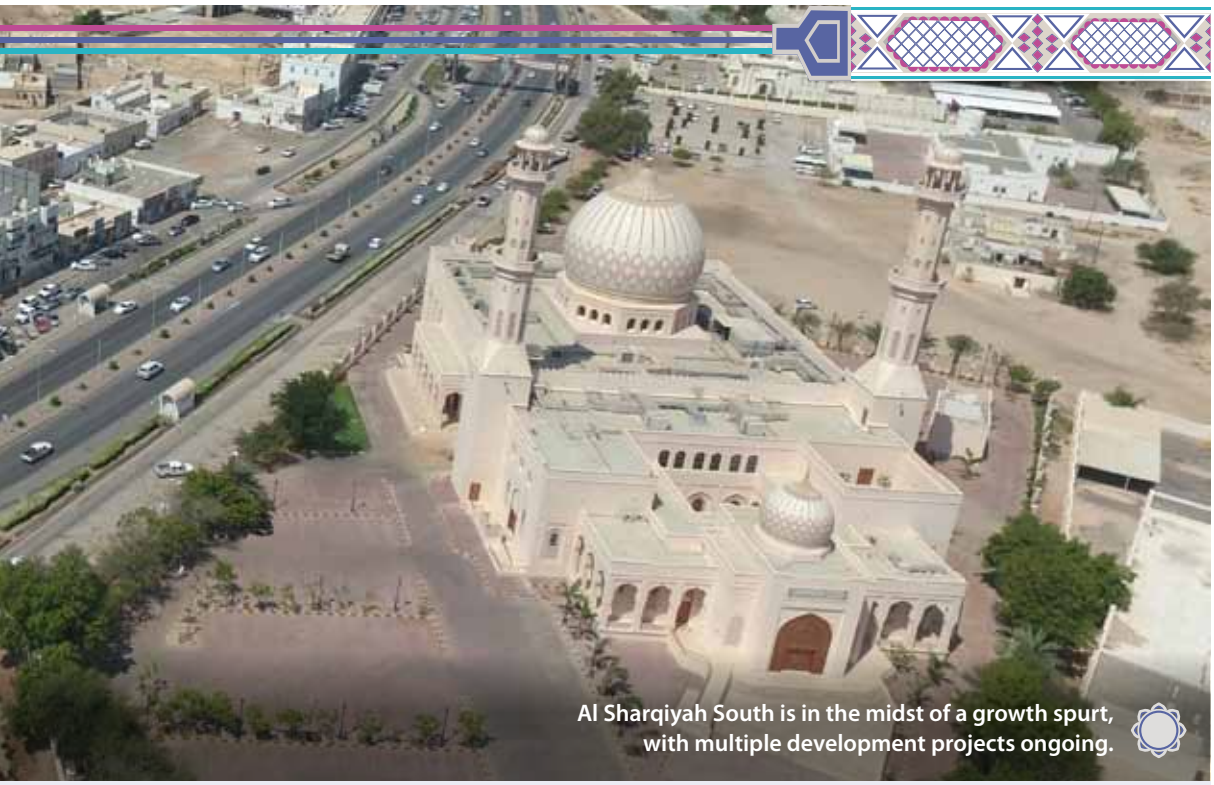
South Sharqiyah Governorate

South Sharqiyah Governorate, which lies in the north-east of the Sultanate, borders the Arabian Sea to the east, the Sharqiyah Sands to the south and Dakhiliyah Governorate to the west.

The Governorate comprises five wilayat – Sur, al Kamil Al-Wafi, Ja'alan Bani Bu Hassan, Ja'alan Bani Bu Ali and Masirah. Sur is the administrative capital.

South Sharqiyah has seen the implementation of a range of development projects, along with a major extension of the road network and infrastructure specific to tourism. It is home also to major economic projects, including LNG plants, a urea-ammonia smelter and the Sur Industrial Zone.

With a population of 315,445 in the 2020 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments and 318,045 in the December 2021 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the governorate's Municipal Council has 16 representative members.



Al Sharqiyah South is in the midst of a growth spurt, with multiple development projects ongoing.

Wilayat (5)

- Sur
- Al Kamil wal Wafi
- Ja'alan Bani Bu Hassan
- Ja'alan Bani Bu Ali
- Masirah

Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
315,445	318,045

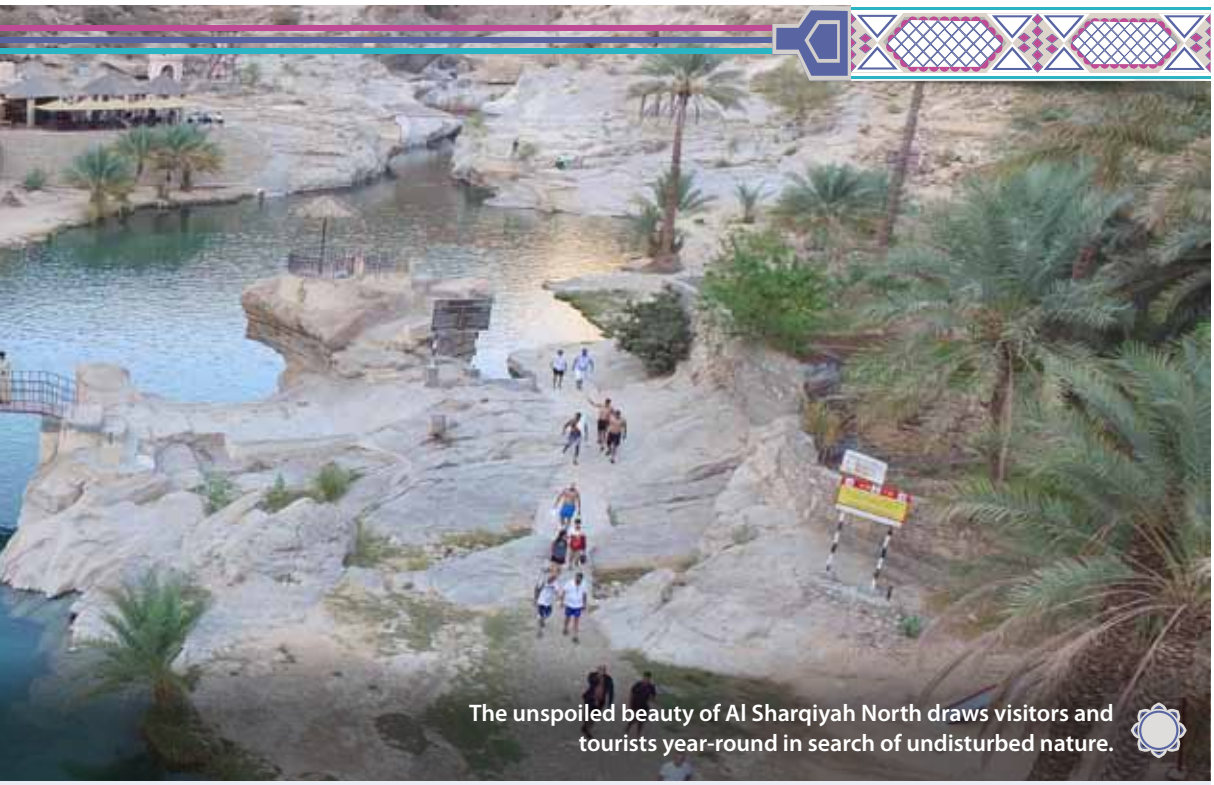
North Sharqiyah Governorate

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

North Sharqiyah's six wilayat are Ibra, the main centre, Mudhaibi, Bidiyah, Qabil, Wadi Bani Khalid, Dima and Al-Ta'een. The administrative capital is Ibra.

North Sharqiyah has benefited from substantial development projects, spread over a range of public services, including health, education, road infrastructure, water supply, as well as tourism projects.

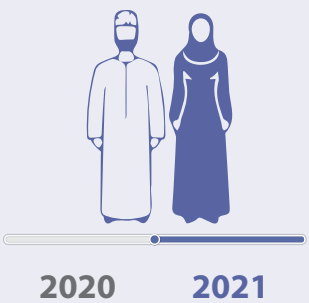
With a population of 271,822 in the 2020 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, and 273,890in the December 2021 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the Governorate's Municipal Council has 16 representative members.



The unspoiled beauty of Al Sharqiyah North draws visitors and tourists year-round in search of undisturbed nature.

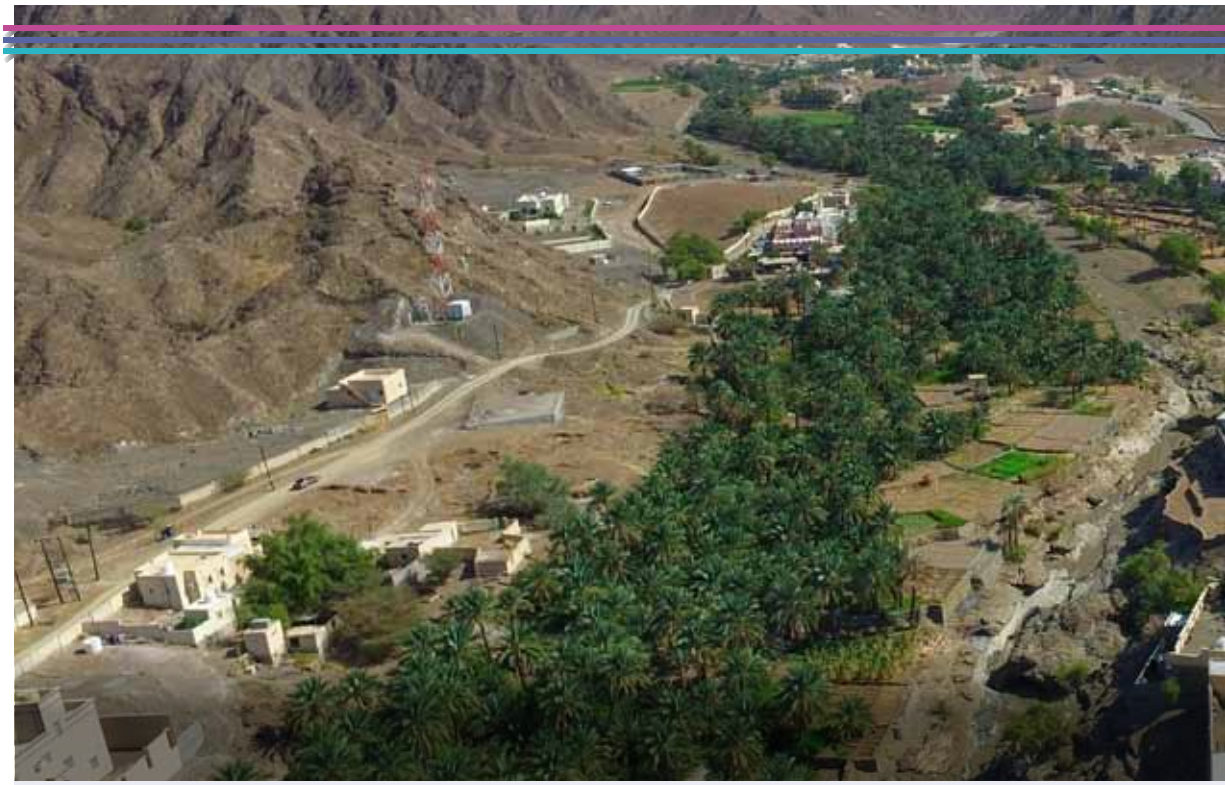
Wilayat (6)

- Ibra
- Mudhaibi
- Bidiyah
- Qabil
- Wadi Bani Khalid
- Dima wal Ta'een



Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
271,822	273,890

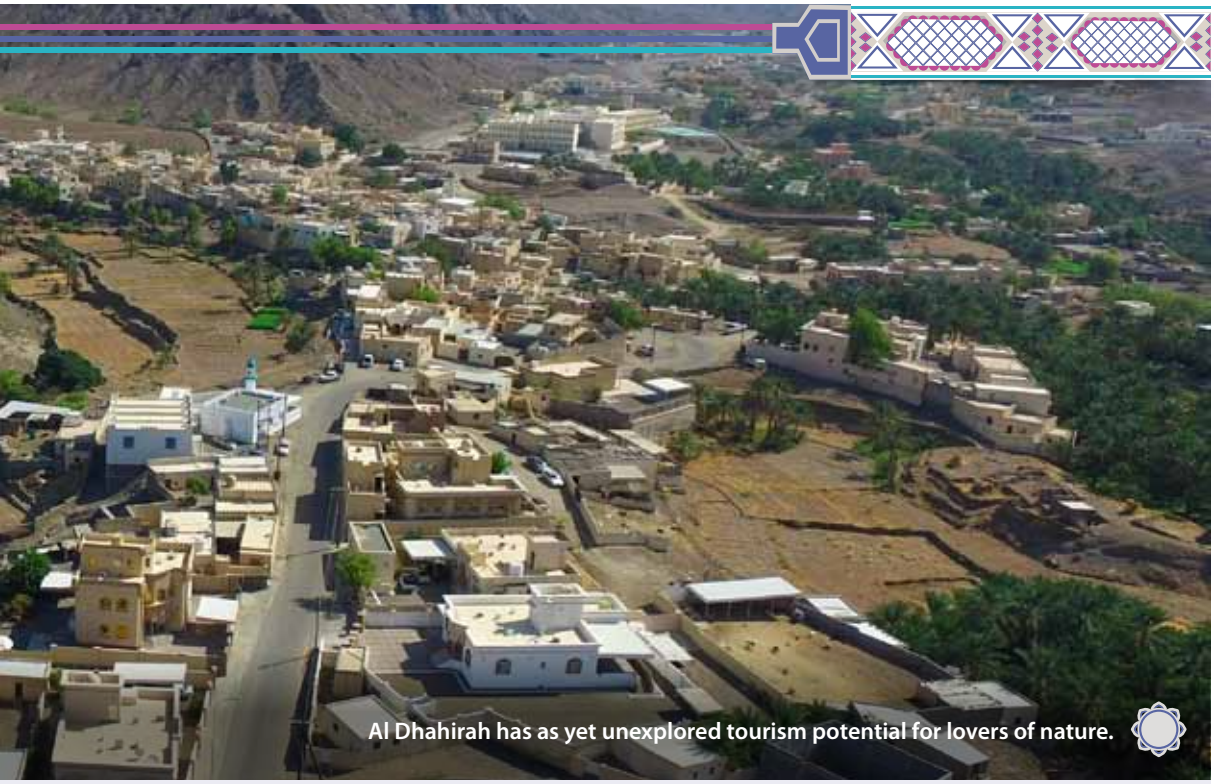


Dhahirah Governorate

Dhahirah Governorate is steeped in history and rich in agricultural and tourist potential. It has undergone major positive changes across all sectors since 1970. The Governorate consists of a semi-desert plain that descends from the southern slopes of the western Hajar Mountains towards the desert of Al Rub al Khali. The Kor Mountains separate the province from the Omani interior to the east. It shares a western border with the Rub al Khali and a southern border with the Governorate of Wusta.

The Dhahirah Governorate has three wilayat – Ibri (the main wilayah), Yanqul and Dhank – and a 2020 population of 213,043 according to the 2020 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, and 215,351 in the December 2021 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

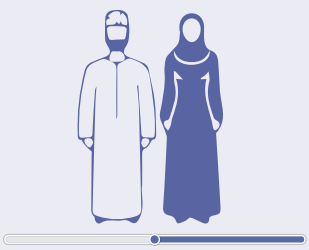
At the crossroads of the centuries-old trans-Arabian caravan routes, Dhahirah is distinguished in addition to its intensive agricultural activity by several oil and gas fields and has benefited liberally from substantial development projects. Its Municipal Council has 10 members.



Al Dhahirah has as yet unexplored tourism potential for lovers of nature.

Wilayat (3)

Ibri | Yanqul | Dhank



Population

2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021
213,043	215,351

Wusta Governorate

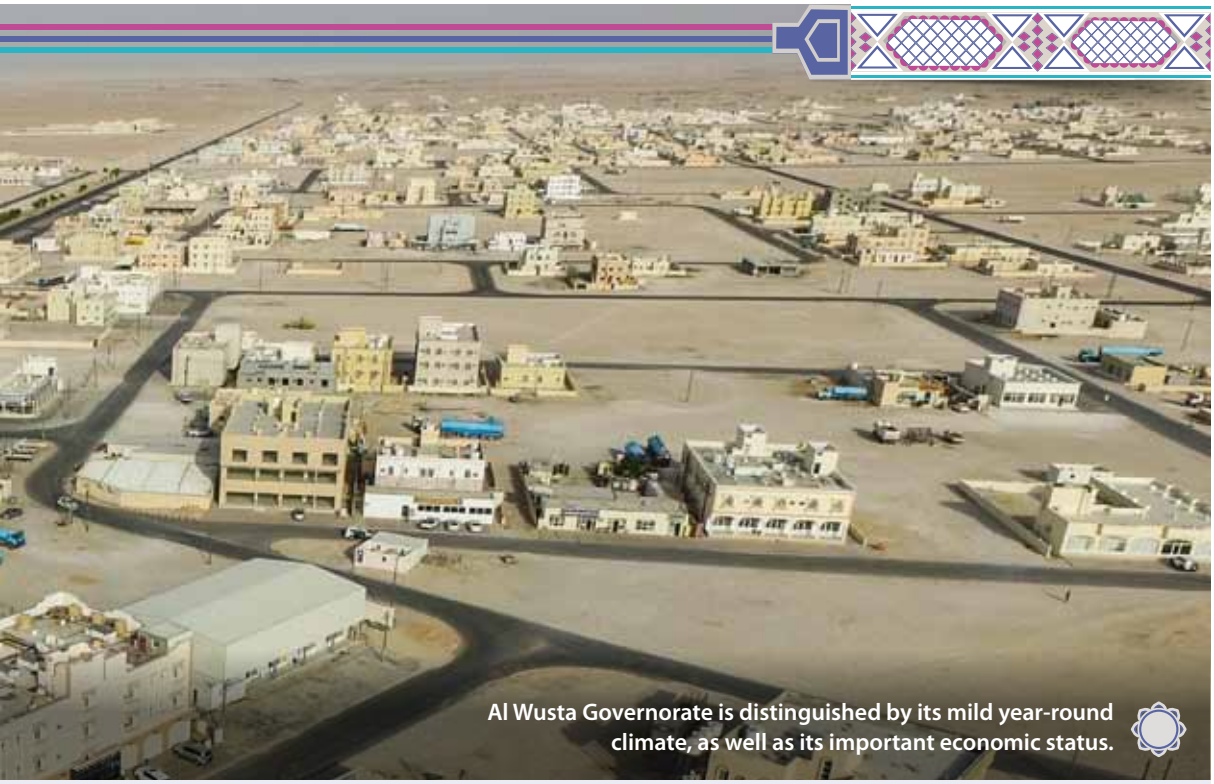
Wusta Governorate lies to the south of the Dakhiliyah and Dhahirah Governorates. It overlooks the Arabian Sea to the east and borders the Rub al Khali, or Empty Quarter, to the west and the Dhofar Governorate to the south. Its most distinctive features include multiple oil and gas fields and a temperate climate throughout the year.

Duqm's Special Economic Zone (SEZAD) is one of the governorate's most ambitious projects. It is a multi-purpose economic interface of global proportions and key regional hub, assisted by Duqm's strategic geopolitical aspect on the Arabian Sea. Duqm has benefited significantly from development in recent years and now occupies a special position on the global investment map, given its competitive edge and the many incentives and facilities afforded investors.

The dry dock complex in the Duqm Economic Zone, meanwhile, reflects the government's strategy to transform Wusta Governorate into a major contributor to the national economy and promoter of the Sultanate's standing internationally.

In addition to this complex, many projects of water, electricity, roads, fishing jetties and health and educational services have been introduced.

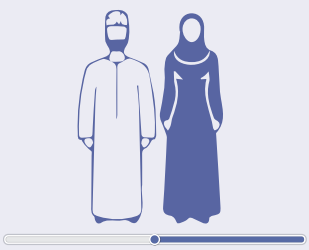
Wusta comprises four wilayat – Haima (the main hub), Mahawt, Duqm and al Jazer – and had a population in 2020 of 52,344, according to the 2020 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, and 52,048 at December 2021, per the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Its Municipal Council has eight members.



Al Wusta Governorate is distinguished by its mild year-round climate, as well as its important economic status.

Wilayat (4)

- Haima
- Mahawt
- Duqm
- Al Jazer



Population

2020	2021
52,344	52,048
2020 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments	National Centre for Statistics and Information December 2021

Modern Institutions – Smoothing the Path to Construction and Development

Clear Vision and Keen Ambitions

A resolve to walk the path carved by the founder of Oman's modern renaissance, the late beloved Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimur, to protect his legacy and drive forward his vision, was a commitment about which His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik had no hesitation. It was a commitment publicly voiced at his own inauguration, directly after taking the oath of office on 11 January 2020 at a joint session of the Defence Council and the Council of Oman.

With the publication of Royal Decree No 75/2020 of 12 August 2020 bearing on the state's administrative apparatus, Sultan Haitham effectively ruled into law the promise of his speech of 23 February 2020, in which he had affirmed his determination "to take such measures as are necessary to restructure the state's administrative apparatus. We will modernise the schema of laws, regulations, programmes and mechanisms relevant to labour, elevating its values and principles, and espousing and streamlining procedures and measures of performance, transparency and accountability that will bring them into full harmony with the requirements and goals of our vision."

The overhaul of the state's administrative apparatus was an initiative imperative to the success of the current and coming stages of the development process, if they were not to be bogged down by an increasingly inadequate infrastructure that would gradually sap momentum. The improvements would bring new vigour to the process and encourage more active engagement with the expansive goals of Oman Vision 2040. At stake were transformative, and inevitable, economic, social and cultural considerations that will determine the fate of the coming two decades and beyond.

This was the backdrop that inspired publication of the Basic Law of the State on 11 January 2021, pursuant to Royal Decree No 6/2021. The Basic Law constitutes the legal framework of reference that governs the work of the various authorities and establishes the boundaries that separate them. It is the source from which the various state agencies derive the foundations and scope of their work. It lays out the legislative framework and associated considerations that are pertinent to the building of the modern state; as well as the relationships between institutions; the responsibilities, rights, duties and tasks assigned to the various organs of the state and to its affiliated administrative, executive, parliamentary and judicial institutions. Thus it ensures that each component undertakes its national task in a manner that guarantees harmony and complementarity between the Council of Ministers and the bicameral Council of Oman. It helps protect the independence of the judiciary in its pursuit of justice, equipped with tools that monitor and assess performance against a measure of fair adjudication.

The Administrative Apparatus of the State

Royal Decree No 75/2020 was the legislative basis from which the restructuring of the state's administrative apparatus was launched. It embodied the promise made by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in his powerful speech of 23 February 2020, where he laid out his commitment to the development process and the need to consolidate the principle of the state of institutions. The state administrative apparatus as outlined in Royal Decree 75/2020 is described in three chapters

containing 18 articles. Article 1 specifies the component units of the apparatus as including ministries, military and security agencies, councils, and other executive units that derive their authority from the state. The definition includes any public legal person serving to manage a public service or economic facility, such as a public authority or institution. The state's administrative apparatus consists of central units, such as ministries, agencies, councils and the like, and decentralised units, such as public bodies or institutions. The establishment and abolition of units of these state's administrative apparatus shall be by royal decree. Units of the state's administrative apparatus may issue regulations, decisions, or instructions within the limits of the powers assigned to them under the royal decrees issued in their regard.

Basic Law of the State

The Basic Law of the State was promulgated on 11 January 2021 in the form of Royal Decree No 6/2021. It confirmed the principles on which the Sultanate of Oman was founded, and which dictated and guided its broad policies, locally, regionally and internationally. It validated its international standing as an arbiter of justice, truth, security, stability and peace among nations and peoples. It confirmed Oman's determination to pursue its vision for the future. It cemented its commitment to protect the homeland against all threat, to preserve, along with its territory, its rich cultural heritage, and the unity and social fabric of its people, their rights, duties, and freedoms. It reiterated its support for the state of institutions, and reinforced the principle of shura (consultation).

The Basic Law of the State consists of 98 articles, laid out in seven chapters. It describes a stable mechanism for the transfer of government rule in the Sultanate, and a mechanism for the appointment of a Crown Prince, whose duties and powers it outlines, in a context in which the rule of law and independence of the judiciary are sacrosanct principles in the governance of the state. Chapter Two of the Basic Law lays out the values that guide the state's political, economic, social, cultural and security policies. The third chapter covers public rights and obligations. Article 18 states that life and dignity are the right of all human beings, and the state is obligated to respect and protect these (se rights) in accordance with the law.

Article 21 states: "All citizens are equal before the law. They are equal in public rights and duties, and there can be no discrimination between them on the basis of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status."

The Basic Law of the State, in its Articles 34, 35 and 36, guarantees freedoms, as represented in freedom of worship as conforms with established custom in the matter of ritual; that is to say in a manner that does not violate public order, or contradict morality. Freedom of opinion and expression, verbally, in writing, and by all other means, is guaranteed within the limits of the law. Privacy is sacrosanct, inviolable. All forms of electronic communication, of communication by telephone, telegraph, post or any other means is inviolable, its confidentiality guaranteed. It may not be monitored, searched, accessed, disclosed, delayed, or confiscated, except in such cases as are specified in law, governed by the procedures described therein.

Firm Foundations

In its introductory articles, the Basic Law of the State defines the Sultanate of Oman as an independent Arab, Islamic, and fully sovereign state, with Muscat as its capital, Islam as the state religion, Islamic shari'a as the basis of legislation, and Arabic as the official language of the state.

Articles 5 to 11 of Part One of the Basic Law bear on the mechanism of government in the Sultanate, defining to whom the mandate of government devolves. It states: "The system of governance is Sultani, hereditary in the male descendants of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan, provided that whomever is to be chosen from amongst them as successor shall be a Muslim, mature, rational and the legitimate son of Omani Muslim parents." It states that succession shall pass from the Sultan to his eldest son, then to the eldest son of this son, and so on down through the generations. Where an eldest son should be deceased before assuming the succession, it shall pass to his eldest son, even where the deceased had a brother or brothers.

In the event that the incumbent should have no sons, succession devolves to the eldest of his brothers. In the absence of the brother, succession shall pass to the eldest son of the eldest brother, and if the eldest of the brothers had no son, then to the eldest son of another brother in accordance with the age hierarchy of the brothers.

If the ruler has neither brother nor a nephew from a brother, succession passes to his uncles and their male offspring in the manner and sequence outlined in Clause 2 of Article 5.

Article 5 stipulates that the "successor shall be a Muslim, mature, rational and the legitimate son of Omani Muslim parents."

Where succession has passed to an heir who has not yet reached the age of 21 years, the powers of Sultan shall be exercised by a Regency Council that has been formally appointed by the Sultan. Where he has not appointed a Regency Council prior to his death, the Royal Family Council shall appoint a Regency Council consisting of one of the Sultan's brothers and two cousins and a Royal Decree shall be issued from this Regency Council.

Also under the provisions of Article 5 of the Basic Law, a Royal Order shall issue appointing the legitimate successor as Crown Prince. The Royal Order will define his competencies and the tasks assigned to him. The Crown Prince shall take an oath before the Sultan prior to his exercising the powers or tasks assigned to him. The oath is as stipulated in Article 10 of this Law. Where a temporary impediment prevents the Sultan from the exercise of his powers, the Crown Prince shall replace him.

Article 9 stipulates that "the Royal Family shall be assigned a council with the title Royal Family Council, in respect of which the formation, structure and determination of its powers and primacy of its members shall be by means of a Royal Order."

The Organisational Structure of the State

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

One: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

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 49 of the Basic Law of the State defines His Majesty's functions.

Two: The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers assists His Majesty the Sultan in formulating and implementing the broad policies of the state. It is the executive body assigned to carry out these policies. Specifically, it submits recommendations to the Sultan on matters of national concern. It proposes legislation and drafts royal decrees, attends to the interests of the general public and ensures continuity in the provision of necessary services. It participates in drawing up broad development objectives and project implementation procedures and schedules. It conducts deep analysis of plans prepared by specialist authorities after first presenting them for deliberation to the Council of Oman. It submits

finalised plans to the Sultan for approval, follows up on the execution of approved projects. It examines proposals received from individual ministries drafted in line with their specific competencies, and seeks and adopts appropriate recommendations and decisions in this regard.

The Council of Ministers oversees the functioning of the state administrative apparatus, monitors its performance, coordinates with its respective units, and generally supervises the enforcement of laws, royal decrees, regulations, decisions, treaties, agreements and court rulings in a manner that enhances compliance. Finally, it accepts any further competencies conferred on it by the Sultan, or authorised under the law.

On 18 August 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 111/2020 establishing a Council of Ministers, headed by His Majesty and with membership as follows:

His Majesty Sultan Haitham chairs a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Alam Palace on December 30, 2021.

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said
Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers

His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik bin Taimur al Said
Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs

His Highness Sayyid Dhi Yazan bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said
Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth

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

HE Lieutenant General Sultan bin Muhammad al Na'mani
Minister of the Royal Office

HE Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Saeed al Busaidi
Minister of Interior

HE Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Busaidi
Minister of Foreign Affairs

HE Sultan bin Salem bin Saeed al Habsi
Minister of Finance

HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abdullah al Salmi
Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs

HE Dr Mohammed bin Hamad bin Saif al Rumhi
Minister of Energy and Minerals

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

HE Dr Madiha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah
Minister of Education

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

HE Dr Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Said al Saidi
Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs

HE Dr Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Harrasi
Minister of Information

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

HE Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said bin Ibrahim al Busaidi
Minister of State and Governor of Musandam

HE Salem bin Mohammed bin Said al Mahrouqi
Minister of Heritage and Tourism

HE Dr Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al Habsi
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

HE Dr Khalfan bin Saeed bin Mubarak al Shuaili
Minister of Housing and Urban Planning

HE Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim bin Saeed al Mahrouqi
Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation

HE Engineer Said bin Hamoud bin Saeed al Maawali
Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

HE Dr Saeed bin Muhammad bin Ahmed al Saqri
Minister of Economy

HE Qais bin Muhammad bin Musa al Youssef
Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

HE Laila bint Ahmed bin Awad al Najjar
Minister of Social Development

HE Dr Muhad bin Said bin Ali Baouin
Minister of Labour

Three: The Defence Council

The Defence Council was established by Royal Decree No 105/96 on 28 December 1996. On 25 January 2021, Royal Decree No 12/2021 was issued reorganising the Defence Council under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan and with a membership consisting of six individuals selected on the basis of their rank or position. These are: The Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; the Minister of the Royal Office, Head of the Office of the Supreme Commander; the Head of Liaison and Coordination at the Royal Office; the Head of the Internal Security Service; the Inspector General of Police and Customs; and the Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Without prejudice to its other competencies, as stipulated by legislation and royal decree, the Defence Council is competent to consider all issues related to the protection and defence of the territorial integrity of the Sultanate. It convenes where a need arises for announcement of a general mobilisation.

Four: The National Security Council

The National Security Council (NSC) is responsible for considering all matters related to national security. On 25 January 2021, Royal Decree No 13/2021 announced a restructuring of the National Security Council. The introductory article described a national security council to be formed under the chairmanship of the Sultan, the Supreme Commander, with membership consisting of the Minister of the Royal Office, Head of the Office of the Supreme Commander; the Head of Liaison and Coordination at the Royal Office; the Head of the Internal Security Service; the Inspector General of Police and Customs; and the Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces. The Council may request the attendance of non-members as it deems appropriate.

The National Security Council has a Secretary-General whose appointment is decided by royal decree. The Council is supported in the exercise of its powers by a Secretariat-General that reports to the Royal Office, and a number of committees that report to the Council. The operating structure of the Secretariat-General , the assignment of the Secretary-General's powers, the creation of committees and definition of their competencies, are determined by a decision of the Minister of the Royal Office, Head of the Office of the Commander in Chief.

Five: The 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 1 December 1974 as per the provisions of the Banking Law No 7/74, later amended by Royal Decree No 114/2000.

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.

The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman consists of six governors, appointed and headed by His Majesty the Sultan. Royal Decree No 112/2020 was issued on 18 August 2020 creating certain new positions, including that of Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, to which position was assigned the rank of minister.

Six: The Supreme Judicial Council

Article 82 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that "the judiciary shall have a Supreme Council that supervises the proper functioning of the courts and their auxiliary bodies."

The Supreme Judicial Council has jurisdiction over the general policy of the judiciary, guarantees its independence and monitors its development. It executes a role in consolidating the values, ideals and ethics of judicial work and the prudent care of its systems. In order to achieve its objectives, the Supreme Judicial Council has jurisdiction over the courts and the Public Prosecution. In addition, it facilitates the litigation process and access to legal proceedings and reviews nominations submitted by the competent authorities for appointments to positions within the judiciary, the Administrative Court and the Public Prosecution, in cases where the law stipulates such posts should be filled by Royal Decree. 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.

Seven: The Private Office

The Private Office was established on 3 June 2020 by means of Royal Decree No 59/2020, and it reports directly to His Majesty the Sultan. The specific function of the Private Office is the daily preparation and documentation of matters for presentation to His Majesty the Sultan, or of those for which he has instructed that information be provided to him, or for which directives have been issued. The Office, therefore, keeps His Majesty abreast of the progress of work programmes and projects arising from the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Eight: Higher Committees, Subsidiary Councils and Public Authorities

Article 63 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that "Specialised Councils shall be established, their powers specified, and their members appointed by virtue of Royal Decrees. The said Councils shall be associated with the Council of Ministers unless their establishing Decrees state otherwise." Royal Decree No 75/2020 bearing on the administrative apparatus of state specifies that the state's administrative apparatus should consist of central units such as ministries, agencies, councils, and similar, and decentralised units, as typified by public service bodies and institutions. A public service body is established with the purpose of managing a facility that serves the public interest without seeking to earn a profit; while a public institution manages an economic facility that is a participant in the development of the national economy. All such units of the state's administrative apparatus are established and/or dismantled by means of royal decree.

Higher Committee for Conferences

The Higher Committee for Conferences shall undertake the task of preparing, following up and coordinating in relation to conferences in which the Sultanate participates, especially conferences related to the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States, by working and coordinating 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 and follow-up of these plans.

It acts as an executive force in brokering the current priorities outlined by His Majesty, translating them into policies to be enshrined in and executed through the Five-Year Development Plan.

The Committee promotes ever greater coordination between the government and both the State and Shura Councils in mobilising energies to achieve national goals.

Secretariat General of National Celebrations

The Secretariat General of National Celebrations (SGNC) has the task of preparing and organising the celebratory public events that mark national occasions. The Secretariat is a legal personality with full financial and administrative independence. It was established on 1 March 2020 by Royal Decree No 6/2020, and its supervision assigned to the Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court.

On 9 August 2020, Royal Decree No 116/2020 was issued amending certain provisions of Royal Decree No 6/2020. The title 'Supreme Committee for National Day Celebrations' was amended to 'Secretariat General of National Celebrations' and the decree also stipulated the formation of an executive committee at the Secretariat General, to be headed by a secretary general and with membership consisting of representatives - each of a standing no less than ministerial undersecretary or equivalent – of each of the following bodies: The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, and the Royal Oman Police.

The committee also includes one member each representing the Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, and the Royal Protocol.

State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution

Financial controls were first introduced in the Sultanate in 1970. The state's financial and administrative control body has evolved through many stages of legal and structural adjustment, as well as through several changes of title since that time. Among the most prominent changes were those ushered in by Royal Decree No 95/1999, which converted the Secretariat-General for State Financial Control to a stand-alone institution with financial and administrative independence. Subsequent royal decrees regulated the work of the agency and further amended its organisational make-up.

The evolutionary process culminated on 27 February 2011 in Royal Decree No 27/2011, when the authority acquired its current title, the State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution (SFAAI), along with broad audit control competencies. In the same year, the State Financial and Administrative Oversight Law was issued. Royal Decree No 111/2011, which subordinated the agency directly to His Majesty the Sultan, coincided with issuance of the Law for the Protection of Public Funds and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest (Royal Decree No 112/2011). This latter, with its sweeping objectives and powers, was destined to become an important support for the audit institution in the exercise of its national role.

In 2014, the State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution was entrusted with the duties of the Anti-Corruption Commission and with implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, after Royal Decree No 64/2013 approved the Sultanate's accession to the UN treaty.

On 11 January 2021, the Basic Law of the State specified in Article 66 the institution's competence to follow-up activity at all of the financial and administrative units of the state's administrative apparatus and other public legal persons, in such manner as is approved by law.

Sultan Qaboos University Council

The Sultan Qaboos University Council is the university's supreme administrative body. The SQU Charter authorises the Council to formulate and implement general policy, and the Council carries out specific tasks related to enhancing the university's status and enabling it to fulfil its mission and achieve its objectives to best effect.

On 25 February 2021, the Council approved a number of new academic programmes, including the PhD programme in Islamic Studies at the College of Education and the PhD programme in Information Studies at the College of Arts and Social Sciences. The restructuring of the Master of Business Administration programme at the College of Economics and Political Science and the development of a Master of Education programme in Educational Administration into a Master of Educational Administration and Leadership at the College of Education were also approved.

The Tender Board

The Tender Board was established on 30 April 1973, and in October 1984 Royal Decree No 86/84 brought an amended system into line with legislative advances drafted to keep pace with the Sultanate's economic and social development objectives. On 24 March 2008 Royal Decree No 36/2008 introduced the Tender Law, which works today as an effective tool for the protection and management of public funds. Its promulgation was followed up by amendments in the form of Royal Decrees Nos. 19/2011, 120/2011 and 60/2013.

On 17 August 2020, Royal Decree No 84/2020 was issued in the matter of the Secretariat-General of the Tender Board, stipulating that the Tender Board shall have a secretariat-general benefiting from a separate legal personality and financial and administrative independence. The Secretary-General of the Tender Board will bear responsibility for all of the administrative and financial affairs of the Secretariat, representing it in its relations with others and before the judiciary. He will have the powers of head of the said unit as stipulated in the royal decrees and laws applicable to units of the state's administrative apparatus.

The Tender Board has responsibility for announcing tenders, opening bids, analysing and awarding government tenders priced at over RO3 million. Excepted from this process are contracts relating to security and defence projects and projects with specific connotations in law. The Council approaches its functions guided by measures designed to raise performance levels in government agencies, in order to ensure the proper and efficient use of public money.

The Board exercises its functions by way of measures that guarantee the implementation of government projects, by providing goods, supplies and services of the highest specification at the lowest price, and by ensuring equal opportunity for all companies and institutions in the competition for public contracts. It is particularly supportive of small and medium enterprises, encouraging them to participate in the bidding process, and it is equally supportive of government strategy to provide work opportunities for the national workforce.

Oman Investment Authority

The Oman Investment Authority is the investment arm of the government. It functions to manage the Sultanate's financial resources and assets, to invest these in such manner as achieves the greatest return. It operates within the limits of its commitment to the implementation of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to achieve greater prosperity in a more sustainable economic context for the Omani people and for future generations.

In accordance with Royal Decree No 61/2020 of 4 June 2020 establishing the Oman Investment Authority, ownership of all government companies, investments and assets, with the exception of Petroleum Development Oman and the government's contributions to international institutions, were transferred to the Authority. The transfer was consistent with the Authority's necessarily substantive input into the governance and management of these companies so as to adapt their policies and regulations to meet the evolved sustainability objectives of the Authority.

Royal Decree No 57/2021, which prescribed the structural organisation of the Oman Investment Authority, also defined its goals and powers. Article 5 describes the Authority as the investment arm of the government, with responsibility for managing, developing and investing the Sultanate's financial resources and assets with a view to obtaining the highest return. It is also tasked with establishing reserves and financial savings, and contributing to provision of the revenues needed to supplement the public budget and achieve financial sustainability. The OIA is expected to facilitate the implementation of government policies and strategies in targeted economic sectors, to enhance the investment environment, and attract investment to the Sultanate.

Oman Medical Specialty Board

From its institution on 4 April 2006 under Royal Decree No 31/2006, the Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) has been advancing steadily towards the attainment of its methodological and scientific goals in the specialised medical education field. It aims to achieve status as a leading academic institution in this region of the world, and every year the Board sees an increase in the number of doctors enrolled in its training programmes.

On 4 November 2020, the Oman Medical Specialty Board launched the health education initiative Tibyan, a national electronic platform with a mission to raise the quality of the education process for health cadres in the Sultanate. The rollout would be supported by innovative aids designed to enhance the educational experience. This in turn would have a knock-on effect that would raise health awareness within the community. The upgrades would be achieved through partnership with creators of innovative medical education techniques.

In September 2021, the Oman Medical Specialty Board signed up a newly graduated batch of doctors hoping to complete specialist studies in the 2021/22 academic year. Doctors seeking to specialise become associates of the Board when they embark on one of 19 specialist training programmes on offer.

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit

The Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit was established by Royal Decree No 100/2020 issued on 18 August 2020. The unit has a legal personality, financial and administrative independence and the capacity to own, manage and dispose of fixed and moveable assets.

The unit's mission is to see through to completion the various objectives of the Sultanate's vision for the future (Oman Vision 2040), monitoring their stage by stage outcomes and the performance indicators of the entities entrusted with achieving them. This it can accomplish by providing a stimulating environment for the creation of future vision projects, including of projects of economic or development benefit, and devising appropriate solutions or actions to mitigate the obstacles they encounter. The Oman Vision Unit seeks out potential partners, then works to cement partnerships between the various stakeholders involved in Oman Vision 2040 and then between them and the private sector generally, always with the goal of maximising the outcome for Oman Vision 2040.

The unit is building collaboration with government agencies, encouraging them to excel in a culture of innovation and best practice standards. It is reviewing closely all services provided to the public to ensure continuity of quality as well as to develop systems and procedures that ensure that all who deal with government service agencies obtain the best service available. Crucial to the success of this initiative will be a streamlining and simplification of access and processing mechanisms.

The Capital Market Authority

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has worked, as legislator and regulator, to achieve for the capital market and insurance sectors the highest economic interests of the State. It strives to protect all parties interacting with these sectors, guided by a pursuit of justice, integrity and transparency that fulfils international best practice standards. It monitors the legislation governing the two sectors, issuing new laws or amending or replacing existing legal instruments to keep pace with current requirements and accommodate developments adopted by accredited global organisations.

Royal Decree No 5/2021 of 6 January 2021 converted the Muscat Securities Market to a closed Omani joint stock company under the new name Muscat Stock Exchange Company SAOC. The action was a significant one in its positive impact on the standard of service offered and powers granted in the drive to attract foreign investment and enhance the liquidity of the stock exchange. It has succeeded in increasing the trading volume and increasing investor confidence. The Muscat Stock Exchange

licence was approved by the Authority on 11 April 2021.

In July 2020, the Capital Market Authority approved a newly introduced draft regulation governing the exercise of health insurance claims management in the Sultanate. This initiative reflects the remarkable growth spurt in health insurance products in recent years, with the health sector now constituting 35% of the overall country-level insurance portfolio, a value that amounted to RO170 million in 2019.

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones was established under Royal Decree No 105/2020 of 18 August 2020 and enjoys financial and administrative independence. It reports to the Council of Ministers.

The Authority oversees the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, the free zones at Mazunah, Salalah and Sohar, and all other economic or free zone areas operating within the Sultanate.

It proposes policies and strategies of direct relevance to the work of the country's special economic and free zone areas, motivated to enhance their contribution to the state's development goals. It makes submissions to the Council of Ministers for approval of such plans, then proceeds to their implementation and follow-up. It evaluates approved strategies and prepares studies and programmes that fall within the Authority's jurisdiction. It proposes the establishment of new economic and free zones, then completes the preparatory measures for issuance of the necessary royal decree to secure their establishment, selecting sites, defining limits, incentives, advantages and facilities granted to operating agencies and operating companies respectively. It is responsible for the regulation and control of the investment environment in the special economic and free zones.

The Authority is also concerned with promoting investment opportunities in these zones, operating both within the Sultanate and overseas. In this regard, it coordinates with other competent authorities to approve the establishment of legally compliant companies beneficial to the development of the zones, while managing, extending and promoting he sector.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) was established on 12 March 2002 under the Telecommunications Regulatory Act, issued by means of Royal Decree Law No 30/2002 and designed to liberalise and upgrade services in the sector. It was given responsibility in 2012 for reorganising the national postal services sector in line with the Postal Services Executive Regulation

Law that stemmed from Royal Decree No 71/2012 on the development and liberalisation of the postal sector.

The Authority focused its energies on creating a telecommunications sector capable of providing all users with access to world-class telecommunications services at affordable prices, and to this end, it has worked continuously to increase the number of licensees in the market and to provide more options for consumers.

On 2 June 2021, the TRA announced the granting of licences for the provision of postal and related services to three local companies which had fulfilled all regulatory requirements. The activities covered include the reception, clearing, sorting and distribution of all types of postal items, such as documents, parcels, packages and other items with weights not exceeding 25 kilograms.

The National Records and Archives Authority

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) was established by means of Royal Decree No 60/2007 of 2 July 2007 as a national project to preserve Oman's history, while establishing a comprehensive system for managing public records related to government departments that are subject to the Document Law.

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) maintains in storage 4,218,437 documents and manuscripts of every kind, both paper and electronic, in multiple formats. Its archive is constantly growing, reflecting the NRAA's concerted drive to preserve an important heritage for posterity. It files important State documents, as well as manuscripts and other records of Oman's folk history. The archives are kept in a manner that protects them from degradation and facilitates their accessibility for the purposes of historical and academic research.

The NRAA currently holds 150,125 folk records acquired from public sources, in addition to 44,410 manuscripts.

The Authority maintains mutually beneficial relations with archival institutions throughout the world and has signed 18 memoranda of understanding with national representative bodies, international archives and document centres. These agreements complement its efforts by way of diplomatic channels or through its connection with countries with which Oman shares historical, economic, political or geographical ties. Where bilateral and joint contracts and agreements were concluded in the past, the NRAA endeavours to obtain originals or copies of these, the latter case where the original is held in an international archive. It is a member of the International Council on Archives, the Arab regional branch of the International Council on Archives, and the Secretariat-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council States, and interacts regularly with multiple international and local peer institutions and centres.

This ongoing collaboration has built important relationships over the years, and given rise to a total of 18 conferences and seminars successfully organised by the NRAA to date.

The Omani Charitable Organisation

The Omani Charitable Organisation (OCO) has been able to achieve many of the lofty goals for which it was established, undertaking charitable works that benefit the deserving and disadvantaged both inside and outside the Sultanate. As an example, the Organisation participated in the recovery plan for North Batinah Governorate, which was impacted by tropical hurricane Shaheen in October 2021. It worked within the system of the National Centre for Emergency Management alongside multiple official and private agencies and community services, helping launch and equip shelter centres.

In addition to relief works associated with climate emergencies in the Sultanate, the OCO extended aid to people in Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, Libya, Pakistan and other countries suffering from conflict and war or weather emergencies. Relief was channelled through international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN High Commission for Refugees and other recognised organisations.

The OCO also intervenes in unforeseen disasters of individual or group impact, bringing relief to the victims of earthquakes and famine throughout the world. At home it manages a number of social welfare projects and programmes that benefit children, orphans, the disabled and various deprived minorities.

The Public Authority for Social Insurance

The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) has made significant strides in its drive to achieve social insurance cover for citizens working in the private sector. Its role is vital in protecting this segment of the working community, a goal which provides its principal motivation.

The Authority is deeply involved in the strategies defined under Oman Vision 2040, including the digital strategies which hope to raise living standards for citizens and families throughout the Sultanate.

The Authority is undertaking ambitious measures to improve the services system and achieve its vision of becoming one of the top 20 social insurance institutions in the world. Digitalisation is one of its most effective tools in this endeavour. By the end of 2020 it had succeeded in digitalising the delivery of services to a level exceeding 80%, a feat that is transforming the sector.

The Consumer Protection Agency

A Royal Directive was issued on 26 February 2011 calling for the creation of an independent authority for consumer protection, resulting in Royal Decree No 26/2011 of 28 February 2011 that established the Public Authority

for Consumer Protection. The PACP Regulations followed on 5 April 2011, pursuant to Royal Decree No 53/2011.

On 12 August 2020, Royal Decree No 77/2020 amended the name 'Public Authority for Consumer Protection' to 'Consumer Protection Authority (CPA).'

Since its establishment, the Authority has pursued an integrated work system to exercise its mission as a protective shield for consumers by protecting them from illegal practices that may be committed by actors in the supply chain. It closely monitors markets in the Sultanate, a task represented in the first half of 2021 by inspections of 51,025 commercial establishments, with the seizure of 22,697 illicit goods, and penalising of 1,275 violations.

As the world opens up to an economy that is global in its scale and reach, the Sultanate's markets are required to adapt. The resulting spike in the exchange of merchandise through import and export has placed consumers at the mercy of fluctuating standards or outright fraud. Fraud has become the top priority for the Authority because of its unique responsibilities. Royal Decree No 54/2021 bearing on the creation of harmonised legislation to combat commercial fraud in the territory of the Gulf Cooperation Council States was drafted with a view to strengthening the legal infrastructure available to protect the Sultanate's marketplace from harmful practices, and has proved to be an important support for the PCA's role in this respect.

To bring its work in line with the standards required, the Authority implemented the ISO quality management system (ISO). This system organises and simplifies work procedures to enhance efficiencies and overall performance levels, using indicators as guidance. It has resulted in a shift in routine work patterns, which benefit from standardisation and best practice targets.

The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency was established on 18 August 2020 by means of Decree No 106/2020, which abolished the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. The Authority enjoys financial and administrative independence and reports to the Council of Ministers.

The Environment Agency is mandated to propose policies and strategies relevant to environmental protection and sustainability, pollution control, nature conservation, environmental safety and the preservation of important ecosystems. It operates within the framework of the core objectives of sustainable development, the protection of wildlife, nature conservation, and the preservation of renewable resources. It works to ensure that all resources are exploited in a sustainable manner. The Agency will promote broader horizons of scientific research in the environmental fields, by exchanging experiences, and collecting and applying scientific data. It will work to spread ever greater awareness of environment issues among all societal sectors and to instil appreciation for the value of a pristine environment and the protection of its natural resources.

The Civil Aviation Authority

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA), acting pursuant to Royal Decree No 43/2013 of 16 September 2013, defined the Authority's objectives in promoting the civil aviation sector and all of its supporting facilities, and raising standards to the maximum achievable in terms of efficiency, quality, and safety and security of civil aviation and air transport.

On 17 August 2020, Royal Decree No 85/2020 was issued in the matter of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation, amending its name to the 'Civil Aviation Authority' and assigning to it competencies related to climate affairs, transferred from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs.

The decree stipulates that "the Authority shall be managed and regulated by a board of directors formed by a decision of the Council of Ministers, with the term of board membership being three years, renewable for a single similar period." In addition, "the Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority shall have a specially assigned status and be appointed by royal decree."

The Authority has been an active contributor to the development of both the legislative and service aspects of the civil aviation sector and to the expansion of this crucial transport link both locally and internationally. It oversees the drafting and observance of regulations governing civil aviation in the Sultanate, issuing the necessary permits for crews and maintenance stations, concluding bilateral air agreements with other countries, and ensuring the security of airports and the safety of air transport. It sets out the financial infrastructure necessary to maximise revenue from the Sultanate's airports and facilities and to encourage investment. It oversees and checks, insofar as its sphere of competence permits, all matters relevant to the operations of airline and aviation-related services active within the Sultanate.

Authority for Public Services Regulation

The Electricity and Related Water Sector Regulation Authority was established pursuant to Article 19 of the Law on the Regulation and Privatisation of the Electricity and Related Water Sector promulgated under Royal Decree No 78/2004 of 1 August 2004, as amended by Royal Decree No 59/2009 and Royal Decree 47/2013. The Authority has a legal personality and financial and administrative independence, and reports directly to the Council of Ministers.

On 12 August 2020, Royal Decree No 78/2020 amended the name: Electricity and Related Water Sector Regulation Authority to: Authority for Public Utilities Regulation, and assigned to it competencies relating to the transportation of natural gas, as stipulated in Articles 4, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 of the Oil and Gas Law issued under Royal Decree No 8/2011. In the exercise of its natural gas transportation competencies, the Authority has all appropriate powers, in particular as regards the issuance of relevant transportation licences and the conclusion of agreements associated with the transport of natural gas, all as approved by royal decree.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Development Authority was established on 18 August 2020 by Royal Decree No 107/2020. Transferred to it were all of the allocations, assets, rights and obligations of both the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises and the Rafed Fund, along with all of the Fund's extant capital and its annual state allocation from the general budget.

The Authority is working on initiatives to expand the SME and crafts sectors as part of a comprehensive national development strategy. All proposals will then be submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. It will be responsible for creating a regulatory environment designed to encourage the growth and development of SMEs and craft industries, as well as preparing the groundwork for such plans and programmes as further the objectives of the Authority. In this regard it will coordinate with other competent authorities to provide SMEs with financial, administrative and legal advice that supports their growth and enhances their competitiveness. Helping them produce high-quality products and services will be specialised centres offering facilities and skills training to international best practice standards.

The Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education

The Omani Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education was established on 13 January 2021 by means of Royal Decree No 9/2021, which amended and replaced the previously entitled Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation. The competencies of the new Authority were outlined, the most prominent of which gave it power to establish a national system to oversee the quality of school and higher education in the Sultanate, ensuring that it measures up to international standards. Educational institutions are encouraged to build internal quality assurance systems, and public and private schools are monitored for compliance with the standards and procedures set by the Authority and their programme offerings accredited accordingly.

The Authority continues to perfect a comprehensive national system for the assessment of qualifications. Omani qualifications are graded within this framework, and harmonised with foreign and international qualification standards. The Authority publishes the results of its quality assurance and accreditation assessments, listing and grading Omani and international qualifications within the framework. It is also involved in training educational cadres in the methodology of measuring and ensuring superior standards within the school and higher education systems and as measured within its National Qualifications Framework.

Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance was established by Royal Decree No 3/2013 of 8 January 2013. The Authority has a legal personality and financial and administrative independence. It is affiliated to the Royal Oman Police. On 30 November 2014, the Authority's organisational structure was published under Royal Decree No 68/2014. On 22 April 2021, Royal Decree No 39/2021 amended the title of the organisation from: Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance to: Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority.

Under Article 2 of the Decree, the Authority states its objectives as protecting lives and property, achieving public safety, reducing the risk of natural and industrial disasters and mitigating their impact should they occur. It also implements measures related to civil defence and ambulance work, ensuring the presence of ambulance services on the public road system, as well as meeting emergency and home callouts and maintaining a well-functioning flying ambulance service.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority secured first place in the 2021 competition organised by the Secretariat-General of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers, a periodic award event focusing on audio-visual awareness and educational campaign material around issues of civil protection. The 2021 competition title was The Role of Civil Defence Organisations in addressing the Covid-19 Pandemic. The win was the second for the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, which previously took home the award in 2019.

Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science

The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science facilitates exchange between the relevant Arab, Islamic and international organisations (UNESCO, ALECSO, and ISESCO) and the peer authorities in the Sultanate of Oman. It promotes the intangible heritage of Oman and communicates the ongoing endeavours of the Sultanate in the fields of education, culture and science. It cooperates with the three overseas organisations in a manner that enhances understanding and communication between peoples and cultures.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Protection is allocated biennially through UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere programme in recognition of outstanding contributions to the environment made by individuals, groups, institutions and organisations, as aligns with UNESCO's published policies in the field.

The pioneering Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Protection was the first Arab award to be allocated at global level on the theme of environmental protection. Established in 1989 on an initiative of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, it was quickly embraced by UNESCO.

Oman Human Rights Commission

Since its establishment, the Oman Human Rights Commission has pursued a sustained and transparent campaign to protect human rights and the perception of human rights in the Sultanate. It has demonstrated a strong commitment to the protection of civil liberties and fundamental freedoms, responsibilities and duties in the Sultanate, as befits the mandate afforded it under Royal Decree No 124/2008. On 15 November 2008, a Human Rights Commission was established and its functions defined. The Human Rights Commission had a legal personality and independence in the exercise of its functions. Headquartered in Muscat, the Committee reported to the State Council.

On 18 April 2016, Royal Decree No 23/2016 amended the name of the organisation to: Oman Human Rights Commission, and on 21 June 2017 Royal Decree No 26/2017 appointed its Chairman. Later, Royal Decree No 29/2019 appointed the membership of the OHRC, which consists of 14 persons representing various entities, including three Omani women.

The OHRC has strengthened its activities at the external level by communicating with human rights organisations overseas, as well as participating in meetings, conferences, workshops, and regional and international training courses. The Commission has responded to a number of international reports dealing with issues concerning human rights in the Sultanate, after first coordinating with the competent authorities to verify the information contained in these reports.

Cyber Defence Centre

The Cyber Defence Centre was established by Royal Decree No 64/2020 on 10 June 2020 to be the competent authority responsible for electronic defence in the Sultanate and the national reference hub for all matters involving the protection of vital interests in cyberspace. It oversees the building of national specialist capacities related to cybersecurity. It is affiliated to the Internal Security Service.

The Centre sees its mission as enhancing the capacity of affected units and individuals to deal with cyber threats, in part by creating partnerships between the relevant sectors and local and international peer entities. In furthering its objectives, the Centre can avail of a set of competencies, including the preparation, implementation and amendment of strategies, and verification of their implementation, subject to the required approvals. It can establish legislative and regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms for the implementation and follow-up of strategies and of a national plan designed to mitigate or eliminate risk in the cybersecurity field, always subject to approval. It can submit proposals for amendments and is responsible for preparing a determination and classification of all entities associated with the cybersecurity infrastructure, identifying the relevant sectors and entities vulnerable to risk.

Tolerance - A Core Feature of the Omani National Identity

Religious tolerance is just one aspect of the broad curiosity and acceptance of other ideas and cultures that has marked the Omani character as a steady constant throughout its long history, and stood out as a feature of the modern renaissance culture. It conforms with established customs, and is safeguarded so long as it does not disturb public order or contradict morals. Articles 34, 35 and 36 of the Basic Law of the State guarantee, respectively, freedoms of worship, expression and privacy: "The freedom of religious worship as accords with established customs is inviolable provided that public order is not disturbed or morals contravened;" "Freedom of opinion and expression, verbally or in writing or by any other means of expression is guaranteed within the limits of the law;" and "Private life is sacrosanct, inviolable and untouchable."

Oman's personal status law guarantees non-Muslims living in the Sultanate the right to live by their own religious guidelines insofar as these do not contravene Omani tradition, as afforded under Article 282 of the law. It is common knowledge that non-Muslims are entitled to their own houses of worship for the conduct of their religious rites freely and under the reassuring protection of the law.

In order to promote peaceful coexistence and tolerance, and to protect the fabric of society from all threat of conflict, the Omani Penal Code issued by Royal Decree No 7/2018 defined all acts designed to foment religious or sectarian strife or to lead to feelings of hatred or contempt or disunity among citizens, or to instigate such, as crimes against the State's internal security, punishable by prison terms of no less than three years and up to ten. Article 108 states that such crimes are "deemed an aggravating circumstance where the crime should occur in a house of worship, or an official establishment, council or public

place, or emanate from a public official during or in the process of the performance of his/her work, or from a person of religious status or one delegated as such."

It is fitting, therefore, that the Sultanate should continue to hold its pre-eminent ranking as measured by global peace indicators. There are several such indices compiled by multiple impeccable institutions and organisations, and the Sultanate's position confirms the success of policies that have consistently rejected violence, terrorism and crime. The Sultanate ranked fourth in the Middle East and North Africa, and 68th globally on the 2020 Global Peace Index issued by the Institute for Economics and Peace. The Institute monitors levels of peace prevailing in 163 countries and territories around the world, based on its evaluation by reference to three sub-indicators, namely safety and social peace, ongoing conflicts, and the effectiveness of the military.

The Sultanate also topped the list of countries least exposed to terrorist activity. The 2020 Global Terrorism Index classified it as a country of 'zero terrorism' for the eighth year in a row. This maximum ranking, which the Sultanate has maintained since the Index was first published in 2012, reflects Oman's tolerant social climate, where violent trends have never managed to take hold.

The Sultanate's message of understanding and coexistence, a deeply rooted facet of its history, is resonating more than ever around the world, especially in regions where its absence is fuelling social anxiety as never before. Oman's message bears the authenticity of long experience and social reality. On 16 November 2019, in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, the Sultan Qaboos Declaration Project on United Human Values was unveiled at the celebration of the International Day for Tolerance before a large UN audience.

The Declaration Lays out a Three-Stranded Blueprint Designed to Restore Balance to the Turbulent World in Which we Live Today

Strand One

Improve people's lives by guaranteeing basic dignity and rights, and human cohesion free of conflict and strife.

Strand Two

Adopt a global system of ethics that motivates people to unite in protecting people and the environment and promotes understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Strand Three

Revive spiritual values in mankind and reconcile them with the evolution of reason, philosophy and faith.

The Declaration project focuses on fundamental aspects of human behaviour that favour peaceful interaction, with respect and appreciation for life; respect for self and individual identity; and a vision of community and society as a shared partnership.

The desire to eradicate negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims that appear to be prevalent in the West, and to emphasise tolerance as a desirable principle for human relations, was responsible for the genesis of the 'Message of Islam from Oman' exhibition project. With the tolerance that defines Omani society as a central theme, the energy that fuels the message comes from a desire to promote constructive dialogue between the various religions and sects in the world, with the Sultanate's own well-established experience in religious tolerance, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence as a reference model.

By early 2021, the exhibition had brought its message of hope to 133 locations around the world, including 96 overseas and 37 local hosting venues. It has engaged proactively with scientific and academic institutions, universities, institutes, and museums in many countries across the globe, most prominently the United Nations and Unesco. It has helped produce joint programmes in aspects of religious studies, the Arabic language and other research fields. Academics and media figures of diverse nationality and faith have universally expressed their admiration for and endorsement of the exhibition, which travels under the title 'Message of Islam from Oman.'

The efforts of the exhibition continue to pay off in unexpected ways. In one recent example, the German Ministry of Immigration and Refugees approved the content of the exhibition as guiding material for its policies. Three German schools in Bavaria adopted the spirit of the exhibition's central theme as material by which to identify tolerance in Islam. Meanwhile, the German Navy distributed copies of the exhibition content, along

with its accompanying documentary film, to its soldiers on ships bound for Somalia.

UNESCO has hosted the exhibition at its headquarters three times in the space of two years. In Brazil the Brazilian government renamed the main square in the city of Foz do Iguacu 'Oman Square'; and in Uzbekistan the Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan has assigned the name 'Oman Hall' to one of its instruction theatres

The US Department of State's Report on Religious Freedom in the World praised the role of the 'Message of Islam from Oman' exhibition in spreading a culture of tolerance and changing negative stereotypes in the world. The Report confirmed that the exhibition had the support of political, municipal, community and educational institutions around the world, suggesting that diplomacy in the Arab world and beyond was contributing significantly to the successful communication of the exhibition's message of peace.

For its part, the Department of the Presentation of Islam and Cultural Exchange at the Office of the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate, with its bilateral responsibilities, protects the authentic spirit of Islam, encouraging tolerance towards non-Muslims residing in the Sultanate through activities and programmes that reflect this purpose.

The Department is also responsible for the Hidaya programme, a one-year educational course for newcomers to Islam through which they study the Holy Qur'an and its sciences and beliefs, as well as jurisprudence, the Arabic language and the Prophet's biography. Its core aims are to establish an appreciation for Islamic principles among new Muslims through a full examination of their meaning and application, to deepen bonds of brotherhood in the new Muslim community and to elaborate the correct exercise of Islamic ritual by practical example.

Working in Conjunction with Oman Vision 2040, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs has Completed an Inventory of Contemporary and Heritage Mosques that Have Been Restored.

Sultanate has mosques and prayer halls in total **16,464**

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs uses technology to develop its services and facilitate its beneficiaries, while pursuing the best advice available in investing the endowment funds for which it is responsible, including mosque and school endowments, and family and charitable endowments. It also oversees upwards of sixteen thousand mosques throughout the territory under the mosque programme.

The many mosques that bear the name of HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said and which were built at his personal expense, tell another chapter of the story of the modern Renaissance he pioneered and of its deep concern for people. The Renaissance believes in providing the faithful with the means to perform their rites of worship in surroundings of peace, tranquility and safety. It tells a story of Oman's role in and contribution to Islamic civilisation from its earliest days, as evidenced in architectural masterpieces that exude the spirit of Islam. Wonderful mosques, marked by creativity and harmony in their engineering and design, express the deeply felt impact of Islamic culture in the hearts of Muslims, manifested in these religious buildings of surpassing beauty.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on education in the Holy Qur'an schools as in all other educational fields, the distance learning option was activated through the platform of the Holy Qur'an Education Programme, and all teachers of the Holy Qur'an, as well as imams of mosques proceeded to work remotely.

The Office of His Eminence, the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate, plays a leading role in spreading religious awareness based on proper knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and the guiding teachings of the Prophet's Sunnah.

The College of Shari'a Sciences, for its part, is an academic institution that enshrines in its scholarly programmes the values and noble principles of Islam, of tolerance and love, of friendly interaction with others that fosters cultural understanding with respect for privacy.

Through its academic programmes, the College turns out highly qualified experts in shari'a law, Islamic studies and related skills. It uses what means are available at any time, including technology, in the service of its aims, including to promote and implement the distance learning project. This latter project constitutes a particularly efficient use of technology in delivering content to a wide audience. It has availed of an innovative educational service to stimulate a climate of serious academic research.

In addition to the Sultan Qaboos academic chairs established at some of the most prestigious American, European, Asian and Australian universities, and which play a vital and useful role in the study of Arab and Islamic civilisation, and in deepening the foundations and reach of dialogue between religions, the Sultanate has either established or supported the setting up of cultural centres and foundations around the world that share the goal of achieving more understanding between peoples and cultures.

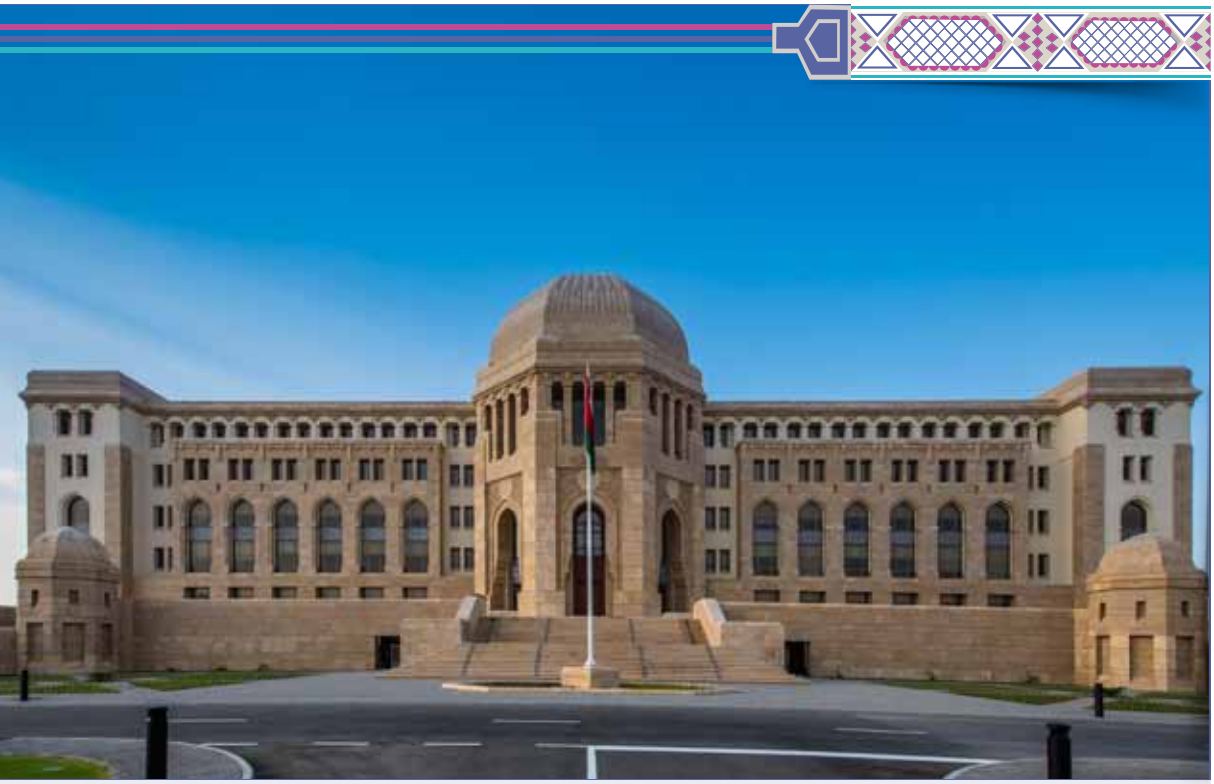
Justice - Underpinned by Independence and Transparency

The consolidation of justice, delivered by means of an independent, effective, transparent legislative system, is both a priority of Oman Vision 2040 and a waymark to its achievement. The Vision embodies a national strategy for the coming two decades that is built upon the triple aspects of: people and society, economy and development, and governance and institutional performance. The institutional blueprint places a high value on flexibility in the rollout of legislation, and on a strong, independent judiciary, specialised, accountable, comfortable with technology, and closely monitored for its capacity to serve justice.

The Basic Law of the State promulgated by Royal Decree No 6/2021 reasserted the independence of the judiciary. "The rule of law is the basis of governance in the state, and the dignity of the judiciary and integrity and honour of judges are the guarantee of rights and freedoms."

Article 77 states: "No authority stands higher in a judge's administration of justice than the law, no judge may be removed from office save where specified by law, and no party may interfere in a case or in an affair of justice but that this interference shall be deemed a crime punishable by law." Chapter Six, Articles 76 to 88, defines the mechanisms by which a court expresses its authority, the functions of the Public Prosecution within the judicial authority, the functions of the legislative advisories and the working mechanisms of the legal profession.

The Law on Simplifying Litigation Procedures in Certain Disputes, issued by Royal Decree No 125/2020 of 12



November 2020, represented a quantum leap in the modernisation of the judicial process and towards the achievement of the Oman Vision 2040 goals for the system as a whole.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has made the judicial goals a target of particular interest, returning to this theme in successive public addresses, always emphasising the essential values of integrity and transparency. In his speech of 23 February 2020, he resolved "to undertake such measures as are necessary to restructure the state's administrative apparatus. We will modernise the schema of laws, regulations, programmes and mechanisms relevant to labour, elevating its values and principles, and espousing and streamlining procedures and measures of performance, transparency and accountability that will bring them into full harmony with the requirements and goals of our vision."

Speaking on the landmark occasion of the Sultanate's Fiftieth National Day on 18 November 2020, His Majesty noted that "work is ongoing to refine mechanisms of legislation and oversight and advance accountability. These are fundamental to Oman's future, of crucial importance in safeguarding the rights of our homeland and its citizens, and in consolidating justice and integrity. We will, God willing, afford this system our particular attention and care."

Such reassuring pledges by His Majesty, backed by committed action, constitute the roadmap to genuine judicial reform. The system, in both its judicial and administrative branches, continues to develop, offering a fully accountable basis to advance the evolved vision that is Oman 2040.

The Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary

The Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, through Oman Vision 2040, has the practical task of building out an integrated and well-functioning judiciary on the established grounds that an ethical judiciary is key to the development of a nation and its people. If Oman is to preserve the civilisational advantages nurtured in the years of the modern renaissance, if it is to achieve the status envisioned in Vision 2040, there are imperatives for which the Council has responsibility. These include the adoption of effective, streamlined methods of governance, in which procedures for the execution of directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, are simplified.

In this context, the Council has adopted a plan to re-engineer litigation procedures in a comprehensive and integrated manner, and to build a strategy for artificial intelligence in the judicial process that will convert case management in the courts to a system that is fully electronic.

The above-referenced Law on Simplifying Litigation Procedures, issued under Royal Decree No 125/2020, underpins the strategy of the Council to develop and amend existing legislation, and free up bottlenecks in the litigation process, while driving forward the mission to reach a place of comprehensive justice in the shortest possible time and at the lowest cost.

The Council pledged to develop the Law on Simplifying Litigation Procedures as it pertains to certain disputes. The Law has at its disposal tools and procedures relevant to specific types of dispute with the potential to strongly impact the national economy, viz:

1. Disputes arising from construction contracts.
2. Individual labour disputes arising from application of the Labour Law.
3. Disputes arising from application of the Foreign Capital Investment Law.
4. Disputes between owners and tenants of residential, retail, manufacturing real estate in application of the provisions of Royal Decree No. 6/89.
5. Disputes involving debt-creation documents endorsed by a notary per the Notaries Public Law and cheque-related subordinate cases

The core features of the law are having the effect of accelerating the pace of dispute settlement where investment and the broad economy are involved. Binding dates are set on which judges are required to issue a ruling. Article 10 states that a circuit court of first instance must issue its ruling in a dispute within a period not exceeding 30 days from the date the case was referred. The deadline may be extended for an equivalent period on a one time only basis, where the case has not reached the status of a verdict. As well as accelerating the execution pace of court rulings and limiting the time

frame for appeals, the use of technology is expediting the judicial process across the board, including in the publication of judicial papers.

The digital transformation programme adopted by the Council under the e-government framework is the main instrument in its strategy to reach the justice system's goals for Oman Vision 2040. The Council's upskilling policies that are critical to judicial reform involve the conversion of all judicial procedures to electronic format. New electronic services are constantly being introduced, and existing services brought into line with the changing legislative environment.

There can be no achievement of a fully equitable judicial system without the timely execution of justice, without speedy implementation of a court's rulings. Operating from this standpoint, the Council has been proactive in its focus on the speedy implementation of court rulings. Its success in this respect is due in part to the unique organisational structure of the Council administration. Its unusually broad reach extends to the affairs of all of its constituent units, and thus of their respective internal administrative processes.

This acceleration of procedures has also been greatly facilitated by digitalisation, including digitalisation of the lawyers' portal. The latter development enables a lawyer to file an application for prompt implementation to the court by way of the portal. Follow-up procedures may also be handled via the portal.

In a further streamlining move that will speed up completion of legal proceedings, the Council has developed the Maad application, which allows litigants and parties availing of the services of a notary public to arrange an appointment to visit the notary or court. Appointments can be arranged right up to 48 hours before the appointment date selected.

The programme has been implemented so far in seven notary departments and six courts in various governorates. In the selected locations, the programme is activated in the court or in the notary department at the request of the court. The number of departments in which the appointment booking feature is activated is arrived at on the basis of the court's determination of its needs.

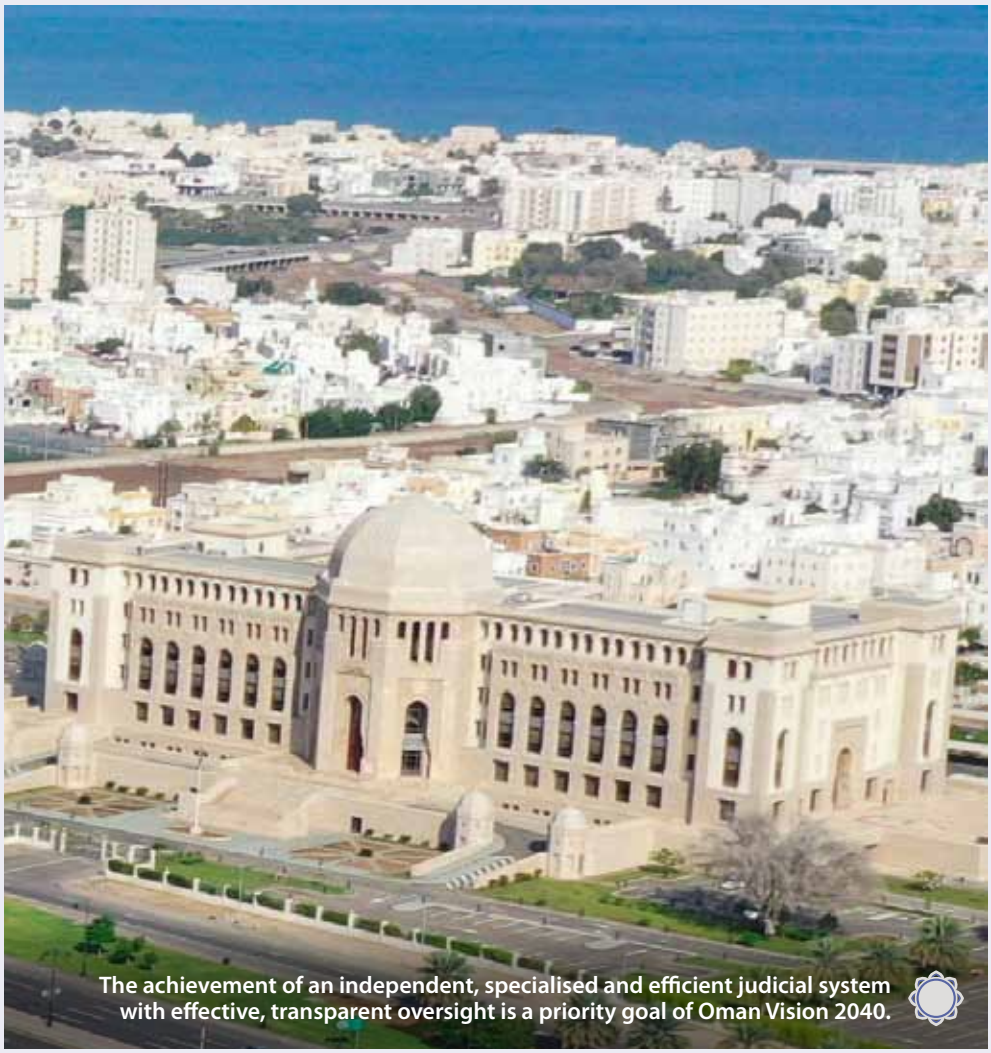
Given that judicial inspection is an essential support pillar of an independent judiciary, the Council has developed an electronic programme to manage the work of judicial inspection. The programme was designed to include all tasks entrusted to the judicial inspection process.

The Council has customised all electronic systems to meet the requirements of Royal Decree No 125/2020 on the simplification of litigation procedures to ensure full protection for the integrity of judicial procedures being exercised digitally.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court sits at the top of the judicial hierarchy in the Sultanate, and it was established according to the Judicial Authority Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 90/99 and its amendments, and it is a single court based in Muscat.

The Supreme Court is composed of a president and a sufficient number of vice presidents and judges, and it consists of chambers to adjudicate the appeals that are submitted to it, and each chamber is headed by the president of the court or



The achievement of an independent, specialised and efficient judicial system with effective, transparent oversight is a priority goal of Oman Vision 2040.

one of his deputies or the most senior judges in it, and judgments are issued by five judges, according to Article 139 of the Procedural Code Civil and Commercial Law issued by Royal Decree No 29/2002.

The Supreme Court has jurisdiction over the appeals filed before it against the judgments issued by the courts of appeal if the appealed judgment is based on a violation of the law or an error in its application or interpretation, or if a nullity in the judgment or nullity in the procedures resulted in affecting the judgment.

In accordance with Article 240 of the same law, the Court is competent to hear appeals made against any final judgment in a dispute, irrespective of the level of court that rendered it, where it contradicts a separate previous ruling delivered to the litigants and res judicata applies.

In accordance with Article 241 of the law, appeals on points of law that contest final judgments in courts of any level may be filed by the State Prosecutor with the Supreme Court in cases where the ruling has been predicated on a violation of law or an error in its application or interpretation, where the litigants are permitted by law to appeal, or where they have missed or waived the deadline for appeal.

In accordance with the Judicial Authority Law, the Supreme Court is required to dedicate a specially constituted body to adjudicate in cases of negative or positive conflict of jurisdiction between courts in the ordinary court system and administrative or other specialised courts. This body is also competent to adjudicate disputes concerning the compatibility of laws and regulations with the Basic Law of the State, to ensure that none of its provisions is transgressed.

Courts of First Instance

The courts of first instance are primary courts, where a dispute is first heard. The court is presided over by one or three judges (tripartite chamber), and they are competent to rule in civil and commercial lawsuits, as well as applications for arbitration and cases involving personal status, general, labour, tax, lease and other matters brought before them as the law determines.

There are 44 courts of first instance throughout the Sultanate, each constituted from a president and an adequate number of judges. Specialised chambers may be formed within these courts as needed, with the proviso that the position of chamber president be of no lower standing than that of a primary court judge.

Courts of Appeal

Courts of appeal (second instance courts) are competent to hear appeals against judgments issued by the primary courts and which are assessed to qualify for appeal under the law. Disputes may not be brought initially before a court of appeal, insofar as they exist to correct miscarriages of justice arising from rulings delivered in a court of first instance and requiring an adjudicating authority other than a primary court judge.

The courts of appeal were established by a sequence of royal decrees. They are composed of a presiding judge and a number of assisting judges. Chambers are formed as needed. The chamber is presided over by the court president or by its most senior judge and rulings are delivered by three judges.

The Sultanate has 13 courts of appeal, one in each governorate with the exception of Muscat, which has two courts, at Seeb and Muscat respectively.

The Notary Public Departments

The Notary Public plays an important role in the protection of rights that are at the very foundation of the Sultanate's judicial and legal system. Testimonies, marriage contracts, documents of divorce, widowhood and non-marriage, and some commercial contracts are entrusted to the authority of notaries public. They ratify the signatures of parties to social transactions, along with the dates of these and other similar transactions.

Under the broad policy of making the services provided by institutions and other entities more accessible to their beneficiaries, especially given the remoteness of the Sultanate's provincial extremities, a total of 61 Notary Public Departments have been established throughout the governorates. Royal Decree No 88/2020, Article Five of which merged the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Legal Affairs into a single entity, transferred the powers of these departments to the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary which is developing an electronic programme that will facilitate the provision of all notary services electronically, as befits the broad electronic transformation strategy adopted by the Council.

The Administrative Court

Over the course of two decades, the Administrative Court has borne its banner of transparency proudly, anchoring the reality of the state of law and institutions while adjudicating the delicate balance between the privileges of public authority and the legitimate rights of stakeholders. With its sights set firmly on the vision of Oman 2040, the administrative judicial process has been guided towards an aspirational global standard of performance, its success acknowledged in the expanding awareness of both institutions and the public. It works ceaselessly to bring litigation bodies closer to litigants under the auspices of the principles of the Basic Law of the State. The Court maintains summary-level chambers in Salalah in Dhofar Governorate, and Sohar in the Governorate of North Batinah. It is working to develop a realistic expansion plan based on validated statistics.

The Court has been delivering precedent-setting decisions in the matter of administrative contracts. Moreover, in clarifying the relationships between parties to such contracts, it is helping consolidate a more secure and stable investment climate, as well as enhancing confidence in many areas of development and exchange. It has been responsible for bringing broader awareness to certain legal principles, and become a reference for researchers and others who share an interest in the workings of the administrative judiciary. It has earned this respect from its demonstration of the depth of its judicial experience and summation of the well-established principles of justice, becoming a reliable resource and paragon of ethical practice in the sector.

In pursuit of its determination to normalise the speedy execution of justice, and in implementation of the core pillars of Oman Vision 2040, the Court has moved forward quickly to introduce technology that would automate all judicial procedures and build them into a fully digitalised smart system. It has developed its website to mirror the digitalisation process, so that it now includes a smart judicial services portal, through which all litigating parties can access all of the relevant components of the litigation process. Litigation parties include representatives of government agencies, lawyers and the litigants themselves. All litigation procedures, from the filing of applications all the way to a preliminary court hearing, can now be processed electronically.

Amid these quantum leaps towards transformation of the judicial system it manages, the administrative judiciary has supplemented its ranks with seven assistant judges, all promptly seconded

to the Higher Judicial Institute, where they will be enabled to build their judicial capabilities, better equipping them for the exercise of their functions. The Court places a high value on sourcing energetic and well qualified recruits suited to a stimulating working environment, individuals open to innovation, to creative solutions and to the sustainable use of technology in confronting the rising quantity and diversity of cases being presented. It is incumbent now on all concerned parties to collaborate in cementing the principle of the rule of law, the foundation of justice and equality, His Majesty Sultan Haitham urged in his speech of 23 February 2020. This is the direction in which the path of the Omani renaissance lies, and the direction in which His Majesty, with God's Help, will continue to guide it forward.

The Mediation and Reconciliation Committees

The Sultanate has shown itself to be fully committed to the advancement of justice in all of its forms and settings, showing preference for an approach that mitigates the impact of disputes between litigants. In this pursuit, successive governments have advanced policies that afford value to the reconciliation process in society.

Oman's long heritage of tolerance has proven success as the basis of a harmonious society. In the Sultanate today, the virtues of reconciliation, counsel and tolerance have been reformulated into legal frameworks that merge these Islamic values with the finer aspects of a modern judicial system.

The Mediation and Reconciliation Law was issued in the form of Royal Decree No 98/2005 to bring to the edifice of justice a support block with links to inherited and contemporary instruments of justice.

In its Article 4, the Mediation and Reconciliation Law specified the competence of the Mediation and Reconciliation Committees in adjudicating civil, commercial and personal status disputes.

There are 46 Reconciliation Committees distributed across the Sultanate.

Under Article 5 of Royal Decree No 88/2020, which merged the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Legal Affairs and defined the functions and organisational structure of the new Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, all of the functions, allocations, rights, obligations and assets of those divisions linked to mediation and reconciliation at the Ministry of Justice were devolved to the Ministry of the Interior and to the Governorates of Muscat, Dhofar, and Musandam as appropriate.

The Higher Judicial Institute

The Higher Institute of Justice is a beacon that lights the path to national development and the rule of law. It has done much to consolidate and expand awareness of the law and how it needs to permeate every aspect of life if society and the individual are to feel secure in their rights. The Institute was established by means of Royal Decree No. 35/2010 of 11 April 2010 and its inauguration the following year was a landmark achievement of the Renaissance.

The mission of the Institute is to prepare and qualify judicial cadres who are fully abreast of ongoing developments in the nation's judicial and legal institutions. Their training is derived from specialist academic curricula and fully compares with international qualification standards.

The Institute has since its establishment supported the Sultanate's sustainable development strategies and performance enhancement endeavours within the judicial services and legal branches of the State administrative apparatus. In its training plans, the Institute has pursued a policy of implementing short single-skill programmes, and custom-building a limited selection of specialised courses. Its training packages are designed to meet the job description needs of target groups and offer trainees a mixed content that blends academic material and skills development. It also offers joint training programmes for jobs with overlapping functions.

Justice and Legal Affairs

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs has a pivotal role to play in integrating the various branches of the Omani legal system, the capstone of which is represented by the Basic Law of the State. The reinvigorated Basic Law was issued by means of Royal Decree No 6/2021. All royal decrees, laws, regulations and decisions issuing from time to time from the various legislative sources are required to conform to the Basic Law of the State.

As understood by the provisions of Royal Decree No 88/2020, the Ministry constitutes a merger of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Legal Affairs and its terms of reference are defined by the Decree, as is its organisational structure. Among its functions are the preparation and review of draft royal decrees and arrangement of procedures for their issuance and the review of draft laws, regulations and decisions of a legislative nature prepared by units of

the state administrative apparatus and other public legal persons in advance of their issuance and publication in the Official Gazette.

In practice, the role of the Ministry is not limited to preparing and reviewing legislation and undertaking procedures for its publication, but extends to include reviewing existing legislation and recommending adaptations, coordinating in this task with the relevant government agencies.

It offers legal opinions on matters presented to it for interpretation as they relate to the application of royal decrees, laws, regulations and decisions. These opinions are delivered at the request of units of the state administrative apparatus or other public legal persons. It also offers legal advice on the basis of facts presented to it that have a bearing on the implementation of international conventions, or contracts entered into by units of the administrative apparatus or other public legal persons. It has expertise in the settlement of disagreements arising between units of the state administrative apparatus and other public legal persons, or between them and companies wholly owned by the government.

In addition to its competencies in the areas of legislation and legal advice, the Ministry is qualified to review draft contracts that entail financial obligations on the state exceeding in value five million Omani riyals. These reviews are conducted prior to the signing of any such contract by any government agency. It has special competency to review all draft international agreements and memoranda of understanding that the Sultanate intends to sign. It offers its legal opinion on requests to join existing international conventions, and participates in the preparation of periodic reports to be submitted to regional and international organisations.

By virtue of the royal decree that defined its competencies, the Ministry has oversight over the professional affairs of lawyers. It is responsible for their accreditation and registration in the relevant register and for issuance – and withdrawal where warranted – of licences to practice law. The Ministry cooperates with the Higher Judicial Institute in making available training programmes for lawyers.

The Ministry oversees and regulates the work of experts appearing in courts of every standing in the Sultanate. Ministerial Resolution No 76/2021 outlined the specifics of the regulations governing the work of court experts.

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs issues the Official Gazette, which publishes the official text of decrees, laws, regulations and ministerial decisions announced in the Sultanate, in addition to announcements and other official material required by national

legislation to be published in the Gazette. The Gazette can now be viewed on the Ministry's website, a convenience in keeping with the Sultanate's drive to automate government services and the Ministry's part in this move towards full digitalisation of government services.

The Ministry publishes an annual volume of law that incorporates royal decrees, royal orders, laws, regulations and administrative decisions issued during the year.

Also published on an annual basis is the 'The Book of Legal Principles in Matters of Legal Opinion', which incorporates the most important legal opinions issued by the Ministry and the legal principles extracted from them.

The Public Prosecution

The Public Prosecution exercises its mandate as entrusted to it by the government under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in a manner conformant with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. It uses the powers granted to it to the fullest extent in meeting its obligations to represent the interests of the public before the law.

Article 86 of the Basic Law of the State, issued on 11 January 2021 by means of Royal Decree No 6/2021, states that "the Public Prosecution is a component of the judicial authority. It undertakes public action in the name of society, oversees matters of judicial control, ensures the application of the criminal code, the prosecution of the guilty and the execution of judgments in the manner indicated by law. The Law defines the structure of the Public Prosecution, establishes its competencies, and sets out the terms and guarantees applicable to the persons who undertake its functions."

The Public Prosecution is endeavouring to streamline its operating process and improve overall performance with a view to meeting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, in particular as concerns the areas of legislation, the judiciary and oversight; as well as reasserting its strategic direction as 'a participatory legislative system, an independent and specialised judicial system, with effective and transparent oversight.' The Prosecution has focused on objectives directly linked to enhancement of work practices and the introduction of technology. It hopes to derive immediate benefit from the promotion of digitalisation, while offering full support to its human cadres and continuing to streamline its administrative divisions. Accordingly, on 20 April 2021, the Public Prosecution

issued administrative decisions amending the organisational structure of the Public Prosecution's district and provincial departments, merging some and amending their titles. It issued a judicial decision naming members of the Office of the Public Prosecution as financial investigators in the provinces to undertake investigations and prosecute financial cases and cases involving the abuse of public money or money laundering. Other Public Prosecution officers were designated to investigate cases involving minors.

In 2020, the Public Prosecution handled 23,831 cases. Of this number, 12,481 cases were referred, 9,303 retained and 10,699 rulings delivered.

The Public Prosecution continues its determined endeavour to expand the scope of electronic connectivity with partner government agencies. Its objective is to create a dynamic and flexible environment in which both speed of litigation and quality judicial work can be achieved. Cases are filed electronically by the Public Prosecution Departments with the court system in all governorates, and the system for the filing of court complaints bearing on custodial rulings has been updated. The Prosecution has also implemented a number of electronic projects with the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Environment Agency.

The Public Prosecution established the Oman Vision 2040 Office by virtue of Resolution No 295/2020, which launched its action plan to implement the Vision's priorities and strategies. Preparatory work began with the creation of a questionnaire designed to measure satisfaction rates among responders. This was followed by initiation of Phase Of the remote work project, and other similar initiatives.

Also initiated in 2021 was the project to measure individual and institutional performance, using work teams to introduce the system, and a rollout of training, marketing and related schemes to the tune of 13 introductory workshops, 51 training workshops, and 62 induction visits.

On the international front, the Sultanate, represented by the Public Prosecution, participated in the work of the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which took place from 7 to 12 March 2021. The Sultanate emphasised to the gathering that it attaches special importance to the matter of criminal justice, arising from a firm belief that criminal justice and the rule of law are absolutely essential to the achievement of sustainable development. The Sultanate also participated in meetings of the Public Prosecution Offices of the Gulf Cooperation Council States, held on 15 June 2021.

Foreign Affairs – Powerful Principles that Sustain Alliance and Harmony

The Sultanate of Oman is engaged in a renewal of its commitment to the civilised, moderated advance that has been a steady feature of its development to date. Its modern renaissance, as the process has come to be known, is well grounded in history and heritage, and in the outward-looking curiosity of the Omani character, a willingness to engage with the ideas of other cultures and a preference for fellowship over collision. As a member of the international community, the Sultanate extends the hand of friendship with ease and without judgment, and in doing so has earned universal respect. Its manner of dealing with conflict is marked by the values of honesty, diplomacy, impartiality, balance, the wisdom of experience, the courage to take difficult decisions and then to see them through.

As expected, these values define the Sultanate's approach to foreign policy. It sees itself as a friend to all, with dialogue and tolerance the principles that guide its response to all issues. It is resolute in its determination to protect the security and stability of Omani society, seeing this as a vital social infrastructure for its ambitious economic and cultural plans. His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos respected and promoted these core principles and His Majesty Sultan Haitham shares them fully. Their non-aggressive nature invites goodwill among neighbours and regional and international partners. Underpinning its foreign policy approach is an understanding that relations will thrive only in a climate of mutual respect, of non-interference in the internal affairs of others. The Sultanate's immediate neighbours

His Majesty the Sultan meets with Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth at Windsor Castle in Berkshire, England.

include the Republic of Yemen and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. With these states, the Sultanate has developed extensive cooperation in the economic and security areas, and this cooperation has been largely instrumental in maintaining not only the security of the individual countries, but of the overall region.

But the Sultanate's concept of neighbourliness extends far beyond its immediate borders to encompass countries somewhat further afield, including significant partners and allies of long standing, such as Iran, India and Pakistan.

The principle of good neighbourliness demands that the Sultanate do everything in its power, not merely to maintain good relations with its neighbours, but also to assist its neighbours reach understanding and maintain good relations with one another. It is a matter of some consequence to Oman that this web of inter-relationships is not dismembered, given the implications this would have on the long-term economic, social and security status of all concerned. As such, the Sultanate will never shrink from an opportunity to step in to facilitate a neighbour or neighbours in choosing the path of dialogue and conciliation.

With tolerance at the forefront in the Omani approach to others, the diplomatic bedrock of its foreign policy, the Sultanate's experience over a long history brings more than tolerance to the table. In approaching conflict in whatever form, it avoids rushing to

judgments that could lead to rigidity, complication or bias. Oman's foreign policy is based on the firm conviction that the difficult problems of this age can only be confronted without prejudice, and must be exercised in a climate of tolerance.

Given that dialogue is the key that unlocks polarity in matters of contention, whether in domestic or external contexts, the Sultanate resists policies that are founded on exclusion or boycott. Rather, it opts for settings that encourage mutual tolerance between conflicting parties, as a less inflammatory and more productive environment for peaceful reconciliation.

The Omani development vision sees openness to the world as a crucial constituent. It promotes communication and trade. The pragmatic principle has deep roots in the Sultanate's geopolitical situation, especially in light of the responsibilities imposed by its location overlooking the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

Addressing the Councils of Oman and Defence jointly on 11 January 2020, immediately after taking the oath of office, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik drew attention to the Basic Law of the State, and in particular to its Article Seven, emphasising the constants which the late Sultan Qaboos had laid down in the Sultanate's foreign policy. He recalled its cardinal principles: peaceful coexistence between nations and peoples; good neighbourly relations; non-interference in the internal affairs of others; respect for the sovereignty of states; and international cooperation in various fields. We must, he emphasised, "require and participate in the resolution of disputes by peaceful means. We must make efforts to find satisfactory solutions in a spirit of accord and understanding."

The Sultanate's pacifistmindset is recognised in both official and public circles and Oman is consequently enlarging its contribution to the resolution of intractable and contentious issues in the region and beyond. In parallel, it is constantly expanding its network of relations with countries across the world, underlining and promoting common goals and interests. In the Gulf, the Sultanate shares close bonds with its GCC sister countries. These bonds are deep and interlocked, encompassing many areas of trade and exchange as well as common experience, and bode well for choices that emphasise the benefit of harmony in creating a better life for their respective peoples, now and into the future.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham brought further reassurance on this inclusive philosophy in his inaugural speech of 11 January 2020, reaffirming his commitment to persist "with our brothers, leaders of the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, in advancing the process of mutual cooperation with a view to

His Majesty the Sultan reviews prospects of optimising joint cooperation in talks with His Majesty, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

fulfilling the aspirations of our peoples and advancing the achievements of the Cooperation Council going forward."

Confirming a long and supportive history shared by their respective peoples and leaders, the Sultanate and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continue to maintain neighbourly relations marked by cordiality and reciprocity. His Majesty Sultan Haitham accepted the generous invitation of the Saudi monarch and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, to undertake a state visit to the Kingdom on 11-12 July 2021.

The talks that took place between the two leaders during the visit were broad-ranging and encompassed proposals for ongoing cooperation in many areas of mutual benefit. Muscat and Riyadh already enjoy positive collaborations in the political, military and security spheres, and these were reviewed and reaffirmed with the intention of maintaining security and stability for both countries.

The two sides welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of a Saudi-Omani Coordination Council, headed up by the foreign ministers of the two

countries. The Council will be a channel for enhanced and sustainable bilateral relations covering diverse fields. At stake is greater economic integration between the two countries, and a determination to accelerate the pace of economic cooperation between them. The latter objective is expected to be achieved by stimulating the public and private sectors towards a qualitative advance in trade and investment exchanges with the purpose of adding value to both sides and propelling forward the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and Oman's Vision 2040. A set of initiatives has been proposed that would foresee major projects of mutual benefit, including investment in the Duqm region, energy cooperation, partnership schemes in the area of food security, and broad cooperation in cultural, sports and tourism activities.

His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, visited the Sultanate on 6-7 December 2021.

During talks hosted by His Majesty Sultan Haitham, the two sides reviewed a range of proposed bilateral collaborations, noting with satisfaction the progress already achieved in the political sphere and reaffirming their mutual commitment to an acceleration of economic activity that would serve Oman Vision 2040 and the Kingdom's

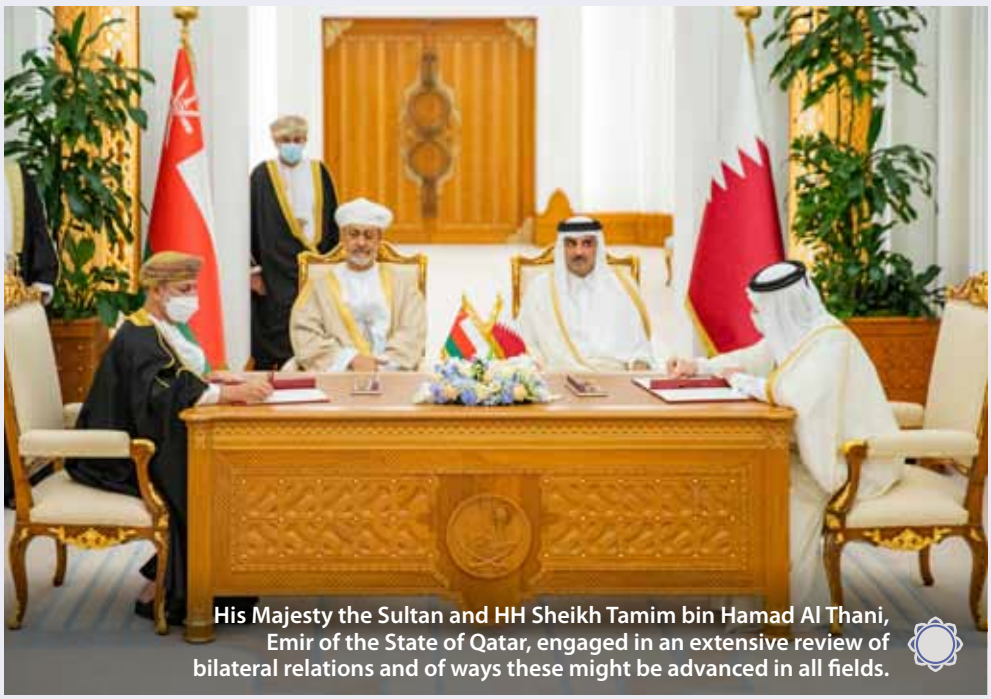
His Majesty the Sultan receives the Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, HRH Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz.

Vision 2030. Given the strong case for incentivising partnership opportunities between their respective private sectors, both sides welcomed the impetus given to this potential by the 725 km Oman-Saudi Arabia highway, the opening of which, on 8 December, is expected to quickly enhance the smooth movement of citizens between the two countries and the integration of supply chains

Strong ties also characterise the Sultanate's relationship with individual Gulf countries and His Majesty paid a historic state visit to the State of Qatar on 22-23 November 2021 at the kind invitation of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar.

Extensive bilateral talks held during the visit reviewed the status of current exchanges between the two countries and ways in which these could be strengthened and expanded. The two leaders also discussed regional and international matters and the success of the discussions reflected the broad convergence of their positions on many issues of geopolitical significance. Both sides emphasised the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in addressing all regional divergences of perspective.

Again, both leaders reaffirmed their political will to advance all aspects of cooperation and it is expected that this important exchange will see Oman



His Majesty the Sultan and HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, engaged in an extensive review of bilateral relations and of ways these might be advanced in all fields.

and Qatar advance to new horizons of consultation, coordination and cooperation.

His Majesty the Sultan and His Highness the Emir expressed their shared view that the real and diverse opportunities that exist in and between their two countries will constitute a solid basis for relations going forward, for increased investment opportunities, and new productive partnerships that will bring value to many sectors. Greater volume and diversification in trade exchange between Oman and Qatar, with both countries pursuing a larger role for the private sector in achieving benefit for each separately and both mutually, will cement their existing bond.

The two countries signed an agreement on military cooperation between the Sultanate and Qatar; a further agreement that will eliminate double taxation; an agreement on broader investment cooperation; two cooperation agreements specific to investment in the Oman Shipping Company on the one hand and to projects in the hospitality sector; along with a memorandum of understanding on development in the labour and human resources sector.

In a salute to Oman's close and long-established relationship with the United Kingdom, with whom the Sultanate shares many common goals, His Majesty paid a private visit to the United Kingdom that commenced on 14 December 2021 and extended for several days. On 15 December, Sultan Haitham met with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, at Windsor Castle. During the meeting, the two sovereign heads of state exchanged cordial greetings and explored the historical bonds shared by their two countries and other matters of mutual interest.

In a gesture of this solidarity, and of the value she places on the close friendship that exists between the Sultanate and the United Kingdom, Her Majesty conferred on Sultan Haitham the honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George.

On 15 December, Sultan Haitham met with His Royal Highness Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, at Clarence House in the British capital.

On 16 December, His Majesty met with Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the Prime Minister's official Downing Street residence.

The theme of these successive meetings was the strength of the ties that unite the United Kingdom and Oman and how this strength might best be exploited to mutual advantage. There was agreement that the potential for broader bilateral cooperation existed between the two countries, in

the service of common interests and shared concerns amid fast changing international events.

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, headed the Sultanate's delegation to the 42nd Summit of Leaders of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, which was held on 14 December 2021 in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

Addressing the conference, His Highness indicated that the Sultanate would be happy to chair the forthcoming summit, and that it would apply its best endeavours in this respect in 2022, while noting that Oman would support an existing mechanism whereby the main Council sessions could be held again at their current venue in Saudi Arabia.

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, headed the Sultanate's delegation to the 41st Summit of Leaders of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (the Sultan Qaboos and Sheikh Sabah Summit) which convened on 5 January 2021 in the city of Al Ula in Saudi Arabia.

In Arab affairs, Oman has been an active proponent, since its accession to the League of Arab States on 29 September 1971 and during the following 50 years of its membership in the League, of Arab solidarity, and has made sustained efforts to that end. It believes profoundly that solidarity is the route to the greater realisation of the potential that exists in the Arab world. It will bring vast rewards to all of the Arab peoples, and the

The Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, HH Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, headed the Sultanate's delegation to the 42nd Summit of leaders of the GCC States.

Arab League is the optimal channel for achieving that solidarity. This has been more than evident in the archive of the Sultanate's 50 years of participation in every Arab summit, the most recent of which took place at the League's 30th ordinary session, convened at Tunis on 11 March 2021.

His Majesty made a point to recall this history in his inaugural speech of January 2020, confirming that Oman would continue to cooperate "with the Arab League, and with our brother Arab leaders, to achieve the goals of the League, to advance the lives of our citizens and to distance this region from dispute and conflict. We will work to achieve the economic integration that best serves the aspirations of the Arab peoples."

In this context, the Sultanate participated in every ministerial meeting of the League of Arab States held in 2021, both ordinary and extraordinary, as it continued its endeavours to distil appropriate solutions from the complex issues impacting the Arab arena.

In international affairs, the Sultanate is equally proactive, and diplomatic, in its interactions at country level, while making positive contributions to many regional and international special interest organisations.

Oman, His Majesty promised in his closely observed inaugural speech, "will continue to uphold its role as an active member of the United Nations, respectful of its charter. We will work with member states to achieve international peace and security; we will advocate for economic prosperity for all peoples; and we will build relations with all countries of the world, committed to the valuable legacy left to us by the late Sultan [Qaboos]. We are committed to friendship and cooperation with all peoples, and to respect for the charters, laws and agreements that we have signed with countries and organisations."

The Sultanate's new chapter under His Majesty Sultan Haitham is bound by the same longstanding perspectives and policies, and Oman's message to the world still resides in its core belief in peace, harmony and brotherhood, cultural diversity, tolerance, positive dialogue, close cooperation with other nations and peoples, and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions, principles and rules of international law.

In its statement to the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2021, the Sultanate once again pledged "to adhere to the main fundamentals and principles of its foreign policy, embodied in the policy of good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, respect for international laws and norms, support for cooperation between countries and the enhancement of opportunities for dialogue among them. This is an expression of our conviction that resolving differences in the spirit of

harmony and tolerance is a mark of our human civilisation and one that leads to better and lasting results than may be achieved by conflict and strife. The word is mightier than the sword."

On 7 October 2021, the Sultanate of Oman celebrated the 50th anniversary of its accession to the United Nations on 7 October 1971. Marking the occasion, His Excellency Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, noted the Sultanate's position of distinction in world affairs as a reliable mediator, peace-maker, bridge builder and promoter of regional stability, adding that Oman had "earned the gratitude and appreciation of the international community."

Speaking to the occasion, Sr Guterres referenced Oman's commitment to the goals of sustainable development, as expressed in Oman Vision 2040; the success of its equitable distribution of Covid-19 vaccines; its championing of opportunities for women and youth, both key to the success of sustainable development and social stability; and its election to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the 2022-2024 term.

In exercise of its human and international obligations and rights, the Sultanate has sought subscription to a great many international agreements, in addition to signing and ratifying multiple regional agreements and memoranda of understanding.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinating with the Sultanate's diplomatic missions abroad, has mounted an energetic campaign to strengthen Oman's overseas relations, with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 in mind. The campaign was launched at the directive of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, who has been proactive in his dedication to these goals.

In this regard, the Ministry is also collaborating with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and in 2021 organised several virtual meetings with Oman's overseas diplomatic representatives, seeking to conscript their support for the objectives of the plan. The principal target is investor capital, or the quest for overseas investment in the projects that will fuel the aspirations of Oman 2040.

The virtual meetings focused on the need for Oman's overseas missions to devote resources to selling to the relevant political and economic entities in their host countries the economic advantages of investing in the Sultanate.

In all of its meetings with officials and delegations from neighbouring and friendly countries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focuses on the pragmatic aspects of bilateral relations, such as economic collaboration and exchange. It favours the existence of well-functioning joint committees in the exercise of bilateral commitments in all fields.

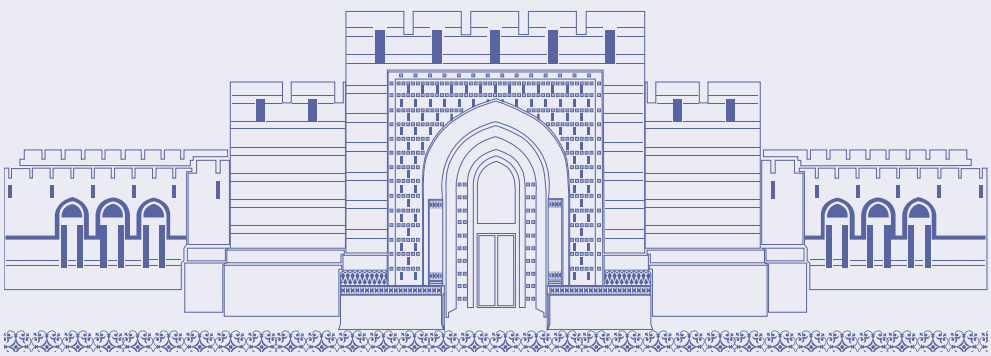
Council of Oman – The Legislative Path to Oman Vision 2040

The Sultanate's shura status today is the product of many complex stages, enacted over successive decades with deliberate and focused intent. The process began with the establishment of the State Consultative Council in 1981, to be followed by the elected Shura Council in 1991. Today the appointed State Council (Majlis al Dawla) and the elected Shura, or Consultation, Council (Majlis al Shura) share responsibilities under the umbrella of the Council of Oman, with each enjoying a separate legal personality and financial and administrative independence.

Article 12 of the Basic Law of the State defines the unifying values and basic components of the system of governance in the Sultanate. It stipulates that governance be based on justice, consultation, equality and the prescribed rights of citizens to participate in public affairs. Article 76 stipulates that "the rule of law is the basis of governance in the State." Article 68 of Chapter Five defines the Council of Oman as a bicameral body consisting of the State and Shura Councils; and Articles 69 to 75 lay out the powers of the Council of Oman, while regulating the mechanism of appointment for members of the State Council and of election for members of the Shura Council, the latter mechanism defined as a process of direct secret ballot.

The Council of Oman Law, promulgated by means of Royal Decree No 7/2021, contains provisions that describe the membership conditions and the categories from which selection for membership of the State Council are drawn; the requirements associated with candidacy for membership of the Shura

Council; the duration of membership terms for both the State and Shura Councils; the circumstances involved in termination of membership in both Councils; the principle constituent bodies of the respective Councils; and their rules of assembly. It also grants specific legislative and oversight powers to each Council, including the approval or amendment of draft legislation referred by government. The Councils make independent recommendations on projected development schemes and on the State's general budget. These recommendations are then returned to the Council of Ministers, which is mandated to notify the two parliamentary Councils where recommendations they have made have not been taken into consideration, providing explanatory reasons for their decisions.



Council of Oman

The establishment of the Council of Oman by means of Royal Decree No 86/1997 of 16 December 1997 was a significant milestone in the advancing shura process. It greatly expanded the basis of participation in decision-making, which now benefited from the expertise of scholars and specialists. This was crucial to the successful exploration of appropriate strategies for implementing ambitious development programmes and serving the public interest.

The Council of Oman Law issued under Royal Decree No 7/2021 of 11 January 2021 offers a critical framework for the work of achieving the goals set of Oman Vision 2040. Among these goals is the creation of flexible legislation on the one hand and an independent legislative authority with full powers on the other.

The Council of Oman, as stipulated in Article 68 of the Basic Law of the State and Article 1 of the Council of Oman Law, consists of the State Council, the members of which are appointed by His Majesty the Sultan from a select pool of experts, and the Shura Council, to which Omani citizens elect representatives of their constitutencies. The Council of Oman meets at the invitation of His Majesty the Sultan during the month of November of each year. In addition, as an exception to the terms of Article 38 of the Council of Oman Law, "The Sultan summons the Council of Oman to an inaugural meeting following the Shura Council general election, to convene within one month of the date on which the election results were announced." Finally, "the Sultan invites the Council of Oman to meet in extraordinary session in such situations as he deems appropriate. The invitation to the Council of Oman to convene for both regular and extraordinary session and the adjournment of such sessions shall be effected by Royal Order."

The Council of Oman is the umbrella organisation that oversees the appointed State Council and elected Shura Council, each of which constitutes a separate legal personality with independent financial and administrative status. (Oman's Majlis building in Muscat's Al Bustan district).

State Council a Pioneering Approach Rewarded by Success

The Sultanate's State Council is a nexus of national action. Its legislative and financial powers, outlined in the Basic Law of the State, the Council of Oman Law and its own internal regulations, provide the framework within which it conducts its regular sessions and oversees the work of six standing committees and their respective sub-committees, along with the various working groups emanating from the standing committees.

The State Council enjoys a separate legal personality and financial and administrative independence. It includes in its membership an elite cohort of experts and specialists who enable it to carry out the national work entrusted to it under its powers and competencies with an efficiency worthy of a dynamic body within the state of law and institutions.

The State Council has a primary role in the process of national action.

Membership of the State Council

The State Council consists of a Chairman and members, of whom the total, including the Chairman, shall not outnumber the membership of the Shura Council. Its members are appointed by royal decree, chosen from a field of candidates with long years of service in the State's administrative apparatus, or exceptional service to the country in a personal capacity. Experience and a track record of efficiency are guiding values in the selection process. Frequently drawn from the fields of science, literature and culture, from positions of excellence in academic life, from the diplomatic ranks or the commercial marketplace, the selection is the prerogative of His Majesty the Sultan, who has the final say in appointing members to the Council from the world outside politics.

Royal Decree No 77/2019 appointed 85 members to the State Council for its current seventh term, and this figure includes 15 women, representing about 18% of the total membership.

The State Council includes in its membership an elite cohort of experts and specialists who inform its decisions when carrying out the tasks entrusted to it.

Special Functions of the State Council

Article 72 of the Basic Law of the State bearing on the Council of Oman defines the powers of the Council, which are to approve or amend draft laws, debate development plans and the state's general budget, make recommendations as appropriate, and propose new legislation as befits the limits of its authority.

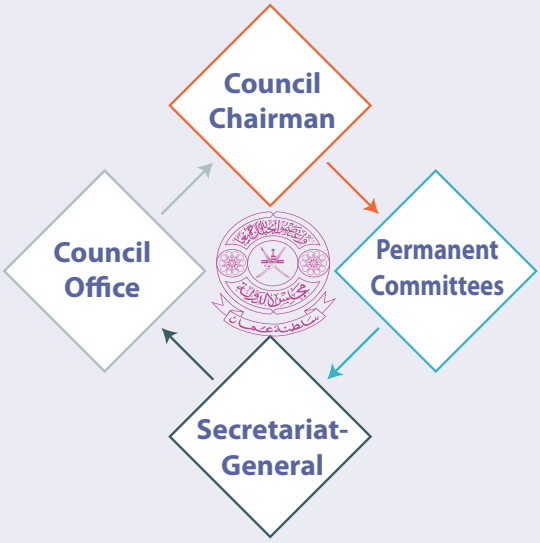
The State Council also studies and debates matters bearing on the implementation of development plans, and submits proposals to government that it views as beneficial to the country's broad development agenda. It proffers proposals and studies that validate and empower the traditional values of Omani society, that protect its successes, and that voice appropriate solutions to many economic and social issues.

The State Council sits for a term of four years, and conducts four annual sessions, each of a duration of not less than eight months, commencing with the annual inauguration of the Council of Oman.

Structure of the State Council

The main organs of the State Council, as described in Article 31 of the Council of Oman Law, consist of the Council Chairman, the Council Office, Standing Committees and the Secretariat-General.

The Council of Oman Law clarified the powers of the Council Chairman, and stipulated that the State Council's internal regulations should establish the procedures for formation of the Council Office and committees, and define their respective competencies.



The Council Chairman: The Council Chairman represents the State Council in its relations with others and before the judiciary. Insofar as concerns financial, administrative and personnel affairs, he wields the authority of a head of department as defined in legislation and royal decree.

The Council Chairman presides over plenary sessions, as well as over joint sessions with the Shura Council. He manages the Council Office, and generally oversees the proper conduct of the Council's work, ensuring its compliance with the provisions of the Basic Law of the State, with broad legislation and with the internal regulations of the Council itself.

Council Office: The Council of Oman Law assigns authority to the Council's internal regulations to determine such procedures as concern the structure of the Council's office and its competencies. These internal regulations include procedures for the formation of the Council Office and a description of its personnel, which shall include the Chairman, his deputies and four members elected by the Council. The Office is responsible for a set of tasks and functions outlined in the Council's articles of association.

The Standing Committees: The Council of Oman Law delegates to the State Council the responsibility for drafting its own procedures for the establishment of standing committees and describing their functions. The internal regulations stipulate that the Council establish standing committees at the start of every session, subject to these including a Legal Committee, an Economic Committee, a Social Committee, a Culture, Media and Tourism Committee, an Education and Research Committee, and a Technology and Innovation Committee.

These committees exercise the powers of the Council, each in its field of competence. Such powers include the study of proposals referred to the Council, the tabling of draft legislation, a review of extant legislation and submission of proposals, review of development plans and of the State's general budget, and submission of proposals and studies of relevance to the Council.

Secretariat-General: The State Council is administered by a Secretariat-General consisting of a Secretary-General, assistants to the Secretary-General, and an adequate quota of personnel. The Secretary- General of the State Council is appointed by royal decree.

The Secretariat-General carries out the necessary work of enabling the Council and its affiliates to exercise their functions and responsibilities, and does so in a manner conformant with the organisational code determined by the Council Chairman.

The Secretary-General has a set of specific tasks, which include overall management of the Secretariat-General and its personnel, assessment of general job performance, preparation of the Council sessions, preparation of the agendas approved by the Office by coordination with the Chairman, and review of the minutes of Council sessions and Council Office meetings.

Achievements Born of Focused Activity

The second annual session of the State Council's seventh term was marked by significant legislative events, most significantly His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's announcement of the new Basic Law of the State, issued as Royal Decree No 6/2021. This was followed a month later by the Council of Oman Law (Royal Decree No 7/ 2021). These two major pieces of legislation represent the Sultanate's stabilising response to the requirements of the coming phase, as embodied in Oman Vision 2040.

The second annual session saw the Council work its way through a steady procession of legislative acts representing consolidation of the foundations of the shura process and an expanding role for the Council. Matters debated, in addition to routine referrals from government, proposals drafted and studies commissioned, included intense discussions around the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025) and the State's general budget for the fiscal year 2021.

In application of Article 48 of the Council of Oman Law, the Council, in the course of the second session of its seventh term, discussed the Draft Law on the Elderly referred to it by the Shura Council.

Article 53 of the Council of Oman Law granted the Council the power to debate studies bearing on the implementation of development plans, as well as on the strategy to consolidate and protect the inherent values of Omani society, referring the outcome of its deliberations back to government. In this regard, the Council

Issues debated in depth by the State Council include all draft laws referred by the government.

discussed six in-depth studies, and at the beginning of the second session of the seventh period agreed to study 15 proposals submitted by its standing committees for the incoming session.

With regard to the activities of the Council Office during the second session of the seventh term, the Office met on several occasions, during which it hosted chairpersons and rapporteurs of the Council's standing committees to review reports submitted by them on various outstanding bills, as well as proposals for new studies and matters brought to their attention by various quarters.

Notwithstanding the challenges facing the Sultanate and the world at large arising from the spread of the novel coronavirus (Covid 19), the Council's work was not interrupted. Three public sessions were convened, for which all precautionary and preventive measures were taken to prevent the spread of the virus and protect the Council's members and personnel. This was in line with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to defer plenary sessions of the Council, and to limit to the expanded relevant committee all discussion of referred bills and other topics related to the Council's competencies. The relevant expanded committee held seven meetings in all, in the course of which many pressing matters were addressed and approved.

Coordination and Collaboration

Under the provisions of the Basic Law of the State and the Council of Oman Law, the State Council retains its national role, in harmony and consistency with other state institutions, ensuring continuity of the development process that the Sultanate is driving forward across all sectors towards ever more ambitious goals. Within the framework of coordination that exists between the State Council and the Council of Ministers, the two bodies consult regularly to discuss aspects of cooperation between them. In this context, a joint meeting of the Council of Ministers and representative members of the Council Office was held on 26 September 2021, at which the value of mutual exchange in the higher interest of the country was emphasised. As such, both sides committed to further strengthen partnership between government and Council. On a separate point, it was agreed that the Council should continue to actively pursue its community awareness campaign.

Further coordination exists between the State and Shura Councils, ensuring complementarity in the work of the two Councils. This collaboration operates at several levels, between the respective Councils' offices and committees on an ongoing basis, as well as through the joint Council sittings. The latter joint sittings are required under Basic Law in the event of differences arising between the two Councils over draft legislation being examined by them.

Consultation Council Legislation that Carries the Hopes of Nation and Citizens

The second annual session of the Shura Council's current term was marked by issuance of the Basic Law of the State and the Council of Oman Law, which defined the Shura Council's relationship with the government, as well as the procedural framework for legislative work shared with the State Council. Also clarified were the internal work procedures involved in the management of Council sessions and of its standing committees. The new legislation empowered the Council to formulate its internal regulations in accordance with Council of Oman Law and the Basic Law of the State.

The second annual session coincided with the arrival and subsequent advance of the coronavirus pandemic, which the Council followed intently. It submitted several direct recommendations to the Supreme Committee charged with identifying a mechanism for dealing with

the spread of Covid-19. These included consequences of a health, social and/or economic nature that were affecting the community and the recommendations were welcomed by the Supreme Committee. Members of the Council also contributed to a support fund established to deal with the effects of Covid-19. Further, at the 24 January 2021 Council session with the Minister of Health, at which the latter delivered his Ministry's statement to the Council, members of the Council discussed the campaign of action being directed by the Ministry of Health in the face of the pandemic, along with its efforts to make available a vaccine against the disease.

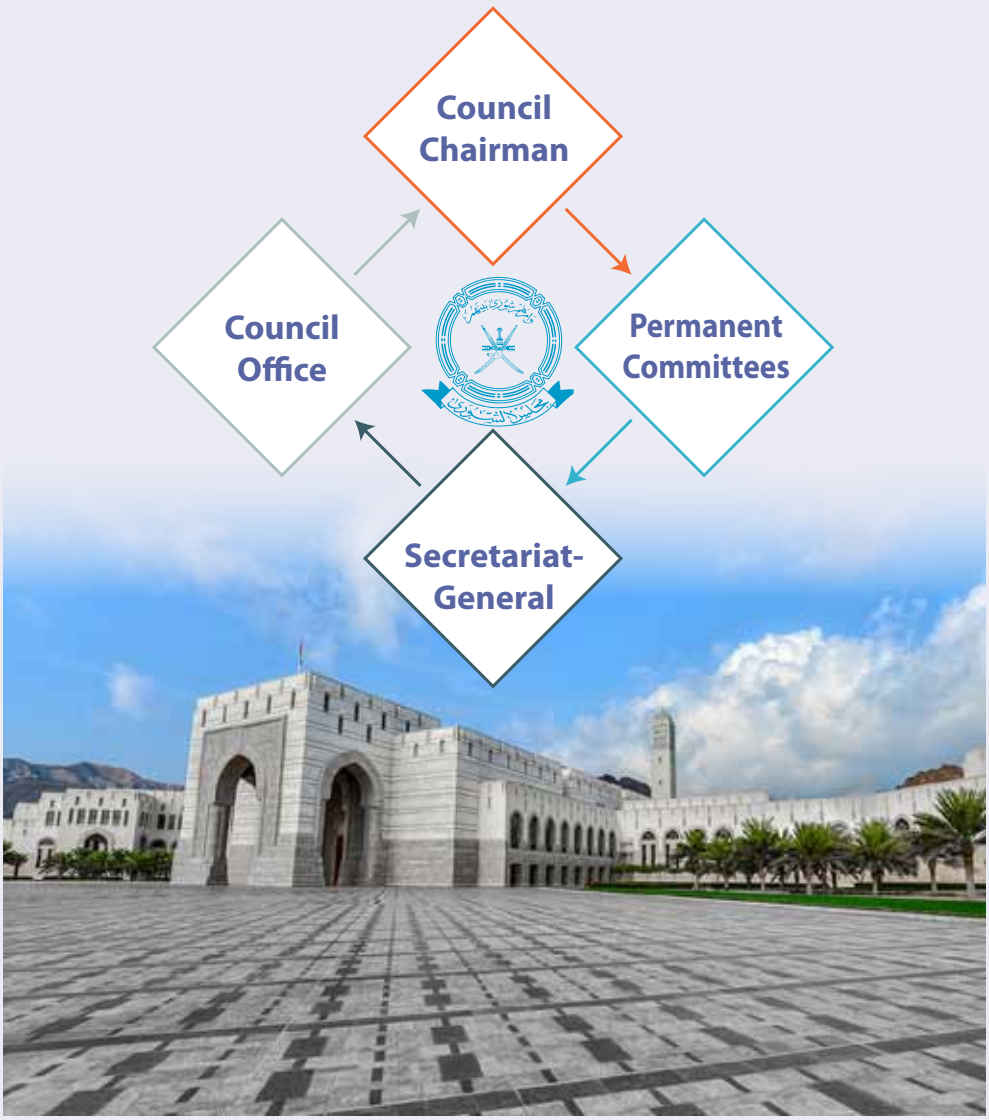
The Council, in its quest to assess the broader adverse impact of Covid-19, sought responses in the form of requests for briefing, while members of the Shura Council submitted a series of communications to the Central Bank of Oman requesting deferrals of loan payments by borrowers, and issued an urgent statement addressing the damage caused by the pandemic, and proposing mechanisms to deal with it.

During its second annual session, the Shura Council activated a number of follow-up tools with the purpose of assessing the impact Covid-19 has had on the community.

Structure of the Shura Council

The term of the Shura Council is four years, commencing on the announcement date of the official results of the Shura Council elections, and extending until 30 September of the fourth year of the Council's term.

The Council exercises its powers and competencies through its four main organs: the Council Chairman, the Council Office, the Standing Committees, and the Secretariat-General.



The Shura Council Office sets out the Council's work plan, along with dates and agendas for regular sessions.

The Council Chairman: The Chairman oversees the work of the Council, manages its sessions, represents it in its communications with other bodies, and speaks on its behalf. He has the right to summon an extraordinary session as necessary. The Chairman and his two deputies are elected at an extraordinary session at the invitation of His Majesty the Sultan, pursuant to Article 17 of the Council of Oman Law issued by means of Royal Decree No 7/2021.

Council Office: The Office draws up the Council's work plan, the dates of regular sessions and their respective agendas, in light of the activities of the various Council committees and the matters referred to them or presented directly to the Council. The Office also manages the Council's workload between sittings and follows up on ministerial responses to the questions drafted during Council sittings and put to them in writing.

Standing Committees: For its ninth term, the Shura Council Office approved the formation of the Council's main committees, namely: the Legislative and Legal Committee, the Economic and Financial Committee, the Health and Environmental Committee, the Education and Scientific Research Committee, the Services and Social Development Committee, the Youth and Human Resources Committee, the Food and Water Security Committee, and the Information and Culture Committee.

The Secretariat-General: The Secretariat-General of the Shura Council consists of the Secretary-General, who is appointed by a royal decree, and a cohort of staff and specialist personnel. The Secretariat-General assists the Council and its organs in the exercise of their responsibilities, facilitating all matters of an organisational and administrative nature. As such, the role of the Secretariat-General is critical to the success of the Council's work.

Legislative and Oversight Activities

The Shura Council exercises its powers and prerogatives by means of established shura work tools. The Council of Oman Law defines the legislative and oversight powers enjoyed by the Council, as underwritten in the Basic Law of the State issued under Royal Decree 6/2021, of which Article 72 outlines the legislative and oversight powers assigned to the Council of Oman. These powers expand the capacity of the Council to participate in the decision-making process on the one hand, while voicing the concerns and aspirations of their constituents on the other. Chapter Six explains the follow-up tools available to the Shura Council which, as described in Article 56, consist of: urgent statement, request for briefing, expression of desire, question, request for debate, discussion of ministerial statements, deep questioning. These tools enable the Council to monitor the performance of government agencies and learn about the policies, plans and programmes they are implementing.

During the second annual session (2020-2021) of its ninth term (2019-2023), the Council completed its examination of a number of draft laws, reports and follow-up tools. It held 14 regular sessions, during which it approved 10 bills and agreements referred by government, specifically the draft state general budget for the fiscal year 2021; the draft amendment to certain provisions of the insurance companies law; the draft amendment to the Takaful insurance law; the unified draft law (system) to combat commercial fraud in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); the draft securities law; the draft amendment to certain provisions of the Civil Status Law; the draft amendment to certain provisions of the Motor Vehicle Insurance Law; the draft amendment

The Council of Oman Law defines the legislative and oversight powers enjoyed by the Shura Council.

to certain provisions of the Foreigners' Residence Law; the draft amendment to certain provisions of the Documents and Archives Law issued under Royal Decree No 60/2007; and the draft agreement between the Government of the Sultanate and the Government of the State of Qatar on the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of tax evasion in relation to taxes on income and capital.

The Council Office and its standing committees commission and conduct in-depth studies of relevance to current draft legislation and referred draft agreements. In addition, they assess the efficacy of follow-up tools adopted. The Council Office holds periodic meetings, during which it reviews issues raised by the committees, by its own membership and by members of the public.

Insofar as concerns follow-up tools, members of the Shura Council rely heavily on these valuable instruments, especially in the current social and economic climate. Of particular interest are those issues which are brought to light through public interaction on social media platforms. In this respect, five urgent statements were addressed, most notably an urgent statement on the terms and controls involved in the allocation of government land, an urgent statement on Oman Vision 2040 and the aspirations associated with achievement of this vision, and one on the challenges presented by distance learning.

Council members also used written questions to obtain clarification on a number of topics. A total of 136 questions were submitted, in addition to 12 briefing requests. Members of the Council presented 28 expressions of desire with the aim of raising the level of government performance by way of mechanisms that can improve the government's level of service to the public. The Council submitted 9 debate requests.

On the matter of ministerial statements, the Council, in the course of the second annual session of its ninth term debated five ministerial statements, during which discussions enquiries and observations were submitted. In the final analysis, appropriate solutions were found for all difficulties facing the implementation of various sectoral development projects. The debates around ministerial statements included a discussion of the statement of His Excellency the Minister of Health, the statement of His Excellency the Minister of Education, the statement of His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the statement of His Excellency the Minister of Heritage and Tourism, and the statement of His Excellency the Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation.

Within the formal structure of cooperation and coordination that exists between the Shura Council and the Council of Ministers, and based on the stipulations contained in the Basic Law of the State and the Council of Oman Law that promotes coordination between all state institutions, the annual joint meeting of the two Councils was held at the Council of Ministers headquarters on 4 May 2021, where His Highness the Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs greeted His Excellency the Chairman of the Shura Council in the presence of Their Highnesses and Excellencies members of the Council of Ministers and Their Excellencies members of the Shura Council Office.

Omani Media - An Honest Mirror and An Honest Message

The Omani media have served as custodians of reality in the half century of concentrated progress undertaken by the Sultanate. Their various organs of expression, never given to hyperbole, have been uniformly impartial in their presentation of the projects and personalities that have driven this process forward, conscious of their role in communicating fact over fabrication. This approach to the delivery of news and commentary is one that resonates with the Omani character. It prides itself on objectivity and eschews the kind of sensationalism that divides. By any metric, the Omani media message is one of balance.

The Omani media derives its vision, mission and objectives from basic principles espoused by the state. It drafts its own strategic goals, and its specific programming policies, within a framework defined by the national ethos of the Sultanate of Oman. It views its mission as one of spreading awareness and knowledge and achieving cultural openness, while protecting lawful freedom of opinion and expression. It is uncompromising in its quest for excellence, raising the performance bar within of the Omani print and audio-visual sectors, while ensuring their continuity. It recognises the value of media studies, research, and of course technology, in advancing performance. Technology has opened the door to new formats of communication, and the traditional media channels have adapted accordingly, expanding their delivery streams to social media platforms and their various applications. One result has been a broadening of

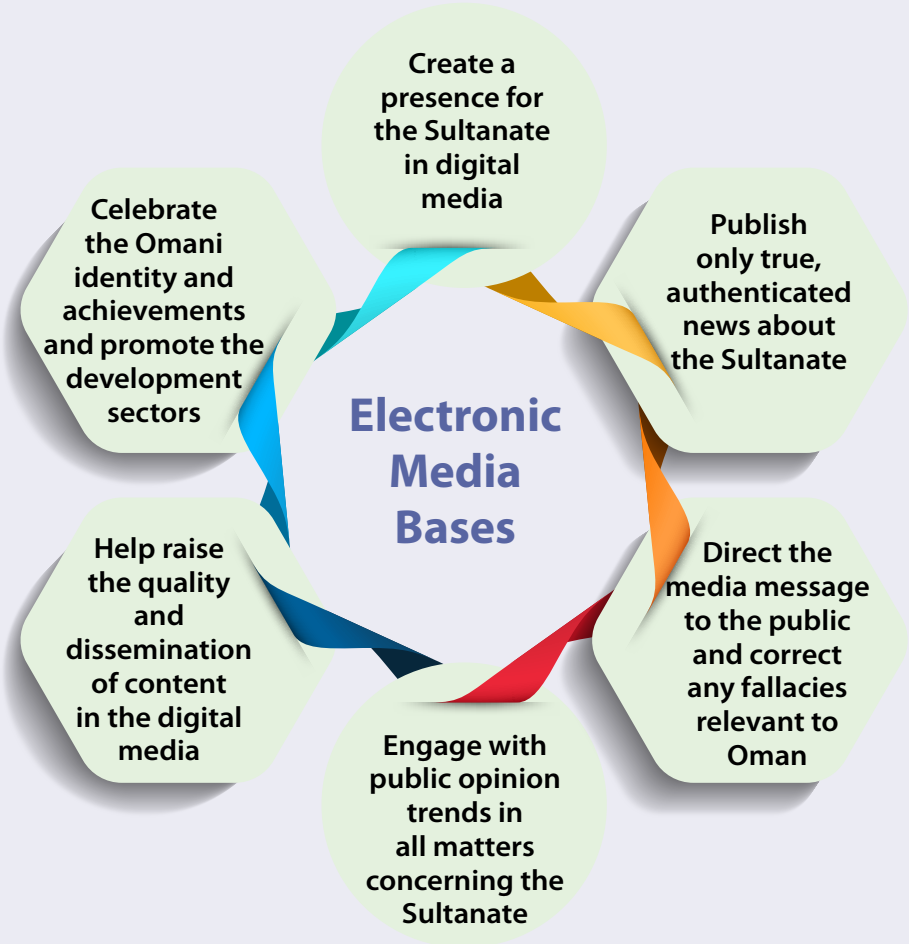
reach via these platforms, bringing the culture and character of the Sultanate to an ever growing audience. Media legislation, meanwhile, has kept pace with the changes, and new professional charters regulate the conduct of media work. At stake is the valuable reputation of the Omani media, indeed of the Sultanate itself. Oman is proud of its contributions, past and present, to civilisation. Its ability to influence local, regional and global opinion is a direct consequence of its balanced, responsible, open-minded approach to issues, especially issues involving divergent views, and these values are embedded in the founding principles of its media.

A Clear Media Vision

The Ministry of Information espouses the State-approved policy of clear communication, seeing its mandate as one of constantly improving the quality of its media message to the public, for the delivery of which it uses the tools of technology, creativity and technique. It is diligent in its pursuit of better information and engages in research, public polling and targeted studies to this end. The communication environment to which it is committed is one guided by the principles of objectivity, credibility and responsibility that underpin Oman's

overall communication policy, whether dealing with the public at home or the international community in its overseas interactions.

The Ministry of Information, through policies adopted in its espousal of the digital age, has multiple objectives, among them the priority of establishing a strong presence for the Sultanate in the various electronic media. This presence can be used to create an awareness of Oman's unique identity and recent achievements, or to promote specific sectors of the economy or culture, always with an eye to maintaining or improving the quality of Omani content. The Ministry seeks to be a trustworthy source of information by disseminating reliable data about the country and by interacting with the public to provide information requested and/or to correct misinformation about the Sultanate. It monitors and analyses all news and information of relevance to the Sultanate on various sites and platforms and



surveys public opinion regularly on such issues.

In pursuit of its long term objective of providing an effective digital media service, the Ministry has expanded its electronic endeavours to aspects of production, publishing and the promotion of media content of every kind. Through much of 2021, the Directorate-General of Electronic Media worked on production of the video-on-demand platform project 'Ain', and a group of programmes exclusive to the platform were aired in a trial broadcast on 1 September 2021.

Ain is the Sultanate's first interactive digital platform with a focus on Omani and Arab content and a mission to build bridges of communication between the Ministry and the public. It offers a set of services and media products with broad appeal on the one hand, and strong marketing instincts on the other, enabling it to survive and thrive in a field of competing electronic platforms.

The platform has assembled a raft of audio and visual content representing upwards of ten thousand media materials from the Ministry of Information's various radio and television channels. These materials are preserved and archived on the platform in an easy-access arrangement designed to provide the user with a glitch-free browsing experience in his/her chosen media format.

Acutely aware of the preference by social media users for visual and other digital formats, the Ministry has been developing electronic content that is then broadcast through its accounts, publishing video clips, images and newsfeed to followers within the Sultanate and overseas.

The Ministry's electronic platform, Sultanate of Oman Media Portal, launched on 12 December 2019, has an increasingly important presence in the digital media and offers diverse and integrated content about the Sultanate in all of its aspects and in three languages: Arabic, English and French. The Portal's principal objective is to enhance the Omani presence on the worldwide web. As a consequence, it is alert to all domestic, Arab and regional changes and developments in accelerated electronic media. News content published under the 'Oman News' tab topped all other content by volume, with a total of 1,739 Arabic language news items published, including 908 items between January and June 2021.

In a building partnership with other government institutions, enhanced by the provision of factual, dependable data and information, the Ministry of Information, acting through the Community Media Centre, makes available reports and commentary on politics, the economy, media and other vital issues. Most recently it generated reports on His Majesty the Sultan's visit to Saudi Arabia, on the General State Budget for 2021, the launch of the Ain digital platform, and the outlook for Oman in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

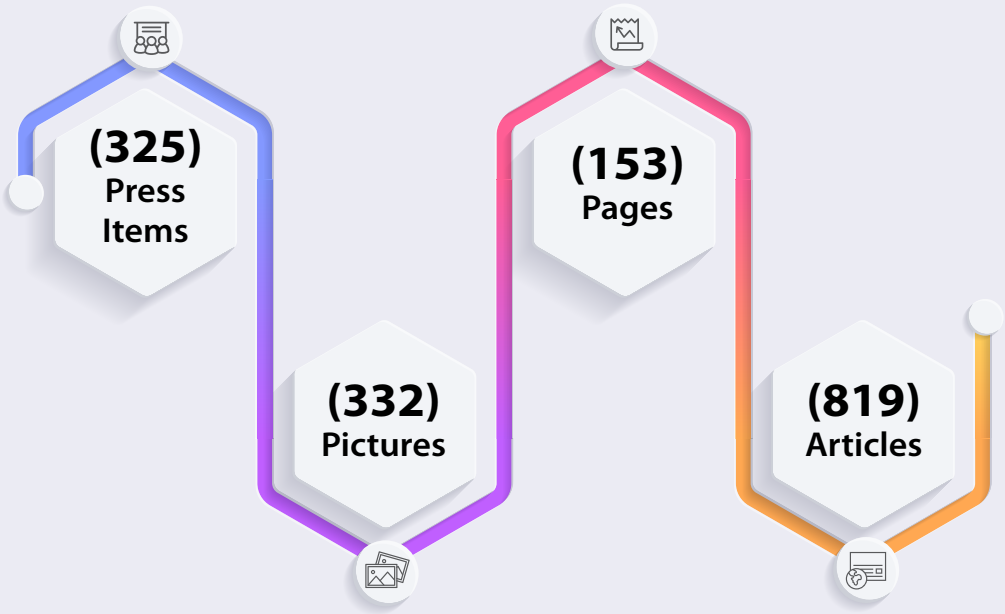
Protecting the Image of the Sultanate Abroad

The Ministry of Information is solicitous of the positive reputation the Sultanate has acquired regionally and internationally, and acts as a guardian of that status. It promotes to the widest audience the success story of the Sultanate's approach to development; communicates Oman's strong and diverse cultural contribution to the world; and highlights aspects of the cultural, educational, environmental and health progress achieved by the Sultanate. The Ministry participates to this end in the most important of the international book fairs in the Arab world and further afield.

In this context, records show 325 written items and 332 photos published in the external press during the first half of 2021, a total of 153 pages, including articles and reports. In all, 819 articles included information on the Sultanate, with the French press leading with a total of 405 articles. articles.

The Ministry of Information is acutely aware of the influence of the external media and its potential for presenting the Sultanate to overseas audiences in a positive light. The foreign print and broadcast media constitute a valuable

News and Reports Published in the Foreign Press During the First Half of 2021



publicity channel for the dissemination of Oman's views and underlying belief systems, clarifying Muscat's official policies and positions to optimal effect. As such, the Ministry has been expanding and developing its external contacts and the Sultanate now has three media attachés: in the Arab Republic of Egypt (Cairo), the United Kingdom (London), and the United States of America (Washington). The media attachés function to bring attention to the reinvigorated Omani renaissance and its vision for 2040. Their approach is creative in describing the phases of the great project being brought to fruition under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The Oman News Agency

Since its establishment under Royal Decree No 39/86 of 29 May 1986, the Oman News Agency, official source of news for the Sultanate, has been a significant implementer of Oman's media policies, derived broadly from the vision of His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in the past and of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik today, and expressed in the mandate assigned to it at its foundation by Royal Decree.

The agency has been active locally, regionally and externally, and constantly measures its own performance against a rising standard. It has done much to enlighten the public with its briefings on local and foreign events, priding itself on publishing only accurate, verified news through its local and international network of sources.

As part of its brief, the agency covers local events and activities, political, economic and development-related, as well as reporting general news. It conveys the Sultanate's positions on diverse issues of significance and distributes news, features, photographic images and other material to media channels in both Arabic and English.

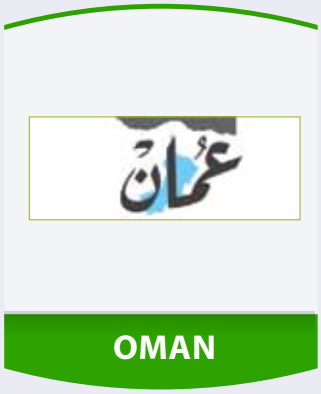
As its reach and influence have grown, ONA has assigned correspondents to locations throughout the Sultanate, whence they cover local news for the agency. It also supports a network of correspondents in Arab and international capitals who provide the agency with breaking developments and background coverage, as exemplified in its valuable sabq service, which has earned the Omani agency plaudits among its peers at home and abroad. It makes strategic use of social networking sites to deliver its news and photo services to followers. In 2021, the agency added print and visual reports, viz. the Governorates bulletin, the Culture bulletin, the Sports bulletin, the International bulletin, and the Economy bulletin.

The Omani Press

The Omani press is trained and equipped to respond to rapid developments in media and communications at international level. It is equally conscious of its mission to fulfil the demand for real and relevant news by the Omani public, while providing a forum for the open discussion of citizen concerns.

Perhaps one of the most prominent distinguishing features of the Omani press is that it is almost entirely owned by the Omani private sector, with the exception of the Oman newspaper. The work of press institutions in the Sultanate, as well as the procedures for issuing newspapers and establishing publishing houses, printing presses and advertising companies,

Daily Newspapers Published in Arabic



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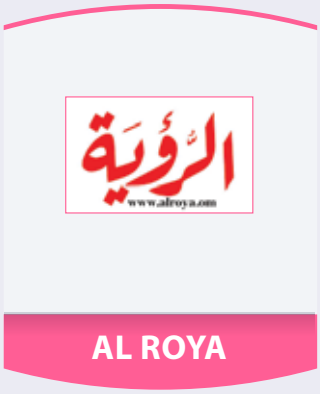


AL ROYA

are regulated through the Press and Publications Law, which was amended by Royal Decree No 87/2004.

The Sultanate publishes a fleet of newspapers, magazines and bulletins - daily, weekly, monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly in addition to free trade journals, responding to ever more sophisticated demand from a fast-evolving society with fast-evolving concerns. In addition, ministries and agencies publish magazines or publications concerned with their own activities or special interest matters.

Oman's Arabic-language dailies are Oman, Al Watan, Al Shabiba and Al Ruwaya. Published daily in the English language also are the Oman Daily Observer, Times of Oman and Muscat Daily. In addition, several tabloid format weeklies dominated by entertainment, sport and advertising themes are delivered free of charge with their parent newspapers or distributed individually.

English-Language Publications

OMAN DAILY OBSERVER

TIMES OF OMAN

MUSCAT DAILY

Directorate-General of Press, Publication and Advertising

The Directorate-General of Press, Publication and Advertising is affiliated to the Ministry of Information and succeeds the Oman Foundation for Press, Publication and Advertising, which was dissolved and merged with the Ministry under its new title by virtue of Royal Decree No 95/2020 of 18 August 2020. The Directorate supervises the most important of Oman's home grown newspapers and magazines and is distinguished by the professional quality of its personnel, its publications, its ability to keep pace with the rapid advances experienced by journalism in all its aspects.

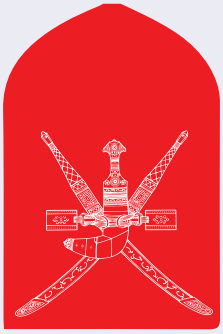
The Directorate's publications, daily newspapers, and monthly and quarterly magazines are remarkably robust, with solid readership figures, notwithstanding competitive challenges. They were, consequently, more than able to keep abreast of ongoing advances in the profession and its supporting technologies.

It has faced the challenges of media work head on, framing policy from the hard realities of the sector, with a focus on rationalising production methods and overall spending.

The Directorate principally publishes the Arabic-language newspaper Oman and the English daily Oman Observer, as well as the quarterly cultural magazine Nizwa, a much respected Arab cultural publication. It maintains an active research unit, which publishes studies of significance to the sector, as well as providing printing and publicity services.

The local press avails of the latest printing methods. (Ministry of Information Press).

Government Communication



التواصل الحكومي

In 2017, the Government Services Communication Centre was established within the Directorate-General of Communications at the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers. On 18 August 2020, Royal Decree No 95/2020 disbanded the Government Services Communication Centre and transferred the Directorate-General of Communications to the Ministry of Information. The Decree defined the new terms of reference of the Ministry of Information as concerns government communication as: drawing up plans to overhaul government communication; enhancing community awareness of government projects, decisions and policies; providing the media support needed by government agencies to explain their activities to the public; and overseeing and analysing the output of the media and communication services.

The Directorate-General of Communications has been looking to the resources of social media platforms as a means of facilitating communication with the public at home and abroad. One intention is to enrich social media content that is of direct relevance to the Sultanate, for onward sharing with different segments of society. It hopes to raise awareness of the services, programmes and activities that government institutions are working on. Broadly, it plans to circulate more material around individual and institutional initiatives of national importance and to promote the Sultanate and its achievements, highlighting its advanced positions in global rankings and reports.

Radio and Television... A Sincere and Purposeful Media Message

Radio and television channels in Oman are riding the crest of a wave of positive growth. Programming trends are full of optimism and hope for the future, promoting feelings of national belonging and a will to engage with the grand development project that is taking the Sultanate forward with confidence to 2040. The achievements of the state, including its peace-oriented foreign policy achievements, are properly celebrated.

In the overhaul and restructuring of the state's administrative apparatus that took place in 2020 and which included the media sector, the Public Authority for Radio and Television was dissolved and incorporated into the Ministry of Information. Royal Decree No 95/2020 of 18 August 2020, which accomplished the merger and defined the structure of the new organisation, accomplished a step closer towards the vision of Oman 2040.

While many radio and television programmes explore formats for conveying the broad and specific successes of the development process, they also actively encourage viewer and listener participation in the process, through talk shows, panel discussions, phone-ins and online dialogues. Young people are particularly active in this sphere and their interaction is nurtured by programming strategies that focus intently on activities that interest them, on publicly celebrating their academic, sporting and other achievements and dreams. Offsetting this validation is the message that reminds young people of their responsibility to contribute to the advance of their nation. Youth are its most precious and most valuable resource.

The Ministry of Information reaches its domestic listening audience by way of the five radio channels it oversees. Between them, their combined programming range spreads its appeal to all segments of Omani society, with content extending from early civilisation and history to the successes of the Modern Renaissance. The tradition of disciplined news reporting runs deep and is constantly monitored for quality and for openings to improvement in both radio and television. Four television channels compete for excellence in delivery of visual content, from news to culture to sport and entertainment. Television lends itself to the impactful portrayal of developments, typified by the giant economic and other projects that have transformed the landscape of the Sultanate and generated equally transformative changes in Omani society. Education, health and prosperity are now available to all Omanis. Meanwhile, as a consequence in part of these successes at home, the Sultanate has stepped gradually into a larger and

more influential role in the region and beyond as a purveyor of the values of non-aggression, understanding, friendship, humanitarianism. These values are reflected in the nature and quality of media programming and are deeply respected by domestic and overseas audiences. The constant shared by all broadcasters is a commitment to credible, responsible reporting of diverse content, delivered by professionals and motivated only by the goal of communicating accurate information to the public.

The Ministry of Information won several awards in 2021 at the 21st Arab Radio and Television Festival in Tunisia. In the television sector, the Sultanate of Oman TV programme 'Malaf al Osbou'a (Weekly File) won the Television Creativity Award against stiff competition. Sultanate of Oman Radio, meanwhile, came away with three awards. It earned second place in the Radio Coordination Award (the Comprehensive Radio Exchanges Award) contested by Arab radio stations. The 'Bibasata' (Simply) programme carried off first prize in the Simplifying Science category. Finally, in the Music and Singing stakes, the Sultanate's national radio came second for its song 'Dream of the Road.'

Highly professional Omani cadres present the news without embellishment.

The Audio Sector… Where Quality Intersects with Credibility

The audio sector has responsibility for managing the message conveyed to listeners at home and abroad through its five radio channels, along with maintaining the overall quality of content and presentation. Today, Radio Oman is being heard across different parts of the world, thanks to the digital revolution on the one hand and the continuous improvement and diversification of programme content on the other. To encourage a spirit of collaboration, the radio sector works alongside other regional radio broadcasters, participating in Gulf and Arab festivals and forums and reserving guest slots for an exchange of programmes on their respective airwaves. It arranges training courses for its media cadres at prestigious radio stations around the world, such as the BBC, the France 24 group and others, with a view to benefiting from pioneering radio experiences and raising the professionalism of personnel. After over fifty years of sustainable growth in the radio sector, combined with relentless adherence to the principle of quality and credibility, the radio today is highly trusted by the Omani public, and is heading to achieve substantial listener growth with its content range that appeals to all ages and tastes.

Beyond its regular and exceptional coverage of activities, events and emergency situations, Sultanate of Oman Radio logged an extracurricular success in its live broadcast of the opening of the Sultanate's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai under the title 'Oman at Expo.' The significance of the broadcast was the fact that it was a live broadcast of an international event in which the Sultanate was participating. Conducted using new technology to transmit directly from outside the Sultanate, it represented a trial unique to the radio station.

Radio broadcasts appeal to the spirit and authenticity of Omani social traditions.

Public Radio

The first radio station in the Sultanate, Public Radio began broadcasting on 30 July 1970, documenting the very earliest steps of the modern Renaissance. It sees its dual mission as, on the one hand, helping to inculcate values of good citizenship, while contributing to raising the standard of publicly-disseminated information.

Public Radio articulates its public service mission with a programming schedule that revolves around social, cultural, intellectual, economic and religious issues of general interest. It encourages dialogue on these issues and reinforces the emerging ethos of self-motivation and engagement with the broad horizons of national development.

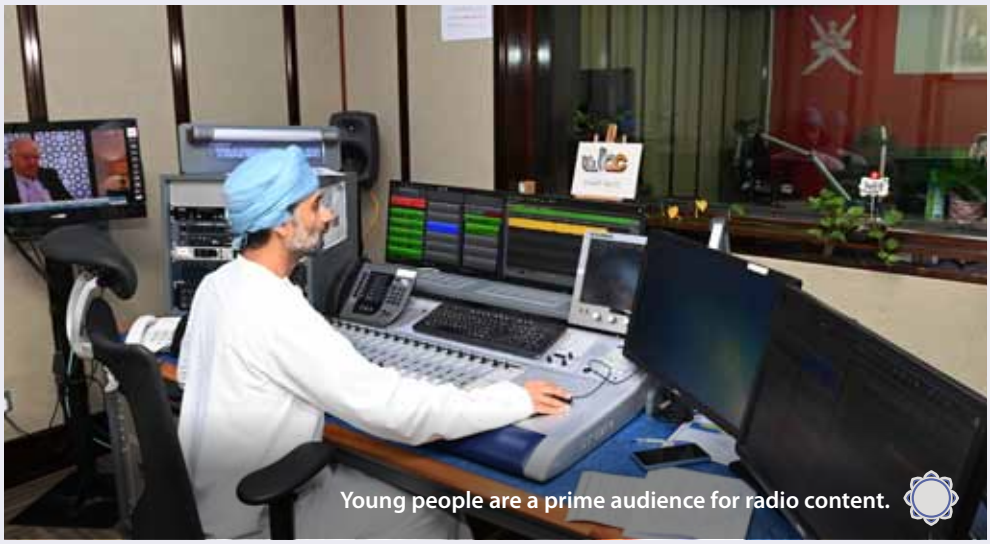
The ethos of Public Radio draws on the principles of moderate Islam and on the authentic Arab customs and traditions that have moulded the open-minded tolerance of the Omani personality.

The Sultanate's media message is one of moderation and impartiality delivered by journalists who take pride in their profession.

Youth Radio

Youth Radio first came on the air in July 2003, coinciding with the Sultanate's celebration of Renaissance Day on 23 July. Initially known as the Youth Programme, it was specifically aimed at the younger generation in its content and youthful presentation.

Al Shabab began to broadcast around the clock on 1 January 2014 and airs in all governorates.



Young people are a prime audience for radio content.

Holy Qur'an Radio

Holy Qur'an Radio is dedicated to the Holy Qur'an and its teachings, and its broadcasts include recitations from the Holy Book in the various styles, along with programmes of special interest to Muslims or students of Islam. The programming ethos is one of moderation and tolerance, and its content promotes these Islamic values. As features also of the Omani character, they are values that resonate strongly with Omanis and with their interpretation of Islam historically. This interpretation respects freedom of worship and rejects all forms of extremism in favour of understanding between Islamic sects and harmony, brotherhood and compassion between people.

Holy Qur'an Radio was launched on 28 July 2006, broadcasting for seven hours a day, and moved to its current 24-hour schedule on 1 January 2014.

English Radio

Established on 15 December 1975, it aims to communicate, interact and promote dialogue between Omani society and the non-Arabic speaking English communities residing or visiting the Sultanate. On 1 January 2015, English radio broadcasting began around the clock.

English-language radio is a channel for communication with the non-Arabic speaking communities residing in or visiting the Sultanate.

Classical Music Radio

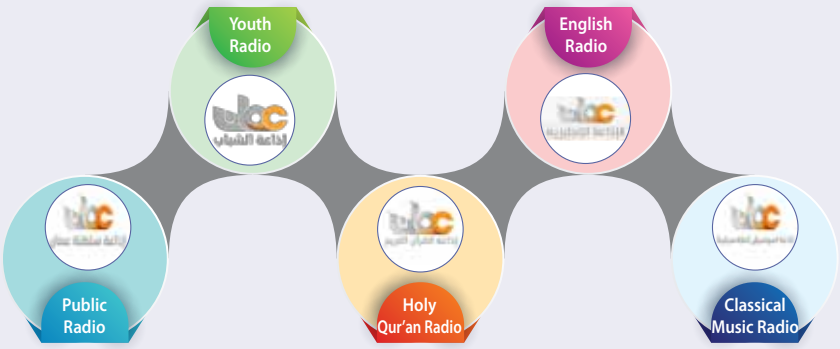
Classical Music Radio took to the airwaves on 22 July 2010 and has been broadcasting to appreciative audiences ever since. It presents an eclectic programme schedule of music derived from the creative output of the world's greatest classical music geniuses past and present. Musical presentations are preceded and followed by brief commentaries in Arabic and English, and the station has a strong following of both Arab and non-Arab listeners, echoing the station's philosophy that music is a global language that transcends geographical and linguistic boundaries. Classical Music Radio is passionate about its mission to spread the culture of classical music and make it accessible to all, to educate the listener's musical palate, and generally to inspire audiences with some of the finest work of local, Arab and international composers.

Television... Diversity and Quality in the Visual Image

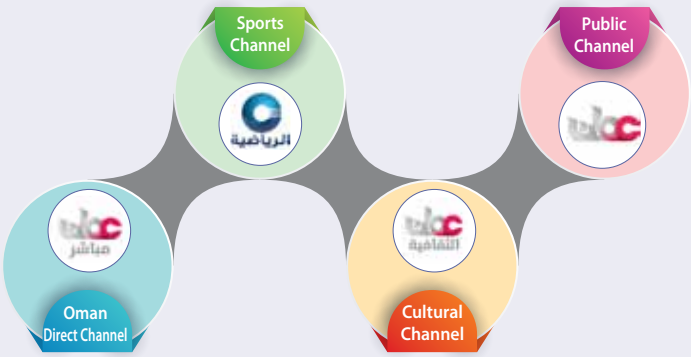
Sultanate of Oman TV is responsible for bringing to public attention all material of essential or recreational interest in a timely manner, and without sacrificing quality in the process. All newsworthy events, of religious, social, cultural, economic or sporting consequence, are covered by the national broadcaster, as are in-depth analyses of interest to youth or sports fans or relevant to tourism, health, family and children, with content and presentation adapted to the respective audiences. Sultanate of Oman TV broadcasts reach all parts of the Sultanate, via satellite or internet, facilitating access by all.

Sultanate of Oman TV incorporates the Public Channel , Oman Direct (or Oman Mubasher), and the Sports Channel, to which was added , on 1 January 2016, the Oman Cultural Channel, which brought with it an important visual dimension to the dissemination of Oman's rich and diverse cultural heritage and identity.

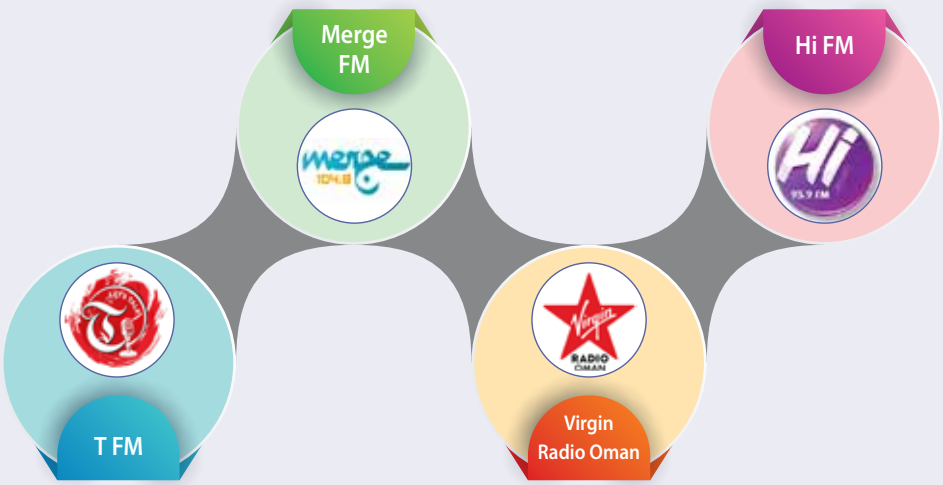
Sultanate of Oman Radio



Sultanate of Oman Television



Private Radio Stations



The Public Channel

As the national broadcaster, Oman TV is the visual documenter of Omani society, offering its viewers a window on all aspects of Omani life in the 21st century: what Omanis are doing today, as well as the history that brought them to this point. Its ethical mission is to consolidate the social values of citizenship, moderation, tolerance and dialogue, with the end purpose of arriving at greater understanding and peace among peoples and nations. It recruits talented young Omani technicians, writers and presenters with skills in the televisual field to create the high quality product that viewers see on their screens.

In 2021, the Public Channel upheld its policy of reaching the broadest audiences through a diverse offering of general and entertainment content that reflects viewers' eclectic preferences. Particularly popular are the many local, Arab and overseas films and drama series that dominate its recreational programming schedule.

Sultanate of Oman TV keeps abreast of media developments and benefits from modern technologies in all aspects of its delivery.

The Sports Channel

The Sports Channel offers broad coverage of local and international sporting events in a variety of formats, with daily, weekly and seasonal coverage and commentary, as well as daily roundups.

The Sports Channel provides uninterrupted coverage of local and international sports news and events.

The Cultural Channel

The Cultural Channel essentially promotes Omani culture to its viewers, highlighting the Sultanate's unique heritage and keeping abreast of local culturally-focused events. It provides direct coverage of the most important relevant activities taking place around the country, including lectures and seminars attended by lovers of books and literature, art or related areas of interest. It produces or commissions special interest programmes and documentaries locally, and also airs select overseas productions as appropriate to its mandate.

The Oman Direct Channel

The Oman Mubasher (Oman Direct) channel was launched in January 2014 to cover political, social and cultural events, conferences, festivals, seminars, poetry and literary gatherings, student graduation ceremonies and military parades. Since early 2020, it has broadcast press conferences held under the auspices of the Supreme Committee charged with coordinating the handling of the Covid-19 coronavirus and its repercussions. Oman Direct also airs the 'Life Lesson' programme and offers a variety of other scheduled entertainment slots. The channel broadcasts round the clock.

The Private Sector and Radio and Television Broadcasting

The developed state of the Omani media is an accurate mirror of the developed state of Omani society. To stay ahead in the media race, the Private Institutions Radio and Television Law was declared in 2004, providing opportunities for the Omani private sector to enter the broadcasting industry, enabling private institutions to own and manage radio and television channels. The principal beneficiaries of this broadening of scope are the Sultanate's listeners and viewers.

The result has been several new radio channels offering programmes on the FM wave band, operated by the Omani private sector. These channels are:

Private radio channels have kept pace with the advances made across all aspects of Omani society.

Muscat FM

Muscat FM Radio in Arabic is Owned by the Muttrah Media Services Company. Muscat FM is a Public Service Provider Broadcasting to the Entire Territory of the Sultanate on the FM Frequency Band.

Al Shabiba FM in Arabic and TFM in English are Both Affiliated to the Muscat Space Media Company, a Media Arm of the Muscat Media Group

The legislation governing private radio and television establishments opened the door for the Omani private sector to own and manage audio and visual broadcasting channels.

In addition to these radio stations, which have extended the scope of their broadcasting service to all governorates, the Ministry of Information, represented by the Department of Private Radio, Television and Electronic Broadcasting Establishments, granted broadcasting licences in 2021 to three electronic radio stations, viz. the 'Gulf Racing Electronic Channel,' owned by Gulf Media Services, 'Funun Electronic Radio', owned by Funun Media and Arts Production, and Mazoon Electronic Channel, owned by the Dhofari Press and Media Company.

Permits were also granted for rebroadcasts from a number of international radio stations, including the BBC and Radio Monte Carlo.

Radio broadcasting channels owned by the private sector contribute to awareness-raising in the community by delivering targeted media messages.

Security - A Disciplined and Reliable Force for Peace and Protection

Even as the modern renaissance transformed the nation's human and material resources into an engine of growth, greatly expanding its wealth, the Sultanate never relinquished its advanced position in global security rankings, often earning maximum status as measured by social and economic stability. Oman continues to keep extremist violence at bay. For the eighth consecutive year, the Sultanate has earned 'zero terrorism' status on the 2020 Global Terrorism Index.

The Index is issued annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace, an influential global research body that promotes the concept of Positive Peace. Oman's zero ranking, which has remained unchanged since the Index was first published in 2012, represents the highest level of safety from terrorist threat in a sometimes violent part of the world.

Credit for this achievement is attributable to commendable core values espoused by Omani society and which have roots in its unique history and culture. Omanis by their nature are uncomfortable with manifestations of intolerance and hatred in others. This antipathy has eased the task of the Sultan's Armed Forces, the Royal Oman Police and the other military and security agencies in maintaining public peace. Oman is an oasis of stability, a secure home for its citizens to enjoy their prosperity in a climate of peace. The modern renaissance founded by His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimur was reasserted by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik when he announced his determination to guide Oman forward to meet "the broad aspirations and hopes nurtured by its citizens."

The annual military parade, over which the Supreme Commander His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik presided at Camp Al Murtafa on 18 November 2021, marked the Sultanate's 51st National Day. Participating in the parade were representative units of the Royal Army of Oman, the Royal Air Force of Oman, the Royal Navy of Oman, the Royal Guard of Oman, the Sultan's Special Force, the Royal Oman Police, the Royal Court Affairs, the Royal Cavalry, the Royal Cavalry of the Royal Guard of Oman and the Joint Military Musical Band. The occasion was a proud display of the military discipline of the Sultan's Armed Forces, of men and women able and ready to defend the homeland and its leader, to affirm their commitment to the national values of dignity, sovereignty and independence of their beloved country; to protect its people and its achievements; and to defend with their lives its territory and its honour, in fulfilment of the covenant they made to themselves and before God, country and leader.

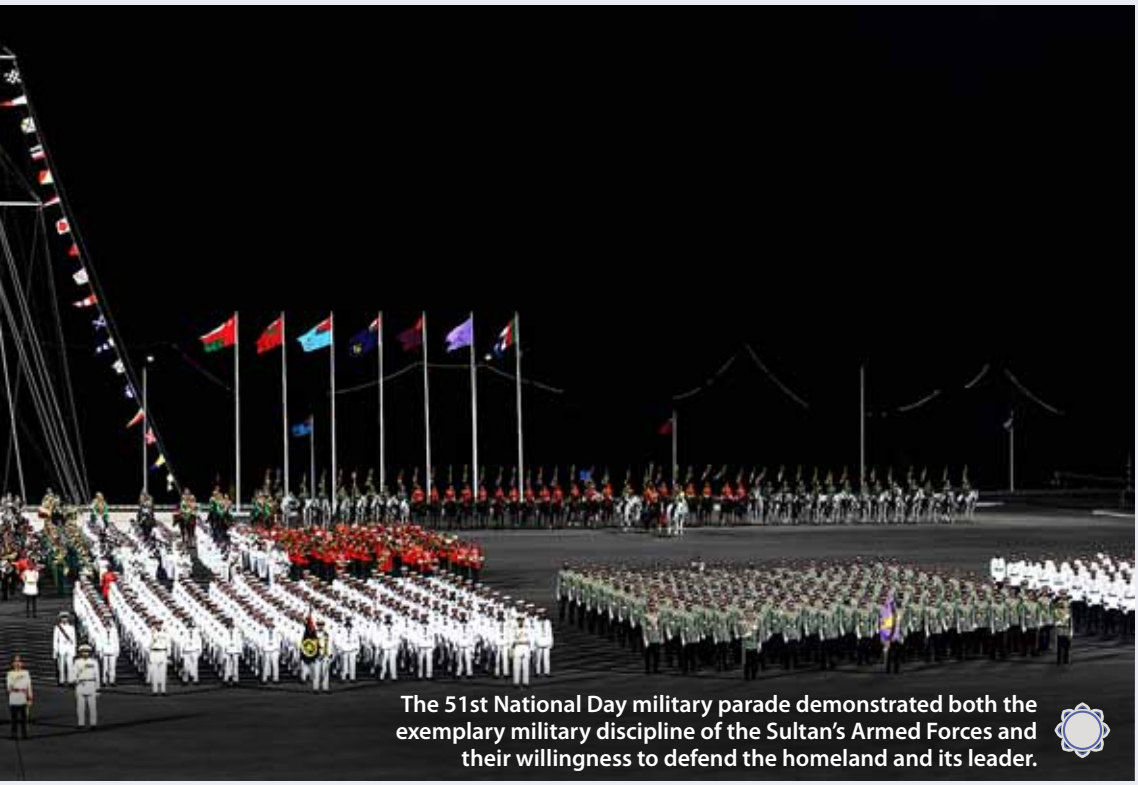
The Sultan's Armed Forces
Trusted Defender of the Integrity of Oman's Modern Renaissance

The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) are a powerful symbol of the Sultanate's renaissance and its achievements. The foundations of that renaissance were laid by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and it advances today under the direction of the Supreme Commander, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Speaking of his commitment to maintaining the vision and pace of development at his address to the nation on 23 February 2020, His Majesty acknowledged the work of the security services: "We would like to express our deepest thanks and gratitude to all of the intrepid personnel of our armed forces, who serve in the military and security sectors, who shoulder the burden of defending this dear homeland and all that it has achieved. We reaffirm to you our careful attention, so that you may continue to be the bulwark that protects this country from end to end."

The SAF is a cornerstone of the stability that has underpinned the rollout of the Sultanate's development

strategy. Its commitment to defending the nation's territorial integrity is unassailable, as is its commitment to discipline and high performance within its ranks. It is a highly trained force that has pursued a methodical path to its own development, acquiring weapons and equipment of ever greater sophistication as that development progressed. It has placed itself at the service of ambitious national projects, as it has pursued equally ambitious internal goals, constantly testing and retraining its personnel to standards worthy of their role as protectors of their country's development endeavours and successes.

The human element constitutes the backbone of the SAF's development aspirations and, as such, is seen as top priority by His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, who recognises it as the main component of the development plans for the SAF's respective wings – the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) – in addition to the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO). Here the focus is on training to the highest levels of proficiency and on creating forces, equipped with a full range of modern weapons, whose members are well qualified to handle the latest military science and technology in every field.



The 51st National Day military parade demonstrated both the exemplary military discipline of the Sultan's Armed Forces and their willingness to defend the homeland and its leader.

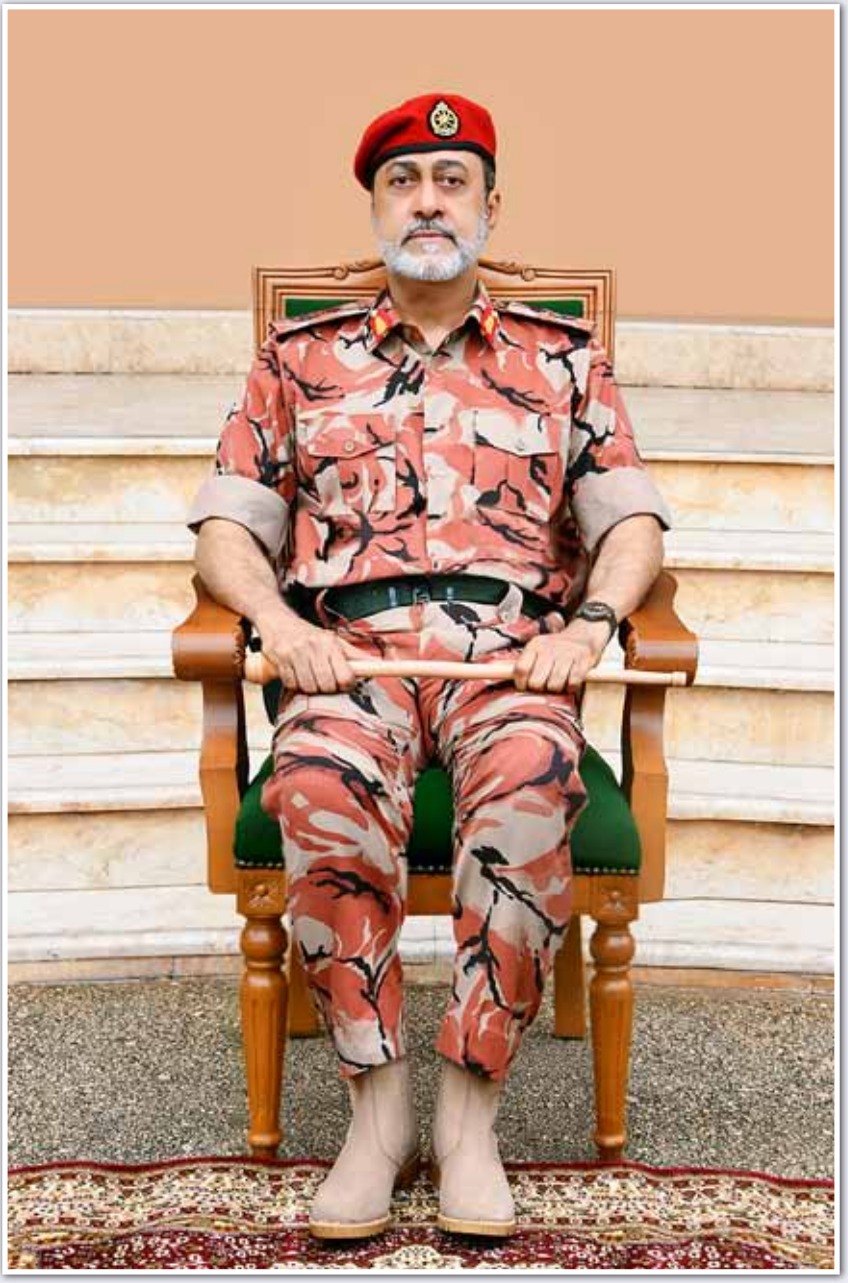
The Royal Army of Oman

After many years of upgrading and modernisation over the course of the renaissance, the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) has become a strong military force, a source of pride for Oman. Its brigades, formations and units have been supplied with high-tech weaponry. In the meantime, special training programmes are being conducted to enhance the combat capability of the military personnel and introduce them to the latest systems applicable in war, such as armoured personnel carriers, modern artillery and air defence systems, armoured vehicles, signals systems, transport vehicles and maintenance workshops. These brigades and formations have become an integrated and high-performance force, with efficient operational, administrative and technical systems in place.

The firqat forces have also undergone significant improvements in their organisation, installations, service facilities and telecommunications systems.

The arsenal is constantly reviewed and restocked in line with the operational requirements of the Royal Army of Oman within the fully integrated system favoured by Oman's military strategy. Combat units are streamlined for more efficient deployment, and new elite special-purpose units created and professionally trained.

The Royal Army of Oman trains to a strict protocol that aligns with the modern weapons technology in its arsenal.



The Royal Air Force of Oman

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAF0) has undergone transformational changes that have turned it today into a highly structured and disciplined contemporary air force, armed with modern fighter craft, advanced equipment and qualified manpower fully capable of safeguarding the tangible and intangible integrity of their homeland. As a proven and efficient arm of Oman's defence structure, RAFO has been entrusted with state-of-the-art aircraft, including combat and logistical transport aircraft, helicopters, and an air defence system that incorporates anti-aircraft missile batteries and radars, training aircraft and training simulators. It has also concluded several forward-looking agreements designed to meet incoming challenges as well as to raise its current technical capability through constant upgrading of the military technology at its disposal. It operates air bases fitted with sophisticated systems capable of functioning in all circumstances and conditions.

RAFO's weapons systems and equipment, transport facilities and manpower are constantly being upgraded to ensure the highest levels of combat proficiency and readiness as it performs its role of protecting Oman's skies and supporting the other wings of the Sultan's Armed Forces.

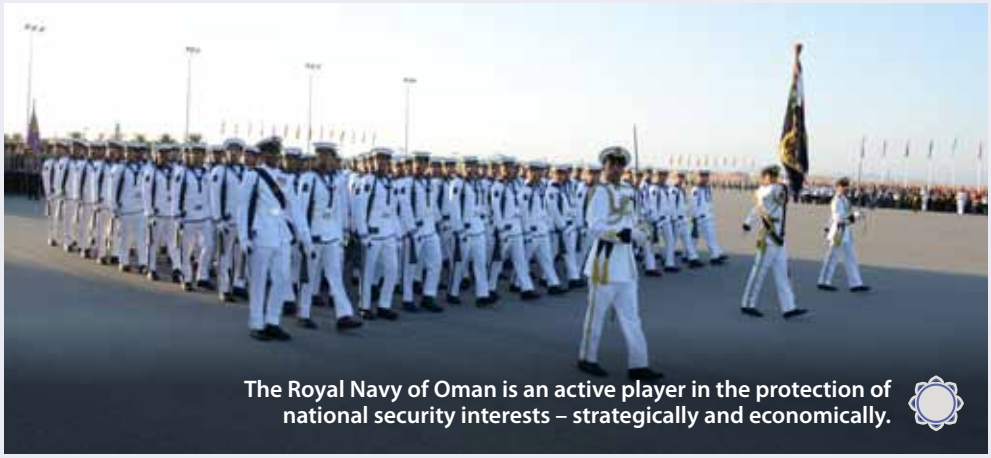
The Royal Air Force of Oman is a well-armed, highly organised contemporary air force.

The Royal Navy of Oman

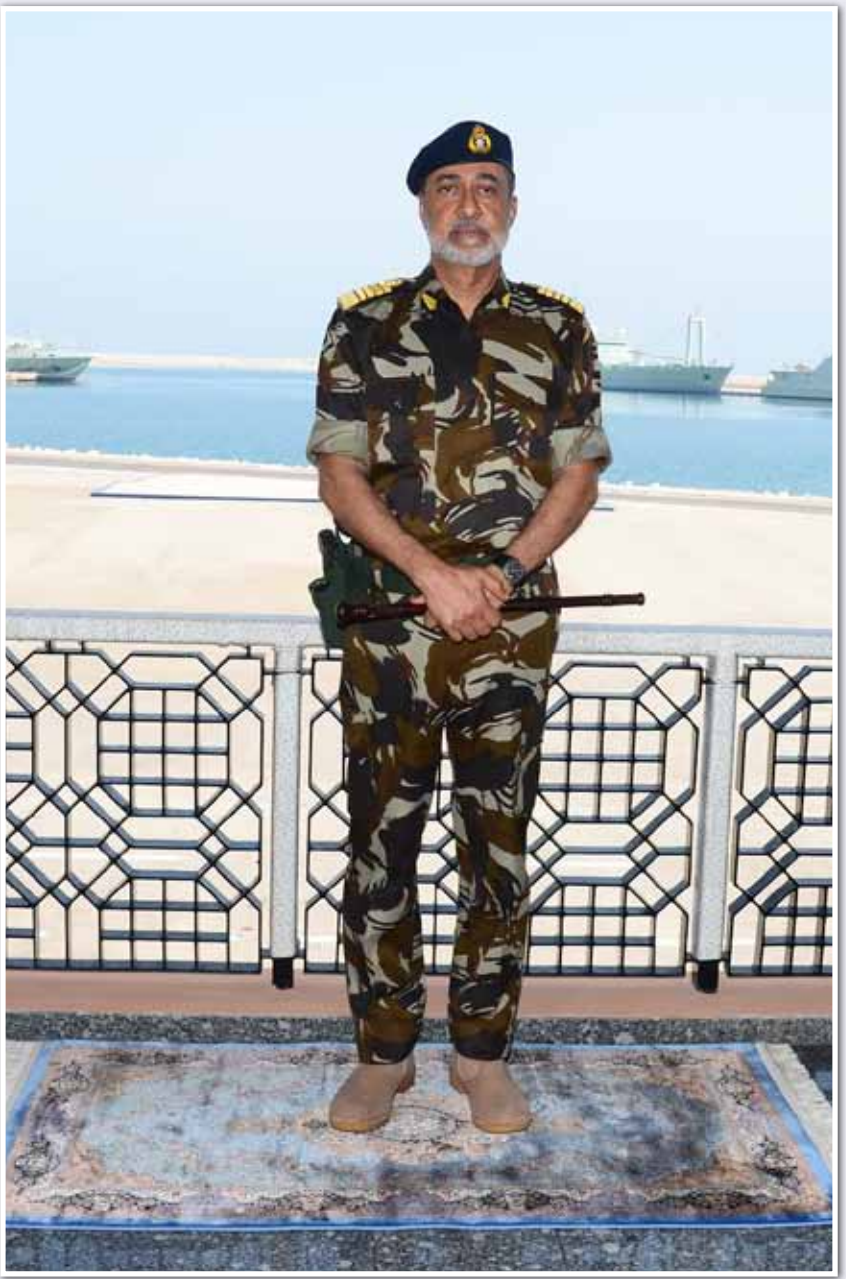
Due to Oman's strategic location on the world map and the fact that the Sultanate overlooks the Gulf, the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) has played a critical role in safeguarding the country's strategic security and economic interests through the RNO's permanent presence in Oman's territorial waters. The RNO continues to modernise its fleet and has benefited from the acquisition of several modern special-purpose vessels in the context of recent projects in which it has participated. These include the Khareef project, the Horizon project, and the Sea of Oman project. Advances in technology and design enable naval units to perform their tasks in diverse maritime conditions over long stretches at sea, and to work under the umbrella of the joint operations system with coastal patrols and relief and search and rescue units in drills and assignments. The RNO maintains a strong presence on the high seas, protecting national sovereignty in Oman's territorial waters and the safety of maritime navigation therein.

The Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy provides the fleet with trained and qualified cadres who have obtained specialist military training and qualifications. In this way the RNO is constantly refining the skills and capabilities of its personnel, training them in various marine sciences of relevance to their respective functions to enhance their skills and performance.

The RNO is privileged to have established the Sultan Qaboos Award for Sailing. The award is presented at the conclusion of World Sailing's annual conference, organised by Sailing Training International (STI), to the winning vessel for outstanding achievement.



The Royal Navy of Oman is an active player in the protection of national security interests – strategically and economically.



Royal Guard of Oman

The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), as an important component of the modern Omani military system, is afforded commensurate status in the Sultanate's overall coordinated military defence system. It has attained high levels of efficiency and combat ability, and its infantry and support units are fully and adequately armed with the equipment they need to maintain these levels. In addition, it maintains training, technical and administrative support units. The RGO attaches priority to training and retraining and the programmes offered are tailored to the optimal use of the sophisticated equipment afforded the RGO for its use.

The Royal Guard Technical College supplies the RGO and other state bodies with technologically qualified manpower trained to international standards, while the highly regarded Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra draws the flower of Oman's young musical talent.

The RGO's bands perform at military, national and international events, and the RGO Cavalry demonstrates its skills in displays of horsemanship and show jumping competitions and on various national and military occasions, including graduation and passing out ceremonies.

The Royal Guard of Oman units carry out tactical exercises throughout the year, in addition to participating in annual shooting competitions. The RGO also participates in joint military exercises with other branches of the Sultan's Armed Forces, and its free-fall parachute team takes part in a range of regional and international events.

The Royal Guard of Oman offers high levels of efficiency and fighting ability.

Training to Raise Combat Efficiency

Numerous facilities for the training and education of officers and men have been set up on site at units and bases and branches of the military. Here they attend courses in the use of weapons and systems approached from the respective perspectives of science, technology and military strategy.

The National Defence College is the highest strategic academic institution concerned with preparing national cadres in the skills of strategic thinking and planning, at national, regional and international levels, as relates to security and defence. Here also they are trained in the ability to unify, integrate and coordinate actions to accord with the broader framework of national endeavour.

The College, which turned out its eighth batch of graduates on 18 July 2021, has managed over time to acquire a strong reputation both regionally and internationally. Nor was it prevented by the Covid-19 pandemic from fulfilling its national mission. By taking all necessary precautionary measures, it was able to carry out its annual strategic exercise,

Continuous task-specific training in defensive and offensive combat, in diverse environmental and climatic conditions, is a central feature of the rigorous schedule of the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Sun'al Qarar (Decision-Making). The College has now proceeded with confidence to its ninth academic year, launching the latest course round on 2 September 2021.

Meanwhile, the SAF's Command and Staff College celebrated the launch of its 35th academic year for officers studying at the College on 6 September 2021. All precautionary measures were taken relative to the Covid-19 pandemic in order to protect the health of participants in the course, as well as its governing personnel.

The Military Technical College offers academic training programmes, both theoretical and practical, based on study of the modern training needs of the Sultan's Armed Forces. All established technical and engineering disciplines are covered. On 23 August 2021, the College received its ninth batch of degree students for the academic year 2021/2022.

In its commitment to achieve and maintain the highest levels of qualification for both officers and non-military personnel, all are encouraged to avail of opportunity. For the many relevant military, scientific and technical disciplines, multi-level training is readily available, whether in the Sultanate or in the universities and colleges of sisterly Arab and friendly countries.

The SAF are at the forefront in providing young Omanis with employment in specialist military, technical and related professional fields. The Ministry of Defence, the SAF and the RGO always welcome young Omani job-seekers, who join their ranks after passing out from their training courses. Successive batches of these soldiers who have opted to enlist in this honourable service are turned out annually as graduates, to contribute with those who preceded them in the service of their beloved country, to carry proudly the honour of defending its borders. Recruitment endeavours continue apace to all branches of SAF and the various departments of the Ministry of Defence.

Military training is the cornerstone of the SAF and its administrative units. The focus is on developing the knowledge, skills and planning expertise of its officers, NCOs and men in all the relevant specialist fields.

Joint military exercises are designed to help maintain readiness and high efficiency, to advance the SAF in the exercise of its national tasks and duties. They constitute a reinforcement of the training received, and an opportunity to strengthen bonds of communication and cooperation. In this context, and in line with the underlying strategy of the SAF to maintain optimal levels of readiness, joint exercises and joint operational processes are implemented involving the various units and command levels of the SAF and the Royal Guard of Oman. Such exercises and operations provide the occasion for testing the efficiency of equipment, of personnel and of the capability of personnel to handle advanced weapons.

Social, Medical and Engineering Services

The Social Services division of the Sultan's Armed Forces provides social welfare to the officers and men of the SAF with the aim of maintaining social stability for them and their families. It offers housing loans and supervises the associated building works, along with other social services. These services are extended also to service veterans of the SAF.

The SAF Medical Services division provide treatment services to members of the Sultan's Armed Forces and their families. SAF Medical Services also provide medical care and support for evacuation operations, play an active role in the health aspects of the development process and provide emergency flying doctor services.

The Armed Forces Medical Services School is one of the training edifices that provide the Sultan's Armed Forces with qualified medical and technical cadres, and the Armed Forces Hospital in Al Khoudh has been expanded with the addition of new departments and advanced facilities.

The Defence Ministry's Engineering

The medical services have access to cutting edge equipment to facilitate the tasks of diagnosis, testing, laboratory analysis, surgery and treatment.

Services division - one of the SAF's main support wings - plays a vital role in providing technical and engineering backup during military exercises, as well as providing essential services such as water, electric power, sewerage and other infrastructure facilities at military camps, bases and installations. Further, it assists in the design and construction oversight of local and national projects and maintenance works, and helps maintain various infrastructural networks and facilities.

As the body responsible for the military media, the Morale Guidance section has the function of maintaining morale and highlighting both the role of the SAF and its personnel and their high levels of proficiency in carrying out their national duties, as well as media coverage of social, cultural and sporting events. It also publishes booklets and other material aimed at improving the cultural and educational standards of the armed forces' officers and men and produces radio and television programmes.

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, and it is for this reason that they provide a wide range of sports facilities.

The Ministry of Defence's engineering units play a vital practical role in providing and maintaining essential services.

Specialised Authorities and Services

The National Survey Authority (NSA) is the central body responsible for the production of military and civilian maps. It also carries out aerial photography operations in every part of the Sultanate, sets the criteria for topographical surveys and maintains the national geographical archives. Its modern printing presses, sophisticated computer programmes and photographic and other advanced equipment ensure that its aeronautical charts, geographical data and satellite surveys are produced to the highest standards of accuracy. The Authority's work has received international recognition in the form of the Geospatial World Forum Award, which acknowledged its exemplary application of geospatial policies in carrying out its pioneering project to establish the Sultanate's National Geodetic Reference (ONGD14).

The Maritime Security Centre concerns itself with maintaining the security of the Omani coastal environment and addressing any and all marine security risks found to fall within the Sultanate's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. As such it is responsible for confronting maritime piracy, illegal immigration, smuggling and other related activities. The Centre coordinates policy with all military, security and civil authorities with a view to sharing in a joint response to such illegal activities.

On 25 October 2020, the Centre implemented Maritime Security Exercise 1/2020, in which multiple military, security and civil authorities participated. The exercise also benefited from the cooperation of the Masirah Oil Company.

The Ministry of Defence Pension Fund invests its own funds with set goals in mind. These goals include being able to provide service to retired former personnel and to the families of deceased employees of the Ministry of Defence.

The light weapons ammunition factory in the wilayah of Sumail is an enterprising project without close competitor in the region, with its high-efficiency and high-tech production values. It was set up by the Sultanate's military and security pension funds as a closed joint stock company and its mission is to meet the light ammunition requirements of the SAF and the Sultanate's other security services.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum narrates the military history of Oman across the ages through photographic and other exhibit models such as that of the historic Bait al Falaj fortress, which was built during the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan in 1845. The

Sultan's Armed Forces Museum is the only military museum in the Sultanate where visitors can peruse the history of the Omani military all the way from the pre-Islamic period to the era of the modern renaissance. The Museum's halls contain displays of weaponry, photographs and historical documents that chronicle that long history and evoke the buried memory of illustrious battlefield victories and events.

On 11 January 2021, the first anniversary of the Supreme Commander His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik assuming leadership of the country, the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces mounted a joint celebration at Al Murtafa Camp, which included the formal launch of Al Somoud Radio.

Al Somoud Radio pays tribute to the efficiency and readiness of the Sultan's Armed Forces, to its high levels of training, education and qualification, and to the determination of its leadership to perpetuate the process of developing and maintaining its capabilities in all fields. To this end, the SAF is granted all tangible and intangible, material and moral, support such as will enable it to exercise its mission to maximum effect.

The inauguration of the Al Samoud FM radio station, which broadcasts on behalf of the Sultan›s Armed Forces.

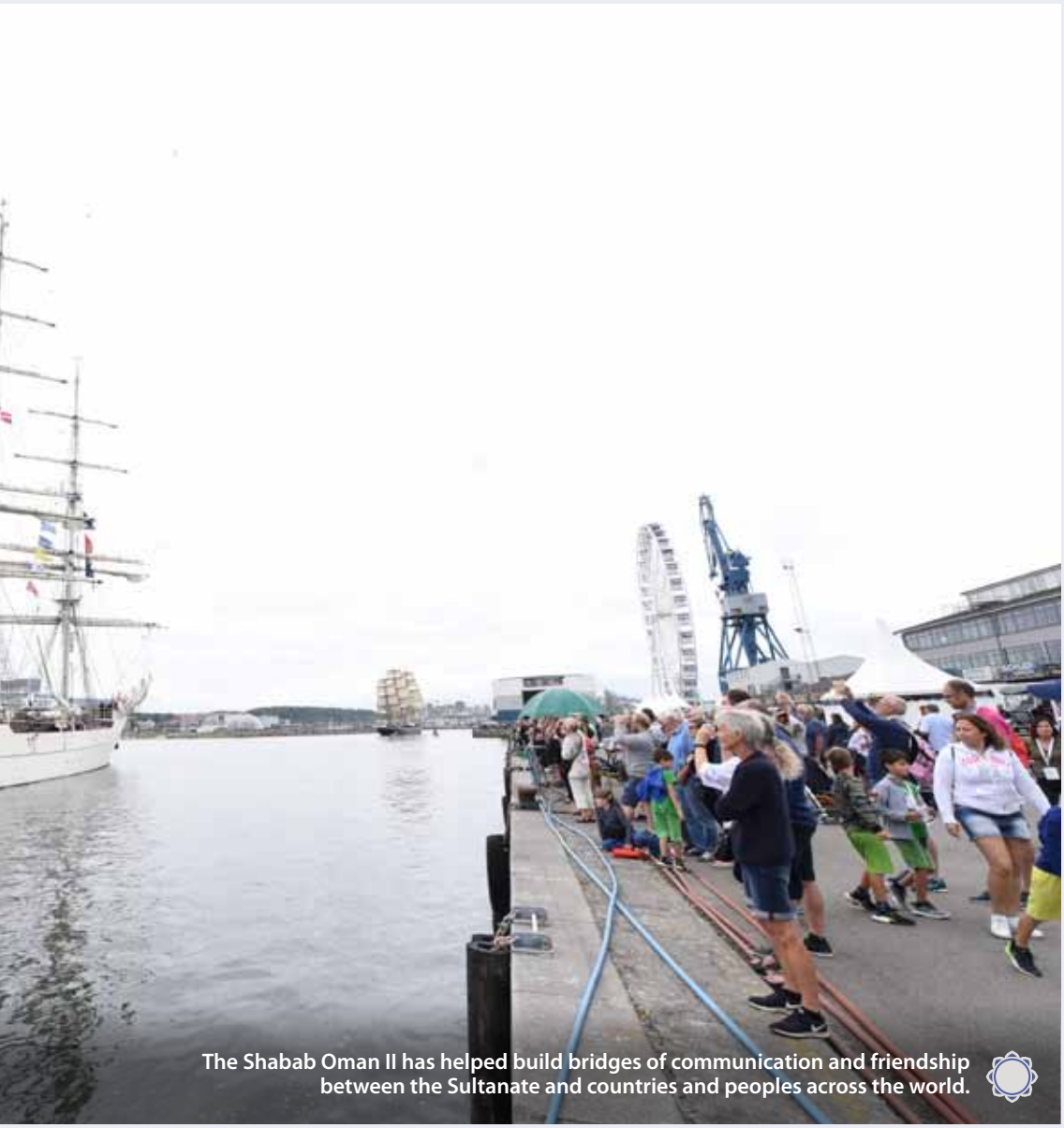
The Shabab Oman II

The RNV Shabab Oman II continues to fulfil its mission, originally performed by the RNV Shabab Oman, of building bridges of friendship between the Sultanate and other countries around the world. With its young Omani crew and message of cultural harmony, the elegant Shabab calls into foreign ports on its journey of peace, establishing bonds and introducing Oman and its people. It has earned the Friendship Award at the Historical Seas Race in Greece, the International Friendship Award for Long Sailing for the seventh time, the International Friendship Award at the Freedom Festival of Sailing in the Netherlands. Its predecessor, the Shabab Oman, was the recipient of more prestigious international awards than any other vessel of its kind.

On 7 November 2021, the Shabab Oman II left Sultan Qaboos Port in Muttrah on a 28-day tour of the Gulf Cooperation Council States themed 'Oman, A Renewed Approach.' The vessel carried an on-board exhibition chronicling Oman's illustrious maritime history on the one hand and development highlights of its modern renaissance on the other. The tour reasserts the Sultanate's universal message of tolerance and peace while reinforcing existing bonds with its Gulf neighbours.

The Shabab II's itinerary began with a visit to the port of Shuwaikh Port in Kuwait, followed by King Abdulaziz Port in Saudi Arabia, Port Salman in Bahrain, Hamad Port in Qatar, and ending with the Emirati port of Dubai.

The arrival of the Shabab Oman II in Dubai was scheduled to coincide with Expo 2020 Dubai, and represented part of the Sultanate's participation in the pavilion of the Secretariat-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the exhibition. Also taking part in the form of musical performances were the bands of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), and the RAO's Sultan of Oman Armoured Division.



The Shabab Oman II has helped build bridges of communication and friendship between the Sultanate and countries and peoples across the world.

Contribution to the Development Effort

The SAF interacts with government agencies engaged in the national development programme from a conviction that development represents a civilisational challenge that demands the service of all those with the capacity to make a contribution. It takes seriously its mandate to protect those progressive measures, as directed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, that will secure national prosperity and abundance in a climate of stability. Public confidence is the propellant that will induce citizens to participate fully, to engage with development and support an economic climate conducive to foreign investment. The Sultan's Armed Forces is a frontline player in the process that is leading to modernisation, development and reconstruction.

The Sultan's Armed Forces proved again to be a proactive force in dealing with the aftermath of tropical storm Shaheen, which made landfall in the Sultanate on 2 October 2021. SAF units conducted intensive relief work in the Al Batinah North and South Governorates, focusing on the most affected locations and populations.

In fulfilment of their national duty - alongside other government agencies

The Sultan's Armed Forces were active participants in the relief works following tropical storm Shaheen.

The Sultan's Armed Forces spearheaded immunisation efforts across the Sultanate during the Covid-19 pandemic.

and private sector establishments - and in support of the Sultanate's focused effort to combat the spread of Covid-19, the Sultan's Armed Forces placed all of their available capabilities at the disposal of the nation. They pledged their full support for the decisions and actions taken by the Supreme Committee charged with the task of finding a mechanism to deal with the pandemic and its consequences.

Under the national immunisation plan, the medical services of the Armed Forces, acting in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, enacted its part in the national executive plan for immunisation of members of the Sultan's Armed Forces and other units, divisions and departments of the Ministry of Defence.

The Sultan's Armed Forces are in an ongoing process of modernisation. As the unbreakable defenders of the homeland, they are pledged to engage all means, all material and human capability, to protect the homeland from all aggression, by land, sea or air. A motivated and determined force, they are constant in their commitment to remain effective and ready to meet all challenges to Oman's stability, to defend its accomplishments and keep its citizens safe.

The Royal Oman Police... An Indefatigable and Effective Force

Strategic planning and perseverance in the execution of those plans are outstanding features of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) approach to their mandate. These practices have earned deserved plaudits for the ROP, which has an impressive track record in peace-keeping and the defeat of criminal activity. Through the judicious use of integrated electronic systems and simplified, effective police services, the ROP has done much to create and maintain Oman's unusually stable social climate.

The advanced status attained by the ROP as a public peace-keeping force reflects the attention afforded it by a government focused on a 'results through efficiency' approach to handling events. Of particular relevance in this context are events of an emergency or weather-related nature, or events such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The ROP has proven that the use of modern technology provides the best police results, with particular success in the criminal, traffic and customs fields.

The Royal Oman Police have a crucial role in preserving peace and stability in the community.

The Royal Oman Police would not be such a successful force without successful personnel. Training is seen as paramount in ensuring selection of the most suited recruits and then extracting optimal performance from them. The Police General Command has built its recruitment policy around preparing and training its personnel to best deal with the nature of the current tasks entrusted to them, including emerging security challenges. This philosophy forms the basis of training at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences, the Officers Training Institute, and the training departments and sections of the various ROP formations. All programmes are updated with the latest training, educational and practical applications that best equip police recruits with the skills they need.

Notwithstanding its successes to date, the ROP is not complacent in its service to citizens, residents and visitors. It continues to review all of its services and activities with a view to building a modern integrated police force that operates in harmony with the institutions of civil society.

The Royal Oman Police aims to provide security coverage, and where possible a police presence, in all locations. It maintains police stations throughout the Sultanate, and handles traffic, passport, residence and civil

Using technology to advantage in the protection of citizens, residents and visitors from destabilising influences.

status issues through service centres in many states. It also manages support units for the Police Special Task Force. Members of the latter force undergo the highest level of training and are competent to handle all emergencies. They also offer support to all ROP units. They benefit from the most sophisticated equipment and support mechanisms available today.

During 2020, the Directorate-General for Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control carried out qualitative operations during which they were able to dismantle several smuggling and drug trafficking networks.

The work of the Royal Oman Police in confronting crimes in all its forms and defeating the illegal drugs trade are reflected in the growing volume of ROP interactions with overseas countries and with regional and international organisations. The level of international cooperation between the Sultanate and other countries has expanded in multiple areas, including the area of border security and cross-border crime, especially in light of the outbreak of Covid-19. The cooperation covers such matters as evaluation of police work and exchange of expertise and experience, in addition to collaborative action in the arrest of criminals and fugitives from justice. The ROP also passes and exchanges information with peer forces on urgent criminal matters and the rapid response approach to these.

While Coast Guard police boats patrol Oman's territorial waters, exercising their security and humanitarian duties in collaboration with other military and security authorities, the Royal Oman Police has opted to strengthen the role of the Directorate-General of Police Aviation, which supports task units on regular air patrols of the Oman coastline, monitoring suspicious activity inside territorial waters. It also assists in personnel transfers to remote locations or rough terrain locations with a need for a continuous security presence. It conducts search and rescue operations and medical evacuations from inaccessible places, and transports food supplies and other necessities to residents of mountainous regions.

The Directorate-General of Customs has a role in both facilitating trade and enhancing the logistics sector. Its success in this mission was validated in the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 Report, which acknowledged the Sultanate's cross-border success. Oman, the Report stated, made "importing and exporting faster by upgrading infrastructure at Sohar Port, as well as by introducing risk-based inspections and post-clearance audits."

The customs declaration system provides all customs services electronically. A single portal lends access to 48 government agencies. The portal was awarded the Best Integrated Government Project Award by the Sultan Qaboos Award for Excellence in e-Government Services in 2018.

The ROP believes in the importance of involving women in all aspects of police work, and co-opting their capabilities and expertise in the service of police objectives. Women members of the force are offered all opportunities to train and advance in their careers and they perform all of the same police roles as do men within the ROP. They have established themselves as a valuable and effective force for good within the ranks in every branch of police work, including training and public security. Their public presence calms and reassures, while their professionalism is equal in the tasks of protecting lives, honour and property. Women police are active also in the fields of criminal investigation, and the collection and substantiation of criminal evidence. They undertake traffic control duties, and escort duty in protecting public personalities, as well as special operations, aviation assignments and other general policing functions.

The ROP has been particularly successful in providing high quality, integrated e-services for citizens and residents. It offers services to citizens, residents and visitors through the ROP website, availing of technology to enable access to services via the website, or smartphone apps or self-service devices.

During 2021, the ROP launched several new electronic systems, three of which relate to assessment of the quality of work and service provided by the force to its own personnel. These systems are, respectively: the ROP electronic training platform, the human resources management system (Masar), and the electronic wallet (R'aya), for processing the social services offered by the ROP.

The ROP also launched the governorate-wide Traffic Safety Institute system, as well as three electronic services related to the traffic scheme. These are the electronic driver's examination test system, the electronic driver's licence application system, and the electronic vehicle licence application system. These initiatives are in line with the ROP's long term strategy to advance and improve the portfolio of e-services offered to the public, with particular focus on the traffic sector and traffic safety.

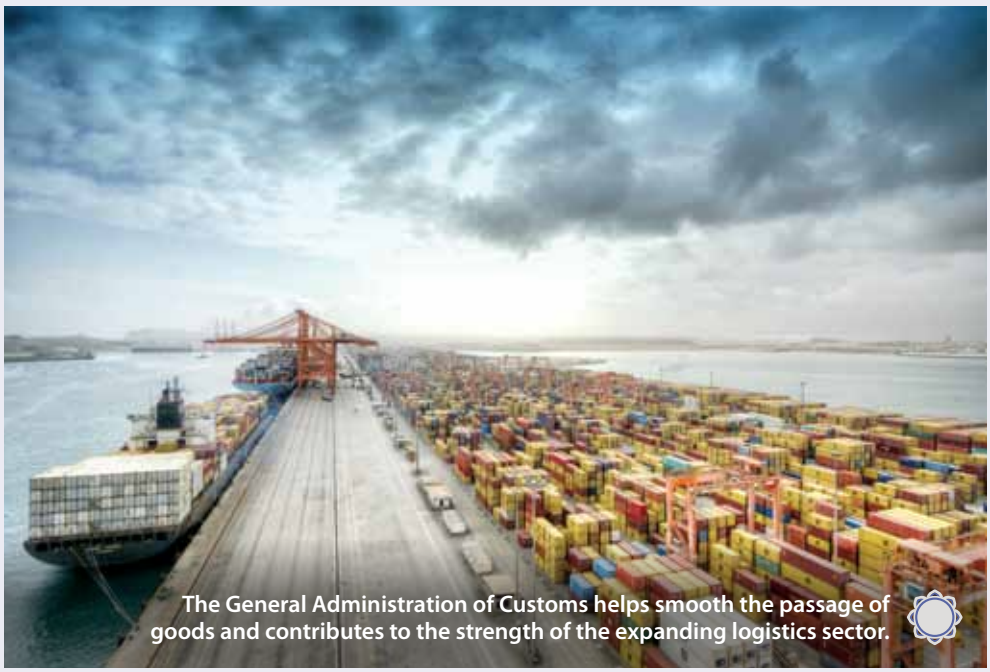
Marking the launch of a new phase in the work of streamlining Customs procedures at the Sultanate's ports, the ROP has been developing or acquiring accurate security control systems and advanced inspection devices that the current technology boom is providing and that can facilitate safe and rapid customs inspection. In this context, the ROP has now launched its unified security system designed for port use.

The Royal Oman Police have been pioneers in building Oman's digital society (e-government), providing passports, electronic visas, civil status services, vehicle renewal and registration services, driver's licences and customs services, as well as electronic payment services for all police services.

The ROP retains its leadership role in the introduction of new e-service initiatives. Its network now has the broadest reach in the Sultanate and its advance is proceeding at an accelerated pace. It sees innovation as the cornerstone of progress in the technical sector if the requirements and expectations of the public, government agencies and the business sector are to be met.

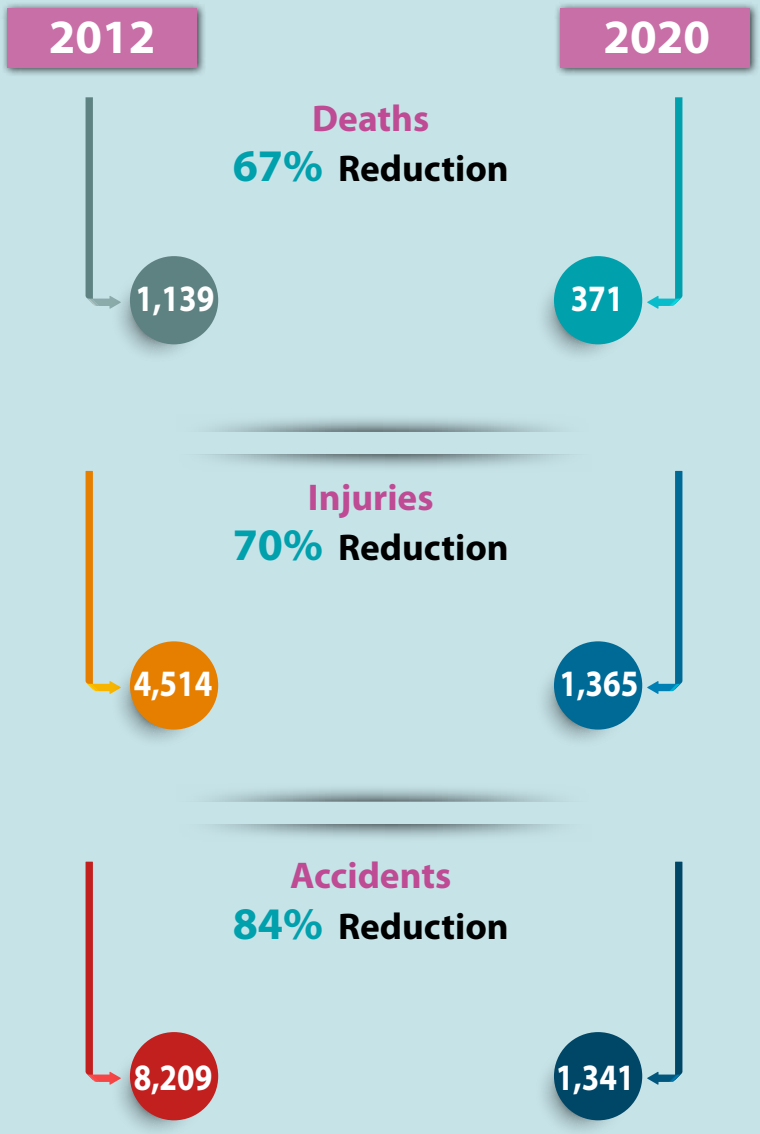
The Royal Oman Police application provides an integrated set of electronic services characterised by ease of navigation and comprehensiveness. The app has been lauded as an easy to use platform on which a range of services may be accessed and processed.

Initiatives pioneered by the ROP have been beneficial to the commercial community and to the movement of traded goods between the ports of the Sultanate and the world at large. Most outstanding of these innovations is the Safe Customs Corridor initiative, which links air and sea ports with the Sultanate's various free zones. Another highly regarded initiative is the system of pre-clearance of goods before they reach the Sultanate's sea and airports. The TIR universal transit system serves as a passport for the transit of goods. The Approved Economic Operator programme has had the effect of building partnership and mutual trust between customs and private sector institutions. Finally, the introduction of bonded warehouses to facilitate the movement of re-export goods enables investors in this field to store goods for a



The General Administration of Customs helps smooth the passage of goods and contributes to the strength of the expanding logistics sector.

Traffic data for the period 2012-2020 show an improvement in traffic safety indicators, despite the significant extension of paved roads nationwide and growth in the number of vehicles.



longer period, before re-accessing them for repackaging and export to either local or overseas markets.

Traffic data for the period 2012-2020 show an improvement in traffic safety indicators, despite the significant extension of paved roads nationwide and growth in the number of vehicles. Statistics show a drop of 67% in deaths between 2012 and 2020, with 1,139 deaths logged in 2012 and 371 in 2020. There was a corresponding drop in the figures for road injuries, from 4,514 in 2012 to 1,365 in 2020. Again, in 2012, a total of 8,209 road accidents were recorded in the statistics, against a figure of 1,341 accidents of varying gravity in 2020, representing a drop of 84%.

The various branches of the ROP's Traffic Safety Institute engage in traffic awareness campaigns in their respective locations nationwide.

The Royal Oman Police continues to diversify its channels of communication with the largest possible segment of the public. It employs visual, print and audio media, in addition to social media, for this purpose. It publishes the Watching Eye magazine and the Small Police Supplement, which engage in awareness initiatives and offer an information bridge between the public and the police.

The Traffic Safety Institute of the Royal Oman Police takes its awareness message directly to the public.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority... Protecting Lives and Property

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance was established as a constituent of the overall public security structure, as defined by Article 16 of Royal Decree No 68/2014, and assigned the function of protecting lives and property, preserving public safety, reducing the risks of natural and industrial disasters and mitigating their impact where they occur, and implementing measures and procedures related to civil defence and ambulance work.

In 2021, Royal Decree No 39/2021 was announced, bearing on the work of the Authority. It amended the name from Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance to Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority.

During tropical storm Shaheen, which affected parts of the Sultanate in October 2021, the Authority implemented its operational plan, designed to respond to tropical emergencies. Civil defence and ambulance teams deployed to the areas which were expected to be most impacted by the storm, where they dispatched units to prearranged sites with instructions derived from the approved response plan. All units were linked for clear communication with local emergency management teams, enabling them to mount a rapid coordinated response to emergencies arising.

The Authority's teams dealt with 416 reported storm-related incidents, the

Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority teams have an outstanding contribution to make in the protection of life and property.

most serious of which involved persons trapped inside vehicles in the valleys. Also rescued were people whose homes were badly flooded. In all the Authority's teams were able to rescue 544 members of the public in the governorates affected by the tropical storm, as well as participating in firefighting, land rescue, water rescue, ambulance and other humanitarian operations.

The Authority has upscaled its awareness-raising endeavours with the cooperation of other specialised teams, and expanded equipment and protocols in a bid to speed up the response to the damage caused by the storm and return life to normal at the earliest opportunity. Given that the wilayat most severely impacted by Shaheen were Suwaiq and Khaboura , and due to the high volume of storm-related incidents in the North Batinah governorate generally, the Authority referred responsibility for its field operations to its National Search and Rescue Team and established an advanced field centre in Suwaiq to manage communications and direct field teams to deal directly with requests for assistance.

Since the field centre was activated on 8 October 2021, the field teams have dealt with 1,925 communications concerning matters as varied as the re-paving and reopening of internal roads in residential neighbourhoods, to the removal of fallen trees on public roads and on citizens' homes due to the strong winds, to providing homes with drinking water, suctioning stagnant water, distributing supplies to those affected, cleaning homes, towing and removing vehicles. In all of these operations the Authority worked in close cooperation with military, security, government and private agencies and volunteers.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority are furnished with high-functioning vehicles equipped with the latest rescue devices and equipment.

The Youth - Sustainable Development

A new dynamism is fuelling the Omani renaissance under the energetic leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, with sustainability gaining more and more traction as an umbrella goal in the process. All aspects of life are impacted by the shift towards a culture that is more evolved in its aspirations and in its shared concern for people and planet. His Majesty the Sultan outlined his vision in his inaugural remarks on 11 January 2020, and expanded further in his more detailed address to the nation on 23 February 2020. "Oman is always the intended beneficiary in all that we do and all that we seek to achieve." He called on "every citizen, without exception, to strive to preserve the gains of the renaissance and to take an active part in seeing to fulfilment, by the Grace of God, the higher goals of development."

His Majesty's appeal for concerted effort to achieve "everything that will enrich the blessings of development, progress and growth" summarises neatly the spirit of the renaissance. It is a route to attainment of the "great national goal" of sustainable abundance. The path to this goal is being accelerated by way of updated legislation, regulations, mechanisms and work programmes across all fields of activity, and most significantly by the promulgation of the new Basic Law of the State under Royal Decree No 6/2021, for it is the Basic Law that determines the overall direction of the process. And so, the effort must continue if Oman and the citizens of Oman are to look forward to a future that fulfils their aspirations.

The Covid-19 coronavirus has had repercussions of varying degrees of difficulty in every country, especially repercussions of a social and economic order. The Sultanate, as represented by

the Supreme Committee charged with examining mechanisms for dealing with developments arising from the spread of the Covid 19 coronavirus, arrived at its decisions from a standpoint of balance, moderating the consequences of action in light of their broad and long-term impact on public health, society and economy. It advocated for precautionary measures, with public safety in mind, and sought cooperation in the community response to these measures. It later introduced internationally approved anti-virus vaccines as the central focus of its national immunisation campaign, and this response was positively reflected in the mitigated impact level of the pandemic in the Sultanate.

Overall and with the benefit now of hindsight, these decisions have been validated, resulting in improved statistics in the Sultanate's epidemiological status. There has been a significant decrease in deaths, injury levels and patient numbers. A cure rate of 98.5% was reached, supported by a national vaccination campaign that extended to almost all social categories, including both citizens and residents. The vaccinated percentage of the population stood at 83% when measured in November 2021.

On another matter of national import, and reflecting His Majesty's particular concern for the welfare of the younger generation and their prospects for gainful employment, as well as for the welfare of self-employed business owners, a set of initiatives was introduced in May 2021. "In light of current conditions adversely impacting the global economy, which have resulted in a contracting labour market, as well as the direct effects of

the coronavirus pandemic," the initiatives were included in a framework scheme to provide upwards of 32,000 job opportunities during 2021.

Given that no development process can survive except on a basis of soundly established science, His Majesty Sultan Haitham has taken a direct interest in the quality demonstrated at every level of the educational system, placing education high in the "hierarchy of national priorities." He has advocated for a supportive and stimulating environment for scientific research and innovation, going so far as to assign to the erstwhile Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research a portfolio for Innovation. He has also overseen the establishment of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, with branches in the governorates, the academic mandate of which was published in June 2021. Also in June 2021, the Council of Ministers decided to establish a branch of the University in Musandam Governorate, with faculties focusing on certain specialisations. In September 2021, Duqm College in Al Wusta was established inside the Special Economic Zone. Meanwhile, the National Strategy for Scientific Research and Development 2040 lays out a clear strategy for the future of research in the academic context and this strategy aligns with the vision of Oman 2040.

Young people are encouraged to achieve their maximum potential through generous educational opportunities and career development programmes.

Education

Education is the means by which a society advances. It must now become the main driver of sustainable development, as the instrument that instigates the change in human thought patterns and nurtures the ability to expand thinking laterally. The Ministry of Education is fully committed to raising the quality and effectiveness of its educational policies in line with global changes. Its overall mission is to oversee a system of curricula and programmes that accomplish the optimal development of young minds.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham has placed education front and centre of broad government strategy. The Sultanate found itself obligated, along with the rest of the world, to undertake precautionary measures when the coronavirus pandemic emerged. The decisions taken by the Supreme Committee fell closely in line with His Majesty's concern for the sector, and opted for a two-pronged policy that declared blended education as most appropriate for high-density school settings in the 2021/22 academic year, with a direct system applicable for low-density schools.

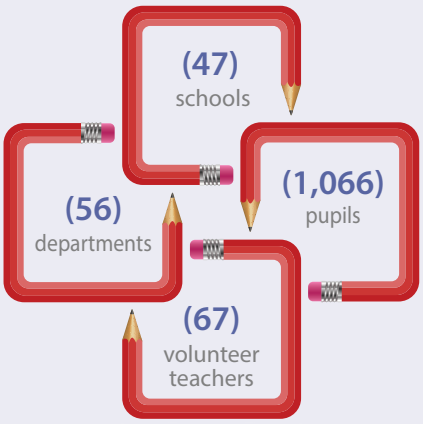
With this as the context, the Ministry of Education implemented policy programmes geared towards a restart of the school system. In doing so, it drew benefit from regional and international experiences, as well as the Sultanate's own experience in 2020. Exercise, mask-wearing, hand washing and the use of sterilisers are all advised or mandated.

The digital content of the curricula has been adapted to match the current conditions imposed by the pandemic, and accordingly the mechanism for evaluating student learning in the 2021/22 school year will be over a two-semester system for grades 5 to12. For pupils in grades 1 to 4, the evaluation mechanism will be by way of 100% continuous assessment, as has been the practice in the past.

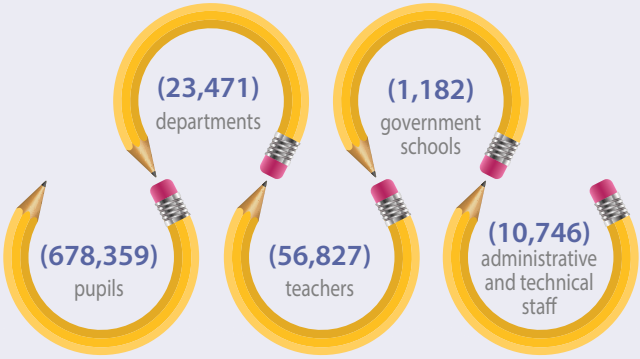
Insofar as concerns the general education diploma exams for the 2021/22 school year, these will be centralised, in line with the previously established two-semester system, and with the examination being allocated a 70% relative weighting. A guide was prepared to familiarise the stakeholders and the administrative and teaching bodies with procedures for implementing the diagnostic policy within the schools.

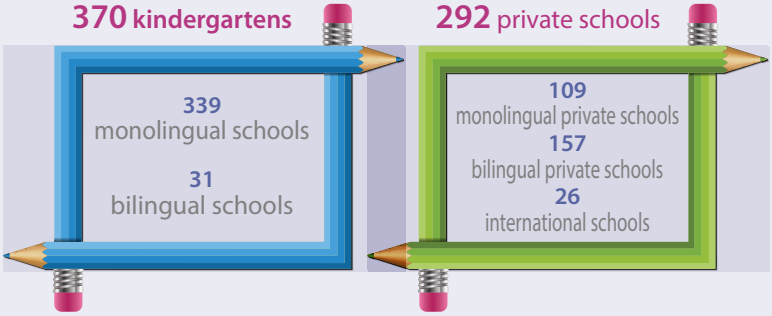
The Ministry of Education is especially considerate of the requirements of pupils with special needs, and offers many services for

For the 2021/22 school year, the Ministry of Education has focused its customary attention on the education of pre-school children, with preparatory classes 1 to 4 opened.



For public school education grades 1-12, the Ministry pledged to ensure the fulfilment of educational services in all governorates, as the national pupil population grows strongly





school-goers challenged by disability, including integration programmes for these and support for pupils with learning disabilities. In the 2021/22 school year, there were 383 merged classes, an increase of 85 over the previous year. Auditory merging was achieved in 47 classes in cycle one, and 76 classes in cycle two. The merging of pupils with mental health needs was accomplished in 178 classes in cycle one and 82 classes in cycle two.

Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation

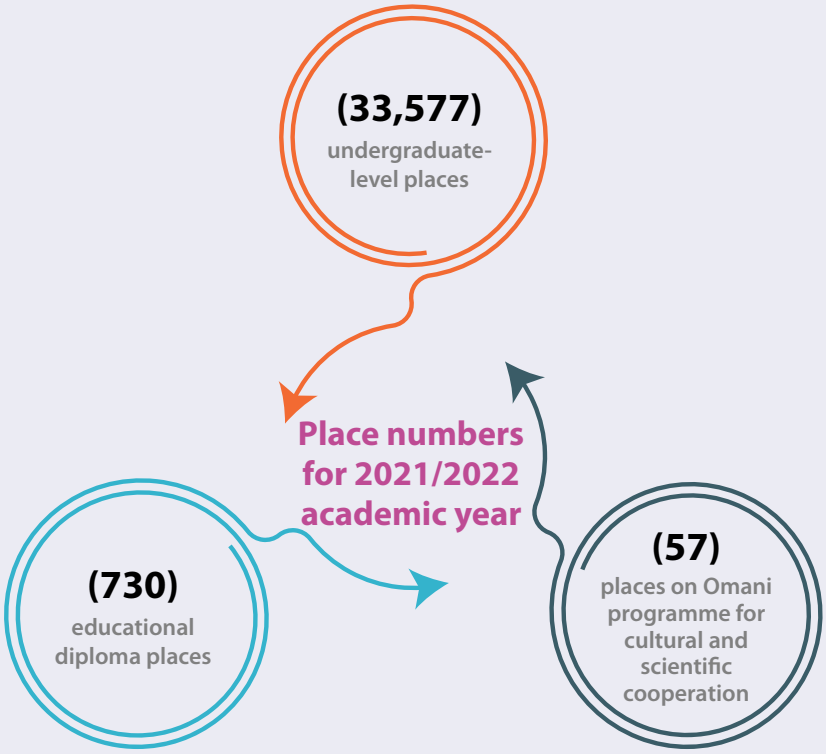
Third level represents the highest degree of educational endeavour, and encompasses all academic levels above the secondary, whether delivered by a university or by other advanced educational institutions concerned with academic scholarship, training, or scientific research. Higher education is crucial in the preparation of high-aspirational, qualified national cadres capable of effective participation in the national development process.

The establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation brings attention to the importance of these sectors in

Contemporary educational programmes are designed to meet the requirements of the incoming knowledge-based society.

building well rounded human beings. People are the very raison d'être of the development process, and their evolution is the principal indicator of its progress. The need for focus on these areas of advancement has never been more important in the context of goals envisioned in Oman 2040. Institutions of higher education and scientific research have become hubs for cultural and scientific decision-making, primary resources in the search for strategic direction, and incubators for the enlightened minds that will advance the balanced progress of the country and of the national economy.

The electronic admissions system manages registration and admission to institutions of higher education and allocates scholarships and grants. The scope of the work of the Unified Admissions Centre has expanded over the years and it now supervises four main programmes:



The Centre also publishes statistical data and indicators of relevance to the higher education sector in the Sultanate, through its management of the higher education statistical system. The system draws its data from the central database by linking the Ministry electronically with public and private higher education institutions.

Private Higher Education

The private higher education sector in the Sultanate is witnessing rapid growth, in terms of both the number and quality of established third level institutions, as well as in their geographical distribution. The diversity of the courses on offer broadens with every passing year, as does their network of connections in the scientific and academic world, both inside and outside the Sultanate.

There are 27 private third level institutions in the Sultanate - 9 universities and 18 private colleges. Most of these institutions have managed to achieve their aspiration to move to permanent buildings. So far 23 have done so, or the equivalent of 80% of the total. The campuses that house them were developed in accordance with established standards and controls as approved by the Ministry, which requires modern design and high quality facilities. These criteria have reflected positively in attracting students and gone a long way towards changing public attitudes to the private education sector generally.

The National College of Automotive Technology.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation is devoting resources to raising the overall quality of higher education in these institutions, through legislation, regulations, controls and procedures, most notably those focused on the quality of academic programmes provided, and on the appointment of administrative and academic cadres. At stake is the imperative that the labour market and development process are fed with a regular supply of well-qualified graduates. The project to raise the efficiency of teacher training programmes resumed in early 2021. This initiative falls under a five-year project to re-evaluate all educational programmes on offer at third level institutions, including the diploma programmes in the education qualification itself.

In this regard, several private third level institutions have succeeded in obtaining institutional accreditation by the Omani Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education. Moreover, a new mechanism for ratifying graduation documents issued by private higher education institutions in the Sultanate has been announced. This initiative aligns with the strategy of adapting services to the needs of Oman Vision 2040, as well as to the developing trend in the Sultanate of simplifying and facilitating government service procedures. Under the new regime, electronic certification will be limited to international students with diploma and bachelor's degrees, and to students wishing to complete their university studies outside the Sultanate. These candidates will be granted an electronic certificate validating the qualification they have obtained.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation is fully invested in the qualification of young human cadres, whom it expects to become the backbone of the Sultanate's sustainability projects. As such, it is especially interested in making available external scholarships in all disciplines, as needed by the Omani labour market, with a focus on medical and technical disciplines and specialisations required locally and internationally. Several criteria have been set for the allocation of scholarships to particular academic institutions, the most important of which are: an unblemished record, a reputation for academic excellence, and advanced standing as recognised by international classification measures.

During the 2021/22 academic year, the focus was on expanding the number of scholarship places assigned to the disciplines of sports studies, science, technology and engineering, management, social studies and education. Under the policy rolled out, students are given the opportunity to choose their study destination, specialisation and university based on their academic achievements and personal aspirations. This flexibility is seen as beneficial to the psychological wellbeing of scholarship students, enabling them to focus on excellence in their academic studies.

As regards internal scholarships, the Ministry has made available several schemes, namely: a bachelor's programme open to public competition, diploma programmes for students from low-income backgrounds and diploma programmes for students from social

security backgrounds. These are in addition to scholarships provided by private sector companies. The Ministry has assigned 27 private third level colleges in the Sultanate as destinations qualifying for its domestic scholarships.

Among the more significant developments in the internal scholarship system for the 2021/22 academic year is the expansion of the educational programme, with first and second level programmes for females introduced at Sohar University; mathematics, medical laboratory sciences, and industrial chemistry programmes at Sharqiyah University; and adjustments made to the admission terms for the veterinary medicine programme at Sharqiyah University.

The Ministry has been communicating with private sector companies and private sector institutions of higher education to earn their collaboration in providing additional scholarships within the internal scholarship programme. The private third level college sector has provided hundreds of scholarships under the domestic scholarship programme, through two initiatives: the Full Internal Scholarship Programme and the Partial Internal Scholarship Programme.

In addition, nine special study programmes have been introduced for students challenged by disability, and the competition terms have been modified for them to suit their respective circumstances.

The Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre.

The Scientific Research and Innovation Sector

The Sultanate of Oman moved up in the rankings globally in 2021, notably on the Global Innovation Index, where it advanced 8 positions to 76th place globally. The Index recognised the Sultanate's progress in the innovation categories, raising its ranking by 19 points in Innovation Output, and 1 point in Innovation Input. The Sultanate also scored well in a number of sub-indicators, including: first place globally in the percentage of science and engineering graduates to total graduates; and tenth globally in the higher education index. This progress reflects the Sultanate's efforts to enhance the domestic research and innovation environment.

The National Award for Scientific Research is in its seventh year, and the winners were announced at the beginning of 2021. Twelve scientific research projects were recognised, and the awards were distributed over six research sectors. The recognition is helping motivate researchers and scientists to conduct research of high quality and of national importance to the Sultanate, and to qualify innovative national cadres capable of competing both locally and internationally.

Under the capacity-building research and innovation programmes for youth in the Sultanate, Mawarid (The Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre) oversaw the September 2021 Manafa'a ideathon under its 2021 theme, the national initiative to plant ten million trees. The initiative is being carried out in a collaboration with the Environment Agency and Petroleum Development Oman. Five teams were awarded for their innovations. The Ejad platform is concerned with strengthening partnerships between the industrial sector, academic institutions and the research sector with a view to producing works that will serve as practical solutions to the challenges facing the industrial sector. Ejad will also encourage investment in research and academic expertise domestically. A total of 72 industrial challenges were referred to the platform, while 27 joint research projects are ongoing. Total research funding obtained from the industrial sector came to more than RO1 million.

Winners of the National Prize for Scientific Research.

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education and training is an important mainstay of the work of building and refining the skills that enlarge the potential of the individual and of his/her capacity to help attain national goals. The Sultanate is well advanced in its strategy to train and qualify a national workforce capable of replacing the expatriate workforce. It needs cadres in each of the specialist professions as demanded by the labour market. Serving this goal are the eight existing vocational colleges distributed throughout the Sultanate, in the wilayat of Al Seeb, Saham, Sur, Ibri, Shinas, Buraimi and Salalah. A further college is focused on the marine sciences, that is the Vocational College for Marine Sciences in Al Khaboura.

The vocational education and training sector has undergone a growth spurt, reflected in the Sultanate's Ninth Five-Year Plan (2015/16-2019/20), when the capacity of existing colleges was greatly expanded.

The number of students and trainees enrolled in these colleges in the academic year in various tracks

2019/2020
5,465
Students and Trainees

2015/2016
3,937
Students and Trainees

No. of graduates over the course of the Ninth Five-Year Plan

7,387
Graduates

As at mid-October 2021 programmes approved for rollout in private training institutions across a range of disciplines

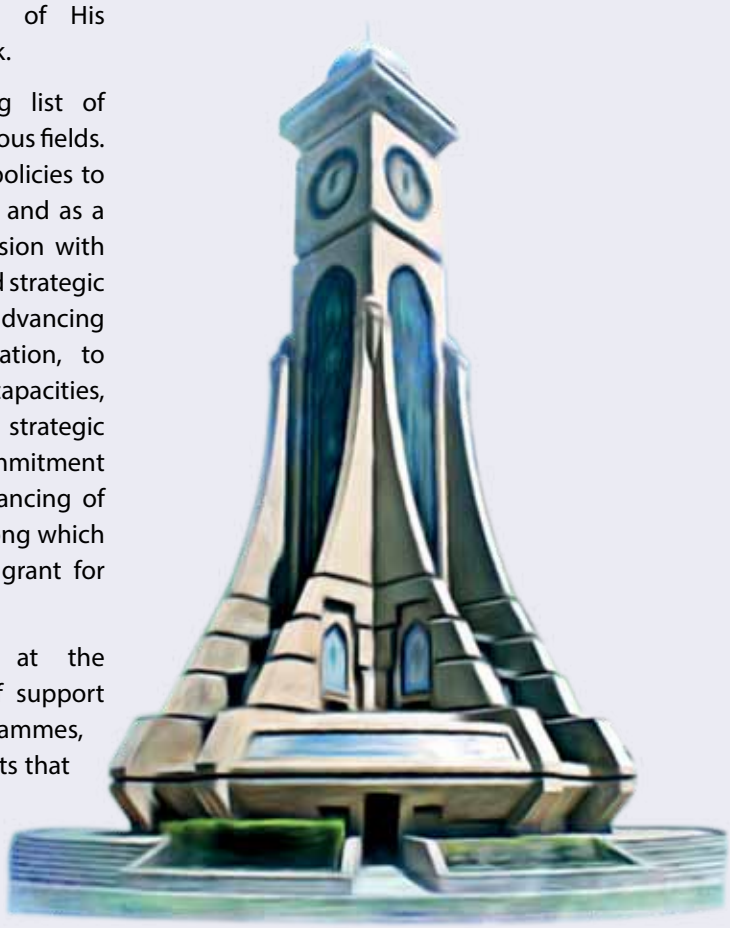
8,873
Programmes

Sultan Qaboos University

Sultan Qaboos University has been a powerful influencer in the elevation of third level educational standards in the Sultanate. It has won a well-deserved reputation for excellence in the academic world and is a supporter of longstanding in the drive for greater investment in scientific research and innovation. These two target fields are among the national priorities informing the vision for Oman 2040, and have received the focused encouragement and support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The University has a long list of achievements to its credit in various fields. It is dedicated in its academic policies to the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and as a matter of course aligns its mission with national priorities, directions and strategic goals. It is fully committed to advancing scientific research and innovation, to building competitive national capacities, not least in the areas of strategic development. It relies in this commitment on support options for the financing of research projects, foremost among which is the His Majesty Trust Fund grant for strategic research projects.

In addition, researchers at the university enjoy high levels of support from other funding programmes, including internal research grants that funded 97 projects in 2020, and grants from the Deanship of Scientific Research which supported 29 others.



The grants awarded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation (formerly the Scientific Research Council grant) also had an impact in supporting academic activities at the University in 2020. Ministry funding supported six projects by way of the Academic Research Grants Programme for PhD holders, five projects via the Graduate Research Grants Programme, six projects via the Undergraduate Research Grants Programme and an additional 16 projects at Sultan Qaboos University dealing specifically with the study of aspects of the Covid 19 pandemic.

For its part, the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer at Sultan Qaboos University continued its supportive role in transforming the products of innovative research and creative ideas at the university. In 2020, the Centre supported seven instances of invention disclosure and five patents filed with the Omani Patent Office.

Researchers at the university are motivated to make creative and outstanding contributions to scientific publishing and innovation through the Sultan Qaboos University Prize for Scientific Publishing and Patents. The Prize was awarded in 2020 to 658 scientific papers published and one patent lodged by university researchers. The University's continued commitment to scientific research and innovation, to the high quality of its teaching process, and to its community involvement, are also evident in the high level of its rankings in the indices of international and regional universities. Sultan Qaboos University's position in the QS World University Rankings rose from 450th place in 2019 to 375th in 2022. The university moved from 9th place in the QS rankings for the Arab region in 2020 to 7th place in 2022.

In December 2020, meanwhile, the Earthquake Monitoring Centre obtained the approval of Unesco to establish the Unesco Chair for Earthquake and Tsunami Risk Studies. The Sustainable Energy Research Centre continued its work on the hybrid station project, building new laboratories and storage areas to accommodate electrochemical experiments. These experiments are attempting to produce electricity from renewable energy sources with a view to replacing diesel fuel and are focused especially on rural areas. In addition, the Centre continued to work on the project to transform Sultan Qaboos University into a smart campus, as evident in its success in achieving improved energy efficiency in the College of Science building.

In the area of academic accreditation, the College of Nursing obtained agreement for an eight-year renewal of the undergraduate studies (bachelor's) programme and the five-year master's programme by the American Nursing Education Accreditation Commission. Academic accreditation was renewed for a period of five years for the bachelor's degree in the respective programmes of Information Institutions Management and Archive Management at the Information Studies Department of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. And, finally, academic accreditation was renewed for the undergraduate programme specialising in Curricula and Methods of Teaching English at the Faculty of Education.

Health

The Sultanate's health sector continues to shine, achieving regular quantum leaps in the quality and timely delivery of healthcare nationally. Its successes are reflected in the health indicators measured annually by international observers. The Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) showed accelerated growth and development in the quality and performance efficiency of the health sector and this valuable data was used in the preparation of the health development aspect of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), which was largely aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

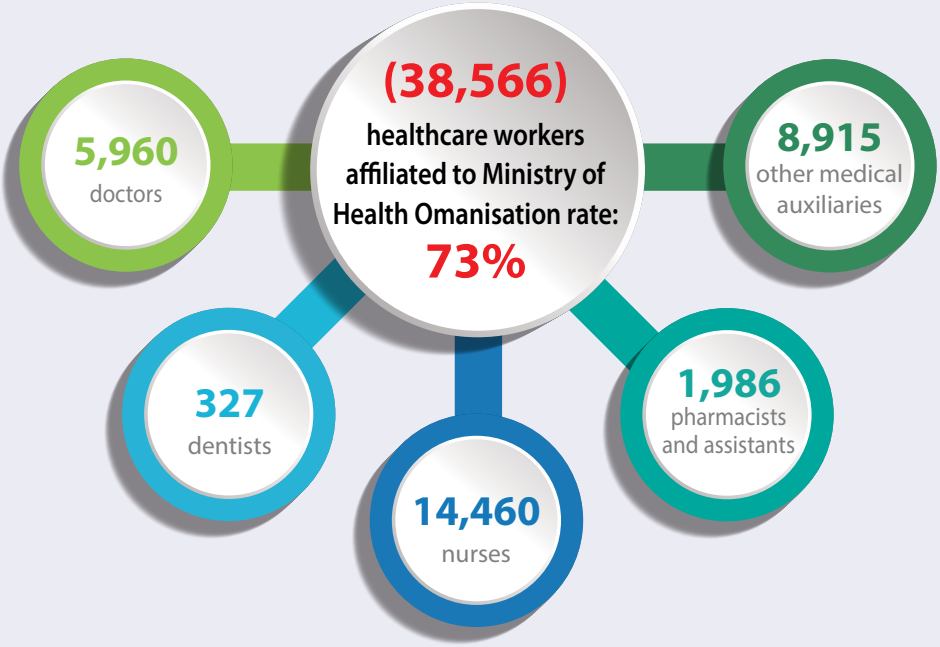
The Oman 2040 vision has the committed blessing of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. When fully implemented, it will place the Sultanate in the ranks of countries benefiting from a prosperous economy that serves its citizens to the maximum extent in all health, economic, social and other aspects.

Health is a top priority in the Oman 2040 vision, one of the goals of which is to obtain a state of sustainable health in society in which the culture of "health is the responsibility of all" is rooted and protected from danger and threat. It anticipates the participation of all areas of impact to the health sector in the Sultanate. The Ministry of Health has focused much of its attention on achieving the strategic goals of Priority Health as outlined in Oman 2040. Priority Health is a comprehensive vision that represents pinnacle performance in healthcare over the coming decades, a vision of quality healthcare delivered seamlessly, with the benefit of advanced technology on the one hand and best professional practice on the other.

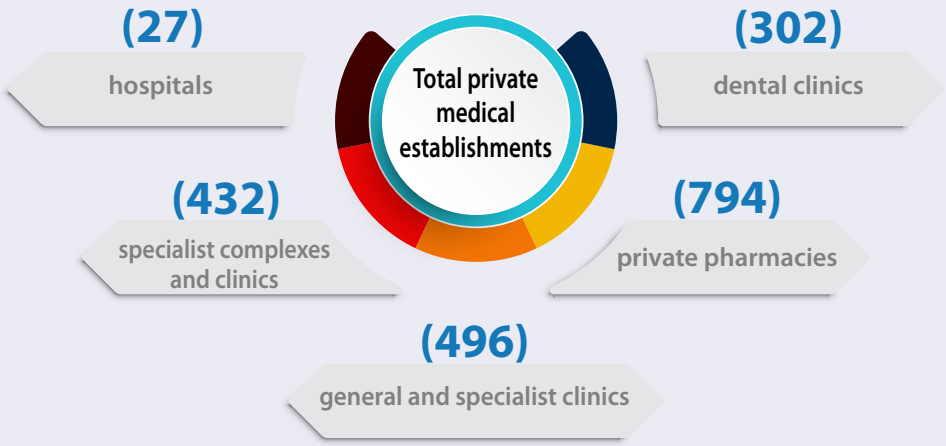
The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) as it applies to health represents optimal performance in the sector, overseen by the Ministry of Health. It is characterised by a focus on health as a national priority that embodies health for all, better care, and better quality; a focus on personal responsibility in the maintenance of personal health; and the participation of other health-related sectors and entities in achieving desired outcomes.

The tenth plan for health development resides in a set of foundational principles, as defined in both Oman Vision 2040 and Health Vision 2050, as well as the sustainable development goals of 2016-2030. The third of the sustainable development goals relates directly to health and is subdivided into 13 related objectives that have been translated into targets in order to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the goals accurately. The third of the sustainable development targets states its intention to "ensure the enjoyment of healthy lifestyles and prosperity for all at all ages."

The health workforce is the backbone of the healthcare system. In 2020, the total health sector workforce in the Sultanate surpassed 57,000 persons, including more than 9,000 doctors, some 1,500 dentists, and more than 20,000 nursing personnel, 4,700 pharmacists and assistant pharmacists, and 11,138 medical auxiliaries.



The Sultanate had 84 functioning hospitals in 2020, including 51 affiliated to the Ministry of Health. There was a combined total of 7,168 hospital beds nationwide, of which 5,238 were available in hospitals of the Ministry of Health.



Total (262) Ministry of Health Affiliated Health Establishments

As to the private health sector, there were 27 privately run health institutions at the end of 2020, along with 432 health complexes and specialist clinics, 302 dental clinics, 496 general clinics and diagnostic centres, in addition to 794 private pharmacies distributed throughout the Sultanate.

The health care system consists of three integrated levels: the effective and high-quality primary care offered at health centres, complexes and local hospitals located across the country; second level, secondary health care provided by referral hospitals located in all governorates, as well as district hospitals found in some of the denser population areas and that provide more specialist medical expertise and care for specific health problems; and finally the third level, which consists of high-tech specialist healthcare, available at all of the referral hospitals in the Governorate of Muscat. The latter are the Royal Hospital, Khawla Hospital, Al Nahda Hospital and Al Masra Hospital, all of which are comprehensive general hospitals that operate as referral establishments for patients from all parts of the Sultanate. Al Masra Hospital in Muscat Governorate is a third-level specialist facility for mental and psychiatric illness.

In its earlier, development phase, the health system in the Sultanate was concerned with limiting the spread of infectious diseases and relied on a number of strategies, the most important of which was a system established to monitor infectious diseases. These strategies were successful in bringing to heel many endemic infectious diseases.

Insofar as concerns the coronavirus pandemic, which emerged globally at the end of 2019, the total number of confirmed cases detected in the Sultanate up to 1 November 2021 was 304,437, and the total number of recoveries was 299,853, representing a cure rate of 98.5%. A total of 4,113 deaths were recorded.

The coronavirus crisis affected all health services in 2020 and 2021, with more than 10.5 million outpatient visits to Ministry of Health facilities logged in 2020. This figure represented a drop on

the figure for 2019 (10.7 million visits). The total number of inpatients in Ministry of Health hospitals was also down, from 331,000 in 2019 to around 257,000 in 2020. One consequence was a decrease in surgical operations and other services carried out, such as medical laboratory and radiology services.

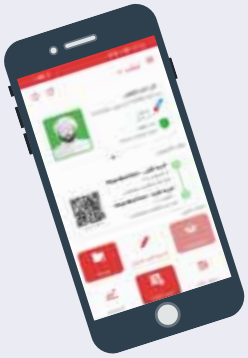
By international standards, the Sultanate of Oman is well advanced in the task of improving the quality of life of its residents, as it is also in protecting the lives of children. Child mortality below the age of one year and below the age of five years has fallen, to 7.6 and 9.3, respectively, per 1,000 live births.

International organisations have praised the progress made by the Sultanate in ensuring infant survival and maintaining healthy growth. The improvement in these figures is a consequence of the Sultanate's determination to combat dangerous childhood disease by expanding its immunisation programme. Several diseases are targeted, including tuberculosis (pulmonary tuberculosis), acute polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, and measles. Vaccines against viral hepatitis, rubella, mumps, and Type B Haemophilus influenza have also been added. Since July 2003, the 5-vaccine protocol has been upheld in line with international developments in immunisation procedures recommended in the war against dangerous disease.

In 2008, a vaccine was added against pneumococci, and another against polio by injection as a booster to other vaccines. Arising from immunisation rates approaching 100%, the Sultanate has remained free of polio since 1993, of diphtheria since 1991, of and neonatal tetanus since 1991. In addition, rates of other infectious diseases have dropped to very low levels.

The health sector has experienced substantial, tangible progress at every level of care.

Dealing with the Corona Pandemic



Covid-19 occupies an important place among the priorities of the government, which is engaged in a sustained effort to confront and contain the pandemic.

The situation has had the uninterrupted attention of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik since early 2020, when he made clear at the emergence of the first cases of Covid-19 that the Sultanate's overarching objective was to protect all citizens and residents without interruption to the government's performance of its duties; to minimise the impact of the changing situation on all sectors; and to mitigate to the greatest possible extent the impact of the health crisis on the Omani economy and the work of the private sector.

His Majesty the Sultan issued directives on 20 March 2020 bearing on the formation of a Supreme Committee charged with examining mechanisms for dealing with developments arising from the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus in light of emerging health data and the advice of the World Health Organisation in this regard. The Committee would also

The Supreme Committee in charge of examining a mechanism for dealing with developments resulting from the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).

monitor efforts being made regionally and globally to address the pandemic and follow up on measures taken in this regard. In this way it would be better equipped to make appropriate proposals and recommendations for balanced, fact-based solutions derived from an on-the-ground assessment of the actual public health need.

In the context of this interest, His Majesty chaired a number of meetings of the Supreme Committee, which has been working diligently since its formation to monitor and deal with the epidemiological situation and its after-effects, and to make appropriate decisions in a timely manner. Such decisions include the introduction of routine precautionary measures, as well as partial or total closure of certain governorates through control points. Also banned was night-time movement outdoors. Mosques were closed, school and college attendance suspended and on-site staffing levels reduced to essential levels. Remote work systems were introduced and expanded and many commercial activities suspended altogether. A bank of legislation and regulations was introduced to ensure compliance with all these measures designed to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

In a personal gesture of support, His Majesty donated RO10 million to the dedicated relief fund, a generous expression of his solidarity with the government and the citizens and residents of the country in their joint efforts to eradicate the pandemic.

His Majesty also directed that a further committee, affiliated to the Supreme Committee charged with handling the pandemic, be created under the chairmanship of the Minister of the Interior, who is also Chairman of the Supreme Committee, to address the economic effects resulting from the pandemic. The new committee would be expected to brainstorm and come up with an appropriate mechanism to ensure the speedy return of economic activity and restoration of accelerated economic growth.

The government, led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham continues to support the small and medium enterprise sector, helping mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 crisis by way of a series of banking facilities and incentives. These support measures include loan rescheduling, easier credit facilities and deferral of instalment, interest and profit payments. Easier tax terms are also offered by the state, with tax exemptions and facilities that include reduced income tax, taxes payable by instalment, carry-over of losses, exemption from tourist and municipal taxes, etc.

Further support is rendered in the form of exemptions from licensing fees for small and medium enterprises, deferral of monthly contributions to the social insurance system, reduced fees, exemption from late penalties, emergency financing schemes, and deferral of payments due for basic services (electricity and water). In parallel with these measures, practical studies have

been undertaken to examine, measure and address the specific issues affecting enterprises on the ground and decide on the most appropriate incentives and exemptions that will improve the status of SMEs.

In implementation of royal directives to create and apply social initiatives and stimulus packages designed to enhance the activity and sustainability of SMEs, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority launched its emergency financing programme for entrepreneurs who carry the Entrepreneurship Card. The programme offers financing with a ceiling of RO10,000. Applications have already been received and a set of operating initiatives launched.

The Social Security Scheme (SSS) social protection initiatives approved by His Majesty during his chairmanship of the National Programme for Fiscal Balance's main committee meeting last April involve a cost commitment of more than RO100 million. The initiatives amount to an extension of the social and economic incentive packages being built by government into the national social protection system, and which are intended to become an effective and sustainable umbrella system for all existing or future social security services, programmes and networks.

The social protection package for SMEs coincided with the launch by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority of an emergency financing programme directed at holders of the entrepreneurship card.

His Majesty, meanwhile, directed that a new central laboratory for public health be established that would keep pace with advances in technical systems such that it would be capable of meeting future needs as required and in a timely manner.

From the outset of the pandemic, the Ministry of Health has drafted and re-adapted guidelines and policies to best prevent entry of the disease to the Sultanate and to deal with any suspected imported infections. Health workers have been trained to deal with outbreaks, and efficiency levels at health institutions vindicated by the results. They have proven a readiness and capacity to deal with epidemics, especially in the areas of prevention and infection control. Personal protective equipment is provided to health workers, who are properly trained in its use, and the electronic epidemiological investigation system has been strengthened and updated to track infection and quarantine those displaying symptoms.

In the same context, the capabilities of the Central Public Health Laboratory were strengthened and upgraded. It has been fully served with the diagnostic reagent supplies necessary for it to function efficiently. Meanwhile public health procedures at land, sea and airports were tightened, with self-disclosure being expected of all travellers arriving from areas where the disease is active. Medical testing is carried out routinely for persons exhibiting disease symptoms, with home or institutional quarantine for arrivals. The Ministry of Health has coordinated with the Royal

The vaccines used in the immunisation protocol were selected by reference to solid scientific and methodological foundations.

Oman Police, the General Authority of Civil Aviation and operators of airports, ports and land crossings to suspend direct flights to and from a number of countries.

The Sultanate's efforts kept pace with the constantly changing landscape of the crisis worldwide, and the numbers of those impacted. On 5 October2020, the Ministry of Health inaugurated the field hospital for Covid-19 patients in the old Muscat International Airport building, helping to take pressure off the major hospitals and health facilities. The field hospital is equipped to handle cases of medium severity only. Cases examined on admission and found to be critical are immediately referred to the appropriate hospital.

Health education and community awareness-raising with the help of visual, print, audio and social media were among the most important interventions sponsored by the Ministry of Health since January 2020. The Ministry also maintained an open line of communication with civil society groups, channelled through the municipal councils in the various governorates, with district health committees, with civil associations and sports clubs, driving home the message of reducing infection within the community by upholding personal protection practices, avoiding travel to affected areas, and adhering to quarantine procedures.

In a related context, an electronic mechanism has been developed using

the Tarassud Plus platform, an integrated platform developed to international standards by local experts. Tarassud Plus uses sophisticated analytics to monitor vaccine recipients at all specified sites in the institutions affiliated, or not affiliated, to the Ministry of Health. For Ministry of Health and private sector institutions, an electronic mechanism has been established to report post-vaccine side effects where they occur, and workshops have been organised to train field teams in communicating to all partners involved in the implementation and follow-up process the procedural aspects of the national vaccine rollout plan.

As regards immunisation efforts, the Ministry of Health conducted a strict examination of the vaccines available to the immunisation process. The analysis was carried out, with reference to a stringent scientific protocol, by a team of specialists in the vaccination field with long experience in dealing with their administration. The expert team has many achievements to its credit, including a world first in the management of vaccines awarded in 2016. Their efforts encompassed a comprehensive study of all available vaccines, and a dialogue with vaccine manufacturers accompanied by an investigation into all relevant published research on vaccine efficacy and safety. It also reviewed the results of

Safe travel procedures ensure that travellers apply all precautionary measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

the serological survey conducted on the population in the Sultanate, and analysed infected patients, with particular emphasis on the hospitalised and the deceased. As a consequence of this work, the vaccines adopted for distribution in the Sultanate were selected and the priority categories of the public identified with a view to best preventing the spread of the disease.

Oman has Contracted with Several Vaccine Manufacturers and Joined the Global Alliance for Vaccines

Total vaccination doses reserved as at end 2021:	8,492.160
Total vaccination doses delivered as at 1 November 2021:	6,836.669
Total vaccination doses delivered to government and Private health establishments and administered to citizens	5,873.919

The Gulf Cooperation Council has Granted Recognition to All Vaccination Certificates Registered in GCC Countries

Ratio of citizens and residents double vaccinated at 1 November 2021

Ratio of single vaccinated among groups targeted in national vaccination campaign

The Business Sector

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for maximising the effectiveness of the services provided by its twin branches (labour and human resources development). Its mission is to place human resources firmly and squarely at the forefront of the development process. The Ministry is particularly conscious of its role in support of the national economy and of national growth objectives with a view to meeting the goals of Oman's economic vision for 2040. Its own strategic goal, which aligns with the vision of Oman 2040, is to participate in building a modern economy based on knowledge and increased productivity and that revolves around its human component. It believes that all investment in human development, all that advances the acquisition of knowledge, of diversified and specialist skills, all that facilitates the manifestation of human potential and capability, will serve the fulfilment of the Sultanate's aspirations for progress, now and into the future.

A set of measures impacting the labour market and the human resources development sector were announced at the launch of the Ministry's executive plan on 27 January 2021. The plan involves the development of human capital, application of a sectoral approach to human resource development, and implementation of a training and replacement strategy. It intends to roll out national programmes to train and qualify job seekers with a view to enhancing their employment potential.

Confirming the government's support for multiple and novel work systems and policies that will accommodate Omani competencies in the labour market; and in order to fulfil the commitment of the Ministry of Labour to its executive plan.

Human resource development is an essential component of the overall national development process.

Between January and September 2021 the Ministry Created
35,344 Job Opportunities in the Public and Private Sectors.

19,535
job opportunities in units of the state administrative apparatus .

6,446
job opportunities arising from retraining in the government sector.

8,562
private sector job opportunities for first time job seekers.

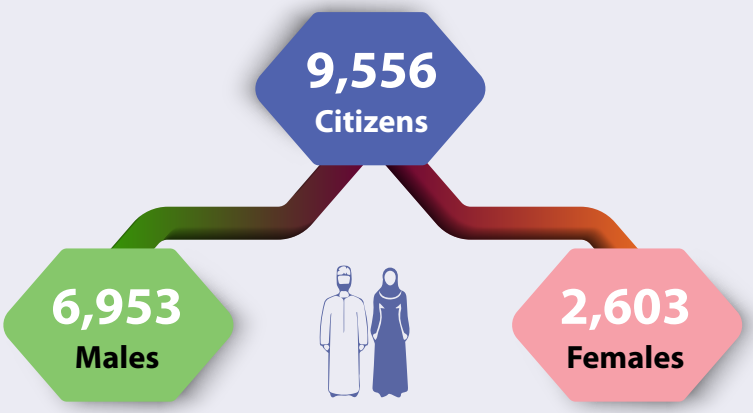
1,067
job opportunities generated from Ministry of Labour initiatives.

6,180
job opportunities arising from private sector training and qualification schemes.

7.6%
reduction in the non-Omani workforce between September 2020 and September 2021.

Replacement strategies are proceeding to plan with satisfactory results.

Beneficiaries of the Job Security System as at Mid-November 2021



Figures from Across All Governorates

The Ministry of Labour received requests from 83 private institutions wishing to terminate the entirety of their national workforce; as well as from 128 private institutions wishing to reduce the wages of their national workforce. In its response, the Ministry was able to address and resolve the issues presented, ensuring that job stability prevailed. Services were not terminated; nor were wages reduced, for 45,708 members of the national workforce in the private sector.

Job security is one of the Sultanate's core social protection principles. His Majesty Sultan Haitham is adamant that social protection should be provided for those members of the national workforce whose services have been terminated by private sector entities. He issued directives establishing the job security system in early March 2020, as a precursor to the institution of an integrated partnership system between government and citizens that will offer Omanis social protection. His Majesty demonstrated his commitment to this principle with a personal start-up contribution of RO10 million.

Royal Decree No 82/2020 instituting the job security system specified details of its operation, including the terms of its financing and of benefit entitlement, its duration, and other crucial elements of its administration.

Total beneficiaries of the job security system at mid-November 2021 stood at 9,556 citizens distributed across the Sultanate, of whom 6,953 were male and 2,603 female.

Over the past years, more than 55 electronic services have been introduced in an endeavour by the Ministry of Labour to align with the e-government strategy and facilitate the provision of services to all segments of society and beneficiaries of the Ministry's services. Among the services now digitalised and accessible online are electronic licensing, digital voting, the wage protection scheme, and the Na'mal app, in addition to work contracts and other services.

Social Development

The concept of social development goes beyond its welfare service meaning with its limiting connotations to embrace the principles of equity, social integration, community participation, knowledge and economic empowerment. It is based on the belief that social investment made with the intention of advancing human potential through empowerment of latent capacities can only contribute to accomplishing the shift towards self-fulfilled, independent living. A culture that celebrates individual responsibility will bring enormous benefit to the larger community. In order for such a culture to come fully into being, the dynamism generated by institutions working together in harmony is essential.

The social care sector encompasses a set of programmes and services provided by the Ministry of Social Development to groups and cases in need of care and assistance to enable them lead dignified lives. The number of individual cases benefiting from a social security allowance stood at 73,130 at the end of the first half of 2021. The total disbursement came to RO55,817,158 and a total of 132,731 individuals were in receipt of the allowance.

The Sultanate was exposed to a number of exceptional climate events

Children with disabilities receive all the benefits of education and care to help them achieve their full potential.

in 2021, including storms and torrents, and districts or settlements in their path often suffered catastrophic damage. Damage was classified as either individual or collective, depending on its type and extent, and early responses took the form of urgent relief, following assessment of the particular assistance and materials needed by those affected. Disaster aid was provided to 119 victims of such emergencies in the first half of 2021 at a cost of RO590,975, while temporary, emergency cash assistance was disbursed to 11,847 beneficiaries to the aggregate tune of RO1,129,003.

Under the scheme devised to secure employment for members of families benefiting from social security payments and persons challenged with disability, the first half of 2021 saw job opportunities created for 38 members of social security families and for four persons with disability.

The Social Welfare House in Rustaq accommodates elderly individuals who do not have a working relative to look after them in independent housing. There were 44 residents of the House at the end of the first half of 2021. Meanwhile 1,726 beneficiaries of social services through the home care programme for the elderly and their dependents received assistance during the same period.

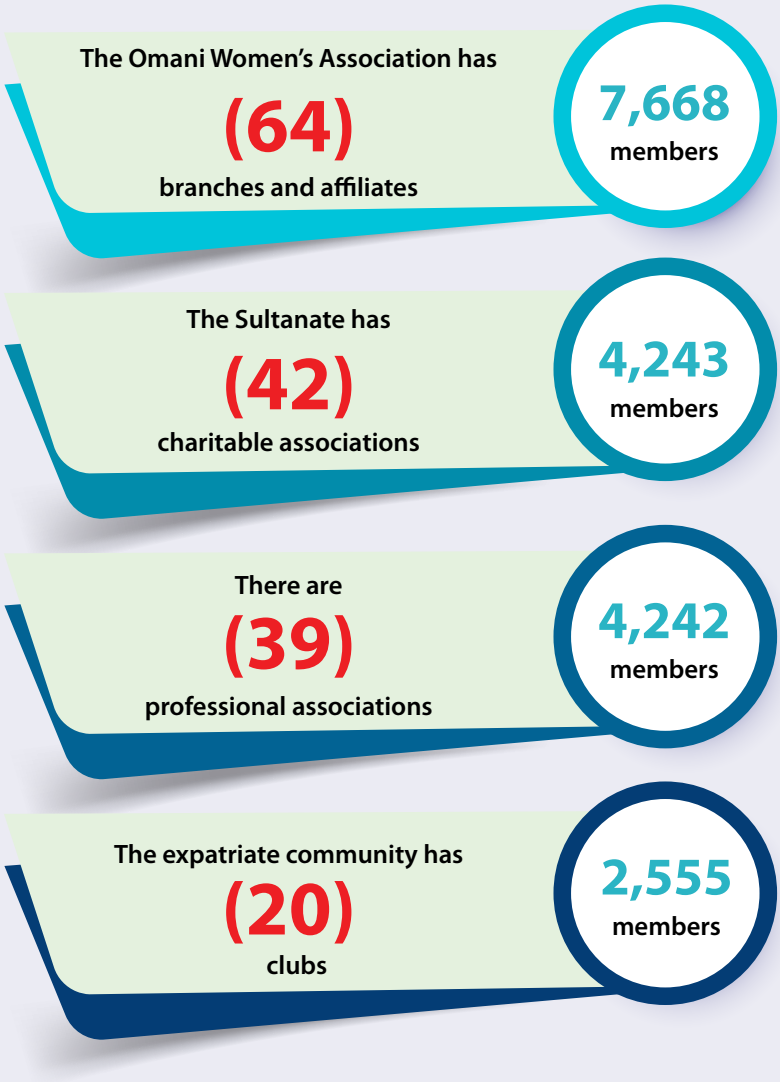
The Ministry of Social Development operates under the principle of empowerment and rehabilitation, encouraging those in its care to aim for self-reliance in managing their lives insofar as this is possible. The Ministry sponsors many diverse welfare programmes and social services for persons challenged by disability, including the Vocational Evaluation and Rehabilitation Centre, which cares for and helps those suffering from mental disability, but who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation. The Centre had 104 individuals enrolled in its various programmes in mid-2021. The Al Aman Rehabilitation Centre, meanwhile, provides those under its care with social, health, rehabilitation, psychological and therapeutic services. The first half of 2021 saw 296 male and female individuals enrolled with the Centre. The Al Wafa Centres for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities care for children of both sexes in the 2-14 year age bracket who are suffering from various mild and moderate mental, hearing or motor disabilities. There were 2,340 children enrolled at the Centre's 28 nationwide branches at mid-2021. There are additional privately run rehabilitation centres operating at the expense of the Ministry of Social Development in providing services to persons with disability. They work in close conjunction with the government-run institutions and centres that share their mandate. These private sector institutions had an aggregate number

of persons in their care of 1,275 at mid-2021. The Ministry also makes available prosthetic devices and other support mechanisms for persons with disability, and 1,106 such individuals had availed of this service in the first half of 2021. There were 685 persons registered with the national disabled card system.

The Ministry's brief includes responsibility for policies that protect the family, that support its cohesion, providing an environment that favours empowerment and advances all appropriate means to raising the standard of living of family and family members socially and economically. It works to resolve problems arising from poverty and reduced access, seeking solutions that underpin stability in family life. The Family Protection Department works to develop awareness of opportunity and sponsors care programmes which identify the needs of individual family members. It intervenes in cases that involve exposure to specific adverse family issues, in a manner compliant with the regulations that apply in this regard. This Department deals with cases of women who are exposed to a type of muscle. There were 12 such cases in the first half of 2021.

Senior citizens benefit from a range of generous welfare programmes and social services.

The Ministry of Social Development supervises civil and professional associations, the Omani Women's Associations, and the social clubs of expatriate communities. It follows up on the work of these associations to ensure their compliance with the provisions of the relevant legislation and of the decisions and regulations issued by the Ministry that bear on their work. It supervises the meetings of their general assemblies.



Pursuant to the Civil Societies Act (Royal Decree No 14/2000 as amended), the Ministry of Social Development, on 2 June 2021, announced the creation of the Ahed Foundation, capitalised with RO1 million in cash for investment in any business that generates profit for the Foundation.

The mission of the Ahed Foundation is to enhance the values of citizenship, identity, heritage, culture and patriotism; to support community empowerment initiatives, especially those related to women, or persons challenged by disability or limited income; to provide and support social welfare initiatives and services for families and individuals; to support NGOs interested in providing rehabilitation and social care services for the family; and to support community and humanitarian work that serves the elderly and orphans.

The Honorable Lady Ahed bint Abdullah Al Busaidi.

Sports and Youth

Those who have followed the progress of the modern Omani renaissance from its earliest days know that its mission was built around the talented contributions and long term aspirations of the rising generations. His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos returned again and again in his public statements to the refrain that the youth of Oman were its hope and its mainstay, the key to its advancement. The positive tangible results of that faith in the nation's youth are evident everywhere today in the Sultanate. As they attained maturity, the generations who grew up under the modern renaissance joined the national endeavour as capable, enthusiastic participants, expanding their aspirations for their beloved country until it became the ultimate grand vision that is Oman 2040.

The broad public addresses and specific directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham are public examples of his commitment to youth, of his government's pledge to provide for their welfare, of his continued faith in their value as the nation's inexhaustible resource.

The responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, as defined by royal decree, are reflected in the many interconnected functions it exercises in its areas of competency. It has direct influence in the many local and national sports competitions that identify outstanding athletes and emerging sports figures and sponsors their growth and prowess. It supports private entities working in the sports arena, monitoring their performance as complies with the legislation governing their activities. It sponsors meetings, matches and competitions in all sports fields, domestically and overseas.

The Ministry concerns itself with maintaining open channels of communication and meaningful dialogue with youth groups in the Sultanate, promoting a sense of engagement and belonging among them, and encouraging sentiments of patriotism and loyalty and a willingness to contribute to the social and economic development of their country. It devotes much discussion and study to the current and developing requirements of young people, and makes recommendations to relevant bodies that serve to celebrate the talents and creativity of the younger generation and their outstanding influencers. It supports the gifted and encourages excellence and bonding through its network of science and technology-oriented clubs that serve as gathering venues where bright young people can exchange ideas and form friendships.

The creation of the Women's Sports and Cultural Creativity Club is a Ministry initiative under its women's empowerment strategy. It was announced on the 12th Oman Women's Day 2021. Oman Women's Day, marked on 17 October, is an annual celebration of the

achievements of women and translates a personal conviction of His Majesty's that the humane and expansive feminine intelligence is crucial to the success of the development process.

Omani women have made their mark in many individual and team sports activities, proving their ability to compete locally, regionally and internationally, in club and field events, and across multiple sports, with courage and honour. Backing their efforts are the supportive entities within the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Oman Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, federations, sports committees and clubs. All are enthusiastic in their backing for women's sports in general and in spreading a culture of women's sports in the Sultanate. Their participation in competitive events is encouraged and their victories celebrated. The influence of leading women sports figures is having an impact on lifestyles, with fitness being given more attention among all age groups, and the dismissal of any notion that women's sports were not in alignment with the finest customs and traditions of Omani society.

Young People are Making a Mark Within the Youth Culture Fostered by the Ministry's Supportive Facilities and Event Schedule, Including:

746
Young people
'Thank you, Youth'

1,019
Total young participants

7
young contestants
'Omani Researcher and Young Author'

53
young participants
'Omani Debates'

193
young participants
'Omani Youth Day'

20
young participants
'Youth Excellence Awards'

Other youth-centred creative initiatives drew increasing interest and social media attention over the past two years. In 2020, 360 separate events took place in various creative fields, targeting 67,410 young men and women directly and indirectly.

Amid the accelerating cascade of ideas sweeping the world and that technology and instant communication have made accessible to young and creative minds everywhere, the past few years have seen a flowering of creativity and innovation within the younger generation, especially in the fields of technology and practical invention. Many of these bright ideas are in tune with the energies of the Oman 2040 vision and with the focused youth-supportive strategies of the government. As an example of the latter endeavour, state-sponsored local projects and competitive events have been responsible for generating some 260 young innovators, now making good their enterprising research. Among the projects which gave them a forum in which to explore their talents were, for example, the Falling Walls Lab Competition, the Biodiversity Ideas Marathon, and the Chamber Prize. Notable in the area of innovation are the programme to convert student graduation projects in the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution into start-up companies; the competition to create smart applications useful in confronting a pandemic; the London International Forum for Young Scientists; and the Lindau Forum for German Nobel Prize campaigners. Moreover, more than 300 young men and women from educational institutions took part in various events, activities, programmes, seminars, conferences, forums, initiatives, prizes and competitions organised in the scientific research and innovation sector in the run-up to 2020.

To encourage young people to embrace their creativity and innovate; and to harvest the energies of the largest possible number of talented and creative people in their various fields of activity, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Directorate General of Youth, revealed details on 17 August 2021 of the 2021 Second Youth Excellence Award. The winners of the Award were announced as part of the Sultanate's celebration of Youth Day on 26 October 2021, at a virtual ceremony broadcast from Wilayat Sohar in the Governorate of North Batinah.

The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic extended into and through 2021, causing the suspension of sports and youth activities and all events sponsored by the sports bodies operating in the Sultanate, viz. federations, committees, sports clubs and private sports teams. The suspension was in line with the decision of the Supreme Committee charged with examining mechanisms for dealing with developments arising from the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic. On 2 June 2021, the practice of team sports in open spaces was permitted to resume within a regime of adherence to all preventive measures and requirements. With the decision to lift restrictions, sports activity resumed at local and overseas venues, with events either hosted by the Sultanate or participated in by visiting teams.

Young Omanis continue to earn deserved accolades in local and international sporting events.

In this regard, the Sultanate hosted the first round of the Cricket World Cup qualifiers on 17-21 October 2021, with teams participating from Bangladesh, Scotland, Papua New Guinea and the Sultanate itself. Play took place at the grounds of the Oman Cricket Academy in Al Amerat.

The Oman Cycling Federation, in a collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Office of the Minister of State and the Governor of Dhofar organised the Tawaf cycle tour of Salalah, which was held from 14-17 September 2021 AD. A full complement of 150 cyclists representing 14 teams from the Sultanate and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council participated in the race.

The Oman Table Tennis Association also hosted the Oman International Junior and Junior Girls' Table Tennis Championships, in which 29 players representing nine countries took part. The countries participating were: Egypt, India, Iran, Lebanon, Maldives, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Syria, in addition to the Sultanate of Oman.

The Sultanate, represented by the Oman Sail Corporation, officially hosted the final Asian sailing qualifiers for the '49 boats' category, which qualified for the Tokyo 2021 Olympic Games. The qualifiers were held in the Sports City at Mussanah from 1-8 April 2021, after approval had been granted by the Committee in charge of following up the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The same strict medical protocol undertaken by the 'Oman Sail' project was followed, in addition to all additional precautions worked out with and approved by the competent authorities in the Sultanate assigned to prevent the spread of the virus.

Heritage, Culture and Arts - Roots of a Healthy Contemporary Society

The history of the Sultanate of Oman is a fascinating, uplifting chronicle of an outward-looking, enterprising people with strong cultural instincts. These embedded features of the Omani national identity are much evident in the cultural climate of the Sultanate today. They value curiosity, respect for difference, tolerance of other ways of being. In a world that is shifting gradually towards a more sustainable way of life, the balanced Omani approach favours the open-minded transfer of knowledge and skills, meanings and values from one generation, one people, to another.

The Sultanate has endeavoured across half a century to protect Oman's human history and artistic legacy, from literature and the arts to antiquities, recognising the essential truth that heritage is key to the creation of a truly modern state; that it is vital to preserve a national continuity of identity and to celebrate the distinctive character of the Omani personality in all of its deeply-rooted aspects.

Honouring a long tradition of acknowledging excellence in the contributions of Omanis in their respective fields of endeavour, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on 30 November 2020 awarded the Order of Merit First Class to: the Honourable Dr Aisha bint Hamad Al Darmakiah, and researchers Mr Ali bin Ahmed Al Shihri and Dr Ali bin Faraj Al Kathiri. Awarded the Order of Commendation for

Distinguished Civil Service Second Class were Ms Bayuba bint Ali Al-Sabriya, Dr Hilal bin Saeed Al Hajri and Mr Ibrahim bin Ali bin Qambar Al Ajmi.

Meanwhile, in a landmark and well-deserved validation of the Sultanate's determination to celebrate its heritage of outstanding human endeavour, the Oman National Committee for Education, Culture and Science, acting in concert with the Office of the Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to Unesco, succeeded on 11 November 2021 in winning recognition for the legacy of the great Omani navigator Ahmed Ibn Majid Al Saadi. As a result, Ibn Majed is now included in the Unesco programme that commemorates important historical events and globally influential personalities. His inclusion marks the 600th anniversary of his birth, and he becomes the sixth Omani historical figure to be included on this international listing. Previously included were linguist Al Khalil bin Ahmed Al Farahidi (in 2006), physician and pharmacist Rashid bin Omaira (in 2013), social reformer Sheikh Noureddin Al Salmi (in 2015), physician and physicist Abu Muhammad Abdullah Al Azdi (in 2015) and poet Nasser bin Salem Al Rawahi, popularly known by the name Abu Muslim Al Bahlani.

The Sultanate also earned a placing, jointly with the UAE, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, for its contribution entitled 'Camel

Racing, Social Practices and the Associated Ceremonial Heritage.' The List was instituted and is maintained by Unesco. The Sultanate, in a collaboration with several other Arab countries, had earlier succeeded in having the joint Arab nomination 'Date palm, knowledge, skills, traditions and practices' inscribed on the Representative List.

Camel Races are included UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Highlights of Past Civilisation Seen Through a Modern Lens

Given the seriousness with which the Sultanate views culture and tradition as cornerstones of development, not least because of its own particularly rich historical and cultural heritage, it pays due attention to the social environment in which young Omanis are immersed. A culturally sound young generation will have a valuable role to play in advancing development. To address issues pertaining to the ethos within the sectors of culture, sports and youth, August 2020 brought a restructuring of certain state institutions, in addition to establishment of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The terms of reference of the new ministry were defined and its organisational structure approved. The former Ministry of Heritage and Culture became the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and its reformed structure reflects a new focus on efforts to merge the administration of certain national objectives, removing duplication and overlap and thus improving performance and services rendered.

Royal Decree No 87/2020 establishing the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth defined its terms of reference and approved its organisational structure. It defined the Ministry's competencies as they relate to cultural affairs. The Ministry drafts policies and programmes pertaining to culture, sports and youth and submits these for approval to the Council of Ministers. As part of its cultural brief it supervises libraries, cultural centres and institutions, collecting and documenting examples of Omani literature, and disseminating them locally, regionally and internationally. It encourages authors and scholars, celebrating their contributions, supporting their literary endeavours through research, studies and translation. It is responsible for arranging exhibitions, festivals and cultural events at home and abroad, marking for attention Oman's cultural contributions to literature as well as to open-minded exchange with peoples of all backgrounds. It encourages creativity and innovation, and supports and sponsors artists across all of the creative arts.

From a belief in the need to transform the Omani cultural environment into a place of convergence for creativity and diversity reflective of the Sultanate's commitment in this regard, a cultural strategy for the years 2021-2040 was announced on 8 September 2021 that envisions an open source hub of creativity that welcomes input from other cultures. The executive plan of this strategy recognises the need for an unambiguous working methodology that lines up with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. This vision will be the operating framework

within which all cultural policies are structured in the coming decades.

In the context of its work to preserve Oman's cultural heritage, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has launched an electronic platform that provides ready access to Omani manuscripts and documents. The archive is available digitally on the Ministry's website to researchers, scholars and interested parties throughout the world and conforms with the government's digital transformation strategy. The Ministry has responsibility for more than four thousand manuscripts on diverse topics, having worked since its creation to collect, restore, preserve and digitise its vast archive.

The digitalisation of the Ministry's manuscript collection is the first of its kind in the Sultanate. It greatly facilitates the research work of scholars, who can access and sort through the 4,000 documents digitally and with ease. The Ministry has plans to greatly expand its digital archive, helping to broaden the reach of the Sultanate's literary and creative influence in this way.

The Ministry has established a new affiliate body with objectives compatible with the vision of Oman 2040 and a focus on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and areas of scientific and technical innovation. On 7 September 2021, the Ministry revealed details of the revamped Clubs Competition for Cultural Creativity for the 2021-2022 season. On 25 September 2021, it launched the Libraries and Civil Cultural Centres Performance Contest, with its first iteration devoted to measuring the readiness of these institutions to deal with urgent problems such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the context of reviving the drama sector and incentivising drama groups around the country in the wake of the changes caused by the pandemic, the Ministry, representing the cultural sector, sponsored a virtual competition for theatrical performances in which nine drama groups participated. In a publishing initiative meanwhile, the Ministry's Oman Cultural Centre reprinted a series of inspiring literary essays under the titles 'Flowers in the Waters of Solitude', 'Enlightened Features of the Personality of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos,' ' Extracts from the Wisdom of Al Awtabi Al Sahari,' 'The Grammatical System of Khalil bin Ahmed Al Farahidi' and 'Readings from the Story of Contemporary Oman.'

The Sultanate participated virtually in a meeting of the Permanent Committee for Arab Culture of the Arab Organisation for Education, Culture and Science (ALECSO), as well as a meeting of the General Cultural Committee of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. The two meetings dealt with an agenda covering many cultural issues common to the participating states.

The year was not without reward in the cultural and artistic fields at Gulf and Arab level. The Mazoon Theatre Troupe won the Best First Drama Presentation Award at the International 'Theatre Without Production' Festival 2021 for the play 'Midq Al-Henna.' Four additional individual awards were brought home from this innovative drama event.

Upholding the high standard of contemporary literary output , the Omani poet Badriya Al Badri was crowned Prophet's Poet in the Eloquent Poetry category at the conclusion of the fifth session of the Katara Prize held in the Qatari capital, Doha. In the 38th Rashid bin Hamid Award for Culture and Science 2021, three Omanis were honoured. Ashraf bin Ali Al Awfi won first prize in the Eloquent Poetry category; Ishraq bint Abdullah Al Nahdia in the Short Story, and Samah Abdul Sattar Younis in the Novel .

Heritage sites reflect a history and civilisation spanning hundreds of years.

Care of Archaeological Sites

The Sultanate's heritage and cultural sites have been very fortunate in the unquestioning attention and support they receive. Expense is not spared to ensure that restoration projects undertaken can avail of scientific methodology and experienced teams, working to internationally approved standards. This is a mark of respect for the value of the heritage, and one of its rewards is a guarantee of long term economic viability in the form of tourist returns. There are hundreds of sites around the Sultanate where history has been brought back to life in this way and it is a history that has a fascinating, centuries-long story to tell.

In this context, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism continues its nationwide restoration programme that encompasses castles, forts, traditional alleyways, mosques and archaeological sites. Their mission is to preserve Oman's priceless heritage, to keep intact for posterity the impressive legacy of the Sultanate's ancient and medieval history.

Restoration work continues at Al Rustaq Castle, with ongoing maintenance of the damaged parts of the castle, a consequence of diverse natural factors; restoration of Nakhl Castle, with maintenance of its external facades, and eroded internal sections; maintenance of Al Hazm Fort and treatment of deep cracks that have appeared on the external facade and internal ceilings of the fort.

Multiple archaeological surveys and excavations being undertaken by missions from academic institutions both local and international, continue through for the 2021/2022 season. In all, 23 archaeological missions are active in the field, including a German mission from Heidelberg University, which is conducting archaeological surveys and excavations at the Al Sulaili site in Wilayat al Mudhaibi, where they have already excavated one of the site's Iron Age burials.

Another German mission from the University of Tübingen, meanwhile, is surveying and excavating the Al Khashbah Bronze Age site, also in Wilayat al Mudhaibi. The team has completed geophysical surveys at the site, and proceeded to a study of the artefacts unearthed at the site in the 2020 season. In Sur, meanwhile, a French mission from the desert and steppe foundation, L'Institut des déserts et des steppes, continued its work at the Iron Age site at Khor Gramma in Wilayat Sur, where

it has been engaged in excavations for a number of seasons.

The archaeological site of Medam in Wilayat al Amerat in the Governorate of Muscat is acknowledged to be the most important archaeological site discovered in 2021. It is likely that the site dates to the late Islamic period, or the 16th century AD. Traces of copper slag were found scattered on the surface of the ground near the foot of the mountain. Nearby, the foundations of dwellings resemble those at the sites of copper smelting furnaces. The Medam site includes four caves housing production quarries, with evidence suggesting that they had been expanded with the growth of copper ore transportation.

At the Al Khairan site in Wilayat Muscat, a series of drawings was discovered depicting tools and techniques of self-defence. At the Al Ghubeirtin site in Wilayat al Amerat, rock inscriptions were found depicting animals, including horses and camels, indicating that the site may have been a junction where trade caravans intersected. Further rock inscriptions at the Wadi Uday site in Wilayat al Amerat depict various predatory animals that have since become extinct. Meanwhile, a rock façade near the village of Sani in Wilayat Rustaq was found to be inscribed with a form of script that is likely to be Thamudic, one of the primitive writing forms found throughout the Arabian Peninsula, which is sometimes also known as North Peninsular.

In the town of Bilad al Shahoum in Wilayat Ibri and on the Wadi al Hajar road, a series of tombs of varying design was discovered at a burial site. Some were above-ground structures, shaped alternately as beehives or pyramids, and others were in-ground and distinguished by an oval outline lined in stone.

These structures resembled somewhat the layout of Islamic cemeteries unearthed elsewhere in 2013 during pre-construction surveys for the road linking Wadi al Hajar and Bilad al Shahoum. In June 2021, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism began excavation work at both of the above-mentioned sites.

In February 2021, the Ministry completed the project to restore and rebuild the ancient Al Awainah Mosque located at Wadi Bani Khalid. The restoration took nearly two years. The mosque was restored to its original architectural splendour and an exact copy of its unique mihrab was made and installed. The original mihrab was removed to the National Museum, where it may be observed by a larger audience as a fine example of the skills of Omani engravers.

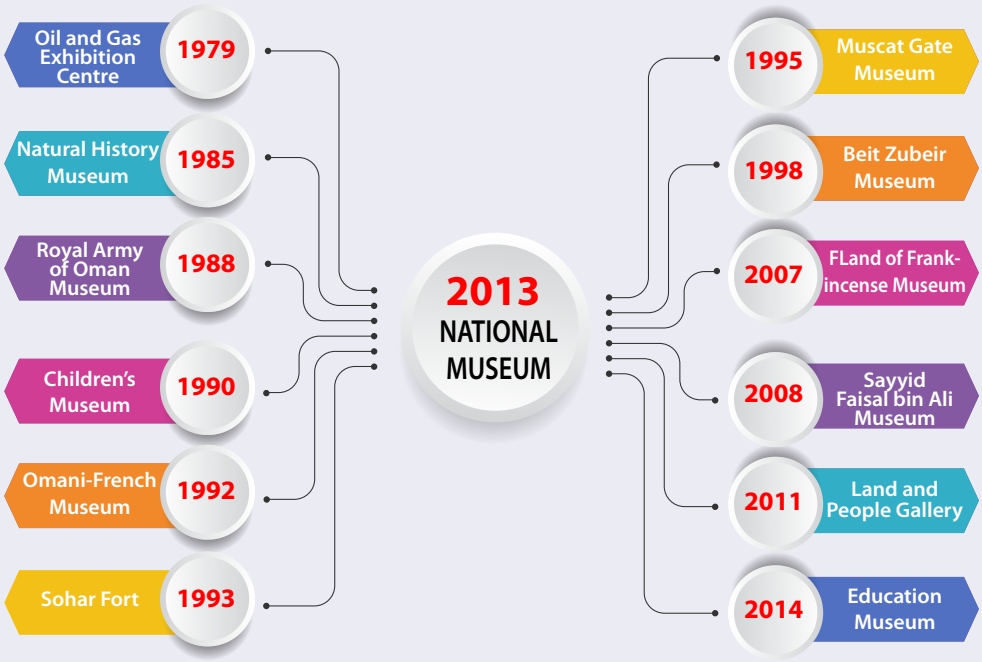
Museums – Windows on Past Glory

The Sultanate has a well-earned reputation for investing in its heritage, and taking exceptional care of its historical treasures. It recognises the role museums play in reflecting the dialogue of culture, languages, history and civilisation. Museums can avail of state-of-the-art tools to illustrate to maximum effect the interaction of past cultures and how they have influenced society, bringing knowledge, linking people and preserving human history.

The National Museum is the Sultanate's most prominent cultural edifice. It is dedicated to highlighting the nation's many-faceted heritage, from the birth pangs of human settlement in the Arabian Peninsula many millennia ago and up to the present day.

The National Museum was established by Royal Decree No 62/2013, promulgated on 20 November 2013. It was officially opened on 15 December 2015. The museum houses more than seven thousand archaeological artefacts, most of them of rare or unique value, as well as tens of thousands of other display items systematically arranged

Museums – Windows on Past Glories



to illustrate the narrative of human evolution in Oman from its earliest days to the present time.

The Museum's holdings have been enhanced by the acquisition of 643 items through purchase, gift, loan and commission. Meanwhile, 706 museum pieces have been restored and reserved, most notably the Sinaw treasure, consisting of the largest hoard of Islamic coins discovered in Oman to date.

In November 2019, the National Museum was unanimously accepted as a member of the Asian National Museums Association, becoming the first museum from the Middle East and Arab world to be adopted by the association.

In addition to the National Museum, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism oversees several other publicly-supported museums, including the Natural History Museum, opened in 1985, which showcases the many diverse aspects of the Omani environment through illustrated descriptions of terrain, geology, vegetation, insects, and marine life.

The Children's Museum, which opened in 1990, is a science and technology learning resource that introduces modern inventions and delivers scientific knowledge in a simplified and child-friendly manner that easily conveys a sense of the vital role of science in life.

The National Museum reveals an Omani civilisation with roots deep in the ancient past.

The Omani-French Museum was inaugurated in Muscat in 1992, with a mission to highlight the historical relations between 18th-century France and Oman. It is located in the building that was once the French consulate and consists of eight halls. The museum houses a collection of documents that chronicle Omani-French relations, alongside traditional costumes from the two countries, a selection of jewellery and antiques, and models of Omani and French ships.

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 inaugurated.

The Ministry of Defence oversees the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum, which was opened in 1988 at the Bait al Falaj Fort in Ruwi. The museum contains exhibits that illustrate the highlights of Oman's military history.

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.

The Land of Frankincense Museum, inaugurated on 23 July 2007 within the perimeter of the Al Baleed archaeological site in Dhofar, includes a historical hall with six sections documenting Oman's history across the ages, and a maritime hall devoted to Oman's illustrious seafaring and boatbuilding history.

The Oil and Gas Exhibition Centre portrays the history of the formation of oil over different periods and the stages of its extraction and narrates the story of oil discovery, in the Sultanate in particular. The Central Bank of Oman's Currency Museum, situated within the bank's premises, 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.

There are privately-owned museums, such as Bait al Zubair Museum in Muscat, which opened in 1998 and houses valuable displays of collectibles and costumes from the various governorates of the Sultanate. Ghaliya's Museum of Modern Art, opened in 2011 on the Mutrah corniche, has rooms representing the typical modern house in the period from the beginning of the 1950s to the mid-1970s.

On 8 January 2014, the Education Museum at the Saidia School in Muscat was opened. The museum documents the evolution of public education in the Sultanate. The Saidia School itself occupies a prime and prestigious position in this story and was the inspiration for the foundation of the museum.

A Rich Storehouse of Culture

A nation's archive is a valuable, indeed essential, repository of research and knowledge. It houses important information about history, civilisation and the human sciences. Scientific research is a cornerstone of true development in any society, providing as it does viable truths that contribute to the success of national plans. As such, archival institutions play a prominent role in supplementing and enhancing scientific research with authentic documents and other materials that serve as witness to political, economic, cultural and social realities from a country's past; and this information is invaluable in developing the strategies and decisions needed, because it bears the authority of genuine data and statistics drawn from primary sources.

The National Documents and Archives Authority (NRAA) is responsible for the preservation, collection, classification and storage of documents in the Sultanate. Since it was created in 2007 under Royal Decree No. 60/2007, the NRAA has assembled and archived a vast and important collection of historical documents of relevance to the Sultanate across all periods of its recorded history.

The NRAA today houses a total of 4,218,437 documents in manuscript and digital form, stored by various means. The archive is expanding constantly, reflecting the wealth of documentation in existence bearing on the Sultanate and also the energetic endeavours of the NRAA to assemble and store it.

In addition to official state documents, the NRAA collects and preserves material of interest gleaned from private sources, ensuring its protection for posterity. It facilitates access to its archive by scholars and academics for the purposes of research or further study. As at the present time, it is responsible for 150,125 documents obtained from private sources, in addition to 44,410 manuscripts.

Exhibitions rank as one of the most important direct channels by which the NRAA connects domestic and overseas audiences. To date the Authority has either hosted or attended upwards of 96 document exhibitions, both at home and abroad.

Since 2012, the NRAA has been engaged in a race to record and preserve for posterity the rich fund of wisdom contained in the collective 'oral memory' of the nation, and it has fitted out a dedicated studio for the purpose. As of September 2020, it had conducted 473 interviews have been conducted with 400 individuals, rendering a total of 1,000 hours of audio and visual record. The interviews are later transcribed for ease of storage and circulation.

In the processing of archival documents prior to their storage, restoration is frequently necessary, with the goal of returning them to their original condition, or as near to that state as possible. Having analysed a manuscript for its composition, including the specifications of the paper and inks used, suitable chemical treatments are selected for the task. In this manner, a total of 235,246 pages, representing 73,743 documents, have been restored as at the end of September

2020, along with 1,679 manuscripts and books, 131 files constituting 6,025 pages, 71 folders and 913 maps.

Through its microfilm department, the Authority prepares and modifies documents, a task that has today succeeded in microfilming 1,095 manuscripts and documents, incorporating 144,752 images. It uses specialist programmes for this purpose that conform to the accepted standards in this regard. It also stores 279 film reels containing more than 1,199 manuscripts, and more than 159,340 images.

The restoration, storage and reproduction of manuscripts and documents is conducted with the benefit of the best that modern techniques have to offer.

Institutions of Cultural Enrichment

The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, for its part, has been responsible for adding much value to the Sultanate's cultural, literary and artistic movements. It functions under the mandate of Royal Decree No 52/2012, which established it as a cultural and scientific body with functions related to the protection of culture, science and the arts. It fosters cooperation with cultural institutions in other countries, introducing Omani culture in a receptive environment.

The Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Arabic Speakers provides a valuable service in facilitating communication and thereby strengthening bonds between the many language cultures that inhabit the Sultanate's human landscape.

The magnificent Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) stands as a bridge between cultures, both within Oman and between Oman and the outside world. It represents the vision with which His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said set out to recognise and celebrate authentic Omani values and the Arab and Islamic identity of Oman. From this solid ground can rise a generation confident enough to be open to the cultures of the world and aware of their great diversity and beauty.

The House of Musical Arts was inaugurated on 15 January 2019 to serve as an arena for the intersection of cultures, a forum for dialogue where values of love, brotherhood and peace can be encouraged and expressed creatively.

The building that is home to the new House of Musical Arts is a unique architectural achievement, designed to blend the charms of the East with Western technology and merge heritage and contemporary culture. The complex incorporates a theatre outfitted to outstanding specifications, a cultural centre, a music library in which to archive and document the programmes presented in-house and several halls for the exhibition of permanent and temporary collections.

On 1 November 2021, the Royal Opera House Muscat announced its tenth season programme, after a break in live performance due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The new season coincides with the Opera House's 10th anniversary and features a packed schedule of performances and concerts, including two operas, two ballets, three concerts featuring popular Arab musical stars, two evening variety shows, two symphony orchestras, as well as jazz and world music concerts, and four world class musical acts.

The Cultural Club is a driver of the Sultanate's intellectual revival, with its mission to harmonise literary, cultural, intellectual and scientific events. The combined effect serves the advancement of intellectual and cultural dialogue internally and enhances Oman's contribution to broader trends regionally and internationally.

The Omani Society for Writers and Literati (OSWL) is a powerful presence on the literary scene, influencing written culture by way of a regular succession of events, conferences, symposia and celebrations to honour talented writers. It also publishes books and periodicals, and in 2020 was responsible for 26 literary publications, encompassing poetry, fiction in the form of novels and short stories, drama, essays, scientific studies, reviews, children's literature and new studies on the economic and social history of the Sultanate.

A popular OSWL event is the annual Cultural Creativity award, which continues to grow in stature among writers in Oman and to strengthen its position amid the various awards that acknowledge cultural excellence in the Sultanate.

The Royal Opera House Muscat is a magnificent monument to intercultural dialogue.

The National Economy – Further Improvement

The national economy performed well in the first half of 2021, with gross domestic product at current prices increasing by 10.1% to RO15.3 billion as compared with RO13.9 billion for the same period last year. Oil activities, which grew by 8.7%, and non-oil activities, up 11.1%, both supported economic growth.

This healthy growth, along with the measures taken by the Sultanate to balance finances and reduce public debt, led credit rating agencies in October 2021 to amend the Sultanate's credit outlook. Moody's revised its future outlook from negative to stable, and affirmed its long-term issuer and senior unsecured ratings at Ba3. Standard & Poor's also revised its outlook for the Sultanate of Oman from stable to positive.

GDP at Current Prices - First Half of 2021

(RO million)

ITEM	FIRST HALF 2021	FIRST HALF 2020	GROWTH (%)
Oil Activity	4,428.4	4,074.2	8.7
Non-oil Activity	11,456.1	10,309.5	11.1
GDP at Current Prices	15,301.9	13,898.3	10.1

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin - October 2021 - National Centre for Statistics and Information

Contribution of Economic Sectors to GDP - First Half of 2021

(RO million)

ITEM	AMOUNT
Crude Oil	3,723
Natural Gas	705.4
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	421.2
Mining and Quarrying	114.5
Manufacturing	1,338.1
Electricity, Water Supply and Sanitation Activities	434.3
Construction	1,235.3
Wholesale and Retail Trade	1,364.5
Transportation and Storage	777.8
Accommodation and Food Services	239.3
Communications	195.1
Financial and Insurance Activities	1,050
Real Estate, Professional, Technical and Administrative Services	1,282
Public Administration and Defence	1,379.9
Other Services	1,624

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin - October 2021 - National Centre for Statistics and Information

GDP at Current Prices - 2018 to 2020

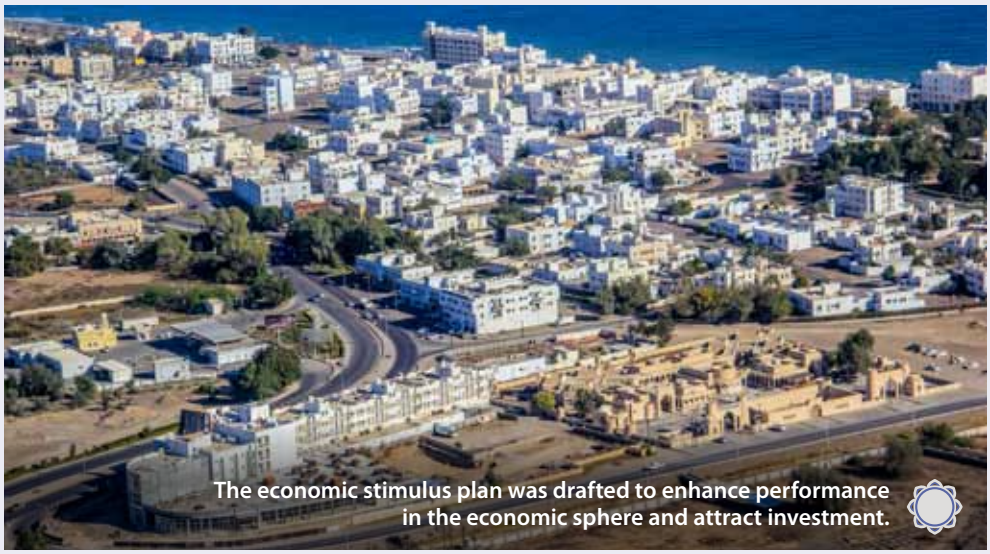
ITEM	2020	2019	2018
Oil Activity	7,377.6	10,095.6	11,031.1
Non-Oil Activity	21,884.8	20,490.7	20,648.6
GDP at Current Prices	28,040.2	29,349.5	30,481.9

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin - December 2019, December 2020, October 2021 - National Centre for Statistics and Information

Economic Stimulus Plan

The Sultanate of Oman has taken several measures within the context of an economic stimulus plan designed to mitigate the repercussions of the Covid-19 coronavirus crisis on the national economy. The stimulus plan has had an impact in helping the recovery effort, enhancing economic performance and attracting foreign investment.

The economic stimulus plan is aligned with the objectives of the medium-term (2020-2024) fiscal balance plan, which is expected to improve the Sultanate's overall financial position, reduce public debt and raise the country's credit rating.



The economic stimulus plan was drafted to enhance performance in the economic sphere and attract investment.

Incentives Offered Within the Economic Stimulus Plan

12 Incentives

Exemption from income tax, as and from the date of their registration with the Commercial Register, for all companies whose principal activity fell within sectors of economic diversification in the period between 1 January 2021 and the end of 2022. The exemption is valid for five years, as complies with the terms and controls set by the Tax Authority.

Tax and fee-associated Incentives

7 Incentives

Permitting the exercise of business, commercial and investment activities on a preliminary licence while a final licence is pending. Participants pledge to abide by the specific requirements and standards for the practice of the said activity and the relevant authorities may conduct random inspections to assess the investor's commitment to these requirements.

Business and investment-enhancing incentives

3 Incentives

Assigning government procurement tenders with values not exceeding RO10,000 to SMEs. The owner(s) of the SME must be in possession of a Riyada card, unless exempted by a reasoned decision of the head of the unit.

SME-supporting incentives

2 Incentives

Allocation of RO20 million in the 2021 budget to train Omani job-seekers and better qualify them for entry to the labour market.

Labour and employment market incentives

4 Incentives

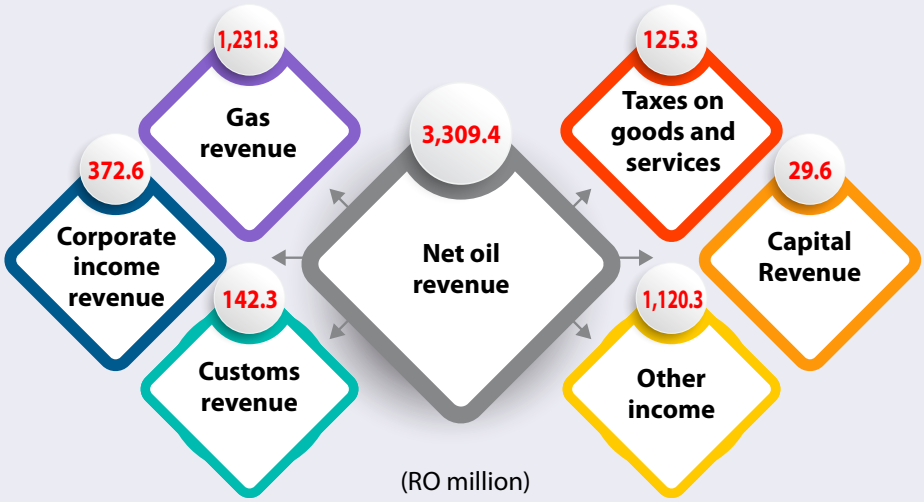
Continuation of the incentive package scheme associated with credit, with a flexible ceiling on the lending rate, easier terms for affected sectors, a reduction in protective capital ratios, and other measures aimed at helping banks, financing and financial leasing companies play their part in supporting the economic recovery effort and improving liquidity levels in the local market.

Banking incentives

Government Revenue and Public Spending in 2021

Public finances performed well in 2021. Government revenue for the first eight months of the year, at RO6.3 billion, marked a 73.2% improvement on the figure targeted in the state's general budget for 2021. The Sultanate also managed to reduce public spending to a level which saw the expected deficit drop below the budget estimate.

Government Revenue – January-August 2021



(RO million)

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin - October 2021 - National Centre for Statistics and Information

Public Expenditure - January-August 2021

(RO million)

Source: Monthly Statistical Bulletin - October 2021 - National Centre for Statistics and Information

Government revenue 2020 and 2019

(RO million)

ITEM	2020	2019
Net oil revenue	3,937.5	6,098.5
Gas revenue	1,860.2	1,900.5
Non-oil revenue	2,705.5	2,590
TOTAL REVENUE	8,503.2	10,589

Source: State Final Account for 2020 - Issued by the Ministry of Finance.

Revenue and Expenditure Estimates – State General Budget 2021

(RO million)

ITEM	AMOUNT
Oil revenue	3,550
Gas revenue	1,870
Current revenue	3,000
Capital income	200
Capital recovery	20
TOTAL REVENUE	8,640
Current expenditure	9,020
Investment expenditure	900
Contributions, subsidies and other expenditure	960
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	10,880
ESTIMATED DEFICIT*	(2,240)

*Deficit will be financed through domestic and external borrowing and financing from reserves.

Public Expenditure 2020 and 2019

(RO million)

ITEM	2020	2019
Current expenditure	9,466.8	9,515.7
Investment expenditure	2,453.6	2,747.6
Contributions, subsidies and other expenditure	1,005.3	947.9
TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE	12,925.7	13,211.2

Source: State Final Account for 2020 - Issued by the Ministry of Finance

Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025)

In 2021, the Sultanate of Oman entered into its Tenth Five-Year Plan, which will run until the end of 2025. The Plan has economic and social goals that are primarily concerned with stimulating economic activity, developing the macroeconomic environment, raising the efficiency of public financial management, and achieving balance between government revenue and public spending. It builds upon forecasts of oil prices averaging US$48 per barrel during the years of the Plan. Its overall objectives line up with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 in a context of full participation by all governorates in achieving these.

The Plan aims to achieve a real GDP growth average of no less than 3.5% over the years of its execution; a GDP growth rate at current prices of 5.5%; an increase in the investment rate to 27% of GDP, while working to raise investment efficiency; increased foreign direct investment in the oil and non-oil sectors to a level of 10% of GDP by the end of the Plan; an increase in the private sector's contribution to investment to a level of 60%; and real growth in non-oil activities of 3.2%.

Objectives of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025)

- Promoting sustainable human development and preserving human capital
- Achieving balanced development among the governorates and increasing the per capita income of citizens
- Expanding the base of economic diversification and revamping production mechanisms and programmes
- Developing the macroeconomic environment and achieving financial sustainability
- Stimulating economic activity in partnership with the private sector and supporting the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

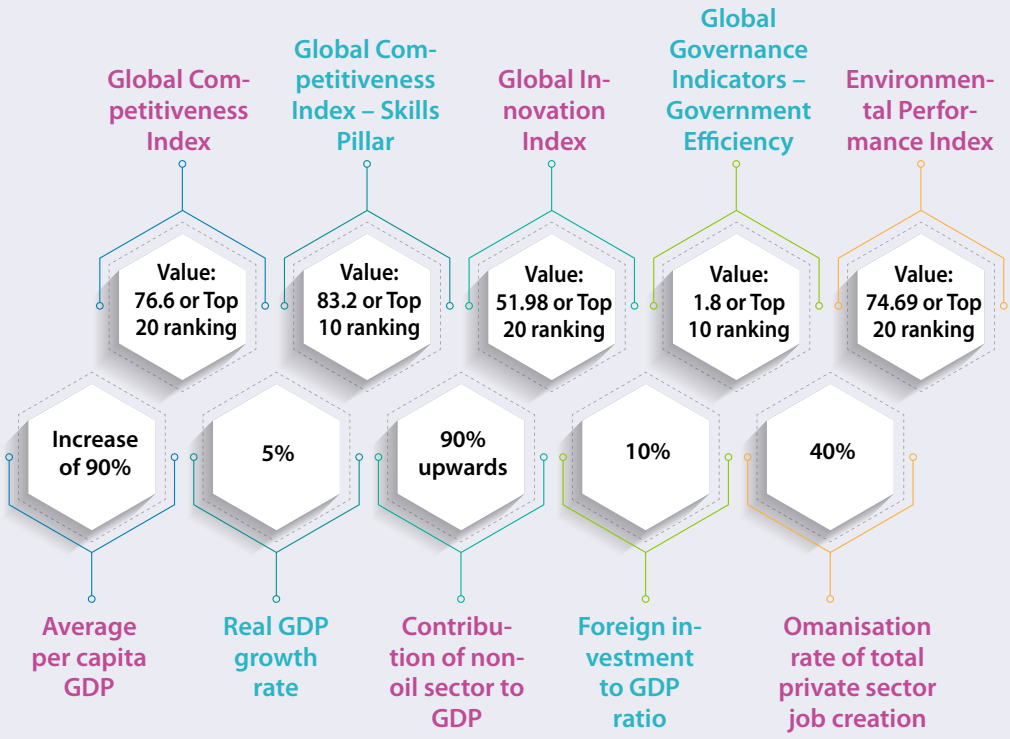
Financial Framework of the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan

1. Achievement of financial balance through measures aimed at controlling public finances.
2. Improving the Sultanate's credit rating to raise investor confidence by controlling public debt levels.
3. Increasing government revenue by raising the contribution of non-tax revenue to total revenue.
4. Maintaining measures to rationalise public spending and raising the efficiency of government services.
5. Strengthening the social welfare system to protect those of limited income from any consequences arising from the proposed measures.
6. Maintaining the level of spending on basic services such as education, health, housing, security and social care.
7. Establishing financial and investment incentives throughout the Sultanate, enabling the respective governorates to best exploit their resources and comparative advantages, with the goals of achieving sustainable development, stimulating trade and creating job opportunities for citizens.
8. Incentivising economic diversification and developing economic sectors, using additional sources of finance for productive projects and supporting public-private partnerships.
9. A commitment to transfer the proceeds from the sale of 20,000 barrels of oil per day during the years of the Plan to pay off a portion of loan instalments.

Oman Vision 2040

In 2021, the Sultanate of Oman began implementing its first steps to Oman Vision 2040, a grand strategy which aims to achieve advanced social goals and further economic development, moving the economy from its status of dependence on oil to one more diversified and knowledge-based.

Principal Indicator Targets Envisioned in Oman 2040



Functions of the Oman Vision 2040 Follow-up Unit

The Oman 2040 Vision Follow-up Unit was established to oversee the activities of government and private sector institutions and ensure that they have aligned their strategies and policy rollouts with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. The Unit's terms of reference can be summarised as follows:

- **Follow up implementation of the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and review indicators and results.**
- **Provide a stimulating environment within which to achieve Oman's 2040 vision.**
- **Follow up on policies that simplify procedures and facilitate services.**
- **Support all participating entities and encourage effective partnerships between relevant parties.**
- **Lay down systems and procedures to ensure that all who interact with government service agencies obtain the best service possible.**
- **Strengthen cooperation between government agencies and the private sector to advance the implementation of plans and projects emanating from the vision.**
- **Facilitate government agencies in developing and improving the quality of services to conform with accepted standards, and encourage a culture of innovation and quality in line with best management practice.**

National Executive Programmes

Over the course of the next five years, the government will roll out a series of priority programmes aligned along the four axes of Oman Vision 2040. During this time frame, the Oman 2040 Follow-up Unit will be focusing on the Economy and Development axis, pursuing the implementation of accelerated national programmes on the priority list. Among these will be initiatives that seek urgent and sustainable solutions to challenges such as the Sultanate's financial and economic status and operations.

Sultanate's Advanced Rankings in Global Economic Indicators

Direct Foreign Investment

The volume of direct foreign investment in the Sultanate up to the end of June 2021 had increased by 6.7% to RO16.3 billion, as compared with RO15 billion for the same period in 2020. Foreign direct investment flow volume came to some RO1.3 billion.

Principal Investing Countries and Volume of Investments

COUNTRY	INVESTMENT VOLUME
United Kingdom	RO 8.3 billion
United States	RO 1.9 billion
United Arab Emirates	RO 1.2 billion
Kuwait	RO 911 million
People's Republic of China	RO 783 million
Bahrain	RO 398 million
Qatar	RO 387 million
India	RO 285 million
Kingdom Saudi Arabia	RO 106.8 million

Principal Foreign Investment Sectors

SECTOR	INVESTMENT VOLUME
Oil and gas extraction	RO10.9 billion
Financial brokerage	RO1.4 billion
Real estate activities	RO1.1 billion
Manufacturing industry	RO695 million

Oman Investment Authority

The Oman Investment Authority is building a highly diversified portfolio, investing in a wide range of assets distributed geographically throughout the world. It invests prudently, within the permissible risk ceiling, ensuring sustainable returns over the long term.

The Authority's investment strategy is both precise and flexible, given the levels of risk applicable across asset categories. It follows best practice standards in formulating its investment strategies and goals.

Oman Investment Authority Performance Record

1. Achieved an average annual return of 5.8% since the establishment of the Agency.
2. Added 20 new investments in 2020.
3. Launched the 'Rawabat' (Links) programme for companies owned by the Authority, through which the corporate governance principles of the companies owned by the Authority were formulated, and a series of eight policies and guidelines drafted.
4. Restructured these companies and drafted onto their boards of directors outstanding figures from the national business world, along with experts and specialists in various fields drawn from both public and private sectors.
5. Issued the Governance Charter, a template of work practices that conforms with the highest local and international standards.
6. Took up an equity stake in SpaceX, the space technology and satellite communications company.
7. Ramped up its stake in Kumport, the Turkish container port to 35% in a joint shareholding with a Chinese investment corporation.
8. Invested in Kenmir, which engages in the the mining and production of titanium.
9. Investing in Bharat port in Mumbai in a partnership with the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore to operate a port with a 4.8 million container capacity annually.
10. Launched 13 national projects in 2021 with an aggregate value of RO3.5 billion.

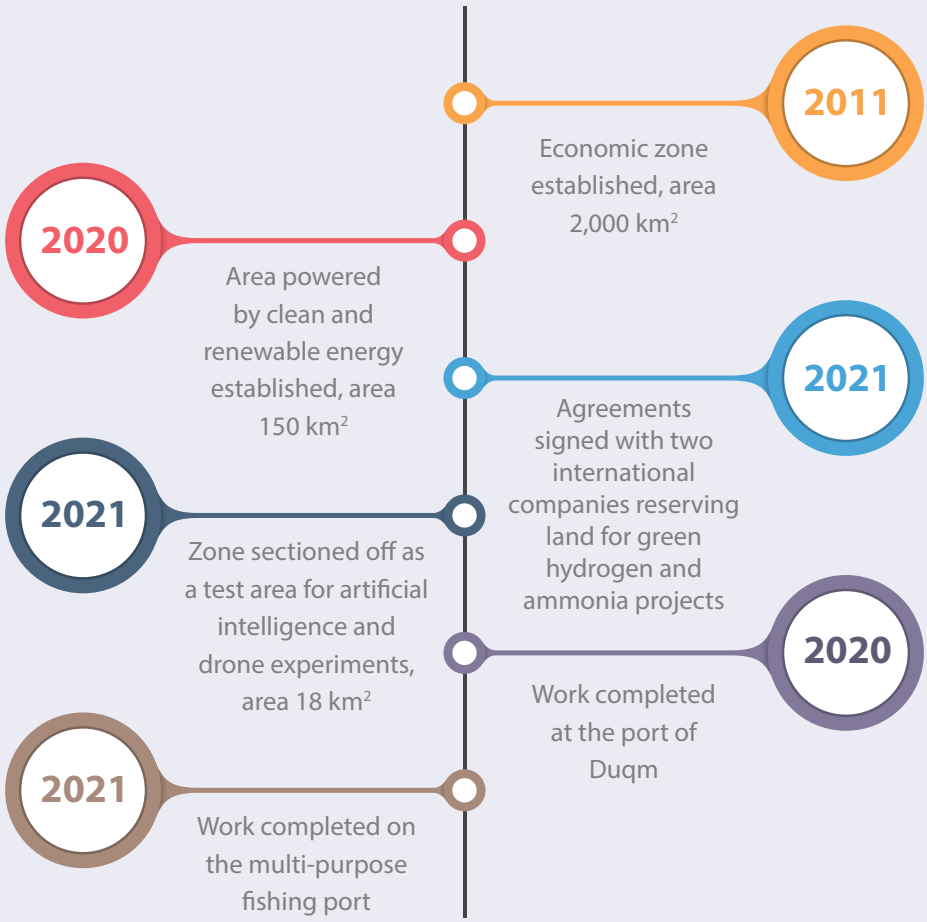
International Distribution of Omani Investment Authority Assets

Sultanate of Oman			North America
Kazakhstan			Saudi Arabia
Pakistan			Turkey
China			Hungary
South Korea			Tanzania
India			Mozambique
Vietnam			Republic of the Congo
Singapore			Switzerlan
Bahrain			Germany
Egypt			Canada
Argentina			France
Russia			Luxembourg
Uzbekistan			Italy
Australia			Spain
Jordan			Portugal
United Arab Emirates			Tunisia
Qatar			Brazil
Kuwait			

Special Economic Zones and Free Zones

The Sultanate of Oman has promising investment opportunities in diverse economic sectors. The facilities supervised by the General Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, covering a combined area of 2,100 km^2 of serviced sites, are viewed as attractive investment oases. They are: Duqm Special Economic Zone, Mazyunah Free Zone, Salalah Free Zone, and Sohar Free Zone.

Duqm Special Economic Zone



Investment Sectors

Notable Projects Under Construction

- Integrated power and water station
- Duqm refinery
- Ras Markaz oil storage station
- Container and bridge cranes project for the commercial berth at Duqm Port
- Second phase of the dualisation of Sultan Said bin Taimur Road
- Construction of the superstructure of a multi-purpose fishing port

Al Mazyunah Free Zone

First free zone in the Sultanate of Oman

Opened in 1999

Area: 15.3 km^2

Gulf gateway for transit trade to the Republic of Yemen and from there to East Africa

Contributed to encouraging investments and trade movement between the two neighbours

Zone Objectives

Attracting international investors

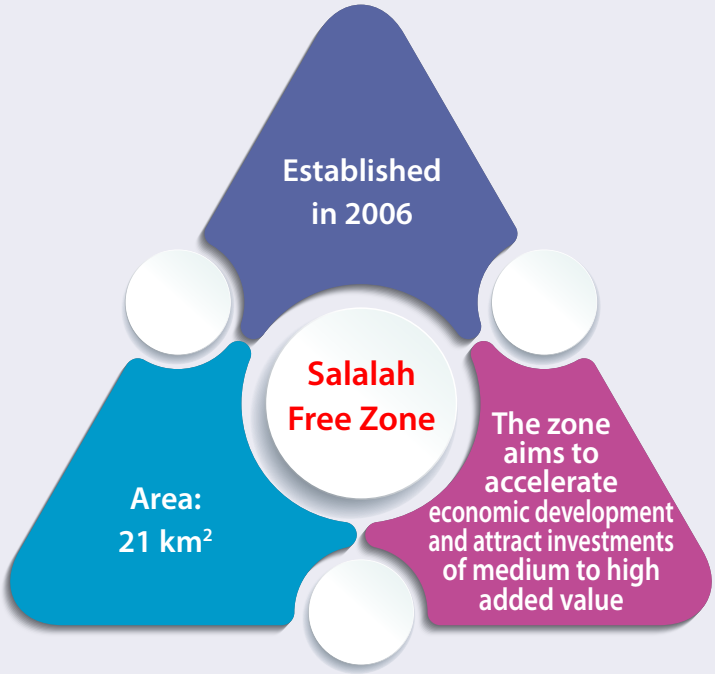
Strengthening partnership with Yemeni investors

Establishing projects in the storage of re-export goods

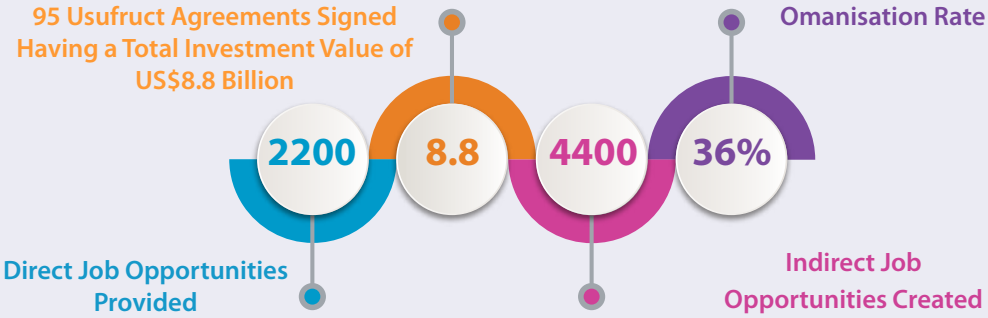
Implementation of a 4 million m^2 Phase Four expansion plan

Total Zone Projects at End of First Quarter 2021

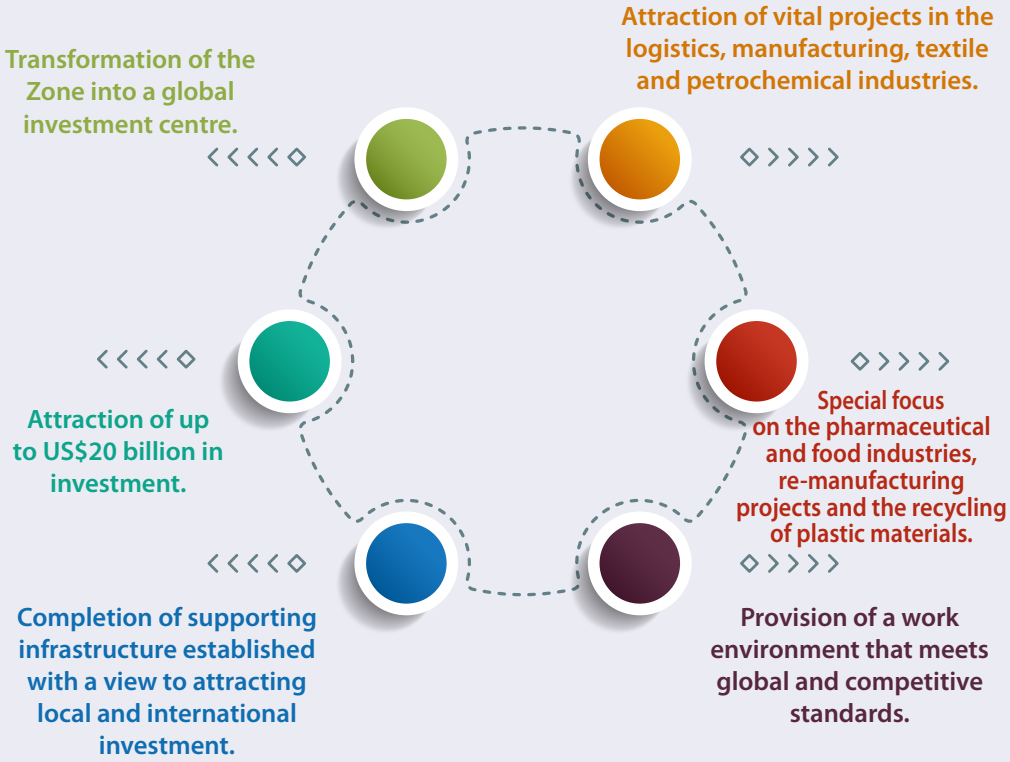
Projects in Production	74
Projects Under Construction	36
TOTAL PROJECTS	110



Zone Performance up to March 2021



Zone's Strategic Goals for the Period 2013 - 2028



Investment Value of Existing Projects at End of First Quarter 2021

ITEM	2020	2019
Projects in production	23	RO1.1 billion
Projects under construction	14	RO662 million
TOTAL PROJECTS	37	RO1.762

Sohar Free Zone

1. Established in 2010 .
2. Area: 45 km² .
3. Zone follows standardised design of a specialised industrial complex.
4. Located within the master plan of Sohar Port.
5. The Zone and port of Sohar together contribute 2.7% of GDP.
6. The Zone targets export industries and industries based on raw materials sourced nearby.
7. Value of investment in existing projects: US$918 million.
8. Value of investment in projects under construction: US$200 million.

Investment Sectors

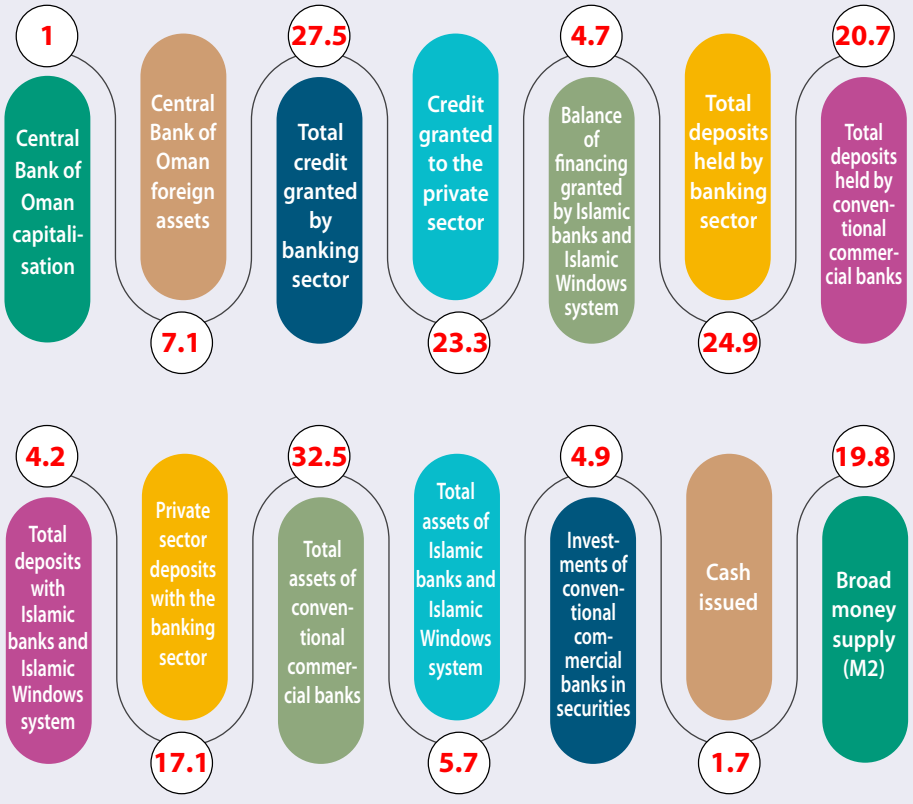
- Logistics
- Clean energy
- Iron, steel and metals
- Chemicals
- Textiles

The Banking Sector

Despite the emergence of liquidity pressures in the months after the outbreak of the pandemic, the Central Bank of Oman worked diligently to ensure the availability of funds, enabling the banks to meet liquidity demands. Throughout the worst of the crisis, the liquidity coverage ratio and the ratio of net stable funding at all times exceeded the applicable regulatory requirements.

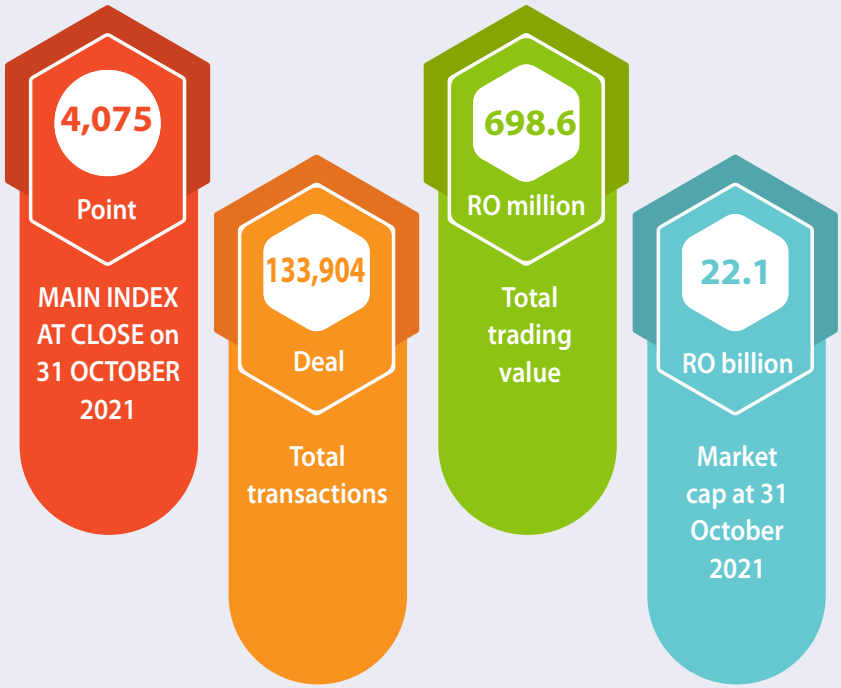
Banks in the Sultanate of Oman handled the Covid-19 pandemic from a perspective of flexibility. Large capital margins facilitated a climate in which they could expand their balance sheets and better absorb the effects of shock. Accordingly, the banking sector was able to alleviate somewhat the impact of the pandemic by offering facilities to affected borrowers in the form of deferred loans and expanded credit.

Banking Sector Indicators to August 2021



RO billion

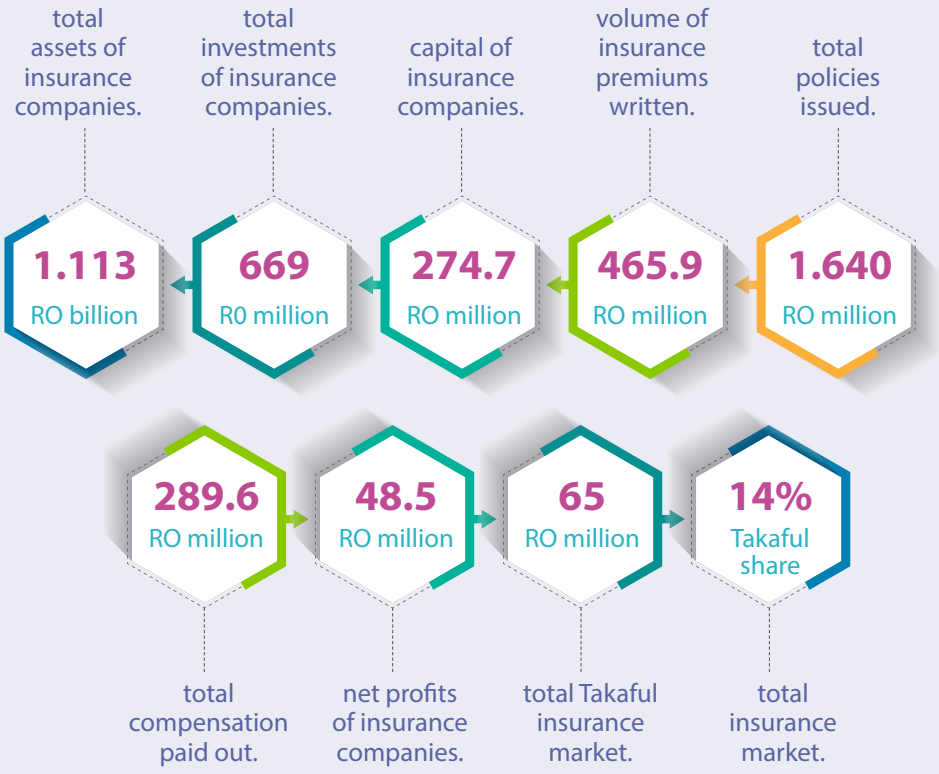
Principal Indicators - Muscat Stock Exchange 1 January to 31 October 2021



Performance of Muscat Stock Exchange – 2019 and 2020

ITEM	2020	2019
Main Index	3,658.7	3,981.1
Total Trading Days	243	245
Total Transactions	103,951	118,105
Total Trading Value	RO441 million	RO762.7 million
Market Cap at End December	RO20.4 billion	RO18.1 billion
Foreign Share in Capital of Public Shareholding Companies	25.61%	25.37%

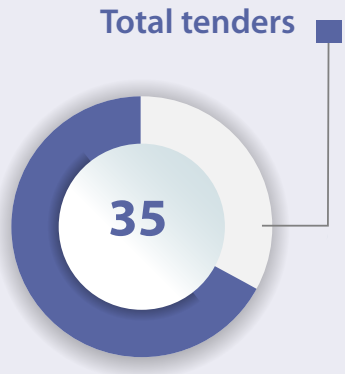
Insurance Sector Indicators 2020

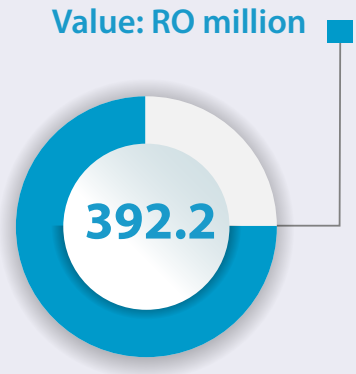


Most Significant Tenders Awarded in 2020

PROJECT	COST (RO)
Adam-Thumrait Road Dualisation (Phase 4)	114,953,182
Adam-Thumrait Road Dualisation (Phase 3)	73,946,766
Adam-Thumrait Road Dualisation (Phase 5)	62,284,843
Construction of flood protection dam in Wadi Adunab in Wilayat Salalah in Dhofar	23,903,015
Construction of flood protection dam in Wadi An'ar and side protection at Salalah Port in Dhofar	22,924,941
Construction of new Al Mazyunah Hospital in Dhofar	15,359,970

Tenders Awarded by Tender Board and its Secretariat-General in 2020





Significant Tenders Awarded

TENDER	COST (RO)
Supply of medicines, serums and vaccines for year 2022 to Ministry of Health and 5 government agencies	37,078,670
Rehabilitation of the southern runway and air corridors at Muscat International Airport	21,077,493
Provision of catering, food, cleaning, laundry and pest control services to health hospitals affiliated to the Ministry of Health	17,847,930
Design and implementation of gradient stabilisation works on both banks along a 35 km stretch of the Argot-Sarfeet asphalt Road in Dhofar	11,364,21
Supply of surgical consumables to the Ministry of Health	7,908,771
Removal of demolition waste from the Al Batinah Coastal Road - Phase Two (Al Suwaiq-Sohar)	7,357,627
Supply of medical laboratory supplies and blood transfusion services for the year 2021	6,248,219
Supply of laboratory supplies to the Ministry of Health	6,069,280
Supply of consumables for dialysis to the Ministry of Health	4,976,133
Provision of transportation services to Sultan Qaboos University students for the academic year (2021-2022)	4,187,680
Supply of computers for school students in the social security category	3,499,925

* Limited to bids awarded between 1 January and 3 November 2021

Oil and Gas Indicators - 2020

4.7 billion barrels — Sultanate's total reserves of crude oil and condensate.

24 trillion cubic feet — Total natural gas reserves.

342 fields — Total oilfields in production.

72 fields — Total gas fields in production.

80 wells — Oil and gas exploration wells drilled and evaluated.

951 bpd — Oil production average rate.

122 million cubic — Natural gas production daily average.

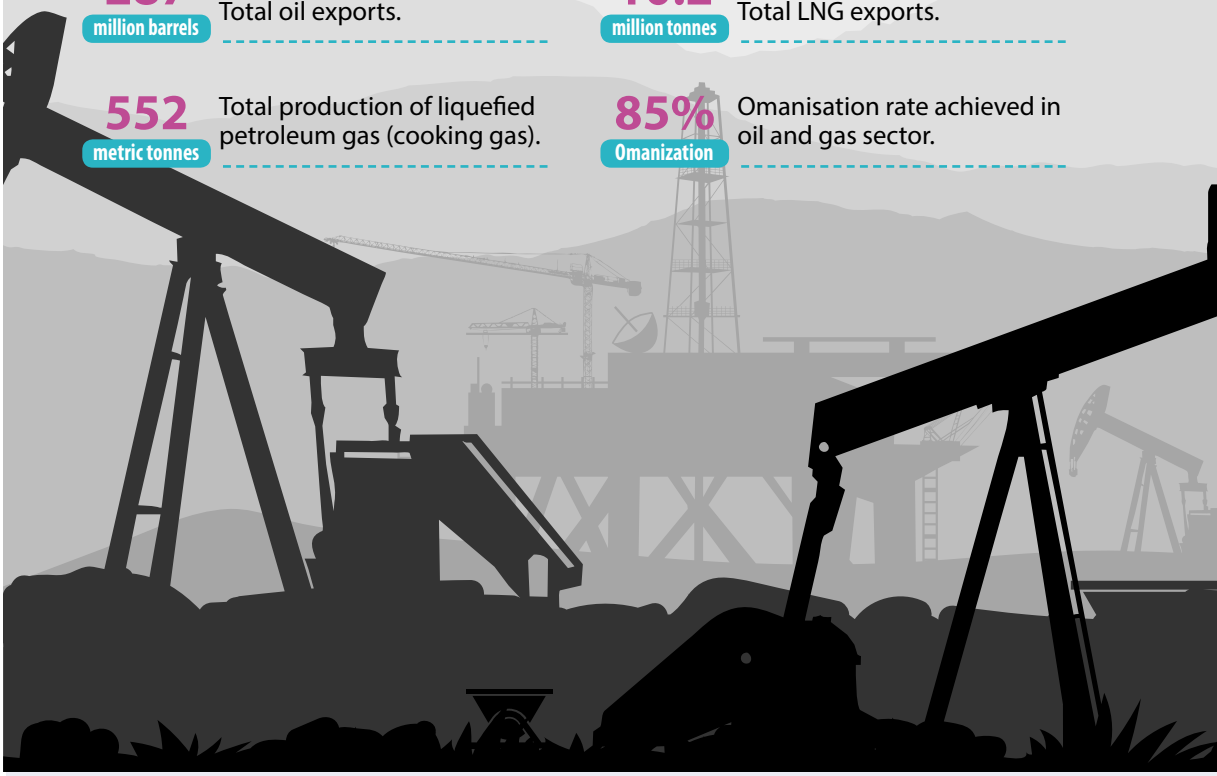
94 million barrels — Total petroleum products from Mina al Fahal and Sohar refineries.

287 million barrels — Total oil exports.

10.2 million tonnes — Total LNG exports.

552 metric tonnes — Total production of liquefied petroleum gas (cooking gas).

85% Omanization — Omanisation rate achieved in oil and gas sector.



Oil Production and Exports – 2020 and 2019

ITEM	2020	2019
Total Oil Production	347.9 million barrels	354.4 million barrels
Average Daily Production	951,000 barrels	971,000 barrels
Average Price Per Barrel	US$46	US$63.6
TOTAL OIL EXPORTS	287 million barrels	310.3 million barrels

Most significant projects in oil and gas sector

Amin Solar Power Plant:

The plant was commissioned in 2020, with a target capacity of 100 MW, and aims to provide electricity for the Oman Oil Company concession area.

Jibal- Khaff Oil and Gas Production Project:

The completed project became operational in 2021, producing some 5 million cubic metres of gas and 20,000 barrels of oil daily. An initiative of Petroleum Development Oman, the project involved an investment cost of some US$2.6 billion.

Duqm Refinery:

The processing rate at the refinery in November 2021 was in the region of 85%. The refinery's production capacity is 230,000 bpd. It is located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Liwa Plastic Industries Complex:

During 2020, the complex entered its trial operational phase. The project is being rolled out by the Okiyo Company, at an investment cost of US$6.7 billion. It consists of a natural gas extraction plant, located at Fahud, a 300 km pipeline between Fahud and Sohar, a steam gas cracking unit, a polymer production unit consisting of separate production units for high-density polyethylene, low density polyethylene, and polypropylene.

Okiyo LPG:

This project incorporates the design, construction and operation of a plant located in Salalah in Dhofar Governorate for the production of LPG. The project will develop an extraction station, storage tanks, shipping facilities, and a pipeline system linking current connection points to the extraction unit and storage facilities and ultimately to the export facilities.

Okio Ammonia:

The ammonia project, which is being constructed adjacent to the methanol plant in Salalah, will exploit the hydrogen-rich gas generated by the methanol plant as feedstock in the production of ammonia.

Ras Markaz Oil Storage Station:

The Oman Tanker Company is behind the station being built in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm to receive, store and export crude oil. The station is expected to be ready in 2022.

Expansion of gas-powered locomotive fleet in Wilayat Sur:

Production at the Oman Liquefied Natural Gas Company (OLNG) topped 10.1 million metric tonnes in 2020, and 155 cargoes of LNG were loaded from its plant in Wilayat Sur. This achievement comes as a direct result of the plant expansion project, designed to increase capacity at the plant by an expected 10%. The expansion will enable to company to produce 11.4 million metric tonnes of LNG annually.

Metals Sector 2020 Figures

Principal Trade Indicators - First Half of 2021

(RO million)

SECTOR	JAN-JUNE 2021	JAN-JUNE 2020	CHANGE (%)
Total Merchandise Exportsx	7,549.2	6,039.2	25%
Omani Non-Oil Exports	2,428.9	1,408.9	72%
Pegistered Merchandise Imports	4,701.3	3,795.9	23.8%
GDP – Service Activities	7,912.6	7,130.6	11%
CONTRIBUTION OF WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE TO GDP	1,364.5	1,147	19%

Breakdown of Merchandise Exports in 2020

ITEM	VALUE (RO million)
Oil Exports	6,997.8
Non-Oil Exports	3,030.2
Re-Exports	1,669.4
TOTAL MERCHANDISE EXPORTS	11,727.4

Value of Merchandise Imports by Customs Port in 2020

ITEM	VALUE (RO million)	VOLUME (1,000 tonnes)
Imports Via Seaport Customs	4,200.9	19,857.2
Imports Via Land Port Customs	2,528.4	7,147.7
Imports Via Airport Customs	1,244.1	52.5
TOTAL REGISTERED MERCHANDISE IMPORTS	7,973.4	27,057.4

His Majesty the Sultan's Award for Industrial Excellence 2021

Number of participating establishments

74

Winning Companies

- Sohar Aluminium
- Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel
- Oman Fibre Optic Company
- National Pharma-ceutical Industries
- National Aluminium Products

Companies Awarded the Ministry Excellence Shield

- Techno Plastic Industry
- Al Maha Ceramics
- United Gulf Pipe Manu-facturing Company
- Oman Flour Mills
- Oman Aluminum Rolling Company
- Jotun Paints
- Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives
- Asian Paints
- Salalah Flour Mills

Contribution of Industrial Activities to GDP in 2020

ACTIVITY	VALUE (RO million)
Mining an d Quarrying	254.2
Manufacturing	2,114.2
Electricity, Water and Sewage Supplies	841.5
Construction	2,527.9
TOTAL	5,737.8

Programmes Implemented to Enhance Agricultural Resources

- Production of 80,000 tissue palm seedlings from the Tissue Culture and Biotechnology Research Centre in Bahla, including 60,000 for the One Million Date Palm Plantation Project and 20,000 for replacement and renewal projects.
- Eight varieties of date palm produced at the Tissue Culture and Biotechnology Research Centre.
- Several integrated management programmes for dealing with pests impacting palm and other economic crops, the most important being the integrated management programme for controlling the palm dubas bug.
- Production of 2,227 tonnes of wheat in the 2019/2020 agricultural season.
- A total of 2,907 farmers benefiting from the wheat cultivation project.
- Number of beehives distributed throughout the Sultanate stands at 126,793 hives.
- Total honey production in the 2019/2020 agricultural season was 611 tonnes, valued at RO15 million.
- A total of 2,218 surveys carried out by the Desert Locust Control Project in 2020.

Fisheries Sector Figures

52,000	Artisanal fishermen
25,000	Artisanal and coastal fishing vessels
840,000 tonnes	Total artisanal fishing production in 2020
RO364 million	Value of fish production in 2020
1,300 tonnes	Total production from fish farming in 2020
RO2.5 million	Value of production from fish farming in 2020
24	Active fishing ports nationwide
11	Fishing ports and marinas in design to rollout phases

Livestock Figures

- **39%** Livestock production growth rate for 2020.
- **20** New investment in 2020.
- **197** Public and private sector veterinary clinics providing services to livestock breeders.
- **41** Mobile veterinary clinics established to provide treatment and vaccination services for livestock in villages and remote areas.
- **99** Pharmacies providing medicines for livestock.
- **4.2** Vaccine doses provided under the livestock immunisation programme in 2020.
- **37** 37,000: Livestock keepers benefiting from veterinary immunisation services in 2020.
- **400** 400: Licences for animal projects and veterinary facilities issued in 2020.

The Most Significant Financial, Economic and Monetary Achievements of 2021

A decrease in the public debt-to-GDP ratio to the 68% level, as compared with the prior estimate for the year (83%).

A drop in the oil price breakeven point to US$60 per barrel for the five-year period 2021-2025, as compared with the figure of US$80 per barrel for 2016-2020.

A revision by the major credit rating agencies in 2021 of their outlook for the Sultanate to 'Stable' and 'Positive' , reversing a continuing decline that began in 2014.

An Improving Currency Outlook

Central Bank Expands Foreign Currency Reserves:

Total Bank Deposits Rose to:

Total Credit Balance – Loans Issued by Local Banks was up:

The Most Significant Financial, Economic and Monetary Achievements of 2021

Estimated Improvement in GDP at Current Prices

2021 — 13.8% Growth — 32 Billion Omani Riyals — 2020

Improved Financial Indicators

The estimated deficit decreased from RO4.8 billion prior to government mitigation measures to RO1.2 billion for 2021, a satisfying drop of 75%.

A decrease in the annual deficit figure from 15.5% of GDP in 2020 to 3.8% in 2021

Public spending control achieved, notwithstanding financial challenges that required the following exceptional expenses:

- **Appropriation of** RO53 million to handle the outbreak of coronavirus.
- **The absorptive** capacity of higher education institutions raised to a new ceiling of 31,000 places.
- **Costs** associated with employment and associated training programmes.
- **Settlement of** RO418 million in financial arrears from previous years.
- **Settlement of** RO1.2 billion in financial dues to private sector companies up to end of 2021.
- **Allocation of** RO200 million for repairs to the damage caused by hurricane Shaheen.
- **Government's** contribution to oil and gas sector capital and operating expenses arising from operational processing delays by the Energy Development Company of Oman.

Modern Amenities – Set Against an Unpolluted Skyline

A Well-Protected Environment

The environment was a priority for the Sultanate long before it became an issue of serious global concern, and that has not changed as we see out the year 2021. A new natural reserve, the Khor Kharfout Archaeological Reserve, located between Dhalkut and Rakhyut in the Governorate of Dhofar on the Arabian Sea coast, has been added to the Sultanate's existing list. The same year saw the introduction of regulations governing the disposal of waste under which the export of all types of hazardous and non-hazardous waste are prohibited in the absence of a licence issued by the Environment Agency.

In light of the dramatic changes taking place across the world and that impact environmental matters, the Environment Agency is reviewing relevant existing legislation to ensure that it is consistent with Oman Vision 2040, while keeping pace with development requirements, and adequately protecting the Omani environment in a legislative context that is integrated and appropriate.

Insofar as concerns the green economy, the Environment Agency has outlined its broad aspiration for Oman Vision 2040, viz: "a green and circular economy that responds to national needs and is in line with the global trend."

Objectives of the Green Economy Programme in the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025)

1. To consolidate the foundations and applications of the green and circular economy within the environmental sector.
2. To diversify environmental investment as it relates to elements of the green and circular economy.
3. To build knowledge, awareness and innovation into green economy policy.
4. To adapt legislation, regulations and systems such that they stimulate and support the green and circular economy.

Environmental Objectives in Oman Vision 2040

- To attain a balance between environmental, economic and social demands
- To work within the rulebook of sustainable development
- To create high quality environments that are free from pollution
- To achieve food and water security based on renewable resources and advanced technologies
- To exploit to optimum benefit the strategic location and biodiversity of the Sultanate of Oman
- To achieve sustainability in the use and investment of natural resources and potential while maximising added value.

The National Initiative to Plant 10 Million Trees

1. This initiative was launched by the Environment Agency in 2020 in cooperation with the private sector.
2. The project is intended to confront desertification, to limit land degradation and preserve wild plant life through propagation and expansion.
3. Nurseries will be expanded, or introduced, across the governorates to secure the necessary seedlings.
4. Healthy seedlings will be selected that have proven to be suited to the indigenous environment, and where necessary adaptable to difficult climatic conditions.
5. The project will concentrate on trees native or well adapted to the environment of the Sultanate of Oman, such as the ghaf, acacia, buckthorn (lotus), juniper and others, for propagation in landscapes and micro-climates that are suited to their cultivation.

The UNESCO Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation

In November 2021, the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO celebrated the 32nd anniversary of the establishment of the UNESCO Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation. The current winners were announced as part of the ceremony, with the Prize going jointly to the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and the University for International Cooperation (UCI), represented by the Latin American School of Protected Areas (ELAP) - Costa Rica.

The Prize was established in 1989 during Sultan Qaboos' visit to UNESCO, and is awarded every two years for outstanding contributions by individuals, groups, institutes or organisations to environmental and natural resources research, to environmental education and training, or to the establishment or management of biosphere reserves, and of UNESCO's Natural World Heritage and Geospatial sites.

Urban Strategy

Urban strategy takes up a prime position on the agenda for Oman 2040. It lies at the heart of the vision that underlies the many aspects of incoming development, and by reference to which all individual projects are measured. Oman Vision 2040 is a long range aspiration that balances economic, societal, cultural and geographical imperatives.

Under the agreed urban strategy, investment and development are directed at targeted locations and sectors, in a context that harmonises the activities involved and reduces the potential for conflict and inconsistency among them.

Urban strategies trend towards the creation of smart, modern cities and vibrant villages.

Housing and Urban Planning Sector Statistics for 2020

Land and Zoning

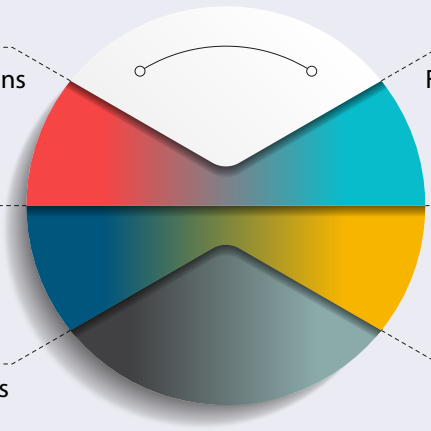
Total zoned lands: 6,690 sites

Lands zoned for residential use: 4,408 sites

Number of sites allocated to the public: 15,666 sites

- 13,333 Sites — Residential use
- 194 Sites — Commercial use
- 290 Sites — Residential and commercial use
- 144 Sites — Industrial use

Real Estate Activity



- 125,000 — Real estate transactions
- RO71.1 Million — Fees collected for total legal transactions
- 58 Sites — Lands registered for the first time
- RO 2.4 Billion — Traded value of real estate
- 211,000 — Property ownerships issued
- 878 Sites — Properties issued to citizens of the GCC

Road Transport

The road transport sector is key to the smooth movement of goods, passengers and traffic to all parts of the country. Crucial to commerce and tourism, the Sultanate's high speed asphalt road network, as overseen by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, extended to 16,000 kms at the end of December 2020, and this is supplemented by a further 17,069 km of dirt road.

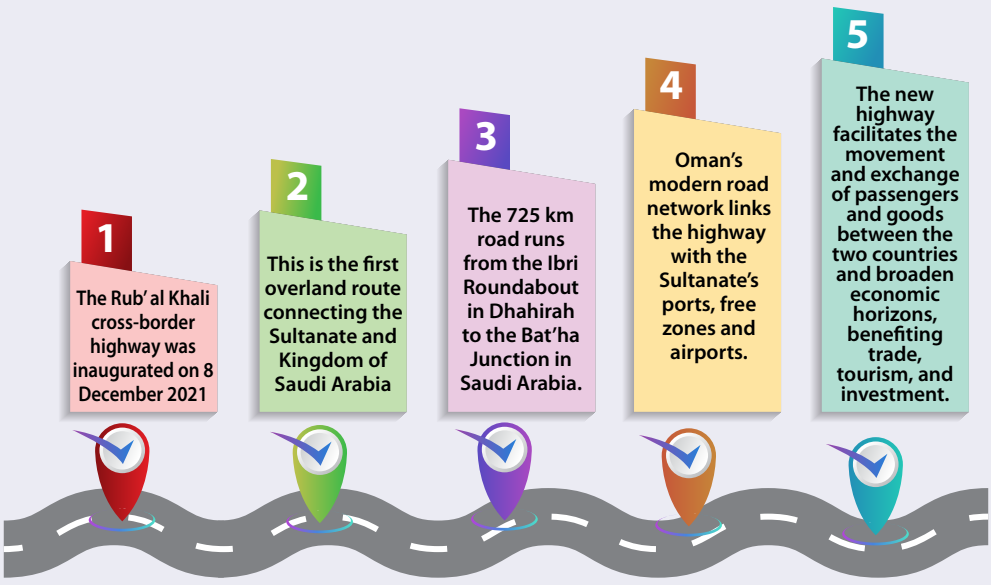
The Ministry has developed legislation regulating overland transport with a view to enhancing economic activity nationally. The land transport law is designed regulate land transport activity in a manner to ensure the provision of the best level of service in the transport of people and goods, thereby to meet the objectives of economic development.

New Completed Road Projects

Ongoing Road Projects

- Dualisation of the Barka-Nakhl road over a distance of 39 km
- Implementation of the Al Sharqiya Expressway (Part 1 of Phase 2) over a distance of 76 km
- Implementation of the Eastern Expressway (Part 2 of Phase 2) over a distance of 55 km
- Dualisation of the Ibri-Yanqul road (Phase 2) over a distance of 34 km
- Addition of a third and fourth lane to the Rusayl-Nizwa dual carriageway between the intersection of Muscat Expressway and the intersection of the 27 km long Al Sharqiya Expressway
- Dualisation of the Osoud Road in Wilayat Shinas from the Al Batinah Expressway as far as the Osoud border crossing with the United Arab Emirates, a total distance of 10 km

The Rub' Al Khali (Empty Quarter) Cross-Border Highway Linking the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia



The Rub' al Khali link road will contribute to the expansion of trade exchange and the recovery of tourism.

Ports

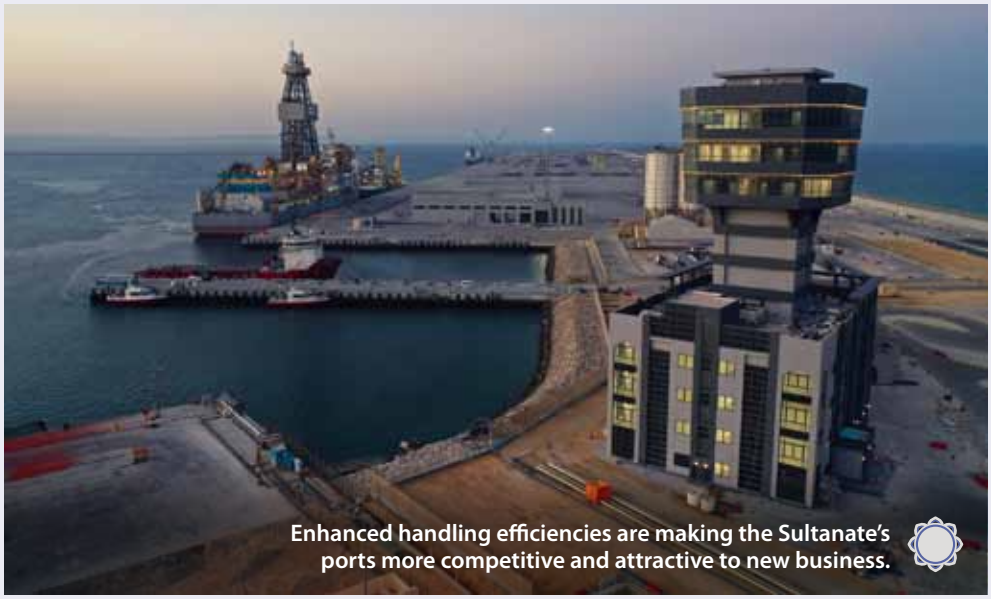
Port activity continues to grow, reflecting the expansion of the Sultanates import-export and re-export sector. Commerce and industry are both thriving and bringing positive benefit to economic stability and diversification.

Several commercial and industrial ports were established in recent years with transportation links to special economic zones and free zones. However the ports also service tourism, which is steadily adding net value to state revenue streams.

To enhance the competitiveness of Omani ports and raise efficiency levels in the goods handling process, concession agreements were concluded with international companies that have extensive experience in the management, operation and marketing of the main commercial and industrial ports.

The four star performers of the Omani port network are: Sultan Qaboos Port, which has been designated to the exclusive service of tourism, Duqm Port in Al Wusta Governorate, Salalah Port, a container hub of increasing influence in the transit and re-export sector, and Sohar Port. The latter is the principal sea conduit for import and export activity, complementing its logistics services to the many industrial projects operating out of the Sohar Free Zone and the port's own industrial zone.

In addition to the above, a number of fishing ports were established or expanded to serve both the commercial and artisanal fishing sectors.



Enhanced handling efficiencies are making the Sultanate's ports more competitive and attractive to new business.

Air Transport

The air transport sector has witnessed successive transformations, and the Sultanate now has four fully functioning civilian airports: Muscat International Airport in Muscat, Salalah Airport in Dhofar, Sohar Airport in North Al Batinah, and Duqm Airport in Al Wusta. Feasibility studies are now substantially progressed on the addition of a fifth civilian airport, in Musandam.

The Sultanate is bound by a total of 111 agreements with countries around the world bearing on the regulation of air transport services. Fifty two of these are open skies agreements. All are designed to regulate the operation of airlines operating between the Sultanate and its respective treaty partners.

Muscat International Airport is an imposing monument to the unique and diverse characteristics of the Sultanate of Oman, characteristics which embody civilisation, modernity and nature at the same time. With a total surface area of 345,000 square metres, the airport building features 96 check-in counters and 10 self-service counters, 12 baggage conveyors, and 118 lifts and escalators. The capacity of the cargo building is 260,000 tonnes annually.

Air Traffic Indicators at Omani Airports
January to September 2021

ITEM	MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	SALALAH AIRPORT	SOHAR AIRPORT	DUQM AIRPORT
Total flights	22,443	3,651	74	-
International flights	17,697	877	30	-
Domestic flights	4,746	2,744	44	468
Total passengers	2,373,363	454,427	9,101	33,919
via international flights	1,809,569	68,530	2,166	-
via domestic flights	563,794	385,897	6,935	33,919

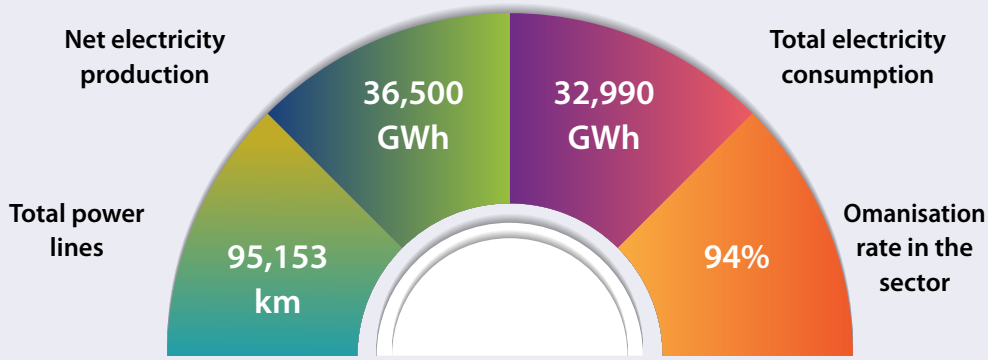
Electricity and Renewable Energy Sector

The year 2020 saw an exponential increase in net electricity production from renewable energy, an aggregate total of 103,000 megawatt-hours as compared with just 9,000 megawatt-hours in 2019. In 2020 also, the Sultanate's largest independent solar power plant went into commission. The massive project, completed at a cost of more than RO150 million, has a production capacity of 500 MW of renewable energy and is the country's most ambitious green power generating facility. It employs the latest solar photovoltaic technologies and is currently supplying the needs of 33,000 housing units. It is projected to reduce almost 340,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

Net Electricity Production From Diverse Energy Sources (MWh)

SOURCE	2020	2019
Diesel	797,811	746,676
Gas	35,590,301	36,040,182
Solar	538	549
Wind	103,026	8,531

Electricity and Renewable Energy Statistics for 2020



Water Sector

The Sultanate's combined annual renewable water resources produce a volume of approximately 1,318 million cubic metres, and the demand for these resources is increasing annually. Particularly high consumption, at 78% of the total, is attributed to agriculture. This issue is being addressed by way of an expanding irrigation network that avails of advanced developments in the field, as well as a phasing out of cultivables having an excessive demand for water.

A master plan designed to handle the water deficit has been drafted, incorporating legislation that will regulate the management of and access to existing resources. Also envisioned is a set of diverse water development schemes, incorporating dams, seawater desalination, waste water treatment and artificial cloud seeding.

Countrywide cloud seeding stations

(2)	(4)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(1)
in the mountains of Dhofar Governorate	in North Al Batinah Governorate	in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate	in Muscat Governorate	in Al Dhahirah Governorate	in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate

Expanded Water Production 2015-2020

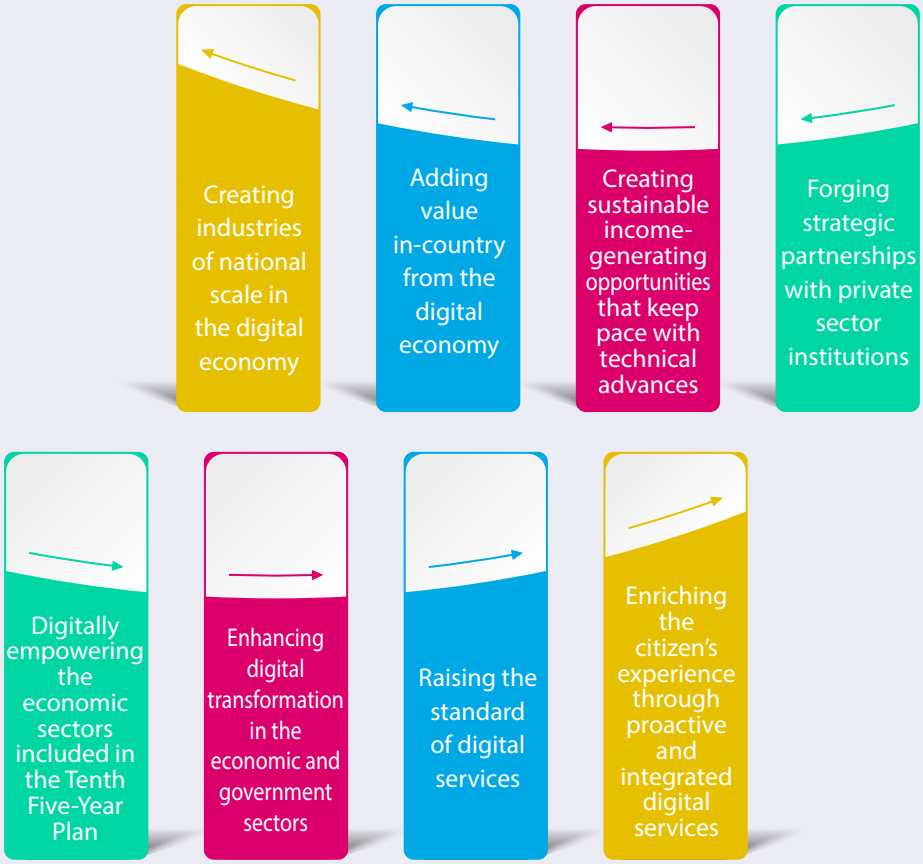
YEAR	PRODUCTION (million M^3)
2015	336.8
2016	377.9
2017	398.5
2018	421.7
2019	446.1
2020	473.5

Communication and Information Technology

The National Programme for the Digital Economy is an initiative focused on developing the communications and information technology sector. The Programme sets out to build a prosperous digital economy that will be responsive to the long term requirements of the future. The programme has identified a set of pillars on which the digital economy rests and that conform to the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040. These include acceleration of the e-government transformation, enhancement of digital services, incentivising the digitalisation of business activities across the board, with emphasis on processes that directly impact the economy and strategic decision-making.

National Programme for the Digital Economy

Goals



Targeted Services and Programmes

Telecom Sector Statistics to September 2021

ITEM	NUMBER
Total fixed phone lines	585,362
Mobile phone subscribers	5,872,681
Active subscriptions to mobile broadband internet	5,088,357
Total fixed internet subscriptions	522,127

Development Initiatives Implemented by Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

Afaq Initiative to Bring Broadband Services to Rural Villages

The initiative was launched in 2020 with the purpose of providing broadband internet service via satellite.

Omanisation Initiative in the Profession of Selling and Maintaining Communications Equipment

This initiative was proposed with a view to creating opportunities for Omanis from social security-supported families in the maintenance and sale of telecommunications devices and accessories.

Endowment Lnitiative to Empower Education

This scheme is concerned with providing sustainable funding sources to enable schools to raise the standard of education by upgrading the efficiency of the technology and communication services available to them.

Asnad Platform

Asnad is a digital platform that allows customers to request tenders and submit proposals. The platform helps integrate service providers and customers by bringing them into a single electronic environment. It is proving very effective in encouraging the digital participation of small and medium sized companies and business owners.

Tourism

The tourism sector saw across the board improvements in 2021 over the preceding year as Covid-19 vaccination programmes rolled out internationally and international flights resumed.

Between January and October 2021, hotels in the 3-5 star categories accommodated 941,000 guests, as opposed to 682,000 for the same period in 2020, or 851,000 for the whole of the year (2020).

3- 5-star Hotel Performance (January-October 2021)

ITEM	JAN-OCT 2020	JAN-OCT 2021
Total guests	682,728	941,418
Revenue (RO million)	72	69.5
Occupancy rate (%)	26.7	36.3
	103.026	8.531

SOME SOCIAL STATISTICS

Item	Unit	2019	2020
1- Social Indicators			
- Total Population	No.(000)	4,618	4,481
Omani	No.(000)	2,655	2,736
Expatriate	No.(000)	1,963	1,745
- Crude Birth Rate	per 1000 Population (Omani)	30.0	28.2
- Crude Death Rate	per 1000 Population (Omani)	2.7	3.2
- Infant Mortality Rate	per 1000 Live Births (Omani)	8.0	7.6
- Under 5 Mortality Rate	per 1000 Live Births (Omani)	10.2	9.3
- Total Fertility Rate	live births per women 15-49 years (Omani)	3.7	3.5
- Life Expectancy at Birth (Omani)	Year	77.2	76.0
- Males	Year	75.2	73.9
- Femals	Year	79.2	78.6
Totol Workers	No.	2,157.807	1,859.657
Omani	No.	465,226	430,605
Expatriate	No.	1,692.581	1,429.052
Government Sector	No.	237,363	204,015
Omani	No.	202,893	175,851
Expatriate	No.	34,470	28,164
Privet Sector	No.	1,626.288	1,402.961
Omani	No.	262,333	254,754
Expatriate	No.	1,363.955	1,148.207
Family Sector (Expatriate)	No.	294,156	252,681

Source: National Centre for Statistics and Information – figures at December 2021

SOME SOCIAL STATISTICS

Item	Unit	2019	2020
2- Economic Indicators			
- Gross Domestic Product at Current Prices[1]	Mn. R.O.	33,389.7	27,705.2
- Gross National Income (GNI)[1]	Mn. R.O.	31,027.2	25,632.0
- GNI per Capita[1]	R.O.	6,718.8	5,720.1
Total Revnues	Mn. R.O.	10,588.7	8,503.2
Total Expenditure	Mn. R.O.	13,211.2	12,925.7
- Oil & Gas Revenue as a % of Total Government Revenue	%	75.5	68.2
- Average Daily Production of Oil	(000) BBL.	971	951
- Total Merchandise Exports	Mn. R.O.	14,896.3	11,727.4
- Total Recorded Merchandise Imports	Mn. R.O.	9,038.3	7,973.4
- Tourism Share in GDP	%	2.8	2.3
3- Infrastructure Indicators			
- Hospitals	No.	83	83
- Hospital Beds	No.	6,894	6,966
- Health Centers (With Beds) - (Governm	No.	54	54
- Health Centers (Without Beds) - (Gove)	No.	135	136
- Extended Health Centers	No.	339	304
- Schools[2]	No.	2,046	1,893
- Students	No.	843,598	826,165
- Teachers	No.	71,469	68,486
- Classes	No.	31,812	31,581
- Asphalted Roads	Km	40,008	40,374
- Fixed Telephone Lines	No.	592,196	594,550
- Mobil Phone Postpaid	No.	781,658	1,020.355
- Prepaid Mobile	No.	5,601.800	5,256.180
Total Fixed Internet Subscribes	No.	475,097	510,800

Source: National Centre for Statistics and Information – figures at December 2021

Overall Supervision

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Sultanate of Oman

Strait of Hurmuz
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
ARABIAN GULF
SEA OF OMAN
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
REPUBLIC OF YEMEN
ARABIAN SEA
Musandam (Sultanate of Oman)
Madḥā (Sultanate of Oman)
Khaṣab
Bukhā'
Dibbā
Shināṣ
Liwā
Ṣuḥār Port
Ṣuḥār
Ṣuḥār Airport
Saḥam
Al Buraymī
Mahadah
Al Khābūrah
As Suwayq
Muscat International Airport
As Sulṭān Qāboos Port
MUSCAT(MASQAṬ)
Matraḥ
As Sīb
Barkā'
Bawshar
Al Amrāt
Bidbid
Qurayyāt
As Sunaynah
Dank
Yanqul
Ibrī
Nakhal
Samāil
Al Awābī
Al Ḥamrā'
Bahlā
Manaḥ
Nizwā
Izkī
Bidbād
Damā
Wa At Ṭā'iyīn
Ibrā'
Samad Ash Shām
Al Qābil
Wādī Banī Khālid
Al Muqaybī
Bidiyyah
Sūr
Ra's Al Ḥad
Al Kāmil Wa Al Wāfī
Ja'lān Banī Bū Ḥasan
Ja'lān Banī Bū 'Alī
Al Ashkharah
Ra's Jibsh
Muḥūt
Maṣīrah
Ra's An Najdah
Ra's Rākiyā
Ra's Bintaḥ
Ra's Al Khabbah
Ra's Bū Raqāq
Ra's Nakhīr
Ad Duqm Port
Ad Duqm
Ad Duqm Airport
Ra's Ad Duqm
Ra's Al Ḥad
Ra's Markaz
Ra's Madrakah
Ra's Khashāyim
Haymā'
Rimā
Al Jāzir
Al Lakbī
Sawqirah
Ra's Sawqirah
Shaḥīm Wa Juzur Al Ḥallāniyyāt
Ra's Darsah
Ash Shuwaymiyyah
Khalij Al Ḥallāniyyāt
Juzur Al Ḥallāniyyāt
Ḥāsik
Ra's Ḥāsik
Thumrayt
Dhahūn
Barbazūm
Tawsināt
Muqāyy
Ḥaṭeyū
Qayrūn Ḥayrī
Zayk
Jibjāt
Ḥarwīb
Tīlān
Ṣalālah
Ṣalālah Airport
Ṣalālah Port
Taqah
Mirbāṭ
Ra's Mirbāṭ
Ra's Janjarī
Ṣadaḥ
Dalkūt
Rakhyūt
Ra's Sājir
Shaḥb Aqayb
Mitan
Al Hashmān
Dawkah
Bithnah
Ash Shiṣr
Mandar Ad Dibyān
Al Maḥsīnah
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