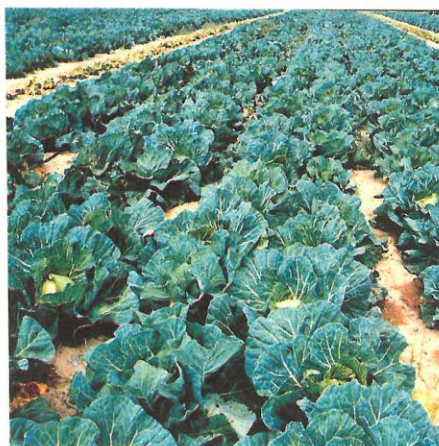
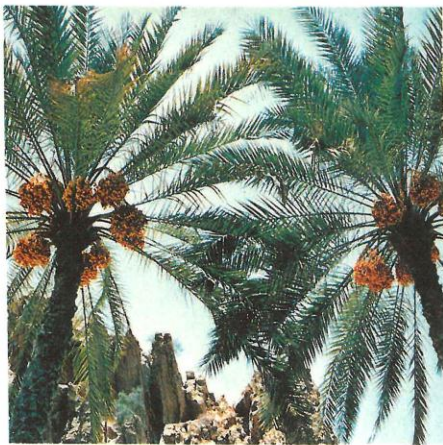
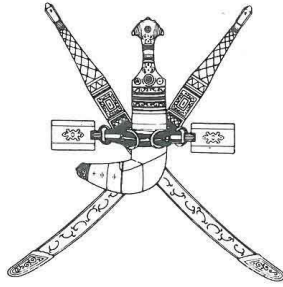


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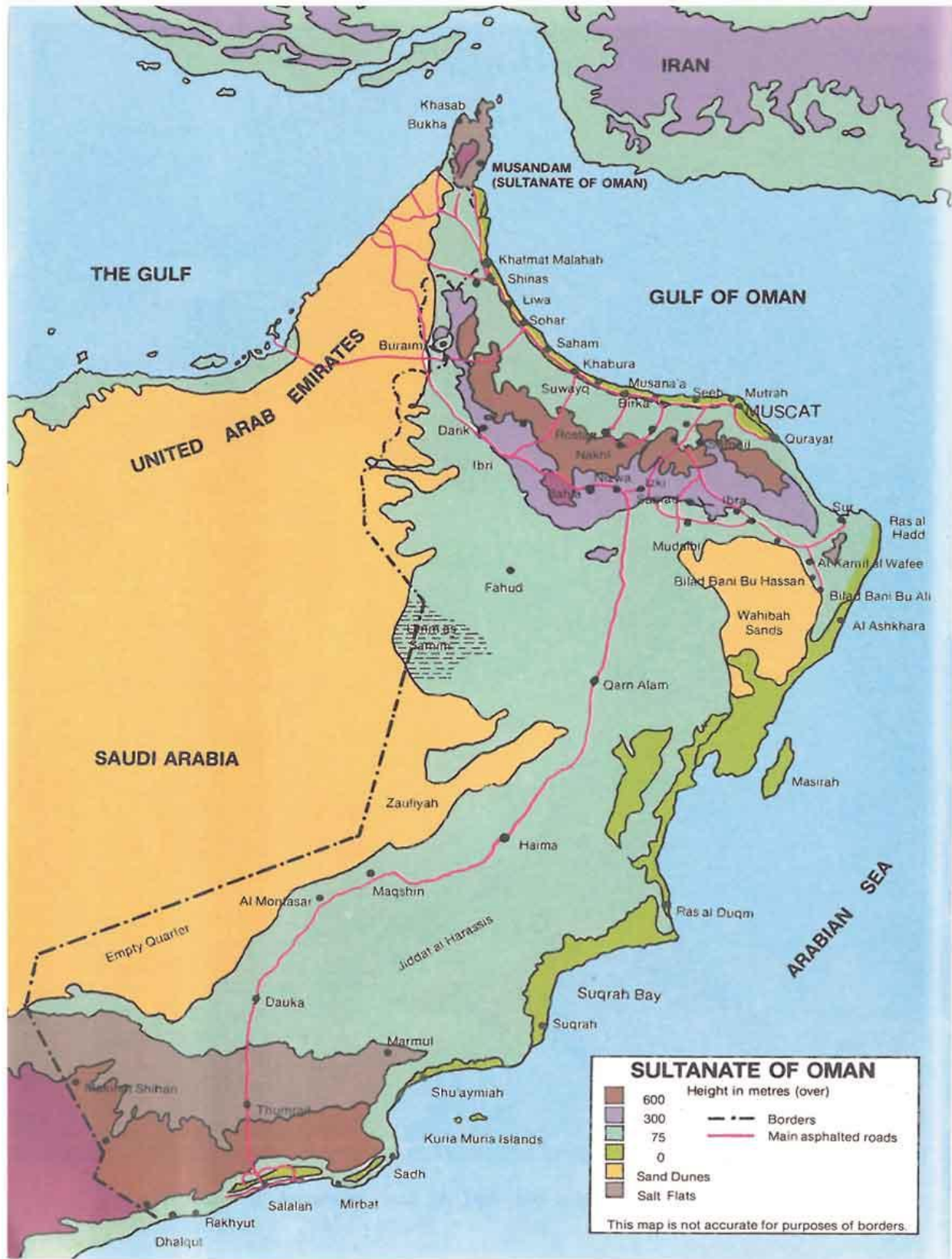
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His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said (Photograph: Mohamed Mustapha)



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID AL SAID

It is not possible for a first-time visitor to the Sultanate of Oman, arriving at Seeb International Airport in 1988, and driving to Muscat along the 35 kms of lighted dual-carriageway road, over fly-overs, past modern Ministry buildings, schools, hospitals and commercial establishments, to visualise that only 18 years ago none of this existed. Any Omani will tell him that all this transformation is due to the inspiration and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

His Majesty was born in Salalah in Dhofar, the Southern region of Oman, on 18th November 1940. He is eighth in the direct line of the Al Busaid Dynasty, which was founded in 1741 by Imam Ahmad bin Said, whose memory is still revered in Oman as a warrior and enlightened administrator who united the country after years of civil war. His Majesty's father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, died in 1972.

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

On the abdication of his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, and his own accession in July 1970, His Majesty flew from Salalah to Muscat to be greeted by his people. Among his first acts were the abolition of anachronistic restrictions on the lives and activities of the people, but most importantly, he announced his intention of proceeding forthwith with the development of the country and to provide his people with the health care, education and other social development they so sorely needed. He also called upon them to play their part in the work that lay ahead and appealed to all Omanis abroad, wherever they might be,

to return and do so. His words met with a spontaneous and overwhelming response, and Omanis came flocking back from many parts of the world.

The task that faced His Majesty was formidable. Little had been achieved in the three years since the oil revenues had started coming in. There was a legacy of more than a century of stagnation, with its accompanying lack of development, illiteracy, high mortality rate and isolation. It is not too much to say that Oman, at this time, was one of the most backward countries in the Arab World. Added to this, there was a bitter local war in the south, where at the time of his accession the military situation was grave.

Meanwhile, His Majesty gave high priority to the expansion of the Sultanate's international relations, which had been almost non-existent before 1970. This has been successfully achieved and diplomatic relations have been established with many countries throughout the world, regardless of their political complexions. His Majesty's policy being to extend the hand of friendship to all countries on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

International contacts through the establishment of diplomatic relations and personal visits are seen by His Majesty to be of great importance in the quest for world peace and understanding between peoples. Relations have been established with both the non-communist and communist worlds; ambassadors were exchanged with the People's Republic of China some years ago, and most recently diplomatic relations have been established with the Soviet Union and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. His Majesty has paid State visits to brother countries of the G.C.C., Egypt, Jordan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

His Majesty also pressed on with development planning. A list of priorities was carefully formulated; wasteful prestige projects were not considered. Advancement has been achieved through a series of Five Year Plans, of which the third is now in progress. The result of this has been that, by the time the oil price crisis struck early in 1986, the Sultanate's infrastructural programme was virtually complete.

His Majesty has carefully combined traditional government with the inception of a modern state. The age-old system of Sultanic rule whereby individual Omanis had the right of access to the ruler — who



*His Majesty presents an award to an outstanding Omani craftsman
(Photo: Mohamed Mustapha)*



An enthusiastic welcome for His Majesty on one of his "Meet the People" tours (Photo: Mohamed Mustapha)



was regarded as the father of his people — has been scrupulously preserved, alongside the evolvement of sophisticated government by a Cabinet of Ministers with their supporting staffs and responsibilities. Thus, His Majesty attaches great importance to personal contact with his people, and this he achieves in three principal ways: one is the State Consultative Council, which has a wide popular representation, now increased from 45 to 55 members, at the first meeting of which, in 1981, he said "The Council shall also be a vital field for interaction and integration between the opinions of its members and full cooperation and integration between the Government and the citizens in carrying out the duties and obligations of the current stage of development"; secondly, His Majesty's annual tours of the Interior, when he is accompanied by many of his Ministers and meets individual Omanis face to face and listens to their suggestions and discusses their problems, is a valuable means of assessing their needs. On these occasions the appropriate Minister is called in and the matter is dealt with immediately. Also, every year on the National Anniversary on 18th November, His Majesty delivers a major address to the Nation when he reviews the achievements of the previous year and outlines future policies.

In his address to the Nation on National Day in November 1987, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos paid tribute to those who maintained the skills of traditional handicrafts in the Sultanate, and called upon the youth of the country to take pride in its historic traditions. In naming 1988 as the 'Year of Agriculture', he drew attention to the formation of the Oman Fishing Company, which will greatly increase the output of the fishing industry to meet the needs of the local market and stimulate exports abroad. His Majesty also urged his people to work for self-reliance in food resources.

In December last, His Majesty attended the 8th Summit Conference of the AGCC held at Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, which expressed its deep concern over the continuing conflict between Iraq and Iran, and called upon the international community to shoulder its responsibility in adopting measures to implement the UN Resolution 598.

In February 1988 His Majesty signed a Royal Decree instituting a new Ministry of Civil Service, to which the Institute of Public Administration will be attached. H.E. Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi Macki was appointed as Minister.



His Majesty at work on State papers (Photo: Mohamed Mustapha)

His Majesty conducted his annual 'Meet the People' tour during February and March this year in some of the worst weather ever experienced in Oman. Heavy thunderstorms accompanied by torrential rains caused considerable damage, particularly in the Sohar area. His Majesty visited many of the worst-hit communities and personally

supervised relief measures.

In a strongly worded speech to community leaders in northern Oman His Majesty called attention to continuing reliance on foreign workers, whose jobs could well be filled by Omanis. He reminded young people that academic qualifications are meant to equip them to work and are not to be regarded as an end in themselves.

In a wide-ranging address to his Council of Ministers in March, His Majesty impressed upon them the need to give high priority to the promotion of Omanisation to achieve national self-reliance; he emphasised the importance of increasing coordination between the Government and the private sector in this connection.

His Majesty also reiterated that the Sultanate's foreign policy would continue to be based on amity towards all and enmity towards none.

HISTORY

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

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

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

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

Within the rock of Oman's abrupt mountain spine existed self-sufficient, fiercely independent farming and pastoral communities that were already flourishing when the first Arab peoples came to Oman from southern Arabia some 2,000 years ago. In the foothills to the west and in the great deserts beyond, nomadic people led their own, very distinct, life. Along the highly cultivated Batinah coast lived farmers, fishermen, merchants and sailors who were the people most exposed to



Bahla Fort and ancient 12km-long Wall — listed by UNESCO in its “Index of the World’s Cultural Heritage”

the rest of the world by nature of their trades and geographical location. These ancient distinctions to some extent still exist, within the modern united Sultanate.

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

Still in pre-Islamic times, tribes from the Yemen — legend has it that they came from the region of the famous Marib dam — trickled into Oman. Later, the Azd tribal group, from which the present ruling family is descended, entered Oman. Then Oman was under the rule of the Persians, but the Azd were able to regain Oman from the Persian

rule and they spread Arab influence to all parts of Oman. Islam came to Oman, and Abd and Jaifar, the sons of Julandi bin Al Mustakbar embraced Islam. When the Persian ruler rejected their call to embrace Islam, Abd and Jaifar expelled Persian rule from Oman.

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

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

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

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

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

GEOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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

The Regions

Geographically, Oman falls into a number of distinct areas.

Muscat Area

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

Batinah Plain

The Batinah runs from the frontier with the UAE for a distance of some



*Oman, land of contrasts: Above, the Eastern Sands (Photo: Michael Neff)
and below, the lush greenery of Dhofar (Photo: Gill Marais)*



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

Western Hajar ('Rock') Mountains

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

The Interior (Al Joof)

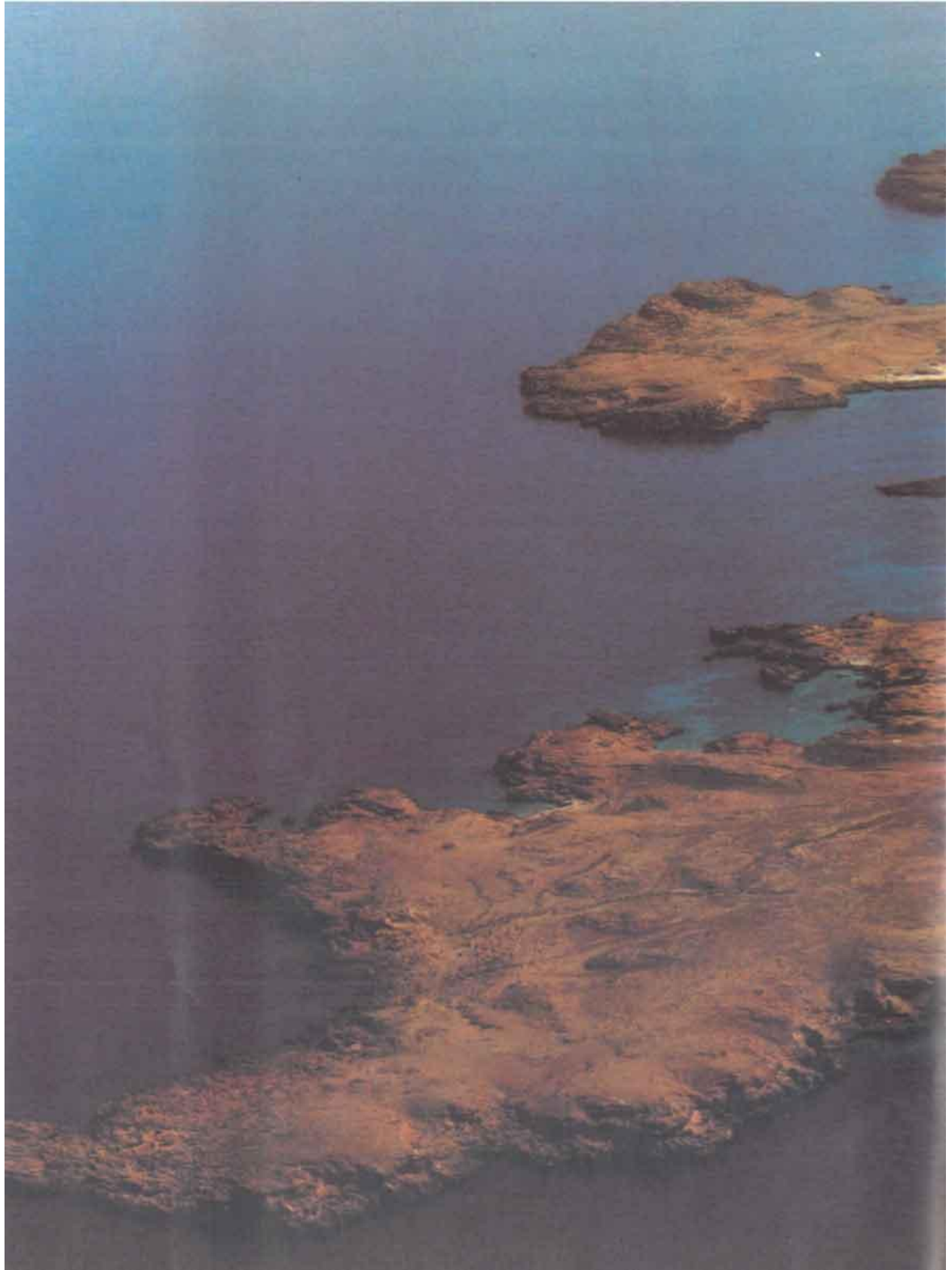
This is the central plateau that slopes from the northern base of Jabal al-Akhdar southwards to the desert. It is bounded on the west by Dhahira and on the east by Sharqiya. The area has four main valleys: Anda'm, Halfein, Bahla and Samail. The Halfein and Samail valleys together form a natural break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

Dahira Area

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

Sharqiyah Area

The Sharqiyah is an area of sandy plains and valleys lying on the inland side of the Eastern Hajar. It is bordered to the south-east by the





The peaceful beauty of one of our islands

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

Barr-al-Hekman

This is an area of approximately 650 square kilometres. Masirah Island is situated to the east, separated by a channel of 14 kilometres. The area of the Barr consists of salt flats and, on occasion, the sea covers as much as five kilometres of the land area. Most of the population live on the island of Mahawt and are fishermen.

Southern Region (Dhofar)

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

The Musandam

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

Regions

The Sultanate is divided into 42 wilayats (regions), in each of which the government is represented by a wali (governor). Muscat has its own governor with assistants in Muttrah, Seeb and Baushar, as does the Musandam with assistants in Khasab, Bayah and Bukha. Dhofar also has its own governor with assistants.

Climate

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

Population

The crosscurrents of history with its migrations and invasions have swept Oman since time immemorial, but its people have remained of basically Arab origin.

Omani society consists of four basic categories: the people of the sea who live by fishing, seafaring and trading; the agriculturists of the Batinah coast and the South, and those of the Interior who employ the aflaaj system of irrigation; the mountain people of Dhofar and the Musandam; and the Bedouin of the desert areas. The population is estimated at 1,500,000.

GOVERNMENT

The administrative system of the State under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said consists of the Cabinet of Ministers and Secretariat to the Cabinet, the Specialised Councils, Governorate of the Capital and the State Consultative Council.

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

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

The Council of Ministers consists of:

His Highness Sayyid Thuwaini bin Shihab al Said,
Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

His Highness Sayyid Fahr bin Taimour al Said,
Deputy Prime Minister for Security and Defence.

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said,
Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs.

His Excellency Qais bin Abdul Munim al Zawawi,
Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs.

His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali al Said,
Minister of National Heritage and Culture.

His Excellency Khalfan bin Nasser al Wahaibi,
Minister of Electricity and Water.

His Excellency Dr. Mubarak bin Saleh al Khadouri,
Minister of Health.

His Excellency Said bin Ahmed al Shanfari,
Minister of Petroleum and Minerals.

His Excellency Hamoud bin Abdullah al Harthi,
Minister of Communications.

His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh al Manthri,
Minister of Education and Youth.

His Excellency Sayyid Badr bin Sa'oud bin Hareb al Busaidi,
Minister of the Interior.

His Excellency Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed al Rowas,
Minister of Information.

His Excellency Sayyid Hilal bin Sa'oud bin Hareb al Busaidi,
Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

His Highness Sayyid Shabib bin Taimour al Said,
Minister of Environment and Water Resources.

His Excellency AlMutasim bin Hamoud al Busaidi,
Minister of State for Defence.

His Excellency Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah,
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

His Excellency Salim bin Abdullah al Ghazali,
Minister of Commerce and Industry.

His Excellency Sheikh Mustahail bin Ahmed al Ma'ashani,
Minister of Social Affairs and Labour.

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

His Excellency Mohammed bin Ali al Qatabi,
Minister of Regional Municipalities Affairs.

His Excellency Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Zaher al Hinai,
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

His Excellency Abdullah bin Hamed bin Saif al Busaidi,
Minister of Housing.

His Excellency Mussallam bin Ali al Busaidi,
Minister of State and Wali of Dhofar.

His Excellency Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi Macki,
Minister of Civil Service.

Supervision of the Cabinet Secretariat:

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said.



His Majesty presides over a meeting of his Cabinet of Ministers (Photo: Mohamed Mustapha)



Secretary to the Cabinet:

His Excellency Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Said.

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

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

For easier administration of Oman's large land area and scattered population centres, the country has been divided into 42 Wilayats (regions) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. At the head of each Wilayat is a Wali (governor).

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

- (a) Streamlining procedures and systems for legislation, futwa for interpretation of the laws and contracts.
- (b) Preparing and publishing volumes of laws, issued annually.
- (c) Preparing and publishing the Official Gazette.
- (d) Advising ministries on legal matters and drafting new legislation.

State Consultative Council

The State Consultative Council was formed in 1981 to give the Omani people greater participation in the planning and development of the country's economic and social affairs.

The Council is headed by a President (currently H.E. Abdullah bin Ali bin Mohammed al Qatabi). Of the other 54 members, 18 represent the Government sector of whom 7 serve in their personal capacity. The remaining 36 represent the national sector. Of these, 11 represent the private sector and 25 the various Wilayats (regions).

Based in Muscat, the Council is independent both administratively and financially.

Council members must be Omani nationals and at least 30 years of age at the time of appointment. Members represent all the people of the

Sultanate and not only the sector from which they were selected. They are appointed for a two-year term which, however, can be extended for one or more terms.

Among the Council's functions are:

- a) To recommend amendments to existing economic and social laws;
- b) To recommend measures to complete development plans and raise the efficiency and capacity of national production;
- c) To recommend solutions to "bottlenecks" facing private enterprise;
- d) To give an opinion on any other subject which may be referred to the Council by His Majesty the Sultan.

During 1987 the State Consultative Council submitted various recommendations to His Majesty the Sultan. Most of these recommendations were approved by His Majesty and were implemented according to the needs and welfare of the people and according to the means available.

Specialised Councils

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

Some of these Councils are:

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

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

The Education and Vocational Training Council which apart from being concerned with the Sultanate's education policy, ensures that the output of trained Omani manpower is geared to the country's requirements.

The Supreme Youth Council which promotes the healthy development of Omani youth through cultural, social and sporting activities.

The Council for the Conservation of the Environment and Water Resources which is responsible for conserving the environment and combating pollution. One of its other functions is to coordinate exploration of water resources so as to ensure that a balance is maintained between availability and requirements.

Other Councils are:

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

The Civil Service Council which draws up general policies relating to the Civil Service. Among its other responsibilities is examination of Civil Service problems and finding solutions to them, taking into consideration public interests. The Council is chaired by H.E. Sayyid Saif bin Hamed al Busaidi, President of the Diwan of the Royal Court.

Tender Board

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

The Tender Board comprises:

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

His Excellency the Minister of Housing as Deputy Chairman.

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

In addition to whom there are the following Members:

His Excellency the Minister of Regional Municipalities.

His Excellency the Minister of Civil Service.

His Excellency the Under-Secretary for Financial Affairs.

His Excellency the Under-Secretary for Communications.

His Excellency the Under-Secretary for Commerce and Industry.

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

The Board's Powers and Prerogatives

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

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

These procedures may be summarised as follows:

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

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

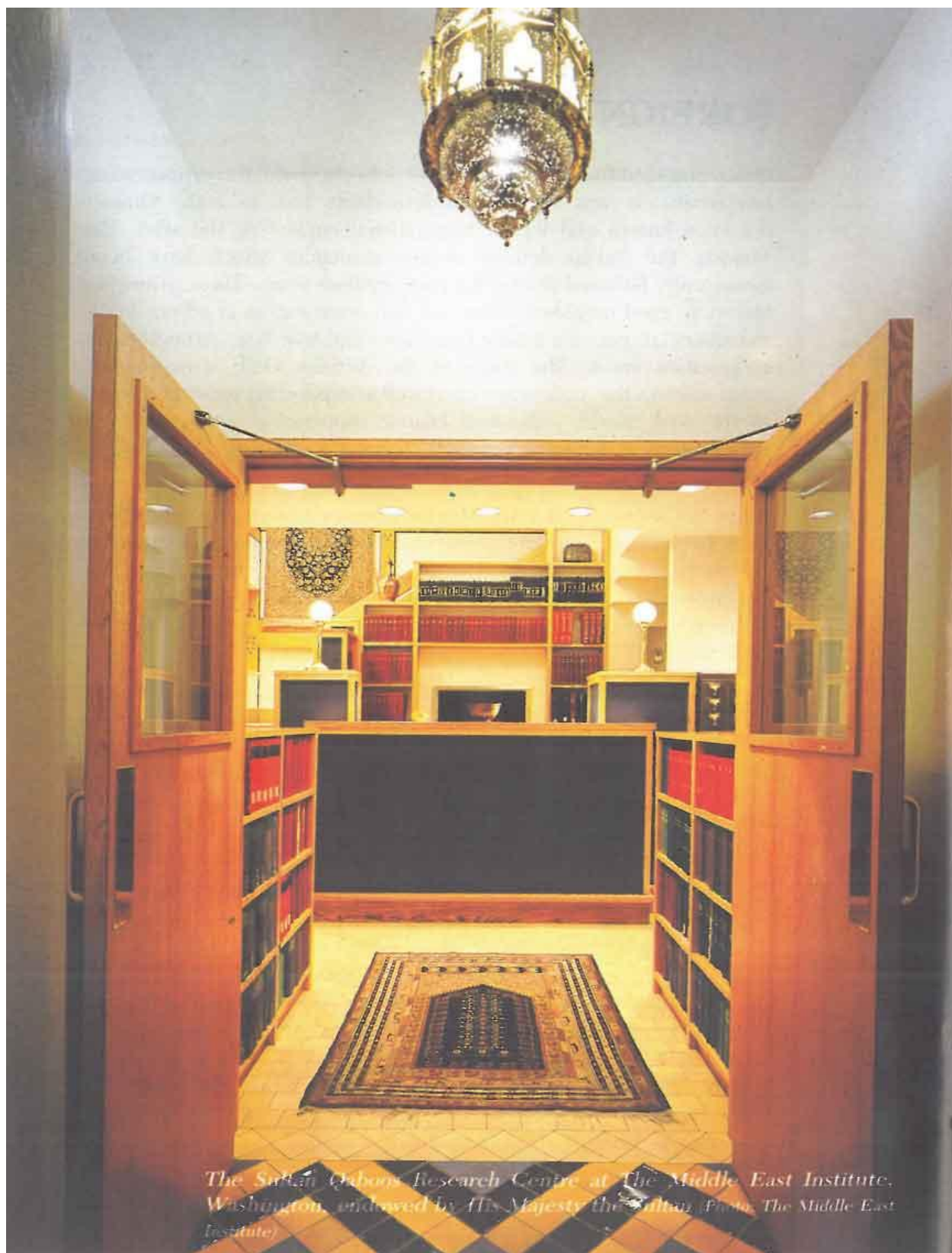
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Oman emerged from isolation in 1970 to face a world of ever-increasing complexity. It was therefore a formidable task to make Oman's presence known and felt in international circles. At the start, His Majesty the Sultan defined certain principles which have been consistently followed during the past eighteen years. These principles included: good neighbourliness and non-intervention in others' internal affairs, respect for international laws and tradition, strengthening cooperation among the states of the Arabian Gulf, strengthening relations with the Arab countries as well as supporting issues of interest to the Arab world, enhancing Islamic cooperation, supporting just African causes, following a policy of non-alignment and establishing cordial relations with all friendly countries.

Since the setting up of a Ministry for Foreign Affairs, energetic efforts have been made to secure Oman's proper place among the nations of the world, as directed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Thus, the Sultanate has made effective contributions towards world issues, helping to solve international problems and working for world peace and security.

In accordance with His Majesty's directives, which are founded upon the peoples' will and the supreme interests of the country, Oman joined the Arab League on 29th September 1971 and the United Nations on 17th October the same year. On 29th February 1972 the Sultanate joined the Islamic Conference Organisation and, in September 1973, Oman became a member of the Non-aligned Group. The Sultanate has also joined many specialised international organisations.

Oman has also established friendly diplomatic relations with many brotherly and friendly countries. In accordance with the principle of non-alignment, these have been exchanged with both the two superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. The Sultanate has consistently worked to enhance cooperation among the States of the Arabian Gulf and for Arab unity. It also played a leading role in the foundation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which was established on 25th May 1981; and in November 1985 hosted the GCC's Sixth Summit that endorsed the following six strategies: security, defence, agricultural policies, a unified strategy for industrial



The Sultan Qabous Research Centre at The Middle East Institute, Washington, endowed by His Majesty the Sultan. (Photo: The Middle East Institute)

development, a unified policy for the conservation of the environment, and mutual aims and methods for the spread of education. In view of these major achievements, the Muscat Summit has become known as the "take-off" summit. Further progress was accomplished by the Seventh Summit held in Abu Dhabi in 1986.

Consistent with the Sultanate's role in fostering Arab solidarity and supporting just Arab causes, full support has been given to all international efforts exerted to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict through peaceful means, including the proposed international peace conference which is regarded by the Sultanate as the best forum to handle the issue, in order to end the conflict and secure a just solution that guarantees the legitimate rights of all the parties concerned. In its belief that the Palestinian issue is still the core of the Middle East problem, Oman has fully supported the Palestinian peoples' right to self-determination on their own land.

The Sultanate has consistently backed legitimacy in Lebanon and expressed the hope that the political crisis there can be ended in order to restore stability and security to all parts of that country.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has voiced his regret over the continued exhaustion of human and material resources on both sides in the Iraq-Iran War and called for peaceful negotiations as the only reasonable way to end the conflict between the two Muslim neighbours. Oman stands ready to play a constructive role in any mediation attempt aimed at ending the state of war, if asked to do so and if convinced that such a mediatory role would help to that end. At the 42nd session of the General Assembly of the UN, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah, drew attention to the threat to the interests of all the Gulf States caused by the attacks on shipping in the area, and reiterated Oman's commitment to respect the treaties of international navigation. In a later statement in February this year he said that Oman opposed an arms embargo against Iran as it was unrealistic, but would support deployment of a multinational naval force in the Gulf. In April the Minister of Information, H.E. Abdul Aziz bin Mohamed Al Rowas, in talks in Muscat with Mr. Georgi Tarazevich, Vice President of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, called upon the Soviet Union to place the issue of finding a swift end to the Iraq-Iran war at the top of the subjects to

be discussed at the forthcoming Moscow summit. At the time of going to press, the Sultanate has warmly welcomed the ceasefire which it hopes will lead to an equitable permanent peace.

In August 1987 the Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, paid a two-day official visit to Muscat in return for a similar visit to Teheran by the Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in May. They discussed the further expansion of bilateral cooperation between the two countries, resulting from which further talks between officials of both countries were held in Muscat in December. In February this year, an Iraqi delegation led by the Minister of Transport, Mohamed Hamza Al Zubaidi, arrived in Muscat for talks on further cooperation between the two countries in the fields of commerce and economy. Social care, education, sports and youth affairs were also discussed.

Oman has historic relations with Africa, particularly the eastern part of the continent. In order to strengthen these centuries-old relations, several African leaders have paid official visits to the Sultanate, and diplomatic relations have been established with many African countries. The Sultanate supports the just causes of the African peoples, notably the independence of Namibia and condemns the racial policies practised by the South African government.

The Sultanate's contacts with Asian countries have also been steadily developing, and diplomatic relations have been established with many of these states. Oman has expressed its concern at the occupation of Kampuchea by foreign forces, and called for their withdrawal in order to enable the Kampuchean people to exercise their right to self-determination. In this connection, the Sultanate also supports the efforts being made by ASEAN to achieve a just solution to the Kampuchean problem.

The Sultanate has given its full support to the UN Secretary-General in his efforts to achieve a peaceful solution in Afghanistan, and to ensure the withdrawal of foreign troops in order to allow the Afghan people to decide their own future. It welcomes the decision of the Soviet government to withdraw its military forces from that country.

Oman's relations with Western and Eastern European countries have been steadily growing in all fields, with emphasis on the economic sphere. Diplomatic relations with a large number of Western and Eastern European countries have been established through resident

and non-resident diplomatic representatives. Good relations are also maintained with many countries in North and South America. The Sultanate supports efforts being made by the Contadora group to achieve a satisfactory solution to the existing problems in Central America. A major successful step, reflecting the Sultanate's desire to broaden its circle of friends has been the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the development of relations with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. In December last year, Oman and Syria agreed to establish diplomatic relations at the level of resident Ambassador in each country. In April diplomatic relations with Uruguay were established, and in July non-residential diplomatic relations were established with the Republic of Ireland. In December, the first resident Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman presented his credentials in Moscow.

In October 1987 the new Sultan Qaboos bin Said Research Centre of the Middle East Institute in Washington was officially dedicated by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah. The Centre will sponsor lectures, research projects and academic exchange programmes and add to its library collection of books and documents about Oman and its neighbours.

RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN THE SULTANATE:

* denotes representation by Charge d'Affaires

Embassies:

Algeria, Democratic and Popular Republic of	Morocco, Kingdom of
Bangladesh*, People's Republic of	Netherlands, Kingdom of the
China, People's Republic of	Pakistan, Islamic Republic of
Egypt, Arab Republic of	Qatar, State of
France, Republic of	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
Germany, Federal Republic of	Somalia, Democratic Republic of
India, Republic of	Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist
Iran*, Islamic Republic of	Sudan, Republic of
Iraq, Republic of	Sweden*, Kingdom of
Italy, Republic of	Syria, Arab Republic of
Japan	Thailand, Kingdom of
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of	Tunisia, Republic of
Korea, Republic of	Turkey, Republic of
Kuwait, State of	U.S.S.R. Union of Soviet
Malaysia*	Socialist Republics

United Arab Emirates*
 United Kingdom of Great Britain
 and Northern Ireland
 United States of America
 Yemen Arab Republic
 Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of

Honorary Consulates:

Austria, Republic of	Greece, Hellenic Republic of
Belgium, Kingdom of	Lebanon, Republic of
Canada	Mexico (United Mexican States)
Colombia, Republic of	New Zealand
Cyprus, Republic of	Norway, Kingdom of
Denmark, Kingdom of	Portugal, Republic of
Finland, Republic of	Spain, Kingdom of
	Switzerland

COUNTRIES WITH NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADORS TO OMAN:

* represented in Oman by resident Charge d'Affaires,

Argentina, Republic of	Mauritania, Islamic Republic of
Australia, Commonwealth of	Mexico (United Mexican States)
Austria, Republic of	Nepal, Kingdom of
Bangladesh*, People's Republic of	New Zealand
Belgium, Kingdom of	Norway, Kingdom of
Bolivia, Republic of	Philippines, Republic of the
Brazil, Federative Republic of	Portugal, Republic of
Burkina Faso	Romania, Socialist Republic of
Burundi, Republic of	Ruwanda, Republic of
Canada	Senegal, Republic of
Chile, Republic of	Sierra Leone, Republic of
Colombia, Republic of	Spain, Kingdom of
Denmark, Kingdom of	Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of
Djibouti, Republic of	Sweden*, Kingdom of
Finland, Republic of	Switzerland
Gambia, Republic of The	Tanzania, United Republic of
Greece, Hellenic Republic of	Uganda, Republic of
Guinea, Republic of	Uruguay, Oriental Republic of
Indonesia, Republic of	Yugoslavia, Socialist Federal Republic of
Ireland, Republic of	Zaire, Republic of
Mali, Republic of	Zambia, Republic of
Malta, Republic of	

OMAN EMBASSIES ABROAD:

* represented by Charge d'Affaires

Algeria, Democratic and Popular Republic of
Austria, Republic of*
Bahrain, State of
Brunei*, Sultanate of
China, People's Republic of
Djibouti, Republic of
Egypt, Arab Republic of
France, Republic of
Germany, Federal Republic of
India, Republic of
Iran*, Islamic Republic of
Iraq, Republic of
Italy, Republic of
Japan
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of
Korea, Republic of
Kuwait, State of

Malaysia*
Morocco, Kingdom of
Pakistan, Islamic Republic of
Qatar, State of
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
Somalia, Democratic Republic of
Sudan, Republic of
Syria, Arab Republic of
Tunisia, Republic of
Turkey, Republic of
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland
United States of America
Yemen Arab Republic
Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of

Permanent Missions to the United Nations:

Geneva (Switzerland)
New York (United States of America)

Honorary Consulates Abroad:

Cyprus (Nicosia), Republic of
Hong Kong
India (Bombay), Republic of
Netherlands (Amsterdam), Kingdom of

Pakistan (Karachi), Islamic Republic of
Philippines (Manila), Republic of the
Tanzania (Zanzibar), United Republic of
Thailand (Bangkok), Kingdom of

REPRESENTATION BY OMANI NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADORS ABROAD:

* denotes representative to the Arab League

Argentina, Republic of
Australia, Commonwealth of
Bangladesh, People's Republic of
Belgium, Kingdom of
Brazil, Federative Republic of
Burkina Faso

Burundi, Republic of
Canada
Chile, Republic of
Colombia, Republic of
Comoros, Federal Islamic Republic of the
Cyprus, Republic of

Denmark, Kingdom of	Norway, Kingdom of
European Economic Community	Philippines, Republic of the
Finland, Republic of	Portugal, Republic of
Gabonese Republic	Romania, Socialist Republic of
Cambia, Republic of The	Ruwanda, Republic of
Greece, Hellenic Republic of	Senegal, Republic of
Guinea, Republic of	Seychelles, Republic of
Guinea-Bissau, Republic of	Sierra Leone, Republic of
Indonesia, Republic of	Singapore, Republic of
Ireland, Republic of	Spain, Kingdom of
Kenya, Republic of	Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of
Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of	Sweden, Kingdom of
Malaysia	Switzerland
Maldives, Republic of	Tanzania, United Republic of
Mali, Republic of	Thailand, Kingdom of
Malta, Republic of	Tunisia*, Republic of
Mauritius	Uganda, Republic of
Mexico (United Mexican States)	Uruguay, Oriental Republic of
Nepal, Kingdom of	Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of
Netherlands, Kingdom of the	Yugoslavia, Socialist Federal Republic of
New Zealand	Zaire, Republic of
Niger, Republic of	Zambia, Republic of
Nigeria, Federal Republic of	

International organisations and specialised agencies which the Sultanate has joined.

Arab League	International Fund for Agricultural Development
United Nations	U.N. Organisation for Industrial Development
Islamic Conference Organisation	Interpol
Non-aligned Movement	International Union for Conservation of the Environment
World Health Organisation	Afro-Asian Organisation for Legal Consultations
Food and Agriculture Organisation	International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium
Universal Postal Union	International Maritime Satellite Organisation
International Monetary Fund	United Nations Children's Fund
World Bank	Afro-Asian Organisation for Rural Development
United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation	
International Telecommunications Union	
International Civil Aviation Organisation	
International Maritime Organisation	
World Meteorological Organisation	

DEFENCE

Military analysts have expressed the opinion that the Sultanate of Oman has the best trained and best equipped Defence Forces for their size in the Arabian Peninsula. The Land and Air Forces, particularly, also have the additional advantage of comparatively recent battle experience.

The present instability in the region demands that the Sultanate maintain a prudently high level of defence capability. Military exercises involving all three Services are held each year, and close liaison is maintained in the Defence field with allies and in particular the other GCC States. In March last year Oman hosted the most recent exercise in the Peninsula Shield series. This involved some ten thousand troops and over two thousand, five hundred vehicles from all the GCC countries.

1987 also saw a reorganisation of the higher echelons of Defence, and the appointment by His Majesty of a Minister of State for Defence, Sayyid Al Mutasim bin Hamoud Al Busaidi. The new Command and Staff College was inaugurated in September 1987.

As a trained Staff Officer with practical military experience, His Majesty takes a keen professional interest in the efficiency of his Armed Forces and their general well-being. He regularly attends their military manoeuvres both on land and sea.

Ministry of Defence (MOD) Engineering Services, often in liaison with the Sultan's Armed Forces Engineers, have performed particularly valuable community work on behalf of the civil population in the construction of difficult road projects. Among major achievements in this respect has been the completion of a road through the rugged and formidable mountainous terrain of the Musandam Peninsula, and another to the summit of the Jebel Akhdar plateau from the Wadi Mu'aydin. The Corps also assists in well-drilling and the maintenance of air strips in remote areas.

The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO)

The Royal Guard Regiment was formed in 1973 as a corps d'elite with the primary role of protecting His Majesty the Sultan and performing



Chieftain tanks advance during an Army exercise (Photo: SOLF)

ceremonial and other duties. In March 1981 the Force was expanded and reorganised into a full Brigade. His Majesty issued a Royal Decree in November 1987 renaming the Force the Royal Guard of Oman. It has become an additional branch of the Sultan's Armed Forces, enjoying a separate identity. Apart from being a highly trained fighting force, it has the particular responsibilities of the protection of His Majesty the Sultan and the Royal residences, the security of foreign Heads of State visiting the Sultanate, and ceremonial duties.

The RGO has three military bands, including the Mounted Division, which perform at official events at home and abroad, as well as on ceremonial occasions. The Southern Band gained a high reputation when it performed at the Sydney International Military Tattoo in Australia in 1985. A Royal Decree in 1985 established the Oman Symphony Orchestra under the aegis of the RGO.



The Royal Guard of Oman drum horse (Photo: Oman News Agency)

Sultan of Oman's Land Forces (SOLF)

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, the initial requirement was to develop SOLF into a lightly-equipped predominantly infantry force capable of a high degree of mobility. Once this basic task had been successfully completed, the Land Forces were then able to further develop and expand into the modern Army that exists today.

In the last twelve years SOLF has been transformed into a well-equipped professional force capable of operating in the conventional role both to maintain the security of Oman's borders and to assist the police and civil authorities in the maintenance of law and order.

The Army is an all-volunteer force of approximately divisional size



Action stations on an Omani warship (Photo: SON)

consisting of two Infantry Brigades, supported by armoured, artillery, engineer and signals units. Logistic depots and workshops and an efficient supply system have been developed to provide the needs of SOLF both in peace and war.

Training has concentrated upon providing officers and soldiers with the skills required to operate the Army's modern equipment. Tactical



SOAF computer equipment in operation (Photo: SOAF)

exercises are then used to practise, develop and perfect joint warfare procedures using ground, air and sea forces as a single unified force.

Sultan of Oman's Air Force (SOAF)

SOAF in 1988 has been transformed from the small force of Jet Provosts and Beavers which it comprised in 1970. Its expansion and modernisation over the ensuing years has created a formidable force capable of opposing external aggression and carrying out its important task of supporting operationally the Sultanate's Land and Sea Forces.

This capability will be enhanced by the introduction of the Tornado F3 fighter-interceptor into service in the early 1990s. The first batch are due in 1992. With the addition of this aircraft to the existing squadrons of Jaguar and Hunter aircraft, SOAF will have the capability of executing operational tasks in all weather conditions over a wider range with more efficiency.

The Sultanate is protected by a sophisticated radar surveillance

network through the provision and deployment of Martello early warning units. Rapier SAM squadrons and mobile Air Defence units protect all military bases and vital installations.

Other important tasks for SOAF are maritime air reconnaissance and maritime pollution prevention, with specially developed Skyvan aircraft. These aircraft, renamed Seavans, have been fitted with radar, a warning system, advanced navigation equipment and additional fuel tanks. SOAF also provides air transport for the other Services with its C-130, BAC 1-11, Skyvan and Defender transport aircraft. In addition there are squadrons of helicopters which operate particularly successfully in the rugged terrain which characterises much of the Sultanate.

Training is essentially a highly important aspect of SOAF's responsibilities, with emphasis on the attainment of the greatest possible degree of self-sufficiency. Training establishments operated by SOAF include the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy on Masirah Island, which produces SOAF officers and qualified pilots, the Trade Training Institute (TTI) at Seeb where comprehensive courses equip SOAF personnel to master the technical complexities of a modern Air Force, and the administration of the SAF School at Ghalla which caters for recruits for all three Services.

In partnership with the other Services, SOAF plays an important role in civil assistance. For many years now SOAF's transport wing has aided the civil authorities by moving supplies to the more remote areas of the Sultanate and providing medical evacuation services.

Sultan of Oman's Navy (SON)

In 1970 the Sultan of Oman's Navy consisted of two armed dhows. Today it is a well balanced, formidable force. Although the youngest of the three Services, it has developed rapidly in recent years.

It now comprises a squadron of 56-metre missile vessels, a squadron of 37.5-metre gunships and a squadron of inshore patrol boats. SON also operates an off-shore patrol vessel, an armed amphibious ship, and landing craft capable of carrying tanks, vehicles and troops, together with other support craft.

As SON commenced its expansion in the late 1970s, it was appreciated that the Sultan bin Ahmed Naval Base at Muscat would be unable to

support a modern Navy of the size being planned. Consequently a new Naval Base, Said bin Sultan, has been built at Wudam on the Batinah Coast. Completed last year, the Base is one of the largest and most significant construction and civil engineering projects undertaken in the Sultanate. Now the Navy's principal Base, it includes full harbour facilities, maintenance, and accommodation for the Fleet.

The Naval Training Centre, previously at Sur, is now an integrated part of the Wudam Naval Complex. The purpose of the Training Centre is to provide new-entry and advanced shore training for personnel; it also runs professional training courses in branch specialisations and other academic fields.

There are two other SON operating bases: at Raysut, 8 km west of Salalah in the south, and at Jazirat at Ghanam (Goat Island) near the northern tip of the Musandam Peninsula. This latter Base has a particularly essential task in the surveillance and protection of the vital shipping channels through the Strait of Hormuz in Omani territorial waters.

In addition to its defence tasks, the SON is responsible for patrolling the Sultanate's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone to prevent smuggling and interference with shipping. This exacting role over a 1700 km coastline and in the special circumstances of the international waterway of the Strait of Hormuz, results in a wide range of challenging tasks which fully stretch the forces available and demand a high standard of professional ability.

SON also operates the handsome sailing ship, SNV Shabab Oman, which provides adventure training for the Armed Forces and various youth organisations in the Sultanate. SNV runs short courses in the waters around Oman and has also undertaken longer voyages to Australia and the United States, participating in the Australian Bi-Centennial Celebrations this year and the international assembly of Tall Ships to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Statue of Liberty at New York in 1986.

POLICE

Only a rudimentary Police Force existed in the Sultanate of Oman before 1970, and this was confined to the Muscat area. Known as the Muscat Police, it was a force of 73 men with its headquarters at the Bab al Kabir in Muscat. Today, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) is a modern, highly efficient force of men and women whose responsibilities extend over the entire Sultanate. In addition to policing duties, these responsibilities include the prison service, immigration and customs and fire services.

During the past eighteen years, the Royal Oman Police has successfully developed a relationship of mutual confidence and assistance with the public. The crime rate in the Sultanate is remarkably low.

Training for the Royal Oman Police is provided at the Police Academy at Nizwa, where courses are held in basic police work and specialised subjects such as finger-printing, criminal investigation, law, photography and foreign languages, coupled with a strong emphasis on physical fitness. All police recruits are impressed with the need for courtesy and helpfulness to the public throughout their training.

The Directorate General of Criminal Investigation not only carries out the duties of investigating crime, but also supports the work of the other Divisions in the protection of visiting Heads of State and other VIPs.

The Royal Oman Police has an airwing (Directorate of Police Aviation) equipped with fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft. The Directorate answers emergency calls for casualty and medical evacuation and supports remote stations by re-supplying men and equipment. It has its own school for the initial training of pilots and engineers.

The responsibility for maintaining law and order at the main ports along the Sultanate's 1,700 km coastline is entrusted to the Coast Guard Division of the Royal Oman Police. With its fast patrol boats it covers Oman's coastal waters, including the strategic Strait of Hormuz, checking for illegal immigrants and contraband, visiting isolated coastal villages, delivering food and medical supplies, searching for overdue fishing craft and pleasure boats and standing ready to evacuate the inhabitants of coastal villages in an emergency.



ROP border patrol (Photo: ROP)

The Oil Installation Division of the Royal Oman Police has its headquarters at Mina Al Fahal and sub divisions at Fahud and Marmul. The Division provides security coverage for the whole oil industry and is responsible for patrolling the pipelines and other installations, ranging from the oil rigs in the desert to the terminal at Mina Al Fahal.

The issuing of visas to visitors from abroad and passports to Omanis is the responsibility of the Directorate General of Immigration which controls entries and departures at airports and seaports. Customs officers at these ports also operate under the Directorate General of Customs. It is a tribute to their efficiency that there is no drugs problem in Oman.

The ROP Fire Service is entitled the Directorate of Civil Defence and



A technician operates a scanner at the ROP Hospital (Photo: ROP)

Fire. Fire service personnel are trained at the Police Academy's fire station at Nizwa which also serves the Nizwa region. There are now fire stations at all the main centres of population.

The Mounted Division have their headquarters at Al-Wattayah near Muscat and carry out patrols on horseback and on camels. The Division also operates specially trained dog teams which search for narcotics and explosives at airports, seaports and the General Post Office.

The Prison Service, under the Directorate of Prisons, is also a branch of the Royal Oman Police. Emphasis is laid on the rehabilitation of prisoners and teaching them a trade so that on release they can play a constructive role in society.

Policewomen perform roles similar to those of their male colleagues, including traffic and criminal investigation duties, as well as conduct-

ing the searching of women at airports as necessary.

The Royal Oman Police Band has attained a very high standard and performs on ceremonial occasions in the Sultanate. It has also been highly commended for its performances at numerous international functions.

The development of the Police Service is a continuing process. During the past two years modern operational complexes have been constructed for the Directorate General of Operations, the Directorate General of Criminal Investigation and the advisory bodies on security. New accommodation is currently being established for an Identity Card Directorate, and more police stations are being built in a number of wilayats. High priority has been given to ensuring that the Force is equipped with the most modern technical resources. These will continue to be provided. Both the Directorate General of Traffic and the Directorate General of Immigration are now fully computerised.

The Royal Oman Police is an active member of Interpol and of the Arab Social Defence Organisation which comes under the Arab League. Exchanges are made for training and familiarisation purposes with the Police Forces of the other GCC States.

Following a Royal Directive the Cabinet has recently announced a reduction in the registration and renewal fees for private saloon cars and light commercial vehicles as from 1 January, 1988.

ECONOMY

The steep fall in the price of oil in 1986 required a full scale policy review and reassessment, as well as considerable economic adjustment. With this exercise completed, the foundation for continued development is in place, and with the stabilisation of oil prices in 1987 the outlook for the economy in 1988 is considerably improved. The prospects for 1988 are best considered in terms of recent trends in the economy, as well as the planning and policy revisions and innovations which took place in 1986 and 1987.

National Economic Trends since 1986

As oil revenues are the major source of finance for all other sectors of the economy, Oman's immediate response to the price fall was to define a policy to prevent the shortfall in oil revenue from causing serious macroeconomic imbalances and a cumulative decline in the nation's economic activity.

These objectives were pursued through a number of actions, including measures to increase the efficiency in Government spending through cost reductions, an adjustment in the exchange rate to defend the balances of foreign trade and payments, and a fiscal policy adjustment designed to protect the private sector from the full impact of the oil price fall. Beyond these shorter term measures, long term development planning revisions in projected sources and uses of funds were made, after a review and reformulation of all objectives, policies and projects were completed. This was done to ensure that resource allocation under the Third Development Plan (1986-1990) will be consistent with realistic forecasts of resource availability, and to confirm that the development projects included in the Third Plan are those which are absolutely essential for the fulfilment of these revised objectives.

Given the extent of the oil price fall and the pervasive influence of oil income on economic activity, the actual performance of the economy in 1986 was better than might have been expected. Because of the dominance of the oil sector there was a decline in nominal GDP, but even so there was modest growth in the volume of domestic production. Real GDP (in constant 1978 prices) grew by 2.2% in 1986, as oil production increased and the disruptive effects of the decline in



An ancient frankincense tree yields its precious resin — the base for the internationally-acclaimed “Amouage” perfume (Photo: Amouage)





Modern Ruwi — Muscat's business district

oil prices on the private sector were cushioned by the maintenance of public spending. In the trade sector, Oman's non-oil domestic exports rose a brisk 26%, from RO 23 million to RO 29 million, and the balance of commodity trade remained favourable at RO 135 million.

The decline in oil income had the effect of increasing the relative importance of the other economic sectors as income sources in 1986. Oil's share in nominal GDP fell to 34%, from 47% in 1985, while the shares of the other sectors increased. Manufacturing's share in GDP doubled from 3.2% in 1985 to 6.4% in 1986. Although their increases were smaller, the GDP shares of the other non-oil sectors also rose in 1986.

1987 and the Outlook for 1988

The economy of Oman is vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices and, unless countercyclical fiscal measures are taken, oil price fluctuations

produce disruptive variations in Government spending, market demand, and personal incomes. Within the limits of prudence, the Government has acted to absorb the impact of the reduction in oil revenue and to minimise the initial shock to the private sector. Despite the fall in Government revenue in 1986, total expenditures declined only 2% from the 1985 level. This was accomplished by using the Government's reserve funds and by international borrowing, within the limits established by Royal Decree No. 103/85. In an uncertain world, the Government of Oman has decided that its reserve funds must be conserved, and the need to protect its credit worthiness limits resort to international capital markets. In 1987 Oman continued to run a budgeted deficit of approximately RO 275 million, but this represents a substantial reduction from the RO 666 million deficit of 1986. A further deficit reduction to RO 252 million is planned for 1988.

Although the statistical record for 1987 is not yet complete, it is thought that, with the improved oil price and revenue situation, economic performance in 1987 was stronger than that of 1986. In 1987 the Government's oil revenue position improved considerably. A preliminary accounting suggests that actual 1987 receipts from all sources were similar to the budgeted figure of RO 1335 million. This compares favourably with actual revenues of RO 1221 million in 1986. In 1988 revenues of RO 1350 million and expenditures of RO 1602 million are anticipated.

Cheaper Oil and the Strategy of Development

The Government of the Sultanate recognises that the price of oil may not increase much in the near future, and that a substantial improvement in oil revenue may not come in the current planning period. For this reason a cautious oil price scenario has been assumed for revenue projections in the Third Plan (1986-1990). Accordingly, development programmes and ministerial allocations reflect this planning assumption.

The basic, long term goals of Oman's development strategy remain unchanged. These goals include: (1) diversification of the sources of national income, (2) regional and rural development, (3) development of human resources, and (4) expansion and increased self-reliance of the private sector. Although these goals have long been established, the new oil market conditions have required some tactical changes and

policy innovations.

To generate new sources of revenue to finance development, the Sultanate has begun marketing treasury bills to the private sector and the first issue proved to be very successful. In addition, a programme for selling Government-owned property and shares in enterprises to the private sector is being prepared. Privatisation will not only provide financial resources for development finance, it will also expand and stimulate the private sector. Another innovation to encourage the private sector is the stock exchange planned to be established under the Third Five-Year Plan. In addition to these institutional developments designed to encourage the private sector, RO 88 million has been allocated in the Third Plan for various forms of private sector assistance.

Concern for other goals is also evident. When the development budget is considered on a functional basis, investment in human resources and rural development together account for about 40% of the development budget in the Third Plan. As for diversification of the economy, public investment and assistance for the private sector are directed towards projects that utilise Omani manpower, capital and natural resources, as well as those which are net earners of foreign exchange. Concerning diversification, it is encouraging to note that in spite of the slowing of the economy, 464 new manufacturing companies, 274 new construction companies, and 7 new fisheries companies were registered in Oman in 1986, and the total number of registered companies rose from 25,789 in 1985 to 29,227 in 1986.

Despite a decline in per capita income in 1986, Oman continues its drive for development and modernisation. According to standard quantitative indicators, Oman made considerable progress in 1986. Electricity and water produced by Government facilities increased by 350 million kilowatt hours and by 1,239 million gallons respectively, while asphalt and graded roads rose from 21,871 in 1985 to 22,559 in 1986, and installed telephone lines increased from 41,320 to 49,592. Students enrolled in Government schools increased from 221,694 in 1985 to 248,006 in 1986, and the number of teachers increased from 11,168 to 11,590. In 1986 the number of low cost housing units rose from 5,562 to 5,982. The number of doctors employed by the Ministry of Health rose from 638 to 674, and the number of nurses increased

from 1,947 to 2,057, while the combined number of in-patient and out-patient cases treated rose from 4,740,661 in 1985 to 4,973,602 in 1986.

In the present period of retrenchment and consolidation, Oman continues to build the foundation for self-sustaining, long-term growth and development.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The recession of 1986, resulting from the abrupt fall in world oil prices, has added impetus to the Government's intensive efforts to accelerate the development of non-oil related industries. A new development is that of tourism, which will eventually make a notable contribution to the Sultanate's revenues.

Before 1970 there was no industry in the modern sense in Oman, and during the immediate years that followed efforts were necessarily concentrated on the development of the oil sector, upon the revenues of which the future development of the country depended. In the early years of the renaissance the development of industry was necessarily gradual. During the year 1975/76, when the First Five Year Plan commenced, there were only ten industrial units operating in the Sultanate with a total investment of RO470,000. By the end of the First Five Year Plan, the number of these units had increased to 393 with a total investment of RO31 million. A considerable advance was made during the Second Five Year Plan, which started in 1981. By the end of 1986 there were well over 3,500 industrial units, ultimately reaching a total of 3,929 units with a total investment of RO347 million by the middle of 1987, when industrial production was worth RO180 million. An annual compound growth rate of 48% was witnessed during the Second Five Year Plan period. At the end of the First Five Year Plan (end-1980), the contribution of the manufacturing sector represented only 0.76% of the total GDP, but at the conclusion of the Second Five Year Plan (end-1985), it had risen to 3.24% of the total GDP, and by the end of the year 1986 it had made a notable advance to 6.37% of the total GDP.

The Sultanate's earlier industrial progress was mainly geared to construction support. With the completion of the major construction projects required for the national infrastructure, priorities for further diversification into the non-oil sector were appropriately adjusted. Emphasis has now shifted to consumer goods and other import-substituting industries, not only to meet local demand, but with an eye to cost-effective and competitive exports. The precautionary devaluation of the currency early in 1986 on the steep decline in oil prices has stimulated exports and applied a necessary brake to imports without



Tourists are welcome: a deluxe suite at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel

adversely affecting the standard of living. During the next fifteen years priority is to be given to the development of light and medium industries, with full utilisation of local raw materials, capital-intensive modern technology and a long-term programme of training Omanis in the various skills required in the manufacturing sector.

The Government gives every encouragement to the development of the private sector in industry, and the Ministry provides the following incentives to local industry:

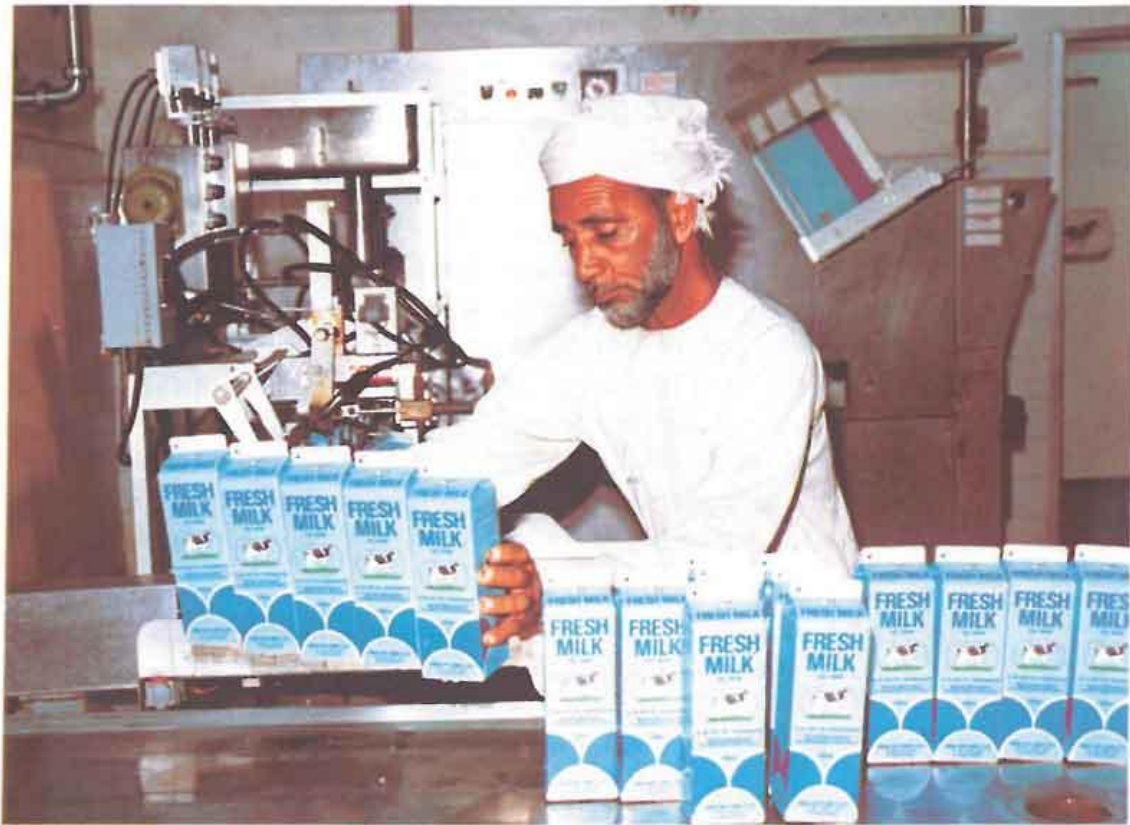
1. Surveys of industrial investment opportunities and preparation of feasibility studies are offered to the private sector.
2. Provision of interest-free Government loans to industry under a Royal Decree, in addition to the loans provided by the Oman

Development Bank (ODB).

3. Exemption from customs duties on imports of equipment and raw materials required for production purposes.
4. Tariff protection through imposition of customs duties on imported goods similar to local products, or prohibition or restriction of their importation taking into consideration the quality and quantity of local production and the interests of the consumer.
5. Exemption from income tax for a period of five years, a concession which may be renewed for another period of five years.
6. Provision of planned and serviced industrial plots for the establishment of factories.

The ODB plays an important role in implementing Government measures aimed at encouraging greater private sector participation in the country's development. Its loans are for up to ten years with a grace period covering the first year of the operation period. The interest rates paid by the projects financed by the Bank are subsidised by the Government. Projects implemented in the Muscat area or the Rusayl Industrial Estate (R.I.E.) will pay only 6% per annum, and a special rate of 4% is applied to projects implemented in other areas. The ODB's lending commitments for any one project must not exceed 20% of its equity or 10% of its total resources. To minimise risk exposure the Bank does not commit more than 10% of its equity to any one project. The ODB has embarked on two new enterprises: a Small Scale Enterprise Scheme and a Vocational Graduate Scheme, by which investors can receive up to 80% of the project cost, not exceeding RO100,000, and graduates of the Vocational Training Centre who wish to open a small workshop will be able to have their project financed on a leasing basis at a special rate of 3% per annum. In October 1987, ODB lending rates were cut by 3%. It is estimated that loans disbursed during the Third Five Year Plan will roughly equal the RO28 million allocated during the Second Five Year Plan.

Foreign investment in industry is welcome. It is regulated by the Foreign Business and Investment Law. The minimum Omani investment in a joint venture company should not be less than 35%; in practice, however, it is preferred that foreign equity does not exceed 49%. Industrial companies with foreign investment are exempt from income tax for five years. If the project directly contributes to



Milk is hygienically packed at the Oman National Dairy

economic development the exemption can be renewed for a further five years.

In May 1987 the Minister of Commerce and Industry announced significant impending measures designed to stimulate the nation's economy. These included the establishment of industrial estates at Salalah, Sohar, Nizwa and Sur during the current Third Five Year Plan, as well as the second and third stages of the development of the Rusayl Industrial Estate. The Ministry has already initiated preparatory action for setting up the estate at Sohar. In 1987, there were already 29 operational units on the Rusayl Industrial Estate and a further 10 are projected. Among the new factories opened in 1987 were an aluminium plant with a 6,000-ton production capacity, manufacturing high-quality goods to international standards, a marble factory, and establishments producing air conditioners, tea-packaging,

radiators, and tyre retreading, a wire and repair plant, and a tiles factory.

The Government has now actively embarked on the development of tourism, through efficiently administered and sponsored groups of tourists. His Majesty has directed that nationals of other GCC countries be allowed to enter Oman without a visa. It is not intended at present that the country be opened up to unrestricted and unregulated tourism. Among several projects to be implemented during the Third Five Year Plan for the development of the tourist industry are new beach resorts, a yacht marina, restaurants in the mountains of the Southern Region, and the improvement of recreational facilities in Government hotels. The private sector is also to be encouraged to implement approved projects by the provision of soft loans from the Government. A committee for the financial support of industry and tourism was set up in 1987.

As further incentives to industry there is to be a 50% reduction in rents of industrial land and a reduction in electricity tariffs.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI)

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry was set up in 1973 to encourage industrial and commercial development in the Sultanate. All business organisations in Oman are expected to be members.

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

The OCCI has an information centre in Muscat, and branches in Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa, Sur and Salalah.

The Chamber legalises documents, invoices, agency and labour contracts and issues certificates required in trade and industry. It acts as arbitrator in the event of commercial disputes between local

members and foreign businessmen or investors, and participates in the discussion of trade-related problems with concerned government organisations. It also sponsors and facilitates the issuing of visas to foreigners wishing to establish business relations with Oman, but who do not have contacts in the Sultanate.

Oman's first Stock Exchange, authorised by Royal Decree No. 53/88, is planned to open under the aegis of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

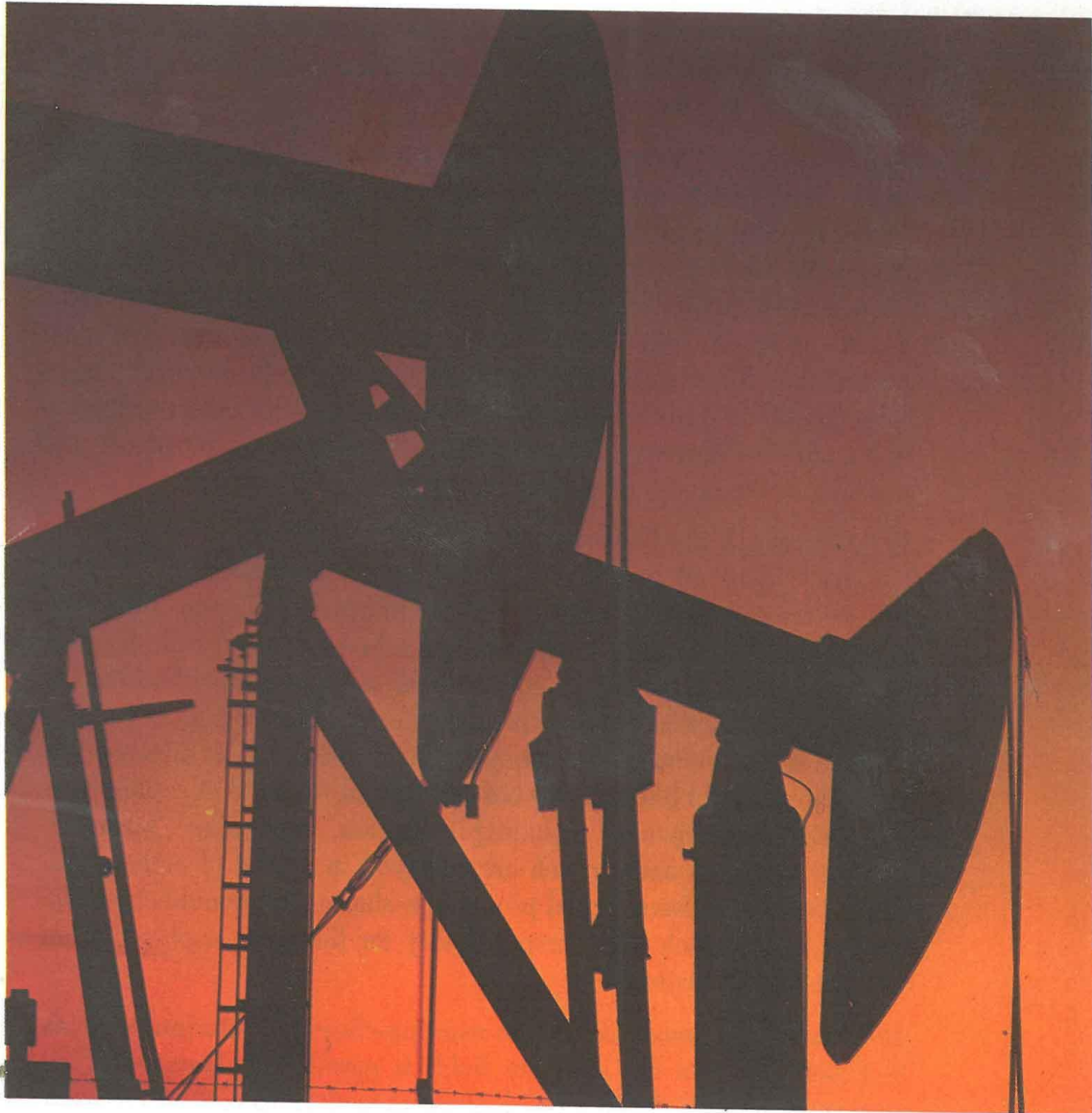
OIL AND GAS

Exploration for oil and gas in Oman continues, and five new oil finds have been reported by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in central and southern Oman during 1987. Today the Company has 50 producing oilfields.

The search for oil in the Sultanate goes back many years to 1924. It was not however until 1954 that a serious and methodical start was made by the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) operating from its base at Duqm on the south-east coast of Oman. Initial searches were unsuccessful after several dry wells had been drilled in a number of locations including a promising feature at Jebel Fahud. Finally IPC withdrew and the concession was granted to PDO, of which Shell was the major shareholder, the minority shareholders being Compagnie Francaise des Petroles and Partex. In 1962 the first oil find was made at Yibal, but it was in 1964 that the first major source was located at Fahud, after it was found that IPC had originally drilled just on the dry side of a geological fault. 1987 marked the 25th anniversary of the first commercial oil find at Yibal.

The discoveries at Fahud, Yibal and Natih in the same area were therefore the beginning of the oil industry in Oman. The first exports of oil from the Sultanate began in 1967. In the years that followed further discoveries of small fields were made in the north of the country. In more recent years oilfields have been discovered in south and central Oman, where exploration continues with promising results. As the world price of oil rose steeply in the 1970s, so the Sultanate's smaller fields in south Oman containing heavy oil also became commercially viable.

Many of Oman's oilfields are small, since the oil-bearing formations are fragmented, and they are far from the coast, requiring lengthy pipelines. The oil from the south is piped northwards through the main pipeline to the coast, for lack of natural harbours along the monsoon-swept southern seaboard coast. The Iraq-Iran conflict highlighted the strategic advantage of Oman's outlet at Mina Al Fahal on the Gulf of Oman where tankers call in safety. Insurance rates on cargoes, crews and ships are consequently lower.



“Nodding donkeys” pump Oman’s oil (Photo: PDO)

Production of oil rose steeply in the early years between 1967 and 1970, reaching 332,000 b/d, but a decline set in during the following five years until new discoveries in Central Oman were brought into production in 1975. By 1977 a further decline was threatened, and in 1980 production had fallen to 282,000 b/d. However, by that time oil

had been discovered in commercial quantities in the south, and the next five years saw an upsurge in production capacity which reached a peak of 600,000 b/d in 1986.

Falling oil prices in early 1986 made it initially desirable to increase production, which resulted in a rapid rise in output during that period, Oman is not a member of OPEC or OAPEC, but has always kept in step with oil prices maintained by OPEC. When OPEC members agreed to implement oil production quotas in order to stabilise the world price of oil, Oman co-operated by voluntarily reducing production. Since 1986, reductions have been made in three stages from 600,000 b/d in that year to 536,750 b/d when the latest reduction was made in February 1988, of which 468,000 b/d was for export, the remainder being for domestic consumption.

PDO, in which the Government now holds a 60% stake, remains the country's main oil producer, but there are a number of other oil companies either producing or prospecting for oil in the Sultanate. Elf-Aquitaine Oman has been pumping oil on a limited scale from its Sahmah field in western Oman since 1980, and Oxy Oman became the third oil producer in 1984 with limited extraction from four wells at Safah in its Suneinah concession near Ibri in the north. It increased its output from 3,000 b/d to 9,900 b/d in 1987. In the field of exploration, some 23 oil companies including Canadian, Australian, Japanese, British, American and French are involved in a total of eight areas. These companies have signed production-sharing agreements with the Government, which place responsibility for financing exploration on the foreign consortiums.

All Oman's oil is pumped into the main pipeline from Marmul to Mina Al Fahal. Oil from the southern fields is piped from Marmul to the main pipeline at Nahada. PDO has introduced enhanced oil recovery (EOR) methods in some of its fields. At Marmul a steam injection plant is used to recover heavy crude oil, the first of its kind in the Middle East. Without such a technique the recovery of heavy viscous oil is extremely slow. In some fields like Fahud, Natih, and Yibal supplemental recovery methods are used by means of the injection of gas and water.

An offshore discovery of oil has been made by the International Petroleum Corporation (IPC) also known as the Lundin Group, in their



Pipeline maintenance (Photo: PDO)

concession area off the west coast of the Musandam Peninsula. The oilfield's reserves are being evaluated, and should these prove positive, production could start in 1989.

A new development for PDO this year has been the start of offshore exploration for oil, in what is its first offshore concession. It consists of a

10,000 sq. mile area in three blocks off Salalah, the Kuria Muria Islands, and Masirah Island in southern Oman. PDO has also taken over a 19,000 sq. mile concession in Dhofar recently relinquished by BP.

An oil refinery was constructed at Mina Al Fahal and came into operation in 1982 to fulfil the requirements of the domestic market. It originally had a capacity for refining 50,000 b/d, but with the continuous increase in the usage of refined products in the Sultanate its production capacity was increased to 80,000 b/d in 1987.

Continuing new discoveries of oil are maintaining the level of proven reserves, which at the beginning of 1988 were approximately 4 billion barrels. In January 1988 a new record was set when 2.73 million barrels of oil were loaded into the 403,000 ton Greek tanker Parthenon. This was made possible because Mina Al Fahal is one of the few loading points in the Gulf region with a deep draught mooring. Many tankers leaving the Gulf stop at Mina Al Fahal to top up with oil.

Oman has large reserves of natural gas, which are playing an increasingly important role in the development of the country and its industries. At the beginning of 1988 reserves of associated and non-associated gas were estimated to be 2.70 and 6.63 trillion cubic feet respectively. Natural gas is being used notably in the development of the Rusayl Industrial Estate, saving valuable fuel oil. The Government gas system was started in 1978 with the construction of a gas pipeline linking Yibal with the Al Ghubra power station and desalination complex near Muscat. Gas is supplied to the power station in the Rusayl Industrial Area, as well as to the Wadi Jizzi power station which serves the copper smelting facility, Sohar and the surrounding region. Gas is also supplied to the Sultan Qaboos University. PDO is the largest consumer of associated gas, which it requires for its power plants and equipment as well as for reinjection into oil reservoirs to maintain pressures and to sustain oil production.

The Government gas system is wholly owned by the State and operated by PDO. In order to increase reserves to meet industrial demand well into the 21st century, the Government has financed a PDO gas exploration programme which started in 1984. This programme has resulted in confirmed discoveries of major quantities of gas, notably at Yibal in the Khuff formation below the earlier developed

oilfield, where significant quantities were found as well as, coincidentally, an oil reservoir. This year RO6 million is being invested in gas development in three production plants.

A natural gas liquids (NGL) plant at Yibal started operating in 1979, and similar plants are now in production at Fahud and Saih Nihayda to clean gas and extract light hydrocarbon liquids as additives to improve the quality and quantity of crude oil. In 1980 a liquid petroleum gas (LPG) plant was added at Yibal to extract butane and propane, and 'flaring' has now been significantly reduced. The LPG is taken by road tanker to a private sector bottling plant in the new industrial area at Salalah.

Omanisation of personnel in PDO and other oil companies is proceeding on a long-term basis. PDO has 680 Omanis undergoing courses abroad and at its training centres in the country. Candidates from secondary school leavers may join PDO, with those passing required aptitude tests being accepted into the training centres. Two committees have been formed recently consisting of members from the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals and PDO. One committee is entrusted with the strategic and planning issues of Omanisation, whilst the other is responsible for operational matters and meets at short intervals to keep abreast of recruitment requirements, training and promotion of Omanis. 52% of those employed in PDO are now Omanis, at time of going to press.

MINERALS

The existence of copper ore in the north of Oman has long been known. Three thousand years ago the ore was being mined in Magan, as Oman was then known, and processed and exported to the Sumerian Empire to the north. Now it is being mined once again from some of the same deposits in the Wadi Al Jizzi area near Sohar, at the Bayda and Lasail mines. The ore is concentrated and smelted to produce copper which is then electrolytically refined to produce cathodes. Work started on this mining/metallurgical complex in 1979 and was completed in 1983, when the first shipment of copper cathodes was exported. Since then production of cathode copper has increased; export sales totalled 15,490 tonnes last year.

Originally, the Government controlled 75% of the shares of the complex, but later acquired the remainder, so that the whole copper industry is now State owned. The Oman Mining Company (OMCO), which runs the national copper operation is a member of the London Metal Exchange (LME), which has awarded international recognition to the quality of Omani copper.

Chromite is obtained from open pit mines in Wadi Rajmi; to date OMCO has exported approximately 7,000 tonnes. Recent exploration work in the Sultanate has revealed additional chromite reserves in excess of one million tonnes in the Rajmi and Samad areas.

In 1987, additional deposits of copper ore were identified in a south-east extension of the Lasail mine, amounting to over 1.5 million tonnes. At the present time exploration drilling for copper ore is continuing at Hayl a'Safil near Yankul, where a total reserve of 1.5 million tonnes has so far been identified.

Deposits of other minerals are known to exist in Oman, and geological surveys are continuing to identify their locations and potential commercial viability. In some cases the deposits lie in particularly inaccessible regions.

Detailed geological mapping, drilling and evaluation in the Ras Al Hadd area in south-eastern Oman has indicated the existence of limited reserves of manganese ore. Exploration in the Jebel Hammah region has also revealed the existence of numerous thin beds of

manganese. Preliminary investigations in the Fanja and Ibra regions have shown the existence of quantities of laterite with iron and nickel. Exploratory work is continuing here.

Extensive deposits of coal are known to exist near Sur in south-eastern Oman, as well as asbestos in the Wadi Haybi west of Sohar.

Gypsum, of which large quantities occur in Dhofar in the south, and limestone are being exploited for the cement factories at Raysut in the south and Rusayl in the north. High quality marble is being quarried at several locations, and marble products are being exported by private companies to neighbouring countries.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals has no plans at present to exploit mineral resources other than copper and chromite. However, the private sector is encouraged to utilise all these deposits, including industrial minerals and rocks such as limestone, gypsum, marble and the iron laterites which are found in abundance throughout the Sultanate. At present the Sultanate has a number of industries making use of industrial minerals which are related to the construction industry including cement, lime-silica bricks, fibre cement and others.

AGRICULTURE

In his speech to the Nation on National Day in November last year, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said declared 1988 as 'The Year of Agriculture', thus emphasising the importance he attaches to agriculture in the development of the economy of Oman, including the essential factor of marketing. Self-reliance in food resources is the ultimate aim of agricultural policy in the Sultanate.

Lacking other natural resources until the discovery and exploitation of oil in 1967, Oman's largely subsistence economy was based on agriculture and fishing. A high proportion of the population still works on the land, but the rapid development of the economy since 1970 resulted in a drift from the land to the urban areas, where higher wages could be earned. The Government has been keenly aware of this fact, and for some years has been making comprehensive efforts to encourage farmers to remain on the land by a variety of means, the success of which is beginning to become apparent.

Oman is a large country, the second largest in the Arabian Peninsula, with considerable variations of geography and climate. Thus it produces a wide variety of agricultural products, ranging from temperate climate fruit and vegetables such as peaches, apricots, almonds and walnuts, grown on the heights of the Jebel Akhdar, to dates and limes cultivated on the lowlands of northern Oman, and coconuts, bananas and papaya grown on the Salalah plain.

Due to a generally arid climate, the principal limitation on agriculture is the shortage of water and thus the need for careful water conservancy. Most of the areas of Oman are subject to periods of drought; rainfall is sporadic, often in the form of heavy storms, the exception being the coastal regions and seaward-facing mountains of Dhofar, which receive a regular summer monsoon rainfall from June to September. In recent years the expansion of land under cultivation has resulted in the resources of subterranean aquifers being over-taxed, particularly along the Batinah Coast, the most intensively cultivated area of the country. The fact that on 100 farms, mostly on the Batinah Coast, up-to-date irrigation techniques are now being used, is an encouraging indication that farmers are responding to the Government's call for the conservation and best use of valuable water



Agricultural farm at Sohar

resources. Another problem both in the north and the south has been the over-grazing of the land by livestock.

Agriculture in Oman largely depends on well water and the falaj system, the origins of which are almost lost in the mists of antiquity. Many of the aflaj (plural of falaj) in operation today were constructed 800 years ago or more. One thing is certain: that it is a highly efficient system, and nothing has since been found to improve on it. In most cases, water is tapped at the water table in the mountains and led by man-made subterranean channels, up to 10 km in length, to the plains where it follows surface channels, often involving the use of aqueducts and syphons, to the area of cultivation. The use of the water is very carefully controlled in the villages by means of allocating periods of irrigation to individual farmers.

Considerable progress has now been achieved in meeting the long-term aim of the Government in making Oman self-sufficient in food. To this end an Agriculture and Fisheries Bank was established in 1981 with a capital of RO 19 million. Loans are granted at low rates of interest both to companies and individuals. The role of the Bank is not limited to part-financing of projects; it also arranges technical assistance, identification of projects and feasibility studies. The Bank extends loans for the development of new farms and improvements to existing ones, as well as for the procurement of agricultural equipment such as tractors and water pumps. The Head Office of the Bank is in Ruwi, and there are branches in Barka, Sohar, Nizwa, Al Kamil, Salalah, Ibri and Ibra.

In order to increase the area under cultivation, close cooperation has been established between the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, with its overall responsibility for water resources, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. At present there are 41,000 hectares of land under cultivation, and it is hoped to double this within the next 15-20 years. Systematic soil surveys and land classification along with ground-water surveys have been carried out. So far 138,000 hectares of marginally suitable land have been classified, of which 17,300 hectares are highly suitable and 55,748 hectares are moderately suitable. The land to be brought under irrigation depends on ground-water which is very limited. The aim is to find the best soils and ground-water existing in coinciding locations.

Many aflaj have fallen into disuse over the years, resulting in land going out of cultivation. An intensive programme of falaj repair is now under way. The hitherto indiscriminate sinking of wells for irrigation purposes, resulting in the lowering of water tables and salination of aquifers is being brought under centralised control. Dams for recharging aquifers and for irrigation purposes are being constructed. At an individual level, farmers are being shown how to use water economically by the use of sprinklers, drip feeding and bubblers.

Government farms have been in existence for many years, but have recently been increased in number to include production farms and research stations at Rumais, Salalah and Wadi Quriyat for agriculture and animal husbandry. Agricultural Centres are to be increased to 2,500 in 1988. Their facilities will include expert advice, plant



Roses on the Jebel Ahkdar: specially cultivated for Oman's renowned rose water

nurseries, seeds, fertilisers, insecticides and machinery. Nursery plants will be provided free of charge. Field workers from extension centres visit farmers to advise on the latest farming techniques.

An interesting development in food production has been that of meat, particularly of beef. Traditionally, in northern Oman, goat meat has formed a major part of the diet of the population. In the south, the Jabali tribesmen of the mountain areas are cattle breeders, but until recently only for milk. The possibilities of beef production have long been appreciated, but the size of the local market was too limited to justify it commercially, and the lack of communications with the main centres of population in the north thwarted this potential outlet. Since the completion of the tarmacadam road connecting Salalah with

Muscat, beef can now be transported by refrigerated lorries from the south to the markets in the north. At the same time, rapid changes in the demographic structures of the country, together with increased incomes, have been changing the eating habits of the population towards a more varied diet. Recent statistics show that meat consumption is increasing steadily among a growing population. At present local production of meat is estimated to sustain 27% of annual consumption. A measure of destocking of cattle in the south has become necessary, and within this framework the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has purchased 51,000 head of cattle for slaughter in recent years. In future it is estimated that 5,000 head of beef cattle will be sold annually from the Southern region. Import policies have been revised to allow for this.

Extensive veterinary services have been developed in Oman. A veterinary hospital has been established in Salalah, and some 25 clinics and 26 sub-clinics throughout the country. A nationwide vaccination programme has been carried out, innoculating nearly half a million head of livestock against foot and mouth disease.

One of the most successful and impressive aspects of the Sultanate's agricultural policy has been the establishment by Royal Decree in November 1981 of the Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (PAMAP). The role of this organisation is to encourage farmers to increase production and to market their produce, as well as to ensure the availability of this produce in the required quantity and at reasonable prices. The Authority provides a link between the farmers and traders through a well-organised marketing network. Thus farmers have a marketing outlet and are encouraged to grow high-quality produce. The Central Distribution Centre is at Ghala near Muscat; there are regional Distribution Centres at Suwaiq, Sohar, Nizwa and Salalah, and 12 Collection Centres throughout the country. At Salalah, there is a banana factory and a banana-ripening facility in Ghala. The Authority has successfully participated in several exhibitions at local, regional and international level, exhibiting Omani produce, most recently at the International Green Week in Berlin early this year. As part of the educational programme of PAMAP, within the framework of the Year of Agriculture, seminars were held in Nizwa in January and in Sohar in February to show modern methods of



Modern farming methods are producing high yields (Photo: PDO)

harvesting and marketing.

In March this year, a new marketing policy was in the process of being formulated by PAMAP, on the instructions of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The Authority was charged with the task of re-evaluating its present marketing policy and submitting new proposals for the



Omani dates — an international favourite. (Photo: PAMAP)

protection of the rights of producers and consumers. The new policy will be based on marketing needs and will harmonise with that of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, making provision for the training of farmers and fulfilment of the requirements of local and international markets at all seasons.

Also, in March this year, the 19th Near East regional conference of the Food and Agricultural Organisation was held for the first time in Oman, attended by 26 countries and 17 international organisations. In opening the conference His Highness Sayyid Thuwaini bin Shihab Al Said, deputising for His Majesty the Sultan, pointed to the significance of the conference being held in Oman's Year of Agriculture, and the great strides made by Oman in the fields of agriculture, fisheries and

water conservation. At the same time he emphasised that this was only a beginning, and drew attention to the food crises existing in some countries of the region due to the neglect of the environment and overpopulation.

With particular reference to Musandam, the Ministry is currently engaged on the following:

- a. Intensification of extension work.
- b. Provision of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides for farmers.
- c. Intensification of operations in the fields of agricultural production and visits by technical staff to local farmers.
- d. Organisation of agricultural production competitions.
- e. Introduction of modern irrigation systems within the agricultural intensive service programme.
- f. Promotion of the work of Veterinary Clinics attached to the agricultural centres.
- g. Assistance to farmers of the region in marketing their dates.

FISHERIES

The major development in the fisheries industry during the past year has been the establishment of the Fisheries Company of Oman in December, 1987 by Royal Decree. It is a joint stock company with a stock capital of RO10 million, set up for a term of 30 years, renewable for a term or terms, into which the existing Oman National Fishing Company (ONFC) is to be merged. The company's task will be to take the lead in the development of the full fisheries potential of the Sultanate through investment in fishing vessels, fish processing plant, infrastructure and fisheries support services, and, more importantly, in the further development of the traditional fishing skills of the people, towards participation in a truly modern fishing industry. To initiate this leading role the new company has been granted an interest-free loan of RO5 million repayable over 15 years, with a grace period of 5 years. Four of its ten Directors are to be appointed by the Government.

The seas of the 200 mile exclusive economic zone along the Sultanate's 1700 km coastline — and the open ocean beyond — are enormously rich in living resources. It has been estimated that the annual potential fishery yield of Omani waters may be as high as 300,000 tons and that such a level of catch would be sustainable from year to year without exhausting the growth and reproductive abilities of the fish species. Since the current annual estimated catch is around 100,000 tons there is considerable scope for development, particularly in offshore areas and of species so far unexploited or lightly exploited. The demersal and pelagic species in the inshore areas, including the seasonal and migratory sardines and tunas, have long been the target of traditional fishermen. In recent years large quantities of lobsters have been trapped in southern waters off Masirah Island and the Dhofar coast and these have formed the basis of a new and economically important export industry. The catching of sardines off the Batinah coast and elsewhere, netted close to the shore and sun-dried for use as animal feed and rich fertiliser, remains an important part of the fishing industry. Indeed, cattle and camels in the southern mountains depend upon this supply of dried fish to supplement their diets — during the dry season when grazing becomes scarce — in much the same way as they have done since the distant past.

The Fisheries Department, formed in 1972, became a Directorate-



Oman has abundant supplies of fish (Photo: Apex Publishing — Mark Mallett)

General in 1974 which now forms part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Over the years, studies and surveys of the fisheries potential and its economic viability have been carried out, including a complete sector study during 1987. In the first 5 year development plan RO15 million was allocated for new infrastructure including refrigeration and ice plants, landing sites and harbours, refrigerated distribution lorries, and for further studies for development needs into the future. Such capital investment continues to this day and has included, since 1976, the widely acknowledged Fishermen's Encouragement Fund for the subsidised purchase of the modern fibreglass skiffs and outboard engines which are now a common sight along our shores and a visible sign of progress in the traditional fishing communities.

Large scale commercial fishing enterprises have also played their part in fish production increases, beginning in 1976 with an agreement

between the Government and a Japanese fishing company to use trawlers in deeper waters. Through these operations the Government obtained 40% of the catch and Omanis were employed and trained in modern fishing methods. Since 1977 that agreement has been replaced by a fishing concession to a Korean company which employs Omani fishermen on its trawlers and provides 38% of the catch to the Government as a form of royalty. The Oman National Fishing Company, formed in 1980 with Government assistance, handles some of this fish. It has successfully organised the purchase, export and domestic distribution of the catch from traditional fishermen, particularly from the new fishing centres that have been constructed at Sohar, Salalah, Sur and elsewhere. A number of other smaller fishery companies have been formed and are operating successfully. Together with the ONFC they can now supply fish to retail outlets in all the main population centres, including the Interior. In Musandam, the fishery industry, upon which that region is so economically dependent, has also received government assistance and has been successful in entering the markets of the UAE.

The role of Government in research into the marine environment and its potential resources received a major boost in 1986 with the opening of the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre near Muscat. This 'state-of-the-art' fisheries research facility — part of the Directorate General of Fisheries — was constructed at a cost of RO1.5 million with consultative support from UNESCO and FAO. It became fully operational in 1987 and the research undertaken there (including cooperative programmes with Sultan Qaboos University) will form the basis for both the future development of the vast range of marine species in Omani waters and for the rational management of their sustainable exploitation now and for the future. It will also pursue a more academic role with investigations into the general ecology of the marine environment, with a particular emphasis on the conservation of ecosystems and endangered species. Oceanography, food and fishing gear technology and fish farming are also being investigated. The Centre will also have an educational role; it has a comprehensive fisheries library and a guesthouse for visiting scientists. The large aquarium is open to the public and forms an accessible and beautiful living collection of the marine resources of the Sultanate to which individuals and school groups are welcomed.

WATER

Whereas the discovery and exploitation of oil has provided the economic basis for the development of Oman as a modern State, in the long term it is the conservation and the most efficient usage of its water resources which will ensure the continuing prosperity of the Sultanate and the well-being of its peoples.

Omanis have long been skilled in exploiting our water resources to the best advantage for irrigation purposes by means of the remarkable falaj (plural aflaaj) system in the Interior and by sinking wells along the Batinah coast. However, it was evident from 1970 onwards that if Oman was to develop industry from a nil basis, cope with the needs of a rapidly increasing population with higher living standards, and extend the areas under cultivation, the need to increase and conserve supplies of fresh water was a matter of urgency. Thus it was that two Councils concerned with the environment were merged into the Council for the Conservation of the Environment and Water Resources, of which His Majesty is personally the Chairman, and the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources is the Deputy Chairman. Various related Ministries are represented on the Council. The Council formulates water management policies, and is supplied with data by the Directorate of Water Resources Research in the Council Secretariat (formerly the Public Authority for Water Resources which was established in 1979).

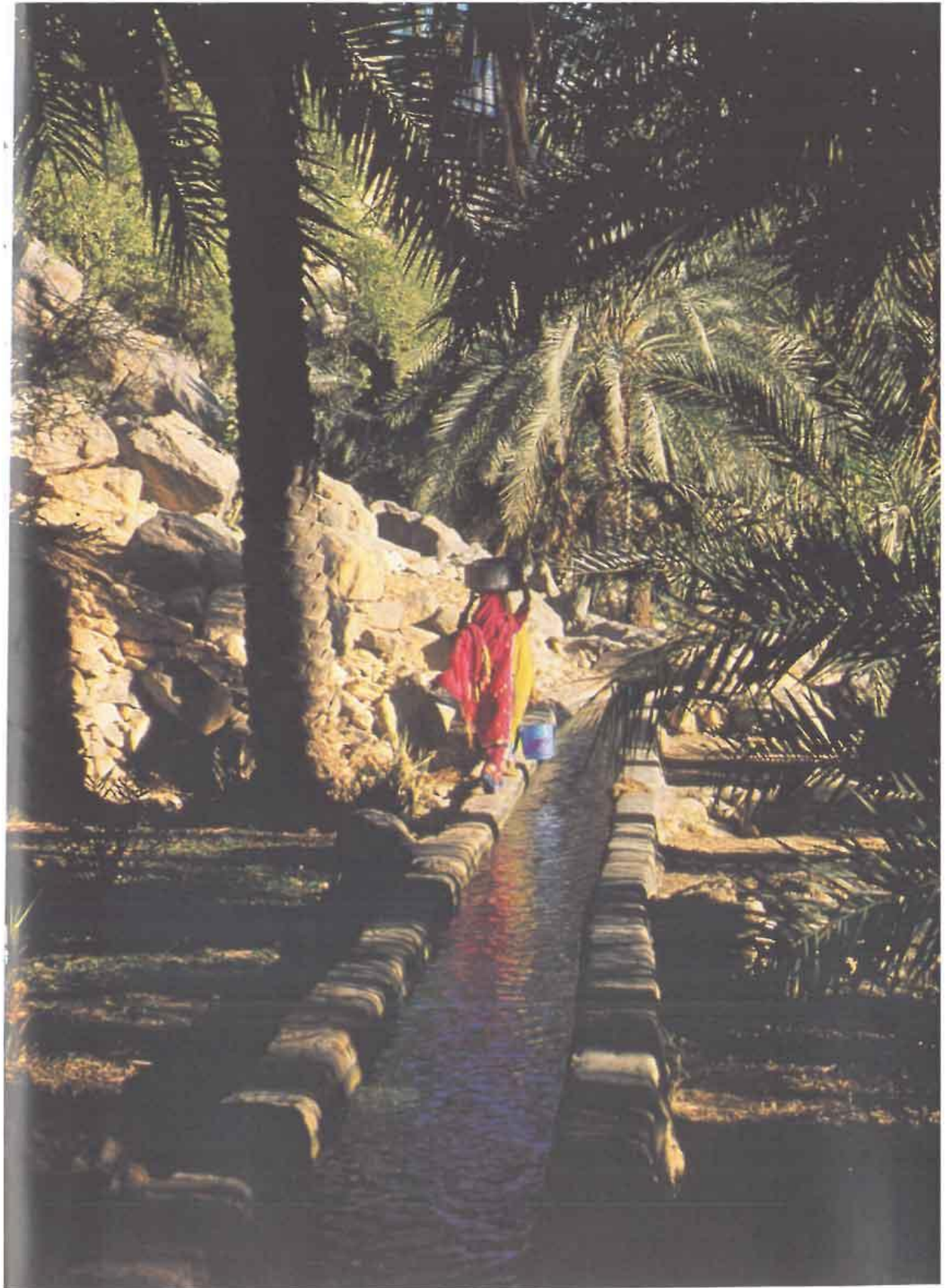
Thus, on a day to day basis, water policy is controlled by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources which deals with the various interest groups such as agriculture, industry and domestic water supplies, whose interests can often be conflicting. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is concerned with water usage for irrigation purposes, such as the falaj system, while the Ministry of Electricity and Water provides potable water for domestic purposes and supplies water for industry.

Water reserves in the Sultanate are divided into those supplied by rainfall, which is renewable, and fossil water, which, like oil, is finite and cannot be replaced. This latter, which derives from a period when the climate of Oman was considerably wetter than it is today, has to be carefully husbanded. Rainfall is limited in Oman, and varies consider-

ably throughout the country according to its geography, but it is generally spasmodic and unreliable except in the area of southern Dhofar which receives regular summer monsoon rains. Elsewhere, rain falls most frequently over the mountains of northern Oman — often in the form of violent storms.

During the last eighteen years considerable progress has been made in hydrological surveys of the Sultanate in which assistance has been given by several outside institutions such as the British Universities of Durham and Bristol. The information derived from these various sources is collated by the Directorate of Water Resources Research, from which Government policy is ultimately formulated. At the end of 1987 it was announced that a comprehensive survey is to be undertaken throughout the Sultanate to find new water resources for agricultural development. The exploration for new water sites and efforts to preserve existing ones are to be carried out simultaneously. The construction of new wells or modification of existing wells is to be controlled to avoid excessive exploitation of water resources which, in the past, has resulted in sea water seepage with a consequent rise in salinity levels. This has occurred most notably on the Batinah coast, the most thickly populated and intensively cultivated region of Oman. Here the increasing affluence of the country over recent years has permitted farmers to extend the area under cultivation by large-scale well-drilling; but it has resulted in neighbouring sea water invading the subterranean aquifers, and the salinity of irrigation water has thus been increasing. This problem has been compounded by the fact that farmers further inland, closer to the Hajar mountains from which the water is derived, have also been sinking more wells and drawing off more water for irrigation purposes with the result that less water has been reaching the Batinah coast, and wells there have had to be sunk even deeper.

A newly-tried method of conserving water is the construction of recharge dams, the first of which was completed at Al Khoodh, near Muscat, in March 1985. Other similar dams have since been completed in the Wadi Hilti-Salahi (Sohar) and at Quryat, near Jabrin. The purpose of these dams is to tap the run-off of rainwater, which occurs when storms break over the mountains, and ensure that it seeps into the ground to recharge the subterranean aquifers. There is also a



protection dam against salt water at Sur. Another dam has been constructed in the Wadi Khasab in Musandam which serves the dual purpose of flood control and recharge dam. After two years of good winter rains data gathered to date indicates that the Wadi Al Khooth aquifer recharge dam is meeting its goals. However, collection and evaluation of ground water levels, salt water intrusion and pumping records over a period of several months will be required to make a final assessment of the dam's effectiveness.

Potable water for drinking purposes and other domestic needs in the Muscat area is obtained from desalination plants and wells. Two additional desalination units at the Al Ghubrah thermal power/desalination plant came on stream in 1986 making a total of four units with a capacity of 23 million gallons per day. In addition, two wellfields in the Wadi Adai and Seeb areas, with a production capacity of 3 million gallons per day each, boost the total output. Smaller desalination plants are in operation elsewhere in the Sultanate, including Dhofar, which has a large reservoir of water under the Salalah plain, and Musandam. Under the Third Five Year Plan a small desalination plant came into operation on the Kuria Muria islands in the south.

82 wells, comprising the Muscat area's total ground water resources, provide 6 million gallons per day, whilst 0.5 million gallons per day is received from the Oman Refinery Company under a Ministry contract. Additional storage capacity is being created at the Al Ghubrah plant which now stores 12 million gallons.

The problem of water wastage is being energetically tackled. An individual consumes 50 gallons a day on an average. Water wastage is estimated at 30 per cent of water production and is currently the subject of a programme of mains repairs and checks on water meters to cut this wastage.

← *An ancient falaj (Photo: Gill Marais)*

ELECTRICITY

In 1988 Oman is within sight of supplying electricity to every household throughout the entire Sultanate. An electricity supply is now taken for granted in every new home; and the demand continues to increase. It is difficult to imagine that, as recently as 1970, the only source of electricity in the Sultanate was a small generating station, recently completed, with a capacity of 4 MW at Riyam, supplying Muscat and Muttrah. By the end of 1986 supply had been increased to 536 MW in the Muscat area, 82 MW in Dhofar and 266 MW in the remaining areas of the Sultanate.

The principal sources of electricity supply are now from power stations at Al Ghubra for the Muscat area, with a capacity of 285 MW supplied by gas and steam turbines, which is interconnected with a gas turbine power station in the Rusayl Industrial Area, the capacity of which has recently been doubled to 500 MW, a gas turbine-operated power station with a capacity of 160 MW in the Wadi Jizzi near Sohar in the north which also supplies the copper complex, and power stations in Dhofar at Raysut, Salalah, Mirbat and Sadah which supply the southern area.

Khabourah is now the only wilayat on the Batinah coast with a diesel power station supply of electricity. All the other wilayats along the coast are either supplied by the Muscat area network or the Wadi Jizzi power station. Rustaq, Suwaiq, Musana'a and some neighbouring towns have recently been added to the Muscat network. Power supply has also been extended to Yanqul, Dhank and Buraimi from the Wadi Jizzi power station. Only two of the most remote wilayats in the Sultanate are now without power stations. As increasing numbers of towns and villages in the Interior are added to the national network, so their diesel generators, no longer required, are moved to the more inaccessible villages in the mountains.

During the Third Five Year Plan new power stations are planned for construction at Raysut in the south, and at Manah in the Interior which will provide electricity for the entire Dhakiliya region, replacing diesel power plants at Nizwa, Bahla, Adam and Izki. In 1987 a power station and desalination plant commenced operating on the Kuria Muria

Islands in the south with four diesel units with a total capacity of 640 KW.

A basic element in the development of the national supply of electric power is therefore the training of labour. This is undertaken by the Oman Technical and Industrial College (OTIC) of Muscat which is run by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, and which is producing the highly-skilled specialists required to maintain and expand the increasingly sophisticated service. On-job training is also undertaken by Ministry of Electricity and Water at Riyam where the old power station has been transformed into a training centre where specialised courses are constantly operated.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The Sultanate of Oman did not really have a social welfare programme before 1970. However, after His Majesty Sultan Qaboos took over the affairs of state social welfare was assigned an important position in the scale of priorities. It is no wonder, therefore, that over the last eighteen years social welfare in the Sultanate has reached a level comparable to that of the best social welfare programme in the advanced nations of the world.

In 1977, when the planning stage was complete, a Royal Decree was promulgated to set comprehensive social welfare regulations.

The most conspicuously successful achievements in this field have been the local community development projects and the setting up of the Directorate-General for Women's and Children's Affairs. These come under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

There were numerous difficulties in the early stages. At that time there were no surfaced roads, telephones, transport or communications. Most areas of the country were cut off from the administrative centres in the Muscat area. In order to achieve its objectives, therefore, overall development had to proceed on a wide front, since each individual part of the development process was integrally linked with the overall operation. This situation has certainly applied to the social welfare programmes which, under the guidance of His Majesty the Sultan, have registered one success after another.

Communications and transport have reached a stage whereby the most remote and isolated communities can easily be integrated into the social welfare system.

The social security system aims to provide a suitable standard of living for all citizens, and enable them to live a decent life and at the same time become self-reliant. To this end assistance has been made available for those most in need; the foundations were laid early in 1980 in a Royal Decree that again raised the minimum level of social security benefit for families and individuals, and of cash assistance payable to the aged, disabled, widows, families with orphans in their care, and women with no-one to provide for them.

Some families are also aided by means of land grants and assistance in



Rehabilitation Centre at Al Khoodh

marketing their crops. Other citizens are given equipment to enable them to set up private businesses and become self-reliant. There are also vocational training programmes in sewing and other productive skills.

Much attention is given to the disabled. Welfare officials in charge of the disabled are sent on specialised courses outside the Sultanate and to seminars in commercial company premises. As a result information is exchanged and training is given in the latest methods. The ultimate aim of all this is to involve the disabled in the mainstream of life and in the activities of their community, and to enable them to participate as effectively as possible through clubs, camps, sports and other communal and leisure pursuits.

The National Committee for the Welfare of the Disabled has made

great efforts to create employment opportunities for them in the Ministries and Government establishments. The Ministry's crowning achievement with regard to services to the disabled was the opening of a welfare and training centre for the disabled in Al-Khoodh, which went into operation at the beginning of the 87/88 academic year.

Development

The Ministry is particularly concerned with local community development projects. The first of these was launched in 1976 as a pilot scheme and its success exceeded all expectations. By the end of 1987 the local community development projects covered a total of 182 villages in thirteen Wilayats across the Sultanate, with a population of more than 57,500 nationals. The aims of these projects include the narrowing of the gap between rural and urban areas through comprehensive development in which all the Ministries participate simultaneously. The development programmes have also been aided by several international organisations.

The local communities themselves have a role to play in these programmes, too, through local development committees and the contributions and efforts of individual citizens. Moreover, the local community leaders are able to participate in decision-making and to play an effective role in the implementation of these projects. Thus traditional Omani values and customs are preserved and upheld.

Up to now, 353 Government and non-Government projects have been carried out. These include falaj maintenance, digging wells for irrigation and drinking-water, building Koran schools, improvement of drinking-water sources, building public baths, installing the services and facilities donated for women's activities, and constructing public meeting places, public libraries, health centres and sports grounds.

The development of rural womanhood is considered the corner-stone of the national local community development programme. Here priority is given to raising the level of social, cultural, health and economic awareness through meetings, lectures and field visits. The programme also covers activities related to the eradication of illiteracy; significant progress has occurred in setting up literacy classes for men and women in remote villages.

In addition, the development teams and agricultural experts have

encouraged the people of the rural areas to benefit from successful experiments in the improvement of agricultural methods and to aim for more productive crops. The development teams have also played a prominent part in familiarising the public with the health services provided by the Ministry of Health, and in persuading them to benefit from these services.

These teams are accompanied by male and female health visitors who give guidance to the members of these communities and provide them with health education through the basic health care, child welfare, paediatrics, child nutrition, pre-natal and post-natal care and nutrition improvement programmes.

It is intended that these programmes should be expanded in future when the necessary material and human resources are available. Special consideration will be given to the more backward communities that have not yet received the basic services. They will receive priority in these future programmes, which will be expanded to cover the bedouin and pastoral communities.

Projects will be developed to help local crafts and industries related to the environment. These will assist rural families by increasing their incomes. The ultimate aim here is to improve the standard of rural life.

Women and Children

The Directorate-General for Women's and Children's Affairs at the Ministry provides assistance to Omani women for the purpose of improving their economic and social circumstances. On the whole it operates through the Omani Women's Associations. Until recently there was only one Association in the Sultanate, with two branches. Now there are eleven Associations distributed among the various regions of the Sultanate. Their aim is to improve the situation of women — by (for example) participating in organising exhibitions and charity sales in which women's products are put on display. Through activities of this kind members of the Associations help to preserve the national heritage.

In addition to this, the Directorate-General works in co-ordination with the international organisations to emphasise the special role of Omani womanhood, particularly in the provision of comprehensive child-care, since this is vital for the welfare of future generations and



Omani ladies pose in their colourful national dress

for making available the opportunities they need. The Directorate considers the supervision of creches to be of the utmost importance; at present there are 14 creches in the Sultanate. It also oversees the women's training centres in the various parts of the Sultanate; there are now four of these — two in Muscat, in Al-Amerat and Al-Khoodh, one in Sohar and one in Al-Ashkhara.

The Directorate-General also participates in a number of regional and international conferences and seminars. In 87/88 there were numerous activities of this kind; in March 1987 the Directorate took part in the Co-operation Council's Second Seminar on Girls' Activities in Kuwait. It also attended the inaugural meeting of the Arab Council for

Childhood and Development in Jordan, and was represented in the women's meeting of the Unicef Executive Council, where it played an important role in the meeting's discussions. The Directorate also set in motion a national plan for improving the situation of women and children in the Sultanate in February of this year, at the Omani Women's Association in Al-Sarooj.

LABOUR

In his speech to us at the beginning of this year His Majesty the Sultan gave us a clear warning of the danger of long-term and unjustified dependence on a foreign work-force. He also pointed out to the youth of Oman that the purpose of educational certificates was to qualify people for employment and the competent performance of their jobs. They should not, he said, regard these certificates as an end in themselves. His Majesty also directed employers to give priority in recruitment to young Omanis wherever possible.

Since 1970 — the beginning of Oman's renaissance under His Majesty's leadership — the youth of Oman have had access to all possible employment opportunities in the various fields. With regard to posts requiring specialist skills, however, the shortage of a trained Omani work-force has made it necessary to resort to foreign labour, although now — as full educational and vocational training opportunities are open to all — the number of qualified young people is constantly on the increase. Hence His Majesty's invitation to them to fill the positions that are compatible with the training they have received.

From its earliest stages the rapid development that the country has undergone since 1970 has made it necessary to plan and regulate relations between employers and employees, in such a way as to guarantee the interests of both parties. The Omani Labour Law was prepared and issued, and came into force in 1973. This Law affirms the principle of equality and impartiality between employees. It also contains special stipulations concerning foreign employees. It forbids the employment of non-Omanis in the Sultanate without prior permission from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour unless they fulfil the conditions of residence and have specialist qualifications that cannot be found in sufficient quantity among the Omani population.

The Law obliges employers to engage Omani employees as far as possible. It also permits the Minister to issue a decision specifying the proportion of Omani to foreign employees in an establishment and lays down rules to help achieve this objective.

The Education and Vocational Training Council, which was founded in



Students undergoing technical training

1978 and is headed by His Majesty, assumes full responsibility for the development of the national work-force and aims to provide the necessary skilled labour for the national economy. It works in co-ordination with the programmes of the other Ministries, government establishments and private sector establishments. During the past decade the Ministry has set up nine vocational training institutes, which are up-to-date and in step with recent developments in primary, preparatory and secondary education. Here the aim is to provide the vocational training needed for the technicians of the future. The first nucleus of these institutes was the Oman Technical School in Darseit, which was set up by Petroleum Development Oman in 1970. The government took it over in 1976; its syllabi were then greatly expanded and it widened its scope beyond the original aim of providing technical

personnel for the Company. Its operations are still being constantly updated.

Up to now 1,873 students have graduated from the vocational training institutes. With regard to the higher levels, the Ministry began planning to set up the Oman Technical Industrial College in Al-Khuweir in 1979. This opened in 1984 for the purpose of teaching and training technical personnel. The need for such people was clearly identified following the rapid expansion in the public and private sectors, which depended upon advanced technology. The College was equipped with modern laboratories and workshops; lecturers and trainers with high qualifications were appointed; the Ministry decided to establish a continuous dialogue with the employers, the aim being to link the College with the labour market and keep it up to date with the latest technical, industrial and commercial labour requirements. The college has an annual intake of 250 students — male and female — in the commercial and technical sections. In addition, the necessary preparations have now been completed for practical and laboratory training to be carried out in harmony with the relevant theoretical studies. The College also has a library and a teaching aids centre. Courses in the various specialisations are two years in length. Students are secondary graduates or their equivalents with suitable grades in their specialised subjects.

There is close co-operation between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Youth. The latter plays an important role in preparing young people for employment — through its general, commercial, industrial and agricultural secondary schools and intermediate teacher-training colleges — and for study at the vocational training institutes and the Oman Technical Industrial College. It also sponsors advanced training or study courses in various colleges and universities outside the Sultanate. In addition, the opening of Sultan Qaboos University in 1986 was an important milestone on the road of comprehensive education in Oman, the aim of which is to groom Omani specialists to work in the various fields.

Many health technicians are graduates of the Institute of Health Sciences. With regard to banking and the financial sector, the Central Bank of Oman has set up the Omani Banking Institute for banking studies. This institute gives training to those who have completed their

secondary education. In accordance with the employment policy followed by the state, establishments owned wholly or partly by the state give absolute priority to developing the work-force. Examples of these are Petroleum Development Oman, Oman Refinery and the Oman Mining Company.

COMMUNICATIONS

Roads

In view of the fact that Oman is the second largest country in the Arabian Peninsula, the completion of its system of major roads, despite considerable geographical difficulties, in less than 17 years is truly a remarkable achievement. Until 1970 there were only eight kilometres of paved road, connecting Muscat with the airfield at Bait Al Falaj via Muttrah. Apart from that there were only graded roads from Muttrah along the Batinah Coast as far as Sohar and to the oilfield at Fahud in the Interior. Otherwise there were only tracks to follow.

It was obvious from the start that, with Oman's difficult terrain, roads were to be of paramount importance in the development of the country. In the first stages, permanent roads were constructed along the length of the Batinah Coast, the most thickly populated region of the Sultanate, and to Nizwa, the largest centre of population in the Interior. In the later stages, permanent roads were built connecting Muscat with Sur in the south-east, and with Salalah in the south, a distance of 1,000 km. The road to Nizwa has been extended along the inside of the Hajar mountain range through Bahla and Ibri to connect with the road system of the UAE at Buraimi. Likewise, the road along the Batinah Coast now also connects with the UAE road system. Many other permanent roads have now been constructed, connecting the main towns of the country. Two notable engineering achievements have been the construction of roads through the rugged mountains of the Musandam, and to the top of the formerly inaccessible Jebel Akhdar.

Apart from the asphalt road connecting Muscat with Salalah, the Southern Province of Dhofar has its own road system, which has been extended to the west over particularly difficult mountainous terrain to the border with the PDRY, and to the east to Mirbat. There is also a system of permanent roads into the Jebel from the coastal plain and along the mountain watershed.

In the Third Five Year Plan emphasis is now on the construction of rural road communications, and on roads connecting towns on the Batinah Coast through the mountains with towns in the Interior.



The entrance to Salalah Airport

Another aspect of communication by road has been the development of a bus and coach service, previously non-existent, for public transport. The State-owned Oman National Transport Company (ONTC) runs a fleet of more than 240 buses and coaches which serve the Muscat area and the main towns. The Company also operates six air-conditioned luxury coaches, fitted with long-distance fuel tanks, television and toilet facilities, which serve the new Muscat-Salalah route.



Oil storage tanks at Port Qaboos, Muttrah

Air

One of the first major projects in the development of modern Oman was the construction of the International Airport at Seeb, 35 km from Muscat, which was completed in 1974 to replace the old airfield at Bait Al Falaj with its notoriously difficult approaches for aircraft. In addition to its passenger and freight facilities — which are up to the most modern international standards — the airport also serves military and police movements. In recent years large-scale extension programmes have been carried out. Seeb International Airport is regarded as one of the major international airports in the region, due to its modern installations, its high efficiency and standards of operation. It serves 21 international scheduled air carriers and 14 international non-scheduled operators, in addition to various cargo charters.



Muscat area's sophisticated road complex (Photo: Oman News Agency)

Salalah Airport was the second major airport to be constructed in the Sultanate. Work was completed in April 1986 for the construction of a new integrated terminal building which started operations for receiving passengers in July 1986. Improvement of cargo and other airport facilities was recently made. With the completion of these projects, Salalah Airport is now capable of accommodating 250 arriving and departing passengers in each direction per hour.

Oman has a 25% share with the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain in Gulf Air, which operates international services to western Europe, the Gulf, the Indian sub-continent, the African continent, the Far East and, most recently, the United States of America.

Following the inauguration of Seeb International Airport, Oman's first domestic air service, Oman International Services, was founded in 1972. In 1977 it took over the maintenance of Gulf Air's light aircraft division, and in 1981 acquired it. Later in that year the present Oman Aviation Services was established by Royal Decree, taking over Oman International Services. Oman Aviation Services is a 100% Omani stock company. It also runs the catering services at the Airport. Beside establishment of domestic air services from Muscat to Salalah, Khasab, Bayah, Sur, Buraimi and Masirah, it also operates charter flights and checking of flight navigation aids in the Sultanate and in neighbouring countries.

Growing traffic demands on Seeb International Airport indicate the need for further expansions. A feasibility study is being conducted into the alternatives of constructing a new airport or of extending the present Seeb Airport. The future development plan for Salalah Airport includes runway extension, the construction of a parallel taxiway, an additional aircraft apron and increasing the capacity of standby power and some other facilities.

Sea

Before 1970, Oman had no modern port facilities. All cargoes had to be off-loaded by lighters in Muttrah bay. Among the first major projects was the construction of a new deepwater port at Muttrah — Mina Qaboos — which was completed in 1974, providing a vital service in the development of the country. The ever-increasing volume of freight imports has required many additional developments, such as the construction of a container terminal, modern warehouses, engineering workshops and deepwater wharfage. With the advent of the Iraq-Iran war, Mina Qaboos and the oil terminal at Mina Al Fahal assumed considerable importance in international commerce: insurance rates for tankers and cargo ships calling there were considerably lower, since the ships avoided the Gulf danger zone, and consignments unloaded at Mina Qaboos could be transported overland by road to the other Gulf States in safety.

In the south where there is no natural protection from the monsoon

winds which blow at gale force for several months in the summer, a new port with container facilities had to be constructed at Raysut, 8 km to the west of Salalah, to serve the region.

For the future, the project of constructing a new port on the Batinah Coast, under the Third Five Year Plan, has been dropped as there are already adequate port facilities between Muscat and the Musandam Peninsula. Instead, the possibilities of a new port between Muscat and Sur or between Sur and Duqm are being studied.

POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Postal Services

The first post office in Oman was opened in 1856, and overprinted Indian postage stamps were used until 1947. In 1966 the postal services were taken over by the Government and the first Omani postage stamps with local designs were issued. However, in 1970, there was still only one post office in Muscat with postal services confined to the city area. At that time letters outside Muscat had to be conveyed haphazardly by travellers. Since 1970 the postal services have spread at an ever accelerating rate to the farthest corners of the Sultanate. The tentacles of communications in the broadest sense, whether roads, postal services or telephone services have advanced hand in hand.

Emphasis in the current Third Five Year Plan is on extending the postal services to all parts of the Sultanate, and is receiving high priority from the Ministry. This not only includes the construction of post offices and sub-post offices in all regions of the country but also the enlargement of existing ones.

By last year there were 70 post offices in the Sultanate together with 33 postal agencies. 34 new post offices are to be built, and should be functioning by the end of the current Five Year Plan, for which the work has already commenced.

The efficiency of the postal services has been further improved with the purchase of a fleet of vehicles for operation between the wilayats and Muscat — a move that will substantially accelerate collection and delivery. Three of the mobile post offices which were allocated to heavily populated areas have since been replaced by permanent establishments, and the remaining one at Madinat Nahdha is also planned to be replaced by a permanent post office in the current Five Year Plan.

An express mail service, known as the Datapost service, and manned by specially trained staff, has been introduced for fast and reliable postal handling. At first limited to the Muscat area, it has now been extended to Salalah. The International Express Mail Service, first started worldwide in 1970, was introduced in the Sultanate in 1985.



Mail is sorted at the Central Post Office, Seeb (Photo: Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones)

Commencing with the GCC countries, it has since been extended to a total of 50 countries.

A home delivery service is available for Datapost mail, but house-to-house service for ordinary mail has not yet been instituted, due to some practical handicaps, but it is expected to be commenced next year. The introduction of automatic mail-sorting equipment at the Central Post Office, Seeb has expedited outgoing mail with notable speed and accuracy.

The Sultanate's postal history is told in a book, published in colour by the Ministry: 'The Postal History of Oman, 1856-1985' features reproductions of almost every stamp that was issued in the Sultanate during that period, and is proving a popular addition to the libraries of philatelists. Last year, there were special stamp issues commemorating



The central console at Al Amerat which controls Oman's satellite telecommunications complex (Photo: Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones)

Police Day, Arab Gulf Week for Social Work, International Environment Day, Municipalities Month, Al-Hajj, National Day and the Royal Omani Amateur Radio Society.

Telecommunications

All telecommunications in the Sultanate are operated by the General Telecommunications Organisation (GTO) which was formed by Royal Decree in 1980 as a fully Government-owned entity, the eventual aim of which is to be self-financing. At present profits are ploughed back into maintenance and development. With the construction of the new Telecommunication Centre at Bait Al Falaj and twelve other digital electronic telephone exchanges within the Muscat area, the equipped capacity of telephone exchanges has increased to 61,000 lines. The introduction of another centre in Salalah has raised the number of lines

in the south from 4,200 to 15,000, with direct dialling now possible between Muscat and Salalah and also abroad. The advent of the digital switching system has considerably reduced operating and maintenance costs. In 1985 a mobile telephone service was introduced covering a large area of the Sultanate, which can be expanded to provide facilities to remote areas which cannot be served by the conventional telephone network.

Oman was the first country in the region to establish an external telecommunications link when a telegraph cable was laid in 1877 between Muscat and Aden. However, the first modern telecommunications network was inaugurated in the early 1970s. A satellite station was set up in 1974 at Wattayah, near Muscat, being replaced the next year by a new station at Al Amirat; the Wattayah station was then moved to Salalah. The satellite earth station, standard A, at Al Amirat carries Oman's international traffic worldwide, while standard B types at Al Amirat and Salalah are used for domestic traffic in addition to two other earth stations at Musandam and Masirah Island. Also, a new earth station — Al Amirat 2 — completed in 1985 is linked to Arabsat, whence international traffic, including television programmes, is routed to other Arab countries. The switch from Intelsat to Arabsat has now been completed. A modern exchange with initial capacity of 1,000 international, and an equal number of local circuits, was commissioned in 1986 to cater for the increased domestic and international traffic.

The Third Five Year Plan, as part of an ambitious overall Ministry plan ending in 2005, provides for an expansion of 16,600 lines along the Batinah Coast and in the Quriyat region, including six main exchanges, at a cost of RO 15 million. A rural project contract for the development of telecommunication facilities in 39 towns and villages has now been completed. A further expansion project in the Muscat area and other urban locations is planned at a cost of more than RO 3 million; this contract was signed with a Swedish firm in May 1985 and includes a complete turnkey system — telephone exchanges, subscriber and junction cable networks, a microwave system, long distance coaxial and optical fibre cable systems and rehabilitation of existing systems and networks.

By last year, a total of 49,592 telephones had been installed throughout the Sultanate and 12 new exchanges were due for completion by mid 1988.

The GTO has its own training centre in Ruwi, and about 80% of its manpower is Omani. 100 new students are being trained annually.

EDUCATION

Addressing a national education seminar in Muscat in January this year, the Minister of Education announced that currently there were 696 schools, institutes and colleges in Oman with 272,000 students. Since 1970 1,470 students had graduated from foreign universities and 2,500 students were studying abroad. When comparing these figures with a total of less than 1,000 students in three boys' schools in 1970, this is evidently a remarkable achievement.

In his first address to the nation, on his accession in July 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos laid special emphasis on education and health in expressing his determination to press ahead with all speed with the economic development of the country. In 1986 when a measure of economic retrenchment became necessary as a result of the sudden steep fall in world oil prices, His Majesty directed that the programme for educational development should not be affected.

The task of developing an educational system in 1970 was awesome. From this minimal basis a whole system for boys and girls had to be constructed. There was a total lack of school buildings, teachers and experience. Many of the first schools were in tents, with classes working in shifts, while teachers had to be recruited from Egypt, Sudan and Jordan. Text books had to be composed and published, curricula worked out and examination standards set. To quote just one example, no text book existed on the history of Oman, only books on English history were available for examination purposes. At the same time, there was a pressing demand for adult education. As education developed, it was not unknown for fathers and sons to be studying in the same class.

Education in the Sultanate is based on the principle of its being a universal right for all members of Omani society. It encourages the development of each individual's abilities, and aims to provide the necessary manpower for all sectors of national life. It also concentrates on the enlightenment of each Omani as to his rights, duties and obligations to his country and to the world at large, and his ability to use his leisure time to the best advantage. Islamic education plays an important role at all levels. In a recent strongly worded speech to community leaders His Majesty Sultan Qaboos reminded young



A Salalah school

people that academic qualifications are meant to equip them to work effectively in the service of their country and should not be regarded as sufficient in themselves. Study for certain qualifications should not be avoided — this was “negative behaviour” — and all must bear in mind the need to reduce dependence on foreign workers, His Majesty said.

In the early years of educational development, before and during the First Five Year Plan, emphasis was on the construction of primary schools, the entry age for which was from six to eight years. Education was not compulsory, but was strongly encouraged by the Government. In fact so great was the demand that there was no need for compulsion. As the construction of primary schools proceeded, so the programme for preparatory schools followed, together with that for secondary



The Physics Laboratory at Sultan Qaboos University (Photo: Sultan Qaboos University)

schools. Historically, the actual birth of secondary education within the Sultanate's educational infrastructure commenced during the academic year 1973/74 with an enrolment of 25 students.

On successfully passing the examination at the sixth primary grade, the student progresses to the preparatory school, generally at between the ages of twelve and fourteen. Students passing the General Preparatory Certificate examination are admitted to the first grade of secondary schools between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years. Here they are selected for the appropriate type of secondary education, in accordance with the results of their preparatory examination. After the first year of general secondary education, students are allocated to either the literary (humanities) or the scientific 'stream'. In 1987 270,695 students

commenced attendance at elementary, preparatory and secondary schools, and in the same year 3,334 students completed secondary education.

There are at present six local teacher-training colleges in the Sultanate — three male colleges at Qurm, Salalah and Sur, and three for women at Khuwair, Salalah and Rostaq. Currently these colleges have some 1,323 students on their rolls, nearly half of them women. Three new teacher-training colleges are planned in the Third Five Year Plan in the Dakhiliya, Sharqiya and Batinah regions. In a move to speed up 'Omanisation' of teaching staff, following recommendations by the Education and Vocational Training Council, the Ministry has set a target of at least 70% Omani teachers in elementary education by 1995.

The College of Education and Islamic Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University will play an important role in helping to achieve this process of 'Omanisation' at preparatory and secondary levels. Interestingly, at present 'Omanisation' is proceeding faster among female teachers than among male teachers.

The school curriculum has now been successfully 'Omanised' to the extent that all schools now follow an Omani syllabus. Teaching of English, as a universal language, is taking its place alongside the other main core-curriculum subjects. It is taught through nine years of the school system, starting at fourth elementary level, and is accepted by all educationalists as an essential subject to facilitate further study both in Oman and abroad.

In addition to the courses offered at Oman's specialist colleges — the eight mosque institutes, Nizwa Agricultural Institute, the Muscat Commercial Institute and Sohar Industrial Institute — new courses are now being offered, such as domestic science for girls and technical crafts for boys. Agricultural studies have been introduced in 57 preparatory schools, and fisheries subjects are to be included in the curricula of schools in coastal towns and villages.

Adult illiteracy was a major problem that had to be urgently undertaken in the development of the overall education infrastructure. Much progress has already been made, and now the emphasis is on providing facilities for the rural communities. The literacy and adult education programme has recently been expanded in these areas.



A student in one of the computer rooms at Sultan Qaboos University.

Literacy classes are now attended by more than 11,000 people throughout the country, of whom 9,000 are women. Another 11,000 are studying at Oman's 200 adult education centres, and a further 10,000 are taking home study courses.

Schools for the deaf and other handicapped children have been established in Muscat.

The crowning achievement of the development of the educational system in Oman was the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University at Al Khoud in September 1986. The University comprised five colleges: Education and Islamic Sciences, Science, Agriculture, Engineering, and Medicine: a College of Arts was added a year later.

The College of Education and Islamic Sciences has 506 students and

the College of Arts has 114 students, approximately half male and half female. These two Colleges accept students graduating from secondary schools in both science and arts specialisations. They cover the areas of languages, philosophy and sociology, history and geography, Islamic sciences, home economics, psychology journalism, library science and documentation. The students select their specialisation at an early stage. In the meantime all students get substantial courses in English language, computer science and some elective courses such as 'Oman and Islamic Civilisation'.

For the other colleges, the students can take a broad spectrum of fundamental science courses relevant to their chosen academic disciplines for the first three terms, then proceed to choose their area of specialisation. The medium of instruction in the University is Arabic except for the science-based courses.

Two intakes of students, totalling 1,194, have been accepted by the University since its opening. The total intake for the academic year 1987/88 will be 632 students. It is anticipated that the University will ultimately accept about 3,000 students in various faculties and specialisations.

The support centres of the University include the Computer Centre, the Library which contains advanced technology information systems as well as printed material, a Language Centre, a Teaching Hospital to be opened this year, and a Centre for Education Technology.

Residential accommodation is provided in the form of small communities, instead of hostels, each accommodating about 150 students drawn from all the colleges, with a supervisor acting as counsellor in social, religious and moral matters. Non-resident students are made members of the communities.

Co-operation in the field of education among the Arab Gulf States is carried out through the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), and includes the standardisation of curricula and text books. This co-operation includes the establishment of the University of the Gulf in Bahrain and the Centre of Educational Studies in Kuwait.

YOUTH

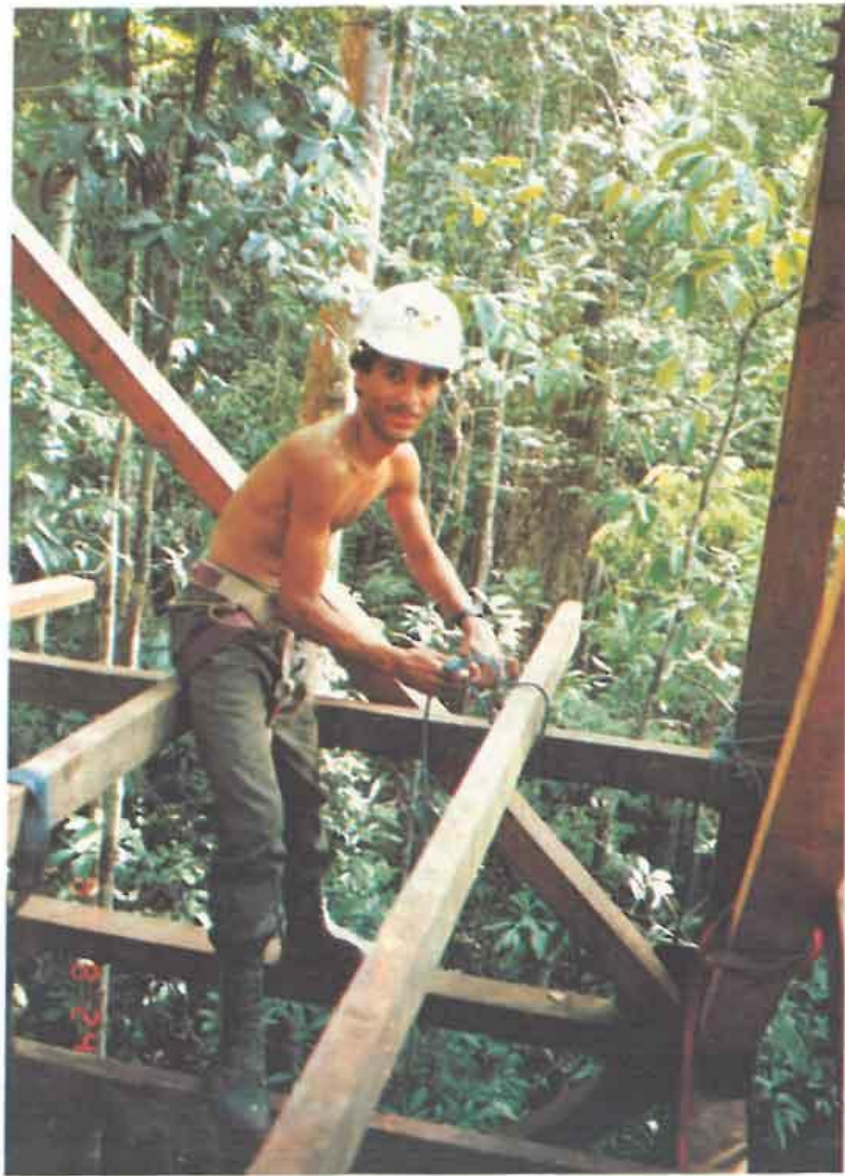
It was natural that, with the lack of education in the Sultanate at the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, attention should be actively and urgently concentrated on providing for the educational needs of the young. It was logical therefore that education and youth activities should be coordinated under the supervision of one Ministry.

Over the ensuing years the importance of youth activities has constantly been emphasised, as for example the decision in 1982 to give the responsibility for supervision of sports activities in Oman to the Ministry's Directorate General of Youth Affairs, and the declaration of His Majesty the Sultan that the National Day celebrations in 1983 were to be devoted to the subject of Youth, when youth delegations from 45 countries attended.

In furtherance of youth care and promotion of youth activities, a Royal Decree (No.83/86) was issued amending the name of the Ministry of Education to Ministry of Education and Youth. The Decree approved an administrative structure including an Office of H.E. the Under Secretary for Youth Affairs and three Directorates General: for Administration and Finance, Cultural and Social Activities, and Sports Activities, in addition to The Qaboos Sports Complex Administration and Regional Administrations for youth.

Sporting activities are recognised as playing a major role in the character building of the country's young people. In order to promote these activities His Majesty presented the nation's youth with an Olympic-sized sports complex in 1985 at Bausher near Muscat, covering 44 hectares of land. Its main features are a stadium with a seating capacity for 35,000 spectators and a large hall with facilities for more than 23 games.

Young Omanis have been participating since 1984 in 'Operation Raleigh', which is planned to develop in four stages until 1988. Its aim is to explore in detail marine, desert, tropical and polar environments. A team of fifty young Omanis has been operating in Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Australia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Chile. This year, they will be going to the United States, Bahamas and Cameroun.



A member of the "Operation Raleigh" youth team at work in the Malaysian jungle (Photo: Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs)

During the past three years, many sports, cultural and social activities were conducted on both local and external levels; these numbered 1,543, with the active participation of 24,497 young people.

The sports activities included soccer, handball, table tennis, volleyball,

hockey, lawn tennis, athletics and swimming. Cultural and social activities included, among others, youth camps, visits, competitions and participation in social services. A number of sports organisations have been established in the past year including Volleyball, Athletic, Tennis, Equestrian, Handball, Cycling and Swimming Associations. Hence the number of clubs increased to 51, enabling new games and sports to be introduced in most wilayats and regions.

The Sultanate participates in international competitions including athletics, soccer, shooting, etc. and for the first time won a Gold Medal in the first round of the GCC athletics competition for young people under 20 years of age, held in Bahrain in March last year. A seven-man athletics team, a boxing team and a marksmen's team were entered for the Olympic Games held in Seoul this year, and Mohammed Amor Al Malki was the first athlete from the Middle East to reach an Olympic track final.

Among future plans are the establishment of regional youth centres, cultural centres, and the construction of clubs, and additional work on the Qaboos Sports Complex under the Third Five Year Plan.

The Youth Centre at Sohar has already been completed with most of the sporting facilities and equipment up to international and Olympic specifications, and that at Salalah will be ready next year. The Sohar soccer stadium has accommodation for 7,500 spectators and includes a six-lane running track. The centre also has an assembly hall, squash and tennis courts, games pitches, a six-lane swimming pool, art studio and library; accommodation for 60 visitors is also provided. The Youth Centre at Salalah is to have similar facilities with a soccer stadium which will accommodate 15,000 spectators.

Scouting

Scouting plays an important part in organised youth activities for boys and girls. The Scout movement was first introduced in Oman as long ago as 1948 at the Saidiya school in Muscat. Shortly afterwards scout packs were formed in boys' schools in Muttrah and Salalah. In 1970, when many more schools were opened, scout packs increased accordingly. The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides was established by Royal Decree in 1975 with the aim of inculcating young people with a sense of service and of developing their self-reliance,



The Sohar Sports Stadium (Photo: Oman News Agency)

sense of responsibility and public spirit. To this end annual camps were commenced in 1976. They are held in all parts of the country and have been very successful in promoting care of the environment, initiative training, mutual cooperation and leadership. The young people are encouraged to participate in projects which aid society; one of the best of these activities is the organisation of an annual course for the handicapped under the auspices of the Oman National Committee for the Care of the Handicapped — part of the State effort to enable the handicapped to undertake work which will give them a secure and dignified life, and help them to make a positive contribution to society. These courses have been so successful that handicapped people from other member-States of the GCC are now joining them.

In 1983 during the National Day celebrations His Majesty the Sultan



Omani youth participate in many international events

was installed as Chief Scout in honour of his support for the Movement. By 1987 there were a total of 7,000 scouts and 5,316 guides throughout the Sultanate, with packs in all schools. Oman participated in the last World Scout Conference at Melbourne, and will be sending a contingent to the Arab Scout Camp in Morocco this year; Oman held a similar camp at Salalah in 1986. Eight scouts were included in the crew of the Navy's sailing ship 'Shabab Oman', for its voyage to Sydney for the Australian Bicentennial Celebrations. The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides is taking part in the 'Scout Jamboree of the Air' which promotes international scouting contacts between radio amateurs. The Guides' Association was a participant in the World Guides' Conference in Nairobi in July 1987 marking its affiliation to the World Guides' Conference.

Omani scouts also assist the Royal Oman Police in the Sultanate's annual Traffic Week, and provide a delegation with the National Haj Mission. In 1985 Oman's Sea Scouts were established as an extension of the scouting movement; at present there are 70 sea scouts in the Muscat area, and there will shortly be other groups in Musandam, Sharqiya, Dhofar, Batinah and Rostaq.

HEALTH

The opening of the magnificently equipped Royal Hospital on National Day last November by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has provided the people of Oman with the very latest in sophisticated health-care. The hospital, which has now started to function, offers the ultimate in specialist treatment in its role as the principal referral centre for the Sultanate's increasingly comprehensive medical services.

The Royal Hospital is a large modern general hospital, with residential accommodation for staff, occupying 25 hectares of land. It has 630 beds including 30 special care baby units, and a large modern Accident and Emergency department. The clinical departments in the Royal Hospital are: Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Medical and Surgical Paediatrics, General Surgery, Nephro-Urology, General Medicine, Cardiology, Gastroenterology, Endocrinology and Orthopaedics. The Supporting services are radiodiagnostics, pathology, physiotherapy and rehabilitation, in addition to administration.

Since 1970 advances in every aspect of health care from prevention to cure have been truly remarkable. In earlier years the mortality rate due to illness, particularly among children, as a result of an almost total lack of medical facilities was very high. Epidemics of influenza and measles used to sweep through tribal areas of the Interior, destroying whole families. There was only one small hospital in Muttrah and a few clinics elsewhere in the country. Trachoma, dysentery, tuberculosis and malaria were rife as a result of lack of basic hygiene. Thus, from His Majesty's Accession 18 years ago, the highest priority has been given to the development of the Health Services. When spending cuts due to the fall in oil revenues became necessary in 1986 His Majesty directed that the needs of the health and education sectors were to be unaffected.

In addition to the Royal Hospital, a RO2.5 million 40-bed hospital was also opened in Haima last year, and another at Wadi Pani Kharous, bringing the total number of hospitals in the Sultanate to 47, with 3,438 beds. There are now over 80 Health Centres throughout the country and more than 70 other Preventive Medicine Units. Eight more Health Centres are due to be opened during 1988 plus a Public Health Compound at Salalah and the University Teaching hospital at



His Majesty opens the ultra-modern Royal Hospital in Muscat — the Sultanate's main referral hospital (Photo: Mohamed Mustapha)



'The Women and Child Care' Exhibition

the Sultan Qaboos University.

In February this year, contracts were signed for the construction of three 18-24-bed hospitals at Suwaiq, Shinas and Wadi Hibi as well as for Health Centres in the Batinah region at a cost of RO 3,635,000 as a part of the Regional Health Services Development Programme.

In the early stages of development of the Health Services, all doctors and nurses had to be recruited from abroad. In 1970 there was only one trained Omani doctor. Now, with the opening of the University and its medical college, Oman will be providing its own doctors in a few years' time.

The first Omani nursing school was opened in 1971, but this role was taken over by the Institute of Health Sciences in Wattayah when it was

opened in 1982. The Institute also trains Sanitary Assistants and other para-medical staff, as well as running courses in physiotherapy, laboratory work and radiology. The Ibn Sina Hospital, opened in 1983 with 60 beds, specialises in psychiatric medicine, while the Al Nahda Hospital is equipped with a kidney dialysis unit and units for internal medicine, paediatrics, ophthalmology and E.N.T. in addition to a well-equipped dental unit. Khoula Hospital has 385 beds which are distributed as follows: 16 General Surgery, 16 Neuro-Surgery, 28 Reconstructive (plastic surgery), 8 Burns, 130 Obstetrics and Gynaecology, 152 Orthopaedics, 19 Private beds, 6 Intensive Care Units, 6 Day Care Wards and 4 miscellaneous.

Under the Third Five Year Plan the Government intends to press on with the extension of the Health Services to the more remote communities in the Interior, with the establishment of more Health Centres. In the meantime, outlying areas are visited by mobile medical units. Oman has considerable experience in this field since flying-doctor services were first employed in the remoter areas of the southern province of Dhofar before the construction of roads.

The Government attaches great importance to preventive medicine and health education throughout the Sultanate and its campaign to eliminate diseases that were endemic before His Majesty's Accession. Vaccination against disease has made great progress in recent years. Immunisation is available in every hospital and Health Centre in the country, and all children can now be screened and immunised. This has resulted in an increase in coverage of children under one year of age from 40% in 1984 to 85% at the end of last year. Thus the number of children suffering from childhood diseases such as measles, whooping cough and polio has been drastically reduced. Another notable success in the treatment of children has been Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) which is available in all Ministry of Health institutions. It can now be confidently claimed that 90% of Omani mothers are aware of the availability of ORT for the treatment of children with diarrhoeal disease, once extremely prevalent. Acute respiratory infection (ARI) is the third biggest killer of children in the developing world. A standardised system of ARI management was introduced nationwide in July last year and is now in use in every Ministry of Health institution. Oman has made tremendous progress in providing standardised care for children with ARI.

The National Woman and Child Care Committee (NWCCP) consists of members from all Ministries involved in improving the quality of life of women and children. In 1986 it launched 'The Child', an operation which has resulted in a marked increase in immunisation coverage and knowledge about diarrhoeal disease. This year, the NWCCP Committee has launched the year of the 'The Woman' with similar aims

These initiatives taken by the Ministry of Health, combined with the improvements in the standard of living in Oman over the same period, have resulted in a major decrease in infant mortality from well over 100 deaths per 1,000 live births a few years ago to under 50 deaths today. The Ministry's target is to reduce this figure to 30 deaths per 1,000 live births by 1990.

The Ministry's health education campaign is supported by special programmes on radio and television. The Ministry also maintains teams of health educators who tour small towns and villages to encourage parents to have their children vaccinated against tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough. Mothers are advised on the need for safe drinking water, nutritious diets for children, the proper disposal of refuse, and personal hygiene. In the fight against malaria the Muscat area has now been declared malaria-free.

Close cooperation has been established with the World Health Organisation, whose experts and consultants are welcomed in the country to study health developments and to make recommendations.

HOUSING

The first-time visitor to Oman is today immediately struck by the well-ordered traditional architecture of its buildings, blended with unobtrusive modernity. This has not come about by chance, but is the result of long-term planning and inter-departmental cooperation between Ministries. Modern housing in Oman has therefore become an integral part of the comprehensive development process of the State. It was thus that His Majesty decided in 1984 to establish a Ministry of Housing to fulfil the functions formerly carried out by the Ministry of Land Affairs and Municipalities.

It is not only in the Muscat area that these conditions prevail; a visitor to the Interior and the coasts will see that this programme is proceeding apace throughout the country. Oman has benefited from the problems encountered by other fast-developing states, and avoided the pitfalls into which they have fallen during a period of rapid expansion, not least in the spheres of town planning and housing. No high-rise concrete blocks mar the skyline, no architectural jungles are to be seen and no shanty towns — and money has not been wasted on 'white elephant' prestige projects. Housing blends with the landscape, with its traditional Omani design. Oman has a fine architectural tradition and many splendid examples of this are to be seen in the older buildings which are preserved in Muscat and other towns.

Considerable pressures for new construction rapidly arose in the Muscat area during the first burst of intensive development after 1970. Simultaneously, there was an urgent need to improve the standards of existing housing; added to this were the housing needs of the large numbers of Omanis who flocked back from abroad in response to His Majesty's call to them to return to assist in the development of their country. Also, the population increase due to greatly improved health services had to be anticipated. All these factors created an urgent necessity for new housing.

The first housing project was implemented in 1973 when a pilot scheme of 76 houses was completed. This has since been rapidly expanded. The Government has placed great emphasis on the provision of housing for families with limited incomes. Under the



A modern government-built fishing village near Bustan (Photo: Tor Eigeland)

Third Five Year Plan (1985-1990), additional Government-sponsored houses will be built in the Muscat area at a total cost of RO6,760,000; in the Wilayats at a cost of RO17,983,000, in the Bedouin areas at a cost of RO3,800,000, and in the Southern Region RO4,477,000 will be spent. An allocation of RO1,000,000 has been made for similar projects in Musandam. Tenders submitted will include mosques, market complexes and the installation of water, electricity and other services.

Six new townships are to be built in the Muscat area: work is proceeding on Qurm Beach township, while others are to be established in Ghubra, Azaiba, Al Khuwair, Airport Heights and Al Amrat. They will include industrial and commercial construction in addition to dwellings, and will be provided with electricity and water,

mosques, clinics and schools as well as post and telegraph offices and parking lots.

It is Government policy to stem the drift to the cities from the land by encouraging the inhabitants to remain in the rural areas. In the Third Five Year Plan priority is therefore being given to housing for the interior regions of the country. In spite of the drastic fall in the world price of oil in early 1986, necessitating a review of this Plan, it was determined that housing would continue to receive its high priority.

The Directorate-General of Land Affairs at the Ministry of Housing comprises three departments as follows:

- a) The Muscat Land Department. This includes various sections dealing with Government land, housing land, commercial and industrial land, registration and allocation.
- b) Follow-up Department in the Wilayats — one section follows up the distribution of land in the Wilayats, and there is another section dealing with lands in the Quriyat area.
- c) Agricultural land. This Department has follow-up and coordination sections, and a section dealing with the procedures for land tenure.

Close attention is given to the fulfilment of local demands for new housing, commercial and industrial sites. This is done through 27 coordination plans under which the necessary allocations are made. Outside the Muscat area, housing projects started in 1987 in Bahla and Ras Al Hadd are due to be completed this year, and projects in eleven other locations in the Interior are due to be started in 1988. Dhofar is dealt with separately by its local administration. The local committees for land affairs in the provinces give their advice on the distribution of lands to the public and consider any disputes either between citizens or between them and the Government.

The Ministry of Housing recognises that it is important that communities should not be broken up by moving people to new housing sites. Emphasis therefore is being given to the restoration of old houses and their internal modernisation. At the end of 1987, alterations to executive regulations for financial aid for residential improvement were issued whereby maximum allotment was raised from RO5,000 to RO6,000.

One of the Ministry's major current projects is the preparation of a comprehensive map of the Sultanate which will assist other Ministries to prepare their service plans. Contracts for this work have been agreed with several companies, including the General Telecommunications Organisation (GTO), a fully Government-owned entity which is to prepare an aerial photographic survey of the Muscat area by the end of this year. Similar surveys of the Batinah area, the Interior, the Eastern part of the Sultanate, and Musandam will be completed by 1989. Other areas are scheduled for completion by 1990.

The Ministry is also to give careful consideration to the replanning of old Muscat.

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES

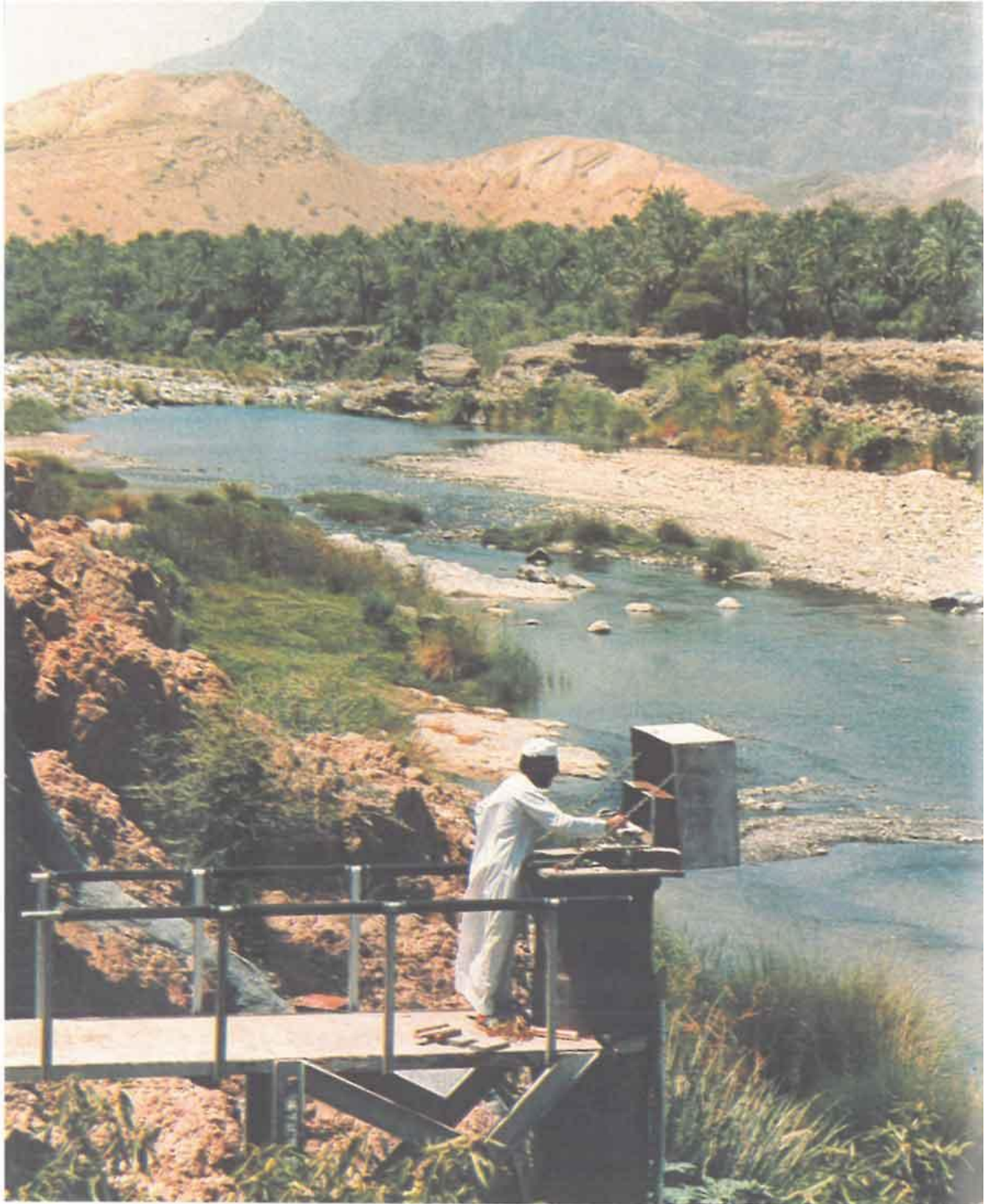
The protection and improvement of the environment is one of the major priorities of our time. The most effective way of protecting the environment is to prevent the generation of pollutants at their source instead of repairing the damages already done. Its management therefore requires intense effort but an effort that must be based on sound understanding and reliable data. From the early years of the renaissance of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, great care has been devoted to the conservation of the environment and the issuance of laws and regulations required to protect the country's natural resources by controlling the sources of pollution and mitigating their harmful effects.

The very first law issued in Environmental Affairs in Oman was in 1974 on Marine Pollution (Royal Decree No. 34/74). This law provided the guarantees to safeguard our international waters from pollution. It was followed by several decisions and laws designed to secure the territorial waters of the Sultanate.

The establishment of the Council for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution (CCEPP) in 1979 was a significant step towards the achievement of proper environmental control. The Chairmanship being held by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said of this organisation was a great incentive towards the Sultanate's efforts directed to the field of conservation of the environment and prevention of pollution.

The Council, with the help of concerned agencies, undertook to implement the provisions under Royal Decree No. 34/74 for the protection of the environment and prevention of pollution. In addition the Council cooperated with countries with similar aims to develop joint agreements and specialised organisations.

In 1982 the Law for the Conservation of Environment and the Prevention of Pollution was issued. It outlines the basic rules in this field, establishes penalties and other appropriate measures and thereby protects the environment of Oman.



A CCEWR technician takes recordings from the gauging station at Mazara (Photo: CCEWR)

In May 1984 a Royal Decree 10/84 was issued establishing the Ministry of Environment and appointing His Highness Sayyid Shabib bin Taimour Al Said as Minister. The new Ministry was assigned the responsibility for implementing and enforcing the national plan for environment and the Law for the Conservation of Environment and Prevention of Pollution. It was also to provide the required equipment and qualified personnel to deal with emergency cases of pollution, minimise the resulting damage and eliminate their impact. In addition, the Ministry implements the decisions reached by the CCEWR (see below) and those between the Council and other countries or organisations.

In December 1985 a Royal Decree 105/85 was issued amalgamating the Council for the Conservation of Environment and Prevention of Pollution with the Water Resources Council thereby creating the Council for Conservation of Environment and Water Resources, and appointing His Highness the Minister of Environment and Water Resources, as Deputy Chairman. This new body continues the work concerning the environment and water resources.

Earlier in the same month, a Royal Decree 104/85 had been issued establishing the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources. The Ministry is responsible for the implementation of the Law for Conservation of the Environment, with the aim of protecting and securing our environment. As for new industrial projects and development of structural plans, no projects are carried out unless a 'No Environmental Objection' letter is issued by the Ministry, taking into consideration their environmental effects and the necessity of using all possible means to minimise pollution by the emission of wastes created by these projects.

The Ministry of Environment and Water Resources has appointed specialised experts in the different environmental fields. The Ministry organises site inspections of plants and establishments to monitor and ensure compliance with the conditions and specifications laid down in the permits.

In addition to this, there are experts in the field of water resources who work for the conservation and the development of these resources. Water consumption within Muscat increased 18-fold, from 1.9 million

cubic metres per year in 1976 to 34 million cubic metres per year in 1987. In the field of development and conservation of water resources, several studies are being carried out, especially in the Batinah area. Their aim is to discover new sources of water and determine their quality and quantity, as well as the hydrogeological structure, for research in developing these resources. The Ministry is implementing intensive training programmes for the Omani staff; it is also studying ways to develop, re-cycle and distribute waste water, which will also help to protect groundwater resources from bacteriological and other harmful substances.

A great deal has been done in the field of preventing and combatting marine pollution from land-based sources. The Royal Oman Police, which is responsible for implementing the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, cooperates with the Ministry to combat pollution. The Sultanate's membership of several international conventions in this field has also effectively contributed to this end.

The Ministry is actively involved in increasing environmental public awareness, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Youth and the Sultan Qaboos University who include environmental sciences within their educational syllabuses. In addition, plans to train Omani staff in the different environmental fields are being developed with the cooperation of many international organisations.

The Ministry has already completed studies concerning conservation and management of coastal areas, and the location of dumping areas for hazardous and non-hazardous solid wastes, as well as an integrated system of environmental data collection.

In the field of nature conservation and the protection of natural resources, a system of Nature Conservation Areas has been prepared for the Sultanate by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and its proposals are awaiting official approval. In the meantime, the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources takes into consideration, when studying different projects, the proposed boundaries of such conservation areas in order to minimise any future negative environmental impact which might take place in such areas.

Furthermore, studies have been initiated by the Council for the Conservation of Environment and Water Resources and the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, in cooperation with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, for the preparation of a National Conservation Strategy.

The Sultanate is a member of several organisations dealing with environmental protection at the regional level, in the Arab world, and on the general international scene. It has been acclaimed on a number of occasions by the international press for its work.

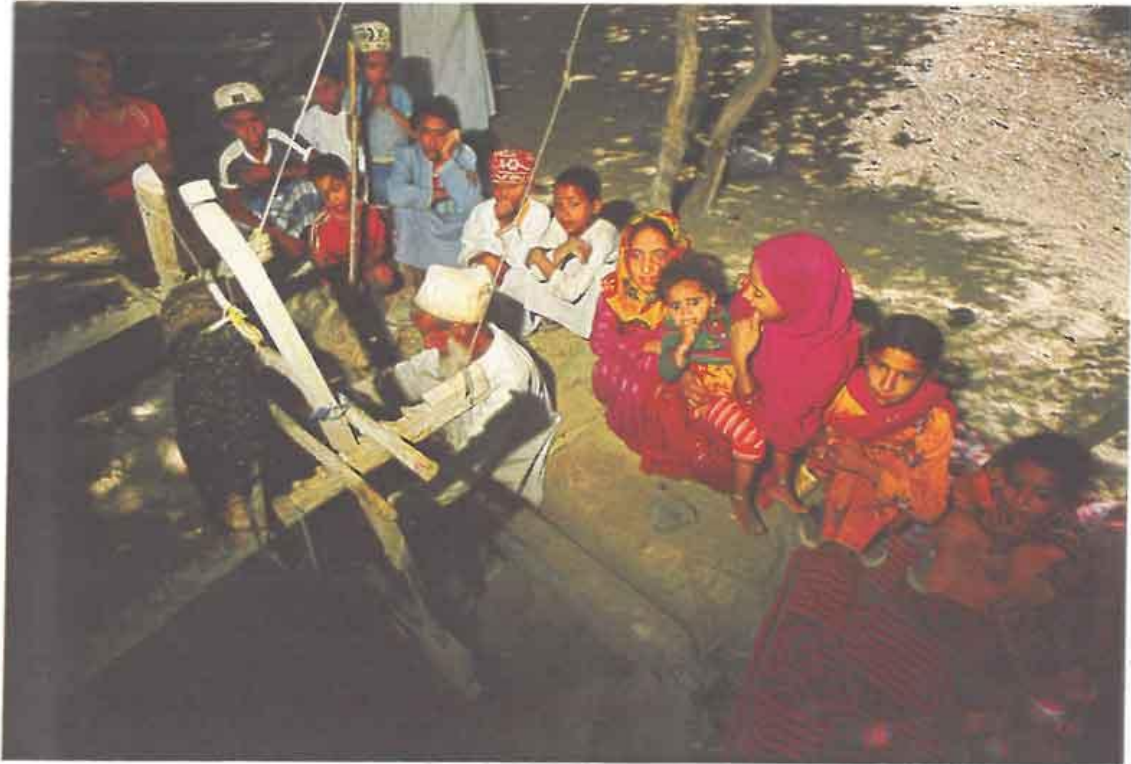
NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The fact that Oman is one of the few countries to have a Ministry devoted to National Heritage and Culture is an indication of the importance that the Sultanate attaches to its historical background and culture, of which it is justifiably proud.

The Ministry of National Heritage and Culture was established in 1976 with the task of strengthening the nation's knowledge of its great cultural heritage and history. The results achieved by the Ministry during the past twelve years in this respect have been impressive. The compass of interests and activities which the Ministry embraces is considerable. It ranges from the preservation and restoration of historic forts and archaeological sites to the establishment of museums and their organisation, the collection and collation of ancient books and manuscripts, and the encouragement of traditional handicrafts as well as the promotion of cultural exhibitions abroad.

Oman's architecture preserved

The successful restoration of historic citadels, forts and ancient buildings — a work which is continuing — has been a considerable undertaking which ranks among the Ministry's most impressive achievements. A notable example has been the castle of Jabrin, originally built by Bilarub bin Sultan in the 17th century as a residential palace, and one of the treasures of Omani architecture, which has been completely restored. Restoration work has also been carried out on the forts at Nizwa, Hazm, Bidbid and Barka. The magnificent fort at Rostaq, a former capital of Oman, which stands in a commanding position guarding the approaches to the great massif of the Jebel Akhdar, is another of Oman's treasures which has been carefully restored to its former grandeur. In Muscat the two great forts of Merani and Jalali, poised on lofty crags overlooking Muscat Bay and Muscat's walled city, have been restored to their original glory, as has the fort on a rocky pinnacle overlooking the neighbouring town of Muttrah.



Traditional handicrafts still interest the younger generation (Photo: Gill Marais)

A major achievement of the Ministry at the end of last year was its success in persuading UNESCO to register Bahla Fort, the ancient 12 km long wall and the oasis of Bahla in the Index of the World's Cultural Heritage. The registration will be published in the next annual Index to be issued by UNESCO.

Under the Cultural Co-operation Agreement signed between Oman and Morocco, the Ministry has engaged Moroccan experts for the restoration of some of the Sultanate's historical forts and castles.

Inside the walls of Muscat are many fine old buildings, which have been preserved and carefully renovated. Most famous among these are the Sayyid Nadir Mansion and the Sayyida Muzna Mansion.



An old tomb at Bat, near Ibri, dates back to the 3rd millenium BC

Historic manuscripts and other documents are carefully collated

The Ministry is also engaged in the acquisition and preservation of ancient manuscripts and documents. The oldest manuscript at present in its possession is an interpretation of the Shari'a Law dated 918 Hijri (AD 1512); others, on medicine dated 1084 Hijri (AD 1673) and 1305 Hijri (AD 1888), and on astronomy dated 1122 Hijri (AD1710), are also part of the historical collection. The Ministry estimates that as many as 30,000 manuscripts could be in private hands in the Sultanate, but although it is prepared to purchase them for a handsome price the owners often wish to retain them for family reasons.



His Majesty's yacht "Fulk Al Salamah" — currently taking relief supplies to Sudan — which is being loaned for the UNESCO project "Integral Study of Silk Roads" (Photo: Oman News Agency)

Artifacts, flora and fauna

An historical museum has been established at Qurm, near Muscat, with many fine displays. Another museum has recently been assembled at the premises of the Ministry's Islamic Library. The objects on display range from various types of weapons to old pottery and traditional costumes. The exhibits at the Natural History Museum comprise an interesting range of Oman's flora and fauna, including examples of wildlife: among others, the oryx, Arabian tahr, caracal lynx and leopard. Also to be seen are collections of seashells, butterflies, moths and bees. The enlargement of the museum, which comprises its second stage of development, will be completed by the end of this year.

Our cultural heritage

In response to His Majesty's keen interest in literature, the Ministry has established a Literature Club — the Al Muntada al Adabi — at Seeb, to provide a rendezvous and forum for the country's poets and writers as an encouragement to the further enrichment of the Sultanate's literary heritage.

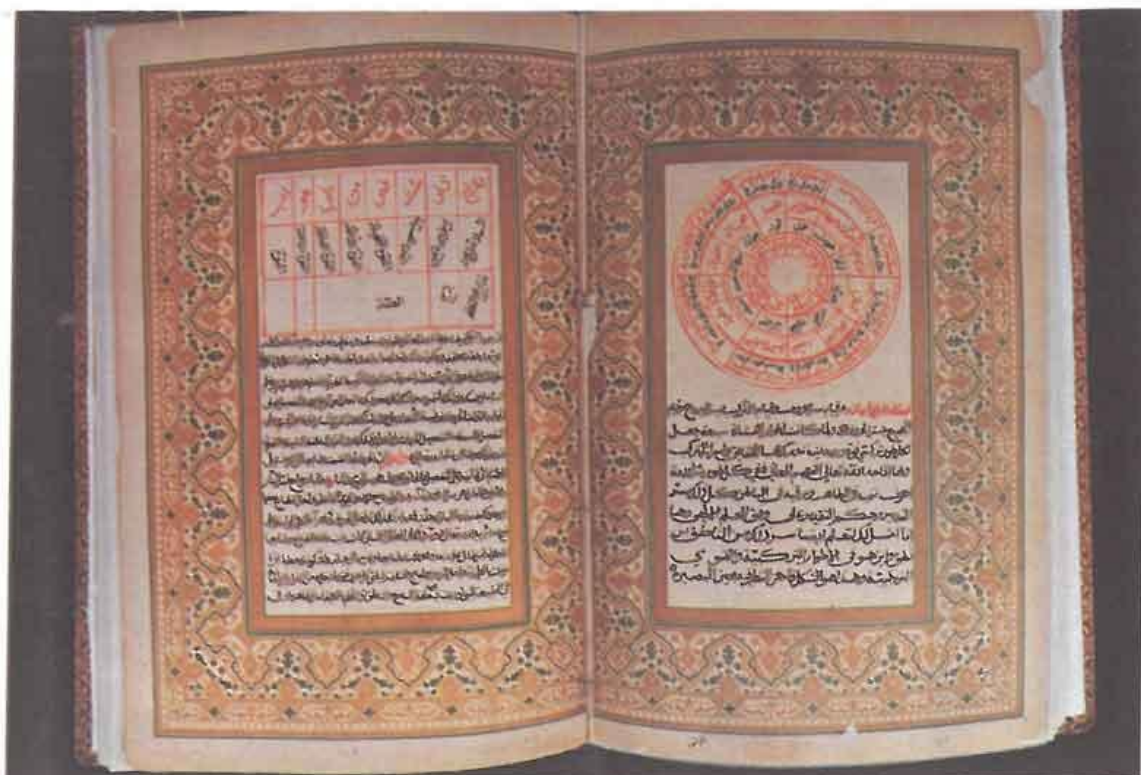
Traditional handicrafts are strongly encouraged by the Ministry, and the year 1987 was devoted to this aspect of its activities. The Ministry provides craftsmen with tools and materials and buys their products for sale at its five national handicraft centres and shops. The programme has the two-fold aim of preserving Oman's culture and encouraging rural people to remain in the countryside.

A Cultural Centre at Salalah, comprising a museum, theatre, library and halls for various cultural activities is to be completed this year. During this year also, a start will be made on the construction of a Cultural Centre at Muscat, which will have similar facilities to the Centre in Salalah, but on a larger scale.

The Advisory Committee for the Sultan Qaboos Arabic Names Project — the Omani National Committee which is chaired by H.E. Malallah bin Ali bin Habib, Heritage and Culture Adviser — for the research and recording of Omani Arabic names — held its third annual meeting in Muscat earlier this year. The project began in 1985 and is expected to complete its work by 1990, when its first volume of record will be published.

Future plans

The Ministry is to participate in the historic sea voyage that UNESCO is planning for 1990 to explore the Old Silk Road. A group of distinguished academics and historians will take part in this voyage, which will start in Venice and re-trace the sea route taken by the silk traders in ancient times, as far as Guangzhou (Canton) in South China. The project has been entitled the 'Integral Study of Silk Roads'; the participants will be accompanied by a special media team from UNESCO and the caravan will stop at several ports en route, including Muscat. H.M. the Sultan has graciously agreed to lend a yacht for this



Ancient astrological manuscript by Omar bin Masoud Al Manthry Al Suleefi — a magnificent example of early Omani scholarship (Photo: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture)

historic event.

There is much still to be done in uncovering Oman's historic past. The task that lies ahead embraces a vast area — from the old and formerly flourishing port of Sohar in the north, where twenty years ago pieces of ancient Chinese ceramics could be found, testifying to the early trade with the Far East, to the remains of the ancient cities of Subhram and Al Balid in Dhofar in the south — but there is no doubt that the work will not only make an immense contribution to the Sultanate's already rich heritage, but also to world appreciation of Islamic culture.

Oman is known for its rich ancient archaeological heritage. The Ministry is pursuing a long-term Excavation programme to recover and preserve these valuable relics of the Sultanate's past. Many important

finds have been made: such as a large necropolis in Bat, northern Oman, which dates back to the 3rd millennium B.C. Human remains, seashells and household appliances, discovered at Al Qurm near Muttrah, have provided evidence of human habitation in the 4th millennium B.C.

INTERIOR

For many years it was difficult or impossible for visitors to come to Oman. In the past, travel was dangerous, particularly in regions such as Musandam and parts of the Ja'alan area, where communications were extremely difficult. This situation improved noticeably after His Majesty took over the reins of power.

The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for running and overseeing the administration inside the country. It uses a variety of methods, some of which have been recently introduced, while others are part of the traditional structure. One of the Ministry's significant successes has been the preservation of the traditional links between the tribal authorities and the administration of the Wilayats. The Shaikhs of the tribes are subject to the authority of the Walis, who are appointed by the Government as rulers of their regions, in order to obtain information, and consult and arbitrate between the tribes. They in their turn exchange opinions and ideas with the Ministry of the Interior on important matters affecting their Wilayats, and vice versa. Thus the Government's policies are conveyed to the Wilayats via the Ministry of the Interior; the Walis in their turn convey them to the Shaikhs of the tribes to be disseminated among the people of the country.

The Walis play a role in promoting development, through meetings with the directors of the government bodies in the Wilayats and the shaikhdoms, and through the fact that they head a number of local committees involved in development. They also work to remove obstacles that might hold up the implementation of the development projects. Furthermore, the Walis are respected and esteemed by all the people of the country since, historically, there have always been direct links between the public and the Walis, (which continue to this day). This makes it easier for the Walis to get members of the public to understand the Walis' point of view in different matters which are in the public's interest.



His Majesty confers with his people on a tour of the Interior (Photo: Mohamed Mustapha)

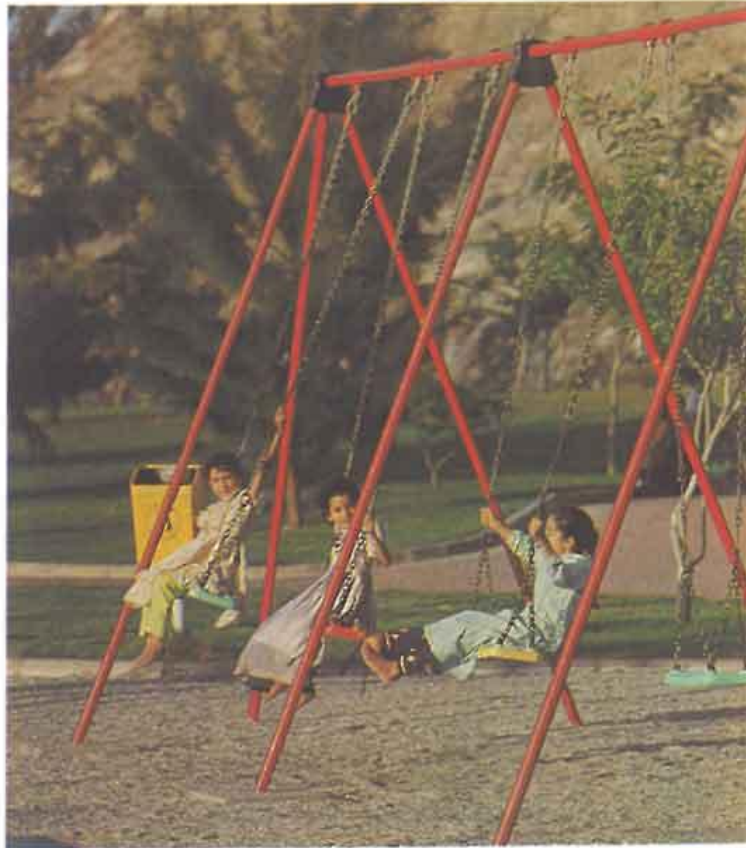
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities was established in January 1985 in place of the Directorate General of Rural Municipalities which was part of the former Ministry of Land Affairs and Municipalities. In addition to the former municipal services, the new Ministry is entrusted with the functions of widening and promoting these services, establishing Municipal Local Committees, representing Municipal Affairs in regional and international conferences, securing training facilities, and cooperating with other government organs in order to carry out municipal functions effectively.

The Ministry devotes wide-ranging efforts to the improvement of amenities in the various Municipalities, cooperating closely with local regional authorities and the Department of Health, and taking into account the views and wishes of the local communities. This is particularly important in the Interior where of necessity development of local amenities has had to follow those on the coast as communications by road, telephone, etc. have been extended throughout the Sultanate.

The Municipalities and Ministries have brought about many achievements through their cooperation such as the construction of minor roads, erection of sun shelters along the roads — a much-needed innovation, given the climate — and provision of refuse disposal facilities. Swamps, the breeding grounds for malaria-carrying mosquitoes, have been drained; market stalls have been provided for the sale of vegetables, fruit, fish and meat; playgrounds for children have been landscaped; trees and shrubs planted along roads, and parking lots constructed; public toilets have been built and cemeteries repaired and enclosed.

Developments currently in hand include a new market on Masirah Island comprising 25 shops and another at Rostaq with 65 shops. Six large cemeteries at Nizwa, Sur, Ja'alan, Bani bu Ali, Dima and Wadi Taeen are being fenced. Necessary public facilities are being built in Bidbid, Al Awabi and Nakhl, and compounds for stray animals are being constructed in seven different areas. The area around Al Suwaidi beach near Barka is to be developed for public recreation with drinking water, sun shelters, children's playgrounds and other public facilities.



A children's playground (Photo: Tor Eigeland)

In 1988 the first stage in the construction of public abattoirs at Nizwa, Sur, Saham, Ibri, Rostaq and Mudhaibi is to be completed. Work on road lighting, increasing the size of the market and construction of parking lots in Nizwa will proceed. The first stage in the construction of administrative buildings at Nizwa, Sur, Mudhaibi, Rostaq and Saham is to be implemented. Work will continue on the beautification of many Wilayats by the planting of trees and shrubs together with the development of local public amenities.

Training of personnel is given considerable emphasis, and in 1987 twenty-six training courses were conducted in the fields of health, vocational training, technical and administrative work, accounting and falaj inspection. The Environmental Health Sections inspect markets and shops for cleanliness and standards of foodstuffs.

INFORMATION

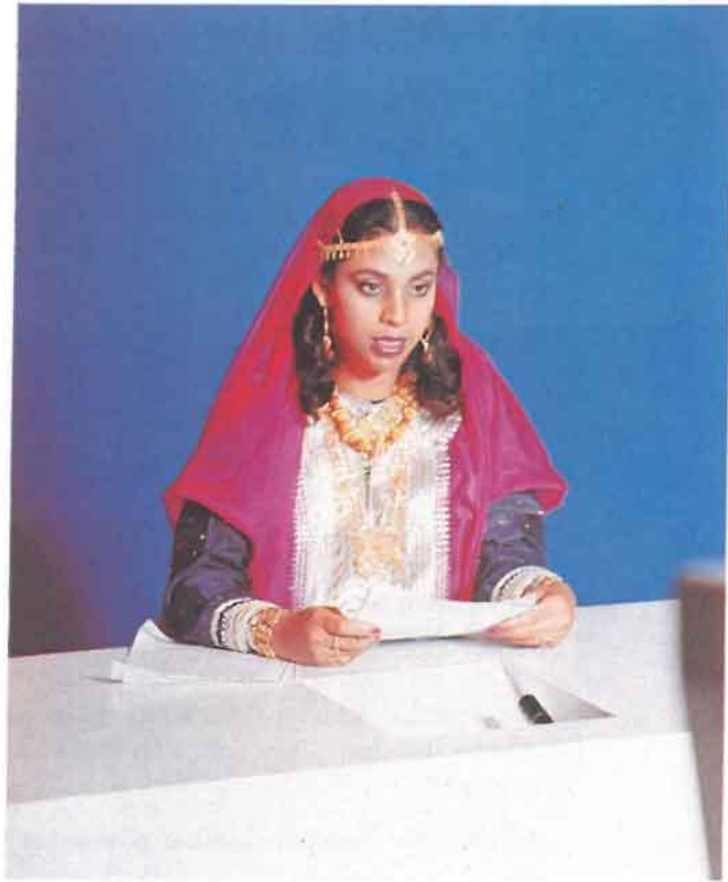
Until 1970 the Sultanate of Oman was a land of mystery to the outside world, which received very inadequate information about this country. As an act of policy foreign correspondents and writers were denied access to the country, except on rare occasions, and publicity was actively discouraged. Internally, no machinery existed to inform the Omani people.

On his accession, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was keenly aware of the urgent need to rectify this situation. Within one week of his assumption of power a small broadcasting station of only one kw was set up at Bait Al Falaj which enabled the inhabitants of Muscat to hear a national radio for the first time. Two years later in 1972 a new radio station of 10 kw was inaugurated, broadcasting regularly 14 hours a day and 18 hours on holidays. In 1975 broadcasting commenced by a 100 kw medium wave transmitter and another of 50 kw on short wave. In Salalah broadcasting first began in 1971, and in 1975 a new radio station was opened up in the south broadcasting on the same wavelengths. Additional transmitters were sited in many parts of the country to strengthen and relay national broadcasts to the entire Sultanate.

In 1979 the two broadcasting stations at Muscat and Salalah were linked by space satellite to strengthen radio transmission throughout the country; programmes are transmitted from Muscat during part of the day and from Salalah during other times of the day, thus achieving fuller use of studio facilities.

It has thus been possible to increase daily broadcasting from Muscat and Salalah to all parts of the Sultanate as well as to the Arabian Gulf, East Africa and the United States of America. Broadcasts are now made in Arabic for 19½ hours daily and English-language broadcasts are transmitted for 14 hours daily.

The importance of Omani broadcasting is not limited to the extent of its coverage, but also lies in its cultural, religious, social and scientific programmes which render a valuable contribution to the renaissance of the country.



Reading the news on Oman Television (Photo: Tor Eigeland)

Colour television was inaugurated in Oman in November 1974 with transmissions from Muscat covering a large area of the capital, Muscat. The service was later improved to reach a wider audience. Colour television transmission commenced from the Salalah station exactly a year later to cover the entire southern region.

Television broadcasting notably extended the ability to provide information, entertainment and education for our people. New studios were set up for broadcasting and recording programmes, and the filming of plays and serials. A film laboratory and maintenance sections were established. A fleet of motor vehicles was also acquired for



*Oman sends its news to the world: Oman News Agency operators
(Photo: Tor Eigeland).*

outside transmissions and tele-recording. In order to further extend the reception area, 12 television relay transmitters were installed, five being in the Muscat area, three at Salalah and one each in Nizwa, Sur, Saham and Buraimi. Also in 1979, the two television stations at Muscat and Salalah were linked by space satellite to provide alternative daily transmissions from the studios of both stations, to serve the maximum number of viewers in the Sultanate. The television service has been particularly important in providing guidance in such matters as health, education, agriculture, industry and family affairs and child care.

Television broadcasts are transmitted for eight hours daily on weekdays from 3.00 pm to 1.00 am and from 10.00 am to 11.00 pm on Fridays. There is a daily English language news bulletin at 11.00 pm daily.

Employees in television receive similar training to their colleagues in

radio broadcasting, but because of the more exacting requirements of television, the senior and more highly skilled personnel are sent abroad for training courses for up to five years during which they qualify in all branches of television.

The Ministry of Information has progressively established another complex, the Information Complex, alongside the Radio and Television Complex at Al Qurm. This is a comprehensive establishment providing accommodation for work, residence, sport, recreation and cultural activities, with a gymnasium, swimming pool, shopping centre and nursery. A new building is about to be constructed for the Broadcasting Station with additional television studios.

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

Another important source of popular information is newspapers, which were non-existent before 1970. From one newspaper in the early 1970s, a wide selection of political, social and specialised publications has been developed. There are now two Arabic daily newspapers and one English language daily newspaper, as well as an English weekly newspaper. There are also four Arabic social and political weekly magazines and one monthly Arabic social magazine for women.

Commercial advertising has now been introduced. Al Omaneya SAO has exclusive rights for advertising on radio and television.

The annual Survey published by the Ministry of Information makes a valuable contribution to the dissemination of information concerning the progress of development in Oman both at home and abroad. It appears in Arabic and English and is translated into Japanese, French and German for distribution through the Sultanate's Embassies.

JUSTICE, AWQAF AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

Oman was one of the first countries to adopt Islam during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Throughout the vicissitudes of its subsequent history the Sultanate has remained steadfast in its faith, which is as strong today as it ever was. The renaissance which occurred in 1970 with the Accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, was itself inspired by the spirit of Islam: its sense of justice, progress and humanity and its aspiration to improve the standards of society.

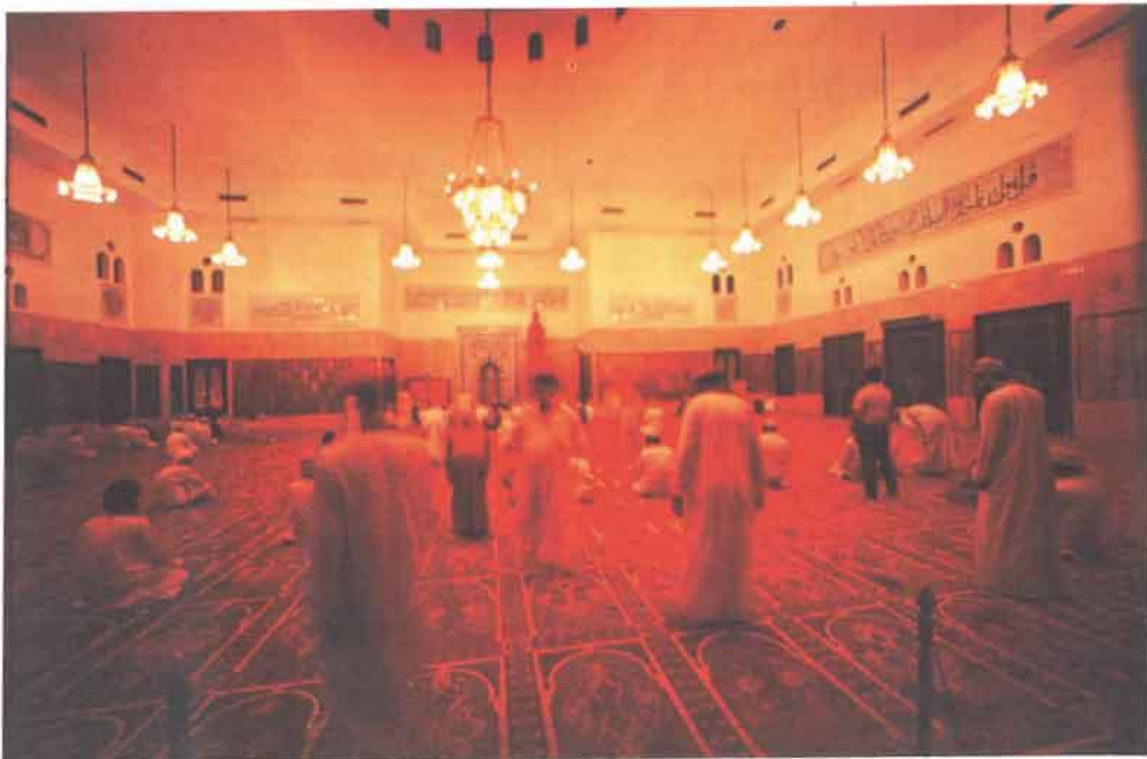
The Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is responsible for all matters related to religious affairs, and as such was set up as a unit of the administrative apparatus of the State. Its various departments are concerned with religious enlightenment, the observance of rituals and the provision of justice for the faithful. They include the strengthening of religious sermons and guidance, Islamic research, Shari'a studies, learning of the Holy Koran and the organisation of the pilgrimage.

The Ministry establishes and administers Shari'a Courts in the Sultanate, supervises their activities, and raises the competence of those working in them, in order to ensure that prompt judgements are rendered in the cases put before them in accordance with the Islamic Shari'a laws, and that all are accorded the rights to which they are entitled. This ensures the propagation of justice and the achievement of confidence and security. It considers appeals filed against judgements issued by the Shari'a Courts throughout the country, thus guaranteeing the greatest possible degree of justice in any disputes or conflicts that may arise between citizens.

The activities of the Courts are coordinated by the Ministry in order to ensure consistency in the matter of evidence and statements, and to provide for the investigation of subjects of disputes on their own home territory before judgement is given.

Legal cadres are trained and systems organised to ensure they are completely fitted to bear the responsibilities assigned to them. The Ministry also ensures that the Sultanate participates in Arab and Islamic organisations and conferences concerned with justice matters.

Last year the number of Shari'a Courts was increased to 45; one of



Prayer in a principal Mosque (Photo: Emphasis Hong Kong — Tom Chapman)

which is in Muscat and the remainder in the other regions of the Sultanate — at an average of one in each Wilayat. The latest of these Courts to be set up is in the Wadi Ma'awil.

The Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Section of the Ministry is responsible for propagating the teachings of the True Islamic Religion in the Sultanate, by means of religious counselling and guidance in the mosques, and through other available media, and the establishment of libraries specialising in Islamic culture.

The Section implements participation in Islamic activities abroad through organisations, conferences and seminars; organising exchange visits with members of the Islamic community and the fraternal Arab States — particularly States of the Gulf Cooperation Council — and coordinating activities in the field of work in the light of such directives

and decisions as may be issued by the political leadership of these States.

It also organises preparations for the Haj season; setting the rules and regulations necessary to enable Omanis to perform this religious duty in the most ideal circumstances in coordination with the Saudi authorities; preparing suitable measures for the annual travel of Omani pilgrims, which includes supervising all aspects of the pilgrims' welfare in the Holy territories.

The Ministry is responsible for the renovation and maintenance of mosques in the Sultanate, and handling all their affairs in such a manner as to enable them to accomplish their mission.

The Ministry supervises the funds of Awqaf and Bait Al Mal (Public Treasury) and safeguards the rights of the orphans and those missing, through a Directorate General which includes several departments.

The Awqaf funds are invested in property; commercial and residential buildings are set up and plots of land leased in order to increase the Awqaf revenue.

The Ministry makes all efforts to protect the Bait Al Mal and the funds of the orphans and the missing persons and to multiply their income.

The Zakat is collected by the Ministry and distributed to the needy in accordance with the injunctions of the Islamic Law.

Last year, 14,930 pilgrims went on the Haj from the Sultanate. Before they set off on their journey, the Ministry registered them and gave them the necessary health and identity documents. The Omani Haj delegation prepared the necessary camp site to accommodate them in Mina and Arafat and arranged all aspects of their welfare needs. Here it is worth noting that the Ministry laid down the basic regulations for the Haj contractors, by which they are obliged to provide the travelling pilgrims with the best possible care, and not to exploit or neglect them.

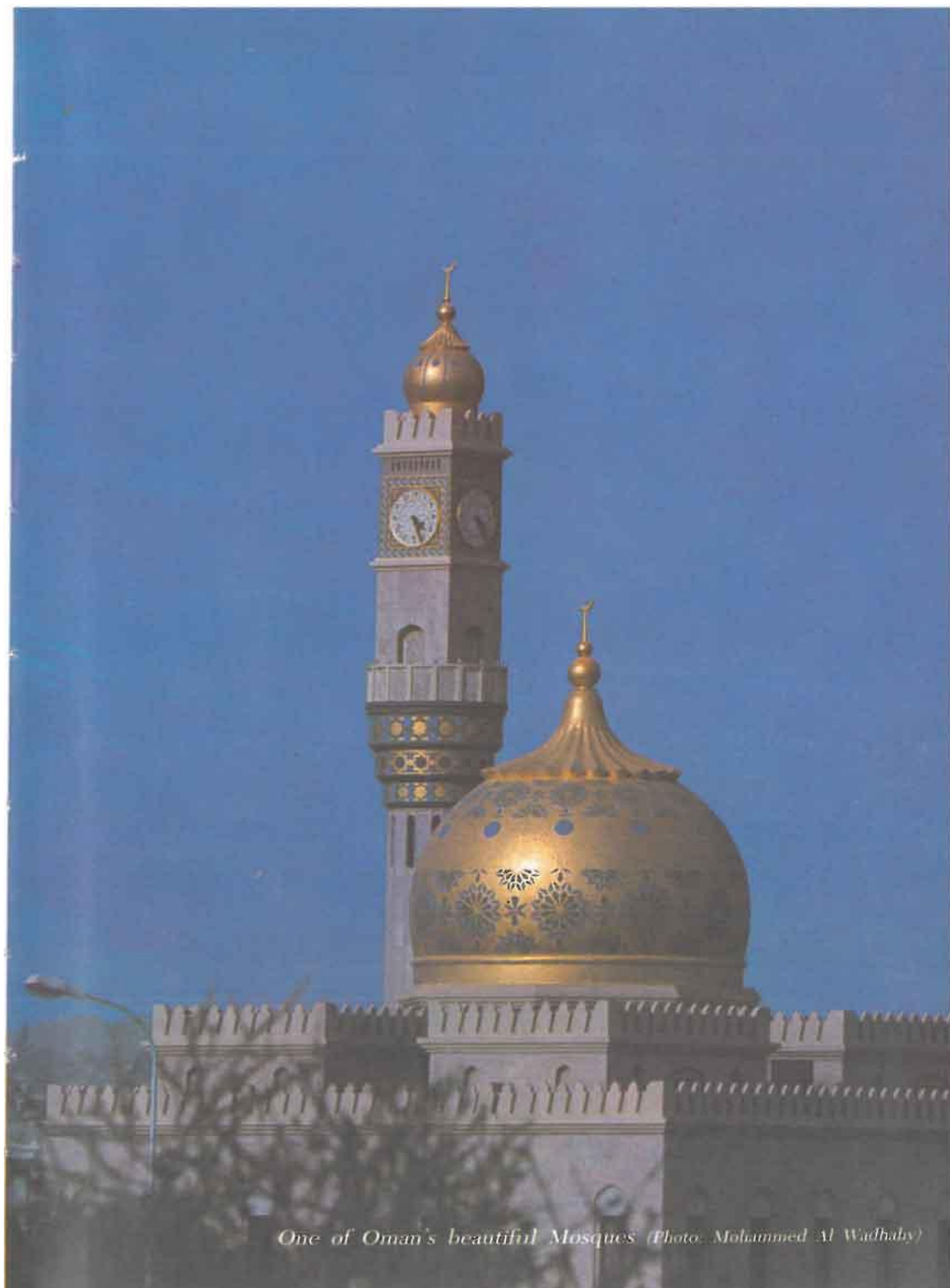
The Koranic schools are the basic source for those wishing to memorise the Holy Koran and learn the elements of reading and writing, especially in the less developed regions. Even today they play a vital role, as they did for many generations in the past, despite the existence of modern schools. Nowadays, students come to them to learn the Holy Koran outside their hours of study at their schools of general

education, as they also do during the school summer holidays.

To mark religious occasions, the Ministry organises lectures in mosques all over the country. Orators, well-versed in the Shariat, deliver the sermons to mark the Holy Prophet's migration and ascension anniversaries and throughout the fasting month of Ramadhan.

A large number of people from various countries embrace the Islamic religion from time to time. The Ministry completes their formalities and the Shari'a Court issues certificates, certifying their acceptance of Islam.

The Ministry's Department of Oratory and Islamic Research goes through the religious literature in various languages to ascertain that it does not contain any material which runs counter to the teachings of Islam before giving it clearance.



One of Oman's beautiful Mosques (Photo: Mohammed Al Wadhahy)

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