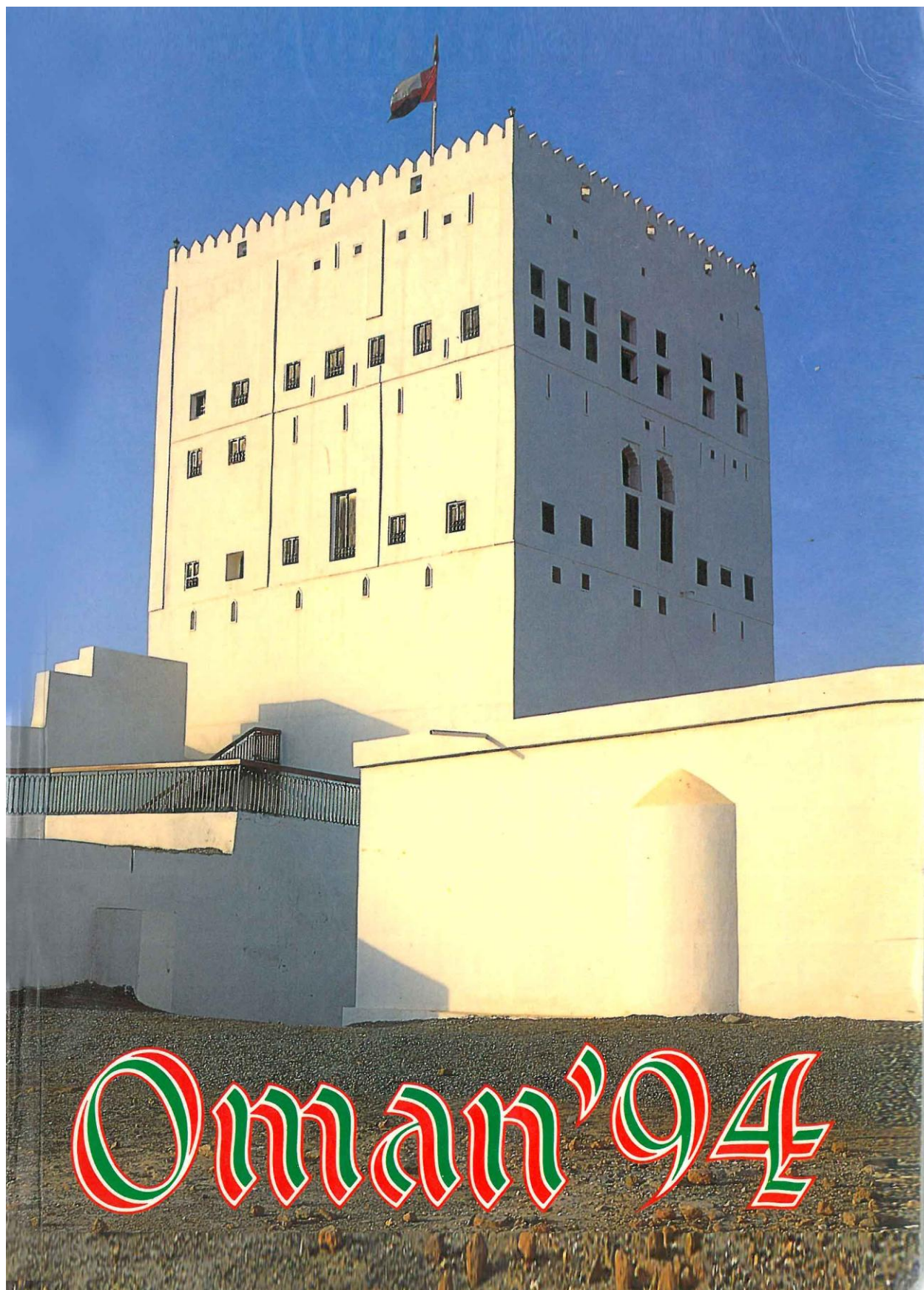






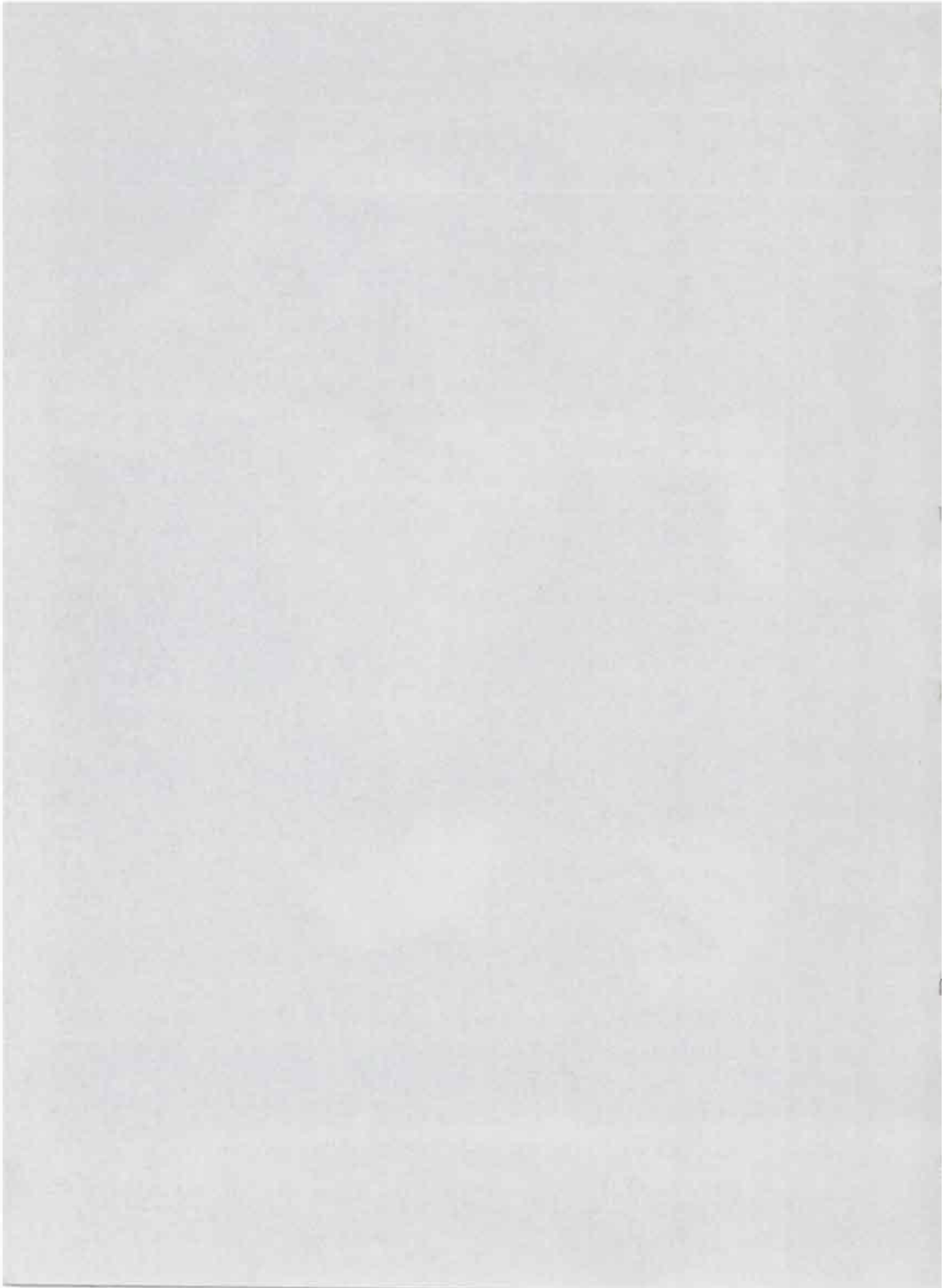
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Information

Oman'94

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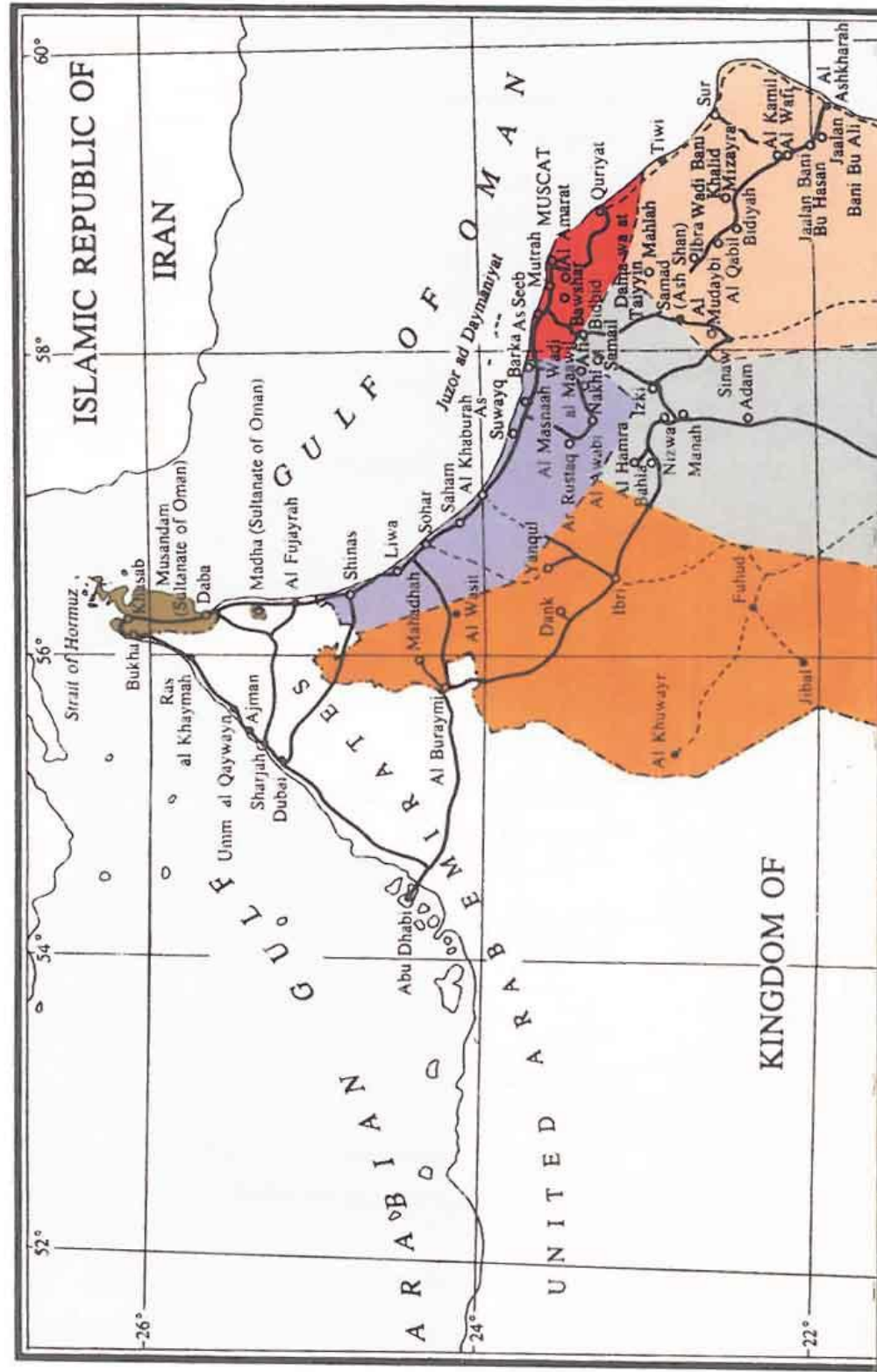
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al-Said

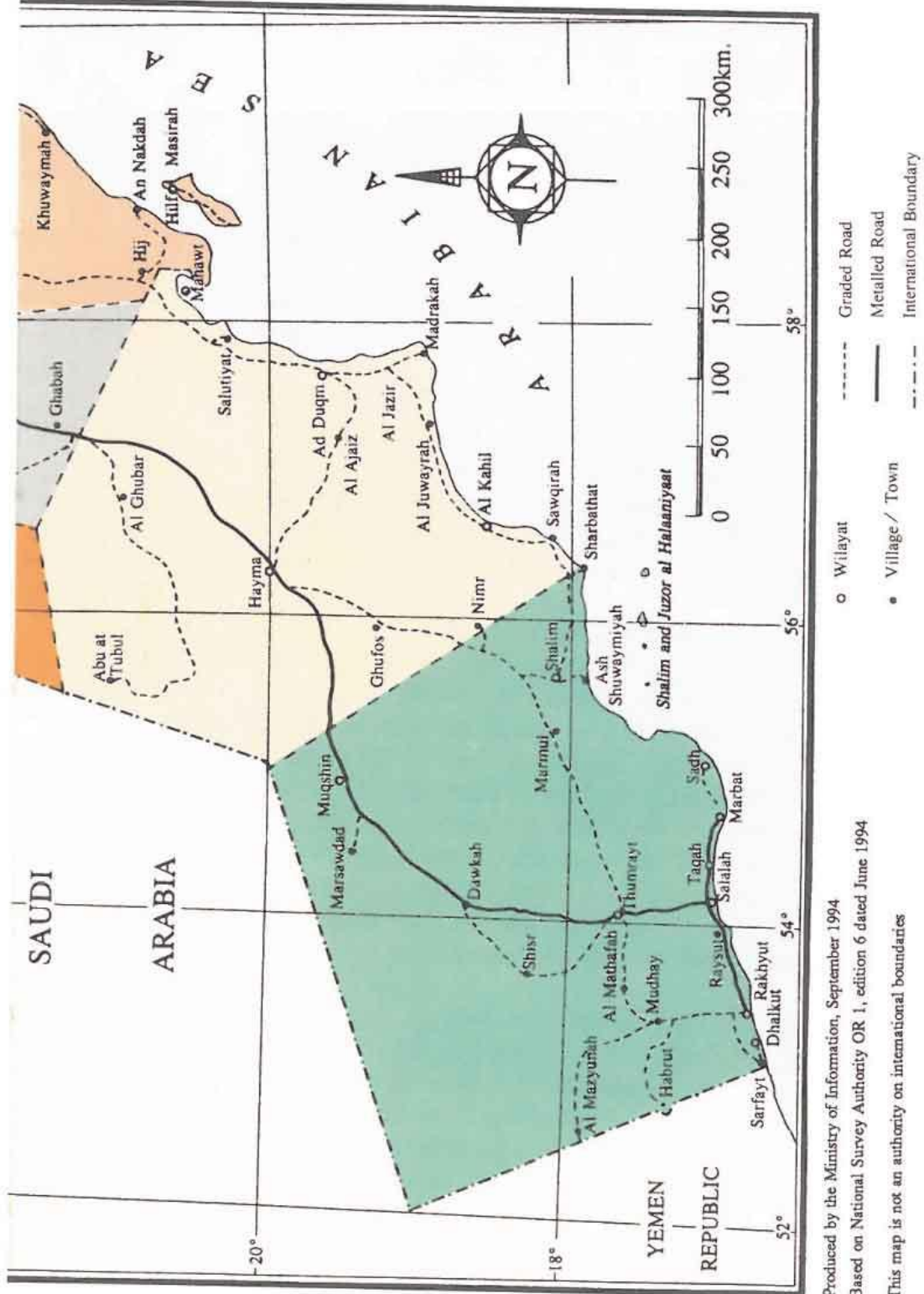


CONTENTS

H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said	8
History	17
Geography	22
Government	30
Foreign Affairs	43
Information	57
Defence	64
Royal Oman Police	75
Economy	80
Commerce and Industry	88
Oil and Gas	98
Minerals	106
Agriculture	109
Fisheries	118
Water	124
Domestic Water	132
Electricity	136
Social Affairs and Labour	140
Communications	148
Posts and Telecommunications	156
Education	164
Youth	171
Health	177
Housing	185
National Heritage and Culture	189
Interior	197
Regional Municipalities and Environment	200
Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs	208
Civil Service	215
Vocational Training	220
Development	224

SULTANATE OF OMAN





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

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID AL SAID

It is not possible for a first-time visitor to the Sultanate of Oman, arriving at Seeb International Airport in 1994, and driving to Muscat along the 35 kms of lighted dual-carriageway road, over fly-overs, past modern ministry buildings, schools, hospitals, and commercial establishments, to visualise that only 24 years ago, none of this existed. Any Omani will tell him that this transformation is due to the inspiration and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

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

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

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

in the work that lay ahead, and appealed to all Omanis abroad, wherever they might be, to return and do so. His words met with a spontaneous and overwhelming response, and Omanis came flocking back from many parts of the world.

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

▼ His Majesty is cheered by his people as he drives through a town in the Interior during his annual 'meet-the-people' tour.

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



to all countries on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and good neighbourliness. International contacts, through diplomatic relations and personal visits, are seen by His Majesty to be of great importance in the quest for world peace and understanding between peoples. These relations have currently been established with a total of 122 countries. His Majesty has paid State Visits to brotherly and friendly countries of the GCC, Egypt, Jordan, the Yemen, the United Kingdom, United States, France and Spain.

His Majesty also pressed on with development planning. A list of priorities was carefully formulated: wasteful prestige projects were not considered. Advancement has been achieved through a series of Five-Year-Plans, of which the Fourth, current plan, commenced in 1991. The result has been that the major elements of the Sultanate's infrastructural programme have been virtually completed, and the emphasis has now shifted to the consolidation of the achievements that have been secured.

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

This democratic process was carried a stage further in 1991, with the implementation of His Majesty's stated intention of establishing a Majlis Ash'Shura, a State advisory council wholly composed of representatives of the people, and with no government membership. The representatives are nominated by the

► President Mubarak of Egypt is greeted on arrival by His Majesty.



people of the 59 wilayats (Governorates) throughout the country. In his opening address to the Majlis, His Majesty called upon its members to scrupulously appreciate the great responsibilities they had undertaken.

The Majlis Ash'Shura has already demonstrated its constructive role in representing the people of the Sultanate: as an example, in accordance with His Majesty's overall directives, this year, at its opening Session, in January, the Secretary-General announced that it would be reviewing the Secretariat's report on the activities of its various bodies for the period from the final Session of last year and, notably, the Evaluation Committee report on the two sittings of the Majlis that had been attended by the Ministers of Communications, and Posts, Telegraphs, and Telephones.

His Excellency Abdul Qadir bin Salim Al Dhahab, the Secretary-General, reported that this year it would take up study proposals put forward by its permanent and special committees. Among them would be the subjects of Health, Social Affairs, Education, and Culture. A programme of the Economic Committee which is making a study of banking operations, was approved, and the Legal Committee is also examining a proposal for an administration law. A meeting was held in January, attended by the Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs, and by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, and the Minister of State for Development, to discuss the privatisation of Government assets, in accordance with His Majesty's directives.

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

This year, His Majesty's tour was considerably prolonged, during which he covered hundreds of miles and talked with many thousands of his people. A main theme of his conversations was the need for a sensible approach to family planning; Omanis should remember that it was important and religiously accept-

► The prize presented to His Majesty by UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor at the Al Alam Palace, Muscat, is in recognition of His Majesty's efforts for peace and justice in the world and his work for youth welfare and the conservation of the environment and heritage.





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

Also, every year on the National Anniversary on 18th November, His Majesty delivers a major address to the nation when he reviews the achievements of the previous year and outlines future policies. In his National Day speech last year, His Majesty declared that the achievement of a worthy standard of living for all his people had his highest priority. He called upon both the Government and the private sector to devote themselves to the needs of the Omani people, with special attention to the youth of the country. At the same time, His Majesty also called on the young people to be aware of their own responsibility in building their country. They must contribute with the utmost energy towards its development.

His Majesty also welcomed the agreement reached in the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, and looked forward to its bringing a comprehensive and just peace between Arabs and Israelis. He called for efforts to be made to bring back security and stability to places of conflict in the world under the principles of international law and respect for human rights.

Dedicating this year as the Year of National Heritage, His Majesty said that the adoption of modern science and technology had been done without abandoning Oman's glorious heritage and the precious evidence of its past.

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

The advent of the Gulf crisis in August 1990, brought unprecedented problems to every state in the region. Consistent with his

◀ His Majesty King Hussain of Jordan enjoys a joke with His Majesty the Sultan during a private visit.

◀ His Majesty receives reports on the progress of the Sultanate's first census.

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

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

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

In furtherance of this policy, the Sultanate became the first non-member country to hold a national exhibition at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

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

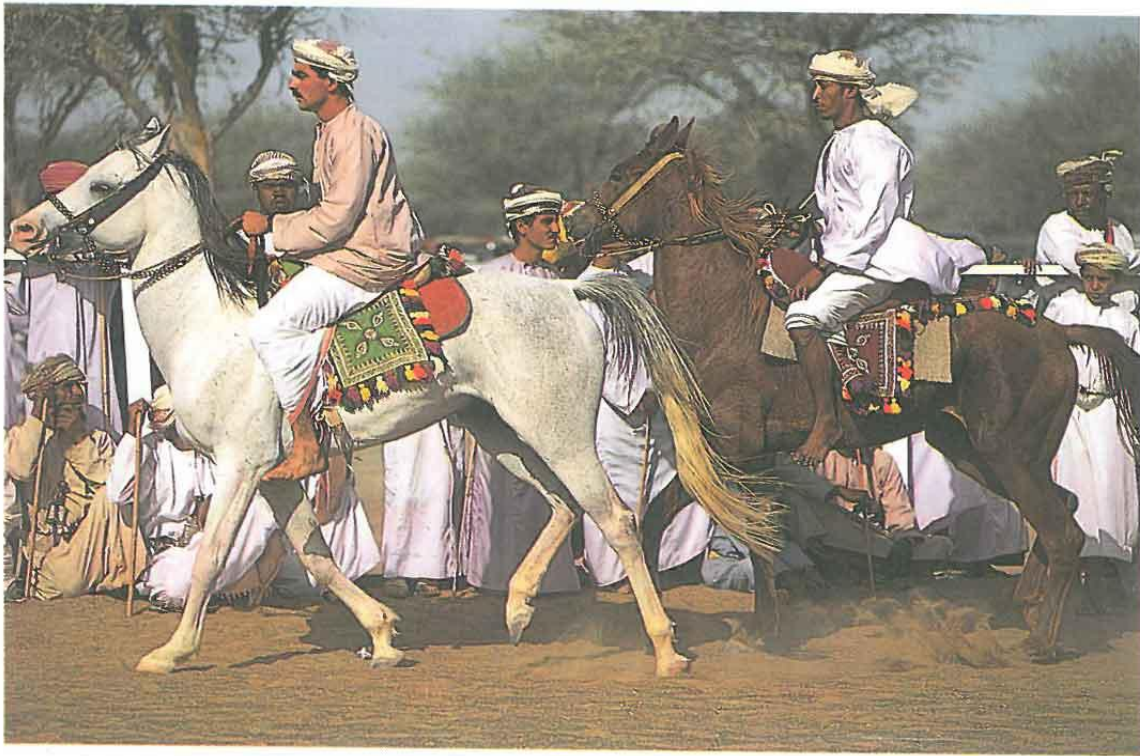
In March this year, His Majesty welcomed His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan on a private visit, and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mrs Benazir Bhutto, the same month.

HISTORY

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

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

▼ Oman's
horsemen have
been famous
throughout history.



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

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

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

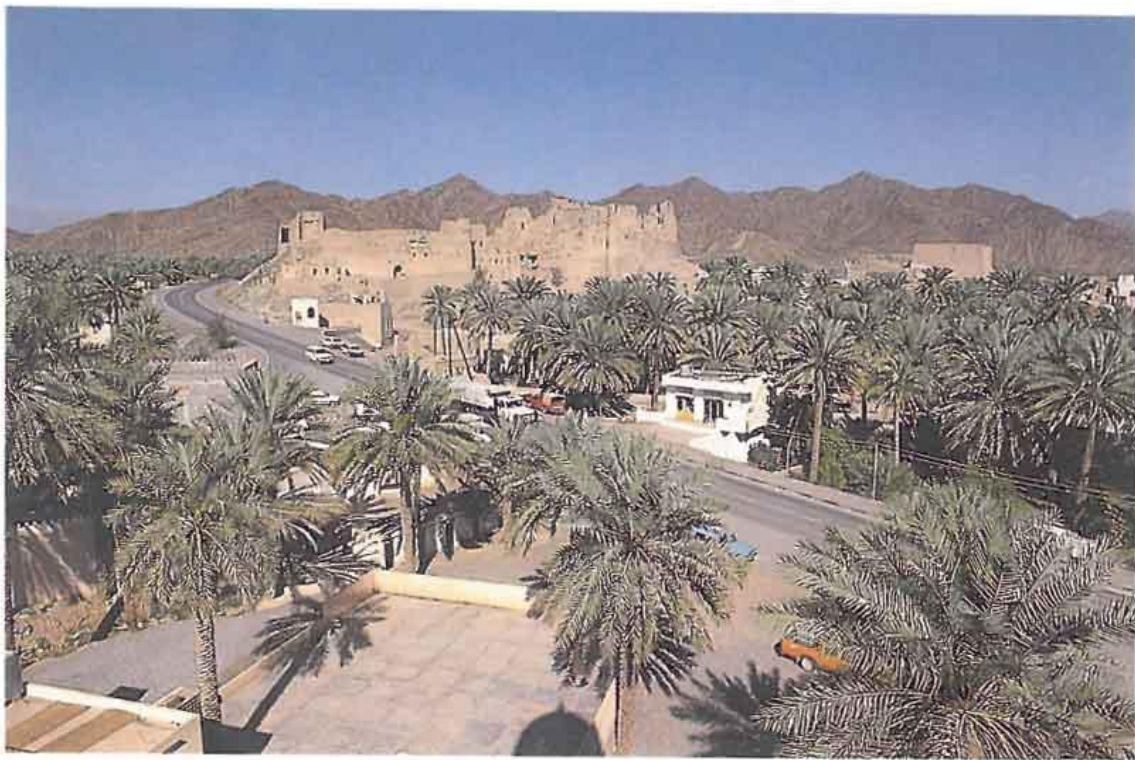
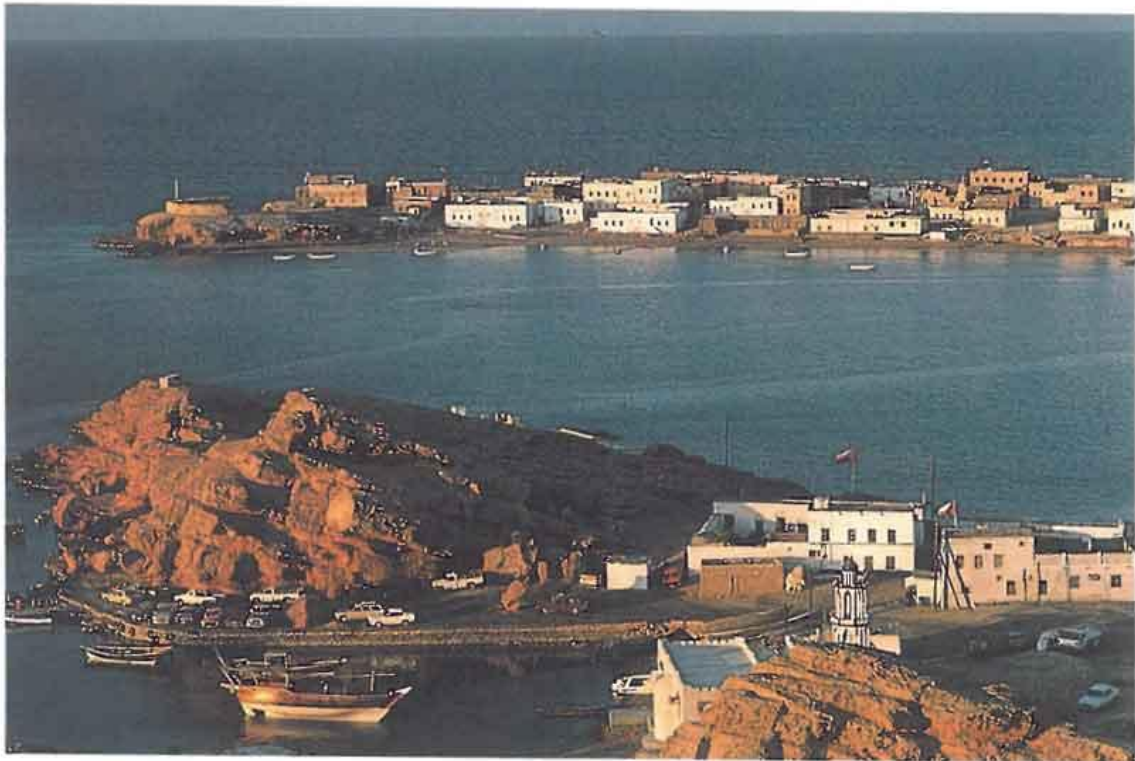
Cyrus the great, founder of the Persian empire, dominated the area in the fourth century B.C. With the consequent introduction of the famous falaj system of underground irrigation, the prosperity of the Batinah greatly increased.

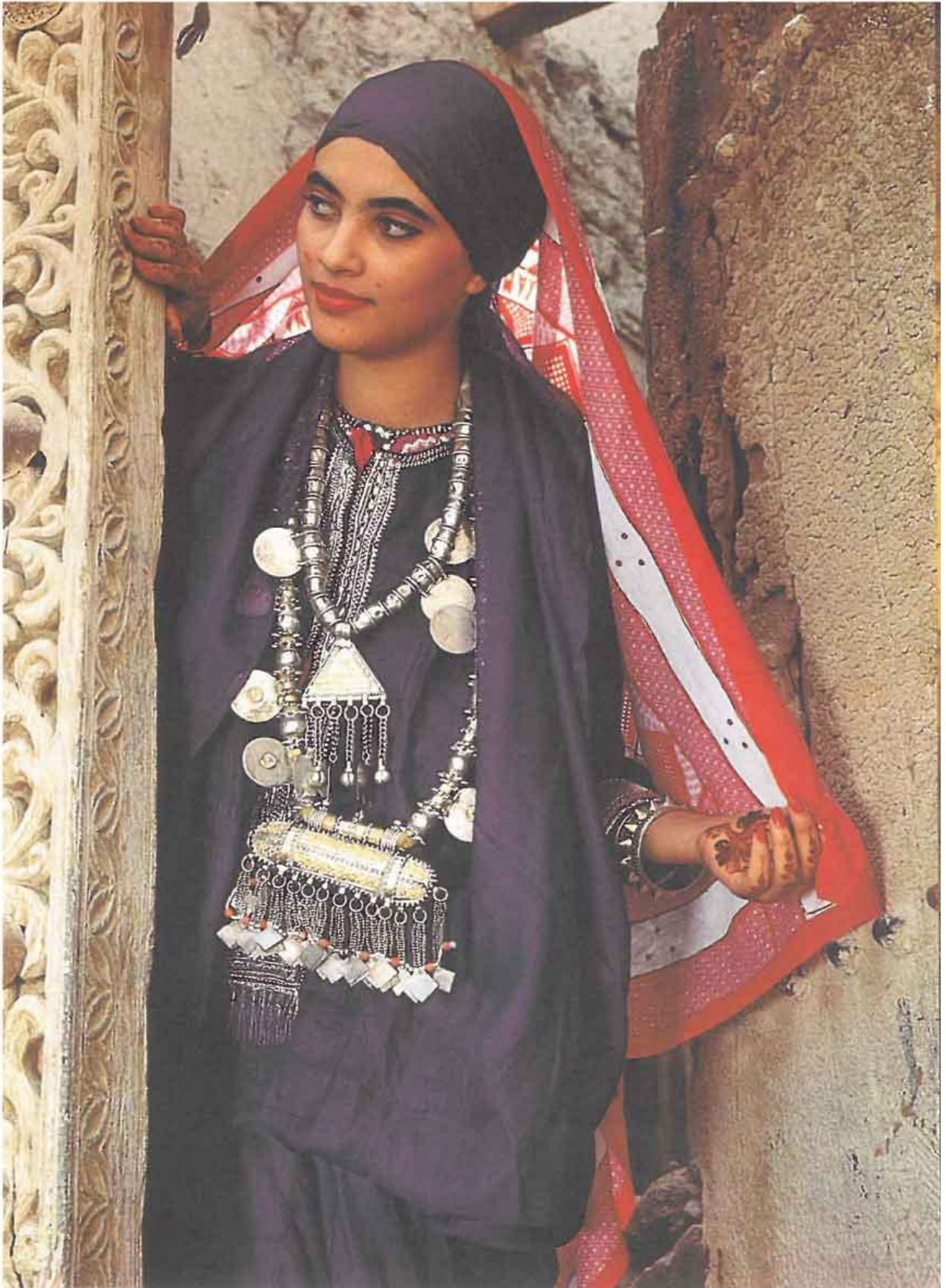
Still in pre-Islamic times, tribes from the Yemen – legend has it that they came from the region of the famous Marib dam – trickled into Oman. Later, the Azd tribal group, from which the present ruling family is descended, entered Oman. Then Oman was under the rule of the Persians, but the Azd were able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

From the seventh to the fifteenth centuries Oman's maritime trade flourished. Omani ships regularly called at ports in Persia, India, and Southeast Asia. As early as the eighth century, the

► The coastal town of Sur, where the construction of dhows has preserved Oman's seafaring tradition throughout the centuries.

► The ancient fort at Bahla, the historic guardian of the Capital.





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 at several places along the coast.

Nearly a century and a half later, in 1650, Sultan bin Said 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 clove to Zanzibar which he brought originally from Indonesia. These plantations provided a third of the Sultanate's budget. During his reign, Oman developed her relations with many parts of the world; a special envoy was sent to the United States in 1840 - the first Arab emissary to that country. Oman was thus the first 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 historic glories and opened a new chapter of development, prosperity, and social and economic progress.

◀ Silverware, fashioned by Oman's famed craftsmen, is handed down from generation to generation.

GEOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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

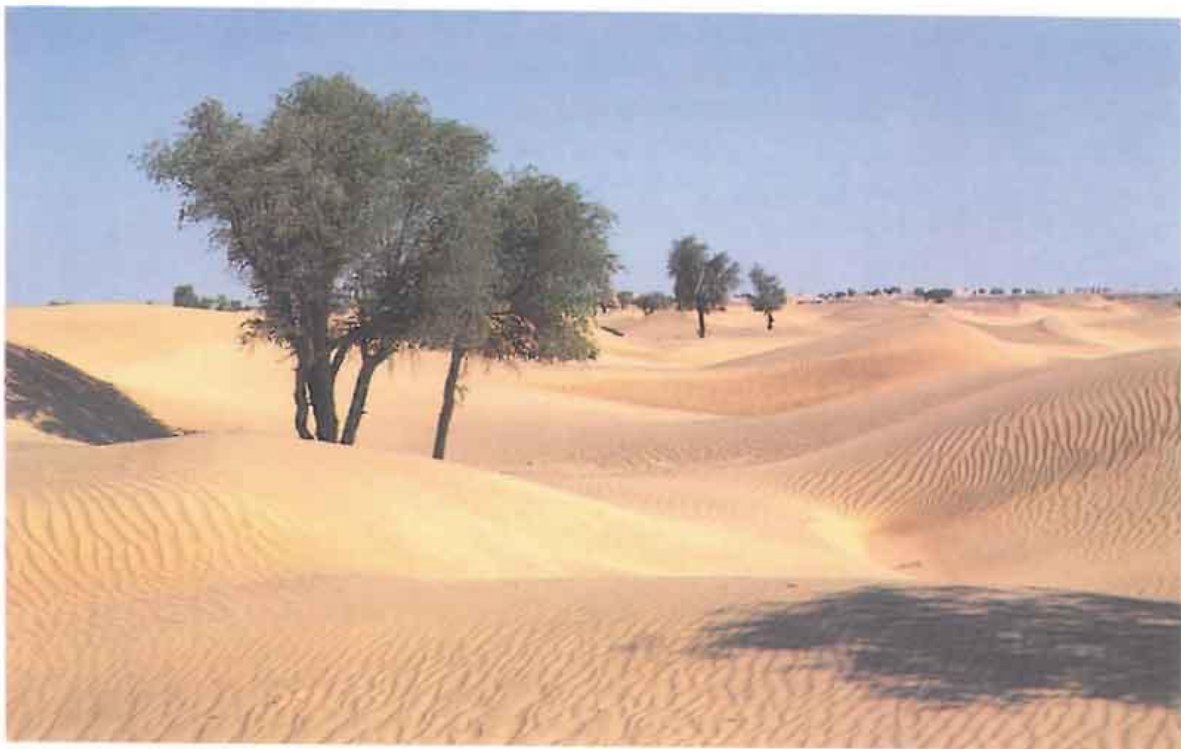
The Regions

Geographically, Oman falls into a number of distinct areas.

Muscat Area

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

► The superb variety of Oman's Interior provides remarkable contrasts in beauty. Here the lush vegetation of the Musandam strikes a different note from the majestic sand dunes of the "Empty Quarter".



Batinah Plain

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

Western Hajar (Rock) Mountains

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

The Interior (Al Joof)

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

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.

Sharqiya Area

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

Barr-al-Hekman

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

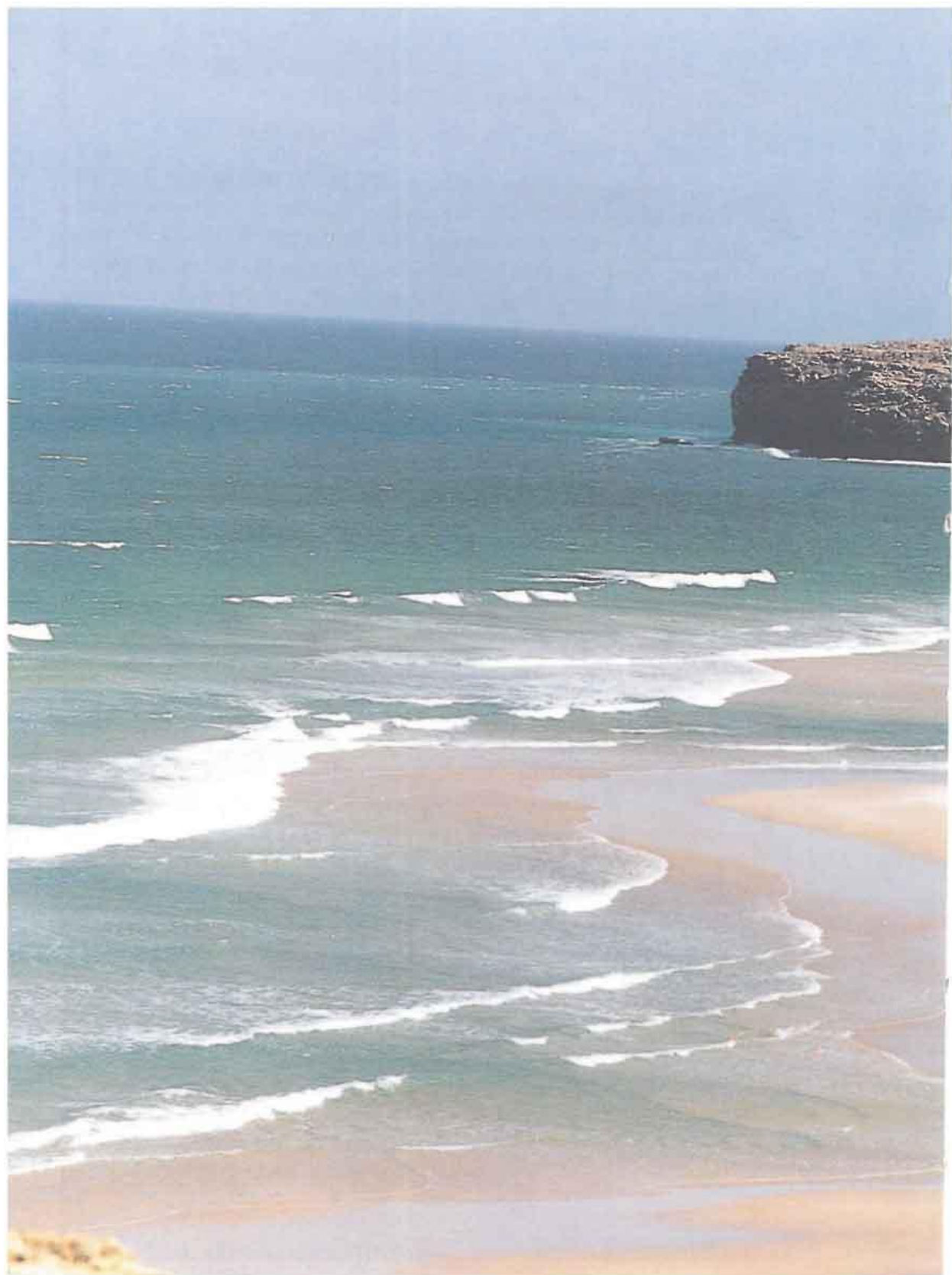
Southern Region (Dhofar)

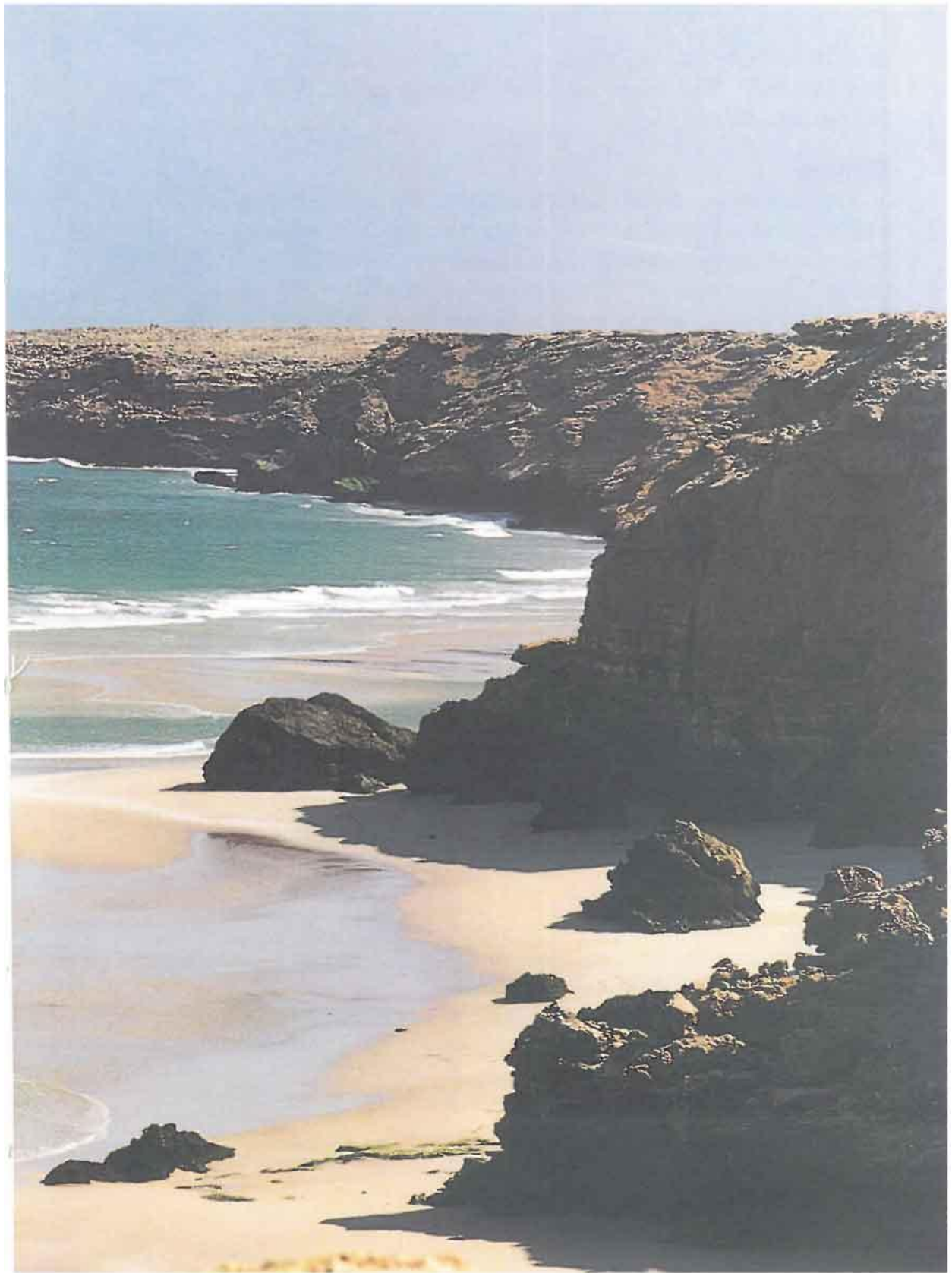
The Southern Region of Oman accounts for a third of the country's total area. The coastal plain, extending from Raysut in the west past Salalah, is nowhere wider than about eight kilometres, but the fertile alluvial soil is well watered between June and September by the Monsoon. The rains also irrigate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

► One of Oman's unspoilt bays.





coast which juts into the Strait of Hormuz, has a spectacular, fjord-like look. The main towns are: Khasab, Bayah, Madha, Bukha, Kumzar and Lima.

Regions

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

Climate

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

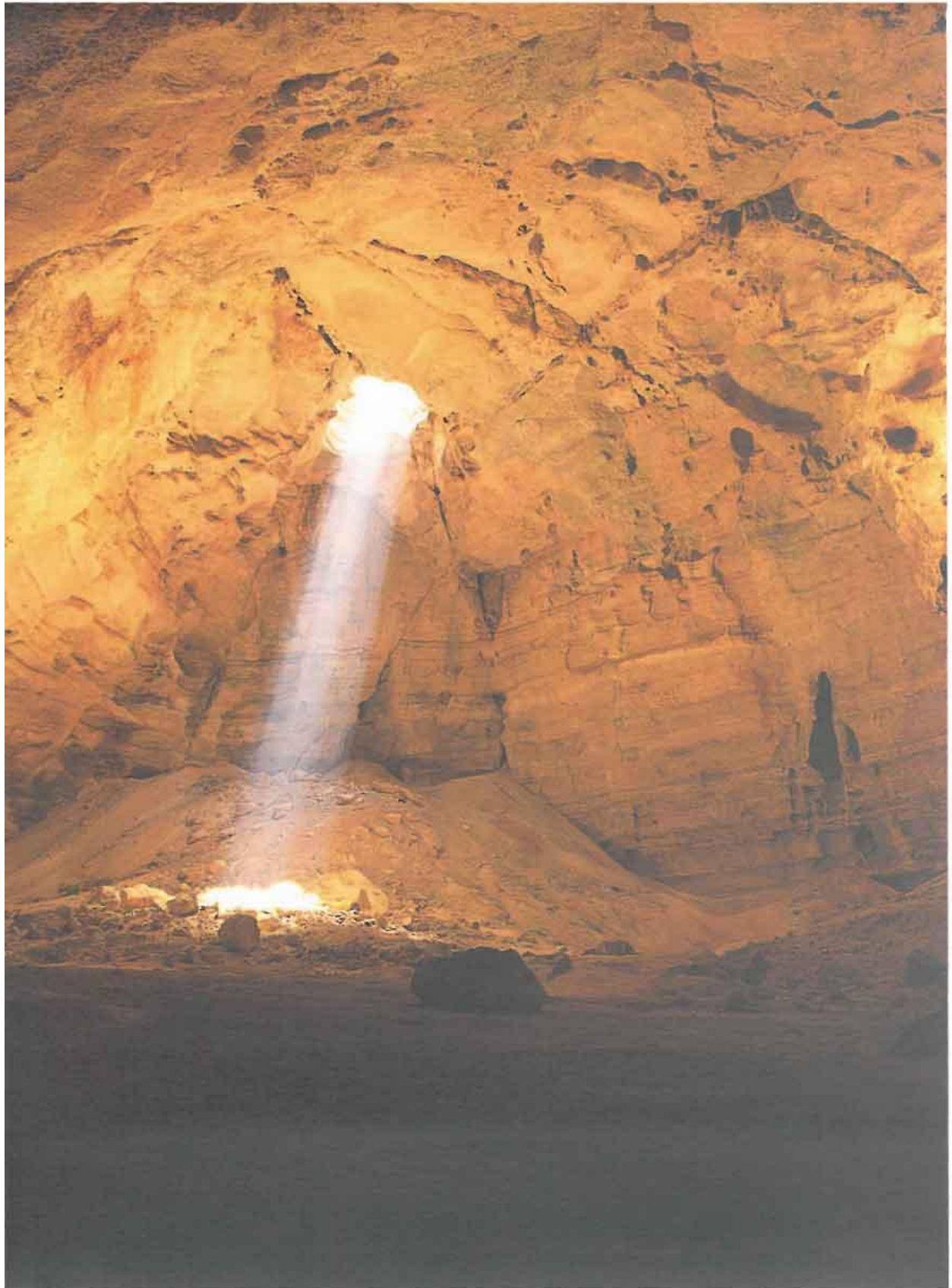
Population

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

► Sunlight cascades through the entrance of the Majlis al-Jinn cave in the eastern Hajar mountains. This subterranean splendour is considered, the world's second largest cave.

▼ Among the massive boulders of Wadi Qura near Sumail, a refreshing pool is supplied by a small stream.





GOVERNMENT

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

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

The Cabinet of Ministers consists of:

His Highness Saiyid Thuwainy bin Shihab al Said

Personal Representative of His Majesty The Sultan

His Highness Sayyid Faher bin Taimour al Said

Deputy Prime Minister for Security and Defence

His Highness Sayyid Fahad bin Mahmood al Said

Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs

His Excellency Qais bin Abdul Munim al Zawawi

Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs

His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali al Said

Minister of National Heritage and Culture

His Excellency Sayyid Saif bin Hamad bin Saoud

Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court

His Excellency Fareeq Awal Ali bin Majid al Ma'amari

Minister of Palace Office Affairs and Head of the Office of the

Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

His Excellence Said bin Ahmed al Shanfari

Minister of Petroleum and Minerals

His Excellency Hamoud bin Abdullah al Harthi

Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs

His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh al Manthri

Minister of Higher Education and Vice Chancellor Sultan

Qaboos University

His Excellency Sayyid Bader bin Saoud bin Hareb

Minister of Interior

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

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





functions is to ensure that the Cabinet decisions are implemented within the given time-frame and budget. The Governorate of Muscat is responsible for the administration of the city.

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

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

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

Majlis Ash'Shura

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

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

Among the principal duties of the Majlis is the reviewing of all social and economic draft laws, prepared by Ministries, before their enactment. The Majlis also participates in setting up devel-

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

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

Article I

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

Article II

The Council shall have 59 members, each representing a Wilayat of the Sultanate. The selection of the members is to be carried out according to the following procedure:-

▼ His Majesty listens attentively during a "meet-the-people" tour.



- A. Every Wilayat to nominate three citizens, resident in the Wilayat. The nomination is carried out by a Committee consisting of dignitaries of the Wilayat and people of valued opinion and experience.
- B. One of the three nominees of each Wilayat is to be selected as a member of the Council.
- C. A Royal Decree will be issued naming the selected members.

Article III

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

Article IV

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

Article V

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

Article VI

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

Article VII

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

Article VIII

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

Article IX

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

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

Article X

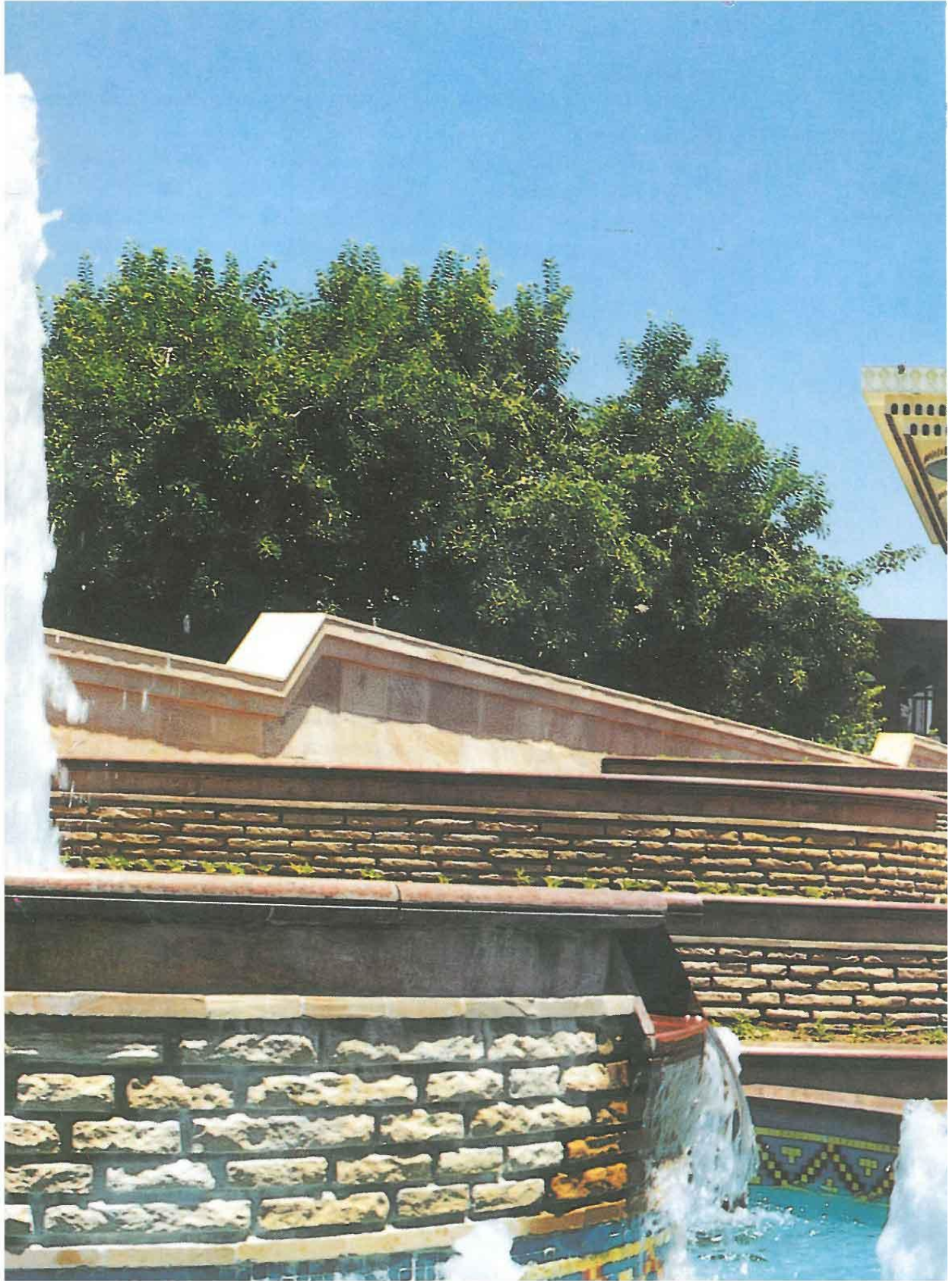
The Council of Ministers shall devote two meetings a year to be attended by the President and the members of the Council's office. The objective is to follow up means of coordination between the Government and the Council in the public interest.

Article XI

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

The Council has the right to call any of the Public Service

► Al Alam Palace:
where Heads of
State and other
important official
visitors are received
by His Majesty.





Ministers to discuss matters related to the duties of their Ministries whenever this is required.

Article XII

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

Article XIII

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

Article XIV

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

Specialised Councils

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

Some of these Councils are:

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

The Sultan Qaboos University Council which is responsible for maintaining the standard of the University, and the establishment of new colleges, sections or centres. The Council is chaired by H.E. Yahya bin Mahfudh Al Mantheri, Minister for Higher Education. The Civil Service Council draws up general policies relating to the Civil Service. Among its other responsibilities is examination of Civil Service problems and finding solutions to

them, taking into consideration public interests. The Council is chaired by H.E. Sayyid Saif bin Hamed bin Saud, Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court.

Tender Board

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

The Tender Board comprises:

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

His Excellency the Minister of Housing, as Deputy Chairman.

His Excellency the Minister of Electricity and Water, as Deputy

In addition to whom there are the following Members:

His Excellency the Minister of Regional Municipalities and Environment

His Excellency the Minister of Civil Service.

His Excellency the Undersecretary for Financial Affairs.

His Excellency the Undersecretary for Communications.

His Excellency the Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry.

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

The Board's Powers and Prerogatives

The Board is responsible for all Government tenders, whether these involve assignments, purchases of items or project implementation, with the exception of contracts and projects related to Defence installations or those covered by a special stipulation in the Law or Regulations for Tenders. In addition, the Board follows up developments in the implementation of projects from their inception until their completion. This is made possible by the fact that Ministries and Government organisations regularly

keep the Board informed of all problems associated with the projects' implementation. Consequently, the Board takes effective action to solve these problems by studying them and finding appropriate solutions to them in coordination with the authorities on whose behalf the projects are being carried out. When necessary, the Board also issues all circulars and directives required for regulating the progress of the work in hand.

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

These procedures may be summarised as follows:

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

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

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Undoubtedly the most important event in the realm of foreign affairs in the Sultanate of Oman in the past year was the election of the Sultanate to be a member of the Security Council of the United Nations for the year 1994. The election is a tribute to the mediatory role which Oman has consistently played in the affairs and problems of the Middle East.

Another important achievement in the past year has been the final agreement over the borders with the Republic of Yemen. In October, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos made a State visit to the Republic of Yemen – the first such visit he has made, thus exemplifying the final normalisation of relations between the two States. The border agreement follows a similar one made with Saudi Arabia earlier. The Sultanate was represented at the International Conference on the Environment held in Brazil in June 1993, to which His Majesty the Sultan sent a personal message, thus indicating his personal interest in matters appertaining to the environment.

In December 1993, His Majesty attended the summit meeting of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, which was held in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. Amongst topics discussed at this meeting was the controversy between the UAE and Iran over the ownership of islands in the southern Gulf. A government delegation from the Sultanate attended the independence celebrations in Eritrea during the year.

At the beginning of 1993, an 'Oman Week' was held at the Middle East Institute's Sultan Qaboos Centre in the USA. During the year, diplomatic relations were established with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Guatemala.

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

► His Majesty and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, in Riyadh after His Majesty the Sultan arrived in the Saudi Capital to attend the 14th Gulf Co-operation Council Summit.





However, with the death of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (Said the Great) in 1856, and the separation of the East African possessions from Oman, the country fell into a state of isolation for 100 years until 1970, when it re-emerged on to the international scene following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

On his accession, His Majesty was confronted with a most formidable task in making the Sultanate's presence known and felt in international circles, in addition to the many other urgent needs of the Sultanate and its people. From the start, His Majesty defined certain principles which have been consistently followed during the past 24 years. These principles include good neighbourliness and non-intervention in the internal affairs of others, respect for international laws and traditions, strengthening of cooperation between the Gulf States, fortifying relations with other Arab countries, as well as supporting issues of importance in the Arab world, enhancing Islamic cooperation, supporting just African causes, exploring all avenues for increased cooperation with the European Union and other international

► His Majesty in discussion with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, during her visit to Oman.

▼ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs building, Qurum.





bodies, and following a policy of non-alignment, and establishing cordial relations with all friendly countries.

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

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

Oman joined the Arab League in 1971, and the United Nations later the same year. In 1972, the Sultanate joined the Islamic Conference Organisation and, in 1973, became a member of the Non-Aligned Group. The Sultanate has also joined many specialised international organisations (see list at the end of this chapter).

In December 1989, the Sultanate played host to the Heads of State of the Gulf Community, when the 10th Summit of the Supreme Council for the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council was held in Muscat. This Summit marked a new phase in the nature of relations between the Gulf States.

The Sultanate has always maintained good relations with Iran in accordance with its policy of good neighbourliness, and has made great efforts to bring about a rapprochement between Iran and certain of the Gulf States. In 1990, Muscat was the venue for a meeting between the foreign ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result, the two countries agreed to resume diplomatic relations following a three-year break.

At the 13th Summit of the AGCC leaders held in Abu Dhabi at the end of 1992, the declaration at the conclusion of the meeting included disagreement with the Iranian occupation of the Tumb Islands and Abu Musa.



▲ His Majesty greets the then German President, Richard von Weizsäcker on the latter's visit to the Sultanate.

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

In November 1991, the Omani Diplomatic Institute was opened on the premises of the Foreign Ministry. The aim of the Institute is to upgrade Omani diplomatic standards. Studies at the Institute centre on topics relating to political affairs, international relations, crisis management, economy, and international law, consular affairs and protocol and Omani history.

Countries with which the Sultanate of Oman has diplomatic relations

Albania, Republic of
Algeria, Democratic and Popular Republic of
Argentina, Republic of

Armenia, Republic of
Australia, Commonwealth of
Austria, Republic of
Azerbaijan, Republic of
Bahrain, State of
Bangladesh, People's Republic of
Belarus, Republic of
Belgium, Kingdom of
Bolivia, Republic of
Brazil, Federative Republic of
Brunei Darussalam, State of
Bulgaria, Republic of
Burkina Faso
Burundi, Republic of
Canada
Chad, Republic of
Chile, Republic of
China, People's Republic of
Colombia, Republic of
Comoros, Federal Islamic Republic of the
Cuba, Republic of
Cyprus, Republic of
Czech Republic
Denmark, Kingdom of
Djibouti, Republic of
Ecuador, Republic of
Egypt, Arab Republic of
Eritrea, State of
Estonia, Republic of
Finland, Republic of
France, Republic of
Gabon, Republic of
Gambia, Republic of
Germany, Federal Republic of
Ghana, Republic of
Greece, Hellenic Republic of
Guatemala, Republic of
Guinea, Republic of
Guinea-Bissau, Republic of

Hungary, Republic of
Iceland, Republic of
India, Republic of
Indonesia, Republic of
Iran, Islamic Republic of
Iraq, Republic of
Ireland, Republic of
Italy, Republic of
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of
Kazakhstan, Republic of
Kenya, Republic of
Korea North, Democratic People's Republic of
Korea South, Republic of
Kuwait, State of
Kyrgyzstan, Republic of
Latvia, Republic of
Lebanon, Republic of
Lithuania, Republic of
Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of
Malaysia
Maldives, Republic of
Mali, Republic of
Malta, Republic of
Mauritania, Islamic Republic of
Mauritius
Mexico, United States of
Moldova, Republic of
Mongolia, People's Republic of
Morocco, Kingdom of
Mozambique, Republic of
Nepal, Kingdom of
Netherlands, Kingdom of the
New Zealand
Nicaragua, Republic of
Niger, Republic of
Nigeria, Federal Republic of

Norway, Kingdom of
Pakistan, Islamic Republic of
Panama, Republic of
Peru, Republic of
Philippines, Republic of the
Poland, Republic of
Portugal, Republic of
Qatar, State of
Romania
Russian Federation
Rwanda, Republic of
Saint Lucia
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
Senegal, Republic of
Seychelles, Republic of
Sierra Leone, Republic of
Singapore, Republic of
Slovakia
Somalia, Democratic Republic of
Spain
Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of
Sudan, Republic of the
Sweden, Kingdom of
Switzerland, Confederation of
Syria, Arab Republic of
Tanzania, United Republic of
Thailand, Kingdom of
Tunisia, Republic of
Turkey, Republic of
Turkmenistan
Uganda, Republic of
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay, Republic of
Uzbekistan, Republic of
Venezuela, Republic of
Vietnam, Socialist Republic of
Yemen, Republic of

Zaire, Republic of
 Zambia, Republic of
 Zimbabwe, Republic of

United Nations' offices in the Sultanate:

WHO – World Health Organisation
 UNICEF – United Nations International Children's
 Emergency Fund

Gulf Organisations	Date Joined
Arab Centre for Educational Research	1.12.73
Higher Education Council	1.12.73
Gulf International Bank	1.2.76
Gulf Organisation for Industrial Investment	20.10.76
Gulf States' Health Ministers' Council	1976
Gulf States' Labour and Social Affairs Ministers' Council Continuity Office	6.2.78
Gulf Air	4.6.78
Arab Education Office for the Gulf States	1.12.79
Gulf Television Board	10.4.80
Arab Gulf University	16.8.80
Arab Gulf Co-operation Council	25.5.81
Gulf Region Permanent Communications Committee	30.5.81
Arab Gulf States' Joint Programme Production Organisations	25.3.82
Gulf News Agency	13.6.82
Co-operation Council States Specifications and Standards Board	9.11.82
Technical Office for Communications (Gulf States Co-operation Council)	1983
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations	
Joint Information Organisations	
Joint Economic Organisations	
Joint Gulf Organisations in Other Co-operation Fields	
Arab Gulf Foundation for United Nations	9.81

Arab Organisations

Date Joined

Arab Postal Union	1.7.71
Organisation of Arab Cities	24.9.71
League of Arab States	29.9.71
Arab States' Broadcasting Union	14.6.72
Arab Labour Organization	9.2.73
Arab Social Defence Organisation	26.3.73
Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation	14.6.73
Arab States' Civil Aviation Council	15.10.73
Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development	18.2.74
Arab Organisation for Specifications and Standards	6.7.74
Arab Bank for Economic Growth in Africa	1.2.75
Arab Administrative Development Organisation	4.75
Arab Centre for the Study of Arid and Desert Areas	30.4.75
Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development	30.4.75
Arab Academy for Maritime Transport	31.8.75
Arab Health Ministers' Council	4.5.75
Arabsat	10.7.76
Arab Scouts' Office	1976
Arab Guides' Office	1976
Arab Monetary Fund	5.3.77
Arab Youth and Sports Ministers' Council	1.4.78
Arab Organisation for Industrial Development	12.1.80
Arab Social Affairs Ministers' Council	26.3.80
Arab Planning Institute	7.12.80
Arab Interior Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Justice Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Housing Ministers' Council	23.9.82
Arab Telecommunications Union	30.11.83
Arab Tourism Union	27.8.84
Arab Transport Ministers' Council	28.3.85
Arab World Institute in Paris	30.11.87

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

International Organisations	Date Joined
United Nations Organisation	7.10.71
World Health Organisation	27.5.71
UN Food and Agriculture Organisation	11.71
Universal Postal Union	17.8.71
International Monetary Fund	23.12.71
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	23.12.71
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)	10.2.72
International Telecommunications Union	28.4.72
International (Criminal) Police Organisation (Interpol)	26.9.72
International Civil Aviation Organisation	23.2.73
Non-Aligned Movement	5.9.73
International Maritime Organisation (IMO)	30.1.74

International Satellite Organisation (INTELSAT)	3.1.75
World Meteorological Organisation	2.2.75
World Conservation Union (IUCN)	4.6.75
Asian Legal Consultative Committee	1.76
World Scout Bureau (WSB)	1977

Afro-Asian Rural Reconstruction

Organisation	1.79
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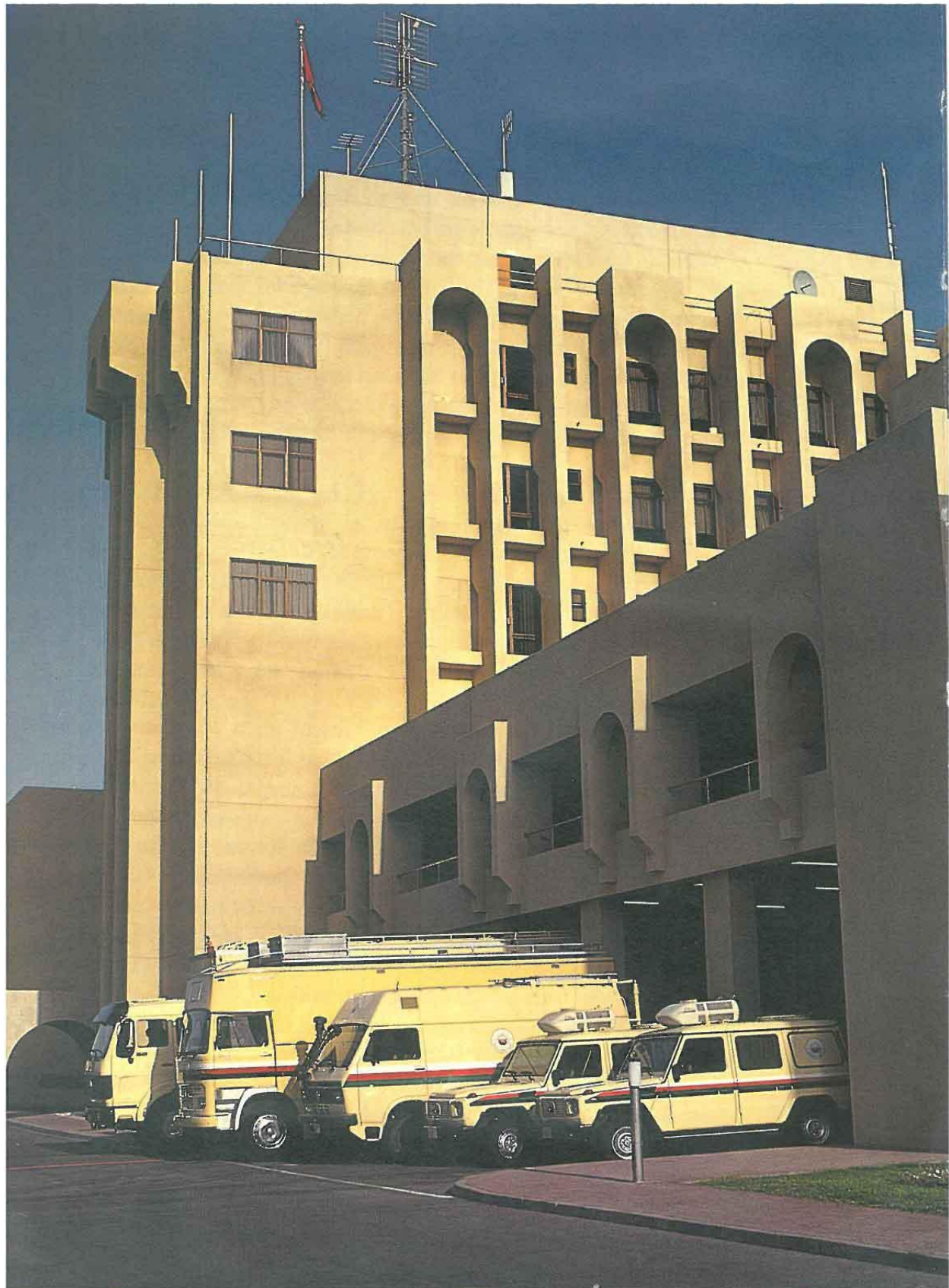
World Council for the Welfare of the Blind	1979
Regional Organisation for Protection of the Maritime Environment (ROPME)	20.3.79
International Union for Child Welfare	1980
International Whaling Commission (IWC)	1980
International Union Against Tuberculosis (IUAT)	1980
International Maritime Satellite Organisation	30.12.80
Afro-Asian Insurance Union	1981
International Fund for Agricultural Development	1983
United Nations Industrial Development Organisation	6.85
International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO)	1985
International Organisation for Legal Meteorology	1985
Office International des Epizootics	1985
International Institute of Administrative Science	6.9.86
International Standardisation Organisation	1986
International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration	1986
International Association of Lighthouse Authorities	25.6.87
International Association of Maritime Signals	25.6.87
International Hydrographic Organisation	25.6.87
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)	1987
International Organisation for Training and Welfare of the Disabled	
Asian Legal Committee for Consultations	
International Development Association	23.12.71
International Finance Corporation	23.12.71
Inter-Governmental Bureau for Informatics	
International Labour Organisation	31.1.94

INFORMATION

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970 any form of news media in the Sultanate was entirely lacking. There were no newspapers and no radio or television. Those who were fortunate enough to possess transistor radios had to tune in to radio broadcasts from abroad to get any news of what was going on in the outside world. Until 1970 instructions from the Sultan in Salalah were passed by radio telephone to the Army headquarters in Bait Al Falaj and posted on the walls in Muscat. Now, by contrast, Oman radio broadcasts can be heard in every part of the Sultanate, and Oman television programmes can be received by 95% of the population, a remarkable achievement in less than a quarter of a century.

Within a week of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, a small broadcasting station of only one kw was installed at Bait Al Falaj, which enabled the inhabitants of Muscat and the immediate area to hear a national radio for the first time. It was by this means that His Majesty made his initial broadcast to the nation outlining his intentions for the development of the country. Two years later, in 1972, a new medium wave radio station of 10 kw was inaugurated, broadcasting regularly 14 hours a day and 18 hours on holidays. In 1975, broadcasting commenced in Muscat on a 100 kw medium wave transmitter and a 50 kw short wave installation. In Salalah, in the south, transmissions began in 1971, and in 1975 a new radio station was opened there, also broadcasting on medium wave at 100 kw. In 1985, in time for National Day in November, the Muscat medium wave transmitter power was increased to 200 kw. Additional VHF FM transmitters were subsequently sited in Saham, Buraimi, Nizwa and Sur to strengthen and relay national broadcasts, and the short wave service was extended by additional 100 kw transmitters at Muscat and Thumrait.

In 1979 the two broadcasting studios at Muscat and Salalah were linked by space satellite to improve radio transmissions. Programmes are originated from Muscat during part of the day and from Salalah at other times, thus achieving fuller use of radio facilities. It has thus been possible to extend broadcasts from Muscat and Salalah to all parts of Oman, as well as to the Gulf and East Africa. The short wave service can now be heard in Europe and



Africa, and in North America. Broadcasts are now made in Arabic on 1242 khz from Muscat, 1035 khz from Salalah and on VHF FM for 19.5 hours daily, also in the English language on 90.4 mhz from Muscat and 94.3 mhz from Salalah, for 15 hours. The main news in English is at 0730, 1430 and 1830 hours daily, with news highlights and headlines at 1100, 1300 and 2200 hours. Classical music is broadcast on the English service from after the news at 0730 hours until 1200 hours, and light and popular music from 1500 hours to 2200 hours daily.

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

Colour television was introduced in November 1974, with transmissions from Muscat covering an extensive local area. The service was subsequently improved to reach a wider audience. Transmissions commenced from a station in Salalah in 1975 to

◀ Ministry of Information administrative building.

▼ A member of the library staff makes a selection from the extensive radio tape library.

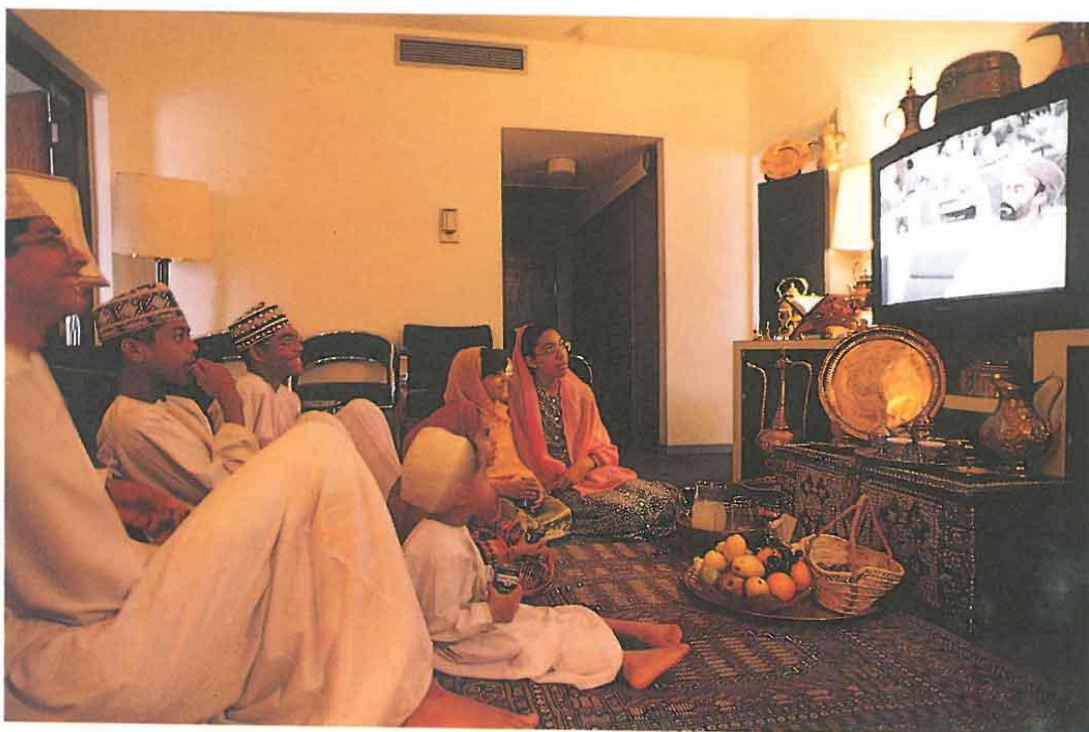


cover the entire Governorate of Dhofar. Commercial advertising has been introduced on both television and the English language service.

Extensive facilities for efficient outside television and radio transmissions are now employed. In order to extend and improve reception, 12 television relay transmitters have been installed; five in the Muscat area, three at Salalah, and one each at Nizwa, Sur, Saham and Buraimi. These are in addition to the solar relay stations established throughout the Sultanate north of the 22nd parallel. In October 1990, the Minister of Information, H.E. Abdul Aziz bin Mohamed Al Rowas, signed an agreement with a French group for further extension of television and radio facilities. The project involved the establishment of 16 main stations for television and radio, and 75 relay and strengthening stations linked with the 16 main stations. The whole project will cost more than RO 25 million. Consultants have been appointed to supervise expansion of colour TV and FM radio to the area south of the 22nd parallel.

The Sultanate is a partner in the ARABSAT system and uses it to feed radio and TV signals to main transmitters. This facility has recently been improved to enable the TV service to be received directly from satellite by those viewers with suitable equipment. From November 1992, transmission hours on television have been considerably increased, commencing at 0800 hours daily, and ending at 0100 hours. During national occasions, television transmission continues until a late hour, and in the fasting month of Ramadan TV transmission continues for nearly 21 hours daily. Besides the normal news bulletins at 2000 and 2200 hours there are additional ones at 1010 and 1630 hours. During this period, new TV and FM radio stations were commissioned at Barka, Bani Bu Ali, Shinas, Ibri and Bahla. In the Musandam Governorate, existing TV and FM radio sites at Madha and Jebel Hara were re-engineered to supply adequate coverage in the area.

Oman television screens documentary films to mark special occasions, such as the National Day Celebrations. During the Celebrations marking the 23rd National Day, 36 films were produced for that occasion and were telecast. These films included Oman 1993 in Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish, the annual 'Meet-the-People' tour of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and other varied subjects. Other occasions on which Oman Television played a major and effective role, were the years which were dedi-



▲ Oman TV now reaches 95% of the population.

cated by His Majesty the Sultan to Youth, Agriculture and Industry.

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

Oman Television is a member of all the joint Gulf and Arab organisations that produce and exchange programmes. Many of the films it has produced have won awards in Arab and international competitions. 'The Sindbad Voyage' won the Toulon 6th International Festival award for the best maritime exploration film. It also won a prize for underwater photography in Paris, while another film, 'Our Beautiful Environment', won the first prize in Kuwait.

The present headquarters of the Ministry of Information at Al Qurm was opened in 1989. It contains radio and TV studios, in addi-



▲ An engineer services the equipment in one of the mobile outside broadcasting studios.

tion to the administration. The comprehensive complex also provides residential accommodation as well as recreational and cultural facilities, including a swimming pool, tennis and squash courts, and a cafeteria.

There were no newspapers before 1970 in the Sultanate, and during the early 1970s there was only one. Since then, a wide variety of political, social and specialised journals has developed, independent of Government publications. There are now three Arabic daily newspapers, and two in the English language. The Oman News Agency, established in 1986, carries news about Oman and the region to many countries worldwide.

Following the Sultanate of Oman exhibition held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in September 1990, the first by a country from outside the European Community, a highly successful 12-day exhibition was held in Budapest in October 1992. This was the first such exhibition held by the Sultanate in Eastern Europe. It was formally opened by H.E. the Minister of Information, and many Ministries and organisations from the public and private sectors participated. The exhibition displayed Oman, past and present, and the development which had taken place since 1970. Great

interest was shown by the Hungarian public, as the total attendance of 15,000 bears witness. Business contacts were made, and the exhibition received extensive coverage in the Hungarian Press.

Abroad the Ministry of Information maintains representatives and offices responsible for Egypt, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and the United States. During the year, journalists have been welcomed from all these countries, including many from the rest of the Arab World.

OMAN CENTRE FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC

The Oman Centre for Traditional Music is also situated in the Information complex. Founded in August 1983, the Centre is responsible for the collection and documentation of the traditional folk music of Oman. It houses video tapes, sound recordings, colour photographs and slides, together with field recordings of the songs and dances which have been handed down over the years from generation to generation.

OMAN NEWS AGENCY (ONA)

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

DEFENCE

Under the guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, with his background of modern military training and Staff experience, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) have made considerable progress in the past 24 years. At the time of his accession, an armed struggle was in progress in the south, the rebels being sustained by external assistance. At that time the Sultan's Armed Forces were inadequately equipped and faced with an extremely difficult task in containing the situation. Gradually the situation was brought under control and external forces driven out of the country with the result that victory was proclaimed at the end of 1975, and peace restored in the south of the country. By this time control and stability had been firmly established throughout the remainder of the Sultanate.

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

In the field of social welfare the SAF have made considerable progress. The Military Welfare Services Directorate (MWS) provides servicemen with housing loans, houses, residential and agricultural land. The MWS, in cooperation with the Morale Guidance and PR Directorate provides handicapped ex-servicemen and widows and children of servicemen with special services and assistance as the situation demands.

Apart from their military capability, the SAF have played a full part in the overall development of the country. The engineers have made a remarkable contribution in road construction in some of the most remote and mountainous regions of the Sultanate. The Forces' Medical Services role is clearly reflected in the high standards achieved in the medical field, and the wide

► His Majesty presents the Sword of Honour to a cadet graduating from the Sultan Qaboos Military Academy.



range of services it offers to the servicemen and their families. The military hospital at Al Khoudh, near Muscat, was honoured in 1993 by Unicef as one of the leading hospitals in the world offering special care for children.

The Armed Forces are also represented on the permanent committee in charge of the national strategy for the protection of the environment of Oman.

The SAF provides assistance to all citizens at times of national disaster, including evacuation and rescue operations whenever needed.

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

The Sultan's Armed Forces museum at Bait al Falaj gives a clear picture of the achievements of the earlier generations. The museum consists of several wings representing the various Services. Documents, models, old and modern weapons tell of Omani military achievements. The Museum is open to visitors.

The Command and Staff College is one of the main training institutions in the Sultan's Armed Forces. It has been training officers since it was first established in 1987, and can be favourably compared with the world's leading military colleges. The College's 7th course was the first attended by officers from the Armed Forces of some of the other AGCC states.

The SAF sports teams participate in international tourna-

ments. The national shooting team has achieved good results in international shooting championships. The SAF marksmanship team takes part annually in the World Marksmanship Championships. In 1993 the team won two championship cups and medals. The national free-fall parachute team won the Rhine Armies championship held in Germany in 1992.

The National Survey Authority was set up at the Ministry of Defence to carry out land surveys, and thus to play a vital role in the development planning of the country. It has prepared maps, provided survey information, and furnished the government and private sectors with the maps and charts that they require. This is all in addition to its principal duty of preparing maps for the Sultan's Armed Forces.

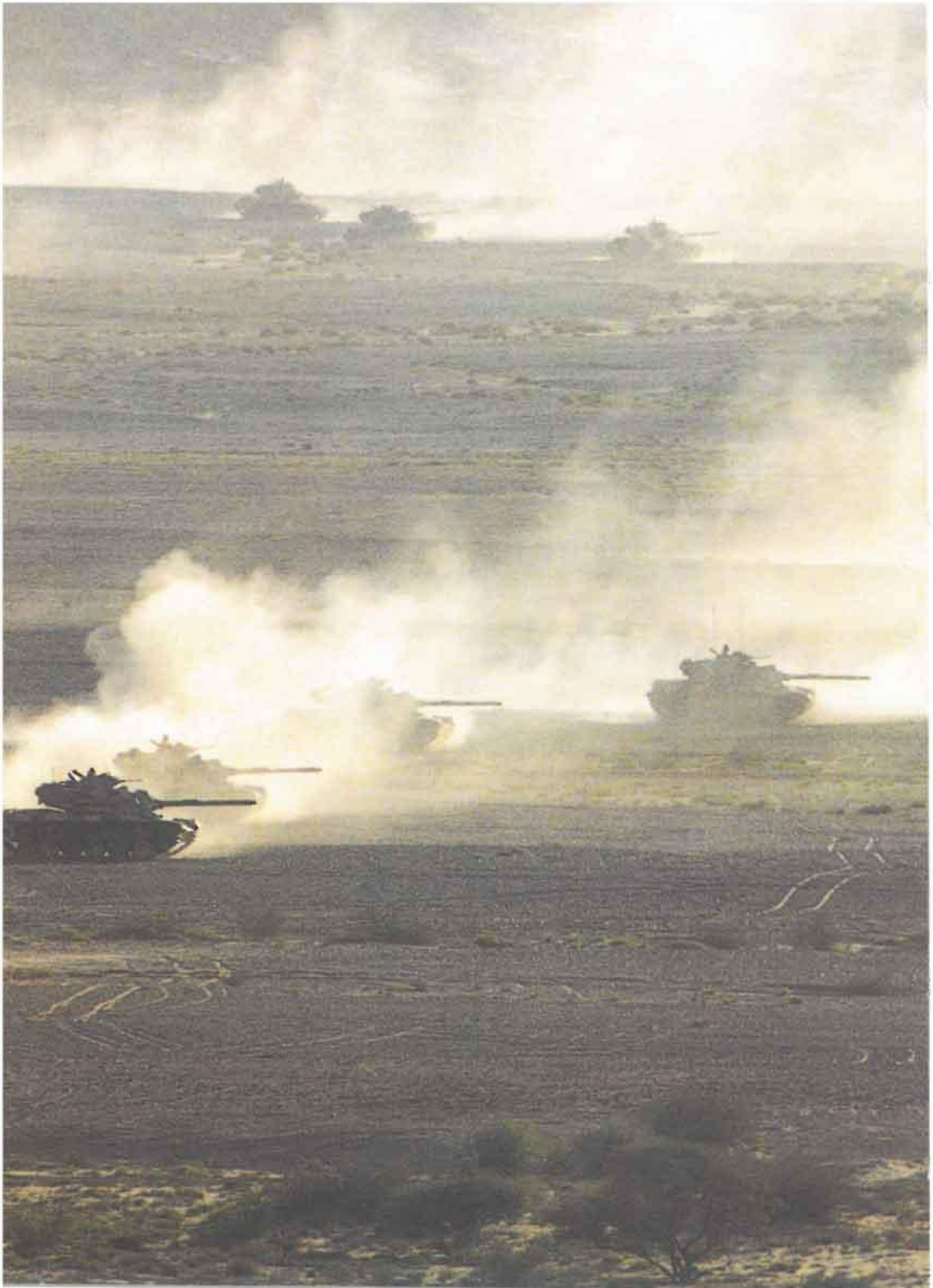
The Royal Army of Oman

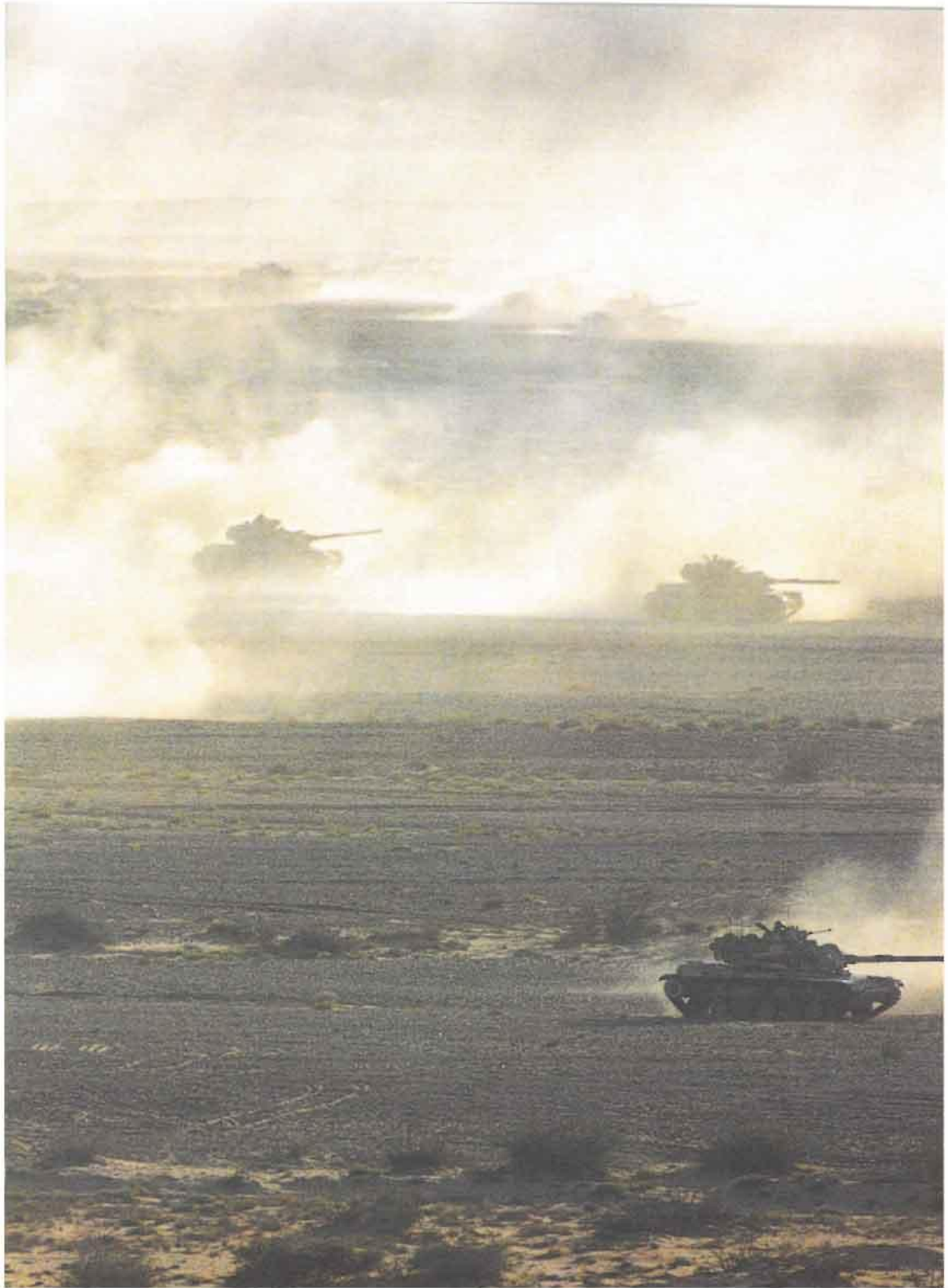
The Royal Army of Oman consists of infantry units with supporting services. Physical endurance, complete mastery of personal weapons and equipment, and the full development of tactical skills are the keynotes of the infantryman's training. The Royal Army of Oman includes a parachute regiment, and the firqat forces, originally irregulars, but formed into a regular force in 1975 to play a vital role alongside the formations and units of the Royal Army of Oman. They are made up of the Rural Security Force and the Oman Reconnaissance Regiment, in addition to other units.

In October and November 1993 the Royal Army of Oman carried out its major mobilisation exercise 'Fajr 23', under the direction of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. This marked the culmination of a three-year training programme of the Army and included wide-scale deployment over an extensive area of varied terrain, as well as the different phases of a mock war from a strictly mobilisation angle.

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

► Tanks attacking
"enemy" positions
during an exercise.





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

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO)

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

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

The RAFO renders assistance to citizens living in the mountains and remote areas. For example, it supplies food and other necessary items to the people of the Jebel Akhdar by air, as well as the Governorate of Musandam and the southern regions of the Sultanate. It also operates a flying doctor service, vitally important to the inhabitants of those areas still remote from the country's road communications systems. The RAFO's transport air-

craft carry medical teams from the Ministry of Health's hospitals to these areas to treat citizens living there. In cooperation with other concerned organisations the Air Force plays an important role in rescue operations on land and at sea.

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

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO)

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970, the once all-powerful Oman Navy, which had dominated the waters of the Indian ocean in the last century, was left with just two armed 'Booms' (species of Dhow). Less than two decades later, the Royal Navy of Oman had become a highly competent fighting force, capable of carrying out its modern role and responsibilities with the utmost efficiency.

During this period, the Navy has laid the firm foundations of a naval force to be reckoned with – a force with an impressive combat capability and a vital role in protecting the country's sovereign waters. To strengthen further this capability, the RNO is being supplied with two missile corvettes, equipped with appropriate combat systems. This new generation of vessels will substantially increase the fire power of the RNO fleet in support of its presence in the strategic areas of the Sultanate's long coastline.

The RNO Training Centre plays an essential role in providing the professional training for the many branches of the Navy. It undertakes the basic training of both officers and ratings, as well as advanced and specialised career development courses. Further training is provided at various RNO specialised schools and afloat, in fire fighting, warfare systems, sea and fleet training. The Training Centre also conducts purpose designed training courses for the staff of the Royal Yacht Squadron, Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In 1992 the RNO took a significant step forward when it initiated the Naval Junior Staff School.

A number of exercises have recently been carried out with the AGCC states and other friendly countries.



The Royal Guard of Oman

The Royal Guard Regiment was formed in 1973 with responsibility for the security of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Majesty's guests and the protection of Royal property. It is a corps d'elite, consisting of some of the fittest and best trained men in the Army, and is a formidable fighting force, as well as performing ceremonial and other duties. In 1981 it was expanded and reorganised into a full Brigade. In 1983, coinciding with the celebrations of the 15th anniversary of His Majesty's accession, His Majesty bestowed on the Royal Guard Brigade the signal honour of designating 1st November annually as Royal Guard Brigade (RGB) Day. It was on that date in the same year that the Brigade received its Royal Standard from His Majesty. On 1st November 1987 the title was changed to the Royal Guard of Oman.

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

◀ The Royal Navy of Oman comes to the assistance of a ship in difficulty.

▼ The Royal Guard pipe band on parade.



nological subjects is English, entrance to the school is regulated by means of a competitive examination in Arabic subjects, which ensures that the facility is open to all Omanis, irrespective of their previous experience of the English language. Competition for the thirty places each year is fierce. The success of the school can be judged best by the quality of its output. Graduates are well-trained, disciplined, engineering technicians with a fluent command of technical English. Many of these ex-students can now be found in important Government organisations, applying the technical skills they have acquired at the school. Students frequently go on to further study, so that, already, the school has many graduates with UK degree qualifications in engineering disciplines, readying themselves to fill the posts which are now held by expatriate employees.

All students follow the same curriculum, which includes a rigorous study of the Arabic language and culture, in addition to a full technological syllabus held in the English medium. The school has now progressed to a stage where its certificates are officially recognised throughout the world.

Students now have the opportunity to obtain a wide range of qualifications, including the Schools' Certificate, the Oman Ministry of Education Final Certificate, the BTEC First Diploma (Engineering), and the BTEC National Certificate of Achievement (Engineering).

The Royal Guard has been entrusted by His Majesty with another important responsibility. In 1985 His Majesty directed that a Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra be formed, and a school was accordingly established near Muscat. Recently, the school has moved to its permanent location at Bait Al Barakah. The new premises contain excellent facilities for every aspect of musical training and general education, and is a unique boarding establishment attended by young Omanis of both sexes. The Orchestra has now reached a remarkably high standard of performance, acclaimed by visiting specialists from many parts of the world. The Royal Guard also maintains three-highly trained military bands – one of them mounted – which perform on State occasions. The bands have earned a high reputation for their performances abroad, notably at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Scotland, and at the Sydney International Military Tattoo in Australia.

ROYAL OMAN POLICE

The Royal Oman Police has come a long way since 1970 when no national police force existed. At that time there was only a police detachment consisting of one officer and 75 constables with their headquarters at the Bab Al Kabir in Muscat. Their responsibilities were confined to Muscat and Muttrah and the immediate vicinity. Outside this limited area, the only civil authority was that of the regional Walis or governors.

Following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970 a new modern police force, the Royal Oman Police, was created, and quickly established its control throughout the Sultanate, since when peace and stability have been maintained in every part of the country. Over the ensuing years the ROP has seen a significant expansion in its functions and areas of responsibility, which are considerably greater than those of police forces in many other countries. Apart from conventional police duties, the ROP is responsible for immigration control and passports, customs, civil defence and fire fighting, coastguard operations

▼ Firemen
bringing a burning
building under
control.

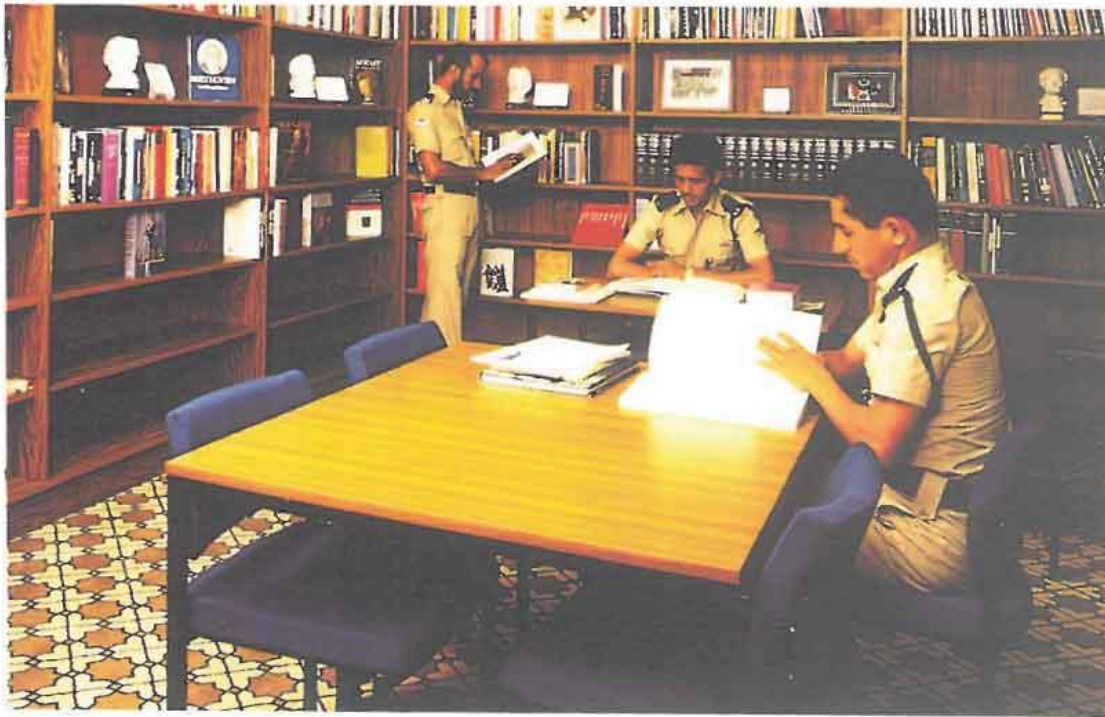


and the prison service. Omani women have an important role in the ROP, as in other Government organisations.

It is abundantly clear that this highly efficient and modernised Force enjoys public support and confidence among the citizens who appreciate the security to their lives and property which it ensures. In comparison with many other countries the crime rate in the Sultanate is remarkably low. This is largely due to close family ties, coupled with strict adherence to the teachings of Islam and to Omani traditions. The fact that the Sultanate does not suffer from a drugs problem may also be attributed to these traditions and the family role in the education and upbringing of children, as well as the part played by the ROP in protecting the country from the drugs menace by enforcing strict customs control over the air, sea and land entry points. Probably traffic accidents are amongst the main problems facing the Police.

The Royal Oman Police Academy Nizwa (ROPAN) was opened in 1980 to provide training in a wide range of specialised police work such as finger-printing, criminal investigations, law, driving and traffic regulations, and foreign language courses. Advanced courses in secretarial skills are also held at the Academy. In addition to other sources of recruitment, ROPAN recruits from young Omani university students,

The Directorate-General of Operations is one of the main elements of the ROP. It is responsible for fighting crime, a task that it tackles by directing its efforts towards crime prevention, reducing the opportunities to commit crimes to a minimum and curtailing the spread of crime, so that the public can enjoy a sense of stability, security and peace of mind. The Directorate-General is also responsible for planning and following up administrative control procedures. It plans the security protection of VIPs, public places and official celebrations. Expansion in recent years includes the introduction of computerisation throughout the Director-General's departments and units, which process hundreds of thousands of cases every year. This has been of considerable benefit to the public, particularly where traffic and immigration and passports are concerned. The departments and sections of these two sectors in the country's regions are now linked by the computer network, thus enabling the public to complete



▲ ROP cadets study civil law as an essential part of their training.

their traffic, immigration and passport business in their own areas without having to go to Muscat.

The vital role played by the Directorate-General of Traffic in safeguarding the public is well recognised. The Police are equipped with high-powered vehicles with the latest means of communications for road patrols and answering emergency calls. An annual Traffic Week is held, which takes place simultaneously in all the AGCC States. It involves intensive information and advice campaigns in the form of personal one-to-one contacts between police and public in the streets and on the highways, as well as lectures, radio and TV programmes and newspaper features.

The highly efficient Customs Service at the country's points of entry has enabled the Sultanate to avoid the problem of drugs. In addition to the manual and electronic examinations that take place at entry points, the Customs also receives valuable assistance from the Mounted Unit's police dog section. Drug prevention operations and suppression of criminal activity is aided by the close cooperation that exists between the ROP and other security organisations in the AGCC and Arab League States.



The Directorate-General of Criminal Investigations has a major role in crime prevention and the apprehension of criminals. It is then the responsibility of the Directorate-General of Public Prosecutions to arrange arraignment in court. The Directorate-General of Criminal Investigations possesses a highly specialised laboratory with the most up-to-date equipment including computerised finger-printing, forming part of international police work. The Directorate-General of Civil Defence has an important responsibility for providing fire protection for State and private property. It also provides the public and private sectors with advice and consultancy services in the construction of housing, industrial and commercial complexes.

The ROP is vitally involved in the protection of the country's oil and gas resources. This includes pipelines and other installations, and the oil rigs in the Interior and the terminal at Mina al Fahal from which the Sultanate's oil is exported. Originally PDO had its own police force, which was absorbed into the ROP.

The several million people who enter the Sultanate annually through its various entry points are processed by the Directorate-General of Immigration and Passports. Its operations are assisted by a comprehensive computer system, enabling the regional departments to serve the public in their own areas. Its services include the issue and renewal of passports, identity cards and road permits, and the administration of expatriate residence visas.

The Coastguard Unit possesses a fleet of modern craft for the protection of the Sultanate's coastline. It coordinates its operations with the Royal Navy of Oman. It also provides assistance to fishing vessels and other ships in distress.

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

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

◀ The Royal
Oman Police band
gives a concert at
the Al Bustan
Palace Hotel.

◀ Assistance is
given at the scene
of an accident.

ECONOMY

In spite of considerable progress in the diversification of the Sultanate's economy, it is still oil-based, and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. As stated by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos some time ago, Oman would be satisfied to see the world price of oil stabilise at about US\$ 18 a barrel. During recent months, it has been hovering around US\$ 13 a barrel. The Sultanate has a reputation for running a prudent economy. However, being oil-based, it is subject to the vicissitudes of the world's oil markets.

The Minister of State for Development Affairs, H.E. Mohamed bin Mousa Al Yousef, stated recently that, once the world price of oil below US\$ 15.5 a barrel, adjustments have to be made to the economy of the country. Accordingly, it has been decided to cut Government spending by 15% in its 1994 budget, in anticipation of continuing low world oil prices. The Ministry has announced that the economy of the Sultanate grew by around 4.5% in the past year, with most of the growth in the oil sector. The GDP stood at RO 987.9 million in the first quarter of 1993, compared with RO 945.7 million in the first quarter of the previous year. GDP in the oil and gas sector rose by 5.9% to RO 426.4 million from RO 402.7 million in the same period in the previous year. Growth in the non-oil sector was lower, standing at 3.4%. GDP in Government services had the lion's share of the non-oil GDP. Total spending in the 1994 budget is RO 2,033 million as compared with RO 2,138.5 million in 1993. This represents a budget spending reduction of 4.9%.

By Middle East standards, Oman's oil resources are modest. According to the latest estimates, reserves are in excess of 4.5 billion barrels and are expected to rise to 5 billion barrels in the near future. Currently, oil production is around 750,000 barrels per day. Earnings from the export of crude oil are being used to develop non-oil sectors and tap the huge gas reserves of the Sultanate. According to latest estimates resulting from further discoveries of natural gas in south-central Oman, the reserves of natural gas, which were 9.8 trillion cubic feet in 1990, now stand at nearly 20 trillion cubic feet in 1994. In five years' time, gas



▲ Omani textiles are supplied to both domestic and export markets.

production is expected to equal that of oil. Gas now fuels the Al Ghubrah power and water desalination complex, the Industrial Estate at Rusayl, and the copper smelting complex near Sohar.

Plans are proceeding for the export of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) by the construction of an LNG project utilising the recently-discovered gas reserves in the PDO concession area of central Oman.

The Oman LNG Company has been established to carry out this project, which is designed to produce 5,000 tonnes a year starting in 1999. This is dealt with in more detail in the chapter on Oil and Gas.

In addition to the steps being taken to expand the sources of income through domestic investment, Oman is encouraging investments abroad as well. The Sultanate has formed a strategic alliance with Caltex of the United States to pursue joint projects in Asia. Projects being studied include refineries in Thailand and India. In recent months, Oman has also joined in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, to carry crude oil from Kazakhstan's Tengiz oilfield to the Black Sea, and is involved in an oil exploration and production-sharing venture in West

Kazakhstan. The Sultanate is also studying a proposal for an under-sea gas pipeline from Oman to India, to provide an additional outlet for Omani gas.

From the beginning of the renaissance in 1970, the Government has been keenly aware of the necessity of diversifying the economy, and a considerable degree of success has been achieved in this respect. Unlike many of its neighbours, the Sultanate possesses natural resources other than gas and oil. The principal non oil resources are agriculture, fisheries and minerals, and to these can now be added tourism.. Medium and light industry is also being fast expanded. This includes a flour mill at Muttrah, the first of these, which has since been enlarged. There is now a flourishing industrial estate at Rusayl near Muscat, which is constantly growing. More recently, industrial estates have been established at Sohar in the north and Raysut in the south. At the end of 1993, yet another industrial estate had been opened at Nizwa in the Interior. These are dealt with in more detail in the chapter on Commerce and Industry. Apart from medium and light industry, there is a copper and chromate mining industry and an oil refinery at Mina Al Fahal to meet the domestic requirements of the country. Originally industry was directed towards import substitutes based on indigenous resources, but, with a limited home market, industrial policy has been switched towards exports. Since the establishment of a textile mill, the export of textiles has been particularly successful.

Growth in agriculture has been notably significant; in particular, the crop and livestock sub-sectors have been important areas of growth, as has the fishing industry, which now fully meets the demands of the home market. As a result, agriculture and fishing also account for an increased percentage of the GDP as compared with the earlier years of development.

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



▲ Health regulations are strictly observed in all Oman's factories.

The rate of inflation has been kept well under control during the past four years. Commodity prices have fluctuated, influenced by world figures, but until recently, it has been rents which have been the principal contributor to inflation, due to the high demand for housing. At the present time, new construction is fast reducing the demand, and the surge in rents is rapidly subsiding.

Prices have been very stable in 1993. According to the Muscat Consumer Price Index, inflation for the year to November 1993 was slightly less than one percent. The factors behind this stability were a decline in food, beverage and tobacco prices of nearly 1.5%, a general decline in world commodity prices, which was reflected in certain import cost-savings, and a decline in rent inflation, as well as a restrained monetary policy followed by the Central Bank.

Oman's exports rose by 5.6% during the first six months of 1993. From January to June, export revenues totalled RO 1.03 billion as against RO 973.6 million for the same period in 1992. Non-oil exports increased by 22.2% whilst re-exports increased by 72.1%. Significantly, oil exports went down by 3.2%. Monthly sta-

tistics released by the Ministry of Development showed that oil exports reached RO 810.4 million during the first six months of 1993, as compared to RO 836.9 million for the same period in 1992. Minerals and industrial products made up the bulk of non-oil exports, totalling RO 14.1 million compared to RO 8.1 million for the same period in 1992. Export of animals and animal products contributed RO 13.7 million compared to RO 9.4 million for the same period in 1992. Textile exports reached RO 7.5 million.

The chemical industry exported products worth RO 2.7 million in the first half of 1993. The Ministry of Development also reported that re-exports amounted to RO 160.6 million during the first half of 1993, compared to RO 93.3 million during the same period in 1992.

H.E.Qais bin Abdul Munim Al Zawawi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs, announced at the beginning of January that the general state budget for 1994 would be reduced compared with that for the previous year.

It provides for public expenditure totalling RO 2,033 million compared with around RO 2,263 million for 1993. Investment expenditure represents 21.2% of the total, current civil expenditure 37.6%, and defence and national security, 30%. Loan interest repayments, together with private sector and industrial sector grants and subsidies account for 11%. Estimated revenues for 1994 will amount to about RO 1,732 million compared with the 1993 figure of around RO 1,716 million. Oil revenues will represent around RO 1,311 million, or 76% of the total with non oil revenue accounting for RO 421 million, or 24% of the total revenues. Comparing the 1994 budget with its predecessors, Al Zawawi said that it is in line with the delicate and complex economic situation, both as far as revenues, expenditure and deficit are concerned, and from the point of view of the country's development needs.

Wholly-owned Omani companies have been exempted in the past from taxes to encourage investment in the local economy. The exemption was extended due to the economic downturn caused by the Gulf crisis. In October 1993, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, H.E.Maqbool bin Ali bin Sultan, announced that the exemption was no longer justified, and that it was the Government's intention to impose corporation tax to



▲ Dates hygienically packaged in a factory.

take effect from the beginning of 1994, to be collected in 1995. A tax of 5% will be charged on all net profits above RO 30,000 rising to 7.5% for profits above RO 200,000. The taxes are required for the Government to provide funds for the country's development and will not have an adverse effect on business in the Sultanate.

Banking in the Sultanate

The emergence of the banking system in Oman commenced with the opening of the first bank, the British Bank of the Middle East (BBME) in 1948 and remained the only bank in the country for more than 20 years. The Oman Currency Board was established in 1972. The Banking Law was enacted in November 1974. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) assumed its full powers on April 1, 1975. After three mergers by the end of April 1994, the total number of commercial banks reduced to 18 of which 7 are locally incorporated. In addition to these, there are three specialised banks for housing, industrial development and agriculture and fisheries. The domestic network of commercial banks branches reached 247 at the end of 1993.

Central Bank of Oman (CBO)

The Central Bank of Oman fulfils the whole range of functions traditionally undertaken by Central Banks. It is the issuer of currency, banker to the Government, lender of last resort to the banking system, and the supervisory agency of the entire financial system in the country. With a capital of RO one million in 1975, the total assets of the CBO had grown to more than RO 830.7 million by 1993, of which nearly 87% were foreign assets. The CBO, together with the Government, has been following a policy of broadening, as well as deepening, existing money and capital markets, in addition to promoting new instruments and institutions in the financial sector. It has issued Development Bonds on behalf of the Government to provide an investment outlet for the surplus resources in the economy, and to finance Government development projects. Denominations and maturity periods were varied for each issue to suit preferences of different saving sectors. The first batch of Development Bonds was issued in August 1991, and the ninth batch in September 1993, with a maturity date of five years, and bearing an annual interest of 7%. The total Bond issue up to end 1993 is worth about RO 294 million. The current Fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991-95) calls for a total of RO 429 million, which seems quite attainable judging by current performances.

Commercial Banking

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

A recent development since the last report has been the introduction of credit guarantees to Omani companies engaged in exporting goods of Omani origin to other AGCC countries against default by buyers. Under an agreement signed between the Oman Government Programme, a US \$ 10 billion line of credit is



▲ Oman International Bank's new building at Al-Khuwair.

made available to re-finance loans given to Omani exporters who have proven success and competence in the export business.

Forty-eight projects, backed by investments totalling RO 22 million, received loans from the Oman Development Bank (ODB) in 1993. Twenty of the projects were industrial, seven in the service sector, and one was an agricultural project. The total of the approved loans amounted to RO 10 million. The ODB obtains its finance from the Government in the form of direct loans from the Ministry of Finance and from the commercial banks. The Government subsidises the interest rates if they rise above 5%.

The outlook for 1994 is that it is expected to be a year of fiscal restraint, with some further slowing down in the rate of growth. Government spending will slow down and the budget deficit will be reduced. Growth in private economic activity will be slower, but a recession is not expected. There is still considerable momentum in the overall economy. Work on private and public projects will continue in 1994. The trade surplus will be substantial, and a small current payments surplus is probable. In general, economic growth will continue to be positive, although at a slower rate in 1994 than in the past two years.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The Sultanate of Oman has a predominately oil-based economy, but it has long been appreciated that there is a need to diversify the economy away from dependence on oil revenues as much as possible. Before 1970, industry in the Sultanate was non-existent. In the immediately succeeding years, industrial development was, of necessity, slow, due to the immense problems involved, and, moreover, this development had to be necessarily geared to the establishment of a national infrastructure. By 1986, most of the major projects required for this infrastructure had been completed. Priority was then switched to consumer goods and other import-substituting industries. Oman has a small population, and, therefore, the internal market is limited, thus the emphasis of light and medium industries is now being directed to exports.

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

The years 1991 and 1992 were nominated Years of Industry, out of which arose in 1991 a master plan for industrial development (1991-2005), the executive agent for which is the United National Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). The plan projects a growth of about 12.9% per annum during the current Fourth Five-Year-Plan, and around 10% in the Fifth Plan. The two Plans provided a forum for all those concerned with industry to work in close cooperation to accelerate industrialisation, whilst maximum support and incentives are offered by the Government. The Government's drive to encourage businessmen to set up industrial units outside the capital has met with a very good response.

A growing number of industrial estates are being established throughout the Sultanate. The first and largest, at Rusayl, was set up in 1983. It is situated about 45 km from Muscat and the main port of Mina Qaboos. Seeb International Airport is 6 km from the Estate. The Estate is, in all respects, fully serviced: it



▲ The Ministry of Commerce and Industry building in Greater Muttrah.

has its own power station, fuelled by natural gas from the Interior, and its own water supply. On completion, the Estate totalled 100 hectares in area, comprising 125 plots. It now has over sixty units, producing a wide range of manufactured goods, including: food and beverages, furniture, textiles, paper products, chemicals fabricated metal products, and electrical goods.

The Estate offers the advantage of low rental costs; the annual rent per sq. metre was reduced by Royal Decree during 1991 to 250 baisas. The Estate also provides electricity generated from natural gas, making overheads cheaper. The Rusayl Industrial Estate Authority has recently been replaced by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates, which is responsible for all industrial estates in the Sultanate.

Two new industrial estates were opened in November 1992: at Sohar in the north and Raysut in the south. The Sohar estate has a total reserved area of 100 hectares, of which 30 have been developed in the first phase. The Estate houses 50 industrial plots, out of which 8 are 'advance' factories, so called because they are built before the occupants are known. Two factories are to be in production this year. The Raysut estate is located in the

Dhofar Governorate 15 km west of Salalah, and 15 km from the airport. The Estate has the advantage of Raysut Port 6 km distant, which links Dhofar with the Asian and East African markets. The recent opening of relations with the Yemen Republic also offers new markets for the products of the Estate by generating trade across the border. The Raysut estate also has a total reserved area of 100 hectares, of which 30 have been developed in the first phase. The Estate houses 35 industrial plots and 21 'advance' factories. Three factories are to start production this year.

More industrial Estates are planned for the future, the first of which will be at Nizwa. The Minister of Commerce and Industry announced, at the beginning of this year, that the Nizwa estate is to be constructed during the current year. Industrial estates are also to be constructed at Sur, Buraimi, and Khasab in the Musandam Governorate. The Minister also announced that payment of rent in advance would be brought down from one year to six months at the Rusayl industrial estate, and to three months at the Raysut, Sur and Nizwa estates. The Ministry is currently studying a plan with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates to encourage the private sector to take part in the construction and management of the industrial estates.

The emphasis of the Fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991/96) being on the industrial sector, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos had directed that industrial development in the Sultanate must give priority to industries which rely on agriculture and fisheries products, as well as those, both light and medium, which depend on local raw materials.

They must meet the basic needs of the country and provide employment for the Omani people. He further directed the Government to provide all that is necessary to promote the vocational training programmes for the national workforce. In addition, full support is to be given to young people who are committed to the principle of self-employment, as well as to those who provide jobs for Omanis.

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

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

It should be noted that the tax exemption previously granted to Omani companies ceased from the beginning of 1994. All companies are now to be taxed at the rate prescribed in the Royal Decree number 77/89.

The Oman Textile Mills, the first of its kind in the AGCC countries, went into production five years ago. It has an investment of RO 8 million, and is the most modern of its kind. It has its own training centre for young Omanis. It is intended that the textile industry should stimulate the establishment of other related industries. The growth in the garment industry has been considerable, and there are about twenty enterprises exporting various types of garments to many parts of the world.

One of the earliest industrial projects in the Sultanate was the Flour Mills at Muttrah, which have been in operation since the 1970s. Their capacity has been increased in subsequent years, and they also produce animal feed.

There are two cement plants in the Sultanate: one at Rusayl in the north, and the other at Raysut in the south. Output at the Rusayl plant has been very satisfactory in recent years. The Ministry has engaged a consultant to study the demand and supply position of cement in the Sultanate and other neighbouring areas, and to investigate the scope for establishing additional cement production in northern Oman. Preliminary indications have shown that increased production may be justified. Exports of cement have been increasing in recent years.

The Government policy is to develop heavy industries if they

are based on local resources. A major project is a polyolefins complex using potash from the salt deposits of the Umm Al Samim and magnesia from sea water. The initial study of the potash project is currently in progress. In addition, there are many initiatives from the private sector to establish heavy industries in the fields of sponge-iron, steel, copper, glass, etc.

The export of Omani goods is steadily increasing as more industries are established based on local resources. The recently introduced export guarantee scheme is proving to be highly successful. In 1989, the export of goods by 64 industrial establishments was worth RO 90.14 million. This had increased to RO 126.77 million by 75 industrial establishments in 1991, and to RO 134.61 million by 89 industrial establishments in 1992. Thus, the growth in export of goods during the last three years was 49.3%.

The Oman Development Bank (ODB) plays an important role in implementing Government measures aimed at encouraging greater private participation in the country's development. Since its inception in 1979, ODB has lent RO 67 million to private businesses. It is now doubling its share capital to RO 20 million. The RO 10 million share capital with which it has operated until now is inadequate under present circumstances. The ODB cannot lend at one time a sum exceeding one-tenth of its net worth. Its current net worth, comprising capital and reserves, is under RO 20 million. The Government has been requested to consider its loans to the Bank, amounting to RO 16 million, as subordinate loans, making them part of the institution's net worth. 54% of ODB shares are held by the Government, 6% by Omani individuals and organisations, and 40% by regional and international institutions.

A new Commercial Law came into force in 1991, replacing the previous law which dated back to 1974. It is a wide-ranging enactment, which directly affects every person and company engaged in trade or business in the Sultanate. The terms of the code widely define the individuals and commercial activities to whom it applies. These include foreign businesses trading in Oman. Foreign investment in industry is welcome, and is regulated by the Foreign Business and Investment Law. The minimum Omani investment in a joint venture company should not



▲ The Oman Cement Company, Al Rusayl.

be less than 35%. In practice, however, it is preferred that foreign equity does not exceed 49%. The Government attaches particular importance to attracting direct foreign investment in the manufacturing sector. The Sultanate has decided to allow AGCC citizens to hold shares totalling up to 25% of the capital of wholly Omani-owned public joint-stock companies, provided that approval is given at the annual general meetings of these companies. This will apply to all types of economic activity in the Sultanate. As many as 58,040 establishments were registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry at the end of 1992 compared with 50,943 in 1991, an increase of 13.9%.

Industrial Development Unit (IDU)

Consonant with its aim of improving management and operations within industry, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry set up the Industrial Development Unit in 1989 under the Ministry's Directorate-General of Industry. The advisory services of the Unit provide investors with information about market, technology, manufacturing process and feasibility studies. It will also familiarise investors with the rules and procedures

required in obtaining an industrial licence and the incentives provided by the Government for industrial projects. IDU conducts diagnostic studies to assist sick industries and assist healthy industries in maintaining their profitability. To this end, IDU has created an in-house programme that will analyse the financial statements of any industry and provide the various indices of profitability, activity, and profit planning of a company. The programme will also provide information on Omanisation. The management training programme, established in 1991, is targeted towards upgrading the skills of Omani managers.

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI)

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry was set up in 1973 to encourage industrial and commercial development in the Sultanate.

All business organisations in Oman are expected to be members. The headquarters of the OCCI are in Ruwi, near Muscat, with branches in Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa, Sur, Salalah and Sohar.

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

The Chamber legalises documents, invoices, agency and labour contracts, and issues certificates required in trade and industry. It acts as arbitrator in the event of commercial disputes between local members and foreign businessmen or investors, and participates in the discussion of trade-related problems with concerned government organisations. It also sponsors and facilitates the issuing of visas to foreigners wishing to establish business relations with Oman, but who do not have contacts in the Sultanate.

The number of enrolments has continued to increase over the years, and the OCCI has expanded its activities, especially in the

fields of training, diversification of the economy, and Omanisation. Technical management courses were started in 1989 and have proved successful. Computerisation of the Chamber's operations and the establishment of an information centre have been completed.

The OCCI is currently upgrading its industrial consultancy unit, originally set up in 1992, to enable it to play a greater role in Oman's industrial development. It reflects the Chamber's policy of support and encouragement of the country's industry, its belief in the need to diversify the sources of national income, and its commitment to the creation of job opportunities. The Unit is electronically linked to the industrial and technological databank set up by the United National Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).

The Stock Exchange

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

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

Tourism

Tourism in the Sultanate of Oman has now fully recovered from the temporary setback caused by the Gulf war, and will rapidly become a major factor in the economy of the country. It



has much to offer the tourist in the way of scenery, climate, historic interest, and water sports. The mild, but sunny, winter climate is attractive to Europeans and others escaping from the rigours of the northern winter, whilst the cooler monsoon climate of the south offers relief from the searing heat of the Gulf in summer to the citizens of that region.

Tourism, which was non-existent in Oman until recent years, is now making rapid progress. The emphasis is on quality. The Government has proceeded cautiously to ensure that this development is pursued in a well planned manner, calculated to ensure quality tourism. In 1970, there was only one small hotel in the Sultanate. By 1993, there were more than thirty throughout the country, many of them of 5-star standard, as well as motels and rest houses at strategic points. In November 1992, a large attractive hotel was opened in Sohar on the waterfront. Altogether, there are now more than 2,000 hotel rooms with more than 3,000 beds. By the year 2005, it is expected that the number of tourists will have risen to 60,000 annually. Tourism is administered by a Directorate-General within the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and now has its own recently appointed Under-Secretary.

▲ Bandar Jissah: the Omani coastline possesses magnificent unpolluted beaches – a popular tourist attraction.

At the request of the Government, the World Tourist Organisation, acting as an executing agency of the UNDP, has prepared a 15-year tourism plan (1991-2005) for the development of tourism in the Sultanate. The concept presents a planning and development network for providing opportunities for the informed traveller to experience the special culture and environmental characteristics of Oman. In 1992, the Ministry announced a five-year tourism development plan under which it will spend RO 8 million to establish tourist reception centres, picnic areas and camping grounds. Under the current Fourth Five-Year-Plan, there are 33 infrastructural projects to improve and expand tourism in the country.

The policy of Omanisation in the hotel industry is progressing steadily and satisfactorily. At the end of 1992, 20.7% of the workforce was Omani, and was expected to reach 25% by the end of 1993. All three Government-owned hotels – the Al Bustan Palace, Muscat Inter-Continental, and Seeb Novotel – topped the 30% mark during 1992. The year also saw the overall average hotel, motel, and guest-house occupancy rate increase to 51% from 45.2% in the previous year. About 15% of these were tourists, mostly from European countries.

Water sports are increasingly popular, and, to meet this, the ambitious Sidab Marina Project, near Muscat, is going ahead. The coastline of the Sultanate possesses magnificent beaches, both in the north and the south, and full advantages of these is being taken in the promotion of tourism.

Plans are afoot to promote Oman as a year-round tourist destination at the tourism exhibition to be organised in Dubai for the first time under the supervision of World Travel Market of England in early 1994. The World Travel Market plans to organise six such exhibitions in AGCC countries, including Oman, which will be the venue some time in the next six years.

OIL & GAS

The past year has witnessed a considerable advance in the scope of the Sultanate's oil and gas industry. Whereas the Government has recently reduced the production of oil by five to ten per cent to help arrest a further decline in world oil prices, considerable advances have been made in the production of natural gas, as well as in feasibility studies for the construction of a gas pipeline to India and other oil and gas plans and projects outside the Sultanate.

The Sultanate of Oman has an oil-based economy and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future, although considerable advances have been made in the diversification of the economy. After considerable and fruitless searches for oil over a period of years, both in the north and south of the Sultanate, it was finally discovered in commercial quantities in the Fahud area of northern Oman in 1964, and went into production in 1967 from three fields in the area. A pipeline was constructed from Fahud, the largest of the fields, through the mountains to the oil terminal at Mina Al Fahal on the coast near Muscat. This immediately brought about a radical change in the economy of the country, but even so, there were many vicissitudes in the early years before further reserves were discovered both in the north and the south of the Sultanate. Currently, the oil industry is on a very healthy basis; new discoveries, which are continuing, have raised proven oil reserves to around 5 billion barrels, and output continued to rise over recent years until the restrictions were imposed at the beginning of this year. Gross oil production of the four petroleum companies operating in the Sultanate rose in 1992 to 270.8 million barrels compared with 258.5 million barrels in 1991. Oil exports rose to 252.5 million barrels in 1992 from 243.7 million in 1991. Petroleum Development Oman, (PDO), the biggest oil producer and exporter, produced 253.4 million barrels in 1992, accounting for 93.5 per cent of Oman's gross oil production. Occidental, Oman's second largest oil producer and exporter, produced 9.8 million barrels in the same year, while ELF Petroleum produced 4.7 million barrels, and Japex 2.9 million barrels.

At the end of 1992, 1,861 oil wells were in production, com-

pared with 1,445 wells in 1991. Japan is the main buyer of Omani oil, and imported 102 million barrels in 1992, or 40.4 per cent of the Sultanate's total oil exports. South Korea was the second biggest customer with 70.8 million barrels or 28 per cent of oil exports, while Taiwan imported 20 million barrels, Thailand 13.5 million barrels, and Singapore 11.6 million barrels.

PDO, which is 60% owned by the Government of Oman, the remainder by Shell, Companies Francaise des Petroles, and Partex, has had its recent greatest success at Lekhwair in the north of Oman, where one of the oldest fields has been expanded. On completion of the expansion work it was handed over to PDO, and it is expected that the production rate will reach 110,000-150,00 b/d this year. This will represent about 15% of Oman's total output. The search for further reserves of oil continues both onshore in Dhofar in the south, where conditions are difficult in the rugged mountain terrain, as well as offshore. The reserves of oil in the Sultanate are such that the oil industry is guaranteed an assured future, well into the next century.

A refinery to meet the needs of the local market was con-

▼ Seismic trucks in operation at the edge of "Rub al-khali" (Empty Quarter) desert.



structed at Mina Al Fahal and came into operation in 1982. Its original production capacity of 50,000 b/d was increased in 1987 to 80,000 b/d to satisfy the expanding domestic requirement. Now there are plans for a further expansion of the refinery. In October 1992, the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals signed an agreement with Mitsui, a Japanese firm, to upgrade the production process at Oman Refinery's benzine unit. Benzine production will be increased and will be lead-free, thus not harming the environment.

The policy of Omanisation is proceeding satisfactorily in the oil and gas industry. PDO has established a large training centre which has contributed considerably to the training of Omanis to replace expatriates. In 1993, 800 Omanis were under training at the company, and Omanisation at PDO had reached 65%. Now, the number of young Omanis trained and qualified for working in the oil and gas industry is being increasingly supplemented by graduates coming from the Sultan Qaboos University and Oman's Technical Institutes.

In the late eighties, the Government set up the wholly state-owned Oman Oil Company (OOC) for the purpose of investing in foreign commercial enterprises and oil trading operations. In 1991, the Sultanate signed a protocol of cooperation with Kazakhstan, whereby the Sultanate would assist Kazakhstan during negotiations with foreign oil companies. The Sultanate has now signed a deal with Kazakhstan to help develop oil reserves in the former Soviet Republic. Oman will get a concession area of about 16,000 sq.kms, expected to produce about eight million tonnes of crude oil a year. Reports from Kazakhstan say that the concession is divided into two blocks, with total reserves estimated at about one billion barrels.

Two major projects are currently planned for the supply of natural gas by pipeline to India and the construction of two oil refineries in that country. An underwater pipeline is to be constructed, through which gas will be supplied by Oman to India. The first phase of the feasibility study for this project has already been completed. The pipeline will be 744 miles in length at an average depth of 10,000 feet and initially carry 50 million cubic metres of gas daily. It is hoped that construction of the pipeline will start next year. India's state-owned Bharat Petroleum

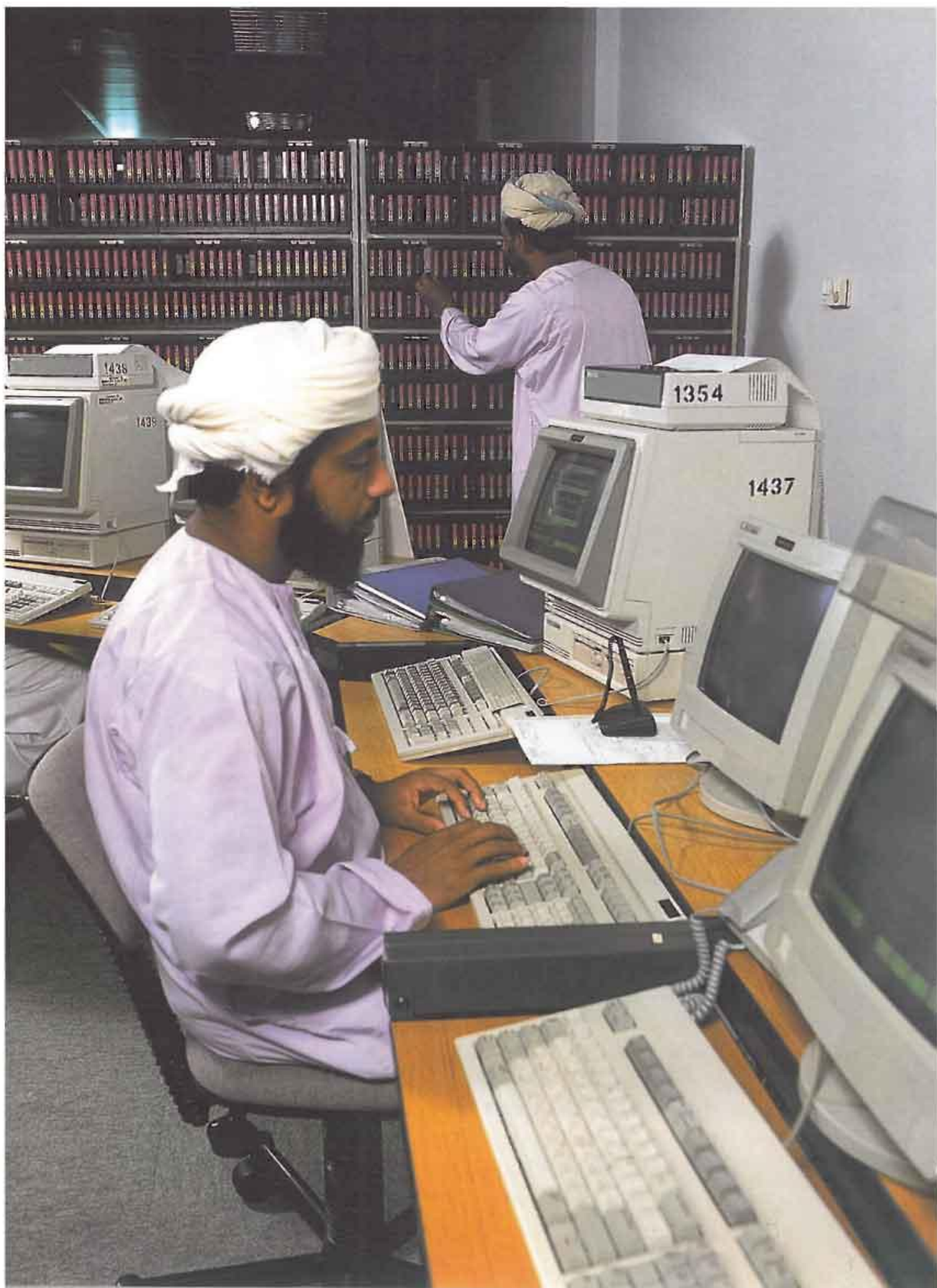


▲ Beam pumps at work in the Nimr oil field, South of Oman.

Corporation and the Oman Oil Company signed an agreement in December 1993 for the construction of a six million tonne capacity oil refinery in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh for completion in 1997. An agreement has also been reached for the supply of crude oil by Oman for the refinery. The OOC has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the state-owned Hindustan Petroleum Corporation for the establishment of another oil refinery in Maharashtra. OOC will hold 26% of the equity in both projects.

Under an agreement signed in Bermuda, a study is being carried out on a project to lay a network of pipelines to carry oil from Tengiz in Kazakhstan and Baku in Azerbaijan to the port of Novorossisk on the Black Sea coast. OOC and two other leading companies have been commissioned to implement the project in two phases.

Oman has signed an agreement with an oil company in Bermuda to construct jointly an oil refinery in Thailand at a cost of US\$ 1.9 billion, with a production capacity of 130,000 barrels a day. Under the terms of the agreement, Oman will supply the refinery with 80,000 barrels of crude oil a day. The Thai Oil



Authority will carry out the marketing of the refined oil in the local market.

The state-owned Oman Refinery Company (ORC) will set up a national firm to market oil products in the Sultanate, thus ending a 30-year monopoly by Shell and British Petroleum. The new marketing stations will operate alongside existing centres created by Shell and BP. The two foreign firms, which have shared control of the domestic market for the past 30 years, will not initially be awarded any new marketing licences, as a temporary measure, until the national stations are established in the market.

Gas

Natural gas was discovered accidentally during the search for oil, and it was soon established that the Sultanate has extensive reserves which are more than sufficient to supply the needs of its developing industry. Demand has risen rapidly, and output has increased correspondingly. Total gas reserves, which stood at 9.8 trillion cubic feet in 1990, have risen to 20 trillion cubic feet in 1994. It is expected that this figure will increase even further in the future. In five year's time, gas production is expected to equal that of oil.

The gas industry is wholly owned by the State and operated on its behalf by PDO. The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals cooperates with PDO in the management of the gas industry. The gas industry started operations in 1978 with the construction of a gas pipeline linking the Yibal field with the Al Ghubrah power station and desalination plant on the coast near Muscat. Gas is now supplied to the power station in the Rusayl Industrial Estate and to the Wadi Jizzi power station which serves the copper-smelting complex and the Sohar Region.

The Yibal plant is currently undergoing expansion, increasing its capacity from 8.5 million cubic metres a day to 16.5 cubic metres to meet the growing domestic needs. In 1988, the direct use of natural gas was introduced in Oman for the first time, other than to power stations. A gas supply has been inaugurated at the Rusayl Industrial Estate for use at the vegetable oil refinery, the textile mill and other enterprises.

The total domestic gas consumption at the present time is

◀ Computers play an important part in the oil industry's hi-tech operations.

around 5.4 million cubic metres a day, with power stations of the Ministry of Electricity and Water consuming 89%, 7% by industrial users and 4% by the Ministry of Defence. The Sohar Industrial Estate was due to be supplied with natural gas at the end of 1993. By 1995, the Manah power station will also be supplied by the Yibal plant. Oman's domestic consumption of gas is expected to reach 8 million cubic metres daily by the end of the century.

As a direct result of the vast recent gas finds, the focus has now shifted from domestic use to exports. The Government has decided to produce and export Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) by setting up an LNG project utilising the recently discovered gas reserves in the PDO concession area of central Oman. The project has been divided into upstream and downstream developments. The upstream development involves the production of gas and condensate by PDO on behalf of the Government of Oman. The downstream development will comprise gas liquefaction shipping and marketing which is to be undertaken by an LNG export company under formation, owned by the Government of Oman (51%), Shell Overseas Trading (34%), Total (6%), Mitsubishi (3%), Mitsui & Co (3%), Partex (2%), and ITCHU Corporation (1%).

Oman's LNG plant is to be located at Bimmah, near the coast between Quriyat and Sur. Its construction is scheduled to start in 1996 and the company will be ready to start exporting its LNG production in 1999. Five to six million metric tonnes of LNG will be produced yearly for 20 years. A training programme for Omanis will be undertaken as part of this project, with a view to beginning its Omanisation as soon as possible.

► The Government gas plant at Yibal, where gas is piped to the coast for use in power stations and industry.





MINERALS

Oman, as a source of mineral wealth, has a history of 3,000 years. Copper was already being mined in northern Oman, or Magan as it was then known, and the ore exported by sea to the Sumerian Empire at the northern end of the Gulf at that time. The remains of these ancient workings can still be seen. Copper is again being mined from the same deposits, refined into copper cathodes in Oman, and exported. Small quantities of gold and silver are valuable by-products of the refining process, which promise to be economically viable.

In recent years, much has been learnt about the mineral potential of the country from large-scale geophysical mapping surveys, which are continuing, as well as from detailed exploration in the form of geologic mapping, geo-chemical surveys and drillings. The main problems have lain in access in a notoriously rugged terrain. In spite of this, a considerable measure of success has already been achieved.

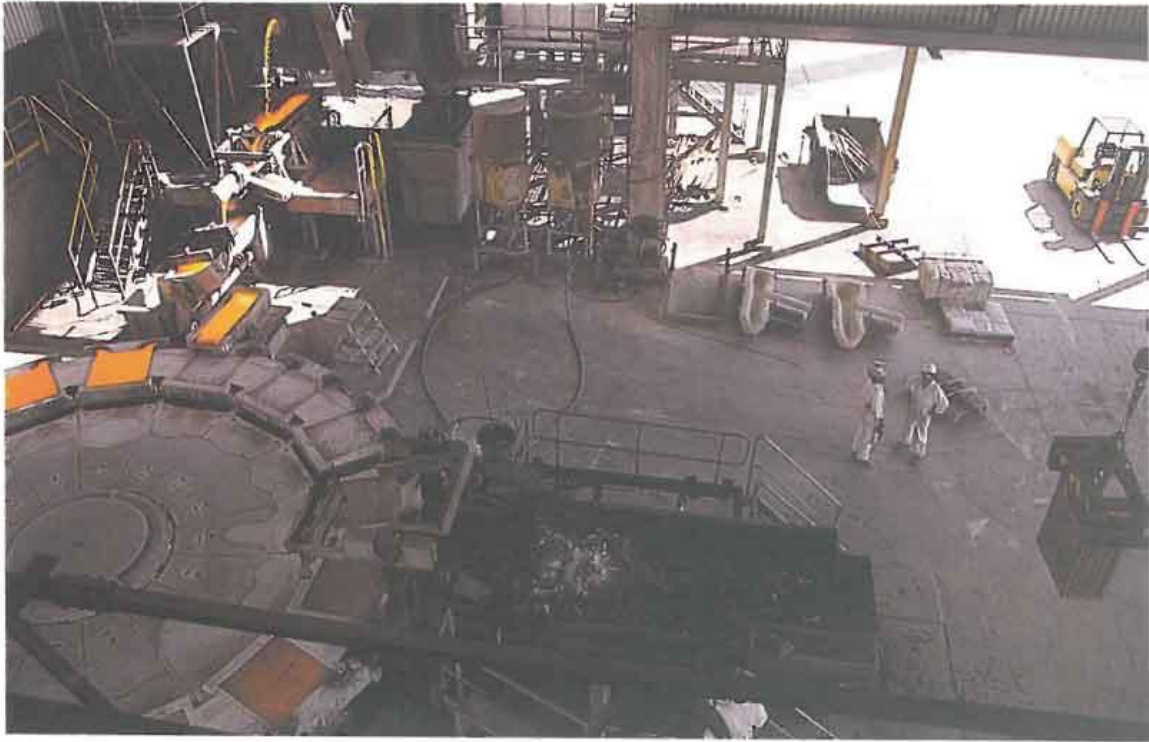
The copper ore deposits lie in the Wadi Jizzi near Sohar in northern Oman. An on-site smelter was constructed and opened in 1983, where the ore is processed into electrolytically refined copper cathodes. The copper ore deposits in the Wadi Jizzi are limited, but further exploration has revealed deposits of copper ore at Rakah and Hayl Al Safil in the Wilayat of Yanqul at a distance of 215 km from the smelter near Sohar. When the ore is mined from these deposits, it is planned that it should be converted into concentrate at Hayl Al Safil, and then transported to the smelter for refining prior to export. A highly sophisticated technique for mineral exploration, applied in the Sultanate for the first time, has opened up possibilities of more large copper deposits, on the Batinah coast.

Originally, the Government held 75% of the shares of the copper complex, but later acquired all the remaining shares, so that the whole copper industry is now state-owned. The operating company is the Oman Mining Company (OMCO). Total copper production increased by 25% in 1992 and was expected to exceed this in 1993, when figures for that year are published.

Chromite was discovered by accident in 1971 during exploration for other minerals. Economically viable chromite deposits

► Copper mined at Sohar is refined for the overseas market.

► Oman produces high quality marble for export and the domestic market. Here completed stocks await delivery.



were found near Zaymi, and are now being mined by OMCO for the Oman Chromite Company (OCCO), which was formed in 1991. In the event of private Omani individuals being granted a licence to mine chromite, they will be grouped together and given a site to develop.

The group will be provided with technical and financial assistance. Transportation, marketing and selling of the mineral will be managed for the group by OCCO. This is in keeping with the Government's policy of providing employment opportunities in less developed areas of the country. Japan is showing a keen interest in Omani chromite.

Extensive deposits of coal exist in the region of Sur in south-eastern Oman. Preliminary exploration work and evaluation drilling in the area have confirmed an estimated 36 million tonnes of coal. The exploration programme, which started in late 1990, was completed last year when feasibility studies were then planned. An initial study by UNDP has estimated that reserves are sufficient to set up a 300 megawatt power plant, using around 100,000 tonnes of coal mined annually. This would be enough to meet the entire requirements of electricity for the whole Sharqiyah area.

Oman has large resources of industrial minerals, including silica sand and quartzite which could be used for a glass industry, gypsum for plasterboard, dolomite for magnesia, and kaolin for ceramics and a glass industry. The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals is currently carrying out an RO 360,000 silica study project to identify a site for a glass factory in Abu Ton in the Wusta region, between the Wilayats of Haima and Al Duqm. The study was due to be completed in early 1994.

High quality marble is being mined both in the north and the south of the Sultanate, some of which is being fashioned locally and some exported. Huge quantities of gypsum have been discovered in the Shuwaymiyah area of Dhofar. Preliminary estimates suggest that the new finds will add another 100 million tonnes to the country's proven reserves. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in partnership with the private sector, is studying the possibility of setting up a magnesia plant either in the south or in the Quriyat area in the north, depending on the quality of dolomite available in the two areas.

AGRICULTURE

Until the division of Oman and its East African possessions into two separate entities in the middle of the last century, the wealth of Oman was considerably derived from the latter. For the following century, Oman had only its resources of agriculture and fisheries, which reduced it to a subsistence economy almost completely. It was not until the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 1964, and its subsequent exploitation, that the country was able to develop. An oil industry is not employment intensive, and, even now, over half the population is engaged in agriculture and fishing. First results of the agricultural census show that in 1993 the total population of owner farmers was 787,300, and that a large percentage of the Omani population live in villages. This means that over 50% of the population live in rural areas. However, the stimulus to the national economy derived from the exploitation of oil and gas has also benefitted the development and modernisation of agriculture, so that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has been enabled to achieve a 44%

▼ Frankincense in its raw state being prepared for the market.



self-sufficiency in food production, with a goal of 100% by the year 2000. In 1993 the agriculture and fisheries sectors contributed around RO 156 million to the GDP of the Sultanate, a 16.4% increase on the 1990 figure of RO 134 million.

Agriculture and fisheries are Oman's main non-oil exports. In 1993 they accounted for RO 33.4 million – RO 13.6 million in agricultural products, and RO 19.8 million from the fisheries sector.

The Sultanate of Oman lies in an arid region of the world, but, unlike the other States of the Arabian Peninsula, other than the Yemen Republic, it has considerable agricultural potential due to its size and topography and local variations of climate. The Hajar range of mountains, which run the length of northern Oman and form the spine of the country, attract considerably greater, if sporadic, rainfall than occurs in neighbouring regions, whilst in Dhofar in the south, regular monsoon rains fall over the coastal range of mountains.

Unemployment was endemic in Oman before 1970, so that the sudden burst of development in the ensuing years absorbed much of this wasted manpower, but it also led to a drift from the land of young men, who would otherwise have been engaged in agriculture, seeking higher wages in the urban areas. The Government's reaction to this undesirable development was to take urgent measures to support farmers in such a way as to encourage them to keep to their traditional occupations. In more recent years, this problem has been ameliorated by the fact that almost all the major construction projects involved in the infrastructure have been completed, so that the incentives to leave the land have been greatly reduced. Agriculture was given a considerable boost when the year 1988 was declared the Year of Agriculture. This proved to be so successful that it was extended to 1989. Now, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has designated two months of each year as Months of Agriculture in order to ensure that agriculture in the Sultanate continues to make progress, and that all the relevant departments in the Ministry step up their efforts to help increase production. Another aim is to create closer cooperation between the Ministry and the farmers, stock-breeders and fishermen.

The climate of northern Oman with long, hot, and usually

rainless summers, except over the mountains, and brief mild winters with small and sporadic rainfall, is well-suited to the cultivation of dates and limes. The dates of Oman are renowned for their high quality, and the yearly production is estimated to be between 150,000 and 175,000 tonnes. Twenty thousand hectares is given to the cultivation of date palms numbering not less than seven million. This is expected to rise to approximately ten million by next year. About 40% of date production is taken up by growers and owners, 25% by livestock, and 30% is marketed inside and outside Oman. In 1992, the Ministry set up a cloning laboratory for the production of date palm seedlings. This is the most technically advanced method of producing high-quality seedlings. The first year of operation saw the production of 25,000 seedlings, which will replace old and low-productive palms. Two large farms have been established at Wadi Quriyat and Al Kamil for the cultivation of high-quality date palms with around 5,000 date palms in each farm. The two farms are used as model units for the study of the care and cultivation of date palms, grown with the aid of the most advanced scientific methods, and research is carried out to determine how easily the different Omani strains are able to acclimatise to conditions in the different date palm-growing areas. In 1993, it was decided by the Government to transfer the two date-packing factories in Nizwa and Rostaq to the private sector.

Limes are grown in quantity along the Batinah coast and particularly at the northern end. Together with dates, limes provide the major agricultural exports from the Sultanate. Also cultivated along the Batinah coast are mangoes, tobacco, tomatoes, onions, aubergines, peppers and many other fruits and vegetables, almost entirely for domestic consumption. During 1992, several research programmes were carried out into ways of improving and diversifying vegetable cultivation in the Sultanate. In the same year, sixteen new types of vegetables were added to the recommended list. There was a considerable increase in tonnage per acre of tomatoes, potatoes and aubergines.

Greenhouses have been constructed for the production of cucumbers and tomatoes. In addition to the programme for the improvement of date production, a programme has been carried

out to improve, develop and diversify the cultivation of other fruit crops. This included research and studies of the cultivation of limes, mangoes, bananas, coconuts, grapes, pomegranates and pawpaws.

Dhofar, in the south, has a totally different climate from that of northern Oman. Regular monsoon rains between June and September fall on the seaward-facing slopes of the mountains. Date palms are not to be found as the climate does not suit them; instead, coconut palms flourish on the coastal plain around Salalah, where bananas, pawpaws and other tropical fruits are grown extensively.

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

The Sultanate is now the leading livestock producer in the Gulf region with more than 183,000 sheep, 153,000 goats, 225,000 cattle, and 71,000 camels, reflecting the high priority given to livestock production since the early 1970s. It is the Government's policy to increase local goat production and reduce dependence on imports. Model sheep production units are also being set up. Modern technology is being applied to improve fertility, lower death rates and increase growth rates, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is supplying breeders with concentrated feed as well as fertilisers and seed for the production of fodder.

A dairy project aims to increase the production of milk and other dairy products, giving dairy farmers marketing assistance and equipment, and introducing them to modern herd management techniques. The aim of the artificial insemination project is to improve local cattle through cross-breeding with selected import strains, whilst the beef production project aims to produce economically feasible, good quality beef the whole year round.

Protection and immunisation are clearly of great importance.



▲ Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries building, Al Khuwair.

The Ministry has introduced a nationwide programme to immunise all livestock against common animal diseases. This huge project, which began in April 1992, will run until 1995, and will cost more than RO 4 million. It aims to immunise about 7 million animals. Projects due to be implemented include a veterinary quarantine station in Wadi Al Jizzi, due to the increasing over-land trade between the Sultanate and its neighbours, and agricultural centres with veterinary clinics in Haima, Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Oqbah and Madha. A veterinary clinic is also being built at Sint in the Wilayat of Bahla.

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

Research has been advanced in the study of pests and plant

diseases. Particular attention has been given to diseases which attack limes, date palms, coconuts, bananas, and tomatoes. Programmes have also concentrated on biological prevention methods. The Ministry provides the Omani farmer with a number of services which he is unable to undertake on his own, and which require high technical and other facilities. In the summer of 1992, about 16,175 feddans (measurement of land) were sprayed against a damaging date palm grub (mataq). The Ministry's spraying teams assist farmers in protecting their fields with general pesticides. The Ministry also offers farmers ploughing services for nominal hire charges at its agricultural development centres.

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

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

During the decade of 1991/2000, the Ministry has the target of increasing the production of poultry meat, eggs, and fresh milk by 100%, and production of meat from grazing animals by 48%. The ultimate aim is total self-sufficiency in all these products, through expert advice and subsidies. In 1992, a livestock research station was opened in Rumais on the Batinah Coast, containing a number of modern research units,

▼ Agriculture production is carefully monitored at an experimental farm.



including a laboratory for analysing foodstuffs, fodders and dairy products. It also has enclosures for cows, sheep and goats, a mechanical workshop, a dairy unit, a training unit, a library and auditorium, as well as accommodation. Also, in the same year, a new livestock research station was opened in Wadi Quriyat with similar facilities and a veterinary clinic. In Dhofar there is a livestock research station which includes a cattle research establishment, a dairy research unit, and an abattoir.

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

The Ministry's veterinary laboratories carry out comprehensive studies of endemic animal diseases with the aim of eliminating them. These include infectious pneumonia, diseases in goats and camels, rodent parasites and rabies. A programme has been carried out for the production of a vaccine against infectious pneumonia with the French Institute for the Study of Diseases in Tropical Areas. The current livestock programme of advice aims to equip stockbreeders with the scientific skills required for rearing cattle, goats, sheep and poultry, and for marketing animal and poultry products. It also promotes the artificial insemination of cattle and modern methods of combating animal diseases.

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

The total area of land in the Sultanate suitable for agriculture is about 100,000 hectares, of which about 60,000 are under cultivation at the present time. In recent years, the areas under cultivation have increased at an average rate of 7.2% per annum. However, the expansion of the area under cultivation is not the main aim of the current Five-Year Development Plan; it is rather the improvement of productivity from land already under cultivation by a programme of support and technical advice, through

2,500 extension farms. An important element of this policy is the use of irrigation water to the best advantage by employing the most modern means to cut wastage to the minimum.

Until the end of 1993, the overall responsibility for water supplies was entrusted to the Ministry of Water Resources, while the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries was responsible for water that was available for agriculture. At the beginning of this year, the responsibility for water for agriculture was transferred to the Ministry of Water Resources. This responsibility includes the construction and maintenance of recharge dams, which collect rainwater descending from the mountains that would otherwise run away to waste in the sea or the deserts of the Interior. Also included is responsibility for the repair and maintenance of aflaj, a system originally introduced into Oman from Persia a thousand years ago or more, whereby water is tapped at the water table in the mountains and led by man-made subterranean tunnels, often many kilometres in length, to the plains where it is used for irrigation and domestic purposes. Along the Batinah Coast and on the Salalah plain, water for irrigation is obtained from wells.

PAMAP

The Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (PAMAP) was established in 1981 with the aim of encouraging Omani farmers to increase the production of fruit, vegetables and other agricultural crops by creating a body to market the produce, to make it available in the local markets at reasonable prices, and to improve the produce in terms of quality, quantity, and availability. PAMAP began commercial operations in the second half of 1985, with a comprehensive network consisting of 6 distribution centres and 12 collection centres, established in the Muscat area and the regions. Activities at the centres are controlled by the headquarters at Ghala, near Muscat, which is manned by experienced professionals. All the centres have built-in cold storage facilities. Refrigerated trucks are used for the transportation of produce from collection centres to distribution centres and marketing outlets. PAMAP has taken over the operation and management of the banana ripening and packing factory at Salalah and has established a banana receiving unit at Suwaiq on the Batinah Coast. It has also taken over the collec-



▲ Produce is screened for quality at the PAMAP warehouse: Oman is approaching self-sufficiency in agricultural produce.

tion, processing and marketing of Omani frankincense, which is famous for its quality and aromatic properties.

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

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

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

FISHERIES

The Sultanate of Oman, with a 1700 km-long coastline extending from the Musandam Peninsula at the entrance to the Gulf in the north to the border with the Yemen in the south, has extremely rich fishing grounds, the potentialities of which have yet to be fully evaluated. A 200-mile exclusive economic zone extends to seaward from the shores of Oman.

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

The fisheries of Oman are now playing an increasingly important role in the economy of the Sultanate. One of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' main objectives is to raise the annual growth rate of the fisheries sector in the country's gross domestic product to 9.9% of the GDP during the Fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991-96).

Fishing, together with agriculture, has been a traditional Omani occupation through the ages, and a major source of employment. Nevertheless, until recent years, it only met the needs of local coastal communities. Until road communications opened up the routes to the Interior of the country, it was impossible for the inhabitants of the towns and villages of the Interior to obtain fresh fish. Now, it is brought to the Interior from the coast in refrigerated trucks and distributed widely. This, of course, has greatly expanded the internal market for fish.

More than 150 species of fish and crustaceans have been identified in Omani waters, ranging from sardines to tuna. Some 35 types of grouper, or hammour as they are known in Oman, are found in the waters of the Sultanate. Schools of sardines, netted off the Batinah Coast, have long been used as animal feed and fertiliser. In Dhofar, sardines are still bought by the Jebali tribesmen as feed for their cattle during the dry season when the grazing has been exhausted, although this is a diminishing practice

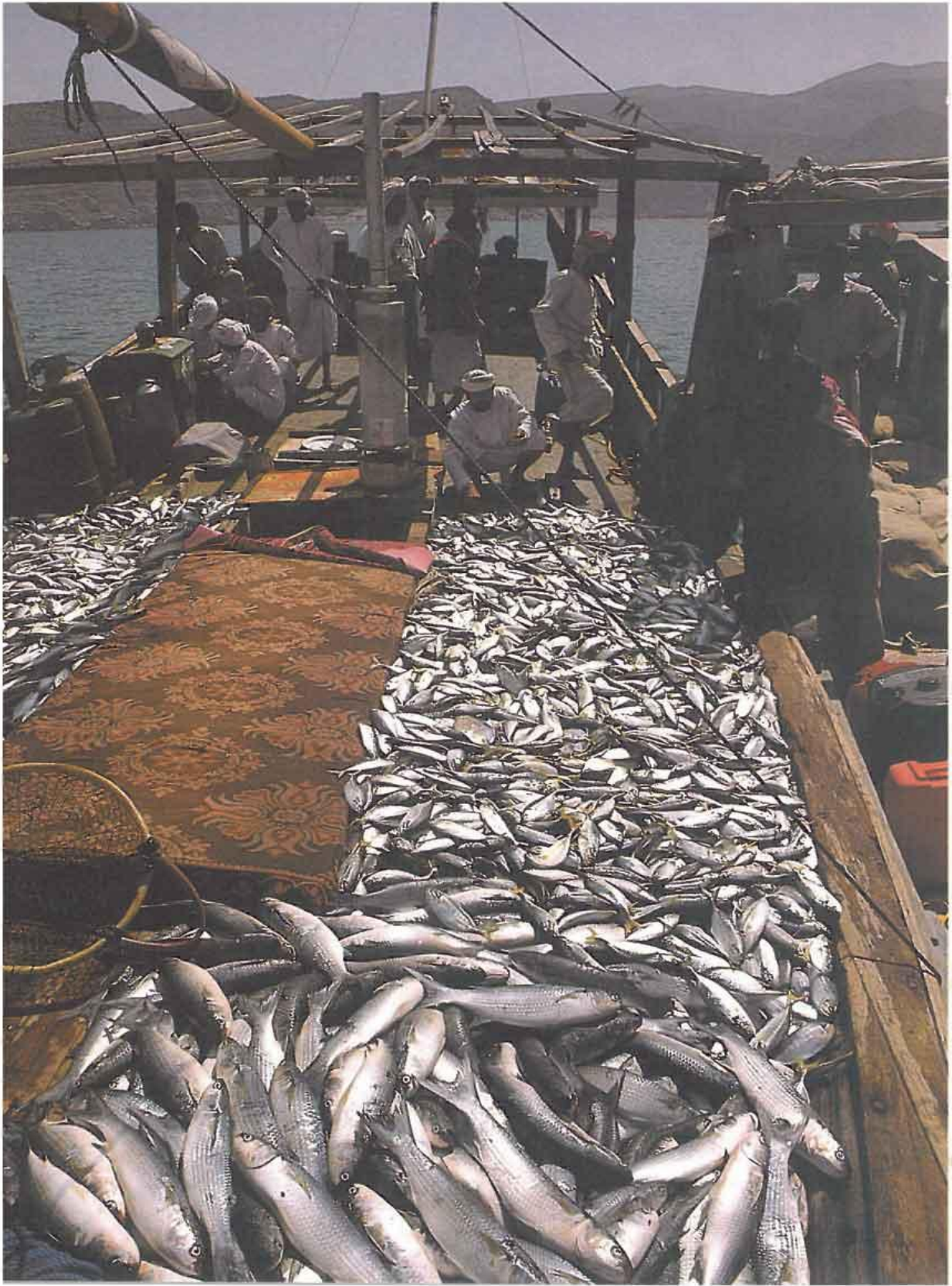


▲ A massive catch of sardines netted by fishermen on the Al Batinah coast.

as fodder becomes increasingly available from the the farms on the Salalah plain. Large numbers of lobsters are now caught off Masirah Island and the coast of Dhofar during the open season, and exported to the north, where they are in great demand.

Aware of the drift away from the coastal fishing communities of able-bodied young men seeking better paid employment in the urban areas, where labour was in short supply primarily in the construction industry during the early stages of the development programme, the Government took prompt action to remedy the situation. A Fisheries Department formed in 1972 became a Directorate-General in 1974, and this was later absorbed into the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In 1980, the Oman National Fisheries Company (ONFC) was formed with Government assistance to purchase, distribute, and export the catches of local fishermen. It also handled fish caught by concessionaires. In 1987 the Oman Fisheries Company (OFC) was established, into which the ONFC was merged. RO 30 million was received as subscriptions from shareholders.

It was the introduction of the Fishermen's Encouragement Fund in 1978 which was most effective in encouraging the fish-



ermen to keep to their traditional occupation. Particularly popular was the financial assistance given to the purchase of fibreglass fishing boats and outboard engines, which were made readily available. By 1990, there were 18,546 registered fishermen, representing an increase of 6,000 over the previous years. Much progress has been achieved in recent years in improvements to fishing harbours, and in the construction of cold-storage and processing facilities throughout the Sultanate.

The total quantity of fish and crustaceans landed rose sharply through the 1980s, reaching a peak in 1988, after which there was a decline. Research carried out by the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre has indicated that over-fishing has had a major part to play in this decline. As a result, fishing for lobsters and abalone is now restricted to two months in the year (December and January). The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre has recommended that nets should have a mesh size of at least 5.1/2 inches, to allow young fish to escape and breed. However, research has also shown that over-fishing is not the sole reason for the decline in fish stocks. It is strongly suspected that pollution, which now widely affects the oceans, has a part in this, particularly through damage to the mangrove ecosystem, which provides a breeding ground for many types of fish and crustaceans.

The preliminary findings of the surveys carried out for determining the marine resources and the assessment of the fisheries stock in the Sultanate were published in 1993. The survey has provided very important data on these resources, and their conservation along the Omani coasts, which will assist in formulating policies and evolving plans for their efficient management.

In 1992, the Ministry carried out technical training programmes for employees of the Ministry's extension staff. This team is to carry out awareness campaigns on fish conservation, safety methods, and pollution-related problems. The programme is aimed at training fishermen on long lines fishing methods to replace the grill nets. Fishermen have been urged to venture out into the fertile continental shelf beyond the narrow strip of inshore waters off the Omani coast where they have traditionally practised their livelihood.

Large-scale commercial fishing enterprises have also played their part in the development of the fishing industry. An original

◀ Another fine catch: Fisheries make a highly important contribution to the Sultanate's economy.

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

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

The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre was set up in 1986 near Sidab, on the coast near Muscat, with the consultive support of UNESCO and FAO. In cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos University, its role includes studies of different stocks of resources and the future development and management of the vast range of marine species to be found in Omani waters, as well as a more academic role in the general ecology of marine environment, with particular emphasis on the conservation of ecosystems and endangered species, including turtles. The Centre also has a public aquarium and a modern library. The Centre and its aquarium have proved to be an excellent learning facility for both students and the general public. The Centre has begun studies on breeding molluscs, including mussels, oysters, scallops, and abalone, through sea aquaculture. It is intended to develop sea-based aquaculture on a large scale. In the course of time, aquaculture at sea will be extended to kingfish and hammour, and it is visualised that fishermen will then be enabled to adopt this method.

There is an allocation of RO 200 million for the fishing industry under the Fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991-96), of which RO 84.1 million has been set aside for investment in industrial and traditional fishing vessels, shore facilities and transport. RO 75 million is allocated for resources assessment and extension services, while RO 25 million is to be spent on the construction of eight



▲ The Marine Science and Fisheries Centre building, Sidab.

major harbours and sixteen smaller ones. Fish processing firms will get RO 13.9 million. Large-scale port development is planned for Sur and Quriyat, enabling them to accommodate industrial vessels and ease pressure on the principal port of Mina Qaboos.

The Ministry's workshops along the coast provide technical services, such as free maintenance of fishing gear and the supervision of the maintenance of boat engines by fishermen. The Ministry has issued subsidy regulations for a number of fishing boats. Between 1991 and 1992, a total of 1,512 applications for fishing boats and 1,670 for boat engines were processed, totalling a subsidy of RO 1 million, while 6,700 lobster traps were distributed free of charge. Meanwhile, the Oman Bank of Agriculture and Fisheries in 1991 gave RO 2.4 million in soft loans to small-scale fisheries and fishing companies. These loans covered a number of activities such as transport, purchase of boats, boat engines and fishing gear.

There is also a fund for financing fisheries research.

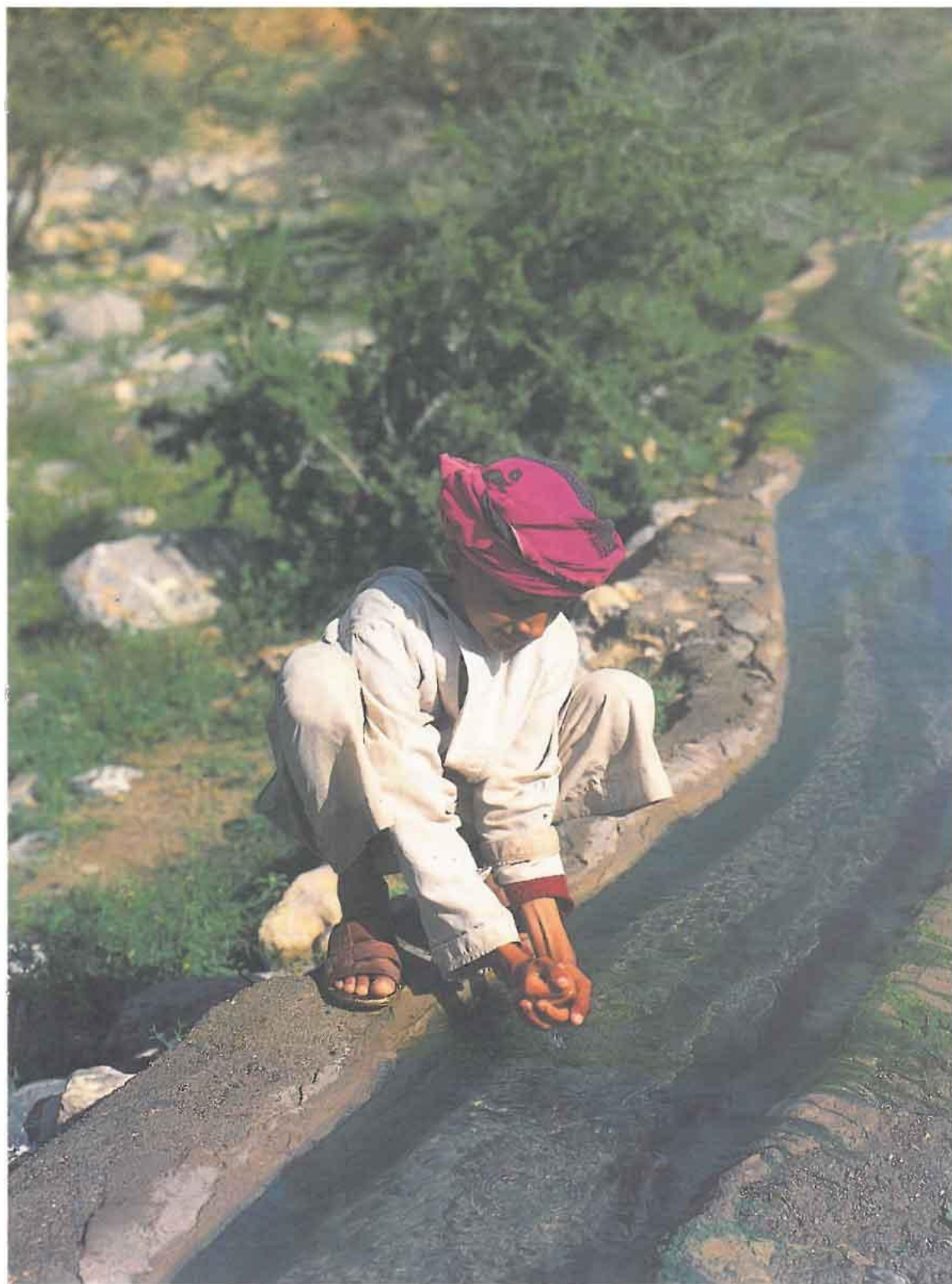
WATER

During the course of his annual tour of the Wilayats at the beginning of this year, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has again drawn the attention of his people to the vital importance of the country's water resources. The economic use of water for domestic purposes is, of course, important, but it is in agriculture that the vast amount of water is used for irrigation purposes, and where the greatest savings can be made by the use of modern equipment and irrigation techniques. The development of industry also involves an increased usage of water. However, it should be emphasised that, in spite of the supply problems that have had to be carefully dealt with locally along the Batinah coast, the overall situation in the Sultanate is satisfactory.

The Sultanate lies in an arid region of the world, and the art of exploiting available water resources to the best advantage is not new in Oman, as exemplified by the centuries-old falaj system of irrigation. However, the ease of modern methods of well-sinking and water extraction have had disadvantages, as can be seen on the Batinah coast where over-extraction from wells has had harmful results. Rainfall in Oman varies according to the geography of the country to a considerable extent, and, in any case, is limited. It is also sporadic and unreliable, except in a limited area of southern Dhofar, which receives regular summer monsoon rains. Elsewhere, rain falls most frequently over the mountains of northern Oman, often in the form of violent storms, the run-off from which has, in the past, been lost into the sea or the deserts of the Interior.

The Government has long been aware that if Oman was to develop industry where none existed before, and cope with the needs of a rapidly expanding population with higher living standards, major measures had to be taken. At the same time, it is Government policy to increase the production of agriculture so as to make Oman as self-supporting as possible in food production. While this can be achieved by improvements in farming methods, it will, to some degree, involve increasing the areas of land under cultivation, which will need irrigation. Thus it was that, in 1986, two Councils concerned with the environment were merged. The result of this merger was the Council for the Conservation of the

► Water is precious to the life of Oman, and is carefully conserved. Here an ancient Falaj carries irrigation to the date palms.



Environment and Water Resources, of which His Majesty the Sultan was the Chairman. In 1989, it was decided that water was of such paramount importance that a new authority, the Public Authority for Water Resources (PAWR) was established by Royal Decree and took over the functions performed by the Directorate-General of Water Resources in the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and the Council for the Conservation of Environment and Water Resources. This has now evolved into the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) which incorporates PAWR, and was established by Royal Decree in 1989. In January 1994, a Royal Decree was issued transferring all the responsibilities, jurisdiction and records of the dams and aflaj from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to the Ministry of Water Resources. The transfer would also apply to the employees working in the field.

Apart from fresh water for domestic supplies obtained from sea-water desalination plants (see chapter on domestic water), all water resources in the Sultanate derive from rainwater. However, some ancient water, sometimes referred to as fossil water, derives from a period when the climate of Oman was considerably wetter than it is today, and is not being replenished in today's arid climate. It therefore has to be carefully husbanded. The falaj system in the Interior has been used for nearly a thousand years, and is a most efficient method of utilising available water to the best advantage. (A detailed description of the falaj system is given in the chapter on agriculture). On the Batinah of northern Oman and on the Salalah Plain in the south, water for irrigation is obtained from wells.

The uncontrolled sinking of wells along the Batinah coast and, to a lesser extent on the Salalah Plain, has in past years resulted in over-abstraction of fresh water from the subterranean aquifers and consequent saline intrusion from the sea. In some places on the Batinah coast, saline intrusion has increased to such an extent that date palms, which have a limited tolerance of brackish water, have been dying off. In order to bring this situation under control, the National Well Inventory Project was initiated at pilot project scale in December 1991 from operation centres in Barka, Salalah, and Buraimi. The experience gained in the ensuing 12 months enabled formulation of optional proce-

dures in both data collection and processing. Building on this foundation, phased expansion of the project has been implemented through 1992 and 1993. Specific attention is being given to areas on the Batinah coast where over-abstraction and consequent saline intrusion has had the greatest adverse effects.

The project involves visits to all wells, which now have to be registered. Field teams seek to confirm well registration, record well characteristics, take water samples to assess water quality, and measure cropped areas to enable estimation of water use. The site of each well is precisely located and registered. Well data is entered into a database from which statistics and maps can readily be compiled and assessed. Once interpreted, plans are drawn up for managing the water resources so that they can be controlled and shared for the common good without risking further deterioration of the water supply. MWR's commitment to this project has brought about large-scale recruitment and investment in training, vehicles, equipment and infrastructure. Within phases one and two of the project, new offices have been opened in Sohar, Khabourah and Suwaiq, and 221 staff recruited, of whom 195 are Omanis. A further 71 Omanis were recruited for phase 3 of the project, bringing the total number of operational field teams to 49 by the end of 1993.

As well as graduate engineers, technicians and surveyors who make up the field teams, the project also employs computer specialists and operators, mechanics and administrative and clerical staff. All staff receive training relevant to their particular job responsibilities and, in the case of field teams, in following a code of conduct in asking for information from farm owners and citizens. Progress to date in fieldwork has been good, with over 15,000 wells inventoried; 10,000 in the Batinah, 2,660 in Salalah, and 1,800 in Buraimi. Over 11,700 farm properties have been visited and cropped areas of a total of 22,000 hectares measured. The first of a series of technical reports providing the results of work completed is expected shortly.

At present, the Ministry is conducting water resources investigations in all regions of the Sultanate. The studies vary in scope and magnitude, but all are considered important in that they seek to gain better understanding and quantification of water resources. By so doing, the Ministry will be better placed

to advise on water availability, and to formulate water management and conservation requirements to best meet the growing demands of the developing country. Related investigations and surveys currently in progress and at various stages of completion include hydro-technical assessment of the surface water potential of Wadi Dayqah in the Muscat region; detailed assessment of the Wadi Al Batha basin, including the potential for recharge dams in Wadi Ghulaji in the Sharqiya region; detailed assessment of the water resources in the Adam area, and monitoring and preliminary investigations in the Jebel Akhdar – Saiq Plateau area in the Dakhliya region; reconnaissance drilling and testing around Ma'abar and in Wadi Rawnab in the Al Wusta region; detailed assessment of Wadis Safwan, Musayliq and Mahdah around Buraimi and Wadi Yanqul-Dank, Al Aridh, Kabir, Lysayl, Dhahira basin and tertiary limestone around Ibri; in the Musandam Governorate, hydrogeological assessment of the Diba and Bayah area, and flood mitigation studies in Bukha; along the Batinah coast investigatory drilling in Wadis Hatta, Ma'awil and Sumail to assess aquifer characteristics, as well as a coastal salinity survey; in Dhofar saline intrusion studies on the Salalah coastal plain, exploratory drilling along the Jebel Qara front, and installation of monitor wells in the Nejd.

Positive indications of additional reserves in Dhahira have been reported, and continuing work is being focused on these prospects to provide more definitive data as soon as possible. The significant reserves in the Nejd are currently being assessed and work is in progress to explore potential reserves in Wahiba and Al Wusta. Evaluation of the potential of deeper aquifers in the Batinah and certain Interior regions is also in progress.

The Flood Study Programme continues with work which aims to predict areas most likely to flood following heavy rainfall in Musandam, the Batinah, Muscat, Dhahira, Dhakhiliyah and Dhofar. Reports with detailed maps of these areas are issued to concerned agencies to guide development planning.

The Ministry has installed an extensive network of rainfall and wadi gauges throughout the Sultanate, and planning for major network extensions and station automation is well advanced. Currently in operation are 179 rain gauges, 6 meteorological stations, 144 wadi gauges, and 502 aflaj gauging sta-

tions. It is planned to install a further 105 rain gauges, 10 meteorological stations, 60 wadi gauges, and 50 sediment gauging stations.

The Ministry opened a new regional department in Sumail town to serve the Wilayats of Sumail and Bidbid (formerly served from Seeb Department) and Izki (formerly served by Nizwa Department). The new office will enable easier access to the Ministry for the people of the Wilayats, and will help the Ministry to monitor the water situation in these Wilayats more closely.

On the management side, the Ministry has made good progress in 1993. The Ministry has established a water metering pilot project on the southern Batinah. More than 100 water meters are to be installed on 27 farms in the Barka-Rumais area. The project will evaluate the performance of four different makes of water meter under water quality and pumping conditions on the Batinah. It will also provide information on the quantities of water being abstracted from wells in the area for irrigation. The information is expected to assist with future water resources management on the Batinah plain and other regions of the Sultanate.

The Ministry has been evaluating the concept of central wellfields as a means of controlling and conserving water supply. Well-drilling would be strictly regulated within areas designated as central wellfields. All water yield would be dedicated to a common water supply which would be distributed according to the needs of participants in the scheme. In a recent address, His Majesty announced that the cost of



► Drilling is scientifically controlled to ensure maintenance of the water table on the Al Batinah coast.

setting up the wells would be RO 25 million.

Water management studies of the Nejd have progressed in parallel with assessment studies since the Ministry has been advising on development of phased agricultural projects in the Nejd. Design of the first development stage has been finalised, and the appropriate locations for development have been identified. The amount of groundwater withdrawals at each of these locations has been determined and design parameters for wellfields in terms of depth, spacing and pumping rates have been prepared.

The Ministry has formed a committee for Wellfield Protection Zones, chaired by H.E. the Under-Secretary and composed of Director-Generals from the different concerned ministries and organisations to review the protection plans, to identify the management needs, to implement fully these plans, and to identify new protection zones for water supply wellfields in Sur, Musandam, Buraimi, Nizwa, Ibri, as well as others. The recommendations of this Committee are sent to the respective Ministers for their comments. The Ministry will then commence taking over the responsibility of identifying the new protection zones and the follow-up in coordination with other government entities, of the implementation of the protected zones.

The Ministry started the implementation of its aflaj improvement programme with a pilot project on Falaj Halban. Based on the agreement of the farmers, the Ministry started improving the falaj channels, installation of storage facilities and introducing modern irrigation systems. The preliminary results are encouraging, and more farmers have indicated their willingness to participate in this programme.

The Ministry's 1990 legislation for the registration of existing wells and new well permits, is in the process of being revised to allow for experiences gained during the last three years. The revised legislation which is now in draft form accounts for a number of cases which were not addressed in the 1990 legislation. Such cases are falaj extension and maintenance permits, water rights, wells for public water supply and private wells for sale of water. This draft, however, may need to be revised again to reflect the new responsibilities regarding aflaj and dams in the light of the Royal Decree No 3/94 transferring the responsibility

for aflaj and dams to the Ministry of Water Resources from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Ministry pursues an active policy of public awareness of the need for water conservation with frequent items in the press, framing announcements on TV and radio, lectures in schools around the country and participation in regional exhibitions. In 1993, the Ministry had a very good response to its nationwide art competition for schools on the theme "Water is Life".

To summarise, the present water situation in Oman is satisfactory and most of the water shortage problems being faced in various regions are not due to lack of resources as much as the need for closer management. The situation with the large groundwater storage in the Nejd area, as well as in other areas, will be announced soon. The Government's role is to look for more resources as well as to identify best possible management and planning schemes for water utilisation and conservation. The objective is to meet the present and future demands for water in such a way that sustainability for the intensive development programmes of the country can be assured.



DOMESTIC WATER

Water, which is vital to all forms of life on this planet, is nowhere more so than in Oman with its arid climate and the high temperatures which obtain for much of the year. This need has become even more pronounced with the steady increase of a healthful population and the general steep rise in the standard of living, added to which are the demands of a developing agriculture and industrial economy. These factors have required the most careful and vigilant planning to ensure that demand does not disastrously outstrip supplies. As a result, the successive Five-Year-Plans have given the highest priority to the conservation and development of this essential resource.

The task of meeting the ever-increasing demands for an adequate water supply for domestic purposes by a rapidly growing population, unevenly distributed over an area the size of the Sultanate of Oman, is indeed a massive one. The manner in which this has been met by the Ministry of Electricity and Water over the past twenty-five years has, however, been notably impressive. Before 1970, the population of the Sultanate was entirely dependent on falaj water and water from wells for domestic water supplies. The sparse and capricious rainfall of the region results in lengthy periods of drought, which are not infrequent, when water supplies ran low, and often became polluted, resulting in sickness.

A start was made in 1970 when three government wells were sunk in the Al Khodh area from where a pipeline was run to Muttrah and Muscat. Water for private households was supplied through distribution points. As natural water resources were limited, and to meet the rapidly increasing demands for water for domestic purposes, a desalination plant was constructed at Al Ghubrah outside Muscat, which was commissioned in 1976 with a daily production capacity of 6 million gallons. A new unit in 1982 doubled this capacity to 12 million gallons daily. In 1986-87, three more desalination units were completed at Al Ghubrah, bringing total production capacity to 23.5 million gallons daily. The sixth desalination unit at Al Ghubrah has been tendered for, and construction work is due to start during 1994. This will bring the production of the Al Ghubrah plant to 35 million gallons



▲ A technician operates machinery at the Al Ghubrah desalination plant which provides water and electricity to the Capital area.

daily by the middle of 1996.

In addition to the Water Production Projects, the Ministry is planning to extend distribution pipelines and house connections to the consumers in recently built and new areas in Muscat. A new distribution reservoir will be built in 1994 at Ghubrah South with a capacity of 2.2 million gallons.

Another distribution reservoir in the Seeb area is planned for construction shortly. This will bring the number of reservoirs in Muscat to 15. The Ministry recently completed a Master Plan for Muscat water supply up to the year 2010, the recommendations of which will be implemented through the Five-Year-Plans of the Government.

In early 1994, a major water distribution system for consumers' premises will be implemented in Nizwa. The earlier phase of the project consisted of drilling boreholes and transmitting water via two major pumping stations through a 300mm ductile iron pipeline to a new reservoir in Nizwa. A full telemetry system was implemented with this project. Three new tanker points are under construction.

Another project is planned for construction in Adam during 1994. Currently, studies are under way to locate drinking water resources for the town. This project will be carried out by phases. The first is the drilling of wells, transmission by pipeline, a distribution reservoir, and tanker points in the town. Later phases will include the distribution of water to the premises of consumers.

Some of the development plans have been allocated to the Jebel Akhdar for future years. Currently the Ministry is carrying out a drilling programme in the area in the search for water. Some productive wells have been located in Saiq, Wadi Bani Habib and Saih Qatnah. The Ministry plans to complete water distribution projects in these places this year.

Many other villages in the Dhakhiliya region have been allocated portions of the development plan. By 1993, a total of 80 boreholes for drinking water had been sunk. A further 8 boreholes are to be sunk during 1994.

Recently, in Sur, the principal town of the Sharqiya region, a desalination plant with a capacity of one million gallons daily was completed, along with a 9 km transmission pipeline and 48 km of distribution pipelines. During 1994, further distribution pipelines will be extended throughout the town. Also, during the year, a desalination plant with a capacity of 66,000 gallons daily will be completed to serve the Wilayats of Bani Bu Hassan and Bani Bu Ali in the Ja'alan. In the Wilayat of Mudhaibi, another desalination plant is to be installed in the village of Al Baydha with a daily capacity of 22,000 gallons.

Further extensions are to be made to the existing desalination plants in Masirah, Al Ruwais and Aseela. A unique project is under way for the town of Tiwi, whereby surface water in the Wadi Sha'ab will be utilised for providing fresh water for the inhabitants.

Besides these major projects, many boreholes are to be drilled in the villages of the Sharqiya region. At least ten more boreholes will be sunk, and tanker points constructed, during 1994.

Khasab, the principal town of the Musandam Governorate, enjoys a complete water scheme with full house connections, and several projects are to be fulfilled in other towns and villages of

the Musandam. A second desalination plant is to be constructed in Lima with a capacity of 22,000 gallons daily, connected to the existing system. Several other small projects are to be carried out this year involving transmission pipelines, reservoirs and distribution pipelines.

In the Batinah region, many towns and villages now have water supplies provided by the Ministry. During 1994, more boreholes are to be sunk, and tanker filling points and other facilities are to be constructed.

In the Dhahira region, Buraimi and Madha now have drinking water networks. These will be further extended during the current year to other consumers. Other towns and villages in the region are supplied with fresh water by tanker from more than 90 boreholes.

There are now six desalination plants in the Al Wusta region to supply the inhabitants with drinking water. A further five desalination plants are to be installed in the region in 1994. Each desalination plant has a capacity of 22,000 gallons daily.



ELECTRICITY

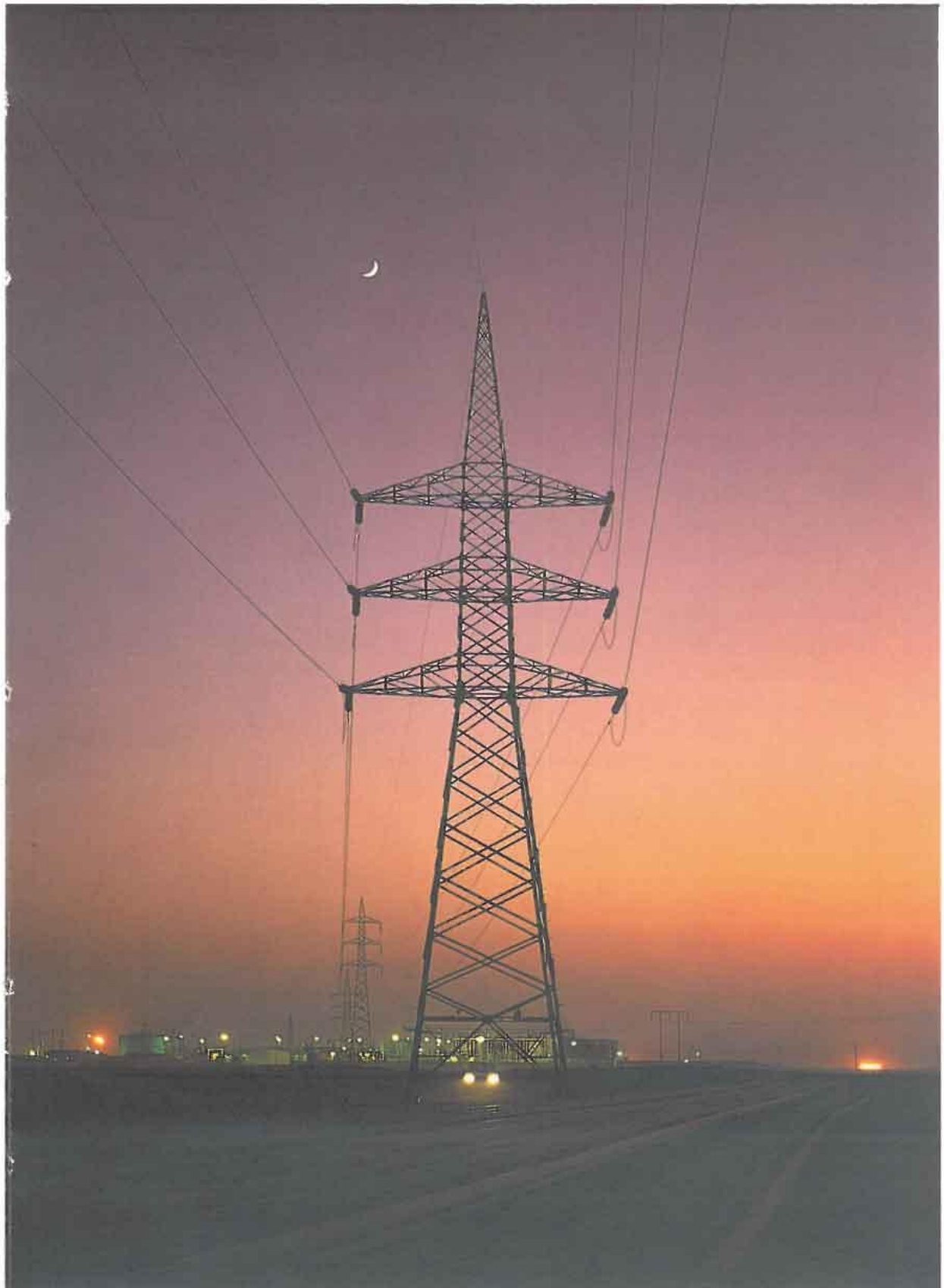
The electrification of all regions of the Sultanate has now reached an advanced stage, which is a remarkable achievement over a period of 24 years, considering that in 1970 there was only one small power station with a productive capacity of 4.5mw at Riyam, situated between Muscat and Muttrah, which supplied these two towns. The present policy is to increase the output of the two main power stations in the northern coastal regions at Al Ghubrah, outside Muscat, and in the Wadi Jizzi near Sohar in the north, whilst at the same time to increase the number of power stations in the Interior for the supply of electricity to the inhabitants of these regions.

The Al Ghubrah desalination and power plant was established in 1976 with an initial capacity of 25.5mw of electricity and six million gallons of desalinated sea water. At the end of 1983 the first extension of the Al Ghubrah plant was completed raising the capacity to 287mw of electricity and 11 million gallons of water daily. In the current Five Year Plan two units are to be added at the Al Ghubrah power plant, one of 30,000kw capacity and the other of 95,000kw capacity. A contract has been awarded for the installation at the Wadi Jizzi power station of an extra gas turbine unit with a capacity of 28mw, which is due to be commissioned in August 1994.

By 1978 the growing nationwide requirement for electricity and water for domestic purposes was such that a Ministry of Electricity and Water was established. The construction of another power station at Rusayl, the site of the Sultanate's first industrial estate near Muscat, was undertaken in two phases, the first of which was completed in 1984 with a capacity of 250mw; by the end of the second phase, capacity had been doubled to 500mw.

There were no generating stations in the Wilayats outside Muscat before 1978, but by the following year twenty-two were set up in the different regions with a total overall capacity of 27mw. Originally all these stations were diesel-operated, but as production costs of diesel units is high, it is the policy of the Ministry to connect the small diesel generation stations to gas

► Electrical power serves the cities and Interior.



turbines and to interconnect these systems with the main power stations in the Muscat area and the Wadi Jizzi.

The power plants at Al Ghubrah and Rusayl are powered by natural gas supplied by pipeline from the gas fields in the Interior. The power plant in the Wadi Jizzi is also operated by natural gas, and was constructed to supply electricity to the copper-refining complex in the Wadi Jizzi and to the Sohar region.

The Muscat area now receives its electricity supplies from the Al Ghubrah and Rusayl power stations which are interconnected. This network supplies not only the Muscat area, but has reached out to Quriyat, Fanja, Sumail, Rostaq, Musannah, Suwaiq and Khabourah. The supply of electricity to rural communities is proceeding rapidly. The Muscat electricity system is to be interconnected with the Wadi Jizzi system which provides for all centres of population of the north Batinah. This project is expected to be completed this year.

The Manah project is a major new enterprise which is a further implementation of the Ministry's policy of improving the economics of electricity to consumers by replacing the small power stations, which use diesel generators, by larger stations using natural gas as fuel. The power station is being built in the Wilayat of Manah, close to the village of Izz in the Interior, and will be interconnected by high-power transmission lines to the load centres in the Dhakiliya which will feed the distribution systems supplying the consumers. The site is close to the natural gas pipeline running from the Saih Nihayda gas fields to the Muscat area, so a supply of fuel is readily available to the power station. The cost of the project at 1991 prices was limited to RO 60 million. The peak demand for the area to be served by the Manah power station is expected to be 90 mw for the immediate future. With this in mind, the installed capacity for the plant has been fixed at 120mw; this should be sufficient for the foreseeable future. However, there is an important difference between this project and all the others which the Ministry of Electricity and Water has implemented: the Manah project is being financed by the private sector as a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) project. The key characteristic of BOOT is that a concession is granted by the Government to an entrepreneur to develop a resource and sell the product to the Government for a fixed period of

years, after which all the assets will be transferred to the purchaser (Government) at no cost. It is the responsibility of the entrepreneur to obtain the finance required to build the facilities, as well as designing, procuring, constructing, operating and maintaining them during the concession period. The tariff rate at which the entrepreneur will sell the electricity to the Government will be such as to enable him to pay all his financing costs and all the operating costs during the concession period. In the case of the Manah power station the concession period is 20 years.

In the southern region work began on building the Salalah power station in 1971, when three diesel units were installed with a maximum capacity of 1,365mw. Later, other units were added and new stations were built at Salalah and two at Raysut, so that by the end of 1989 capacity had reached a level consistent with the massive growth and development taking place in the southern region. Work on improving electricity services was not restricted to Salalah, but also included the coastal towns of Taqah, Mirbat and Sadah. Electricity services have been extended to the Halaniyat Islands off the south coast of Oman. In 1987 a power and desalination plant was built there with a total capacity of 640mw of electricity.

Elsewhere outside the Muscat area during 1994, diesel generating sets at rural power stations are due to be handed over in Bani Bu Hassan, Nizwa, Sur, Bahla, Masruq and Hagr Bani Hameed. Many other power extension projects are currently taking place throughout the Sultanate.



SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOUR

The main duties of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour include the preparation of studies aimed at social improvement, and playing a leading role in promoting efforts between the Government and non-Government sectors in projects that are beneficial to the community. The Ministry is also responsible for devising general social welfare policies for Omani families who are in need due to illness, incapacity, old age, widowhood or being orphaned. It provides emergency aid for victims of fires and disasters, promotes the development of local communities throughout the Sultanate, and runs mother and child care programmes.

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

A system of social welfare has traditionally existed in Omani society over the centuries, as the payment of zakat is one of the pillars of Islam (zakat is described more fully in the chapter on Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs). However, this was clearly inadequate for a modern developing society, and social security has now been extended so that it provides protection for every Omani citizen who falls upon bad times.

Social security is a major humanitarian service under which every Omani national, whose eligibility for benefit has been established by social investigation, may receive a security allowance. Categories entitled under the Social Security Law include families whose social and economic circumstances have led to them being deprived of a decent standard of living through incapacity or loss of breadwinner, or through old age, divorce, widowhood or orphanhood. A Royal Decree issued in 1984 extended the number of categories which are eligible by adding three new groups not covered by the previous law – unmarried girls, women who have been abandoned and prisoners' families.

The Ministry gives a high priority to the welfare of the dis-

abled. Its Special Care Department, set up in 1980, looks after the physically and mentally handicapped and helps to enable them to learn and earn within their own communities. 1987 marked a turning-point in the lives of the disabled, with the opening of the Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled in Al Khodh. This modern and well-equipped Centre serves the disabled from all over the Sultanate and helps them regain their powers and resume their original occupations or take up jobs appropriate to their conditions. They graduate from the Centre after undergoing training in skills such as typing, carpentry, domestic science and tailoring. The Ministry also channels all Government and other non-Government efforts towards finding employment for the disabled in the public and private sectors. In 1993, a number of 'Wafa' Centres for the care and rehabilitation of disabled children in the Wilayats and regions of the Sultanate were opened. The centres provide a vital social service through combined contributions from the Government and members of the public. There are 'Wafa' Centres in Ibri, Nizwa, Rostaq, Buraimi, Sohar, Ibra, Sur, and Bidbid. They cater for 493 children and are staffed by 177 female volunteers, who provide

▼ Weaving –
women are trained
in traditional crafts.



their charges with training and education. More Centres are expected to open in the future in response to the community's needs.

The Ministry and its regional departments encourage nationals to become self-sufficient and avoid depending on charity through helping families to improve their incomes and living conditions by becoming 'productive units'. In this connection, 'livelihood' projects are implemented to set up small businesses such as kiosks and stalls. Social studies have been carried out on a range of social phenomena with the aim of identifying their causes and proposing appropriate solutions. These include, for example, a study of the effect of foreign children's nurses on Omani families, the public's view on the current cost of dowries, and a study on social and environmental influences on Omani farmers and agricultural development, in addition to a number of field studies on other social and development issues.

In 1990, the Ministry was made responsible for the regulation of charitable associations, and for providing members of the community with opportunities for effectively serving the community through voluntary work. Following this decision, a number of charitable associations were set up, including the Disabled Children's Welfare Association in Muscat – the first voluntary association to care for this group.

The local development sector is the Ministry's main instrument for social progress and combines individual and Governmental efforts in the various social fields, with the aim of creating opportunities for a better life. The National Local Community Development Programme was serving 721 villages covered by the Programme last year, as well as 117 villages outside the official remit of the Programme.

The Programme began in 1976 and has been notably successful in achieving its objectives and in coordinating the services of the relevant ministries involved in rural development. The social element is the most important aspect of the Programme. Here it

▼ A silversmith at work using traditional methods.



is essential to gain the confidence of the rural community and persuade them to make voluntary contributions to projects in conjunction with the competent Government authorities. During 1993, 47 social development projects were implemented by the Programme at a total cost of RO 214,033, of which RO 128,100 was raised from members of the public.

Second in importance is the role of the media and information services. Seminars, lectures and visits have been organised and the media has also been enlisted to promote social, cultural, health and economic awareness in the areas covered by the project. The health education programme aims to encourage the public to make use of the health services provided by the Ministry. Ministry health teams carry out field visits in the Interior and other rural areas. In this connection, during 1993, 126 wells were disinfected, and 1,129 mother and child sessions were held. During the same year, 10,850 sick cases were treated or provided with first aid, and 79 cases were referred to hospital.

Education is also an important element of the Programme, and literacy and adult education classes have been opened in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. Individual members

▼ Oman's paraplegic team participates at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Bausher, during youth festivities last year.



of the public play a pivotal role in this, and help in providing premises and transport for teachers and students. In addition, development workers (male and female) visit individuals and groups to encourage them to take advantage of the education opportunities available to them.

Adult libraries and Holy Koran schools have been established to provide the student with access to culture and self-study. A number of rural development libraries have been set up and supplied with a wide choice of books on cultural, social, religious, and health topics. There are also mobile libraries supervised by male and female staff, which tour the villages.

Last year, there were 24 such libraries, most of them mobile, which were used by 14,683 members of the public.

The Programme also oversees the Holy Koran schools, which have been set up through the combined initiatives of the Programme, development teams, members of the public and the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

The Ministry works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in setting up demonstration farms, pest control, and providing veterinary and other services. In 1993, wells were dug, maintenance work carried out on aflaj, 55 demonstration farms were established and pest control programmes were carried out. Veterinary services were provided, and farmers were supplied with seeds and fertilisers.

There are a number of programmes and activities for the benefit of rural women for eliminating practices which are harmful socially and to health. These programmes include literacy and education sessions, as well as classes in domestic science. In 1993 there were 94 rural women's development centres and 339 women were engaged in the production of clothing.

Women and children

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



▲ Omani Women's Association branch meets at Nizwa.

The Ministry has established a number of women's training centres to provide welfare services for Omani women in the regions of the Sultanate and improve their social, economic and cultural levels. At present, it supervises seven centres at Al Khodh, Al Amirat, Bidbid, Ja'alan Bani bu Hassan, Ras Al Hadd, Quriyat and Sohar. There are also four centres set up by voluntary contributions at Sanab, Al Kamil, Al Ghudaifah and Tiwi. These centres train women in needlework, embroidery, and home economics, as well as in traditional local crafts to improve their skills and protect this particular heritage from extinction. Marketing facilities are provided for their products by the centre. The centres also organise lectures, courses, and literacy classes, and pay home visits to families. Four mothers' and children's centres have been opened in Ibri, Ibra, and Taqah and Mirbat in Dhofar. Main activities at these centres are literacy classes in conjunction with the Ministry of Education; at present, there are four classes with 135 students. The centres have 'children's corners' attended by about 860 children. Members also take part in all national and Arab celebrations and occasions, and are given training in simple productive projects aimed at increasing their incomes and the incomes of their families.

The priority given to child care through the Ministry's Children's Department reflects the fact that children are one of the most important sectors of the community. The Ministry recognises the importance of the 'childhood phase' up to the age of fourteen, because this is the time when the child develops its personality. The Children's Department is responsible for providing welfare services for this group and supervises the establishment of non-Government day nurseries in different areas of the Sultanate. At present, there are 23 such day nurseries, which are inspected regularly to ensure that they adhere to the conditions stipulated in the Ministry's regulations for day nurseries. The Ministry also organises training courses and 'workshops' for day nursery staff to teach them how to deal with and teach the children, and how to use locally available materials as teaching aids. Eight such courses have so far been held. Seminars and lectures have also been held on the health, social and educational aspects of child care. Children's activities have included three camps, in addition to cultural events, entertainments, competitions and children's plays on children-related occasions.

On the voluntary side, the Directorate-General of Women's and Children's Affairs has opened thirteen Omani Women's Associations in different parts of the Sultanate. The first was opened in Muscat in 1971 and played a pioneering role in women's voluntary work in the region. In succeeding years, Associations have been established in Salalah, Buraimi, Sohar, Sur, Taqah, Mirbat, Al Khabourah, Ibri, Nizwa, Saham, and Al Mudhaibi.

Labour sector

The Labour sector of the Ministry is responsible for the national workforce employed in private sector enterprises and companies as well as for foreign imported labour. This is a very important part of the Ministry's work, particularly in view of the growing demand for manpower and the consequent requirements to protect that manpower both legally and socially. The Ministry approaches the task through a number of channels. The main ones are local recruitment, work permits, training subsidies, labour inspection, employee welfare, statistics, computers, occupational health and safety, and external labour relations.

The Ministry's policy is to encourage the local recruitment of national manpower for the private sector, in order to replace

expatriate labour with Omanis. Omanisation is making steady progress, and all possible steps are being taken to ensure that rewarding job opportunities are available for every Omani who is willing and able to work. The Ministry's figures show that there was a notable increase in the pace of Omanisation in 1992, and this has continued through the following year.

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

The Ministry carries out checks to ensure that employers and employees abide by the provisions of the Omani Labour Law and the Ministerial decisions implementing it, with the aim of serving the interests of both sides. In this task of implementation, the Ministry's Labour Welfare Departments take all possible steps to resolve difficulties that disrupt production at private sector companies and establishments. At the same time, they endeavour to achieve as fair a relationship as possible between the two sides in a labour dispute.

Computerisation was introduced in 1991 in the sections that handle Omani employers' business, particularly labour cards. The aim was to speed up the Ministry's work and provide maximum flexibility and minimum inconvenience to the public. Computerisation also plays a major role in monitoring the national and expatriate workforce at private establishments and companies, as well as in the preparation of quarterly and half-yearly reports and statistics.

Protecting the workforce from occupational hazards is one of the Ministry's major responsibilities. Through its occupational health and safety regulations, the Ministry obliges employers to provide health care and appropriate healthy housing with all modern conveniences, as well as a work environment that is free from the danger of occupational diseases or accidents. By means of its frequent work-site inspections, the Ministry endeavours to achieve the highest standards of occupational safety and health.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Sultanate of Oman has a long and distinguished history as a maritime trading nation. In the 10th century, Sohar was the hub of commercial activity in the Gulf region. Its merchant fleets plied their trade between East Africa and Madagascar in the west and the Indian sub-continent and as far as China to the east. Its prosperity came to an abrupt end when invaders destroyed both the port and its merchant fleet. In the 13th century, Qalhat, near Sur, rose to fame as the chief port of the area. However, in the 16th century it suffered much the same fate as Sohar at the hands of Portuguese invaders. Meanwhile, in the south, Al Balid, near Salalah, developed into a major port for the frankincense trade. The subsequent seafaring decline was halted by Sultan bin Saif Al Ya'arabi in the 17th century, and again reached a peak in the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan in the 19th century, after which it went into a major decline for a hundred years until the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970.

Seaports

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

The ever-increasing volume of imports and exports in succeeding years has entailed continual expansion with additional facilities such as the construction of a container terminal, modern warehouses, engineering workshops and deepwater wharfage. Mina Qaboos covers an area of 27,000 sq metres, and is equipped with modern facilities, and offers round-the-clock service to visiting vessels. At present, only two berths are capable of handling containers. However, due to their limitations in draught and

length, the port needed upgrading by providing more berths with container-handling facilities,. Another three berths are therefore being modified to meet these requirements. As a part of development works, a new berth is also being constructed as an extension of an existing berth. The basin is being deepened to enable entry of larger vessels. Dredging work is expected to be completed early this year.

Provision is being made for increased container accommodation. Shutaify bay area, adjacent to the existing port, was found to be ideal for providing a container stack area. In order to achieve this, a portion of the jebel has been blasted away and cleared. The bay is being reclaimed by using the dredge spoil obtained from dredging in the port area. A sea wall is being constructed to retain the fill material. A separate approach road to the Shutaify area is also being constructed, and two quay cranes are being installed for handling containers. In addition, eight gantry cranes have been procured for stacking purposes.

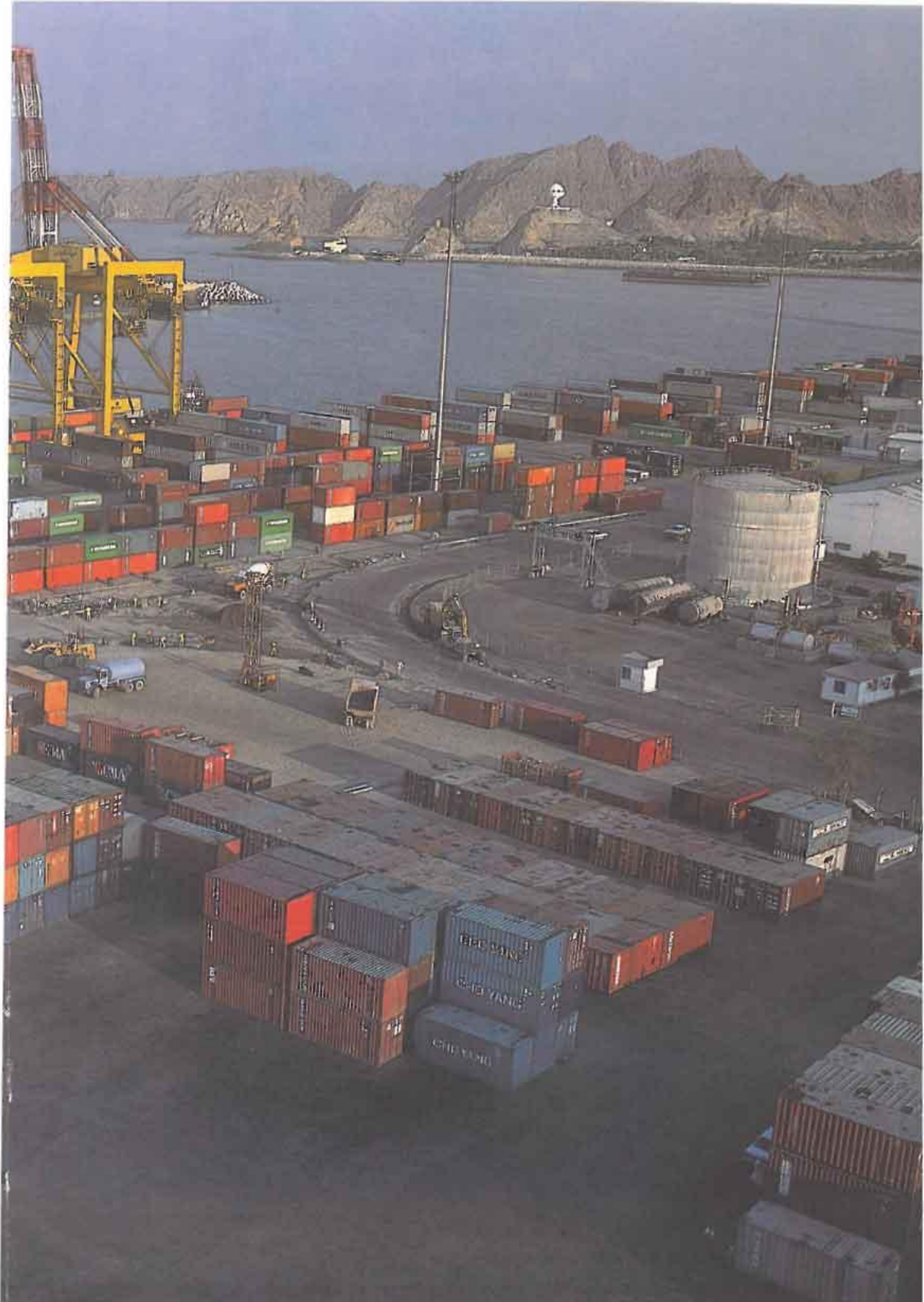
Mina Raysut in the south of Oman, serves Salalah and the Governorate of Dhofar. With the recent inauguration of the

► The port of Mina Qaboos, Muttrah, which serves the entire Gulf, now being further expanded to cope with the increasing traffic.

▼ Road building is still continuing throughout the Sultanate.







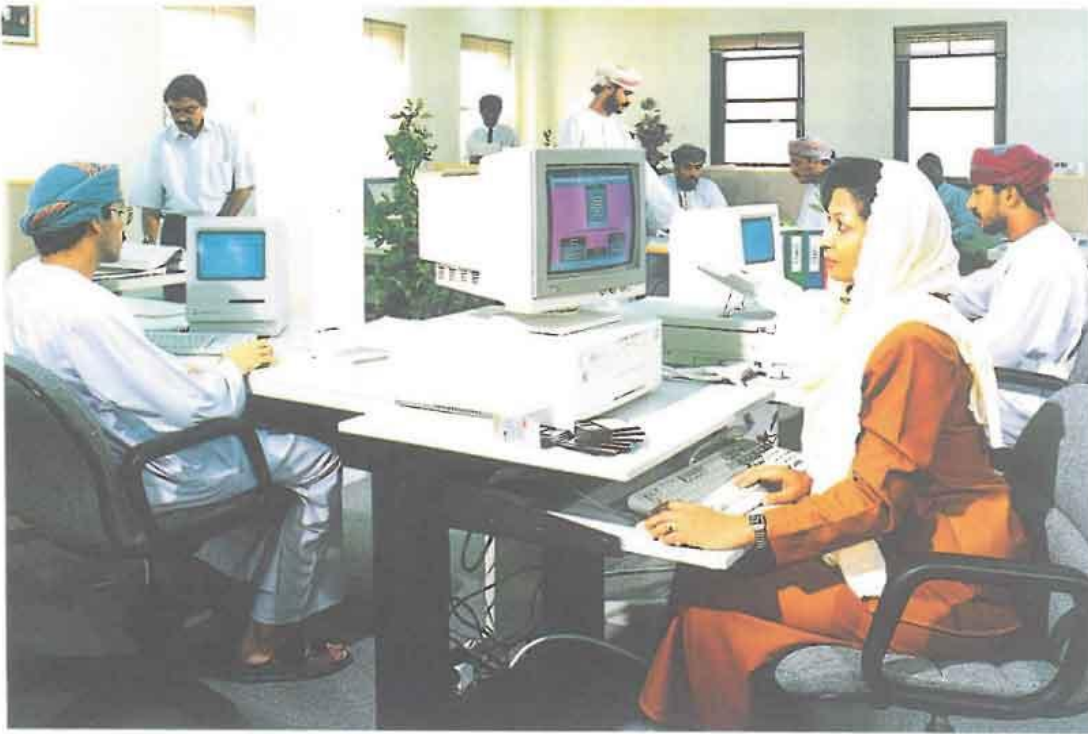
Raysut industrial estate and the prospect of the opening up of trade with the neighbouring Republic of Yemen, Mina Raysut is currently subject to a comprehensive port development plan study. The study will produce recommendations for development options for phased implementation up to the year 2015. Oman's present and future shipping services are being assessed, and the study will provide plans to meet shipping requirements into the next century. Projects under consideration for Mina Raysut include the modernisation of equipment and for offering a round-the-clock service.

The Minister of Communications, His Excellency Salim bin Abdullah Al Ghazali, announced officially in November 1993 that a new port is to be built in the Sultanate during the next Five-Year-Plan (1996-2000). The Ministry plans to issue a tender for detailed design and consultancy during the current Five-Year-Plan. The exact location of the new port has yet to be decided.

Roads

The construction of a modern road system throughout Oman was a key element in developing the basic infrastructure of the Sultanate. In 1970, the only paved road in the country was a stretch connecting the capital, Muscat, via Muttrah, with the airfield at Bait Al Falaj. Otherwise, apart from a graded road along the Batinah Coast to Sohar, maintained by the Government, and another to Fahud in the Interior, maintained by PDO, the oil company, there were only tracks.

Landrovers and Bedford trucks were the only practicable forms of wheeled transport. Necessarily, the construction of a good system of paved roads throughout a country the size of Oman has taken some years. It was not only a question of distances, but also of natural obstacles in the form of mountain ranges that have had to be overcome. Priority had to be given to the coastal strip of northern Oman, the most thickly populated region of the country. It was only later that road construction to the Interior and other regions of the Sultanate could be undertaken. It was a very considerable achievement that, by 1986, a period of only 16 years from when road construction started, a network of paved roads connecting all the main centres of population had been completed. It is now possible to travel by air-con-



▲ The head office of the Sultanate's airline, Oman Air.

ditioned coach from Muscat in the north to Salalah in the south, along a paved road with petrol-filling stations and a motel at Haima along the route. The road system also connects with that of neighbouring States so that one can now travel in comfort by air-conditioned coach to Dubai in the UAE. Since the signing of the border agreement with the Republic of Yemen, discussions have been going on over the construction of a road linking the two countries.

In the second half of the 1980s, some spectacular road construction was achieved in the mountainous regions of the country, connecting isolated communities with the main centres of population and making them accessible to the benefits of modern development. These included roads through the rugged and precipitous mountains of the Musandam peninsula at the northern tip of the Sultanate, and to the top of the Jebel Akhdar plateau, virtually inaccessible until then except by air. Most recently, an impressive paved road has been completed in the south, linking Salalah with Sarfait near the border with the Yemen Republic. It zigzags up from the coastal plain to the summit of the Qamar range of mountains and along the top to the border. Work on the

dualisation of the Rusayl-Nizwa road started in February this year. The first phase will be as far as Bidbid. The Fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991-96) also includes the first stage of the rehabilitation of the old Batinah highway and the Ibri-Dhank road, the dualisation of the Khasab coastal road in the Musandam, and the first stage of the road from Birkat Al Mawz at the foot of the Jebel Akhdar to Saiq on the Jebel Akhdar plateau, as well as 142km of internal roads.

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

Airports

In 1970, Oman only had one combined civil and military airport at Bait al Falaj in a basin in the hills outside Muscat, the air approaches to which, particularly in bad weather, were not for the faint-hearted. The construction of a new international airport was high on the list of priorities in the development plans for the Sultanate. A site was chosen on the Batinah plain near the town of Seeb, 17 km from Muscat. It was completed with commendable speed and was inaugurated in December 1973. Since that time, the airport has undergone a series of renovations and improvements, some of which are currently in progress. The Sultanate now has four civil airports: at Seeb, Salalah, Sur and Diba in the Musandam. Seeb and Salalah airports can handle all types of aircraft, whilst those at Sur and Diba are open for light aircraft only.

Seeb international airport receives and dispatches more than 220 weekly scheduled flights by international airlines, and over

30 non-scheduled flights. Aircraft passenger and cargo movements have shown rapid increases since 1990. Since then, several bilateral agreements have been reached with the civil authorities of other countries, which will result in a further increase in the number of international airlines using the airport. In November 1993, Swissair's first flight arrived in Muscat, marking the beginning of a new route between Switzerland and the Sultanate. Swissair was the fifth international airline to begin operating regular flights to Oman in 1993.

Oman Aviation Services (OAS), an Omani joint stock company, was established by Royal Decree in 1981 to operate domestic airline services and charter aircraft, and to provide other airline-related services on a 20-year franchise. This includes aircraft, passenger services and cargo handling, catering and other facilities, and, by this year, well over half of the company's employees are Omani nationals. In December 1993, the first batch of four Omani pilots graduated to fly Boeing-737 aircraft. At the same time, certificates were also awarded to four Boeing-737 engineers, and ten DH-6 engineers, all of whom have been trained in Australia at the Company's expense. Oman Aviation is now

spreading its wings abroad. By the end of 1993, the company was operating services to three destinations overseas: Dubai, Kuwait, and Trivandrum in southern India, and in January 1994 it inaugurated its service to Karachi, making a total of 17 international flights and 18 domestic flights per week. Oman has a 25% share with the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain in the international airline, Gulf Air, which operates services to Western Europe, the Gulf, the Indian sub-continent, Africa, the Far East, the USA, and Australia.

▼ Omani technicians carry out thorough regular maintenance checks.



POSTS & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

On his accession in 1970 it was emphasised by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos that, together with Health and Education, communications were an essential element in the development of the country. At an early stage a Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones was therefore established to meet this requirement.

Postal Services

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

After 1970 new post offices incorporating the latest technical procedures began to be established in several regions of the Sultanate. By the end of 1993 there were more than 70 main and branch post offices, and around 40 postal distribution agencies throughout the Sultanate. By the end of the current Five Year Plan in 1996 a further 34 post offices will be built and functioning. There has been a vast increase in the turnover of letters and parcels in the past 24 years. In 1971 there was a total of seven and a half million incoming and outgoing letters. By 1993 it has reached more than 50 million. This volume is expected to increase by 3% to 5% annually due to the rise in the population. A comparable increase is reflected in the number of parcels. A fleet of vehicles now moves post rapidly between Muscat and the provinces. EMS, the Express Mail Service, manned by specially trained staff for fast and reliable postal handling, was introduced in 1985. At first limited to the Muscat area, it has now been extended to all the main centres of population.

The Ministry has established direct mail despatch links with more than 37 countries. This is in addition to those Oman has with almost every other country through the exchange offices. There are now more than 41,000 private post boxes in the country. Delivery of mail to the more remote regions, such as the Musandam and the offshore islands, is carried out by the domestic airline. Mail for the Al Halaniyat (Kuria Muria) islands is delivered via the central post office in Salalah. A postal training centre has been set up in Muscat, where about 200 Omanis have already been trained. Others are sent abroad for specialised courses. It is expected that 95% Omanisation will be achieved this year.

Telecommunications

The General Telecommunications Organisation (GTO), established in 1980 is a fully-owned Government entity, and is now self-financed. It is responsible for the infrastructure of the telecommunications network and the extension of a modern telephone system throughout the Sultanate. The GTO is planning to

▼ The satellite station at Al Amarat provides communications worldwide.



change its name to Public Establishment for Communications following the Royal Decree directing it to operate on a commercial basis. The change in the name has been forwarded to the Cabinet for the necessary approval.

During 1984/85 a new Telecommunications Centre was constructed at Bait al Falaj near Muscat, and twelve digital exchanges were commissioned in the Muscat area. GTO's equipped capacity rose from 500 lines in 1970 to 199,876 lines by the end of 1993: whilst the total number of working lines reached 146,347. In 1991 three digital exchanges were commissioned in Salalah, increasing capacity in Dhofar to nearly 15,000. Subsequently, expansion has continued with projects covering the Interior (centred on Nizwa, Ibra, Ibri and Sur). Expansion has also been extended to Buraimi, Masirah, the Musandam Peninsula and the Batinah coastal region. The ever increasing demands on the telephone services require continuous expansion of the switching networks as well as the outside plant and transmission systems throughout the Sultanate. In addition, installation of new telephone exchanges is required to introduce the service into the Wilayats and villages. GTO has provided fibre optic cables to link the new exchanges. In this context, GTO has entered into an agreement for the expansion of telecommunication services in the Musandam Governorate.

GTO introduced the mobile telephone service in the Sultanate in 1985.

The present exchange capacity is 6,500 lines, capable of expansion so as to allow for future increase in the demand for this service. The number of subscribers reached 5,545 at the end of 1993 compared with 747 subscribers in 1986. To extend the range of this service, GTO regularly provides additional Radio Base Stations to the mobile system. The future plan is to expand the capacity of transmission stations for the improvement of the performance of this service.

GTO has signed a contract for the consultancy services to introduce Global System for Mobile (GSM) into the Sultanate. GSM is a versatile communication system among cellular systems and provides high quality utility services to its subscribers. It allows automatic switching so that 'roaming' in the AGCC countries, and eventually in most of the other countries is feasi-



▲ A woman technician carries out repairs at a mobile telephone workshop at Al Azalbah.

ble. GSM maintains a very high degree of confidentiality/security in conversation. It also provides more efficient data transmission from/to mobiles, and accordingly offers a wide range of 'value added services'. Built on state-of-the-art technology and backed by a continuous software enhancement programme, GSM enables rapid deployment of networks. Thus more and more areas can be brought under mobile coverage within a shorter time.

In line with the expansion of the conventional telephone network throughout the country, GTO introduced public payphones in 1980 to make the telephone service available in areas where conventional service was not immediately available. GTO started initially with coin payphones and later in 1986, card payphones were installed in different parts of the Sultanate. By the end of 1993, the number of installed payphones had reached 2,377, of which 161 are coin operated and 2,216 are card operated. Card operated payphones have proved much more successful and popular with the public throughout the Sultanate, and therefore many coin payphones were replaced with card payphones to meet public request. To meet the increasing demand

for this service GTO has installed more public payphones throughout the Sultanate. These payphones are housed in booths made locally according to Omani architectural design as a support for the domestic industry and to depict the Omani architectural heritage.

GTO provides telex, telegraph and data services domestically and internationally. The capacity of the telex exchange reached 3052 lines in 1993, compared with only 14 lines in 1970. Telegraph services were also made available all over the Sultanate, whereas earlier the service was only available in Muscat. As elsewhere the facsimile service is more popular than telex as a more convenient means of communication. It is now widespread throughout the country and is provided by GTO whenever a demand arises. GTO has established through its offices throughout the country a Bureau fax service for the public to transmit and receive facsimile documents.

GTO has recently launched a Packet Switched Data Network Node in the Sultanate called GNS (Global Network Service). This new service will enable customers to utilise one of the most advanced types of technology in the world. With GNS in operation GTO will be able to provide an outlet to the worldwide data centres and will enable customers to exchange data. By installing this service, Oman will gain access to all the world's major database services and computerised service bureaux. Additionally, GNS will provide business opportunities for the Sultanate by making it the only country in the Middle East with direct economical access to an international packet network. These enhanced communication capabilities will make Oman a highly attractive location for multinational companies to establish their regional headquarter facilities. In addition, GTO also provides digital cross-connect data transmission. This service will allow flexibility and speed up allocation of data circuits locally.

The means of telecommunications are continually being improved to widen their range worldwide. Wherever a demand arises, GTO opens new international circuits linking other countries. This promotes social, commercial and tourism activities. The public can make their international calls by direct dialling via their ordinary or mobile telephones, and public payphones or through the assistance of GTO operators.

GTO has established numerous earth stations for satellite communication. One of these is a Standard 'A' earth station working with Intelsat over the Indian Ocean at Al Amarat Satellite Communications Complex. This station provides international direct links with countries outside the Arab world. The Sultanate was among the first countries to complete its Arabsat earth station, in 1985. With its inauguration GTO diverted its traffic to Arab countries via Arabsat instead of Intelsat. The Arabsat system is also utilised locally in the Domestic Satellite Communications Network (DOMSAT). DOMSAT is a communication system which supports the terrestrial and national network and connects the various regions and areas in the Sultanate with TV and telecommunication services.

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

A new digital earth station in Ibri has already been commissioned and will operate via Intelsat Atlantic Ocean Region (AOR) to enable direct links to North and South America to be operated without the need for transit access. By the end of 1993 the total number of international circuits operating via Al Amirat Satellite Complex reached 439, of which 305 circuits are operating with Intelsat Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and 134 via Arabsat.

GTO introduced a paging system in the Sultanate in December 1991, with a system control terminal equipped to accommodate 10,000 subscribers. The system has met with great demand by the public due to the facilities it is rendering such as easy communication, time and effort-saving. GTO

▼ GTO operator communicating with ships at sea.



has therefore started to increase the control terminal capacity to accommodate 55,000 subscribers, along with the expansion of the Radio Base Stations, with the aim of improving the coverage of this service throughout the Sultanate. The Voice Mail Service was introduced in 1991 as an integral part of the paging system. Due to the demand and popularity of this service GTO has installed a stand-alone voice system to accommodate initially up to 13,000 voice mail subscribers. By the end of 1993 the total number of voice mail subscribers was 6,862.

GTO periodically undertakes studies to review its tariffs in order to offer attractive terms to the public and to reduce charges wherever possible in compliance with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos' directives. Accordingly, the tariff for international telephone calls was reduced by 25% to 44% in November 1991. GTO also reduced its sale charges for mobile telephone equipment and tone pagers in 1992, which resulted in a greater sale of these services. The tariff for domestic telephone calls was also reduced by 20% to 55%, effective from May last year. Studies are being conducted for the introduction of new services and their relevant tariffs.

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

The Sultanate, as a member of the Council of Ministers for Arab telecommunication in the Arab League, has been selected as Deputy Chairman for the Executive Committee of this Council. This emphasises the role played by the Sultanate in strengthening relations between Arab countries in the field of telecommuni-

cations either through Arabsat or by its active participation in the regional and bilateral meetings of the Arab countries. The Sultanate participates fully at international level in the field of telecommunications through its active membership of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and other international communications organisations.

In compliance with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos' directives regarding the development of national manpower, GTO trains Omani nationals both in the Sultanate and abroad in various specialisations, and has established a centre to train Omani staff in up-to-date telecommunication systems with the latest technologies. GTO has achieved considerable success in the Omanisation of its staff, which has now reached 82% of the total workforce.

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



EDUCATION

At the beginning of January this year a Royal Decree was issued creating a Ministry of Higher Education with certain specific responsibilities including the Sultan Qaboos University, whilst the remainder continue to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. In effect there are now two Ministries for overall education.

According to the Royal Decree issued on the 11th January 1994 creating the Ministry of Higher Education its responsibilities are as follows:-

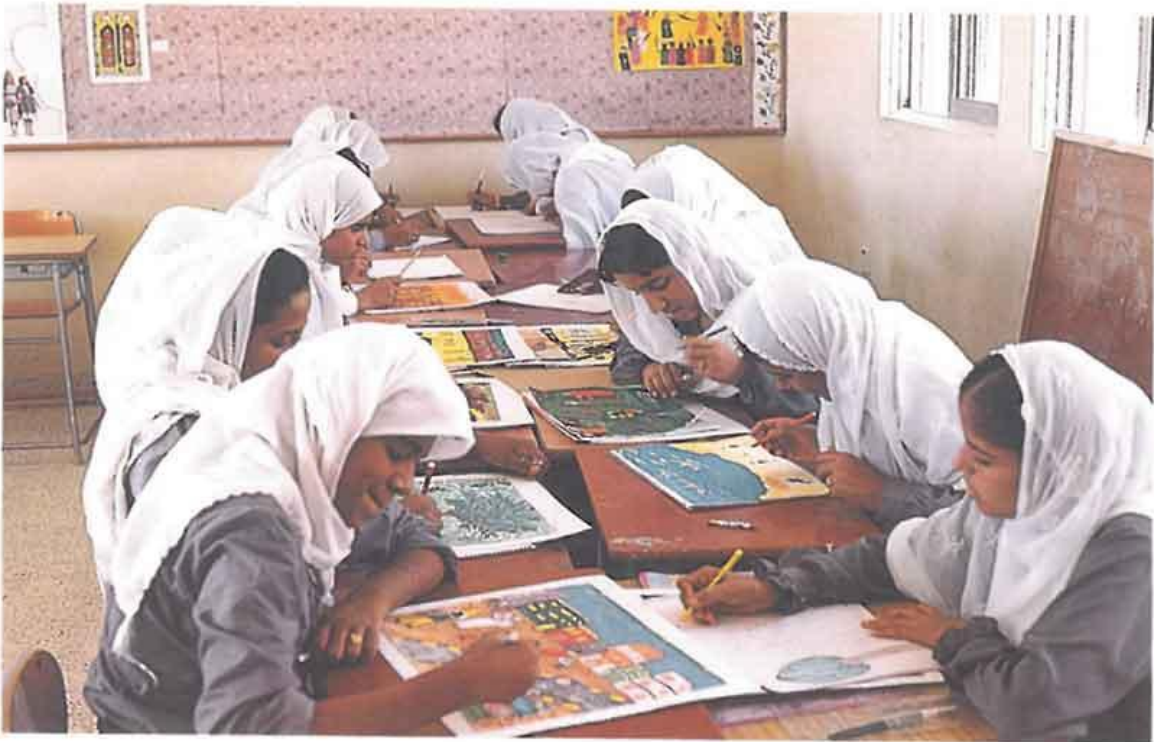
- (a) The supervision of the Sultan Qaboos University and the higher education authorities and institutions within the Ministry's sphere of responsibility.
- (b) The supervision of centres of scientific research, as well as following up scientific and technical development in all fields.
- (c) Application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

The newly-appointed Minister of Higher Education and Vice-Chancellor of the Sultan Qaboos University is His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh Al Manthri.

Sultan Qaboos University

On the 10th anniversary of the Sultanate's National Day, in November 1980, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos inaugurated the establishment of the Sultan Qaboos University. The central objective was to be the education and training of young Omani men and women in order to participate in the modernisation and development of Oman. The construction of the University was completed at Al Khodh near Muscat, in 1986, and in September of that year, the first group of students was enrolled. This represented the crowning achievement of the development of the educational system in the Sultanate. The students were registered in the five Colleges of Education and Islamic Sciences. Medicine, Engineering, Science and Agriculture. The College of Arts was established in the following year. The inauguration of the College of Commerce and Economics last year represented the completion of the University.

▼ Art appreciation is an important part of the school curriculum.



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

The support centres of the University include the Computer Centre, the Library which contains advanced technology information systems as well as printed material, a Language Centre which undertakes the teaching of English to students – the medium for instruction in the University is Arabic, but English is used for the science-based courses – a Teaching Hospital, and a Centre for Education Technology.

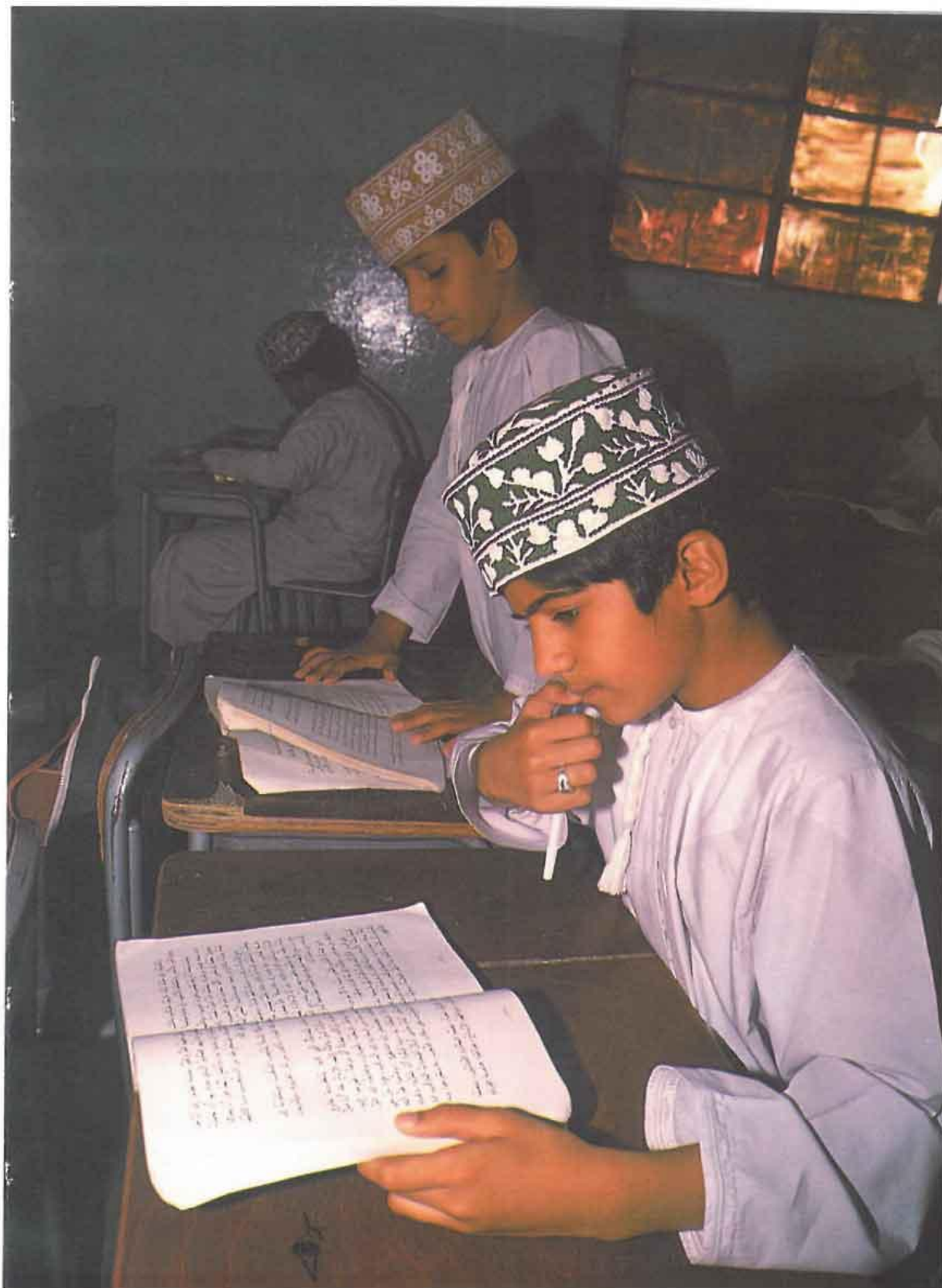
The 500-bed Teaching Hospital has an establishment of over one thousand, composed of 200 academic medical staff and over 800 nursing support staff. Admission to the hospital is by referral only. The hospital has advanced diagnostic equipment, and specialised sections for paediatrics, gynaecology and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

Ministry of Education

With the establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education in January 1994, His Excellency Yahya bin Mahfudh Al Manthri, formerly Minister of Education, was appointed as Minister of Higher Education and Vice-Chancellor of the Sultan Qaboos University. His Excellency Said bin Saud bin Ibrahim Al Busaidi is now the Minister of Education.

In 1970 there were only three schools for boys in the whole of the Sultanate, and no schools for girls. So great was the demand

► Young boys
prepare for their
future.



for education that in the early days of the renaissance schools had to be set up in tents and classes held in shifts. There was also a pressing demand for adult education, and a total lack of qualified and experienced Omani teachers, so that large numbers had to be recruited from other Arabic and non-Arabic speaking countries. Textbooks had to be compiled and published, curricula formulated and examination standards set. There are three stages of juvenile education, primary, preparatory and secondary. Primary school education normally starts at the age of six years. On passing the examination at sixth primary grade, generally between the ages of twelve and fourteen, the pupil progresses to the preparatory school. Students passing the general preparatory certificate examination are then admitted to the first grade of secondary schools between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. Here they are selected for the appropriate type of secondary education, in accordance with the results of their preparatory examination. On completion of their secondary education, it is possible for students to go on to advanced training and qualifications at the University and other institutions of specialised training. With the opening of forty-two new schools at the start of the academic year 1993/94, there are 920 schools, Institutes and Teacher



Training Colleges in the Sultanate with a total of 453,984 students and 20,073 teachers, of whom 8,515 are Omanis. This is a notable achievement over a period of 23 years.

The Sultanate's study system for adult education operates in parallel with the regular education system and provides a bridge to enable the newly-literate to take up academic studies. The Ministry attaches increasing importance to studies and research. The data they provide enables amendments and revi-

◀ Foreign-language learning begins at an early age.

sions to be made to current programmes and also leads to the creation of new programme plans. During the current year an analytical field study has been made on the eradication of illiteracy and on adult education. The objective is to link education to development needs and make it more effective by relating it to people's activities, culture, customs, beliefs and values. The Ministry continues to train male and female Omani teachers in the teaching of adults. In 1993 a short training course was held and attended by 34 teachers of both sexes. In 1993/94 there are 252 Literacy Centres with a total of 8,417 adult students, and 176 Adult Centres with 9,708 students, together with 9,012 home study learners.

Apart from the State schools there are an increasing number of private schools in the Sultanate. Seven new private schools, three of them in Muscat, have opened since the start of the academic year, bringing the total to 78 throughout the Sultanate. Those planning to operate a private school have to be Omanis with at least a secondary school certificate, have no criminal record, and must produce a bank guarantee of at least RO 3,000. The Ministry of Education has issued rules governing the operation of these schools on the basis of proper educational principles and objectives. The Ministry has also issued revised rules for the operation of kindergarten schools.

Training of Omani Teachers

In the first years of educational development, nearly all the teachers were expatriate Arabs. The first Teacher Training Institute started courses for Omanis in 1977. In 1984/85 the male and female Teacher Training Institute system was abolished and its place was taken by the Intermediate Colleges. There are currently eight Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges in the Sultanate, of which five are for male students and three for female students, and in addition there are classes of female Teacher Training Colleges attached to a general Education school. There are now 1,684 male and 1,455 female students in the colleges. An Institute to train graduates as teachers has been established to increase the number of Omani teachers to replace expatriates, and at the same time to expand the educational network. The Institute is intended for preparatory and secondary school teachers.

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

▼ Senior students prepare for their graduation.



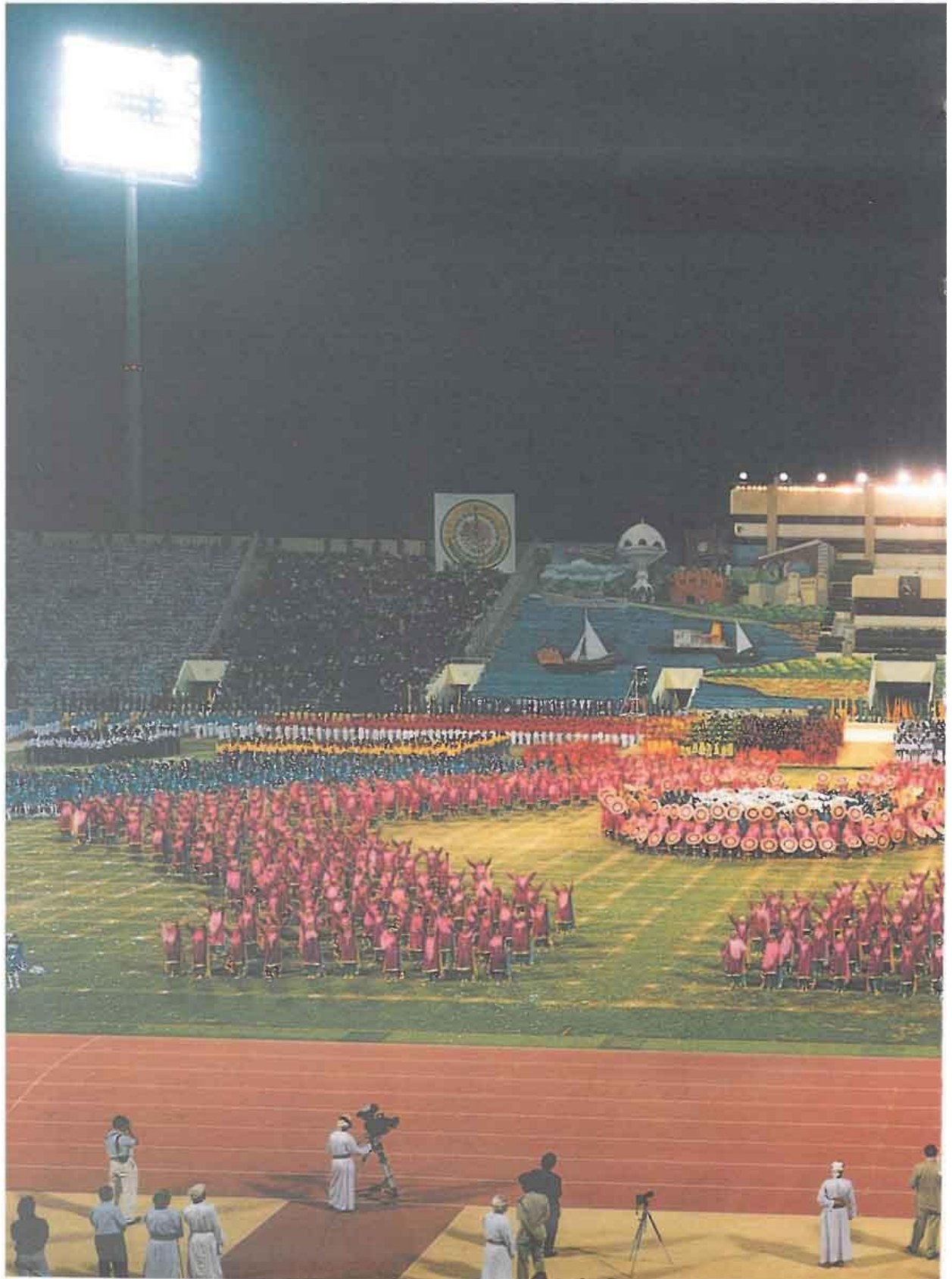
YOUTH

The year 1993 was declared a Year of Youth, as had been done ten years previously. As emphasised by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, this was not so much as to what could be achieved in the field of youth activities during the year, but to draw attention to the importance of youth in the future development and well-being of the country. According to preliminary indications arising from the first National Census, which took place in December 1993, 60% of the total population of the Sultanate is below the age of 15 years, and the average number of children per family is 7.7. The combination of a high birth-rate with rapidly rising health standards, and a corresponding fall in the infant mortality rate, means that the youth of the country represent an increasing proportion of the total population of the Sultanate.

Physical fitness is now widely popular amongst young people, with their keenness for every form of sporting activity. In 1982 the responsibility for supervision of all youth affairs was entrusted to the Ministry of Education, and in 1986 the Ministry's

▼ A young Omani artist, member of the Fine Arts Society of Oman, with one of her paintings.





Children have an
important role in the
National Celebrations.



title was amended accordingly. In 1989, the Higher Council for Youth approved an integrated nationwide plan for expanding and improving youth facilities, including the construction of sports and youth centres, support for the expansion of existing clubs, and the organisation of national sporting and recreational activities, to which His Majesty the Sultan personally donated half a million rials. By a Royal Decree of 1991, sports and youth activities were placed under a General Organisation for Sports and Youth Activities (GOSYA) supervised by the Council of Ministers and its President. The title has recently been altered to the General Organisation for Sport and Cultural Youth Activities (GOSCYA), and the President is Sheikh Mohamed bin Marhoon bin Salim Al Ma'amari.

The Year of Youth's main contribution to the sporting, cultural, artistic and social activities of Oman's young people was an upgrading in the quality and scope of youth services. The most important element here was the completion of the infrastructure to enable the youth to hone their skills, develop their physical and mental potential, and raise their levels of spiritual and social awareness. All sections of the Omani people and institutions responded to His Majesty's call when he announced that 1993 was to be the Year of Youth. This was clearly to be seen in the great attention given to, and participation in, youth programmes and activities, which were held in the smallest villages and centres of population, as well as the major towns and cities. The public and private sectors combined in their efforts to promote the aims of the Year of Youth, and they were joined in this by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which held a highly successful seminar on 'the role of youth in the development process in the Sultanate'. A series of Youth Weeks were held in the main centres of population during 1993. In future a National Youth Week will be held in October each year throughout the Sultanate. A youth complex is being constructed in Nizwa similar to those in Sohar and Salalah; it is expected to be completed during the current year. There are also proposals to build two other sports complexes in the Sharqiya and Dhahira regions, as well as a number of new clubs and sports grounds. The sports complexes in Sohar and Salalah are to be expanded.

Scouting

There is a long tradition of scouting in the Sultanate, where the first scout pack was formed in the Saidiya school in Muscat in 1948. Shortly after this, packs were formed in the boys' schools in Muttrah and Salalah. Scouting for girls was not introduced until after 1970 when it began to be organised in the new girls' schools. In Oman, guides are usually referred to as girl scouts.



▲ Sea Scouts on parade.

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

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

The National Organisation for Scouts and Guides is keen to increase membership and encourage the formation of scout and guide packs in schools at all educational levels. The Organisation provides uniforms, badges and other requirements, and supervises leadership training and development. Statistics show that numbers are growing in both sections of the movement, which now have over 10,000 members.

In observance of the Year of Youth, the NOSG organised various activities during the summer vacation. Arab and international societies were invited to participate. In August, a summer camp for 500 youths was held at the permanent scouts' camp in Salalah. The central theme of the camp was to inculcate the aim of rendering voluntary services to society, helping in the conservation of the environment by coordination with the departments concerned, and offering the young people an opportunity to visit the tourist sites of interest. A further similar camp was held later in the year. In association with six of the concerned Ministries and the Royal Oman Police, a seminar on the environment was held in Salalah in August. In the same month, a meeting was held between the scouts and information officials in the Musandam which was focused on the conservation of Omani traditions and customs. The first meeting of AGCC scouts officials was held in October in Hail al Awamir, in coordination with the AGCC General Secretariat, to discuss methods of upgrading scouting activities. In September a senior scouts' camp to train 50 senior scouts in the fields of ambulance, fire extinguishing, defence and marine activities was held at the training centre, in coordination with the Royal Oman Police and the Institute of Health Sciences.

The Sultanate was among the three Arab countries which participated in the 13th Scouting Camp held in the United States. A delegation of NOSG members visited Bahrain to exchange ideas, and also attended the Eighth National Scouting Meeting in Jordan. The Sultanate was also among the 150 countries represented by 1600 individuals at the Scouts' Conference held in Bangkok in July.

▼ Camping is a popular recreation.



HEALTH

Many notable advances have been achieved in the field of Health in the Sultanate of Oman in the past year, but one of these calls for special mention, and that is the emergence of the first fully trained and qualified Omani doctors of both sexes from the Medical School of the Sultan Qaboos University. Before 1970 there was only one Omani doctor in existence, who was trained and qualified outside Oman. That was doctor Asim al Jamali, who practised along the Trucial Coast from Abu Dhabi to Ras Al Khaimah. Doctor Jamali became the first Minister of Health in Oman following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970. During 1993 48 Omani doctors, 28 of them women, have fully qualified following their training and qualification within Oman. From now on it is anticipated that those who graduate from the Sultan Qaboos University, together with those who have trained and graduated abroad, will produce about 50 new doctors each year. By 1997 this number is expected to increase to 80 per year, and to reach over 100 per year by the year 2000.

▼ Rehabilitation is a vital part of the Health Service.



Another considerable achievement in the past year has been the malaria eradication programme in the Sharqiya region of the Sultanate, whereby an intensive drive has now severely reduced the presence of the vector mosquito, and hence brought the numbers of new cases of malaria to an all-time low. This has been achieved over a period of two years by intense spraying of houses and the water sources in which the malaria-bearing mosquito requires to breed. This method of eradication is being repeated in the Batinah regions this year. The incidence of malaria reached its peak in 1990 with a record number of 32,720 cases. This was basically due to the expanding areas under cultivation by irrigation, which increased the breeding grounds of the malaria-bearing mosquitoes. This in turn provoked the drive against malaria with the result that the incidence of confirmed cases of malaria in the Sultanate fell to just under 15,000 in 1992, less than half the cases in 1990. The present aim is the total eradication of malaria in the Sultanate by the year 2000. In 1993 a 'Malaria Border Meeting' was held in Oman attended by delegations from Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Republic when it was agreed to adopt the methods of Oman's malaria eradication programmes. In the course of the meeting the delegations were taken on a guided tour of the Sharqiya region. It was agreed to hold similar meetings at six monthly intervals, the next one to take place this year in the Yemen border area.

There are now 47 hospitals throughout the Sultanate compared with the one hospital run by an American mission in Muttrah in 1970. By the end of 1995 (the end of the fourth Five Year Plan) it is expected that the number of hospitals will remain the same as at present. However, with the larger new hospitals and the extensions of existing hospitals, the total number of beds (in both hospitals and health centres) will have increased from the current 3,578 beds to an estimated 5,000. The number of Health Centres is expected to increase from the current 110 to about 120, including 5 combined health centres (Polyclinics). As well as an increase in the numbers of facilities, there will also be an improvement in the quality of service provided, with the introduction of more modern diagnostic and treatment facilities in both the new and some of the existing hospitals and health centres. At present the Ministry of Health is building new hospitals in the major towns of each region to replace the original ones which have now become either too old or too small. These will be

► A laboratory technician examines specimens.



referral hospitals for the people of the regions in which they are located to allow specialist care to be available without the inconvenience and discomfort of travelling to Muscat. Each hospital will have in-patient and out-patient services with the main specialities of General Medicine, General Surgery, Obstetrics and Paediatrics. They will also provide services in many sub-specialities including Ophthalmology, Otorhinolaryngology (ENT), Dermatology, Renal Dialysis, Coronary Care, Plastic Surgery, Neonatology and Dentistry. They will have the most modern diagnostic facilities including automated laboratory equipment, radiography and ultrasonography.

In December 1993 the Wadi Heebi hospital (18 beds) in the North Batinah region was completed. The building of two more hospitals was also completed in 1993, and these are currently being finalised and equipped. These are the new 140 bed hospital at Buraimi (to serve the Dhahirah region), which opens early this year, and the new 248 bed hospital at Rostaq (to serve the South Batinah region) which is expected to be opened in April/May 1994.

Other plans include:-

- (a) the new regional hospital in Ibri (248 beds) is currently under construction, and is scheduled for completion in early 1994. Construction of new regional hospitals in Sohar (382 beds), Nizwa (280 beds) and Sur (248 beds) will start early this year. The existing regional hospital at Khasab in the Governorate of Musandam is being extended with the addition of an extra 62 beds, while the extension of the Sultan Qaboos Hospital in the Governorate of Dhofar by an extra 150 beds is scheduled to begin in 1994. Thus every region in the Sultanate will have a fully fledged hospital with all specialities.

The super-specialities for the whole Sultanate will continue to be provided in Muscat. Construction for an extra 148 beds in the Khoula hospital was due to begin at the end of 1993, in order to cater for the increasing demand on the two units of Neurosurgery and Reconstruction and Plastic Surgery.

- (b) The construction of a new 24 bed hospital on the Jebel Akhdar will begin this year. Also in 1994, the hospital at Ibra will be extended for an extra 36 maternity beds and extra beds will be added in the Bukha hospital. Construction of a new 50 bed hospital at Dibba in the Governorate of Musandam will begin in 1995.



▲ An operation in progress at the Royal Hospital.

(c) Two new Combined Health Centres (polyclinics) at Barka and Musanah were opened in 1992 along with the new Combined Health Centres at Suwaiq and Shinas. The Combined Health Centre at Bausher is now complete and was opened in November 1993.

(d) The construction of 12 new health centres, 7 with maternity beds and 5 without, and the addition of maternity beds to 9 of the existing health centres. The new health centre at Wadi al Ain and al Hagar has already been completed and was opened in 1992. The remainder will be built during 1994 and 1995.

In September 1993 the overall level of Omanisation in the Ministry of Health was 48%. The number of Omanis in each medical and paramedical field was 148 (10%) doctors, 10 (15%) dentists, 518 (11%) nurses, 25 (38%) physiotherapists, 31 (19%) radiographers, 135 (27%) laboratory technicians, 7 (14%) pharmacists, 24 (10%) assistant pharmacists and 53 (31%) sanitarians.

In addition, the first doctors to qualify from the Medical School of the Sultan Qaboos University – 48 in number – began their year of internship in various hospitals around the country in July 1993. With an additional few receiving training abroad this will produce about 50 new doctors each year. This number



will rise to 80 per year by 1997 and is expected to reach over 100 per year by the year 2000. The targets for Omanisation of doctors are thus around 15% by the end of 1995 and 30% by the year 2000.

Five new Nursing Schools were opened in 1991 in Nizwa, Salalah, Sohar, Sur and Tanam to provide training courses for secondary school graduates in each region. These began with an intake of 30 students each, and have recently admitted their third batch of new students. A new Nursing School was opened in Ibra in September 1993 and two more at Rostaq and Ibri are planned to open in 1994. They have proved highly successful in attracting students from their local areas who would not otherwise have had an opportunity to join the nursing profession. Thus, from 1994 onwards over 200 nurses will graduate annually. The target of Omanisation among nurses is thus 17% by end of 1995 and 40% by the year 2000.

In the field of pharmacy, an Institute of Assistant Pharmacists was established in 1991 with an initial intake of 30. The first of these will graduate early this year. Their level of Omanisation is expected to reach 29% by the end of 1995.

▲ Students study at the Institute of Nursing.

The Oman Public Health Institute began to train sanitarians in 1991 with an intake of 30. These will graduate early in 1994. By the end of 1995 the Omanisation rate is expected to reach 65%. A two year course for Health Educators was begun in this Institute in 1993 with an initial intake of 25 students.

For other paramedical professions (laboratory technicians, radiographers and physiotherapists) the Institute of Health Sciences will continue to produce between 15 and 25 of each profession every year. The targets set for Omanisation by the end of 1995 are thus 29% for laboratory technicians, 27% for radiographers and 54% for physiotherapists.

At the start of 1993 the Health Ministry operated 46 hospitals with a total of 3,560 beds. Over 202,000 patients were admitted as inpatients in these hospitals in 1992. The hospital outpatient services saw a total of 6.8 million patients during 1992. The Ministry of Health also has 110 Health Centres (including 24 with maternity beds) to provide primary health care – curative, preventive and promotive – to the communities in which they are located. In 1992 these Centres saw a total of 3.6 million patients.

In addition to the Ministry of Health (which is the main agency responsible for health services) the Ministry of Defence, Royal Oman Police and Petroleum Development Oman provide health care for their employees and dependents. At the start of 1993 these organisations had a total of 4 hospitals and 43 clinics with 551 beds in use. The Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (under the Ministry of Higher Education) has currently an availability of 500 beds.

Private companies and individuals also operate clinics. In the private sector, at the start of 1993, there were 342 general clinics, 29 specialised clinics and 36 dental clinics.

The use of the health services of the Sultanate of Oman has grown rapidly over the years as access becomes easier for more and more of the population. Nowadays only 5% of the population require more than one hour travelling time to reach either a Health Centre or hospital. The more remote areas are served by the mobile teams which regularly visit communities with difficult access. The main areas affected are the mountainous areas of the Western Hajar range and the Dhofar region, as well as those people living a semi-nomadic life in the al Wusta region.

A target was originally set to reduce the infant mortality rate to 30 per 1000 live births. This level was reached in 1990 and has

continued to improve since then, reaching an estimated 25 infant deaths per thousand live births in 1992.

The reduction of the incidence of communicable diseases has been to such low levels that they are no longer considered to be public health problems. In 1992 the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) immunised 96% of all infants born before they reached the age of one year, to provide them with the security of protection against the seven serious communicable diseases of tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles and viral hepatitis. This far exceeds the WHO goal of 80% for the first six diseases which Oman reached in 1989, and has gone even further to provide protection against viral hepatitis. Consequently, the numbers of cases of these diseases has fallen dramatically since 1986 to such low levels as not to be public health problems. The two communicable diseases which remain as public health problems are trachoma and malaria.

There have been considerable achievements in the fields of environmental health and community development. Community involvement in health matters was introduced in a Community Development Programme with the main objective of promoting self-help and community participation. National and Regional Women and Child Care Plan (WCCP) task forces have been set up to co-ordinate MCH activities at the regional level and to review and solve regional problems. Members of the Oman Women's Association also cooperate on the Ministry's EPI, MCH and health education programmes.

With communicable diseases now under control, the Ministry has been able to pay more attention to the control of non-communicable diseases.

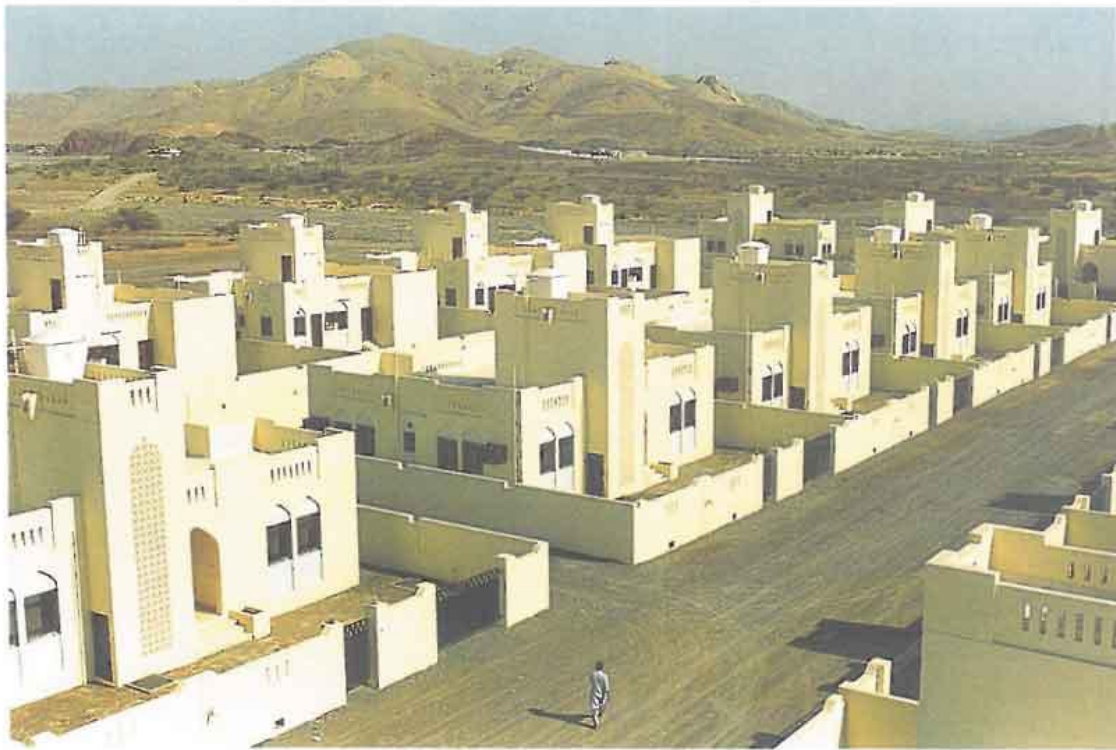
Firstly, several nationwide surveys have been carried out in order to assess the current status of each disease and hence to have a baseline from which to assess the effectiveness of any control or prevention programme. These have included a national diabetes survey in 1991, a nutrition survey in 1992 and a rheumatic heart disease survey in 1993. Plans are currently being made to carry out both a dental survey among school children and a cardiovascular disease and blood pressure survey among adults early in 1994. Specialist committees have also been set up within the Ministry to prepare and be responsible for programmes for the control of each of the most important diseases including cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

HOUSING

A traveller in the Sultanate of Oman will see no slums or shanty towns, for the simple reason that they are non-existent. This was not always the case. Traditional Omani houses were built of mud bricks, and during the early years of the renaissance in the early seventies so many Omanis left the villages of the Interior and the fishing villages of the coast to seek employment in the towns of the coastal region, where development was proceeding apace, that shanty towns did spring up for a time for lack of other accommodation. These disappeared many years ago as new houses were constructed for these workers.

On the other hand it must be emphasised that the construction of new housing has never been rushed as has been the case in some other countries, so that the inevitable resulting mistakes have been avoided. Town planning has been all-important from the beginning, and the Government has insisted on a traditional yet modern style of house construction, thus conforming with the policy of preserving Omani culture, while, at the same time offer-

▼ Modern housing is rapidly becoming available for all.



ing the benefits of modern facilities to Omani citizens.

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

A Social Housing Programme for those on limited incomes was instituted in 1973. After a modest start in that year, when 73 houses were completed, the rate of construction increased rapidly, so that by the end of 1993 a total of 8,186 dwellings had been completed and handed over to citizens. From the outset there has been close cooperation between the various Ministries concerned with housing policy, and particular emphasis has been given to the provision of housing for the lower income groups.

An applicant for housing must fulfil the following conditions:-

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

Under the Social Housing Scheme the Government provides the infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity, while the residents only pay a monthly instalment of RO 25 towards the cost of the house. The average cost of each house works out at between 14 and 16 thousand rials. Oman has the goal of providing housing for all by the year 2000. To meet this target, strategies and policies for housing have been prepared for implementation during the current 5-Year Plan.

Between the launching of the Housing Assistance Programme in 1981 and the end of August 1993, the Ministry received a total of 36,826 applications for housing including 3,842 from the Governorate of Muscat, 4,013 from the Governorate of Dhofar, and 28,971 from other Wilayats.

Assistance is granted on a 'first come, first served' basis, with the added criterion of the applicant's actual need for the assistance. This is determined through field studies carried out by the Ministry's social researchers and engineers, who consider the applicant's social and economic situation and current living conditions. When these factors have been assessed a decision is taken on whether the applicant is eligible for assistance under the regulations.

The Real Estate Register's goal is to register all property in the Sultanate in order to ensure stability in real estate property rights. This in turn will lead to social security and encourage investment, development and economic growth.

The Land Affairs Committee in Muscat and the local committees in the Wilayats are responsible for ruling on ownership applications based on claims relating to before and after 1st January 1970, as well as claims related to unplotted land. The local committees are chaired by the local Wali, and their members include some of the Wilayat's shaikhs and dignitaries, in addition to the director of the Municipality and the head of the Wilayat's Agricultural Advice Department. A committee issues its decision after careful study and the site has been visited. Membership of the local committees is for a period of two years. There are 58 committees in all, covering all the Wilayats in the Sultanate. There is an Appeals Committee chaired by the Minister of Housing and its members include Under-Secretaries from some of the Ministries as well as four competent officials from the Ministry of Housing.

As part of the programme for providing houses for families with limited incomes, the Omani Housing Bank – a joint stock company – was set up in 1977. The Bank's activity is concentrated mainly on granting loans to nationals for the purpose of construction, purchase, improving, and adding to residential properties, and for the purchase and completion of unfinished houses. Persons with incomes of between RO 131 and RO 250 month-

ly, may obtain interest-free loans up to a maximum of RO 15,000 to enable them to build modern housing for themselves, and non-repayable grants of up to RO 6,000 are available to citizens whose monthly income does not exceed RO 130. The loan regulations are flexible enough to enable families to build suitable residences in approved locations in the style that suits them. A citizen who is unable to acquire housing on the grounds that he has already obtained a plot of housing land, can now obtain an interest-free loan to enable him to build a residence on his land. The response to these opportunities has been very good.

The Oman Housing Bank has plans to raise the maximum loan limit, and there are also plans to increase the Government's annual loan allocation to the Bank to RO 25 million by the year 2000. The Bank also plans to lower interest rates, and to standardise the repayment period to 19 years for all borrowers whose monthly incomes do not exceed RO 800.

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

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

NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

It was announced on National Day in November 1993 that 1994 was to be the 'Year of Heritage'. Accordingly the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture has a full programme dealing with the Heritage and Culture of the Sultanate for the year, without restricting it to just this year. On the Cultural side, there are culture weeks, exhibitions, poetry and literary gatherings, book fairs, concerts and performances of Omani songs. On the Heritage side, texts of ancient Omani manuscripts are made available to the public, and lectures, seminars and heritage gatherings are held. Other items on the programme include Oman weeks and exhibitions in a number of foreign countries. A competition was held to design an emblem for the 'Year of Heritage' and the emblem has now been adopted.

▼ The interior of one of Oman's fine museums.

Omanis have always been deeply aware and proud of their national heritage. This was demonstrated, following the acces-



sion of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970, by his establishment of a Ministry of National Heritage (almost unique in the world) in the same year with a member of the Royal Family, His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said, as its Minister.

The responsibilities of the Ministry include the preservation and renovation of historic buildings, with which Oman is well endowed, the encouragement of traditional crafts, the collection and collation of historical books and manuscripts, the establishment of museums, and the investigation of historical sites. The Ministry keeps in close touch with international organisations such as UNESCO, which has listed the massive fort at Bahla and the Necropolis of Bat as world heritage sites. Application has been made for the site and remains of the ancient city of Qalhat and the Jidat al Harasis, where the oryx has been introduced and successfully bred, to be listed.

The successful restoration of historic citadels, forts and ancient buildings, has been a considerable undertaking, which ranks among the Ministry's outstanding achievements. Many of these are now major tourists attractions, a notable example being the castle at Jabrin, originally built by Bilarub bin Sultan in the 17th century as a residential palace. It is one of the treasures of Omani architecture, which has been carefully restored. Others include the historic fort at Nizwa, a former capital of Oman, and the magnificent fort at Rostaq, also a former Omani capital, which stands in a commanding position guarding the approaches to the great massif of the Jebel Akhdar.

In Muscat, the two great forts, Mirani and Jelali, poised on lofty crags overlooking Muscat Bay and the walled city, have also been restored to their former glory, as has the fort on the rocky pinnacle overlooking the neighbouring town of Matrah. Along the Batinah Coast, the fort at Sohar, with its large square tower, has been restored to its original state, when it played a vital role in the history and prosperity of Oman. Many other forts throughout the Sultanate have been restored in recent years, and work is continuing on others. The Ministry is undertaking the restoration of a number of them with help from the Moroccan Government, under an agreement signed in 1983. Notable amongst them is the magnificent fort at Bahla.

Oman has many other fine buildings worthy of preservation.

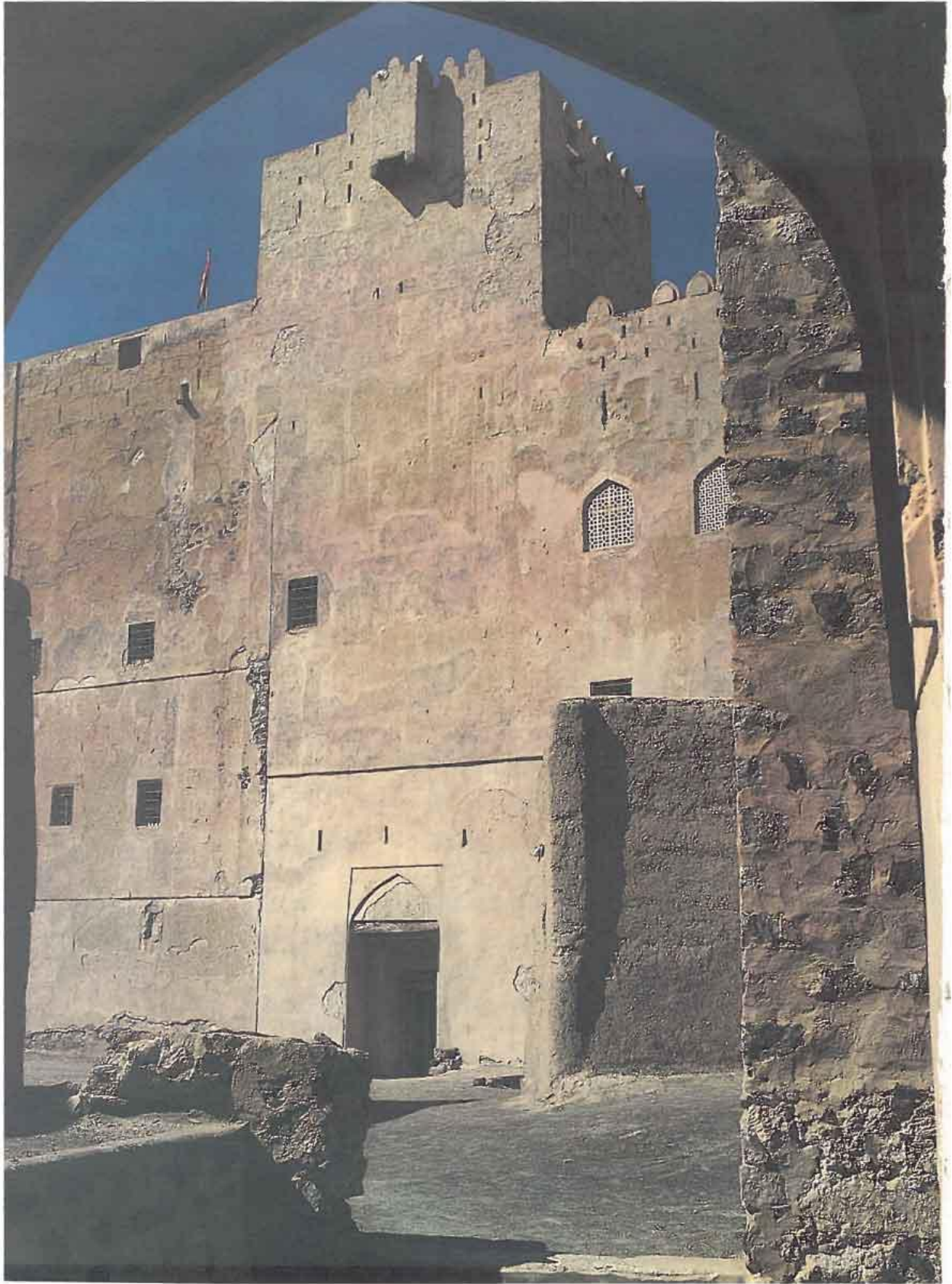


▲ Theatrical performances are an important part of Oman's traditional culture.

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

The Ministry is also actively engaged in the acquisition of ancient manuscripts and documents and their preservation. It now possesses more than 4,000 manuscripts dealing with jurisprudence, interpretation of the Holy Koran, poetry, astronomy, literature and history. The oldest of these dates back to the year 1240 AD. Many such valuable old documents are still held by families who, in some cases are loath to let them leave their possession.

Among the museums for which the Ministry is responsible, is the National Museum at Qurum near Muscat, which attracts many thousands of visitors each year. Another, is the Natural History Museum, adjacent to the Ministry, which is also seen by many thousands of visitors annually, a high proportion of them



children. Splendidly designed, the museum, which was established in 1985, and which has only recently been completed, lays stress on the preservation of the environment. There are displays of the varied wildlife of Oman, including leopards and caracal lynx, as well as a whale hall, a fossil tree and a shell collection. A museum of a different sort, for which the Ministry is responsible, is the Childrens' Museum, opened at the end of 1990. It is a children's science centre, which they visit individually and in organised parties. It is immensely popular, attracting about 3,000 children each month.

The fort at Sohar also has a museum, the exhibits of which highlight the role Sohar has played in the history of navigation as well as Oman's overseas trade. Another successful venture of the Ministry has been the Salalah Cultural Centre, opened in 1990. It has a 10,000-volume library and organises art exhibitions and competitions. Schools arrange visits as part of their academic activities. Handicraft exhibitions are held at the Centre and a literary circle meets regularly.

To encourage reading, and facilitate access to literature by citizens, the Ministry has put mobile bookshops into service.

Airconditioned vans, equipped as libraries, tour the country's regions, to provide books to citizens at their doorsteps, thus avoiding lengthy journeys to the nearest major town.

The Ministry is energetically involved in promoting Oman's heritage abroad by means of Cultural Weeks. Exhibitions are mounted, displaying Oman's artefacts, archeological objects, handicrafts, manuscripts, etc. These Cultural Weeks have been held successfully in several Arab, European and Asian countries. In 1993 renovation work was completed on the following forts, which are expected to be opened to the public during the current year: Al-Aijah, Bait al Khawbar, al Manoomah, Bait al Maqham, al Khandaq, al Fiqain and Daba fort, and in the south, the forts at Taqah and Sadah. In addition,

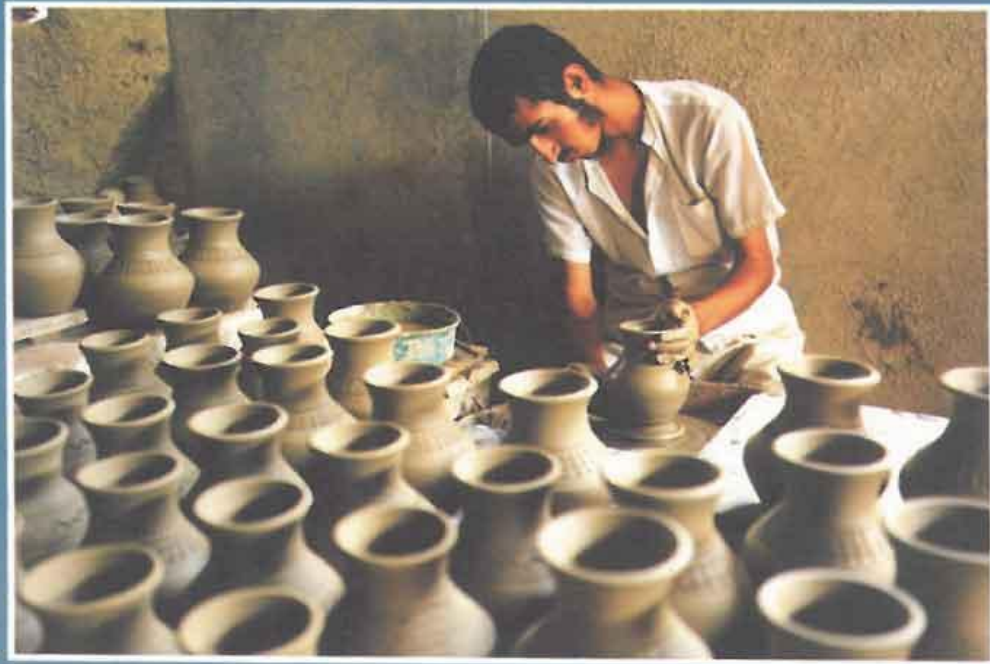
◀ The historic
▼ forts of Jabrin
and Birkat Al Mawz.
The restoration and
preservation of
ancient buildings is
a primary concern
of the Ministry.

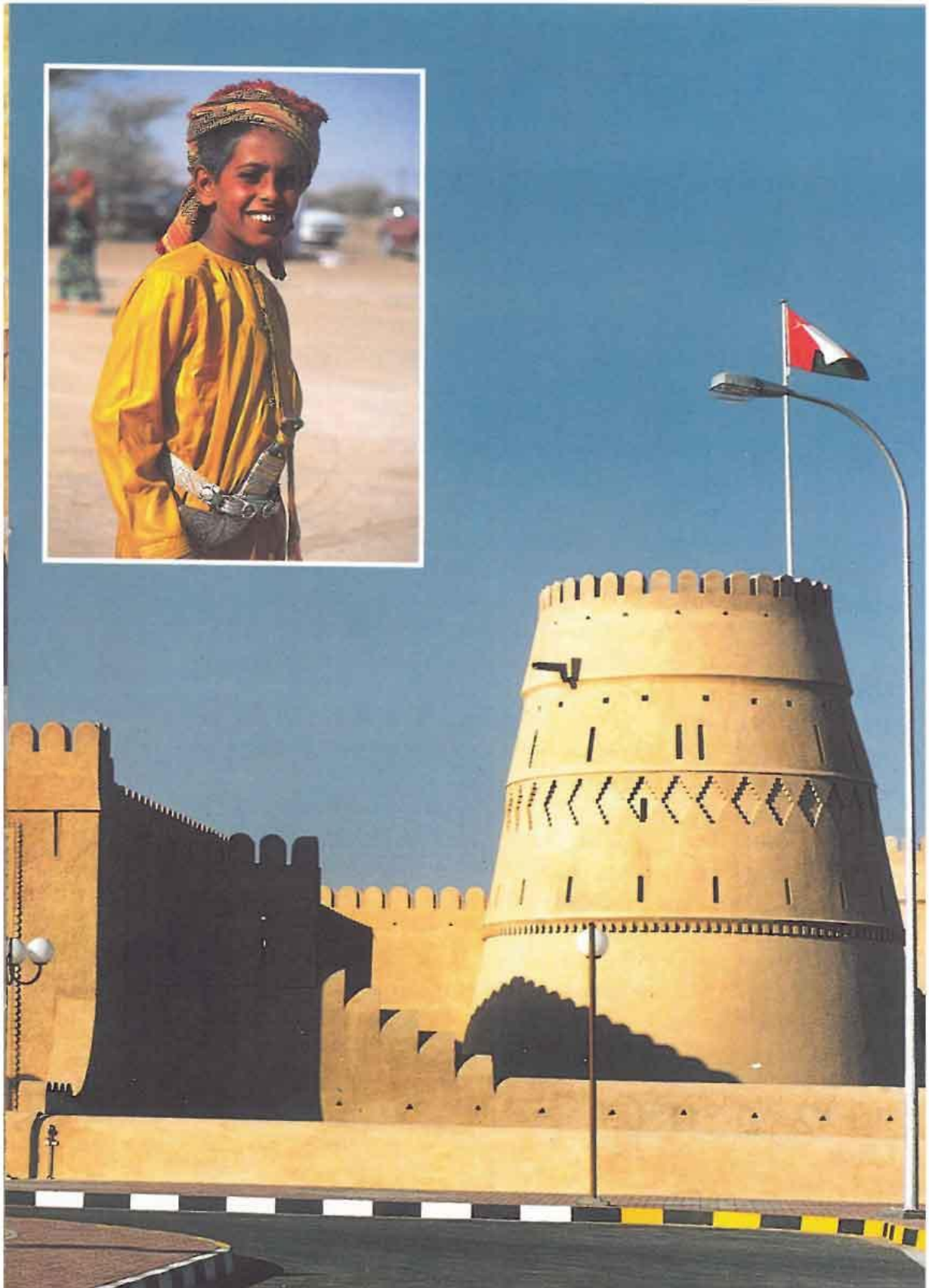


► A young Omani proudly wears his national dress.

► Traditionally hand-crafted pottery at Bahla.

▼ Al Khandak Fort – Al Buraymi.





restoration work on the Sumail towers has been completed. Renovation and maintenance work on the palace at Jabrin has also been completed. The Nizwa fort and some other historic buildings have been furnished. Last year restoration work began on Bahla Fort and on the forts at Ibri, Ja'alan Bani bu Hassan, al Khadam, Saham, al Hillah fort and Nizwa's old souk. Guide books to a number of renovated forts have been issued in Arabic and English.

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

To mark the 'Heritage Year' in 1994, the Ministry is endeavouring to acquire documents from the archives of other countries such as India, China and elsewhere. Also, during the course of the year, the Ministry will revise and print a number of manuscripts and historical and cultural studies on Oman. The Ministry is currently upgrading its manuscript section with the help of UNESCO. Omani cadres are also being trained and the manuscripts stored on computers.

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

The Literary Society, established a few years ago, plays a prominent role in Oman's culture. Systematic cultural events are held by this Society round the year. As a mark of respect to men of letters, the Society grants awards and prizes to prominent Omani poets, historians and other scholars every year.

INTERIOR

The Ministry of the Interior has achieved a remarkable degree of success in adapting modernisation to the practices and traditions of the Interior, where these latter have prevailed for a century and a half at least. The Ministry is, in fact, the oldest in the Sultanate, where, before 1970, it was the only Ministry. Situated within the walls of Muscat, it was commonly referred to as the Al Dhakhiliya (the Interior). It was responsible for administering the Interior, by which was meant all areas outside the immediate purview of the Capital. This was done through the Walis – the regional governors appointed by the Sultan. To a very large extent, this is the same practice today.

Following the events of 1970, the country was soon opened up, internal and external trade rapidly expanded, good land and air communications were developed, public and social services became progressively available, the benefits of modern technology were harnessed, and the appropriate aspects of development and progress were adopted. The Ministry of the Interior has fully participated in this development process, combining the best aspects of both modern administration and traditional systems.

The Sultanate is divided into seven main planning regions, which are themselves divided into Wilayats (Governorates) and centres. These latter include the Governorate of Muscat, which is administered by a Governor at Ministerial level. There are also eight centres in Dhofar, which come under the Governor of Dhofar, who is also a Minister of State, and four in the Musandam Governorate. Other Wilayats within the Sultanate are administered by the Ministry of the Interior.

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

The Walis traditionally enjoy the respect of members of the public in view of the direct ties that have historically linked them



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

A democratic institution which has recently been introduced is the revival of the Barzah, when the Wali holds monthly audiences in his Wilayat. The practice of the Barzah starts in each Wilayat as soon as the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture has completed the restoration of the traditional forts, where the Barzah is held as in former years. The Qadi, or judge, of the Shari'a Court in the Wilayat is also in attendance. The Wali receives members of the public, speaks with them face-to-face, considers their cases and directs the relevant staff to complete their business promptly for them. Cases involving legal rulings will be referred to the Qadi. The Wali also discusses Wilayat affairs with the local Sheikhs at the Barzah. As with the Majlis Ash'Shura, and the State Consultative Council, the Barzah has been warmly welcomed by the public. One of the responsibilities of the Walis is the examination of applications for passports for foreign travel for members of the public of their Wilayats, and their approval. The actual processing is done by the ROP.

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

◀ National Day
◀ Celebrations in
the Interior.

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities was set up in 1985, and the Ministry of the Environment had been established in the previous year. By 1991 their responsibilities had become so inter-related that it was decided to merge the two Ministries. The present Ministry is currently situated in the building in Al Khuwair, which used to house the Ministry of the Environment. However, an agreement was signed in March 1994 for the construction of a new building for the Ministry in Al Khuwair, which will bring all the municipality-related departments together under one roof, and simplify the Ministry's business with members of the public and the regional municipalities outside the Muscat area. The Ministry's environment departments will continue to be located in its present premises.

In the early stages of the renaissance, roads and any other form of communication was lacking, so, of necessity, development was largely confined to the coastal regions. In recent years, one of the principal responsibilities of the Ministry has been the development of municipal services in the towns and villages of the Interior. Much progress has now been achieved and the Ministry is now actively engaged in the planning and implementation of further projects.

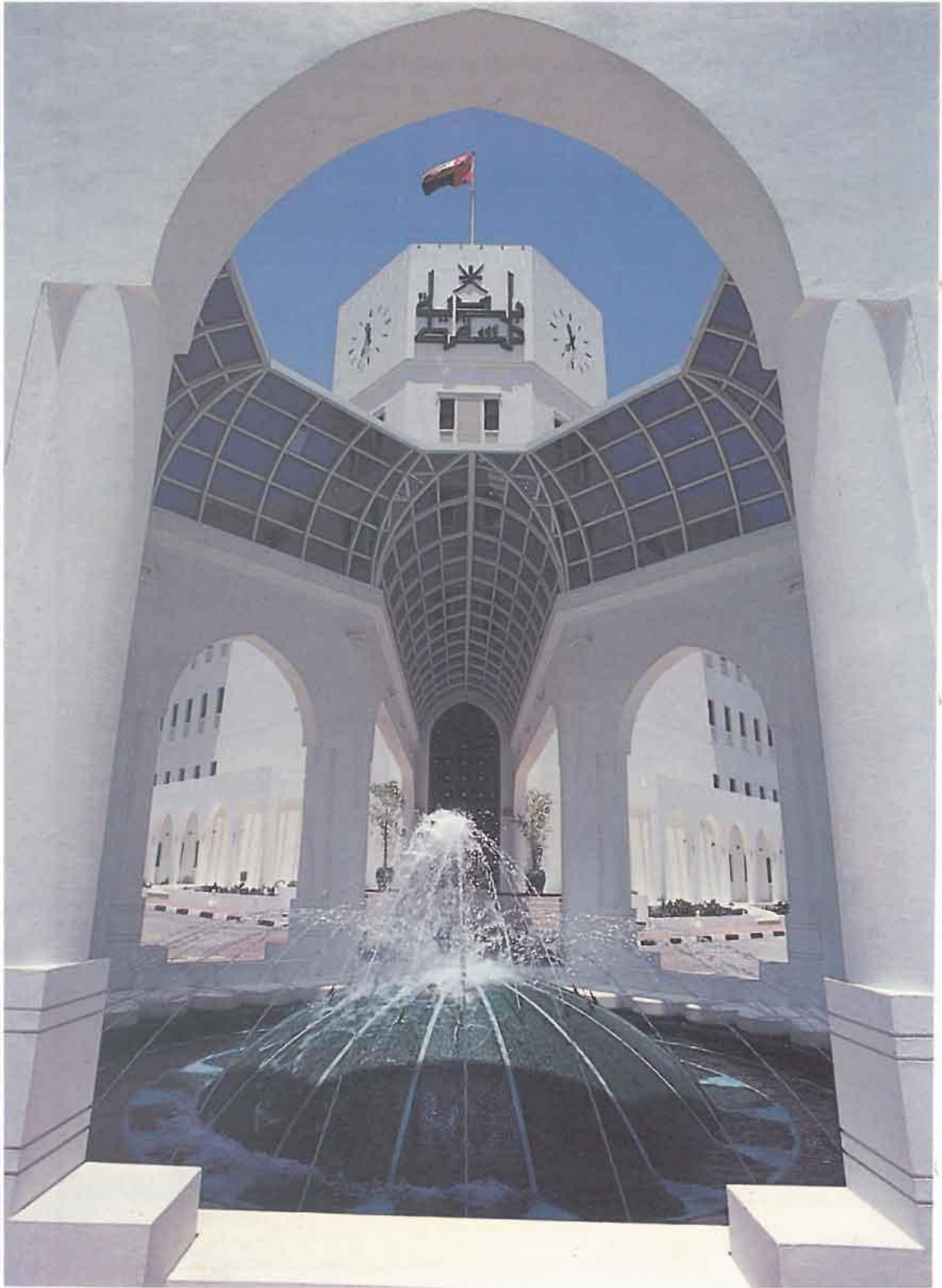
Municipal services include specialised responsibilities such as environmental health, public hygiene, housing hygiene, ensuring that water and food are healthy and safe to consume, pest control, and generally improving the quality of life. The services also include the removal of refuse and food condemned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

A Municipalities Month is held annually each October when various events are organised to increase the awareness of the people of the importance of cleanliness, hygiene and the need for wholesome food. There is a 'Best Municipality' award consisting

► Green Oman:
Many parks now
flourish for the
people's enjoyment.

► Modern planning
and landscaping are
a feature of Omani
architecture.





of a cup presented by his Majesty Sultan Qaboos and a sum of RO 9,000.

Much progress has been achieved in the beautification of cities, towns and villages throughout the Sultanate, which is plain to see. Parks have been laid out, trees planted and children's playgrounds created. In 1992 a beautification project for Nizwa was completed at a cost of RO 5 million, part of which was the construction of a new souq, built to the latest technical standards, whilst at the same time preserving the Omani indigenous design and characteristics. A bridge was also built over the Wadi Al Abyadh, and a ring road constructed as an alternative highway. Other projects, including beautification schemes, and other municipal facilities, are planned or are in progress at Buraimi, Sur, Rostaq and elsewhere in the Sultanate.

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

The Ministry is actively implementing Omanisation of jobs by increasing the number of training courses, and upgrading performance standards of its staff, so as to enable them to meet the responsibilities of the posts targeted for Omanisation. Personnel are sent abroad for courses in food hygiene, health and sanitation. Staff members also attend seminars and conferences abroad on environmental health and other subjects to keep abreast of latest developments.

Environment

Oman has set an example to the world by maintaining a judicious balance between the needs of development and the environment.

◀ The Muscat Municipality building, Darsait.

▼ Regular inspections of food shops are carried out by municipal officers to enforce hygiene regulations.



The country's sound environmental protection and conservation policies have gained international recognition. The United Nations Environmental Programme has cited the Sultanate as a country with one of the best records in environmental conservation and pollution control measures geared to protect the land, air and water, and maintain the ecological balance.

The first law concerning environmental affairs was issued in 1974. This was followed in ensuing years by several other decisions and laws designed to secure the territorial waters of the Sultanate. In 1979 the Council for Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution was established with His Majesty as Chairman. A further step was taken in 1984 with the establishment of the Ministry of Environment, to which was assigned the responsibility for implementing the national plan for the environment and the law for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution. In October 1990 a seven-year coastal zone management project was completed in response to the threat posed by rapid urban development. This project, which covered the entire 1,700 km-long coastline of the Sultanate, involved detailed ecological surveys of the coastal regions, the sea and offshore islands, with the result that the Sultanate has one of the most intensively-studied coastal environments in the world for management purposes. All the information obtained is logged into a comprehensive computerised environmental database. The project has contributed much to regional scientific knowledge through its findings, including the discovery of new species of fish and corals, new turtle nesting and feeding areas, some of which are of global importance, as well as bird-breeding and feeding sites. Together, these coastal and regional plans will help development of the coastal zone. As a result of this project, and its many findings and recommendations, the Sultanate has a secure basis from which to proceed with the safeguarding of its valuable coastal resources for future generations to come.

All projects launched in the country are required to have a 'No Environmental Objection' certificate from the Ministry. By this method, the Ministry controls plans for new industrial enterprises and other structural projects. Before issuing such certificates, the Ministry takes into account possible environmental effects and the necessity for using all possible means to minimise pollution caused by the emission of waste products.

In June 1989, on the day that an honour was conferred on His

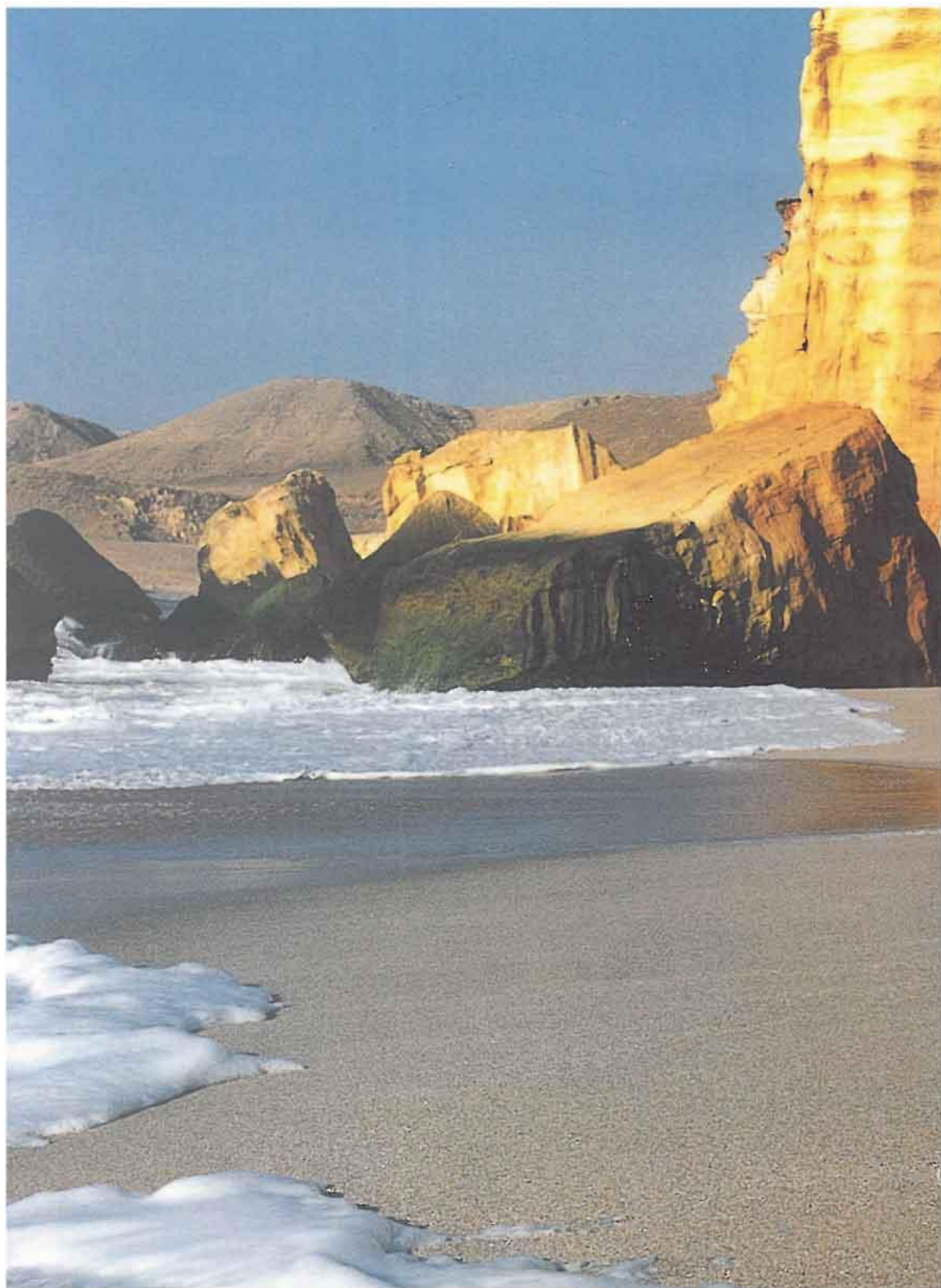
Majesty at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, marking the climax of a series of achievements that have brought Oman to the prominent position it now enjoys in the environmental sphere, it was announced that His Majesty was donating a prize to be granted every two years for the conservation of the environment. UNEP has adopted a number of the Sultanate's proposals on subjects such as a ban on the export of waste to the developing countries, and the need to ensure that it remains in the countries that produced it.

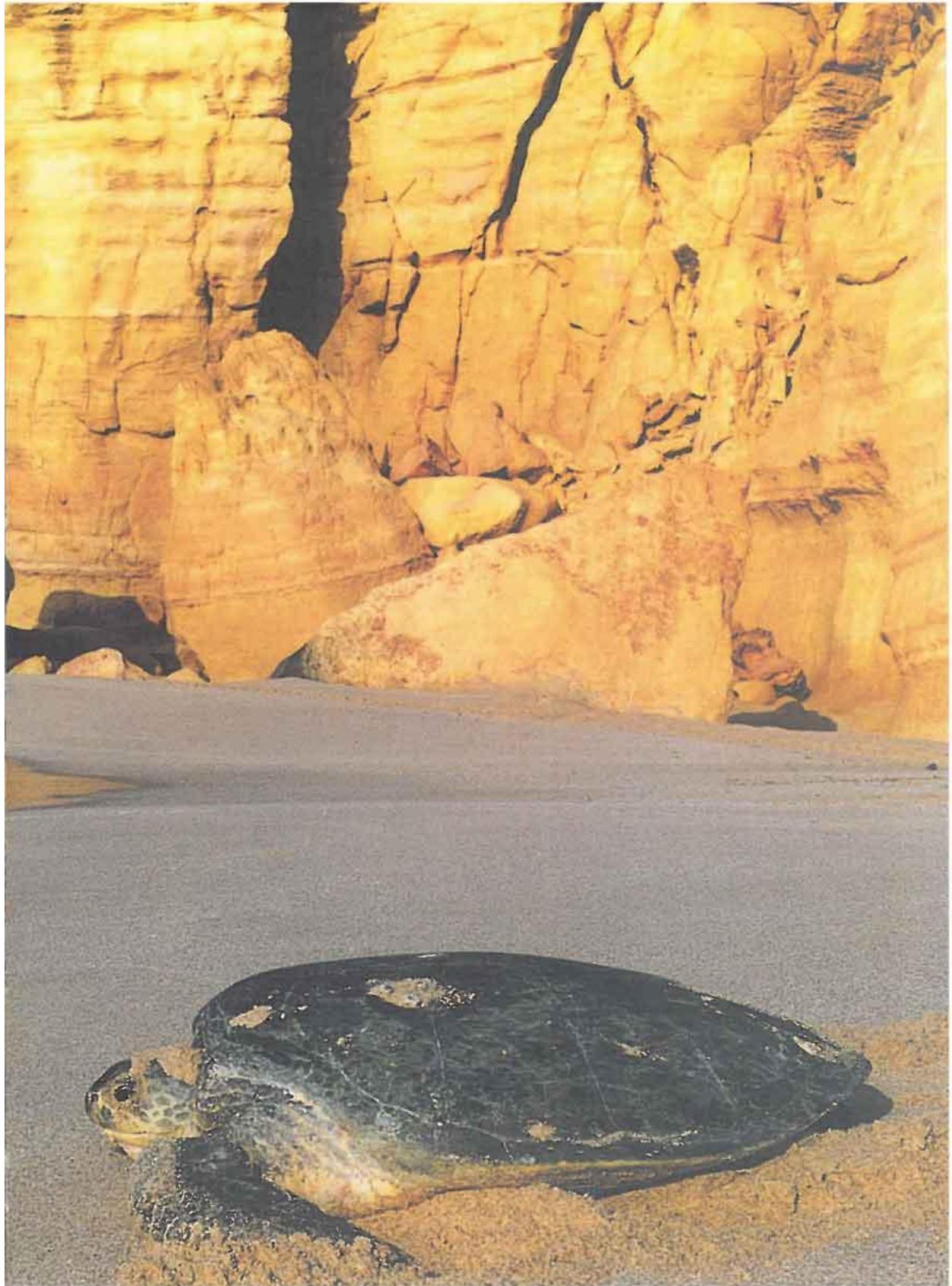
The Sultanate gives a very high priority to the conservation of Oman's rich flora and fauna. This involves the protection of the latter's habitats and breeding sites, providing them with the proper conditions to enable them to breed successfully. To this end, the Ministry has set up wildlife reserves, notably the sanctuary in the Jidat Al Harasis, where the re-introduced oryx now breed in their own environment after being wiped out in 1972 as a result of illegal hunting. The hunting of wildlife is strictly forbidden throughout the country. There is also a project for a 50 km turtle protection zone at Ras al Hadd, which is one of the three recognised turtle nesting sites in the Indian Ocean area.

A report on the completed Coastal Zone Management Plan, referred to earlier, was presented by Oman to the World Conservation Union meeting held in Argentina in January this year; the Sultanate and the Union having signed an agreement for the implementation of the Plan in 1993. The project is currently being supervised by the Ministry. The execution of the project is planned with the help of the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries, Commerce and Industry, Education, Communications, Housing, National Heritage and Culture, Petroleum and Minerals and Regional Municipalities and Environment.

The Sultanate will start implementing the new National Conservation Strategy (NCS) from the middle of this year, after the official results of the National Census have been published. Although the NCS is a 20-year programme the Government might make modifications to it from time to time, if the situation warranted it. In 1993 the Ministry launched a number of projects aimed at protecting the environment, including one for monitoring coastal erosion in the Muscat and Batinah regions, a study of sea currents, draft regulations on noise pollution, monitoring of radiation, regulations on recycling and drainage of sewage, and a draft plan for monitoring ground-water pollution.

► A green turtle at
Ras al Junayz.





JUSTICE, AWQAF & ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

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

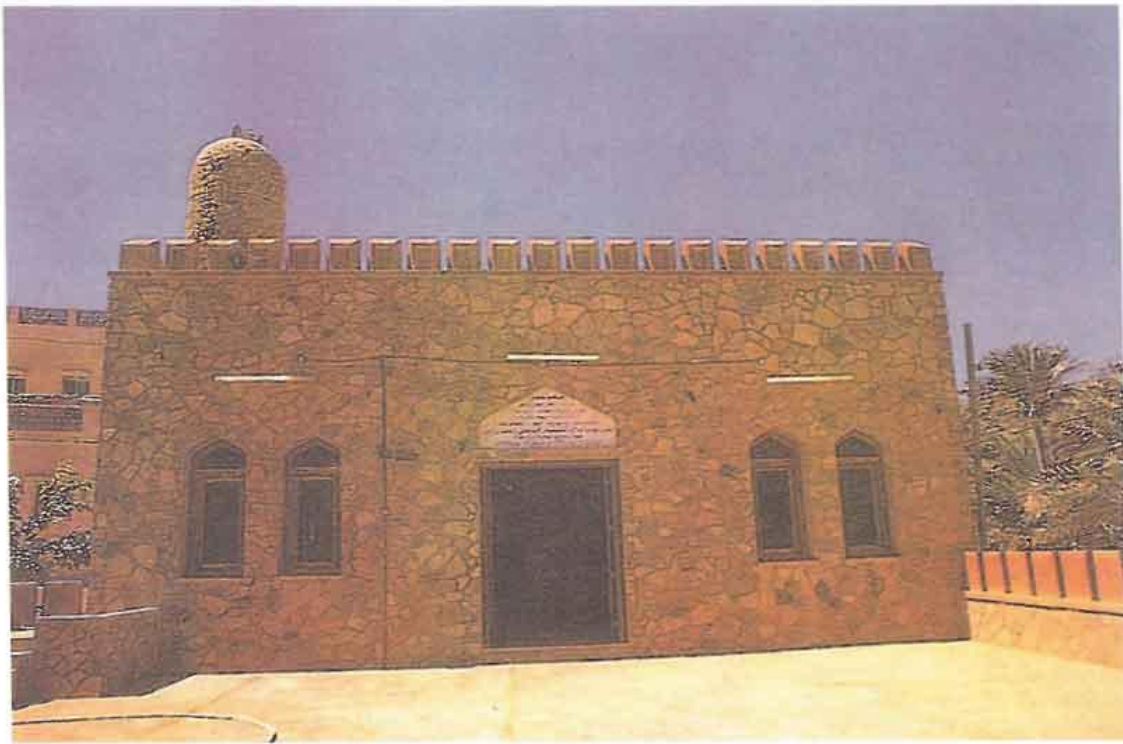
In spite of the great distances and wide deserts which separate Oman from the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, Oman was one of the first countries to embrace Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet, by acceptance rather than by conquest, a faith to which it has staunchly held over the ensuing centuries.

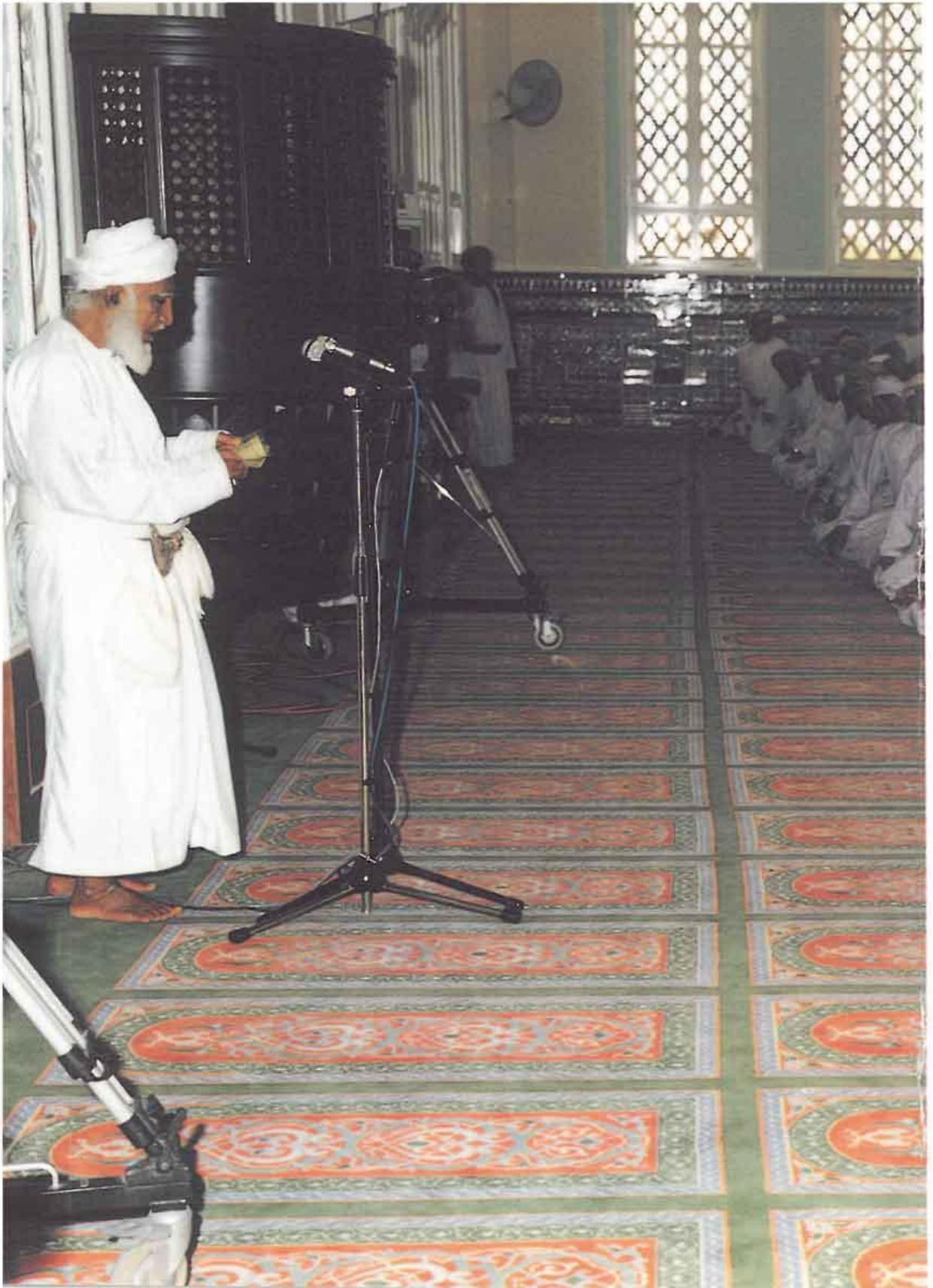
The Ministry provides some of the most important social and religious services, and endeavours to ensure justice for every citizen who has suffered injury to his person or his property, or in any of the rights guaranteed to him under the Islamic Shari'a Law or Royal Decrees. As far as social work is concerned, the Ministry provides religious services, spiritual guidance in the form of preachers and counsellors in the mosques, and the training and appointment of Imams. In addition, it takes care of the properties of orphans and bequests left to them, investing them so that they produce the best possible growth and returns. It also collects the zakat and distributes it to those entitled to it. It teaches the Holy Koran, and looks after the Waqf (plural Awqaf) properties. Zakat is a religious tax, originally representing 5 or 10 per cent of earnings from the land. Today, revenues from zakat go to the Ministry, which organises zakat revenues and expenditure. The Ministry is divided into two main sections, of which one is Justice and the other Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. Each section is headed by an Under-Secretary, who is responsible to the Minister for the running of his section, which has its own prerogatives and functions. Under the Justice section are the Shari'a Courts, of which there are 45 in Muscat and other principal towns in the Wilayats. Each court has at least one judge

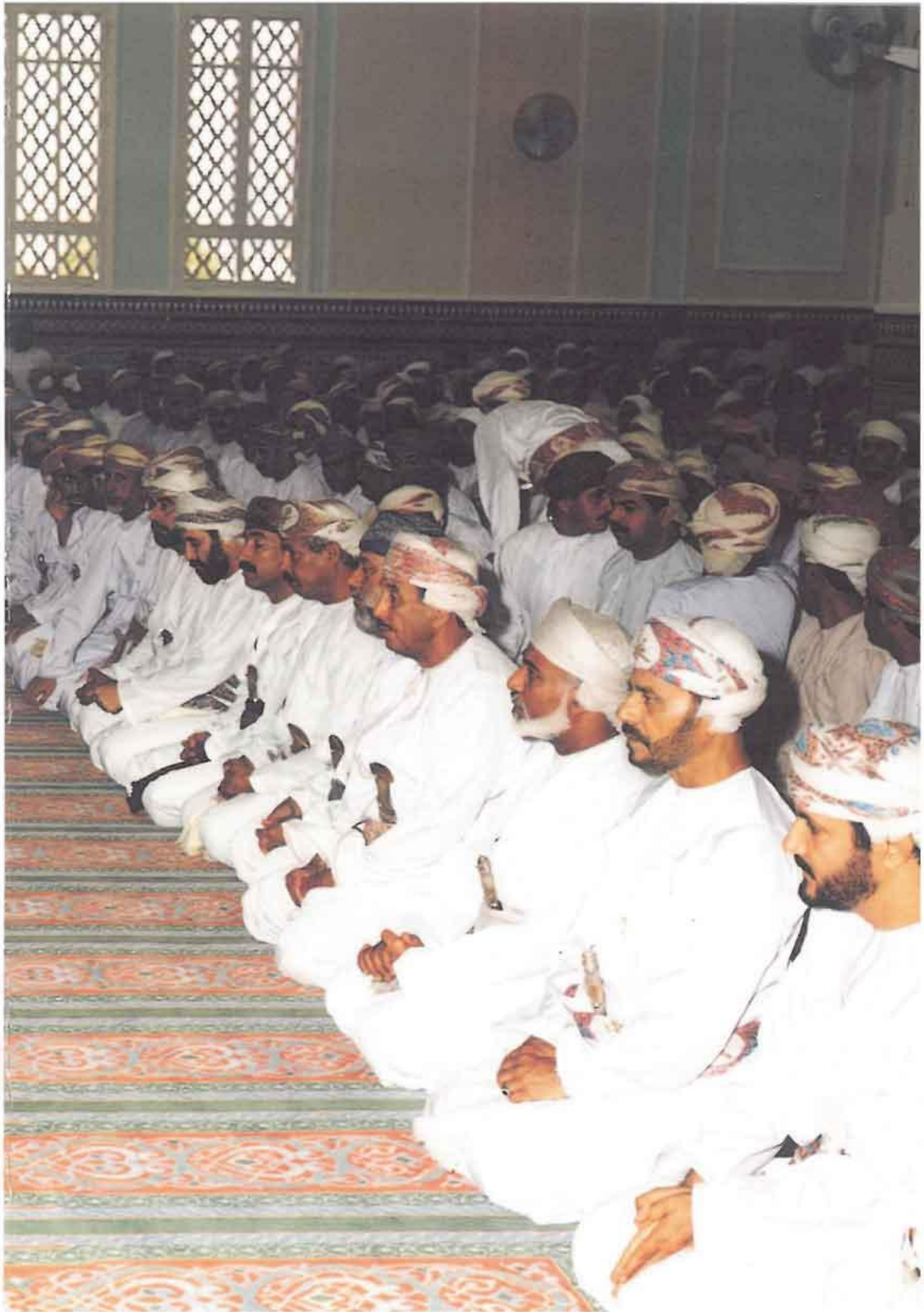
► (Overleaf)
His Majesty (third
from right) prays
with his Ministers at
the inauguration of
a new mosque.

► The oldest
Omani Mosque, in
Sumail, goes back
to the time of the
Prophet.

► Young boys
study the Holy
Koran.







(qadi), an assistant judge and his deputy, with a team of clerks responsible for documents and court records.

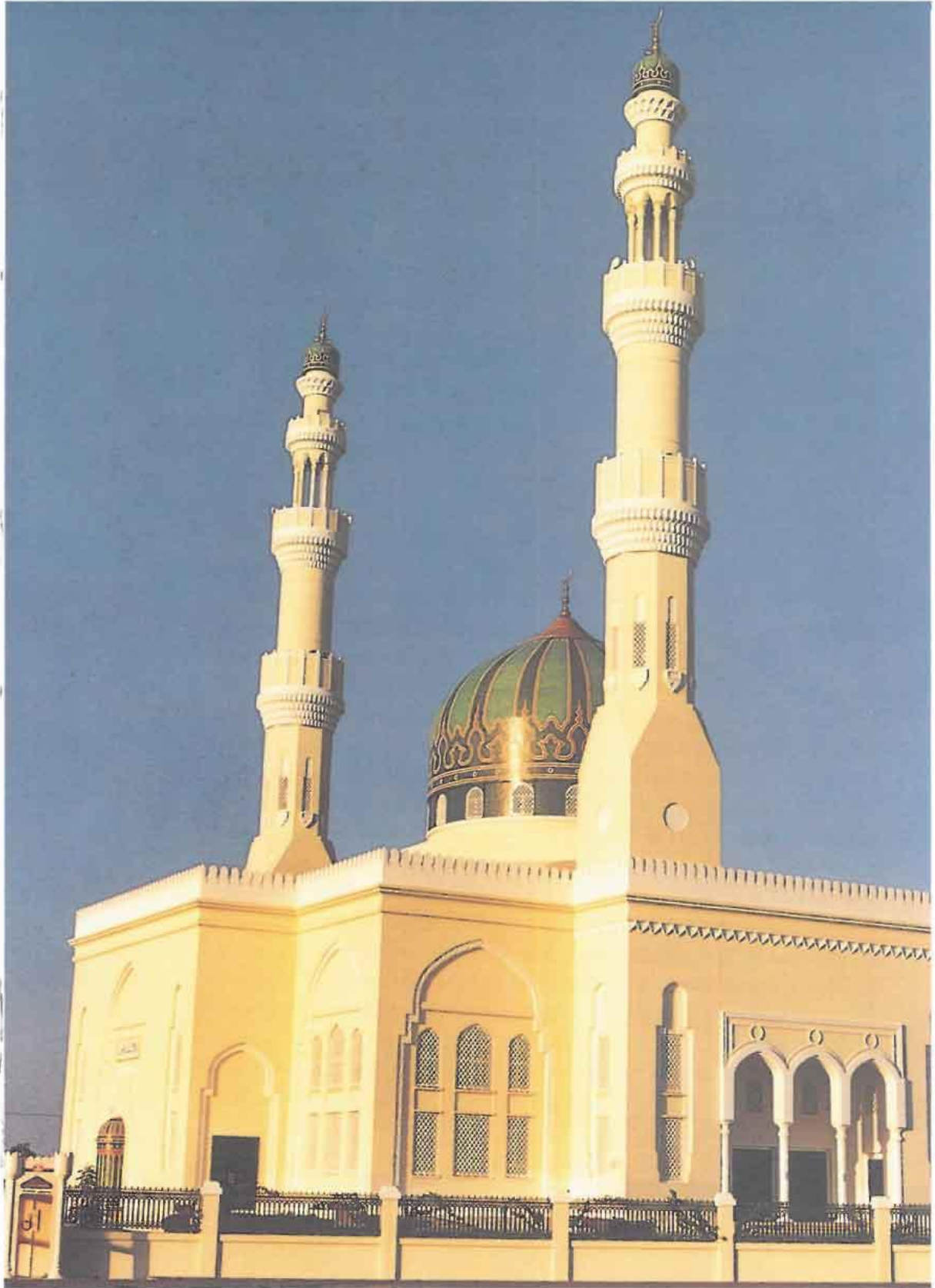
In the Shari'a Courts each judge is responsible for hearing civil and criminal cases filed by citizens against each other, reaching judgements on and solutions to disputes, and how to settle them. The Court of Appeal in Muscat considers judgements by the Shari'a courts when appeals are lodged against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

Studies at the Institute of Shari'a Jurisprudence, Counsel and Guidance, consist of two stages; students who have qualified for the Mosques' Preparatory Certificate, or at an equivalent level, undertake a general Shari'a course of three years. Those completing this stage may then continue to the specialisation stage. Alternatively, they may be appointed to appropriate posts in the Shari'a courts or the Ministry. Students are accepted for specialisation in Shari'a jurisprudence if they have attained a minimum of 60% in the examination at the previous stage. After graduation, they are appointed as deputy judges or to appropriate posts in the courts or the Ministry. Students who wish to specialise in Counsel and Guidance are accepted if they have been successful in the final examination of the Shari'a studies stage. After graduation they are appointed to Counsel and Guidance posts as Imams or preachers.

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

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

► Sultan Qaboos
Mosque,
Al Buraymi.



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

The Holy Koran schools are the basic source for those wishing to absorb the teachings of the Holy Koran and learn the elements of reading and writing, especially in the more remote areas. These schools, of which there are currently more than 500 in the Sultanate, played an important role in training many generations before secular modern schools became widespread. Today they still play a vital role and attract numbers of boys and girls each year. The Ministry also operates summer holiday centres throughout the Sultanate for teaching the Holy Koran and to ensure that students from regular schools have access to Koranic studies when the schools are in recess. During 1992 and 1993 the Ministry's projects included the construction of new mosques, the reconstruction of existing mosques and the renovation of extensions or other properties attached to mosques, and the construction of new ones. Out of a total of 139 projects 112 have been implemented and handed over to the Ministry, and 27 will be handed over this year. There are 27 projects due for implementation during the remaining period of the current Five Year Plan. These include new mosques and extensions to existing mosques, as well as renovation and maintenance work. They also include the construction of Shari'a courts in some regions, as well as maintenance work on courts and judges' residences. Plans have been drawn up to more judicial procedures so that the public can have access to them in the Wilayats in which they live. The Ministry has begun introducing the new regulations in the Muscat Shari'a Court. Appeals Departments have been set up to rule on appeals submitted to them on the basis of certain specific procedures for hearing cases. Regulations have also been issued to define the limits of the Shari'a courts' jurisdiction. The Ministry has sent a large number of judges abroad to obtain M.A. degrees in Shari'a sciences.

CIVIL SERVICE

In the course of an address during his recent 'Meet-the-People' tour, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos stressed the importance of Omanisation in both the public and private sectors. Subsequently, while quoting this address, the Minister of Civil Service, His Excellency Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi Macki, announced that it was the aim of the Government to achieve 72% Omanisation of the Government sector by the end of the current Five-Year-Plan (1991-96). This would be 6% higher than the present level, with the target for the future being 90-95% Omanisation. The Minister went on to point out that his Ministry had drawn up the first country-wide programme for training Government staff and had submitted it to the Ministry of Development for approval. The plan provides for staff training for all the 48,000 employees of the State. In connection with this, the Government has converted the Vocational Training Institutes in Salalah, Nizwa, Musana'ah, and Ibra, into Technical Industrial Colleges. Originally, priority in the Omanisation programme had been given to the lower levels, but recently attention has been turned to higher levels such as engineers, doctors and veterinary surgeons. He emphasised that there are now numerous training

▼ Young Omani women now occupy important executive posts. Here, students undergo office training.



programmes aimed at producing high level skilled personnel.

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

Until the Ministry of Civil Service was established in 1988, personnel matters were dealt with by the Establishment Bureau under the guidance of the Civil Service Commission. In October 1992, a Royal Decree was promulgated, defining the functions of the Ministry of Civil Service, which included implementation of general approved policy, proposing draft Civil Service laws, preparing standard salary and allowance regulations and schedules, planning administrative changes, preparing training plans in conjunction with the competent authorities, studying problems faced by the Civil Service, providing assistance for Government personnel departments, simplifying organisational and training procedures, ensuring application of pension and end-of-service benefit laws, and appointing graduates to suitable posts compatible with their qualifications, and serving the State's development goals.

The Ministry is responsible for ensuring that all Government departments comply with Civil Service Laws and regulations, and follows up their implementation to ensure that they meet the purpose for which they are intended. The Ministry appoints university graduates, and those with similar qualifications, to Government posts. It is also responsible for the initiation of academic and field researches which lead to improvement in the services and help in overcoming problems in the implementation of the Human Resources Development Plans.

The Ministry of Civil Service's Directorate-General of Pensions monitors the circumstances of retired employees and those entitled to retirement pensions under the Pensions and End-of-Service Benefit Law. Computerisation has recently been introduced to enable pensioners to receive their pensions with the minimum of inconvenience, and all pensioners' file details were computerised by the end of 1992.

The Fourth Five-Year-Plan provides for the construction of a single permanent Ministry of Civil Service building. Construction is currently

under way at a site in Al Khuwair, and is expected to be completed by the target date, the end of January 1995.

Great care is being taken to avoid increasing the number of civil servants without affecting efficiency. This is mainly intended to curb redundancy and to utilise the existing manpower to the full extent. New methods and techniques for performance evaluation have been introduced. Individual performance is evaluated rationally on the basis of achievements and special training programmes by way of enhancing overall performance.

One of the main objectives in the administrative reform has been the introduction of position classification, approved by the Council of Ministers. The first phase of outlining the legal framework for the project has been fulfilled. The scheme is to be implemented centrally in collaboration with the different units, and is aimed at generating a unified system applicable to the whole Civil Service. The system selected is a combination of the advantages of different evaluation methods to suit the needs of the civil system in the Sultanate. Further steps are being carried out, including the formulation of the different necessary forms, training of Omani executives in the field of position classification, and collecting data regarding present positions, titles and functions, as necessary steps for the second stage of evaluating positions. The Ministry has introduced a new technique for processing personnel information by implementing the human resources database for meeting Civil Service needs. The data provided covers a wide range of information; hence the Ministry is to become the manager of the Civil Service 'memory' and records in all activities pertaining to personnel management.

Omanisation Plan

The aim of the Omanisation programme, which was introduced in 1992, is to replace expatriates with Omanis, when the latter are qualified to do so, and without affecting standards of efficiency. The sum of RO 10 million was allotted in the 1991-95 development budget to the Omanisation Plan. Accordingly, the Technical Office of the Ministry was established to implement the Plan, and has set out systematic procedures for the replacement of expatriates by Omanis.

The guidelines for Omanisation are:-

1. candidates for higher qualifications or specialised training are to be selected by competitive examinations;
2. those requiring training or education abroad should be sent to reputable institutes of learning;

3. the required academic qualifications or relevant training in different fields of specialisation are to be based on the job description of the positions to Omanis on the successful completion of their studies;
4. In some cases, training will be followed by a period understudying the expatriate before taking over.

It was announced at the end of 1992 that 161,000 new jobs would be generated for Omani nationals by the end of 1995. During the Fourth Five-Year-Plan (1991-96) period the national labour force is expected to grow at an annual rate of 8.3% to 368,000 by the end of 1995.

The Institute of Public Administration

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

Currently, the academic sections of the IPA consist of the Departments of Personnel Management, Local Administration, Financial Management, Organisation and Methods, Documentation and Publications, English language, Research and Consultancy, Clerical Training and Computers.

During the period 1989-90, the IPA introduced a programme for training senior servants, including Under-Secretaries and Directors-General, in addition to training lower-level personnel. This programme synchronised with the beginning of the current Fourth Five-Year-Plan, and takes into account the Omanisation of the Civil Service now under way. Over 1,000 personnel are being trained, through fifty different courses, with a view to revamping the public administrative system and providing a more efficient and productive Civil Service. The programme also includes courses for improving the proficiency of civil servants in the English language.

In a similar vein, special emphasis has been placed on offering long-term diploma courses in the fields of accountancy and statistics.

Continuous effort has been made to enhance the professional competence of Omanis in both the private and public sectors to accelerate Omanisation. Apart from these diplomas, IPA is considering other long-term courses in a number of related fields according to the needs of the labour market.

In the face of the developing overall situation, it has become imperative for IPA to keep abreast of new trends in the areas of public administration. Thus, great emphasis has been placed on strengthening ties with similar institutions at the Arab and International level. An example of this was two joint programmes with the Royal Institute of Public Administration (RIPA) on the analysis of training needs during 1992.

In addition to its training programmes, IPA also provides research and consultancy services. These are two essential factors for identifying, assessing and solving administrative problems. IPA maintains a specialised library for the academic staff, the regular participants in IPA programmes and researchers into administrative development. The library keeps close touch with publishers, acquires new publications, and subscribes to periodicals, journals and newspapers. It has a collection of 13,600 books, of which 10,500 are in Arabic and 3,100 are in English. IPA also has 6,500 documents, of which 5,500 are in Arabic and 1,000 in English. The documentation and publication section also has the responsibility for publishing the journal 'Al-Edari', a specialised periodical in administrative sciences. It is intended that, after the completion of its new buildings, IPA will be in a position to increase and strengthen its manpower capabilities and extend its activities to meet a variety of training needs in Muscat and the regions.

The National Census

The first-ever National Census was carried out in the Sultanate of Oman in the first half of December last year. This followed a pilot census which was carried out a year previously. About 3,500 enumerators were trained to carry out the census. The count covered all Omani citizens and expatriates, as well as establishments of all kinds. In this connection, the Ministry of Civil Service embarked on a course for civil servants in accountancy and census. The project received help from the UN Population Fund with which a technical agreement was signed. Help was also provided by the Omani-American Joint Commission and the Population Census of the USA. With the establishment of a new Ministry of Development, responsibility for the census is in the hands of this new Ministry.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational Training is central to the Government's policy of Omanisation. According to the latest statistics, there are 400,000 expatriates living and working in the Sultanate. This represents approximately 25% of the overall population. It was with the aim of rectifying this situation that the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) was established at the end of 1991. Much has changed since 1970, when there was only one training centre for technicians in the Sultanate, which was originally set up by PDO. In 1978, the Education and Vocational Training Council was founded, with the aim of developing a national workforce to provide the necessary skilled labour for the national economy. The Vocational Training Authority, previously part of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, became a separate entity in 1991 under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs.

In pursuance of its goal of reducing the expatriate labour force, firstly to 15% of the total labour force, and ultimately to 10%, as recently announced by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the VTA has prepared a range of training programmes, plans and policies to develop the capabilities of the national workforce, administratively and technically, to reach the Omanisation objectives. The objectives are laid down in the policies adopted by the Higher Committee for Vocational Training and Labour and the VTA's board of directors.

Oman Technical Industrial College (OTIC)

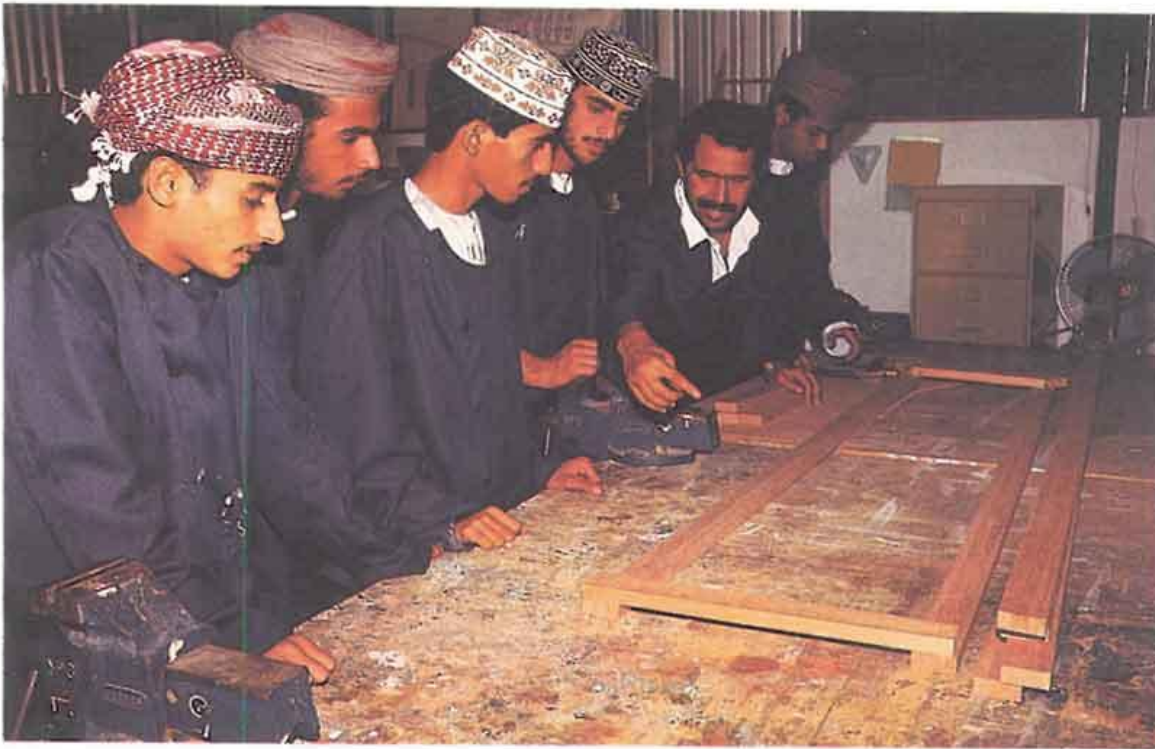
Oman Technical Industrial College is one of VTA's academic and training flagships, providing excellent opportunities for promising young Omanis who are heading for technical and administrative careers. OTIC was established in 1984 at Al Khuwair near Muscat to international specifications, as an institute of higher education and training. Since then, it has trained young Omanis, both male and female, to high levels of skills and proficiency.

At the beginning of the current academic year, 1993/94, OTIC had an intake of 510 male and female students, with a further intake in March this year. As a result of recent extensions to the

College, it was able to increase its intake for the current academic year to 500 students. Last year saw the graduation of the eight batch of students from the college – a total of 199. The first batch of students graduated in 1987. Between then and 1993, 1,320 students qualified in a range of technical and commercial disciplines, 800 of them male and 520 female. 226 students are expected to graduate in the latter half of this year.

The subjects taught at the College include technical disciplines such as computer studies, mathematics, science and medical laboratory work, electrical engineering, electronics, construction engineering and mechanical engineering. Commercial disciplines include book-keeping, general administration, insurance and marketing. OTIC's courses last for two academic years, spread over four sixteen-week terms and two six-week periods of practical training at public and private sector establishments. OTIC has laboratories and workshops to provide students with practical training in their respective disciplines.

In a drive to furnish the labour market with skilled and semi-skilled Omani manpower, and to meet the national economic demands, the Vocational Training Institutes in Ibri, Saham, Seeb, Sur and Salalah, are to be restructured as Vocational Training Centres during the course of 1994. This will extend to the trainees' necessary flexibility in the choice of the courses which commence in October 1994. It has been explained that the previous system could not be adapted to suit the needs of the trainees. Now, with a foundation course of six months, incorporating the basic requirements of every specialisation in the technical field, the trainee can opt for a semi-skilled job of his choice. With this exposure, if he later decides to master any specific technical subject, the doors of VTC will be open to him for various specialisation courses. This will help the candidate understand the problems and study the subject accordingly. It will also encourage the feeling that training is linked to the private companies and is not separate. Besides, the VTC will not demand any qualifications from the trainees, except their physical and mental fitness. Omanis, above the age of fifteen, aspiring to take up any course, will only have to pass the preliminary interview at the Centres.



Since the courses offered are technical, and require physical capability to handle heavy machinery, the education will focus on the Omani male. The continuous programme, including the foundation, will extend up to two and a half years, depending on the course taken. In addition to the foundation course, which is general for every specialisation, there will be automotive, carpentry, construction, electronics and mechanical departments. Two certificates will be issued by the Vocational Training Authority, one after the foundation course, which equips the trainee to be a semi-skilled worker, and the other, after the completion of the entire course, qualifying him as a skilled professional.

The Authority strongly believes that Omani women have a major contribution to make to the life of their community. This is the principal motive for the evening courses in Arabic and English typing, secretarial skills, computers and other technical subjects at the Training Centres. Women are also well represented at OTIC and on courses at private Institutes and in on-the-job training.

At present, the Authority is endeavouring, through all available channels, to guarantee job opportunities for graduates of OTIC and Vocational Training Centres by sending out schedules containing details of the numbers, names and specialisations of future graduates. Where the public sector is concerned, these are sent to the Ministry of Civil Service; for the private sector they are sent to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This policy should greatly assist the policy of Omanisation, and enable young Omanis to find jobs and gain experience in every area of work.

◀ Technicians of
the future.
◀ Young Omanis
developing
their skills at the
Technical Training
Institutes.



DEVELOPMENT

A new Ministry of Development was established at the beginning of 1994. One of the first tasks of the Minister, H.E. Mohamed bin Mousa Al Yousef, was a visit to Holland to deliver a speech directed at possible foreign investors in major forthcoming projects in the Sultanate of Oman. He stressed the advantages offered of interest free loans for periods of 10 to 20 years. Soft loans through the Oman Development Bank, preferential treatment including exemption from customs duties for imported equipment and raw materials, tax holidays for the first five years, possibly extended for a further five years. Projects include a giant Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project, a power and desalination project, and a sewage system project. Studies have been completed for a large, new commercial port where the Port Authority of Rotterdam is giving a helping hand. Acting as a bridge to South East Asia, the Oman Oil Company is planning a \$3 billion project for an oil pipeline carrying natural gas to India across the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Two refineries are to be set up in India, as well as a pipeline project to bring crude oil from the rich oilfields of Kazakhstan and the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean.

The Minister also had discussions with top officials of Royal Dutch Shell about the prevailing world price of oil, which is much too low. A price of between \$15 and \$18 would be desirable. If prices remain at their present low level, social repercussions in the Arab world were to be expected. A reduction in oil production of 1.5 million barrels a day by OPEC members would solve the problem. An important first task for the Ministry has been the conduct of the first National Census in the Sultanate, which puts Oman ahead of neighbouring States in this field, despite the fact that the country is a relative newcomer.

The first National Population Census

Probably the most important achievement of 1993 was the General Census of the population, homes and installations, which was carried out on the instructions of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Preparations for the Census began nearly two years ago, when the Ministry began mobilising its material and

human resources, and established the required organisation and administrative systems. These preparations have, as can be seen, led to the success of the project.

Under the slogan "The Census in the Service of Overall Development", the end of 1993 saw the completion of the actual counting phase of the Census, with the result that, as His Majesty has said, it was able to add its contribution to the country's economical and social development.

This success was achieved thanks to the combined efforts of the various Government organisations and authorities together with the interested co-operation of citizens and residents, following intensive preparations carried out by the Ministry of Development's Census Department over the previous two years.

The Ministry was able to prepare and publish the preliminary results of the Census before the end of 1993; these results included the total numbers of inhabitants, homes and families in each Wilayat. The Ministry also drew up a plan to produce the detailed results as soon as possible. Under this plan details of the demographic composition and features will be published step-by-step and will be complete and ready for use during the final quarter of this year, i.e. less than one year after the Census was carried out. The announcement of the first Census results marked the end of a long period in which the planning organisations and government administrative authorities had to depend on estimates. From now on it becomes possible to rely on accurate population statistics which reflect the actual situation within the country. Soon, when preparation for the 5th Five-Year Development Plan begins, the planning staff will find that they have access to a complete set of data on the population of the Sultanate for the first time ever, enabling them to produce more accurate plans in respect of the country's overall development.

Data and Documentation Centre

The launching of the Data and Documentation Centre in 1993 was another important achievement related to the Census. Its function is to complete the database in accordance with the latest available technology. It is responsible for collecting, classifying and publishing information aimed at supporting economic and social development efforts, and serving Government and pri-





vate sector employees, as well as individual researchers and students. The Centre comprises three sections as follows:

1. The library, which includes a bibliographical database in Arabic and English, information, periodicals and borrowing facilities. During the next phase the Ministry is to link its library system to the Sultanate's other bibliography systems, and with leading world libraries, such as the US Congress Library, the British Library and others. It will also have facilities for information exchange.
2. The Document Circulation Section, which is divided into two sub-sections for, firstly, documentation of decisions and decrees, and secondly for electronic mail.

During this year and next the Ministry expects to complete the remaining phases of the system, with the addition of other subjects such as minutes of meetings, circulars and internal decisions, and by linking the Ministry to the other Ministries and Government departments which will enable them to utilise its computer resources.

3. Social and Economic Indicators Section

This Section comprises the following:

- a) Economic and social indicators.
- b) Publication of monthly bulletins
- c) Preparation of schedules for the annual statistics publication.
- d) Publication of a bulletin of indicators for higher authorities.
- e) Direct information system.
- f) Indirect information system.

The Ministry hopes progressively to achieve the following next year and thereafter:

- a) Linking the section to all Government units, so that information from the competent authorities can be included.
- b) Linking it to international databanks, such as the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia, so that information can be exchanged with them.

A number of important specific projects were launched last year and are expected to be completed this year. They include:

- a) A geographical databank
- b) A civil registration system.
- c) A databank.

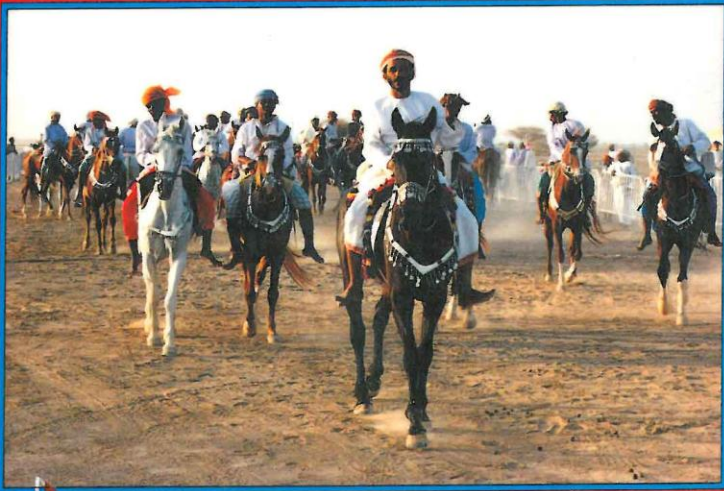
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