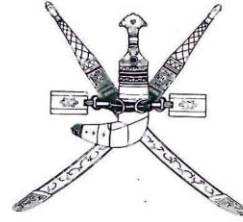


OMAN 1986





Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Information

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CONTENTS

General Review	4
History	14
Geography	18
Government	26
Foreign Affairs	31
Defence	40
Police	46
Economy	53
Oil and Gas	63
Mining	69
Agriculture and Fisheries	71
Water	77
Electricity	81
Social Affairs	83
Labour	85
Communications	88
Postal and Telecommunications Services	92
Education	96
Youth Affairs	103
Health	108
Housing	112
Musandam	116
Environment	120
National Heritage and Culture	124



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



GENERAL REVIEW

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has ruled Oman since 1970. Under his leadership, the country has made such spectacular economic and social progress that it is hardly recognisable as the land he inherited just 16 years ago. Two successive five-year development plans, the second of which ended last year, 1985 generated high economic growth and dramatically raised the people's living standards. The economy has absorbed the sharp recession in oil prices without substantially affecting its targets, since nearly all major essential infrastructure projects have already been completed. As a precautionary measure the government adjusted the parity of the Omani Rial to the U.S. dollar by 10.2 per cent from US\$2.89 to US\$2.60 in late-January. The move was made to improve the country's balance of payments position and to increase government revenue. The Sultanate also reduced projected current, capital and development expenditure by 10 per cent in the 1986 budget estimates. The vital health and education sectors have not been seriously affected.

The government is currently carrying out studies on the economic structure with a view to concentrating still further on developing new economic resources and government expenditure priorities.

The main feature of the third five-year plan (1986-1990) is a gradual shift of government expenditure, now that infrastructure projects are largely completed, towards investment in production of goods and services, and the exploitation of non-oil resources.

The private sector, which is already playing a successful supporting role in developing the economy will be further encouraged to invest in various development fields. To this end, the government is making large allocations of funds available to the industrial sector and to finance specialised banks such as the Oman Bank for Agriculture and Fisheries, the Oman Development Bank and the Oman Housing Bank. These banks will work together with the commercial banks in financing viable commercial projects.

The new development plan, details of which are being finalised, will reflect the government's conservative financial policies. These have placed a maximum ceiling on net borrowings and ensured that appropriate means are available to handle the impact of lower oil prices.

Fort Marani provides a background to the graceful architecture of Al-Khor Mosque. ►



At the time of writing (August 1986) Oman is currently producing a daily average of 550,000 barrels of crude petroleum. Production in the first quarter of this year reached 49 million barrels and, despite the world oil glut, 44.5 million barrels were exported. Government oil revenue was estimated at RO369 million.

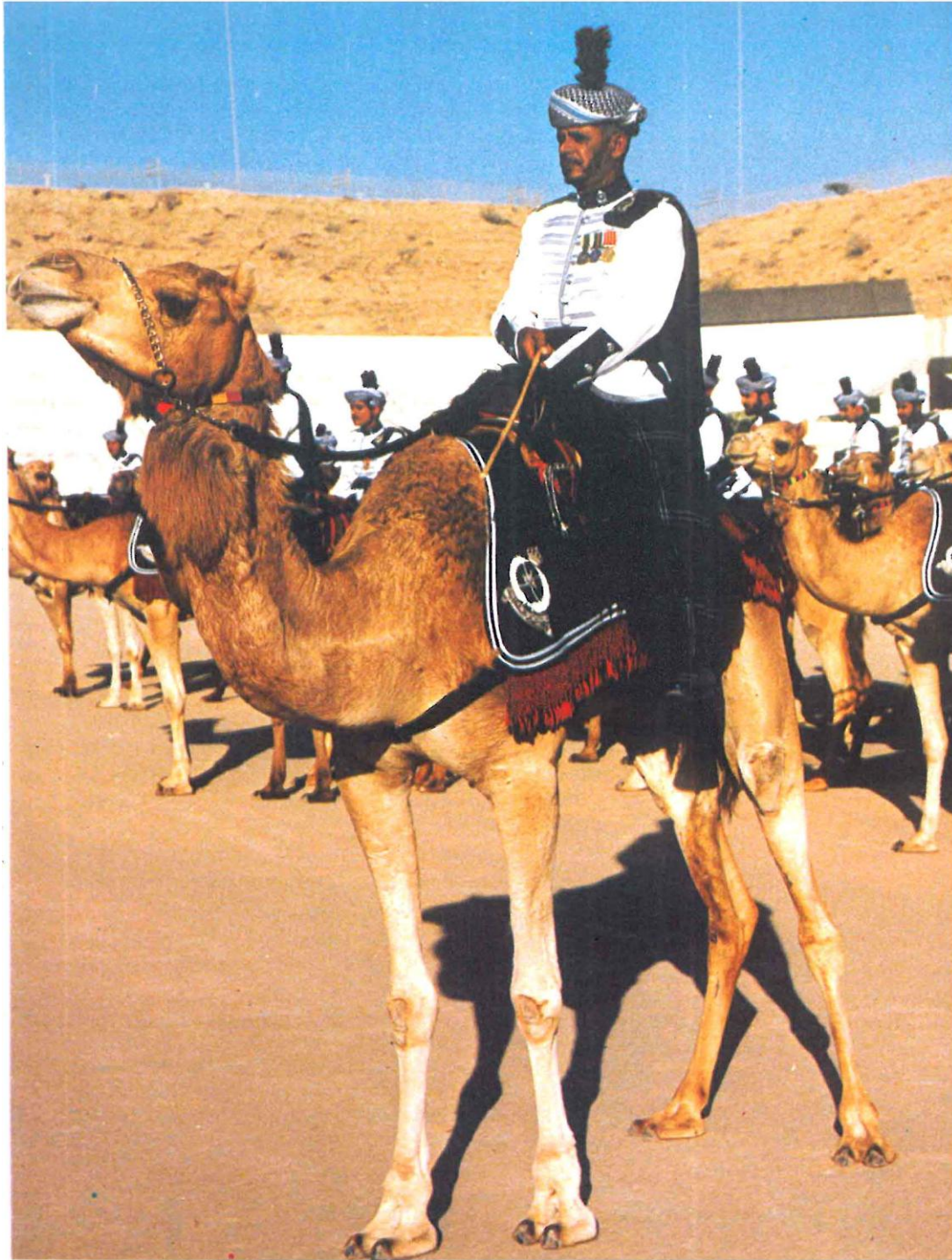
Oman is not a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and is, therefore, free to adjust production to meet foreign demands for its high-quality crude. Sales are readily made since buyers pay substantially less in tanker insurance charges due to the fact that Oman's oil port at Al Fahal on the Gulf of Oman lies outside the Gulf war zone. Equally important is Oman's pricing policy: virtually all Oman's oil is sold on 12-month contracts but prices are tied to the free market levels retrospectively.

Funds have been allocated for increased exploration and drilling for oil and gas under the current plan. Although Oman has been increasing oil output sharply in recent years to offset shortfalls in government revenues, the rate of increase in recoverable reserves has outstripped production. In 1985, for instance, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) discovered new sources which can yield 210 million barrels of high-grade oil — 28 million barrels more than the amount extracted. Reassessment of known PDO fields added another 130 million barrels to the recoverable reserves. The Sultanate's proven reserves totalled 4.01 billion barrels at the end of 1985 compared with 2.5 billion barrels at the start of the second five-year plan in 1981. PDO produces 98 per cent of Oman's crude petroleum. Its unit production cost in 1985 was US\$4.33 (per barrel) which includes the cost of exploration and exploitation of new finds.

Oman has other natural resources — agriculture, fisheries and minerals — which will be further developed. Manufacturing is another sector into which the Sultanate has diversified its economy.

Although the commercial exploitation of oil began in 1967, virtually no other economic development had taken place. At that time, and indeed until His Majesty's accession, there were only three primary schools solely for boys, one 12-bed hospital and 10 km of asphalted road. Electricity was for a privileged few. Thousands of Omanis left the country to study and live abroad. A foreign-sponsored rebellion was in progress in the south.

Oman: Land of pageantry and tradition (Photograph: Gill Marais) ►



In the face of these formidable problems His Majesty, in his first public statement after his accession, promised his people: "I shall work with every possible haste to make your life happy in preparation for a better future. In this duty, I need the assistance of every one of you. Our nation in the past was glorious and powerful. If we work together, cooperating on a united front, we shall be able to regain our past glory so as to claim our rightful place in the world."

Thus His Majesty spelt out his vision of a new Oman. The Omani people responded to his call. Thousands returned from voluntary exile, and domestic support for the rebellion collapsed as people saw that the national resources were to be devoted to their welfare and that widespread reforms were being introduced.

A massive development programme was launched. Schools, hospitals and clinics, roads and houses were built. Welfare aid was introduced. Two new ports were built: at Muscat, the capital, and at Raysut. An airport at Seeb, capable of handling the world's largest airliners, began operations in 1973 while a second airport at Salalah catered for domestic flights.

Postal services and telecommunications were established. At the same time, His Majesty introduced a programme of political and social reform with a Council of Ministers appointed to run the day-to-day government of the country. For the first time, girls attended schools.

By 1975, a soundly-based economic and social infrastructure had evolved, making further development possible. Qualified Omani women had also begun to fill important posts in government, the social services and commerce. That year also saw the end of the foreign-sustained rebellion.

In 1976, Oman launched its first five-year plan. It achieved its basic aims of expanding the economy and further improving the standard of living of the people.

The stage was thus set for the launching in 1981 of Oman's second five-year plan. Two other significant events also took place in 1981:

Oman became a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council whose other member states are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar. At home, Oman took a major step in political reform: a 45-member State Consultative Council was established to give the people a voice in the planning and development of the country's affairs. The

Council proved so successful that after its first term of two years, membership was enlarged to 55. Today, the Council is serving its third term.

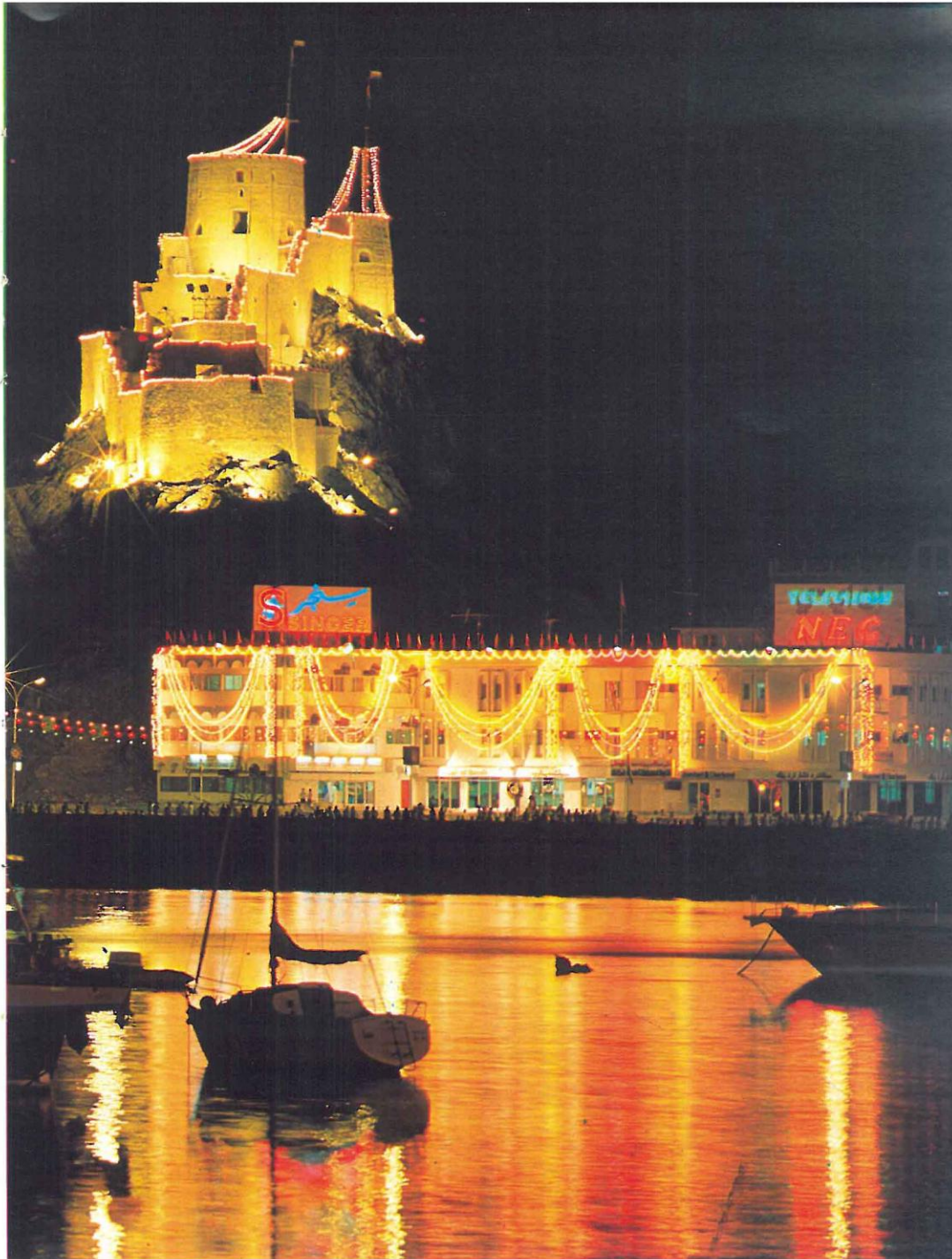
In addition to direct contact with his people through the State Consultative Council, His Majesty also keeps in constant touch with Omanis at grass roots level by touring the country extensively. These annual tours, which have become popularly known as "meet the people" sessions, enable His Majesty to find out for himself whether the government is meeting the people's needs and if they understand and approve its policies.

Oman completed its second five-year plan at the end of 1985. Gross domestic product at current prices was estimated at a record RO3,464.4 million, compared with RO2,063.5 million in 1980, the base year. The increase was RO1,427.9 million (69.2 per cent) although the price of oil had begun to decline three years earlier.

In 1985, agriculture and fisheries contributed RO98.5 million, natural gas RO36 million and manufacturing RO111.1 million, as against RO52.6 million, RO12.3 million and RO15.6 million respectively. Crude petroleum generated RO1,609.3 million, compared with RO267.2 million in 1980. Total exports reached an all-time high of RO1,717 million compared with RO1,294.5 million in 1980. A significant development was the increase of non-oil exports from a mere RO4.6 million to RO22.9 million. The fishing industry was also beginning to play a valuable role in the economy: Oman was now exporting fish worth RO8.8 million to a growing world market. Crude petroleum exports in 1985 were worth RO1,597 million, representing about 92.5 per cent of the country's total exports. Government revenue from oil was RO1,510.1 million, representing 80.6 per cent of the total revenue. Following the development of the oil sector, Oman's trade balance has always been in surplus. Last year, the surplus was RO555 million.

On the social side, development was equally impressive during the 1981-1985 period. Not only were more schools built but the quality of education was greatly improved. At the start of the 1980/1981 school year, there were 373 schools in the academic stream; by the beginning of the 1985/1986 school term the number had risen to 588. To meet Oman's needs for its own trained manpower, the scope of education was also expanded to include teacher training institutes, adult education establishments, commercial schools, an agricultural insti-





tute, a technical secondary school and the Oman Technical and Industrial College whose first batch of 65 students is expected to graduate in March 1987. In September 1986, the Sultan Qaboos University accepted its first intake of students for its five colleges — Engineering, Agriculture, Science, Medicine, and Education and Islamic Studies. The choice of disciplines reflects His Majesty's policy of preparing young Omanis to fill positions vital to the future development of the country.

With better qualified Omanis coming forward, including university graduates from abroad, Omanisation of executive posts in all fields is gaining momentum.

By the end of 1985, Oman's health services were available to people in all parts of the country. With better health care, the incidence of disease has dropped, particularly among young children, who at one time suffered extensively from preventable diseases such as diphtheria, tuberculosis, polio, and trachoma.

The upgrading of the health services will continue to receive high priority during the current five-year plan. As part of this policy, the Health Ministry is to provide more specialised hospital treatment with the opening in January 1987, of the 560-bed Royal Hospital at Al Ghubrah. More health centres will be opened in remote areas, primary health services and facilities at existing district hospitals will be improved, and diagnostic and supporting services at secondary and tertiary levels will be upgraded.

More emphasis will be paid to the preventive health services through mass vaccination against preventable diseases, particularly among young children. Existing intensive programmes to control malaria, trachoma and intestinal diseases will be further strengthened.

In the Capital area, the Al Ghubrah desalination complex is now able to produce 23 million gallons of water daily, enough to meet the needs of the area's population until 1989. The bulk of the population also has power supplies. High priority under the current plan is to be given to the improvement of water and power supplies in rural towns and villages.

Today, the country has an extensive road network. All major towns are connected to the capital by asphalted highways and small towns and villages are linked to one another by graded roads. Highways now traverse the entire Sultanate from north

to south, from the border with the United Arab Emirates, through the Capital, Muscat, to Salalah.

During the 1981-1985 period, port facilities at Mina Qaboos and Mina Raysut were expanded to handle the growing number of ships, calling at those ports, and the increase in cargo, including container traffic.

The 1981-1985 period also saw Oman grow in importance as an air traffic centre, with an increasing number of international airlines calling at Seeb, the Capital's airport. To cope with the higher passenger and air traffic movements, as well as the increase in air cargo, considerable improvements and extensions were made to Seeb International Airport's terminal building, runway and air traffic control system.

Oman's rural telecommunication services, serving 40 towns and villages, were launched under the development plan. The number of telephone lines in the Capital area alone increased from 18,000 to 57,000.

In international affairs, Oman's foreign policy of good neighbourliness and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states has gained many friends. His Majesty's repeated calls for negotiated settlements of international conflicts have won worldwide appreciation.

Heads of state and government delegations from over 60 countries attended Oman's National Day celebrations in November 1985 to mark the first 15 years of His Majesty's reign and the achievements made during that period.

November also saw Oman hosting the Sixth Summit Conference of Heads of State of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which further strengthened accord among the six member-nations in the fields of defence, security, political and economic matters.

The Sultanate maintains a high defence capability in view of the continuing instability of the region. Accordingly, its Armed Forces are highly trained and well equipped to safeguard Oman's own security and to fulfil its defence obligations to its brother states of the GCC.

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 civilization 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 folds 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 rest of the world by nature of their trades and geographical



Bait al Falaj — Original headquarters of the Sultan's Armed Forces, now a Museum, recently restored to its ancient grandeur

location. These ancient distinctions to some extent still exist, within the modern united Sultanate.

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

Still in pre-Islamic times, tribes from the Yemen — legend has it that they came from the region of the famous Marib dam —

trickled into Oman. Later, the Azd tribal group, from which the present ruling family is descended, entered Oman. Then Oman was under the rule of the Persians, but the Azd were able to regain Oman from the Persian rule and they spread Arab influence to all parts of Oman. Islam came to Oman, and Abd and Jaifar, the sons of Julandi bin Al Mustakbar embraced Islam. When the Persian ruler rejected their call to embrace Islam, Abd and Jaifar expelled Persian rule from Oman.

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

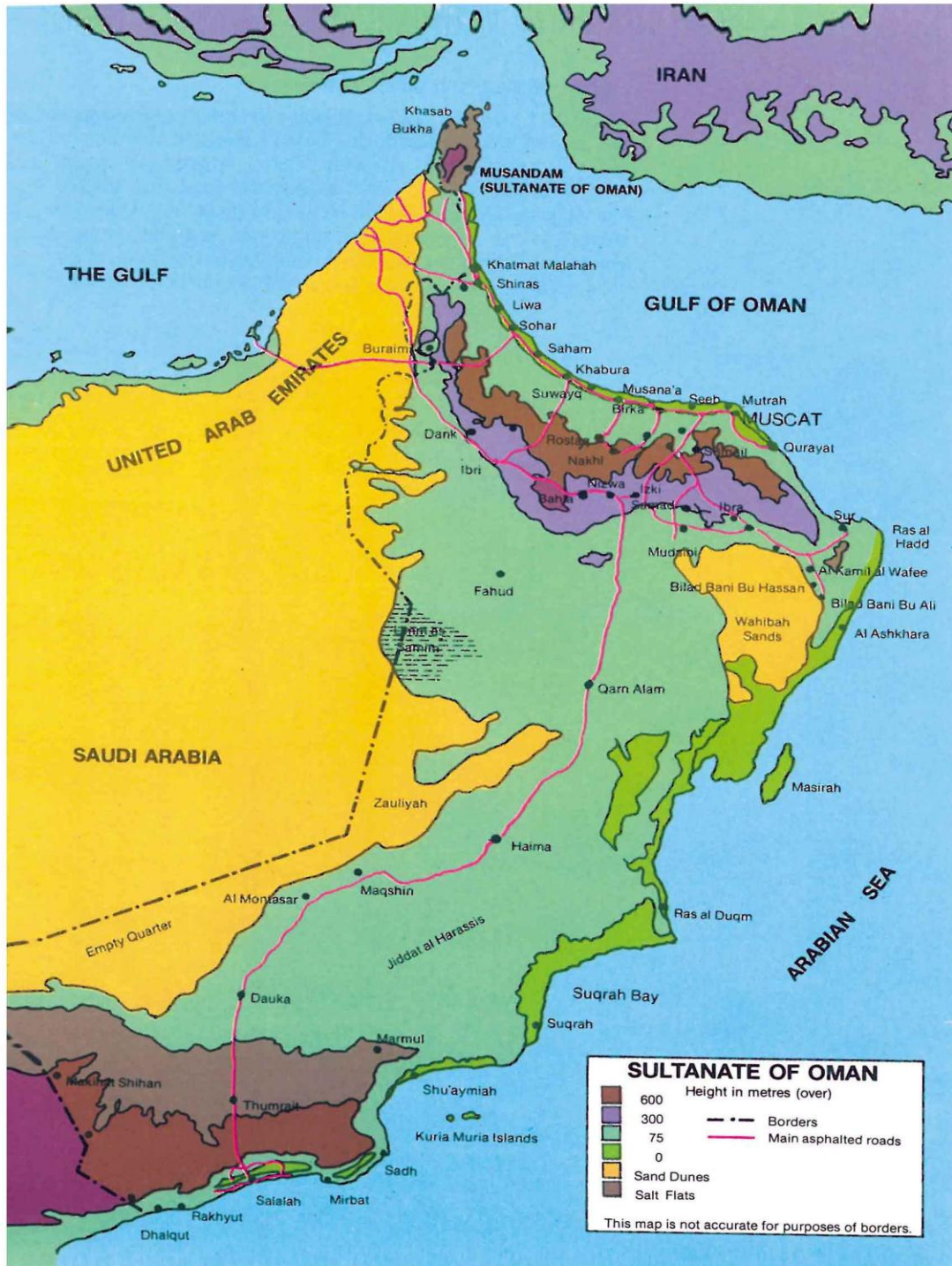
In 1507, nine years after Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, finding a sea route to India — ironically being guided by the famous Omani navigator Ahmad bin Majid — a Portuguese fleet brutally sacked Muscat and within a year the Portuguese flag flew all along the coast.

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

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

France, Holland and other countries.

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



GEOGRAPHY

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

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

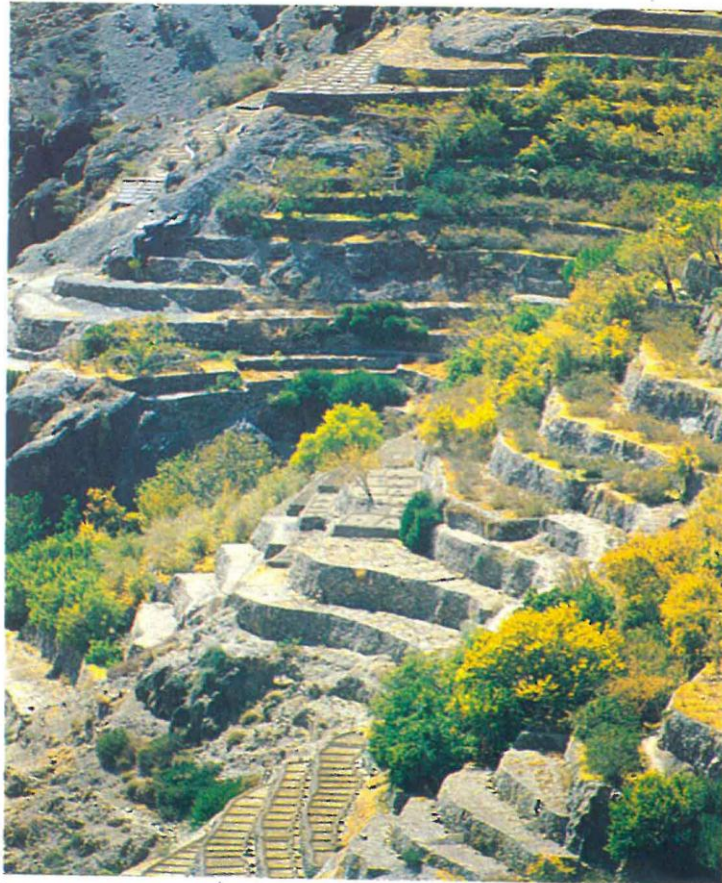
Geographically, Oman falls into a number of distinct areas.

Capital 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 Mutrah 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.

Batinah Plain

The Batinah runs from the frontier with the UAE for a distance of some 270 kilometres south-east almost to Muscat. It is



Terraced cultivation on the Jebel Al-Akhdar

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

¹ Like the Batinah Plain, this mountain range runs parallel to the coast from the United Arab Emirates in the north to Wadi



Oman has many fertile valleys

Maawel 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 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: Batha', Halfein, Bahla and Samail. The Halfein and Samail valleys together form a natural break in the West-

ern 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.

Dhahira Area

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

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



Beautiful Dhofar.

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.

Provinces

The Sultanate is divided into 41 wilaya (regions), in each of which the government is represented by a wali (governor). Muscat has its own governor with assistants in Mutrah, Seeb



Dhofar: After the monsoon

and Baushar, as does the Musandam with assistants in Khasab, Bayah and Bukha.

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 six basic categories: the people of the sea who live by fishing, seafaring and trading; the agriculturists of the Batinah coast, and the farmers of the interior who employ the aflaaj system of irrigation; the mountain people of the Musandam; the Bedouin of the desert areas; and the people of Dhofar in the south. The population is estimated at 1,500,000.

GOVERNMENT

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

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

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

The Council of Ministers consists of:

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

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

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud 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 Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Zaher al-Hinai,
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

His Excellency Sayyid Hilal bin Hamad al-Busaidi,
Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

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

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

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

His Excellency Sheikh Hamoud bin Abdullah al-Harhi,
Minister of Communications.

His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh al-Mantheri,
Minister of Education and Youth Affairs.

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

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

His Excellency Sayyid Hilal bin Sa'oud bin Hareb,
Minister of State and Wali of Dhofar.

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

His Excellency Brigadier Sayyid al Mutassim bin Hamoud al-Busaidi,
Minister of Regional Municipalities Affairs and President of Musandam Development Committee.

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

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

His Excellency Sheikh Mustahail bin Ahmed al-Mashini,
Minister of Social Affairs and Labour.

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

Supervision of Cabinet Secretariat:

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said.

Secretary to the Cabinet:

His Excellency Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said.

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

The Governorate of the Capital is responsible for the administration of the Capital.

For easier administration of Oman's large land area and scattered population centres, the country has been divided into 41 wilaya (regions) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. At the head of each wilayat is a wali (governor).

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

- (a) Streamlining procedures and systems for legislation, fut-wa (religious interpretation of the law) 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. Sayyid Salim bin Nasser al Busaidi). Of the other 54 members, 18 represent the government sector of whom seven serve in their personal capacity. The remaining 36 represent what is termed as the national sector. Of these, 11 represent the private sector and 25 the various wilaya.

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

Council members must be Omani nationals and at least 30 years of age at the time of appointment. Members represent all the people of the Sultanate and not only the sector from which they were selected. They are appointed for a two-year term which, however, can be extended for one or more terms.

Among the Council's functions are:

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

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.



His Majesty meets local representatives of the people (Photograph: Mohamed Mustafa)

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 exploitation of water resources so as to ensure that a balance is maintained between availability and requirements.

The Civil Service Council which draws up general policies relating to the Civil Service. Among its other responsibilities is the examination of Civil Service problems and finding solutions to them, taking into consideration public interests.

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 Higher Committee of the Gulf Cooperation Council which studies subjects put forward for discussion at summit conferences and meetings of the Ministerial Council and Ministerial committees. It formulates the positions to be taken by the Sultanate in the political, economic, security and other fields and submits them to His Majesty the Sultan for approval. The Higher Committee also notifies Ministries of the official stand they should adopt at GCC conferences and committee meetings.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Sultanate's foreign policy is based on principles laid down by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. These principles include:

- (a) good neighbourliness and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states;
- (b) respect for international laws, principles and traditions;
- (c) strengthening cooperation among states of the Arabian Gulf region;
- (d) strengthening relations with Arab states and supporting issues of interest to the Arab world;
- (e) strengthening Islamic cooperation;
- (f) supporting just African causes;
- (g) following a non-aligned policy;
- (h) establishing cordial relations with all friendly nations.

By following these principles, Omani diplomacy has gained worldwide appreciation and respect. Such diplomacy has also gained more friends for Oman, which was evidenced by the attendance of representatives of more than 60 countries from different continents at the Sultanate's 15th National Day celebrations.

Oman actively and effectively supports the international community's efforts to achieve justice, peace, security, prosperity and stability throughout the world, within the framework of mutual cooperation and respect.

Oman deeply believes that international conflicts should be solved through understanding and by peaceful means. In this context, Oman continues to contribute actively to efforts at the United Nations and in other international forums towards finding a just and durable peaceful solution to the Middle East problem, the search for a peaceful solution to the Iraq-Iran war and other major international concerns.

Gulf Cooperation Council

The Sixth Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, held in Muscat in 1985, reviewed what had been achieved in its various fields of cooperation. Particular reference was made to issues relating to the implementation of the GCC Unified Economic Agreement and the Gulf Investment Organisation, and cooperation in the oil sector, commerce, industry, finance and posts, telegraphs and telephones.

After reviewing achievements of the cooperation process,

steps were taken to secure more effective joint action.

As for defence, the Muscat Summit gave a fresh impetus to existing military cooperation among the six member states. This cooperation has been progressing remarkably well through bilateral and multi-lateral military exercises. The Summit approved a framework for a defence cooperation military strategy.

In the security field, coordination among security organisations in the GCC member states gained further strength. The Muscat Summit approved targets for a security strategy.

In addition, co-ordination is being promoted in other fields such as education, youth, sports, social affairs and labour, and electricity and water.

In order to strengthen the existing cooperation among the six states, the GCC Supreme Council at its sixth session in Muscat also approved the following:

- (a) an agricultural strategy;
- (b) a strategy for industrial development;
- (c) an education strategy;
- (d) policies related to the conservation of the environment.

The Council has, therefore, succeeded in a relatively short time in achieving a great deal, and the Muscat Summit gave joint Gulf action a greater dimension.

Middle East

Oman will continue to support all Arab and international initiatives to reach a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem. This policy was reaffirmed by His Majesty the Sultan when he addressed the nation on the occasion of the 15th National Day celebrations last year. His Majesty expressed his belief in dialogue as a means to obtain a peaceful solution. Such a solution would be based on international legality in conformity with the United Nations resolutions.

He called upon "all international forces friendly to Israel" to accept their responsibilities and exert their full influence to put an end to Israeli intransigence in order to achieve positive progress towards reaching a solution which would restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and guarantee justice and peace for all.

Oman favours the convening of a United Nations sponsored international conference (to be attended by the Security Coun-



*His Majesty presides over the 6th GCC Summit meeting held in Muscat, November 1985
(Photograph: Mohamed Mustafa)*

cil's five permanent members) to solve the Middle East problem.

Oman rejects Israel's aggression against Lebanon, its occupation of Lebanese territories and its violation of that country's sovereignty. The Sultanate regards such acts as a flagrant violation of international conventions and traditions and supports the integrity, unity and independence of Lebanon as well as the legitimate power there.

On the Iraq-Iran war, His Majesty reaffirmed that the Sultanate would continue its strong support for all mediation efforts to end the war, which threatens regional stability and the safety of navigation. After deploring the loss of life and resources on both sides, His Majesty called once more on the leaders of

both countries to bring the fighting to an end and to respond to international attempts to bring about peace. Negotiations should take place in an Islamic spirit to reach a permanent settlement, guaranteeing the rights of both parties, to open a new era of friendly relations.

Oman has participated in all efforts, aimed at ending the war, through the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Islamic Conference Organisation, the non-aligned movement, and the United Nations. The Sultanate has also made contacts with various brotherly and friendly countries aimed at intensifying efforts to put an end to the war.

Africa

In line with His Majesty's Government's policies for widening the circle of the Sultanate's friends, Oman has maintained a special relationship with the African Continent. There are also historical relations between Oman and Africa in general, and East Africa in particular. Oman, under the leadership of the Sultans of the al-Said dynasty extended its influence to the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman from Gwadar in the Indian sub-Continent and to Harare and Mozambique. This relationship over a long period of time has helped in the development of relations with other African states on the basis of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and respect for their sovereignty and independence. Oman has non-resident ambassadors accredited to Tanzania, Senegal, Zambia, Niger, Rwanda, Gabon, Birkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Gambia, Sierre Leone, Nigeria, Uganda, Comoros and Seychelles. All these countries have non-resident ambassadors accredited to the Sultanate as a first step towards the establishment of fully-fledged missions in the future.

To further strengthen relations with Oman, several African leaders paid official visits to the Sultanate. These leaders included President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, the former President of Tanzania, Mr Julius Nyrere, and Tanzania's present President, Mr Ali Hassan Muringi.

African Ministerial delegations and officials who visited the Sultanate included the Finance Minister of the Comoros, the Foreign Minister of Niger, the envoy of the President of Zambia, and the Foreign Ministers of Mali, Rwanda and Senegal.

Four African representatives attended the Sultanate's 15th National Day celebrations. They were the Foreign Minister of Senegal, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Defence of Tan-



*His Majesty reviews the 15th Anniversary parade, which was attended by many world leaders
(Photograph: Mohamed Mustafa)*

zania, the Minister of Finance and Economy of the Comoros, and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Kenya.

H.E. Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, accompanied by a high-level delegation, paid official visits to Tanzania and the Seychelles in 1985. In addition, Omani Government delegations visited a number of African countries to take part in international conferences and meetings.

Oman supports fair and just African causes at various levels. It has affirmed its support for the independence of the people of Namibia and their right to self-determination and has once again condemned the policy of racial segregation of the gov-

ernment of South Africa. The Sultanate also denounces all foreign intervention in the Horn of Africa.

North and South America

Oman has good relations with many North and South American countries which include the United States of America, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Columbia and St. Lucia. The Sultanate's relations with these countries are based on mutual understanding, respect and cooperation, according to the United Nations Charter.

The Sultanate has particularly warm relations with the United States. These relations cover cooperation in most fields — economic, technical and cultural. The two countries are represented by resident ambassadors in Muscat and Washington. On Central American affairs, the Sultanate supports efforts made by the Contadora Group as the best means of achieving peace in the area. It believes that the region should be kept free from super-power interference.

Western and Eastern Europe

The Sultanate's relations with European countries have made steady progress. These ties now cover most fields of activity, with emphasis on economic matters.

In 1985, His Majesty the King of Spain, the Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, and the British Minister of Defence visited the Sultanate. Representatives of number of European countries also attended the Sultanate's 15th National Day celebrations. They were: HRH the Crown Prince of Spain, HRH the Crown Prince of Belgium, HRH the Duke of Kent, the Foreign Ministers of West Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Italy; the French Minister of Planning, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Trade, the Turkish Government's official spokesman, a Member of the Federal Executive Council of Yugoslavia, and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Romania.

In 1985, Oman announced the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. This arose from the Sultanate's belief in the importance of balancing relations between countries, particularly the super-powers, and the role it could play in maintaining world stability and security.

Asia

Oman's relations with Asian countries are good and steadily developing. This was reflected in the number of high-ranking

delegates who attended the 15th National Day celebrations. These included His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei, President Zia al Haq of Pakistan, the President of the Maldives, and the Prime Minister of India. Japan sent a senior government official and the People's Republic of China sent a high-level delegation. Other Asian countries were represented by delegations led by their Foreign or other Ministers.

1986 is due to witness more activities towards the development of relations with Asian countries.

On Asian affairs, the Sultanate notes with concern the continued occupation of Cambodia by foreign forces and calls for their withdrawal so as to enable the Cambodian people to exercise their right to self-determination. In this respect, Oman supports efforts made by member countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) to find a just solution to the Cambodian issue. The Sultanate believes that the people of Afghanistan should decide their own destiny, free from foreign interference.

In view of its geographical position, Oman supports all efforts that would make the Middle East area and the Indian Ocean zones of peace, free of nuclear weapons.

Oman has also made known in international circles its views on the world economy and on international terrorism. Oman believes that the existing system is unable to solve the current world economic crisis. As a member of the 77 Group, the Sultanate calls for a new economic order, based upon a fresh and equitable relationship between wealthy and poor countries.

Oman denounces all forms of terrorism and considers them to be anti-Islamic and contrary to all religions. It supports all international and regional efforts in the fight against terrorism and calls on all states to cooperate fully to eliminate it.

Resident Diplomatic Representation in the Sultanate:

EMBASSIES:

Republic of Algeria
People's Republic of China
Arab Republic of Egypt
Republic of France
Federal Republic of Germany
Republic of India

Islamic Republic of Iran
Republic of Iraq
Republic of Italy
Japan
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Republic of Korea
State of Kuwait
Kingdom of Morocco
The Netherlands
Islamic Republic of Pakistan
State of Qatar
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Democratic Republic of Somalia
Democratic Republic of Sudan
Republic of Turkey
Republic of Tunisia
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
United States of America
Yemen Arab Republic

CONSULATES:

Republic of Austria
Kingdom of Belgium
Republic of Cyprus
Kingdom of Denmark
Republic of Greece
Republic of Portugal
Kingdom of Sweden
Federal Republic of Switzerland

Representation by non-resident Ambassadors:

Republic of Argentina
Australia
Republic of Bangladesh*
Federal Republic of Brazil
Canada
Republic of Chile
Republic of Djibouti
Republic of Finland
Republic of Gambia
People's Republic of Guinea
Republic of Indonesia
Malaysia*

*Represented in Oman by a Charge d'Affaires

Republic of Mali
 Republic of Malta
 Islamic Republic of Mauritania
 United States of Mexico
 Kingdom of Nepal
 New Zealand
 Republic of Niger
 Kingdom of Norway
 Republic of the Philippines
 Socialist Republic of Romania
 Republic of Rwanda
 Republic of Senegal
 Republic of Sierra Leone
 Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
 Kingdom of Spain
 Thailand
 United Republic of Tanzania
 Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
 Republic of Zaire
 Republic of Zambia

Oman's Embassies Abroad

Algiers	Mogadishu
Amman	Nairobi
Ankara	New Delhi
Baghdad	Paris
Beijing (Peking)	Rabat
Bonn	Rome
Brunei	Riyadh
Cairo	Sanaa
Djibouti	Seoul
Doha	Tokyo
Islamabad	Teheran
Khartoum	Tunis
Kuala Lumpur*	Vienna
Kuwait	Washington
London	
Manama	*Charge d'Affaires

Oman's Consulates Abroad

Bangkok	Hong Kong
Bombay	Karachi
Cyprus	Los Angeles
Geneva	New York

DEFENCE

The Sultanate maintains a prudently high defence capability in view of the continuing instability in the region. Its Armed Forces are highly trained and fully equipped with sophisticated modern weaponry to safeguard Oman's security and to fulfil its defence obligations to its brother states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Collective responsibility for the region's security was reaffirmed last year at the sixth GCC Summit held in Muscat. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and his brother rulers stated that any threat to the security of a member state is a threat to all GCC countries and that GCC security is inseparable.

To this end, joint GCC military exercises are regularly held in which all three Services of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) participate. In November 1986 SAF will carry out joint manoeuvres in Oman with British land, sea and air forces as part of the Sultanate's wider policy of improving SAF's efficiency by exercising with the forces of friendly countries.

As a trained Staff Officer with personal military experience, His Majesty takes a keen professional interest in the efficiency and well-being of his Armed Forces.

Sultan of Oman's Land Forces (SOLF)

The Army is a highly mobile, well-trained and hard hitting force capable of strongly defending the Sultanate and effectively contributing to the Island Shield Force of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Following an intensive re-equipment programme, the Army is now actively and continuously training in the use of its sophisticated equipment and weapons.

In composition, the Army is a seasoned, well-balanced force, strong in highly mobile infantry supported by armoured, artillery, engineer and signals units. It is soundly based logistically with well stocked depots, a flexible and efficient supply organisation, workshops and excellent medical facilities.

This year, 1986, the Army will inaugurate its own Staff College with the first course starting in 1987. Officers and NCOs go abroad for training in the latest military systems and technology. Soldiers of all ranks receive specialist training at technical schools run by the Artillery, Engineers, Signals and Transport Regiments, and the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. The programme to house the Army in well designed, permanent



Soldiers of Sultan of Oman's Land Forces on manoeuvres

barracks continues. New camps, including family accommodation and medical centres, are being built to house each regiment. This year (1986) the Armoured Regiment will move to its new camp in Shafa.

SOLF, like its two brother Services, plays an important role in civil assistance by building roads, well-drilling and maintaining airstrips in remote and difficult areas.

Royal Guard Brigade

In 1973, a Royal Guard battalion was formed primarily to provide protection for His Majesty the Sultan. Eight years later, the battalion was expanded into a brigade. Members of the Brigade are among the toughest and best-trained in the Army. Last year a Brigade member was selected as the best overseas Officer Cadet at Britain's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

1985 was an eventful year for the RGB. Members of the Brigade played their part in the security measures for the Sixth



His Majesty, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, presents an award to member of his elite Royal Guard Brigade

Summit Meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the 15th National Day celebrations in Muscat. While some Brigade members provided security cover, others provided an important ceremonial contribution to the National Day parade. The RGB's internationally famous Maroon Helmets (Motor Cycle Display Team) showed their skills in another National Day event, the Oman Tattoo.

In March 1986, the Royal Guard Band represented the Sultanate at the Melbourne Military Tattoo which marked the 150th anniversary of the State of Victoria, Australia.

August saw the formation of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra and, as directed by His Majesty the Sultan, 87



SOAF technicians carrying out maintenance on a Jaguar engine

Omani students were recruited for the orchestra under arrangements made by the RGB.

His Majesty honoured the RGB last year by approving the award of the RGB's special service medal to personnel who had completed seven years' service on 1st November 1985. An investiture parade was held on 31st October at which His Majesty personally presented the medal.

Another signal honour for the Brigade was His Majesty's declaration that 1st November of each year be observed as RGB Day. This was celebrated for the first time in 1985. 1st November was chosen because it was on this date in 1983 that the Brigade received its Colours from His Majesty the Sultan.

Sultan of Oman's Air Force (SOAF)

The Air Force has been greatly expanded and modernised since 1970, and its capabilities now extend over a broad spectrum of tasks. Its primary responsibility is to deter external

aggression, but it also has important roles in support of the Land and Naval Forces and in the continuing civil development of Oman.

Air defence and attack capabilities are provided by two squadrons of Jaguar aircraft, equipped with a sophisticated array of modern weapons, operating from well protected bases. The Jaguars are supported by an integrated air defence system which includes long range surveillance radar and Rapier surface-to-air missiles.

The Air Force provides air transport support to the other Services with C-130, BAC 1-11, Skyvan and Defender aircraft and two squadrons of helicopters. The transport wing also supports the civil development of the country by moving supplies to the more remote areas and providing medical evacuation services. Modified versions of the Skyvan and Defender also provide support for the Navy and Civil Ministries in maritime reconnaissance and oil pollution control over the Gulf of Oman.

Great emphasis is placed on comprehensive training for Omani personnel to master the technical complexities of a modern air force. The Air Force has a well established Technical Training Institute at Seeb and its own Flying Training School at Masirah, which will be developed over the next few years as the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy. A notable achievement this year (1986) has been the award of the Best Overseas Student's prize at the RAF College, Cranwell, to an Omani cadet. Future plans also include improvements to the air defence radar network and the acquisition of Tornado all-weather interceptor aircraft.

Sultan of Oman's Navy (SON)

The youngest of the three Services, the Navy has developed rapidly in recent years and consists of a squadron of 56-metre missile ships, a squadron of 37.5 metre gun-armed ships and another of inshore patrol boats. These are supported by an Offshore Patrol Vessel, and two armed Amphibious Ships with their Landing Craft capable of carrying tanks, troops and other cargo. There are also various other vessels for supply, training, diving and hydrography. A further Attack Missile Ship has been ordered.

SON has two shore establishments — the main naval base at Muscat and the Naval Training Centre at Sur. There are also



Crew-members of the Navy's training ship "SNV Shabab Oman"

two forward operating bases: one in the south at Raysut and the other at the tip of the Musandam Peninsula. A large and comprehensive naval complex at Wudam on the Batinah coast is scheduled for completion and occupation by April 1987; this will become the main base of the Sultan of Oman's Navy.

In addition to its defence tasks, SON is responsible for patrolling the Sultanate's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone to prevent smuggling and interference with shipping. The exacting role, over a 1700-kilometre 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 expertise.

POLICE

Effective policing by gaining the respect and co-operation of the people is a primary aim of the Royal Oman Police. Oman's exceptionally low crime rate — one of the lowest in the world — is indicative of the extent to which it has succeeded in achieving this goal.

Oman had only 73 policemen, known as the "Capital Police" before 1970; since then, the Royal Oman Police has undergone rapid modernisation in its concepts and methods to enable it to cope effectively with the demands and expectations of a modern Arab society.

The Force now comprises several thousand well-equipped and highly trained men and women. Apart from operating its land divisions, the Force also maintains a Coast Guard Division and an Air Wing.

The Force has undergone much reorganisation over the past few years so that in addition to the general duties branches with which the public are familiar there are many other directorates operating in supporting roles. They include the Directorate General of Criminal Investigation and the Directorate General of Operations.

The Royal Oman Police also provides services to the public with its Directorate General of Immigration, Directorate General of Customs, Directorate of Civil Defence & Fire, and the Directorate of Prisons.

The Force is supported by a Mounted Division, Directorate of Police Aviation, Directorate General of Personnel and the Directorate of Public Relations.

Some of the more notable activities and responsibilities of the Force are as follows:

Training

The Police Academy at Nizwa provides training courses in basic police work and in specialised subjects such as finger printing, criminal investigation, Islamic law, criminal photography, foreign languages, coupled with a strong emphasis on physical fitness. An important aspect of the training is instilling in a recruit that he or she is first and foremost a servant of the public; this requirement to be courteous and helpful is also stressed during refresher courses. Although the training courses are tough and demanding, the Force has little difficulty



*Passing Out Parade at the Royal Oman Police Training Academy, Nizwa
(Photograph: Royal Oman Police)*

in attracting young Omanis since a police career is now a highly respected and challenging one.

Among its many facilities, the Academy has its own police station to enable recruits to practice what they have learnt in the classrooms before being posted.

The Force keeps up-to-date with international policing ideas and methods by drawing on expertise from friendly countries for senior officers' seminars. Some officers and senior non-commissioned members of the Force are sent overseas for attachments to police forces of friendly countries to gain experience in specialised fields.

Serving members of the Force are also encouraged to continue with their general education, and those who are academically qualified can apply for university courses.

Directorate General of Traffic

More roads, flyovers, and heavier traffic have made road safety an important aspect of police work in Oman. The Directorate



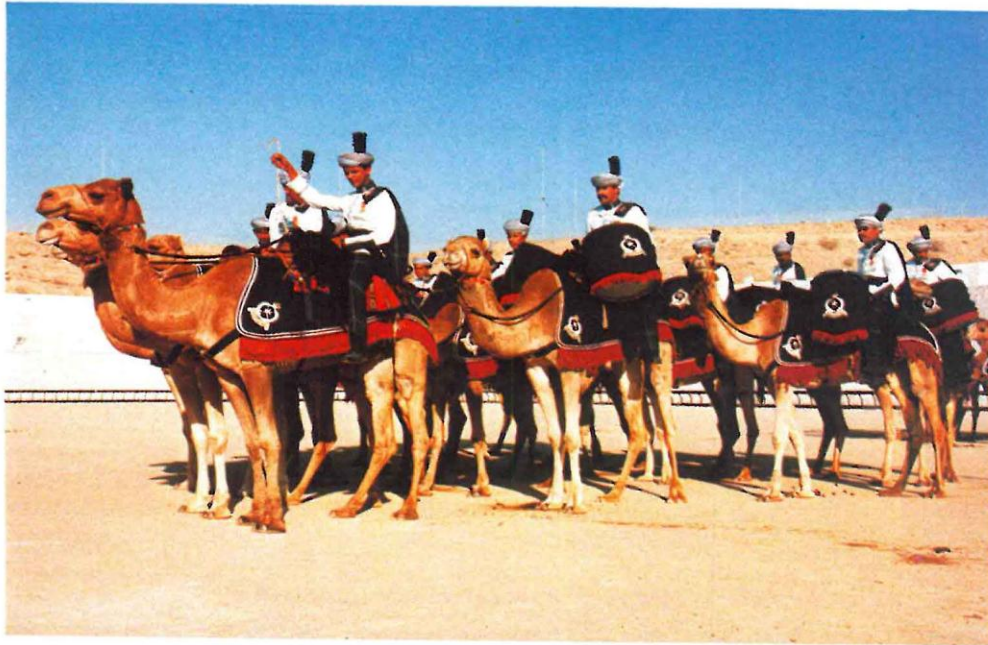
A woman Police Officer helps children at a busy crossing (Photograph: Royal Oman Police)

General of Traffic has, therefore, been expanded and a new traffic control complex which includes a Driving School has been established at Azaiba.

Together with Highway Patrols, now operating in outlying Divisions and formed to extend patrolling to the trunk roads outside Capital area, the Traffic Section has been largely responsible for reducing road accidents. Highly mobile and equipped with sophisticated radio communications, the men of these sections carry out regular patrols.

Oman has also been observing Traffic Week annually. The theme this year was "Watch Your Speed" since drivers are required to exercise particular care on the modern highways which have now come into service. The Directorate General of Traffic also makes use of the mass media to teach drivers better and safer driving habits.

The Directorate General undertakes the considerable task of testing, registering, and licencing both vehicles and drivers throughout the Sultanate.



The Camel Section of the Mounted Division (Photograph: Royal Oman Police)

Directorate General of Criminal Investigation

Investigating a crime is just one aspect of the work carried out by CID personnel.

They support Divisions and other Directorates in ensuring the safety of visiting Heads of State and distinguished VIPs. As with other Divisions and Directorates they played a most important role in ensuring the safety of world leaders and other distinguished VIPs present at Oman's 15th Anniversary celebrations in November 1985.

Directorate of Police Aviation

Having both fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft this Directorate forms a vital support unit to the Force. Its helicopters carry out regular patrols and answer emergency calls for casualty and medical evacuation. The fixed wing aircraft support distant stations by resupplying men and equipment.

The Directorate maintains its own school for the initial training of pilots and engineers.

Coast Guard Division

The Coast Guard maintains law and order at the ports of Mina Qaboos and Mina Raysut, and along Oman's 1700 km. coast-line. It carries out regular patrols in its fast boats in Omani waters, including the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Besides carrying out checks for illegal immigrants and contraband, the patrols regularly visit isolated coastal villages, delivering food and medical supplies. Searches for overdue fishing boats, pleasure craft, evacuation from villages in emergencies, and security coverage for visits by VIPs are among the Division's other duties.

Oil Installation Division

With headquarters at Mina al Fahal and sub-divisions at Fahud and Marmul, the Division is the largest in the Force.

Men of this Division provide tight security coverage for the oil industry. They maintain constant patrols to protect oil pipelines and installations, ranging from rigs in the desert to the oil terminal at Mina Al-Fahal.

Directorate General of Immigration

This Directorate not only has responsibilities at the airport and seaports but undertakes the immense task of issuing visas to Oman's visitors from abroad. The Directorate also issues passports to Omani citizens.

Directorate General of Customs

The Customs Officers perform duties both at the airports and seaports and ensure that only authorised goods are allowed to enter the Sultanate. Their duties particularly include checking to ensure no products harmful to the public are allowed into Oman.

Airport Division

While maintaining tight security measures, airport police are nevertheless proud of the courteous and efficient manner in which they deal with the growing number of visitors to the Sultanate.

Directorate of Civil Defence & Fire

The Fire Service is part of the Police Force. Fire-fighting personnel receive their initial training at the Police Academy's



A patient is brought by helicopter from a remote area (Photograph: Royal Oman Police)

own fire station which also serves the Nizwa area. Other fire stations now operate at centres of population throughout the Sultanate.

Mounted Division

The Mounted Division, whose headquarters are at Wattayah, carries out urban and rural patrols on horseback and camels. The Camel Patrols were recently formed.

This division also includes dog units. Dogs are specially trained in detecting narcotics and explosives and are used to make regular luggage searches at airports, seaports and the General Post Office.

Directorate of Prisons

The Prison Service is manned by members of the Police Force. Emphasis is placed on the rehabilitation of the prisoner, including trade training, with a view to fitting him to take a

constructive place in society on completion of his sentence.

Policewomen

Before 1972, the Omani policewomen's main role was to carry out security checks at Seeb International Airport. Today, policewomen perform duties similar to those of their male colleagues; these include traffic and criminal investigation duties.

Directorate of Police Music

The Royal Oman Police Band has attained a very high standard and has been widely acclaimed after taking part in international events.

International Relations

The Royal Oman Police is an active member of Interpol and the Arab Social Defence Organisation which comes under the Arab League. The Sultanate, as a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, also works closely with the police forces of the other five member-states.

ECONOMY

Oman's oil-based economy grew at an impressive rate of 13.8 per cent in 1985, the final year of the second five-year development plan, in spite of falling oil prices. Provisional figures put the gross domestic product (GDP) for 1985 at a record RO3,464.4 million, up by RO419.7 million over 1984. Oman's second five-year plan thus achieved an average annual growth rate of 11.1 per cent (provisional) in the GDP at current prices, just 2 per cent short of the target. Nearly RO201 million of the GDP increase came from crude petroleum which continued to be the main contributor at RO1,609.3 million, providing the bulk of the Sultanate's export earnings and government revenues. The oil sector's growth rate in 1985 was 14.2 per cent, compared with 4.1 per cent in 1984. Despite the world oil glut, the Sultanate was able to increase its market share, and oil exports in 1985 rose to a new peak of RO1,597 million, up by RO196 million over 1984.

In the oil sector, Oman's exploration programme has been highly successful. As a result, the Sultanate's recoverable reserves stood at 4.01 billion barrels at the end of 1985, compared with 2.5 billion at the beginning of 1981; thus enabling the Sultanate to increase oil production to an average of 500,000 barrels per day (b/d) in 1985 and still not extracting more oil than was discovered during the year. Last year, Oman produced about 182 million barrels of oil, 28 million barrels less than the amount discovered.

Oman has been diversifying its economy into agriculture, fisheries, mining and industry since an important aim of its development programme is to lessen its heavy dependence on oil earnings.

In 1985, the agriculture and fisheries sector registered a 10.7 per cent growth rate, from RO89 million to RO98.5 million. Manufacturing rose from RO91.2 million to RO111.1 million, a growth rate of 21.8 per cent.

Another significant development has been the steady expansion in non-oil exports over the years. In 1985, these exports generated a 33 per cent increase from RO17.2 million to RO22.9 million. Exports of fish and other marine products showed a substantial rise of 39 per cent, from RO6.3 million in 1984 to RO8.8 million. The value of refined copper exports rose by 8 per cent, from RO6.3 million to RO6.9 million. Other

non-oil exports were dried limes worth nearly RO2.2 million, live animals RO1.3 million, wheat flour RO1.2 million, fresh fruits and vegetables RO728,000 and dried preserved dates RO809,000. Re-exports, however, dropped to RO97 million from RO109.4 million in 1984.

The total value of exports (including re-exports) reached a record level of RO1,717 million, up by 12.42 per cent over 1984. With imports valued at RO1,162 million, Oman, therefore, had a trade surplus of RO555 million, about RO41 million more than in 1984.

After taking into account a sum of RO517 million for services and private transfers, the country's current account balance was RO38 million; RO1 million higher than in 1984. In 1985, remittances by foreign workers alone amounted to RO312 million, which was RO30 million more than in the previous year.

According to preliminary budget figures for 1985, total revenues amounted to RO1,873 million while total expenditures came to RO1,928.3 million, resulting in a deficit of RO55.3 million.

Revenue from oil increased by RO205.5 million to RO1,510 million, representing 81 per cent of total revenues for 1985.

With the increasing use of natural gas as a fuel, revenue from this source has risen over the years and in 1985 receipts reached RO36.7 million, an increase of 6.7 per cent over 1984. Customs duties netted RO41.1 million while corporate income tax brought in RO26.4 million — both considerably higher than in 1984 — thus reflecting a greater flow of trade and profitability of joint ventures.

Recurrent and development expenditures for the civil sector, including those for Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), rose considerably to RO599 million and RO533.7 million respectively from RO507.2 million and RO464.7 million. The development expenditures in 1984 and 1985 were both much higher than in the preceding three years of the second five-year plan as more development projects got underway or were brought to completion.

Manufacturing's share of the GDP increased significantly from 0.76 per cent at the beginning of 1981 to 3.2 per cent at the end of 1985. Value added rose from RO15.6 million to RO111.1 million. At the end of the Second 5-Year Plan in December 1985, the contribution of this sector to the GDP thus showed



One of Oman's modern banks in operation (Photograph: PDO)

an increase of .91% over the original Plan target of 2.3%.

The Sultanate has a notably free economy where considerable facilities and encouragement are given to the entrepreneur — local or foreign — to set up industries contributing to the economic development of the country. These include tax exemptions for a minimum of five years, duty-free imports of most types of equipment, and unrestricted transfer of profits. Paid-up capital of new companies should not be less than

RO150,000 and the minimum Omani participation 35% Long-term low-interest government loans are also available to companies willing to introduce technology into the Sultanate and utilise Omani labour and raw materials.

The setting up of the Rusail Industrial Estate was another incentive for the local entrepreneur to participate in manufacturing. New industries, located at Rusail, include a biscuit factory and plants for making concrete blocks, vehicle batteries, plastics, paints, footwear and fibreglass. Other locally-made products are pre-fabricated houses, vegetable oils, building materials, detergents and light bulbs.

Two cement plants began production in 1983. One is owned by a joint stock company at Raysut in the south, with a production capacity of 210,000 tonnes. The other is the wholly government-owned Oman Cement Company at Rusayl, able to produce 670,000 tonnes.

Almost all locally-made products are import-substitutes for the domestic market. Notable exceptions are wheat flour and biscuits which are exported to other Arab countries; scent and eau de toilette to the United States, Britain, Europe and the other Gulf states; and refined high-grade copper from the Sohar complex which has found buyers in Japan, Europe and other Arab countries. The Sohar mining complex is managed by the Oman Mining Company (OMC), a government enterprise. It exported RO6.9 million worth of refined copper ingots in 1985. It started production in the last quarter of 1983 and in 1984 exported over 14,000 tonnes of copper ingots worth RO6.3 million. Since the existing mine has a life span of 11-12 years, OMC has already started exploration to locate additional ore.

The government's economic policy is to establish large-scale industries only when the Sultanate has the natural resources to support them. Thus apart from the Oman Cement Company and the Sohar copper complex, a third major plant in the public sector is the Oman Oil Refinery at Mina al Fahal. The refinery, which came on stream in late 1982, began producing at its full capacity of 50,000 b/d in 1985 and will increase output to 80,000 b/d later this year.

With government financial and technical assistance, the agriculture and fisheries sector made satisfactory progress during the 1981-1985 period. In nominal terms, agriculture and livestock production rose from RO37.2 million to RO67.5 million; while fisheries increased by RO14.6 million, from RO15.4



The splendid foyer of the Al Bustan Palace Hotel (Photograph: Gill Marais)

million to RO 30 million. The sector's share of the GDP in 1985 was 2.84 per cent, slightly higher than the 2.2 per cent called for in the 1981-1985 plan. However, exports of fish and other marine products rose considerably from RO 6.29 million in 1984 to RO 8.76 million in 1985. A private fishing company was largely responsible for the increase in exports by finding outlets around the world, including such countries as Britain, the United States, Japan, Thailand and member-states of the

Gulf Cooperation Council. Exports of marine products rose sharply from 21 per cent of its turnover in 1981 to about 75 per cent in 1985. The company's total turnover reached RO 4.4 million, an increase of 60 per cent over 1984.

Other significant contributors to the economy included the wholesale and retail trade and construction. The internal trade sector has consistently generated high growth rates and in 1985 it accounted for RO430 million, an increase of 21.4 per cent over 1984. Construction registered an average annual growth rate of 18.3 per cent. In 1985, it contributed RO242.3 million to the GDP. Public administration and defence was another major contributor, accounting for RO373 million, up by 12 per cent over 1984.

The banking sector recorded a modest growth in 1985 with the assets/liabilities of the 22 commercial banks increasing by 6.4 per cent from RO 1,218.6 million to RO1,296.3 million.

In 1986, output of crude petroleum was raised to an average of 550,000 b/d. Demand has remained strong despite the continuing glut. This is reflected in the government's oil revenue for the first quarter of 1986, estimated at RO369 million. At the current (May) price of about US\$12.00 per barrel, government revenue from crude oil this year would be about the same as that for 1981 which totalled RO1,341 million. Oil then commanded a price of US\$34 per barrel.

About 98 per cent of the Sultanate's crude oil is produced by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). Last year, PDO's unit production cost (per barrel) was US\$4.33.

Funds have been allocated for increased exploration and drilling for both oil and gas under the third five-year plan (1986-1990).

Oman has no problem in finding buyers for its crude petroleum since its oil terminal at Mina al Fahal, on the Gulf of Oman, lies outside the Gulf war zone. Tankers and their crews may come and go in complete safety. There are, therefore, considerable savings to be made in tanker insurance charges. Equally important is Oman's flexible pricing policy. As a non-OPEC member, Oman sells its oil at free market rather than at OPEC price levels.

The government has taken several measures to ensure that the Sultanate's economy remains stable in spite of the drastic fall in oil prices. It adjusted the parity of the Omani Rial to the US\$ by 10.2 per cent from US\$2.89 to US\$2.60 in late January



The Sultanate manufactures the internationally-acclaimed Amouage scent.

to meet the immediate impact. The move was taken to improve Oman's balance of payments position and to increase government revenue. At that time, the State General Reserve Fund stood at slightly over RO1,000 million. The Sultanate also reduced projected current, capital and development expenditure by 10 per cent in the 1986 budget estimates. The health and education sectors are to be least affected.

The main feature of the third five-year plan is a gradual shift of government expenditure on infrastructure projects towards investment in production of goods and services. This is possible since most of the economic and social infrastructure has been completed.

The development of the private sector is receiving special attention and encouragement by the government. Considerable funds are being made available to support the industrial sector, and also to finance banks such as the Oman Bank for Agriculture and Fisheries, the Oman Development Bank and the Oman Housing Bank which have been established to

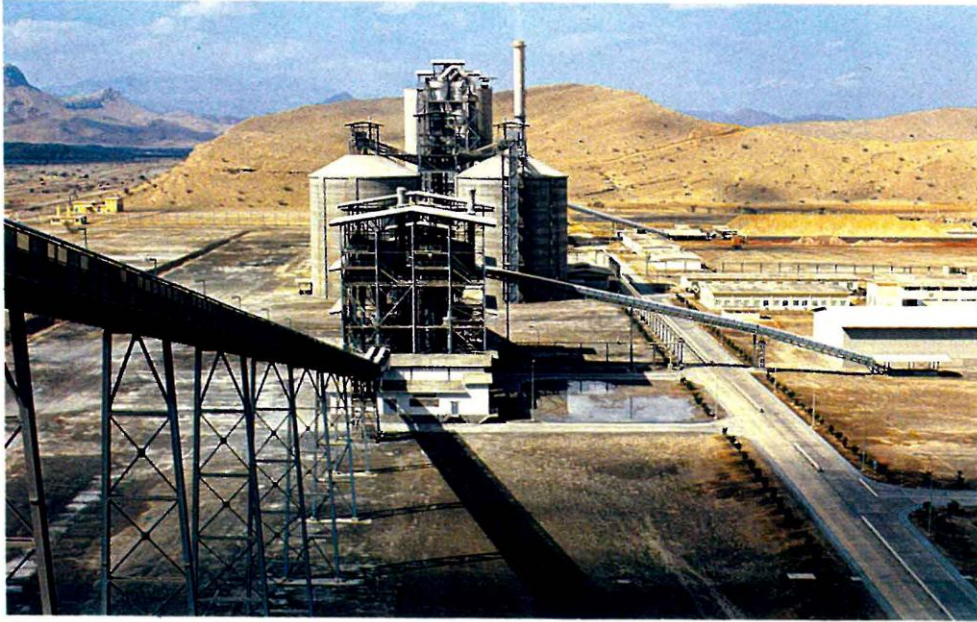


The Amouage laboratories where the scent is produced under the most modern conditions.

specifically underpin vital aspects of economic and social development.

Omani merchants pioneered the sea route to China in the eighth century and its ports welcomed trading vessels from many parts of the world. Now, because of attacks on shipping in the Gulf, ships of many more nationalities are calling at the Sultanate's ports from where their cargoes can be safely transferred overland to countries in the area. At the same time, shippers benefit from lower insurance rates.

As stated in the general review, the new development plan will continue to follow the government's long-established conservative financial policies, with their maximum ceiling on net borrowings. The volatile oil market will continue to be kept under close observation to ensure that the Sultanate is protected from the effects if the current recession continues. Oman has signed a US\$500 million loan with a consortium of 53 international and local banks to assist in financing the country's current and future development projects under the third five-year plan.



The cement works at Rusayl Industrial Estate

Projects which are due for completion this year include the Sultan Qaboos University, the Royal Hospital, a number of schools, health centres and clinics. Also due for completion are additional water and electric power installations.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

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

The Chamber acts as a bridge between Omani and foreign businessmen and investors; it 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. Both local and foreign businessmen and investors can obtain statistical data and other details about local markets and/or



Central Business District in the Capital Area

potential areas for investment; members are kept in touch with foreign markets through the Chamber's bulletin and 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 problems with various government organisations.

The Chamber also sponsors and facilitates the issuing of visas to foreigners wishing to establish business relations in Oman, but who do not have contacts in the Sultanate.

OIL AND GAS

Oil

Oman's oil production reached 600,000 barrels a day during 1986. This daily average production was reduced to 550,000 b/d from 1st September as a gesture of Oman's cooperation towards OPEC's production policy to curtail crude surplus in the market.

Despite the world oil glut, sales are readily made since buyers pay substantially less in tanker insurance charges; Oman's oil port at Al Fahal on the Gulf of Oman lies outside the Gulf war zone. Equally important is Oman's pricing policy. Virtually all Oman's oil is sold on 12-month contracts but prices are tied to the free market levels retrospectively.

In 1985, Oman exported 164.8 million barrels of oil, worth RO1,597 million. This was RO 196 million more than in 1984. Japan was the biggest buyer, importing 66.3 per cent of the Sultanate's total oil exports. South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and Taiwan were the next four major importers. Japan and these four Asian countries bought 92.6 per cent of Oman's oil.

PDO, which is 60 per cent owned by the government, produced 98 per cent of the country's crude oil last year.

Although Oman has been increasing oil output sharply in recent years to offset short falls in government revenues, the rate of increase in proven reserves has outstripped production. In 1985, for instance, PDO discovered 210 million barrels of new crude, 28 million barrels more than the amount extracted. Reassessment of known PDO fields added another 130 million barrels to the recoverable reserves. The Sultanate's proven reserves totalled 4.01 billion barrels at the end of 1985 compared with 2.5 billion barrels at the start of the second five-year plan in 1981.

In 1985, Oman produced an average of 500,000 b/d compared with 416,000 b/d in 1984. Part of the increased production came from ten new fields, some of which came on stream ahead of schedule. Production from these new fields in 1985 was about 35,000 b/d. Four of them — Sayyala, Wafrah, Al Ghubar and Suwaihah — are in the Haima region in Central Oman and produce high quality light oil. Of particular interest is the Sayyala field which produces very light oil at around 48° API. Sayyala also has a high proportion of natural gas liquids, and permanent production facilities due for completion some

time this year will have a natural gas liquid plant (NGL) to handle them. The oil is transported to the main export line to Mina al Fahal through a pipeline, connecting with Suwaihah.

Oil from Rima is of the high 34° API quality, unlike most of the crude in the southern area, which is heavy.

Oil from the southern fields is piped through a line from Marmul to Nahada to join the main oil line ending at Mina al Fahal, Oman's oil export centre. Parts of this section have been looped this year to provide for increased flow from the southern fields.

The new network will have a capacity of 650,000 b/d unboosted flow, which could be increased up to 1.1 million b/d with the aid of compressors.

PDO has stepped up exploration drilling at several promising sites as it has 3 rigs for oil exploration and one rig for government gas exploration. Apart from exploring for new oil, PDO has successfully increased recovery of crude by using secondary recovery methods. By injecting water or gas into oil reservoirs, PDO has increased the recovery rate.

The company has introduced enhanced oil recovery (EOR) methods. Last year, it installed a steam injection pilot plant in the Marmul oil field in the south. Marmul, opened in 1980, handles heavy crude from a cluster of fields nearby as well as from the large Marmul oil field itself. The recovery of highly heavy viscous oil is extremely low without using enhanced techniques.

Injecting steam into reservoirs will reduce the in situ oil viscosity and drive the resulting thinner oil to production wells, thus increasing the recovery significantly. Most of the new oil discoveries in 1985 were in south Oman. The steam injection plant is the first in the Middle East to be installed.

Another EOR pilot test is being carried out at Qarn Alam. It uses the hot water injection technique. If the method proves suitable for Qarn Alam, it could increase the recovery of oil from the field. Commissioned in 1975, it also supplies gas from Saih Nihayda field which is piped to the southern fields for use as fuel.

PDO was the sole producer in Oman until Elf-Aquitaine Oman began production of 45° API crude at its Sahmah field in 1980. It was estimated then that the Sahmah field had enough oil for a daily production of 12,000 b/d for 14 years. Output began



A technician operates PDO's modern equipment (Photograph: PDO)

dropping, however, and production at the Sahmah fields last year was 2.59 million barrels, around 7,000 b/d.

The Occidental (Chevron) Group is now the third oil producer in the Sultanate. It began producing about 3,000 b/d of light crude of 42° to 50° API at Safah, south-west of Ibri, late in 1984. Recoverable reserves of about 60 million barrels have been

found, and last year the Safah field produced 0.74 million barrels of crude.

Six other companies are operating in the Sultanate. They are Japex, Amoco Petroleum Oman, British Petroleum (Oman Branch), Japan Petroleum Development, International Petroleum Corporation and Placid Oil.

Oman began refining crude for its domestic market in 1982. Its plant, at Mina al Fahal, is being extended to refine 80,000 b/d. The refinery has been producing at its full capacity of 50,000 b/d since last year. The refinery produces petrol, kerosine, jet fuel, middle distillates, bunker oil, and butane which is bottled for household consumption.

Gas

The uses of gas can be easily divided into two groups: oil field and non-oil field.

PDO, being the primary concessionnaire in Oman, is the largest consumer of oil field gas. Oil-field uses of gas include fuel for power plants and equipment and its reinjection into oil reservoirs to maintain pressures and to sustain oil production rates.

On the non-oil field side, the Government is increasingly using Oman's somewhat limited reserves of natural gas to provide a cleaner and less expensive fuel (compared to diesel oil) for power generation, water desalination, and various industrial and domestic purposes.

The primary consumers of non-oil field gas are the Government's electrical power plants. These include Al Ghubra and Rusayl which serve the Greater Capital Area, and the Wadi Jizzi power plant which serves Sohar, Buraimi, and their surrounding villages, as well as the copper smelting facility. Al Ghubra was the first consumer connected to the Government Gas System. This occurred in 1978. And Al Ghubra continues to be the largest single consumer of gas in its dual role as power generator and desalinated water producer.

In addition to the major power/desal plants, gas is (or soon will be) used to generate power and desalinate water at various military installations. Gas is also in use on a small scale at the Sultan Qaboos University and to a larger extent in the manufacture of cement. In the near term future, gas will be available to the various industries of the Rusayl Industrial Estate.

Natural gas is found in two conditions: in association with oil



PDO's terminal complex at Mina al Fahal (Photograph: PDO)

(associated gas) and by itself (non-associated gas). Oman's gas reserves are estimated to be 8.1 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of which 6.2 TCF are classified as non-associated and the balance is associated.

Due to the increasing importance of gas in the oil field and out of it, Oman has embarked on a 10 year gas exploration programme which began in 1984. So far the results have been positive with a significant discovery in the Khuff reservoirs at Yibal. These reservoirs lie just below the shallower oil and gas producing zones which have been in production almost from the beginning. Other discoveries were made near Maghoul and Tauf Dahm.

PDO, the other oil concessionaires, and the Government are continuously involved in securing the most efficient and economic utilization of natural gas and are making certain that facilities are in place to handle the ever-increasing demands.

Typical gas-related facilities include wells, gas treatment

plants (to strip out the liquids and the impurities), pipelines, and pressure reducing/metering stations at the points of delivery to consumers.

Gas production, treatment and transmission facilities are costly and require many years to complete. Nevertheless, the Government is committed to natural gas as its primary fuel for the nation's continued growth and prosperity.

MINING

The mountains that form the backbone of northern Oman which extend south-east from the top of the Musandam Peninsula to Ras al-Hadd, Oman's easternmost point, are composed of rocks referred to as the Semail ophiolites. These rocks represent exposures of ancient oceanic crust that have been emplaced onto the Arabian continental margin. The ophiolites are the principal host rocks for mineral deposits.

Archaeologists believe Oman was the legendary land of Magan from where the Sumerians obtained the copper on which their civilisation — the forerunner of our own — was based.

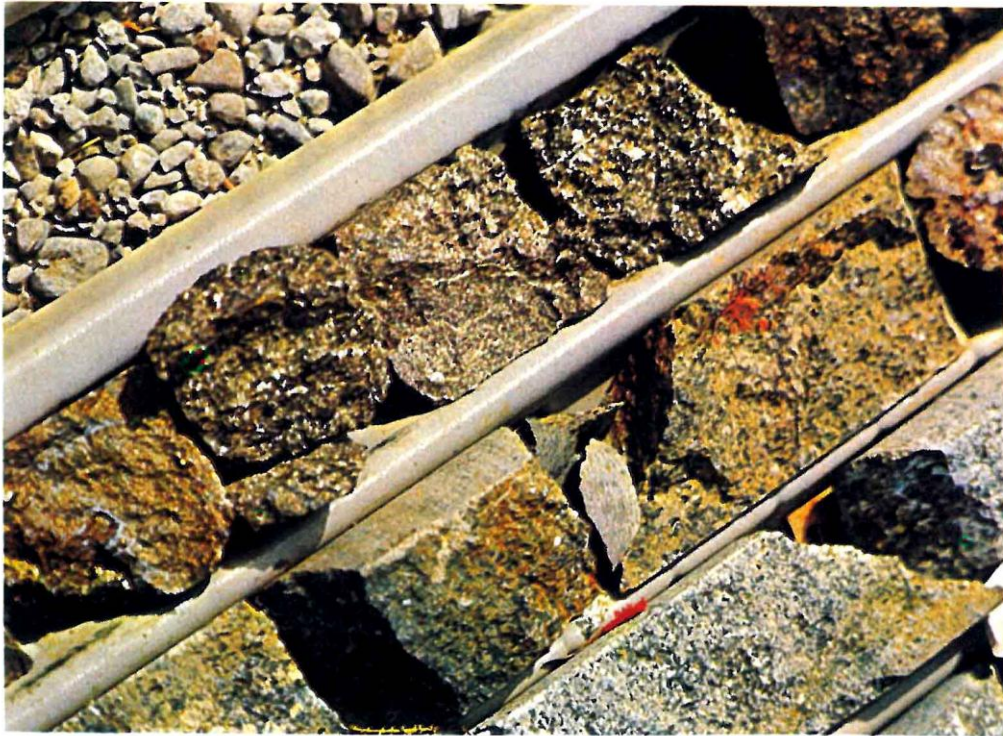
Oman exported 14,318 tonnes of refined copper cathodes, worth RO6.9 million in 1985 from its Sohar copper mining, smelting and refining complex. Shortly after export production commenced, Oman copper was officially recognised by the London Metal Exchange in 1984 as being of the highest international quality. The main importers of Oman's copper cathodes are Britain and Japan. Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have also been buyers.

This marks a further milestone in Oman's efforts to diversify its oil-based economy into industries utilising other natural resources, and to spread employment opportunities more evenly throughout the country.

The whole Sohar copper operation is run by the state-owned Oman Mining Company (OMCO). The main copper deposits are at Bayda, Aarja and Lasail. Together, they contain some 11 million tonnes of ore with a copper content of nearly two per cent.

Mining began in mid-1979 with the re-opening of ancient mines at Bayda and Lasail. The complex has plants for crushing, concentrating, pelletising, smelting and refining. Production will be maintained at around 15,000 tonnes a year. At this production rate, the Sohar reserves have a lifespan of 11 to 12 years. However, further exploration is being carried out in areas surrounding the present copper mines in Wadi Al Jizzi, and the results so far have been encouraging. Exploration has also begun in several other parts of the country. These include Daris, al Ghuzayn, Mahab, Shinas, Wadi Abdam, al Washihi, al Ajal and Hayl al Safil.

OMCO has, so far, exported 7,056 tonnes worth RO272,000 of chromite ore.



Oman is rich in minerals: copper, chrome, manganese, iron and nickel offer great potential for development — a display of earth core samples.

High-quality marble is being quarried at a number of locations, and marble products made by private companies are now being exported to neighbouring countries.

The Sultanate also has large deposits of limestone and gypsum. These are being exploited to produce cement at two factories — one at Rusayl, near Muscat, and the other at Raysut in the south.

Geological surveys conducted in northern Oman and on Masirah Island indicated the existence of other minerals, notably iron, manganese and nickel. Surveys of other parts of the country have indicated the presence of coal, asbestos, lead and zinc. The survey programmes are being extended throughout the whole country to locate and evaluate other non-hydrocarbon deposits.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

Oman is intensively developing its agricultural and fisheries resources as part of a comprehensive plan to lessen its current heavy dependence on earnings from crude petroleum. The Sultanate's long-term aim is to develop farming and fishing to a point where the country becomes self-sufficient in staple foods. Farming and fishing were the backbone of Oman's economy long before the advent of oil. Even today, they continue to provide the main source of income for about half the Sultanate's population, and will remain one of the mainstays of the economy in the future. A priority of the government, therefore, has been to reorganise farming and fishing and put them on a firm footing for the future.

Production has increased in recent years with the provision of government technical and financial aid to farmers and fishermen. During the second five-year plan (1981-1985), the agriculture and fisheries sector's contribution to the gross domestic product rose from RO52.6 million to RO98.5 million. Exports of fish and agricultural produce also went up substantially — fish from RO2 million to RO8.8 million; dried limes from RO787,000 to RO2.2 million; fresh fruits and vegetables from RO526,000 to RO728,000; dried and preserved dates from RO199,000 to RO809,000; tobacco from RO18,000 to RO380,000, wheat flour RO1.2 million. Exports of live animals to countries in the region rose sharply, from RO31,000 to RO1.3 million.

The government has announced that during the current plan, there will be a gradual shift of development expenditure from infrastructure projects to income generating sectors. Large funds have been allocated to the Oman Agriculture and Fisheries Bank which has been giving soft loans to the farming and fishing communities enabling them to buy at subsidised prices high-yield seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, livestock, animal feed, farming machinery, fishing boats and other equipment. During the four-year period from 1981-1984, the bank provided loans totalling RO14 million. Figures for 1985 are not yet available, but it has been announced that the bank's capital is to be increased.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has indicated that during the current development plan, priority will be given to

raising productivity and particular attention given to reducing production costs in the agricultural sector.

Research and extension programmes for crops and livestock will be expanded and upgraded to suit local requirements. Additional research facilities are due to be completed in 1986 at Rumais, Tanuf and Salalah research stations.

Work carried out at research stations includes soil and water analyses to determine the most suitable crops, fertilisers and pesticides. Field workers from 38 extension centres visit farmers regularly to advise them on the latest cropping and other farming techniques and to provide subsidised products such as improved seeds, fertilisers and pesticides.

Oman has established extensive veterinary services — a veterinary hospital in Salalah and a network of some 36 veterinary clinics. The authorities have carried out a country-wide vaccination programme, inoculating nearly 450,000 head of livestock against foot and mouth, rinderpest and other diseases. The veterinary services are to be further expanded, concentrating on vaccination programmes, strict enforcement of quarantine measures, and the establishment of demonstration centres to guide farmers on proper housing, feeding, breeding, and general husbandry methods for their animals.

With subsidised feed supplies and veterinary services, the livestock population in the Dhofar jebel region in the south has increased rapidly and over-grazing has become a problem. To preserve the grasslands, the government has started a scheme to buy calves from Jebali herdsmen.

Priority will be given to developing a comprehensive plan for efficient use of water for irrigation. Supplies are still largely drawn from the traditional network of aflaj and wells. With the advent of drilled wells and mechanical pumps, the amount of water drawn has risen considerably. In some areas, this higher demand has surpassed the safe long term yield of the aquifer. Sea water intrusion has become a major problem on the highly cultivated Batinah and Salalah plains. Water resources are being developed by the extensive building of new catchment dams for rain water which has hitherto been lost through draining off into mountain ranges into the desert or the sea. And Oman's centuries-old falaj system is gradually being restored.

Oman's farmland lies in widely different climatic regions, from the temperate terraces of Jebel al-Akhdar to the monsoon-



Agriculture is an increasingly important factor in Oman's economy. Modern techniques are greatly improving yields.

swept Salalah plain. This enables farmers to grow a variety of crops, ranging from dates, limes, and bananas to tomatoes, lettuces and cabbages. The fodder crops are mainly alfafa and Rhodes grass. Coffee is being successfully grown on the Dhofar jebal.

Under the current plan, date farming is to be revitalised with special attention given to cultivating nurseries and conducting more research. Another aim is to assist farmers to improve their cropping pattern by restructuring the present system of

government subsidies, thus diversifying seasonal crops and regularising supply. The farmers are assured of guaranteed marketing outlets through the Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce whose collecting centres buy directly from the farms. The Authority became fully operational last year (1985). It now controls a network of six distribution and 12 collection centres, whose facilities include cold stores and refrigerated trucks.

As with other income-generating sectors of the economy, the government is encouraging more private participation. In line with this policy, the extensive Oman Sun Farm at Salalah has been transferred to private ownership, and other similar government enterprises will be transferred to the public sector once they have successfully proved their viability.

Fisheries

Oman's coastal waters, rich in marine life, provide a natural resource of great potential, and the fishing industry a valuable developing asset to the economy. In 1985 the industry was Oman's largest non-oil export earner. Last year (1985) exports of fish and other seafood totalled RO8.8 million. Among Ministry infrastructure projects to be completed are fisheries complexes with cold stores, ice plants, freezers and marine workshops in Sohar, Kuria Muria, Salalah and four other sites. Also to be completed this year are docking facilities for fishing boats on Masirah Island and at Mirbat, a fish distribution centre and sales outlets in Nizwa, and three fish retail sales outlets in Ibri, Dhank and Manah. In addition to these facilities, a considerable number of others were completed during the 1981-1985 development period. Oman's fishermen were supplied with 4,506 boats and 8,022 engines at subsidised prices, distributed by the Fishermen Encouragement Fund and the Agriculture and Fisheries Bank.

The government's research programme is being strengthened with the opening shortly of the Marine and Fisheries Science Centre in Muscat. Its work will include monitoring studies of the size and nature of existing fish stocks. Its findings will assist the government in deciding the scale of commercialised fishing that is to be allowed. Particular care is being taken to prevent over-fishing.

Omani waters have abundant supplies of commercially marketable fish. According to some estimates, the present catch of 60,000-70,000 tonnes is a small fraction of the poten-



Oman's coastal waters are rich in fish (Photograph: Helmut Schulze)

tial yield of demersal (deep sea) and pelagic (surface feeding) fish.

The main types of demersal fish found in Omani waters are rock-cod, snapper and cuttlefish. Some of the more common pelagic species are sardines, yellow-fin tuna, anchovy and kingfish.

Lobsters, trapped by fishermen in the southern waters of Oman, were among the most lucrative exports in 1985 of the Oman National Fisheries Company (ONFC). Under a cooperative arrangement with local fishermen, ONFC bought 1,500 tonnes of lobsters at its collection centre in Salalah where the company also operates a fish processing plant.

ONFC, set up in 1980 with government assistance, has achieved considerable profitability, notably in the export market. In 1985, 75 per cent of its sales of RO4.4 million came from exports to countries ranging from the United States to Thailand.



The fishing industry is making a valuable contribution to the country's revenues. The government provides generous assistance to fishermen to buy their own modern boats and equipment (Photograph: Helmut Schulze)

The company, jointly owned by the government, private investors and fishermen, operates the Muttrah Fishing Complex which consists of a fish processing plant, an ice plant, large freezing and cold storage facilities, refrigerated trucks, and a workshop for repairing fishing vessels. ONFC operated eight trawlers last year; under Oman's strict fishing conservation regulations, the vessels were restricted to fishing five miles off-shore or in waters 50 metres deep.

There are two other fishing companies operating in Oman: the Oman Sea Company, a wholly owned Omani private enterprise, and the Korean Overseas Fishing Company which returns roughly a third of its catch to the government as royalties.

WATER

One of the most pressing problems confronting the government on His Majesty's accession in 1970 was the urgent need to develop the country's water resources. The Sultanate's rapid development since then has continued to demand a high priority for these resources to keep pace with ever-growing requirements.

Oman's water supplies stem from two main sources: (1) desalinated water for the Capital area for domestic and industrial use and (2) surface and ground water for the rural towns and villages for domestic and agricultural needs.

The first category has been relatively less difficult to resolve since Oman had the funds to build desalination plants.

The al Ghubra desalination complex, where two extra units were completed recently, now produces 23 million gallons of water daily — enough to meet the needs of the Capital area until 1989. The al-Ghubra plant also blends with its desalinated water some 3 million gallons of well water from the Wadi Adai field. Another important source of supply for the Capital area is Wadi al Khoud (Seeb) where a recharge dam was completed in 1985. The dam is designed to retain rain water long enough for it to seep into the ground and thus replenish resources.

Smaller desalination plants have been installed on Mahout Island, near Masirah Island and in nine other coastal communities. These plants produce from 20,000 to 120,000 gallons of water per day. Rural towns, like Ibri, Sur, Sohar and Nizwa are served by well-water and these towns have so far had no problems in getting water supplies.

In common with all arid countries, Oman's natural water resources are limited and subject to occasional rather than regular replenishment.

In Oman's coastal areas, intrusion of sea water into the aquifer threatens long-term deterioration of the water resource. This is a problem throughout the Batinah coastal plain in the north-east and the Salalah plain in the south — both regions are highly cultivated and saline intrusion, if not controlled by careful water resources management, could do severe damage.

Oman's water management policies are formulated by the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Water Resources. These are based on data supplied by the Public



Water resources are vital to the Sultanate's life and economy — here officials of the PAWR carefully monitor supplies (Photograph: PAWR)

Authority for Water Resources (PAWR) directed by and responsible to the Council. PAWR, established in 1979, has been building up valuable data on surface water, ground water and quality of the water resources; quantities of regional significance have been found in the Nejd, in the north-eastern region of the Wahibah and within the Saiq formation in areas of the northern Oman mountains adjacent to the Batinah coast.

PAWR's exploration programmes have identified other water resources of local importance, including supplies in Wadi Safwan near Buraimi. These discoveries followed an intensive drilling programme, which totalled over 60,000 metres between 1981-1985.

An important PAWR project that is expected to be completed this year is a comprehensive isotope study to establish the age of groundwater resources throughout the Sultanate. It is ex-

pected that this study will confirm that some of Oman's groundwater resources entered the ground many thousands of years ago, as is the case elsewhere in the Arabian Peninsula, when the climate was much wetter. These resources represent a legacy from the past which must be carefully husbanded under today's arid conditions. The results of the isotope study will provide invaluable inputs for this essential management.

PAWR is also to continue to examine further invasion of the coastal aquifers in the Batinah coast by sea water.

A study of the water resources of the Greater Mannah area near Nizwa is under way; several government agencies are involved in this development. A comprehensive drilling programme is being carried out in support of this study.

Exploration drilling programmes that will be completed during 1986 include major enterprises in the Nejd in Dhofar and in north-east Sharqiyah. Altogether about 4,000 metres of drilling will be completed during 1986.

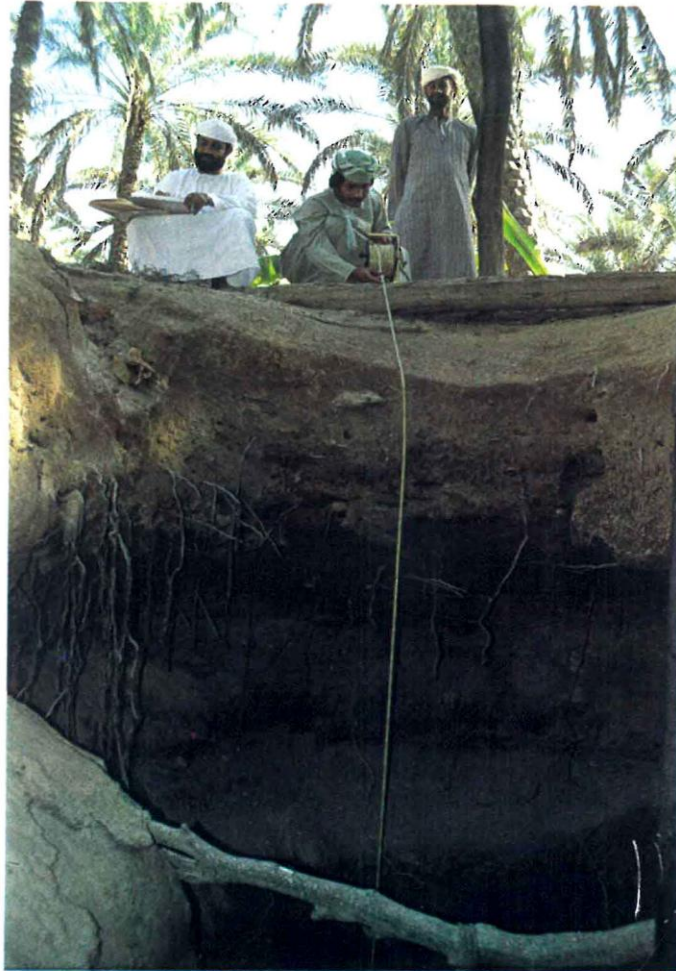
PAWR's national water resources information system and clearing house will become fully operational in 1986. This will facilitate the flow of information between government agencies and avoid duplication of effort and conflicting development plans.

A pilot study has been undertaken by the University of Bristol in Britain on the use of satellite imagery to enhance the information available from ground stations on rainfall distribution and amounts. This study followed an initial report, prepared several years ago, whose findings were encouraging.

Aware of the crucial importance of careful planning and exploitation of water resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has instituted a programme to maintain and repair the traditional falaj* and well system of irrigation and to increase their efficiency. During the 1981-1985 development plan, the Ministry spent RO22 million on maintaining and repairing 950 aflaaj (out of an estimated 4,000 aflaaj) and 4,500 wells throughout Oman.

The Ministry has also commenced a campaign to encourage more farmers to use modern irrigation equipment such as sprinklers, centre pivots and drip systems. To stop further erosion of the water level in the Batinah coastal plain by sea

* Arabic singular: Falaj; Plural: Aflaaj



Carrying out a hydrological survey (Photograph: PAWR)

water, no permits will be issued to farmers to drill new wells unless these are outside a declared prohibited area, at least 3.5 km from main falaj services and outside the areas needed for constructing recharge dams. So far, apart from the recharge dam at al Khoud (Seeb), three others have been completed at Wadi Quryat (Bahla), Hilti Salahi (Sohar) and Khor al Rusaq (Sur).

ELECTRICITY

A major aim of the current plan is to increase power supplies to meet the needs of the population in outlying areas. In the Capital area, the bulk of the population is already provided with electricity.

Rural areas have seen the Sultanate's biggest load-growth over the past five years, with demand sometimes increasing by as much as 70 per cent. To organise efficient load-shedding, the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) is reinforcing the generation system in remote areas by relocating existing diesel generating sets to where demand is greatest.

Existing high-voltage networks in the north, at Wadi Jizzi, and the Capital area are to be extended to surrounding townships to release small diesel generating sets for supplying power to the remote regions.

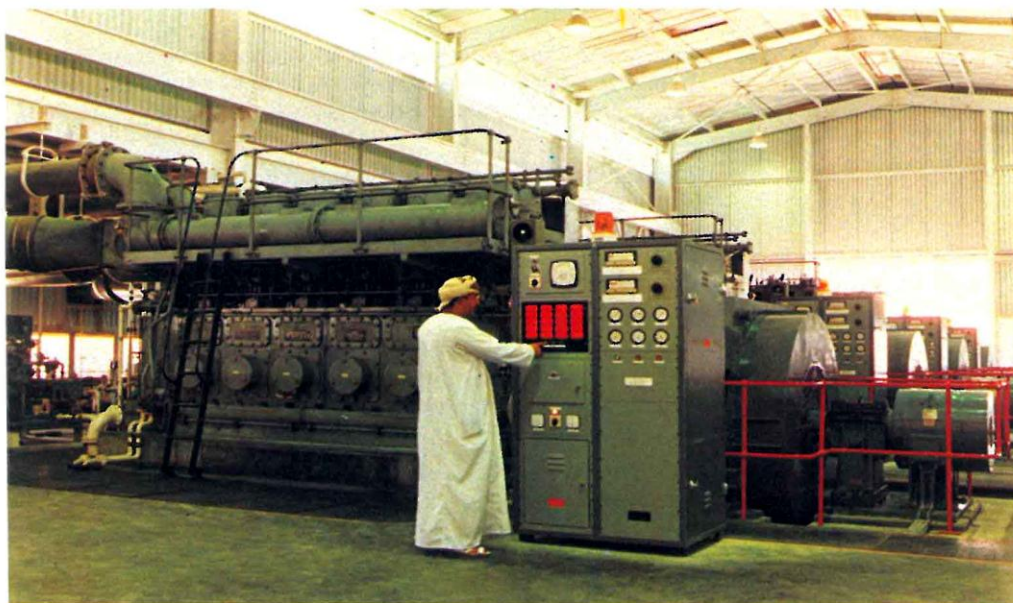
Last year, a total of 33.9 MW of new generating capacity was installed in the Interior and on the coast.

Oman's main sources of power at present are a 294 MW gas-fired complex at Al Ghubrah, a 250 MW gas turbine station at Rusail, a 26.5 MW plant at Wadi Jizzi, near Sohar, and a 41.9 MW plant at Raysut, near Salalah, in the south. The plant at Rusail will shortly be extended by the installation of three generators, which will double its present capacity to 500 MW. MEW also has plans to build two large power plants at Barkah, on the Batinah coast, and Manah, near Nizwa. Barkah is to have a three-phased development, ultimately bringing its total installed capacity to over 600 MW with an associated desalination capacity of 36 million gallons of water per day.

MEW is now reviewing detailed design bids for the first phase of the gas-fired Barkah station. Initially the station will have an installed capacity of 160 MW with an associated 12 million gallons per day desalination plant.

Detailed designs for the 100 MW gas-fired station at Manah will begin in 1987. Construction tenders will be called in late 1987 or early 1988. Manah will serve as the central power station for the Interior.

Power generation for the Southern Region also comes under MEW. The biggest power station in the south is Raysut; there are several other smaller plants which, together with the Raysut station, have a generating capacity of under 100 MW.



One of the Sultanate's modern power stations in operation (Photograph: R.K. Vincent Jr.)

MEW is looking into the possibility of bringing a gas pipeline extension to Salalah, from Petroleum Development Oman's gas fields in the south, within the next five years. If this goes ahead, there will be a potential of up to 150 MW of power generating capacity to be centralised at Salalah.

For the first time, inhabitants of the Sultanate's Kuria Muria islands, off the south coast, will have their own power and water supply. Contracts were awarded at the end of 1985 to build a power station and associated desalination plant.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

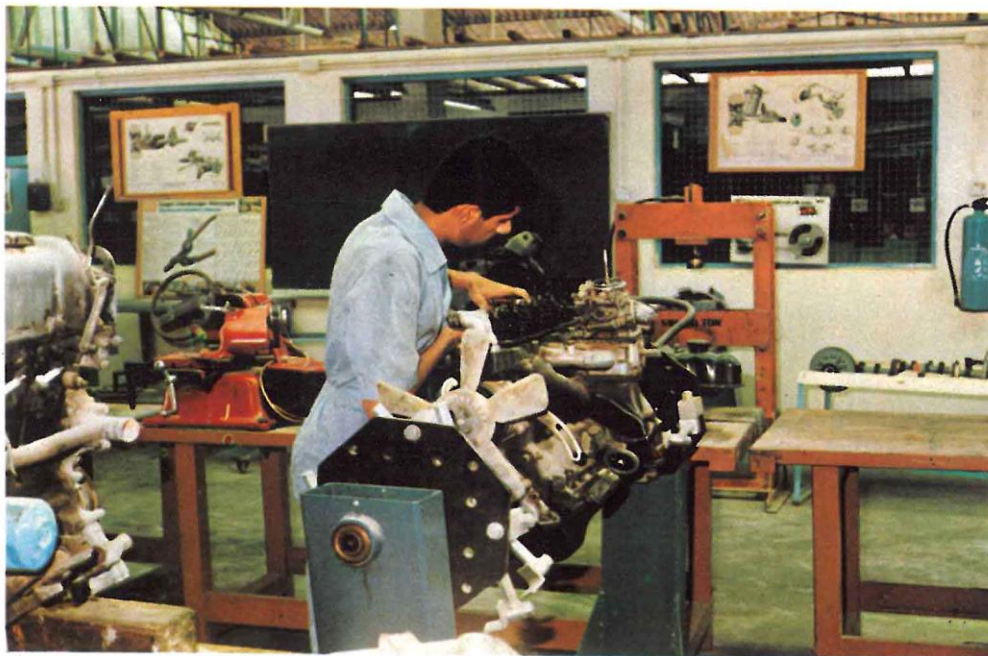
Oman's social welfare programme compares, per capita, with the best in the world. First introduced in the Sultanate in 1972, a comprehensive system, operated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and other government agencies, now ensures that help is available to all Omanis in need.

Financial aid is given to the aged, handicapped, widows, women in special need, families who look after orphans or other parentless children, and unmarried women who are between 18 and 60 years of age and who have no one to depend on for a living. Other categories of those in need can qualify for assistance. In addition to financial aid, housing is also provided for the aged. The disabled can also receive free vocational training at two centres: near the Capital area and at Salalah. Both centres have training workshops, farms and clinics.

Some families are given help to start a trade or cultivate a plot of land; the government will provide, for instance, a small flock of sheep or a water pump or a sewing machine to help people become independent. Assistance is then given in marketing their products.

Government also operates a community development programme. This is a self-help scheme under which villages in remote areas can themselves build a temporary school or a local road pending permanent structures being provided by government. An education programme, teaching villagers sound health habits and encouraging them to use maternity, child-care centres and hospitals has also proved successful. A school for deaf and dumb children has also been established. By order of His Majesty the Sultan, a National Child Care Committee has been set up. Presided over by the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, its other members are the Under-Secretaries of Education and Youth Affairs, Health, Information and National Heritage and Culture. The Committee's main responsibility is to work out policies and plans on child care and to coordinate with ministries and government departments concerned in carrying out field research programmes and studies to provide statistics and data on the needs of children.

A low-cost housing programme, launched in 1974, has benefited several thousand Omani families in the lower income



A student at one of the Vocational Training Institutes

brackets. An Omani who earns less than RO1,200 a year can be given an interest free loan, repayable over 30 years, to buy a house built by the government on 400 sq. metres of land given free. During the second five-year plan, 1,984 such houses were completed and allocated.

In 1972, Oman's social welfare programme provided 131 families with nearly RO23,000. In 1985, 27,973 families received a total of nearly RO7.8 million.

LABOUR

Development of Oman's human resources is a particular responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. It runs full-time training courses in such subjects as construction, electrical and mechanical engineering, commerce, agriculture, fishing and mining at vocational institutes throughout the country. Part-time training courses are also available to improve the skills of people already in employment. Response to these training programmes has been good.

Omanisation of jobs is gathering momentum as increasing numbers of qualified Omanis become available. A government survey of the private sector shows that in the past five years (1981-1985), there was a 10 per cent increase in the number of Omanis holding higher administrative and technical posts. Those holding clerical posts increased by 3.5 per cent. There was, however, a drop of 10 per cent in the number employed in unskilled work, which probably reflects the growing availability of Omanis qualified for skilled appointments.

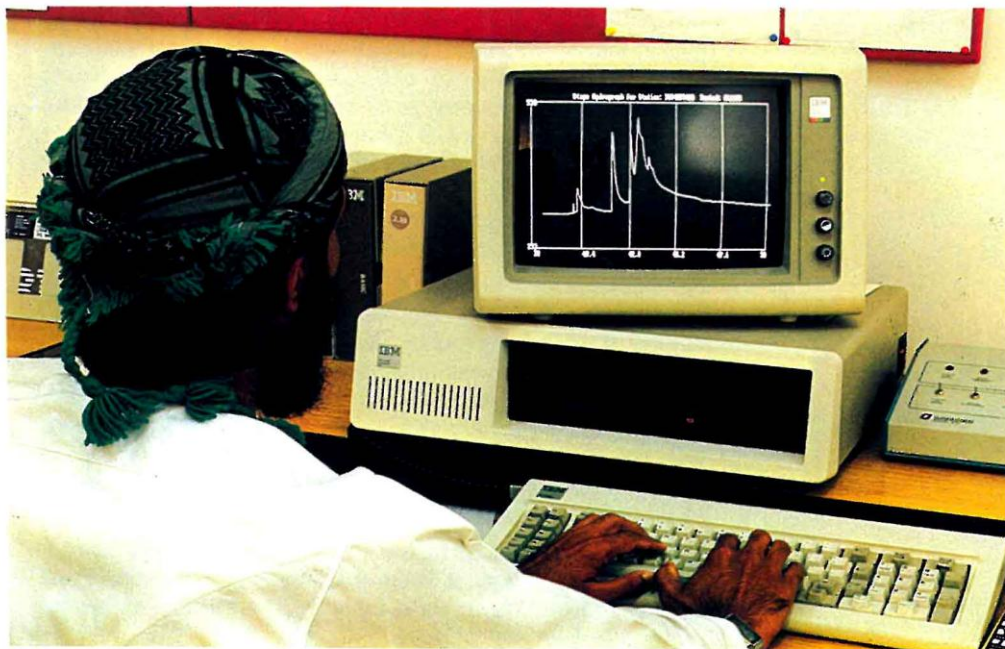
The survey, conducted by the Directorate-General for Labour Affairs of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, shows that 10,000 more Omanis were employed in the private sector during the five-year period.

Overall responsibility for manpower development rests with the Education and Vocational Training Council, set up in 1978 under the chairmanship of His Majesty. It aims to meet each sector of the national economy's need for skilled personnel by coordinating the programmes of ministries, state enterprises and private companies involved in education and training.

The Ministry of Education provides skilled manpower through its secondary, commercial, industrial and agricultural schools, and intermediate colleges for teacher training. It also sponsors candidates for advanced training or studies at colleges and universities abroad.

The Sultan Qaboos University, which admitted its first intake of students in September 1986, teaches science, engineering, medicine, agriculture and education and Islamic studies — subjects geared to the country's needs for specialised personnel.

Vocational training institutes and Oman's Industrial and Technical College are meeting some of the requirements for commercial and technical manpower.



Adult technical training is high among the Ministry's priorities.

Many of Oman's qualified health personnel are graduates of the Institute of Health Sciences. For the banking and financial sector, Omanis are being trained at the Oman Institute of Banking, run by the Central Bank of Oman. Trainees must have first completed a secondary school education.

In line with the government's labour policy, wholly or partly government owned enterprises give high priority to manpower development. Among them are Petroleum Development Oman, Oman Oil Refinery and the Oman Mining Company.

Under Omani labour laws governing Omanisation of jobs, no foreigners may be employed unless they have technical skills required by the Sultanate, or when the number of Omanis with such skills is insufficient to meet demands.

Another regulation is aimed at on-the-job training of Omani manpower. It stipulates that companies employing 20 or more workers should set up a training centre at the place of work and draw up a training programme under the Ministry's supervi-

sion. Such employers can join others, who run similar businesses, to meet the training regulations. Employers must also extend financial aid to vocational training projects run by the Ministry; such contributions are based on the number of employees but do not exceed six per cent of the total annual salaries.

An employer who contributes to the training of an Omani worker must appoint him in his establishment, provided that the worker successfully completes the course. The training period is to be regarded as part of normal working hours.

Companies enjoy certain compensations: they can claim refund of part of the trainees' salaries and allowances and, where applicable, the full cost of training fees. In certain cases, the government will pay the trainees' salaries and housing allowances.

In the case of overseas training, the Ministry will compensate private companies for cost of travel; it will also pay a daily allowance to a trainee. In certain cases, employers may also recover part of the cost of training equipment. These concessions only cover vocational training and do not cover lectures, seminars and general academic education.

Oman's labour laws also regulate minimum wages, annual leave, hours of work, medical treatment, industrial safety and labour disputes.

COMMUNICATIONS

Oman today has an extensive road network connecting villages and provincial towns to the Capital area. Development of the network has been rapid, particularly in the second five-year plan (1981-1985). During this period, 1,858 km of asphalt roads were completed, bringing the total length of asphalt roads in the Sultanate to 4,000 km. Some of the major projects included the 800-km north-south highway, linking the Capital area to Salalah, and the Raysut-Mughasyl-Nitam road, as part of the regional road development scheme, serving the Jebel area in the south. Another major development was the Seeb-Aqr dual carriageway, linking the Capital area through the Batinah coast to Dubai and Abu Dhabi. By the end of 1985, Oman had 18,000 km of graded roads. Generally, all major towns are now connected to the capital by asphalt highways and small towns and villages linked to one another by graded roads.

One road, driven by Army engineers through the mountains of Musandam, now makes it possible to reach Oman's northernmost town of Khasab, once only accessible from Muscat by sea.

To ease growing traffic congestion in the Capital area, the government completed several major road building projects. These included flyovers at Ruwi, Hamriya, Wadi Adai, Wat-tayeh, Darseit, Mutrah, Qurum, Ghala, Boushar and Khuwair.

The Ministry of Communications, responsible for road building and maintenance, is also in charge of the country's ports and airports.

During the 1981-1985 period, facilities at Mina Qaboos and Mina Raysut were expanded to service the growing number of ships calling at the ports with the consequent increase in cargo handling. Among the improvements made at Mina Qaboos, Oman's main port, was the installation of container facilities and the construction of additional berthing accommodation. In 1985, Mina Qaboos saw an increase of nearly 19 per cent in container traffic — 48,300 containers were moved compared with 40,690 the previous year.

Mina Qaboos now has 10 deep-water berths, capable of taking vessels of up to 10.4 metres draught. The port operates round-the-clock services, thus enabling quick turn-round; ships can



The Capital's extensive modern road network, which is continually being expanded.

berth almost immediately on arrival and discharge cargo into adjacent modern storage areas.

In 1985, 1,580 ships and 1,128 light craft called at Mina Qaboos compared with 1,481 ships and 121 light craft respectively in 1984; the amount of cargo handled totalled 2.54 million tons.

Container facilities were also installed at the southern port of



An aerial view of the Sultanate's thriving Port Qaboos, Mutrah.

Mina Raysut during the 1981-1985 period. The number of ships calling there increased to 322 in 1985 compared with 275 in 1984. The port handled nearly 430,000 tons of cargo last year.

The 1981-1985 period also saw Oman grow in importance as an air traffic centre. Seeb International Airport served 1.3 million passengers in 1985, almost double the number at the beginning of 1981. The airport also handled over 35,000 tonnes of cargo, nearly three times the quantity at the start of the five-year plan; aircraft movements rose to nearly 33,000, an increase of nearly 32 per cent.

To cope with the higher passenger and air traffic movements, as well as the increase in air cargo, numerous improvements and extensions were made to the airport terminal building, runway and air traffic control system.

Domestic air travel also increased during the five-year period, and Oman's main domestic airport at Salalah in the south,



Seeb International Airport's busy passenger concourse.

handled nearly 74,000 passengers in 1985; a 33 per cent increase since 1982 when statistics were first kept. A new airport terminal building was completed in April 1986.

Oman Aviation Services (OAS) operate all domestic routes; domestic services were extended to Khasab, Bayah, Sur, Masirah and Buraimi in September 1984.

Under the third five-year plan, several projects to further improve and extend the country's road network and services provided at the ports and airports are under consideration.

POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Oman's telecommunication network was upgraded and expanded rapidly during the second five-year plan to meet growing demands for telephone and telex services. In the Capital area alone, the number of telephone lines increased from 18,000 to 57,000 with the opening of the ultra-modern Telecommunication Centre at Bait al Falaj and six other digital electronic telephone exchanges. Another centre in Salalah in the south raised the number of available lines from 6,000 to 16,000. Direct dialling between Muscat in the north and Salalah in the south also became available. With the digital switching system, operating and maintenance costs are reduced while waiting time for installation of new telephone lines is also much shorter.

Another significant development was the introduction in 1985 of a mobile telephone service covering a large area of the Sultanate. This service can be expanded to provide conventional telephone services to remote areas of the country which cannot be connected to Oman's domestic satellite network.

Oman's Rural Telecommunication Service, serving 40 towns and villages, was launched towards the end of the development plan.

At the Bait al Falaj Telecommunication Centre, a new international digital electronic telephone exchange is scheduled to be completed by the end of 1986. The exchange will have an initial capacity of 1,000 lines.

Oman now has a fully automatic Arabic-English telex exchange, to accommodate bilingual telex machines.

Microwave links have been installed between Nizwa and Salalah, Nizwa and Ibri and Greater Muttrah and Azaiba.

Oman's international telecommunication network was expanded last year with the commissioning of another satellite earth station at al-Hajar. The new station is linked to Arabsat, whence international traffic, including television programmes, are routed to other Arab countries. An earlier satellite earth station, also located at al-Hajar, carries Oman's international circuits with numerous countries via the Indian Ocean Intelsat satellite. A third earth station at the same location handles television transmissions to five other stations at Buraimi,



Operating the Ministry's advanced equipment

Saham, Nizwa and Sur in northern Oman, and Salalah in the southern region. An earth station at Masira is one of the latest to be completed connecting the island to Oman's domestic network.

Under the third five-year plan, some of the more important projects include expanding the telephone service to the rural areas, increasing the capacities of telephone exchanges in the Capital Area and extending the mobile telephone service. The automatic telex exchange will also be expanded. A proposal to build a satellite earth station to link up with the Atlantic Intelsat is also under study.

Postal services in the country have also been improved and expanded to cope with increasing demands. Among the latest developments is the introduction of a datapost service which initially covered neighbouring countries, and has since been extended to the United States, Europe and the Far East.

Automatic mail sorting equipment has now been installed to deal more rapidly with the ever increasing flow of letters and



Oman's sophisticated satellite system provides worldwide communications.

parcels. This computerised system is housed in the Central Sorting Office, near Seeb International Airport.

The Sultanate has 60 post offices and 39 local distribution agencies which offer postal services. Mobile post offices temporarily service remote or newly developed areas or areas where requirements are on a limited scale.

Oman issued its own stamps only in April 1966, although it was possible to send mail to and from the Sultanate in 1856. The stamps used then were of Indian origin and only the postmark identified a letter as having been posted in Muscat. It would then be sent to India before being forwarded to its destination. This system continued until 1947 when Pakistan assisted Oman's postal service for a few months. Letters would then have Indian stamps, overprinted with the word Pakistan, and sold in Oman.

In April 1948, Britain helped Oman's postal service, using British stamps overprinted with a value in Indian currency.



Oman's postage stamps graphically illustrate the Nation's progress.

Eventually, Oman issued its own stamps on 30th April 1966. It was a set of eight stamps worth between three and 50 baisas.

Oman has issued many attractive and colourful stamps since then, a large number of them to commemorate landmarks in the country's development after 1973.

The Sultanate's postal history is told in a book, published in colour by the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones. Appropriately named "The Postal History of Oman, 1856-1985", the book features reproductions of almost every stamp that was sold or issued in Oman since 1856, and is proving a popular addition to philatelists' libraries.

EDUCATION

The development of formal education in Oman began only in 1970 when His Majesty became Sultan. From 1970 to 1975, the priority was for rapid expansion so as to correct the neglect of past years when Oman had only three schools with 909 boys. For the first time too, girls were allowed to attend school. So rapid was the expansion in the early seventies that not all schools could be housed in permanent buildings; some sprang up in tents and huts.

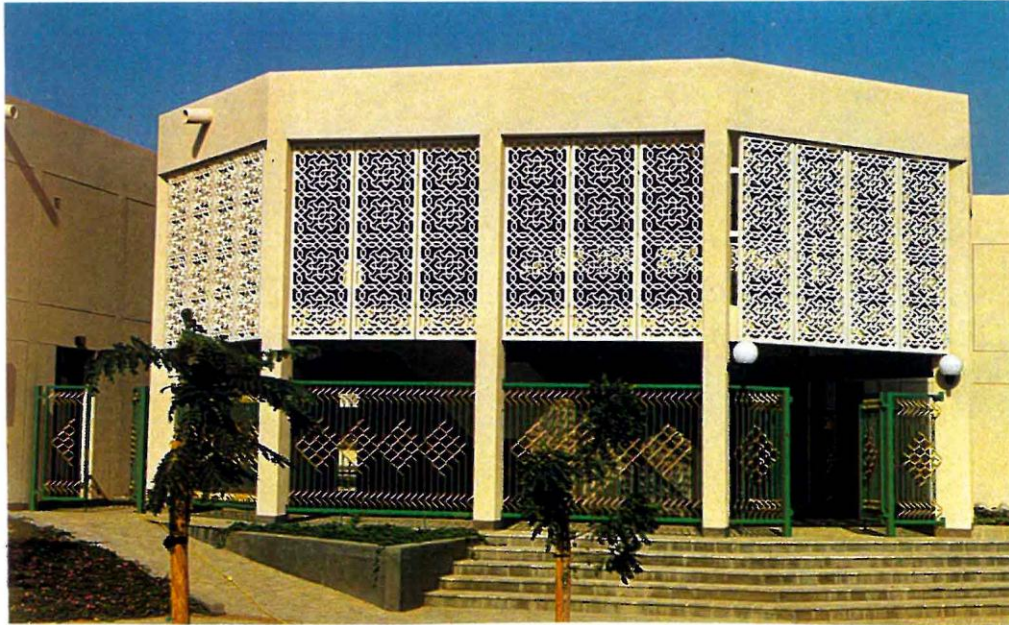
The emphasis in education during the 1976-1980 period was on raising standards and broadening its scope in order to meet the urgent need for skilled manpower. Teacher training, commercial, technical and agricultural studies were introduced. Several hundred Omani students were sent to universities overseas. In 1978, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos established an Educational and Vocational Training Council to coordinate education and training of manpower requirements. At the same time, more and better equipped schools were built. Although education was not compulsory, children were encouraged to attend school and the overwhelming majority did so.

Rapid expansion required the recruitment of a large number of expatriate teachers, most of whom came from Egypt, Jordan and Sudan. It was nevertheless important that the schools should impart Omani values and culture and national pride, so in 1978, Omanisation of education was introduced, which embraced new teaching methods and the provision of Omani textbooks. Whilst stressing Omani values, the Omanised curriculum gives due emphasis to the fact that Omanis are part of the world of Islam and Arabia.

The second five-year plan (1981-1985) saw continued expansion of the education programme and further improvement of standards. While the emphasis was still on providing primary schooling for as many children as possible, it was equally important to ensure there were also enough preparatory and secondary schools to absorb children capable of going beyond primary education. This was achieved. The government built 34 more secondary schools, an increase from 15 to 49, and 30 preparatory schools, an increase from 183 to 213. The number of primary schools increased from 175 to 326. Of the new schools, 99 replaced temporary ones which had been housed in tents or huts.

Our children — Oman's most valuable asset for the future ►
(Photograph: Gill Marais)





School architecture conforms closely to traditional styles — the entrance to the women's dormitory at the Sultan Qaboos University.

With more schools, the Ministry was able substantially to lessen overcrowding and relieve the burden on teachers who had previously had to hold classes for separate sets of children in the mornings and afternoons. Now, it is possible for schools to hold classes in the morning and extra-curricular activities such as sports in the afternoon.

Most of the new preparatory and secondary schools have been provided with modern educational facilities such as science laboratories, workshops and libraries. The education authorities believe that during the period of general education, it is important to expose a child to different opportunities in order to develop his or her natural talents. Pupils who show an aptitude for technical studies can subsequently join a technical secondary school and continue tertiary education in, for example, engineering. Home economics has been introduced as a subject in girls' schools.

One of the basic aims of Oman's educational system is to



A lively group of schoolboys (Photograph: Gill Marais)

provide equal opportunities for girls. The increase in the number of girls attending schools has been a significant development, not only at the primary stage but also at the preparatory and secondary levels. The rise has been notably steeper at the higher levels, thus indicating the increasing interest shown by Omani parents in the education of their daughters.

At the start of the 1985-1986 school year, there were 3,763 girls in secondary schools compared with only 383 at the beginning of the 1980-1981 school year. At the preparatory level, the number increased to 11,060 from 3,445. Of the 218,914 students at school, girls formed 42 per cent.

Technical education is an important part of the government's plan to link school studies increasingly to manpower requirements; thus, for example, a preparatory school in the Sohar copper mining area has become a fully-fledged industrial secondary school, offering a variety of courses including welding, refrigeration and technical drawing. Two commercial secondary schools — one for boys and the other for girls —

have also been established to equip young people with practical office skills. Agricultural studies have been upgraded to secondary level with the establishment of the Agricultural Secondary School at Nizwa. Among other improvements made has been the upgrading of three teachers' training institutes — two in the Capital area and one in Salalah — into intermediate colleges. Trainee teachers can now take a two-year course at an intermediate college after leaving secondary school instead of a three year course on leaving intermediate school.

Part of the development of manpower skills is undertaken by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour which runs eleven vocational institutes and the Sultanate's institute for higher technical studies — the Oman Technical Industrial College. Students seeking admission, must have a secondary school education. The college offers four specialisations — civil, electrical and electronic, mechanical and automotive engineering and laboratory technology. Business studies are also offered with courses in accounting, business management, hotel management, marketing and banking; these courses are divided into five terms of 16 weeks each.

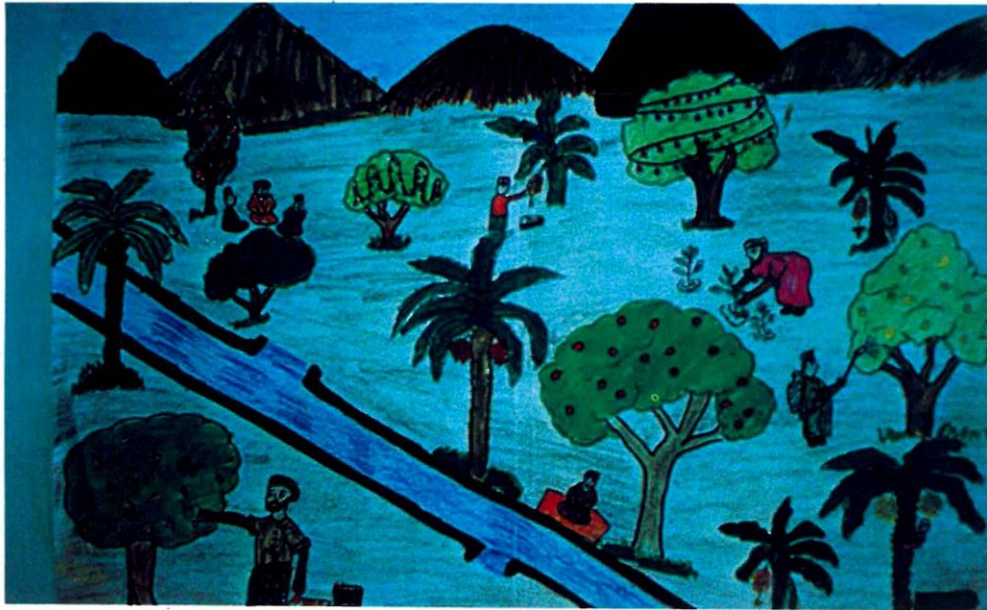
The college was set up in October 1984, and its first batch of 65 students is due to graduate in March 1987, 34 of them in business studies and the rest in the various technical fields. There are 278 students currently studying at the college, of whom 85 are women.

With the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University in September 1986, the government has achieved its aim of providing free education within Oman up to tertiary level. The university, at Al Khoud, near Muscat, has five colleges — Engineering, Agriculture, Science, Medicine and Education and Islamic Studies.

The choice of disciplines emphasises Oman's basic policy of preparing young Omanis to fill positions vital to the future development of the country. The College of Engineering exemplifies this, with students being offered five-year degree courses in civil, mechanical, electrical, mining or petroleum engineering, and electronics.

Students accepted by the College of Agriculture specialise in plant, animal or fisheries sciences.

The Science College will enable a student to take a first degree in physics, chemistry, or mathematics, while the Col-



Art plays an important part in school curricula — a prize-winning picture of rural life by a young child
(Photograph: G. Gaussen)

lege of Education and Islamic Studies qualifies its graduates to teach history, geography, Islamic studies, Arabic and English in secondary schools or to take up appointments in mosques, Islamic courts or other appropriate ministries.

At the Medical College, students have the opportunity of undertaking a four-year degree course in medical science and of continuing their studies in clinical medicine under an additional three-year programme for the Bachelor of Medicine or Bachelor of Science degree, followed by one year's internship at the University's teaching hospital.

Initially, the University has accepted around 500 students which can be expanded to 582. To qualify for entry, students must have completed 12 years of schooling up to "secondary three" standard. However, they also have to undergo a basic foundation course in science, English and other subjects for two terms in the first year. This course continues during the third term in the first half of their second year when the Uni-

versity will then begin introducing subjects related to their field of specialisation.

English is to be the main medium of technical instruction at the University, since it is the most practical language to use in teaching many of the subjects being offered, and will enable the University to keep abreast of world developments in the field of science, engineering, medicine and agriculture.

Omani schools teach English as a second language from "primary IV". By the time pupils graduate from "secondary III", they will thus have had nine years of English instruction.

At the time of going to press, Omanis studying in foreign universities include 86 post-graduate students working for higher degrees in medicine, engineering, agriculture and other disciplines. Seventeen are women.

Adult education and literacy programmes also received greater attention during the second five-year plan; more than 11,000 people attended literacy classes at 294 centres, while 17,000 others studied at adult education centres. Most of those who passed the literacy courses went on to join the adult education programme.

Education will continue to receive high priority under the third five-year plan (1986-1990).

YOUTH AFFAIRS

From the time of his accession in 1970, His Majesty the Sultan has directed that the greatest attention be paid to fitting Omani youth for its future responsibilities. Thus, in addition to providing free formal education, the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs vigorously promotes cultural, social and sporting activities among young people through a network of youth clubs and youth centres.

Young men and women are exposed to their responsibility to society by involving them in local community development projects, through youth camps which have been held annually since 1976. Among those taking part in these camps are young Omanis on vacation from universities abroad; in 1985, for example, most of the participants at two youth camps were boys and girls studying overseas. At Bidiyah, where 100 boys were in camp, community development projects included surveys on health, social and economic development in the area; building a road leading to the Bidiyah souq with the assistance of the local municipality and inhabitants. In addition, bridges were constructed over wadis. The campers also held several discussions with young Bidiyah people on such subjects as nation-building.

Some 60 girls took part in another camp in Birka, on the Batinah coast. They conducted door-to-door surveys on the literacy rate among women in the Birka area and their awareness of social affairs. Another task was to promote health education, particularly in mother and child care. A highlight of the girls' camp was a seminar on the role of women in the economic and social development in Oman.

At these annual youth camps, the young Omanis put on shows in the evenings for the local population. These shows include singing, poetry reading and dancing. On these social evenings, government officials keep a lookout for talented boys and girls who will receive further training to prepare them to represent Oman at foreign festivals and competitions.

To further promote sports in Oman, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos presented the nation's youth with an Olympic-size sports complex in 1985. The RO41 million Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex at Baushar occupies 44 hectares of land. Its main features are a stadium with seating capacity for 30,000



The Sultanate's training ship "SNV Shabab Oman" under full sail.

spectators and a large sports hall with facilities for more than 23 games.

1985 was International Youth Year and it turned out to be an eventful one for young Omanis. Youth delegations visited Singapore, China, Italy and Tunisia on exchange programmes. Another major event was the Gulf Cooperation Council's



Young trainees enjoy a life at sea.

Youth Festival, held in Tokyo, in which young Omanis participated with youths from other GCC countries. The Omani youth display was widely acclaimed.

Oman also took part in graphic arts exhibitions for young artists which are held in London and Tokyo.

To further strengthen ties between young Omanis and their



Oman hosts the 17th Arab Scout Camp at Salalah.

Gulf brothers, Oman participated in the GCC youth camp in Qatar and hosted competitions for GCC Sports Clubs. Omani youths joined in several other events in Gulf countries and also participated in the International Youth Camp in Egypt.

Young Omanis who wanted a taste of their country's seafaring heritage went on cruises on board the Sultan's Naval Vessel (SNV) Shabab Oman, a handsome sailing barque. One of the ship's cruises was to Cochin, Calicut and Bombay, a reminder that Oman pioneered trade by sea between Arabia and India in the eighth century.

In 1986, young Omanis took part in several foreign events, one of which was Operation Sail in July, held in New York Harbour as part of the centennial celebrations of the Statue of Liberty. The Sultanate was represented by SNV Shabab Oman which joined a spectacular parade of tall ships from some 30 other countries.

SNV Shabab Oman left Muscat in late-March for New York on which has been its longest voyage so far — 10,000 miles. Among the crew were naval cadets and boy scouts. There were five crew changes during the voyage so as to enable as large a number as possible of young Omanis to share adventure on the high seas and to develop their sailing skills.

The Shabab Oman's visit to New York was the first made by an Omani ship to an American port since 1840 when the Omani vessel, the Sultanah, arrived there on 30th April. On board the 350-tonne Sultanah was Ahmad bin Na'aman, the personal emissary of Sayyid Said bin Sultan, Ruler of Muscat, Zanzibar and their dependencies. Ahmed bin Na'aman thus became the first Arab envoy to the United States, and his ship the first Arab vessel to visit that country.

In view of the success of its youth programme, the government plans to build in the next five years, 37 more youth clubs with facilities for sports and 12 youth centres with playing fields. There are also plans to set up a maritime club.

The Sultanate also participated in the Asian Games, held in Seoul in September 1986.

HEALTH

Health care of his people has been the foremost priority of His Majesty the Sultan since the day of his accession. Consequently the Health Service has expanded from a state of virtual non-existence at that time to being, per capita, one of the most comprehensive in the world. Oman will continue to improve and expand its health services during the current five-year plan. As part of this policy, the Health Ministry is to provide more specialised hospital treatment with the opening in January 1987 of the 560-bed Royal Hospital at Al-Ghubrah.

The hospital will have facilities for open-heart and orthopaedic surgery and treatment of kidney diseases. In addition to general medical wards, the Royal Hospital will have special maternity and children's wards. The hospital will also assist in the training of medical students of the Sultan Qaboos University.

At present, some of the specialised medical and surgical services provided at hospitals include those of a 128-bed orthopaedic wing and a plastics surgery and burns unit at Khoula Hospital and a cardiology unit at Al-Nahda Hospital, in the Capital area.

Substantial progress was made during the 1981-85 period under the second five-year plan. Now, more health centres will be opened in remote areas, primary health services and facilities at existing district hospitals will be improved, and diagnostic and supporting services at secondary and tertiary levels will be upgraded.

More emphasis will be placed on preventive health services through mass vaccination against preventable diseases, particularly among young children. Programmes to control malaria, trachoma and intestinal diseases will be strengthened.

The already successful health education programmes will continue and be widened in scope. More and more mothers, for instance, are now having their babies vaccinated at birth against tuberculosis and later immunised against tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, poliomyelitis and measles. These programmes also stress the importance of safe drinking water and nutritious food. Apart from using the mass media, the Ministry's teams of health educators visit villages and small towns to give talks and show films on health subjects.

Projects which were started during the second five-year de-

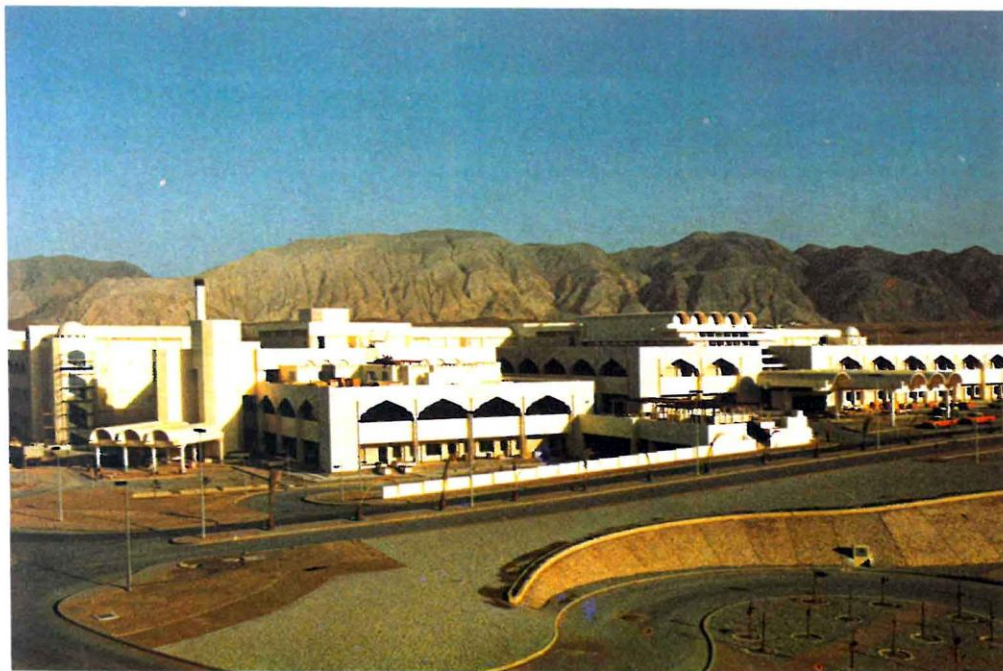


The Sultanate's Health Services provide the most modern free medical facilities.

velopment plan and are to be completed in 1986, include five hospitals, five health centres, one primary health care unit, one malaria control centre and three mother and child health centres.

A major achievement during 1981-85 has been the establishment of hospitals and health centres within easy reach of the population. There is now a network of 40 hospitals and 75 health centres with a total number of 2,877 beds (as at 30 June 1986). Some 25 of these hospitals were formerly health centres which have been upgraded with the provision of more beds and medical staff. Government dispensaries, mostly serving rural areas, have also been upgraded to health centres, now staffed by doctors and nurses. In 1980, there were 14 hospitals and 13 health centres with a total of 1,784 beds. There were then 50 dispensaries. The number of medical staff has also increased significantly from 294 doctors and 857 nurses in 1980 to 635 and 2,249 respectively.

Marked improvements have been made in providing hospitals



Serving the people — the new Royal Hospital under construction at Al-Ghubrah.

and health centres with the latest equipment and in increasing the range of prescribed drugs.

Three permanent mobile medical teams were recently established at Haima, Duqm and Al-Hajj. Rural health services were also set up in Ibra to strengthen mobile clinics and enable them to operate further afield.

Special evening clinics have been set up in most district hospitals, to provide extra care for those suffering from diabetes, hypertension and tuberculosis.

As the government's health programmes have progressed, it has become necessary to seek highly qualified specialised skills from abroad. Consultants from Britain and other countries are regularly invited to provide their services both in direct assistance to patients and in an institutional capacity.

On a regional basis, Oman and member nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council have successfully coordinated their

programmes of malaria control and mother and child care, with the collective purchasing of medicines, sera, vaccines and medical appliances.

High priority is being given to training young Omanis in major health service fields. Many are currently studying at medical schools abroad, and others will now receive their medical education at the Sultan Qaboos University. Omani doctors are also being sent abroad for higher studies in selected fields of specialisation.

Nurses, public health inspectors and other para-medical staff are now trained at the Institute of Health Services (IHS), set up in November 1982. (The first Omani nursing school was established in 1971). Scholarships are also offered for further training abroad to nurses and para-medical staff. A Department of Continuing Education is to be set up at the IHS to provide short-term courses to enable health workers to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

HOUSING

Town planning is a critical factor in a fast developing country like Oman. From the outset, great care has therefore been taken to ensure the maintenance of a correct balance between demand, resources and overall national requirements.

Oman's carefully formulated town planning and housing policies have resulted in significant comprehensive improvements in living conditions, not only in the Capital area but also in regional towns and villages. In addition to being responsible for town planning and housing, the Ministry of Housing (formerly known as the Ministry of Land Affairs), looks after land allocation and community development; the latter ensuring that there is an appropriate proportion of residential, commercial and government plots of land to support a balanced community life.

During the second five-year development plan (1981-1985), the Ministry's major activities included the planning of the Ruwi business district in the Capital area; the siting of Oman's road network within the Capital area and outside; finding suitable locations for health and educational facilities such as the Royal Hospital at Al Ghubra and the Sultan Qaboos University at Al Khod; and allocating plots for private housing, and commercial and industrial properties at Khuwair town, Wadi Kabir, Al Khod Al Jadeed, Maabila South and Atkia/Hajir.

The Ministry also launched a programme for developing six new townships in the Capital area. These are at Qurum Beach, Khuwair South, Ghubra South, Azaiba, Airport Heights and Medinat Al Nahda. The first three are in the process of being implemented. In all, the Ministry's Town Planning Department was instrumental in preparing some 28,600 new plots for building purposes in the Capital area during the 1981-1985 period.

In the wilayats, including Nizwa, Sohar and Sur, the Ministry launched a "quick plan" programme in 1981 to meet demands for land for various uses. Within three years, it provided 34,000 plots. The Ministry is also involved in redeveloping old sites in both the Capital and rural areas. The aim being to improve buildings without destroying their character.

The allocation of plots of land for residential, industrial and commercial uses in towns in the Interior has helped to check undue migration to the Capital; it has also increased commer-



Modern housing

cial activity in several towns: Saham, Nizwa, Masana'a and Suweiq. Tenders are currently being issued for the construction of residential units at Bahla, Nizwa and Ras al Hadd. The Ministry also has plans for constructing houses and other buildings on 4,000 plots in Barka, Musana'a, Suweiq and Khabora. In the Dhakhliya (Interior) and Sharqiyah (Eastern) regions, over 8,800 plots have been allotted for residential, 664 for commercial and 119 for industrial purposes. And in the



Modern housing preserves Oman's traditional dignity and charm (Photograph: PDO)

Batinah and Thahinah, 2,300 plots have been allocated for these purposes. Design bids for a community project in Sohar have been submitted. The scheme, on the Batinah coast, will cost about RO25 million in total, and will cater for a population of roughly 12,000. The brief calls for the design of housing in two areas, and of sites and services in a further three. About 1,000 homes will be built in one area and 750 in the other. In total, roughly 250 plots will be provided in the commercial areas. The housing will cost an estimated RO20 million. The project will be put out to tender in late 1986 to allow construction to start in 1987.

Under the current plan, the emphasis is on community development. Other targets include a comprehensive housing study and design prototype houses to suit Omani families and traditions. Development of central business districts in Azäibä, Sēeb and various towns in the Interior is included. Provisions for the preservation of traditional areas will continue to receive high priority.

Housing loans are available from the Oman Housing Bank on very easy terms. The bank, which began business in 1977, has recently increased individual loans to a maximum of RO35,000. The bank's capital is also being increased from RO20 million to RO30 million.

In 1985, the bank provided 737 loans as against 705 in 1984; the amount approved was RO12.5 million compared with RO10.3 million. About 67 per cent of the loans went to persons from middle-income and low-income groups, thus reflecting the government's emphasis on assisting citizens in these groups to purchase their own homes.

MUSANDAM

The Musandam Peninsular, which commands the strategic Strait of Hormuz, is Oman's northernmost region; it is separated from the rest of Oman by a 70-km strip of territory of the United Arab Emirates. In recent years, economic and social development of the Peninsular by the Musandam Development Committee (MDC) has been extensive.

Most supplies to the Peninsular are delivered by road and by sea, but commercial air services from Muscat to Khasab and Bayah were started in 1984.

Today, Musandam has two ports: at Khasab, the main town, and at Bayah; telecommunications links via satellite (but see below) between Khasab and Muscat; health clinics, schools and hundreds of new homes. Water in the main towns comes from well-fields; for the coastal villages and Kumzar it is mainly supplied by desalination plants, supplemented by water from these same well-fields. Electric power is now available in Khasab and the west coast as well as Kumzar, Lima, Bayah and Mudha. 12km of asphalted roads have now been completed.

Fisheries, followed by agriculture, are the main means of livelihood of the Peninsular's population. Apart from a cold store installation, an ice plant and better landing facilities for their catch at Khasab and Bayah, local fishermen now benefit from fisheries extension centres and marine workshops at both ports. The fishermen are also being advised on how to increase productivity, and a fisheries research vessel has been provided to establish data on the extent, migration, breeding and availability of fish stock.

Agricultural activity, though still relatively small, is being further developed at Bayah. MDC staff supervise schedules for planting, fertilizing, spraying, watering, cultivation and marketing. Fully staffed agriculture centres are now in operation in Khasab and Bayah.

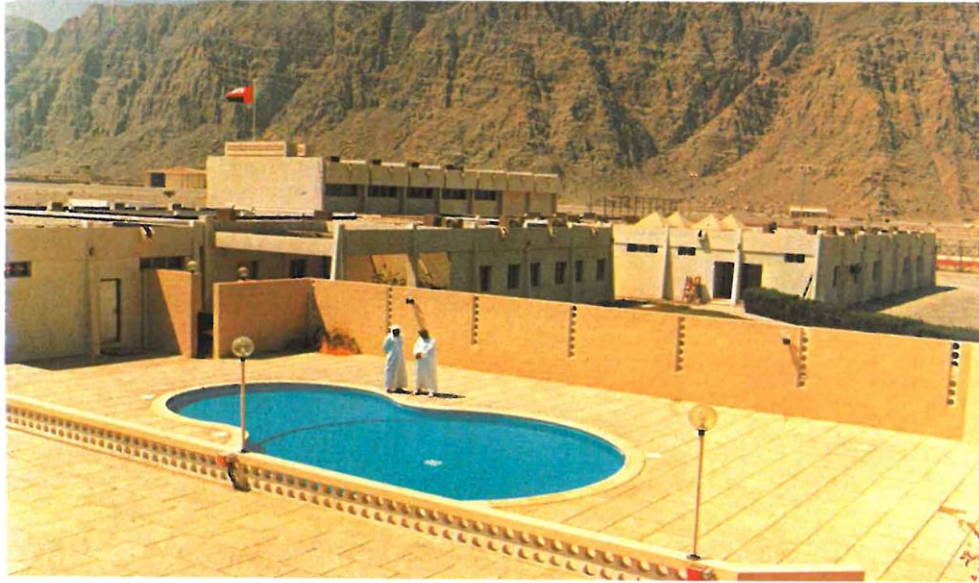
Musandam residents now receive Oman television and radio broadcasts; and telecommunications will be served by the recently-installed microwave backbone system which will link Muscat to the rest of the Sultanate via a terrestrial line that connects at Sohar. Additionally, residents of Khasab and Bukha will have access to more telephone subscriber lines to



*At the end of the day: fishing dhows return to harbour at Hannach Bay, West coast of Musandam
(Photograph: J.K. Vincent Jr.)*

all other parts of the Sultanate. Al Jadi, Bayah, Kumzar, Lima and Mudha will also have telephone lines for the first time in 1986.

As a result of these developments, Omanis who moved to the United Arab Emirates in search of jobs are returning to Musandam, attracted by the improved living standards.



The new Youth Centre at Khasab



Dams under construction in the Musandam (Photograph: J.K. Vincent Jr.)

ENVIRONMENT

One of His Majesty's first acts on his accession was to institute comprehensive laws for the conservation of the environment and the prevention of pollution. As part of these measures a Royal Decree was issued to prevent pollution of the seas off the Omani coast. Subsequently, His Majesty established, under his direct chairmanship, the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution. The Council became the official authority for the prevention of pollution in all forms. This gave the Council the authority for issuing permits, regulations and guidelines for exercising control over all activities which might be harmful to the environment.

At the same time His Majesty also took action to ensure that exploitation of the water resources of Oman was carefully monitored so as to maintain a balance between availability and consumption. This is now one of the main functions of the Water Resources Council.

The two Councils have now been merged into the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Water Resources, responsible to the Ministry of Environment which was set up in 1984 to implement Oman's environmental plans and legislation.

Under a new law, entrepreneurs wishing to set up industrial, agricultural and certain other projects must first obtain a "No Environmental Objection" certificate (NEO), which is granted only after the Ministry is satisfied that a new factory, for instance, poses no hazards to the environment. Current applications for NEO's range from large industrial projects such as oil refineries to small enterprises such as woodworking establishments and waste disposal units. Regular inspections of factories and other installations for possible pollution of the environment are carried out.

The Ministry also acts on reports submitted by the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Water Resources, containing data provided by the Public Authority for Water Resources (PAWR). PAWR, an advisory body, has been conducting surveys for new water resources. (See section on Water.)

Oman is actively seeking closer cooperation with other governments as well as with regional and international organisations concerned with the conservation of the environment, the



Oman's coasts are a paradise for underwater photography — a typically colourful display of coral.



A Sooty Falcon

prevention of pollution and the maintenance of natural resources.

Preservation of historical sites is of special importance and the Ministry has taken appropriate steps to safeguard such buildings against pollution.

The Ministry also organises campaigns in concert with the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, and with the Ministry of Information to create public awareness of the effects of pollution and the measures necessary to protect the environment.

Oman has for some years now been playing a key role in an international experiment that has raised hopes that animals bred in zoos may one day be returned to the wild. The re-stocking of the Sultanate with the Arabian Oryx is a notable example in the successful re-introduction of this handsome indigenous white antelope into the region. Five animals don-



The white Arabian Oryx — a carefully preserved species in Oman (Photograph: M. Stanley-Price)

ated by San Diego Wild Animal Park in the United States have formed the nucleus of what is now a thriving herd.

Another protected animal, is the Arabian tahr; although there are now some 2,000-3,000 of these animals in Oman, they are now the only ones in the world.

The Sultanate also protects the world's largest known breeding ground for sea turtles — Masirah Island. Loggerhead turtles lay their eggs by the thousands on the rocky island just off the Sultanate's central coast, which also serves as a sanctuary for some 200 species of birds.

His Majesty has also established parks and nature reserves in the Capital and elsewhere to provide pleasant recreational areas for his people and to encourage them to value and protect the natural beauties of their country.



An ancient Omani manuscript — one of the Ministry's carefully preserved cultural treasures
(Photograph: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture)

NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Oman has a rich and colourful heritage and is one of the few countries in the world with a full-fledged Ministry of National Heritage and Culture.

For some years now, the Ministry has been collecting manuscripts and artefacts relating to Oman's history and culture. Some of these manuscripts describe the study and practice of medicine, chemistry, astronomy and oceanography in ancient Oman; others tell of Oman's foreign trade in those far-off days when its ships ranged the seas of the East and visited Europe and the New World.

Books, based on some of these manuscripts and on lectures given by visiting historians and archaeologists, have been



Two girls proudly display their unique Omani jewellery.

published by the Ministry. To ensure the widest possible distribution, the Ministry has mobile bookshops touring the country to sell copies at nominal prices. Passages from these publications are also used in simplified form in school textbooks, as part of a programme to ensure that children are aware of their valuable national heritage.

Special television programmes and exhibitions are also a feature of the Sultanate's pride in its culture. As a result of this encouragement of public interest, new discoveries have included a large hoard of three to four-thousand-year-old copper weapons and bracelets and a collection of stone implements and bronze weapons of the first millennium BC.

The Ministry has carried out excavations at over 40 historical sites and unearthed many valuable objects dating from the Stone Age to the early Islamic period. In Khor Rori in the south of Oman inscriptions found on the city wall indicate that the old



Traditional Omani music — a highly popular entertainment (Photograph: G. Gaussen)

town, named Samahrum, was a major frankincense exporting port in the first century AD. Other relics found at Ras al-Hamra and Qurm date back 7000 years.

Recent archaeological excavations have proved that the district of Wattayah, in the Capital area, was one of the sites in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsular where the Stone Age man lived. Archaeologists have unearthed several objects dating back to the end of the Ice Age and the beginning of the Stone Age.

One of the Ministry's main tasks is restoring the old forts that are a handsome feature of the countryside, serving as magnificent reminders of Oman's turbulent past. Restoration work has been carried out on the castle of Jabrin and the forts of Barka, Nizwa, Hazm and Bidbid; and work is currently in progress on the fort at al Rustaq, one of the oldest in Oman. Plans have been made to restore other ancient structures on the Batinah, and in the Interior and Dhahira regions.

Another important aspect of the Ministry's responsibilities is the preservation of ancient crafts threatened by modern development. These include pottery, wood carving, weaving and the manufacture of beautiful silverware, such as the curved dagger (khanjar) worn by Omani men on formal occasions. Two handicraft factories have been set up as gifts of the People's Republic of China, one at Sumail to produce woven cloth and one at Bahla to manufacture ceramics.

Oman has three museums at present, one of which was formerly the house of Al-Sayyed Nader, a famous Omani leader. Another is in Qurm, where priceless pieces are on display.

The Natural History Museum, housed within the Ministry itself, has various exhibits of Oman's wildlife such as the Oryx, the Arabian tahr, Caracal lynx and leopard. Also on display are sea-shells, butterflies, moths and honey-bees.

As part of the policy to conserve Oman's culture, all new dwellings must conform in external architecture and colour to traditional forms.

