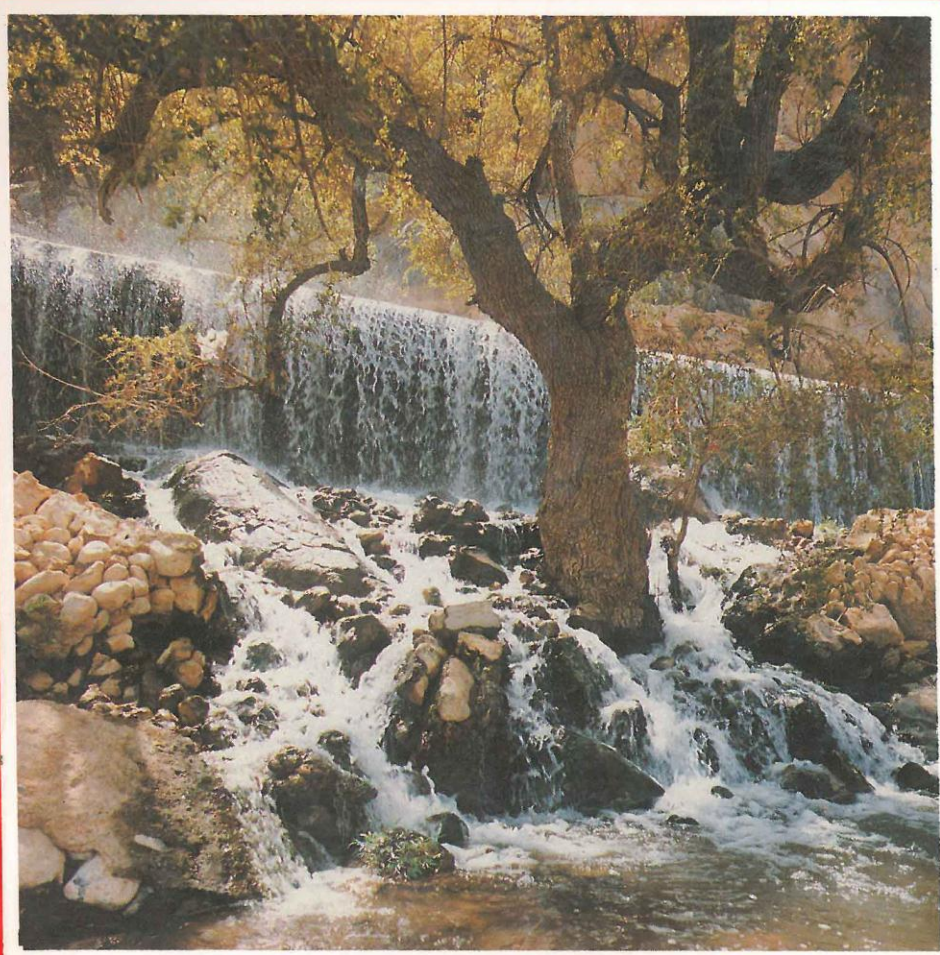


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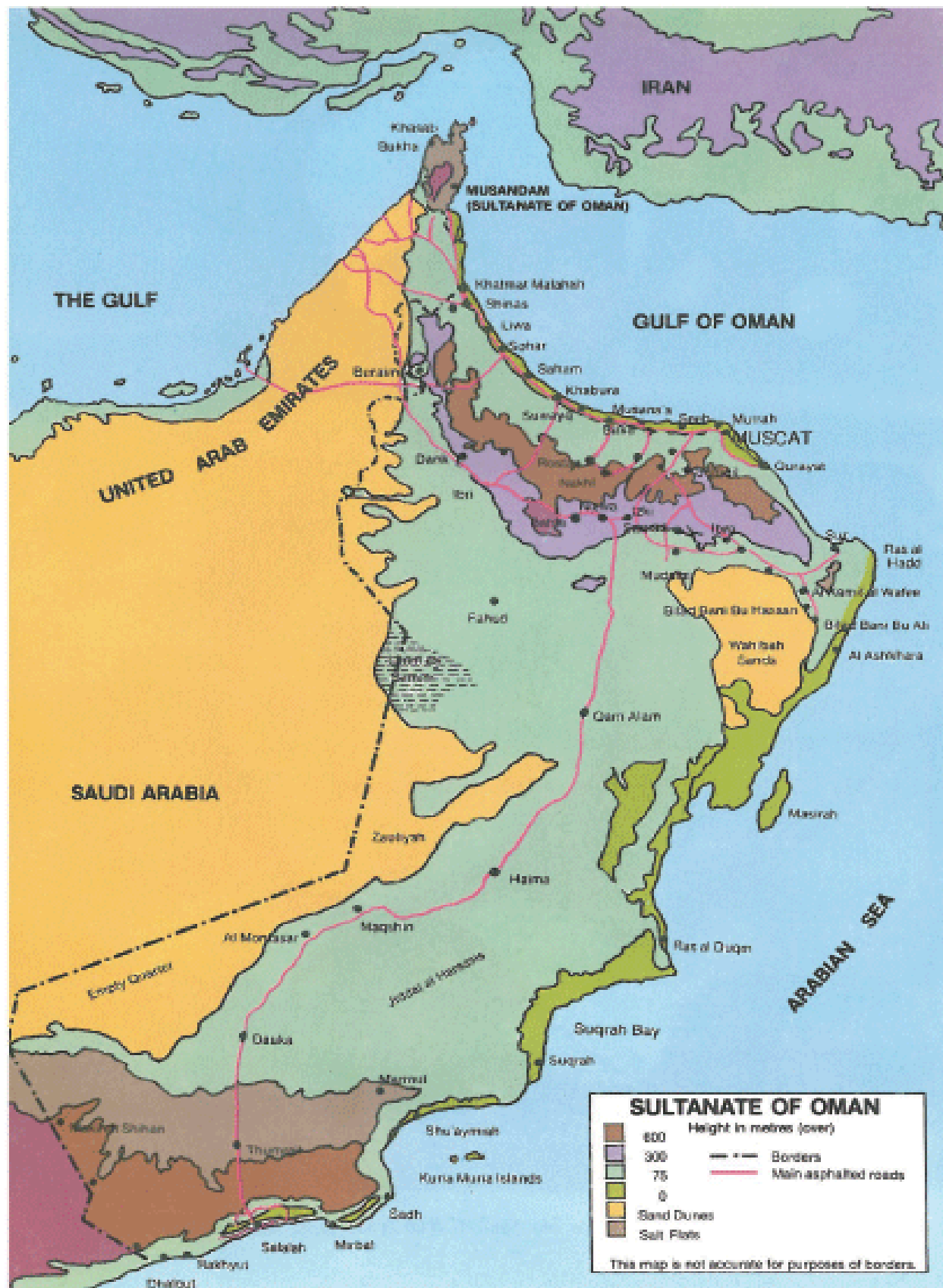
Issued by the Ministry of Information 1989

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



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID AL SAID

It is not possible for a first-time visitor to the Sultanate of Oman, arriving at Seeb International Airport in 1989, 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 19 years ago none of this existed. Any Omani will tell him that all this transformation is due to the inspiration and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

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

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

On the abdication of his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, and his own accession in July 1970, His Majesty flew from Salalah to Muscat to be greeted by his people. Among his first acts were the abolition of anachronistic restrictions on the lives and activities of the people, and he announced his intention of proceeding forthwith with the development of the country and of providing his people with the health care, education and the 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



His Majesty inspects the Guard of Honour on being welcomed by His Highness Shaikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah on his State Visit to Kuwait (Photo: Oman News Agency)

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



His Majesty, accompanied by His Majesty King Hussein, meets senior officers on his State Visit to Jordan (Photo: Oman News Agency)

being to extend the hand of friendship to all countries on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

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



A warm welcome for His Majesty during his State Visit to Egypt (Photo: Oman News Agency)

been that, by the time the oil price crisis struck early in 1986, the Sultanate's infrastructural programme was virtually complete.

His Majesty has carefully combined traditional government with the inception of a modern state. The age-old system of Sultanic rule whereby individual Omanis had the right of access to the ruler — who was regarded as the father of his people — has been scrupulously preserved, alongside the evolvement of sophisticated government by a Cabinet of Ministers with their supporting staffs and responsibilities. Thus, His Majesty attaches great importance to personal contact with his people, and this he achieves in three principal ways: one is the State Consultative Council, which has a wide popular representation, now increased from 45 to 55 members, at the first meeting of which, in 1981, he said "The Council shall also be a vital field for interaction and integration between the opinions of its members and full cooperation and integration between the Government and the citizens in carrying out the duties and obligations of the current stage of development";



His Majesty attends an official banquet given in his honour by President Mitterrand during His Majesty's State Visit to Paris (Photo:

Oman News Agency)

secondly, His Majesty's annual tours of the Interior, when he is accompanied by many of his Ministers and meets individual Omanis face to face, listens to their suggestions, and discusses their problems, is a valuable means of assessing their needs. On these occasions the appropriate Minister is called in and the matter is dealt with immediately. Also, every year on the National Anniversary on 18th November, His Majesty delivers a major address to the Nation when he reviews the achievements of the previous year and outlines future policies.

In his address to the Nation on National Day last year, His Majesty once again emphasised the importance of developing agricultural and other resources of the country with the aim of making Oman self-sufficient. He particularly stressed the importance of "focusing on the exploitation of our rich land resources and the inherited traditional abilities of our people." To this end, he announced that the Year of



His Majesty is welcomed on arrival in Madrid by King Juan Carlos
(Photo: Oman News Agency)

Agriculture would be extended into 1989.

Turning to foreign affairs, His Majesty welcomed the establishment of the ceasefire between Iraq and Iran, and reaffirmed Oman's strong support for the efforts to bring about a permanent and just peace between the two countries. He called upon the international community to recognise its responsibility in bringing about a settlement of Middle East problems through an international peace conference.

His Majesty drew attention to the serious burdens placed upon the developing countries by the world economic situation, and called for an equitable redress which would aid the developing countries. He also called for cooperation by all concerned to stabilise the international oil market and to ensure that it was fair to both producers and consumers.

In the early summer this year, His Majesty visited Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt before attending the Summit Conference at Casablanca in



His Majesty visited the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahad of Saudi Arabia, for brotherly talks during his foreign tour this year.

(Photo: Mohamed Mustapha)

Morocco. This Conference was noteworthy for its decision to readmit Egypt to the Arab League — a move that had been consistently urged by His Majesty.

Following the Summit Conference he paid a three-day State Visit to France where he had talks with President Mitterrand, and a military cooperation agreement was signed. His Majesty has invited President Mitterrand to visit Oman, an invitation which has been accepted.

While in Paris, His Majesty visited the Headquarters of UNESCO and addressed its senior members and staff, during which His Majesty announced that he was donating a grant to the organisation, the interest of which is to be devoted to providing an award to scientists and establishments working for the conservation of the environment.



His Majesty receives his young people at Al Alam Palace (Photo: Mohamed Mostafi)

Following his visit to France, His Majesty paid a three-day official visit to Spain, where he was welcomed by King Juan Carlos. In an interview with the Spanish press he referred to his satisfaction at the ending of the fighting between Iraq and Iran, which had justified his policy towards the conflict. In an interview with the Spanish newspaper "El Pais", His Majesty said that he believed differences between countries should always be settled by negotiation. In answer to a question, as to his opinion of the duties of world leaders, His Majesty said that they did not vary in one respect: "their obligation to work for the happiness and prosperity of their peoples and the preservation of their heritage."

HISTORY

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

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

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

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

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



The fort at Sohar, scene of Sultan Ahmed bin Said Al Said's decisive victory in 1747 which consolidated Oman's independence. (Photo: Oman News Agency)

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

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

Still in pre-Islamic times, tribes from the Yemen — legend has it that they came from the region of the famous Marib dam — trickled into Oman. Later, the Azd tribal group, from which the present ruling family is descended, entered Oman. Then Oman was under the rule of the Persians, but the Azd were able to regain Oman from the Persian rule and they spread Arab influence to all parts of Oman. Islam came to Oman, and Abd and Jaifar, the sons of Julandi bin Al Mustakbar

embraced Islam. When the Persian ruler rejected their call to embrace Islam, Abd and Jaifar expelled Persian rule from Oman.

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

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

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

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

Thereafter, however, there followed a period of decline and, at the time of the first world war, Oman's share of international commercial



Gold-plated Winchester repeater rifle, a gift of U.S. President Archer to Sultan Turki bin Said (1871-1888) (Courtesy: Oman Museum, Qurum)

activities was very limited. Indeed, Oman remained largely isolated from the rest of the world until, in 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to power. His Majesty's reign was the beginning of a bright new era that renewed Oman's historical glories and opened a new chapter of development, prosperity, and social and economic progress.

GEOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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

The Regions

Geographically, Oman falls into a number of distinct areas.

Muscat Area

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

Batinah Plain

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



The lush countryside of Dhofar (Photos: Oman News Agency)

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

Western Hajar ('Rock') Mountains

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

The Interior (Al Joof)

This is the central plateau that slopes from the northern base of Jabal al-Akhdar southwards to the desert. It is bounded on the west by

Dhahira and on the east by Sharqiya. The area has four main valleys: Anda'im, Halfein, Bahla and Samail. The Halfein and Samail valleys together form a natural break in the Western Hajar mountain range providing the traditional route between Muscat and the Interior. It is also one of the most populous areas of Oman, its main towns being: Nizwa, Bahla, Samail, Izki, Manah, Bidbid and Adam.

Dahira Area

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

Sharqiyah Area

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

Barr-al-Hekman

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

Southern Region (Dhofar)

The Southern Region of Oman accounts for a third of the country's total area. The coastal plain, extending from Raysut in the west past Salalah, is nowhere wider than about eight kilometres, but the fertile alluvial

soil is well watered between June and September by the monsoon. The rains also irrigate the tree-dotted hills that rise 1,500 metres above the coastal plain. To the north-west, the region's border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia runs through the Empty Quarter. The main towns and villages here are: Salalah, Taqa, Mirbat, Sudh, Thumrait, Rakhyout, Dalqut, Shaleem and Maqshin.

The Musandam

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

Regions

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

Climate

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

Population

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

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

GOVERNMENT

The administrative system of the State under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said consists of the Diwan of the Royal Court headed by H.E. Sayyid Saif bin Hamad bin Saud, Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court, the Ministry of Palace Office Affairs headed by H.E. Lt. General Ali bin Majid al Ma'amari, the Cabinet of Ministers and Secretariat to the Cabinet, the Specialised Councils, Governorate of Muscat and the State Consultative Council.

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

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

The Cabinet of Ministers consists of:

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

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

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

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

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

His Excellency Khalfan bin Nasser al Wahatbi,
Minister of Electricity and Water.
(Acting Minister of Water Resources).

His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Mohammed bin Moosa,
Minister of Health.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His Excellency AlMutasim bin Hamoud al Busaidi,
Minister of State

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

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

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

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

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

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

His Excellency Malik bin Suleiman al Ma'amari,
Minister of Housing.

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

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

Supervision of the Cabinet Secretariat:

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said.

Secretary to the Cabinet:

His Excellency Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Said.

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

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

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

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

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

State Consultative Council

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

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

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

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



The Dwan of the Royal Court, Muscat (Photo: Oman News Agency)



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

Among the Council's functions are:

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

Two sessions of the Council took place last year, in May and October. The following recommendations were issued after the session in May concerning:

1. Ways of supporting and developing agricultural, animal and fishery resources, removing obstacles to the development of these resources, and encouraging industries related to them, in order to raise productivity rates and to develop the resources so that they can contribute significantly to the diversification of the national income.
2. Motivating the private sector establishments and encouraging them to set up industrial projects that will help support the national economy and assist in the implementation of programmes for economic and social development.

The following recommendations were issued after the session in October concerning:

1. The need to issue a Social Insurance Law for private sector employees, in order to provide them with insurance during and after their period of service, and to encourage nationals to work in private sector establishments.
2. Laying down new principles for the Omanisation of jobs in the Government and private sectors.
3. Encouraging nationals to take an interest in the traditional industries and crafts, by setting up training centres in the several regions, assisting with the marketing of products, and achieving

sufficient profitability to enable those in these industries to continue working in them, since they are a distinctive feature of the Omani heritage.

Specialised Councils

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

Some of these Councils are:

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

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

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

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

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

Other Councils are:

The Sultan Qaboos University Council which is responsible for maintaining the standard of the University, and the establishment of

new colleges, sections or centres. The Council is chaired by H.H. Sayyid Fahad bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs.

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

Tender Board

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

The Tender Board comprises:

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

His Excellency the Minister of Housing as Deputy Chairman.

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

In addition to whom there are the following Members:

His Excellency the Minister of Regional Municipalities.

His Excellency the Minister of Civil Service.

His Excellency the Under-Secretary for Financial Affairs.

His Excellency the Under-Secretary for Communications.

His Excellency the Under-Secretary for Commerce and Industry.

The Board is assisted in discharging its responsibilities by an Executive Secretariat that carries out studies and prepares reports on 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 prerogatives the Board complies with established and well-studied procedures. These enable it to fulfil its role in the best possible manner.

These procedures may be summarised as follows:

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

The Board also forms negotiating committees in cases where the nature of the work involved is such that the necessary procedures have to be

completed through negotiation. The Tender Law stipulates that these committees should be chaired by one of the Deputy Chairmen, and should also include the Under-Secretary for Financial Affairs and a representative from the Ministry on whose behalf the project is being carried out. The committees put their recommendations before the Board so that the appropriate decision may be made.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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

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

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

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



His Majesty, with H.E. Sayyid Saif bin Hamed bin Sa'oud, President of the Diwan of the Royal Court, and H.E. Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, in attendance, leads Oman's delegation at the Arab Summit at Casablanca (Photo: Oman News Agency)

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

Consistent with the Sultanate's role in fostering Arab solidarity and supporting just Arab causes, full support has been given to all international efforts exerted to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict through peaceful means, including the proposed international peace conference which is regarded by the Sultanate as the best forum to handle the issue, in order to end the conflict and secure a just solution that

guarantees the legitimate rights of all the parties concerned. In its belief that the Palestinian issue is still the core of the Middle East problem, Oman has fully supported the Palestinian peoples' right to self-determination on their own land.

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

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

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

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

Oman's relations with Western and Eastern European countries have been steadily growing in all fields, with emphasis on the economic sphere. Diplomatic relations with a large number of Western and Eastern European countries have been established through resident and non-resident diplomatic representatives. Good relations are also maintained with many countries in North and South America. The Sultanate supports efforts being made by the Contadora group to achieve a satisfactory solution to the existing problems in Central America. A major successful step, reflecting the Sultanate's desire to broaden its circle of friends has been the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the development of relations with

the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. In December 1987, Oman and Syria agreed to establish diplomatic relations at the level of resident Ambassador in each country. In April of that year diplomatic relations with Uruguay were established, and in July non-residential diplomatic relations were established with the Republic of Ireland. In December, the first resident Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman presented his credentials in Moscow.

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

In November 1988 the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen paid an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman, thus cementing a new relationship between the Sultanate and its neighbour. During the President's visit three important agreements were signed between the two countries: the first provides for cooperation in trade and industry; the second embraces the field of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs; and the third furthers cooperation in communications.

In his speech at the final session of the 9th AGCC Summit Conference in Bahrain in December last year His Majesty Sultan Qaboos spoke of Oman's commitment to the support of the United Nations in its efforts to secure a peaceful settlement to the Iraq-Iran conflict through direct negotiations. He reiterated Oman's support for the Palestinian people in their struggle for the restoration of their legitimate rights. He ended by welcoming his brother Heads of State in the AGCC to the 10th Summit Conference to be held in Muscat in December this year.

COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Algeria, Democratic and Popular Republic of	Belgium, Kingdom of
Argentina, Republic of	Bolivia, Republic of
Australia, Commonwealth of	Brazil, Federative Republic of
Austria, Republic of	Brunei Darussalam, State of
Bangladesh, People's Republic of	Burkina Faso
Bahrain, State of	Burundi, Republic of

Canada
 Chad, Republic of
 Chile, Republic of
 China, People's Republic of
 Comoros, Federal Islamic Republic of
 Colombia, Republic of
 Cyprus, Republic of
 Denmark, Kingdom of
 Djibouti, Republic of
 Egypt, Arab Republic of
 Finland, Republic of
 France, Republic of
 Germany, Federal Republic of
 Ghana, Republic of
 Greece, Hellenic Republic of
 Guinea, Republic of
 India, Republic of
 Indonesia, Republic of
 Iran, Islamic Republic of
 Iraq, Republic of
 Ireland
 Italy, Republic of
 Japan
 Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of
 Kenya, Republic of
 Korea, Republic of
 Kuwait, State of
 Lebanon, Republic of
 Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of
 Malaysia
 Maldives, Republic of
 Mali, Republic of
 Malta, Republic of
 Mauritania, Islamic Republic of
 Mauritius
 Mexico
 Morocco, Kingdom of
 Netherlands, Kingdom of the
 Nepal, Kingdom of

New Zealand
 Niger, Republic of
 Nigeria, Federal Republic of
 Norway, Kingdom of
 Pakistan, Islamic Republic of
 Philippines, Republic of
 Portugal, Republic of
 Qatar, State of
 Romania, Socialist Republic of
 Rwanda, Republic of
 Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
 Senegal, Republic of
 Seychelles, Republic of
 Sierra Leone, Republic of
 Singapore, Republic of
 Somalia, Democratic Republic of
 Spain
 Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of
 Sudan, Republic of the
 Sweden, Kingdom of
 Switzerland, Confederation of
 Syria, Arab Republic of
 Tanzania, United Republic of
 Thailand, Kingdom of
 Tunisia, Republic of
 Turkey, Republic of
 Uganda, Republic of
 United Arab Emirates

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 United States of America
 Uruguay, Oriental Republic of
 U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
 Venezuela, Republic of
 Yugoslavia, Socialist Federal Republic of
 Yemen, Arab Republic of
 Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of
 Zaïre, Republic of
 Zambia, Republic of

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND SPECIALISED AGENCIES WHICH
THE SULTANATE HAS JOINED.**

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

DEFENCE

Against a background of maintaining the Sultanate's security the Sultan's Armed Forces have developed into a highly trained and well-equipped fighting force, second to none in the Arabian Peninsula. As a professional officer, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos takes a keen interest in the efficiency of His Armed Forces and their general well-being and he regularly attends their military manoeuvres on land and sea and in the air.

The strategic geo-political importance of Oman in the Indian Ocean and Arab Gulf regions, highlighted by the instability of the area in recent years, has demanded that the Sultanate maintain a high level of military preparedness and defence capability. Additional responsibilities were introduced in the early 1980s by the formation of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) of which Oman is an active member in the political, military and economic spheres. Consisting of the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, the AGCC holds military exercises and manoeuvres in the territories of its States from time to time. In 1987, Oman hosted an AGCC exercise involving all three Services of the member-States and more recently there have been a number of single Service combined exercises; one such exercise involving all the AGCC Air Forces was carried out recently in Kuwait.

Apart from their military role, the Sultan's Armed Forces carry out tasks in support of the civil ministries. Ministry of Defence Engineering Services (MODES), often in liaison with the Sultan's Armed Forces Engineers, carry out difficult road construction projects in mountainous regions, most notably in the Mussandam Peninsula and the Jebel Akhdar. The Sultan of Oman's Air Force (SOAF) assists in supplying communities in isolated and remote areas as well as supporting the medical services in their coverage of the Sultanate, while the Sultan of Oman's Navy (SON) performs similar duties along Oman's lengthy coastline.

SULTAN OF OMAN'S LAND FORCES (SOLF)

Following the years of expansion between 1981 and 1985, SOLF has concentrated on developing a command structure and support system



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said opening the Sultan's Armed Forces' Museum, Bait Al Falaj (Photo: MOD)

capable of ensuring the most effective use of the well-trained men of the Army and the modern and sophisticated equipment that they operate. SOLF units are widely dispersed throughout the Sultanate and continue to play a vital role in maintaining a peaceful and stable environment in which the Sultanate can prosper and flourish. If necessary, the Army is capable of rapid concentration to form a hard-hitting, highly mobile and well-equipped force.

SOLF is an all-volunteer force recruited from every area of the Sultanate. It consists of two infantry brigades supported by reconnaissance, armoured, artillery, parachute, engineer, signals and transport units. Extensive systems for logistic and technical support have been developed to meet SOLF's requirements in both peace and war.

1988 was a year of consolidation for SOLF. A year in which plans were reviewed and refined, procedures have been practised and training, at all levels, has been carried out to ensure that every man in the Land Forces knows the part that he has to play in the defence and security of his country.

Hard training and dedication to duty has allowed SOAF to build a firm foundation, ready for further improvement and development in the future.

THE SULTAN OF OMAN'S AIR FORCE (SOAF)

SOAF in 1989 has been transformed from the miniscule force of Jet Provosts and Beavers which it comprised in 1970 to a modern and sophisticated air force. Its expansion and modernisation over the ensuing years has created a force capable of protecting Oman's airspace and sovereignty by carrying out its important task of supporting operationally the Sultanate's land and sea forces.

The Sultanate is protected by a sophisticated radar surveillance network through the provision and deployment of Martello early warning units. Rapier Surface-to-Air Missile Squadrons and Mobile Air Defence Units protect all military bases and vital installations.

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

Training is a highly important aspect of SOAF's activities, with emphasis on the attainment of the greatest possible degree of self-sufficiency. Training establishments operated by SOAF include the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy on Masirah Island, which produces SOAF officers and qualified pilots, and the Trade Training Institute at Seeb where comprehensive courses equip SOAF personnel to master the technical complexities of a modern air force.

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

THE SULTAN OF OMAN'S NAVY (SON)

Last year witnessed two events of particular importance to SON. The first was the launching of a new Fast Attack Craft, SNV Mussandam, the fourth and final ship of the Province class. The second was the formal opening of Said bin Sultan Naval Base by His Majesty The Sultan on 15 November.

Said bin Sultan Naval Base is SON's principal naval establishment. The initial planning for the base began in 1977. After several years of dredging, land reclamation and construction of one of the largest civil engineering projects undertaken in the Sultanate, the base was commissioned in September 1987. It provides a safe harbour and home for SON's fleet; facilities for conducting sea and warfare training; and is well equipped to carry out maintenance and repair of all SON ships using the large shiplift, non-tidal maintenance basin, covered berth and extensive workshop facilities. The base also hosts SON's Brass and Pipe Band, the Diving Centre with its hyperbaric medical facilities and recompression chamber and the Sultanate's Hydrographic Survey Centre. Other facilities include family accommodation, messing, a wide range of sports and recreational facilities, mosques, medical and other support services.

The Naval Training Centre is also located at the Naval Base and is fully utilised in continuing the training for Omanisation. Some 26 courses each academic term, ranging from new entry courses for officers and ratings to specialized branch training in the various naval disciplines, are conducted. Training for other maritime services in the Sultanate is also undertaken when space permits.

The arrival of SNV Mussandam during 1989 will increase the fire power of the fleet considerably. The fleet will then have missile vessels, gunboats and inshore patrol boats as well as an offshore patrol vessel, an armed amphibious ship and landing craft capable of carrying tanks, vehicles and troops, together with other support craft, and the sail-training vessel Shabab Oman.

During 1988, four major deployments were undertaken by SON ships: SNV Nasr al Bahr visited East Africa and the Seychelles; and SNV Al Mabrukah visited ports in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and South-East Asia. At the end of 1987, SNV Shabab Oman departed on her second longest voyage to take part in the Australian Bicentennial

Celebrations. During the course of the voyage, which lasted six months, three trainee crew changes were made and the ship visited Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and several ports in Australia. As the only ship to represent an Arab country, Shabab Oman generated much interest, both in herself and the Sultanate, wherever she went and was a popular attraction during the festivities in Sydney. 1989 has also seen Shabab Oman undertaking another long training cruise to Europe, to participate in the bicentennial celebrations of the French Revolution and Declaration of Human Rights.

Closer to home, SON ships continue with the essential tasks of surveillance and protection of the vital shipping channels through the Strait of Hormuz and the patrolling of the Sultanate's Territorial Waters and Exclusive Economic Zone to prevent smuggling, illegal fishing, and interference with shipping. This exacting role over a 1700 km coastline and in the special circumstances of the international waterway of the Strait of Hormuz, results in a wide range of challenging tasks which fully stretch the forces available and demand a high standard of professional ability.

THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES' COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

The requirement for a joint Service staff college to provide training for officers required to take over senior command and staff appointments, was identified in 1984. The training provided, aims to develop an officer's administrative and executive skills and broaden his understanding of those issues which affect defence policy nationally and internationally. The course is conducted in a tri-Service environment, and premises have been built for a population of 60 students to comprise officers from the three Services, other Sultanate security forces, supporting Government organisations, and eventually students from abroad.

The 20 officers of No.1 Course started their training on 28 September 1987 and received their graduation certificates from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on 18 July 1988. During their 10-month training period they studied communication and management techniques, geopolitical conflicts and economic issues as well as warfare studies in both joint and single Service situations. The course ended





His Majesty visiting the Fleet Maintenance facility at the Saad bin Sultan Naval Base (Photo: MOI)

with a week-long visit to Egypt where students visited industrial complexes, battlefield sites and academic institutions.

Recently built Staff College facilities include a 130-seat lecture theatre with a sand model and capabilities for slide and video projection, lecture recording and simultaneous translation.

These buildings are all located on a site adjacent to the original SAF Headquarters in the Bait al Falaj Fort, which has now been converted to become the Armed Forces' Museum. The complex, which brings together SAF's heritage and future was formally opened by The Supreme Commander, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on 11 December 1988.

THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES' MUSEUM

Bait Al Falaj Fort which houses the museum, was built in 1221 Hijra/1806 AD. This historic building was the Headquarters of the Sultan's Armed Forces from 1913-1978 and it is therefore fitting that it should now house the many artefacts and exhibits from the glorious past of the Armed Forces. In addition to the comprehensive displays inside the Fort, there is an impressive external display which includes artillery, armoured vehicles, planes and ships. The museum is now open to the public, and visitors are encouraged to witness the part played by the Armed Forces in Oman's development, both past and present.

THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN (RGO)

The Royal Guard was formed in 1973 as a corps d'elite with the primary role of protecting His Majesty the Sultan and performing ceremonial and other duties, having evolved from a sub-unit of the Muscat Gendarmerie. It was later expanded and reorganised in 1981 into a Brigade. In 1987, His Majesty issued a Royal Decree renaming the Brigade the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) and it became an additional fully-operational branch of the Sultan's Armed Forces, enjoying a separate identity.

The RGO's operational role and training have fitted it to take the field as a self contained entity in close participation with the SAF formations



Young members of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra which has been formed under the aegis of the RGO (Photo: Oman News Agency)

of the Sultanate.

In addition to its war role, the RGO has been entrusted by His Majesty with other important responsibilities. In 1985, His Majesty directed that a Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra be formed, and a School was established near Muscat, adjacent to the RGO training battalion for the purpose of bringing forward young Omanis of both sexes as members of the Orchestra. The School is a unique boarding establishment which caters for all aspects of the young peoples' education and well-being. The Orchestra has now reached a remarkably high standard of performance, acclaimed by visiting specialists from many parts of the world.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Youth, boys between the ages of 10 and 13 are selected from schools throughout the Sultanate. In November 1988 the first girls joined the school as non-boarders, and are taught alongside the boys. The medium of instruction is English, which means that pupils selected for training have first to undergo tuition in that language. Students are entered for examinations set by the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music, which are held twice a year. The results so far have been excellent, with many pupils gaining distinction passes. After a year's intensive work, the Orchestra gave its inaugural concert on 1st July 1987 in the presence of His Majesty the Sultan.

The RGO also maintains three highly-trained military bands, one of them mounted, which perform on State occasions. Another cultural contribution made by the RGO to the life of the Sultanate, has been the formation of a military choir, designed to perform in concert with the Royal Guard of Oman bands. In order to develop the future technical skills the RGO will require from its members, The Royal Guard of Oman Technical School has been established. The school curriculum concentrates not only on purely technical subjects, but also the full programme adopted in the Ministry of Education schools.

POLICE

The Royal Oman Police (ROP), as it is today, bears little resemblance to the rudimentary police force of twenty years ago when a total of 73 constables with their headquarters at the Bab-al-Kabir in Muscat, were responsible for Muscat and its immediate vicinity. No police operated in the rest of the Sultanate.

During the past 18 years the ROP has developed into a highly-trained modern Police Force, which now covers the entire Sultanate. Since its inception it has been the policy of the ROP to gain and maintain the confidence of the public through cooperation and assistance, and the education of the young. The crime rate in the Sultanate is remarkably low, and drug-taking presents no problem, though there is constant vigilance by the ROP to prevent drug traffickers operating in or through the Sultanate. Close family ties in Oman with strict adherence to the teachings of Islam are a major factor in the defence against drugs.

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

The role of the ROP is not confined to straightforward policing, as it is the case in many other countries. It includes customs, immigration, civil defence and fire fighting, coastguard operations and the prison service. To assist it in these operations the ROP has fast patrol boats for its Coast Guard Division, which is responsible for maintaining law and order at the main ports along the Sultanate's 1,700 km coastline and in the strategic Strait of Hormuz. These duties include checking for illegal immigrants and contraband, visiting isolated coastal villages, delivering food and medical supplies, searching for overdue fishing craft and pleasure boats, and the evacuation of the inhabitants of coastal villages in an emergency.

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



The ROP's highly-trained police dogs show their paces (Photo: PDO)

The Police Aviation Directorate is equipped with fixed aircraft and helicopters. It answers emergency calls for casualty and medical evacuation and supports remote stations by re-supplying men and equipment.

The ROP has an Oil Installation Division, with its headquarters at Mina al Fahal, the oil terminal on the coast near Muscat, and

subdivisions at Fahud and Marmul in the interior. The Division provides security coverage for the whole oil industry and is responsible for patrolling the pipelines and other installations, ranging from the oil rigs to the terminal at Mina al Fahal.

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

The ROP Directorate of Civil Defence and Fire is responsible for all civil defence and fire-fighting operations in the Sultanate. Fire service personnel are trained at the Police Academy's Fire-fighting Training School and fire station at Nizwa which also serves the Nizwa region. Fire stations have been established at all the main population centres.

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

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

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

Every male Omani over the age of 18 has to be in possession of an identity card (ID). I D Cards are not required for women. The card is issued by the Directorate of Immigration and Passports and provides evidence of identity which must be accepted by all authorities and institutions.

There is a campaign to arouse the consciousness of drivers to the need for safety on the roads, through personal contacts made by traffic police and through lectures, seminars, radio and television programmes and in the press. Special attention is given to guidance of children in



A police officer inspects a public service vehicle for roadworthiness – an important part of the ROP's road-safety campaign (Photo: ROP)

schools at all levels by the Police. Lectures and practical demonstrations are coordinated between the ROP's Directorate of Public Relations and the authorities concerned in the Ministry of Education. The ROP mounts a special Traffic Week annually as a part of this campaign.

The development of the Royal Oman Police is a continuing process. Departmental computerisation has been extensively introduced including, among others, Immigration and Passports, Criminal Investigation, Motor Vehicle Registry, Traffic Control and Finance. The ROP is an active member of Interpol and the Arab Social Defence Organisation which comes under the Arab League. Exchanges are made for training and familiarisation purposes with the Police Forces of the other AGCC States.

ECONOMY

With its modest income from oil, by Middle East standards, the Government has been keenly aware since the inception of its development programme of the need for a prudently run economy. From the beginning, strenuous efforts have been made to diversify the economy and reduce dependence on oil revenues by developing other natural resources of the country, such as agriculture, fisheries and minerals, as well as light industry. In the long term the economy will be increasingly provided for by the exploitation of these resources, even though recent discoveries of proven reserves of oil and gas have further projected revenues from those sources well into the 21st century.

Government policy over the past two decades of using the oil revenue to fuel the development of the country's other resources is now showing positive results. Copper is being mined, refined and exported; fisheries' exports are increasing rapidly to meet the needs of international markets; agricultural production and distribution are being improved, thus reducing the need for imported food and increasing self-sufficiency; light industries are also being steadily expanded and are finding viable markets.

The drastic fall in world oil prices in early 1986, which naturally affected the Sultanate's economy, and the unpredictable fluctuations in oil prices over subsequent years have made budgeting and financial management extremely difficult. To be sure, oil prices were stabilised in 1987 so that planning and policy decisions for the future could be made with some confidence; however, hopes that this stabilisation would be maintained through 1988 were not realised; that year prices fell as low as \$9.50 a barrel at one stage from an average of \$17.30 in 1987. Although, with oil producers responding to His Majesty's call for prices to be stabilised at a level equitable to producer and consumer alike, resulting in a benchmark of around \$15 a barrel, prices are still potentially volatile and economic planning must continue with caution.

In the autumn last year, the financial situation was reviewed and policy adjustments were made. This resulted in budgeted income from oil being provisionally reduced from \$15.00 to \$12.50 a barrel and selected development projects being moved from the 1989/90 period to the period starting in 1991. Other measures taken include



Containers being off-loaded at Mina Qaboos (Photo: Oman News Agency)

accelerated plans for privatisation of Government assets to mobilise resources and encourage private initiative, appropriate use of reserve funds, and the innovation of Government securities being made available to the domestic market.

This policy is reflected in the 1989 budget. Government oil revenue is forecast to be RO904.4 million, as compared to RO1063.3 million in the 1988 budget. On the other hand, total Government outlays, including all spending, lending and equity transactions, will be slightly higher at RO 1617.6 million than the RO 1602.3 million in the 1988 budget. Thus the budget deficit expected for 1989 is larger at RO 407.6 million than that of RO 252 million for 1988.

However, further measures will be taken as opportunities occur during the course of the year to reduce this deficit, advantage being particularly taken of increases in oil prices which may exceed the present target. Since \$12.50 per barrel is regarded as a conservative figure, it is reasonable to assume that the final outcome for the 1989

deficit may well be better than the present budget figure suggests.

To generate new sources of revenue to finance development, the Sultanate began marketing treasury bills to the private sector in 1987 and these issues have been well received. This innovation helps to provide short-term liquidity to the Government and facilitates debt management on the shorter end of the maturity structure.

As already mentioned, there is a programme for selling Government-owned property and shares in enterprises to the private sector. Privatisation will not only provide financial resources for development finance, it will also expand and stimulate the private sector. Another innovation to encourage the private sector has been the opening of the stock exchange this year, as part of the Third Five Year Plan. In addition to these institutional developments, RO88 million has also been allocated in the Third Five Year Plan for this private sector assistance.

Sufficient time has to elapse to judge whether the Government's retrenchment policy has been effective. This policy has been intended to harmonise three separate requirements:

- (a) To maintain a sufficient level of spending to shield the private sector from the full impact of the fall in oil prices, as well as to protect the general public from hardship. The general level of private sector economic activity is still strongly influenced by the level of Government spending, and to cut spending abruptly to balance the budget would have created a serious depressing effect. It has thus been the Government's aim to achieve a "soft landing" for the economy at large.
- (b) Secondly, to maintain essential public services in the field of education, health and social welfare. The importance of this obligation is so clear that it requires no elaboration.
- (c) Thirdly, to protect the financial integrity of the country and honour its financial commitments abroad. This goal is of the greatest importance to Oman's long-term development, but it obviously constrains pursuit of the other two goals.

Achieving these aims is not an easy task, especially when the uncertainty of future oil prices and revenue is considered. However, in essence, these goals have been harmonised and a balanced policy has

been achieved.

The Government intends to continue its support for three domestic financial institutions to enable them to offer assistance to the private sector. These are the Oman Development Bank (ODB), the Oman Housing Bank (OHB) and the Oman Bank for Agriculture and Fisheries (OBAF). The three institutions, with independent legal status, are owned by the Government and specialise in extending medium and long-term loans to development projects. The ODB, which commenced operations in 1979, has extended loans to over 200 projects, including the food and beverage, building materials and chemical industries as well as a number of light industrial projects. In 1987, Government financial support to the ODB amounted to RO 2.1 million. The OHB, initially established as the Omani National Company for the Development of Housing, started operations in 1973, and in 1987 received Government financial assistance amounting to RO 7.0 million. The OBAF established in 1981, with a capital of RO 19 million, extends short, medium and long-term loans to Omanis and to the national establishments engaged in agriculture and fisheries. In 1987 it received financial assistance from the Government amounting to RO 1.2 million.

An encouraging indication of increased economic activity last year was a dramatic rise in the value of domestic non-oil exports, which were RO 43.6 million for the first three quarters of 1988, as compared with RO 24.7 million for the same period in 1987. This represents an increase of 76.4 per cent. An impressive 92 per cent gain was registered in the export value of fish for the first nine months of 1988 over the same period in 1987, thanks to the increased emphasis placed on the agriculture and fisheries sector by the Government. The export of agricultural products also registered an increase, although not as dramatic as in the fisheries sector. The export value of copper cathodes registered a large increase in 1988 as against 1987; according to published figures, export of copper cathodes in the first nine months of 1988 were valued at RO 13,261.2 million, as compared with RO 6553.0 million in the 1987 period, for a rise of 102 per cent.

COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

One of the major long-term aims for the development of modern Oman since the start of the new era has been the expansion of the manufacturing industry, which was non-existent before 1970. It is intended to create a national economy based on private enterprise, free from monopolistic practices. Consistent with this policy is the objective of ensuring rapid growth of viable industries utilising indigenous raw materials as much as possible. To this end the private sector has to play a leading role on the basis of competition in a free economy.

At the start, development of light industry by the private sector was slow. By the beginning of 1976, at the commencement of the First Five Year Plan, there were only 10 establishments in production with a total investment of RO 470,800. In just over a decade, however, the number increased to 4,008 units with an investment of over RO 356 million. By the end of 1987, the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the economy had risen from RO 2.1 million in 1975 to RO 111.5 million, representing 3.71 per cent of GDP, and employing a labour force of over 25,000. In the first half of 1988, 114 new industrial projects with an investment of nearly RO 7 million were registered.

The Sultanate's earlier industrial progress was mainly geared to construction support. By 1986 most of the major projects required for the national infrastructure had been completed, and priority was switched to consumer goods and other import-substituting industries, not only to meet local demand, but with an eye to cost-effective and competitive exports. The precautionary devaluation of the currency in 1986 as a result of the sharp fall in world oil prices applied a brake on imports and stimulated exports without adversely affecting the standard of living. For the next fifteen years, priority is to be given to the development of light and medium industries.

The Government gives every encouragement to the development of the private industrial sector, with the Ministry providing the following incentives:

- (1) Free surveys of industrial investment opportunities and preparation of feasibility studies.
- (2) Provision of interest-free Government loans to industry under a



A textile factory, Rusayl Industrial Estate (Photo: Oman News Agency)

Royal Decree, in addition to loans provided by the Oman Development Bank (ODB).

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

A 100 hectare fully-serviced industrial estate comprising 125 plots has been established at Rusayl, 45 km from Muscat, the first phase of

which was completed in 1982. The second and third phases are due to be completed in the current Five Year Development Plan. Factories already on site range from heavy to light industry including cement, a marble factory, an aluminium plant with a 6,000-ton production capacity, opened in November last year, and factories producing air conditioners, radiators, tiles, car batteries, carbonated drinks, tea packaging, plastic pipes and many other products. The Rusayl Industrial Estate Authority (RIEA) was set up in 1983 by Royal Decree for the purpose of managing and developing the Estate and is operated by a Board of Directors appointed by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry. The RIEA headquarters is located within the Estate, which is fully equipped with a mosque, shops, bank, post office and health clinic. Plots are leased for 25 years with an option for an extension of a further 25 years. New industrial estates are being established in Raysut in the south and Sohar in the north.

The Oman Textile Mills, the first of its kind in the AGCC countries, has gone into production in the past year. It has an investment of RO 8 million and is the most modern of its kind. It has its own training centre for young Omanis. It is intended that the textile industry should stimulate the establishment of other related ancillary industries. The Flour Mills at Muttrah have been in operation since the 1970s and their capacity has been increased over the years.

The Oman Development Bank (ODB) plays an important role in implementing Government measures aimed at encouraging greater private participation in the country's development. Its loans are for up to ten years and generally with a grace period covering the implementation and first year of the operation. The interest rates paid by the projects financed by the Bank are subsidised by the Government. The official interest rate charged by the Bank is 9 per cent; however, projects implemented in the Muscat area or the Rusayl Industrial Estate pay only 6 per cent per annum interest and a special rate of 4 per cent is applied to projects implemented in other areas. The ODB's lending commitments for any one project must not exceed 10 per cent of its total resources. The ODB has embarked on two new schemes: a Small Scale Enterprise Scheme and a Vocational Graduate Scheme. Under the Small Scale Enterprise Scheme investors can receive up to 80 per cent of the project cost, which should not exceed RO 100,000. The main condition for granting a loan under this scheme



*A happy group of tourists with the custodian of an historical site (Phot
Al Falaj Hotel)*

is that the borrower should be employed full-time and manage the project himself. Under the Vocational Graduate Scheme, graduates of the Vocational Training Centre who wish to open a small workshop will be able to have their project financed on a leasing basis at a special rate of 3 per cent per annum. It is estimated that loans disbursed during the Third Five Year plan will roughly equal the RO 20 million allocated during the Second Five Year plan.

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

In order to protect local industries customs duties at varying rates are

imposed on a number of foreign imports. These include cement, asbestos pipes, bananas, dates, dried lemons, alcohol and tobacco. Some imports from other than AGCC countries, such as copper cables, paints and cement products are subject to varying rates of duties. All other imports, with the exception of food items from non-AGCC countries, bear a customs duty of 5 per cent.

One important problem that has still to be solved is the question of subsidies to local manufacturing industries within the AGCC States. There is general agreement that efforts should be made to narrow current disparities in the levels of these subsidies so that fair opportunities may be available for investment in manufacturing industries in all AGCC countries. The Secretariat of the AGCC is currently studying ways and means of reducing these disparities.

The Ministry is actively seeking ways of improving management and operations within industry. Last year a team of Japanese experts conducted a 3 month study of industrial units in the country. Weaknesses were detected in some units and remedial measures were suggested and acted on. In addition, a specialist team from the Directorate-General of Industry was sent to Japan and South Korea to familiarise itself with the running of modern industrial units.

It is only very recently that the Sultanate has been opened up to tourism, since the country was previously simply not geared to receive them. The Government has proceeded cautiously, having adopted a policy of encouraging quality tourism. Present indications are that this policy is meeting with success, with the Sultanate proving to be highly attractive to visitors who appreciate its exceptionally pleasant seasonal climate and scenic beauty. In 1987 only 46 groups comprising 900 tourists visited Oman, but last year this number had increased to 125 groups comprising 3,500 tourists from Western European countries, Australia and Japan. The private sector is also taking an increasing interest in tourism, participating in the development of motels and seaside resorts. Now that nationals of other AGCC countries can enter the Sultanate without visas, many are also visiting Oman as tourists. Salalah, in the south, is particularly popular with AGCC visitors. Oman has much to offer tourists with its mild sunny winter climate, splendid sandy beaches with all the facilities for water sports, magnificent mountain scenery with its historic forts and castles, many of which have been restored. Travel is made easy by a first class road

system, and air-conditioned coaches and cars.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry was set up in 1973 to encourage industrial and commercial development in the Sultanate. All business organisations in Oman are expected to be members. The headquarters of the OCCI are in Ruwi, adjacent to Muscat, with branches in Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa, Sur, Salalah and Sohar.

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

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.

In order to stimulate the economy and bring to the notice of the Government the problems of the private sector as well as to acquaint the private sector with the business opportunities in the Sultanate, the Chamber last year organised a series of seminars and top-level meetings including an investment and banking seminar. Also, during the year, a permanent exhibition of products made in Oman was opened at OCCI's Muscat premises. In addition to the permanent exhibition of products made in Oman at OCCI premises, OCCI also has an Exhibition Hall which is offered to foreign and local organisations to hold exhibitions.

Three such exhibitions were held during the year. In July this year, the first woman was elected to the Chamber's Board of Directors.

The Sultanate's first Stock Exchange was opened in May this year, under the aegis of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Strict regulations, including a ceiling on price movements, have been laid down to prevent speculation and there is to be no trading in futures or on margin; shares must be delivered in full immediately after transactions. Settlements must be made in cash, and post-dated cheques will be unacceptable. There will be a limited number of brokers in the beginning.

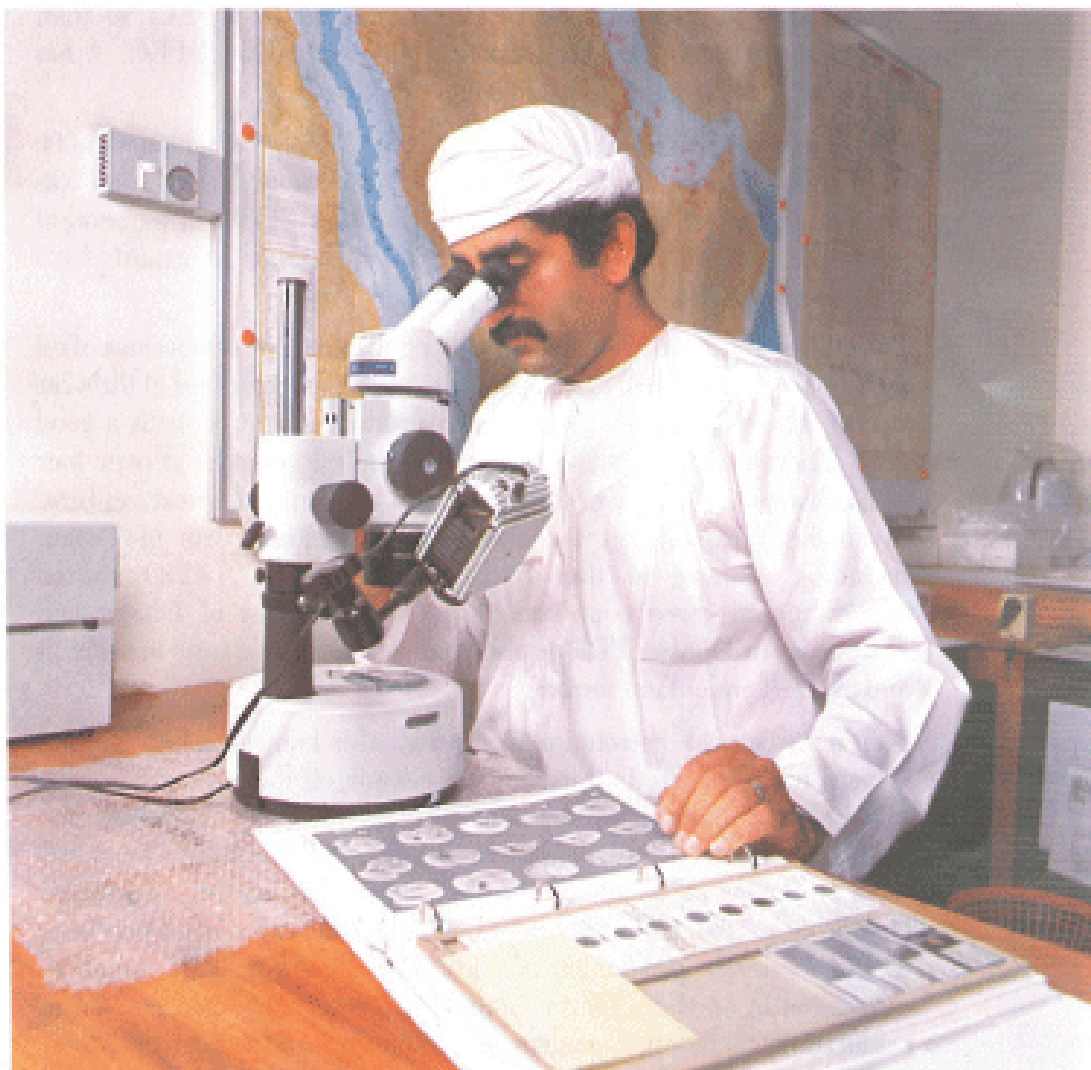
OIL & GAS

The production and sale of oil has been the basis of the transformation of the Sultanate of Oman over the last nineteen years under the guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Together with the production of natural gas it still provides 48 per cent of the GDP revenues of the Sultanate, so that the prosperity of the country is strongly influenced by the world price of oil.

The search for oil goes back many years to 1924, but it was not until 1954 that a methodical start was made by the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), a consortium which initially operated from its base at Duqm on the south-east coast of Oman. Working northwards, several wells proved to be dry including one at Jebel Fahud, a particularly promising location in central Oman. After this, IPC abandoned its attempts and withdrew from Oman, and the concession was granted to Petroleum Development (Oman) Ltd. (PDO), of which Shell was the major shareholder, the minority shareholders being Compagnie Francaise des Petroles and Partex. In 1962 the first oil find was made at Yibal west of Jebel Fahud, but it was in 1964 that the first major field was discovered at Fahud, which finally decided that the production of oil in the Sultanate was commercially viable. By a quirk of fate IPC's barren well, only a few hundred yards distant, happened to be on the dry side of a fault line. A further discovery at Natih in the same area, together with the fields at Fahud and Yibal, formed the foundation of the oil industry in Oman. In 1974 in an agreement with PDO the Government assumed ownership of 60 per cent of the shares in the company.

The first exports of oil from the Sultanate began in 1967. In the years that followed, exploration continued and further discoveries were made. Lengthy spurs have had to be constructed connecting the fields to the main pipeline from Fahud to the coast at Mina al Fahal near Muscat. To reach the coast the main pipeline had to traverse a mountain range through a natural pass, the Sumail gap, which necessitates pumping the oil to a watershed in the gap, from where it is gravity fed to the terminal on the coast.

In recent years exploration in south Oman, has located a number of small oilfields, some of which yield heavy oil. Oil production from these fields was previously considered not commercially viable. The



Evaluation of geological data at the PDO laboratories (Photo: PDO)

steep rise in the world price of oil in the 1970s made it possible commercially to develop these fields.

Production of oil rose steeply starting from 1967, but suffered a decline in the early 1970s until new discoveries in central Oman came into production in 1975. Another decline occurred for a few years, after which discoveries in the south boosted production again, reaching a peak of 600,000 barrels a day in 1986. Steeply falling world oil prices in early 1986 made it initially desirable to increase production to maintain oil revenues. Oman is not a member of OPEC or OAPEC, but has

always kept in step with oil prices maintained by OPEC, so that, although not bound by production quotas agreed by OPEC, it has voluntarily cooperated in stabilising production.

Reduction was made in three stages to 536,750 b/d, of which 468,000 b/d was for export, in February 1988. Subsequently production was allowed to rise to 605,000 b/d but, in February 1989, in agreement with other non-OPEC oil producers, Oman reduced its exports by 5 per cent from 1st April to 30th June this year.

During the past year there have been significant new discoveries of oil in both south and north Oman, but the most important find of the year was at Rajaa in central Oman, which produced light oil with a good flow. These new finds have maintained the oil reserves at over four billion barrels, thus ensuring production well into the next century. Meanwhile, exploration is continuing in various parts of Oman, including offshore in the south where, in 1988, PDO started exploration in three concession areas off the coast of Dhofar and eastwards. In Dhofar, PDO is also conducting seismic tests in difficult and rugged mountain terrain.

The International Petroleum Company, also known as the Lundin Group, has discovered oil in their concession off the west coast of the Musandam Peninsula. Production will depend on an evaluation, the results of which should be known shortly. Elf-Aquitaine Oman has been producing oil on a limited scale from its Sahmah field in western Oman since 1980, and Occidental Oman became the second producer with a moderate production of 18,000 b/d at Safah in its Suneinah concession in northern Oman. Some 23 oil companies are involved in exploration, including Canadian, Australian, Japanese, British, American and French, in a total of ten areas. All have signed production-sharing agreements with the Government, which place responsibility for financing exploration on the foreign consortium.

An oil refinery was constructed at Mina al Fahal and came into operation in 1982 to fulfil the requirements of the domestic market. Its original production capacity of 50,000 b/d was increased in 1987 to 80,000 b/d to meet the increasing demand for refined products in the Sultanate.

Oman has sizeable reserves of natural gas, which are sufficient for the development of its industries. Demand has been rising rapidly, and



A PDO drilling rig (Photo: PDO)

output has increased correspondingly. Production almost doubled in 1987 compared with the previous year, and in 1988 reserves of associated and non-associated gas were estimated to be 9.3 trillion cub. ft.

The Government gas system is wholly owned by the State and is operated by PDO. In order to increase reserves to meet industrial demand well into the 21st century the Government has financed a PDO gas exploration programme which started in 1984. The program-

me has resulted in a number of confirmed gas discoveries.

The system was started in 1978 with the construction of a gas pipeline linking Yibal with the Al Ghubrah power station and desalination plant on the coast near Muscat. Gas is also supplied to the power stations in the Rusayl Industrial Estate, and Wadi Jizzi, which serves the copper-smelting plant and the Sohar area, and to the Sultan Qaboos University. PDO is the largest consumer of associated gas, which it requires for its power plants and equipment as well as for reinjection into oil reservoirs to maintain pressures and sustain oil production. In 1988 the direct use of natural gas was introduced in Oman for the first time, other than to power stations. A gas supply has been inaugurated at the Rusayl Industrial Estate and is being used by a vegetable oil refinery and the newly-opened textile mill.

The development of the system has now entered its fourth phase. The looping of the gas pipeline between Yibal and the coast, included in this phase, entails building a new 36-inch line to run parallel to the existing 30-inch line. It is anticipated that this looping will be completed by the middle of this year.

PDO has a rig working full-time on gas exploration, which has recently found a significant gas field at Saib Nihayda in the lower Haima formation. The drilling of five gas wells and the construction of another gas station at Al Ghubrah is also scheduled for this fourth phase. The gas station at Wadi Jizzi near Sohar will be extended, in addition to the construction of other gas stations, to meet local demands in these areas.

MINERALS

The Sultanate of Oman is rich in mineral deposits, particularly in the mountainous regions of the north. Geological surveys are continually being carried out to identify their locations and to assess their potential for exploitation.

It is known that copper ore was being mined in the Wadi Jizzi area of northern Oman 3,000 years ago and exported to the Sumerian Empire at the head of the Gulf. At that time the country was known as Magan. The ancient copper workings can still be seen, and copper ore is now being extracted from three mines in the same area and processed to produce electrolytically refined copper cathodes, which are exported. Construction of the metallurgical processing plants was started in 1979 and completed in 1983, when the first shipment of cathodes was exported. An increase in production, together with an improvement in the copper market has resulted in exports valued at RO.10,084 million in 1987 and RO.16,660 million in 1988.

Originally, the Government held 75 per cent of the shares of the copper complex, but later acquired the remainder, so that the whole copper industry is now state-owned. The Oman Mining Company (OMCO) runs the operation. Oman copper has received international recognition for quality on being registered on the London Metal Exchange as Grade 'A' electrolytic copper cathode.

In 1987, additional deposits of copper ore were identified in a south-east extension of the Lasail mine in the Wadi Jizzi, amounting to more than 1.5 million tonnes. Further exploration has been carried out at Hayl a'Safil near Yankul, where a total reserve of 1.5 million tonnes has so far been located.

Chromite is obtained from open pit mines in Wadi Rajmi. To-date, OMCO has exported nearly 8,000 tonnes. Exploration has revealed additional reserves in excess of one million tonnes in the Rajmi and Samad areas. In April this year, the Government concluded an agreement, with an international company for exploration and evaluation of the chromite field in the Rajmi-Pizh and Farfar-Hilti areas of northern Oman. The project, which will cover an area of 215 sq.km., will be completed in two years.

Detailed geological mapping, drilling and evaluation in the Ras al



Oman's marble deposits are among the world's best — here a huge block is prepared for processing (Photo: Oman News Agency)

Hadd area of eastern Oman has indicated the existence of limited reserves of manganese ore. Exploration in the Jebel Hammah region has also revealed numerous thin beds of this mineral. Preliminary investigations in the Fanjah and Ibra regions have indicated the existence of laterite, with iron and nickel. Exploration is continuing there.

Extensive deposits of coal are known to exist near Sur in eastern Oman, as well as asbestos in the Wadi Haybi, west of Sohar. Gypsum, of which there is large quantities in Dhofar in the south, and limestone are being exploited for the cement factories at Raysut and Rusayl. High quality marble is being quarried at several locations, and marble products from a private enterprise factory on the Rusayl Industrial Estate are now being exported to neighbouring countries.

AGRICULTURE

Before the discovery of oil and gas, the Sultanate of Oman, the second largest country of the Arabian Peninsula, and thinly inhabited then with an estimated population of under one million, had a largely subsistence economy based on agriculture and fishing. Indeed, the majority of the population are still engaged in these industries. But, as development got under way in the 1970s with oil revenues coming in, there was an increasing drift from the land and the fishing villages to the urban areas on the coast where employment was easy and wages higher. The Government became acutely aware of this undesirable trend at an early stage and introduced measures to encourage farmers to remain on the land and the fishermen to continue in their traditional occupation, since it was appreciated that when the oil and gas resources became eventually exhausted, agriculture and fisheries would play a major role in the economy of the country. the success of the Government's policy is now becoming apparent.

Oman has basically an arid climate, but its size and variations in physical geography result in considerable local contrasts in climatic conditions. The climate in the north is similar to that of the Gulf States with a long hot and usually rainless summer, and a short mild winter when sporadic rain occurs; but Oman's range of mountains running parallel to the coast, and rising to 3,000 metres and more, has a higher rainfall than the surrounding plains, while a high mountain plateau, the Jebel Akhdar, has a climate suitable for temperate climate fruit and vegetables. The far south, bordering the Arabian Sea, has a monsoon climate when regular summer rains fall on the mountain slopes behind the coastal plain. The climate in these mountains is suitable for raising cattle, and the cultivation of fruits and vegetables is not common in these areas. Dates and limes are extensively grown in the north of Oman, but in the south the climate is not suitable for dates, and groves of coconut palms are found on the coastal plain ground Salalah where bananas and papayas are also extensively grown.

The principal limitation on agriculture is the shortage of water, since cultivation is totally dependent on irrigation derived from groundwater. For many centuries agriculture in the Interior has been based on the falaj system, the origins of which are lost in the mists of antiquity; many of the aflaj (plural of falaj) in use today having been constructed at



Visitors showed a keen interest in Oman's exhibit at this year's Royal Agricultural Show, held in Warwickshire, England (Photo: PAMAP)

least 800 years ago.

The system is based on tapping the water table in the mountains and leading the water by man-made subterranean channels, often up to 10 km long, to the plains, where it is utilised for domestic purposes and irrigation. The water is very pure and lukewarm, and the flow is steady and reliable, even through long periods of drought when its volume becomes only slightly reduced. Aqueducts and syphons are used for crossing wadi beds and other obstacles. The use of irrigation water is very carefully controlled in the villages, where ancient sundials for allocating periods of irrigation to individuals may still be seen.

In his address to his people on National Day last November His Majesty Sultan Qaboos declared that the Year of Agriculture which he had proclaimed for that year was to be extended into 1989. He expressed his satisfaction at what had been achieved in the previous year and emphasised the need for the preservation of grazing land and

its protection, and the prudent conservation and development of water resources, as well as raising the quality of agricultural products. The Year of Agriculture has seen a drive to improve agricultural methods by increasing the quantity and quality of produce, through guidance to farmers for the improvement of sowing and harvesting methods. Research has been intensified into soil and water analysis at the Research Centre at Rumais on the Batinah coast; work on the construction of recharge dams to assist irrigation has been continued; and farmers have been shown how to make maximum use of water for irrigation purposes by the most modern methods. In Dhofar in the south, where different crops are grown, a substantial increase in production has been achieved with Government help and subsidies. A new form of farm-grouping involving more than 100 farms under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture has achieved considerable success in persuading farmers to apply modern methods of agriculture. A new coconut farm near Salalah is being established using the latest irrigation system. The increase of the area of land under cultivation is not the main aim of the current Development Plan, but rather the improvement of productivity by a programme of support and technical advice through 2,500 collective extension farms in the country.

Nevertheless, a threat to the existing land under cultivation in the most productive and thickly populated area of the country, on the Batinah coastal plain, has been caused by the increasing salinity of groundwater as a result of overdrawing on the resources of subterranean aquifers with the ensuing seepage of sea water. This is being dealt with by legislation regulating the sinking of new wells and the construction of re-charge dams for the purpose of replenishing the aquifers. The first results have been assessed and are most encouraging. These dams, and the supply of water for irrigation purposes are dealt with more fully below.

Dhofar, for climatic reasons, is the cattle-rearing region of the Sultanate. Traditionally, the Jabali tribesmen there have reared cattle only for milk production rather than for consumption. Until recently beef, which has been in increasing demand in northern Oman as living standards have risen, has had to be imported due to lack of overland communications with Dhofar. Since the completion of the all-weather tarmac road linking Salalah and Muscat in 1986 it has been

possible to transport chilled beef in refrigerated vans to northern Oman. It is expected that 5,000 head of cattle will be sold annually from the Southern Region.

There are an estimated 700,000 goats and 200,000 sheep in Oman. However goat farm productivity requires improvement and the Government has launched a pilot project under which 300 breeding centres are being set up at private farms in the country. These centres will stimulate efficiency and productivity through a scientific approach, each receiving free stock and accommodation for their charges as well as veterinary services and bank credits on easy terms. Development of poultry production is being promoted by the encouragement of both large-scale and small-scale units throughout the country. Current annual production is estimated to be 40 million eggs and one million broiler chickens. The goal is to reach an output of 227 million eggs and 13,600 tons of broiler meat by the year 2000. In addition, small projects have been prepared which are suitable for the production of eggs and broilers by smaller farms; the Ministry is shortly to initiate a scheme to develop 100 such farms in 1989. Last year, the Oman Bank for Agriculture & Fisheries granted the largest single loan of RO 1 million to a poultry farm near Barka.

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

An increasingly successful role in the marketing of agricultural produce is being played by the Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (PAMAP), which was established by Royal Decree in November 1981. The Authority's main objectives are:-

- (1) To provide a link between the farmers and the trade through the establishment of a well-organised marketing network.
- (2) To provide Omani farmers with a market outlet and to encourage

them to grow high-quality produce.

- (3) To improve the present market situation for Omani produce in terms of quantity, quality and availability.

PAMAP's Headquarters and Central Distribution Centre are at Ghala near Muscat; regional Distribution Centres have been established at Salalah, Sohar, Nizwa, Ibra and Suwaiq. These latter also act as Collection Centres, of which there are 17 throughout the Sultanate.

There are four Retail Sales Outlets in the Muscat area as well as at all the collection centres. More of these outlets are to be opened shortly. Banana packing and ripening facilities are operating at Salalah and at the Central Distribution Centre at Ghala. A recent and successful marketing innovation is the production of lime tea, made from dried and powdered limes which are grown in quantity on the Batinah coast. Previously, all dried limes had been exported for processing abroad.

In March last year, on the instructions of His Majesty the Sultan, PAMAP embarked on the formulation of a new marketing policy with the aim of re-evaluating its existing operations and submitting proposals for the protection of the rights of producers and consumers. The new policy will be based on marketing needs and will harmonise with that of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, making provision for the training of farmers and to meet the demands of local and international markets at all seasons.

In November, 1988 the biggest agricultural exhibition ever held in the Sultanate took place at the Oman Exhibition Centre at Seeb; 13 governments and 234 private companies from 34 countries participated. On display were agricultural and fisheries products, equipment, livestock and agro-industry products. PAMAP played a major role at this Exhibition and in exhibiting at the annual International Green Week in Berlin; also in 1988, it participated in an agricultural show at Coventry in the United Kingdom as well as at other local and regional exhibitions. PAMAP also has an educational role, holding regular seminars at main centres outside Muscat.

The Re-charge Dam Programme

Water supplies are vital to the country's agriculture. To this end an intensive programme of dam construction is being pressed forward.

In addition to existing dams, the Ministry will have completed construction of three further dams in September/October/November of this year: at Wadi Jizzi, Wadi Ghul and Wadi Tanuf.

During the same period, or possibly earlier, the Ministry will commence construction of another series of dams:

4 in the Barka/Rumais area at Wadi Bani Kharus, Wadi Ma'awil, Wadi Rubkhah and Wadi Taww.

1 In the Ibri/Araqi area in the Dhahirah region at Wadi al Kabir; and one in the Southern Region, on the Salalah plain at Wadi Sahalnawt.

Later this year, feasibility studies for another group of dams will be completed, followed by detailed studies of the feasible sites.

The sites are:

2 in eastern Oman: one in the Sur area at Wadi Fulayj and one in the Al Kamil area at Wadi Bani Khalid.

2 in the Southern Region (Salalah plain): one at Wadi Jarsis, and the other at Wadi Nahiz.

2 in the Interior: one in the Nizwa area at Wadi Al Abyad, and the other in the Bhala area at Wadi Bahla.

3 in the Sumail area: Wadi Bani Ruwahah, Wadi Rajmi and Wadi Quri. Also during 1989, preliminary studies of a further group of dams will be completed:

5 in the coastal area: 4 in the Batinah, one at Salalah.

8 in eastern Oman

8 in the Interior

9 in the Dhahirah region

Other studies have been commenced this year:

feasibility studies of 3 projects:

2 dams in the Shinas area

4 dams in the Saham/Sohar area

6 dams in the al Khaburah area

The Ministry is also to start reconnaissance studies for dams in the Musandam and Buraimi areas.

Other activities of the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries include:

Completion of the Agricultural Research Station development at Rumais which will be opened during the 19th National Day celebrations.

Completion of the Agricultural Research Station at Jimah.

Completion of the Animal Research Station development at Wadi Quriyat — a goats breeding unit — to be opened during the 19th National Day celebrations.

Completion of the Animal Research Station at Salalah — also to be opened during the 19th National Day celebrations.

Organization of an international symposium for upgrading Omani Agriculture.

The commencement of Agriculture Development Project implementation at Jibreen and Jimah.

Completion of feasibility studies for the Agro-Industry Complex: coconut processing in the Southern Region; feed mill and construction of a pilot farm at Najd also in the Southern Region.

National vaccination project for livestock.

Completion of studies for the development of Bu-sayli and Humaydi Aflaj.

Completion of studies for the survey of marine jetties at Al-Ashkhara and Al-Duqm.

Completion of development and improvement works at Hilty and Salahi Recharge Schemes.

Completion of the feasibility study and design of pickling units for surplus vegetables and the commencement of the implementation phase.

The commencement of the rangeland management programme implementation in coordination with FAO in the Southern Region.

Hiring of a research vessel from FAO for conducting fisheries' stock assessments.

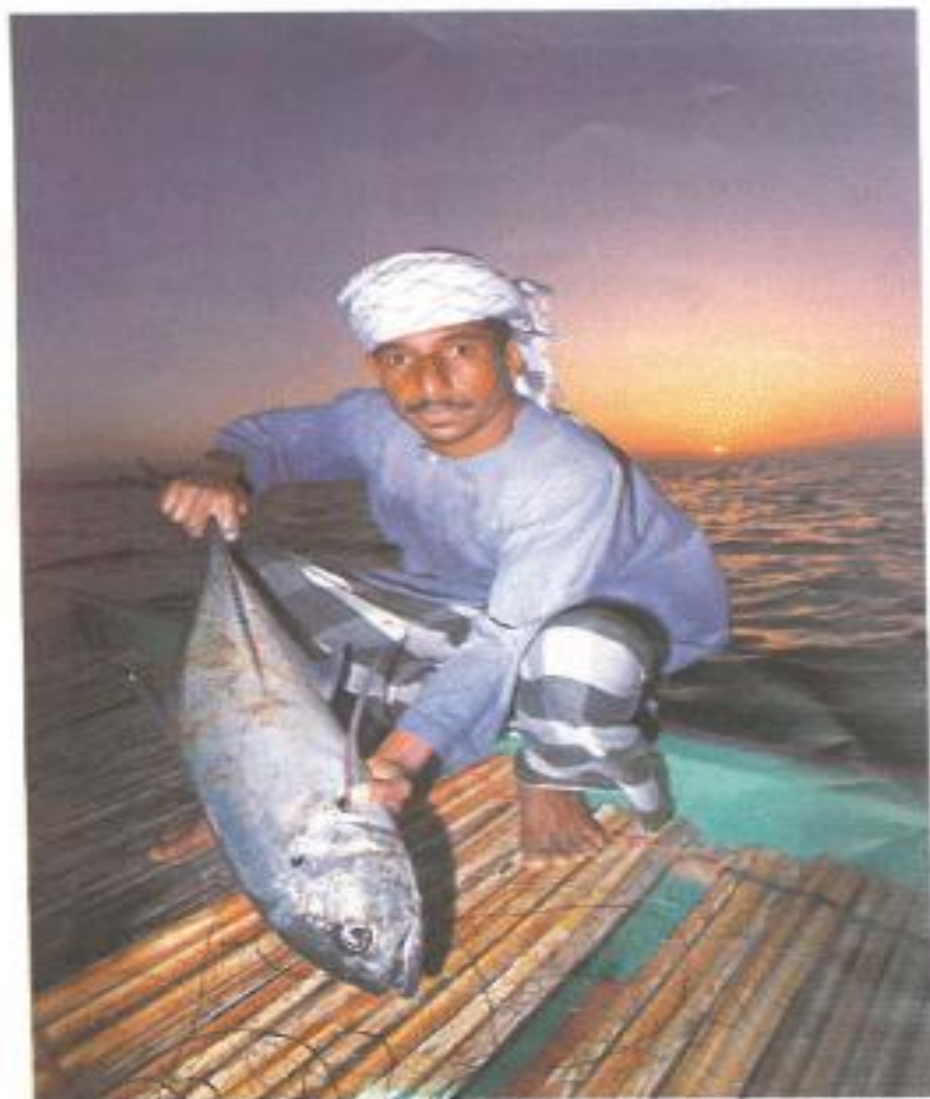
FISHERIES

The Sultanate of Oman has a 1,700 km-long coastline extending from the Musandam Peninsula in the north, at the entrance to the Arabian Gulf, to the border with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south, along which there are immensely rich fisheries, whose potentialities have yet to be fully evaluated. A 200-mile exclusive economic zone extends out from the shores of Oman. Until recent years, these fishing grounds were only exploited by local fishermen, mainly for their own and purely local consumption.

It has been estimated that the potential annual fishery yield of Omani waters may be as high as 300,000 tons, 75% of which is of the small pelagic type, sustainable from year to year without adversely affecting stocks. The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre at Al-Bustan near Muscat has identified more than 150 species of fish in these waters, some of which were previously not known to exist there, ranging from sardines to tuna. In recent years, large quantities of lobsters have been caught in the southern waters off Masirah Island, and the Dhofar coast. Schools of sardines netted off the Batinah coast have long been used as animal feed and fertilizers, after being dried in the sun on the beaches, and still constitute an important part of the fishing industry. In Dhofar, Jabali tribesmen still come to the coast during the dry season to buy dried fish to feed to their cattle and camels after the grazing has been exhausted with the advent of the hot weather.

The Fisheries Department formed in 1972 became a Directorate-General in 1974, which now forms part of the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries.

The Government has appreciated the necessity of stemming the population drift from the fishing villages to the urban areas, and the need to develop fishing into a modern industry which will make a major contribution to the economy of the country. In the first Five Year Development Plan, RO15 million was allocated for new infrastructure projects including refrigeration, ice plants, landing sites and harbours, refrigerated distribution lorries, and further studies for future development needs. In 1976, the popular Fishermen's Encouragement Fund was introduced whereby fishermen can apply for a grant which, on average, covers two-thirds of the cost of a fibreglass fishing boat and an outboard engine. A walk along the shore provides



A fisherman displays his catch — the industry makes a vital contribution to the national economy (Photo: PDO)

ample evidence of the success of this scheme, the traditional wooden fishing boat is rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

When announcing the formation of the new Fisheries Company of Oman two years ago, His Majesty the Sultan specifically assured the local fishermen that their interests in the inshore fishing grounds would be protected. The construction of the extensive road network throughout the Sultanate now makes it possible to bring fresh fish from

the coast to all the major centres of population in the Interior, thus greatly increasing the market for local fishermen to the point where the country is now self-sufficient in that commodity.

Large-scale commercial fishing enterprises have also played their part in fish production, beginning in 1976 with an agreement between the Government and a Japanese fishing company for the operation of deepwater trawlers. Under this agreement, the Government obtained 40% of the catch and Omanis were trained and employed in modern fishing methods. Since 1977, this agreement has been replaced by a fishing concession to a Korean company which trains Omanis on its trawlers and provides 38% of its catch to the Government as a form of royalty. In 1980, the Oman National Fisheries Company (ONFC) was formed, with Government assistance, to purchase, export and distribute their catch from traditional fishermen. ONFC also handles fish caught by the concessionaries. In 1987, a Royal Decree established the Fisheries Company of Oman into which ONFC is to be merged. This new company is to have a share capital of which RO10 million will be raised by other founder-members, the remainder coming from ONFC's shareholders. The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries has assured the smaller fishing companies that they will continue to be protected and given every incentive to prosper and contribute to the national wealth.

In Musandam, the fisheries industry, upon which the region is almost totally dependant, also receives Government assistance.

Oman has been steadily expanding its exports of frozen and processed fish, and the industry has achieved notable success in entering the international market.

A total of 20,668 tons of fish and crustaceans were exported in 1987. In February this year, an international workshop on tuna and seer fish was held in Muscat, hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, to establish methods of controlling, managing and developing the catches of these migratory fish.

Extensive fisheries research is carried out at the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre near Muscat, which was opened in 1986. Costing RO1.5 million, with consultative support from UNESCO and the FAO, it became operational in 1987. In cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos University its role includes studies of different resources' stocks and the future development and management of the vast range



Marine Science and Fisheries Centre at Sidab near Muscat (Photo: PDO)

of marine species in Omani waters, as well as a more academic role in the general ecology of marine environment, with particular emphasis on the conservation of ecosystems and endangered species. It also has responsibility for the student groups and individuals who visit the Centre.

WATER

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

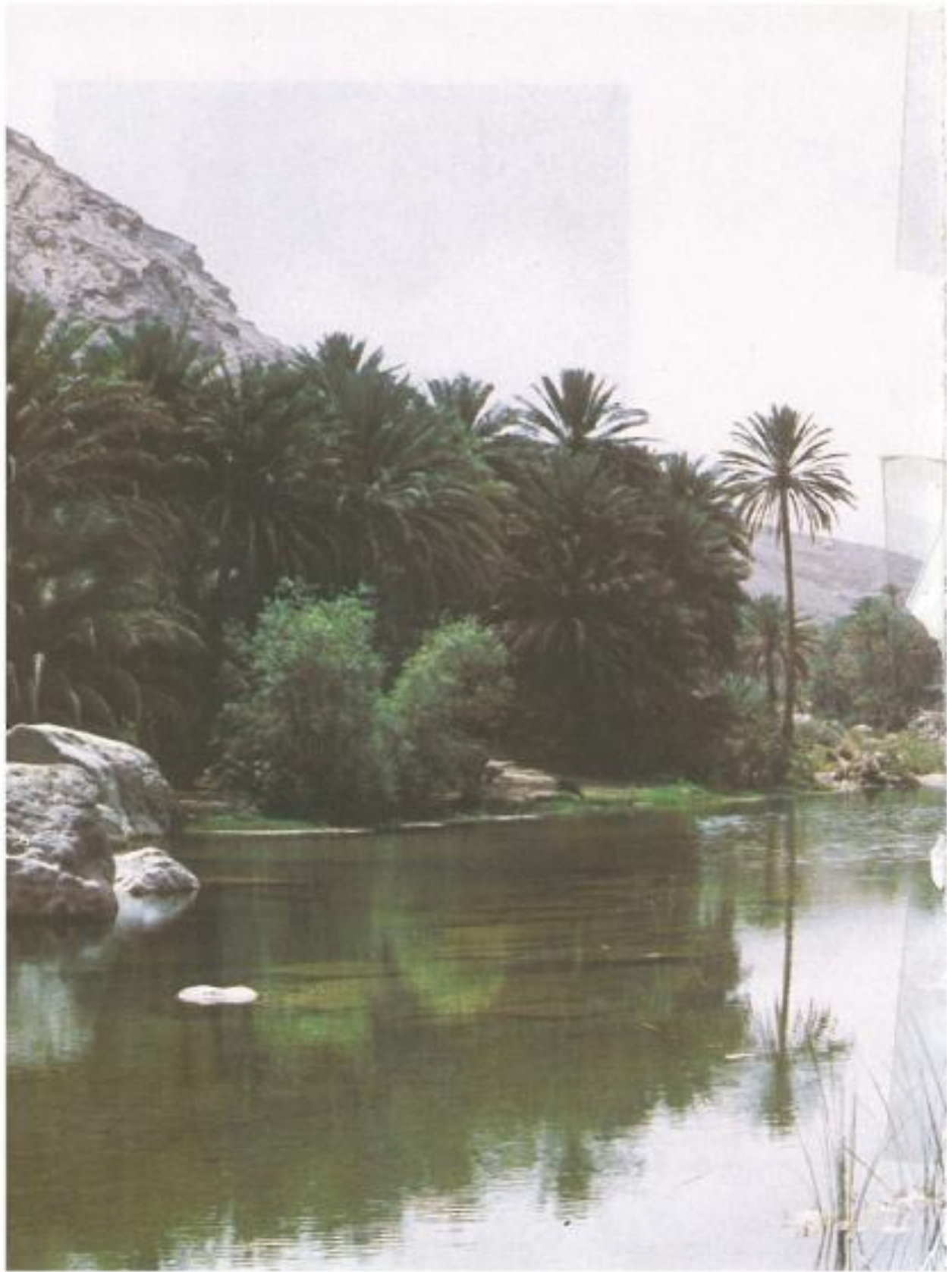
We have had long experience in highly valuing and carefully exploiting our water resources to the best advantage for irrigation purposes by means of the remarkable falaj (plural aflaj) system in the mountains, and by sinking wells along the Batinah Coast in northern Oman and in Dhofar in the south. However, it was evident from 1970 onwards that if Oman was to develop industry from a nil basis, cope with the needs of a rapidly increasing population with higher living standards, and extend the areas under cultivation, the need to increase and conserve supplies of fresh water was a matter of urgency. Thus it was in 1986 that two Councils concerned with the environment were merged into the Council for Conservation of Environment and Water Resources, of which His Majesty the Sultan was the Chairman, and the Minister of Environment and Water Resources was Deputy Chairman. Various related Ministries were represented on the Council.

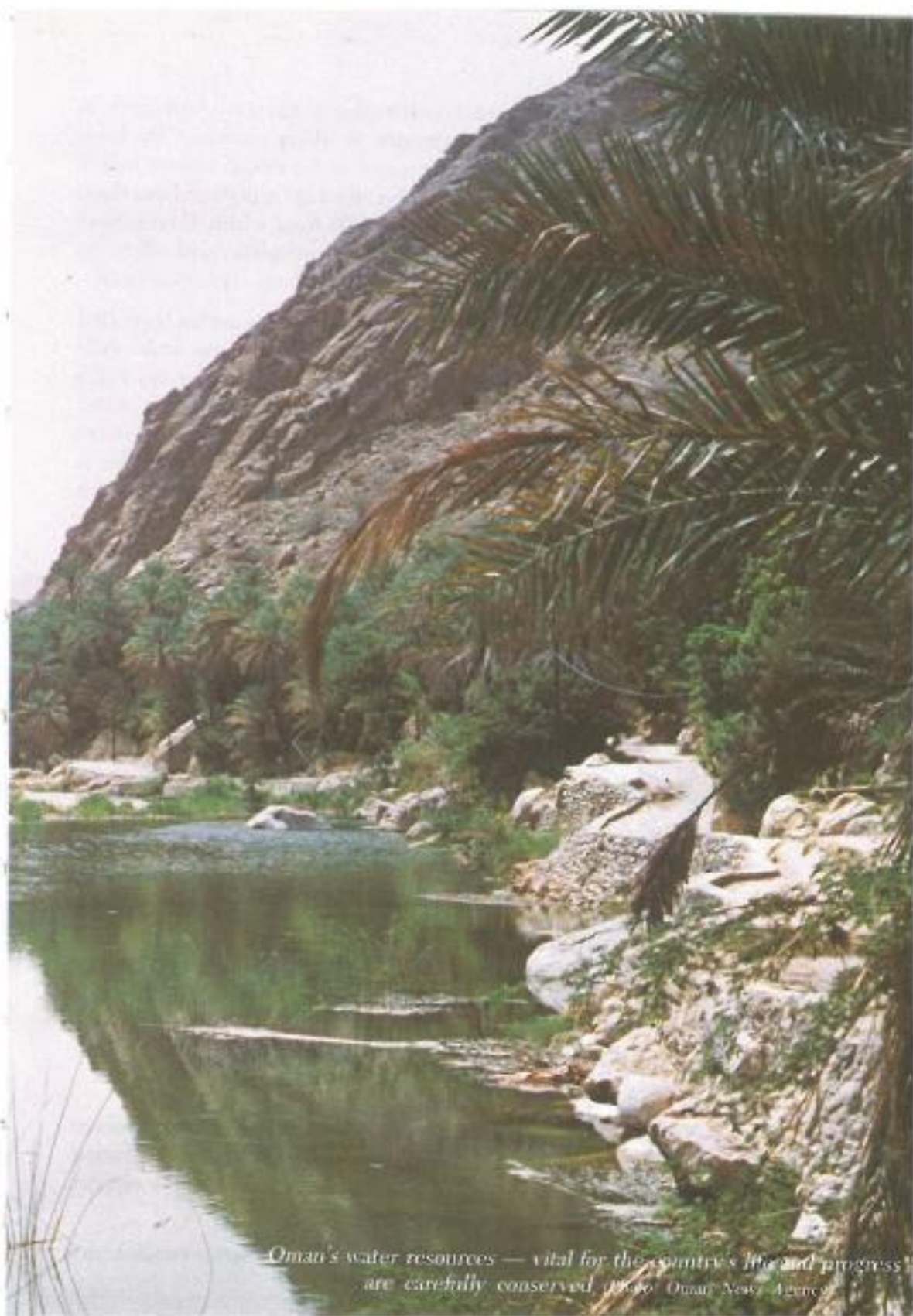
During the past year it was decided that the whole subject of water resources is of such paramount importance that, in March 1989, a new authority, the Public Authority for Water Resources (PAWR), was established by Royal Decree and took over the functions performed by the Directorate General of Water Resources in the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and the Council for Conservation of Environment and Water Resources. In a further development to improve the efficiency of the country's water management, His Majesty has now established a Ministry of Water Resources, which incorporates PAWR, with His Excellency the Minister of Electricity and Water as acting Minister of the new Ministry.



PAWR technician plotting salinity data on photomaps (Photo: PAWR)

All water resources in the Sultanate originate from rainfall. However some ancient water, sometimes called fossil water, derives from a period when the climate of Oman was considerably wetter than it is today, and is not being replenished in today's arid climate; it therefore has to be carefully husbanded. Rainfall is limited in Oman, and varies considerably throughout the country according to its geography, but it is generally spasmodic and unreliable except in the area of southern Dhofar which receives regular summer monsoon rains. Elsewhere, rain falls most frequently over the mountains of northern Oman, often in the form of violent storms.





Oman's water resources — vital for the country's life and progress — are carefully conserved. (Photo: Oman News Agency)

During the last nineteen years considerable progress has been made in hydrological surveys of the Sultanate in which assistance has been given by several outside institutions such as the British Universities of Bristol, Durham and East Anglia. The information derived from these various sources is collated by the PAWR from which Government policy is ultimately formulated. These investigations and efforts to preserve existing resources are being carried out simultaneously.

The increasing affluence of the country over recent years has permitted farmers to extend the area under cultivation by large-scale well-drilling. On the Batinah, this has resulted in neighbouring sea water invading the coastal aquifers, and the salinity of irrigation water increasing. The problem was compounded by the fact that farmers further inland, closer to the Hajar mountains from which the water is derived, were also sinking more wells and drawing off more water for irrigation purposes with the result that less had been reaching the Batinah coast, and wells there had to be sunk even deeper.

The construction of new wells or modification of existing wells is now carefully controlled to avoid excessive exploitation of water resources. In the interior, over-development results in falling water levels which reduce the yield of existing wells and the flow of the aflaaj.

Recharge dams are one method of water conservation that is being tried. The first dam was completed at Al Khodh, near Muscat, in March 1985. Other similar dams have since been completed in the Wadi Hilti-Salahi (Sohar) and at Quryat, near Jabrin. Their purpose is to retain surface flow, which occurs when storms break over the mountains, and ensure that the water seeps into the ground to recharge the aquifers. In April 1988, work began on a new recharge dam in the Wadi Jizzi in the Wilayat of Sohar, which has now been completed. It is hoped that the dam will supplement water resources for irrigation in the Sohar area. Work on another recharge dam was commenced in the Wadi Tanuf, in the Wilayat of Nizwa, in October last year, which is expected to be completed in 11 months. Preliminary surveys are in progress for 30 more recharge dams.

The Government is also maintaining aflaaj, the major irrigation source in the country, particularly in the interior of northern Oman. During the last two years, 100 aflaaj and 600 wells were maintained to support existing and planned agriculture.

Potable water for drinking purposes and other domestic needs in the



A PAWR drilling project (Photo: PAWR)

Muscat area is obtained from desalination plants and wells. Two additional desalination units at the Al Ghubrah thermal power/desalination plant came on stream in 1986 making a total of four units with a capacity of 23 million gallons per day. In addition two wellfields in the Wadi Adai and Seeb areas, with a production capacity of 3 million gallons per day each, boost the total output. Small desalination plants are in operation elsewhere in the Sultanate, including Dhofar and Musandam; one came into operation on the Kuria Muria Islands in the south recently.

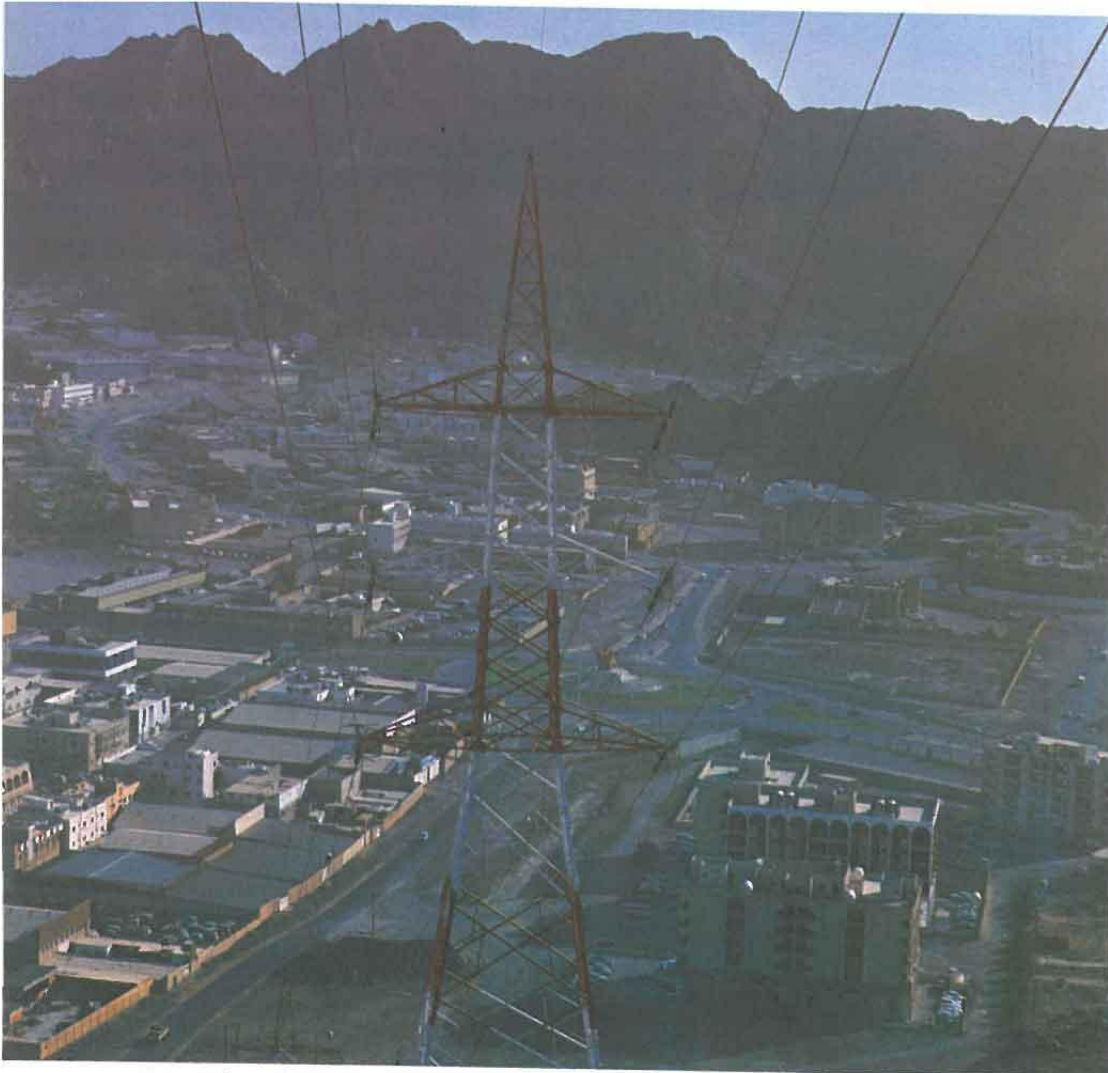
ELECTRICITY

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

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

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

During the Third Five Year Plan new power stations are planned for construction at Raysut in the south, and at Manah in the Interior which will provide electricity for the entire Dhakiliya region, replacing diesel power plants at Nizwa, Bahla, Adam and Izki. In 1987 a power station and desalination plant commenced operating on the Kuria Muria Islands in the south with four diesel units with a total capacity of 640 KW.



Electrical power provides the sinews for the nation's industrial development (Photo: Mohamed Al Wadhahy)

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

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

In the early 1970s the Minister of Social Affairs, in coming to grips with the problems facing his Ministry, observed that the development of social services was dependent on the development of good communications. With adequate financial resources the one would follow the other. Before 1970, the combination of a total lack of communications outside Muscat and lack of these financial resources resulted in the complete absence of social services. It was therefore only possible in the early stages of national development to set modest targets for these services. However, as good road and telephone communications spread their networks throughout the Sultanate, the social services expanded at an ever-increasing pace so that by 1989 social welfare has reached a level comparable to that of the advanced nations of the world, in less than 20 years.

Planning, however, did not wait on events in those early years. By 1977 the planning stage was complete, and a Royal Decree* was promulgated to lay down comprehensive welfare regulations. The most conspicuously successful achievements in this field have been the local community development projects and the setting up of the Directorate-General for Women's and Children's Affairs under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

The social security system aims to provide a suitable standard of living for all citizens and, at the same time, to encourage them to become self-reliant. To this end assistance has been made available for those most in need. The foundations for this policy were significantly consolidated early in 1980 by a Royal Decree which further raised the minimum level of social security benefit for families and individuals, and made cash assistance payable to the aged, disabled, widows, families with orphans in their care, and women with no-one to provide for them. Some families are also aided by means of land grants and assistance in marketing their crops. Other citizens are enabled to set up private businesses and become self-reliant. There are also vocational training programmes in many productive occupations.

Development

The Ministry is particularly concerned with local community development projects. The first of these was launched in 1976 as a pilot scheme



Oman's paraplegic team at the Seoul Olympics (Photo: Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour)

and its success exceeded all expectations. Within the context of the developing world, local community development in Oman may be considered a pioneering experiment. It is based on the principle of integrated development i.e. all the Ministries involved take part in the process as full partners. Members of the community themselves participate through local development committees and their own individual efforts. This enables the local leadership to play its part in decision-making and projects. Particular attention is given to training personnel, raising their level of competence and preparing them to take their places in the national development process. A number of international organisations have provided considerable assistance to the programme. Care is taken at every stage to ensure that Omani values and customs are faithfully preserved.

The national development programme for local communities achieved many notable results during the twelve years from 1976 to 1988, including the extension of its services to 232 villages in 20 wilayats, in addition to approximately 211 populated centres, the Southern

Region's share being 143. Local people have been encouraged to coordinate their own efforts with the competent Government bodies. Rural women have become fully involved in social development activities through Women's Development Centres.

As an example of community participation, the programme has carried out 490 joint (Government/non-Government) projects, also using donations in cash and in kind from the public amounting to a total cost of RO557,300. Of this, about 51 per cent was provided by individual contributions. These projects included surfacing roads within the villages, drilling and deepening wells, the construction of Koranic schools, improvement of drinking water sources, preparation of sites designated for women's activities, construction of public majlises (meeting places), installation of public bathing and washing facilities, and the building of libraries, health care centres and sports grounds.

The development teams and agricultural advisers strongly encourage the rural population to benefit from successful experiments in the improvement of agricultural techniques and, where necessary, to change to more productive crops, aided by the model farms. Farmers are also urged to play an active part in campaigns against pests and plant disease, and coordinate public efforts in falaj maintenance and the drilling and deepening of wells for providing irrigation water.

The teams have also played a conspicuous role in making people aware of the availability and benefits of the health services provided by the Ministry of Health, and have also introduced basic treatment facilities to the more underdeveloped regions. These are administered by Health Visitors co-opted by the Ministry of Health into the teams. These teams also operate in the field of preventive medicine, in coordination with the following Ministry of Health programmes: health education, basic health care, child care, paediatrics, child nutrition, pre-natal and post-natal care, and diet improvement. These programmes are administered by female Health visitors. Other activities include the installation of small drinking-water projects, inspection and sterilisation of water sources, and the construction of nine health centres in villages that had previously no health services.

The project has also made sound progress in setting up literacy and adult education classes for men and women, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, in those villages where there are as yet no

schools. It has also set up schools for the study of the Holy Koran in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, in addition to 41 libraries for adults. These provide a follow-up to the adult literacy programme by making suitable reading material available. The importance of the role played by the national programme for local community development is reflected in the Ministry's intention to extend it to all regions of the Sultanate. This will involve gradual expansion, according to the availability of material and human resources, giving priority to those communities that have not yet received basic services, including the Bedu and pastoral communities, and concentrating on the programme's economic aspects.

Women and Children

The national programme for local community development is one of the cornerstones for the advancement of rural womanhood. It aims to eliminate female illiteracy, encourage female education and provide guidance in the upbringing of children and other domestic matters. Women are also encouraged and enabled to develop their skills, particularly in the home and cottage industries, as well as other projects which could provide additional income for them and their families.

The Directorate-General for Women's and Children's Affairs, as part of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, provides assistance to Omani women for the purpose of improving their economic and social circumstances. It operates largely through the Omani Women's Associations. Until recently there was only one such Association in the Sultanate with two branches; now there are thirteen Associations throughout the various regions of the country. Specific attention is given to young working mothers, who have been given special protection under the laws relating to employment; these include breast feeding hours, maternity leave, the provision of one to two years' leave to look after children, and the opening of nurseries and kindergartens. In the interests of the parents and children, the Government has banned baby-sitting, and only licensed nurseries are allowed to operate under the supervision of the Directorate-General. Before granting licences to nurseries, the Ministry checks their suitability including accommodation, standard of education of those in control, safety standards, fees etc. In Muscat alone there are now at least 15 licensed nurseries.

LABOUR

Before 1970, no education was available for our children, apart from some few facilities for religious instruction. At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos therefore, there was thus a complete dearth of educated young people in the country. Unemployment was endemic and many young Omanis could be found in all the Gulf States working as unskilled labour.

After 1970 the situation altered dramatically. Answering His Majesty's call, Omanis, skilled and unskilled, returned to the Sultanate in large numbers to help in the development of our country. The youth of Oman now has access to a wide field of employment opportunities. However, in the earlier stages of development, the acute shortage of a trained Omani workforce meant that it was necessary to resort to foreign labour, mostly Indian and Pakistani, with Europeans in specialist employment. From the outset, Omanisation has been an important aspect of Government policy, but care has been taken to maintain standards by proceeding only as fast as suitably trained Omanis complete their education. Omanis are now taking over important posts in the Administration, the Armed Forces and industry, and in both the public and private sectors at an ever increasing rate. The importance of Omanisation to the economy was emphasised by His Majesty the Sultan in his National Day address in November last year, when he called upon the private sector to provide increasing opportunities for the national labour force, and emphasised the need for young people to work hard to acquire the necessary skills.

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



An adult dress-making class (Photo: Oman News Agency)

Vocational Training

The Education and Vocational Training Council, which was founded in 1978, and is headed by His Majesty, bears full responsibility for the development of the national workforce and aims to provide the necessary skilled labour for the national economy. It operates in coordination with other Ministries, Government establishments and the private sector. By last year the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour had set up nine vocational training institutes, which conform with the latest developments in primary, preparatory and secondary education, and which are intended to provide the vocational training needed for the technicians of the future. The first nucleus of these institutes was the Omani Technical School set up in Darsait in 1970 by PDO. The Government took it over in 1976, and its scope has been considerably widened and updated to meet national requirements over

and above those of the oil industry. By this year, well over 2,000 students had graduated from these institutes.

To meet more advanced training requirements, the Ministry began planning for the setting up of the Oman Technical Industrial College at Al Khuwair in 1979. This was opened in 1984 for the purpose of training personnel of both sexes. The college has been equipped with modern laboratories and workshops; highly qualified lecturers and instructors have been appointed. The Ministry has established a continuous dialogue with employers, with the object of linking the College with the labour market and keeping it abreast of technical, industrial and commercial labour requirements. The College produced its first batch of graduates last year, and by 1990 approximately 660 students will have qualified.

The present state of the labour market indicates clearly that the growing qualified and trained Omani workforce will not face any difficulties in obtaining employment. In 1985 approximately 15,850 foreign employees with academic qualifications at the general secondary and secondary vocational training institute levels were occupying posts in the private sector. Numbers have continued to increase in response to the demands of the Third Five Year Plan, so that by 1990 there will still be about 16,000 positions occupied by foreign employees in this category. At the same time, the total of secondary school and vocational training institute graduates is expected to reach approximately 12,000 or 75 per cent of the number required to fill the positions in this sector, by the end of 1990.

These figures indicate the considerable opportunities which exist for our young people as they enter the labour market. The Ministry spares no efforts in providing the training which will ensure that they are fully fitted for the work they are to undertake. It thus bears all the costs arising from their training, whether in private institutes and centres or in the various private sector establishments and companies.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Youth closely cooperate in career preparation and planning for our young people; the latter playing an important role through its general, commercial, industrial and agricultural secondary schools and intermediate teacher-training colleges, and as a preliminary to their study at the vocational training institutes and the Oman Technical Industrial College. It also sponsors advanced courses in

colleges and universities outside the Sultanate. The opening of the Sultan Qaboos University in 1986 was an important milestone in the education of Omani students in the higher specializations. Many other organisations are playing their part: the Institute of Health Sciences is making a valuable contribution to the national progress in providing technicians for the health services; in the banking and financial sector, the Central Bank of Oman has set up the Omani Banking Institute for banking studies; while PDO, the Oman Mining Company and others are also giving priority to the training of Omani personnel for the highest posts.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Sultanate of Oman was not only isolated from the outside world in former years, but communities within the country were also isolated from each other by lack of physical communications. Towns and villages along its 1700 km coastline were able to keep in contact by sea, but within the country there were no roads, worthy of the name, apart from one hard surface road from Muscat via Muttrah to the airfield al Bait Al Falaj, a distance of 8 km.

It was clear from the start, on the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, that almost every aspect of development was dependent on communications whether by land, sea or air. It was also obvious that development must begin at points of entry into the country, which meant the construction of an airport large enough to cope with aircraft of major international airlines, deep water ports and good internal road communications. All this was achieved with remarkable speed to such an extent that after less than twenty years a stage has now been reached when resources can be concentrated on the rural areas and the more remote mountain regions of the Interior.

Roads

Oman is the second largest country of the Arabian Peninsula with a varied topography of mountain and plain, and a population unevenly distributed, mostly concentrated in the northern coastal regions and the extreme south, with a sparsely populated vast area in between. Topographically the initial stage of road construction was comparatively simple as it involved connecting Muscat with the new international airport at Seeb and the centres of population along the level Batinah coastal plain, the most densely populated area of the country. The next stage was the construction of roads to the main centres of population in the Interior and the connection with road networks of neighbouring States. This was far more difficult as it involved building roads through the towering, rugged mountains of the Hajar range where heavy local rainstorms send spates of water rushing down the wadis, washing away everything in their path. At the same time, in the far south, the road construction programme connected Salalah with other towns and villages along the coast to the east and west and to the jebel to the north and beyond. During the 1980s an asphalt road has been completed across the desert plains of the Interior connecting Muscat



One of Oman's luxury long-distance coaches (Photo: Oman News Agency)

with Salalah, 1,000 km distant. Another road now connects Muscat with Sur to the south east, communications with which were formerly only feasible by sea, while the road to Nizwa has now been extended through Bahla and Ibri to Buraimi where it connects with the road system of the UAE.

Most recently some spectacular road construction has been completed in the rugged mountainous region of the Musandam, as well as to the top of the Jebel Akhdar plateau, and in the south through the mountains of Dhofar to the border with the PDRY. The main road construction programme throughout the Sultanate has therefore been completed in less than twenty years, a remarkable achievement.

In the current Five Year Plan, emphasis is now on the development of

rural road communications, and on roads connecting towns on the Batinah coast, through the mountains, with towns in the Interior. Thirteen such roads with a total length of 164 miles were completed last year, and the programme is being continued through 1989.

Development of the road system has enabled the establishment of a bus and coach service network. The State-owned Oman National Transport Company (ONTC) runs a fleet of more than 240 buses and coaches which serve the Muscat area and the main towns. The Company also operates six air-conditioned luxury coaches, fitted with long-distance fuel tanks, television and toilet facilities, which operate on the new Muscat-Salalah route.

Air

One of the first major projects in the development of modern Oman was the construction of the International Airport at Seeb, 35 km from Muscat, which was completed in 1974 to replace the old airfield at Bait al Falaj with its notoriously difficult approaches for aircraft. In addition to its passenger and freight facilities, which are up to the most modern international standards, the airport also serves military and police movements. In recent years large scale extension programmes have been carried out. Seeb International Airport is now rated as one of the major international airports in the region, due to its modern installations, its high efficiency and standards of operation. It serves 21 international scheduled air carriers and 14 international non-scheduled operators, in addition to various cargo charters. Salalah Airport was the second major airport to be constructed in the Sultanate. Work on the terminal building was completed in 1986 and the airport became operational a few months later. The airport is capable of accommodating 250 arrivals and departures in each direction per hour.

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

In 1977 Oman Aviation Services (OAS), established by Royal Decree, took over Oman International Services, founded in 1972 as Oman's domestic air service. OAS is a 100 per cent Omani stock company. It also runs the catering services at Seeb International Airport. As well as the air service between Muscat and Salalah, OAS operates other



Tri-Stars of Gulf Air, Oman's own airline, shared with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar, are serviced at Soeb International Airport (Photo: Oman News Agency)

internal flights to Khasab, Bayah, Sur, Buraimi and Masirah Island. It also operates charter flights and checks flight navigation aids in the Sultanate and in neighbouring countries. In 1988 OAS appointed its first Omani Captain, and Omanisation plans are now well advanced.

Sea

Before 1970, Oman had no modern port facilities, all cargoes having to be off-loaded by lighters in Muttrah Bay. Among the first major projects was the construction of a new deepwater port at Muttrah, named Mina Qaboos, which was completed in 1974, providing a vital service in the development of the country. The ever-increasing volume of imports and exports in succeeding years has entailed continual expansion with additional developments such as the construction of a container terminal, modern warehouses, engineering workshops and deepwater wharfage. During the Iraq/Iran conflict Mina Qaboos and the oil terminal at Mina al Fahal acquired considerable importance in

Gulf commerce. Situated outside the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf, tankers and cargo ships calling there enjoyed considerably lower insurance rates than those entering the Gulf danger zone, consignments unloaded at Mina Qaboos being transported overland to the other Gulf States in safety.

In the south, where there are no natural harbours with protection against the seasonal monsoon winds which blow at gale force for several months in the summer, a port with container facilities had to be constructed at Raysut, 8 km to the west of Salalah, to serve the region.

This year, it has been decided that a new port is to be constructed to serve the Sultanate's needs. Four possible sites are at present being studied, at Sur, Masirah Island, on the coast between Muscat and Sur, and a location on the Batinah coast.

POSTS AND TELE-COMMUNICATIONS

The Sultanate of Oman's postal service has a history of almost 150 years, nearly as long as any postal service in the world. The first post office was opened in 1856 in Muscat, with Indian stamps being used for convenience until 1947. In 1948 the British General Post Office was given responsibility for postal agencies in the Gulf, and overprinted British stamps were used. This system continued until 1966 when the postal services were taken over by the Government and the first Omani postage stamps were issued. However, until 1970 there was still only one post office in existence in Muscat with services confined to the city area. Up to that time the conveyance of letters outside Muscat was entirely dependent on the goodwill of travellers.

After 1970, new post offices incorporating the latest technical procedures began to be established in several areas of the Sultanate, so that by the end of 1985 there were 58 post offices together with 36 branch agencies. The rapid development of the Sultanate during this period was reflected in the massive increase in the turnover of letters and parcels. In 1971 the total of incoming and outgoing letters was 7,662,000. In 1984 it had increased to 38,000,000. A comparable increase was reflected in the number of parcels. A fleet of vehicles was purchased for the purpose of moving post rapidly between Muscat and the provinces. By the end of 1987 there were 70 post offices in the Sultanate together with 33 postal agencies, and by the end of the current Five Year Plan a further 34 post offices will be built and functioning. Mobile post offices, which were originally allocated to heavily populated areas, have since been replaced by permanent post offices.

An express mail service, known as Datapost, and 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 Salalah. The International Express Mail Service, initially operating only to the AGCC states, has now been extended to a total of 52 countries.

A home delivery service is available for Datapost, but house-to-house service for ordinary mail is not practicable at the present time and is



The public telephone system now covers most of the Sultanate (Photo: Oman News Agency)

not envisaged for the immediate future. The practicability of a house-to-house service is dependent on a number of factors, one of which is street naming, a task yet to be completed. At the end of 1988 there were 33,300 P.O. Boxes in the Sultanate.

In October 1988, the Sultanate joined the rest of the world in celebrating International Postal Day, marking its achievements in developing its postal services. During the current Five Year Plan ending in 1990, the Ministry will expand the post offices at Ibri and Sohar and set up 18 sub-post offices in a number of Wilayats (regions) including Nizwa, Birkat al Mauz and New Ibri. Four sub-post offices will be constructed in Dhofar and three post offices will be built in the Governorate of Musandam. The total cost of the projects included in the Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones sector during the current Five Year Plan is RO 6,895 million.

Special stamp issues are made at intervals to commemorate particular occasions and activities in the Sultanate. The Sultanate's postal history with reproductions of every stamp issue since 1856 has been published in a book by the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, and is proving very popular with philatelists.

Telecommunications

The General Telecommunications Organisation (GTO) is incorporated in the Ministry. It was established by Royal Decree in 1980 as a fully Government owned entity, and is now self-financing.

During 1984/85 a new Telecommunication Centre was constructed at Bait Al Falaj near Muscat, and twelve digital exchanges commissioned within the Muscat area raising equipped capacity from 500 in 1970 to the present 62,000. At the same time three digital exchanges were commissioned in Salalah increasing capacity for this region to the present level of 15,000. Subsequently, expansion has continued with projects covering the interior region (centred on Nizwa, Ibri, Ibra and Sur), Buraimi, Masirah, the Musandam peninsular, and Batinah Coast region. Total installed capacity is now 122,000 of which 82,000 are connected to subscribers. Telephones have now been installed in all major population centres throughout the Sultanate.

The mobile telephone system, also commissioned in 1985, has a capacity of 4,500 with 1,760 lines currently connected.

In addition, GTO has 1,375 telex subscribers and 320 coin payphones, with 200 new prepaid cardphones being installed.

Oman was the first country in the region to establish an external telecommunications link, with a telegraph cable laid in 1877 between Muscat and Aden. However, the first modern telecommunications network was inaugurated in the early 1970s. A satellite station was set up in 1974 at Wattayah, near Muscat, being subsequently replaced by a new station at Al Amirat; the Wattayah station was then moved to Salalah. The satellite complex at Al Amirat is now to be expanded. The satellite earth station, standard A at Al Amirat, carries Oman's international traffic worldwide, while standard B types there and at Salalah are used for domestic traffic in addition to two other earth stations at Musandam and Masirah Island. Earth station — Al Amirat 2 — completed in 1985 is linked to Arabsat, whence international traffic, including television programmes, is routed to other Arab countries.

A new digital international exchange with a capacity for 1,000 lines was commissioned in 1986 which greatly increased the facility of direct dialling to cater for increasing international traffic. The introduction of the digital switching system has considerably reduced operating and maintenance costs. A programme of tariff changes is underway with reductions already having been made to telephone call charges within Oman, telex call charges both domestically as well as internationally, and domestic leased circuits. Off-peak reductions for international telephone calls and leased circuit charges are currently the subject of a comprehensive study.

The GTO now operates on a "rolling" series of five year plans. The third five year plan, totalling RO 125 million, commenced in 1986 and has been "rolled over" to 1994. To date, RO 75 million has been committed, of which a substantial proportion now represents completed contracts; and the balance of RO 50 million has been allocated to the period 1990-1994.

Projects currently in progress include the expansion of the Batinah Coast and Quriyat region to provide 16,000 additional lines by way of six new main exchanges and additional remote subscriber units, at a total cost of RO 15 million.

Additionally, two new exchanges and remote subscriber units are to be

provided in the Salalah region thereby increasing capacity by 7,600 lines at a cost of RO 4.5 million. Several areas of the interior region are also to be expanded as demand dictates.

During 1989 it is planned to commence the construction of a satellite earth station in the Wilayat of Nizwa to cover the Southern, Eastern, Dhahirah and Muscat regions. This will ease pressure and act as a backup for the existing station at Al Amirat.

The GTO has its own training centre in Ruwi, near Muscat; about 80 per cent of its manpower is now Omani, with 100 new students being trained annually.

EDUCATION

The development of the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman over the past 19 years has been one of the most remarkable achievements in the spectacular advancement of the country from its previous state of isolation in the modern world. The difficulties that have had to be overcome have been immense, but the results are very impressive, and give grounds for considerable satisfaction. Nevertheless, much remains to be done over the coming years in the fields of teacher training, further education and adult education.

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

In 1970, when the programme of educational development first started, there were only three boys' schools in the country with a total of 909 students in Muscat, Muttrah and Salalah. There were no girls' schools and only Koranic schools in the towns and villages of the Interior. By January this year, there were 721 schools and institutes in the Sultanate with a total of 298,426 pupils, of whom 163,222 were boys and 135,204 girls. The task of developing an educational system in 1970 was awesome: there was a total lack of school buildings and experienced teachers. Classes were often held in tents in shifts, teachers had to be recruited from abroad, mainly from Egypt, Sudan and Jordan. Although priority had of necessity to be given to the children, there was also a pressing demand for adult education.

Text books had to be compiled and published, curricula formulated and examination standards set. For example, Omani history presented one such problem. Oman has a rich historical heritage, of which Omanis are rightly proud, but no textbooks of Omani history existed from which it could be taught.

Education in the Sultanate is based on the principle of its being a universal right for all members of Omani society. It encourages the



Young performers celebrate Education Day at a primary school (Photo: Oman News Agency)

development of each individual's abilities, and aims to provide the necessary manpower for all sectors of national life. It also concentrates on the enlightenment of each Omani as to his rights, duties and obligations to his country and to the world at large, and on his ability to use his leisure to the best advantage. Islamic education plays an important role at all levels. His Majesty the Sultan has reminded young people on more than one occasion that academic qualifications are meant to equip them to work effectively in the service of their country and should not be regarded as sufficient in themselves. All must bear in mind the need to reduce dependence on foreign workers.

Primary school education normally starts at the age of six years. So great was the demand for education in the early stages that there was no need for compulsion. On passing the examination at the sixth primary grade, generally at between the ages of twelve and fourteen, the student progresses to the preparatory school. Students passing the General Preparatory Certificate examination are admitted to the first

grade of secondary schools between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years. Here they are selected for the appropriate type of secondary education, in accordance with the results of their preparatory examination. After the first year of general secondary education students are allocated to either the literary (humanities) or the scientific stream. This year there are 228,714 students in the primary grade, of which 122,374 are boys and 106,340 are girls. In the preparatory grade there are 51,030 students of which 30,697 are boys and 20,333 are girls. Secondary grade students number 15,190, of which 7,490 are boys and 7,700 are girls.

Of the 721 schools in the country, 370 are primary schools — 118 for boys, 144 for girls and 108 are co-educational. There are 267 preparatory schools — 122 for boys, 83 for girls and 62 co-educational. The total number of secondary schools is 66—31 for boys and 35 for girls. There are no co-educational secondary schools. In addition there are seven Islamic Preparatory Institutes, one Islamic Secondary Institute, five Intermediate Colleges, three Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural schools and two private education schools (co-educational).

In the first years of educational development, nearly all the teachers were of necessity expatriate Arabs. Teacher training of Omanis started in 1972 and the first Teacher Training Institute commenced courses for Omanis in 1976. In 1983 the male and female Teacher Training Institute system was abolished and its place was taken by the Intermediate Colleges. Courses at these colleges are two years in length. The process of Omanising jobs in education is proceeding on the basis of gradually replacing foreign employees in the field. Omanis are promoted to positions in the various grades strictly in accordance with their qualifications. In 1990-91, the educational system will receive its first batch of graduates from the Faculty of Education and Islamic Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University. From 1991-92 and 1992-93 these numbers will be augmented by qualified graduates from the Faculties of Sciences and the Arts.

The crowning achievement of the development of the educational system was the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University at Al Khoud in September 1986. The University comprises six Colleges or Faculties: Education and Islamic Sciences, Science, Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine and Arts. The students are approximately equal in numbers

between the sexes. It is anticipated that the University will ultimately accept about 3,000 students in the various faculties and specialisations. A total of 705 students was accepted for the 1988/89 intake.

The support centres of the University include the Computer Centre, the Library which contains advanced technology information systems as well as printed material, a Language Centre, a Teaching Hospital, and a Centre for Education Technology. The medium of instruction in the University is Arabic, except for the science-based courses where the language is English. All students are given comprehensive courses in the English language.

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 counsellor in social, religious and moral matters. Non-resident students are included in these communities.

After the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University it was only to be expected that there would be a reduction in the numbers of students sent abroad on scholarships. However, the Sultanate continued to need Omani cadres specialised in certain fields who could not be catered for by the Sultan Qaboos University, thus the Directorate of Scholarships still sends a number of students abroad to study such subjects as veterinary medicine, pharmaceuticals, dentistry, business administration, law etc. Scholarships abroad still play a significant and effective role; in 1988, 140 students were sent to Egypt, the USA, the UK, Jordan and Qatar.

Cooperation in the field of education among the Arab Gulf States is carried out through the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States and the AGCC, and includes the standardisation of curricula and text books. Considerable progress is being achieved in this direction. This cooperation includes the establishment of the University of the Gulf in Bahrain and the Centre of Educational Studies in Kuwait.

In addition to regular education, 1973-74 witnessed the setting up of centres for eradicating illiteracy among the citizens of Oman, who had not had the opportunity to obtain an education in the past. These centres were increased until they now cover all parts of the Sultanate. They have evoked an enthusiastic response from adult citizens. During the academic year 1988-89 there were 424 literacy classes with 9787

male and female students. From the beginning of the anti-illiteracy campaign to the present day more than 28,000 male and female citizens have been through these courses. Opportunities are also available for those who have achieved literacy to continue their education at the adult education centres which have been established. There are more than 19,000 male and female students studying at the three academic levels.

YOUTH

During the early years of development in the 1970s, maximum attention was devoted to instituting the education of the youth of the Nation of both sexes. By the 1980s, the structure of a comprehensive education system was established, reaching its culmination in the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University in 1986.

In more recent years, during the 1980s, it has been possible to devote increasing attention to the broader aspects of the training and upbringing of the youth of the Nation, a theme which has been frequently reiterated by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. In 1982 the importance of youth activities was emphasised by the decision to give the responsibility for supervision of sports to the Directorate General of Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Education. This was followed by the declaration of His Majesty the Sultan that the National Day celebrations in 1983 were to be devoted to the subject of Youth, when youth delegations from 45 countries attended.

In 1986 a Royal Decree was issued amending the name of the Ministry of Education to Ministry of Education and Youth. The Decree approved an administrative structure including an office of an Under-Secretary for Youth Affairs and three Directorates-General: for Administration and Finance, Cultural and Social Affairs, and Sports Activities, in addition to the Qaboos Sports Complex Administration and Regional administrations.

Sporting activities are recognised as playing a major role in the character-building of the country's young people. In order to promote these activities His Majesty presented the nation's youth with an Olympic-sized sports complex in 1985 at Bausher near Muscat, covering 44 hectares of land. Its main features are a stadium with a seating capacity for 35,000 spectators, and facilities for more than 20 games.

As a result of a Royal directive issued earlier this year, the Higher Council for Youth approved an integrated national plan for expanded and improved youth facilities; this plan is based on three main elements:

- (a) Construction of sports and youth installations and facilities.
- (b) Support to existing clubs, in order to provide them with a complete



Oman's Scouts on parade (Photo: Ministry of Education and Youth)

range of these installations and facilities.

- (c) Support for the organisation of national sporting and recreational activities.

His Majesty personally donated half a million Omani Riyals to the National Fund for Financing Sporting Activities, which was set up this year and is administered by the Higher Council for Youth. The Fund enjoys a corporate status and financial and administrative independence, and has an independent board of directors and executive apparatus. The Fund finances youth and sporting activities throughout the Sultanate.

The integrated national plan for youth also provides for the establishment of youth centres similar to that at Sohar, which was opened in November last year and contains a wide variety of outdoor and indoor facilities to Olympic and international standard. Work will begin on a youth centre in Salalah this year, and will be followed by similar

centres in the Dakhiliyah, Sharqiya, South Batinah and Zahirah regions under the next Five Year Plan.

In addition to the establishment of these youth centres, preparations are being made for installing and expanding sporting facilities in a number of clubs, and constructing and equipping sports grounds in schools.

Last year, the Shooting League and the Track, Field and Boxing League participated in the Sultanate's delegation to the Olympic Games at Seoul. Omanis particularly distinguished themselves in the running and shooting events. At the same time as Oman was engaged in the competitive events at the Seoul Games, the Omani youth group made a notable contribution to the cultural-social activities at the youth camp which had been set up in the nearby Olympic village.

Although football is without a doubt the most popular sport, hockey is increasing its following in the Sultanate. It is interesting to note that hockey was introduced into Oman as long ago as 1914, probably from India. Apart from Egypt, Oman is the only Arab country in which hockey is played.

During the period from 1984 to 1988 the Sultanate participated in "Operation Raleigh". Its aim was to explore in detail marine, desert, tropical and polar environments. A team of fifty young Omanis took part in Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Australia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Chile. Last year they went to the United States, Bahamas and Cameroun.

Scouting

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

support for the movement.

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

Eight scouts were included in the crew of the Navy's sailing ship "Shabab Oman" for its voyage to Sydney for the Australian Bicentennial Celebrations. Omani scouts participated last year in the 31st World Scouting Conference in Melbourne, Australia, where they were awarded a prize in recognition of their contribution. They also attended the 18th Arab Scout Camp and the 10th Arab Guide Camp in Morocco, and the 18th Arab Scout Conference in Abu Dhabi. In the current year they will be attending the Third Islamic Scout Conference and the 5th Islamic Scout Meeting in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

HEALTH

During the past nineteen years, health care has received the highest priority in the Sultanate and continues to do so. Health and education were the two most important subjects for which the people stood in need — a fact fully recognised by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos on his accession in 1970. At that time there was only one hospital, in Muttrah run by an American Mission, as well as a few clinics which could only cope with the most basic requirements of the people. Tuberculosis, malaria, trachoma and dysentery were rife, and epidemics of diseases such as measles and influenza were a scourge to whole communities, particularly the Bedu tribes, resulting in a tragically high mortality rate among the children.

Such is the importance given to health care that the financial constraints imposed on the country's economy by the collapse of world oil prices in 1986 left the Health Service virtually unscathed as a result of careful administration. Today there are hospitals in all the main population centres, and the Health Service extends to all parts of the country. Mobile medical teams visit outlying regions and, where road communications are still lacking, there is a flying doctor service.

Prevention is regarded as of vital importance by the Health Service. Great strides have been made in child immunisation. A determined vaccination campaign has doubled immunisation coverage, resulting in an increase from 40 per cent to 85 per cent of infants under one year old being protected from child-killing diseases including diphtheria, polio, tuberculosis, whooping cough, tetanus and measles. One of the successes of the Department of Preventive Medicine in the Ministry of Health has been the Prevention of Blindness Programme, launched to combat trachoma, an infection which results in ultimate blindness unless treated, and which used to be rife in villages in northern Oman, affecting children at an early age. The programme identifies victims through comprehensive school and community-based screening programmes. During the 1987/88 academic year more than 107,000 children in 431 schools were examined and some 20 per cent were found to be affected. Seven teams of health visitors made the rounds of towns and villages examining over 33,000 people, and Ministry ophthalmologists carried out operations and provided other treatment. Hygiene plays a major role in the prevention of disease, not least



Happy convalescents in a Royal Hospital children's ward (Photo: Oman News Agency)

trachoma, and hygiene instruction in the villages and homes is given to the women by members of the Ministry staff. The campaign against malaria is also a highly important aspect of the Ministry's work and is achieving success in spite of many difficulties, the disease having shown a progressive decline over the years. The Malaria Control Department, operating its extensive spraying programme and other measures, has reported that the rate of infection declined from 21.5 per cent in 1983 to 8 per cent in the first six months of 1988. Malaria in northern Oman occurs in places where there is stagnant water, such as wells, irrigation pits and rain-filled wadis in which the anopheles mosquito breeds. These conditions prevail particularly in the periods after heavy rains. Dhofar in the south is malaria-free.

The incidence of polio has been steadily reduced from 81 cases in 1982 to 6 in 1987. However, in 1988 in spite of 90 per cent immunisation coverage there was a limited outbreak, 117 acute cases being reported.

The cause is not yet known, but a joint team from the Centre of Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, and the World Health Organisation is currently carrying out an investigation.

An increasing number of children are being brought under the Sultanate's school health scheme, which covered 50,000 pupils in 1987 in Muscat alone. 30,000 of these children were at primary school. The School Health Department in the Ministry of Health has a staff of doctors and health visitors spread over the country keeping an eye on the state of the children's health. The most important role of the Department is preventive, and it administers vaccines, monitors the health of children, and provides medicines and vitamins as required. Health visitors also monitor the standards of hygiene in the schools by analysing drinking water and inspecting canteens for the quality of food. Pupils are given lectures on hygiene with the aid of demonstrations and video films.

This year, the Ministry of Health is to launch a National Environmental Health Programme to cover about 1,500 villages throughout the Sultanate. The Environmental Health Section will cooperate with Municipalities in investigating and correcting environmental problems, particularly those connected with bad food and contaminated drinking water. The Section's integrated programme will introduce common approaches, technical standards and training methods to ensure that consistent standards of environmental health services are provided for every village in the country. The new programme's aim will be to anticipate problems before they arise in order to take timely preventive measures.

In 1970 there was not a single qualified Omani doctor in the Sultanate. In the first years of development Oman was thus totally dependent on expatriate doctors and nurses to staff the hospitals and generally run the Health Service. Now, with the opening of the Medical College in the Sultan Qaboos University, Oman will be providing its own doctors in a few years time in addition to those who have been sent for training abroad. The first Omani nursing school was opened in 1971, and this responsibility was subsequently taken over by the Institute of Health Science in Wattayah which opened in 1982. The Institute also trains Sanitary Assistants and other para-medical staff, as well as running courses on physiotherapy, laboratory work and radiology. The Ibn Sina hospital, opened in 1983 with 60 beds, specialises in psychiatric



A patient receives a visit from his friends at one of Oman's modern hospitals (Photo: Oman News Agency)

medicine, while the Al Nahda hospital concentrates on dermatology, ophthalmology and ENT in addition to a comprehensive dental unit. The Khoula hospital has 365 beds for general surgery, neuro-surgery, plastic surgery, burns, obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics, intensive-care, and day-care.

In November 1987 the magnificently equipped Royal Hospital was opened by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos as his gift to his people. The hospital provides the people of Oman with the very latest in sophisticated health care. Occupying 25 hectares of land, it has 630 beds, including 30 special-care baby units, and a large modern accident and emergency department. Its clinical departments include obstetrics and gynaecology, medical and surgical paediatrics, general surgery, nephro-urology, general medicine, cardiology, gastroenterology, endocrinology and orthopaedics. It also has comprehensive radiodiagnostic, pathology, physiotherapy and rehabilitation supporting services.

HOUSING

The urgent need to rectify the acute housing shortage in the Sultanate formed an important part of the National Development Programme which started in 1970. Poor housing and overcrowding together with unhygienic conditions were major contributors to disease and high mortality rates. Nevertheless, the temptation to rush into a crash building programme was resisted, and much attention was given from the start to long-term planning and inter-departmental cooperation between Ministries. The results have borne fruit and now are there for all to see. Modern housing in Oman has become an integral part of the comprehensive development process, embodying traditional architecture blended with unobtrusive modernity. The rapidly expanding development programme, extending from the Muscat area throughout the country, led to the decision of His Majesty the Sultan to amend the designation "Ministry of Land Affairs" to "Ministry of Housing".

Pressure was considerable in the early stages since not only was there an urgent need to improve existing housing, but the large numbers of Omanis who flocked back from abroad, in response to His Majesty's call to them to return to assist in the development of their country had also to be housed. In addition, the population increase as a result of greatly improved health services had to be anticipated. The first housing project was implemented in 1973 when a pilot scheme of 76 houses was completed. This was subsequently expanded rapidly.

The Government has placed great emphasis on providing housing for families with limited incomes. In this connection the Oman Housing Bank — an Omani joint stock company — was set up in 1977. The Bank's activity is concentrated mainly on granting loans to nationals for the purposes of construction, purchase, working on and adding to residential properties, and also for the purchase and completion of unfinished houses.

The Bank's headquarters and main branch are situated in the Mutrah business district. The Bank also has branches in Salalah, Sohar, Sur, Nizwa, Khasab, Buraimi and Rustaq. (The Rustaq branch was opened in November 1988.)

The Housing Bank's loans are granted on easy terms and are heavily subsidized by the Government. This is particularly the case for people



Modern housing conforms to traditional architecture (Photo: Ministry of Housing)

taking out loans who are on limited, low and middle incomes. For example, the interest charged to a person on a monthly income of 200 Omani Rials is 2% payable by the borrower, while 7% is paid by the Government on his behalf. As far as those on monthly incomes of between RO600 and RO800 are concerned, 6% interest is paid by the borrower while the Government pays 3%.

In accordance with the government's policy of developing all regions of the Sultanate, the Bank distributes loans to all the regions, concentrating particularly on the areas outside Muscat.

A typical example of the Bank's success is the Qurm 29 Housing Project which was completed in 1987. It comprises the construction of 28 houses at a cost of RO615,000, with an additional RO76,000 for the electric power grid. In addition the Directorate-General of Technical Affairs at the Muscat Municipality has participated in the paving of the roads and streets within that area without imposing any additional charges on those benefiting from the project.

The Bank also provides mortgages on nationals' property in accordance with its own lending regulations.

The success of the Qurm 29 Project has resulted in other plans being drawn up and co-ordinated with the Ministry of Housing, so that suitable plots of land can be allocated in the wilayats of Buraimi, Nizwa and Ibra for the implementation of similar projects, as a first step towards introducing them generally to all areas of the Sultanate.

From the time that it was set up to the end of 1988 the Oman Housing Bank has provided nationals with 11,902 housing loans totalling RO165 million.

In 1986 the Ministry of Housing began to implement the social housing projects included in the Third Five Year Plan (1986/90) in various parts of the Sultanate. At present there are projects being implemented in 11 wilayats in various regions of the Sultanate. These cover 325 social dwellings, in Bahla (2nd phase), Shinas (Um Al Anah), Liwa, Ibri, Izki (Qala'at Al Awamir), Sur, Nizwa (2nd phase) and Haima, in addition to Shasr, Dhalkut and the Kuria Muria Islands in the Southern Region.

In addition, three other projects covering 170 social dwellings have been assigned to the contractors. Work will begin on them during the course of this year in Jabrin, in the Dakhiliya Region, and Mughsail and Rakhyut in the Southern Region.

Regional structural plans are embodied in the general Government policy for the improvement of living conditions for the people. To this end, preparation work has been assigned to two consultancy firms: one will prepare maps and structural plans for the north and south Batinah regions and the Muscat area, the other will carry out similar work for the Dhahirah, Dakhiliya and Sharqiya regions. Commenced in January this year, all are due to be completed in 16 months.

The Government wishes to control drift to the cities by encouraging people to stay in the rural areas. To achieve this objective, priority is being given to housing in the interior regions of the Sultanate. Under the Third Five Year Plan, RO 35 million has been allocated for housing projects, the major part of which will be spent on housing in the Interior. It is noteworthy that, included in this expenditure, is RO 3,800,000 to be spent on housing for the Bedu tribes, who until very recently have lived a nomadic existence. The Ministry recognises

the importance of not breaking up communities in moving people to new housing sites. Emphasis is therefore placed on the restoration of old houses and their interior modernisation. Close attention is given to the fulfilment of local demands for new housing, commercial and industrial sites. This is done through 27 coordination plans under which the necessary allocations are made. Dhofar is dealt with separately by its local administration.

Housing needs in the Muscat area are expected to be fully met by the planned construction of six townships, of which the Qurm Beach township is virtually complete. In addition to dwellings, these townships will include commercial and industrial construction; they will be provided with water, electricity, clinics, mosques, schools, parking lots, and post and telegraph offices.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said issued Royal Decree No. 48/89 on 20th March 1989, on the Issue of Regulations for the transfer of flats and buildings. This is considered a noble Royal act, since it satisfies many nationals' needs for appropriate accommodation. At the same time, the Oman Housing Bank participates by offering loans to those wishing to purchase flats or houses, in accordance with the Bank's regulations and according to the facilities available.

ENVIRONMENT

From the outset of the country's modern development, a high priority has been placed on the protection of the environment. With its potentially rich agricultural and fisheries resources, it was clearly essential to take practical steps against pollution and protect a countryside which, apart from its cherished beauty, also offered the prospect of a tourist industry that would make a notable contribution to the country's income.

During the early years following his accession in 1970 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al-Said gave his personal attention to the problems of the environment, an attention which has continued to the present time. In 1974 the first law concerning environmental affairs was issued. It was followed by several decisions and laws designed further to secure the territorial waters of the Sultanate.

The establishment of the Council for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution (CCEPP) in 1979 was a significant step towards the achievement of proper environmental control. The Chairmanship is held by His Majesty, thus providing a strong incentive for the efforts being made in this field. In 1982 the Law for the Conservation of the Environment and the Prevention of Pollution was issued, which codifies the ordinances covering all aspects of this important feature of the nation's life.

In 1984, a further step was taken with the establishment of the Ministry of Environment by Royal Decree, and His Highness Sayyid Shabib bin Taimour Al Said was appointed Minister. The new Ministry was assigned the responsibility for implementing the national plan for the environment and the law for the Conservation of Environment and Prevention of Pollution. It was also to provide the required equipment and qualified personnel to deal with emergency cases of pollution, minimise the resulting damage and eliminate their impact.

Oman has valuable fisheries both in coastal areas and in deeper waters which are an important economic asset and require protection. Intensive studies of the coastal areas have been completed, under the direction of the Ministry, to control dumping of hazardous solid wastes, and much else has been done in the field of preventing and combatting marine pollution from land-based sources. The Royal





Exotic fish thrive in Oman's unpolluted waters (Photo: Dr. Rodney V. Salim)

Oman Police, which is responsible for implementing the National Oil-Spill Contingency Plan attends to all oil spillages from sea sources, with which the Ministry of Environment fully co-operates. The Sultanate's membership of several international conventions in this field also effectively contributes to this end.

The Ministry is actively involved in increasing public awareness about the environment, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Youth and the Sultan Qaboos University which includes environmental sciences in its syllabi. In addition, plans to train Omani staff in the several environmental fields are being developed with the co-operation of many international organisations.

The Ministry has already completed studies concerning conservation and management of coastal areas as well as the inception of an integrated system of environmental data collection.

Plans for new industrial enterprises and other structural projects are closely supervised by the Ministry in the light of its responsibilities for conservation. No project can be carried out until a "No Environmental Objection" letter has been issued by the Ministry, which takes into consideration possible environmental effects and the necessity for using all possible means to minimise pollution caused by the emission of waste products.

In the field of nature conservation and the protection of natural resources, a system of nature conservation areas has been prepared for the Sultanate by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which is awaiting approval. In the meantime the Ministry is studying the proposed boundaries of such conservation areas in order to minimise any future adverse environmental impact which might take place in the area.

Much has been done to preserve the fauna and flora of Oman. National protected areas both on land and sea have been designated, and endangered species are now thriving. The reintroduction of the oryx, which had become extinct in Oman in 1972, has been successfully accomplished and, during the past year, action has been taken to protect the turtle breeding grounds on the beaches at Ras Al Hadd, which were being endangered by visitors and sightseers; further measures are being studied to strengthen the existing ones in successfully protecting the environment in all its facets.



Flamingoes at a nature reserve (Photo: Mohamed Al Wadhahy)

NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The Sultanate of Oman is rich in history and historic remains covering several thousand years. Soon after he took over the reins of government in 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos directed that a Ministry be set up to be responsible for the research, recording and conservation of the country's rich heritage. Today, Oman is one of the few countries in the world to have a Ministry of National Heritage and Culture. Over the succeeding years the achievements of the Ministry have been impressive. They range from the preservation and restoration of historic forts and archaeological sites, to the establishment of museums and their organisation, the collection and collation of ancient books and manuscripts, and the encouragement of traditional handicrafts, as well as the promotion of cultural exhibitions abroad.

Most of the research information is published in the *Journal of Oman Studies*, an authoritative publication. Important discoveries dating back to the Stone Age have been made and artefacts several thousand years old have been found in the deserts bordering the Empty Quarter. The Ministry keeps in close contact with international organisations such as UNESCO. Recently, UNESCO classified the famous Bahla fort as a "World Heritage Site."

The Necropolis of Bat, near Ibri, is another site inscribed by UNESCO in the "World Cultural Heritage List." The Ministry has now applied for the ancient town of Qalhat to be included in the List.

Monuments inscribed in UNESCO's list are internationally recognised as part of the authentic heritage of the country to which they belong.

Oman's Architecture Preserved

The successful restoration of historic citadels, forts and ancient buildings — a work which is continuing — has been a considerable undertaking which ranks among the Ministry's most impressive achievements. A notable example has been the castle of Jabrin, originally built by Bilarub bin Sultan in the 17th century as a residential palace, one of the treasures of Omani architecture, which has been completely restored. Restoration work has also been carried out on the forts at Nizwa, Hazm, Bidbid and Barka. The magnificent fort at Rostaq, a former capital of Oman, which stands in a commanding



A 12-metre long sperm whale on display at the Natural History Museum (Photo: Oman News Agency)

position guarding the approaches to the great massif of the Jebel Akhdar, is another of Oman's treasures which has been carefully restored to its former grandeur. In Muscat the two great forts, Merani and Jalali, poised on lofty crags overlooking Muscat bay and walled city, have been restored to their original glory, as has the fort on the rocky pinnacle overlooking the neighbouring town of Muttrah. The programme for further restoration work includes other forts, the most conspicuous of which is the magnificent and imposing fort at Bahla, which dominates the town of that name and the surrounding area. Under a Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed between Oman and Morocco, the Ministry has engaged Moroccan experts to assist in the restoration of some of the Sultanate's historic forts and castles.

Oman has many other fine historic buildings worthy of preservation and restoration. Among those already restored and renovated are the

Sayyid Nadir Mansion and the Sayyida Muzna Mansion within the walls of Muscat.

Historic Manuscripts and other Documents are carefully collated

The Ministry is also engaged in the acquisition and preservation of ancient manuscripts and documents. The oldest manuscript at present in its possession is an interpretation of the Sharia Law dated 918 Hijri (AD 1512); others on medicine dated 1084 (AD 1763) and 1305 Hijri (AD 1888), and on astronomy dated 1122 Hijri (AD 1710) are also part of the historical collection. The Ministry estimates that as many as 30,000 manuscripts could be in private hands in the Sultanate, but although it is prepared to purchase them for a handsome price the owners often wish to retain them for family reasons.

Artefacts, flora and fauna

An historical museum has been established at Qurm near Muscat, with many fine displays. Another museum has been assembled at the premises of the Ministry's Islamic Library. The objects on display range from various types of weapons to old pottery and traditional costumes. Highly popular is the Natural History Museum, adjacent to the Ministry, which has recently been enlarged. The exhibits comprise an interesting range of Oman's flora and fauna, including examples of wildlife such as the oryx, Arabian tahr, caracal lynx, leopard and the complete skeleton of a 12-metre long sperm whale. Also to be seen are collections of seashells, butterflies, moths and bees. An interesting very recent addition is a fossilized tree trunk, estimated to be 260 million years old.

Current and recent cultural activities

A Cultural Centre at Salalah has been recently completed, comprising a museum, library and halls for various cultural activities. Traditional handicrafts are strongly encouraged by the Ministry. The Ministry provides craftsmen with tools and materials and buys their products for sale at its five national handicraft centres and shops. The programme has the two-fold aim of preserving Oman's culture and encouraging rural people to remain in the countryside.



Omani traditional handicrafts are a popular "buy" with tourists (Photo: Oman News Agency)

The Literary Society

At His Majesty's personal direction, an impressive building now houses the Literary Society at Seeb. Apart from being a rendezvous for the many Omani poets and men of literature, the Society organises poetry sessions, lectures and a variety of other literary activities in which Omani and other Arab literati participate.

The Mobile Bookshop

To encourage the reading habit and to facilitate access to books by Omani citizens, the Ministry has set up a mobile bookshop. Air-conditioned vans completely equipped to carry books, tour the country's regions to distribute books and reading material to the populace, the aim being to provide books to the citizens at their doorstep, thus avoiding lengthy journeys to the nearest major town.

Cultural Exhibitions

Among the Ministry's cultural activities is the holding abroad of Cultural Weeks, in order to acquaint people outside Oman with the historical and cultural background of the Sultanate. On these occasions, exhibitions are mounted, displaying Oman's artefacts, archaeological objects, handicrafts, manuscripts etc. So far, these Cultural Weeks have been successfully held in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Austria and a number of Arab countries.

The Silk Road Project

UNESCO is sponsoring a project to explore the Old Silk Road from West to East in 1990. The project involves three stages — a journey overland from Europe across Asia, another involving adventure trips on horseback called "The Steppe Journey," and a "Voyage of Dialogue" by sea. Oman, with its long maritime tradition, is to play a leading role in the third stage. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has graciously agreed to lend the Royal Yacht "Fulk Al Salamah" for the "Voyage of Dialogue." The ship will sail from Venice in October 1990, and during its 100-day odyssey will call at more than a dozen ports, each of which has contributed to the legends of the Silk Route. These ports will include Alexandria, Muscat, Karachi, Colombo, Takwa in Thailand, Palimbong in Java, Guangzhou (Canton), in China, and Osaka in Japan.

During its week-long halt in Muscat, members of the international team aboard "Fulk Al Salamah" will participate in a maritime seminar on the sea routes to the East. Various cultural activities, organised by the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, will be staged in Muscat, including an exhibition and visits by the scientists to places of historical interest.

Arab Names Project

The Advisory Committee for the Sultan Qaboos Academic Names Project was set up in 1985 on the personal initiative of His Majesty for the research and recording of Omani Arabic names. The Committee is chaired by His Excellency Mallalah bin Ali bin Habib, Adviser at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture. The entire project is under the auspices of H.E. Mohamed bin Al Zubair bin Ali, Economic Planning Affairs Adviser to His Majesty. The project was initially intended to last three years, but the scope of the work was found to be

so vast that it was decided to extend it until 1990, when its first volume of record is due to be published. The project is expected to provide a series of titles illustrating various renderings of names common in the Arab world. Alongside the main compedium will be a guide to the names of prominent Omani personalities — an index giving essential data on each personality. This guide will contain more than a thousand names of those who are major figures in history, in the arts, literature, jurisprudence, and the military.

The Omani National Committee for the project and its advisers are at present reviewing the material collected for the Guide. A simplified Guide to Arab Names will be released soon after the publication of the main encyclopaedia to assist, among other practical and academic aims, parents to choose names for their children.

INTERIOR

For the greater part of this century the Sultanate of Oman was a mysterious region about which little was known, and our relations with the outside world were limited. With a few exceptions, the country was barred to foreigners, and most Omanis were not permitted to leave the Sultanate except in cases of extreme necessity.

Before 1970 the Sultanate did not have a government structure in the modern sense. At that time, only one Ministry had been established — the Ministry of the Interior. It was called Al-Dakhiliya (Supervision of the Interior) and was responsible for administering interior affairs through the Walis — the regional Governors appointed by Royal command. The Ministry of the Interior still exercises this same responsibility today.

The winds of change blew across the Sultanate in 1970 with the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and tangible changes began to take place in every sphere. Oman became blessed with a strong central government that was able to lay the foundations of security and stability. The country was opened up to foreigners, internal and foreign trade flourished, land and air routes were established, public services became generally available, the benefits of modern technology were tapped and the appropriate aspects of development and progress were adopted.

The Ministry of the Interior fully participated in this progress and development, and combined the sound aspects of modern administrative systems with the best of the traditional systems, training the administrative cadres needed to run the country's regions. Now the Sultanate is divided into 52 Wilayats or regions. These include: the Governorate of Muscat, which is administered by a Governor at ministerial level; eight in Dhofar, which come under the administration of the Minister of State and Wali of Dhofar; four in the Musandam Governorate; and other Wilayats over the length and breadth of the Sultanate, which are administered by the Ministry of the Interior.

One of the Ministry's notable successes has been its ability to maintain the traditional links between the tribal authorities and the Wilayat administrations. The Shaikhs of the tribes are subject to the Walis, who are appointed by the Government to assume responsibility for their

regions. The Walis exchange views with the Ministry of the Interior on important matters affecting their Wilayats, and pass on Government policy received through the Ministry of the Interior to the Shaikhs of the tribes, which is then communicated to the public.

The Walis traditionally enjoy the respect of all members of the public, in view of the direct ties that have historically linked them together. They perform an important role in boosting the development process through their meetings and consultations with the directors of Government bodies, and through their supervision of the progress of projects, co-ordination of activities between the different bodies in their Wilayats, and their chairmanship of numerous local committees concerned with development. Their distinctive status enables them to remove any obstacles that may stand in the way of those projects.

The progress and development achieved by the Ministry of the Interior is not limited solely to the administrative and organisational aspects. The period referred to has also seen the introduction of a number of development projects, the most important of which has been the construction of the building of the general Diwan of the Ministry and administrative accommodation for the Walis, thus providing an efficient organisational structure from which to operate. In addition, during the age of what all Omanis regard as the blessed renaissance, the Ministry has been provided with the most advanced equipment to meet its requirements. The Ministry is now maintaining the momentum of its progress with plans which will ensure it will worthily support the overall progress and development that the country is achieving.





*The End Al Adha festival is celebrated in traditional style in the Intergovernmental
Ethiopia - Arab League Region*

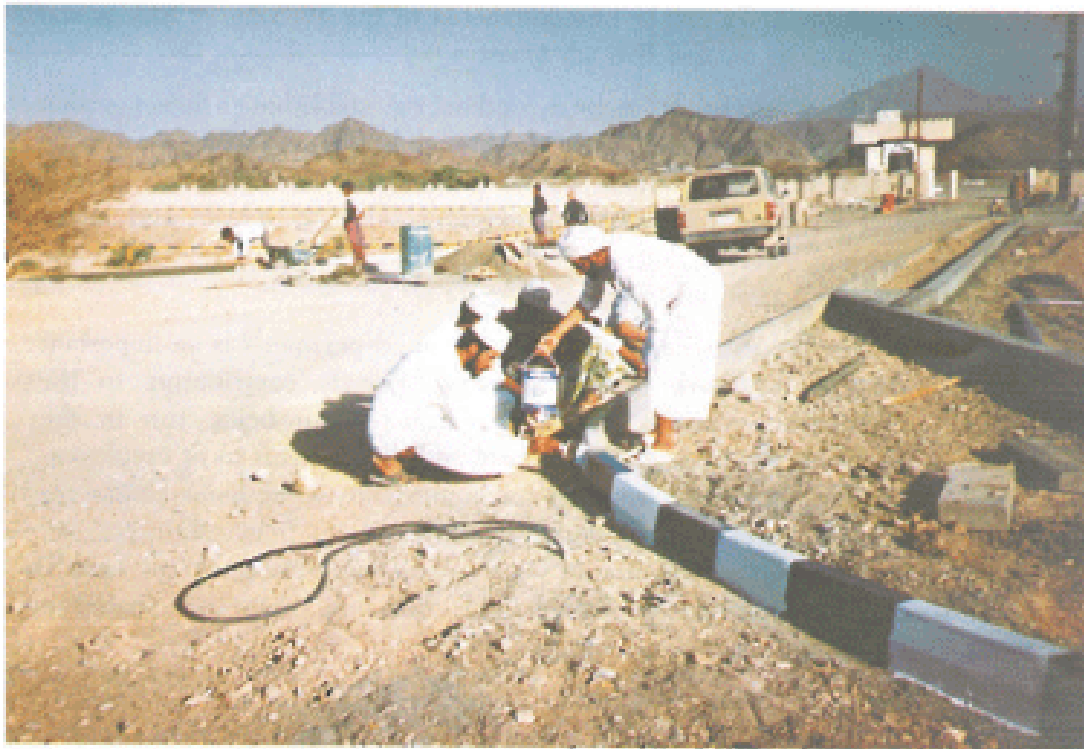
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES

A first-time visitor to the Sultanate of Oman will be struck by the impeccable appearance of the country: the absence of slum dwellings and litter in the streets and the general cleanliness, which now exists throughout the Sultanate. To someone who knew the country 20 years ago this achievement is even more impressive; particularly in the Interior, where of necessity development has come later, a determined drive is in progress to improve the appearance of towns and villages and amenities for the people.

Today, the overall responsibility for all these projects belongs to the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, which was created in 1985 to replace the Directorate General of Rural Municipalities which was part of the former Ministry of Land Affairs and Municipalities. In addition to the former municipal services, the Ministry is now entrusted with widening and promoting these services, establishing Local Municipal Committees, representing Municipal Affairs at regional and international conferences, establishing training facilities, and cooperating with other governmental organs in order to carry out municipal functions effectively.

The Ministry gives high priority to the improvement of amenities in the various municipalities, in many cases in the Interior where such amenities were formerly non-existent. This requires consultation and coordination with Walis (Governors) and other Ministries in such matters as health and social affairs. Close attention has to be paid to the views and wishes of the local population in regions where amenity provision has to follow closely behind the development of communications.

Cooperation between the Ministry and other Ministries has brought about many achievements, ranging from the strictly functional to the beautification of towns and villages. Minor roads have been constructed, sun shelters erected along the roads — a necessary innovation for the heat of summer — and refuse disposal facilities, drainage of swamps — the breeding grounds of malaria-bearing mosquitoes — have been provided, market stalls have been constructed for the sale of meat, fish, fruit and vegetables, public toilets have been built and cemeteries repaired and enclosed. Car parks have been laid out and public parks with playgrounds for children are now a



Road maintenance in the Interior (Photo: Ministry of Regional Municipalities)

feature of every municipality. Trees have been planted along streets and roads, and even the traffic roundabouts have gardens in the centre.

Close attention is given to health services in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. This extends to preventive health sections, inspection of shops and restaurants and of foodstuffs. Officials are being trained to take up supervisory roles over the granting of licences to people working in public places or with jobs of a special type, involving the sale of foodstuffs and other services which may affect the health of the public.

As a result of agreements signed last year, heavy vehicles, machinery and equipment are to be brought into service at a cost of nearly RO 1½ million to improve the performance of the transport system in the regional municipalities. This will support development in the remote and rugged regions of the Interior. A central workshop is to be built to serve the municipalities in the Dhakiliya and Dhahira regions for the maintenance of machinery, equipment and vehicles. Regional Muni-

cial buildings are to be constructed in the Wilayats of Shinas and Khabourah on the Batinah Coast.

This year, studies are to be carried out on establishing a flower garden on the Batinah coast, while children's playground facilities are to be extended in the Naseem Public Gardens. Tree-planting along roads will continue together with improvements to streets and street lighting. Old markets will be improved, while at the same time retaining their historic character.

A training programme for newly-recruited personnel is an important part of the work of the Ministry, directly contributing to the Omanization drive. Specialisation courses are being run in the financial, administrative, technical and health fields to fit employees for posts at Ministry and regional municipality level. Some employees are being sent to other friendly countries to gain practical experience. In 1988, 33 training courses were completed in the technical, health, administrative and personnel fields. 160 employees participated in these courses.

INFORMATION

One of the major problems which faced His Majesty Sultan Qaboos on his accession in 1970 was the entire lack of means of communicating with his people. There were no newspapers, radio or television or even an internal mail system. Those who owned transistors were entirely dependent on foreign radio broadcasts for news of the outside world. Events inside the Sultanate could only be passed uncertainly by word of mouth.

Within a week of His Majesty's accession, a small broadcasting station of only one kw was installed at Bait Al Falaj which enabled the inhabitants of Muscat and its immediate area to hear a national radio for the first time. It was by this means that His Majesty made his initial broadcast to the nation outlining his intentions for the development of the country. Two years later, in 1972, a new radio station of 10 kw was inaugurated, broadcasting regularly 14 hours a day and 18 hours on holidays. In 1975 broadcasting commenced on a 100 kw medium transmitter and a 50 kw short wave installation. In Salalah, broadcasting first began in 1971, and in 1975 a new radio station was opened there broadcasting on the same wavelengths. Additional transmitters were subsequently sited in many parts of the country to strengthen and relay national broadcasts to the entire Sultanate.

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

Oman broadcasting is thus making a valuable contribution to the cultural, religious, social and scientific renaissance of the country through its special programmes in addition to its news and entertainment functions.

Broadcasts are now made in Arabic for 19½ hours daily and in the English language for 14 hours daily. Programmes in English are broadcast from 1200 hours to 1500 hours each day. The main news in English is at 0730, 1430 and 1830 hours daily, with news highlights at



During the year, the Ministry has held photographic displays in a number of countries. Here students view the Ministry's exhibition in Singapore

1100 hours and 2100 hours. Classical music is broadcast from 0700 hours to 1200 hours and light and popular music from 1500 hours to 2100 hours. There are also news headlines in English at 1200 and 1300 hours daily.

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

Television broadcasting has naturally greatly extended the ability to provide information, entertainment and education for the people, and additional studios for broadcasting and recording programmes, and for the filming of plays and serials have been constructed. A fleet of motor vehicles has also been taken into service for outside transmissions and tele-recording. 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 installed throughout the Sultanate. In 1979, the two television stations at Muscat and Salalah were linked by space satellite to provide daily transmissions from the studios of both stations, to serve the maximum number of viewers. The television service has been particularly effective in providing information and guidance in such matters as health, education, agriculture, industry and family affairs and child care.

Television broadcasts are transmitted for ten hours daily: on weekdays from 1500 hours to 0100 hours and from 1000 hours to 2300 hours on Fridays. There is a daily English-language news bulletin at 2100 hours.

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

A handsome new headquarters for the Ministry of Information at Al Qurin is to be opened this year, which will also contain the new radio station and studios. This comprehensive complex provides accommodation for work, residence, and recreational and cultural facilities including a gymnasium, swimming pool, tennis and squash courts, shopping centre and nursery.

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

From only one newspaper in the early 1970s, a wide selection of political, social and specialised publications has now been developed. There are now two Arabic daily newspapers and one English language daily, as well as an English weekly newspaper. There are also four Arabic social and political weekly magazines and one monthly Arabic social magazine for women. Commercial advertising has been introduced on radio and television.



A television play in production

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

Plans for further development of the television service include a new transmitter for the Muscat area, one at Saiq on the Jebel Akhdar to cover that area and part of the Sharqiya, a transmitter at Bahla to cover the Interior, a transmitter in Bani bu Ali for the Jaalan and for the Bedu tribes, and transmitters in Birka and Shinas to provide coverage for the Batinah coast.

JUSTICE, AWQAF AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

In spite of its distance from the Holy Cities of Mecca and Madina, Oman was one of the first countries of Arabia to adopt Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed, a faith which it has staunchly held during the succeeding centuries. Under Islam, religion and the law are interwoven, and thus Shari'a law is the law of Oman. It was only natural, therefore, that following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos the processes of religious affairs and of the law should be conducted by the same Ministry. Thus the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs was established.

The Ministry has the responsibility for setting up Shari'a courts in the Sultanate, administering them, supervising their activities and maintaining the competence of their performance. Its purpose is to see that prompt judgements are given in cases put before these courts in accordance with the Shari'a laws, that everyone receives the rights to which they are entitled, and that justice, tranquility and security prevail. The Ministry hears appeals against judgements issued by the Shari'a courts in Muscat and the wilayats, thus guaranteeing the greatest possible degree of justice in any dispute that may arise between citizens. It coordinates the activities of the courts to ensure veracity of evidence, and provides for on-the-spot investigation of disputes before judgement is given. Legal and organisational training is provided at the Institute of Shari'a Jurisprudence, Counsel and Guidance, thus enabling legal cadres to discharge their responsibilities efficiently and ensuring they are fitted for the proper performance of their duties.

The Sultanate takes an active part in Arab and Islamic organisations and conferences concerned with justice, thus developing contacts with the Islamic and Arab world in this connection and providing brother countries with the benefits of Oman's experience.

By last year, the number of the Sultanate's Shari'a courts had been increased to 45, of which one is in Muscat and the remainder in the other regions, averaging one court in each wilayat. As part of the current Five Year Plan, existing courts are being modernised and new buildings constructed. A Court of Appeal has been established in



A religious address in the Sultan Qaboos University Mosque (Photo: Sultan Qaboos University)

Muscat to hear appeals against judgements issued by the Shari'a courts. 1,250 cases went to appeal before this court during the past year.

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

1. Spreading the teachings of the True Islamic Religion within the Sultanate, through counsel and guidance in the mosques, through the media, and through establishing Islamic cultural libraries.
2. Taking part in Islamic activities abroad, through organisations, conferences and meetings, and exchanging visits with members of the Islamic community and Arab States, particularly the States of the AGCC. In addition, coordinating activities in the light of the directives and decisions issued by the political leadership of these States.
3. Making preparations for the Hajj pilgrimage season, and drawing up rules and regulations to enable Omanis to perform this duty

under the best possible circumstances in coordination with the Saudi authorities. Also enabling the Omani Hajj delegation to make its annual journey to oversee all aspects of the pilgrims' welfare in the Holy places.

4. Establishing, restoring and maintaining the mosques in the Sultanate, and handling their affairs in order to enable them to carry out their mission.
5. Organising both the revenue and expenditure of Zakat (alms) affairs.
6. Overseeing and maintaining all types of Awqaf (religious properties) and endeavouring to increase their revenue, development and regulation.
7. The Bait-Al-Mal (Public Treasury) properties, and for drawing up the rules and regulations for their maintenance and the development of their resources.
8. Looking after the property of orphans and administering bequests, maintaining them, and implementing Shari'a court decisions relating to these properties and the regulations for dealing with them.

The Holy Koran schools are the basic source for those wishing to memorise the Holy Koran and learn the elements of reading and writing, especially in the remote regions. These schools played an important role in training many generations before regular, modern schools became widespread. Even today, they play a vital part and still attract increasing numbers of boys and girls with each passing year, in addition to the fact that there are modern schools available for them. Nowadays, students come to them to learn the Holy Koran outside their hours of study at their schools of general education. Our people's interest can be clearly seen in their keen enthusiasm to join these schools during the summer holidays. Consequently the Ministry has opened a number of summer centres for this purpose which operate during the normal school summer holiday period.

CIVIL SERVICE

A new Ministry, the Ministry of Civil Service, was established by Royal Decree in February last year as an important step in His Majesty the Sultan's policy to provide the Sultanate with a progressively modern governmental infrastructure.

Before 1970 and before the oil revenues which started in 1967 began to become significant, the financial limitations on the Sultanate were such that the development of a modern infrastructure of Government was not feasible. The country was administered from Muscat by a few officials and by the Walis (provincial governors) appointed by the Sultan. Some areas, notably Musandam Peninsula in the north, which is separated physically from the remainder of the Sultanate by a wedge of U.A.E. territory, and areas of the Ja'alan in the south-east, were totally without administration. Thus H.M. Sultan Qaboos, on taking over in 1970, was faced with the daunting task of developing a modern society from an almost mediaeval basis.

Since 1970, much had been achieved in the different areas of the Civil Service, including the organisation and classification of jobs, training, personnel affairs and in other administrative and technical fields. In the beginning, the Diwan of Personnel Affairs played a major role in formulating the Civil Service regulations. In 1980 the Diwan was entrusted with the preparation of a new Civil Service Law to bring it into line with the organisation and administrative developments that had taken place.

It was established that the Diwan of Personnel Affairs was to be independent of other Ministries and administrative bodies, with sufficient technically qualified personnel to enable it to carry out its role and exercise its functions.

When the Ministry of Civil Service was established last year, its functions were defined in a Royal Decree; these included:

1. Implementation of the general policy approved for the Civil Service.
2. Recommending draft laws related to the Civil Service, and preparing regulations and standardised schedules for salaries, allowances and grants and referring them to the Civil Service Council.



The new Ministry of Civil Service building (Photo: Oman News Agency)

3. Preparing plans for administration development and job reorganisation and, after obtaining the consent of the Civil Service Council, submitting them to the Council of Ministers for approval.
4. Preparing administration training plans in cooperation with the organisations concerned.
5. Examining Civil Service problems and finding appropriate solutions for them in the light of the laws and regulations in force and the requirements of the public interest.
6. Providing technical assistance, expressing opinions on employee affairs to the Government apparatus, classifying and planning jobs, preparing schedules for them, and simplifying procedures, organisation and training.
7. Following up the implementation of the Civil Service Law and its

rules and regulations with all Government units subject to its provisions.

8. Implementing the laws on pensions and end-of-service benefits, and the regulations related to them.
9. Allocating graduates who have been on scholarships or who have received study grants and assistance, in accordance with the law on scholarships and study grants, in addition to other graduates or holders of General Certificates, in the light of their specialisations and the actual needs and priorities that serve the aims of the State's development plans.
10. Exercise of the other powers assigned to the Diwan of Personnel Affairs in the decrees, rules and regulations in force.
11. Ensuring that Omani employees working in the Ministry obtain appropriate qualifications and training.

Training is one of the Ministry's principal responsibilities. The Training Department is therefore a major component of the Ministry's organisation. Employees take part in administrative seminars as well as study groups organised by the Institute of Public Administration in the Sultanate, the Arab Organisation for Administrative Sciences, and Institutes of Administration in States of the AGCC and elsewhere.

During the current year, training has been provided for General Secondary graduates in Arabic and English typing, computers and other secretarial skills offering attractive opportunities for young people in Ministries and Government institutions and giving impetus to the process of Omanisation. During last year, 400 employees were sent on various training programmes outside the Sultanate, 404 studied at the Institute of Public Administration and 300 attended English-language courses held in the Sultanate. Also, during the year, 98 General Secondary graduates qualified for employment in Government institutions; 50 graduates completed a secretarial programme and were subsequently employed. Further courses are in progress this year, including computer training.

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

employment. 220 graduates were recruited under these schemes during the past year.

The Ministry also implements the regulations on pensions and end-of-service benefits, through a Directorate-General, which processes all applications.

In the training year 1987/88 the Institute of Public Administration held 38 courses in Muscat, Salalah and Sohar covering financial administration, clerical training, organisation and work-methods, administration of individuals' affairs, English language, local administration, documentation and publishing, and computers. This year's programme is being expanded to include other subjects, notably those covering office work.

For the future, the Civil Service Ministry aims to keep pace with development in the Sultanate, within its area of competence, by modernising the Ministry's functions, including training its personnel in computers and General Secondary graduates for appointments in its job classification departments. It will also be responsible for implementing developments in the Civil Service Law, further developing the present job classification system, and the Pensions and End-of-Service Pensions Law and giving impetus to the training of General Secondary graduates to enable them to replace foreigners. The Ministry will also concentrate on the introduction of computerisation of its operations.

Publisher Registration No. 700/89.

Printed by Oman Newspaper House

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