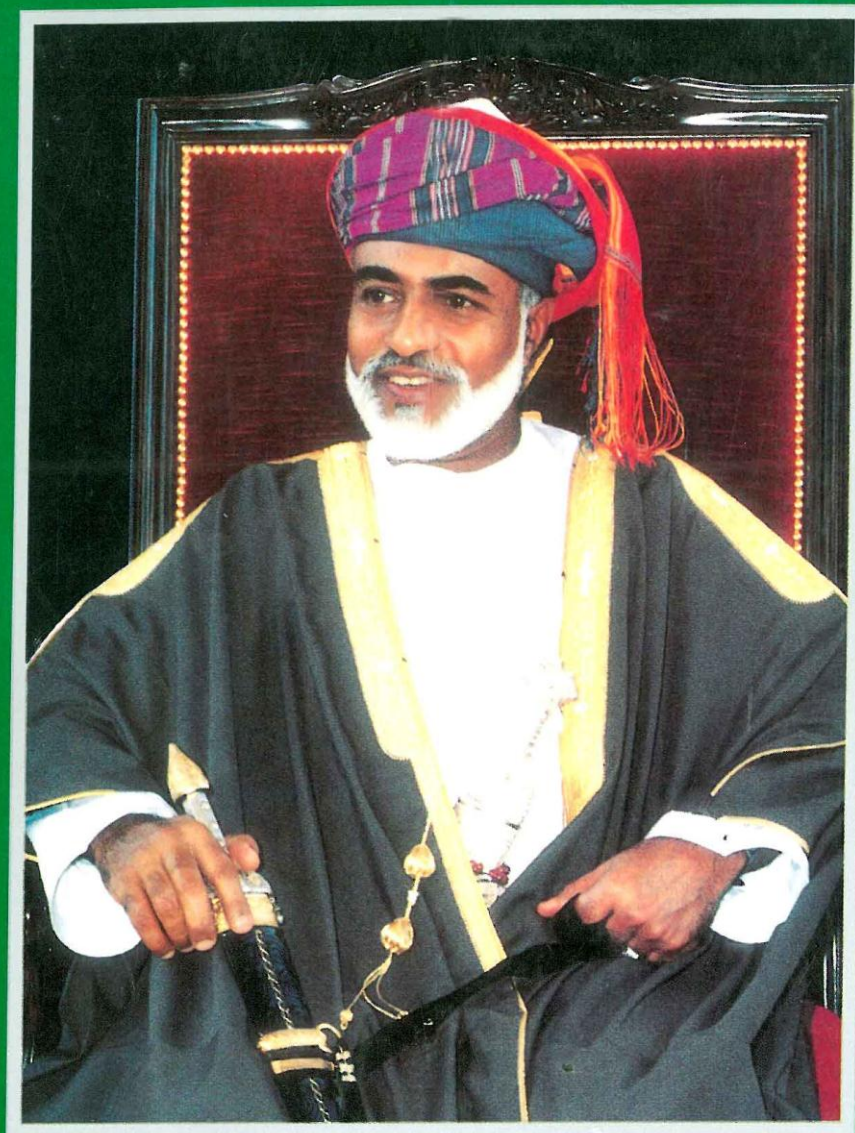
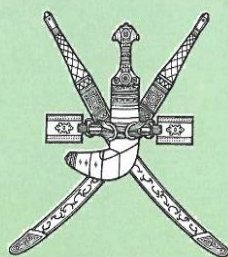




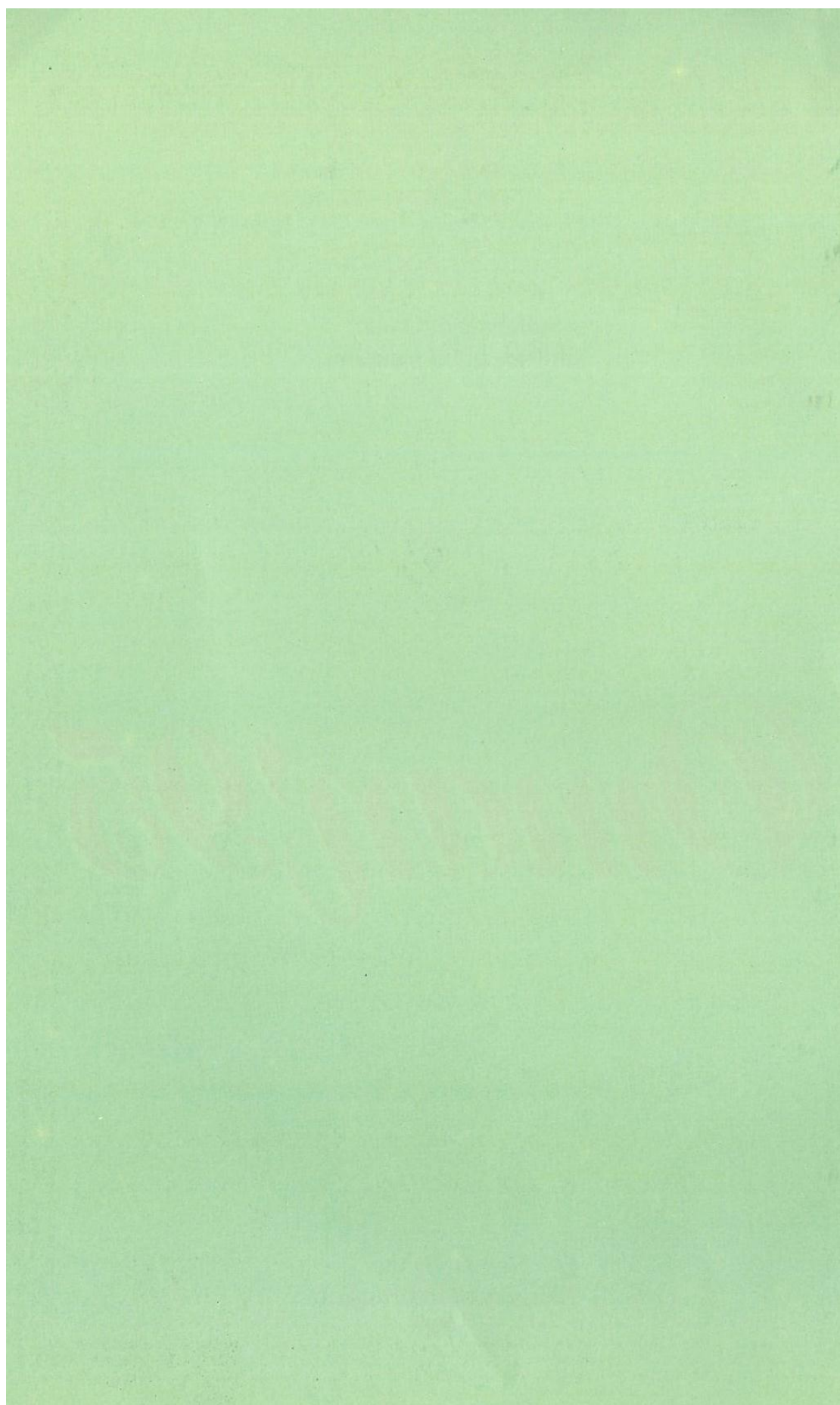
Oman '95



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Information

Oman'95

Issued by the
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1995



*Extract from the Speech by
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said
to his people on the day of his Accession
23rd July, 1970*

"I promise you to proceed forthwith in the process of creating a modern government. My first act will be the immediate abolition of all the unnecessary restrictions on your lives and activities.

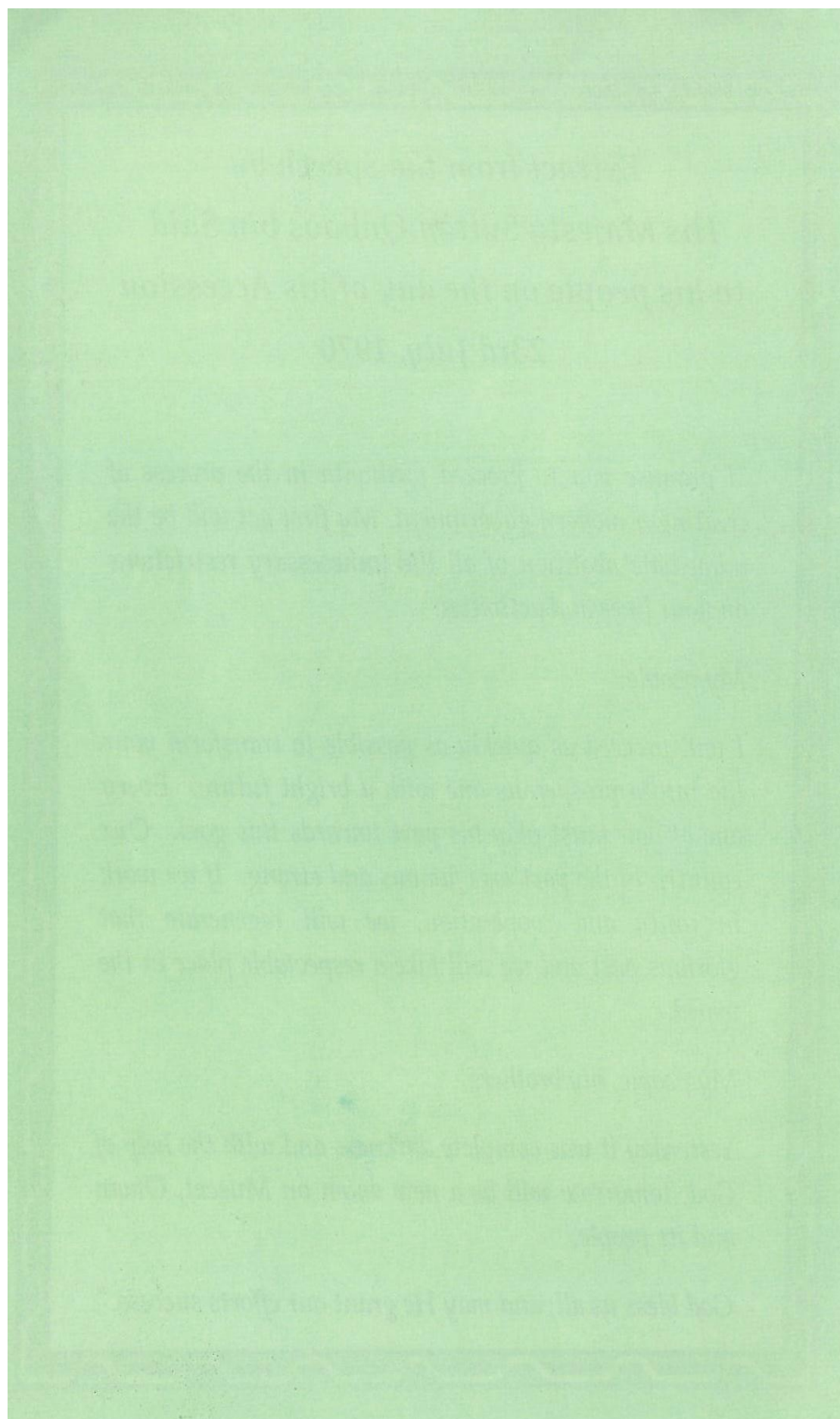
My people,

I will proceed as quickly as possible to transform your life into a prosperous one with a bright future. Every one of you must play his part towards this goal. Our country in the past was famous and strong. If we work in unity and cooperation, we will regenerate that glorious past and we will take a respectable place in the world.

My people, my brothers,

Yesterday it was complete darkness and with the help of God, tomorrow will be a new dawn on Muscat, Oman and its people.

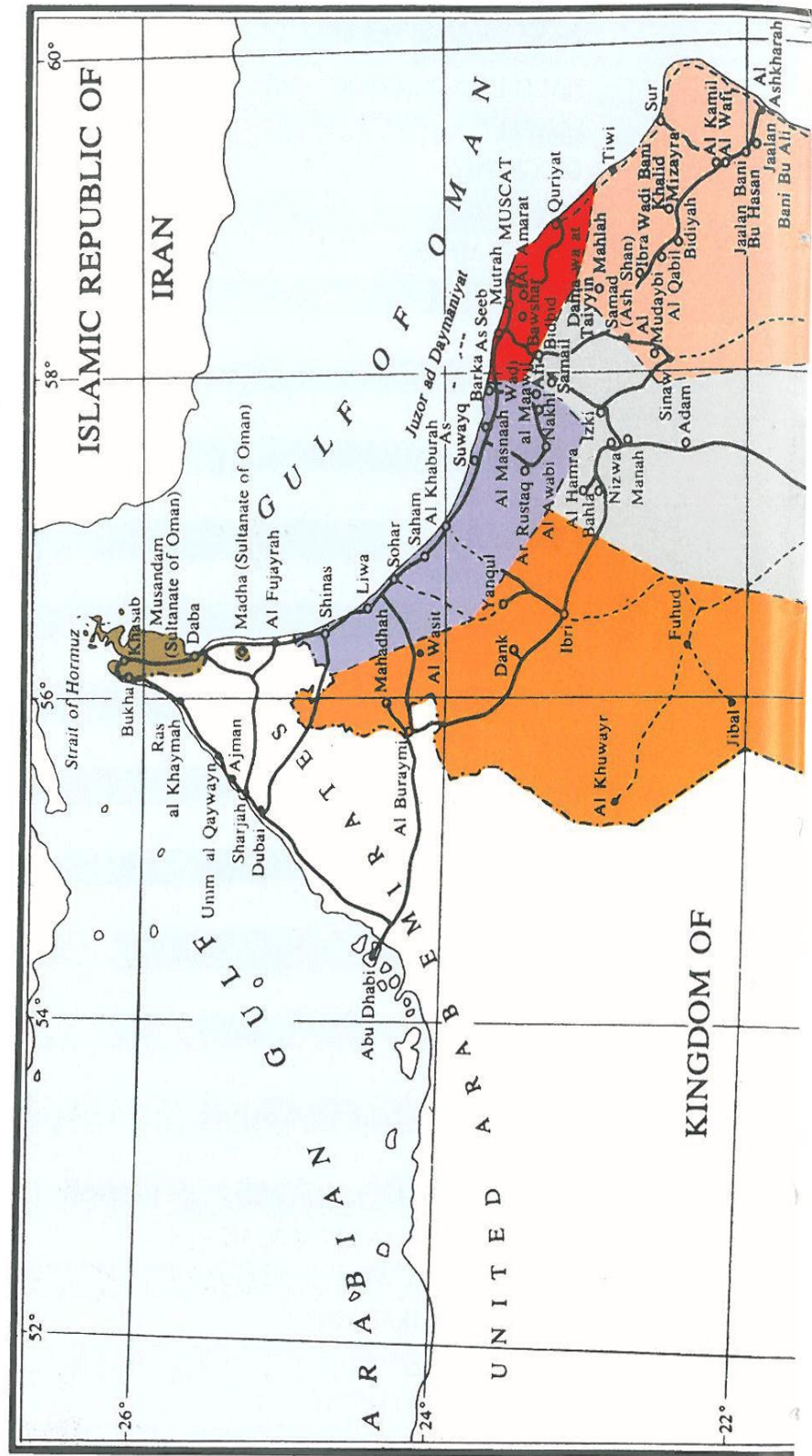
God bless us all, and may He grant our efforts success."

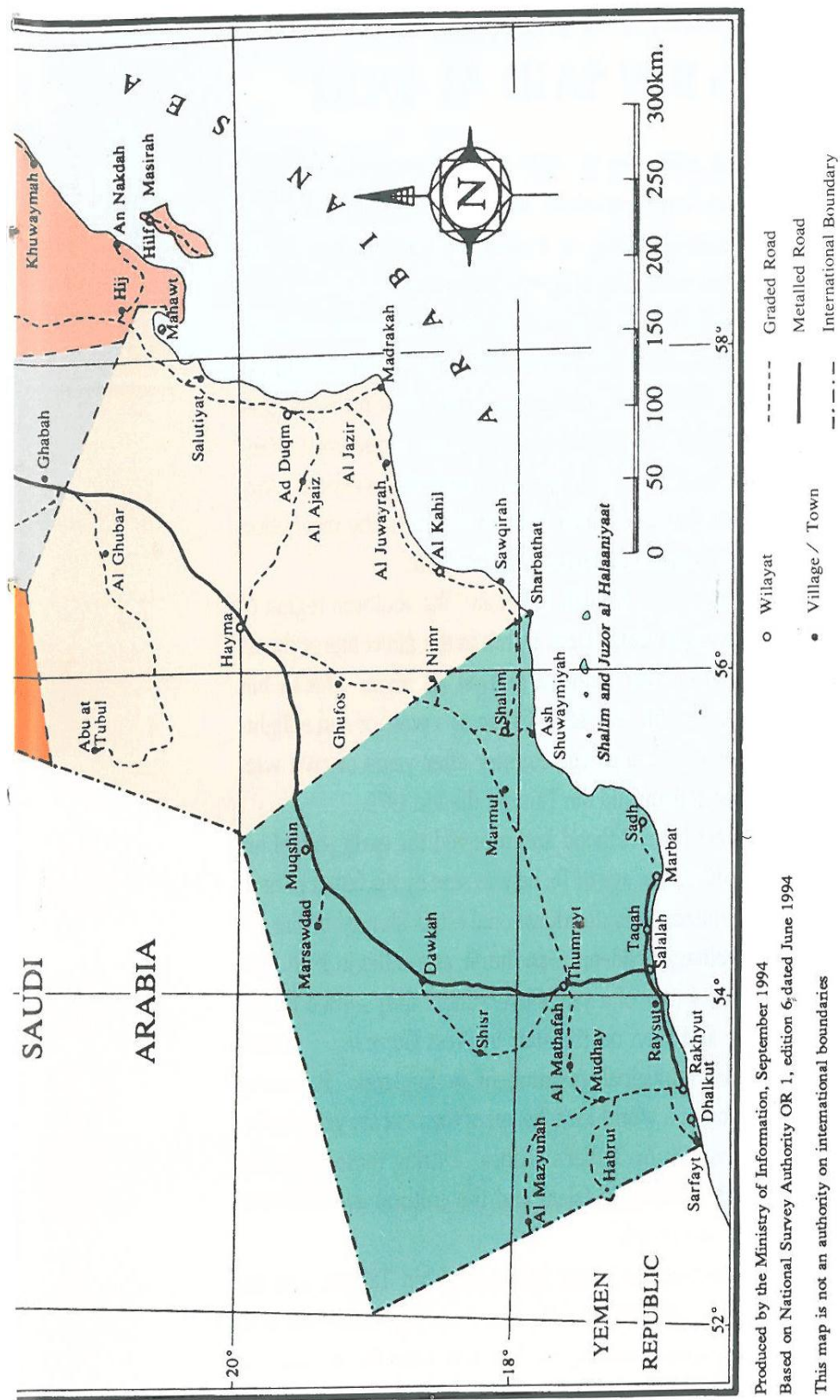


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SULTANATE OF OMAN





Produced by the Ministry of Information, September 1994
 Based on National Survey Authority OR 1, edition 6, dated June 1994
 This map is not an authority on international boundaries

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID AL SAID

This year, which celebrates the 25th Anniversary of His Majesty's accession, is a particularly momentous one in the long history of Oman and its people, commemorating as it does the achievements of the country's Renaissance under His Majesty's leadership.

It is hardly possible for a first-time visitor to the Sultanate of Oman, arriving at Seeb International Airport in 1995, 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 25 years ago, none of this existed. Any Omani will tell him that this transformation is due to the inspiration and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

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

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

On the abdication of his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, and his own accession in July 1970, His Majesty flew from Salalah to Muscat to be greeted by his people. Among his first acts were the abolition of

anachronistic restrictions on the lives and activities of the people, and he announced his intention of proceeding forthwith with the development of the country and providing his people with the health care, education and other social development they so sorely needed. He also called upon them to play their part in the work that lay ahead, and appealed to all Omanis abroad, wherever they might be, to return and do so. His words met with a spontaneous and overwhelming response, and Omanis came flocking back from many parts of the world.

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

Meanwhile, His Majesty gave high priority to the expansion of the Sultanate's international relations, which had been almost non-existent before 1970. This has been successfully achieved, and diplomatic relations have been established with many countries throughout the world, regardless of their political complexions, His Majesty's policy being to extend the hand of friendship to all countries on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and good neighbourliness. International contacts, through diplomatic relations and personal visits, are seen by His Majesty to be of great importance in the quest for world peace and understanding between peoples. These relations have currently been established with a total of 125 countries. His Majesty has paid State Visits to brotherly and friendly countries of the GCC, Egypt, Jordan, the Yemen, the United Kingdom, United States, France and Spain.

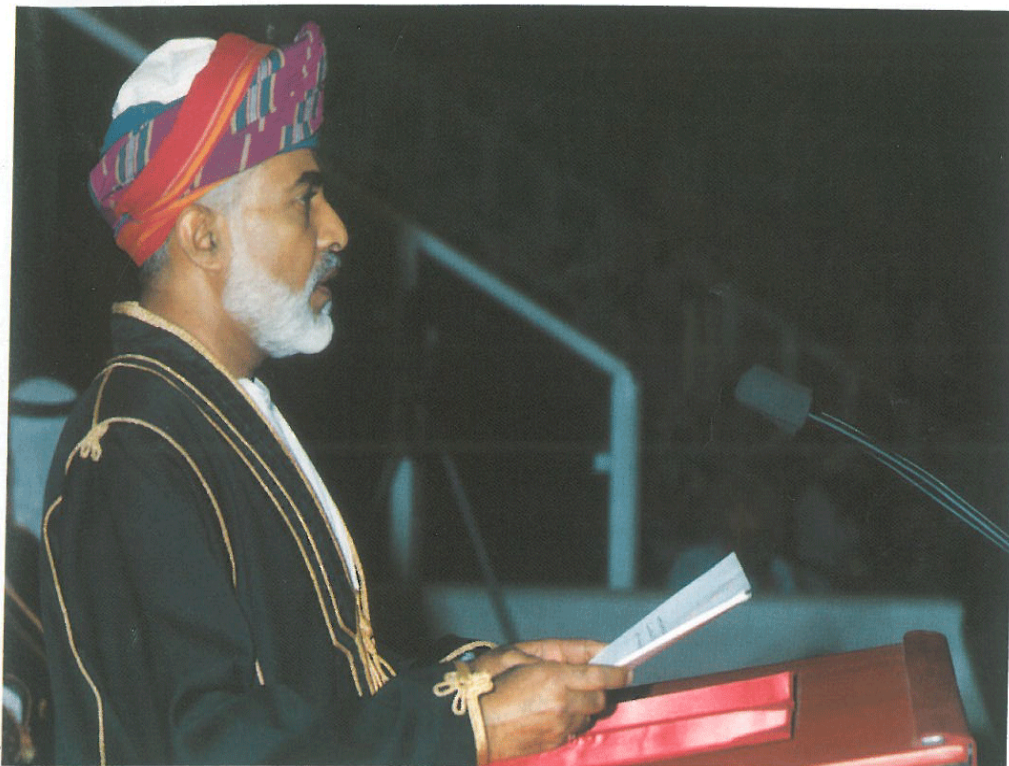
His Majesty also pressed on with development planning. A list of priorities was carefully formulated: wasteful prestige projects were not considered. Advancement has been achieved through a series of Five-Year-Plans, of which the Fourth, current plan, commenced in

1991. The result has been that the major elements of the Sultanate's infrastructural programme have been virtually completed, and the emphasis has now shifted to the consolidation of the achievements that have been secured.

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

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

This year, democratic development has taken a further significant step forward with the election to the Majlis Ash'Shura of the first two women members. Speaking to the Assembly at the opening of the Majlis Ash'Shura's Second term, His Majesty said that the new session was characterised by three elements: first, the broader representation of the people that has resulted from the increase in membership to eighty; second, the benefits that will accrue from the combination of experienced Members and those newly elected; and third, the



▲ His Majesty delivers his National Day speech to his people, 18 November 1994.

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

participation of women Members. In the latter connection, and in wishing them all success, His Majesty said it was their right to contribute their thoughts and views in their country's affairs. He added that their candidacy would be gradually extended to include women from all regions of the Sultanate. His Majesty called on women throughout Oman to come forward to play their full part in the life and development of the country.

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. His Majesty made a notably important speech to his people on the occasion of the last National Day Celebrations. In it, His Majesty called upon Omanis to reject "extremism under whatever guise, fanaticism of whatever kind and factionalism of whatever persuasion" and to follow the true tolerant principles of Islam. He said that "the backwardness of Muslims in recent times (had) rendered them incapable of making use of their inheritance by reference to the original principles and







bases in order to solve the problems that arose in their lives". This stagnation had resulted in the weakness of the Muslim nation and brought about fanaticism based on a lack of knowledge about the correct facts of the religion. It had been exploited by some to perpetrate violence and propagate cases of difference that led to discord and hatred.

His Majesty also carries on the democratic process through his annual tours of the Interior, when he is accompanied by many of his Ministers, which provide him with the opportunity to meet individual Omanis face to face, listen to their suggestions and discuss their problems, thus giving him a valuable means of assessing their needs. On these occasions, the appropriate Minister is called in and the matter is dealt with immediately.

In the past year, His Majesty has made three major tours during which he has covered hundreds of miles and talked with many thousands of his people. One of the main themes of his conversations was the need for a sensible approach to family planning; Omanis should remember that it was important and religiously acceptable to limit the

▲ His Majesty with His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan at the Royal Camp in Al Zamayim during the latter's private visit to the Sultanate.

► His Majesty welcomes the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan on their visit to Oman.



number of children per family so as not to affect the country's social structure.

In his speeches and public statements to his people, His Majesty has continued to place great emphasis and importance on diversifying Oman's economy away from total dependence on oil revenues, and on giving encouragement to the private sector. These oil revenues, which are now increasingly augmented by natural gas resources, are forecast to continue for many years to come, but His Majesty has long recognised the need to broaden the country's economic base, not only as a precaution against possible future uncertainties of the oil market, but also as a means of providing more career opportunities for Oman's graduates and school leavers. His Majesty has also strongly emphasised the need for Omanisation. Thus a programme to qualify Omanis for jobs now performed by foreigners, is being energetically pursued and is making significant progress.

The advent of the Gulf crisis in August 1990, brought unprecedented problems to every state in the region. Consistent with his policy of seeking to promote peaceful solutions to international disputes, His Majesty supported all constructive efforts to bring about a just settlement of the crisis, essentially based upon the withdrawal of Iraq from its occupation of Kuwait, and support for the United Nations' resolutions. At the same time, His Majesty provided a safe sanctuary for the many Kuwaitis who fled to Oman. When the full outbreak of hostilities nevertheless ensued, His Majesty acted in complete solidarity with his brother leaders of the AGCC and the United Nations. In the aftermath of the war, he has sought to further the consolidation of peace in the region, and prevent any future threat to its stability, notably through his chairmanship of the AGCC Higher Committee for Security.

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

► The Crown Prince Filip Leopold Louis of the Belgians is received by His Majesty at Bait al Baraka Palace.

► His Majesty holds talks with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt at Bait al Baraka Palace.



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

Within the Gulf region, His Majesty has successfully reached agreement with neighbouring Yemen on the border between the two countries. This followed an earlier similar accord with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On the international scene, His Majesty welcomed, in his National Day speech, the evidence that countries had become convinced, more

▲ His Majesty welcomes President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen on arrival at Salalah Civil Airport.

► A young citizen presents his Eid greetings to His Majesty.





than at any time in the past, that armed conflicts are no longer justifiable, but obstruct development and endanger international peace and security. But, His Majesty said, it was a matter of regret that the propensity of man to violence towards man himself had increased, embodied in the aggression of one group against others within communities. He called upon all countries to co-operate to put an end to this internal violence.

His Majesty has also welcomed the Middle Eastern peace process and the achievements that have been made towards a settlement. In a message to the Arab League on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, praising its efforts for the security and stability of its peoples, His Majesty called upon God's blessing to protect them from all forms of terrorism and fanaticism.

During the year, His Majesty has received a number of foreign dignitaries, including His Majesty King Hussain of Jordan; the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan; the Crown Prince of Belgium, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, during which visit it was agreed to establish a joint Omani-Egyptian Committee at foreign minister level to strengthen bilateral co-operation; President Ali Abdulla Saleh of Yemen; the Russian Prime Minister, Victor Chernomyrdin; Vice President Al Gore of the United States; Dr Ram K. Chopra, World Bank Director for Middle Eastern Affairs whose Bank recently expressed "full confidence in the Sultanate's economic reform measures" which it "fully supported and endorsed"; Dr Boutros Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on a visit to the Sultanate, praised His Majesty's success in promoting social integration and the development of human resources, in enhancing international and regional co-operation, and solving international issues.

In April, His Majesty received Finance and Economy Ministers and Governors of Central Banks who were attending the annual meeting of Arab Financial Institutions, hosted by Oman.

Also during the year, His Majesty personally donated US\$300,000 for the establishment of an International Disability Centre at The Hague which will assist disabled persons of all countries.

◀ Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia receives a presentation from His Majesty, during His Majesty's Meet-the-People tour.

▶▶ Vice President Al Gore of the United States receives a ceremonial khunjar from His Majesty during the former's visit to the Sultanate.



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 Berber 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.

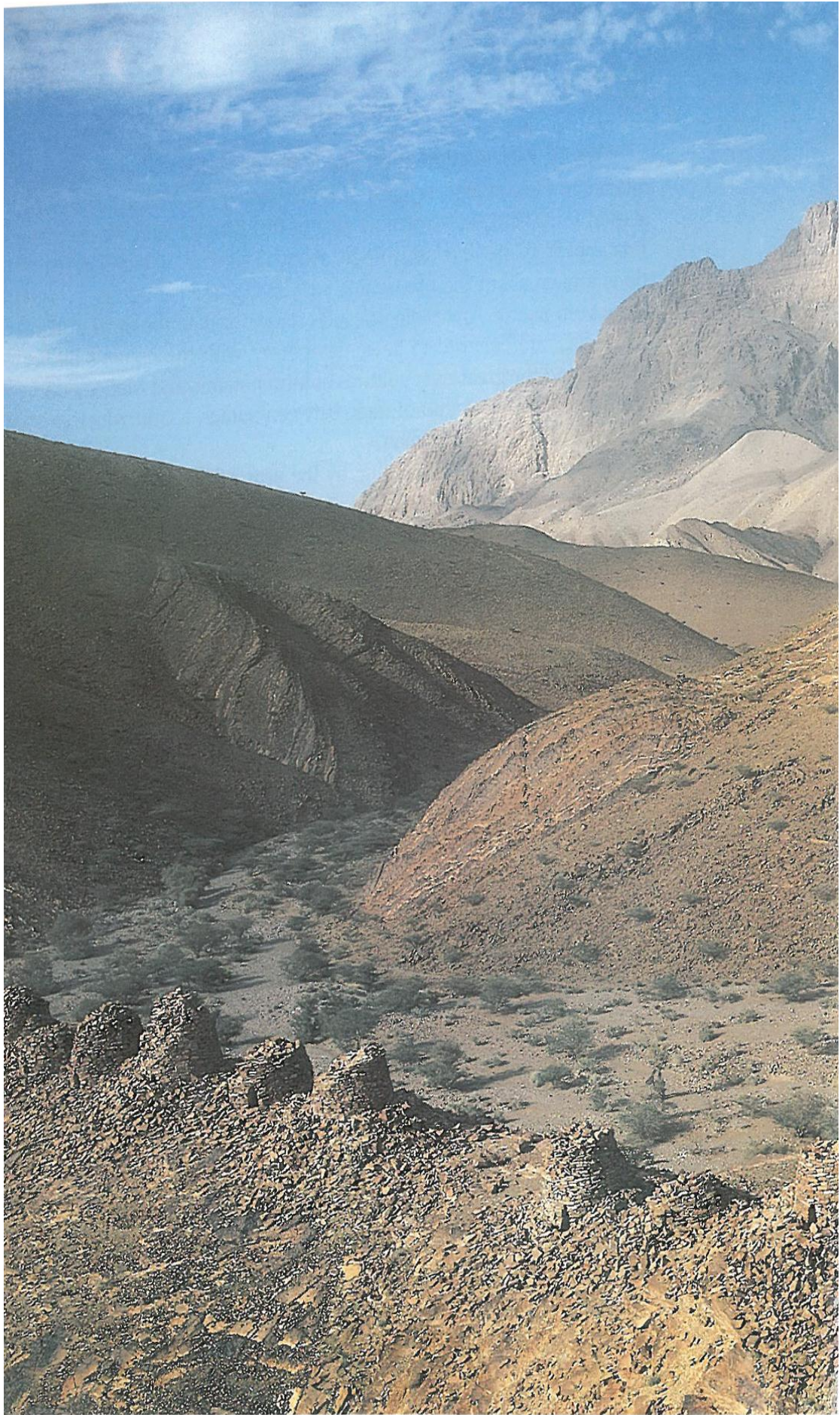
Copper mining and smelting by the year 2,000 B.C. had become a sizeable industry, as revealed by excavations at locations in the Sohar area. The largest of these so far identified is at Lasail where, incidentally, copper mining has recently been resumed. It seems certain that the legendary country of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

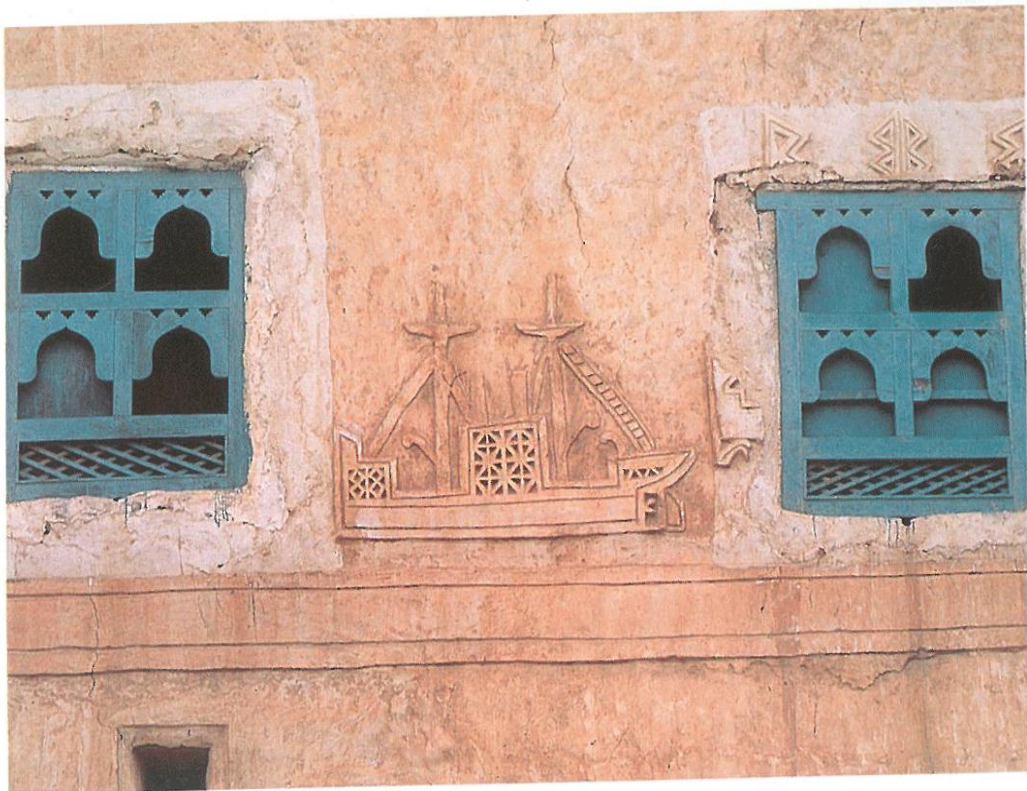
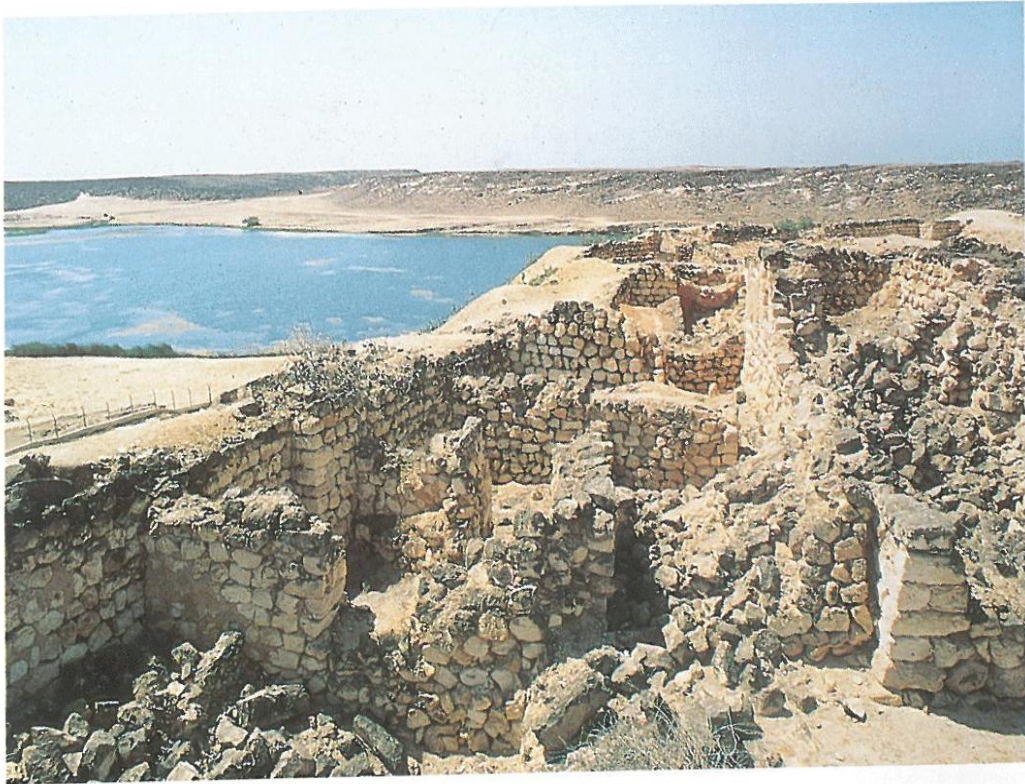
Although trading, farming and fishing settlements existed in Oman as far back as the fourth millennium B.C., there is no evidence of any developed urban civilisation during this early period. One of the reasons may be that there was no great river where a city society would normally be centred. Also,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

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

►► "Beehive"
tombs in the Interior
testify to Oman's
ancient civilisation.







◀ Sum Huram (Khorir Rori), on the Dhofar Coast, was a trade link between Oman and the Roman Empire.

◀ A carving on an old building in Sadh attests to Oman's seafaring tradition.

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. Much of Oman was then under the rule of the Persians, but the Azd were able to regain Oman from the Persian rule and spread Arab influence to all parts of the country. Islam came to Oman, and Abd and Jaifar, the sons of Julanda bin Al Mustakbar, embraced Islam.

From the seventh to the fifteenth centuries Oman's maritime trade flourished. Omani ships regularly called at ports in Persia, India and South East 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 - allegedly being guided by the famous Omani navigator Ahmad bin Majid - a Portuguese fleet brutally sacked Muscat and within a year the Portuguese flag flew at several places along the coast.

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

Sayyid Said bin Sultan is an historically prominent Omani ruler who exercised power during the period 1804-1856. During this time Oman's influence reached Zanzibar and other parts of East Africa in addition to provinces in Persia and Baluchistan. Muscat became an important commercial centre and meeting point for the entire Gulf area. Sayyid Said concentrated his efforts on developing and improving his country's commerce and economy. It was Sayyid Said, incidentally, who introduced the clove to Zanzibar, which he brought originally from Indonesia. These plantations provided a third of the Sultanate's budget. During his reign, Oman developed her relations

with many parts of the world; a special envoy was sent to the United States in 1840 - the first Arab emissary to that country. Oman was thus the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. It had already concluded agreements and conventions with Great Britain, France, Holland and other countries.

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

Last year saw the 250th anniversary of the rule of the Al Busaid family, and this year, 1995, sees the year of the Silver Jubilee of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the 8th Sultan directly descended from this ancient line, which is recognised as the oldest ruling family in the Arab world in modern history.

► Old cannons at Mirbat Fort in Salalah stand guard over the Dhofar coastline.

▼ Oman has many historical sites still to be excavated and thoroughly studied.





GEOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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

The 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 the modern, busy Ruwi which is both a commercial centre and residential extension of the capital. Beyond this again, residential satellite townships and industrial estates have been spreading at a fast pace, changing the area beyond recognition for someone who has not visited Oman for a few years. Quriyat, which is situated on the coast midway between Muscat and Sur, is one of the major towns in this area.

Batinah Plain

The Batinah runs from the frontier with the UAE for a distance of some 270 kilometres south-east almost to Muscat. It is situated between the coast and the Western Hajar, varying from 10 to 30

kilometres in width. Cultivation is limited to a narrow coastal strip, seldom wider than three kilometres. The Batinah is one of the most populous areas in Oman; the main towns are: Barka, Masana'a, Suwaiq, Khaboura, 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.

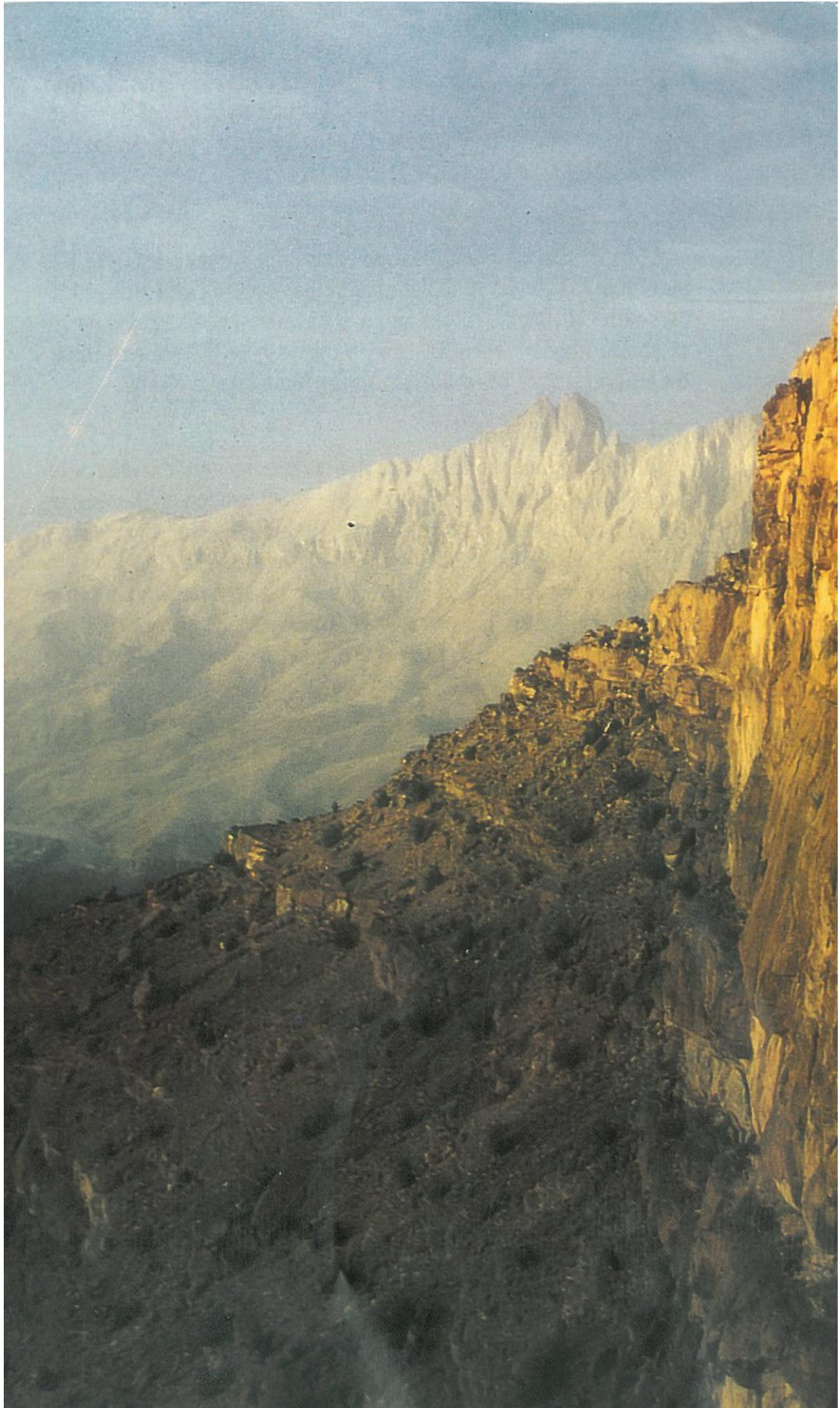
The Interior (Al Joof)

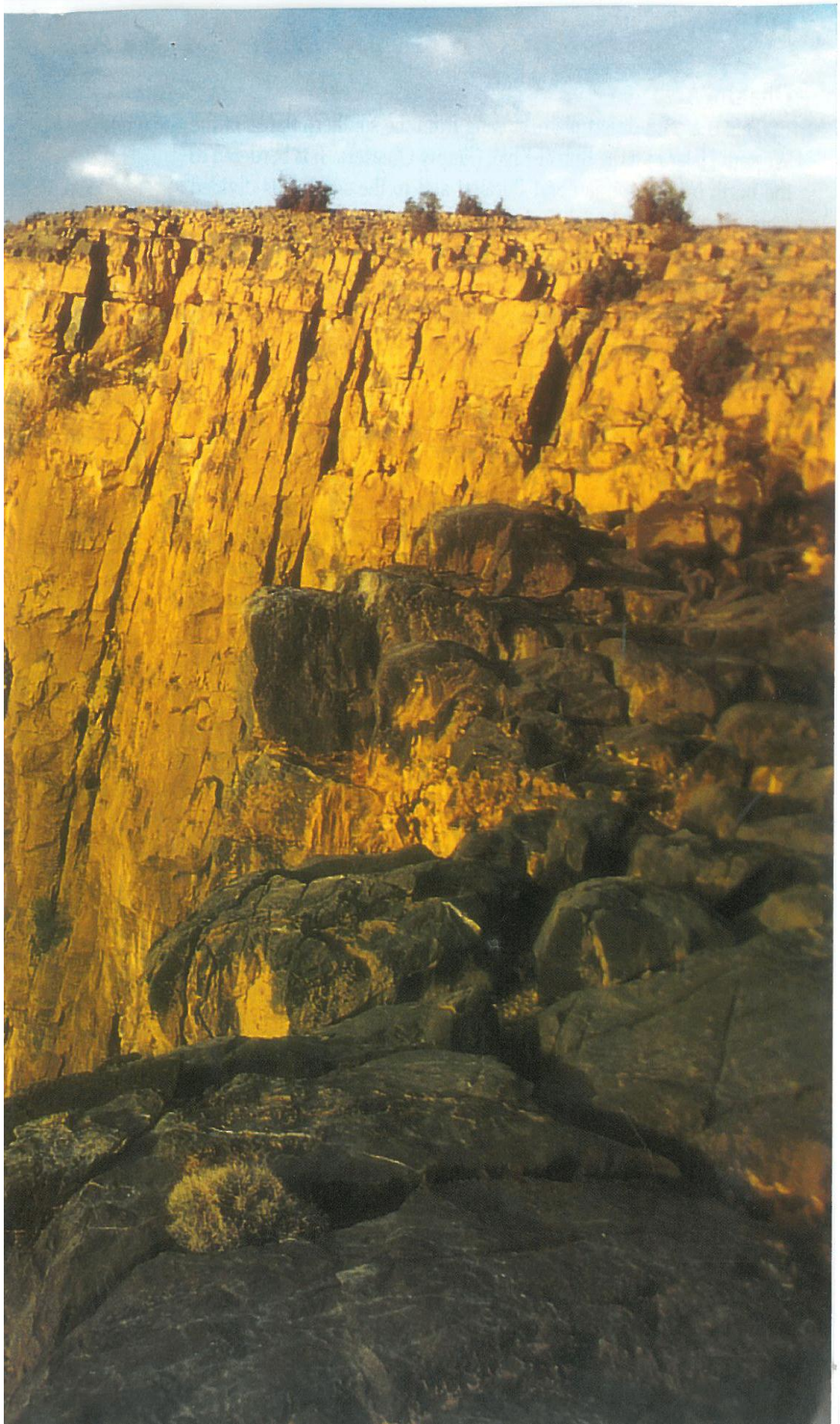
This is the central plateau that slopes from the northern base of Jabal al-Akhdar southwards to the desert. It is bounded on the west by Dhahira and on the east by Sharqiya. The area has four main valleys, Andam, Halfein, Bahla and Samail. The Halfein and Samail valleys together form a natural break 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.

►► The majestic
Jebel Shams.

▼ The sweeping
dunes of the Wahiba
Sands.







Dhahira Area

This is a semi-desert plain, sloping from the southern flanks of the Western Hajar into the Rub al-Khali (Empty Quarter). It is bordered to the north by Yanqul, Jau and Buraimi and to the south it is divided from Oman proper by Jabal al Koor (Deyar al Durooa) and from the east by Deyar Bani Hinah. The major settlements are on two principal wadis, Wadi Dank and Wadi al-Ain, the towns being Dank, Ibri and Yanqul. 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.

Sharqiya Area

The Sharqiya is an area of sandy plains and valleys lying on the inland side of the Eastern Hajar. It is bordered to the south-east by the district of Jaalan and to the south by the Wahiba Sands. The Jaalan is a sandy plain forming the southern extension of the Sharqiya 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 Bani Khalid, Al Kamil, Al Wafi, Bilad Bani bu Hassan, Bilad Bani bu Ali, Al Ashkara and Ras Al Hadd.

► Beautiful Dhofar.

Barr al Hikman

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 Muqshin.

► Dhofar coast in the monsoon.



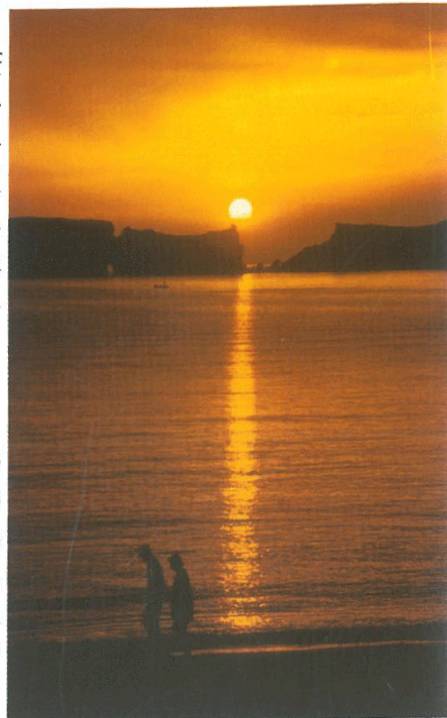
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The Musandam

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, Madha, Bukha, Kumzar and Lima.

Regions

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



Climate

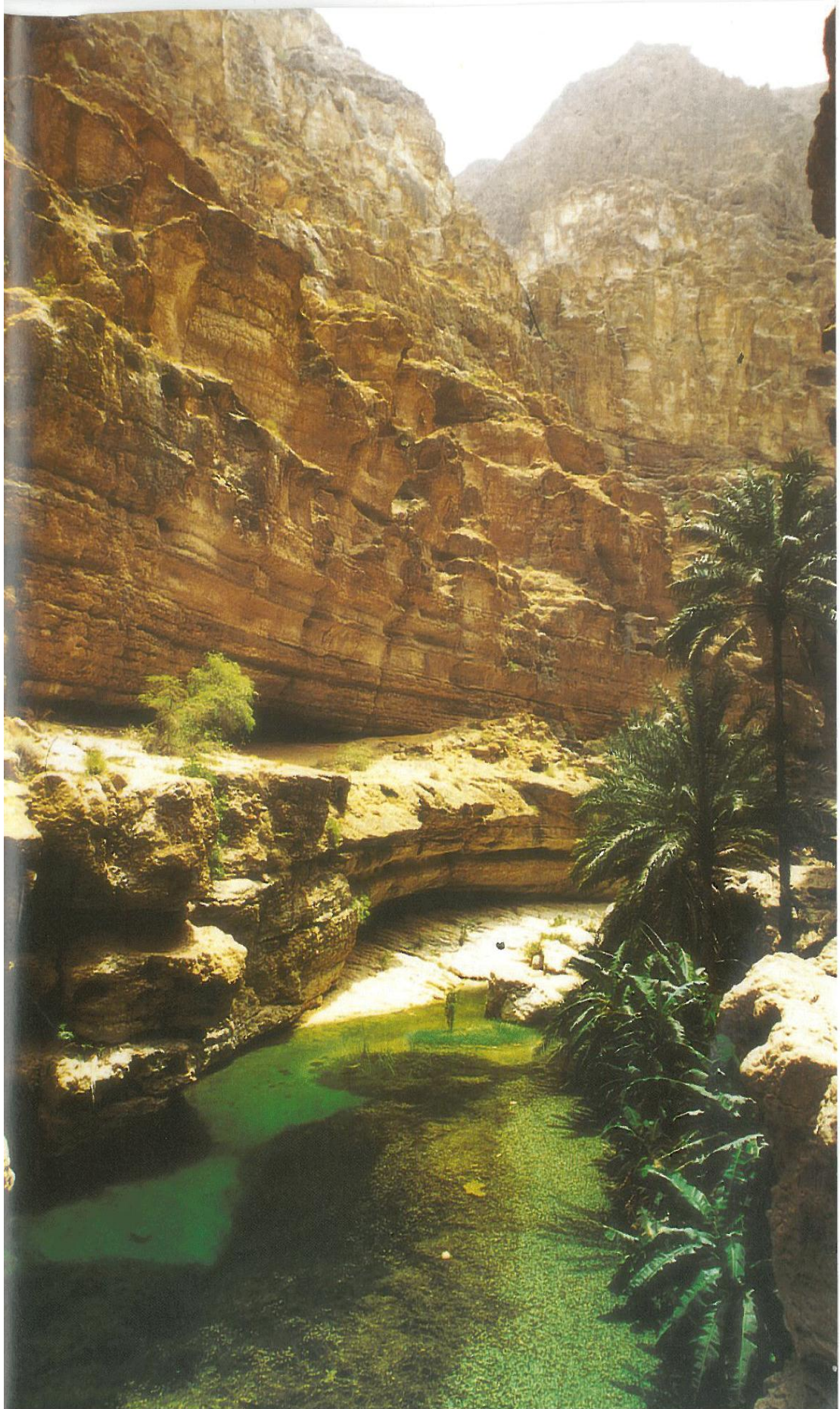
The climate varies from region to region. In the coastal areas it is hot and humid in summer. In the Interior it is hot and dry, with the exception of some higher locations, where it is temperate all year round. In the southern region, the climate is more benign. The country's rainfall is generally low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

▲ A stroll in the sunset.

► Wadi Shaab.

Population

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



GOVERNMENT

The administrative system of the State under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said consists of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Ministry of Palace Office Affairs, the Cabinet of Ministers and Secretariat of the Cabinet, the Specialised Councils, Governorate of Muscat and the Majlis Ash'Shura.

The Cabinet of Ministers is the highest executive authority, deriving its power from His Majesty the Sultan, to whom it is collectively responsible. Laws and decrees are authorised by His Majesty. International treaties, agreements and charters signed or approved by His Majesty become law from the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.

The Cabinet of Ministers consists of:-

His Highness Saiyid Thuwainy bin Shihab al Said
Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan
His Highness Sayyid Faher bin Taimour al Said
Deputy Prime Minister for Security and Defence
His Highness Sayyid Fahad bin Mahmood al Said
Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet 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 Sayyid Saif bin Hamad bin Saoud
Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court
His Excellency Fareeq Awal Ali bin Majid al Ma'amari
Minister of Palace Office Affairs and Head of the Office of the
Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces
His Excellency Said bin Ahmed al Shanfari
Minister of Petroleum & Minerals
His Excellency Hamoud bin Abdullah al Harthi
Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs
His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh al Manthri
Minister of Higher Education and Vice Chancellor of
Sultan Qaboos University
His Excellency Sayyid Bader bin Saoud bin Hareb
Minister of Interior
His Excellency Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed al Rowas
Minister of Information
His Excellency Sayyid Al Mutasim bin Hamoud al Busaidi
Minister of State and Governor of Muscat

His Excellency Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah
 Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
 His Excellency Salim bin Abdullah al Ghazali
 Minister of Communications
 His Excellency Ahmed bin Suwaidan al Balushi
 Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones
 His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali al Qatabi
 Minister of Electricity and Water
 His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hinai
 Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries
 His Excellency Sayyid Mussallam bin Ali al Busaidi
 Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar
 His Excellency Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi Macki
 Minister of Civil Service
 His Excellency Malik bin Suleiman al Ma'amari
 Minister of Housing
 His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Mohammed bin Moosa
 Minister of Health
 His Excellency Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said
 Secretary General to the Cabinet
 His Excellency Sheikh Amer bin Shuwain al Hosni
 Minister of Regional Municipalities and Environment
 His Excellency Hamid bin Said al Aufi
 Minister of Water Resources
 His Excellency Maqbool bin Ali bin Sultan
 Minister of Commerce and Industry
 His Excellency Ahmed bin Mohammed al Esai
 Minister of Social Affairs and Labour
 His Excellency Mohammed bin Ali al Alawi
 Minister of State for Legal Affairs[®]
 His Excellency Sayyid Saoud bin Ibrahim al Busaidi
 Minister of Education
 His Excellency Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousef
 Minister of State for Development Affairs

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

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

►► His Majesty
 presides over a
 meeting of his
 Council of Ministers,
 January 1995.







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

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

▲ His Majesty opens the Majlis Ash'Shura Second Term, December 1994.

Majlis Ash'Shura

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



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

During 1994 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos approved the expansion of the Majlis Ash'Shura from a representation of 59 members to 80 members based on the results of the first National Census held in December 1993. Those Wilayats with a population of more than 30,000 would nominate four nominees, from whom two would be selected by His Majesty to represent their Wilayat in the Majlis. In the case of Wilayats with a population of less than 30,000 there would be two nominees, from whom one would be selected by His Majesty to sit as representative of his or her Wilayat.

His Majesty also decreed the participation of women in the vote for the first time and their right to be nominated for representation in the Majlis. For the time being this is to be limited to the six provinces in or near the capital, Muscat, but it is to be extended to the whole of Oman. As a result, two women now sit as representatives in the Majlis Ash'Shura.

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



▲ Members of the Majlis Ash'Shura at the inauguration of the Second Term.

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

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

Article I

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

Article II

The Council shall have 80 members representing the Wilayats of the Sultanate. The selection of the members is to be carried out according to the following procedures:-

- a. Every Wilayat with a population of less than 30,000 to nominate two citizens, resident in the Wilayat, and every Wilayat with a population of more than 30,000 to nominate four citizens. The nomination is carried out by a Committee consisting of dignitaries of the Wilayat and people of valued opinion and experience.
- b. One of the two nominees and two of the four nominees of each Wilayat is to be selected as a member of the Council.
- c. A Royal Decree will be issued naming the selected members.

Article III

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

Article IV

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

Article V

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

Article VI

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

Article VII

The Council shall have a Secretariat-General consisting of the Secretary-General and a number of assistant secretaries and employees. The Secretary-General is to be appointed by a decision from the Council's office on a recommendation by the President. The Secretary-General is to be granted the financial grade of an Under-Secretary.

Article VIII

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

Article IX

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

1. Review of draft legislation on economic and social matters which is prepared by the Ministries before being issued.

►► Al Alam
Palace, Muscat,
where His Majesty
conducts most of his
State functions.





2. Present its proposals on what it regards as necessary as to the development of economic and social laws that are executed in the Sultanate.
3. Providing opinion and proposals on general policies presented to it by the Government.
4. Participation in the preparation of the country's development plans, the following up of their implementation in the context of the State's general strategy and according to its available potentialities.
5. Participation in reinforcing the citizens' awareness of the development objectives, priorities and the efforts that are exerted to carry them out. This will reinforce the link between the citizens and the Government.
6. Participation in the efforts for the conservation of the environment and its protection from pollution.
7. The study of matters related to public services and utilities and presentation of suggestions on how to develop them.
8. Studying obstacles that face the economic sector and the presentation of appropriate suggestions aimed at overcoming those obstacles.
9. Giving opinions on other subjects which His Majesty thinks should be presented to the Council.

Article X

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

Article XI

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

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

Article XII

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



▲ Members of the Majlis Ash'Shura hold talks with a delegation from the European Parliamentary Association for Arab-European Co-operation, March 1995.

Article XIII

The Council shall refer to its concerned committees whatever applications or proposals are received from citizens on general issues and then seek the Government's opinion. The citizen shall be entitled to receive an answer to his/her request.

Article XIV

The President of the Council shall submit to His Majesty the Sultan the results of the Council's activities once a year. Issued on 12 November 1991.

Specialised Councils

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

Some of these Councils are :

The 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 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.E. Yahya bin Mahfudh Al Mantheri, Minister for Higher Education. The Civil Service Council draws up general policies relating to the Civil Service. Among its other responsibilities is examination of Civil Service problems and finding solutions to them, taking into consideration public interests. The Council is chaired by H.E. Sayyid Saif bin Hamed bin Saud, Minister of the Diwan of 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 - Chairman

His Excellency the Minister of Housing - Deputy Chairman

His Excellency the Minister of Electricity and Water - Deputy

In addition to whom there are the following members:-

His Excellency the Minister of Regional Municipalities and Environment

His Excellency the Minister of Civil Service

His Excellency the Under Secretary for Financial Affairs

His Excellency the Under Secretary for Communications

His Excellency the Under Secretary for Commerce and Industry

An official representative from the Ministry on whose behalf the tender is being carried out.

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

The Board's Powers and Prerogatives

The Board is responsible for all Government tenders, whether these involve assignments, purchases of items or project implementation,

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

In exercising its duties, the Board complies with established and well-studied procedures. These enable it to fulfill 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 within the Sultanate or abroad. This stage of operation is of particular importance; a thorough check of the documents prior to putting the project out to tender assists in the elimination of any problems that might otherwise occur after the issue of the invitation to tender, or while the project is being implemented. This procedure saves considerable time and effort and ensures a high standard of work. As a result, great savings are made on costs and the project is implemented in the required manner.

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

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Sultanate of Oman has played an important role in world and regional affairs in the past years. It was elected as a member of the United Nations Security Council in January 1994. In June 1994 the Sultanate held the Presidency of the Council, and will do so again in November 1995. As the threat of war again loomed over Kuwait in October 1994, Oman came out strongly in support of its fellow members of the AGCC, and strongly condemned Iraq for its aggressive troop movements. Early last year, King Hussein of Jordan visited Oman for discussions with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, when the strong ties linking the two countries were confirmed. This visit was closely followed by a visit by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, for discussions with His Majesty. In March this year President Mubarak of Egypt also came to Oman for two days of talks with His Majesty, as a result of which a bilateral consultation committee has been set up by the two countries at Ministerial level. Following the signing of the border agreement on 1st October 1992 between the Sultanate and the Republic of Yemen, relations between the two countries have continued to develop cordially and constructively.

Oman lies at the gateway of the Gulf, directly overlooking the Strait of Hormuz from the south side. The Strait has far-reaching strategic importance for international trade, especially since the finding of oil, which passes through it to the industrialised countries in the east and west, and has become one of the most important factors in world industrial progress. This position also links it to the countries which lie on the gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Sultanate of Oman has a long history of contacts and relations with countries both within, and outside the Arab world, going back many centuries. Between the seventh and fifteenth centuries it had a flourishing trade with China and the Indian sub-continent, as well as in later years with East Africa. The Sultanate was the first Arab country to establish diplomatic contact with the United States of America in the first half of the nineteenth century, by which time it already had a treaty relationship with the United Kingdom and relations with France.

However, with the death of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (Said the Great) in 1856, and the separation of the East African possessions from Oman, the country fell into a state of isolation for 100 years until 1970, when it

► His Majesty leads the Omani delegation at the 15th AGCC Summit meeting in Bahrain, December 1994.

► The former British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, is received by His Majesty at the Royal Camp in Seeh al Yahmadi.



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re-emerged on to the international scene following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

On his accession in July 1970, His Majesty was confronted with a most daunting and formidable task in making the Sultanate's presence known and felt in international circles, in addition to meeting many of the urgent needs of his people. From the start, His Majesty defined certain principles which have been consistently followed during the past 25 years. These principles include good neighbourliness and non-intervention in the internal affairs of others, respect for international laws and traditions, strengthening of cooperation between the Gulf States, fortifying relations with other Arab countries, as well as supporting issues of importance in the Arab world, enhancing Islamic cooperation, supporting just causes, exploring all avenues for increased cooperation with the European Union and other international bodies, following a policy of non-alignment, and the establishment of cordial relations with all friendly countries.

The Sultanate's relations with Western nations stretch back over 200 years, and Oman today attaches great importance to them, as exemplified by its hosting of the Gulf-European dialogue in 1990. This represented the first collective meeting of Foreign Ministries of the six Arab Gulf States and the European Community. Oman strongly supported this historic event in a spirit of cooperation which reflected the established friendship linking the two communities, whose continuous relationship goes back over such a long period of time.

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

Oman joined the Arab League in 1971, and the United Nations later the same year. In 1972 the Sultanate joined the Islamic Conference Organisation, and in 1973 became a member of the Non-Aligned Group. The Sultanate has also joined many specialised international organisations (see list at the end of this chapter). The Sultanate is a founder member of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, comprising the six Arab Gulf States, and is to host its Summit in Muscat in December this year.

The Sultanate has always maintained good relations with Iran in accordance with its policy of good neighbourliness, and has made great efforts to bring about a rapprochement between Iran and certain of the Gulf States. In 1990 Muscat was the venue for a meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the

► The then French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppe, with his accompanying delegation at a meeting with His Majesty at the Al Hisn Palace, Salalah, October 1994.

► His Majesty receives a message from the President of the United States.



Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result, the two countries agreed to resume diplomatic relations following a three-year break.

The Palestinian question is still the main problem in the Middle East. Oman has given, and continues to give, total support to the Palestinian people's right to decide their own future in their own land, and establish their own independent State, and naturally supports the current negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Oman also supports the call for the withdrawal of the Israelis from the southern territories of Lebanon.

The Sultanate hosted the fifth meeting of the UN Peace Conference from 17 - 20 April, 1994 in Muscat, which was attended by more than 45 countries and organisations. It was decided at the Conference to establish a research centre for salt water in the Sultanate. The aim of the Conference was to develop technology for easier desalination of salt water to help economic and social development in Arab countries and the Middle East in general.

The Sultanate believes that cooperation between countries is the best way forward. It also confirms the principle of human rights and the right of countries to decide their own future. On 18th December, 1991 the Sultanate of Oman recognised the Union of Independent States (the Commonwealth) which is formed from 11 republics:

▼ The Chief Minister of Baluchistan, Nawab Zulfikar Ali Magsi with His Majesty at Bait al Baraka Palace during the former's visit to the Sultanate.



Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Turkmenistan (the states of the former USSR).

Likewise, it recognised the independence of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Slovakia. It established diplomatic relations and exchanged diplomatic representatives at ambassadorial level with all the states of the Union of Russia, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Iceland, Nicaragua, Democratic Korea, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Cuba and Ethiopia.

The Sultanate participated in a number of important regional and international conference and meetings such as:-

- The Seventh Conference for Foreign Ministers of Islamic States in Islamabad in 1994
- The International Population Conference in Cairo from 5-12 September, 1994.
- The Seventh Special Islamic Summit Meeting in Casablanca, Morocco from 12-15 December, 1994.
- The International Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark from 6-12 March, 1995.
- The meeting of the Organising Bureau for the Non-Aligned Movement in Bandung, Indonesia from 15-27 April, 1995, which celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Bandung Conference on 24 April, 1955.
- The International Conference for Women to be held in Peking, China from 4-15 September, 1995.
- The 11th Summit Conference of Non-Aligned States, which will be held in Cartagena, Columbia from 15-20 October 1995.

The Sultanate also participated in conferences in Washington, Lisbon and Tokyo for organising aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (the former republics of the Soviet Union). Oman offered financial facilities and loans to some republics.

The Sultanate participates equally in meetings at the regional level to limit weapons and achieve security in the Middle East.

The Sultanate carries out an active role in 119 regional, Arab and international conferences, and is a member of 45 organisations and special agencies. Most recently the Sultanate joined the World Trade Organisation as an observer at the beginning of January, 1995. The Sultanate has also joined the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund.

In December, 1994 the Sultanate signed a number of agreements, such as The Basle Agreement on the control of the transport of dangerous waste material, banning it from crossing borders.



COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Albania, Republic of
 Algeria, Democratic and Popular Republic of
 Argentina, Republic of
 Armenia, Republic of
 Australia, Commonwealth of
 Austria, Republic of
 Azerbaijan, Republic of
 Bahrain, State of
 Bangladesh, People's Republic of
 Belarus, Republic of
 Belgium, Kingdom of
 Bolivia, Republic of
 Brazil, Federal Republic of
 Brunei Darussalam, State of
 Bulgaria, Republic of
 Burkina Faso
 Burundi, Republic of
 Canada

▲ His Majesty
 gives an audience in
 his office at Bait
 Al Baraka Palace
 to Iran's visiting
 Minister of Culture
 and Islamic
 Guidance.

Chad, Republic of
Chile, Republic of
China, People's Republic of
Columbia, Republic of
Comoros, Federal Islamic Republic of the
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba, Republic of
Cyprus, Republic of
Czech Republic
Denmark, Kingdom of
Djibouti, Republic of
Ecuador, Republic of
Egypt, Arab Republic of
Eritrea, State of
Estonia, Republic of
Ethiopia
Finland, Republic of
France, Republic of
Gabon, Republic of
The Gambia, Republic of
Germany, Federal Republic of
Ghana, Republic of
Greece, Hellenic Republic of
Guatemala, Republic of
Guinea, Republic of
Guinea-Bissau, Republic of
Hungary, Republic of
Iceland, Republic of
India, Republic of
Indonesia, Republic of
Iran, Islamic Republic of
Iraq, Republic of
Ireland
Italian Republic
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of
Kazakhstan, Republic of
Kenya, Republic of
Korea North, Democratic People's Republic of
Korea South, Republic of
Kuwait, State of

Kyrgyzstan, Republic of
Latvia, Republic of
Lebanon, Republic of
Lithuania, Republic of
Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of
Malaysia
Maldives, Republic of
Mali, Republic of
Malta, Republic of
Mauritania, Islamic Republic of
Mauritius
Mexico, United States of
Moldova, Republic of
Mongolia
Morocco, Kingdom of
Mozambique, Republic of
Nepal, Kingdom of
Netherlands, Kingdom of the
New Zealand
Nicaragua, Republic of
Niger, Republic of
Nigeria, Federal Republic of
Norway, Kingdom of
Pakistan, Islamic Republic of
Panama, Republic of
Peru, Republic of
Philippines, Republic of the
Poland, Republic of
Portugal, Republic of
Qatar, State of
Romania
Russian Federation
Rwanda, Republic of
Saint Lucia
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
Senegal, Republic of
Seychelles, Republic of
Sierra Leone, Republic of
Singapore, Republic of
Slovakia
Somalia, Democratic Republic of
Spain

Sri Lanka, Democratic Social Republic of
 Sudan, Republic of the
 Sweden, Kingdom
 Switzerland, Confederation of
 Syria, Arab Republic of
 Tanzania, United Republic of
 Thailand, Kingdom of
 Tunisia, Republic of
 Turkey, Republic of
 Turkmenistan, Republic of
 Uganda, Republic of
 Ukraine
 United Arab Emirates
 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 United States of America
 Uruguay, Republic of
 Uzbekistan, Republic of
 Venezuela, Republic of
 Vietnam, Socialist Republic
 Yemen, Republic of
 Zaire, Republic of
 Zambia, Republic of
 Zimbabwe, Republic of

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SULTANATE IN GULF, ARAB, ISLAMIC AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

GULF ORGANISATIONS	Date Joined
Arab Centre for Educational Research	1.12.73
Arab Education Office for the Gulf States	1.12.79
Arab Gulf Co-operation Council	25.5.81
Arab Gulf States' Joint Programme Production Organisations	25.3.82
Arab Gulf University	16.8.80
Co-operation Council States Specifications & Standards Board	9.11.82
Gulf International Bank	1.2.76
Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consultancies	20.10.76
Gulf States' Health Ministers' Council	1976
Gulf States' Labour & Social Affairs Ministers' Council Continuity Office	6.2.78

Gulf Television Board	10.4.80
Technical Office for Communications (Gulf States Co-operation Council)	1983

ARAB ORGANISATIONS

Arab Academy for Maritime Transport	31.8.75
Arab Administrative Development Organisation	4.75
Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa	1.2.75
Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands	30.4.75
Arab Civil Aviation Council	15.10.73
Arab Fund for Economic & Social Development	30.4.75
Arab Girl Guides' Office	1976
Arab Health Ministers' Council	4.5.75
Arab Housing Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Industrial Development Organisation	12.1.80
Arab Interior Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Justice Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Labour Organization	9.2.73
Arab League Educational Cultural & Scientific Organisation	14.6.73
Arab Monetary Fund	5.3.77
Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development	18.2.74
Arab Organisation for Specifications & Standards	6.7.74
Arab Planning Institute	7.12.80
Arab Postal Union	1.7.71
Arab Scouts' Office	1976
Arab Social Affairs Ministers' Council	26.3.80
Arab Social Defence Organisation Against Crime	26.3.73
Arab States' Broadcasting Union	14.6.72
Arab Telecommunications Union	30.1.83
Arab Tourism Union	27.8.84
Arab Transport Ministers' Council	28.3.85
Arab World Institute in Paris	30.11.87
Arab Youth & Sports Ministers' Council	26.3.80
Arabsat	10.7.76
Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation	5.5.1977
League of Arab States	29.9.71
Organisation of Arab Cities	24.9.71

ISLAMIC ORGANISATIONS

Al Quds Fund	1976
International Committee for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage	1978
Islamic Capitals Organisation	1982
Islamic Centre for Commercial Development	1979
Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research	28.4.78
Islamic Conference Organisation	29.2.72
Islamic Development Bank	12.8.74
Islamic Education, Scientific & Cultural Organisation (ISESCO)	1980
Islamic Fiqh Council	1982
Islamic History & Culture Research Centre	1976
Islamic International News Agency	1970
Islamic States Broadcasting Organisation	1975
Islamic States Centre for Statistical, Economic & Social Research Training	1977
Islamic Solidarity Fund	1974

PRINCIPAL REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Arab Gulf Co-operation Council (AGCC)	1981
League of Arab States	29.9.71

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

International Bank for Reconstruction & Development	23.12.71
International Civil Aviation Organisation	23.2.73
International Fund for Agricultural Development	1983
International Labour Organisation	31.1.94
International Maritime Organisation (IMO)	30.1.74
International Monetary Fund	23.12.71
International Telecommunications Union	28.4.72
United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)	10.2.72
United Nations Food & Agricultural Organisation	11.71
United Nations Industrial Development Organisation	6.85
United Nations Organisation	7.10.71

Universal Postal Union	17.8.71
World Health Organisation	25.7.71
World Meteorological Organisation	2.2.75
World Trade Organisation (observer status)	1.1.95

OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Inter-governmental Bureau for Informatics	6.9.86
International (Criminal) Police Organisation (Interpol)	26.9.72
International Association of Lighthouse Authorities	25.6.87
International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration	1986
International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO)	1985
International Hydrographic Organisation	25.6.87
International Institute of Administrative Science	1985
International Organisation for Legal Meteorology	1989
International Organisation for Training & Welfare of the Disabled	-
International Satellite Organisation (INTELSAT)	3.1.75
International Standardisation Organisation	1989
International Union Against Tuberculosis (IUAT)	1985
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	4.6.75
International Union of Child Welfare	1980
International Whaling Commission (IWC)	1980
Non-Aligned Movement	5.9.73
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)	1987
World Council for Welfare of the Blind	1979
World Scout Bureau (WSB)	1977

OTHER REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Afro-Asian Insurance Union	1981
Afro-Asian Legal Committee for Consultation	1986
Afro-Asian Organisation for Rural Development	1979
Arab Gulf Organisation for Support of Developmental Activities for the United Nations (AGFUND)	
Regional Organisation for Protection of the Maritime Environment	

INFORMATION

In September 1994 the Ministry of Information organised a four day seminar, 'Oman in History', at the Sultan Qaboos University, as one of the biggest and most successful events of the Year of Heritage. 86 distinguished historians and academics, including 19 from Arab and foreign universities attended the seminar. In his address, the Minister of Information, H.E. Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas, noted that the Year of Heritage crowned the renaissance process which had brought in its wake much prosperity for the Omani people. The seminar, which attracted international attention to the Sultanate and its rich heritage, was a reaffirmation of the increasingly important role that the Ministry of Information is playing in the renaissance of Oman and the rapid strides it has made over the years.

For a realistic appreciation of Oman's achievements in the field of Information over the past 25 years, one must take into consideration the situation in the country until 1970. At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in that year, any form of news media was entirely lacking in the Sultanate. There were no newspapers, radio or television. Those who were fortunate enough to possess transistor radios had to tune in to radio broadcasts from abroad to get any news of what was going on in the outside world. Until 1970, instructions from the Sultan in Salalah were passed by radio telephone to the Army headquarters in Bait al Falaj and posted on the walls of Muscat. Now, by contrast, Oman radio broadcasts can be heard in every part of the Sultanate, and Oman television programmes can be received by 95% of the population - a remarkable achievement - in less than a quarter of a century.

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



in November, the Muscat medium-wave transmitter power was increased to 200 kW. Additional VHF FM transmitters were subsequently sited at Saham, Buraimi, Nizwa and Sur to strengthen and relay national broadcasts, and the short-wave service was extended by additional 100 kW transmitters at Muscat and Thumrait in the south.

In 1979 the two broadcasting studios at Muscat and Salalah were linked by space satellite to improve radio transmissions. Programmes are originated from Muscat during part of the day and from Salalah at other times, thus achieving fuller use of radio facilities. It has thus been possible to extend broadcasts from Muscat and Salalah to all parts of Oman, as well as to the Gulf and East Africa. The short-wave service can now be heard in Europe and Africa, and in North America. Broadcasts are now made in Arabic on 1242 kHz from Muscat, 1035 kHz from Salalah and on VHF FM for 19.5 hours daily, also in the English language on 90.4 MHz from Muscat and 94.3 MHz from Salalah for 15 hours. The main news in English is at 07.30, 14.30 and 18.30 hours daily, with news highlights and headlines at 11.00, 13.00 and 22.00 hours. Classical music is broadcast on the English service from after the news at 07.30 hours until 12.00 hours, and light and popular music from 15.00 hours to 22.00 hours daily.

▲ His Excellency, Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousef, Minister of State for Development Affairs, gives an interview to Radio Oman.

During 1994 transmissions totalled 12,789 hours; Arabic language transmissions were increased to 19.5 hours a day; and 15 hours a day in English on medium, short and FM waves. On special occasions and national holidays transmissions are increased to 24 hours a day. There are three news periods comprising three full news bulletins followed by live reports from a network of correspondents in 13 world capitals.

The radio library has been provided with a comprehensive range of reference books, magazines and newspapers to provide the radio staff with easy access to information they require for the preparation of their programmes. The technical library has also been provided with more than 45,000 tapes of songs, news programmes, sound effects and other archive material.

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

Extensive facilities for efficient outside television and radio transmissions are now employed. In order to extend and improve reception, 12 television relay transmitters have been installed; five in the Muscat area, three at Salalah and one each at Nizwa, Sur, Saham and Buraimi. These are in addition to the solar relay stations established throughout the Sultanate north of the 22nd parallel.

In October 1990, the Minister of Information signed an agreement with a French group for the further extension of television and radio facilities. The project involved the establishment of 16 main stations for television and radio, and 75 relay and strengthening stations linked with the 16 main stations. All were completed last year. Consultants have been appointed to supervise expansion of colour TV and FM radio to the area south of the 22nd parallel.

The Sultanate is a partner in the ARABSAT system and uses it to feed radio and TV signals to main transmitters. The facility has recently been improved to enable the TV service to be received directly from the satellite by those viewers with suitable equipment. From November 1992 transmission hours on television have been considerably increased, commencing at 08.00 hours daily, and ending at 01.00 hours. During national occasions, transmission continues until a late hour, and in the fasting month of Ramadan, TV transmission continues for nearly 21 hours daily. Besides the normal news bulletins at



20.00 and 22.00 hours, there are additional ones at 10.10 and 16.30 hours.

Oman Television screens documentary films to mark special occasions, such as the National Day celebrations. These films are shown in Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish and include the annual 'Meet the People' tour of His Majesty the Sultan, as well as other varied subjects. Other occasions on which Oman Television played a major role were the years which were dedicated by His Majesty to Youth, Agriculture, Industry and Heritage.

Television staff receive similar training to their colleagues in radio broadcasting, but, because of the more exacting requirements of television, the senior and more highly-skilled personnel are sent on courses abroad for up to five years, during which time they qualify in all branches of their profession. From the inception of television in 1974, the emphasis has been on Omanisation; now more than 90% of the staff members of the television stations in Muscat and Salalah are Omani. There are Omani engineers and technicians, as well as producers and news readers for both Arabic and English news.

Oman Television is a member of all the joint Gulf and Arab organisations that produce and exchange programmes. Many of the films it

▲ Omani actors in the Ministry's latest documentary film "Oman in History".

has produced have won awards in Arab and international competitions. 'The Sinbad Voyage' won the Toulon 6th International Festival Award for the best maritime exploration film. It also won a Paris prize for underwater photography, while another film 'Our Beautiful Environment' won the first prize in Kuwait.

The present headquarters of the Ministry of Information at Al Qurm was opened in 1989. It contains radio and TV studios, in addition to the administration. The comprehensive complex also provides residential accommodation as well as recreational and cultural facilities, including a swimming pool, tennis and squash courts and a cafeteria.

Since 1970, a wide variety of political, social and specialised journals have developed, independent of Government publications. There are now three Arabic daily newspapers, and two in the English language. The Oman News Agency, established in 1986, carries news about Oman and the region to many countries worldwide.

In 1990 the Ministry held a Sultanate of Oman exhibition at the European Parliament at Strasbourg, and in 1992 a highly successful 12-day exhibition at Budapest. Mutually useful business contacts were made, and the exhibition received extensive coverage in the Hungarian press.

The Ministry of Information maintains information offices and representatives in Egypt, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Britain and the U.S.A.

The Omani press has developed considerably in recent years. The number of Omani papers and magazines has now reached 28. Of these five are daily papers: "Oman", "Al Watan" and "Al Shabiba" published in Arabic, and two English newspapers, the "Oman Daily Observer" and the "Times of Oman". In addition there are four weekly magazines, "The Family", "The Lights", "The Faith" and "The Renaissance". There is also an official newspaper published twice a month which is of a legal nature. There are also magazines specialising in trade and economics, "Al Markazi" and "Al Ghurfa", and several others on specific subjects.

Oman News Agency (ONA)

ONA is the most recent information body that has been established in the Sultanate. The Muscat-based Agency plays a key role in

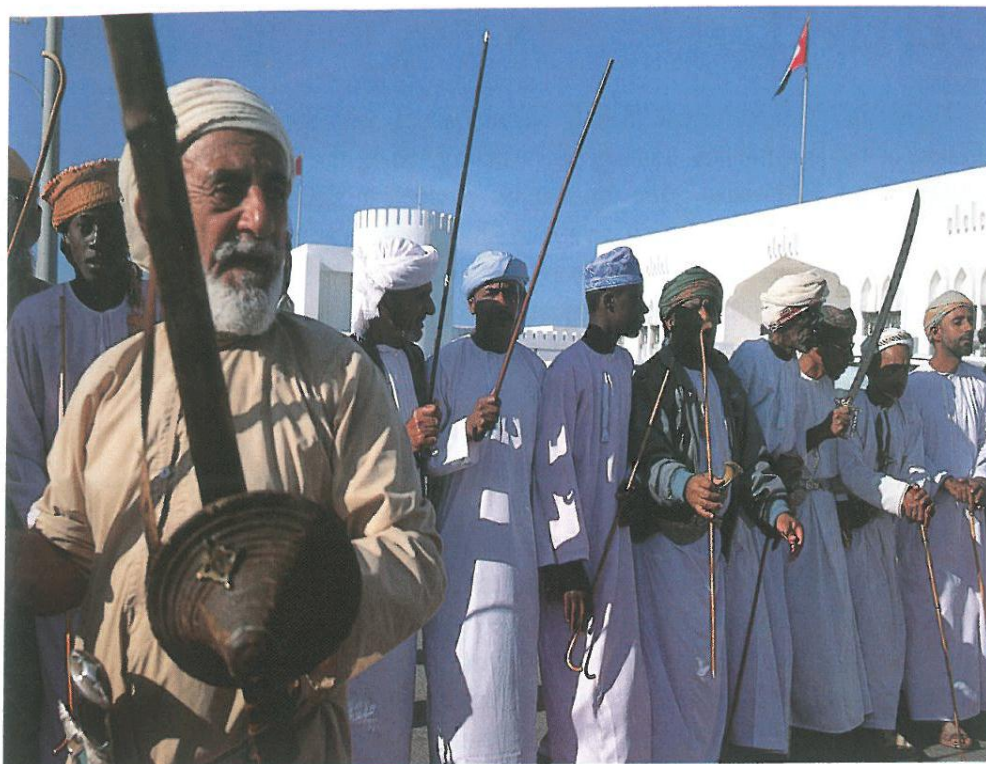


disseminating information about Oman both domestically and internationally. ONA was formally established by Royal Decree in May 1986. The Agency employs a large number of qualified young Omanis, who were sent overseas for training, and are now in charge of the editorial and administrative sections. Over 90% of the Agency has now been Omanised. ONA's headquarters has facilities that enable it to receive pictures from Reuters and AFP via satellite, and then distribute them to local news organisations. It receives transmissions from twelve Gulf and other Arab and international news agencies in Arabic and English, and then re-transmits them on its own network. The Agency maintains a team of roving reporters on a 24-hour basis. It also has correspondents in Arab and other foreign capitals who provide it with news, news analysis and documentary reports.

▲ The Sultanate's most popular TV morning programme on local newspapers being finalised by the presenters before live transmission.

Oman Centre for Traditional Music

The Oman Centre for Traditional Music is also situated in the Information complex. Founded in August 1983, the Centre is responsible for the collection and documentation of the traditional folk music of



▲ Traditional music is still a popular form of entertainment throughout the Sultanate.

Oman. It contains video tapes, sound recordings, colour photographs and slides, together with field recordings of the songs and dances which have been handed down over the years from generation to generation.

In 1994, a "Dictionary of Traditional Music in Oman", written by Yousef Shawqi was issued by the Centre, and this year has seen the publication of a collection of Omani Traditional Music by the International Institute for Traditional Music in Germany; a book entitled "Omani Traditional Art", an album of photographs and a 3-part series entitled "The Complete Documents of the International Symposium on the Traditional Music of Oman" (held here in 1985). A CD "The Music of an Ancient Civilisation" consisting of traditional Omani songs has also recently been issued.

Recently, the Centre participated in the 13th Session of the Executive Council of the Arab Academy of Music in Jordan (February 1994), in the International Conference of Sound Archives in Germany (September 1994) and in the International Council for Traditional Music Conference held in Canberra, Australia in January 1995.

DEFENCE

Under the guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, with his background of modern military training and Staff experience, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) have made considerable progress in the past 25 years. At the time of his accession, an armed struggle was in progress in the south, the rebels being sustained by external assistance. At that time the Sultan's Armed Forces were inadequately equipped and faced with an extremely difficult task in containing the situation. Gradually the situation was brought under control, with the result that victory was proclaimed at the end of 1975, and peace restored in the south of the country. By this time control and stability had been firmly established throughout the remainder of the Sultanate.

Now, 25 years after His Majesty's accession, all three Services of the Sultan's Armed Forces have been modernised and re-equipped, to a point where they are capable of defending the country against external aggression. Particular emphasis has been given to manpower training so that individual servicemen are fully capable of handling modern military equipment, systems and weapons. Physical fitness plays a major role in the training of young men in the SAF. Military exercises are held frequently to test the standards reached by individuals, units and formations. Apart from these, joint military exercises by all three services take place regularly with the Armed Forces of AGCC countries and other friendly states.

In addition to their purely military duties, the SAF has provided for the serviceman and his family in every field of welfare. The Military Welfare Services Directorate (MWS) provides servicemen with housing loans, houses, residential and agricultural land. In co-operation with the Morale Guidance and PR Directorate it also provides handicapped ex-servicemen and widows and children of servicemen with special services and other assistance.

Apart from their military capability, the SAF have played a full part in the overall development of the country. The engineers have made a remarkable contribution in road construction in some of the most remote and mountainous regions of the Sultanate. The role of the Forces' Medical Services is clearly reflected in the high standards achieved in the medical field, and the wide range of services it offers to the servicemen and their families. The military hospital at Al Khoudh, near Muscat, was honoured in 1993 by UNICEF as one of the leading hospitals in the world offering special care for children.



▲ The Royal Army of Oman Free Fall Parachute Team won six gold medals and took top honours in two Free Fall championships held in Germany, July 1995.

The Armed Forces are represented on the permanent committee in charge of the national strategy for the protection of the environment of Oman, and also provide assistance to the citizens at times of national disaster, including evacuation and rescue operations whenever needed.

The SAF follows a policy of continually enhancing the standards of awareness of their servicemen. New systems and equipment are being operated by experienced and qualified personnel. For this purpose the SAF have opened schools in the Services, with qualified staff. Young servicemen attend special courses to keep pace with modern technological developments. The SAF coordinates its teaching activities with the Sultan Qaboos University and the Oman Technical Industrial College (OTIC), and arranges visits by their staff to give lectures in schools and colleges. The SAF have also been granted special scholarships by OTIC whereby young servicemen attend specialised electronic and electrical engineering courses. Individuals also undergo courses in other Government institutes, such as the Institute for Public Administration. The SAF supervise cadet training in secondary schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

The Sultan's Armed Forces museum at Bait al Falaj provides a valuable and interesting record of their past achievements. The museum

consists of several wings representing the various Services, which display documents, models and old and modern weapons. The museum is open to visitors.

The Command and Staff College is one of the main training institutions in the Sultan's Armed Forces. It has been in operation since it was first established in 1987, and can be favourably compared with the world's leading military colleges. The College is now attended by officers from the Armed Forces of some of the other AGCC States.

The SAF sports teams frequently participate in international tournaments. The national shooting team has achieved good results in international championships, with the SAF Marksmanship Team taking part annually in the World Marksman's Championships, with considerable success, having won two championship cups. The national free-fall parachute teams won the Rhine Armies championships held in Germany in 1992.

The National Survey Authority was set up at the Ministry of Defence to carry out land surveys, and thus to play a vital role in the development planning of the country. It prepares maps, provides survey information, and furnishes the Government and private sectors with its products, in addition to the Armed Forces.

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO)

The Royal Army of Oman consists of infantry units with supporting arms and services. Physical endurance, complete mastery of personal weapons and equipment, and the full development of tactical skills are the keynotes of the training. It includes a parachute regiment, and the Firqat Forces. These latter were originally irregulars, but were formed into a regular force in 1975 to play a vital role alongside the formations and units of the Royal Army of Oman. They consist of the Rural Security Force and the Oman Reconnaissance Regiments, in addition to other units.

The Army exercises over an extensive area of varied terrain of mountains and desert. At the end of 1993 it carried out a major mobilisation exercise, Fajer 23, under the direction of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, which marked the culmination of a three-year training programme.

The SAF's supporting arms include the Sultan of Oman's Artillery, the first battery of which was formed in 1971, although the original artillery unit dates back to 1903. Equipped with modern weapons, the Artillery has its own school for the training of officers and men. The first armoured units were also formed that year. Now equipped with Challenger tanks, they are a formidable fighting force, also with their own training



▲ Jaguar ground-attack aircraft give a display during the National Celebrations.

school. The Signal Corps has been provided with highly advanced telecommunications and other technological facilities for operational command and control. It also has its own training establishment, where Signals personnel receive theoretical and practical instruction in operating and maintaining their equipment. SAF's engineering arm was formed in 1974 to provide engineering support for the Sultan's Armed Forces. The Engineers play an important role in the construction of military and civilian installations, particularly roads in regions hitherto inaccessible except by air. Other support is provided by the Transport arm, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, with their specialised training centre, and the Supply services.

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO)

The RAFO is equipped with an effective range of fighter, ground attack and transport aircraft, the crews of which, together with their support personnel have reached a very high standard of proficiency. Hawk fighter aircraft have been introduced in order to enhance the effectiveness of this branch of the Air Force. The early warning and control system has been modernised to cover the entirety of the air space of the Sultanate.



▲ His Majesty
inspects a fighter
aircraft of RAFO.

The RAFO provides its own comprehensive training for its technical personnel through specialist schools and institutes. These include the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy which serves as the main training centre for air crews. The Academy also trains and qualifies officers for other branches of the RAFO. An Air Force Technical College provides the Air Force's several branches with qualified technical staff. Large numbers of technicians graduate from the College each year. Specialised schools enable Air Force personnel to acquire advanced scientific and practical experience. Full aircraft maintenance is carried out in the Sultanate. Further modern equipment is being introduced to raise the maintenance capacity.

In addition to its military responsibilities, the RAFO renders assistance to citizens living in the mountains and remote areas. For example, it provides food and other necessary items to the people of the Jebel Akhdar by air when necessary, as well as the Governorate of Musandam and the southern regions of the Sultanate. It also operates a flying doctor service, vitally important to the inhabitants of those areas still remote from the country's road communications systems, by means of medical teams from the Ministry of Health's hospitals. In cooperation with other concerned organisations the Air Force plays an important role in rescue operations on land and at sea.



▲ Young ratings at the Science Laboratory of the Royal Navy of Oman Training Centre.

The RAFO also has a role in the conservation of the environment and in the combating of pollution in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Environment, and in locust control operations and maritime air reconnaissance in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO)

By 1970 the Navy of Oman, which in the previous century had dominated the waters of the Indian ocean, had been reduced to two armed dhows. Now, 25 years later, the Royal Navy of Oman has been developed into a highly competent fighting force, capable of carrying out its modern role and responsibilities with the utmost efficiency.

Following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970 a naval base was established in Muscat Bay. However, after a few years this was found to be inadequate for the growing Navy, so a new Naval training and maintenance and repair base was constructed at Wudam on the Batinah Coast.

The RNO Training Centre plays an essential role in providing the professional training for the many branches of the Navy. It undertakes the basic training of both officers and ratings, as well as advanced and



specialised career development courses. Further training is provided at various RNO specialised schools and afloat, in fire fighting, warfare systems, sea and fleet training. The Training Centre also conducts purpose-designed courses for the staff of the Royal Yacht Squadron, the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In 1992 the RNO took a significant step forward when it initiated the Naval Junior Staff School.

To further strengthen its capability, the RNO is being supplied with two missile corvettes, equipped with the appropriate combat systems. The first of these was launched in the UK last year. This new generation of vessels will substantially increase the fire-power of the fleet in its presence in the strategic areas of the coastline of the Sultanate.

Oman occupies an important strategic position at the Strait of Hormuz, the gateway



between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and is responsible for the safety of international shipping passing through it. Hence, the RNO has recognised the importance of hydrographic surveys, and has expanded its marine survey department and modernised its marine survey ship 'al Rahmaniyyah'. In surveying Oman's coasts and territorial waters the RNO has enlisted the aid of foreign experience. It has also sent a number of young Omani graduates of the Sultan Qaboos University on specialised courses abroad. The RNO recently issued the first Omani chart of Oman's waters in Arabic and English.

In March 1994 the RNO hosted the first-ever joint naval manoeuvres in its territorial waters involving warships of other AGCC States. During the year, the RNO also took part in other exercises with friendly states, and gained further expertise that will help it to develop its combat skills and its ability to defend the nation. It also carried out several local exercises of its own.

The RNV Shabab Oman, a superb sail training ship, plays an important role in training young Omanis from a number of state sectors in marine skills and crafts. Last year it visited France to join in the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Normandy landings during World War II, visiting en route Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Tunisia and Gibraltar.

◀▼ Modern Royal Navy of Oman ships on exercises contrast with the old 'boum' 'Nasr al Bahr' in service before 1970.

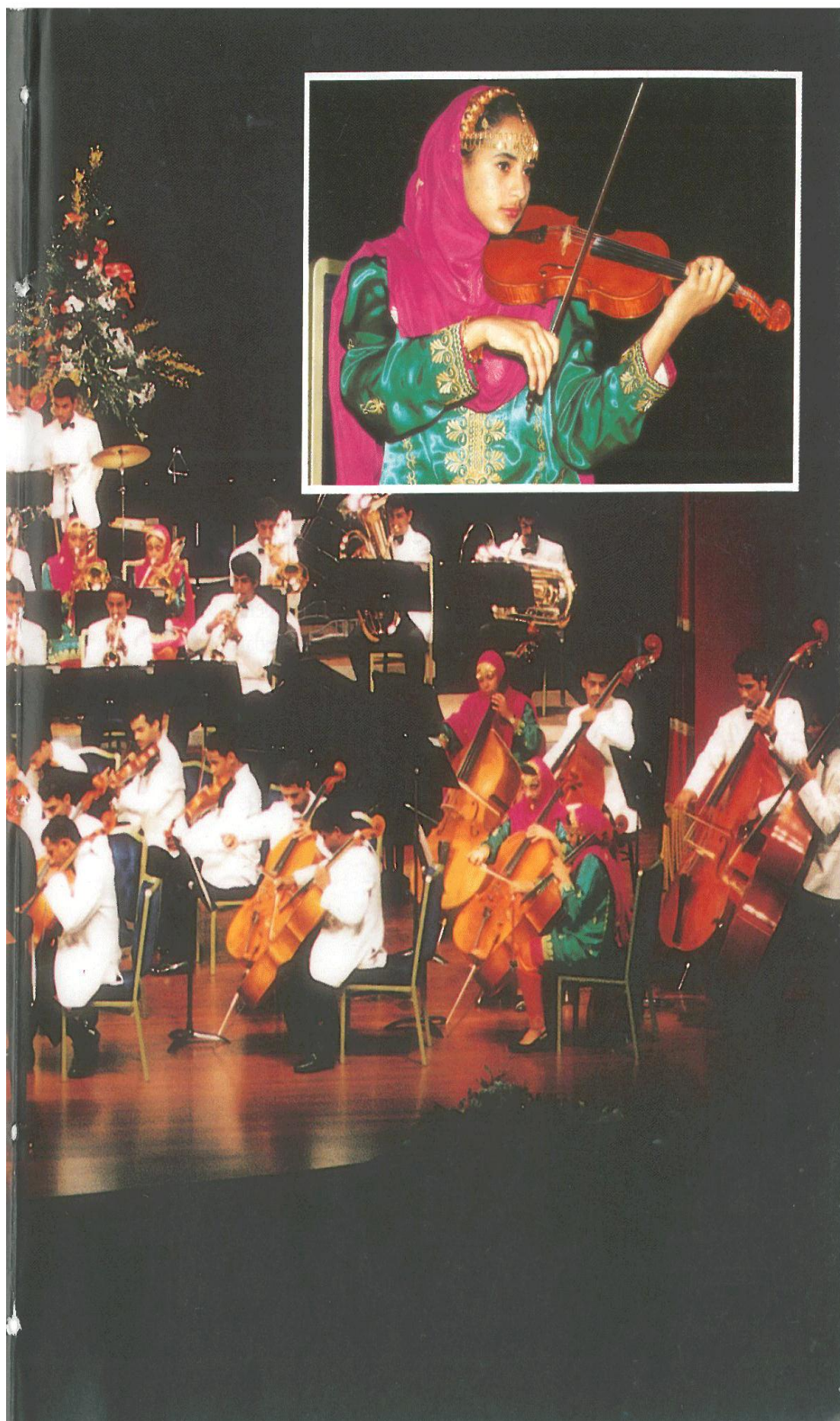
The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO)

The Royal Guard Regiment was formed in 1973 with the responsibility for the security of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Majesty's guests and the protection of Royal property. It is a corps d'elite, consisting of some of the fittest and best trained men in the Army, and is a formidable fighting force, as well as performing ceremonial and other duties. In 1981 it was expanded and reorganised into a full Brigade. In 1985, coinciding with the celebrations of the 15th anniversary of His Majesty's accession, His Majesty bestowed on the Royal Guard Brigade the signal honour of designating 1st November annually as Royal Guard Brigade (RGB) Day. It was on that date in the same year that the Brigade received its Royal Standard from His Majesty. On 1st November 1987 the title was changed to the Royal Guard of Oman.

In November 1976 the Royal Guard was given the task by His Majesty of establishing a school for providing advanced technical education for boys related to serving members of the Royal Guard. The school has 226 students, all of whom follow a curriculum which is heavily biased towards engineering and technology. Although the medium of instruction

▶▶ Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra under the aegis of the Royal Guard of Oman.





for the technological subjects is English, entrance to the school is regulated by means of a competitive examination in Arabic subjects, which ensures that the facility is open to all Omanis, irrespective of their previous experience of the English language. Competition for the 30 places each year is fierce. The success of the school can best be judged by the quality of its output: graduates are well-trained, disciplined, engineering technicians with a fluent command of technical English.

The Royal Guard has been entrusted with another important responsibility. In 1985 His Majesty directed that a Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra be formed, and a school was accordingly established near Muscat. More recently it was moved to its permanent location at Bait al Barakah, which contains excellent facilities for every aspect of musical training and general education, and is a unique boarding establishment attended by young Omanis of both sexes. The Royal Guard maintains three highly-trained military bands - one of them mounted - which perform on State occasions. The bands have earned a high reputation for their performances abroad, notably at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Scotland, and at the Sydney International Tattoo in Australia.

▼ The standard of marksmanship is traditionally high.



ROYAL OMAN POLICE

Oman is a notably law abiding country, and there is a total absence of organised crime. This is due to the strong influence of Islamic principles, close family ties and Omani customs and traditions. Community spirit also flourishes under strong leadership. In comparison with many other countries, the casual crime rate is remarkably low. Another factor is that the Royal Oman Police, which is a highly efficient and modernised Force enjoys public support and confidence.

In 1970 no such thing as a National Police Force existed in the Sultanate of Oman. Outside the Capital Area the maintenance of law and order was the responsibility of the Walis and tribal leaders. In Muscat there was what was generally known as the Town Police, whose writ only extended to the towns of Muscat and Muttrah. Consisting of one officer and 75 constables, it had its headquarters at the Bab al Kabir in Muscat.

Following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in July 1970, a new modern police force, the Royal Oman Police (ROP), was created and quickly established throughout the Sultanate, since when peace and stability have been maintained throughout the country. Over the ensuing years, the ROP has expanded to undertake responsibilities greater than those of police forces in many other countries. Apart from conventional police duties, the ROP is responsible for immigration control and passports, customs, civil defence and fire-fighting, coastguard operations and the prison service. Omani women have an important role in the ROP, as in other Government organisations.

The Royal Oman Police Academy (ROPAN) was opened in Nizwa in 1980 to provide training in a wide range of specialised police work such as finger-printing, criminal investigation, law, driving and traffic regulations, and foreign language courses. Advanced courses in secretarial skills are also held at the Academy. In addition to other sources of recruitment, ROPAN attracts young Omani university students. His Majesty the Sultan has decreed that 5th January each year is ROP day.

The great increase in traffic on the roads of Oman has created its own problems, resulting in an increase in accidents and fatalities.



However, the vital role played by the Directorate-General of Traffic in bringing this situation under control resulted in a fall in traffic accidents in 1994. Statistics show that these accidents are most frequent among younger people. Speeding and careless driving are the commonest causes. Heavy fines and possible loss of a driving licence have played a major part in the reduction of these accidents. To carry out these duties, the ROP is equipped with high-powered vehicles with the latest means of communications for road patrols and answering emergency calls. An annual Traffic Week takes place simultaneously in all AGCC States. It involves intensive information and advance campaigns in the form of personal one-to-one contacts between police and public in the streets and on the highways, as well as lectures, radio and TV programmes and newspaper features.

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

The absence of a drugs problem in the Sultanate is largely due to the vigilance and efficiency of the ROP through its Customs Service at the country's points of entry. In addition to the manual and electronic examinations that take place at entry points, the Customs also receive valuable assistance from the Mounted Unit's dog section. Drug prevention operations and suppression of other criminal activity are aided by the close cooperation that exists between the ROP and other security organisations in the AGCC and Arab League States.

◀ His Majesty
presents Colours to
the Royal Oman
Police at a ceremony
at Nizwa.



▲ Royal Oman
Police women under
training.

The Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations has a major role in crime prevention and the apprehension of criminals. It is then the responsibility of the Directorate-General of Public Prosecutions to arrange arraignment in court. The Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations possesses a highly specialised laboratory with the most up-to-date equipment, including computerised finger-printing linked to international police operations.

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

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

The several million people who enter the Sultanate annually through its various entry points are processed by the Directorate-General of Immigration. Its operations are assisted by the ROP's

► Advanced technology plays an important part in Police work.

comprehensive computer system, which enables the regional departments to serve the public in their own areas. Its services include the issue and renewal of passports, identity cards and road permits, and the administration of expatriate residence visas.

The Coastguard Division possesses a fleet of modern craft for the protection of the coastline of the Sultanate. It coordinates its operations with the Royal Navy of Oman.

It also provides assistance to fishing vessels and other ships in distress.

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

In view of the ROP's continuous endeavour to provide medical care to its members, a Directorate of Medical Services was established in 1974 to provide free medical services to Force members and their families. The present police hospital was officially opened in 1976. Now, medical services are of the highest standard and the hospital has expanded its services and out-patient clinics. At the same time, training courses are held to provide supporting technical staff in various medical specialisations and health sciences. The hospital clinics are well equipped and staffed by qualified Omani personnel.

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



ECONOMY

Since oil went into production in 1967 the Sultanate has had an oil-based economy, subject to the vicissitudes of the world price of oil. This was well illustrated in 1986 when there was a sudden and violent slump in this price, necessitating a 11.3% devaluation in the value of the Omani Rial. This unpredictability also creates difficulties for forward budgeting. Although the world price of oil has made a considerable recovery since 1986, during the past year it has hovered between \$12 and \$16, which is below the figure of \$18 a barrel - a comfortable value for the Omani economy. Since the start of the Renaissance in 1970 Oman has always maintained its financial affairs prudently, a fact confirmed by a team from the World Bank during its recent visit to the Sultanate in January this year. Nevertheless, the annual budget deficit has been increasing in recent years, necessitating reductions in departmental budgets in 1994. This policy of reducing the budget deficit will continue without, as far as possible, affecting basic Government services, such as health and education. According to the World Bank the budget deficit of the Sultanate compares favourably with those of other Gulf States.

The goal of this year's budget is to achieve a maximum reduction in the deficit from the level to which it has built up in recent years. The estimated budget deficit for 1995 is RO 312 million, or 17% of total revenues, which is still high, and every effort will be made to reduce it still further in future years. Estimated expenditure during the past year was RO 2,029.5 million, while revenues totalled about RO 1,722.7 million,, for a deficit of RO 306.8 million. This represents a very substantial deficit reduction from RO 518.7 million in 1993. The Government intends to achieve a balanced budget during the coming Fifth Five Year Plan, 1996-2000.

By Middle East standards, Oman's oil resources are modest. However, according to the most recent estimates, reserves have now topped 5 billion barrels, and are expected to rise even further as new discoveries are made and recovery methods are improved. The Sultanate's oil will at least last well into the next century. Even more important are the reserves of natural gas which stand at

► Old and New - an Omani soldier in traditional uniform guards the entrance to the Ministry of Finance and Economy, Muscat.

▼ Coins issued by the Central Bank of Oman, November 1994, to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Albu-Said Dynasty.







22 trillion cubic ft this year, and which are yet to be fully developed. Gas now fuels the Al Ghubrah power and water desalination complex, the industrial estate at Rusayl and the copper-smelting complex near Sohar. By the year 2000 Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) should start being exported, which will be a considerable boost to the economy of the Sultanate. This is dealt with in more detail in the chapter on oil and gas.

Other steps that are being taken to expand the sources of national income are the privatisation programme, and the stimulation of domestic and foreign investment. Investments abroad are also being encouraged. In the late 80's the Government set up the Oman Oil Company (OOC) for the purpose of investing in foreign commercial enterprises and oil trading operations. The Sultanate has formed a strategic alliance with Caltex of the United States to pursue joint projects in Asia. Other projects under study include refineries in Thailand, India and Pakistan. Oman has also joined in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, to carry crude oil from Kazakhstan's Tengiz oil field to the Black Sea, and is involved in an oil exploration and production-sharing venture in West Kazakhstan. Agreement has recently been reached for the construction of an under-sea pipeline from Oman to India, to provide an additional outlet for Omani gas.

▲ His Excellency, Qais bin Abdul Munim al Zawawi, Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs, chairs the Conference held on the Sultanate's future economic planning, at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel on 3rd and 4th June this year.

From the beginning of the renaissance in 1970, the Government has been keenly aware of the necessity for diversifying the economy away from oil, and a considerable degree of success has been achieved in this respect. Unlike many of its neighbours, the Sultanate possesses natural resources other than gas and oil. The principal non-oil resources are agriculture, fisheries and minerals. To these can be added tourism, which suffered a slump during the period of the Gulf War, but has since made a strong recovery, and is being developed rapidly. Medium and light industry are being fast expanded. In the past few years industrial estates have been created at Sohar, Raysut, and most recently at Nizwa, in addition to the existing large industrial estate at Rusayl, near Muscat, which is still growing. Considerable mineral resources are yet to be exploited. Copper and chromite is already mined, refined and exported.

An important by-product of this diversification policy is the increased opportunities for jobs that are being provided for school-leavers. Promotion of the commodity-producing sectors has led to corresponding expansion in trade, finance and related services. The enhancement and efficiency of these services is vital for the stable expansion of private sector activities in production and trading. These services are playing an invaluable role in supporting the economic progress of the Sultanate.

The rate of inflation has been kept well under control during the past five years. Until recently the major inflation factor has been the demand for housing, which has exceeded supply. But, at the present time, new construction is fast reducing demand, and rents are coming down. As would be expected, commodity prices have been fluctuating, influenced by world prices outside the control of the Government. Generally speaking prices have been very stable since 1993. A general decline in world commodity prices together with the restrained monetary policy followed by the Central Bank have played a major part in keeping the rate of inflation well under control.

Oman's non-oil exports continue to grow rapidly. A preliminary estimate suggests that non-oil commodity exports rose nearly 19 per cent in 1994 to RO 145 million, from RO 122 million in 1993. Oil exports were little changed from 1993 at about RO 1,627 million. When re-exports are included, total exports were in excess of RO 2,130 million, while imports were RO 1,543 million, to provide an estimated trade surplus of RO 587 million.

Although the Omani rial is linked to the dollar, the effects of the dollar's decline tend to be dampened by the diversity of Oman's sources of supply. By diversifying the sources of its imports, Oman has been able to minimise the negative effects of chaos in the currency market. The dollar tends to be rising against some of the currencies of Oman's trading partners, while it is falling against others.

The Government's Fourth Five-Year Plan (1991-96), meanwhile, is proceeding on schedule. Considerable success has been achieved in the diversification of the economy. 62% of the GDP is now being generated outside the oil and gas sectors. In 1975 it was only 33%. The current Five-Year Plan forecasts that Oman's per capita income will reach RO2,685 by the end of this year. This is being done by restructuring the economy and directing appropriate levels of investment to strategic sectors, especially agriculture, fisheries, industry, mining and services. Average annual GDP growth rates are estimated at about 11.1% for non-oil sectors and 6% in service sectors. The Plan emphasises the need for the development of human resources, and allocation of investments to the various regions of the Sultanate outside Muscat, thus reducing regional disparities. To achieve the Plan's objectives, total public and private expenditure will rise by 39% during the Plan to RO4,097 million compared with RO2,943 million in the third Five-Year Plan. To encourage private investment, incentives are being made available to entrepreneurs whose projects meet certain minimum standards, including production for export, import substitution, use of local materials and employment of Omani labour. The Government is also initiating new measures to stimulate foreign investment in Oman. The Commercial Investment and Labour Laws are being reviewed, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is planning to establish a one-stop investment office where all administrative requirements can be met.

In February this year, two loan agreements were signed between the Government and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. Under the agreements, the Fund will finance phase one of the Rusayl-Nizwa dual carriageway project, and phase five of the Al Ghubra power station and desalination plant extension project. Under the first loan agreement RO13 million will be advanced towards financing the dual-carriageway project, which will cost RO17.7 million. The second agreement provides a loan of RO15.6 million towards funding the RO36.7 million Al Ghubra project. The Fund is currently studying a number of other development enterprises listed under the current

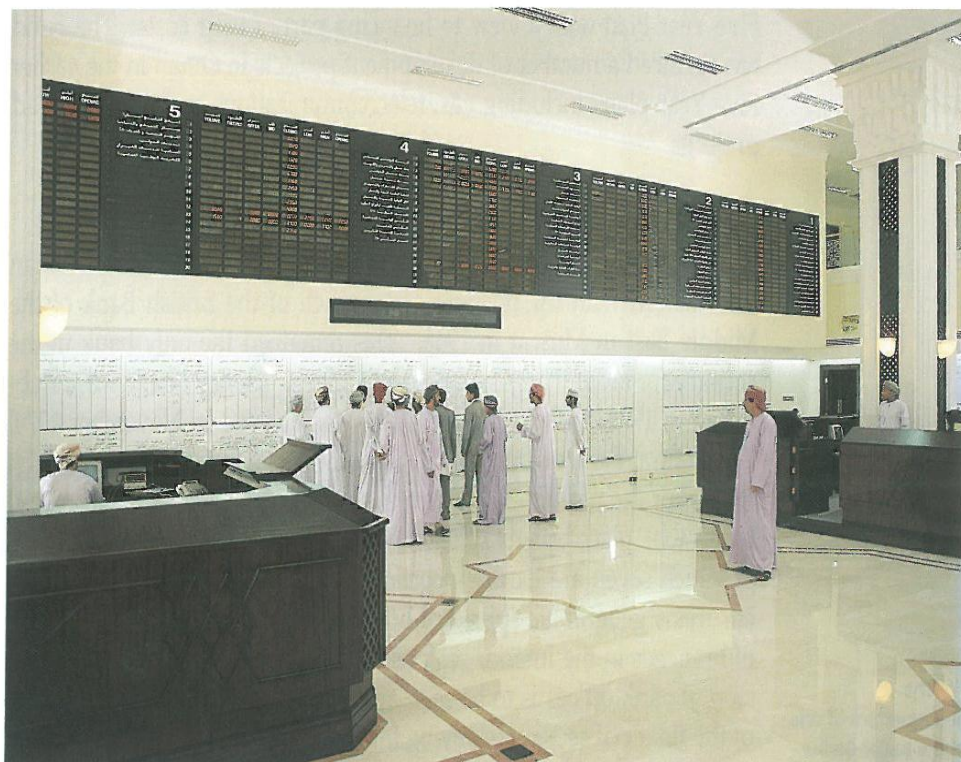
Five-Year Plan with a view to financing part of their costs. The Fund has financed a number of development projects in Oman in the earlier Five-Year plans including gas, telecommunications and regional road projects.

Banking in the Sultanate

The emergence of the banking system in the Sultanate of Oman commenced with the opening of a branch of the British Bank of the Middle East in Muscat in 1948. This remained the only bank in the country for more than 20 years. The Oman Currency Board was established in 1972, and the Banking Law was enacted in November 1974. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) assumed its full powers on April 1st 1975. For the period 1993-94 three mergers of six locally incorporated banks took place bringing the total number of commercial banks to 18, of which seven are locally incorporated. The branch licensing policy ensures a geographic spread of branches by encouraging the opening of branches in the Interior regions of the country. The orderly expansion of bank offices is to be seen as a prerequisite to the development of the financial sector, conveying to citizens the virtues of thrift and efficient use of credit. The commercial banks' domestic branch network

▼ The headquarters of one of the major banks in Oman.





stood at 278 branches at the end of last year. The CBO has required the commercial banks to observe a minimum capital holding, which has been raised to RO10 million for local incorporated banks and to RO3 million for foreign banks. This has been done mainly to strengthen the banking system and to encourage the merger of locally incorporated banks.

▲ The day commences at the Sultanate's Stock Exchange, Ruwi.

By the middle of 1994 all banks in Oman not only met the minimum prescribed 8% ratio, but in the majority of cases had a capital in excess of this requirement, enabling them to provide a cushion for future expansion. Another development in the period 1993-94 was the lifting of the ceiling on Rial Omani deposit and lending rates. With effect from October 1993 the Central Bank deregulated interest rates on deposits, thereby paving the way for market forces to decide them.

From June 25th 1994 all lending rates except those relating to consumer loans of RO9,000 and less were deregulated, thus freeing both deposit and lending rates from the regulatory system. The Central Bank has been pursuing a policy to broaden as well as deepen existing financial mechanisms so as to expand the money and capital markets. Furthermore, the CBO has allowed banks to issue negotiable certificates of deposits within a certain regulatory framework aimed at

improving Banks' competitiveness and extending the range of services offered by banks to their customers. Meanwhile, since October last year, the CBO has issued its own deposit certificates to commercial banks for proper liquidity and money market management.

In addition to the 91-day treasury bills offered to commercial banks, the CBO has begun the issue of 30-day treasury bills to provide the banks with a short term liquidity instrument in their portfolio.

The sale of Government development bonds has been brisk, with sales to commercial banks, pension funds and other financial and non-financial companies, individuals and non-residents particularly in neighbouring AGCC countries.

The CBO monitors the progress of the banks' Omanisation policies. According to the latest figures reported by banks the ratio of Omani personnel stood at 80.6% in mid-1994 against the target of 90% by 1995. In general it can be said that banks have co-operated, but they will have to concentrate on improving the percentage at management level.

The CBO is the issuer of currency, banker to the Government and lender of last resort to the banking system. With a capital of RO one million in 1975, the total assets of the CBO had grown to RO830.7 million by 1993, of which 87% were foreign assets. As issuer of development bonds on behalf of the Government, the CBO issued the first batch of these bonds in August 1991, and the ninth issue in September 1993, with a maturity date of five years, and an annual interest rate of 7%. The current Fourth Five-Year Plan calls for a total of RO429 million, which seems quite attainable judging by current performances.

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

A new development has been the introduction of credit guarantees to Omani companies engaged in exporting goods of Omani origin to other AGCC countries, against default by buyers. Under an agreement signed with the Oman Government Programme a US\$ 10 billion line of credit is made available to re-finance loans given to Omani exporters who have proven success and competence in the export business.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Until oil went into production in 1967 the meagre trading resources of the Sultanate of Oman were limited to dates, limes and skins. Otherwise the country had a subsistence economy. In the early years of the renaissance it therefore followed that the development of the basic infrastructure of the country was entirely dependent on an oil-based economy, subject to the vicissitudes of the world price of oil. Fortunately, during these formative years of the development of the country, the world price of oil was high. However, from the start of the renaissance His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and his Government were acutely aware of the vulnerability of the economy of the country, and were determined to diversify its economy as soon as possible. Much has already been achieved in this direction, but the Sultanate will continue to have an oil-based economy into the foreseeable future. The development of a Liquid Natural Gas industry in the near future is expected to make an important contribution.

Government policy is to create a national economy based on private enterprise, devoid of monopolistic practices. Consistent with this is the objective of ensuring the rapid growth of viable industries, utilising indigenous raw materials as much as possible. To this end the private sector has a leading role to play on the basis of competition in a free economy.

The years 1991 and 1992 were nominated Years of Industry. A master plan for industrial development (1991-2005), was prepared by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). The Plan projects a growth of about 12.9% per annum during the current Fourth Five-Year Plan (1991-1995) and around 10% in the Fifth Plan (1996-2000). Recently, an industrial master plan has been prepared, at the Ministry's request, by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Their final report recommends a growth rate of 13% and 13.5% per annum for the manufacturing sector during the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Development Plans respectively. The two Plans will provide a forum for all those concerned with industry to work in close cooperation in order to accelerate industrialisation, while maximum support and incentives are offered by the Government. The Government's drive to encourage businessmen to set up industrial units outside the capital has met with a very good response.

As a part of essential infrastructural facilities to be provided to the manufacturing industries, a planned programme for establishing fully serviced Industrial Estates has been implemented. Phase I of this



▲ A sophisticated contact lens factory in operation at the Rusayl Industrial Estate.

programme was the setting up in 1983 of an Industrial Estate in Rusayl, situated about 45 km from the capital and the port of Mina Sultan Qaboos. Seeb International Airport is 6 km from the Estate. The Estate is in all respects fully-serviced with its own power station, fuelled by natural gas and its own water supply. On completion the Estate was 100 hectares in area, comprising 125 plots. By the end of 1985 13 factories were in production, and during the following two years 17 advance factories were completed. In 1987 natural gas pipelines were laid in the Estate. Phase I was completed in 1989 with the provision of accommodation for about 1,000 workers with all essential services, including shops and a cinema. By the beginning of 1994 62 factories were in production on the Rusayl Industrial Estate. In the same year 22 advance factories were constructed on the Estate.

In 1987 action was initiated to study, plan and design two industrial estates: at Sohar in the north, and Raysut in the south. In 1993 Phase I of the Sohar Industrial Estate was completed, involving the development of 39 hectares of land, divided into 68 industrial plots, provided with all essential utilities and facilities, as well as the construction of eight advance factories and administrative buildings. By 1994, nine factories were in production and a further 19 projects received approval.

During 1993 work on Phase I of the Raysut Industrial Estate was completed. This Phase included the development of 31 hectares of land, divided into 56 industrial plots supplied with all essential utilities and facilities, as well as six advance factories and administrative buildings. During the same year a Consultant was appointed to study and plan an Industrial Estate at Nizwa in the Interior with an area of 80 hectares, 26 hectares of which would be developed in Phase I. In the following year Phase I of the Nizwa Industrial Estate was completed with all essential utilities and administrative offices. Studies have now been completed for sites for proposed Industrial Estates at Sur in the south-east, Buraimi in the Interior, and Khassab in the Musandam.

The emphasis of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1991-95) being on the industrial sector, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos directed that this development in the Sultanate must give priority to industries which rely on agriculture and fisheries products, as well as those, both light and medium, which depend on local raw materials. They must meet the basic needs of the country and provide employment for the Omani people. He further directed the Government to provide all that is necessary to promote vocational training programmes for the national workforce. In addition, full support is to be given to young people who are committed to the principle of self-employment, as well as to those who provide jobs for Omanis. Increasingly, larger export-orientation has to be given to the manufacturing sector for achieving economies of scale and international competitiveness.

The Government gives every encouragement to the development of the private industrial sector by providing the following incentives:-

1. Free surveys of industrial investment opportunities.
2. Provision of interest-free Government loans to industry, in addition to loans provided by the Oman Development Bank.
3. Exemption from customs duties on imports of equipment and raw materials required for production purposes.
4. Tariff protection through the imposition of customs duties on imported goods which compete with local products, or prohibition or restriction of their importation, taking into consideration the quality and quantity of local production and the interests of the consumer.
5. Provision of planned and serviced industrial plots for the establishment of factories.

The Oman Textile Mills, the first of its kind in the AGCC countries, went into production six years ago. It has an investment of RO 8 million, and is the most modern of its kind. It has its own training centre



▲ A cable factory, Rusayl Industrial Estate.

for young Omanis. It is intended that the textile industry should stimulate the establishment of other related industries. The growth in the clothing industry has been considerable, and by 1994 there were over 40 enterprises exporting various types of clothing to many parts of the world.

One of the earliest industrial projects in the Sultanate was the flour mill at Muttrah, which has been in operation since the 1970s. Its capacity has been increased in subsequent years, and it also produces animal feed.

The idea of establishing a cement industry was initiated and encouraged by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. As a result the Ministry of Commerce and Industry planned the Oman Cement Company, which was formed in 1977. The construction of the plant was completed in 1983 with an annual production capacity of 624,000 tonnes. The plant is situated at the Industrial Estate at Rusayl, and the basic raw material quarries for limestone and silica are nearby. In 1994 the company recorded sales of 922,022 tonnes of cement. Another cement plant was constructed at Raysut in the south and went into production in 1984. Its initial production capacity was 210,000 tonnes annually, and over succeeding years the Raysut Cement Company has increased its production capacity to 250,000 tonnes annually. The Company has

ambitious plans for further expansion, and its production for 1997 is targeted at 750,000.

At the outset of the preparation of the Sultanate's industrial master plan in December 1989, UNIDO foresaw the possibility of making polyolefins from the heavier hydrocarbons contained in the natural gas which is burned in the power plants of the Capital Area and Sohar. From mid-1990 to mid-October 1993, the opportunity for downstream processing of natural gas into higher value-added products has been the subject of successive studies, culminating in a feasibility study prepared for the Ministry to lay the foundations for a joint venture to make a wide range of grades of polyethylene and polypropylene. The project is an integrated gas-based Polyolefins Complex which envisages extraction of its feedstocks from the Government gas system pipeline, cracking them to ethylene and at a later stage to propylene and polymerizing to high density and linear low density polyethylene and then to polypropylene.

The discovery of quality silica sand in quantity in the country has encouraged the private sector to show interest in establishing the production of glassware. The existence of extensive deposits of good quality gypsum in the Southern Region has led the Ministry to assess the possibility of using this resource for making gypsum fibre board. A profitability evaluation of the economics of recovering potash from the salt deposits of the Umm al Samim is currently being carried out.

The export of Omani goods has steadily increased as more industries have been established based on local resources. The recently introduced export guarantee scheme is proving to be highly successful. In 1989 the export of goods by 64 industrial establishments was worth RO 90.14 million. By 1994 exports from 117 industrial establishments had increased to RO 124.39 million.

The Oman Development Bank (ODB) plays an important role in implementing Government measures aimed at encouraging greater private participation in the development of the country. Since its inception in 1979 ODB has lent nearly RO 70 million to private businesses. It is now doubling its share capital to RO 20 million, the RO 10 million with which it has operated until now being inadequate under present circumstances. The ODB cannot lend at one time a sum exceeding one-tenth of its net worth. Its current net worth comprising capital and reserves, is under RO 20 million. The Government has been requested to consider its loans to the Bank, amounting to RO 16 million, as subordinate loans, making them part of the institution's net worth. 54% of ODB shares are held by the Government, 6% by Omani

individuals and organisations, and 40% by regional and international institutions.

A new Commercial Law came into force in 1990, replacing the previous law which dated back to 1974. It is a wide-ranging enactment, which directly affects every person and company engaged in trade or business in the Sultanate. The terms of the code widely define the individuals and commercial activities to whom it applies. These include foreign businesses trading in Oman. Foreign investment in business is welcomed, and is regulated by The Foreign Capital Investment Law. The minimum Omani investment in a joint venture company should be not less than 49%. Foreign investment up to 65% may be permitted by the Minister of Commerce & Industry on the recommendation of the Committee for Foreign Capital Investment. Even 100% foreign capital could be permitted with the approval of the Development Council, provided the project is considered as contributing to the national economy and its capital is not less than RO 500,000. The Government attaches particular importance to attracting direct foreign investment in the manufacturing sector. The Sultanate allows AGCC citizens to hold shares totalling up to 25% of the capital of the existing Omani-owned public joint-stock companies, provided that approval is given at the annual general meetings of these companies. However, in new public joint stock companies 49% of the capital could be held by AGCC citizens.

Industrial Development Department (IDD)

The Industrial Development Department was set up in 1988 within the Ministry in collaboration with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency. Its main activities are as follows:-

1. Advisory and information services
2. Diagnostic studies
3. Management training
4. Implementation of the 5-S programme (a quality management programme)
5. Promotional publications

The Department's aim is the promotion of industries in the Sultanate, and the IDD accordingly extends its advisory services to investors. The advisory service provides investors with information about market technology, manufacturing processes and feasibility studies. IDD also familiarises investors with the rules and procedures required in obtaining an industrial licence and the incentives provided by the Government for industrial projects. IDD conducts diagnostic studies

to assist ailing industries and to aid healthy industries in maintaining their profitability. To this end, IDD has created an in-house programme that will analyse the financial statements of any industry and provide indices of profitability, activity, and profit planning for any company. The programme will also provide information on Omanisation. The management training programme, established in 1991, is targeted at upgrading the skills of Omani managers. It was announced last year that the IDD intends to expand its services and increase its staff.

Tourism

It is the Government's intention to expand tourism as rapidly as possible so that it will become a major factor in the economy of the country. There is a growing tourist interest in Oman, and in the winter season ending in April 1995 tourist groups from European countries and Japan amounting to 14,000 tourists are expected to visit the country. All the major hotels are fully booked at the time of going to press.

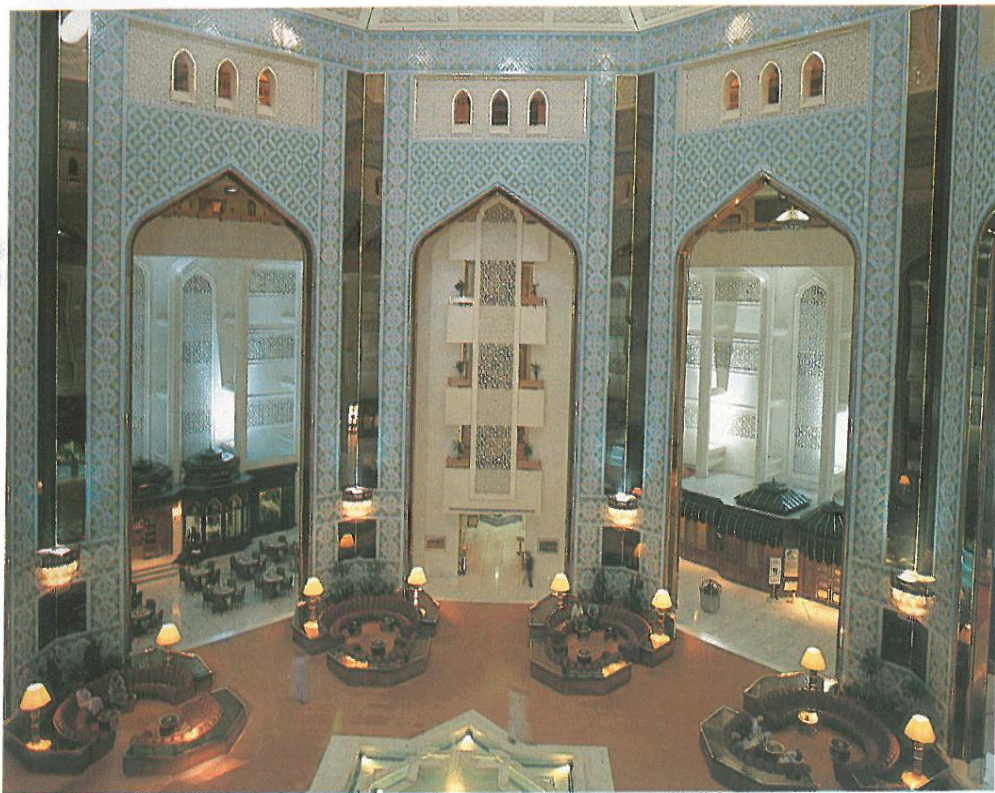
The Sultanate has much to offer the tourist in scenery, climate, historic interest and water sports, as a politically stable and safe location for a holiday. The mild, but sunny winter climate is attractive to Europeans and others escaping from the rigours of the northern winter, while the cooler monsoon climate of the south offers relief from the searing heat of the Gulf in summer to the citizens of that region.

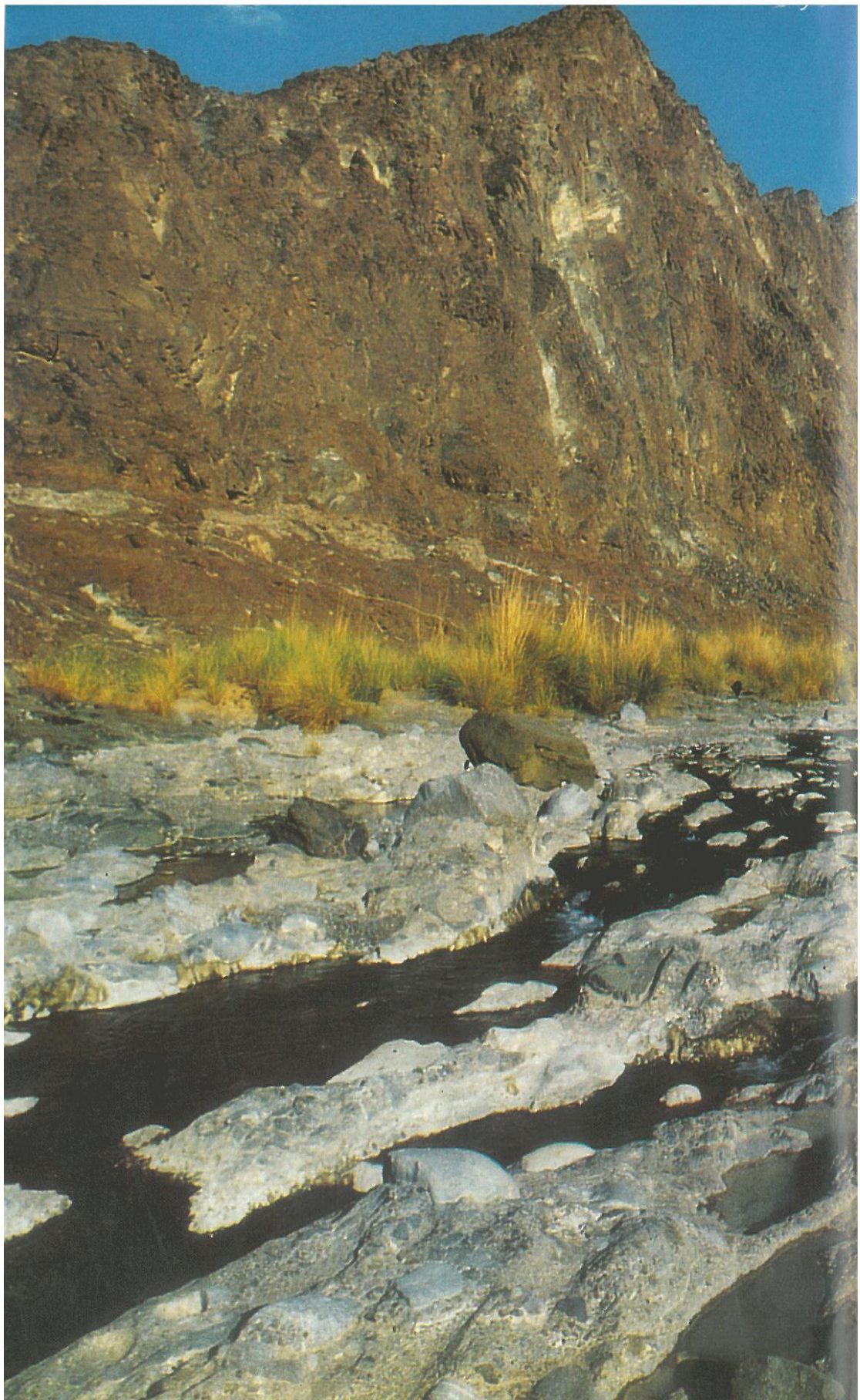
Tourism was non-existent in Oman until recently, and now the emphasis is on quality. The Government has proceeded cautiously to ensure that development is pursued in a well-planned manner. A Master Plan was prepared through the World Tourism Organisation in 1990, and its major recommendation laid stress on selectivity and quality. In 1970 there was only one small hotel, in Muttrah. There are currently 39 hotels in the country, of which five are Government-owned, and of these the Muscat Intercontinental and the Seeb Novotel are planned to be privatised. In 1995 there are two 5-star hotels under construction in Nizwa and Muscat, in addition to a 3-star hotel in Muscat. Elsewhere in the Sultanate there are five other hotels under construction, three of which are in Dhofar and will be in addition to the Holiday Inn in Salalah.

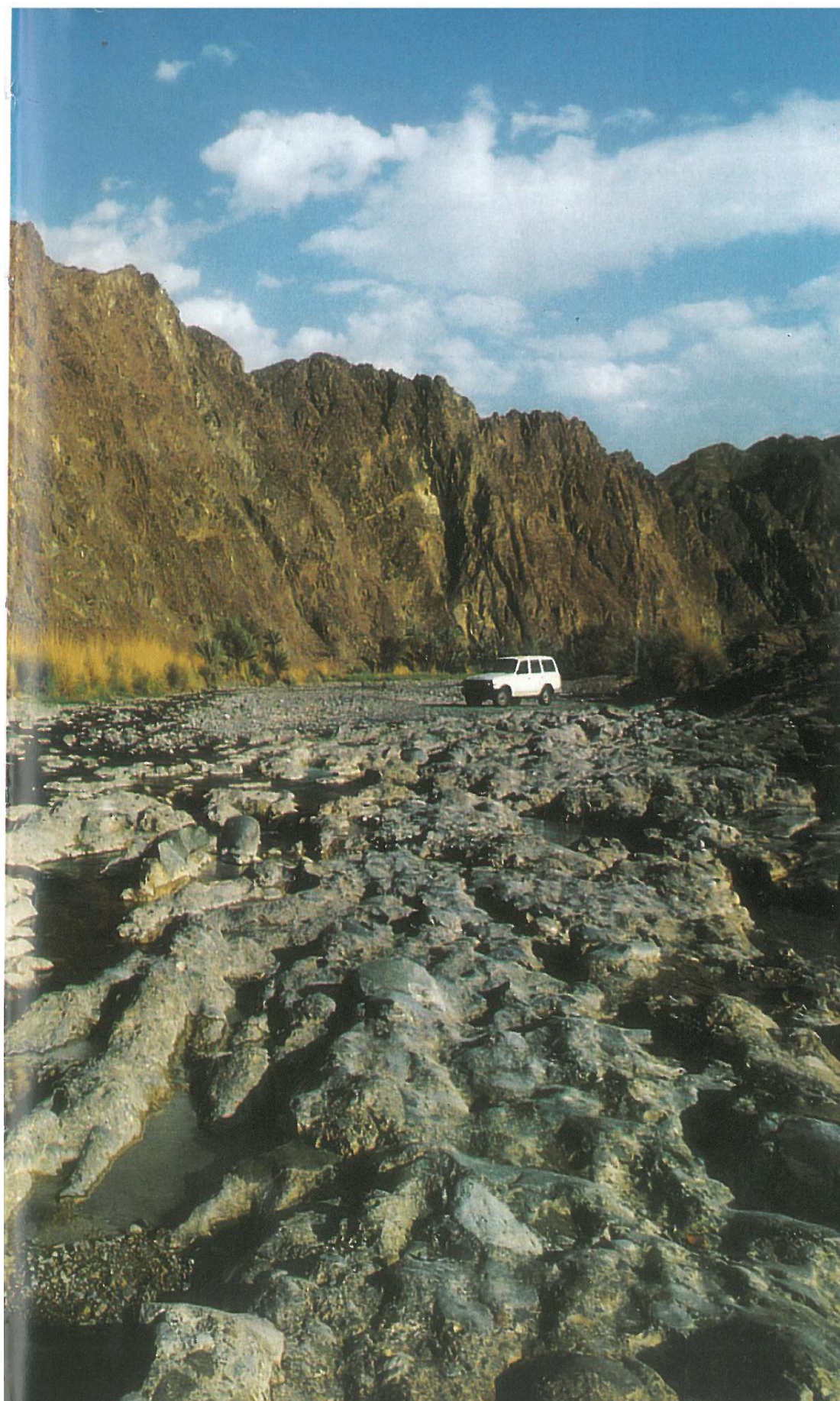
Tourists from the Gulf States have been coming to southern Oman in rapidly increasing numbers during the summer monsoon season. The Government has eased immigration procedures, whereby tourist visa holders can now travel by road to and from the UAE without a road permit, and there are quick and courteous immigration facilities.

►▼ Al Bustan
Palace Hotel - voted
the best hotel in the
world.

►► "Wadi trips" are
one of many ways a
visitor can enjoy the
challenging beauty of
our country.









▲ Tourists enjoy Omani cuisine on a dhow trip organised by one of the Muscat hotels.

The Ministry has plans for a major summer resort at Al Ashkharah in the eastern region, which is known for its beautiful location. It will comprise a main complex with hotel accommodation, sports facilities, a jetty, restaurants and a theatre. The project is still in the stage of planning and preparation of conceptual drawings. A yachting marina at Sidab, close to Muscat, is due to be completed by the end of this year.

It is expected that there will be a 35% increase in tourism in the year 1994/95 over the previous year. It is the intention of the Government to create year-round tourism, and the World Travel Market plans to hold a tourism exhibition in the Sultanate this year with this in mind.

The Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry (OCCI)

The economy of the Sultanate of Oman is now entering a crucial stage of its development whereby the private sector is to play a major role in achieving comprehensive development programmes. The OCCI is playing a vital role in this economic policy.

The Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry was set up in 1973 to encourage industrial and commercial development in the Sultanate. Its headquarters are in Ruwi, near Muscat, with branches in Ibra, Ibri,

Nizwa, Sur, Salalah and Sohar. It acts as a bridge between the Omani businessman and investor and his foreign counterparts. Among the services it provides are information about potential fields of operations, 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 of investment. The Chamber legalises documents, invoices, agency and labour contracts, and issues certificates required in trade and industry. It acts as arbitrator in the event of commercial disputes between local members and foreign businessmen or investors, and participates in the discussion of trade-related problems with concerned Government organisations. It also sponsors and facilitates the issuing of visas to foreigners wishing to establish business relations with Oman, but who do not have contacts in the Sultanate.

The OCCI is linked electronically with the Industrial and Technological Information Bank (INTIB) of UNIDO which enables various sectors to contact INTIB directly for information. The OCCI has set apart a separate department for training and Omanisation which commenced in 1992. It organised more than ten courses in 1993, attended by over 400 trainees from the private and public sectors.

Muscat Securities Market

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

The market conducts its business in the morning and has evening sessions on Mondays and Tuesdays. There is no trading in futures or on margin. Shares must be delivered in full immediately after transactions, and settlements must be made in cash. Post-dated cheques are not acceptable. The Sultanate is intending to open its Stock Market to foreigners in order to attract investment and diversify its oil-dependent economy. This decision is the latest in a series of economic reforms covering the biggest privatisation drive in the Gulf region, where the public sector is still dominant, despite calls for giving the private sector a greater role.

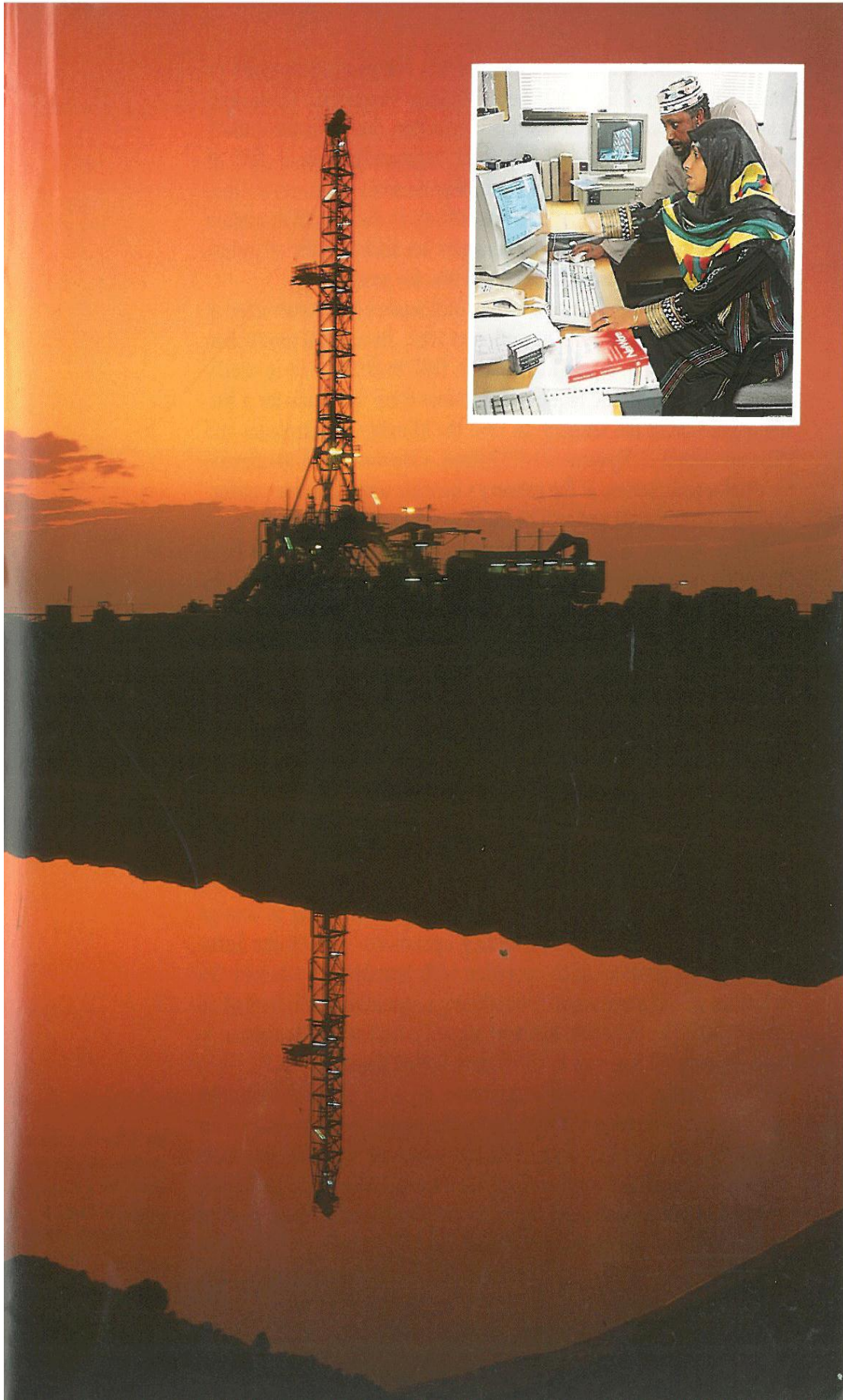
OIL AND GAS

The first oil concession in the Sultanate of Oman was granted as long ago as 1925, but it was not until 1954 that a serious search for oil was started by the Iraq Petroleum Company operating from its base at Duqm on the south coast. Many abortive wells were sunk including at Fahud, but oil in commercial quantities was not discovered, and the consortium abandoned the attempt. However, Shell, a member of the group, formed another consortium with Compagnie Francaise des Petroles and Partex and continued the exploration. In 1964 oil was discovered at Fahud on the other side of a faultline from the location where IPC had sunk a dry well, and this, with smaller oilfields at Natih and Yibal, made the commercial production of oil possible, with the first shipment being exported in 1967.

The discovery of oil in commercial quantities at last made the development and modernisation of the Sultanate possible, but it was not until the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970 that this was put into effect. A subterranean pipeline was constructed from Fahud through the Sumail gap in the mountain range to the terminal at Mina al Fahal on the coast of the Gulf of Oman near Muscat. There were many vicissitudes during the early years of oil production, and at one stage in the 1970s production actually dropped, but exploration continued and more oilfields were discovered in the Interior and brought into operation. Oil was discovered in commercial quantities in the south, and the question arose as to whether to construct a new port in the south, which is subject to rough seas during the monsoon period and where there are no natural harbours, or construct a pipeline northwards to join up with the main Fahud pipeline. Finally it was decided to adopt the latter plan for commercial reasons.

The main producer in the Sultanate is Petroleum Development Oman, the original discoverer of oil in commercial quantities, and in which the Government now has a 60% share. International oil companies are encouraged to invest in petroleum exploration and production in Oman. At present, 21 exploration blocks are held by nine companies. Intensive exploration effort by the companies has resulted in the increase of oil-producing fields from three in 1967 to 78 in 1995. Oil production which was 63,000 b/d in 1967 has risen to 800,000 b/d in 1995. The proven oil reserves have increased from 2 billion barrels in 1967 to more than 5 billion barrels at the end of 1994. Japan is the main purchaser of Omani oil, amounting to about 40% of total production. Other purchasers include South Korea, the second largest purchaser, Taiwan, Thailand and Singapore.

► The silhouette of Rig 31 outlined against the Yibal sunset. Inset, PDO operates the latest in exploration computer technology.

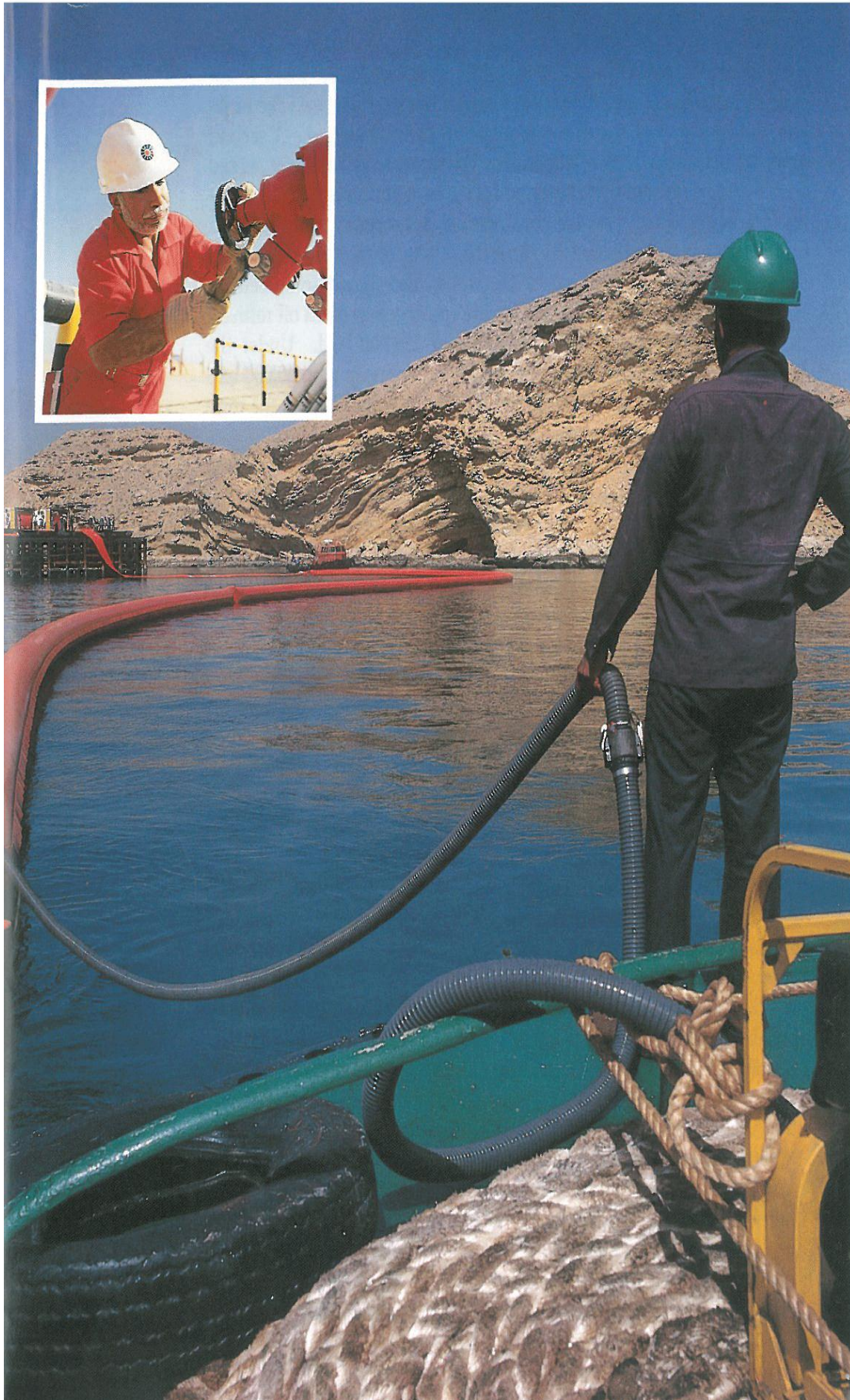


PDO has had its greatest recent success at Lekhwair in the north of Oman, where one of the oldest fields has been expanded. By the end of last year it was expected that the production rate from the oilfield would reach from 110,000-150,000 b/d, representing about 15% of Oman's total output. The search for further reserves continues in Dhofar in the south, where conditions are difficult in the rugged mountain terrain. The reserves of oil in the Sultanate are such that the oil industry is guaranteed an assured future well into the next century.

A refinery to meet the needs of the local market was constructed at Mina al Fahal and came into operation in 1982. Its original production capacity of 50,000 b/d was increased in 1987 to 80,000 b/d to satisfy the expanding domestic requirement. Now there are plans for a further expansion of the refinery. In 1992 the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals signed an agreement with Mitsui, a Japanese firm, to upgrade the production process at the refinery's benzine unit. Benzine production will be increased and will be lead-free, thus not harming the environment. Oman Refinery Company is to distribute its own fuels through a new marketing division. A chain of filling stations will be established across the country, which will operate under the name 'Al Maha'. Since it started producing in 1982 the refinery has marketed its products through Shell and BP. These companies will continue as before, but the Ministry has decided that, for the present, permits for new filling stations will be granted only to ORC. This will enable the new national brand to establish itself and gain a foothold in the market. The first 'Al Maha' filling station was in operation by the end of last year. Lead-free petrol is to be introduced into Oman in the near future.

In the late eighties the Government set up the wholly state-owned Oman Oil Company (OOC) for the purpose of investing in foreign commercial enterprises and oil trading operations. In 1991 the Sultanate signed a protocol of co-operation with Kazakhstan, whereby the Sultanate would assist Kazakhstan during negotiations with foreign oil companies. The Sultanate has now signed a deal with Kazakhstan to help develop oil reserves in the former Soviet Republic. In February this year Oman, Russia and Kazakhstan signed a protocol for implementing the first phase of their oil pipeline project to a Russian port on the Black Sea coast. In September last year, the Sultanate and India signed an agreement on the principal terms of a long-term gas supply contract which involves the laying of a 1,130 kilometre-long pipeline across the ocean between the two countries. The pipeline will transmit one billion cub. ft. per day of natural gas and is expected to be completed by the middle of 1999. The project will consist of an onshore

► A boom, used to contain oil-spill, is tested by a PDO engineer. Inset, a PDO fireman carries out routine checks of fire points in Lekhwair.



pipeline from central Oman to the coast, a compression plant to increase gas pressure, and the pipeline across the Arabian Sea. The pipeline will be installed at a water depth of up to 3,500 metres. A second pipeline is envisaged at a later stage. An agreement has been signed with the Government of Pakistan to set up joint ventures with the public and private sectors for the construction of a refinery with up to six million tonnes annual capacity, and the laying of two pipelines from Karachi to Multan in the Punjab. Oman has also signed an agreement with an oil company in Bermuda for the construction of an oil refinery in Thailand with a production capacity of 130,000 b/d. Under the terms of the agreement Oman will supply the refinery with 80,000 barrels of crude oil a day. The Thai Oil Authority will carry out the marketing of the refined oil in the local market.

The policy of Omanisation is proceeding satisfactorily in the oil and gas industry. PDO has established a large training centre which has contributed considerably to the training of Omanis to replace expatriates. In 1993, 800 Omanis were under training at the Company, and Omanisation at PDO had reached 66% in 1994. Now the number of young Omanis trained and qualified for working in the industry is being increasingly supplemented by graduates from the Sultan Qaboos University and Oman's Technical Institutes

Gas

Natural gas was discovered accidentally during the search for oil, and it was soon established that the Sultanate has extensive reserves which are more than enough to supply the needs of its developing industry. Demand has risen rapidly, and output has increased correspondingly. Total gas reserves, which stood at 9.8 trillion cub ft in 1990, have risen to 25 TCF in 1994. It is expected that this figure will increase even further in the future. In four year's time gas production is expected to equal that of oil.

The gas industry is wholly owned by the State and operated on its behalf by PDO. The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals cooperates with PDO in its management. The gas industry started operations in 1978 with the construction of a gas pipeline linking the Yibal field with the Al Ghubrah power station and desalination plant on the coast near Muscat. Gas is now supplied to the power station in the Rusayl Industrial Estate and to the Wadi Jizzi power station which serves the copper-smelting complex and the Sohar region. The gas-processing facilities of Yibal have been expanded as necessary to supply gas to consumers based on their projected gas demand. The Ministry decided to begin operating the new Yibal cooking-gas liquefaction plant on

► The newly installed gas compressor at Saih Rawl production station. Inset, trainees are given a firm practical grounding at the Mina al Fahal Training Centre before they are sent out into the field.



an experimental basis in October 1994. The plant has been set up to meet the growing demand for cooking gas, which has been increasing at an annual rate of 8%. The new plant will provide 20,000 tonnes a year, in addition to the 40,000 tonnes a year of cooking gas provided by the Oman refinery.

The Ministry is to set up a butane plant in central Oman in 1999 to make up for inadequate supplies expected from indigenous production of liquefied petroleum gas by the turn of the century. A \$17 million plant for producing butane was commissioned in November 1994 in Yibal, but its daily production is expected to satisfy demand for only a few years.

The project for the construction of a Liquefied Natural Gas plant received official Government approval in May 1994, and the plant will be built and managed by Oman Liquefied Natural Gas (OLNG). The contract to build the plant is expected to be awarded in mid-1996, with the first cargo due to be exported early in the year 2000. Originally the plant was to be situated at Bimmah, but it was finally decided that it is to be at Al-Galilah, where the site will be in a designated industrial area 11km west of Sur. An extensive training and development programme is already being developed for Omani staff. When the plant opens, large numbers of trainees will swell the number of staff to some 350, but this will shrink to 250 as the project matures. Gas for the plant, which will produce six million tonnes of LNG a year, will come from vast deep gas fields in Saih Rawl, Barik and Saih Nihayda in central Oman, which were discovered by PDO. It calls for the drilling of between 50 and 80 production wells over the next twenty years which will feed into a gathering station at Barik, and a processing plant at Saih Rawl. The gas will go to the coast via a 44-inch pipeline that will stretch nearly 400 km from the central Oman desert, skirting the northern tip of the Wahiba Sands to Sur. So far 1,500 sq km of seismic has been shot for the LNG project, with four exploration and five appraisal wells being sunk. Two further wells for appraisal are currently being drilled and appraisal-drilling will continue until mid 1995.

The project for LNG production has been divided into upstream and downstream developments. The upstream development involves the production of gas and condensate by PDO on behalf of the Government of Oman. The downstream development will comprise gas liquefaction shipping and marketing which is to be undertaken by an LNG export company under formation, owned by the Government of Oman (51%), Shell Overseas Trading (34%), Total (6%), Mitsubishi (3%), Mitsui & Co (3%), Partex (2%) and ITOCHU Corporation (1%).

MINERALS

The potential mineral wealth of the Sultanate of Oman has long been appreciated - indeed as long ago as 3,000 years, when copper ore was being mined in the Wadi Jizzi in northern Oman, and exported to the Sumerian Empire at the northern end of the Gulf. The remains of these ancient workings can still be seen. Copper has again been mined from the same deposits, refined into copper cathodes and exported. Small quantities of gold and silver are valuable by-products of the refining process, which promise to be economically viable. During the year 1994, 655,911 tonnes of copper ore was produced from the three mines in the Wadi Jizzi, but mining ceased in September 1994 due to the depletion of the ore. The smelter, which is adjacent to the mining sites there, has produced 179,251 tonnes of copper cathodes since it went into production in 1983. Copper ore in commercial quantities has also been discovered at Al Raki and Hayl Al Safil in the Wilayat of Yanqul at a distance of 275 km from the smelter in the Wadi Jizzi. The ore, which has yet to be mined, is planned to be converted into concentrate at Hayl Al Safil, and then transported to the smelter at Sohar for

▼ Wadi Jizzi, near Sohar, where copper ore deposits have made a valuable contribution to Oman's economy. The smelting plant can be seen in the far distance.



refining before export. A highly sophisticated technique for mineral exploration, applied in the Sultanate, has opened up possibilities of more large deposits of copper ore on the Batinah coast.

Originally, the Government held 75% of the shares of the copper complex, but later acquired all the remaining shares, so that the whole copper industry is now state-owned, operated by the Oman Mining Company (OMCO).

A processing plant to produce gold ore from Rakah ore deposits near Yanqul was commissioned during 1994 and the commercial production commenced during August 1994. Production from the plant is planned at about 500 kilograms of gold and 70 kilograms of silver during 1995.

Chromite was discovered in 1971 during exploration for other minerals, and systematic prospecting for it started in 1974, revealing 300 occurrences in two areas in northern Oman. The total reserves of chromite are estimated to be more than two million tonnes. It is now being mined by the Oman Chromite Company (OCCO), which was formed in 1991. In the event of private Omani individuals being granted a licence to mine, they will be grouped together and given a site to develop. They will be provided with technical and financial assistance. Transportation, marketing and selling of the mineral will be managed for them by OCCO. This is in keeping with the Government's policy of providing employment opportunities in less developed areas of the country. Japan is showing a keen interest in Omani chromite. Production last year amounted to 6,166 tonnes.

Coal deposits in excess of 122 million tonnes have been discovered in the Wadi Muswa and Wadi Fisaw areas of the Sharqiya near Sur. The coal is classified as "Bituminous High Volatile A" with the propensity for coking. It is best suited for use as fuel for electricity generation. The pre-feasibility study conducted by the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals with technical co-operation from the UN has estimated that the recoverable reserves are sufficient to set up 250 MWe power plant using 600,000 tonnes of coal annually in excess of 35 years. The coal might also be used for export as high heating value high sulphur coal for making cement.

Oman has large resources of industrial rocks and minerals. These include silica sand and quartzite, kaolin, gypsum, limestone and dolomite, attapulgite, laterite, salt, celestite, marble, granite and aggregate,



▲ High-grade marble being processed at Raysut Industrial Estate, Salalah.

etc. Many of the above rocks and minerals are already under exploitation. The Directorate General of Minerals has recently concluded detailed studies on other deposits such as silica sand and quartzite, kaolin and gypsum. Silica sand deposits from central Oman will be exploited for glass manufacturing in the near future. Detailed study of kaolin also revealed its usefulness in ceramic tile manufacture. Studies on Shuwaymiya gypsum indicated its high quality and large reserves. The unique location of the deposit on the coast makes it very attractive for export. Detailed studies on many other deposits are under various stages of investigation by the DGM.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals has long pursued an ambitious and systematic programme of developing and exploiting the mineral wealth of the Sultanate. The entire country has been geologically mapped on 1:250,000. Detailed mapping such as 1:100,000 and 1:50,000 have been carried out on selected areas with mineral potential. Laboratory facilities have been provided to handle all types of investigations related to the field of geological and mineral exploration. The latest geophysical and remote sensing techniques are being employed in mineral exploration.

AGRICULTURE

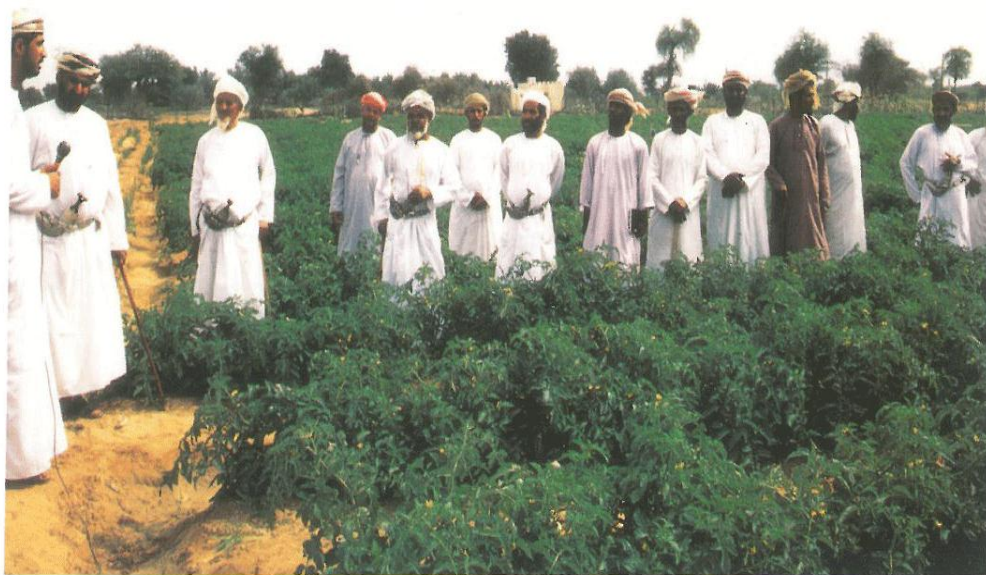
In 1970 the Sultanate's economy, which was virtually a subsistence economy, was entirely based on agriculture and fisheries. It was not until the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 1964 and its production in 1967 that the country was able to embark on its development. Even so, after the initial construction phase is completed, an oil industry is not labour intensive. Over half the total Omani population is still engaged in the agricultural and fisheries industry. 787,300 people hold cultivable land, according to the most recent survey, and the total number of agricultural workers is around 187,820. A large percentage of the Omani population live in rural villages. However, the stimulus to the national economy derived from the exploitation of oil and gas has also benefited the development and modernisation of agriculture, so that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries was enabled to achieve nearly 50% self-sufficiency in food production by the end of last year, with a goal of 100% by the year 2000. The value of agricultural and fisheries production rose from RO 17 million in 1970 to RO 156 million by 1994.

Agriculture and fisheries are Oman's main non-oil exports, representing 70% of the country's non-oil exports. Last year, agricultural production totalled around 802,000 tonnes, of which livestock was about 23,000 tonnes and fish production 114,300 tonnes.

The Sultanate of Oman lies in an arid region of the world, but owing to its size and topography it has considerable variations of climate. The backbone of the country is the Hajar range of mountains extending from the tip of the Musandam Peninsula in the north to the south-east corner of the Arabian Peninsula in the south. The northern end of the range is largely porous limestone rock, which is the source of water used for irrigation purposes on either flank of the mountains. The southern part of the range is of igneous or volcanic rock. The Hajar range, rising to over 10,000 ft at its highest points, attracts the most rainfall of the Sultanate, much of it as heavy localised thunderstorms during the summer months, and from depressions crossing the Arabian Peninsula from the west during the winter. However, as elsewhere in the Sultanate, except in the extreme south, it is very sporadic, and is subject to considerable annual variations. The coastal plain and seaward-facing slopes of the mountains in Dhofar in the extreme south receive regular light monsoon rains from June to September. Much of the Interior of the country is desert or semi-desert.

► An agriculture engineer advises local farmers on how to improve tomato cultivation.

► Pest control produces high-quality crops.



The coastal Batinah plain extending north-westwards from just north of Muscat to the border with the UAE, and to the east of the Hajar range, is the most densely populated and heavily cultivated region of the country. Agriculture is totally dependent on irrigation from fresh-water wells sunk into the aquifers, which in turn derives from the rains that fall over the adjacent mountains. High-quality dates are the major product of the Batinah plain, while limes are grown in quantity, dried and exported. Mangoes, bananas and other fruits are also grown, as well as tomatoes, onions, aubergines and tobacco, for local consumption. The area under cultivation on the Batinah coast has increased greatly in the last quarter of a century. The introduction of the diesel pump in place of the donkey as a means of raising water from wells has resulted in many more wells being sunk and more water being drawn from the aquifers. The result has been the overdraw of water from the aquifers and the intrusion of salt water from the sea in the coastal regions. Salinity in the well-water increased to such an extent in some areas that cultivation of the land became impossible. Urgent measures are being taken to bring this situation under control, and is dealt with further in the chapter on Water Resources.

Inland on both flanks of the Hajar mountains there are considerable areas of cultivation in the wadi beds dependent on water supplied by aflaj (plural of falaj), which are described in detail in the chapter on Water Resources. Dates are the major product of the cultivated areas in the Interior, in addition to other fruits and vegetables. In years of good rains corn is grown as well. Altogether, 35,000 hectares of land are planted with date palms throughout the Sultanate, and 28,000 hectares with other crops, including 11,000 hectares planted with rotation crops.

In the south, on the coastal plain around Salalah, coconut palms are grown in place of date palms, which are not suited to the local climate. Bananas thrive in quantity on the coastal plain, with papaya and other fruits. Cattle fodder is also grown, but there are plans to transfer fodder cultivation to the inland side of the coastal range, in view of increasing pressure on water resources on the coastal plain.

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

but also to the grazing habits of camels, of which there are a large number on these lands. Camels not only graze on the pastures, but destroy them by consuming the roots of the grasses as well.

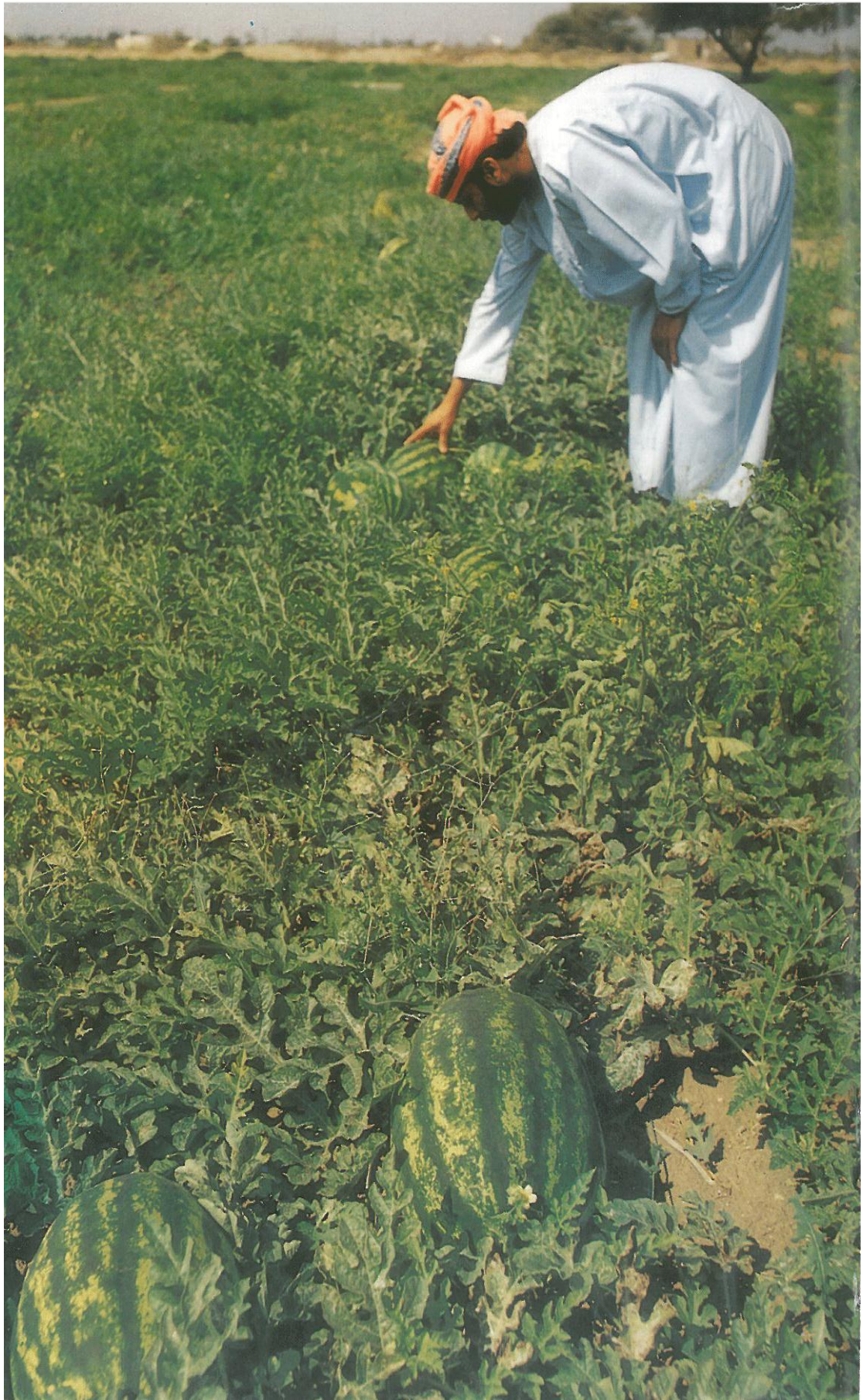
The Sultanate is now the leading livestock producer in the Gulf region, with half a million head of cattle, goats, sheep and camels. Latest figures indicate that there are 213,120 cows, 854,060 goats, 240,260 sheep and 98,550 camels, reflecting the high priority given to livestock production since the early 1970s. It is the Government's policy to increase local goat production and reduce dependence on imports. Model sheep production units are being set up, and the latest technology is being applied to improve fertility, lower death-rates and increase growth-rates. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is supplying breeders with concentrated feed, as well as fertilisers and seed for the production of fodder.

A Ministry project aims to increase the production of milk and other dairy products, give dairy farmers marketing assistance and equipment, and introduce them to modern herd management techniques. Artificial insemination is to improve local cattle through cross-breeding with selected imported strains, while the beef production project is to produce economically feasible, good quality beef the whole year round.

Protection and immunisation are clearly of great importance. The Ministry has introduced a nationwide programme to immunise all livestock against common animal diseases. This huge project, which began in April 1992, is due to be completed this year, and will have cost more than RO 4 million. It aims at immunising about 7 million animals. Projects due to be implemented include a veterinary quarantine station in the Wadi Jizzi, on the route of the overland trade between the Sultanate and its neighbours, which is increasing. Agricultural centres with veterinary clinics are being opened in Haima, Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Oqbah and Madha. A veterinary clinic is also being built at Sint in the Wilayat of Bahla.

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

Research has been advanced in the study of pests and of plant diseases. Particular attention has been given to diseases which attack



limes, date palms, coconuts, bananas and tomatoes. Programmes have also concentrated on biological prevention methods. The Ministry provides the Omani farmer with a number of services which he is unable to undertake on his own, and which require high technical and other facilities. Spraying teams from the Ministry have been operating over large areas of date gardens against a damaging date palm grub (mataq). They have also been assisting farmers in protecting their fields with the use of general pesticides. The Ministry also offers farmers ploughing services for nominal hire charges at its agricultural development centres.

New regulations on agricultural and livestock subsidies were issued in 1992. The Ministry subsidises the cost of agricultural mechanical equipment to encourage farmers to use it. Items covered include ploughs, reapers, binders, chemical sprayers, mechanical saws and small agricultural implements. Other subsidies cover chemical fertilisers, seeds, pesticides, fruit seedlings, plastic covers, cloches and compost. The Government has also reduced unit prices of electricity and diesel used for farming and agricultural industry projects.

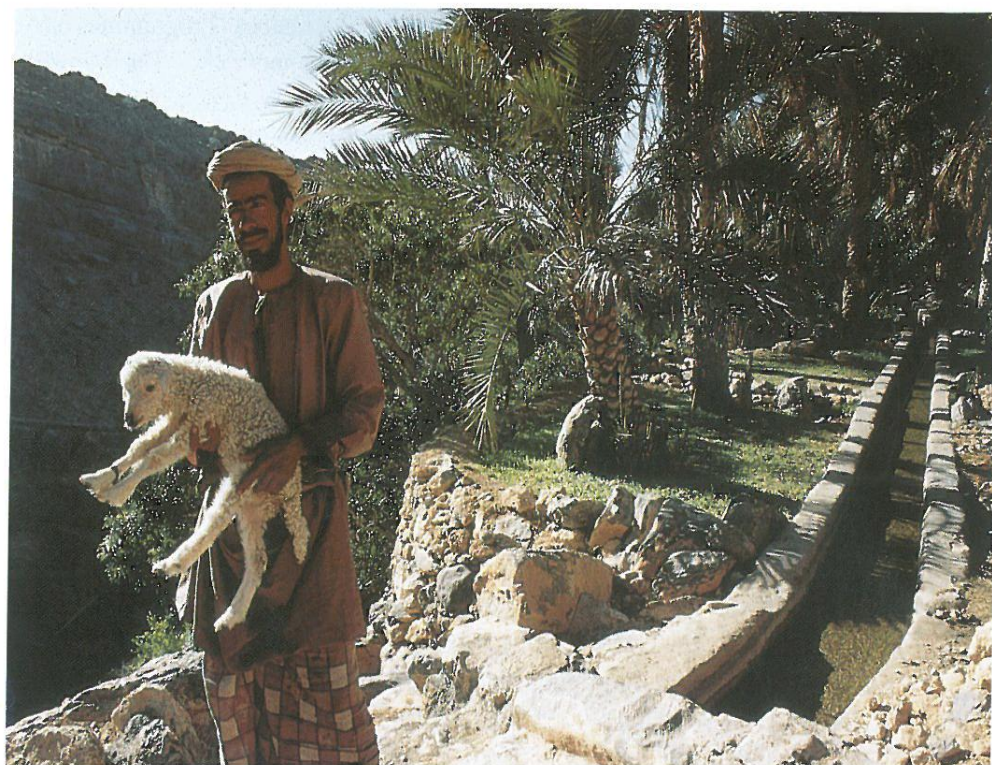
The policy of the Oman Agriculture and Fisheries Bank is to provide loans for all categories of farmers, with priority being given to small farmers and productive agricultural projects. The Bank also administers some agriculture and fisheries loan programmes, and grants loans in cooperation with the relevant departments of the Ministry.

Until responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Water Resources at the beginning of last year, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries was responsible for the maintenance of aflaj and the construction of recharge dams. The Ministry continues to work closely with the Ministry of Water Resources in making the best use of available water resources. During the current Five-Year Plan the Ministry has implemented a number of projects, including a programme to determine which land is suitable for agriculture, a study of the south Batinah, where particular irrigation problems have arisen, and a study of the Salalah Plain in the south, with a view to introducing modern methods of irrigation on farms.

One of the Sultanate's major, and most promising, programmes is the introduction of greenhouse technology. The Ministry has begun subsidising projects of this type, and intends to concentrate on greenhouse agriculture in its next Plan.

During the decade 1991/2000 the Ministry has the target of increasing production of poultry meat, eggs and fresh milk by 100%, and meat from grazing animals by 48%. The ultimate aim is total

◀ A farmer checks his crop for harvesting.



self-sufficiency in all these products, through expert advice and subsidies. In 1992 a livestock research station was opened in Rumais on the Batinah Coast, containing a number of modern research units, including a laboratory for analysing foodstuffs, fodders and dairy products. It also has enclosures for cows, sheep and goats, a mechanical workshop, a dairy unit, a training unit, a library and auditorium, as well as accommodation. Also, in the same year, a new livestock research station was opened in Wadi Quriyat with similar facilities and a veterinary clinic. In Dhofar, there is a livestock research station which includes a cattle research establishment, a dairy research unit and an abattoir.

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

The Ministry's veterinary laboratories carry out comprehensive studies of endemic animal diseases with the aim of eliminating them. These include infectious pneumonia, diseases in goats and camels, rodent parasites and rabies. It also promotes the artificial insemination of cattle, and modern methods of combating animal diseases.

The Ministry has a project for small-scale poultry farmers, which has been in operation for several years. It provides 200 egg-laying chickens, feeding and drinking troughs, nesting boxes and veterinary and advice services. For farmers of meat-producing chickens, it provides a gas-heated hatchery, feeding and watering troughs for chicks and adult birds, wire enclosures, and six batches totalling 3,000 chicks.

◀ Lambing in the Interior.

PAMAP

The Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (PAMAP) was established in 1981 with the aim of encouraging Omani farmers to increase the production of fruit, vegetables and other agricultural crops by creating a body to market the produce, to make it available in the local markets at reasonable prices, and to improve the produce in terms of quality, quantity and availability. PAMAP began commercial operations in the second half of 1985, with a comprehensive network consisting of six distribution centres and 12 collection centres, established in the Muscat area and the regions. Activities at the centres are controlled by the Headquarters at Ghala, near Muscat, which is manned by trained professionals. All the centres have built-in cold storage facilities. Refrigerated trucks are used to transport produce from collection centres to distribution centres and marketing

◀ Employment of modern techniques in local poultry production has significantly reduced dependence on imports.



outlets. PAMAP has taken over the operation and management of the banana-ripening and packing factory at Salalah and has established a banana receiving unit at Suwaiq on the Batinah Coast. It has also taken over the collection, processing and marketing of Omani frankincense, which is famous for its quality and aromatic properties, and increasingly popular as an export and tourist attraction.

▲ Agricultural produce on sale in Salalah, is popular with tourists.

A quality-control laboratory has been established to handle problems relating to fresh produce after harvest. Tests and analysis are carried out at this laboratory to determine safety and acceptability of fresh product and processed items. This facility is also available for private and public sector undertakings and for individuals who may wish to take advantage of it.

Market response to products supplied by PAMAP is currently satisfactory, but PAMAP is always looking for new markets. It has been concentrating on exporting Omani produce, especially during the peak production season, and the results have been encouraging.

Seminars and technical training programmes for farmers are organised by PAMAP in different parts of the country to inform them of developments in the agricultural sector, and to encourage them to use modern techniques in order to improve quality and increase production. As a result of all these measures, dependence on imported produce has been substantially reduced.

FISHERIES

Until 1970 the economy of the country was almost entirely based on agriculture and fishing, and was in any case virtually a subsistence economy. In the case of fishing, no facilities existed for the freezing, storage or transportation of fish, so fishermen's catches were confined to the local communities for their own consumption. There did exist a small local trade, whereby bedu tribesmen conveyed dried fish on camel-back from the coast to the towns of the Interior in return for dried dates.

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

Fisheries are a valuable adjunct to the oil-based economy. Great efforts have been made since 1970 by the Government to develop the industry and to exploit its potential. Restrictions have been imposed in recent years on the fishing of certain species, such as lobsters, abalone and kingfish, of which there has been a noticeable decline in stocks, and intensive study is being undertaken to establish the causes of this decline.

In the 1970s, there was a drift away from the fishing communities by young men to the cities, where they could earn better wages and there was a labour shortage arising from the development programme. Urgent steps were taken by the Government to stem this drift and the situation has now stabilised with more than 22,000 Omanis directly employed in the fisheries industry. It was the introduction of the Fishermen's Encouragement Fund in 1978 which was most effective in encouraging the fishermen to keep to their traditional occupation. Particularly popular was the financial assistance given for the purchase of fibre-glass fishing boats and outboard engines, which were made readily available. Much progress has been made in recent years in the improvement of facilities for fishermen by improvements to fishing harbours, the construction of cold-storage facilities and processing facilities and transportation throughout the Sultanate. Road construction has permitted the conveyance of fresh fish to the centres of population in the Interior in refrigerated vans.



A Fisheries Department formed in 1972 became a Directorate-General in 1974, and this was later absorbed into the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In 1980, the Oman National Fisheries Company (ONFC) was formed with Government assistance to purchase, distribute and export the catches of local fishermen. It also handled fish caught by concessionaires. In 1987 the Oman Fisheries Company (OFC) was established, into which the ONFC was merged. RO30 million was received as subscriptions from shareholders.

More than 150 species of fish and crustaceans have been identified in Omani waters, ranging from sardines to tuna. Some 35 types of grouper, or hamour as they are known in Oman, are found in the waters of the Sultanate. Schools of sardines netted off the Batinah Coast, have long been used as animal feed and fertiliser. In Dhofar in the south, sardines, are still purchased by the Jabali tribesmen as feed for their cattle during the dry season when the grazing has been exhausted, although this is a diminishing practice as fodder becomes increasingly available from farms on the Salalah Plain. Large numbers of lobsters are now caught off Masirah Islands and the coast of Dhofar during the open season, and exported to the north, where they are in great demand.

The total quantity of fish and crustaceans landed rose sharply through the 1980s, reaching a peak in 1988, after which there was a decline. Research carried out by the Marine and Science Fisheries Centre has indicated that over-fishing has had a major part to play in this decline. As a result, fishing for lobsters and abalone is now restricted to two months in the year (December and January). The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre has recommended that nets should have a mesh size of at least 5Ω inches, to allow young fish to escape and breed. However, research has also shown that over-fishing is not the sole reason for the decline in fish stocks. It is strongly suspected that pollution, which now widely affects the oceans, has a part in this, particularly through damage to the mangrove ecosystem, which provides a breeding ground for many types of fish and crustaceans. The preliminary findings of the surveys carried out for determining the marine resources and the assessment of the fisheries stock in the Sultanate were published in 1993. The survey has provided very important data on these resources, and their conservation along the Omani coasts, which will assist in formulating policies and evolving plans for their efficient management.

◀ Intensive scientific research is carried out to protect Oman's abundant marine life – vital to the Sultanate's ecology.



▲ Fish Souq,
Muttrah.

Large-scale commercial fishing enterprises have also played their part in the development of the fishing industry. An original agreement between the Government and a Japanese fishing company was replaced in 1977 by a concession to a Korean company which trains Omanis on its trawlers and provides 38% of its catch to the Government in the form of royalties. The industrial fleet now consists of the National Fishing Company and the Korean Fishing Company. Fish are being exported to the USA, Japan, Australia, France and other European countries. Exports to France have trebled in recent years, and exports to the UK and Holland are being encouraged. All the developed ports are to have enhanced processing and cold-storage facilities, work on which is about to be completed.

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

The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre was set up in 1986 near Sidab, on the coast near Muscat, with the consultative support of UNESCO and FAO. In cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos University

its role includes studies of different stocks of resources and the future development and management of the vast range of marine species to be found in Omani waters, in addition to a more academic role in the general ecology of the marine environment, with particular emphasis on the conservation of ecosystems and endangered species, including turtles. The Centre also has a public aquarium and a modern library. The Centre and its aquarium have proved to be an excellent facility for both students and the general public. The Centre has begun studies on breeding molluscs, including mussels, oysters, scallops and abalone, through sea aquaculture. It is intended to develop sea-based aquaculture on a large scale. In the course of time, aquaculture at sea will be extended to kingfish and hamour, and it is visualised that fishermen will then be enabled to adopt this method.

RO 200 million has been allocated to the fishing industry under the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1991-1995), of which RO 84.1 million has been set aside for investment in industrial and traditional fishing vessels, shore facilities and transport. RO 75 million is for resources assessment and extension services, while RO 25 million is to be spent on the construction of eight major harbours and sixteen smaller ones. Fish processing firms will get RO 13.9 million. Large-scale port development is planned for Sur and Quriyat, enabling them to accommodate industrial vessels and ease pressure on the principal port of Mina Qaboos.

The Ministry's workshops along the coast provide technical services, such as free maintenance of fishing gear and the supervision of maintenance of boat engines by fishermen. During the Fourth Five-Year Plan the Fishermen's Incentive fund approved 2,583 applications for boats, depth-finding equipment, fish detection equipment, communications equipment, winches, propellers, long fishing lines and storage boxes. 6,700 lobster traps were distributed free of charge. Meanwhile, the Oman Bank of Agriculture and Fisheries has granted several millions of rials in the form of soft loans to small-scale fisheries and fishing companies. These loans covered a number of requirements such as transport, purchase of boats, boat engines and fishing gear. There is also a fund for financing fisheries research.

WATER RESOURCES

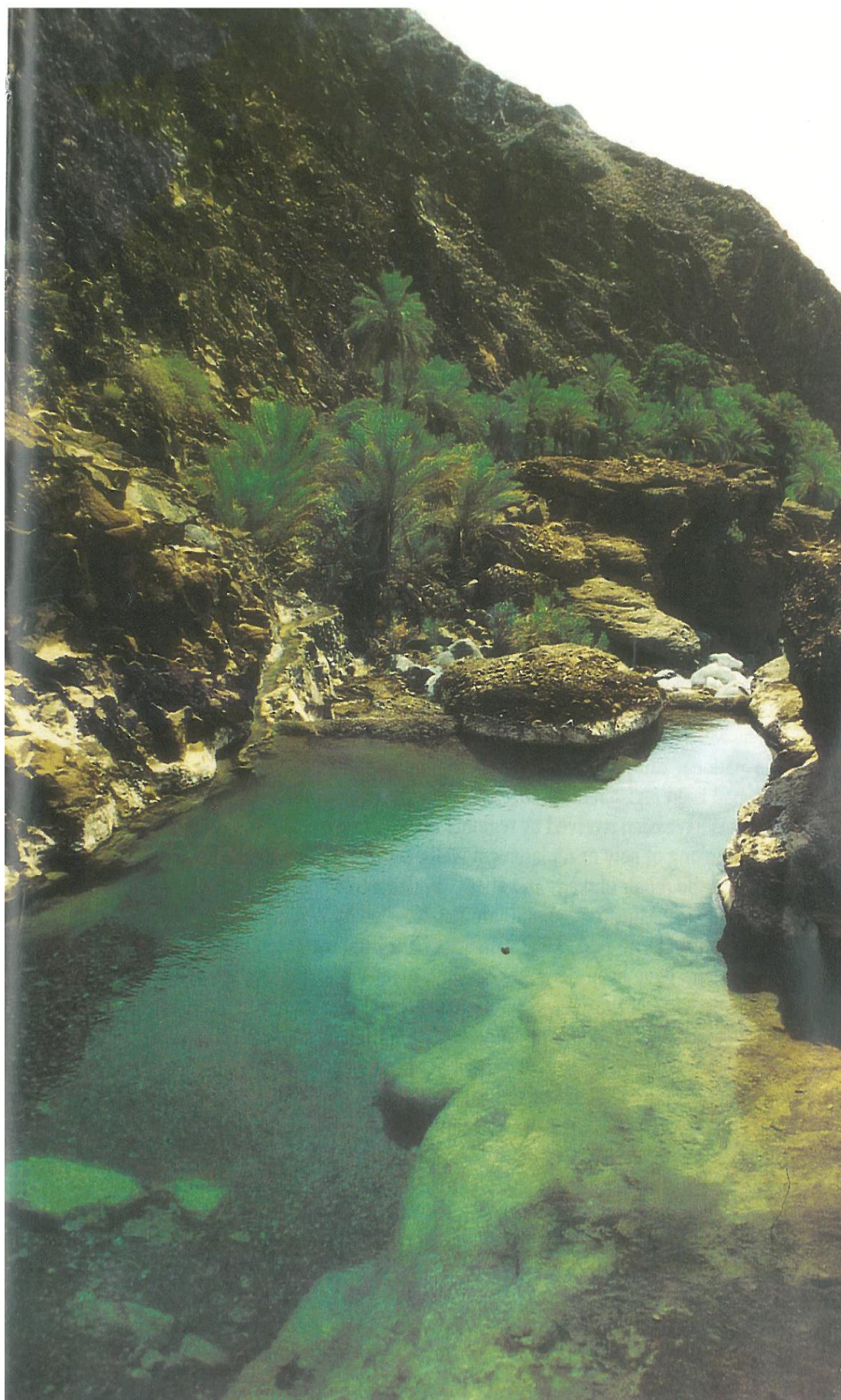
The Sultanate of Oman lies in an arid region of the world, but due to its size and the configuration of its topography there are considerable variations of climatic conditions within the country. Only in the extreme south where the seaward facing slopes of the mountains and the coastal plain have the benefit of light summer monsoons extending from June to September is rainfall regular. In the north of Oman heavy and very localised thunderstorms occur over the Hajar range of mountains during the summer months, and in the winter occasional depressions sweeping across the Arabian Peninsula bring rain to the Interior and coastal regions. Nevertheless, rainfall is sparse and sporadic, and lengthy periods of drought are frequent. On rare occasions major cyclonic storms sweep into Oman from the Indian Ocean to produce large volumes of rainfall in Southern and Central regions.

The art of exploiting available water resources to the best advantage has been perfected by Omanis over the centuries. An example of this is the falaj (plur. aflaj) system, which was introduced into Oman about a thousand years ago, and used throughout the Interior as a means of irrigation. Water is tapped at the water table in the mountains and in wadis, and is led by man-made subterranean channels or by channels that skirt and cling to mountain sides to areas of settlement where at the surface it is used for irrigation and domestic purposes. Elsewhere, and especially in the coastal regions, water for irrigation is obtained from wells.

In recent years the balance achieved over the centuries has been upset by the introduction of modern methods of extracting subterranean sources of water and the subsequent increase in the areas under cultivation. Diesel and electrical pumps have replaced animal power as a means of raising water from wells. Other pressures on available water resources arise from increasing agricultural productivity, the increasing demands of a developing industrial sector, which was previously non-existent, and the mounting demands for domestic water as population and living standards rise. Desalinated sea water now meets an increasing proportion of the domestic requirement in some coastal regions.

Since the start of the renaissance in 1970 the Government, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, has been keenly aware of the need to conserve available water resources and to use them to the best advantage. In 1975, the Water Resources Council was formed. This was followed by the formation of a Public Authority for

► Oman's precious water – vital for our country's life and progress – is carefully conserved.



Water Resources, charged with identifying and assessing the natural water resources. In 1986, two Councils concerned with the environment and water resources were merged into the Council for the Conservation of the Environment and Water Resources, of which His Majesty the Sultan was the Chairman. In 1988 the country's water resources were declared "natural wealth" by Royal Decree. In 1989 it was decided that water was of such paramount importance that the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) was established by Royal Decree. In January 1994, a Royal Decree was issued making the development and maintenance and the jurisdiction and records of dams and aflaj the responsibility of the Ministry of Water Resources.

The principal aim of the MWR is to conserve and develop the natural water resources of the Sultanate, and to initiate long-term policies for these resources to support the economic and social development of the country. Initial emphasis was given to the development of the infrastructure of the Ministry, regulation of water use, the expansion of the water monitoring network, and water resources assessment projects. More recently the Ministry has broadened its scope by giving priority to the assessment of projects that support expanding municipal demands, that can identify all possible new resources, that evaluate development schemes to ease water shortages in some areas, and also to the initiation of other water management projects.

The Ministry has met the major challenge of water use regulation by a national campaign of well registration. By July 1990, 167,000 wells had been registered by citizens. In the past few years 24,000 applications have been received by regional Water Resource departments for the sinking of new or replacement wells, the deepening of existing wells and the repair of wells and aflaj. Violations of regulations and appeals against Ministry decisions are also handled by Water Resource departments. Since 1991, 1,800 violations have been investigated, but the numbers have been declining through greater Ministry vigilance and cooperation of the general public. A national well inventory currently being conducted is confirming well registrations and collecting information required to support current permit policy and future policies for water usage. The inventory was commenced in 1992 following evaluation of one-year pilot projects in three regions. Work initially concentrated in the Batinah coast of northern Oman where 50% of wells were registered in 1990 and where the adverse effects of the saline intrusion are most severe. Inventory on the Salalah Plain and Al Wusta areas were completed last year. By last year 50,000 wells had been inventoried, in the course of which water samples have been collected and analysed providing baseline data for environmental



▲ His Excellency, Hamid bin Said al Aufi, Minister of Water Resources, explains a point at an exhibition held by his Ministry.

monitoring, which will be consolidated in a national water quality database. Work has now extended into the Interior, and the major part of the project should be completed by the end of this year.

To carry out its aim of planning a long-term strategy to develop the water resources of the Sultanate, the Ministry needs to establish how much natural water is available, 97% of which exists as groundwater. Virtually all monitoring of rainfall, wadi flows, groundwater levels and chemistry have been carried out within the last twenty years, so Oman has few measurements or records extending back into the past from which it can infer trends on water availability, except for areas such as Muscat, Salalah and Nizwa. As a result, the Ministry has expanded its groundwater, surface water and meteorological monitoring networks. All the data from these networks is stored in the Ministry's growing technical database to form a national water resources data bank.

Among the Ministry's major tasks has been the need to refine knowledge of available water resources, evaluate stocks, and search for new sources. A most significant find so far has been an aquifer in north western Oman, the Al Massarat aquifer as revealed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos during his annual tour of the Wilayats in January 1994. Phased development of this aquifer will bring relief to

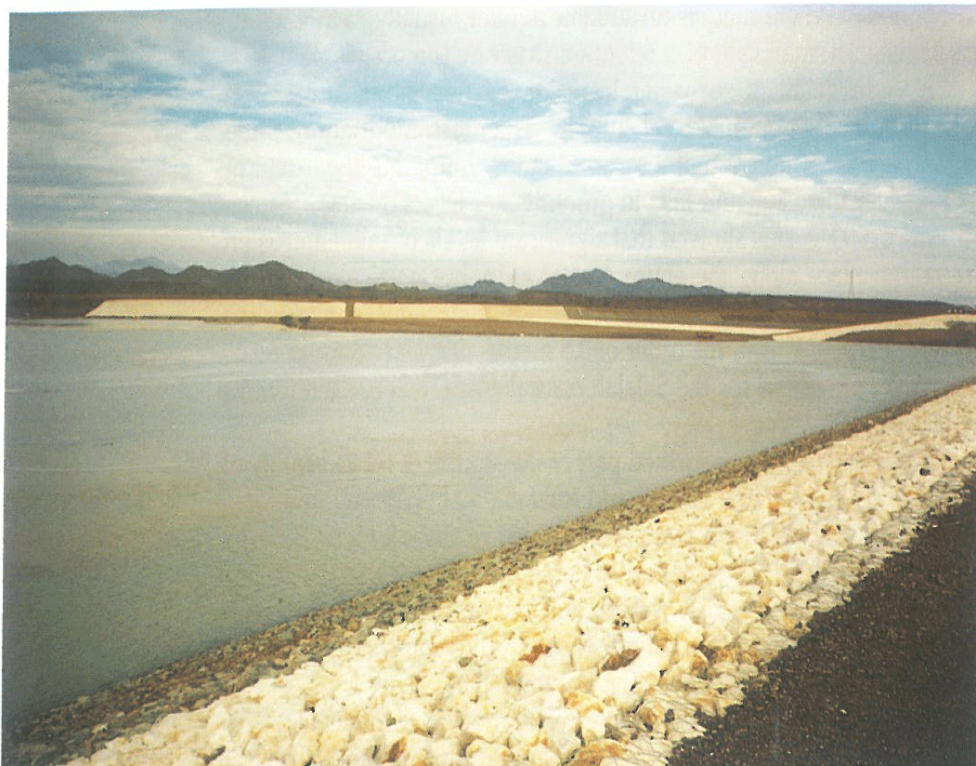
areas around Ibri, Dank/Yanqul and Bahla which have seen the quality and quantity of their natural water deteriorate over the past few years.

Rapid assessments have been carried out over the whole country, which have enabled the Ministry to estimate water balances for the nine major catchment regions. More detailed studies are focusing on areas which are known to be experiencing particular problems of water supply and which are also undergoing more rapid growth. The southern Batinah, where groundwaters have been affected by sea water intrusion, is the subject of a groundwater modelling study. This will help to show the rate at which the aquifers are being affected by water of higher salinity, and their response to changes in rainfall, recharge and pumping from boreholes. A detailed drilling programme is currently proceeding in the Sumail Gap which marks the route between the capital area and Nizwa along which there are several growing centres of population. Drilling programmes at Adam were completed almost two years ago.

Detailed geological and hydrogeological studies have been carried out in Wadi Dayqah near Muscat, which is one of the few perennially flowing wadis in the country. The assessment report on these studies was submitted in 1994. Further southeast, extensive research is being carried out in Wadi Al Batha, which lies between the northern mountains and the northern edge of the Wahiba Sands. Assessment programmes aim to quantify just how much water can be relied on to support future developments.

A study was undertaken in the Nejd of northern Dhofar in 1993 to estimate the quantities of groundwater available, and to explore different methods for its development. Most of the water is brackish and fossil water, meaning that there is no, or very little, recharge to the aquifer in the present day, as it derives from a past age when the climate was much wetter, so any development has to be carefully controlled.

The Ministry has made significant progress in planning and development of schemes to increase recharge, provide surface water storage and to improve aflaj water use efficiency. Recharge dams are designed to intercept flood flows in wadis, which would otherwise run to waste in the sea or inland into the desert. Water is released at a reduced rate of flow often through culverts in the dam and infiltrates the groundwater aquifer beyond the dams in controlled flow. This recharged water moves gradually in the aquifer to replenish boreholes downstream of the dams. Sixteen dams have so far been completed and several small dams and water structures have been built in Jebel Akhdar. Monitoring networks of rain gauges, wadi flow gauges and boreholes



▲ One of the Sultanate's re-charge dams which maintain the water table on the Batinah Coast.

are installed at strategic sites behind and downstream of the dams. When there have been significant periods of wadi flow, water levels in boreholes downstream of the dams rise significantly. Over periods of many months, observations of water levels from over the whole network show that this recharged water diffuses to other zones in the aquifers.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries prepared a master plan for building recharge dams in 1986. The original intention was to build 58 dams in preliminary identified sites, mostly on the coastal and Interior sides of the northern mountains. During each 5-year development planning period progress towards this aim is assessed and modifications are made in the light of experience. Broadly speaking, the master plan is still being followed and discussions are now under way for the next 5-year planning period starting at the end of 1996.

The feasibility of building water conservation structures and their potential for operating successfully is evaluated fully before building begins. Issues that must be taken into account in deciding between recharge and retention structures include estimations of aquifer capacity (how much groundwater the aquifer underlying the site of the structure can hold) and recharge potential (how much of the intercepted flood flows will actually infiltrate the aquifer, rather than just be

evaporated). Where there is no suitable aquifer, usually in mountainous areas with small valleys, a retention structure is more viable.

The assessment of sea-water intrusion on the Batinah Coast has been examined through several studies. The most important of these so far was the production of a series of maps comparing the extent of saline water intrusion and falls in groundwater levels during the period 1983 to 1991. This showed that significant levels of saline intrusion are taking place along the entire coastal strip, but particularly in the south from Suwaiq to Seeb. Here, average long-term decline in the groundwater level is in the order of 0.5 metres per year. Similar maps have been produced for the Salalah coastal plain, where saline intrusion is also increasing.

Similar investigations formed part of the studies of the feasibility of recharge dams in wadis Sumail and Rusayl. National well inventory data together with preliminary assessments of the southern Batinah, completed early last year, have also helped to define the landward extent of saline and brackish waters, and the amount of groundwater abstractions in excess of recharge. These studies confirm that sea water intrusion is generally increasing along the Batinah.

Management options which have been proposed to alleviate the situation include the removal of large fodder farms from the Batinah, the introduction of metering to measure water use, continued well inventory work, improved monitoring and several engineering initiatives that will control use and the intrusion it causes.

The Ministry operates through four Directorate-Generals, which are respectively responsible for water resources assessment, water resources management, regional affairs and administration and finance. Staffing levels have increased more than eight-fold since the creation of the Ministry, which reflects its increasing activity. 93% of the 1,200 staff are Omani. The Ministry provides training, ranging from locally-based administrative and language courses to technical MSc courses overseas. Since 1992, 114 staff have studied abroad, while an average of 500 a year have attended local courses. The Ministry's headquarters are at present in Ruwi, and there are 11 water resource departments in the regions. The number of regional departments has doubled in five years.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of His Majesty's accession and the fifth anniversary of its founding, the Ministry, helped by the International Water Resources Association, held an international conference on Water Resources Management in Arid Countries in Muscat during March 1995. Two hundred and forty delegates representing 39 countries attended 15 sessions of scientific presentations. 86 papers and 19 posters were presented on 11 topics:-

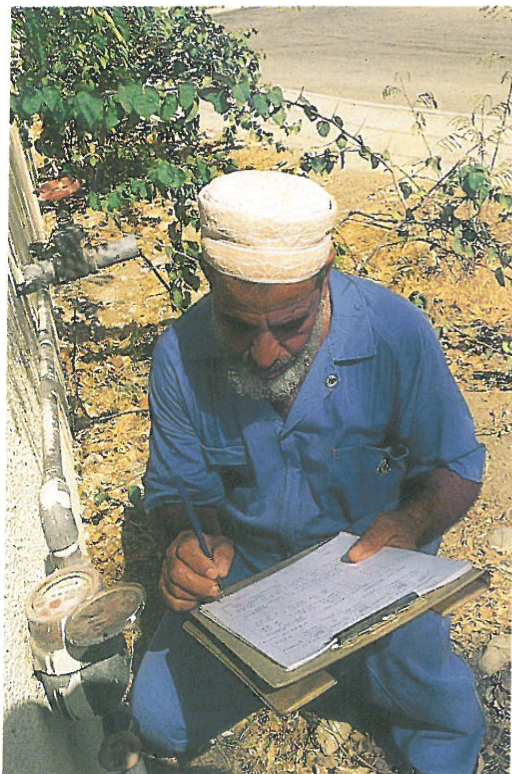
DOMESTIC WATER

Fresh water has always been a precious resource in the arid climate of the Sultanate of Oman. In 1970 water for domestic and agricultural purposes was totally dependent on wells and the falaj system in the Interior. Although agriculture takes 95% of the available water, the demand for domestic purposes has increased sharply in recent years, with a rising population and higher standards of living.

Initially, at the commencement of the country's renaissance in 1970, three government wells were sunk in the area of Al Khodh near Seeb, and a 12-inch pipeline was laid over a distance of 35km from Al Khodh to a water tower in Muttrah. This was followed by the construction of water towers in Muscat and Bait al Falaj. With the exception of a few Government connections, water had to be collected by citizens from distribution points.

By the beginning of 1974 the rapid pace of progress was such that another means of coping with the rapid increase in the demand for water had to be found. The obvious answer to this was sea water desalination. So a desalination plant was constructed at Al Ghubra near

Muscat which went into production in 1976 with a production capacity of 5 million gallons a day. This was increased to 11 million gallons a day in 1982, with the addition of a new desalination unit. In 1986-87 three more desalination units were completed at Al Ghubra bringing total production capacity to 23.5 million gallons daily. A further desalination unit is currently under construction at Al Ghubra which will raise total production capacity at the plant to 35 million gallons daily by the middle of 1996. A



◀ A company official records domestic water consumption.

new distribution reservoir was built in 1994 to supply Ghubra South with water. It has a capacity of 2.2 million gallons and is supplied from the desalination plant. At the beginning of this year, the Minister of Electricity and Water signed an agreement for the construction of a 4.4 million gallon reservoir to supply Ghubra North.

In addition to the water production projects, the Ministry is planning to extend distribution pipelines and house connections to recently-built housing areas in the Muscat region. Another distribution reservoir in the Seeb area is planned for construction shortly, bringing the number of reservoirs in the Muscat area to fifteen. The Ministry has completed a master plan for the supply of water to the Muscat area up to the year 2010, the recommendations of which will be implemented through the Government's Five Year Plans.

Apart from the production of fresh water from the desalination plant at Al Ghubrah, ground water is obtained from boreholes in the Wadi Dayqah and the Al Khodh area and is mixed with the desalinated water for distribution for domestic purposes.

Considerable progress has been achieved in the supply of fresh water for domestic purposes, not only to the main towns, but also to smaller communities throughout the country. During 1994 a major water distribution system was completed for the city of Nizwa, the first phase of which consisted of drilling boreholes in the wellfield. Pumps have now been installed and 42km of pipeline laid to a new reservoir there. Pumping stations have also been installed at Izz and Firq. At Sur, a coastal town and port south-east of Muscat, and the principal town of the Sharqiyah region, a desalination plant with a capacity of one million gallons daily was installed recently as well as a pumping station and 48km of distribution lines, which were further extended last year. A water supply network has also been completed for the city of Sohar in the north, and for the towns along the Batinah Coast.

Desalination plants have been installed at population centres along the southern coast and islands of the Sultanate. A desalination plant recently installed at Ras al Hadd has a daily productive capacity of 22,000 gallons. On the island of Mahawt a desalination plant has been installed with electricity generators to operate the plans and provide lighting for the island. A desalination plant has been constructed at Madrakah in the Wilayet of Haima. In 1984 a plant was established on Masirah Island with a daily production capacity of 120,000 gallons. Another plant was installed on the main island of Halaaniyaat Islands, off the Dhofar coast, several years ago.

Away from the coast a desalination plant was completed last year to serve the Wilayets of Bani bu Hassan and Bani bu Ali in the Ja'alan. In the Wilayet of Mudhaibi a plant is to be installed in the village of Al Bayda. One was completed at Haima in the Al Wusta region several years ago. There are now eleven desalination plants in the Al Wusta region, each producing 22,000 gallons of fresh water daily from underground brackish water.

In the Dhahira region, Buraimi and Mahdah now have fresh-water networks. These were further extended last year. Other towns and villages in the region are supplied with fresh water by tanker from more than 90 boreholes.

In the Governorate of Musandam, Khasab, the principal town, enjoys a comprehensive water-supply scheme with full house connections, and several projects are due to be completed in other towns and villages of the Musandam. A second desalination plant is to be constructed at Lima with a capacity of 22,000 gallons daily. Several other small projects were carried out last year involving transmission pipelines, reservoirs and distribution pipelines.



ELECTRICITY

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970 there was only one small power station in the Sultanate at Riyam between Muscat and Muttrah with a capacity of 4.5mw, which had been completed a couple of years earlier, and was limited to supplying the electricity needs of the two places. Before that electricity was supplied to Muscat by a generator situated within the city. Since that time the electricity sector has developed to such an extent that it now reaches all regions of the country and populated areas except some of the most remote villages in the mountains. About 87% of the Sultanate's regions are now fully supplied with electricity.

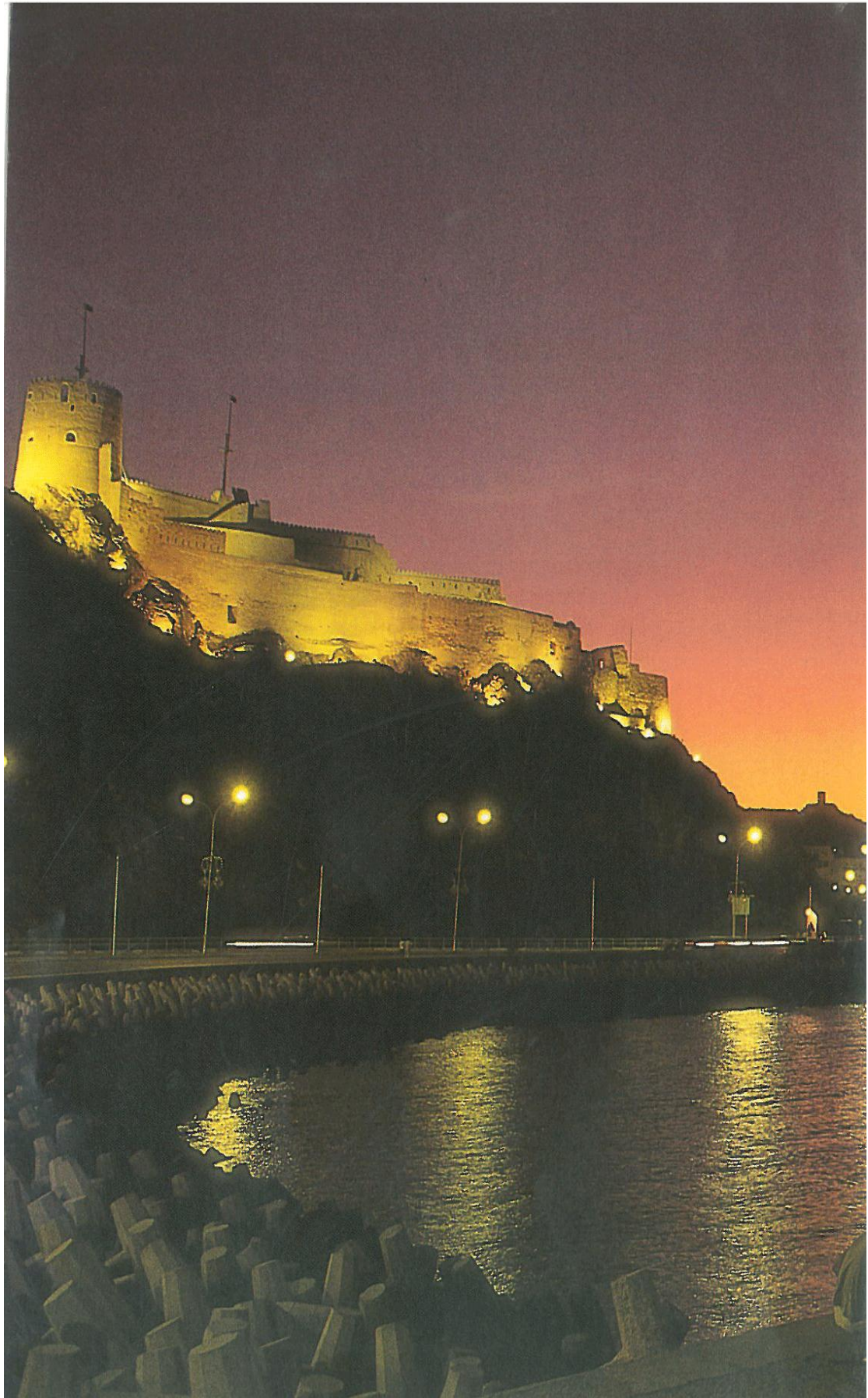
The first major project was the construction of the Al Ghubrah desalination and power plant in 1976, with an initial capacity of 25.5mw. At the end of 1983 the first major extension of the plant was completed raising the capacity to 287mw. In the current Five Year Plan (1991-96) the latest expansion stage with the addition of two gas units of 190mw capacity will raise productivity to 500mw early this year.

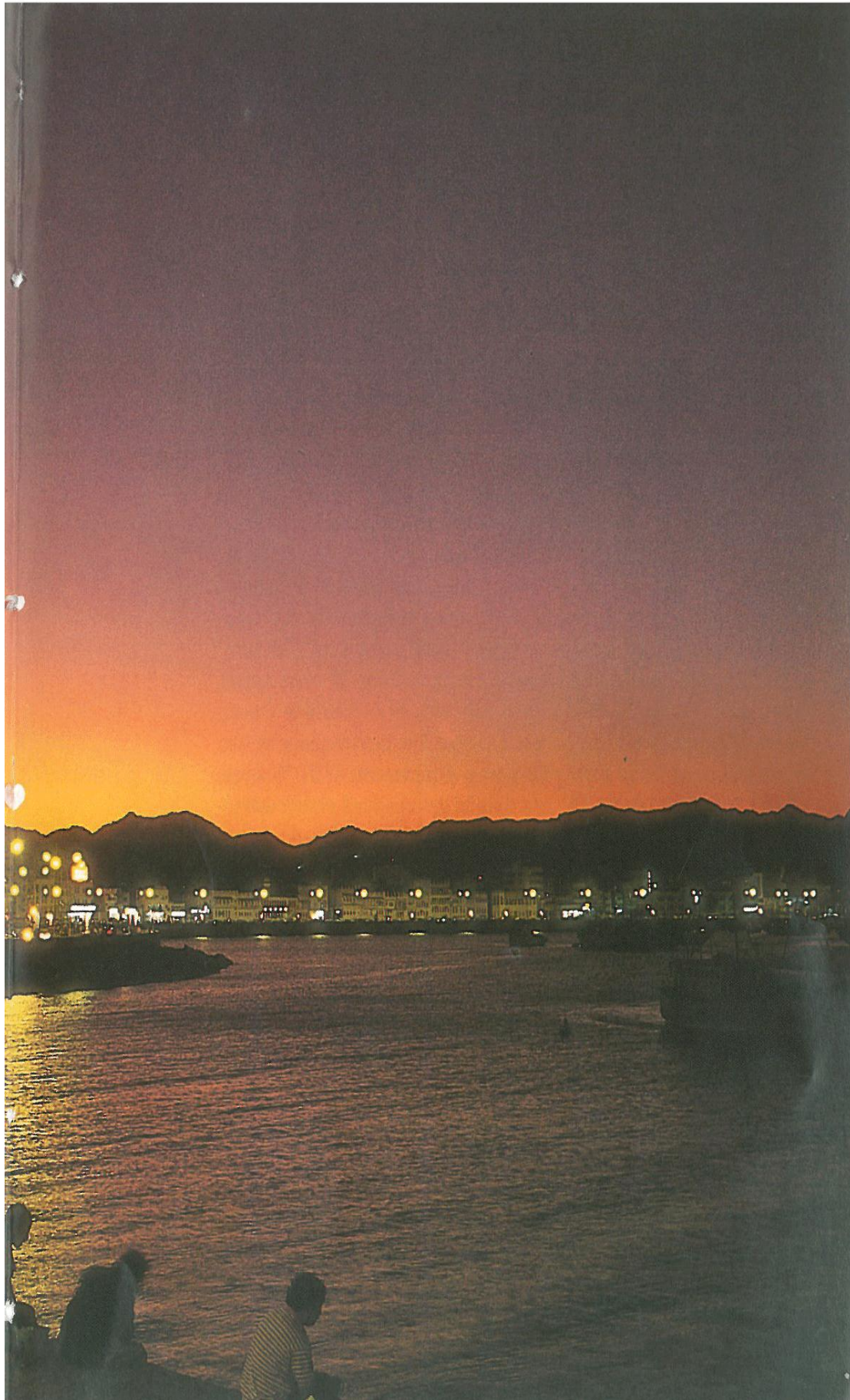
By 1978 the growing nationwide requirement for electricity and water was such that a Ministry of Electricity and Water was established. To meet the needs of the northern Batinah and the copper complex another power station was constructed in the Wadi Jizzi near Sohar. Two gas turbines have since been added raising the total capacity to 250mw. Another power station was constructed at Rusayl, the site of the Sultanate's first industrial estate near Muscat. The construction was undertaken in two phases, the first of which was completed in 1984 with a capacity of 250mw. By the end of the second phase, capacity had been doubled to 500mw.

In the southern region work began on building a power station in Salalah in 1971, when three diesel units were installed with a maximum capacity of 1,365mw. Later other units were added and new power stations were constructed at Salalah and Raysut, the port and site of an industrial area 8km west of Salalah. Two generators will be added to the existing Raysut power station with a total capacity of 12,400kw. Studies are under way to add a gas turbine with generation capacity of 20,000kw at Salalah to assure the future needs of the Governorate. Smaller power stations at Mirbat and Sudh will get an additional generator each.

There were no generating stations in the Wilayets outside the Muscat area before 1978, but by the following year twenty two were set up

►► Muttrah at night – all the Sultanate's major towns are now supplied with electricity.





in the different regions with a total overall capacity of 27mw. Originally all these stations were diesel-operated, but as production costs of diesel units are high, it is the policy of the Ministry to connect the small diesel generation stations to gas turbines and to interconnect these systems with the main power stations in the Muscat area and the Wadi Jizzi. The power plants at Al Ghubrah and Rusayl are powered by natural gas supplied by pipeline from the gas fields in the Interior. The power plant in the Wadi Jizzi is also operated by natural gas, and was constructed to supply electricity to the copper-refining complex in the Wadi Jizzi and to the Sohar region. In 1993 the power stations along the northern Batinah Coast, originally operated by diesel were interconnected with the Wadi Jizzi power station, while those along the South Batinah Coast were linked with the Muscat network. The existing diesel units were relocated to the Interior.

In June last year the Government signed an agreement for the construction of a major power station in Manah at a cost of RO82million, the first of its kind to be wholly built, owned and operated by the private sector. The 90mw project is to be run by the United Energy Company comprising four Omani and three Belgian companies. The company, which is to own and operate the project for 20 years before handing it to the public sector, will offer 40% of its shares to Omani and AGCC nationals. The project is expected to be completed in two years and designed to supply the power requirements of the Wilayets of Izki, Nizwa and Bahla. The new natural gas-operated project will replace the existing diesel-operated power stations in the Interior. Consumers will not be affected by possible price rises as the company will adopt the current price rate.

Due to the availability of natural gas in the Sultanate and the high cost of using diesel fuel, it is the policy of the Government to use natural gas as a fuel for power stations instead of diesel. This will improve the efficiency and economical operation of the power stations. The integrated power system has several technical and economical advantages: besides improving operational efficiency, the integrated system will assist in power interchange between the various stations.

In 1970 there were approximately 1,000 consumers of electricity in the Sultanate; by the end of 1995 it is expected that there will be 332,000 consumers. In 1982 there were 15 main power stations and 1,292 sub-stations; by the end of 1995 this will have risen to 222 main stations and 12,000 sub-stations, and by the end of the year it is expected that the electricity coverage of the Sultanate will be 95%.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOUR

Oman was one of the first countries to accept Islam, and the practice of zakat is deeply entrenched in the culture and traditions of the country. The payment of zakat is one of the pillars of Islam (zakat is described more fully in the chapter on Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs), but clearly requires the co-operation of other measures to meet the requirements of a modern developing society.

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

The social sector of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is responsible for creating the conditions that enable the community to promote and enjoy stability. Studies are carried out in various social fields with the aim of providing opportunities for social development. The Ministry also draws up general social welfare policies for families in need. It provides emergency assistance for victims of fires and other disasters. It helps develop local communities, organises mother and child welfare programmes, provides opportunities for the national workforce to develop its potential and enjoy job security. It promotes good labour relations between employers and employees, supervises the implementation of laws and decisions relating to the private sector, and protects the workforce from occupational hazards. The Ministry prepares plans to ensure that the available manpower meets the country's needs for technically trained and administrative personnel. The aim is to achieve optimal use of national manpower and further the process of Omanisation.

The Ministry uses the most up-to-date methods to provide social welfare for individuals and families. It covers social security, relief, special cases, social studies and research, charitable associations and clubs, the National Programme for Local Community Development, women and children's welfare, Omani Women's Associations and women's training centres.



▲ Adult Education
Class in Ibra.

Social security has been expanded to reach out to every region of the Sultanate and provides all eligible citizens with social security pensions. These include families deprived by social and economic circumstances of a decent livelihood due to incapacity or loss of a breadwinner for reasons such as old age, orphanhood, widowhood or divorce. Among other categories are unmarried girls, women who have been abandoned and the families of prisoners. On the occasions of the Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha 50% of entitlements are paid to families on social security.

In order to ensure that every citizen has the chance to enjoy a decent standard of living, the Ministry is committed to providing the physically and mentally disabled with access to education and with the opportunity to earn incomes within their communities. This is done and administered through the Special Welfare Department of the Ministry, which was set up in 1980. Major achievements in this area include the ultra-modern Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled at Al Khoodh, which was opened in 1987. This Centre provides welfare services for the disabled throughout the Sultanate so that they can regain their potential and return to work in their original occupations or take up occupations that are suitable for their particular

situation. The disabled graduate from the Centre after undergoing training in skills such as typing, carpentry, domestic science and men's tailoring. The Ministry then liaises with Government departments and other organisations to find employment for the newly-qualified disabled in the public or private sectors.

Sport is an important part of the disabled welfare programme. The Ministry ensures that Oman is represented at Gulf, Arab, Asian and International sporting events. The disabled sports team has scored numerous successes in recent years and won gold, silver and bronze medals in 1994 at the International Sports Championship for the Disabled at Stoke Mandeville in England.

1993 saw the opening of several 'Wafa' Centres for the care and rehabilitation of disabled children in a number of Wilayats and regions of the Sultanate. These Centres are funded and run through the combined efforts and contributions of the government and voluntary movements. There are now Centres at Ibri, Nizwa, Salalah, Rustaq, Buraimi, Sohar, Ibra, Sur and Bidbid, which provide services for about 493 disabled children with a staff of 117 female volunteers. The Centres also educate the public on the need for co-operation in dealing with the problem of disability.

The Ministry and its regional departments encourage citizens to become self-sufficient, and to avoid dependence on charity, through helping families to improve their incomes and living conditions by becoming productive units. This is done by means of livelihood projects which involve setting up enterprises such as small shops. The Ministry is currently preparing a new and comprehensive plan of action to increase the effectiveness of these projects.

The Ministry has carried out social studies on negative phenomena which it has observed, with the aim of identifying their causes and proposing ways of treating them.. These wide-ranging investigations include a study of citizens' views and attitudes to marriage, a study on divorce, the social forces motivating the Omani farmer in his approach to agricultural development, and the effects of foreign nursemaids on the Omani family.

To encourage voluntary social work, the Ministry issued a regulation in 1990 on the activities of charitable associations, which enables members of the community to effectively channel their voluntary charitable work. This decision led to the launching of a number of charitable associations, including the Disabled Children's Welfare Association in Muscat, which was the first voluntary association to provide care for this category of society.



Last year the Ministry issued a regulation on the operation of foreign community social clubs. Under this regulation the Ministry is responsible for overseeing all foreign community clubs in the Sultanate and ensuring that they adhere to the directives of the Ministry. The Directive also lays down the procedures for obtaining a licence to set up a club. A sample club constitution was published as a guide to club founders when drawing up their own club rules. Once established, a club must abide fully by the Law on Associations and Clubs, as well as its own constitution and the directives of the Ministry.

The National Local Community Development Programme coordinates and expands the services of the Ministries concerned with rural development. The social feature is one of the most important aspects of this programme. It is based on gaining the confidence of the rural communities and channelling their efforts into financing and implementing projects from their own resources, in co-operation with the relevant Government departments. During 1993 and the first half of 1994, 90 social development projects were implemented by the Programme of which two thirds of the cost was contributed by members of the public.

In the drive for health improvement, the Ministry operates development teams in conjunction with Ministry of Health workers who

▲ The Omani national paraplegic basketball team training at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, in preparation for a tournament organised by the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation.

have been co-opted into the teams. Their tasks include the disinfecting of wells, the education of women and children in health matters, and conducting general awareness and hygiene campaigns.

Education is also a high priority under the National Local Community Development Programme. Literacy and adult education classes are held by members of the local community in co-operation with the Ministry of Education. The public also contribute by providing premises and transport. Social workers meet the local population, either individually or in groups, in order to encourage them to make use of the educational facilities available. During 1993 and the first half of 1994 81 literacy classes and 29 adult education classes were commenced. A high proportion of the students are women.

The Ministry has established adult libraries and Holy Koran schools to provide students with access to culture and self-study. A number of rural development libraries have been set up and supplied with a wide range of books on cultural, social, religious and health topics. There are also mobile libraries, supervised by male and female staff, which tour the villages. Holy Koran schools have been set up through the combined initiatives of the Programme, development teams, members of the public and the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

The Ministry works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the setting up of demonstration farms; pest control and the provision of veterinary services and other services. Wells have been dug, maintenance work carried out on aflaj, and pest control programmes established. Farmers have been supplied with seeds and fertilisers.

Women and Children

Women and children form one of the most important responsibilities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, and its departments have instituted a wide range of social and educational activities and programmes to meet their needs. The Ministry's Directorate-General of Women's and Children's Affairs is responsible for identifying their social, cultural and health needs, and for the operation of social and educational programmes in order to build sound future generations which can play their full part in the country's development.

The Ministry has established seven women's training centres to provide welfare services for Omani women in the various regions of the Sultanate, and to improve their social, economic and cultural standards, while four centres have been set up by voluntary contributions.

These centres train women in needlework, embroidery, and home economics, as well as in traditional local crafts to improve their skills and protect this heritage from extinction. Marketing facilities are provided for their products by the centres. The centres also organise lectures, courses and literacy classes, and pay home visits to families. The centres have children's corners attended by almost a thousand children. Members also take part in all national, and many Arab celebrations and occasions, and are given training in simple productive projects aimed at increasing their incomes and those of their families.

In the knowledge that the period between birth and the age of 14 is a vital period of a child's life, when its character is developed, the Ministry's Children's Department has the responsibility of overseeing the establishment of good, non-Government day nurseries, of which there are now 22 in different regions of the Sultanate. These receive regular supervision and guidance to ensure that they abide by the conditions stipulated in the Ministry's regulations for day nurseries. Programmes of useful activities are also organised for children, including camps, cultural events, entertainments and plays. Care is provided for children of unknown parentage, and foster families are found for them.

Labour Sector

The labour sector of the Ministry is responsible for the national workforce employed in private sector enterprises and for companies, as well as for foreign imported labour. Its aim is to make optimal use of the national workforce in private sector establishments and companies. The question of employment of expatriate labour is at the top of the Ministry's list of priorities in view of the growing need for manpower, and this involves intensive efforts on the part of the Ministry to ensure that this category receives adequate legal and social protection. The main channels for achieving these objectives are local recruitment, work permits (for non-Omani employees), labour inspections, employee welfare, occupational health and safety, and labour relations.

The progress achieved since the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, created an urgent need for imported labour from Arab and other countries in order to enable the goals of the Development Plans to be met, since the available national manpower was insufficient to cover all the country's requirements. It thus became the Ministry's function to reconcile the manpower requirements of the Development Plans with locally available labour, and to supervise the recruitment of foreign workers needed to bridge the gap.

In line with the policy of Omanisation, the Ministry is to increase the recruitment of national manpower for private companies to replace expatriates. Omanisation is progressing steadily according to plan, and aims to provide rewarding opportunities for every Omani who is willing and able to work. Vocational Guidance Regulations have been introduced to encourage nationals to work in the private sector. The Ministry's figures show a significant rise in Omanisation levels in the private sector during 1993 and the first half of 1994. As part of the programme of Omanisation, in 1991 the Supreme Committee for Vocational Training decided to pay owners of private companies compensation equal to a proportion of the salaries and allowances paid to their employees with effect from October 1991 and for periods up to three years. More recently the Committee has announced it is to open employment offices for Omanis and set Omanisation levels in some six main private sector areas.

Through its Employee Welfare Department the Ministry endeavours to eradicate obstacles in the production processes in private sector companies and to ensure just labour relations between employers and employees. These include claims for the rights of employees, as well as appeals against dismissal and termination or cancellation of contracts. Ministry staff make every effort to resolve disputes amicably through mutual agreement between the two parties.

Computerisation was introduced in 1991, in order to speed up and simplify procedures and ensure the minimum of errors and maximum flexibility. The Labour Department also monitors the movements of Omani and expatriate labour at private sector companies. On the basis of the data it receives, the Ministry prepares quarterly and half-yearly reports on the size of the work-force in this vital sector. It also forwards monthly figures to the Economic Research Department at the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Manpower Statistics Department at the Ministry of Development.

One of the Ministry's main objectives is to protect employees from occupational hazards. The Ministry regulations on health and safety at work oblige employers to provide medical care and suitably healthy accommodation, complete with all necessary utilities and services. In addition, the work environment must not be conducive to occupational illness or accidents. Premises are inspected regularly to ensure that the highest occupational health and safety standards are maintained.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Sultanate's National Development Programme over the past 25 years has to a very large degree been dependent on the development of communications. The achievements in this respect have indeed been remarkable. In 1970 there was no seaport, and only a small airport used for civil and military purposes at Bait al Falaj, and 8 km of paved road in the whole Sultanate.

Seaports

In 1970 there was no port in the Sultanate where ships could berth alongside to load and discharge cargoes. There was only a small quay in Muscat which dried out at low tide. At Muttrah, which was the commercial centre of the country, merchant ships had to lie offshore and unload their cargoes into lighters which off loaded onto the beach. It was appreciated that the construction of a modern seaport with deepwater berths was an urgent necessity, and it was therefore given high priority in the development plans. Through intensive effort Mina Sultan Qaboos at Muttrah was completed in 1974, geared to handle two million tonnes of cargo annually.

Over the succeeding years the port has been expanded and modernised in order to cope with the ever-increasing volume of imports and exports. Additional facilities have included the construction of a container terminal, modern warehouses, engineering workshops, new cranes, and extended deepwater wharfage. The port's expansion programme was completed and inaugurated in December 1994. The entrance to the port has been dredged to a depth of 13 metres. Three existing berths have been converted into container berths with a water depth of about 13 metres and a combined quay-length of 471 metres. The converted berths will be equipped with quayside container handling cranes, each with a 40 tonne capacity. These cranes are in addition to two existing container handling cranes with a 35 tonne capacity. The port already has eight transfer cranes with 40 tonne capacity.

Spoil from dredging in the port area has been used for land reclamation at Shutaify Bay, whereby a 150,000 sq. metre container storage/stacking area has been created.

Mina Raysut in the south of Oman, lies 8 km to the west of Salalah, and serves as the port for Salalah and the Governorate of Dhofar. With the recent inauguration of the Raysut Industrial Estate and the prospect of the opening up of trade with the Yemen Republic, Mina



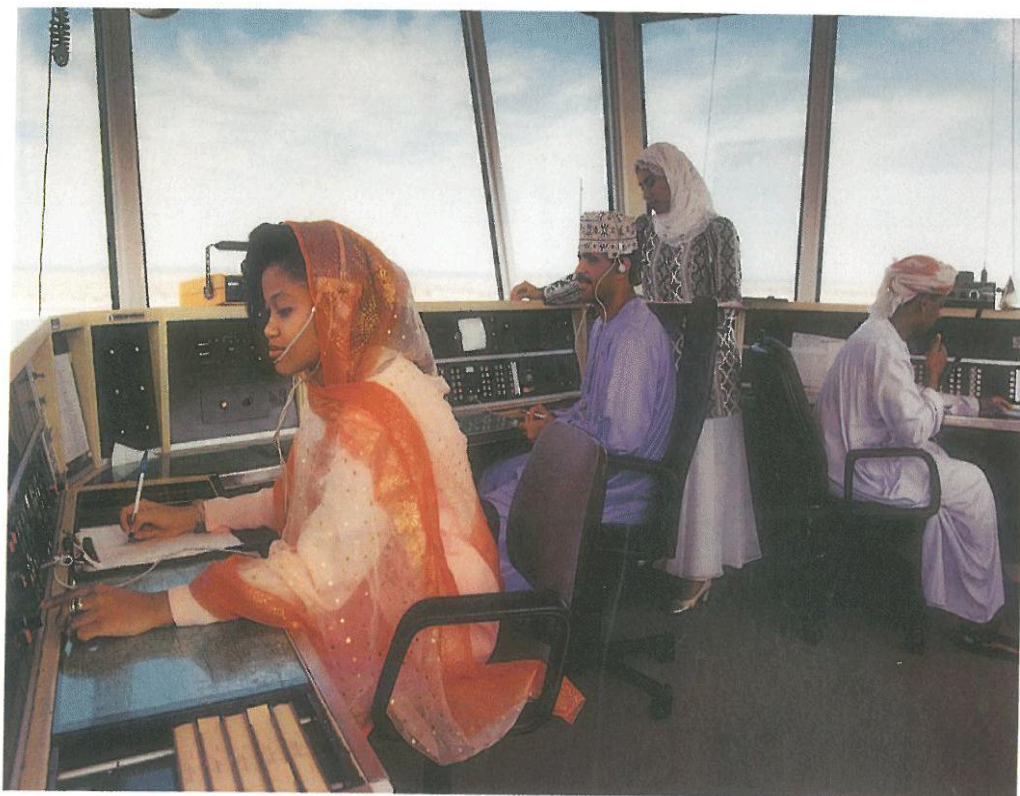
▲ The Port of Mina Al Sultan Qaboos, Muttrah, has undergone extensive expansion.

Raysut is currently subject to a comprehensive port development plan study. The study will produce recommendations for development options for phased implementation up to the year 2015. The future shipping services of Oman are being assessed, and the study will provide plans to meet shipping requirements into the next century.

Based on the comprehensive feasibility studies currently being conducted, the Government believes that in the long term beyond the year 2000 it will be necessary to have a new commercial port in order to meet the traffic demand forecast, and to receive third generation fully loaded container vessels. It is expected to issue tenders for detailed design and consultancy work under the current Five Year Plan (1992-97); construction is expected to take place during the next Five Year Plan. So far, no final selection for the location of a new port has been made. A number of possible sites have been examined along the Batinah Coast between Sohar and Muscat and at Quriyat and Sur.

Airports

The airport at Bait al Falaj operating in 1970 was manifestly unsuitable for a developing country. Situated in a basin in the hills surrounding Muscat the air-approaches were dangerous in bad weather. The construction of a new international airport was therefore high on



◀ Omani flight
controllers at Seeb
International Airport.

the list of priorities in the development plans for the Sultanate. A site was chosen on the Batinah plain near the town of Seeb, 17 km from Muscat. Seeb International Airport was completed with commendable speed and inaugurated in December 1973. Since that time the airport has undergone a series of renovations and improvements. The passenger terminal building when initially constructed contained limited services, which could only process 400 departing and arriving passengers in an hour. The first expansion programme was completed in 1985, by which time 1,000 passengers could be processed per hour. However, the rapidly growing passenger and aircraft movements necessitated further expansion and alterations, so that by the end of last year not less than 3,000 passengers per hour could be processed. Duty-free and other shopping facilities of the highest standards have been opened, and are being further increased. A new baggage-processing system, and flight information displays have recently been installed to provide more efficient operations and a higher standard of convenience to travellers. A separate VIP passenger terminal was constructed to the west of the existing terminal in 1991.

To cater for the increasing and more varied aircraft movements the main runway was extended by 500 metres in 1979 to give a total length of 3585 metres. There are now 18 parking bays for heavy/wide-bodied aircraft and 24 for small/light aircraft. In 1992, an 80,000 sq metre cargo handling area was established at the airport, and the existing aircraft-catering building built in 1980 is to be replaced in the near future with a new facility capable of producing at least 12,000 meals a day, in comparison with 7,000 meals at present. In 1973, a small meteorological section was established to provide the necessary weather information for air navigation purposes.

The first passenger terminal was inaugurated in 1986 with all the necessary facilities for international flights at Salalah airport, and the main runway was extended in 1992 by 692 metres. The airport now has six parking bays. The Sultanate now has six civil airports: at Seeb, Salalah, Sur, Masirah and Khasab and Diba in the Musandam. Those at Sur and Diba are for light aircraft only.

◀ The Duty Free
Shop at Seeb
International Airport
offers a wide range
of products to the
traveller.

Oman Aviation Services (OAS), an Omani joint stock Company, was established in 1981 to operate domestic airline services and charter aircraft, and to provide other airline-related services on a 20-year franchise. This includes aircraft, passenger services and cargo handling, catering and other facilities. Well over half the employees of the company are now Omani nationals. In December 1993 the first batch of four Omani pilots graduated to fly Boeing-737 aircraft. At the same time,



certificates were also awarded to four Boeing-737 engineers, all of whom were trained in Australia at the Company's expense. Oman Aviation is now spreading its wings abroad. By the end of 1993 the company was operating services to Dubai, Kuwait and Trivandrum in southern India. Last year, it inaugurated a service to Karachi, making a total of 17 international and 18 domestic flights per week.

Oman has a 25% share with the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain in the international airline, Gulf Air, which operates services to Western Europe, the Gulf, the Indian sub-continent, Africa, the Far East, the USA and Australia.

▲ In-flight service
– Oman Air is now
spreading its wings
abroad.

Roads

In 1970, apart from the hard-surface road from Muscat to the airport at Bait al Falaj there were only two graded roads in the country from Muscat to Sohar and from Muscat to Fahud. The former was maintained by the Government, and the latter by PDO. Apart from that, vehicles had to travel along tracks, and in practice it was only Landrovers and Bedford trucks which were able to stand up to the conditions. Following the renaissance of the Sultanate in 1970 priority was given to road construction, as the development of the infrastructure of the country was dependent on it. During the past 25 years a

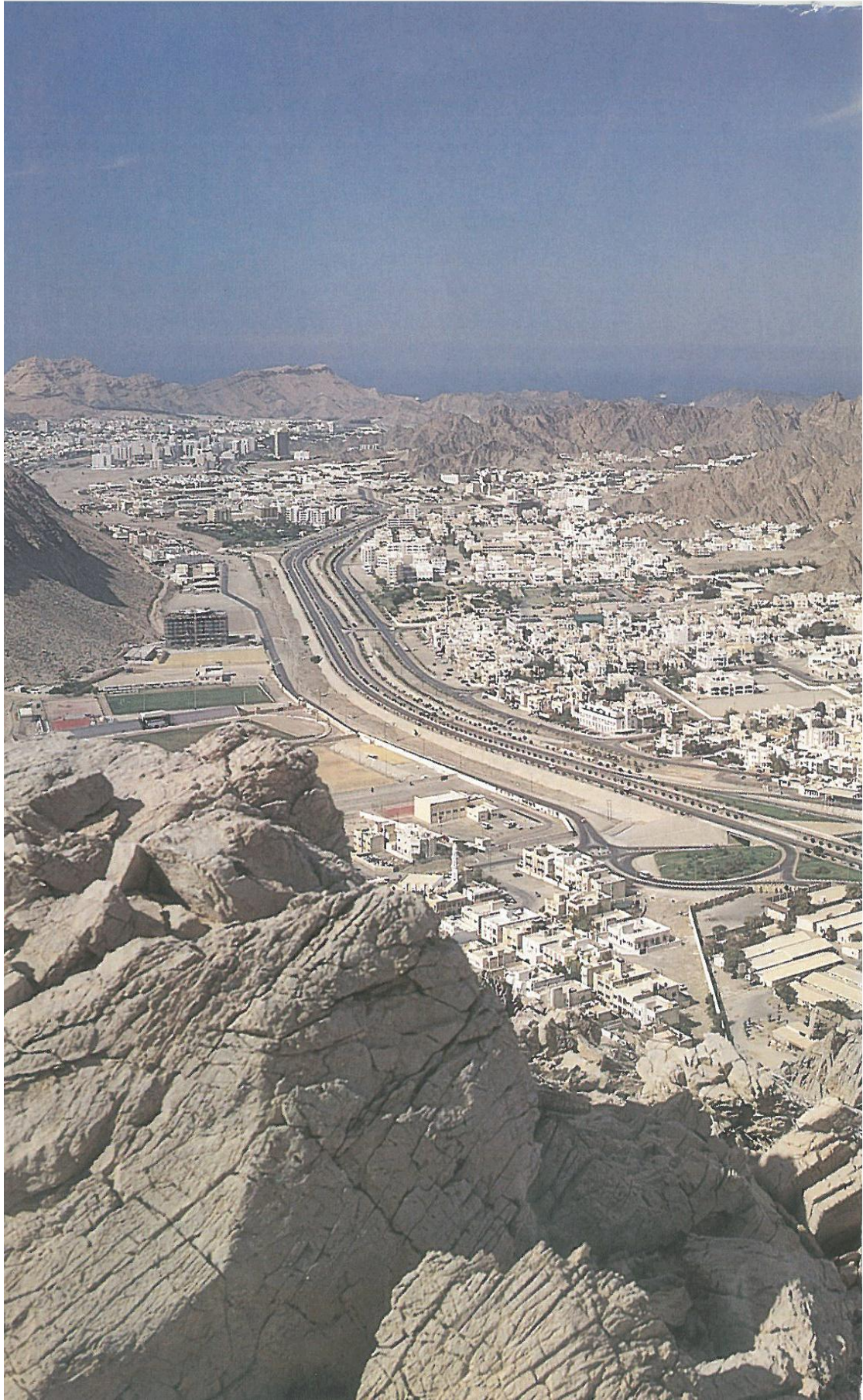
network of asphalt roads has been constructed to cover the whole length and breadth of the country, and to connect with those of neighbouring countries. By the end of last year there were 5,131 km of asphalt roads throughout the Sultanate compared with 10 km in 1970.

In the second half of the 1980s some spectacular road construction was achieved in the mountainous areas of the country, connecting isolated communities with the main centres of population, and making them accessible to the benefits of modern development. These included roads through the rugged and precipitous mountains of the Musandam peninsula at the northern tip of the Sultanate, and to the top of the Jebel Akhdar plateau, virtually inaccessible until then except by air. Recently an impressive paved road has been constructed in the south, linking Salalah with Sarfait near the border with the Yemen Republic.

Now that the network of major roads within the Sultanate has been completed, emphasis is on the improvement of internal local road network in the wilayets. Dualisation of some of the major roads is also taking place, principally that from Nizwa to the coast, the first phase of which, as far as Bidbid, is under way. Rehabilitation of some of the original asphalt roads is also being undertaken under the current road programme.

Oman National Transport Company (ONTC), the state-owned bus company, has the franchise for the operation of public services throughout the Sultanate. It also provides a wide variety of long-term contracts, short-term charters and tourism coach services. Currently the company operates 28 bus routes which provide both urban and suburban services in the Muscat region, and it also links the major cities throughout the Sultanate. It provides students and workers with commuting transport for many organisations, both Government and private, principally in the area of the Capital. The company operates six air-conditioned luxury coaches, fitted with long-distance fuel tanks, television and toilet facilities, which operate between Muscat and Salalah, and Muscat and Dubai. Future plans include expansion of the public bus service network, as well as the replacement of older buses with new, more comfortable, modern vehicles.

►► Muscat – a fine road network system interlinks all our major towns.





POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970, which marked the beginning of the Sultanate's renaissance, it was clearly evident that communications in the broadest sense was essential for the development of the country. Postal services and telecommunications, of course, were a vital part of this. At an early stage a Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones was established to meet this requirement. Subsequently, the General Telecommunications Organisation became a self-contained entity within the Ministry.

Postal Services

The first post office in the Sultanate was opened in Muscat in 1856, but no further progress was made for more than a century. Until 1947, Indian postage stamps were used for the sake of convenience. After Indian independence in that year, the British Post Office was given the responsibility for postal agencies in the Gulf region, and over-printed British stamps were used. The first Omani stamps were issued in 1966 when the Government took over the postal services. In 1970, as there was still only one post office in Muscat, in other parts of the country the conveyance of letters was entirely dependent on the goodwill of travellers.

By 1976 there were already 27 post offices throughout the Sultanate, and by 1994 this figure had risen to 88, plus about 170 postal distribution agencies. Subsequently, in the succeeding 25 years, there has been a vast increase in the turnover of letters and parcels. In 1971 a total of seven and a half million incoming and outgoing letters was handled. By the end of 1994 it had reached more than 52 million. This volume is expected to increase by 3% to 5% annually due to the rise in the population. A comparable increase is reflected in the number of parcels. A fleet of vehicles now moves post rapidly between Muscat and the provinces. EMS, the Express Mail Service, manned by specially trained staff for fast and reliable postal handling, was introduced in 1985. At first limited to the Muscat area, it has now been extended to all the main centres of population.

During the past year six new post offices have been inaugurated in various parts of the Sultanate. Over the same period the number of post boxes has risen from 45,500 to 47,500, and a fax system has been introduced for customers at branches in the Interior. Commemorative stamps have been placed on sale over the years to mark national events; last year two sets were issued, plus a first day cover, in



▲ The latest issue of postage stamps.

November to mark the 'Year of Heritage'. One set commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Sultanate's Al Busaidi dynasty, from the time of the accession of its founder, Imam Ahmed bin Said.

Telecommunications

The General Telecommunications Organisation (GTO), established in 1980, is a fully-owned Government entity, and is now self-financed. It is responsible for the infrastructure of the telecommunications network and the extension of a modern telephone system throughout the Sultanate. Following a Royal Decree directing GTO to operate on a commercial basis, there is a proposal to change its name to Public Establishment for Communications.

During 1984/85 a new Telecommunications Centre was constructed at Bait al Falaj near Muscat, and twelve digital exchanges were commissioned in the Muscat area. GTO's equipped capacity rose from 500 lines in 1970 to more than 200,000 lines by the end of last year, while the total number of working lines reached over 150,000. In 1991 three digital exchanges were commissioned in Salalah, increasing capacity in Dhofar to nearly 15,000. Subsequently expansion has continued, with projects covering the Interior, as well as Buraimi, Masirah, the Musandam Peninsula and the Batinah coastal region.



The Public Mobile Automatic Telephone System (PMATS) is fully integrated with the Sultanate's public automated telephone network. The PMATS is a cellular mobile telephone system which has been in operation in Oman since 1985. Originally, the system was equipped to provide services to 4,500 subscribers. Although the tariff was reduced to encourage growth, the growth rate remained almost constant up to 1990. This situation prompted the GTO to sell mobile subscriber equipment at a reduced cost. This resulted in a higher growth rate. The PMATS is controlled by a mobile telephone exchange in Muscat Governorate, having a capacity of 7,500 lines. The system interlinks with mobile subscribers through radio base stations located throughout the Sultanate and connected to the control terminal through cables and radio links. The mobile telephone service has now undergone substantial expansion. By the end of April 1995 the number of subscribers rose to 7,174 compared with 4,721 in 1992 and 747 in 1986. To improve and extend the radio coverage, two new RBS have been added, and ten have been upgraded making a total of 41 RBS in operation by 1994.

In 1993 two new maintenance centres were opened at Sohar and Nizwa, thus providing an effective and quick response to RBS maintenance in the Batinah and Interior regions. There is potential for further growth in the mobile telephone sector since the service is to be modernised using the digital Global System for Mobiles technique.

▲ The GTO training centre produces its own well-qualified technicians.



▲ The Main Exchange at the GTO headquarters.

As part of the expansion of the telephone network, the GTO introduced public pay phones in 1980 to make telephone services available over a wide area, where an individual service was not immediately available. It started with coin pay phones, and in 1986 card pay phones were introduced. By the end of April 1995 there were 3,254 pay phones, of which 105 were coin-operated and 3,149 card-operated. In 1993, card pay phones were installed in Musandam and on Masirah Island. Solar-powered card pay phones, operating through the mobile network, have enabled the GTO to provide the service to people living in remote mountainous and desert areas.

A major portion of the GTO's revenue comes from international traffic. International telephone calls can be made by direct dialling to most countries from a normal telephone, mobile or pay phone. Such calls can also be made through operator assistance by dialling 195. Telex subscribers in Oman have automatic access to most countries or through GTO telex operators. The capacity of the telex exchange had reached 3,052 lines by April 1995, compared with only 14 lines in 1970. As elsewhere, the facsimile service is more popular than telex as a more convenient means of communication. It is now widespread throughout the country and is provided by GTO whenever a demand arises. GTO has established through its offices throughout the country a Bureau fax service for the public to transmit and receive facsimile documents.

GTO has recently launched a new Data Packet Switching Network service in the global network. It is possible to lease international data communications facilities. By installing this service, Oman will gain access to all the world's major data-base services and computerised service bureaux. Additionally, GNS will provide business opportunities for the Sultanate by making it the only country in the Middle East with direct economical access to an international packet network. These enhanced communication capabilities will make Oman a highly attractive location for international companies to establish their regional headquarters facilities. In addition, GTO also provides digital cross-connect data transmission. This service will allow flexibility and speed up allocation of data circuits locally.

As customer demand grows, the GTO will investigate the means of providing additional capabilities for users. The Digital Data Network system was introduced in November 1993 and covers a total of 17 areas. There are plans to include the remaining areas of the country in the near future. The Digital Data Network is a highly efficient data service, which has proved to be very economical and reliable as compared to the analogue systems. All analogue data subscribers in areas where the digital service is available are being transferred to the new Digital Data Network.

The Voice Mail Service is a state-of-the-art service that has recently been introduced, and offers subscribers a whole range of useful features. The system utilises the latest technology of Modular Voice Processing (MVP) and can handle 25,000 subscribers at present. By the end of April 1995 the total number of voice mail subscribers reached 4,447.

The latest facsimile machines have advanced operational features and this has led to increased demand and usage in the country. The bureaufax service is available to the public for sending and receiving documents; it is provided by GTO at its public counters at selected post offices throughout the country. An increase in demand for this service is apparent. The facsimile service is now widespread throughout the country, and the machines can be readily purchased from local suppliers.

A paging service was introduced by GTO in December 1991. In 1993 the network was expanded substantially both in system capacity and coverage. The system control terminal capacity was increased from 20,000 to 55,000 subscribers. The total number of subscribers rose to 40,908 by the end April 1995 from 11,333 in 1992. To enhance coverage throughout the Sultanate, 13 new transmitters were installed, making a total of 48 by the end of 1993. A new paging concentrator with a capacity of 1,500 subscribers was installed at the Royal Hospital in 1993 to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Health. The GTO has

privatised the sale of the paging equipment, leading to a variety of pager models being available on the market.

In addition to the various directory inquiry services provided to each subscriber, a 24-hour inquiry operator service is available by dialling 198. Demand has increased greatly due to the expansion in GTO services throughout the Sultanate. Studies are currently in progress to further improve the system in order to meet the increasing volume of calls from the public.

The first earth station in Oman was commissioned in 1974 with 12 circuits to the United Kingdom and 12 to Bahrain. In 1975 the Sultanate introduced the latest technology of satellite communications: a fully-fledged Standard A earth station was installed at Al Amerat, working with Intelsat over the Indian Ocean. This station provides international direct links with countries outside the Arab world. The Sultanate was among the first countries to complete its Arabsat earth station in 1985. With its inauguration, GTO diverted its traffic to Arab countries via Arabsat instead of Intelsat. The Arabsat system is also utilised locally in the Domestic Satellite Communications network (DOMSAT). DOMSAT is a communication system which supports the terrestrial and national network and connects the various regions and areas in the Sultanate with TV and telecommunication services.

In addition to the earth stations at Al Amerat in the Muscat Governorate, domestic earth stations have been constructed at Sha'a in the Dhofar Governorate, Masirah Island and at Khasab in the Musandam Governorate. Earth stations to receive only TV have been installed in Nizwa, Sur, Saham and Al Buraimi. This network was earlier commissioned to work with Intelsat in 1976. However, the domestic traffic was transferred to the Arabsat system in 1985.

A new digital earth station has been commissioned in Ibri and will operate via Intelsat Atlantic Ocean Region (AOR) to enable direct links to North and South America to be operated without the need for transit access. By the end of 1993 the total number of international circuits operating via Al Amerat Satellite Complex reached 439, of which 305 circuits are operating with Intelsat Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and 124 via Arabsat.

The GTO periodically undertakes studies to review its services in order to offer competitive tariffs to the public and to reduce charges wherever possible in compliance with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Accordingly, charges for international telephone calls were reduced by between 25% and 44% in 1991. The GTO also reduced its sale charges for mobile telephone equipment and tone pagers in 1992, which resulted in a greater utilisation of these services. The tariff for national telephone calls was reduced by between 20% and

55% in August 1994. In addition, studies are being conducted for the introduction of new services and their relevant tariffs.

A number of steps have been taken to achieve cooperation and integration in the field of telecommunications within the AGCC countries. This has resulted in the standardisation of tariffs for some telecommunication services and specifications of some systems and equipment, in addition to the unification of the training syllabus. There is also a need to integrate the mobile telephone systems within the AGCC countries. In this context, these countries have adopted the GSM standard and necessary studies are being carried out. Within the same framework a fibre optic cable link between Khatmat Malalah and Al Fujairah was established in 1989. The link is fully digital and suitable for data transmission. It is regarded as a terrestrial backup to the current satellite link via the Arabsat network and the terrestrial link between Al Ain and Al Buraimi.

The Sultanate, as a member of the Council of Ministers for Arab Telecommunications in the Arab League, has been selected to provide the Deputy Chairman for the Executive Committee of this Council. This emphasises the role played by the Sultanate in strengthening relations between Arab countries in the field of telecommunication, either through Arabsat or by its active participation in the regional and bilateral meetings of the Arab countries. The Sultanate participates fully at international level in the field of telecommunications through its active membership of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and other international communications organisations.

In compliance with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos regarding the development of national manpower, GTO trains Omani nationals both in the Sultanate and abroad in various specialisations, and has established a centre to train Omani staff in up-to-date telecommunication systems with the latest technologies. GTO has achieved considerable success in the Omanisation of its staff, which has now reached over 80% of the total workforce.

GTO consistently prepares plans for new projects, of which there are currently 19, in order to extend its services throughout the Sultanate. These include studies for the expansion of the telephone service to cover all parts of the Sultanate, the expansion of the telecommunication services to the Al Wusta area and to many towns and villages in the Dhahira and Dakhiliya areas, as well as to Dhofar, replacement of the Al Amerat Standard (A) Earth Station with a new station employing digital technology, expansion of the coverage of the paging service and many other improvements and modifications.

► A GTO technician carries out regular maintenance work.



EDUCATION

The education of both young people and adults has been given high priority in the development of the Sultanate of Oman since the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in July 1970. In establishing an education system in those days, the task was enormous and daunting. In 1970 there were only three boys schools in the whole of the Sultanate in Muscat, Muttrah and Salalah, with a total of 909 pupils and 30 teachers. There was no provision for the education of girls. Today, there are now 947 schools for boys and girls, with 247,006 male and 227, 282 female students, and a total of 21,457 teachers. In the early years there were very few Omani teachers, and the great majority were expatriate Arab teachers, many of them Egyptian. Over the past 25 years the achievements in the field of education have been remarkable. A young Omani can now receive his education from primary school through to University within the Sultanate.

With the establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education in January 1994, there are now effectively two Ministries responsible for education in the Sultanate. His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh Al Manthri, formerly Minister of Education, is now Minister of Higher Education, while His Excellency Said bin Saud bin Ibrahim Al Busaidi is Minister of Education.

There are three stages of juvenile education: primary, preparatory and secondary. Primary school education usually starts at the age of six years. On passing the examination at sixth primary grade, generally between the ages of twelve and fourteen, the pupil progresses to the preparatory school. Students passing the general preparatory certificate examination are then admitted to the first grade of secondary schools between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. Here they are selected for the appropriate type of secondary education in accordance with the results of their preparatory examination. On completion of their secondary education, successful students can go on to advanced training and qualifications at the Sultan Qaboos University and other specialised institutions.

Adult education was greatly in demand from the commencement of the renaissance. The system for adult education operates in parallel with the regular education system and provides a bridge to enable the newly-literate to take up academic studies. The Ministry attaches great importance to studies and research. The data thus accumulated



▲ Schoolgirls – with one exception! – continue their studies, inspite of the photograher.

enables improvements to be made to current programmes and to the creation of new ones. During last year an analytical study has been made on the eradication of illiteracy and on adult education. The objective is to link education to development needs and make it more effective by relating it to people's activities, culture, customs, beliefs and values. The Ministry trains male and female Omani teachers in the teaching of adults. There are now more than 250 Literacy Centres with over 8,400 adult students, and 176 Adult Centres with 9,800 students, together with over 9,000 home study learners.

Apart from the State schools there are an increasing number of private ones in the Sultanate. There has been a highly encouraging response to a Government appeal to the private sector to participate in the country's educational development. Twelve new private schools have recently started functioning across the country, the largest number of such schools to be opened in any year since the first private school was opened in 1973. In the last academic year there were 69 privately-run schools with 12,753 pupils and 881 teachers. School owners must be Omanis, be at least secondary school graduates, and have a certificate from their bank showing that they have a minimum balance of RO3,000 in their accounts. Private schools follow the same



◀ Primary school students – computer training now begins at an early age.

curriculum as those run by the government, and pupils sit the same examinations as in the State schools. The Ministry has also issued revised rules for the operation of kindergarten schools.

A year-long study was initiated by the Ministry of Education in September last year to evaluate the standard of training provided by Oman's technical and commercial secondary schools, of which there are two commercial schools in Seeb and Nizwa and an industrial

school in Sohar. The study will cover everything related to the schools, including the curriculum, teachers' qualifications and training facilities. At present graduates have to be trained by their employers before taking up a job. The intention is to train them to a standard where they can take up their work immediately on completion of their courses.

The teaching of English has assumed increasing importance in recent years, particularly with the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University, where the science-based courses are conducted in that language. In 1987 the Ministry of Education initiated a major project in order to achieve this objective. Responsibility for supervision was given to the Ministry's English Language Teaching Department. The major focus during the first phase of the project has been the development and production of English-learning materials specially designed for the Omani school system. These materials have been produced and printed entirely within the Sultanate. In addition, the system provides some basic health and environmental education through the medium of its training. Teacher-training is an essential part of the general aim of improving the standard of English teaching and learning. There are additional programmes for Omani teachers of English, in both language

improvement and techniques, which aim to raise the general calibre of these teachers.

Training of Omani Teachers

The first Teacher Training Institute commenced courses in 1977. Before that, in the first years of educational development, nearly all the teachers were expatriate Arabs. In the academic year 1984/85 the male and female Teacher Training Institute system was abolished and its place was taken by the Intermediate Colleges. There are currently nine Colleges in the Sultanate, for the preparation of primary school teachers. These colleges are for students who have finished their secondary education, and could obtain the secondary school certificate successfully. The duration of study is two years, after which students graduate as primary school teachers. The Ministry has established an Institute for training preparatory and secondary school teachers which offers theoretical and practical educational studies for university graduates from colleges other than the College of Education and Islamic Studies at the Sultan Qaboos University. The Omanisation of teaching posts is proceeding steadily, and in the academic year 1994/95 the ratio of Omani teachers in primary schools has reached 78.4%.

The following table shows the numbers of teachers who have graduated from the Intermediate Colleges.

Graduates

Academic Year	Male	Female	Total
1985-86	87	80	167
1986-87	155	172	327
1987-88	297	234	531
1988-89	430	233	663
1989-90	472	402	874
1990-91	510	410	920
1991-92	688	577	1,265
1992-93	849	613	1,462
1993-94	814	718	1,532
TOTAL	4,302	3,439	7,741

HIGHER EDUCATION

At the beginning of January last year, a Royal Decree was issued creating a Ministry of Higher Education with specific responsibilities including the Sultan Qaboos University. Other responsibilities remain with the Ministry of Education. In effect there are now two Ministries responsible for overall education.

Under the Royal Decree the Ministry of Higher Education administers the following:

1. Supervision of the Sultan Qaboos University and the higher education authorities and institutions within the Ministry's sphere of responsibility.
2. Supervision of centres of scientific research, as well as following up scientific and technical development in all fields.
3. Application of the Law on Scholarships and Study Grants and the provision of opportunities for eligible students to pursue their advanced studies in the special fields required by the country; also the provision of appropriate training programmes for university graduates.
4. Devising and proposing higher education policies in all fields, in line with the national aims of the State's general policy.
5. The preparation of plans and projects for implementing approved policies for higher education in the light of economic and social development needs and scientific and technical culture.
6. The encouragement of authorship, the production of scientific work and the promotion of specialised science, technology and culture.
7. The preparation of draft laws for higher education and the issue of regulations and decisions implementing them.
8. The strengthening of international scientific and cultural relations in higher education, and representing the Sultanate in relevant international and regional organisations and conferences.
9. The training of Omani staff employed in the Ministry.
10. The exercising of the Ministry's prerogatives through its departments according to the organisational structure.

The Minister of Higher Education is also Vice-Chancellor of the Sultan Qaboos University.



▲ The magnificent Sultan Qaboos University – a gift from His Majesty to the youth of Oman.

At the beginning of this year the Minister announced that the Sultanate expects to broaden its technical and academic programmes during the year. He went on to say that the Government gives particular priority to technical and technological skills, since these are more relevant to the labour market and the needs of the community. The Ministry is currently carrying out technical studies in conjunction with other Government bodies on two major projects due to be included in the next Five Year Plan. These are the construction of a Shari'a and Law college in Muscat and a Higher Institute of Jurisprudence in Nizwa. Also in the Five Year Plan are a Marine Sciences college in Dhofar and a Higher Institute of Arts in Sohar. There are plans to raise the level of the intermediate teachers' colleges to the standards of the College of Education in order to ease the pressure on the Sultan Qaboos University.

Sultan Qaboos University

Following the inauguration of the University by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1980, the construction was completed in 1986, and in



September of that year the first group of students was enrolled. This represented the crowning achievement of the development of the educational system in the Sultanate. Originally there were five colleges: Education and Islamic Sciences, Medicine, Engineering, Science and Agriculture. Then the College of Arts was established in the following year. In 1993 the College of Commerce and Economics was established, thus completing the organisation of the University. The Ministry is also involved with the establishment of a College of Marine Sciences and Fisheries, Colleges of Islamic Sharia and Law and an Institute of Islamic Legal Studies.

It was originally anticipated that the University would take about 3,000 students in the various faculties and specialisations. However, currently there are more than 3,600, of whom 65% are girls. Separate residential accommodation for young men and women is provided in the form of small communities instead of hostels, each accommodating about 150 students drawn from all the colleges, with a supervisor acting as a counsellor in social, religious and moral matters. The academic year is divided into two terms, followed by examinations. One term starts in September and ends in January; the other, after a short break, starts in February and ends in June. The University accepts Omani students who have their secondary school certificate or its equivalent, within the quota assigned for each college, in accordance with the scientific criteria of these colleges and the regulations approved by the University Council.

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 which undertakes the teaching of English to students - the medium for instruction in the University is Arabic, but English is used for the science-based courses - a Teaching Hospital, and a Centre for Education Technology.

The 500-bed Teaching Hospital, opened in 1989, has an establishment of over one thousand, composed of 200 academic medical staff and over 800 nursing support staff. Admission to the hospital is by referral only. The hospital has advanced diagnostic equipment, and specialised sections for paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics, internal diseases, surgery, psychiatry, cardiac diseases, and an outpatients clinic. It serves as a centre for training Omani doctors in specialisations.

◀ Sultan Qaboos University students of the College of Agriculture listen attentively to their instructor.

◀ Language training is an important part of the University's curriculum.

YOUTH

The importance attached to the role of young people in the future development and well-being of the Sultanate is indicated by the fact that twice in the last 25 years, in 1983 and 1993, the years have been declared Years of Youth. A national census was held in December 1993, the first of its kind in the Sultanate, and the final figures published in early 1995 show that 54% of the total Omani population are of the age of 15 years and under. This high proportion is largely due to rapidly rising health standards and a corresponding fall in the infant mortality rate.

Physical fitness has been officially encouraged in the years since the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, and sporting activities on a wide scale are now hugely popular among the youth of the country. In 1982 the responsibility for all youth affairs was given to the Ministry of Education, and in 1989, the Higher Council for Youth approved an integrated nationwide plan for expanding and improving youth facilities, including the construction of sports and youth centres, and the organisation of national sporting and recreational activities. Under a recent re-organisation, sports and youth activities are now the responsibility of the General Organisation for Sport and Cultural Youth Activities (GOSCYA), the President of which is Shaikh Mohamed bin Marhoon bin Salim Al Ma'amari.

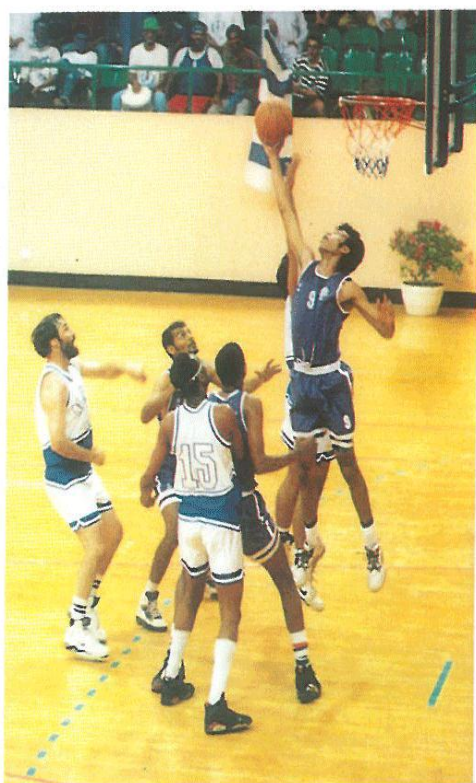
The original sports complex is at Bausher, near Muscat. Other sports complexes have since been constructed at Salalah in the south, Sohar in the north, and at Nizwa in the Interior. A National Youth Week is to be held annually each October. There are now proposals to build two new sports complexes in the Sharqiya and Dhahira regions. Many sports clubs and sports grounds now exist throughout the Sultanate.

A wide range of modern sports are now being played in the Sultanate, the oldest of which is hockey, dating back to the last century, when it was introduced from India. Omani teams representing their country now participate in all regional and international sporting events, and have shown particular prowess in shooting competitions. Young Omanis won a gold medal, two silver medals, four bronze medals and seven certificates of appreciation at the 22nd Nippon Competition in Japan in 1992. Members of the Scientific Club have won several gold and silver medals in events abroad, including the fifth Scientific Forum in Kuwait in 1992, when the Omanis won the competition cup,

► An Omani rider takes a jump in fine style in an international competition.

► The Omani youth basketball team plays a visiting team at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Bausher.

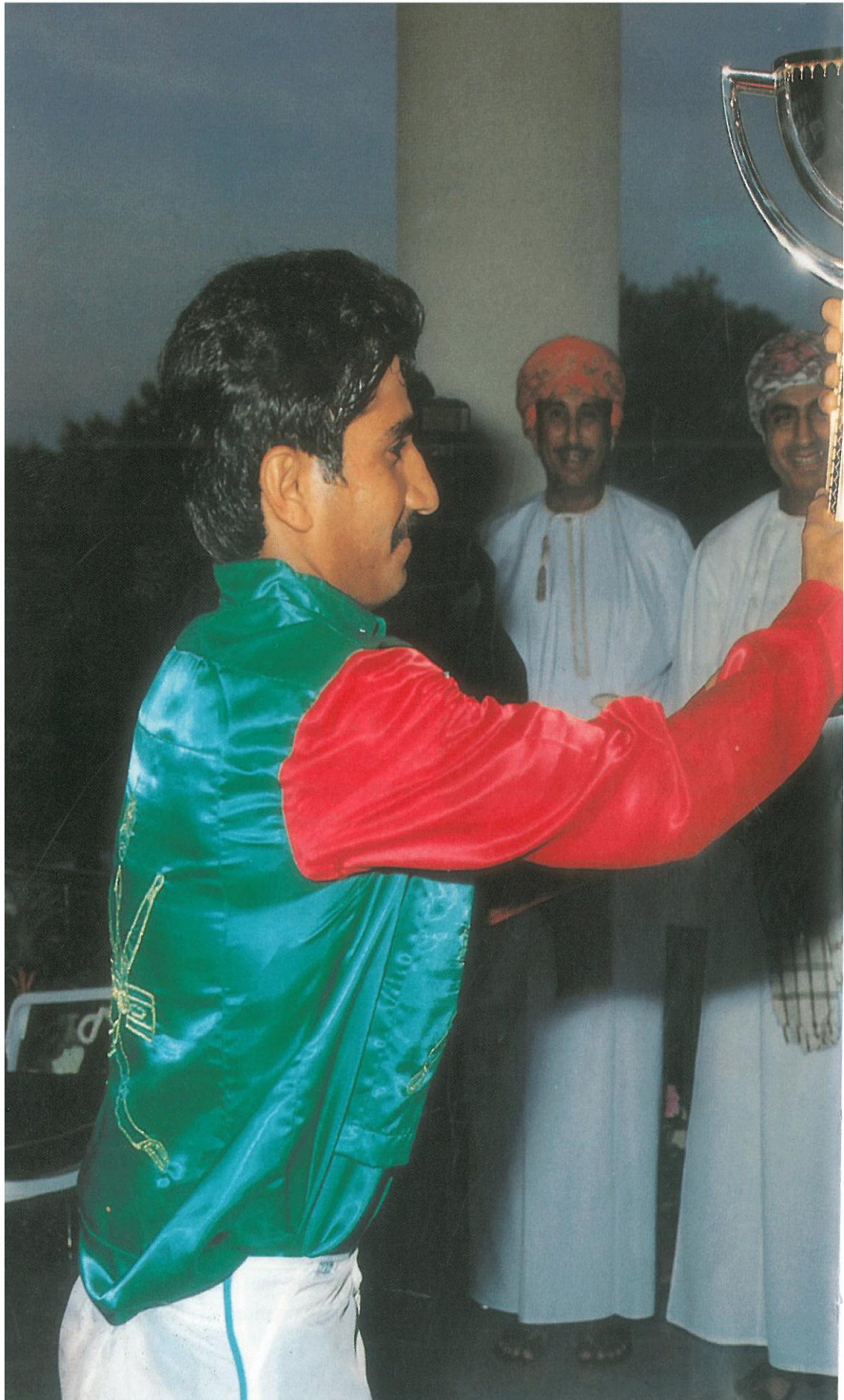
►► The end of a happy day. His Majesty presents the trophy to the winning jockey at a race-meeting.

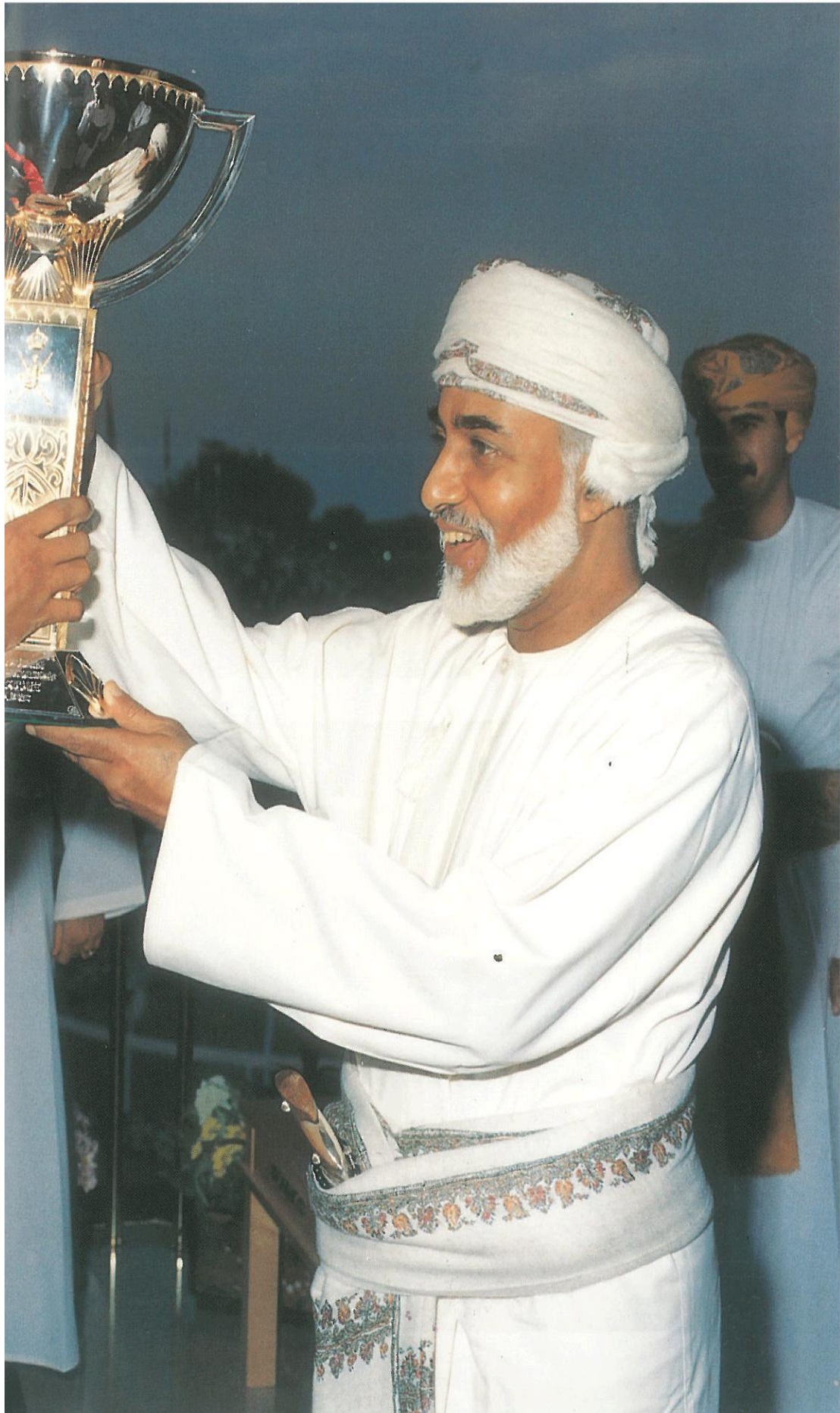


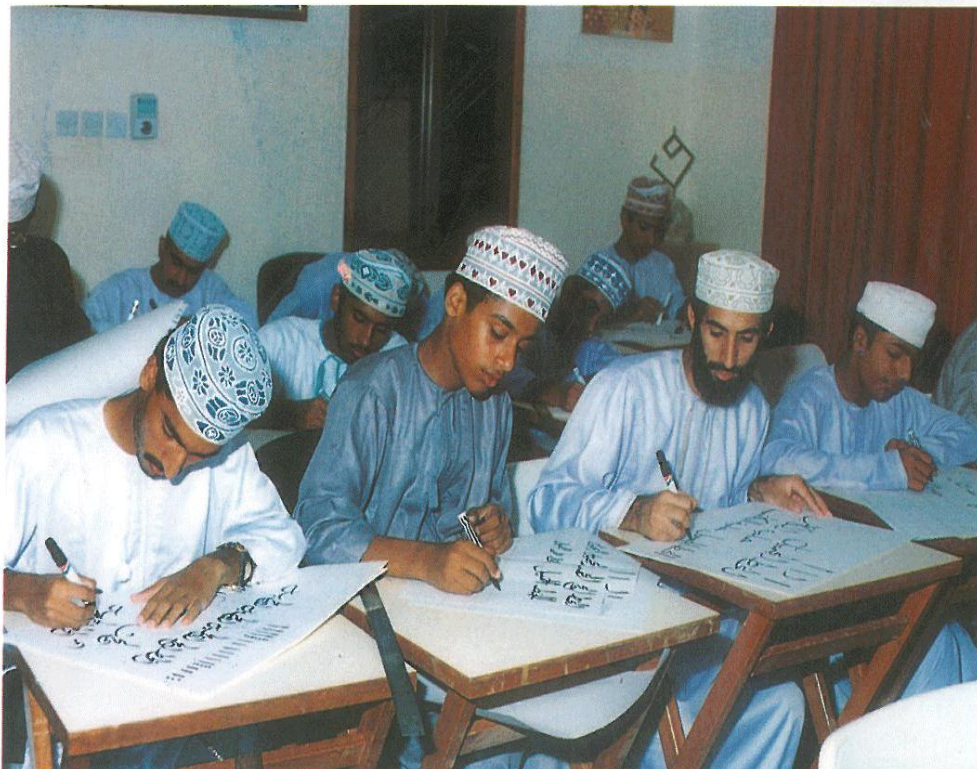
as well as a gold and silver medal. The decision of GOSCYA to establish a wing for women's sporting activities has drawn a very positive response. Last year, GOSCYA organised a Women's Games for volleyball, basketball, squash, tennis and table tennis, which was enthusiastically supported. Later in the year, an athletics meeting was equally popular.

The national teams have performed with distinction abroad. In 1988 they took part in the 24th Olympic Games in Seoul, in 1989 in the Friendship and Peace Championship in Kuwait, in 1990 in the 11th Asian Games in China, and in 1992 in the 25th Olympic Games in Barcelona.

The Omani Olympic Committee was set up in 1982 and joined the International Olympic Committee, the Asian Olympic Council and the Association of Non-Government







◀ A pageant by our children at the National Day Celebrations to mark the Year of Oman's Heritage, November 1994.

Olympic Committees the same year. It joined the Islamic Solidarity Sports Association in 1985. The Omani Olympic Committee is the highest sports committee, and is responsible for organising and co-ordinating sports activities between the different associations and for improving standards. It looks after Olympic and regional activities, and supervises the training and preparation of teams destined to take part in Olympic and regional events, in conjunction with the relevant associations.

A Youth Theatre was established in 1980, and theatrical groups now give concerts and perform plays in many parts of the country, and participate in international competitions and other events.

1994 was a busy year for GOSCYA. In Ramadan there was a cultural programme covering all Oman's Governorates and regions, which included 333 lectures and seminars on a wide range of cultural, artistic, social, health and scientific topics. There were also a number of religious and cultural competitions and poetry evenings. These programmes attracted large numbers of young people, and demonstrated their interest in religious and spiritual matters, in addition to their interest in other activities.

Construction work was completed on the Nizwa Sports Complex, and Phase Three of the Sohar Complex was completed. Additional work was completed on the Khasab Centre; Khasab, Nizwa and Mudha Clubs were built, and the Seeb Club buildings were completed.

Scouting

The origins of scouting in the Sultanate can be traced back to 1932 when a Palestinian schoolteacher, Ismail bin Khalil Al Rasasi, who later became Omani and Wali of Muttrah, realised the significance of scouting in the country, and mobilised a handful of youths to form a movement. The first organised scout pack was formed in the Saidiya School, Muscat in 1948. Shortly after this, packs were formed in the other two boys' schools in Muttrah and Salalah. Scouting for girls was not introduced until after 1970 when it began to be organised in the new girls' schools.

The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides (NOSG) was established in 1975, with the aim of inculcating young people with a sense of service and developing their sense of self-reliance, responsibility and public spirit. In 1983, in recognition of the keen interest that he has shown in the scouting movement in the Sultanate, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was installed as Chief Scout during the National Day celebrations.

◀ Calligraphy class at a Youth Club.



Within a year of its establishment, NOSG gained acknowledgment from the Arab world during the Arab Scouting Conference in Tunisia in 1976, and in the following year it was internationally recognised at the International Scouting Conference in Canada. In 1984 the NOSG headquarters was constructed in Al Ghubra near Muscat. The total number of scouts and guides registered in NOSG reached 14,000 last year. The composition of scouts and guides packs in Oman follows international practice: they are divided into four categories, based on their age. Boys between the ages of six and 12 years are designated cub scouts and girls, brownies. Boys and girls between 12 and 15 years of age are boy scouts and girl scouts respectively. This is followed by ranger scouts and senior scouts, and girls become senior guides, both in the age group of 15 to 17 years. From 17 to 23 years boys become rover scouts and girls become rover guides.

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

capped people from other member States of the AGCC are now joining them.

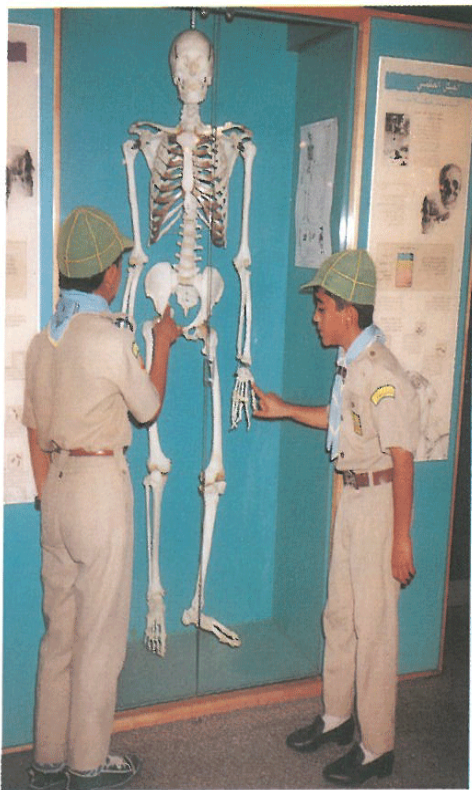
Currently, NOSG has 10 camps in different regions of the country, for both scouts and guides. These camps are actively involved in organising year-round programmes for these young people. The fourth AGCC scout camp was held in Dhofar during August. NOSG usually invites Arab and other international organisations to participate in the scouts and guides activities in the country. In 1993 the first Arab 'Jamboree on the Air' was organised by NOSG, a special event for scouts communicating with each other around the world by amateur radio.

Training of senior scouts usually includes defence and marine activities, often conducted in coordination with the Royal Oman Police and the Health Services Institute. Guides undertake important service projects, such as the education of women.

◀ Girl Guides enjoy the amenities of one of our national parks.

◀ Junior Scouts at an Art competition.

▼ Young Scouts visit a biology exhibition.



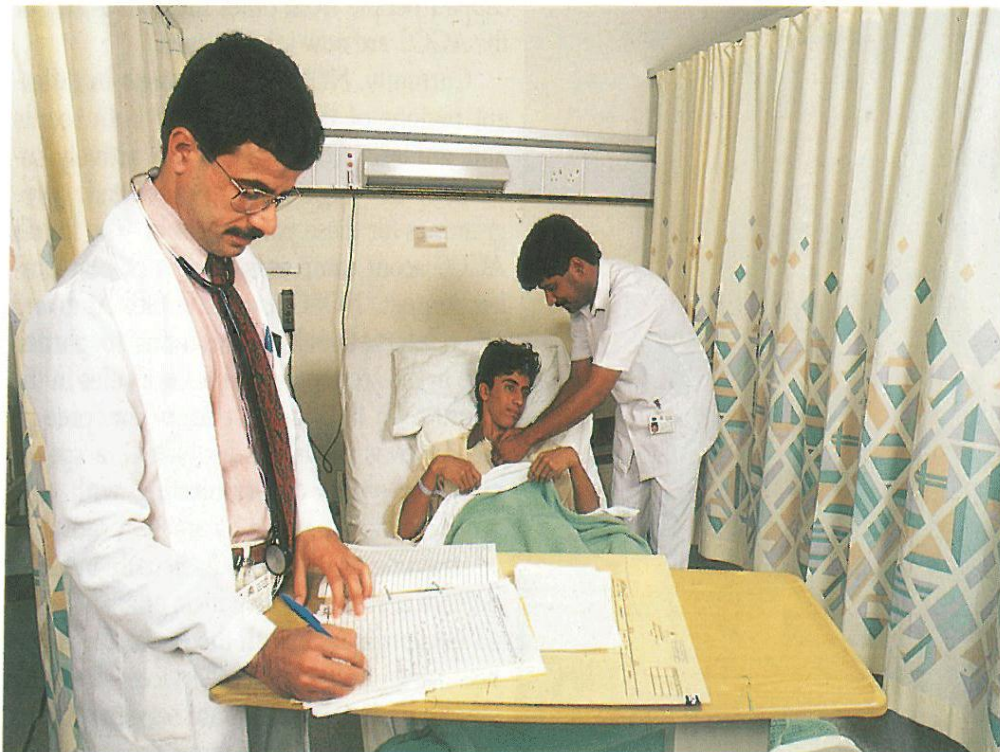
HEALTH

In his first address to the nation following his accession in 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos promised that priority in the development of the country would be given to health and education, for which all Omanis yearned. These promises have been amply fulfilled over the past 25 years. In 1970 there was only one hospital in the country, at Muttrah, 23 beds and fee-paying, which was run by an American Mission. by the end of this year there will be 51 hospitals throughout the Sultanate, as well as five combined health centres (polyclinics) and 115 health centres in the smaller centres of population.

In 1970 there was only one trained and qualified Omani doctor, and he was practising outside the country. On His Majesty's accession he returned to Oman and was appointed the first Minister of Health. In 1993 the first 48 Omani doctors, 28 of them women, became fully qualified following their training and qualification within Oman. It is anticipated that those who graduate from the Sultan Qaboos University, together with those who have trained and graduated abroad, will provide about 50 new doctors each year. By 1997 it is expected that this number will increase to 80 new doctors annually, and reach over 100 by the year 2000.

► Care for mothers and their children is one of the Government's important responsibilities.

▼ An Omani doctor and a nurse attend a patient in one of the Sultanate's many fine hospitals.



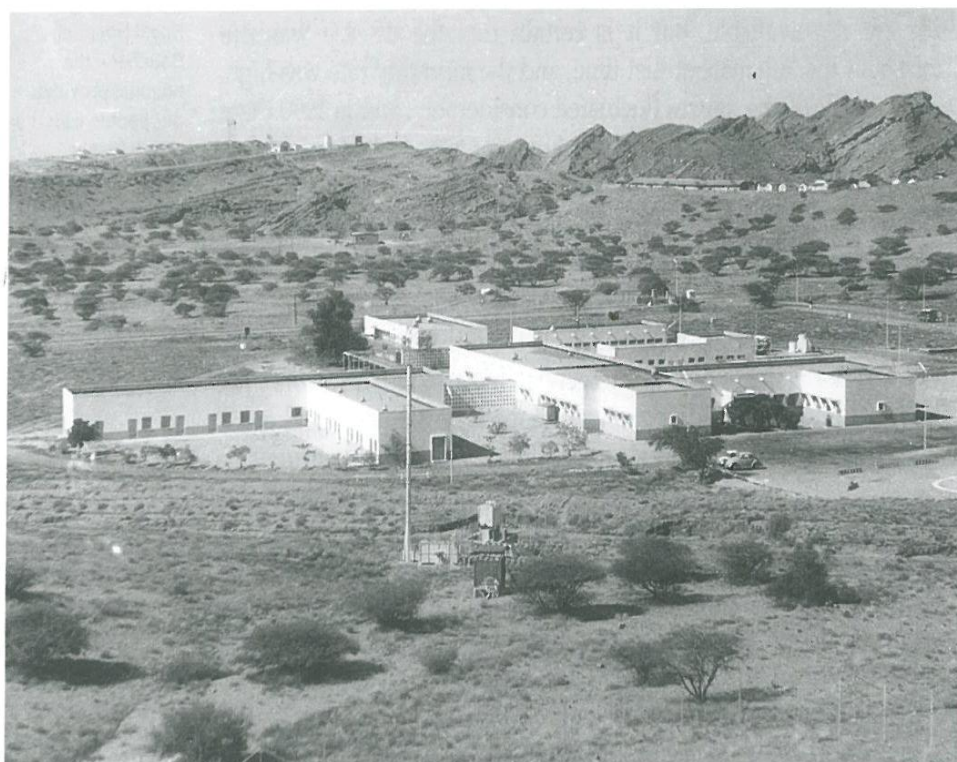




In the 1980s a mass immunisation programme was introduced for children, and later expanded, the aim of which is to immunise all children against tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles and rubella. As a measure of the success of the preventive programme, the numbers of cases of these diseases has fallen dramatically. In 1994 there were no cases of diphtheria, poliomyelitis or neonatal tetanus in the Sultanate. Hepatitis B vaccination was introduced into the programme in 1990. Trachoma, the blinding eye disease, formerly prevalent throughout northern Oman, remains a public health problem. It is endemic among the rural population of northern and central Oman. In 1994 the prevalence of trachoma among the 6-7 years age group was 2.44%, whereas in the community as a whole it is 9.66%. Early detection and the ability of the Health Service to provide modern treatment has rendered this disease largely curable.

The goal of the tuberculosis control programme is to detect and treat all new cases. The control programme began in 1984, and has succeeded in reducing the number of new cases from 700 in 1986 to 278 in 1994. Malaria is one of the most difficult communicable diseases to control as there is no effective vaccination. Much of Oman's terrain has been ideal for the breeding of the anopheles mosquito which transmits the disease, especially in the regions of Al Dhahira,

▲ ► Khoula
Hospital now —
and in 1970.



OMAN/95

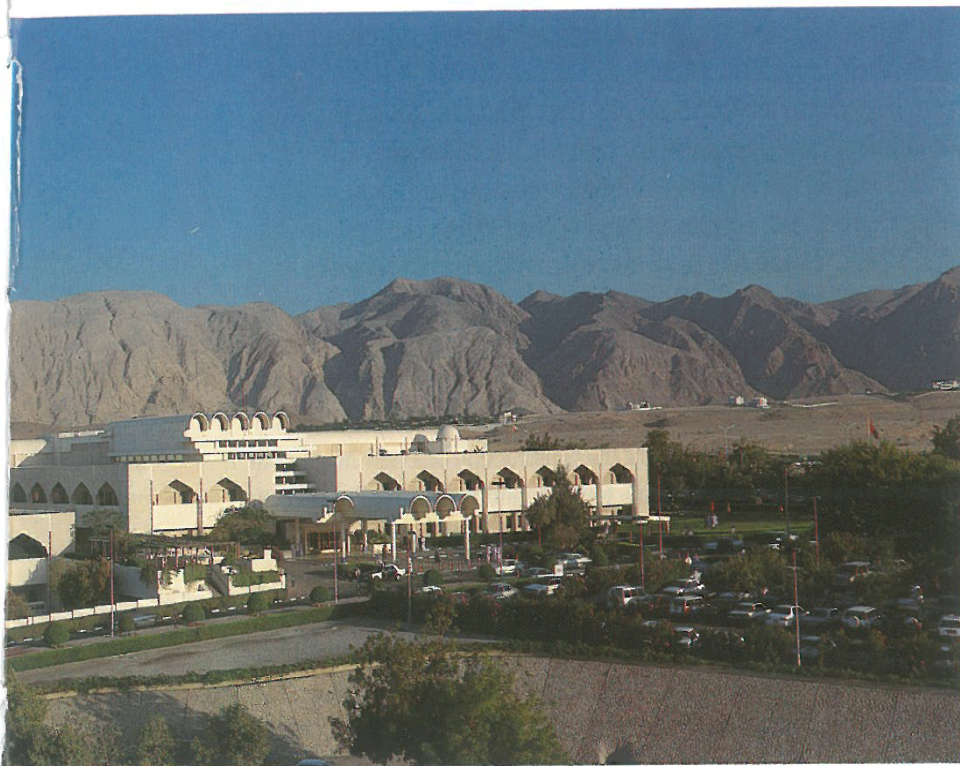
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Al Sharqiya, Al Dakhiliya and Al Batinah. Figures for malaria in the 1970s are not available, but it is certain that the disease was rife throughout the Sultanate at that time, and the mortality rate was high. During the 1980s the figures fluctuated considerably, and in 1990 there was a resurgence when they peaked at over 32,000. In 1992 the Malaria Control Programme was upgraded to a Malaria Eradication Programme, and concentrated in the Sharqiya region, where an intensive campaign virtually eliminated the vector mosquito over a period of three years. In 1990 there were 4,946 cases of malaria among a total population of a quarter of a million in the Sharqiya region; in 1994 there was not a single case of indigenous malaria in the region. The same programme of eradication was adopted in the north and south Batinah regions in 1993, and as a result there has been a considerable reduction in the number of cases of malaria reported; indications are that it will have been eliminated from the South Batinah by the end of 1995. It is hoped that by the end of the century malaria will have been totally banished from the Sultanate.

In 1991 the Ministry set up a National AIDS Committee to prevent and control the problem of AIDS. Oman is similar to every other country in having some cases of AIDS who were infected from imported blood products containing the HIV virus before its existence was

▲ The magnificent Royal Hospital, Bausher – the hospital provides our people with the very latest in sophisticated health care.



known. Educational material is now available for persons travelling to high risk countries, especially to Africa and the Far East, as to the potential risks of acquiring AIDS, and how to avoid them.

Having successfully overcome most of the serious infectious diseases, the country has now reached the stage of development where it can turn its attention to the non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart problems. 1990 saw the successful launch of the National Diabetes Programme with a comprehensive national survey being initiated to determine the extent of the problem and the resources needed to provide comprehensive services for those suffering from the disease. The result of the survey showed that just over 10% of the adult population of the Sultanate are suffering from diabetes - rising from about 2% in the twenty-year olds to over 30% in those aged 60 and over. With the increased longevity of life of the population, the number of diabetics will grow rapidly in the future. To help meet their needs, each region is now being provided with a health team to be responsible for the management of diabetic cases, including both the prevention and cure of secondary complications.

A nationwide study on anaemia is to take place in the Sultanate this year, which will be conducted by the Ministry in collaboration with the World Health Organisation. There are three types of anaemia

to be found in the country, all of which are inherited and passed on to the children, though the parents do not necessarily have the disease. There is evidence that bone marrow transplant can cure thalasaemia, one of the types of anaemia which occurs in the Sultanate.

On National Day in 1994 two new hospitals were opened in Buraimi and Rostaq. The hospital in Buraimi has 146 beds, and that in Rostaq 239 beds. In addition to all the other facilities, both hospitals have 24-hour accident and emergency wings. Work is under way on a new hospital in Sohar, the biggest Health Ministry project of the Fourth Five-Year Plan; it is due to be completed by 1996. It will have 391 beds, five operating theatres and two outpatient departments. In July 1994 an agreement was signed for the construction of a new hospital in Nizwa, which will have 280 beds, four operating theatres and specialised X-ray, accident and emergency rooms. There are at present one private hospital and 435 private polyclinics functioning in the country, which are subject to monitoring by the Government.

With the expansion of the health services, and the increased sophistication of the services provided, planning, management and evaluation have taken on greater priority. The Ministry has already strengthened its Health Information Systems, and is now looking to developing further and integrating the other management information sectors of finance and personnel. A major change that took place in 1990 was the de-centralisation of administration and management. The administrative structure of the Ministry was revised, with responsibility for health services being given to Regional Directorates-General in order to provide an integrated health care service at the local level. This was the start of a new approach to health care in which each health unit and each region is responsible for the combined preventive, curative, promotive and rehabilitative health care of the community it serves.

A further stage in the decentralisation process, included in the Fourth Five Year Health Plan (1991-1996) is the development of regional hospitals in each of the eight health regions, which will provide specialist in-patients and out-patient services and hence an improved referral system at a regional level similar to that currently given by the specialist hospitals of Muscat and Salalah.

The health manpower development is a long-term process, depending upon the existence of a stratum of basically qualified young nationals. The Government's policy is to progressively replace expatriate health workers with qualified nationals for the socio-economic development of the country. In the health sector this is still a long way off,

and Oman will be dependent on expatriate health workers for some years to come.

The number of medical and para-medical personnel employed by the Ministry grew by 7.4% in 1993. At the end of that year there were 1,538 physicians, 73 dentists, 50 pharmacists, 4,728 nurses and 3,762 para-medical personnel. Including health staff in other organisations and the private sector, the Sultanate had one doctor per 840 of the population.

The Faculty of Medicine in the Sultan Qaboos University started functioning in 1986, and is currently training medical students to become the next generation of Omani doctors. The total enrolment for 1994/95 was 238 male and 242 female students, compared with only 18 and 30 respectively in 1986/87. The Institute of Health Sciences has increased its training facilities for paramedical staff. It is now producing nursing personnel, medical laboratory technicians, physiotherapists and radiography technicians. To cope with the growing need, the extended facilities at the Institute became operational at the start of the 1992/93 academic year. In addition, the Institute of Assistant Pharmacists and the Oman Institute of Public Health both opened in 1991 in order to train Omanis in these specialties.

A further development of both Omanisation and regionalisation has been the introduction of regional training programmes. In September 1991 five new Nursing Institutes were opened in Nizwa, Salalah, Sohar, Sur and Tanam to provide training courses for secondary school graduates of each region. These began with an intake of 30 students each, and took a similar number in their second year of operation. In total, 1,266 students were enrolled in the Ministry's Institutes at the start of the 1994/95 academic year.

With the increased efforts to train and subsequently employ Omani nationals, the proportion of nationals among medical and paramedical staff employed in the Ministry of Health has remained constant at 35% since 1987. Omanisation has thus kept pace with the expansion of the health services over the last four years.

Since 1989 the Maternal and Child Health Services have steadily increased. In 1992 more than 90% of all pregnant women used antenatal service on an average of five to six times during each pregnancy, thus ensuring the best care to both the mother and the developing baby. Each pregnancy is closely monitored and recorded in an antenatal record kept by the mother for use when she attends any one of

the 156 health facilities. Over 90% of all deliveries took place in hospitals in 1993, thus providing for each mother during her delivery and the newborn baby immediately after birth when it is most vulnerable. Each baby is then monitored regularly over the first six years of life. As described earlier, each child in its first year is immunised against seven diseases; in 1993 the coverage against these diseases reached 95%. These rates are among the best in the world. The infant mortality rate under the age of one year has now been reduced to only 24 per 1,000 live births compared with 45 in 1985 and 75 in 1980.

In addition to the Ministry of Health, which is the main agency responsible for health services, the Ministry of Defence, the Royal Oman Police and Petroleum Development Oman provide health care for their employees and dependents. In 1993 these organisations had a total of four hospitals and 43 clinics with 551 beds. The Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (under the Ministry of Higher Education) currently has an availability of 500 beds. Private companies and individuals also operate clinics, of which in 1993 there were 342 general clinics, 29 specialised clinics and 36 dental clinics.

Recourse to the health services has grown rapidly over the years as



access becomes easier for an increasing number of the population. Nowadays only 5% of the population require more than one hour travelling time to reach either a health centre or a hospital. The more remote areas are served by the mobile teams which regularly visit communities with difficult access, such as the mountainous regions of the Western Hajar range and Dhofar, and the people living a semi-nomadic life in the Al Wusta region.

◀ Khoula Hospital Rehabilitation Centre.

HOUSING

In the past, outside the larger towns on the coastal belt of the Sultanate, traditional Omani housing consisted of buildings constructed with mud bricks. Due to the vagaries of the weather they were subject to a rapid rate of dilapidation and in constant need of repair. Windows were small and the interiors dark and insanitary. A very different picture is presented today to the visitor to Oman. The mud brick houses have been abandoned and the former inhabitants are now housed in modern dwellings with all the services that one would expect in such housing.

In the early years of the renaissance the acute housing problem was accentuated by a rapid drift into the towns, particularly on the coastal belt, by the inhabitants of villages in the Interior and from fishing communities on the coast, in addition to Omanis abroad, who had answered the call of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to return and help in the development of the country. They were all seeking employment in the major infrastructural programmes, which of necessity were started along the coastal regions. Shanty towns inevitably sprang up on the edges of the larger towns for lack of other housing. These, however, disappeared in a remarkably short space of time as the Government energetically set in train a housing programme to accommodate these workers.

On the other hand it must be emphasised that the construction of new housing has never been rushed. Town planning has been given priority importance in order to avoid the mistakes made in some other developing countries. The Government has also insisted on a traditional, yet modern style of architecture for all new housing, thus conforming with the policy of preserving the Omani culture of Arab and Islamic architecture, while at the same time providing the benefits of modern facilities to Omani citizens.

Originally, housing was the responsibility of the Ministry of Lands and Municipal Affairs, but at the end of 1984 a Ministry of Housing was created to fulfill these functions. Last year, the Ministry of Housing was moved from Ruwi to a new Ministry building in Al Khuwair, where it is adjacent to other Ministries with which it works closely.

Under a directive by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, every citizen should be provided with a plot of land in the area where he works and another plot in the area where he resides. The Ministry has therefore attached much importance to the preparation of detailed plans of the regions and prepared numerous layouts beginning with the Muscat Governorate. These gradually merged together into a unified



development area until Muscat became transformed into the present capital as we see it today.

A Social Housing Programme for those on limited incomes was instituted in 1973. After a modest start in that year, when 73 houses were completed, the rate of construction increased rapidly, so that by last year a total of 8,186 had been completed and handed over to citizens. From the outset there has been close cooperation between the various Ministries concerned with housing policy, and particular emphasis has been given to the provision of housing for the lower income groups.

An applicant for housing must fulfill the following conditions:-

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

Under the Social Housing Scheme the Government provides the infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity, while the residents only pay a monthly instalment of RO 25 towards the cost of the house. The average cost of each house works out at between 14 and 16 thousand Rials. Oman has the goal of providing housing for all by the year 2000. To meet this target, strategies and policies for housing have been prepared for implementation during the current Five Year Plan.

A soft housing loan system to perform a similar function to the Social Housing Programme, without the negative aspects of the latter, was introduced in 1991. Interest-free loans are granted on condition that the borrower repays in equal monthly instalments before he retires (in the case of public and private sector employees). He must not be more than 60 years of age, and the monthly deduction must not have a major detrimental effect on the family's overall income. The maximum loan is RO15,000. The size of the loan is determined by the age of the borrower, and the results of a study carried out by the Ministry on the applicant's social, economic and housing situation. The loan is granted for the following purposes:-

◀ Traditional
Omani design is
widely employed in
modern housing.



1. To build a house.
2. To purchase a ready-built house.
3. To buy and complete a house that has not been completed.
4. To complete a house that has not been completed.
5. To extend an existing dwelling.

▲ A new
Government –
sponsored housing
estate.

The Real Estate Register registers all property in the Sultanate in order to ensure stability in real estate property rights. This in turn will lead to social security and encourage investment, development and economic growth. The Land Affairs Committee in Muscat and the local committees in the Wilayats are responsible for ruling on ownership applications based on claims relating to before and after 1st January 1970, as well as claims related to unplotted land. The local committees are chaired by the local Wali, and their members include Shaikhs in the Wilayat and other dignitaries, in addition to the director of the Municipality and the head of the Wilayat's Agricultural Advice Department. A committee issues its decision after careful study and the site has been visited. Membership of the local committees is for a period of two years. There are 58 committees in all covering all the Wilayats in the Sultanate. There is an Appeals Committee chaired by the Minister of Housing; its members are Under-Secretaries from appropriate Ministries, and four competent officials from the Ministry of Housing.

In 1977, the Oman Housing Bank was established as part of the programme for providing housing for Omani families with limited incomes. The Bank's activity is concentrated mainly on granting loans to nationals, particularly outside the Muscat area, as it is these areas which are priority development regions. The loans are for the purpose of construction, purchase, improving and adding to residential properties, and for the purchase and completion of unfinished houses. Persons with incomes of between RO 131 and RO 250 monthly may obtain interest-free loans up to a maximum of RO 15,000 to enable them to build modern housing themselves, and non-repayable grants of up to RO 6,000 are available to citizens whose monthly income does not exceed RO 130. The loan regulations are flexible enough to enable families to build suitable residences in approved locations in the style that suits them. A citizen who is unable to acquire housing on the grounds that he has already obtained a plot of housing land, can now receive an interest-free loan to enable him to build a residence on his land. The response to these opportunities has been very good.

The Bank's loans are long-term - up to twenty years in length. Since its inception, interest rates have been set to take account of the citizen's means, and are liable to change according to the citizen's circumstances. The Government bears the cost of a large part of the charge, while the citizen bears a small part of it, particularly in the case of those with limited incomes.

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

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

NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

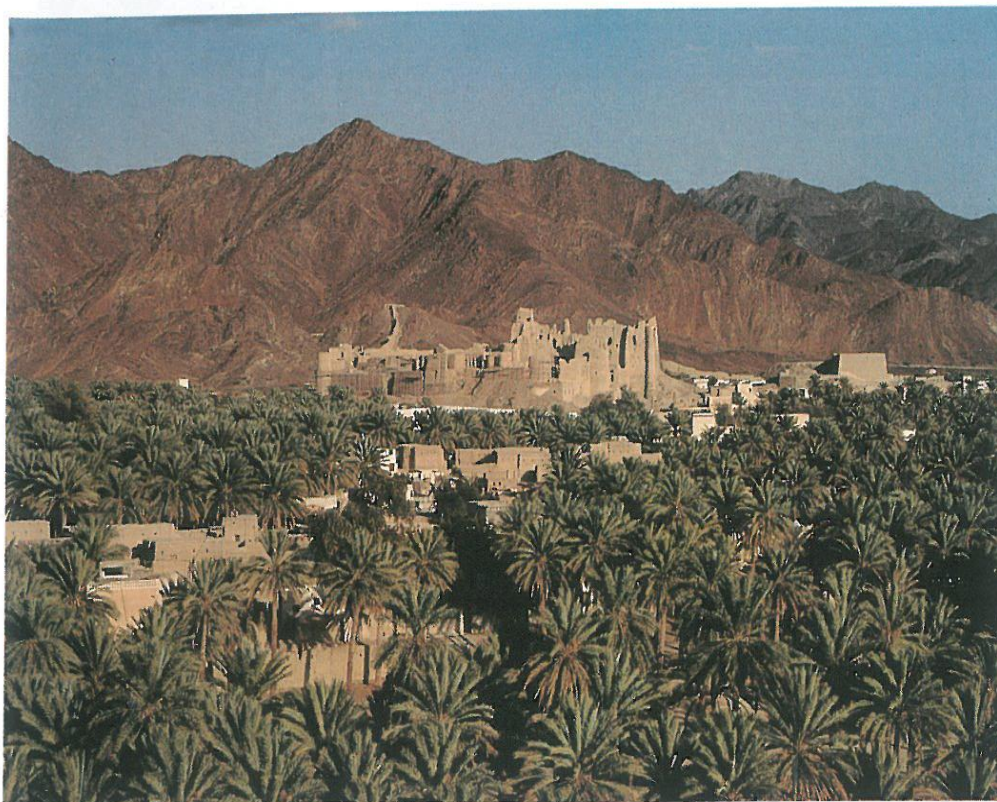
On National Day in November 1993 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos announced that he was designating 1994 as the Year of Omani Heritage. Plans and programmes for the year 1994 were immediately set in train by the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture. In implementing its programmes and activities the Ministry decided that it should cooperate with all Government and private organisations, including Ministries, organisations and individuals, so that a full and comprehensive programme could be carried out through their combined efforts.

Omanis are keenly aware of and proud of their national heritage, and it was with this in mind that His Majesty established a Ministry of National Heritage and Culture in 1976 with His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said as its Minister. Between the time of its establishment and 1995 the Ministry has restored 92 historic buildings, including forts, castles, watchtowers and houses in various parts of the Sultanate. It has also established a number of historical and specialised museums including the Omani Museum, the National Museum,



the Children's Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Omani-French Museum and the Sohar Fort Museum. In addition, the Ministry has launched several other heritage and cultural projects, including the Manuscripts and Documents Centre, the Islamic Library and the Cultural Centre in Salalah, which comprises a museum, theatre and a library. The Ministry has organised excavations for ancient remains in many areas, including the Wadi Jizzi, Sohar, al Balid in the

◀ An old door with carved script.



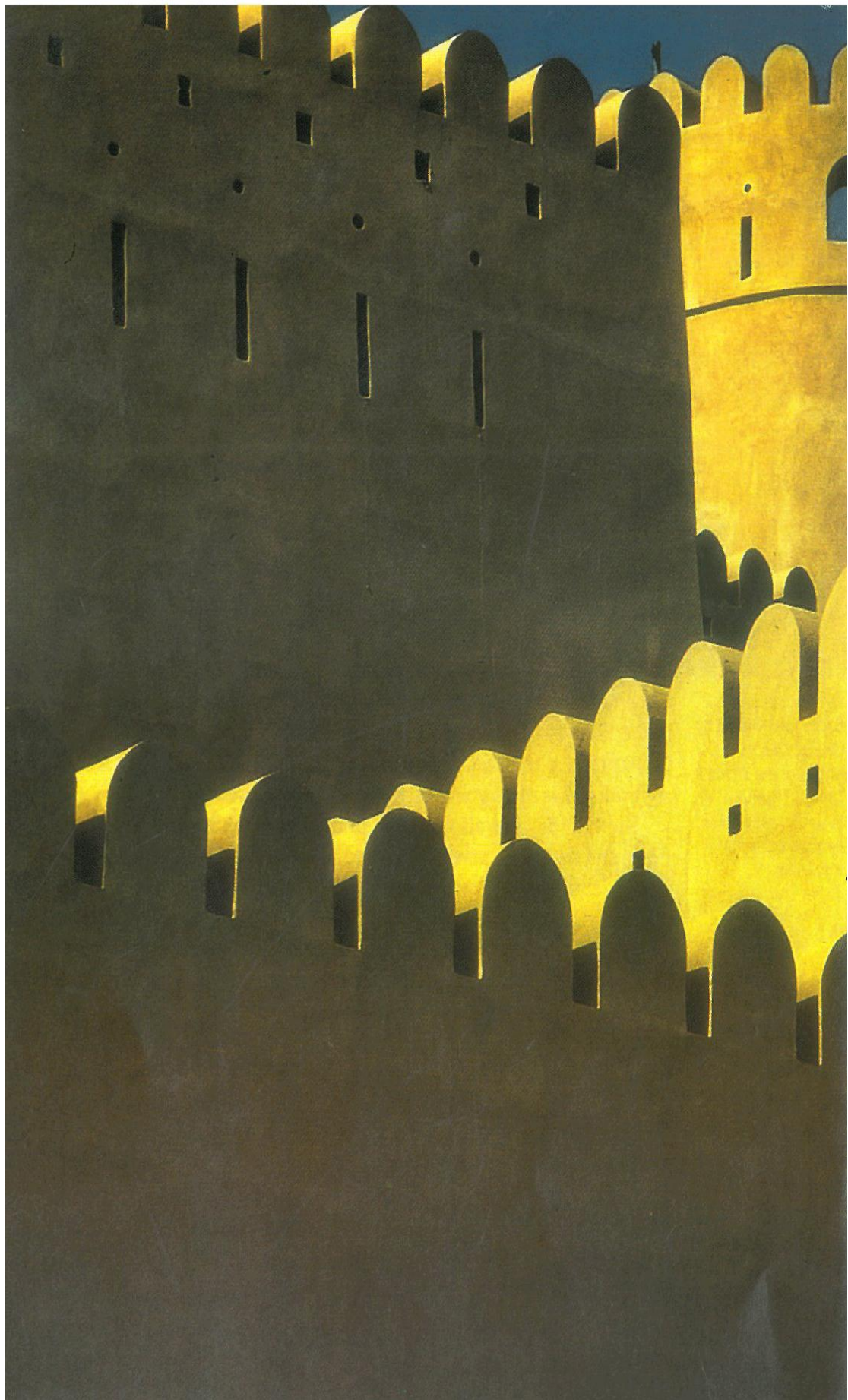
▲ The ancient Bahla fort – listed by UNESCO in its 'Index of the World's Cultural Heritage' – is under restoration, using traditional materials.

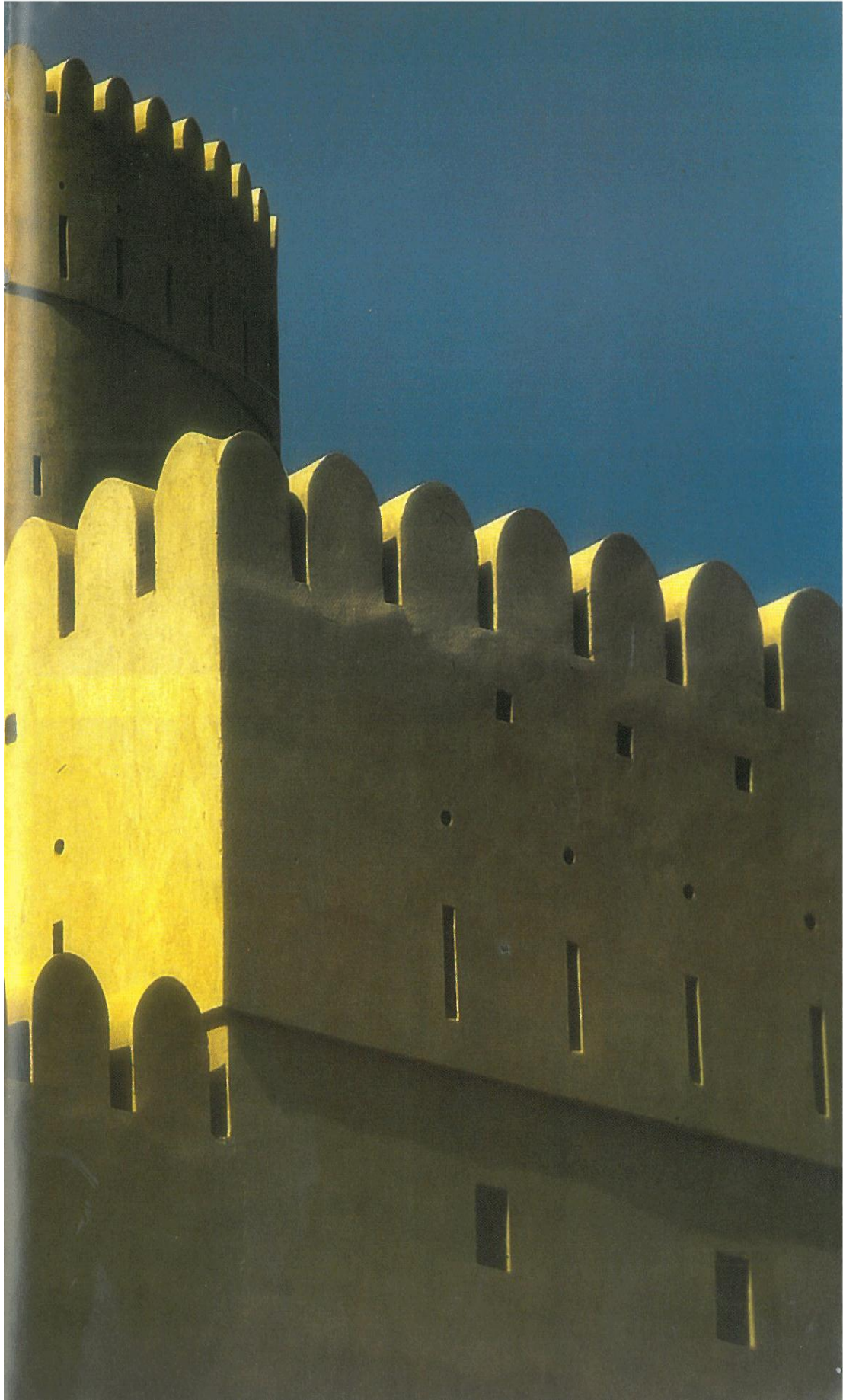
Governorate of Dhofar, Ras al Junaiz in the Sharqiya region, Bahla, Bat in the Wilayat of Ibri, and in Qurum, Bausher and al Wattayeh in the Governorate of Muscat. These excavations have revealed that Oman's civilisation has roots going back to the third millennium B.C.

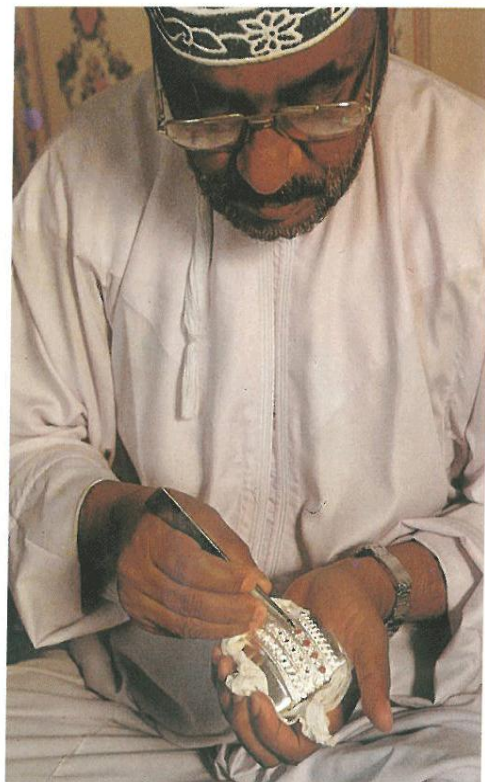
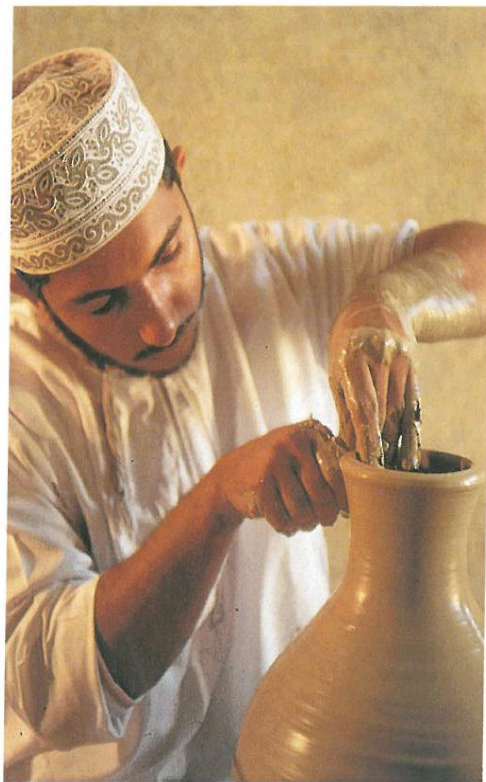
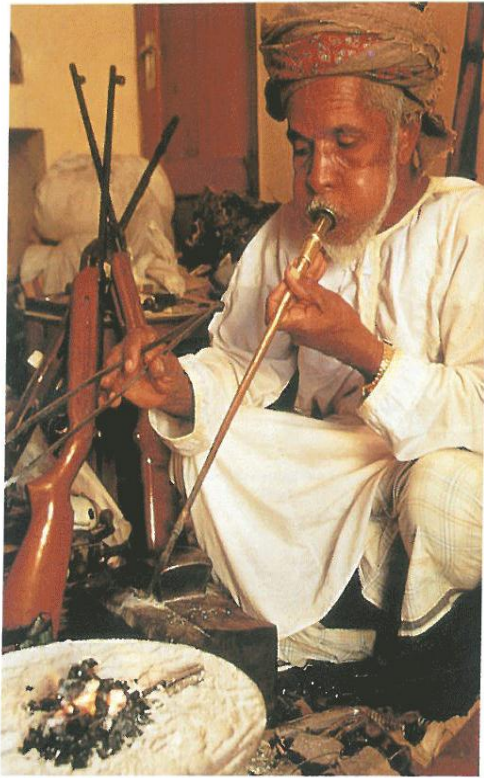
The Ministry has also revised, printed and published 700 publications, and has taken part in Arab and international book fairs with the aim of familiarising a wider public with Oman's intellectual and literary riches. It has also printed a concise encyclopaedia of the Omani heritage. Other achievements include the Sultan Qaboos Arab Names Project set up in 1985 on the personal initiative of His Majesty which involved the compilation of 16,000 names with all their literary, geographical, historical and tribal connections, as well as the Silk Road Project in 1990, which was sponsored by UNESCO, and in which the Sultanate participated, when the Royal Yacht "Fulk al Salamah" sailed from Venice to Japan, calling at more than a dozen ports en route.

During last year's Year of Omani Heritage, the Ministry was actively engaged in a number of projects. Renovation work was carried out on 14 historical forts, and a number of heritage books were revised and printed, as well as some modern books on Omani culture. A nationwide Manuscript Cup competition was held, with prizes for the three Wilayats submitting the best and largest collections of manuscripts

►► Rustaq Fort – a fine example of Oman's cultural heritage.







within their areas. Temporary 'Omani Heritage' villages were constructed in 17 different locations throughout the Sultanate, while a permanent 'Heritage Village' is being established at Nizwa. This is specifically designed for Omani craftsmen, so that they can practise their crafts there, and will include models depicting Omani life in former times. Documentary films were made of some of the country's famous forts and castles in Arabic and English.

During the past two years Phase II of the extension of the Natural History Museum adjacent to the Ministry, has been underway. This includes the impressive Whale Hall, which has now been completed.

The Ministry is currently preparing studies and maps for the Cultural Centre's Dhofar Museum, which will be officially opened in the near future. Its exhibits will include rare and ancient artifacts, traditional handicrafts, manuscripts and documents.

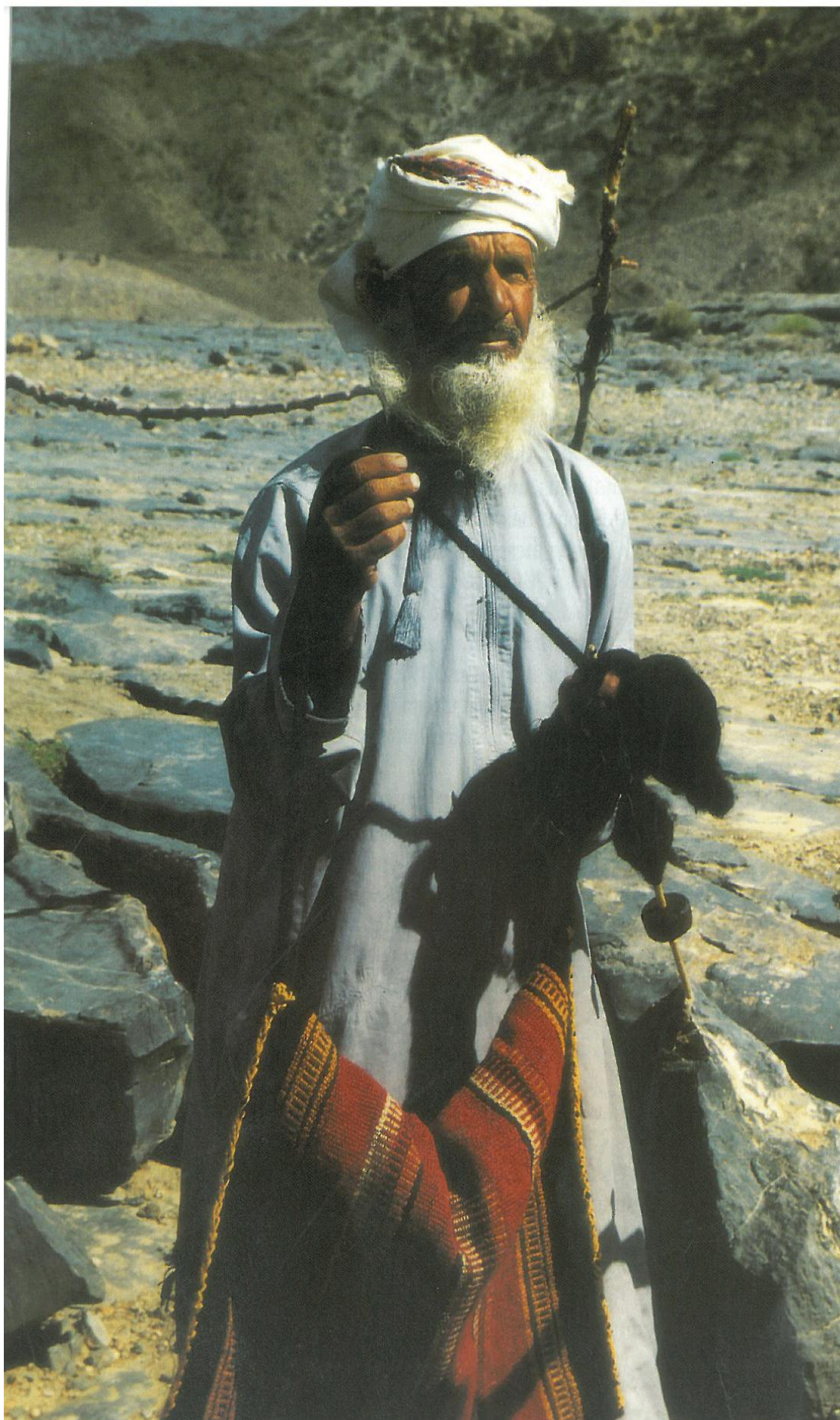
The Ministry has organised numerous exhibitions at home and abroad. Among these were the first and second International Book Exhibitions held in Muscat in 1992 and 1993. Several folklore exhibitions have been held over the years. Oman participated in the famous 'Expo' in Spain, and held a 'Sea and Forts' exhibition at the Arab World Institute in Paris in 1994 and 1995. There have been exhibitions of the works of Arab artists, and Oman has participated in International book exhibitions abroad, including international book fairs in Cairo, Damascus and Abu Dhabi.

A number of cultural agreements and protocols have been signed with Arab and foreign states. The State of Qatar has held a cultural week in Oman, and Oman has done so in Qatar. Dutch, Austrian, Iraqi, Russian and French cultural weeks have been held in the Sultanate. The Ministry takes part in all AGCC cultural activities.

At the beginning of this year, Muscat was the venue for a major meeting of UNESCO's international commission for culture and development. Topics discussed included cultural development in the Sultanate, and the relationship between culture and comprehensive projects.

The successful restoration of historic citadels, forts and ancient buildings has been a considerable undertaking, which ranks among the outstanding achievements of the Ministry. Many of them are now major tourist attractions, a notable example being the castle at Jabrin, originally built by Bilarub bin Sultan in the 17th century as a residential palace. It is one of the treasures of Omani architecture. Others include the historic fort at Nizwa, a former capital of Oman, and the magnificent fort at Rostaq, also a former Omani capital, which stands

◀ Traditional industries are widely practiced and encouraged.



in a commanding position guarding the approaches to the great massif of the Jebel Akhdar.

In Muscat, the two great forts, Mirani and Jalali, poised on lofty crags overlooking Muscat Bay and the walled city, have also been restored to their former glory. These were originally built by the Omanis, and rebuilt by the Portuguese in the late 16th century during their occupation of part of the coastal region of Oman. In the neighbouring town of Muttrah the fort on the rocky pinnacle overlooking the town has also been restored. Along the Batinah Coast the fort at Sohar, with its large square tower, unique in Oman, has been restored to its original state - when Sohar played a vital role in the history and prosperity of Oman. The fort also contains a museum. The Ministry is currently undertaking the restoration of the magnificent fort at Bahla, the largest in the Sultanate, with Moroccan expertise, under an agreement signed in 1983. During the past year it has been announced that the ancient 14km-long wall, which encircles Bahla and its dates gardens is to be restored.

Oman has many other fine buildings worthy of preservation. Among those already restored are the Sayyid Nadir and the Sayyida Muzna mansions within the walls of Muscat, as well as the Bait Fransa, which was reopened in 1992 as an Omani-French museum. Another fine building, recently brought back to its former glory is Bait Arride-dah, the one-time residence of Suleiman bin Himyar, lying at the foot of the Jebel Akhdar at Birkat al Mawz.

Following the discovery in 1992 of the ancient city of Ubar, buried in the sands at the edge of the Empty Quarter in Dhofar, work on the site has been continuing. The existence of Ubar was known through historical records dating back thousands of years, and much has yet to be learnt about it through more archaeological research, but it is believed to have been the headquarters of the frankincense trade, where caravans assembled at the start of their long journey overland to Mesopotamia and Syria.

The Antiquities Department has carried out excavations at Al Balid in Dhofar, as a continuation of earlier work there, which dates from the Islamic period. A burial site at Wadi Ajran in the Wilayat of Buraimi was found to contain pottery jars, carnelian beads and arrow heads dating back to the third millennium B.C. In 1994 excavations were also undertaken at Wadi Bahla, Ras al Junaiz and Samad al Shaan.

INTERIOR

Until comparatively recent years there was a dichotomy between the coastal regions of the Sultanate of Oman and the Interior. The inhabitants differ considerably from each other in their occupations, customs and way of life. In fact, right up to the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970 some regions of the Sultanate, such as the Musandam and parts of the Ja'alan, were virtually outside Government control. The Ministry of the Interior has played a major role in blending together the various regions of the Sultanate, merging modernisation with traditional practices.

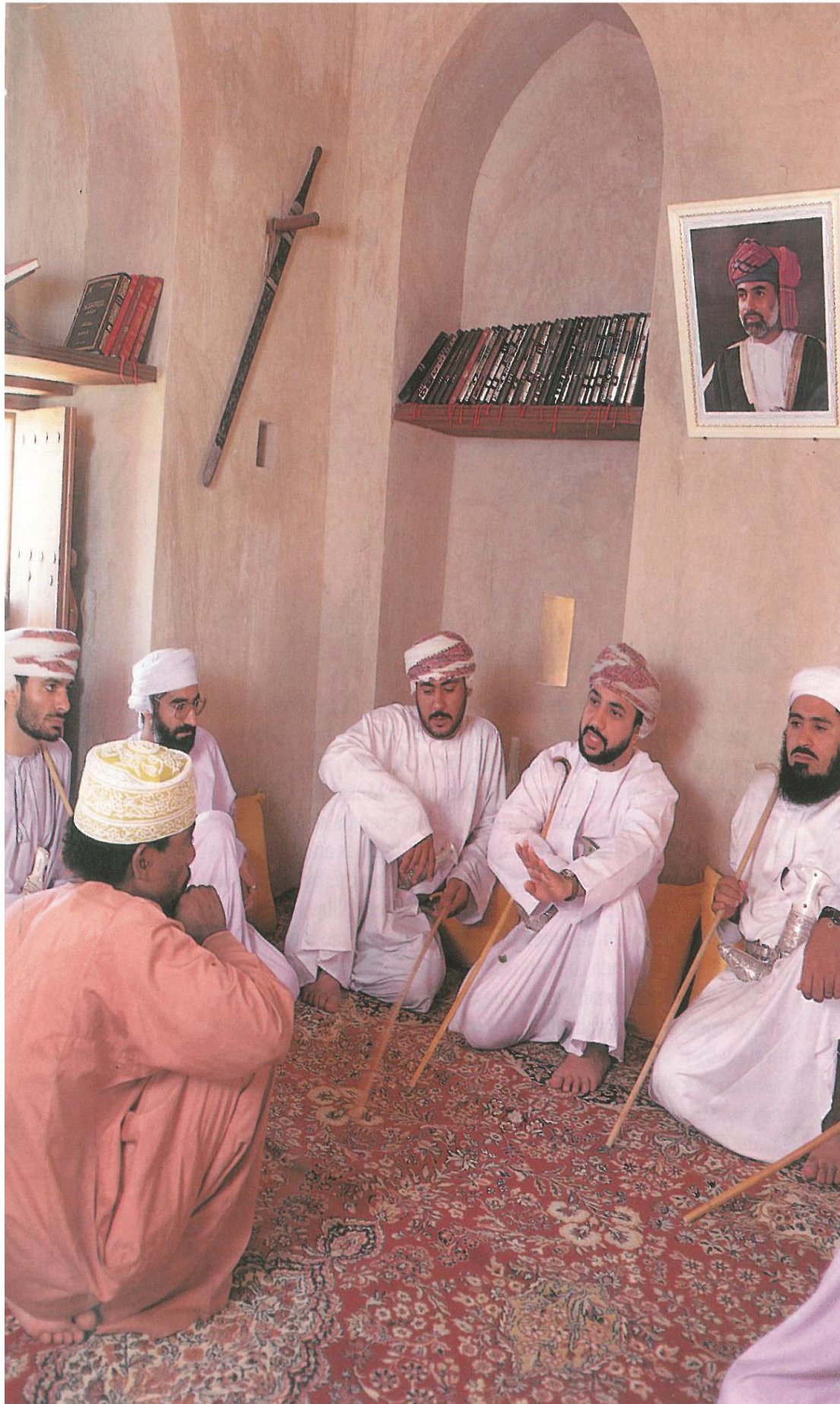
Until 1970, the Ministry of the Interior was the only Ministry, as such, existent in the country. The then Minister of the Interior, Sayyid Ahmed bin Ibrahim Al Qais, had his offices inside the walls of Muscat, adjacent to the palace of the Sultan. The Ministry of the Interior is therefore the oldest in the country.

Originally the Sultanate was divided into Wilayats, each administered by a Wali, who was appointed by and responsible to the Sultan. The tribal Shaikhs were responsible to the Wali in whose area they were situated. The basis of this form of administration is maintained to this day. Now there are three Governorates of Muscat, Dhofar and

► A democratic institution which has recently been introduced is the revival of the Barzah, when the Wali (provisional governor) holds monthly audiences in his Wilayat.

▼ The Ministry of Interior building, Al Khuwair.







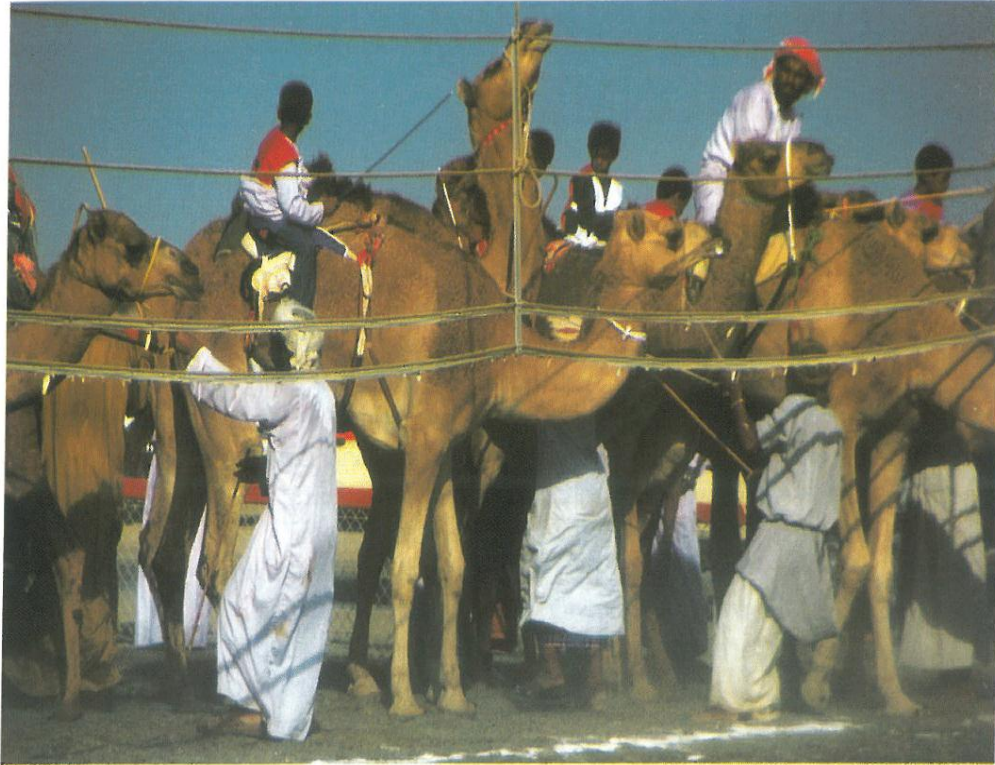
Musandam, where the Walis are responsible to the Governor, and in the case of Dhofar, the Governor is also a Minister of State. Other Wilayats are administered by the Ministry of the Interior. There are eight administrative centres in Dhofar, and four in the Musandam.

▲ Traditional Friday markets are special events.

One of the Ministry's notable successes has been its ability to maintain the traditional links between the tribal authorities and the Wilayat administrations. The Walis consult with the Ministry, by whom they are appointed, on important matters affecting their Wilayats, and pass on Government policy, received through the Ministry to the Shaikhs of the tribes, which is then communicated to the public.

The Walis traditionally enjoy the respect of members of the public, and perform an important role in pursuing the development process through their meetings and consultations with the directors of Government bodies, and through their supervision of the progress of projects, the coordination of activities between the different bodies in their Wilayats, and their chairmanship of local committees concerned with development - notably the local municipal committees. Their distinctive status enables them to remove any obstacles that may stand in the way of those projects.

A democratic institution which has recently been revived is that of Barzah, when the Wali holds monthly audiences in his Wilayat. As soon as the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture has completed



▲ Camel racing is a popular sport throughout the Interior.

the restoration of the traditional forts in each of the Wilayats, so the practice of the Barzah has been revived and re-instituted as it was in former years. The Qadi, or judge, of the Shari'a court in the Wilayat is also in attendance. The Wali receives members of the public, speaks with them face-to-face, considers their cases and directs the relevant staff to complete their business promptly for them. Cases involving legal rulings will be referred to the Qadi. The Wali also discusses Wilayat affairs with the local Shaikhs at the Barzah. As with the Majlis Ash'shura, the Barzah has been warmly welcomed by the public.

Another of the responsibilities of the Walis is the examination of applications for passports, and their approval. The actual processing is done by the Royal Oman Police.

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

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

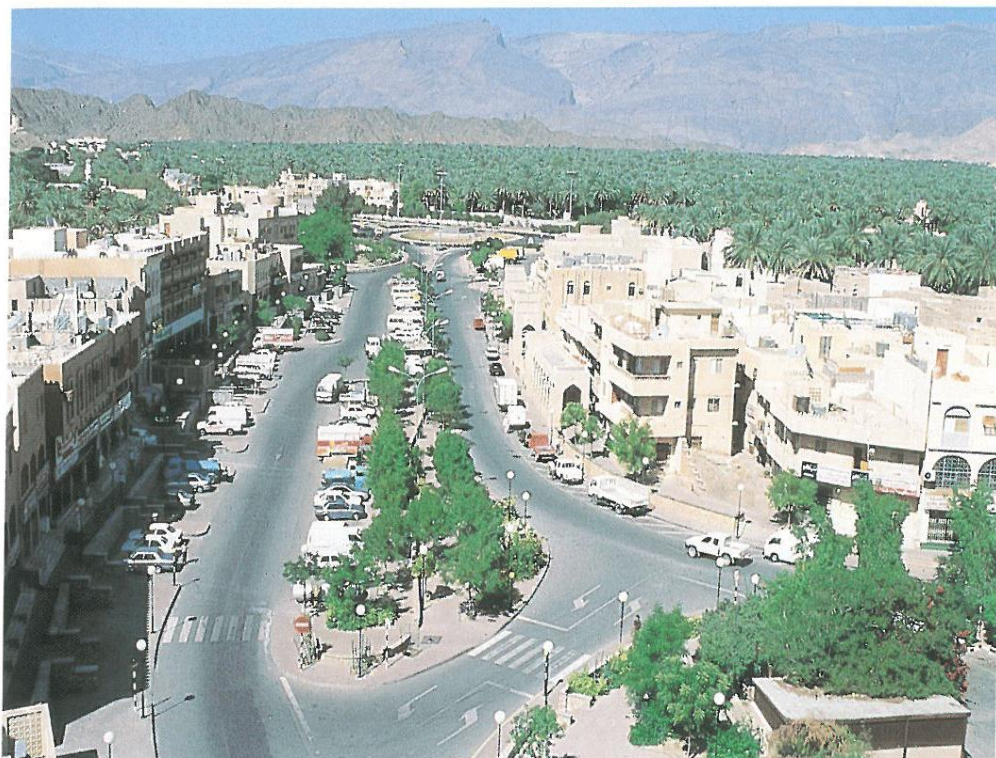
On the occasion of the second National Day His Majesty Sultan Qaboos said "We shall set up municipalities in the main cities, until finally we have municipalities in every town and village." This task was completed some years ago. The Ministry of Regional Municipalities was set up in 1985, while the Ministry of the Environment had been established in the previous year. By 1991 the responsibilities of the two Ministries had become so inter-related that it was decided to merge them into the one Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Environment. The present Ministry is currently situated in the building in Al Khuwair, which used to house the Ministry of the Environment. However, an agreement was signed in 1994 for the construction of a new building for the Ministry in Al Khuwair, which will bring all the municipality-related departments together under one roof, and simplify the Ministry's business with members of the public and the regional municipalities outside the Muscat area. The Ministry's environment departments will continue to be located in its present premises.

The Ministry has endeavoured to extend municipal services to every part of the country, particularly the remote areas, and to enable the Sultanate's municipalities to fulfill their mission of providing the best possible level of municipal and environmental services. The Ministry oversees 43 municipalities, as well as 14 municipal branches and about 20 cleanliness offices in the more remote Wilayats.

The development of Oman's towns and populated areas is a natural consequence of the efforts of the State to establish the infrastructure, services and aesthetic standards that the modern towns and cities need. The Ministry has launched an ambitious plan aimed at developing the ancient Omani cities of Nizwa, Buraimi, Sur and Rostaq, in phases. The development projects include road surfacing, lighting, tree planting and the establishment of green areas, as well as markets, public parks, children's playgrounds, improving the facades of buildings, the construction of abattoirs and car parks. The appearance of ancient, historic and tourist sites is to be improved. Sewage systems are to be installed, as well as public toilets and other infrastructural projects. It is hoped that the development plan can be expanded to include the Wilayat of Ibri.

The sewerage system projects are high on the list of priorities of the Ministry, because of the importance of the service and the effect that

►▼ Nizwa and
Sohar –
modernisation of
regional
municipalities is
carefully carried out
to preserve the local
environment and
national character.



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the sewage can have on ground water stocks. The Ministry has completed a detailed study of implementation of sewerage projects in the towns of Nizwa, Sumail, Ibri, Buraimi, Ibra, Sur, Saham, Rostaq and Khasab.

Municipal services include specialised responsibilities such as environmental health, public hygiene, housing hygiene, ensuring that water and food are healthy and safe to consume, pest control and the general improvement of the quality of life. The services also include the removal of refuse and food condemned as unfit for human consumption. There are regular inspections of food shops and to ensure that hygiene regulations for employees are being implemented. There are checks to see that aflaaj (water channels) are cleaned and water quality is monitored. The number of inspectors is being increased, and the Ministry is conducting a number of staff training courses. The staff of veterinarians is being expanded to ensure that rigorous checks of animals before and after slaughter is carried out.

A Municipalities Month is held annually each October when various events are organized to increase the awareness of the people of the importance of cleanliness, hygiene and the need for wholesome food. There is a 'Best Municipality' award, of a cup presented by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, and a sum of RO9,000. To mark the tenth year of the

▲ The beautification of our towns and cities has high priority. Salalah, a typical example.

competition, this year a seminar is being held to examine the results achieved so far, as well as ways by which projects can be improved.

In accordance with recently issued regulations, only Omani citizens may now operate shops in municipal markets and residential areas. In order to encourage Omanis to set up businesses in these markets there are a number of inducements, which include exemption from municipal rents for a period of six months, and loans to cover the capital cost of equipment and the furnishing of shops. Loans will have to be repaid in two years. Expatriates are not now permitted to be employed in shops in villages and residential areas.

The Ministry is actively implementing Omanisation of jobs by increasing the number of training courses, and upgrading performance standards of its staff, so as to enable them to meet the responsibilities of the posts targeted for Omanisation. Personnel are sent abroad for courses in food hygiene, health and sanitation.

Environment

Firm action on the part of the Government under the personal guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has saved Oman from the environmental disasters which have occurred in some other developing countries. The extinction of the oryx in 1972 is a prime example of what could have happened had firm action not been taken. As it is the re-introduction of the oryx to its original habitat has proved to be a success. The country's imaginative and forward-looking environmental protection and conservation policies have gained international recognition. The United Nations Environmental Programme has cited the Sultanate as a country with one of the best records in environmental conservation and pollution control measures geared to protect the land, air and water, and maintain the ecological balance.

The first law concerning environmental affairs was issued in 1974. This was followed in ensuing years by several other decisions and laws designed to secure the territorial waters of the Sultanate. In 1979 the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution was established with His Majesty as Chairman. A further step was taken in 1984 with the establishment of the Ministry of the Environment, to which was assigned the responsibility for implementing the national plan for the environment and the law for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution. In October 1990 a seven-year coastal zone management project was completed in response to the threat posed by rapid urban development. This project, which covered the entire 1,700 km-long coastline of the Sultanate, involved detailed ecological surveys of the coastal regions, the sea and

►► A rare herd of
ibex grazing
peacefully at Al
Huqf.







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◀ Oman has colourful coral reefs inhabited by a wide variety of marine life.

◀ An Omani fish stares disdainfully at the photographer.

offshore islands, with the result that the Sultanate has one of the most intensely-studied coastal environments in the world for management purposes. All the information obtained is logged into a comprehensive computerised environmental database. The project has contributed to regional scientific knowledge through its findings, including the discovery of new species of fish and corals, new turtle nesting and feeding areas, some of which are of global importance, as well as bird-breeding and feeding sites. Together, these coastal and regional plans will help development of the coastal zone. As a result of this project and its many findings and recommendations, the Sultanate has a secure basis from which to proceed with the safeguarding of its valuable coastal resources for future generations to come.

All construction projects launched in the country are required to have a 'No Environmental Objection' certificate from the Ministry. By this method, the Ministry controls plans for new industrial enterprises and other structural projects. Before issuing such certificates, the Ministry takes into account possible environmental effects and the necessity for using all possible means to minimise pollution caused by the emission of waste products. The Ministry also operates programmes to raise the level of public awareness about environmental issues and involve the population in protecting the environment and conserving resources.

Oman has a wide variety of wild life, some of which are now very rare. Strict laws now exist for their protection, and the hunting or shooting of wild life is banned. These laws and regulations are strictly enforced. Animals existing in the wild include leopards, hyenas, oryx, gazelle, tahr, desert foxes, antelope and wild cats. In the sea, there are more than thirteen types of dolphin and whale, while four hundred species of birds have been recorded. Laws have been introduced for the protection of National Parks and Protected Natural Sites. Beaches such as those at Ras al Hadd, which are turtle breeding areas are protected, and visits to these areas are regulated by the issue of permits. In pursuit of this, visits to the Daymaniyat Islands in the Gulf of Oman are forbidden at certain times of the year. The Jiddat al Harasis, where the oryx have been re-introduced and now roam freely, is a world wild-life sanctuary, and in December 1994 UNESCO's World Heritage Committee listed it on its World Natural and Cultural Heritage Register. The Jiddat al Harasis is the third site in the Sultanate to be listed on the World Heritage Register, together with the fort at Bahla, which is currently being restored, and the ancient tombs at Bat in the Wilayat of Ibri.

JUSTICE, AWQAF AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

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

In spite of the great distances and wide deserts which separate Oman from the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, Oman was one of the first countries to embrace Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet, by acceptance, rather than conquest, a Faith to which it has staunchly held over the ensuing centuries. The oldest mosque in Oman, situated in Sumail, goes back to the time of the Prophet.

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

The Ministry is divided into two main sections, of which one is Justice, and the other Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. Each section is headed by an Under-Secretary, who is responsible to the Minister. Each section has its own prerogatives and functions. Under the Justice section are the Shari'a Courts, of which there are 45 in Muscat and the other

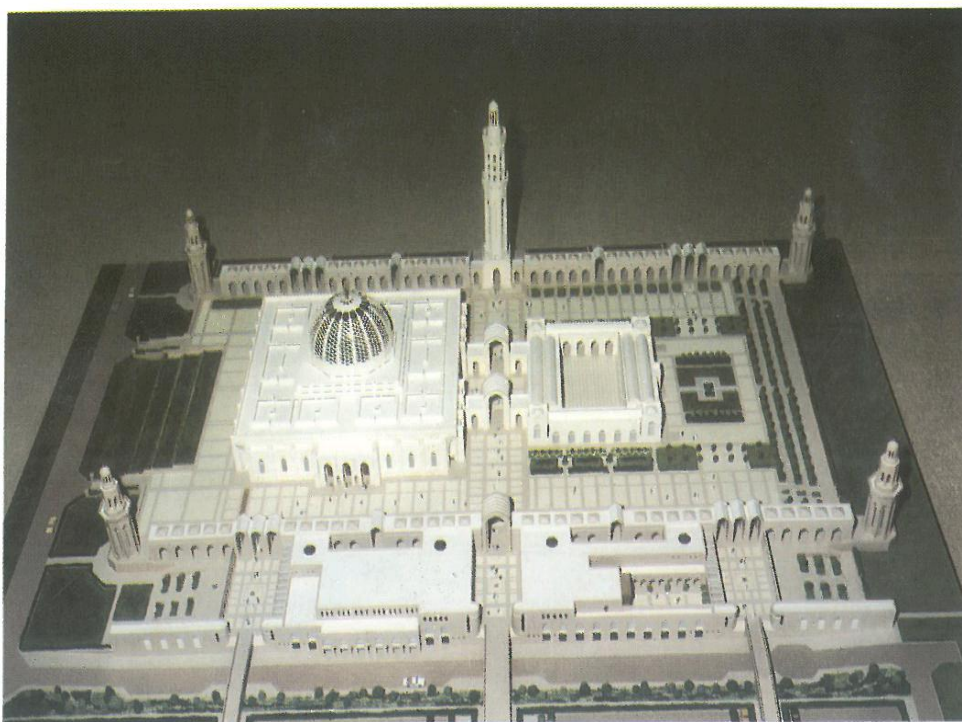
► His Majesty
(fourth from right)
joins his people in
prayers on the
occasion of Eid al
Fitr.

► The new Ministry
building of Justice,
Awqaf and Islamic
Affairs at Al Khuwair.



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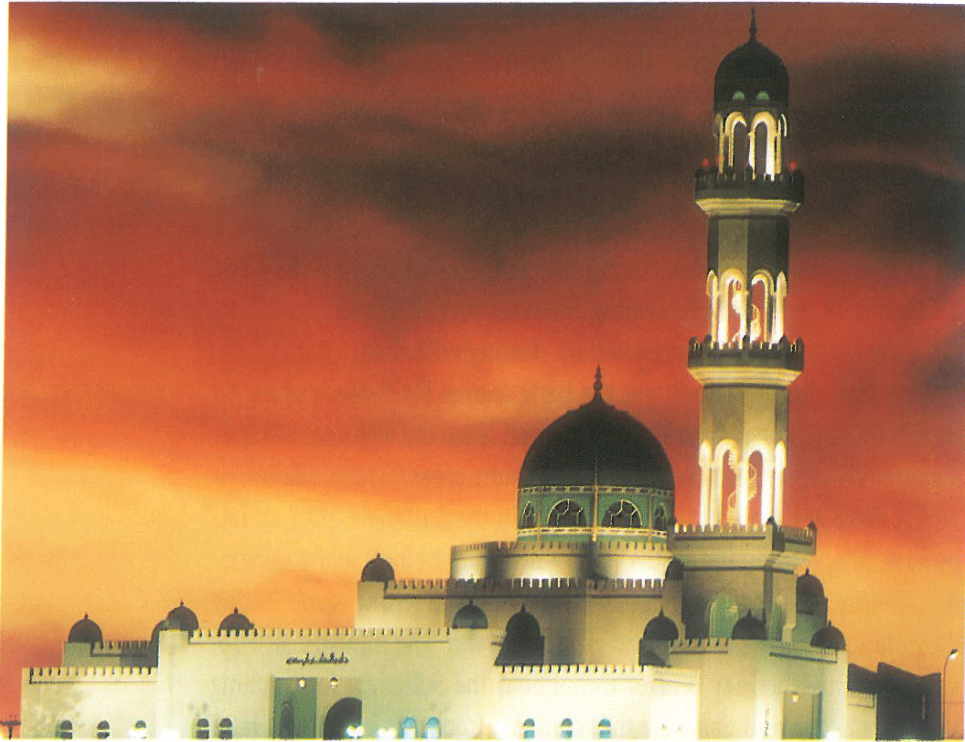


principals towns in the Wilayats. Each court has at least one judge (qadi), and an assistant judge and his deputy, with a team of clerks responsible for documents and court records.

In the Shari'a Courts, each judge is responsible for hearing civil and criminal cases filed by citizens against each other, reaching judgments on and solutions to disputes, and how to settle them. The Court of Appeal in Muscat considers these judgments when appeals are lodged against them. At the highest level is the Complaints Committee to which there is recourse by those who are not satisfied by the judgments given at the two lower levels. Rulings given by the Complaints Committee are final.

Studies at the Institute of Shari'a Jurisprudence, Counsel and Guidance consist of two stages; students who have qualified for the Mosques' Preparatory Certificate, or at an equivalent level, undertake a general Shari'a course of three years. Those completing this stage may then continue to the specialisation stage. Alternatively, they may be appointed to appropriate posts in the Shari'a courts or the Ministry. Students are accepted for specialisation in Shari'a jurisprudence if they

▲ A model of the Friday Mosque – a personal gift to his people by His Majesty – under construction as a centre for Islamic and cultural instruction.



▲ The Al Muhallab bin Abel Sufra Mosque in Qurum – one of the many beautiful mosques in the Sultanate.

have attained a minimum of 60% in the examination at the previous stage. After graduation, they are appointed as deputy judges or to appropriate posts in the courts or the Ministry. Students who wish to specialise in Counsel and Guidance are accepted if they have been successful in the final examination in the Shari'a studies stage. After graduation they are appointed to Counsel and Guidance posts as Imams or preachers.

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

1. Spreading the teachings of the True Islamic Religion within the Sultanate through counsel, guidance and the various media, and setting up Islamic libraries.
2. Participating in Islamic activities abroad through organisations, conferences and seminars, and exchanging visits with members of the Islamic community and brotherly Arab States.
3. Making preparations for the Haj (pilgrim) season in coordination with the Saudi authorities and relevant local organisations.
4. Establishing, restoring, maintaining and administering mosques.

5. Organising zakat revenues and expenditure.
6. Overseeing and maintaining all types of Awqaf, and endeavouring to increase their revenues, develop them and regulate their affairs.
7. Taking charge of Bait Al Mal (Public Treasury) properties, and setting rules and regulations for maintaining them and developing their resources.
8. Looking after and maintaining the property of orphans and bequests to them, implementing Shari'a court decisions related to these bequests, and the regulations dealing with them.

The Holy Koran schools are the basic source for those wishing to absorb the teachings of the Holy Koran and learn the elements of reading and writing, especially in the more remote areas. These schools, of which there are currently more than 500 in the Sultanate, play an important role, as they did in the past, when they trained many generations before secular schools became widespread in recent years. Today they attract numbers of boys and girls each year. The Ministry also operates summer holiday centres throughout the Sultanate for teaching the Holy Koran and ensuring that students from secular schools have access to Koranic studies when the schools are in recess. Over the period of the current Five Year Plan, out of a total of 139 projects involving the building of mosques and extensions to existing mosques, nearly all had been completed by the end of last year. Appeals Departments have been set up to rule on appeals submitted to them on the basis of certain specific procedures for hearing cases. Regulations have also been issued to define the limits of the Shari'a courts' jurisdiction.

It was announced on 1st January 1995 that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos had issued instructions for the building of a new mosque in the Governorate of Muscat at his own expense. It will be the largest mosque in the Sultanate, and will accommodate 15,500 worshippers. Situated in the Wilayat of Bausher, it will not only be a place of worship, but also a centre for the teaching of the Islamic religion and culture. The mosque will include a large library for Islamic scholars, containing large numbers of books and references written by Islamic scholars through the ages. The design of the mosque has been assigned to architects with Arab and international reputations, who have won prizes for Islamic architectural design in international competitions.

CIVIL SERVICE

Before 1970 no Civil Service as such existed. The functions of government, such as they were, were performed by a small number of officials. As the development policy initiated by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos proceeded, the number of personnel employed by the Government increased to meet the needs of expansion. In 1975, the Law for the Organisation of the Government Administrative System was enacted to establish a rational system of organising the machinery of government. Likewise, a Civil Law was passed to provide the expanded service with qualified personnel, and to implement the services needed for the development of the nation. The 1975 Law was replaced by a new Law in 1980. Until the Ministry of Civil Service was established in 1988, personnel matters were dealt with by the Establishment Bureau under the guidance of the Civil Service Commission.

The principal aim of the Ministry has been the modernising and increased effectiveness of the Government machinery. Unlike the Establishment Bureau, which preceded it, the overall function of the Ministry of Civil Service lies in providing support services for Government units, and not just administrative control. Since its inception, the Ministry has reviewed the administrative regulations with the aim of simplifying procedures and embodying the merit system in all personnel matters.

In October 1992 a Royal Decree was issued defining the functions of the Ministry, which include:-

- i. the implementation of general approved policy.
- ii. drafting Civil Service laws.
- iii. the preparation of standard salary and allowance regulations.
- iv. the planning of administrative changes.
- v. the preparation of training plans in conjunction with the competent authorities.
- vi. the study of problems faced by the Civil Service.
- vii. the provision of assistance for Government personnel departments.
- viii. the simplifying of organisational and training procedures.
- ix. ensuring the application of pension and end-of-service benefit laws.
- x. the appointment of graduates to suitable posts compatible with their qualifications.
- xi. serving the State's development goals.

The Ministry has put special emphasis on training, to facilitate the recruitment of qualified professional and technically trained Omanis

for Governmental positions. A new system of performance appraisal has also been developed. Under this system, officials are evaluated on their actual achievements, the focus thus being on merit and the motivation of the individual for higher levels of performance. This ensures equity through applying a unified criteria for the same type of posts and employing the performance appraisal system in developing the required training plans. This marks a departure from the traditional seniority system and ensures the development of the merit concept.

In its efforts to improve the capability and reform of the Civil Service, the Ministry has planned and is currently implementing a position classification project for the Civil Service, the aims of which are:-

- i. Ensuring a systematic approach for the projection of manpower needs, which assists in identifying the right candidates for Civil Service posts.
- ii. Ensuring equity in salaries and benefits on the basis of defined responsibilities.
- iii. Providing job descriptions for all Civil Service positions as a basis for all management activities.
- iv. Providing a comprehensive system which ensures objectivity in performance appraisal and consequently in promotions.

The Ministry has already completed the first phase of the implementation process which includes the provision of the legal framework and the enlistment of the support of top management in all Government units. The second phase is now in progress, which includes the collection of information for selected positions from job-holders representing the different units, as well as analysing this information in relation to the organisational structure with the aim of specifying the job descriptions for these positions. The last phase is to be the designing of the appropriate job classification scheme and specifying the rank structure for the purpose of salary scaling.

The Ministry is currently introducing a human resource database system to provide information related to Civil Service personnel. This information will enable the Ministry to be the 'memory' and reliable source of information for decision-making related to personnel management.

The overall objective of the Omanisation plan for the public sector, which was introduced in 1991, is the placement of qualified and trained Omanis in place of expatriates. The sum of R.O. 10 million has been allotted in the 1991/95 development budget to the Omanisation plan. A technical office has been established in the Ministry to implement the plan in co-ordination with Government units. Detailed arrangements have been made for designing and implementing training programmes to qualify Omanis for the posts which are programmed in



▲ The new Ministry building of Civil Service at Al Khuwair.

the Omanisation plan. The potential Omani cadres who are trained in the Omanisation plan are enabled to work closely with expatriates for six months to two years to gain practical experience and develop their skills. By this means the Omanisation process ensures that the trained cadres have the necessary experience to enable them to perform efficiently and effectively.

The percentage of Omanisation achieved by the end of 1993 was 66.3%. The target which is projected for the end of the Fourth Five-Year Plan is 72%. It is, however, important to note that 76.3% of the non-Omani officials in the public sector are employed in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. The other 23.7% are employed by other Government units. Both the Ministries of Education and Health are currently intensifying their efforts to educate and train Omanis to replace expatriates. The Ministry of Health has 11 training institutes, which include eight nursing training institutes, an institute for Health Sciences, an institute for Assistant Pharmacist training, and an institute for Public Health. The Ministry of Education has nine institutes to qualify Omani cadres for teaching positions.

With the assistance of qualified international consultants, the Ministry has developed a special project in the past year to provide advisory services for the transfer of knowledge, and the production of manuals and other reports, in order to strengthen the Ministry's technical

capabilities and effectiveness. These consultative services have included career planning, improvement of pension records and funds management, job classification, training planning, management information systems, improvement of financial systems and developing Civil Service aptitude tests.

The current Five-Year Plan has provided for the construction of a single permanent Ministry of Civil Service building. Construction is currently under way, and is expected to be completed this year.

The Institute of Public Administration

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) was established by Royal Decree in 1977. Officially it was an autonomous body within the Ministry of Royal Diwan Affairs. After the dissolution of that Ministry, IPA was placed under the supervision of the Minister of National Heritage and Culture until the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Service in 1988. The Director-General of the IPA is appointed by the Minister and board of Directors, and works closely with the Ministry in preparing the National Training Programme prior to its submission to the Board of Directors. He also prepares IPA's annual plan for the various administrative levels for presentation to the Board.

Continuous effort has been made to enhance the professional competence of Omanis in both the private and public sectors to accelerate Omanisation. With the Omanisation of the Civil Service in mind, during the current Five-Year Plan (1991-96) the IPA introduced a programme for training senior Civil Servants, including Under-Secretaries and Director-Generals, in addition to training lower-level personnel. Over 1,000 personnel are attending fifty different courses, with a view to revamping the public administrative system and providing a more efficient and productive Civil Service. The programme also includes courses for improving the proficiency of civil servants in the English language.

In addition, special emphasis has been placed on offering long-term diploma courses in the fields of accountancy and statistics. Apart from these diplomas, IPA is considering other long-term courses to meet the needs of the labour market.

In order to keep abreast of new trends in public administration, ties are being strengthened with similar institutions at Arab and international levels. In addition to its training programmes, IPA also provides research and consultancy services. In this connection IPA has a library of 13,600 books, of which 10,500 are in Arabic and 3,100 are in English, together with 6,500 documents of which 5,500 are in Arabic and 1,00 are in English.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The history of Vocational Training in the Sultanate of Oman during the twenty five years since the renaissance in 1970 has been that of lively adaptation to the circumstances of the time and the requirements of the future, always with the central aim of Omanisation. In 1970 there was only one training centre for Omani technicians in the Sultanate, established by the oil company PD(O) Ltd., at that time a totally private company. In 1978 the Education and Vocational Training Council was founded, as a part of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. Its sole aim was the development of a skilled national workforce. At that time, one quarter of the total population of the Sultanate were expatriates, most of whom were Asians, who provided the skilled and semi-skilled workforce urgently required for the development of the infrastructure of the country.

In 1991 the Vocational Training Authority was created as a separate entity under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs. The main objective of the Authority is to undertake the management and development of existing training systems or those to be established in the future for training and qualifying Omanis of both sexes so as to enhance productivity and meet development requirements. The Vocational Training Authority works in close co-ordination with the Ministry of Civil Service, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In accordance with the directives of the Supreme Committee for Vocational Training and Labour, and with the strategy to encourage utilisation of human resources, the Authority has set objective targets to be achieved. Of these, the following have been attained in the past three years:-

- i. The development of four of the vocational training institutes in Nizwa, Salalah, Ibra and Musana into technical colleges with effect from September 1993.
- ii. Four vocational training institutes in Seeb, Sur, Ibri and Saham were converted to vocational training centres in September last year. The aim of the centres is to provide short-term training courses for the production of a national labour force at semi-skilled and skilled levels. This will entail the phasing out of the 3-year full-time vocational training programme completely by June 1995.
- iii. In order to enhance the process of Omanisation in the private sector and upgrade the productivity of the Omani national workforce, the Authority has adopted two training schemes. The first called the Vocational Progression and On-the-Job Training Scheme



◀ ▼ Young
Omanis are provided
with technical
training by the
Government in
preparation for their
future.

(VPOJT), aims at training Omanis who join the private sector for the first time. The companies are compensated for the cost of training their employees. The second scheme is designed to compensate companies in the private sector for the costs incurred by them in training Omani employees from their contribution towards vocational training as stated in the Omani Labour Law. The aim of the scheme is to upgrade the level of the national workforce in the private sector to increase their productivity and to replace expatriates at higher occupational levels in the companies.

- iv. The Authority realises the importance of the major role of the private sector in the training of Omani nationals. Thus it has issued regulations governing the establishment of private sector training centres. The regulations apply to instruction in theoretical and practical skills in a particular profession or occupation. In addition, they establish conditions and procedures to be followed by private sector employers who intend to set up vocational training institutes.

The success of these schemes has encouraged the private sector to efficiently proceed with their Omanisation plans and improve standards of instruction at the training organisations in the country.

The new systems of vocational training programmes is now undergoing a process of restructuring in line with the rapidly changing demands of the Omani economy and labour market requirements. The first batch of trainees were enrolled in the new programmes in the four Vocational Training Centres this year. More than 3,200 Omanis applied to join these programmes. It is expected that the Centres will be able in future to train annually more than 1,500 trainees after the phasing out of the 3-year programme with effect from September 1995. By that date there will be five colleges in Muscat, Ibra, Nizwa, Salalah and Musana administering from 350 to 1,500 students. At full complementation in September 1995, the overall capacity for the five colleges to offer a 3-year programme will be 4,500 students. The graduates from these colleges will meet the requirements of the Omani labour market at technical and middle management level.

At present, 88 private vocational training institutes are in operation. These cater mainly for training Omani nationals in business studies, but few of them run technical and vocational courses. Their contribution is regarded as valuable in expediting the Omanisation process in the private sector.

The Technical College in Muscat has also introduced changes in subjects during the past academic year. For the first time, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses are to be offered to students in the Muscat Technical Industrial College on an experimental basis. The courses are to be limited to technical studies only.

DEVELOPMENT

The new Ministry of Development was established at the beginning of 1994 with His Excellency Mohamed bin Mousa Al Yousef as its Minister. A major project with which the Ministry was confronted at its inception was the conducting and processing of the first ever national census in the Sultanate. At the same time the Ministry has been actively encouraging privatisation and foreign investment in major projects shortly to be undertaken in the Sultanate.

The First National Census

The scope of the first national Census to be held in the Sultanate far exceeded a straightforward population Census. Commenced in December 1993, the final results were published in January this year. The total overall population was 2,018,074, of which 1,483,226 were Omanis (73%) and 534,848 were non-Omanis. The majority of the non-Omanis are concentrated in the Capital area, where they represent 46% of the population. In most other areas Omanis are 75% or more of the total population. An interesting and significant statistic emerging from the Census is that 52% of the population are of the age of 15 and under. Those over the age of 64 represent only 3% of the population. This illustrates a high birth rate and greatly improved health standards among the younger generation. Other interesting statistics are in the field of education. Illiteracy among Omanis whose age was 15 and above was around 41%, while the ratio of illiteracy among the generation of the renaissance (1970), whose ages ranged between 15-29 was around 4.5% among males and 21% among females. 86% of male and female children, whose ages ranged between 6-11 were attending school at the elementary level. These figures compare favourably with those for other Arab and developing countries. Most of the Omani labour force work in the public sector, 62% of them in the administrative and defence sectors. 80% of Omani homes are owned by the occupants, 73% of homes have laid-on water supplies, 87% have electricity services and 94.8% use gas for cooking.

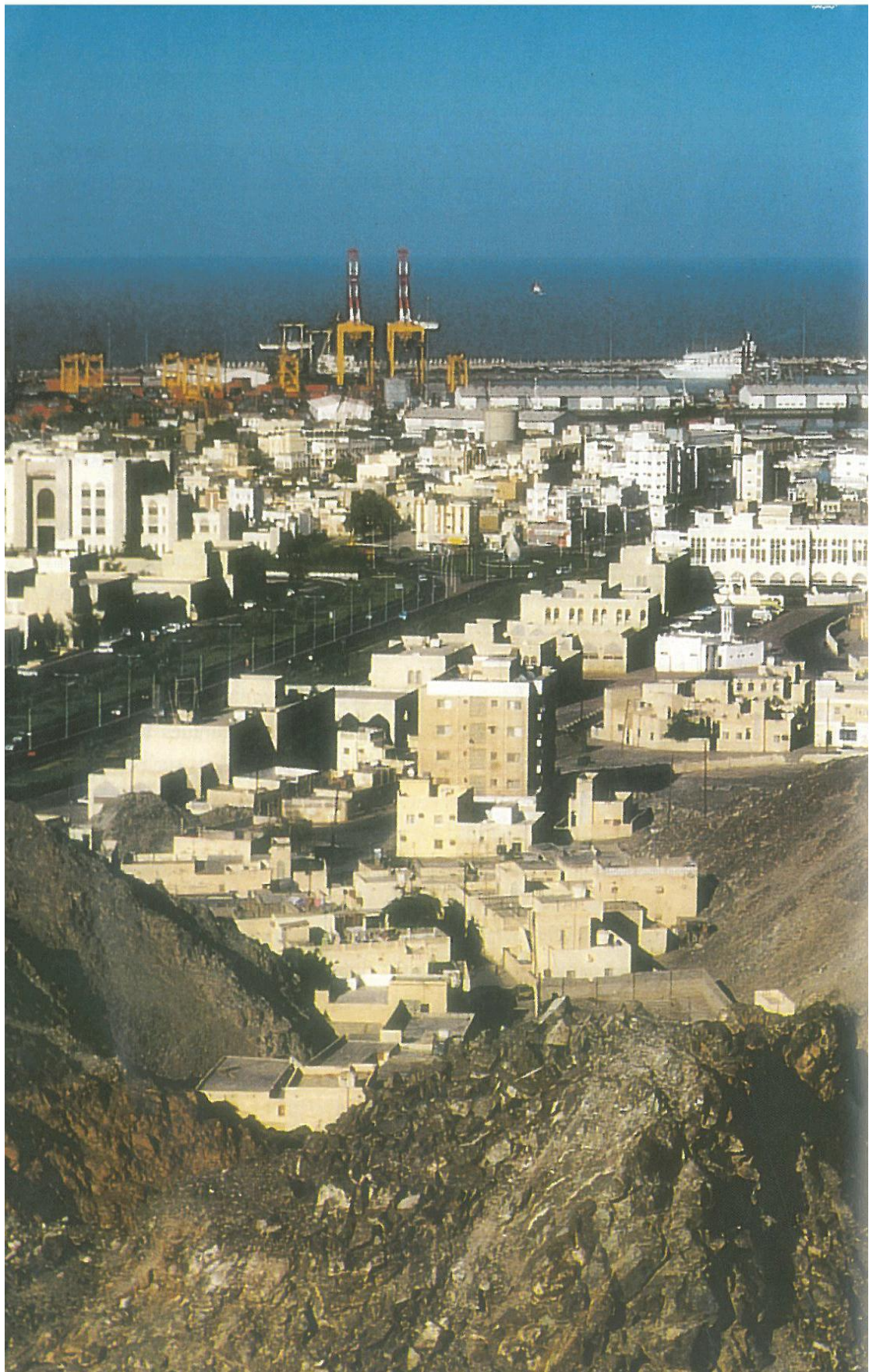
The launching of the Data and Documentation Centre in 1993 was another important achievement related to the Census. Its function is to

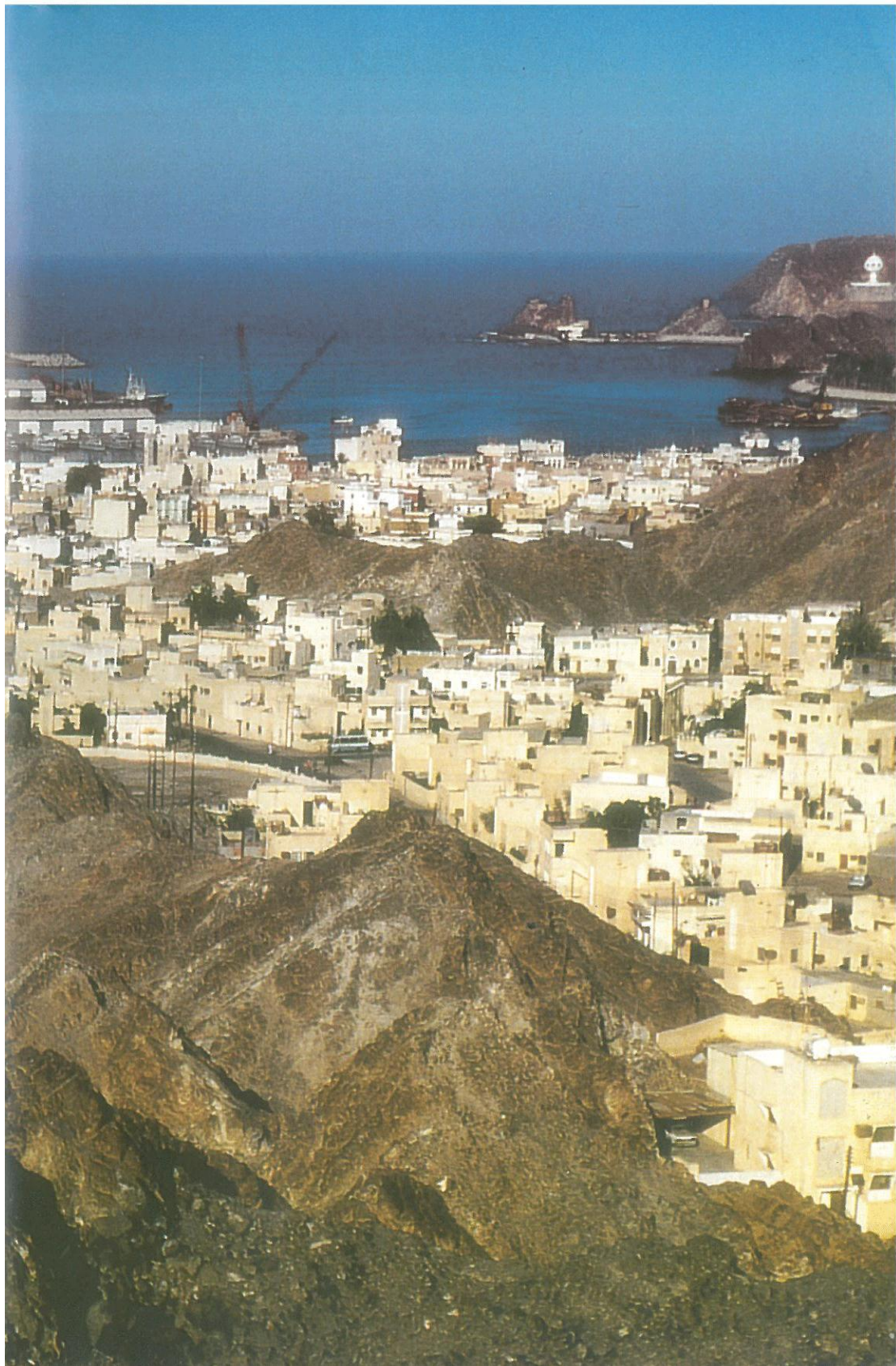
complete the database in accordance with the latest available technology. It is responsible for collecting, classifying and publishing information aimed at supporting economic and social development efforts, and serving Government and private sector employees, as well as individual researchers and students. The Centre comprises the library, which includes a bibliographical database in Arabic and English and a Document Circulation Section. The remaining phases of the system are expected to be completed during this year. Also expected to be completed during the current year are a geographical data bank, a civil registration system and a data bank.

An ambitious privatisation programme has been announced by the Ministry. The programme includes modern systems of sewage disposal and treatment in Muscat and Salalah in the south. During the past year the Gulf Hotel, ONIC, the cement plant at Raysut in the south and the National Bank of Oman have been privatised. Plans also exist to privatise the Oman Flour Mills, Oman Aviation and the Port Services Corporation. It is also intended to privatise the Intercontinental Hotel and the Seeb Novotel.

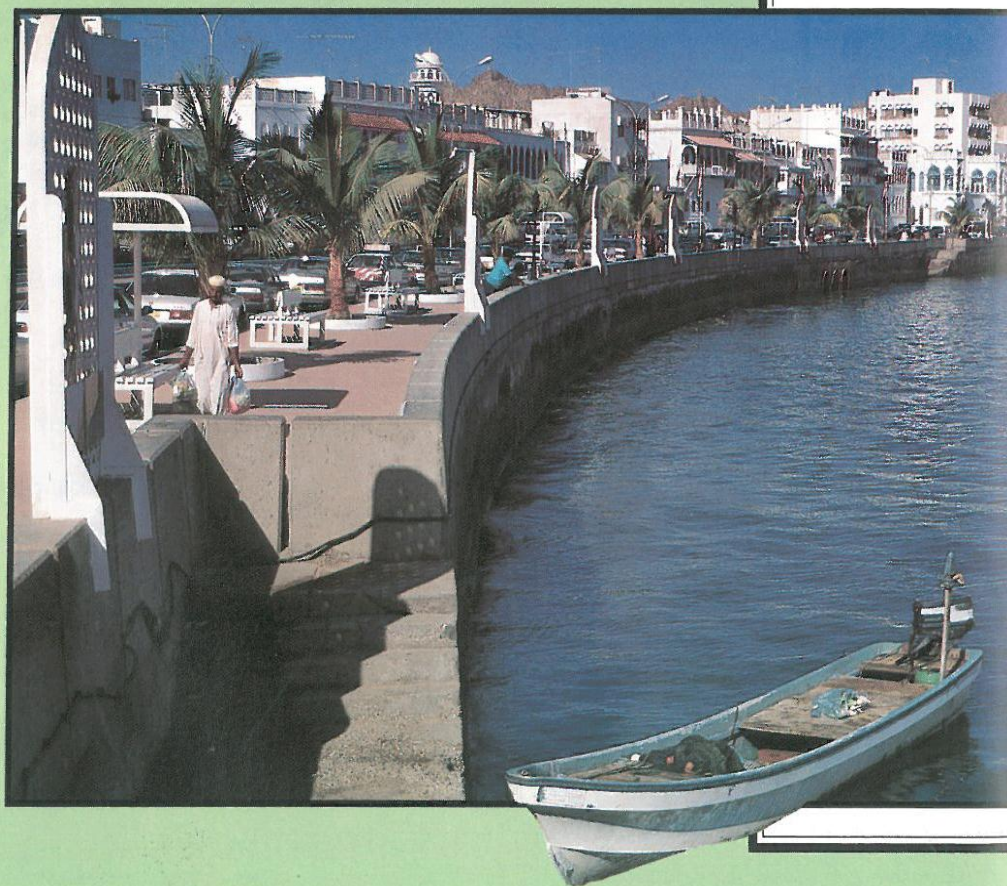
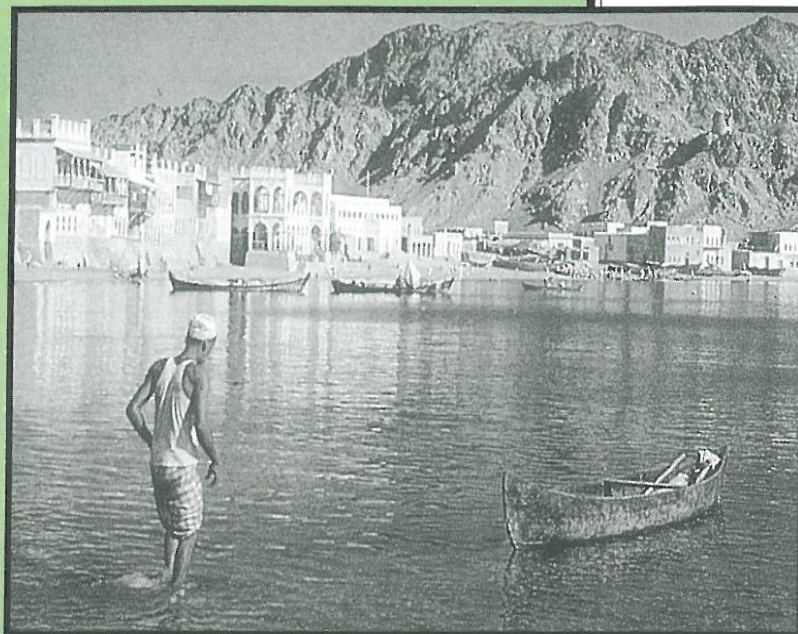
Several steps have been taken in recent months to attract local and foreign investors. One is to offer more opportunities to the non-Government sector to invest in infrastructure projects such as sewage treatment, power stations and water supply. Another is to amend the Commercial Companies Law and the Foreign Capital Investment Law to facilitate investments by foreign and local parties. Now foreigners are to be allowed to own up to 49% of trust accounts, which will be treated as fully-owned Omani companies, attracting the same taxes as the companies, and enjoying the right to invest in any sector. Foreign investors are also to be allowed to own up to 65% of stock in public infrastructure projects, which the government entrusted to the private sector.

In order to boost private sector investment, which stood at 18% of the total in early 1994, an investment conference was held in Muscat last December. The conference took place when the country was preparing to implement major economic projects including a \$700 million petrochemical project, a liquefied natural gas plant expected to cost \$8 billion initially and a \$6 billion gas pipeline.



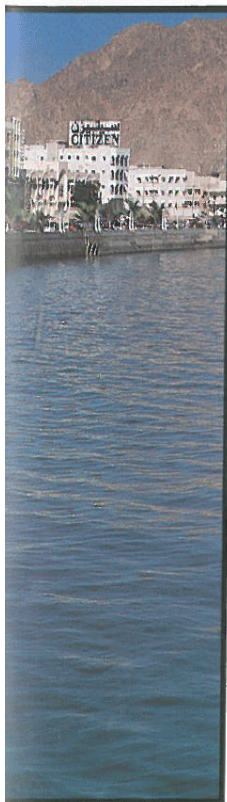


► Muttrah
seafront in
the mid-
sixties
▼ and
today.

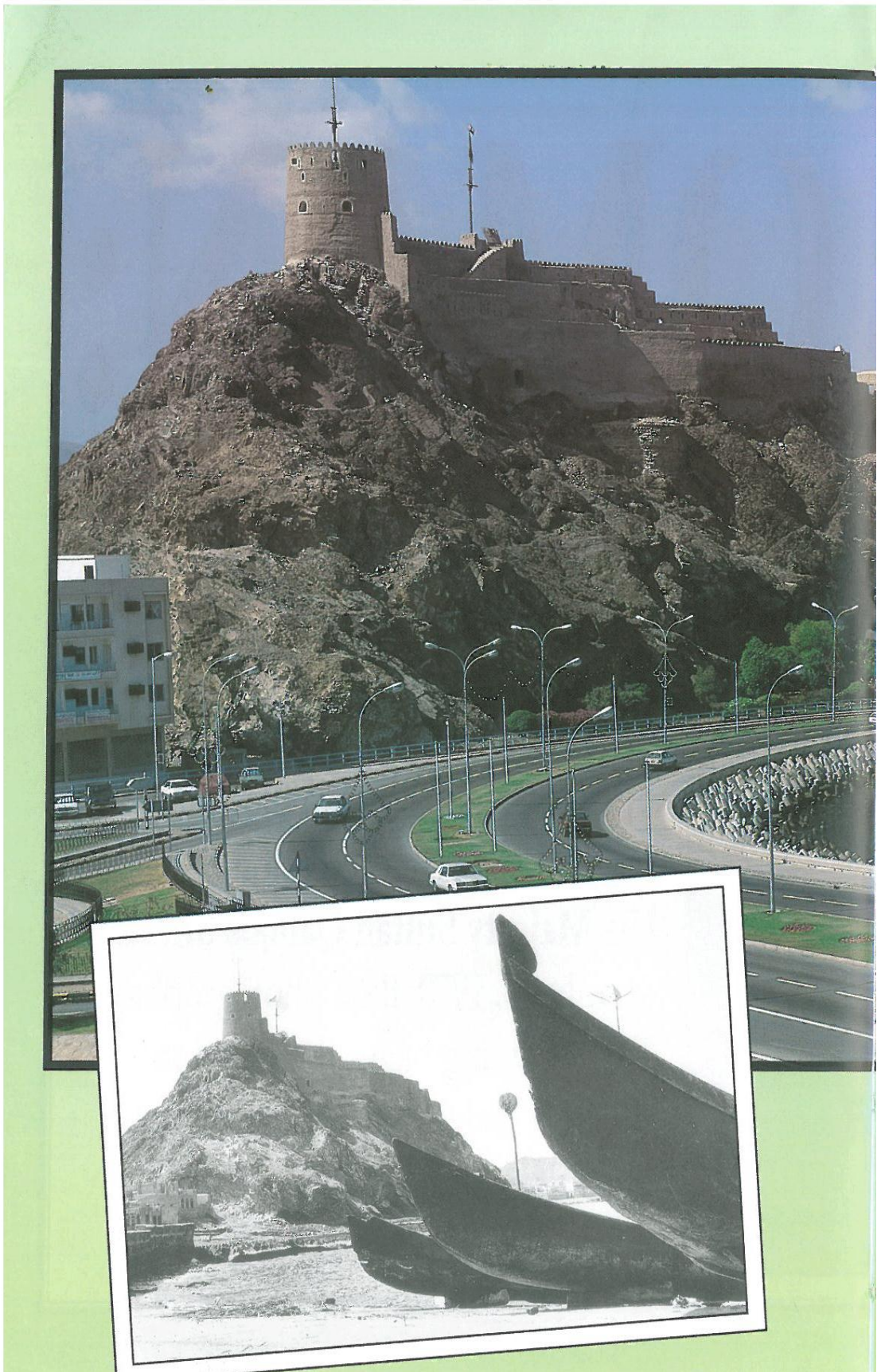


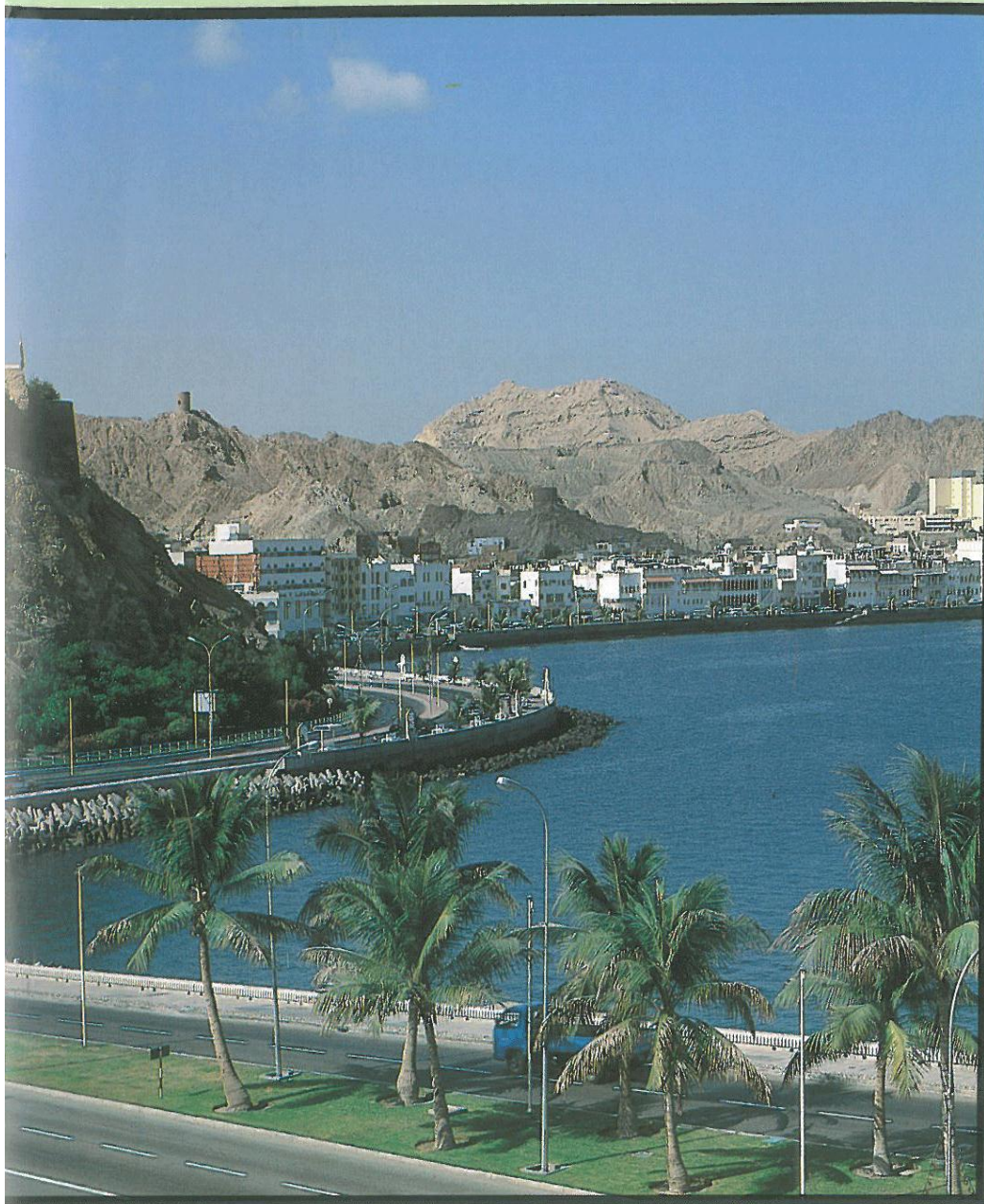
OMAN:

PAST & PRESENT

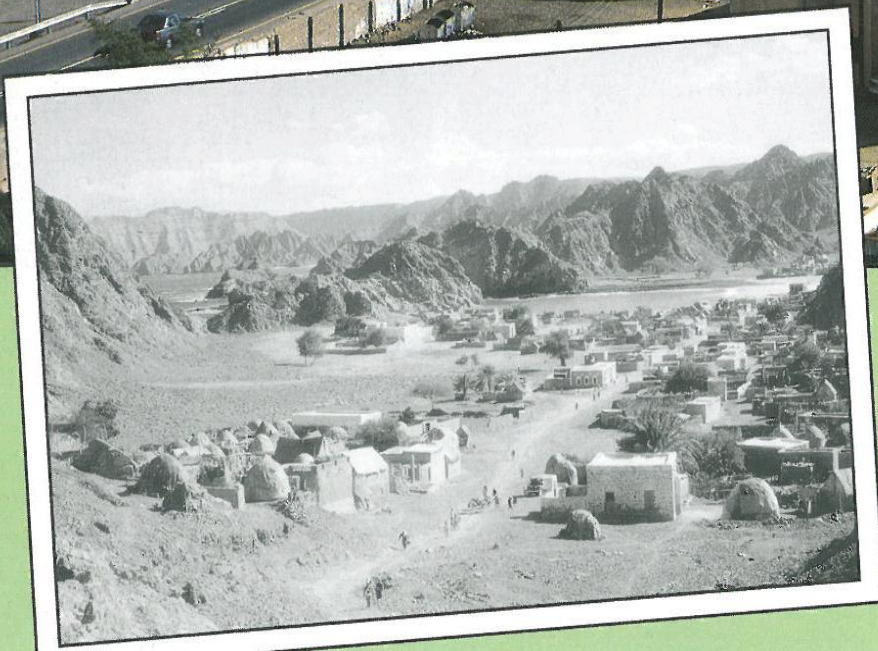
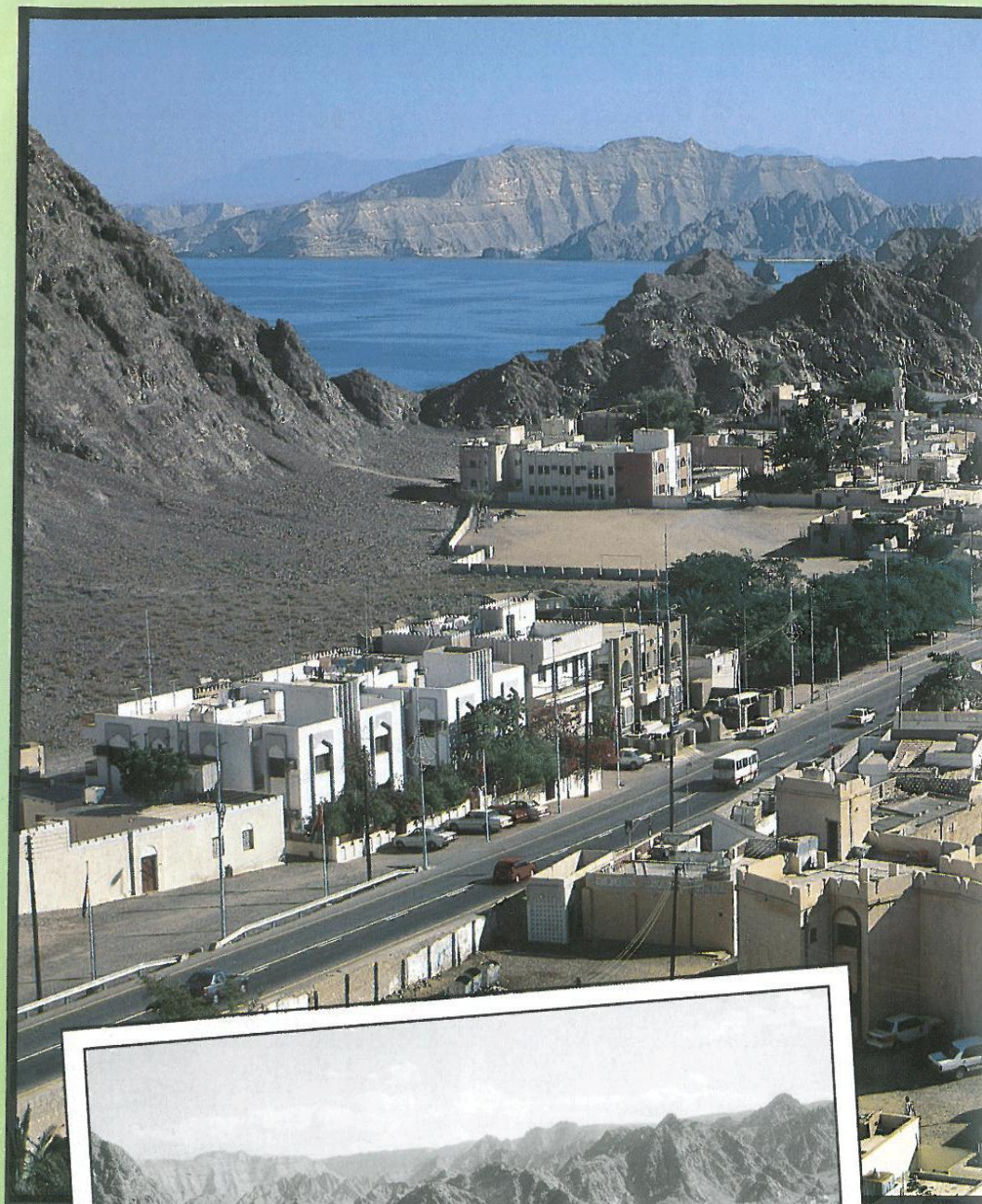


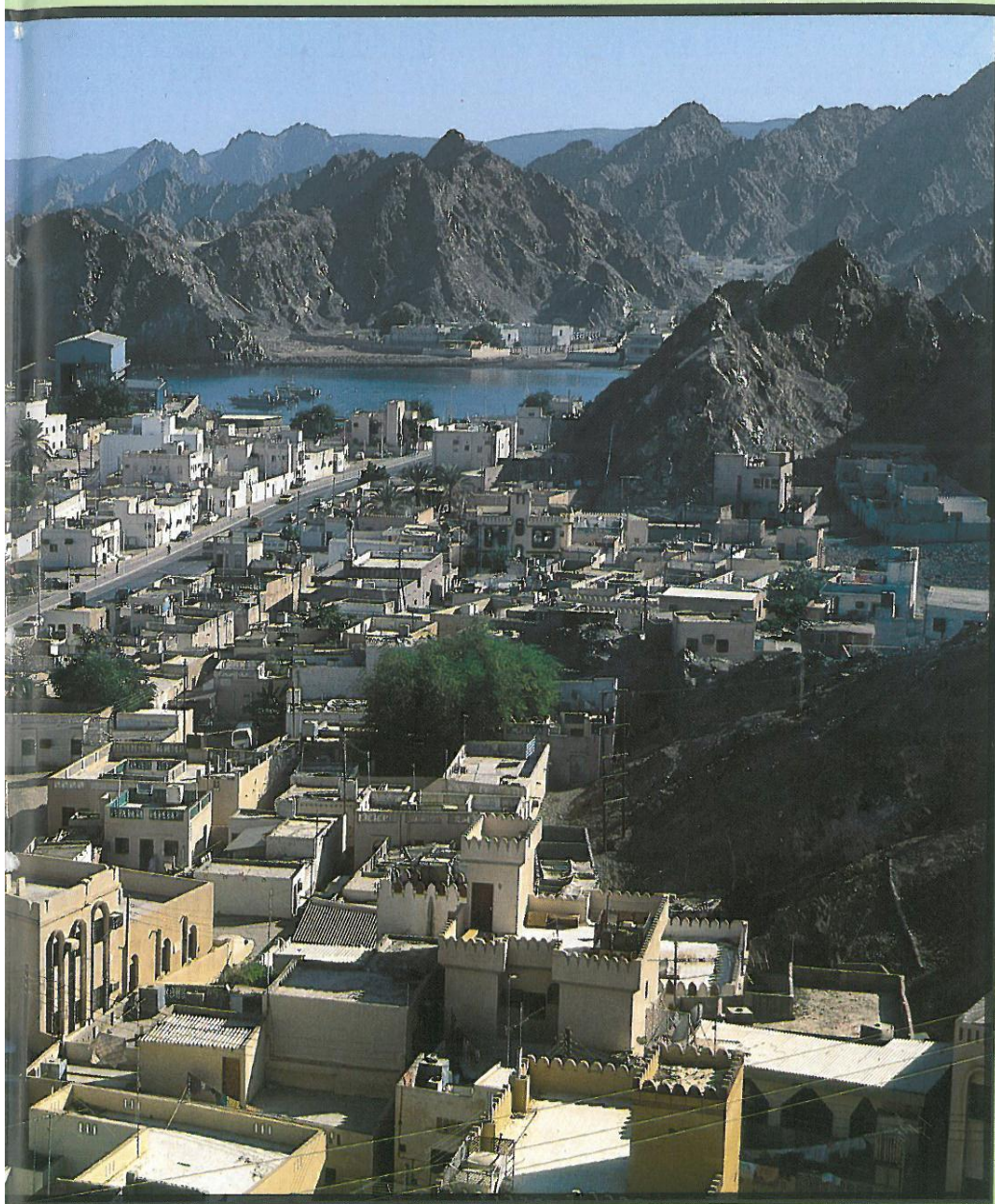
There is no better way to portray the scope and scale of development in the Sultanate of Oman since the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on July 23, 1970, than photographs. The following pages demonstrate the impressive transformation of the Sultanate into a modern state, in just a quarter of a century.



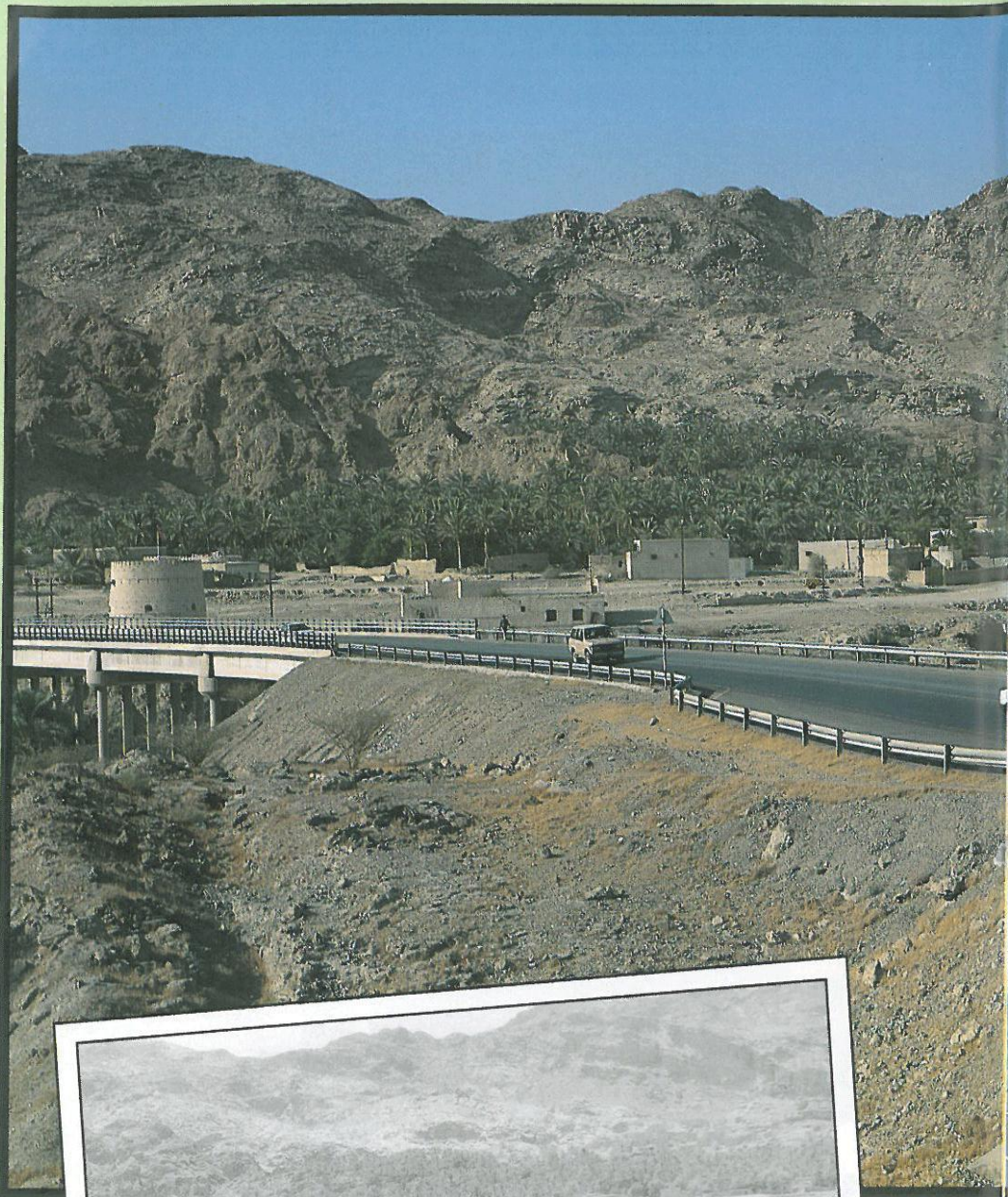


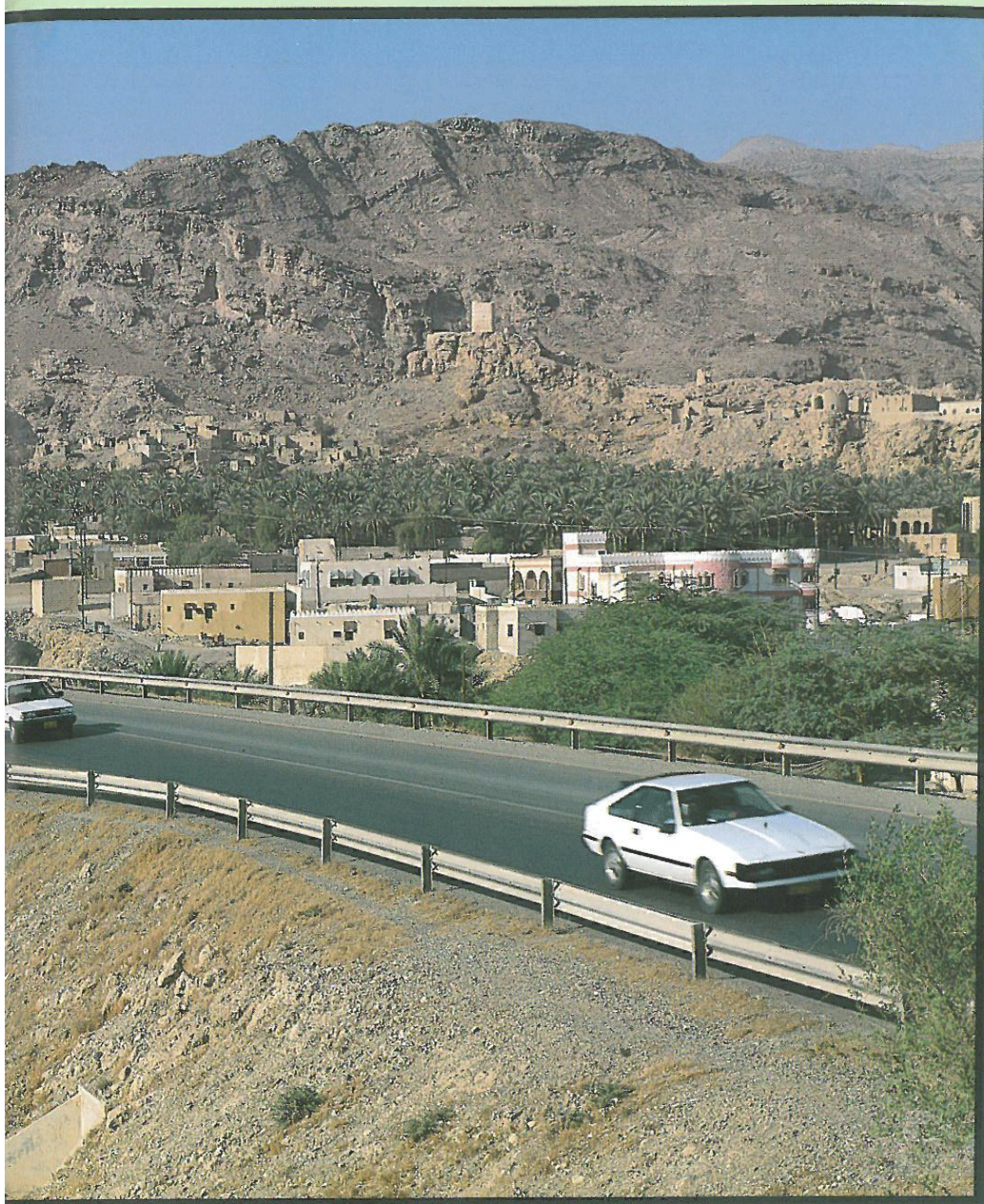
◀ Muttrah Fort, 1965 ▲ and today.



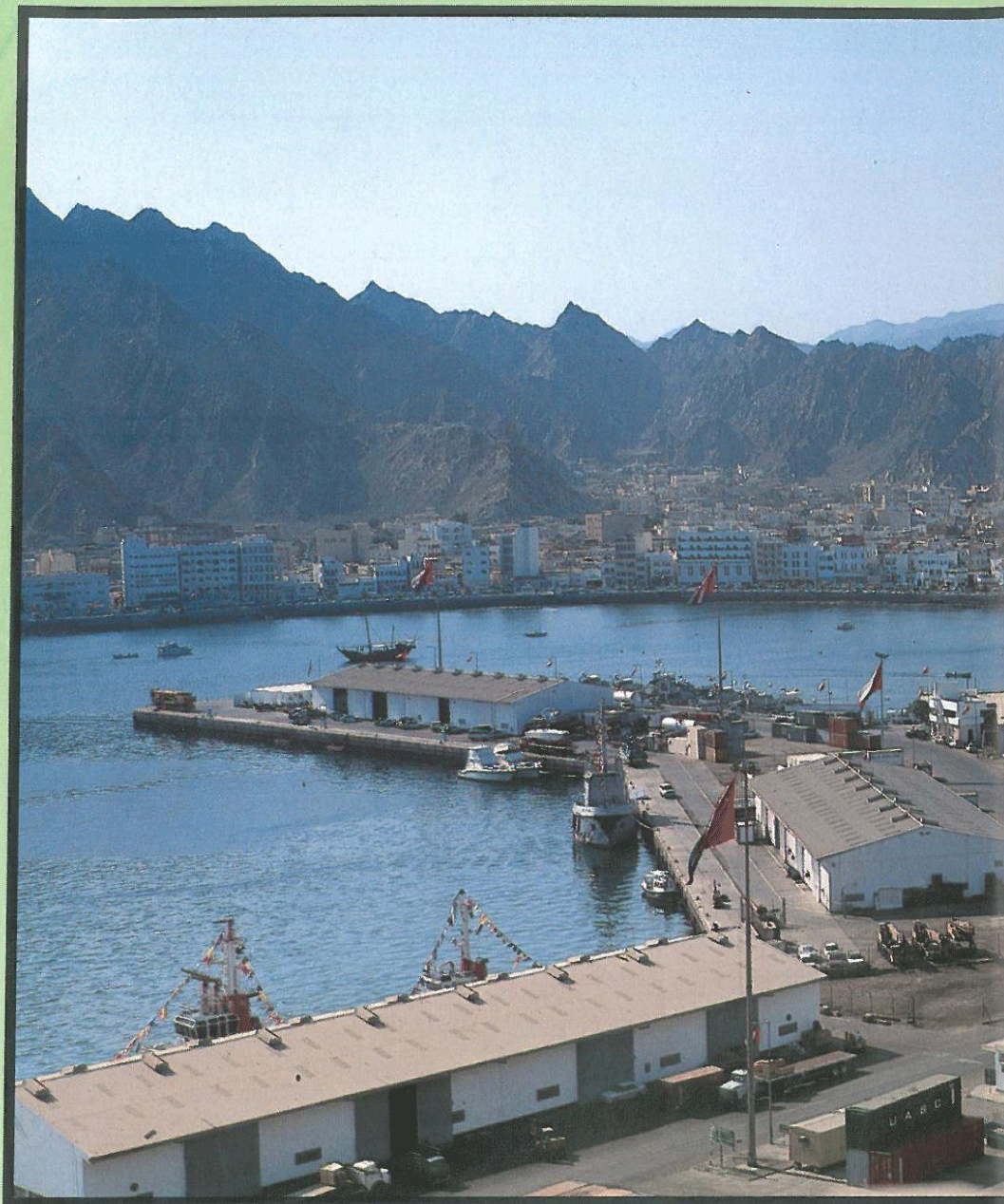


◀ *Sidab from the pass, 1967* ▲ *and today.*

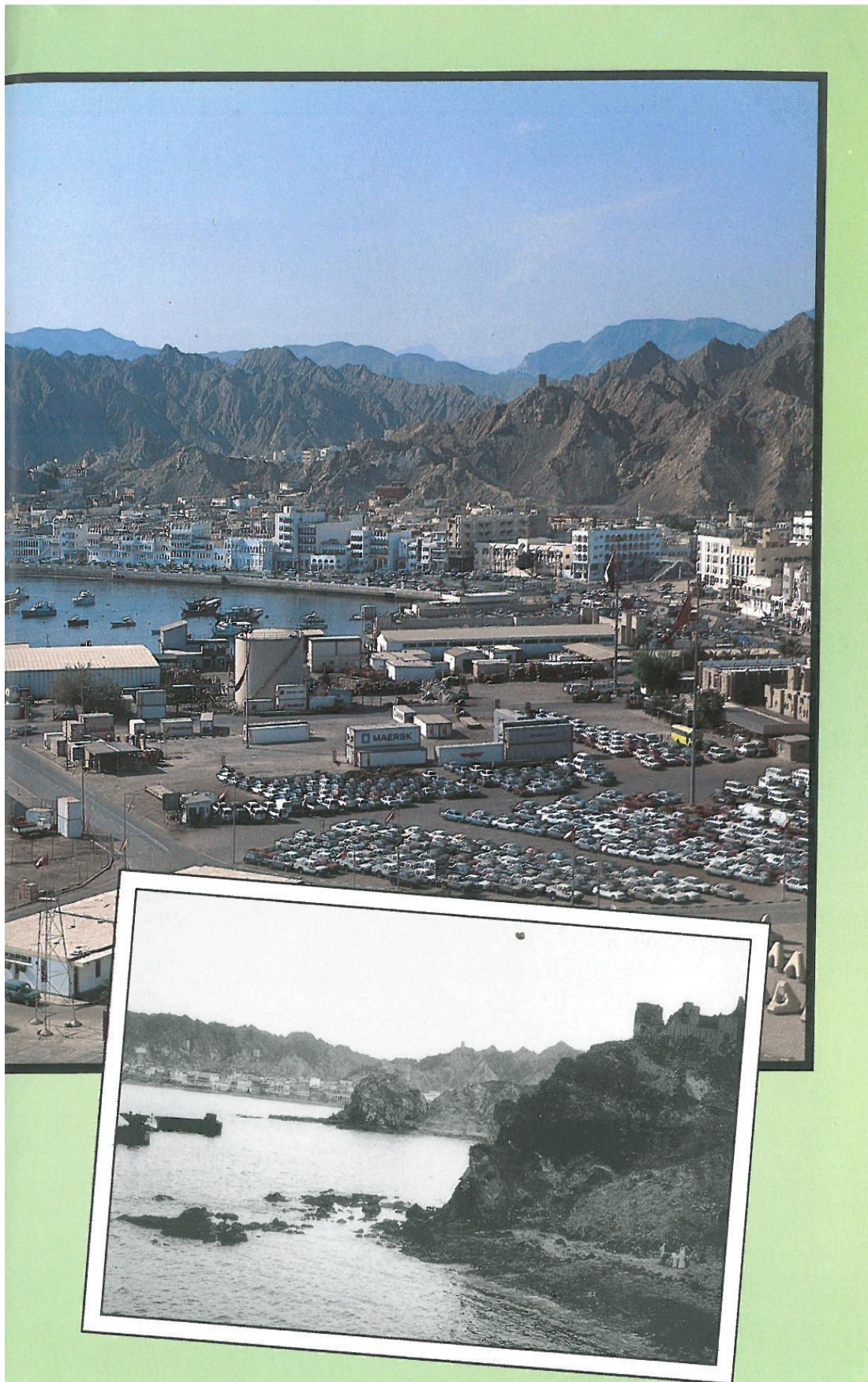


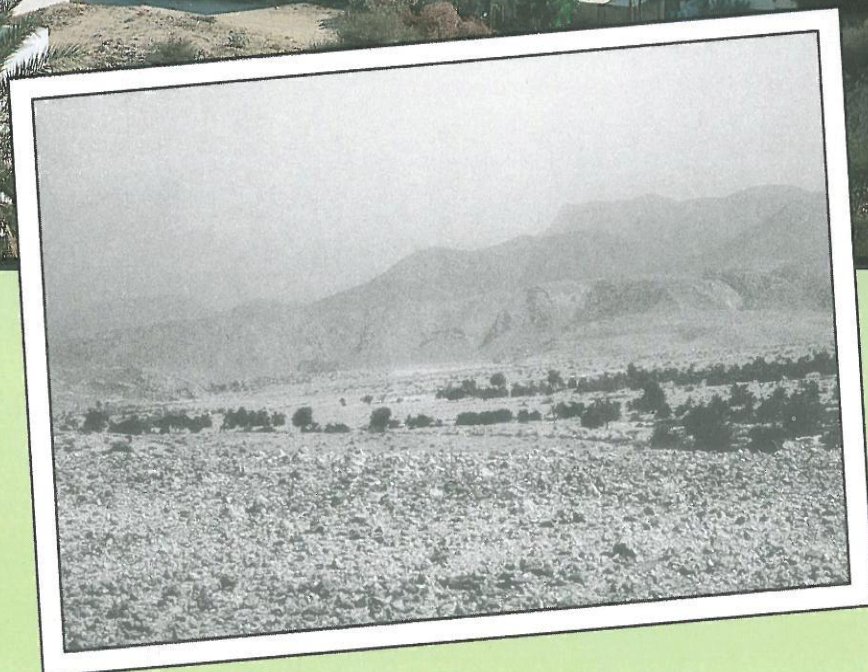
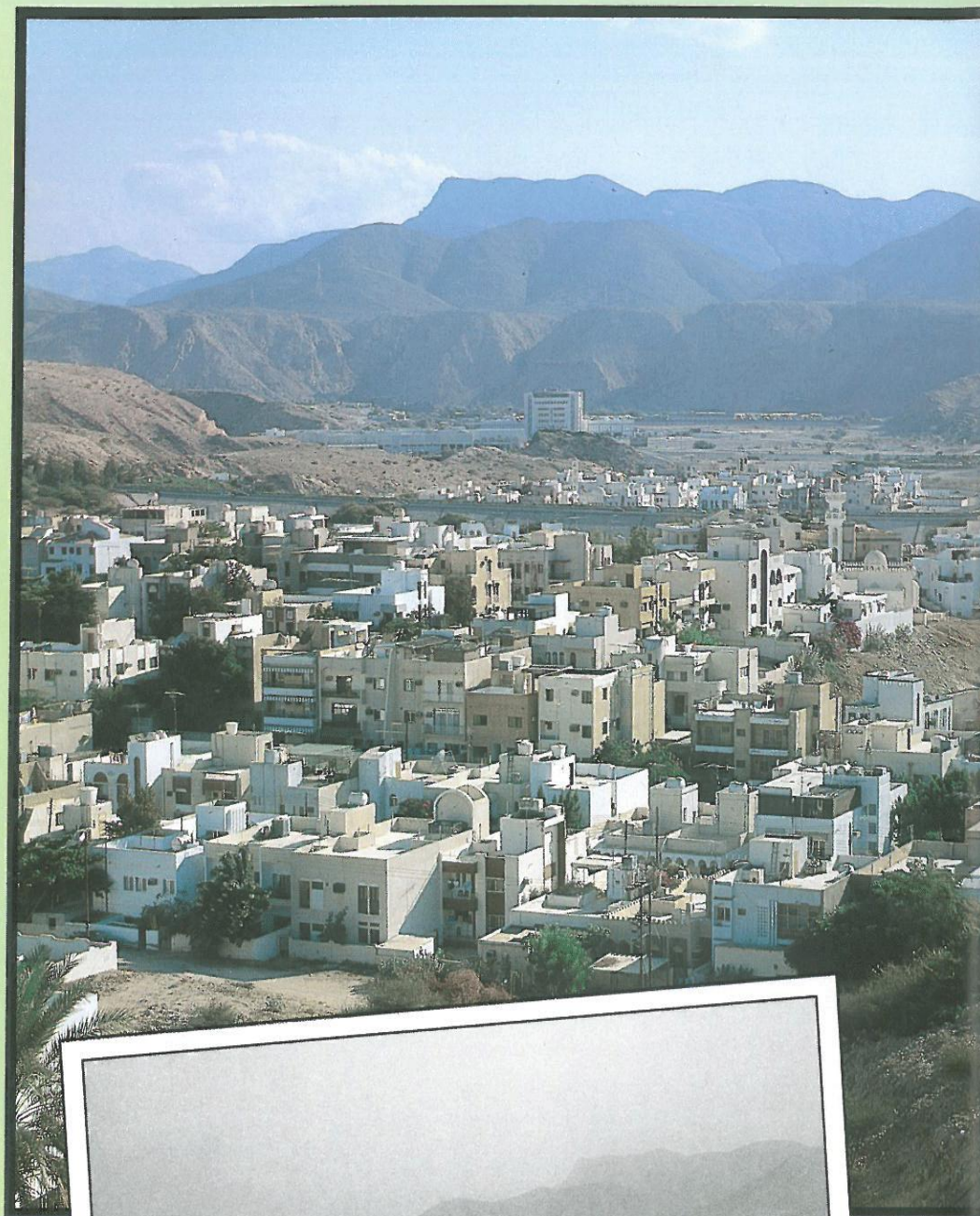


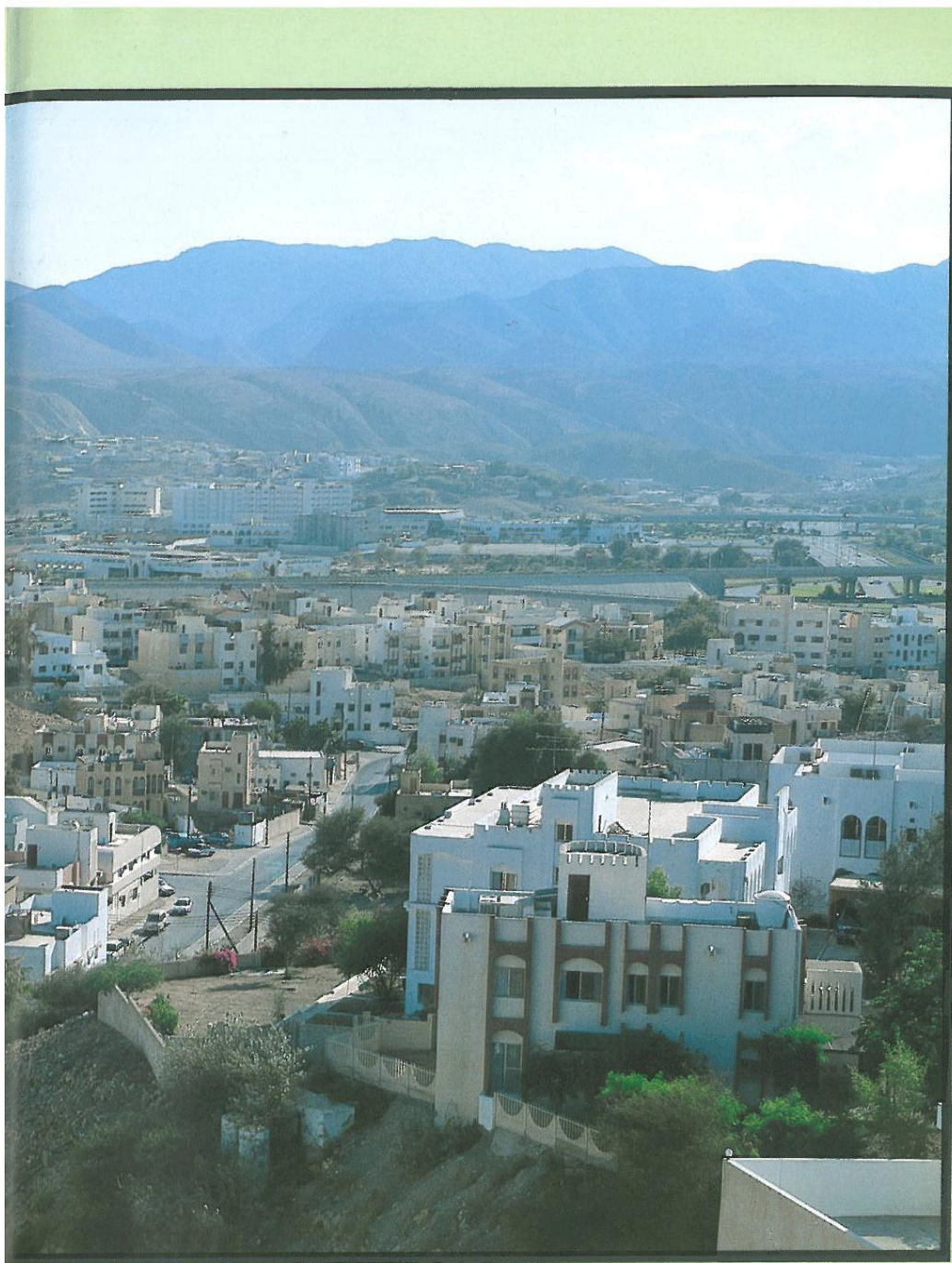
◀ *Fanja in the mid-sixties* ▲ *and today.*



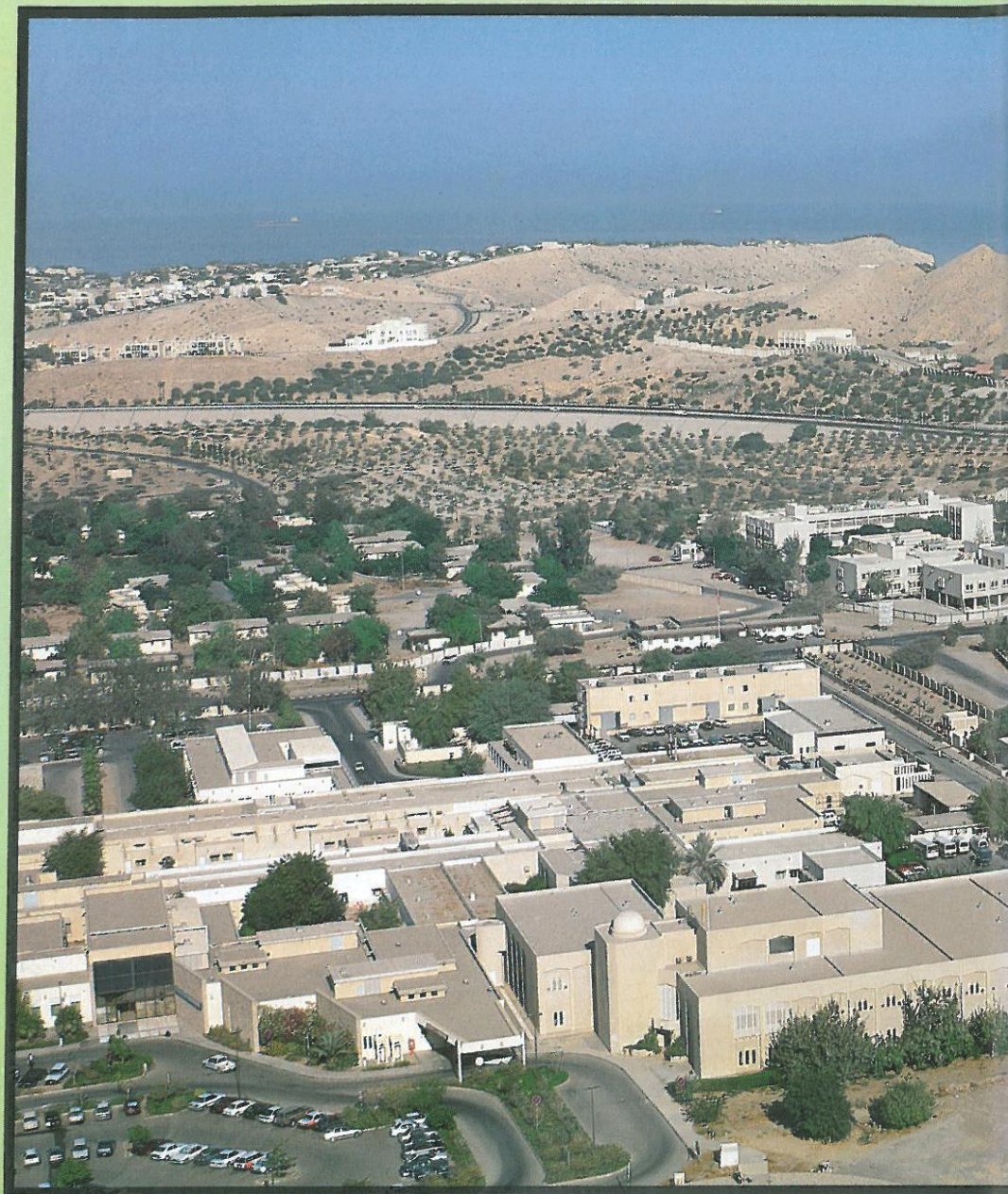
► Arbaq and Muttrah in late sixties ▲ and today.



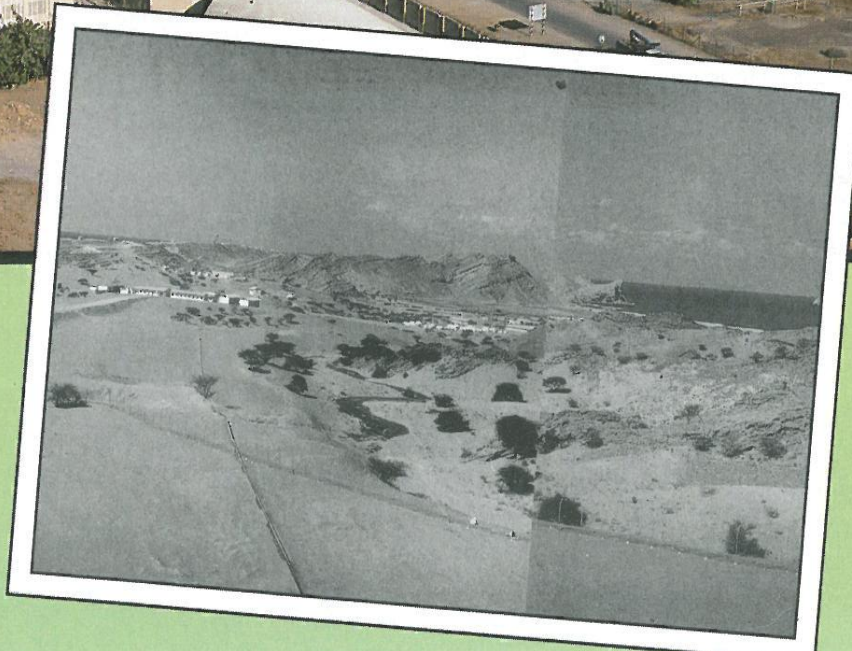
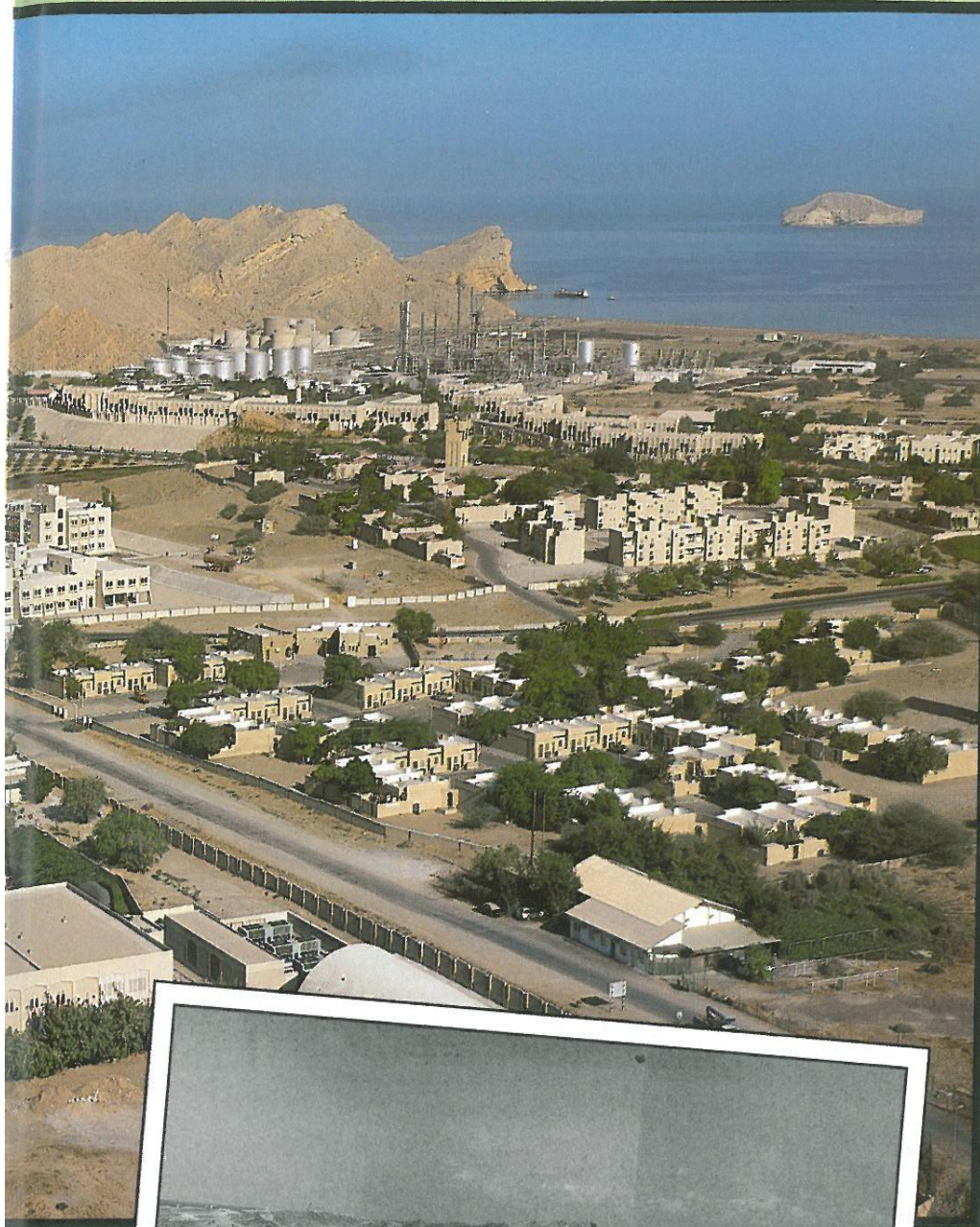


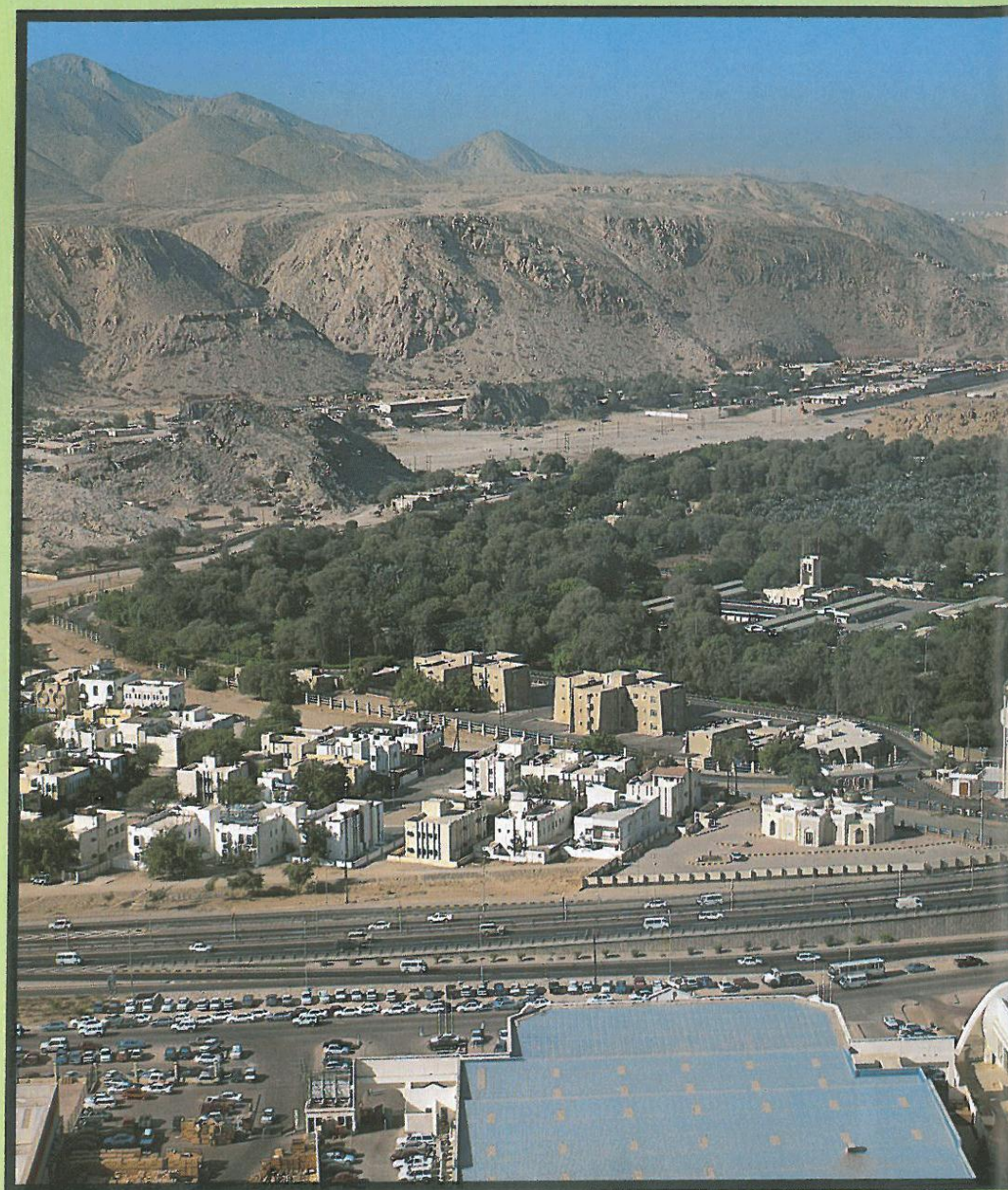


◀ Qurum hills overlooking Wadi Adai in the early fifties ▲ and today.

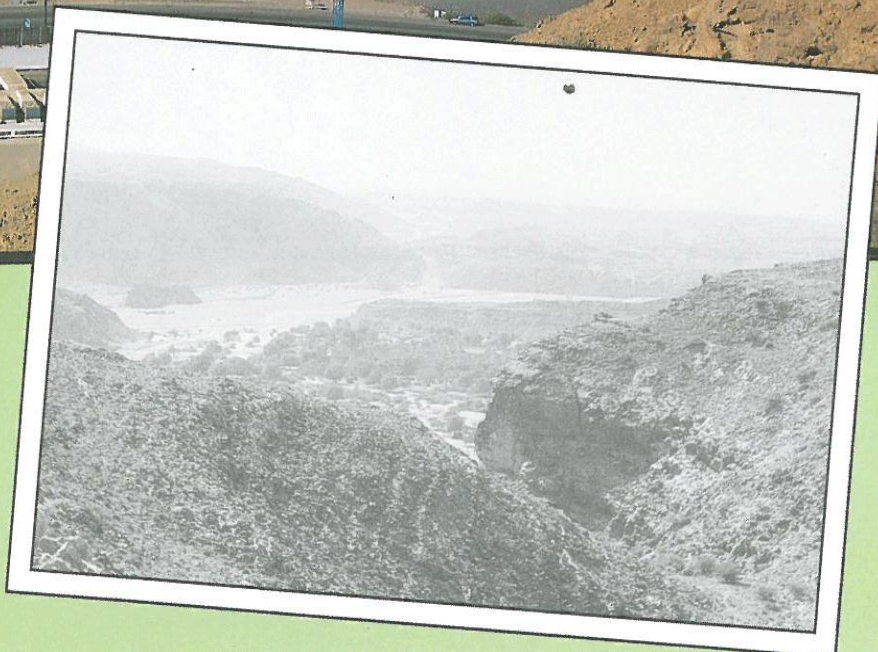
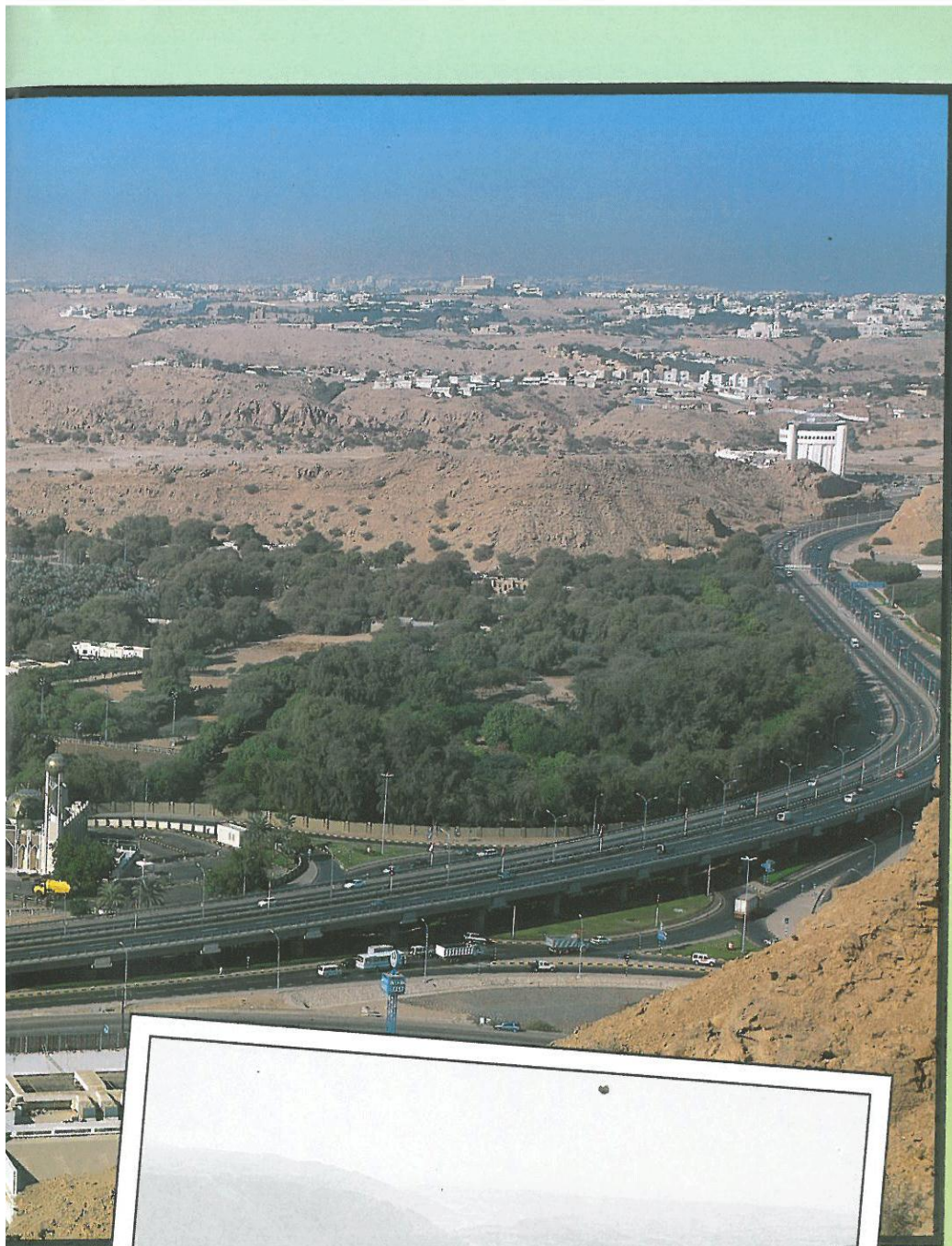


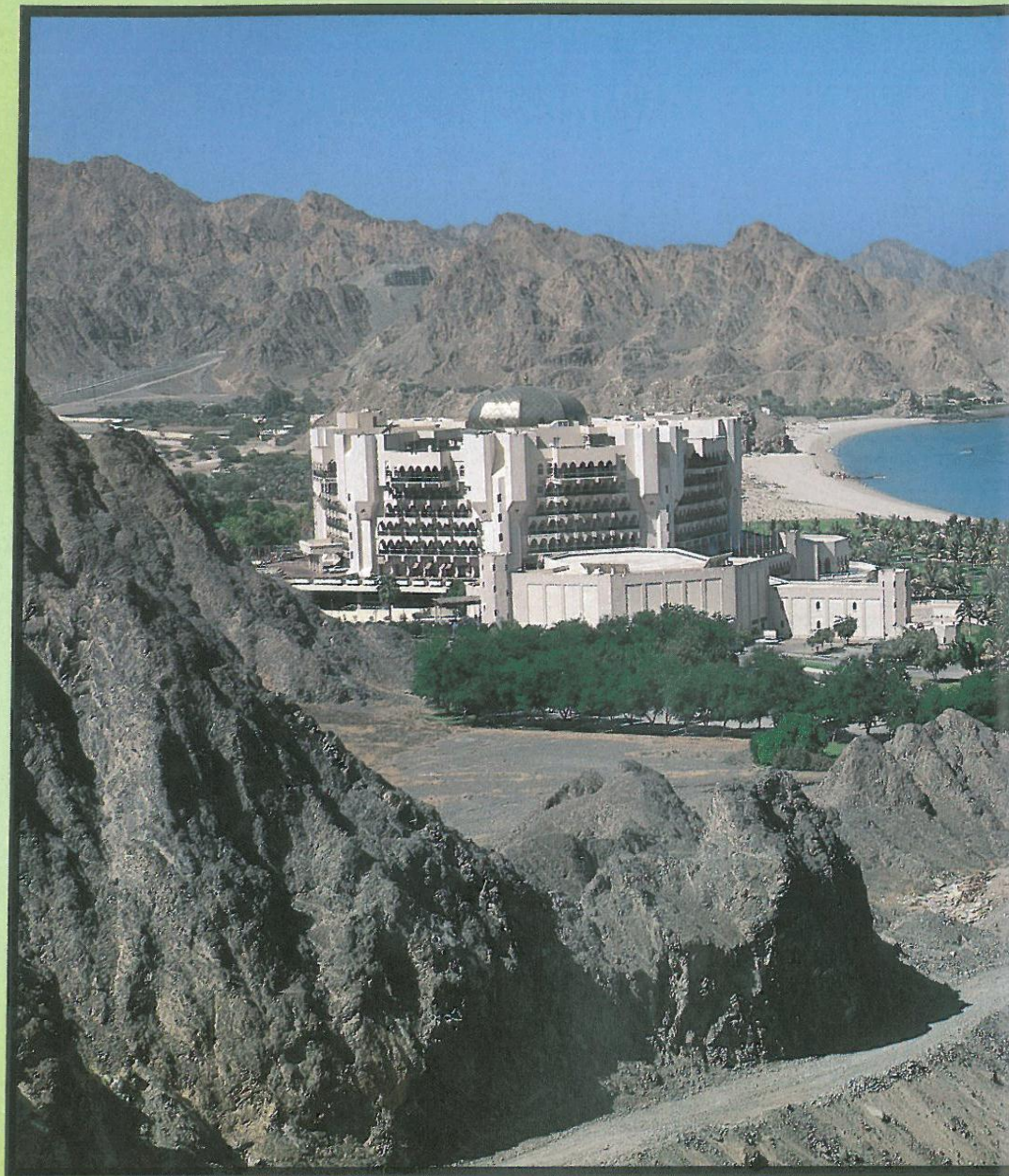
*Mina al Fahal and surrounding hills in late sixties ►
▲ Mina al Fahal today, with the oil refinery and terminal in the background.*





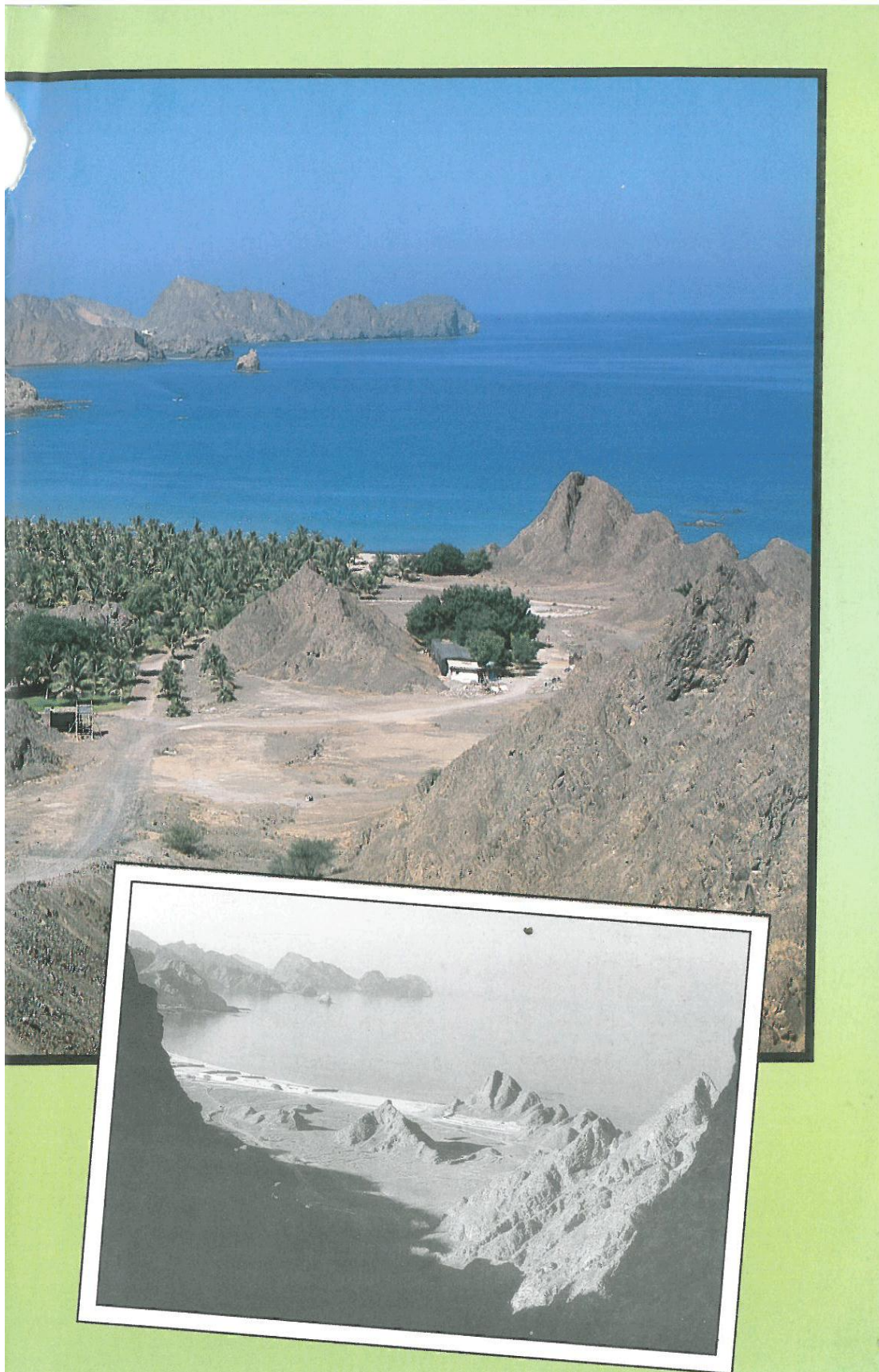
► Wadi Adai and al Wattayah in mid-sixties ▲ and today.





Al Bustan beach in 1977 ►

▲ *Al Bustan beach and the magnificent Al Bustan Palace Hotel today.*



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NOTES

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