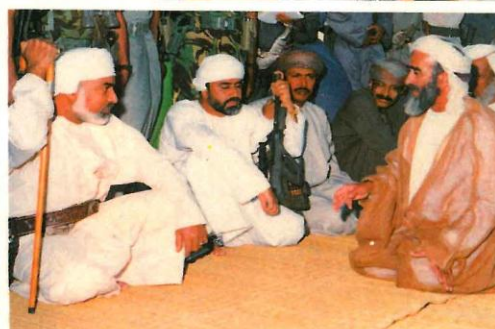
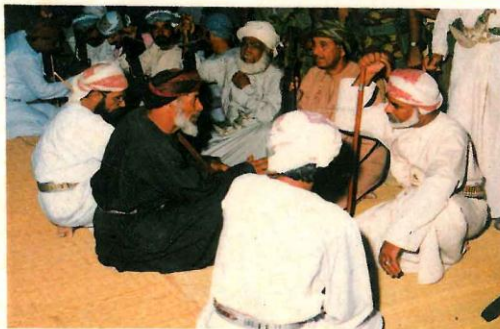
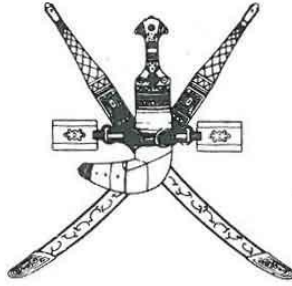


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Ministry of Information

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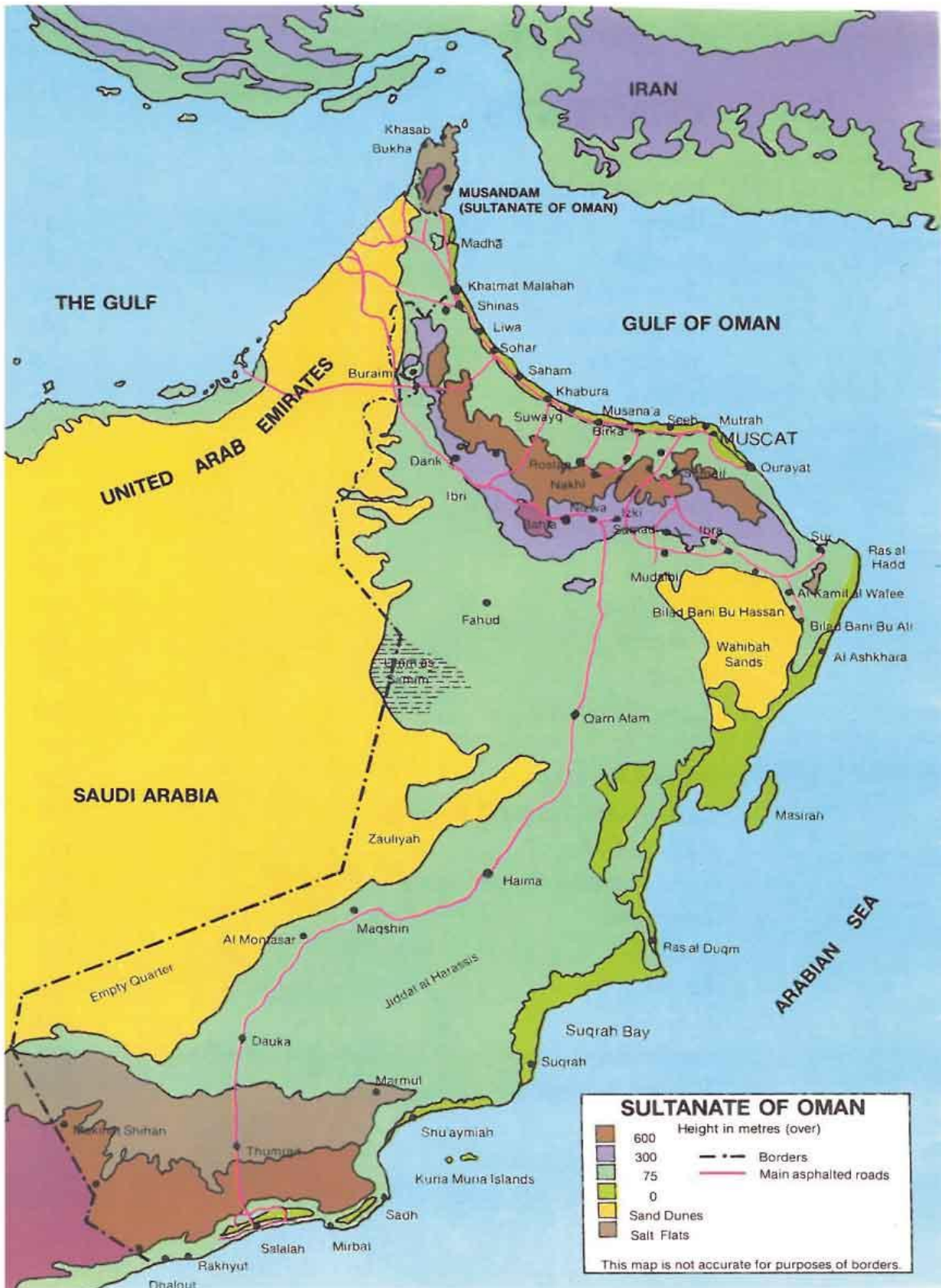
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*His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said
(Photograph: Mohamed Mustafa)*

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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 1990, 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 20 years ago none of this existed. Any Omani will tell him that all this transformation is due to the inspiration and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

His Majesty was born in Salalah in Dhofar, the southern region of Oman, on 18th November 1940. He is eighth in the direct line of the Al Busaid Dynasty, which was founded in 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 spent in studying Islam and the cultural and historical past of his country and people.

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



His Majesty with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt who arrived in Muscat on a visit which demonstrated the warm relations between the two countries (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)

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

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

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



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos welcomes Chinese president, Yang Shangkun, on his arrival in the Sultanate (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)

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

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

His Majesty also pressed on with development planning. A list of priorities were carefully formulated; wasteful prestige projects were not considered. Advancement has been achieved through a series of Five Year Plans, of which the third is being completed this year.



His Majesty presents a ceremonial sword to an officer of the Royal Yacht Squadron during the celebration marking the tenth anniversary (Photo: Mohamed Elustafa)



His Majesty takes a keen interest in Oman's armed forces. Here, he tests a heavy machine gun during exercises by the Royal Guard of Oman (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)

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

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



His Majesty inaugurates Sultan Qaboos University Hospital: a teaching hospital to the highest world standards and a gift from His Majesty to his people (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)

out the duties and obligations of the current stage of development".

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

In his speeches and public statements to his people during the past year, His Majesty has continued to place great emphasis and importance on diversifying Oman's economy away from total dependence on oil revenues. These 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



His Majesty with His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan at Al Hisn Palace in Salalah during the latter's private visit to the Sultanate (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)

market but also as a means of providing more career opportunities for Oman's graduates and school leavers.

Thus, in his address to the Nation on National Day last year, His Majesty commended the great efforts his Government and people had made in answer to his call for the development of the agriculture and fisheries industries as part of this sustained drive. Referring to the high importance of preserving Oman's ancient cultural heritage and traditional crafts, His Majesty said "In pursuance of this, we must ensure that we have a comprehensive social and economic framework within which we can demonstrate the high importance of these crafts. We must develop our economy, diversify the exploitation of our resources, and thus continue to improve the standard of living of our people. At the same time, it is the duty of us all continuously to bear in mind that this progress must be built on the foundations of our great inherited traditions and customs in accordance with the circumstances of the times in which we live. Thus will fruit be borne for this generation and those generations still to come."



*His Majesty meets the Senegalese President, Abdou Diouf, who was on a private visit to the Sultanate
(Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)*

His Majesty has continually stressed the need for Omanis to fit themselves to take over work at present done by expatriates, and reminded employers that it was their duty to provide opportunities to enable the Omani people to do so.

As Chairman for this year of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, His Majesty warmly welcomed his brother heads of State to the Council's 10th Summit meeting which took place in Muscat last December and, in his address, reviewed the progress that had been made by the Council's efforts in working for peace and stability in the region, notably to secure a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Iraq-Iran conflict. He also reaffirmed his determination to support the establishment of legitimacy and the efforts to bring about an internal reconciliation in Lebanon, and the just cause and struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and self-determination.

His Majesty, in referring to the momentous political and economic developments taking place in the world, said that, in looking



His Majesty bids farewell to President Arafat of the State of Palestine at the conclusion of the latter's visit to the Sultanate (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)

forward to these new horizons, the Council must, have "a progressive role and effective presence" in this changing world. "We must positively associate ourselves with these changes, in the service of our peoples". The Council was determined to participate in promoting peace and cooperation at all international levels.

During the past year, His Majesty has continued to play an active role in international diplomacy, welcoming the President of China who arrived in Oman for a three-day visit last December, and Yasser Arafat, President of the State of Palestine, the following month, with whom he exchanged views on the Palestinian situation; at the end of their talks His Majesty announced his consent to the opening of a Palestinian Embassy in the Sultanate. In February, His Majesty held official talks with His Highness the Emir of Kuwait at Al Alam Palace, Muscat. Their discussions covered Arab and international developments within both bilateral and inter-AGCC relations.

An historic event in bilateral affairs took place in March with the signing of an agreement demarcating the border between their two countries by His Majesty and His Majesty King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. In his speech at the signing, warmly welcoming the Agreement, His Majesty King Fahd described His Majesty the Sultan as "a great Arab leader and thinker", during whose reign Omani-Saudi relations had achieved a peak of excellence.

Also, in March His Majesty made his extensive annual 'Meet-the-People' tour of the Sultanate, travelling hundreds of miles to some of Oman's remotest areas, to talk to his people personally and to discuss their problems and needs with them face-to-face. His people took the opportunity of this year's tour to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of his accession in demonstrations of loyalty and in performing traditional dances and other entertainments at the simple encampments where His Majesty stayed.

HISTORY

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

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

Frankincense, the aromatic gum used in ancient Egyptian and European rites, and traditionally offered by the Queen 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



Ahmed ibn Na'man, Oman's first envoy to the United States in 1840

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



'Sohar' – replica of Sindbad's dhow – that is now permanently on display in Al Bustan, near Muscat after its scientific and historic voyage to Gaungzhou in China

Oman. Later, the Azd tribal group, from which the present ruling family is descended, entered Oman. Then Oman was under the rule of the Persian, 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 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



Fort Mirani and the modern offices of the Diwan of Royal Court – fine examples of the Sultanate's carefully preserved traditional architecture

Hope, finding a sea route to India – ironically being guided by the famous Omani navigator Ahmad bin Majid – a Portuguese fleet brutally sacked Muscat and within a year the Portuguese flag flew all along the coast.

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

Sayyid Said bin Sultan is an historically prominent Omani ruler who exercised power during the period 1807-1856. During this time Oman's influence reached Zanzibar and other parts of East Africa in addition to provinces in Persia and Baluchistan. Muscat became an important commercial centre and meeting point for the entire Gulf area. Sayyid Said concentrated his efforts on developing and improving his country's commerce and economy. It was Sayyid



Sumhura (Khor Rori), on the Dhofar coast, where archaeological finds have revealed trade links with the Roman Empire, based on frankincense

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 historical glories and opened a new chapter of development, prosperity, and social and economic progress.

GEOGRAPHY

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

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

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

To the west Oman borders Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates; to the south, 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.



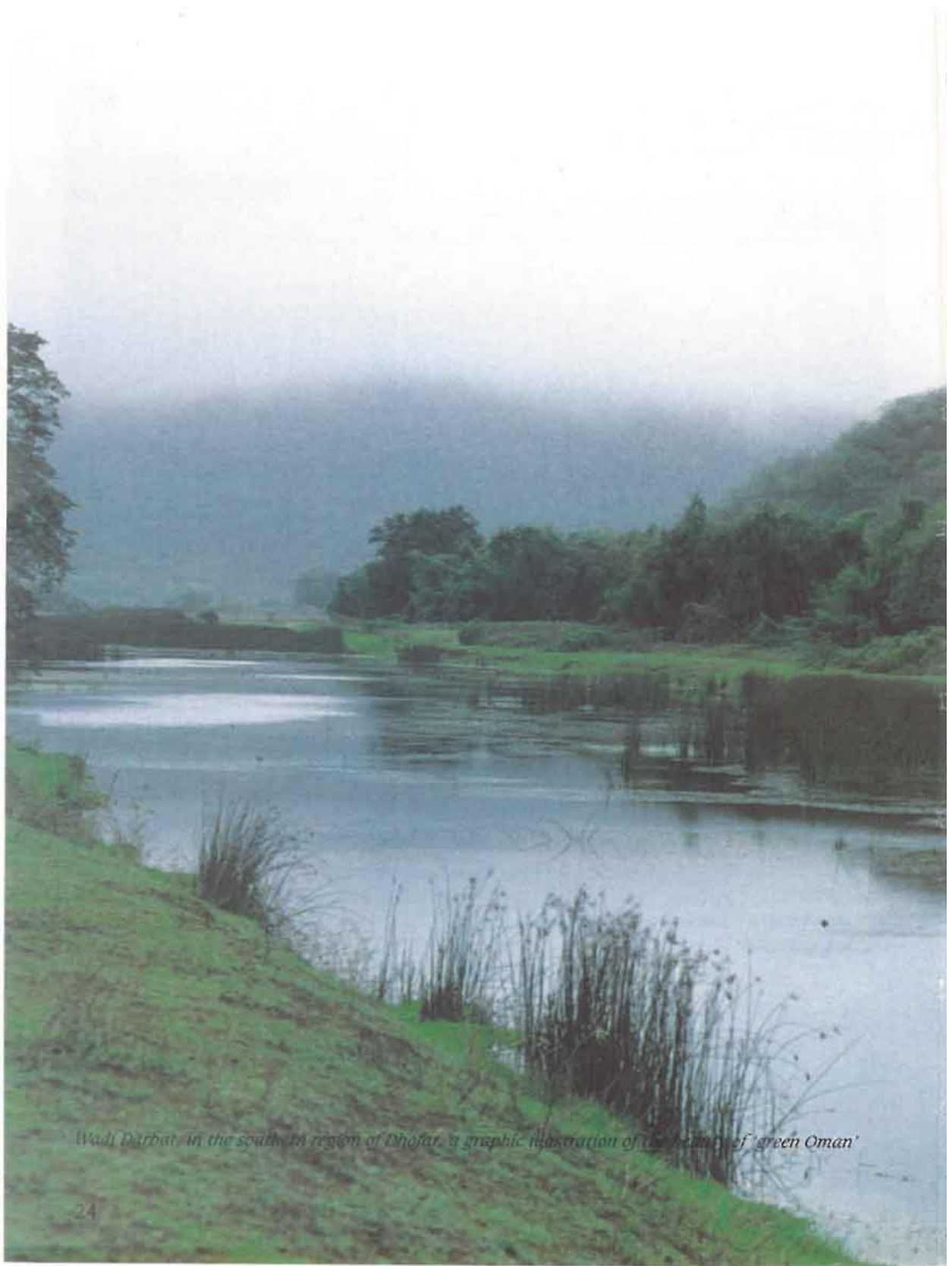
The majestic Jebel Musandam, commanding the vital Strait of Hormuz through which much of the world's oil supplies flow. The road in the foreground is an impressive testimony to the skill of engineers of the Sultan's Armed Forces

Batinah Plain

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

Western Hajr ('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.



Wadi Darbat, in the southern region of Dhofar, a graphic illustration of the beauty of 'green Oman'



The Interior (Al Joof)

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

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

Barr-al-Hekman

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



The Wahiba Sands of Eastern Oman, one of the most romantically beautiful parts of the Sultanate

Southern Region (Dhofar)

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

The Musandam

Separated from the rest of Oman by part of the United Arab Emirates, this is the northernmost part of the Sultanate. Its rugged mountains rise up to 1,800 metres above sea level and the coast which juts into the Strait of Hormuz, has a spectacular, fjord-like

look. The main towns are: Khasab, Bayah, Mudha, Bukha, Kumzar and Lima.

Regions

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

Climate

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

Population

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

Omani society consists of four basic categories: the people of the sea who live by fishing, seafaring and trading; the agriculturalists of the Batinah coast and the South, and those of the Interior who employ the aflaaj system of irrigation; the mountain people of Dhofar and the Musandam; and the Bedouin of the desert areas. The population is estimated at 2 millions.

GOVERNMENT

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

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

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

The Cabinet of Ministers consists of:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



His Majesty presides over his Cabinet (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)



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

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

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

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

His Excellency Sayyid Al Mutasim bin Hamoud al Busaidi,
Minister of Labour and Vocational Training.

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

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

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

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

His Excellency Sheikh Mohamed 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 Wali 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 to the Cabinet.

His Excellency Sheikh Amer bin Shwain al Hosni,
Minister of Regional Municipalities.

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

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

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

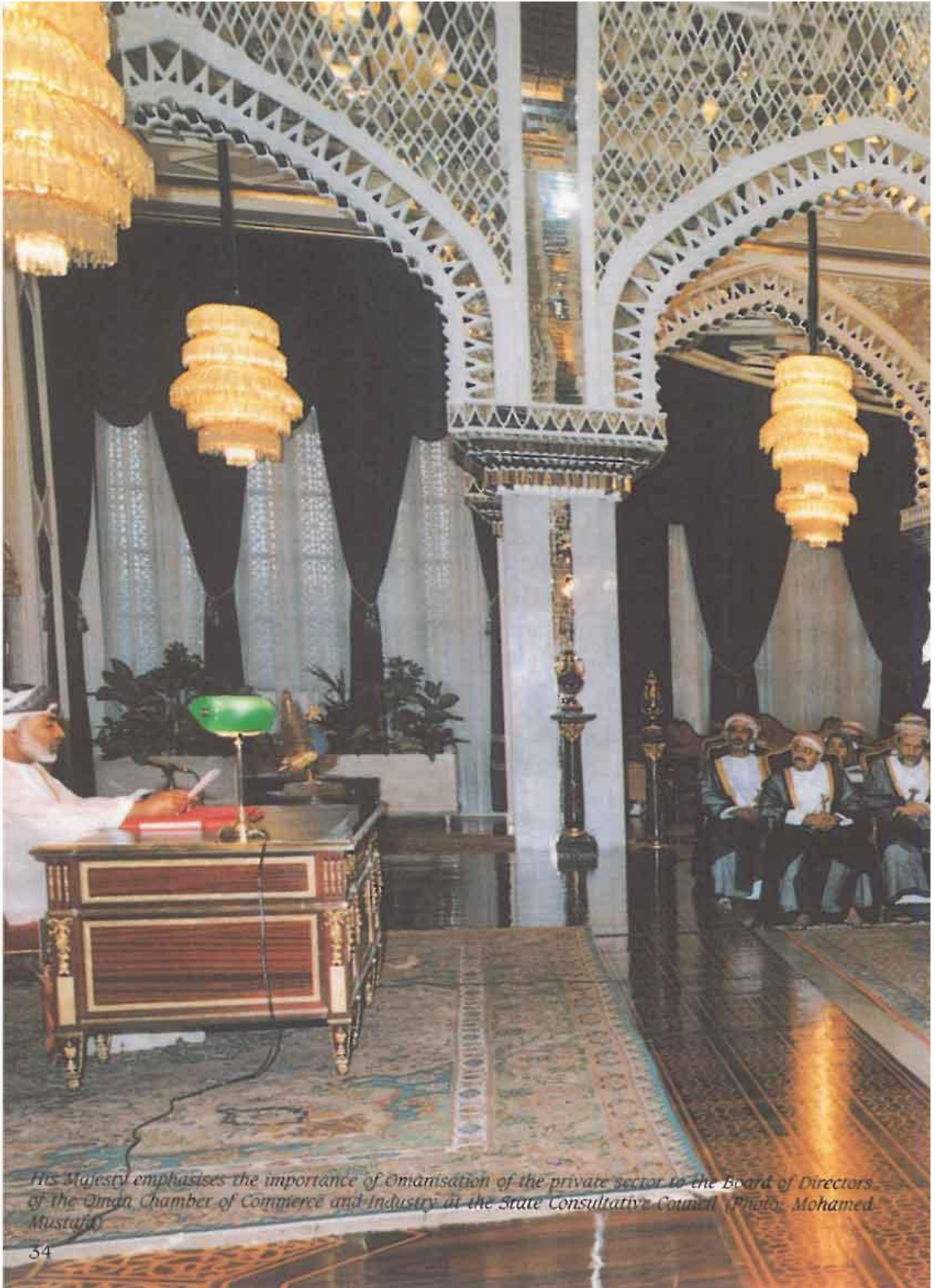
The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs is responsible for:

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

State Consultative Council

The State Consultative Council was established in October 1981 by Royal Decree. The purpose of its inception was to implement the principle of consultation and develop the State's basic consultative machinery in such a way as to produce the maximum of effective popular participation in the Government's economic and social plans. It was particularly intended that this participation should enable the Omani people to directly contribute to the realisation of their needs and ambitions in the areas of development that the country is undertaking.

The Royal Decree granted the State Consultative Council corporate status and financial and administrative independence and designated its headquarters in Muscat. Its members were appointed from both the Government and non-Government sectors. Originally there were 45 members of the Council, but this was later increased to 55. Of these, 18 are from the Government sector and 25 from the regions with the remainder from the private sector. The main





conditions for membership of the Council are that the member should be of Omani nationality, not less than thirty years of age on the date of his appointment, and of a sound experience and judgement. Membership is for a period of two years, and on expiry of this term all or some of the members may be reappointed for a further term or terms. The Council holds three sessions per year during the first week of January, May and October. Council decisions are issued on the basis of a two-thirds majority of the votes of members present. Council sessions are closed and may only be attended by Council members, the General Secretary and those Government officials authorised by the Council. The Council's views on the subjects brought before it are issued in the form of recommendations which the President of the Council submits to His Majesty the Sultan.

The jurisdiction and powers of the Council are defined as being in the following areas:-

- (a) Expressing opinions on the economic and social laws in force in the Sultanate.
- (b) Expressing opinions on general development policy put before it by the Government for discussion, and making recommendations in that connection.
- (c) Suggesting steps that the Government should take in areas of development which it has not previously embarked upon.
- (d) Studying economic and social problems faced by the private sector, and recommending appropriate solutions.
- (e) Expressing opinions on other matters referred to it by His Majesty the Sultan.

Last year the following subjects were discussed by the Council and the resulting recommendations forwarded to His Majesty the Sultan:-

- 1 – The development of traditional crafts.
- 2 – The development of the Civil Service law.
- 3 – Providing drinking water and developing its sources in all regions of the Sultanate.

Additionally the Council was charged by His Majesty the Sultan to carry out a study on the progress of Omanisation in the Government and Private sectors through a symposium held in January 1989. Also, in accordance with a Directive from

His Majesty, the Council prepared an in-depth study of the effects of proposals to change the system of weekly working days and holidays.

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 Ministers and other officials. In addition, some of the Councils include prominent members of the community.

Some of these Councils are:

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

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

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

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

The Council for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution which is responsible for conserving the environment and combating pollution.

Other Councils are:

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



His Majesty discusses a point during his annual 'Meet-the-People' tour (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)



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 Chairman.

In addition to whom there are the following Members:

His Excellency the Minister of Regional Municipalities.

His Excellency the Minister of Civil Service.

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

These procedures may be summarised as follows:

Before putting any project out to general tender the Board thoroughly checks the relevant documents and contracts – in coordination with the Government body concerned – to ensure that they are acceptable. In doing so it has the right to ask for assistance from experts, who may be employees of the State or other Omani or non-Omani technical personnel, either within the Sultanate or abroad. This stage of 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

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

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

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

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



His Majesty presides over the 10th GCC Summit meeting held in Muscat, December 1989 (Photo: Mohamed Mustafa)

industrial development, a unified policy for the conservation of the environment and mutual aims and methods for the spread of education. His Majesty also chaired the GCC's tenth Summit which further carried forward the notable successes already achieved in brotherly cooperation.

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

The Sultanate has consistently backed legitimacy in Lebanon and

expressed the hope that the political crisis there can be ended in order to restore stability and security to all parts of that country.

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

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

Oman's relations with Western and Eastern European countries have been steadily growing in all fields, with emphasis on the economic sphere. Diplomatic relations with a large number of Western and Eastern European countries have been established through resident and non-resident diplomatic representatives. Good relations are also maintained with many countries in North and South America.

A major successful step, reflecting the Sultanate's desire to broaden its circle of friends was the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1985 and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1988. These latter friendly ties and those which already existed with the Yemen Arab Republic naturally continue with the now united Yemen. In January 1990 the Government approved the opening of a Palestinian Embassy in the Sultanate. President Yasser Arafat visited Oman in the same month. Later this year diplomatic relations were established with Hungary and Bulgaria.

In October 1987, the new Sultan Qaboos bin Said Research Centre of the Middle East Institute in Washington was officially dedicated



His Majesty and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahad of Saudi Arabia, sign an historic agreement demarcating the border between the two countries (Photo: Mohamed Mustafá)

by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah. The Centre sponsors lectures, research projects and academic exchange programmes and develops its library collection of books and documents about Oman and its neighbours.

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

The 10th Summit of the AGCC was held in Muscat last December under the chairmanship of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. In his address at the closing session His Majesty confirmed the support of

the AGCC for the UN in its efforts to secure a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Iraq-Iran conflict, its support for legitimacy in Lebanon by achieving national reconciliation between the Lebanese factions, and its determination to stand beside the Palestinian people in their just cause and legitimate struggle for freedom and self-determination.

In May 1990 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos hailed the announcement of the border demarcation agreement reached with Saudi Arabia, and expressed his satisfaction with the warm relations between the two countries.

An historic conference was held in Muscat in March this year between the Foreign Ministers of the European Community and the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council to explore ways of improving commercial relations between the two communities. One of the most important subjects for discussion was the question of tariffs on the import into the EC countries of petro-chemicals and some other industrial products from the AGCC countries. At the conclusion of the conference, a joint communique was issued instructing the Joint Cooperation Committee to give high priority to cooperation measures in a number of specific sectors, in particular industry, trade promotion, agriculture, science, technology and energy, with special reference to matters relating to investment. His Excellency the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Oman spoke on the subjects of the Palestine problem, the Iraq-Iran issue and Lebanon. He warmly thanked the EC for its support of the Taif Agreement concerning Lebanon.

COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

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

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

Nepal, Kingdom of
New Zealand,
Niger, Republic of
Nigeria, Federal Republic of
Norway, Kingdom of
Pakistan, Islamic Republic of
Palestine, State of
Philippines, Republic of
Portugal, Republic of
Qater, State of
Romania, Socialist Republic of
Rwanda, Republic of
Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
Senegal, Republic of
Seychelles, Republic of
Sierra Leone, Republic of
Singapore, Republic of
Somalia, Democratic Republic of
Spain,
Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of
Sudan, Republic of the
Sweden, Kingdom of
Switzerland, Confederation of
Syria, Arab Republic of
Tanzania, United Republic of
Thailand, Kingdom of
Tunisia, Republic of
Turkey, Republic of
Uganda, Republic of
United Arab Emirates,
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,
United States of America,
Uruguay, Oriental Republic of
U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics),
Venezuela, Republic of
Yugoslavia, Socialist Federal Republic of
Yemen, Republic of
Zaire, Republic of
Zambia, Republic of

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

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

INFORMATION

In a policy statement, the Minister of Information, H.E. Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas, has said that his Ministry broadly aims at strengthening the attachment of the citizens of Oman to their country, its heritage and Islam, and is specifically focussed on telling the world what is happening in Oman, and informing the people of the Sultanate of events taking place in their own country and in the world at large.

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

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

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

Broadcasts are now made in Arabic for 19½ hours daily and in the



A play is filmed in Oman TV

English language for 14 hours daily. The main news in English is at 0730, 1430 and 1830 hours daily, with news highlights at 1100 hours and 2100 hours. There are also news headlines in English at 1200 and 1300 hours daily. Classical music is broadcast from 0700 hours to 1200 hours, programmes in English from 1200 hours to 1500 hours and light and popular music from 1500 hours to 2100 hours each day.

Colour television was introduced in November 1974, with transmissions from Muscat covering a large area locally. The service was subsequently improved to reach a wider audience. Colour television transmissions commenced from a station in Salalah exactly a year later to cover the entire southern region. Commercial advertising has now been introduced on both television and radio. Television broadcasting has naturally greatly extended the ability to provide information, entertainment and education for the people, and additional studios for broadcasting and recording programmes, and for the filming of plays and serials have been



Oman Radio's master control room

developed. Extensive facilities for 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. In 1979, the space satellite-linked stations at Muscat and Salalah enabled daily transmissions from the studios of both stations to serve the maximum number of viewers. The television service has been particularly effective in providing information and guidance in such matters as health, education, agriculture, industry and family affairs and child care, in close cooperation with other relevant Ministries.

Television broadcasts are transmitted for ten hours daily on weekdays from 1500 hours to 0100 hours and from 1000 hours to 2300 hours on Fridays. There is a daily English-language news bulletin at 2000 hours.



Oman News Agency sends news of the Sultanate to the four corners of the world

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

A handsome new headquarters for the Ministry of Information at Al Qurm was opened at the end of last year, which contains the radio station and studios in addition to the administrative staff. This comprehensive complex also provides residential accommodation and recreational and cultural facilities including a gymnasium, swimming pool, tennis and squash courts, shopping centre, cafeteria and day-nursery.

Also part of the Information Complex is the Oman Centre for Traditional Music. Founded in 1985, the Centre is responsible for the collection and documentation of the traditional folk music of Oman. It houses video-tapes, sound recordings, still photographs and colour slides, together with field records of the traditional songs

and dances which have been handed down over the years from generation to generation.

From only one newspaper in the early 1970s, a wide variety of political, social and specialised journals have developed, independent of government publications. There are now two Arabic daily newspapers and one English-language daily, as well as an English weekly newspaper. There are also four Arabic social and political weekly magazines and one monthly Arabic social magazine for women.

The Ministry recently announced that a new scheme would shortly be submitted to the Development Council which would further provide for the expansion of the Radio and Television services. The scheme includes better TV transmission in the region between Ras al Hadd and Shinas. Also planned is an expansion of the radio FM service. These projects are expected to be completed in the early stages of the fourth Five Year Plan.

In recognition of his work for the welfare of his people, his contribution to world peace through his efforts to bring about a cease-fire in the war between Iraq and Iran, his achievements in protecting the ecology of his country, and his support for human rights, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has been honoured by having a specially-bred rose named for him. The Sultan Qaboos Rose, which has been developed by the Royal Moerheim Nurseries of Holland, is to be formally presented to His Majesty by the President of the World Federation of Rose Societies in November of this year to mark the twentieth anniversary of His Majesty's accession. The Ministry has been closely involved in the arrangements for the Rose to be displayed as the centrepiece of Oman's exhibit at the International Exposition in Osaka, Japan, in April, where it won silver and bronze awards. The rose has been exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show in London in May of this year, where it won a bronze award.

The Ministry has designed and constructed an exhibition illustrating the culture, history and scenic beauty of Oman, to be held at the European Parliament at Strasbourg in September. This is the first time that a country outside the European Community has done so. The Ministry has also organised a travelling exhibition, currently

touring Sweden, which comprehensively displays the many interesting aspects of the Sultanate.

With the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of His Majesty's accession this year being such a significant stage in the Sultanate's progress, the Ministry is heavily involved in making preparations to welcome and provide facilities for the many foreign journalists who will be attending, and with the commemorative TV and Radio programmes and other special features which will mark the occasion.

DEFENCE

To get a true measure of the progress achieved by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), particularly over the last twenty years since the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, it is necessary to go back to its beginnings in 1921 when the first regular military force was formed with the recruitment of the Muscat Force of company size. By 1955, with the meagre resources available, it had grown to regimental strength and been named the Muscat Regiment, and by 1970 following the rebellion in the interior and the increasing disturbance in the south the SAF had been expanded by the addition of the Northern Frontier Regiment, the Oman Gendarmerie (a para-military force for frontier and coastal protection), the Mountain Regiment and the Desert Regiment. However in 1970 the SAF was still only equipped with outdated weapons and equipment. It is only since that time that the SAF has been developed into a highly trained and well-equipped fighting force for the maintenance of the security of the Sultanate, and second to none in the Arabian Peninsula. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, as an experienced and professional officer, takes a keen personal interest in the efficiency of his Armed Forces and their general well-being, and he regularly attends their military manoeuvres on land, at sea and in the air.

The recent conflict between Iraq and Iran has highlighted the strategic geo-political importance of Oman in the region, which demands that the Sultanate maintain a high level of military preparedness and defence capability. Additional responsibilities were introduced in the early 1980s with the formation of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC), of which Oman is an active member in the political, military and economic spheres. Consisting of the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, the AGCC holds military exercises and manoeuvres in the territories of its member States from time to time. In 1987 Oman hosted an AGCC exercise involving all three services of the member States.

Apart from their military role, the Sultan's Armed Forces carry out tasks in support of the civil Ministries. Ministry of Defence Engineering Services (MODES) often in liaison with the SAF Engineers, carry out difficult road construction projects in mountainous regions, most notably in the Musandam Peninsula, the Jebel Akhdar and the mountains of the south. The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) assists in supplying communities in isolated



A radio section of a Company H.Q. (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

and remote areas as well as supporting the medical services in their coverage of the Sultanate, while the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) performs similar duties along Oman's lengthy coastline.

Royal Army of Oman (RAO)

At the time when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos took over the reins of government in July 1970 he was faced with an armed conflict in Dhofar, where there was a steadily deteriorating military situation. It took a further five years before this conflict was brought to a successful conclusion in December 1975. During this period it was only feasible to achieve a limited degree of modernisation, so that it was from the end of 1975, with the establishment of peace, stability and security, that the modernisation of the Land Forces was really able to take off.

1972 saw the formation of the Sultan's Armed Forces Training

Regiment – the main support body for the supply of manpower (RAO is an all-volunteer force recruited from every area of the Sultanate), and the Frontier Regiment – now known as the Frontier Force. In 1974 the Southern Oman Regiment was formed, while at the end of that year the first field engineering detachment was created. This later evolved into the Transport Regiment, which developed a range of services to meet the heavy transport needs of the Sultan's Armed Forces, and also provided electrical engineering and mechanical support. 1972 also saw the beginning of the formation of the first Sultan of Oman's Artillery Regiment, which later grew into a field artillery and anti-aircraft brigade. In 1976 the Rationing and Provisioning School was opened, as well as the Medical Services Training Wing and the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Centre. In 1980 the Command Training Centre came into operation; this is now known as the Officers' Training School. In 1982 the Musandam Security Force and the Oman Reconnaissance Force were set up, together with the Western Frontier Security Force, the Coastal Security Force and other units.

The Royal Army continued to grow and increase its range of activities as more modern equipment was introduced. In 1984 the Sultan of Oman's Parachute Regiment acquired its present name. As a result of the overall development of the armed forces and the medical services in particular, they now possess two large hospitals. The main one is at Al-Khoodh with a 154-bed capacity, for which there are plans for further expansion. The second hospital is the Umm Al-Ghawaref.

The Signals Regiment was expanded to meet the growing needs of the Land Forces, and in 1985 it was divided into two regiments.

The first course for officers at the newly established Staff College commenced in September 1987, and the College was officially opened by His Majesty the Sultan in the following year. Its main function is to provide appropriate training in joint command and staff duties for officers of the Sultan's Armed Forces. The curriculum for the course, which runs for ten months, comprises three main sections – staff duties, military training, and social, geographical and political studies.

Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO)

Great advances have been achieved in the Royal Air Force of Oman



Strikemaster ground attack aircraft are serviced by RAFO technicians (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

during the last twenty years, both in quantity and quality. In 1970 it comprised of a miniscule force of Jet Provosts and Beavers. Now it consists of a well-balanced establishment of modern tactical and fighter aircraft, transport aircraft and helicopters. In 1971 Strikemaster ground attack aircraft were purchased and in 1974 Skyvans and Defenders were ordered to replace the outdated Beavers. In the same year a contract was signed for the purchase of 3 BAC 1-11s for use as heavy transport aircraft, as well as a contract for the purchase of 15 Bell helicopters. In subsequent years Rapier anti-aircraft rocket batteries were acquired to increase defensive capacity, and in 1977/78 a squadron of Jaguar tactical aircraft entered service. RAFO is now also equipped with modern radar and communications systems. In 1980 more Jaguar aircraft were purchased, which went into service in 1983. In 1981 Hercules C130 transport aircraft were also acquired.

Training is naturally a highly important aspect of RAFO's activities, with emphasis on the attainment of the greatest possible



Parachutists emplane for an exercise (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

degree of self-sufficiency. Training establishments operated by RAFO include the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy on Masirah Island, which produces RAFO officers and qualified pilots, and the Vocational Training Institute, which has intensive programmes for training personnel in the complex technicalities of aircraft and electronic equipment maintenance. At present it also provides trained national cadres for all SAF's branches and sections. The Institute is situated at Seeb near Muscat.

Other important tasks undertaken by RAFO are maritime air reconnaissance and maritime pollution prevention with specially developed Skyvan aircraft, renamed Seavans which have been fitted with radar, a warning system, advanced navigation equipment and additional fuel tanks. RAFO also participates in locust control operations. These tasks are carried out in cooperation with the Ministries of the Environment and Agriculture and Fisheries. Assistance is also given to the Ministry of Health in conveying medical teams from hospitals in the major towns to the



Young students at the Royal Navy of Oman Training Centre (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

remote regions when emergencies occur and speedy transportation is required.

RAFO has several Military Police squadrons to provide each base with the necessary security protection, as well as a school for training police guard dogs and dog handlers. The squadrons' duties also include fire fighting. RAFO band has taken part in international military music competitions, where it has been highly ranked. Entry is open to all Omanis, and traditional as well as military music forms part of its repertoire.

Royal Navy of Oman (RNO)

At the time of the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 1970, the Royal Navy of Oman consisted of three lightly armed dhows.

In less than two decades, the Navy not only became a well-balanced, well trained, effective force capable of meeting the demands and challenges of the Iraq-Iran war close to its territorial



Maritime patrol ships of the JMSDF (Pacific Ministry of Defense)



waters, but it also laid the foundation for a credible ocean-capable force.

The Royal Navy of Oman has expanded its capability by introducing four fast attack craft (missile), a Landing Ship Logistic (LSL), improved command and control facilities, built a new base at Wudam on the Batinah coast, the Said bin Sultan Naval Base, for the long term support of RNO, improved the Ras Musandam Naval Base in the North, constructed a new modern Training Centre and instituted diving and hyperbaric and hydrographic survey sections.

The construction of the Said bin Sultan Naval Base, which was formally commissioned by his Majesty the Sultan in November 1988, is one of the largest civil engineering projects undertaken in the Sultanate to date. It provides a safe harbour and base for RNO's fleet, and is well-equipped to carry out maintenance and repair of all RNO ships using the large shiplift. In addition it has a non-tidal maintenance basin, covered berth and extensive workshop facilities, as well as a wide range of sports, recreational and living facilities.

The RNO Training Centre, co-located with the Naval Base, conducts courses ranging from new entry courses to specialized training in naval disciplines, employing sophisticated technology and computer based equipment. Sea training is conducted on board SNV Nasr Al Bahr for ratings, and officers join SNV Al Mabrukah to consolidate the knowledge gained and obtain experience of living at sea. Sail Training is provided on board SNV Shabab Oman.

The Royal Navy of Oman consists of ships varying in size, speed and weaponry according to the task and requirement: 56 metre fast attack missile craft, fast patrol boats, inshore patrol boats, landing, logistics and offshore ships coastal freighters, Hydrographic capability, and a sail Training Ship.

In Oman's territorial waters, the Royal Navy of Oman exercises sea control to ensure the freedom of navigation and peaceful exploitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The Royal Navy of Oman has a duty to ensure the freedom of passage of shipping through the sea lanes that run through Omani territorial waters. It also undertakes the task of fishery and



An engineering student, specialising in aviation, carries out tests at the Royal Guard of Oman School of Technology

environmental protection, prevents smuggling, illegal fishing and interference with international shipping.

The exacting role along a lengthy coastline and the special circumstances of the international waterway, the Strait of Hormuz, results in a wide range of challenging tasks which fully stretch the forces available and demand a high standard of professional ability.

Royal Guard of Oman (RGO)

The Royal Guard Regiment was formed in 1975 with responsibility for the security of His Majesty the Sultan, His Majesty's guests, and the protection of Royal property. It is a corps d'elite consisting of some of the fittest and best-trained men in the Army, and is a formidable fighting force, as well as performing ceremonial and other duties. In 1981 it was expanded and reorganised into a full Brigade. In 1985, coinciding with the celebrations of the 15th anniversary of His Majesty's accession, His Majesty bestowed on the RGB the signal honour of designating 1st November annually

as 'RGB Day'. It was on that date that year that the Brigade received its Royal Standard from His Majesty.

The Bands of the Royal Guard, one of which is a fully mounted Band, have earned a high reputation for their performances abroad, notably at the Edinburgh Tattoo in Scotland, and at the Sydney International Military Tattoo in Australia.

In November 1976 the Royal Guard was given the task by His Majesty the Sultan of establishing a school for providing advanced technical education for boys related to serving members of the Royal Guard. The school now comprises some 200 students, all of whom follow a curriculum which is heavily biased towards engineering and technology.

Although the medium of instruction for the technological subjects is English, entrance to the school is now regulated by means of a competitive examination in Arabic subjects. This is important since it ensures that the facility is now open to all Omanis, irrespective of their previous experience of the English language. Competition for the thirty places each year is fierce, with over 250 student applications being received in 1989.

The success of the school can best be judged by the quality of its output. Graduates are well-trained, disciplined, engineering technicians who have in addition a fluent command of technical English. Many of these ex-students can now be found in important and sensitive governmental organisations, applying the technical skills they have acquired at the school.

Many students 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 engineering posts which are now held by expatriate employees.

Since its inception, the school has placed great emphasis on the personal and social development of its students. The boarding school environment has been used to promote the important personal qualities of discipline, hard work and self-respect. Already, it is clear that students who come from a wide range of different regional and social backgrounds, have formed bonds of friendship which will remain with them for the rest of their lives. Thus, the

school helps materially to promote social harmony throughout the Sultanate.

All students follow the same curriculum, and this includes a rigorous study of Arabic language and culture in addition to a full technological curriculum delivered in the English medium, and 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 School's Certificate, the Oman Ministry of Education Final Certificate the BTEC First Diploma (Engineering) and the BTEC National Certificate of Achievement (Engineering).

Extra curricular activities are designed to enhance academic studies and to develop the personal qualities of leadership, discipline and self-reliance. Technical hobby groups work on a wide range of engineering projects. In addition students can select from many sporting activities, while military discipline and deportment are developed by means of the school cadet force. The school also maintains close links with the industrial and engineering community, and all senior students regularly visit factories and engineering projects.

The RGO 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. The school is a unique boarding establishment which caters for all aspects of the young people's education and well-being. It is 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 RGO also maintains three highly-trained military bands, one of them mounted, which perform on State occasions, as well as a military choir.

ROYAL OMAN POLICE

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has made remarkable progress over the past twenty years. Two decades ago there were only 73 constables, with their headquarters at the Bab al Kabir in Muscat. Their duties were confined to Muscat and its immediate vicinity, and no police operated elsewhere in the Sultanate. Since its establishment in 1970 the ROP has developed into a highly efficient modern force which now covers the entire country. The policy of the ROP has been to gain and maintain the confidence of the public through cooperation and assistance, and the education of the young.

The scope of the responsibilities of the ROP is considerably greater than that of police forces in many other countries. Apart from conventional policing duties, it is responsible for immigration and passports, customs, civil defence and fire-fighting, coastguard operations and the prison service. Omani women have an important role in the ROP, as in other Government organisations, which is greatly appreciated by both the Police and the public.

Close family ties, coupled with strict adherence to the teachings of Islam and to Arab traditions are major factors behind the remarkably low crime rate in the Sultanate. Nevertheless, there is constant vigilance by the ROP to prevent drug abuse and trafficking in or through the Sultanate. Alert customs officers at ports, airports and border crossings have helped to keep the country free from the devastating problems resulting from drug trafficking in other parts of the world.

The Royal Oman Police Academy in Nizwa (ROPAN) which was opened in January 1980 provides training in a wide range of specialised police work such as fingerprinting, criminal investigation, law, driving and traffic regulations as well as foreign languages. Recently the ROP recruited a number of Omani university graduates who received military and police training at ROPAN. They are now working as officers in various departments and units which need their specialised scientific skills. A number of officers have been despatched to specialised security-related institutions in Arab and European countries in order to acquire additional experience.



A spectacular demonstration by ROP karate experts

A notable contribution to the efficiency of the various police divisions and sub-divisions operating in the field of combatting crime is made by the criminal laboratory at the Directorate-General of Criminal Investigation which has been equipped with 'state-of-the-art' finger-printing and criminal photography equipment. Its new computerised unit is being used for storing hundreds of thousands of fingerprints, which includes those received from liaison bureaux in the Arab countries, and other members of Interpol, which provide photographs and fingerprints of persons regarded as a security threat world-wide.

The Royal Oman Police Coast Guard Division which is responsible for maintaining law and order along the 1,700 km coastline of the Sultanate, has been provided with fast patrol boats to prevent illegal immigration and contraband as well as combatting drug trafficking. Their duties include visiting isolated coastal villages, delivering food and medical supplies, searching for overdue fishing craft and pleasure boats, and the evacuation of the inhabitants of coastal



A Royal Oman Police Coastguard diving team being inspected before practice operations (Photo: ROP)

villages in an emergency. The Aviation Directorate of the ROP is equipped with helicopters, fixed-wing and jet aircraft which answer emergency calls for casualty and medical evacuation and carry relief aid to remote areas in cases of natural disasters.

The ROP has an oil installation division, with its headquarters at Mina al Fahal and sub-divisions at Fahud and Marmul in the Interior. The division provides security coverage for the whole oil industry and is responsible for patrolling the pipelines and other installations ranging from oil rigs in the desert to the oil export terminal at Mina al Fahal.

ROP personnel of the Directorate-General of Immigration and Passports and the Directorate-General of Customs are responsible for controls at airports, seaports and border crossings. As with other ROP departments, the Directorate-General has set up sub-divisions in the various wilayats and regions of the Sultanate in order to save the citizens the trouble of travelling to Muscat to obtain police service.



ROP patrol craft keep watch over Oman's territorial waters (Photo: ROP)

Through its headquarters and sub-divisions at all land checkpoints, ports and airports the Directorate-General of Customs is responsible for finalising Customs' documents and procedures according to the Sultanate's laws and regulations. The Directorate also monitors and follows up the implementation of decisions and instructions concerning export and import transactions. Customs duties are a significant source of national income.

The Civil Defence and Fire-Fighting Directorate is responsible for fire-fighting and the protection of lives and property against the danger of fire. Through comprehensive training and use of modern equipment the Directorate has developed and improved its services to high international standards.

A natural result of steady economic growth and the remarkable improvement in the road network has been the great increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. This in turn has increased the burden on the Directorate-General of Traffic which is responsible for

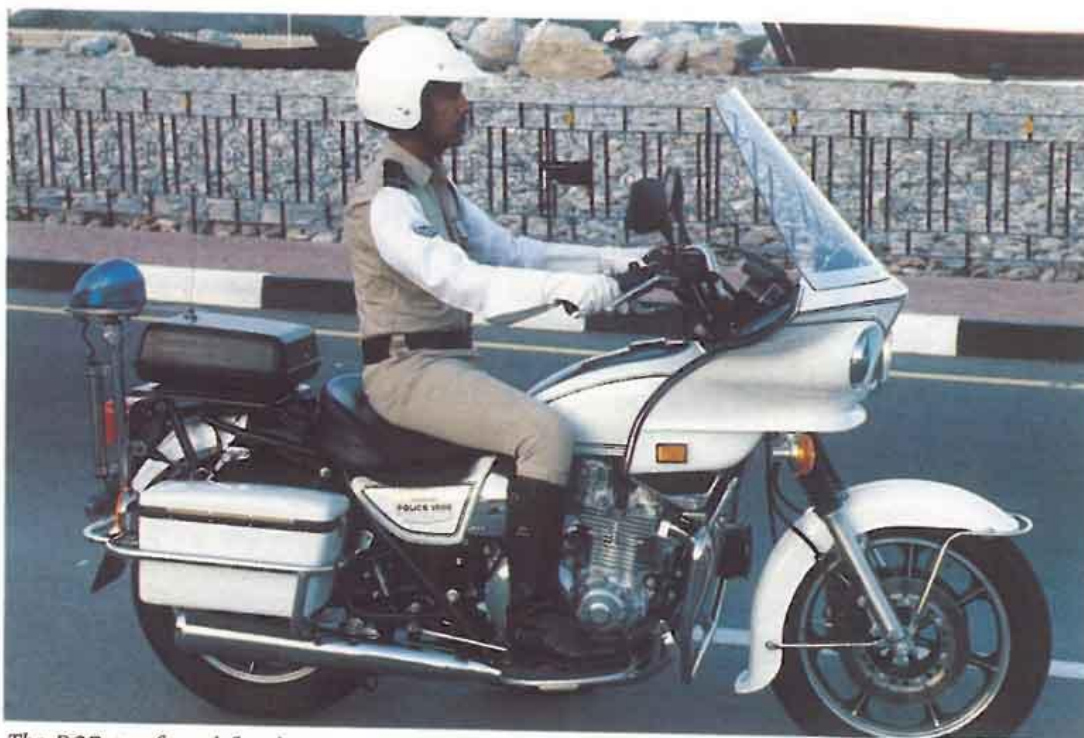


ROP medical staff evacuate a badly injured civilian patient. The ROP hospital, which primarily cares for police personnel and families is equipped to the highest standards (Photo: ROP)

all operations relating to vehicles and their use, traffic regulations such as vehicle inspections, licencing, investigation of accidents and resulting damage, and the siting and installation of traffic signs and lights in coordination with other responsible state authorities.

Together with the various modern means of transport used by the ROP, the mounted division continues to play a significant role; indeed, since its establishment in 1974, the division has been gaining in importance. It carries out patrols on horseback and on camels in towns, villages and border areas in those parts of the Sultanate which are inaccessible to modern means of transport. The Police dog unit employs teams of highly trained dogs for guarding and criminal trailing purposes.

The Royal Oman Police public relations department is doing important work in fostering ties of cooperation between the police and the public. Police departments and units are closely coordinating efforts to provide the best possible police service to the



The ROP are famed for the turnout of their men and vehicles (Photo: ROP)

citizens in line with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Supreme Commander of the police, as well as measuring up to the slogan "police at the service of the citizens".

The Sultanate's active participation in various AGCC security-related meetings has helped in producing positive results as well as fostering inter-AGCC security cooperation within the framework of the AGCC security strategy. Since it joined Interpol the ROP has also been playing a notable role at its international conferences and other meetings; the ROP's crime prevention performance, and its record of cooperation with the Organisation in all security spheres, has received high appreciation.

A new 24-hour visa facility was introduced earlier this year exclusively for passengers in transit and on flights landing for technical reasons. This exception does not apply to the visa requirements which obtain for other categories of visitors.

ECONOMY

Some indication of the measure of expansion of the economy in the Sultanate of Oman during the last 20 years since the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos is shown in the increase of Gross Domestic Product during that period. In 1970 the estimated GDP was RO 105 million; by the end of the second Five Year Plan in 1985 GDP stood at RO 3.454 billion. Since there was very little inflation in Oman between 1970 and 1985, the annual increase in real GDP during the 15 years was almost 26 per cent per annum. As a result of the sharp fall in world oil prices in 1986 GDP fell to RO 2.8 billion. Latest available estimates for 1989 indicate that GDP has since risen to RO 3.234 billion.

By Middle East standards Oman's reserves of oil are modest. According to the latest estimates these are currently 4.3 billion barrels, which would indicate that present levels of production could be maintained for a further 20 years, although prospects of new finds are promising. From the beginning of the renaissance era the Government has been keenly aware of the necessity to diversify the economy, and a considerable degree of success has been achieved in this respect, although of course Oman continues to have an oil-based economy. Diversification has meant, for example, the construction of major cement plants, an oil refinery and a copper smelter, as well as medium and light industry producing flour, textiles, electrical components, plastic materials, food products etc. Originally, industry was directed towards import substitutes based on indigenous resources. More recently industrial policy is being steered towards exports, the home market being a very limited one. Growth in agriculture has been equally significant. In particular, the crop and livestock sub-sectors have been important areas of growth, as has the growth in the fishing industry. As a result, agriculture and fishing also account for an increased percentage of the GDP as compared to the situation during the seventies. Consequently, agriculture and industry now account for approaching 10 per cent of the GDP.

Development 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, and



The internationally famous perfume, Amouage, being prepared at the production laboratories at Rusayl. The perfume is based on the resin of the frankincense tree which is found in the Sultanate's southern province

at the present time these services are playing an invaluable role in supporting the economic progress of the Sultanate.

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

The 1989 budget was based on an estimated average price of



The business district of Greater Muttrah

\$12.50 a barrel for oil with a forecast deficit of RO 407.6 million. In the event the world price for oil in 1989 averaged close to \$17 a barrel, with a consequent reduction in the budget deficit to about half the estimated amount.

In announcing the budget for 1990 the Deputy Prime Minister for Finance and Economy Affairs, H.E. Qais bin Abdul Munim al Zawawi, added that the rise in oil prices during 1989 had contributed positively to the State revenue and reduced the original estimated deficit. Therefore, the Budget for 1990 had been based on realistic oil prices during 1989. Oil prices had witnessed some improvements during the second half of 1989, but price fluctuation over the past few years does not help in predicting the future of the oil market. This requires caution and a continuation of the policy of rationalising expenditure in the best possible way so that it does not affect the level of performance. The new Budget gives more emphasis to investment in order to activate the national economy and promote trade. The estimated revenue for 1990 is RO 1433



The ultra-modern shopping centre in Qurum – the private sector plays an increasingly important role in the national economy (Photo: Christian Vioujard)

million with an estimated volume of total public expenditure of RO 1747 million. This includes current expenditure, investment, expenditure on oil production and assistance given to the industrial sector and specialised banks. Estimated total expenditure for this year has been increased by 8 per cent compared with 1989. The estimated expenditure on investment on new projects during 1990 is RO 516 million. Of this RO 243 million is to be spent on new projects included in the Third Five Year Plan. As regards the distribution of the Budget, RO 553 million is allocated for national security and defence, RO 200 million for oil production, and RO 13 million for loans given by specialised banks.

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



The offices of the Development Council in Al Khuwair

There is a programme for selling government-owned property and shares in enterprises to the private sector. Privatisation will not only provide financial resources for development finance, it will also expand and stimulate the private sector. Another innovation to encourage the private sector has been the opening of the stock exchange last year as part of the Third Five Year Plan. In addition to these institutional developments, RO 88 million has also been allocated in the Third Five Year Plan for private sector assistance.

The Government will continue its support for three domestic financial institutions to enable them to offer assistance to the private sector. These are the Oman Development Bank (ODB), the Oman Housing Bank (OHB) and the Oman Bank for Agriculture and Fisheries (OBAF). These three institutions with independent legal status are owned by the Government and specialise in extending medium and long-term loans to development projects. The ODB, which commenced operations in 1979, has provided loans for over 200 projects, including the food and beverage,

building materials and chemical industries as well as a number of light industrial projects. By the end of 1988 the ODB had financed 253 projects with a total investment of RO 146 million thus contributing about 40 per cent of the total investment. This year the ODB will be granting more loans and the estimation of the amount of loans granted in 1989 is RO 7 million.

The Development Council, presided over by His Majesty the Sultan, is currently engaged in the task of preparing the Fourth Five Year Development Plan. Preliminary assessment of growth prospects in the economy indicates a 5 per cent annual growth in GDP during the next ten years. The main thrust of the Plan will be to consolidate the living standards of the people of Oman.

However, the Development Council has instituted a process to ensure that future Five Year Development Plans will be in the nature of blueprints for the comprehensive long-term development of the economy. The plans will incorporate policies not only of direct relevance to and impact on the public sector, but they are also intended to promote the unhindered progress and development of the private sector in a free market climate. In order to achieve that, various sectoral studies are being undertaken with the help of friendly countries and International Agencies.

The GNP in Oman achieved a record growth of 7.93 per cent in the first nine months of 1989, totalling RO 2,421.4 million compared with RO 2,243.3 million in the corresponding period of 1988. Oil production in the same period rose to RO 1,090 million over the previous year's RO 943.5 million, a 15.53 per cent growth. Other, non-oil, sectors produced RO 1,374.3 million compared with RO 1,337.5 million, marking a 2.75 per cent rise over the previous year. Gross exports amounted to RO 1,131.8 million in the first nine months of 1989 compared with RO 981.3 million in the corresponding period of the previous year, a 15.34 per cent growth.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Considerable success has been achieved in developing light industry in the Sultanate of Oman during the last 20 years. Before 1970, manufacturing industry was non-existent in the country, and in the early years progress was necessarily slow due to the immense development and educational problems involved. It is the policy of the Government to create a national economy based on private enterprise and free from monopolistic practices. Consistent with this policy is the objective of ensuring rapid growth of viable industries utilising indigenous raw materials as much as possible. To this end, the private sector has a leading role to play on the basis of competition in a free economy.

The Sultanate's early industrial development was mainly geared to construction support. By 1986 most of the major projects required for the national infrastructure had been completed, and priority was switched to consumer goods and other import-substituting industries, not only to meet local demand, but with an eye to cost-effective and competitive exports. The precautionary devaluation of the currency in 1986 as a result of the sharp fall in world oil prices applied a brake on imports and stimulated exports without adversely affecting the standard of living. For the next fourteen years priority is to be given to the development of light and medium industries. The industrial sector in Oman is currently witnessing a significant change with an increasing number of industrialists opting to set up export-oriented industries. It has been felt for some time that the Omani market is very small, and instead of competing with multinational companies there is a need to shift the emphasis from import substitution industries to export-oriented industries. Most of the factories on the Rusayl Industrial Estate are now exporting, and the average export of produce in 1989 was more than 45 per cent against 15 per cent in 1988. Some of the recently established factories, such as the clothing factories, are exporting their entire production. At the end of 1989, 41 factories were in production on the Estate and 15 more were in the pipeline.

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

- (1) Free surveys of industrial investment opportunities and



A textile factory at Rusayl Industrial Estate – an example of Oman's drive to diversify its economy

preparation of feasibility studies.

- (2) Provision of interest-free Government loans to industry under a Royal decree, in addition to loans provided by the Oman Development Bank (ODB).
- (3) Exemption from customs duties on imports of equipment and raw materials required for production purposes.
- (4) Tariff protection through the imposition of customs duties on imported goods which compete with local products, or prohibition or restriction of their importation, taking into consideration the quality and quantity of local production and the interests of the consumer.
- (5) Exemption from income tax for five years, a concession which may be renewed for another period of five years.
- (6) Provision of planned and serviced industrial plots for the establishment of factories.

The 100-hectare fully-serviced industrial estate at Rusayl, 45 km from Muscat, comprising 125 plots, the first phase of which was



Traditional silver shop in Nizwa

completed in 1982, is now in full operation. An expansion programme is under way on recently-acquired 650,000 sq metres of land, more than half the existing area of the Estate. Work will begin on developing the infrastructure at the beginning of the new Five Year Development Plan during the current year. The additional area adjoining the Estate, will have all the facilities offered at the existing Estate, which include gas, electricity, water, telephone and telex lines, as well as support services such as a bank, post office, cafeteria, clinic and mosque. In addition, the Estate also has a sewage treatment plant. With the additional area, the capacity of the Estate is expected to increase by another 50 factories. At the present rate, the Estate has been attracting about ten new factories every year, and the most conservative estimates indicate that the expanded Estate will run out of space in another five to six years. Plots are leased for 25 years with an option for an extension of a further 25 years. The Rusayl Industrial Estate Authority (RIEA) was set up in 1983 by Royal Decree for the purpose of managing and developing the Estate and is operated by a Board of Directors

appointed by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry. The RIEA headquarters is located within the Estate. Work has commenced on two new industrial areas at Sohar in the north and Raysut in the south. Consultants are now at design stage. These projects are expected to be put out to tender in June this year.

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

The Oman Development Bank (ODB) plays an important role in implementing government measures aimed at encouraging greater private participation in the country's development. Its loans are for up to ten years and generally with a grace period covering the implementation and first year of the operation. The interest rates paid by the projects financed by the Bank are subsidised by the Government. The official rate of interest charged by the Bank is 9 per cent; however, projects implemented in the Muscat area or the Rusayl Industrial Estate pay only 6 per cent per annum interest and a special rate of 4 per cent is applied to projects established in other areas. The ODB's lending commitments for any one project must not exceed 10 per cent of its total resources. The Bank has embarked on two other schemes: a Small Scale Enterprise Scheme and a Vocational Graduate Scheme. Under the Small Scale Enterprise Scheme investors can receive up to 80 per cent of the project cost, which should not exceed RO 100,000. The main condition for granting a loan under this scheme is that the borrower should be employed full-time and manage the project himself. Under the Vocational Graduate Scheme graduates of Vocational Training Centres who wish to open a small workshop will be able to have their project financed on a leasing basis at a special rate of 3 per cent per annum. It is estimated that loans disbursed during the Third Five Year Plan will roughly equal the RO 20 million allocated during the Second Five Year Plan.

Foreign investment in industry is welcome. It is regulated by the Foreign Business and Investment Law. The minimum Omani investment in a joint venture company should not be less than 35

per cent. In practice, however, it is preferred that foreign equity does not exceed 49 per cent. Industrial companies with foreign investment are exempt from income tax for five years. If the project directly contributes to economic development the exemption can be renewed for a further five years.

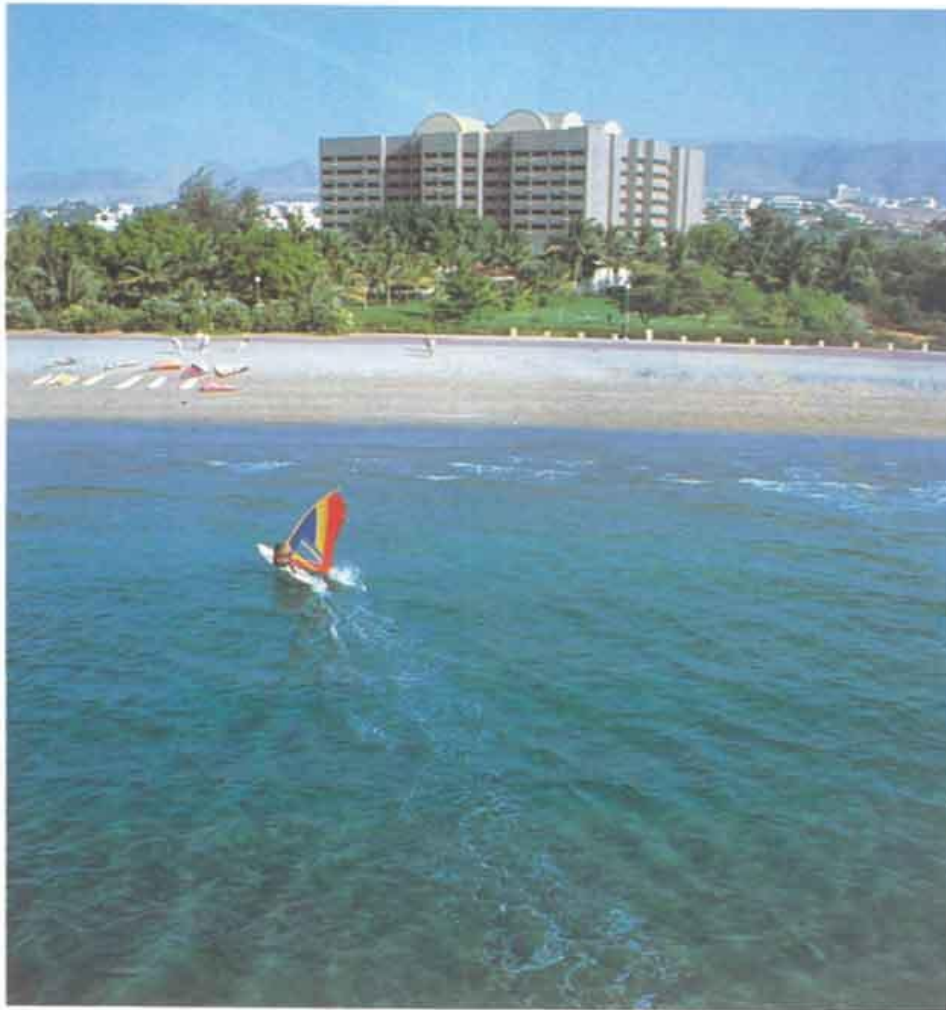
In order to protect local industries, customs duties at varying rates are imposed on a number of foreign imports. These include cement, asbestos pipes, bananas, dates, dried lemons, alcohol and tobacco. Some imports from other than AGCC countries, such as copper cables, paints and cement products are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

The Ministry is actively seeking ways of improving management and operations within industry. Early last year the Industrial Development Unit was set up under the Ministry's Directorate-General of Industry.

The Unit's main activities have been concentrated on offering guidance to new investors and carrying out diagnostic studies for industries with problems. Being an advisory service, potential investors take advantage of consulting the Unit during the development stages of their industries. The Unit also explains to potential investors the different procedures required for setting up an industry, such as feasibility studies. The Unit makes all possible efforts to provide the investors with the required information for the studied project as well as with possible sources of information.

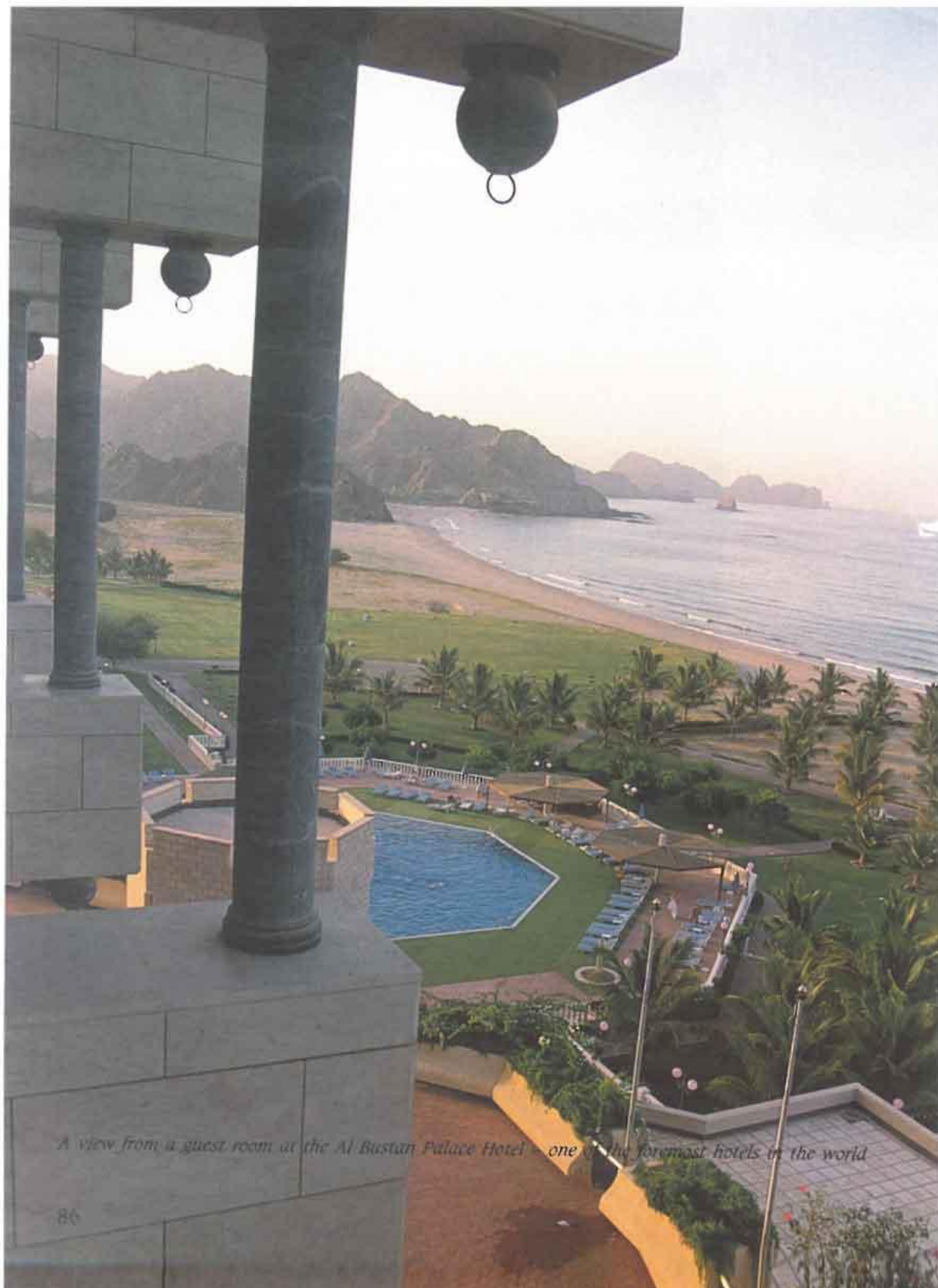
The Unit's team analyses problems related to finance, production, marketing management and other general concerns. The Unit then determines the main factors and proposes methods of dealing with them.

Tourism is comparatively new to Oman, since the country was previously simply not geared to receiving tourists. The Government has proceeded cautiously, having adopted a policy of encouraging quality tourism, but comprehensively assists the private sector in playing its role in the development of tourism through implementation of feasible projects. Present indications are that this policy is meeting with success since the Sultanate is proving to be



Tourist enjoys an exhilarating day windsurfing – one of the many amenities available for our visitors (Photo: Muscat Intercontinental Hotel)

highly attractive to visitors who appreciate its exceptionally pleasant seasonal climate and superb scenic beauty. The Ministry coordinates with various Government bodies in facilitating the entry of tourists, promoting internal and external tourism with travel agencies, tourists offices and hotels, and informing them of the approved procedures for tourist groups' entry and preparing programmes for international tourists' itineraries, taking into account the necessary environmental and social considerations. At present the concentration of tourism projects is in three regions – Muscat, Nizwa and Salalah. These regions have excellent tourist



A view from a guest room at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel - one of the foremost hotels in the world

attractions with their natural beauty, magnificent cultural heritage and unique places of interest. Prior permission is required to visit some carefully preserved natural or historic sites, such as the Ras Al Hadd area, where turtles breed, the Jidat Al Harasis area where there is the Arabian Oryx breeding centre, and some villages in the Interior.

The Government is planning to build Oman's first marina at Sidab, close to Muscat. It will be a joint venture by the Ministry and the private sector, and will be large enough to cater for 250 boats of all sizes. It will have all the facilities that a marina should have, including a pier, restaurant and workshop for boats. There are also proposals to build a diving centre at Bandar Jissa and to develop sea resort facilities at Bandar Khairan.

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. 1989 was marked by the fact that the OCCI became the first Chamber of Commerce in the Gulf to elect a woman to its Board of Directors.

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

The Chamber legalises documents, invoices, agency and labour contracts and issues certificates required in trade and industry. It acts as arbitrator in the event of commercial disputes between local members and foreign businessmen or investors, and participates in the discussion of trade-related problems with concerned Government organisations. It also sponsors and facilitates the



Oman Flour Mills at Jibroo – another example of Oman's successful economic diversification policy

issuing of visas to foreigners wishing to establish business relations with Oman, but who do not have contacts in the Sultanate.

Last year, following its notably successful performance in 1988, when it enrolled 2,938 new commercial firms, registering an increase of about 12 per cent, the OCCI expanded its activities, especially in the field of training. H.E. Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, President of the OCCI, which has been strongly cooperating in the efforts towards achieving the national goal of diversification of the economy and Omanisation, revealed plans last year for holding technical management courses for Omanis. The courses, intended for staff at all levels, began in the last quarter of 1989 with 20 to 50 people attending each course. In order to assist the process of Omanisation in the private sector, the Chamber also plans to hold training courses for this sector for Omanis, and, in addition, is helping the retail business sector to set up an Omani training centre.

A study has been completed for computerising the Chamber's

operations, and it is hoped that this computerisation will take place this year; this to be followed by the establishment of an information centre.

The Sultanate's Stock Exchange opened in May 1989 and got off to a good start. During its first seven months of business to the end of last year, it conducted business amounting to more than RO 9 million, thereby exceeding its target. 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 set-up companies and those not having any specified characteristics which enable them to enjoy sufficient liquidity, protection and security required for operation in the chamber of the principal market.

To begin with, the market conducted business only in the mornings, but in order to expand the circle of participants, the management added evening sessions on Mondays and Tuesdays. There is to be 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 unacceptable.

OIL AND GAS

The transformation of the Sultanate of Oman over the last twenty years has been based on the production of oil and gas. 95 per cent of the revenues of the Sultanate are still derived from the production of oil, so that the prosperity of the country is strongly influenced by the world price of that commodity. Although the revenues from the export of crude oil started in 1967 and rose sharply over succeeding years, development was hesitant until His Majesty Sultan Qaboos took over the control and development of the economy following his accession in July 1970.

In spite of the fact that Oman was one of the last States of the Arabian Peninsula in which oil was discovered in commercial quantities, it was one of the earliest in which the search for oil was started. It was in 1924 that the first tentative search for oil took place, but it was not until 1954 that the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), a consortium operating from its base at Duqm on the south coast of Oman, made a methodical search. Working northwards, several wells proved to be dry, including one at Jebel Fahud, a promising feature in central Oman. Finally IPC abandoned its attempts and withdrew from Oman. The concession was then granted to Petroleum Development (Oman) Ltd (PDO), of which Shell was the major shareholder, the minority shareholders being Compagnie Francaise des Petroles and Partex. In 1962, the first oil find was made at Yibal west of Fahud, but it was in 1964 that the first major field was struck at Fahud. This provided the firm indication that production of oil in Oman was commercially feasible. By a quirk of fate, PIC's dry well, only a few hundred yards distant, happened to be on the dry side of a fault line. A further discovery at Natih in the same area, together with the fields at Fahud and Yibal, formed the original foundation of the oil industry in Oman. In 1974, in an agreement with PDO the Government assumed ownership of 60 per cent of the shares in the company.

Following the first export of oil in 1967, exploration continued and further discoveries were made in central Oman and later in the south, as well as at Lekhuwair in the north. The idea of constructing an artificial port in the south, which is swept by gale force monsoon winds in the summer, was abandoned when it was found to be cheaper to construct a pipeline from the southern fields to the main pipeline from Fahud, which passes underground



Double 'nodding donkey' at work on an oilfield in the southern region (Photo: P.D.O.)

through the Sumail gap, a natural pass through the mountains, to the terminal on the coast at Mina al Fahal near Muscat.

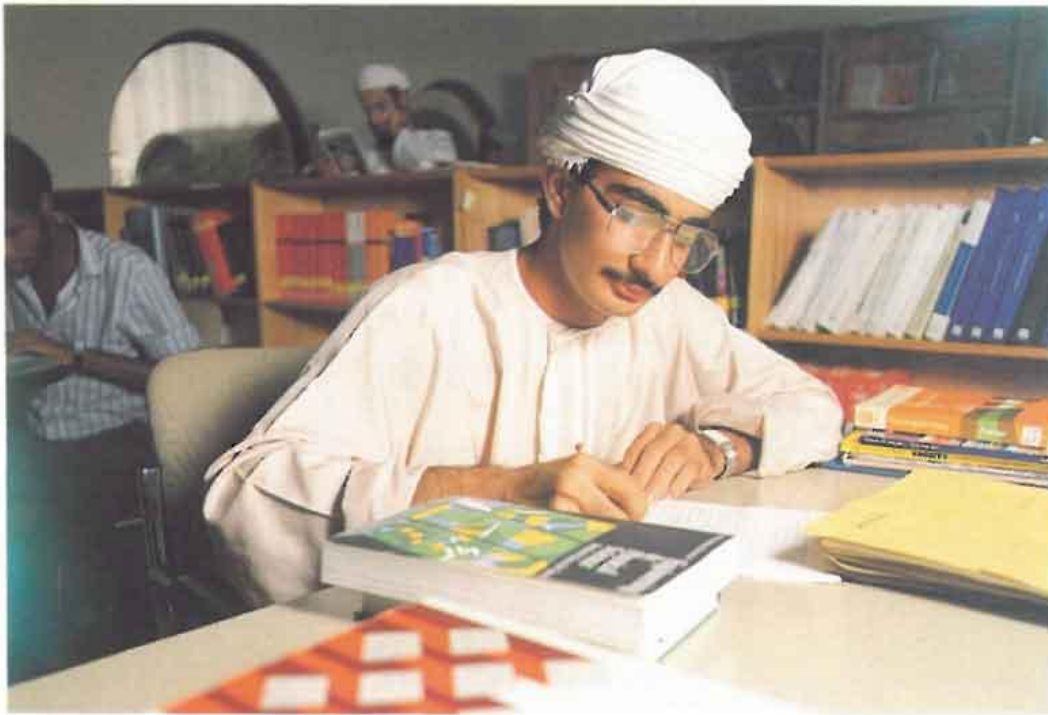
Production of oil rose steeply from 1967 onwards, but suffered a decline in the early 1970s until new discoveries in central Oman came on stream in 1975. Another decline followed for a few years, after which further discoveries in the south boosted production again, reaching a peak of 600,000 barrels a day in 1986. Steeply falling world oil prices made it initially desirable to increase production to maintain oil revenues, but prices dropped to such an extent in 1986 that oil revenues fell sharply before recovering. Oman is not a member of OPEC or OAPEC, but has always kept in step with oil prices maintained by OPEC, and although not bound by production quotas agreed by that organisation it has voluntarily cooperated in stabilising production. The Sultanate is active in oil affairs at a regional level being a member of the Arab Gulf Consultative Council (AGCC), several members of which are members of OPEC, so that cooperation with OPEC is achieved at this



An oilfield technician carries out maintenance work on pipelines in the Interior (Photo: P.D.O.)

level. On the other hand the Sultanate plays a leading role in the non-OPEC group which is cooperating with OPEC to achieve stability in oil markets and prices. In recent years Oman twice cut its oil production voluntarily to assist OPEC in stabilising prices, and again in the second quarter of 1989 it cut output by 5 per cent in compliance with the decision reached by the non-OPEC group, as a contribution on their part to help OPEC in restoring normal conditions to oil markets. Current production in Oman, in the first quarter of 1990, is 650,000 b/d. By the end of this year it is planned to increase production to 700,000 b/d. Altogether some 60 fields are currently in production with over a thousand wells, and drilling activity is carried on intensively to maintain and expand both new and established fields. Some 21 rigs were operational in Oman in early 1990 and more may be added later in the year. Oman's current internal consumption of oil is around 27,000 b/d.

By the beginning of 1990, proven oil reserves had reached 4.3 billion barrels, compared with 2.5 billion barrels in 1982. The



A young trainee at the PDO Training Centre (Photo: P.D.O.)

Sultanate is fortunate since it succeeds almost every year in discovering larger amounts of oil than it exports, so that the reserves are continually increasing. Exploration for oil and gas is being rigorously pursued and currently there are groups of foreign oil companies operating in 11 concessions. PDO is by far the largest producer, whilst Occidental of USA and Elf Aquitaine of France are also producing, and Japex of Japan is expected to come into production for the first time in 1990. During the past year, PDO has announced a number of new discoveries including a deep reservoir of light oil in the al-Huwaisah field below the field's main producing reservoir. At the same time heavy oil was found in the Mafrag field south of Qarn Alam, and in the middle of 1989 oil was discovered at Hawqa in central Oman. A significant extension of the al-Burj field was announced in August last year, and it is now thought that the al-Burj and the nearby al-Jameel fields are one accumulation. Three new fields have come on stream in the past year: the Alam field in central Oman and the Thamoud and al-Dhabi fields in the South. In November 1989, PDO produced its three billionth barrel of



Gas turbines at Yibal – Oman is self-sufficient in natural gas (Photo: P.D.O.)

oil since production started in 1967. In 1988 PDO started exploration in three concession areas off the coast of Dhofar and eastwards, as well as carrying out seismic tests in difficult and rugged mountain terrain in Dhofar. The International Petroleum Company, also known as the Lundin Group, has discovered oil in their concession off the west coast of the Musandam Peninsula.

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

Natural gas in Oman was discovered accidentally during the search for oil, and it has now been established that the Sultanate has sizeable reserves which are sufficient for the development of its industries. Demand has been rising rapidly, and output has increased correspondingly. In 1984 the Government initiated a

government-financed exploration programme for a period of ten years i.e. until 1994. PDO is conducting this programme on behalf of the Government. So far, this programme has proved satisfactory. As a result, at the beginning of 1990, total gas reserves stood at 9.8 trillion cub ft, of which 2.7 trillion is associated gas and 7.1 trillion is non-associated gas.

During 1989 a major gas find was made at Saih Nihayda in the Andam formation, which is the largest for 22 years. Provisional estimates place recoverable reserves at 10 billion cub metres. It also contains a relatively high condensate element. In October 1989 drilling started in the search for gas on Jebel Medhmar to the east of Adam. It is interesting to note that 50 years ago the explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, in his travels noted the 400 metre-high jebel as a potential oil-bearing feature, a fact noted in his book 'Arabian Sands'.

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

The Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals cooperates with PDO in the management of the gas industry. This includes the production and distribution of gas, as well as the operation and maintenance of the system since 1978. Since gas is an important source for the generation of electricity in the Muscat and other regions as well as in the development of industry, the Government has continuous plans, which are carried out in stages, for its development. During

the next five years efforts will be exerted in order to:

- (a) Continue to develop the Yibal-Natih gas reservoir.
- (b) Expand the gas treatment plant at Yibal.
- (c) Instal additional compression equipment at a cost of 80 million US dollars.
- (d) Increase the capacity of the Batinah coast pipeline by either looping or installing additional compression equipment, or both.
- (e) Supply gas to the new power plants at Manah and Birka.
- (f) Supply gas to the Sharqiya region.

MINERALS

It has long been known that the mountains of Oman are rich in mineral deposits. 3000 years ago copper ore was being mined in northern Oman, or Magan as it was then known, and exported to the Sumerian empire at the northern end of the Gulf. The remains of the ancient copper workings can still be seen. Now the same deposits are being exploited in the Wadi Jizzi near Sohar. The ore is processed into electrolytically refined copper cathodes for export in a nearby smelter, opened in 1983 when the first refined copper was exported. Production is currently running at 15,000 tonnes of refined copper annually. Pre-feasibility studies indicate that this production level can be maintained for seven more years. Gold and silver are produced as by-products of these operations.

Originally the Government held 75 per cent of the shares of the copper complex, but later it acquired all the remaining shares, so that the whole copper industry is now state-owned. The operating company is the Oman Mining Company (OMCO). Omani copper has received international recognition for quality, on being registered on the London Metal Exchange, as Grade 'A' electrolytic copper. In the first half of 1989 refined copper to the value of RO 11.4 million was exported from Oman.

During the past year feasibility studies have been carried out into deposits of copper ore in the Yanqul region of northern Oman, which have indicated proven reserves of minimum of 8.5 million tons of ore, guaranteeing commercial production for another 14 years and possibly beyond that.

Chromite is being mined from open sites in Wadi Rajmi. To date, OMCO has exported over 8,000 tons. Exploration has revealed additional reserves in excess of one million tons in the Rajmi and Samad areas. In April 1989 the Government concluded an agreement with an international company for exploration and evaluation of the chromite field in the Rajmi-Fizh and Forfar-Hilti areas of northern Oman. The project, which will cover an area of 215 sq. km. will be completed in two years. The latest figure of known chromite deposits, which are commercially viable is two million tons.

Extensive deposits of coal are also known to exist near Sur in the



*Copper smelting plant at Sohar – geological surveys have shown that the area contains significant deposits.
(Photo: R. Schulze)*



south east of the Sultanate. In November 1989 the Minister of Petroleum and Minerals signed an agreement with a company for excavating at a depth of 2,300 metres to reach the coal strata. The reserves of coal in the area are expected to amount to a total of 36 million tons.

There are deposits of asbestos in the Wadi Haybi west of Sohar, and exploration in the Jebel Hammah region has revealed thin beds of manganese. Gypsum, of which there are large quantities in Dhofar in the south, and limestone, are being exploited for the cement factories at Raysut and Rusayl. High quality marble is being quarried at several locations, and marble products from a private enterprise factory on the Rusayl Industrial Estate are being exported to neighbouring countries. In January 1990 the Minister of Petroleum and Minerals announced that he would shortly be signing a contract with a company for exploration of gold, platinum and chromite and their possible exploitation.

A 12-day international symposium on 'Ophiolite Genesis and Evolution of the Oceanic Litosphere' was held at the Sultan Qaboos University in January this year, in which 300 leading scientists took part. Oman is covered by one of the largest masses of ancient oceanic crust in the world. In the mountainous regions of the north, there are large areas of this exposed crust, the rocks in which, known as ophiolites by geologists, are believed to be rich in minerals including gold, platinum and chromite, and possibly diamonds.

Also in January this year, the Minister of Petroleum and Minerals signed an agreement worth over RO 2 millions with the French Bureau for Geological and Mineral Research for compiling geological and other maps for mineral exploration purposes.

AGRICULTURE

The Sultanate of Oman lies in an arid region of the world, but unlike other Arab States in the Arabian Peninsula, other than the Yemen, it has considerable agricultural potential due to its size and geography, which allow for 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, while in Dhofar in the south regular annual monsoon rains fall over the coastal range of mountains.

Until the discovery of oil and gas the Sultanate had a largely subsistence economy based on agriculture and fishing. The population, of under one million at that time, was engaged in farming in those areas where irrigation was possible and was unevenly spread throughout the country, large expanses of desert being virtually uninhabited.

For rather more than twenty years the economy of the Sultanate has been 95 per cent based on the production of oil and gas, the remaining 5 per cent being divided between agriculture, fisheries and mineral production. However, the Government has always been well aware that the economy has to be diversified against the day that the oil reserves are exhausted, and that agriculture must play a major role in this diversification.

A problem that arose as development got under way in the 1970s was a drift from the land and the fishing villages to the rapidly expanding urban areas on the coast where there was a demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour and wages were higher. The Government was acutely aware of this undesirable development at an early state, and introduced measures to stem this drift from the land by providing incentives to encourage farmers and fishermen to continue in their traditional occupations. In recent years the success of Government policies and actions in this respect have become increasingly apparent. Now that most of the major construction projects involved in the development of the infrastructure have been completed the incentives to leave the land have been greatly reduced.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos proclaimed 1988 as the Year of



A restored falaj in Oman, one of the Ministry's important projects.

Agriculture, in which an intensive drive was to be made to develop this vital industry. This proved to be highly successful, so much so that in his traditional address to the nation in November of that year he announced that the Year of Agriculture would be extended into 1989. He expressed his satisfaction at what had been achieved, and emphasised the need for the preservation of grazing land, its protection, and the prudent conservation and development of water resources, as well as raising the quality of agricultural products.

Northern Oman has a climate similar to the Gulf States with long, hot and usually rainless summers, and a brief mild winter with a small and sporadic rainfall. Much of the interior is virtually rainless and is either desert or semi-desert. In the extreme south in a limited area on the seaward-facing slopes of the mountains and the coastal plain of Dhofar there is a totally different climate. The summer heat is tempered by rain-bearing monsoon winds off the Arabian Sea from June to the end of September which regularly bring rain and high humidity to this region. While conditions in the north of Oman are well-suited for date palms, in Dhofar the climate does not encourage their cultivation, but coconut palms flourish in their place on the coastal plain round Salalah, where bananas, papaya and other tropical fruit flourish and are cultivated extensively. The coastal slopes of the mountains, where tall grasses grow during and after the monsoon rains, are the only cattle rearing areas to be found in Oman. The Jabali tribesmen are traditional cattle herdsman, breeding cattle for their milk rather than their meat.

Dates and limes are traditional products of northern Oman and are cultivated extensively wherever irrigation is available, but increasingly a wide variety of vegetables are grown in the winter months for marketing in the urban areas. Along the Batinah coast, which is fringed with date gardens, mangoes, tobacco, tomatoes and onions are grown in quantity. On the high mountain plateau of the Jebel Akhdar, at a height of over two thousand metres, the climate is suitable for the cultivation of temperate climate fruit and vegetables, including peaches, apricots and walnuts.

The principal limitation on agriculture is the availability of water, a precious commodity in this country. Cultivation is totally dependent on irrigation derived from groundwater. In the mountainous interior of northern Oman agriculture is largely based on the falaj system,



Modern farming – a substantial increase in production has been achieved

the origins of which are lost in the mists of antiquity, though probably introduced into Oman from Persia. Many of the aflaj (plural of falaj) in use today are 800 years old or more. This ingenious system depends on tapping the water table in the mountains and leading the water by man-made subterranean channels, often up to 10 km long, and siphons across wadi beds to the plains, where it is brought to the surface and used for domestic purposes and irrigation. The water is very pure and lukewarm, and the flow is steady and reliable, even through periods of drought when its volume is only slightly reduced. The use of irrigation water is very carefully controlled in the villages, where ancient sundials for allocating periods of irrigation to farmers may still be seen.

Along the Batinah coast irrigation water is obtained from wells, nowadays operated by diesel pumps. The water originates from rainfall over the Hajar mountains and flows towards the coast through subterranean aquifers, being forced to within a depth of 8 metres when it reaches the seawater at the coast. A serious problem

has arisen in recent years due to increasing salinity of groundwater caused by overdrawing water from the aquifers, resulting in seawater seepage. Strict control on the sinking of new wells has been imposed by the Government, and dams are being constructed to help the recharging of the aquifers. This subject is dealt with more fully in the chapter on water.

During the last two years the drive to improve agricultural methods has been intensified in order to increase the quantity and quality of produce from land already under cultivation and to use irrigation water by the most modern methods to cut wastage to a minimum. The total area of land suitable for agriculture is about 100,000 hectares, of which 55,756 hectares are under cultivation at present. According to estimates, the area under cultivation has been increasing at an average rate of 7.2 per cent per annum during the period 1984-1989. However, an increase of the area of land under cultivation is not the main aim of the current Development Plan, but rather the improvement of productivity by a programme of support and technical advice through 2,500 extension farms in the country. The ultimate aim is to make Oman self-sufficient in the production of food.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has three main agricultural centres at Rumais, Nizwa and Salalah, and 42 extension centres spread throughout the Sultanate. The centre at Rumais on the Batinah coast deals with agricultural research in all its forms, applying knowledge gained from academic research to help farmers to deal effectively with their problems and to assist in better farm management. In this connection it should be mentioned that there is now a faculty of agriculture at the Sultan Qaboos University.

Traditionally Dhofar, for climatic reasons, has been the cattle-rearing region of the Sultanate. Until recently beef, which has been in increasing demand in northern Oman as living standards have risen, has had to be imported due to lack of overland communications with Dhofar. However, since the completion of the all-weather tarmac road linking Salalah with Muscat in 1986 it has been possible to transport chilled beef in refrigerated vans to northern Oman. It is expected that 5,000 head of cattle will be sold annually from the Southern Region.



Buyers at a PAMAP centre. Agricultural products are contributing increasingly to Oman's economic self-sufficiency

There are estimated to be 700,000 goats and 200,000 sheep in Oman. However, livestock development has been held back by traditional feeding methods. Animals are left to graze as best as they can on meagre rangelands, which is both uneconomic and destructive. Recognising the need for increasing domestic meat production to reduce dependence on imports, the Ministry has initiated a goat-rearing project by selecting 300 farmers in northern Oman to participate in the project. Each farmer was provided with the animals and accommodation for them, as well as veterinary services and bank credits on easy terms to set up modern systems for the production of fodder. The success of the scheme has been such that the Ministry has decided to carry out a similar operation for sheep-rearing. About 800 farms in the north and 20 in the south have been selected for this purpose.

Development of poultry production is being promoted by the encouragement of both large-scale and small-scale units throughout the country. Current annual production is estimated to be 40 million

eggs and one million broiler chickens. The aim is to reach an output of 227 million eggs and 13,600 tons of broiler meat by the year 2000.

A small-scale broiler project has been initiated, for which 250 small-holders have been selected. These will receive free of charge from the Ministry accommodation for 300 chickens and 500 day-old chicks in three batches, during the first year of operation, plus two tons of broiler feed. A similar scheme is being introduced for small-scale egg production.

For the first time during 1988, the Year of Agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture started to organise the bee industry with the establishment of 5 government apiaries and the distribution of 300 colonies among 120 farmers, as well as the appointment of a team specialist in bee-keeping and the supervision of apiaries.

A maize propagation programme has been launched to cope with the remarkable increase in the animal production projects by providing forage or concentrates. A plan to implement this programme in five agricultural areas with full governmental support has been prepared, by which farmers will receive free of charge improved seed and other necessities.

With a view to making Oman self-sufficient in food production in the long-term, the Agriculture and Fisheries Bank was set up in 1981 with a capital of RO 19 million. Loans are granted at low rates of interest to both companies and individuals. The Bank also arranges technical assistance, identification of projects and feasibility studies. It extends loans for the development of new farms and the improvement of existing ones, as well as for the procurement of agricultural equipment such as tractors and water pumps. The Head Office is in Ruwi and there are fifteen branches throughout the Sultanate.

PAMAP

The Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce (PAMAP) is playing an increasingly successful role in the marketing



Headquarters of the Public Authority for Marketing Agricultural Produce at Ghala

of agricultural produce. It was established in 1981 with the main objectives of:-

- (a) Providing a link between the farmers and the trade through the establishment of a well-organised marketing network.
- (b) Providing farmers with a market outlet and encouraging them to grow high-quality produce.
- (c) Improving the existing market situation for Omani produce in terms of quantity, quality and availability.

PAMAP's Headquarters and Central Distribution Centre are at Ghala near Muscat; Regional Distribution Centres are at Salalah, Sohar, Nizwa, Ibra and Suwaiq. These latter also act as Collection Centres, of which there are 17 throughout the Sultanate. Banana ripening and packing facilities are operating in Salalah and at the Central Distribution Centre at Ghala. A recent and successful marketing innovation is the production of lime tea, made from dried and powdered limes which are grown in quantity on the Batinah coast. Previously all dried limes were exported for processing abroad.

Three years ago PAMAP ventured into the revival of an ancient and historic market – the export of frankincense, which is harvested in Dhofar in the south. Omani frankincense is a multi-purpose product with a high proportion of essential oils which can be used in a number of chemical, pharmaceutical and perfumery industries. It can also be used as a fragrance. PAMAP purchases frankincense from producers, processes and packages it for sale on the internal market and for export. The possibility of exporting camels is also being investigated at present.

Thirty Wilayat across the country have been selected by PAMAP in the first phase of a scheme to involve the private sector in its marketing efforts. The scheme is basically to ensure the supply of fruit and fresh vegetables locally in all parts of Oman.

FISHERIES

The fishing industry is playing an important role in the development of the economy of the Sultanate of Oman. Much progress has been made in recent years, and it is quite clear that there is high potential for further expansion. It has been estimated that the potential annual fishery yield of Omani waters may be as high as 300,000 tonnes, 75 per cent of which is of the small pelagic type, and is sustainable from year to year without adversely affecting stocks.

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

More than 150 species of fish have been identified in Omani waters, ranging from sardines to tuna. Some 35 species of grouper, or hamour as they are known in Oman, are found in the waters of the Sultanate. Schools of sardines, netted off the Batinah coast have long been used as animal feed and fertilisers. In Dhofar dried sardines are bought by the Jebali tribesmen as feed for their cattle during the dry season, when the grazing has been exhausted, although this is a dying practice as fodder becomes increasingly available from farms on the Salalah plain. Large numbers of lobsters are now caught in quantity off Masirah Island and the coast of Dhofar, and exported to the north.

During the first flush of development in the early 1970s many fishermen left their communities for the town where they could earn much higher wages. The Government was keenly aware of this threat to the fishing industry and took early remedial action. A Fisheries Department formed in 1972 became a Directorate-General in 1974, and 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



Fishermen's boats bought with Government grants at Quriyat – the fishing industry is vital to the national economy (Photo: Mohamed Al Wadhahy)

fish caught by the concessionaires. In 1987 a Royal Decree established the Oman Fisheries Company (OFC) into which the ONFC has been merged. RO 30 million was received as subscriptions from shareholders. The Government which holds 24 per cent of the shares has given assurances that the new company will operate in such a way that it will not stifle other fisheries firms. OFC has six board members from the private sector and from the Government.

The total quantity of fish and crustaceans landed has risen rapidly over the past few years. In 1985, 95,000 metric tonnes were landed, and by 1988 this had risen to 166,100 tonnes. The increase came from all regions, but the largest was from the northern Sharqiya, where the quantity of fish landed more than doubled in 1988 when it totalled 45,000 tonnes compared to 22,500 tonnes netted in 1987. Fish landed in Dhofar also more than doubled in 1988 when the total reached 24,100 tonnes compared to 11,700 tonnes in 1987. The bulk of the fish landed

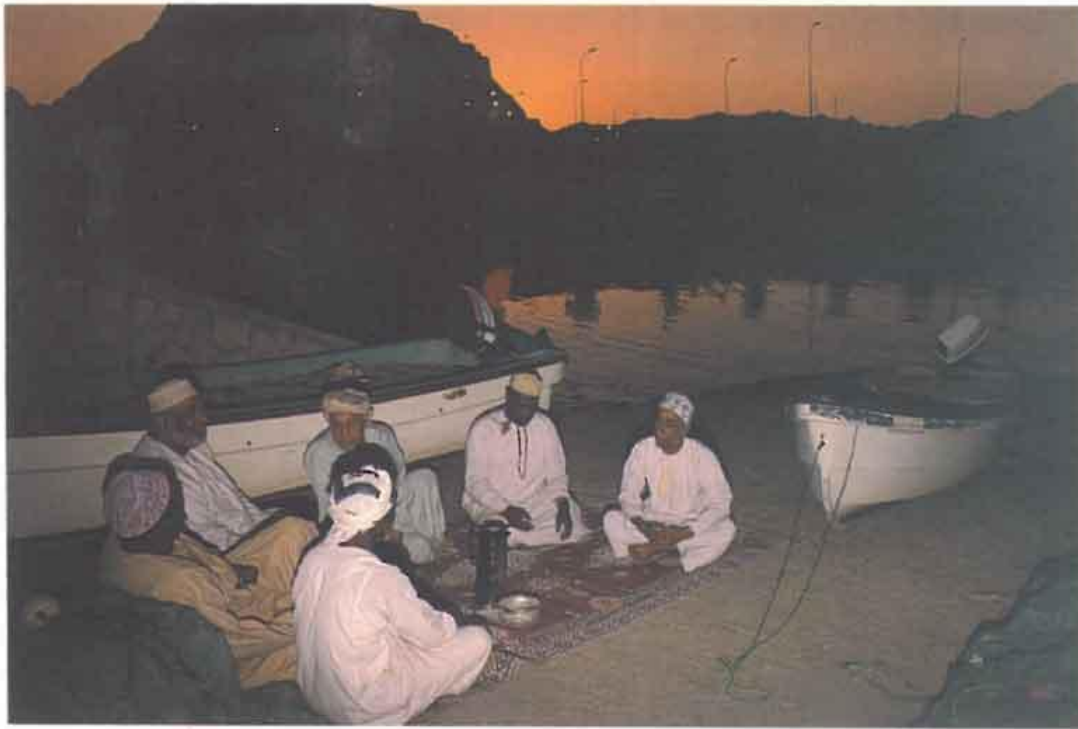


A day's catch – local fishing in Musandam

were caught by the traditional fishermen who accounted for almost 90 per cent of the catch in 1988. 10,543 fishermen are recorded as officially registered that year.

Large scale commercial fishing enterprises have also played their part, beginning in 1976 with an agreement between the Government and a Japanese fishing company for the operation of deepwater trawlers. Under this agreement the Government obtained 40 per cent of the catch and Omanis were trained and employed in modern fishing methods. In 1977 this agreement was replaced by a fishing concession to a Korean company which trains Omanis on its trawlers and provides 38 per cent of its catch to the Government in the form of royalties. The industrial fleet, which consists of the National Fishing Company and the Korean Fishing Company landed about 10 per cent of the total fishing catch in 1988, i.e. about 17,900 metric tonnes.

During the period 1983-1988, the quantity of fish exported has



Fishermen relax at the end of the day's work

increased two and a half times from 14,200 tonnes in 1983 to 35,300 tonnes in 1988. The value of these exports, however, more than quadrupled from RO 4.4 million in 1983 to RO 19.3 million in 1988. Fish are now being exported to the USA, Japan, Australia and to the other GCC states as well as to European countries.

Formerly, it was impossible for the inhabitants of the Interior to obtain fresh fish. Jenaba tribesmen used to trade dried fish from the coast in the region of Masirah Island for dates from the Interior around Nizwa. Now, with the development of modern road communications throughout the Sultanate and the employment of refrigerated vans fresh fish are brought from the coast to all the major centres of population in the Interior, thus greatly increasing the market for local fishermen to the point where the country is now self-sufficient in the commodity. In Musandam, the fisheries industry, upon which the region is almost totally dependent, receives Government assistance.

In 1986, the Government set up the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre at Al Bustan near Muscat. Costing RO 1.5 million, with consultative support from UNESCO and the FAO, it became operational in 1987. In cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos University its role includes studies of different 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. It also has responsibility for the student groups and individuals who visit the Centre.

WATER

At the beginning of 1990 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said issued a Royal Decree appointing His Excellency Khalfan bin Nasser al Wahaibi as Minister of the newly constituted Ministry of Water Resources. While the discovery and exploitation of its oil have been vital for the development of Oman over the past 20 years, in the long term it is the management of the limited water resources of the Sultanate which is vital for the future of the country and the well-being of its people.

The Government has long been aware of the need to conserve and increase supplies of fresh water as a matter of urgency, if Oman was to develop industry where none existed before, and cope with the needs of a rapidly expanding population with higher living standards. Thus it was in 1986 that two Councils concerned with the environment were merged into the Council for Conservation of Environment and Water Resources, of which His Majesty the Sultan was the Chairman. In 1989 it was decided that the whole subject of water resources 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 Conservation of Environment and Water Resources. This has now evolved into the new Ministry of Water Resources which incorporates PAWR.

All water resources in the Sultanate originate from rainfall. However, some ancient water, sometimes called fossil water, derives from a period when the climate of Oman was considerably wetter than it is today, and is not being replenished in today's arid climate; it therefore has to be carefully husbanded. The art of exploiting available water resources is not new to Oman. The falaj system in the Interior has been used for nearly a thousand years, and is a most efficient system of utilising available water to the best advantage. It is the main method of irrigation in the Interior to this day and many aflaj (plural of falaj) have been in operation for 800 years or more (a detailed description of the falaj system is given in the chapter on agriculture). On the Batinah coast in northern Oman, and on the Salalah Plain in the south, water for irrigation is obtained from wells.



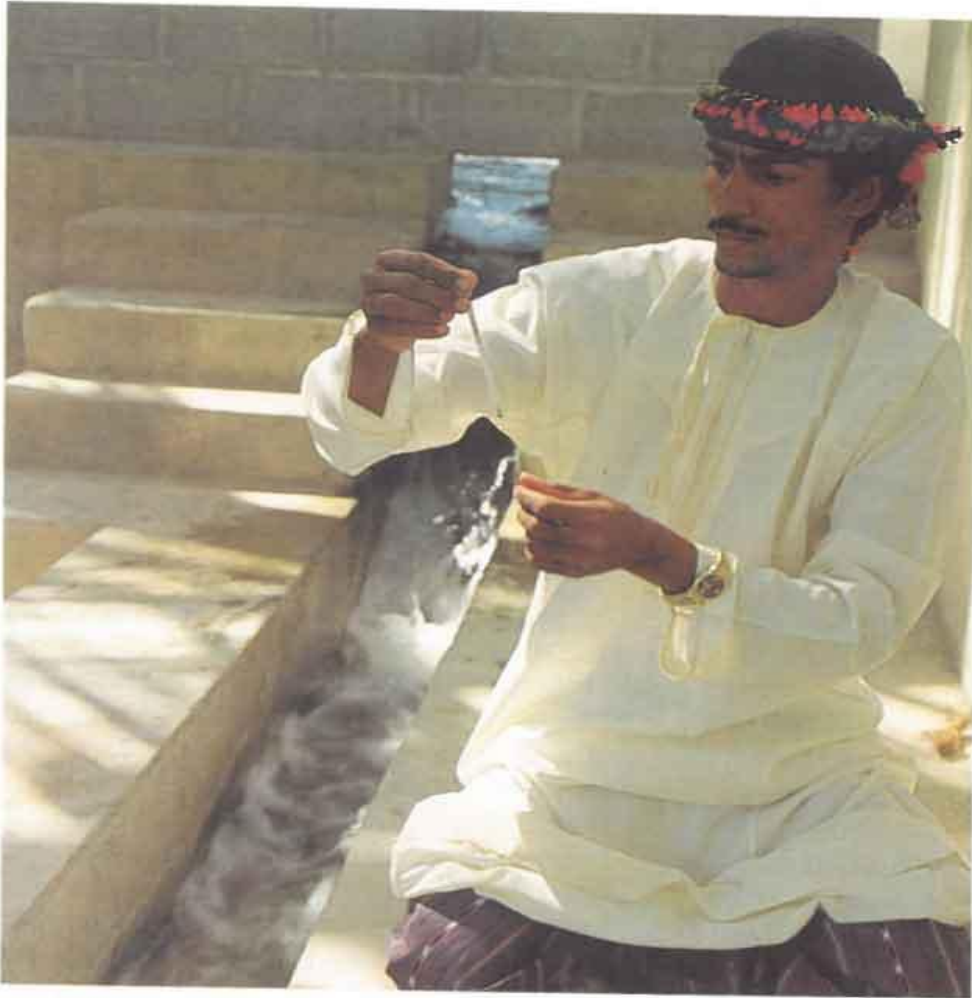
Surface water technicians take indirect measurements for the flood study programme (Photo: Min. of Water Resources)

Rainfall is limited in Oman and varies considerably throughout the country according to its geography, but it is generally 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 obviously been lost, into the sea or the deserts of the Interior in the past.

In recent years, a major problem has arisen on the Batinah coast, the most densely populated and intensively cultivated region of the country. Here the irrigation of date gardens and crops is supplied entirely by well water. The availability of powerful pumps has made water extraction much easier, and coupled with this is the use of drilling rigs, which makes the construction of wells quick and easy. As a result the number of wells has increased enormously, as has the area of land under cultivation. Unfortunately, this upset the balance between extraction and the re-supply of the subterranean aquifers from which the water is drawn. Seepage of sea water into

the aquifers increased to such an extent that in some areas the salinity rose to a level which could no longer be tolerated by date palms and other crops. In short, the trees were dying. Drastic action was needed to be taken to control this situation and reverse the trend. In March 1989 a National Committee for the Guidance of Water Use on the Batinah coast was set up by Royal Decree. The 15-member committee is chaired by His Majesty's Adviser for Economic Planning Affairs, His Excellency Mohamed al Zubair, and in August 1989, was allocated RO 7 million to implement an emergency plan to deal with the situation, much of which is to be used to subsidise farmers opting for modern irrigation systems. Steps to limit the sinking of wells and the regulation of land usage agreed by the Committee will now be implemented by the newly instituted Ministry of Water Resources in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF).

Re-charging of aquifers is being tried by the construction of re-charge dams in the wadis, thus retaining flood waters from the mountains, which would otherwise flow to waste in the sea. The retained water will, it is hoped, on being progressively released, seep into the aquifers and thus recharge them. The first dam was completed at Al Khodh, near Muscat, in March 1985. First indications are that this method is proving to be successful, but much more data has yet to be collected. Meanwhile other re-charge dams have been completed in the Wadi Hilti-Salahi (Sohar), Quryat, the Wadi Ghul near Hamra, and at Tanuf. In September 1989 it was announced that work was to start on the Birka/Rumais water scheme, the largest groundwater re-charge scheme in the Sultanate. The scheme to be carried out in the south Batinah involves the construction of four dams in four major wadis in the region – the Wadi Bani Kharus, Wadi Maawil, Wadi Rubkah and Wadi Taww. The four dams will have a total storage of 30.4 million cub. metres and, once implemented, the scheme is estimated to recharge about four to six million cub. metres per year, when there is rain. Also in 1990, dams will be constructed in the Wadi Sahalnait in the south and the Wadi Fulaj in the Sharqiya. In January 1990, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries signed an agreement valued at RO 1,350,000 for the construction of a dam in the Wadi al Kabir area in the Dhahira region, which will enable the area under cultivation to be increased in the region and provide protection against floods.



A Ministry technician tests the quality of falaj water (Photo: Min. of Water Resources)

Potable water for drinking purposes and other domestic needs in the Muscat area is obtained from desalination plants and wells. Two additional desalination units at the al Ghubrah thermal power/desalination plant came on stream in 1986 making a total of four units with a capacity of 23 million gallons per day. In addition two wellfields in the Wadi Adai and Seeb areas, with a production capacity of 3 million gallons per day each, boost the total output. Small desalination plants are in operation elsewhere in the Sultanate, including Dhofar and Musandam as well as on the Kuria Muria Islands.

The policy guidelines recently issued by the Ministry of Water Resources are as follows:-

- (a) Priority of water use shall be given first to reasonable domestic purposes, then to animal rearing and finally to agriculture and industry.
- (b) There is to be an inventory and compulsory registration of all water wells.
- (c) Drilling of wells will be banned except where studies confirm there is suitable soil for agriculture, and water is available in excess of actual present uses.
- (d) A permit to drill a well must be obtained from the Ministry of Water Resources.
- (e) Deepening of wells will be limited to human needs, then for animal needs and the needs of trees.

Water management is to be introduced throughout the Sultanate in two phases:-

First phase – To instal water meters in all wells.

Second phase –

- (a) To coordinate with the MAF the determination of appropriate crops for each area, and the water requirements for each farm and the means to control them.
- (b) The drilling by Government of central wells for distribution of piped water to farms.
- (c) The control of well-sinking and deepening within aflaj protection zones.
- (d) The maintenance and repair of aflaj.
- (e) The encouragement of the maintenance of cleanliness of aflaj.

The public is to be kept informed of the implementation of these policies and the explanation for them through the information media.

DOMESTIC WATER

Until recent years Oman was totally dependent on wells and aflaj for its domestic water supplies, and these in turn were dependent on a capricious and sparse rainfall. In times of prolonged drought, which were not infrequent, great difficulties were experienced, and such water as was available was liable to become polluted and resulted in disease.

The first organised water project in the Sultanate was implemented in 1970, when three government wells were sunk in the Al-Khoodh area and a 12-inch diameter pipeline, 35 km in length, was run from Al-Khoodh to the Muttrah reservoir near the Al-Rahma hospital. Reservoirs were later constructed at Muscat and Bait al Falaj. 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-Ghubra outside Muscat, which was commissioned in 1976 with a daily production capacity of 6 million gallons. A new unit was added in 1982 which doubled capacity to 12 million gallons daily. In 1986 two more desalination units were completed at Al-Ghubra bringing total production capacity to 23.5 million gallons daily.

At the same time wells were sunk into the largest aquifers in the Muscat area, and the number had risen to 92 by the end of 1986. These wells are in the Wadi Adai, and at Al-Khoodh and Al-Seeb. In normal circumstances their daily production is about 6 million gallons, but in an emergency and over short periods this can be raised to 21 million gallons. The water pumping station at Mawaleh is one of the major water projects to be implemented by the Ministry of Electricity and Water. It pumps water from the western well-fields through a pipeline to the Al-Ghubra station. There it is mixed with water from the eastern well-fields and desalinated water for distribution to the Muscat area.

Up to the end of 1989, 296 production wells had been sunk in the wilayats. Concrete and iron reservoirs of various capacities had been built according to the needs of each area, pipelines and



The extensive desalination installation at Ghubra which supplies much of the Muscat area's needs for electricity and water

distribution points had been installed, walls had been built round the reservoirs, and some old pipelines had been replaced by new ones. There is now a project to supply to the Wilayat of Sur at a cost of RO 2 million, comprising the construction of a 1.5 million-gallon concrete water reservoir and 50 kilometres of water pipelines covering large areas of the Wilayat. A project has also been implemented to supply water to the Wilayat of Shoar at a cost of RO 1.5 million. This includes the construction of a one million-gallon concrete reservoir and approximately 40 km of water pipes.

In Buraimi, a concrete reservoir and 30 km of pipelines have been installed to supply water to the wilayat. A similar scheme at Nizwa, including a concrete reservoir and 17 km of pipeline, has now been completed. In the more remote regions, small desalination units have been established to provide the populations with water. In addition, there are six desalination units in the coastal areas of the Musandam Governorate. Up to the end of last year a total of 8,981

connections were made to houses in the wilayats in which water networks exist.

The new Five Year Plan, due to begin in the next year, provides for the implementation of a large number of water projects. Additional desalination plants will be installed in Muscat and some of the wilayats; water networks will be expanded in the areas in which they already exist; new networks will be established in wilayats where the Ministry considers this necessary, and additional wells will be sunk in various towns and wilayats.

ELECTRICITY

Before 1969 the only source of electricity in Muscat was a generator housed within the walls of the city. In that year a power station at Riyam between Muscat and Muttrah came into operation with a productive capacity of 4½ megawatts. It had small diesel engines and distributed power to a limited area of Muscat and Muttrah; the total number of connections did not exceed 2500.

In 1970 responsibility for the Riyam power station was assigned to the Ministry of Communications and Public Services. In view of the upsurge in development that was taking place in Oman at that time, the Ministry decided to expand the station's capacity by the purchase of large diesel engines. This, however, was a stop-gap operation until a new water/desalination plant went into operation at Al Ghubra near Muscat in 1976. This had an initial capacity of 25.5 megawatts of electricity and 6 million gallons of desalinated sea-water. It was then expanded to keep pace with the increasing demands for electricity and water until it reached its present level of 285 megawatts and 23.5 million gallons respectively.

The growing nation-wide requirement for electricity, however, brought increasing needs for power, and, in 1978 a Ministry of Electricity was accordingly established. The construction of another power station at Rusail, the site of the first industrial estate was decided upon; this was done in two phases, the first being completed in 1984 when a capacity of 250 megawatts was reached. By the end of the second phase, capacity had doubled to 500 megawatts. This meant that overall generating capacity had increased from 4.5 megawatts to 785 megawatts within a period of only 18 years. Over that same period the number of connections had increased from 2,500 to 81,316.

In the southern region work began on building the Salalah power station in 1971, when 3 diesel units were installed with a maximum capacity of 1,365 megawatts. Later, other diesel units were added and new stations were built in the region – the new Salalah power station, Raysut A and Raysut B stations – so that by the end of 1989 capacity had reached 99 megawatts, 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



Power grids now provide electricity to most areas of the country

Taqah, Mirbat and Sadah. In 1982 the power station at Taqah was decommissioned when the town was linked with the Salalah grid.

Electricity and water services have been extended to the Kuria Muria Islands off the south coast of Oman. In 1987 a power and desalination plant was built, with a total daily capacity of 640 kilowatts of electricity and 29,920 gallons of water.

Before 1978 there were no generating stations in the wilayats outside Muscat. By 1979, 22 generating stations were set up in the different regions with a total overall capacity of 27 megawatts. Their capacity has since been raised to 360 megawatts. Originally all these stations were diesel-operated. Now a gas turbine station has been installed in the Wadi Al-Jizzi, which supplies electricity to Sohar, Majis, Shinas, Ibri, Dank and Buraimi. The diesel generators which previously supplied these areas have been transferred to provide back-up for the stations and installations in the remote

villages which are located far from the gas-line which runs from the gas fields to the copper mines in the Wilayat of Sohar. Fanja, Sumail, Quryat, Nakhl, Wadi Al-Ma'awil, Al-Suwaiq, Al-Musana'a, Al-Rostaq, Al-Khabourah and Al-Bidiyah have now been linked to the Muscat grid. By the end of 1989 electricity connections had been made to 87,850 subscribers in Muscat and to 111,382 subscribers in the Wilayats. At the same time, in the southern region, connections had been made to 23,439 subscribers.

At present preparations are being made for the Ministry's 4th Five-Year Plan, the broad outlines of which will include installing new power stations and plants in all the regions. The plan will be implemented according to the means and facilities available at the time.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

At the beginning of January this year His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued a Royal Decree establishing a new Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, thereby separating these responsibilities from those of Social Affairs, which until then had been included in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. This was a natural outcome of the greatly increased scope of social affairs and labour-related responsibilities in recent years.

In the early 1970s, shortly after the establishment of the Ministry, it was submitted by the Minister that its activities were greatly circumscribed by lack of communications in their broadest sense as well as lack of financial resources. It was therefore only possible in the early stages of national development to set modest targets for these services. However, as good road and telephone communications spread their networks throughout the Sultanate, the social services expanded at an ever-increasing pace so that by 1990 truly remarkable results had been achieved.

Meanwhile, in the 1970s, planning went ahead and by 1977 this preliminary stage was complete, and a Royal Decree was issued laying down comprehensive welfare regulations. The most conspicuously successful achievements in this field have been the local community development projects and the setting up of the Directorate-General for Women's and Children's Affairs under the aegis of the Ministry.

Social Security is one of the most important aspects of social welfare. This is nothing new in Omani society and tradition, as one of the pillars of Islam is the Zakat, which aims at bringing people closer together and making the community socially interdependent. Islam also specifies how the Zakat funds are to be spent; thus social security is in fact an actual and practical application of the system laid down by Islam. The current law stipulates all the categories of people who are entitled to security payments. The scope of social security has been extended to provide shelter for those suffering from poverty and need, and guarantees them peaceful and secure lives. In the five years up to the end of 1989 payments involving more than RO 14.5 million were made to 36,851 social security cases.



Oman's paraplegic team prepares for an international competition

In 1980 the Special Welfare Department was set up to provide for the physically and mentally disabled and to create conditions whereby they are enabled to 'learn and earn' within their communities. The leper home at Al-Rostaq caters for all the basic needs of its occupants; moreover, where breadwinners are suffering from leprosy and live in the home, their families are provided with proper care and attention. Out-patient care is also provided, and the progress of outpatients is followed up and they are given advice on how to avoid re-infection and obtain regular treatment.

In 1987 the Welfare and Training Centre for the Disabled was opened at Al-Khoodh. This is equipped with the most modern scientific and technical equipment to ensure that it is able to fulfil the functions for which it was set up in enabling people to regain the ability to perform their original jobs and/or do any jobs that their conditions allow them to do. The first batch of 51 trainees graduated in the 1988-89 academic year.

In the case of disasters, which involve people in severe loss, the

Ministry does everything within its power to provide assistance. In 1989 compensation was paid for 317 cases of personal disaster, as well as for 452 cases of communal disasters.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is particularly concerned with local community development projects. The first of these was launched in 1976 as an experimental pilot project for community development. The success of this project exceeded all expectations so that the Government decided to consider it a National Programme, able to provide basic services to the widely scattered communities in the country. Within the context of the developing world, the Community Development Programme in Oman may be considered a pioneering experiment. It is based on the principle of integrated development, with all the Ministries involved taking part in the process as full partners. At the same time the project places great emphasis on individuals themselves participating. Members of the community collaborate through local development committees by identifying their needs, and participate with their individual efforts and potentialities in meeting them. This enables the local leadership to play its part in decision-making and implementing development projects in their own communities. Particular attention is given to training personnel at different levels, as well as local leaders, to upgrade their capabilities and prepare them to take their places in the national development process.

In recognition of its importance, a number of international organizations have provided considerable assistance to the community development programme in Oman. Care has been taken at every stage to ensure that Omani values and customs are faithfully preserved. The National Community Development Programme achieved notable results during the 13 years from 1976 to 1989, including the extension of its services to 625 villages and settlements in 17 Wilayats, including 305 villages and settlements in the Southern Region. The Programme plays an important role in coordinating and enhancing the services of different governmental bodies in local communities.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the development teams and agricultural advisers encourage the rural population to benefit from successful experiments in the improvement of agricultural techniques and where necessary, to change to more productive crops, aided by model farms. Farmers



Ministry of Social Affairs building – Salalah branch

are also urged to play an active part in campaigns against pests and plant disease, and in coordinating public efforts in falaj maintenance and the drilling and deepening of wells for providing irrigation water.

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

The project has also made good progress in setting up literacy and adult education classes for men and women, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education in those villages where there are as yet no schools. So far 117 classes for men and 370 classes for women have been established, in which 1995 men and 7268 women have benefitted.

The ultimate goal of the Community Development Programme is to create a cadre of local leaders able to identify community problems and needs, and find out ways and means of meeting them through self-help efforts and available local resources. Accordingly, enhancing self-reliance and community participation is recognised as being an essential component of a strategy aimed at lessening the dependence of communities on Government. So far, 36 local and village committees have been established which through their meetings, assess community needs, lay down local plans in cooperation with the project teams and participate in their implementation. Through joint efforts, 532 projects have been carried out at village level, using donations in cash and in kind from the people of the communities amounting to RO 1,078,848. Of this 60 per cent was provided by individual contributions towards paving village roads, drilling and deepening wells, repairing and maintenance of aflaaj, construction of Koranic schools, improvement of drinking water sources, the construction of public baths and latrines and village halls.

Women and Children

The Directorate-General for Women's and Children's Affairs, as part of the Ministry of Social Affairs, provides assistance to Omani women for the purpose of improving their economic and social circumstances. It operates largely through the Omani Women's Associations, of which there are now 13 throughout the Sultanate. These Associations have more than 2000 members. Approval has been given in principle for Associations to be set up in Bahla, Sumail, Al-Suwaiq, Ja'lan Bani Bu Hasan, Al-Kamil and Al-Wafi. Specific attention is given to young working mothers, who have been given special protection under the laws relating to employment; these include breast-feeding hours, maternity leave, the provision of one to two years leave to look after children, and the opening of nurseries and kindergartens. In the interests of the

parents and children, the Government has banned baby-sitting, and only licensed nurseries are allowed to operate under the supervision of the Directorate-General. Before granting licences to nurseries, the Ministry checks their suitability, including accommodation, standard of education of those in control, safety standards, fees etc. In Muscat alone there are now at least 15 licensed nurseries.

The national programme for local community development is one of the corner-stones for the advancement of rural womanhood. It aims to eliminate female illiteracy, encourage female education and provide guidance in the upbringing of children and other domestic matters. Women are also encouraged and enabled to develop their skills, particularly in the home and cottage industries, as well as other projects which can provide additional income for them and their families. Two main factors have to be taken into consideration for the integration of rural women into the development process. Firstly, in rural Oman all such female activities have to be performed by women, which requires creating a capable team of workers both official and voluntary. Secondly, available work opportunities elsewhere have resulted in quite a number of men working outside the villages, with the result that women have increased responsibilities in family affairs and decision-making.

The Child Affairs Department looks after the care and welfare of children. Female social investigators make regular visits to foster homes to check on the children, follow up the situations of the families in which they have been placed, and prepare reports on the state of the child in its foster family. Creches receive regular visits to check that they fulfil Government conditions. In 1989 there was a total of 17 creches.

LABOUR AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

In January 1990 a new Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training was established by Royal Decree. Previously labour and training responsibilities had belonged to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. Educated and skilled Omanis capable of developing the country were almost totally lacking in the Sultanate in the years before 1970. Such educated Omanis as were to be found in the country had been educated and trained abroad as the necessary facilities were virtually non-existent within the Sultanate. At that time unemployment was endemic and many Omanis went abroad to work in the oil-rich neighbouring Gulf States as unskilled labour.

Following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos the situation altered dramatically. Answering His Majesty's call, Omanis, skilled and unskilled, returned in large numbers to help in the development of the country. In the early years of development Oman was heavily dependent on expatriates, mostly Indian and Pakistani, as well as Europeans in managerial posts, for lack of an educated and skilled Omani workforce. Now, as trained young Omanis graduate from schools, institutes and the Sultan Qaboos University, Omanisation is taking place in every field at an ever-increasing pace. Nevertheless, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has found it necessary to emphasise repeatedly the need to reduce Oman's dependence on foreign workers, and has reminded the country's youth that academic qualifications are meant to equip them to work effectively in the country's service. Recently he has prompted the private sector to do more to replace foreign employees with Omanis.

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



Students learn advanced training skills at one of the Vocational Training Institutes

proportion of Omani to foreign employees in an establishment and lays down rules to achieve this objective.

Vocational Training

The Education and Vocational Training Council, which was founded in 1978, and is headed by His Majesty, bears full responsibility for the development of the national workforce and aims to provide the necessary skilled labour for the national economy. It operates in coordination with Ministries, Government establishments and the private sector. At present there are nine Vocational Training Institutes at Seeb, Darsait, Nizwa, Saham, Salalah, Musa'ana, Ibra, Ibri and Sur and a Technical College at Al Khuwair. The Ministry plans to set up another Vocational Training Centre in Sumail to meet the growing requirements of technical manpower in the Interior. The Centre, which will be in step with recent developments in the educational system, will have a capacity of 360 students. The



Research at a Technical and Industrial College at Al Khuwair

Ministry also plans to set up a training institute at the Rusayl Industrial Estate, the only one of its kind in the country. During 1989 the Ministry worked out a plan to train Vocational Training Institute graduates as teachers at the Al-Khuwair Oman Technical Industrial College in a renewed bid to step up Omanisation of teaching staff at the country's vocational training institutes. The plan proposes admission of the first group of 20 VTI diploma holders this year under the scheme for the two and a half year long course. Currently the Government is aiming at finding jobs in the private sector for about 400 young Omanis who have graduated in 1989 from the VTIs. Last year the Government launched a scheme under which secondary school graduates are trained and given jobs in the private sector. The first group of 160, including 60 women, are being trained as Arabic and English typists, secretaries, counter clerks in travel agencies, receptionists in hotels, cashiers and marketing assistants at three private institutes.

To ascertain the number of Omanis in the private sector, the



A chemist under training at a Ministry College

Ministry last year began the issue of labour cards to all nationals working in this sector. The cards will have to be produced by Omanis when they return to the Ministry looking for new jobs. This will help in checking the high rate of turnover of Omanis in the private sector. An Omani will not be given a new job unless the reason why he left his previous job is known.

The Oman Technical Industrial College at Al-Khuwair was opened in 1984 for the purpose of training personnel of both sexes to meet more advanced training requirements. The College is equipped with modern laboratories and workshops, and highly qualified lecturers and instructors have been appointed. A continuous dialogue is maintained with employers with the object of linking the College with the labour market and keeping it abreast of technical, industrial and commercial labour requirements. It is estimated that, by the end of this year, 660 students will have qualified.

The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Education and Youth cooperate closely in career preparation and

planning for young Omanis. The latter plays an important role through its general, commercial, industrial and agricultural secondary schools and intermediate teacher training colleges, and as a preliminary to their study at the VTIs and the Oman Technical Industrial College. It also sponsors advanced courses in colleges and universities outside the Sultanate. The opening of the Sultan Qaboos University in 1986 was an important milestone in the education of Omani students in the higher specialisations. Many other organisations are playing their part; the Institute of Health Sciences is making a valuable contribution to the national progress by providing technicians for the health services; in the banking and financial sector, the Central Bank of Oman has set up the Omani Banking Institute for banking studies; PDO, the Oman Mining Company and others are also giving priority to the training of Omani personnel for the highest posts.

COMMUNICATIONS

Twenty years ago communications were almost totally lacking in the Sultanate of Oman, and the country was isolated from the outside world both through circumstances and as a matter of policy. In 1970 there were only 8 km of paved roads from Muscat via Muttrah to the airfield at Bait al Falaj. Otherwise there was only a poorly maintained graded road along the Batinah Coast to Sohar, while PDO maintained a graded road to Fahud in the Interior. Beyond that there were only tracks. Only landrovers and other cross-country vehicles could cope with the conditions. There was no port where passengers or cargo could be landed from ships. Cargo was transferred ashore by lighters at Muttrah. The only airfield, at Bait al Falaj, was used by civilian and military light aircraft and its facilities were rudimentary. Landing conditions were hazardous owing to the surrounding mountains. The oil company maintained its own landing strips. A limited and basic telephone service was confined to the Muscat area and there was a small broadcasting station of only one kw at Bait al Falaj.

The accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said brought about an immediate and remarkable change. It was obvious from the start that development would be dependent on communications, which of necessity had to begin on the coast with the construction of a deepwater port and an international airport as well as paved roads. With an unskilled labour force this was a daunting challenge. Nevertheless, work went ahead on all these major projects simultaneously, with such success that twenty years later a major network of communications on land and in the air has been completed, and resources can now be concentrated in the rural areas and the more remote mountain regions of the Interior. In 1970 only 10 km of asphalt roads were constructed; by 1988 this had risen to 3,238 km.

Roads

Oman is the second largest country of the Arabian Peninsula with a varied topography of mountain and plain, and a population unevenly distributed, mostly concentrated in the northern coastal regions and the extreme south, with a vast, sparsely populated area in between. The first stages of road construction was comparatively simple as it involved connecting Muscat with the new international



Super modern highways – Ruwi business district

airport at Seeb and the centres of population along the level Batinah coastal plain, the most densely populated area of the country. Only then was it feasible to proceed to the next stage of the construction of roads to the main centres of population in the Interior, and the development of road networks connecting with those of neighbouring States. This was far more difficult as it involved building roads through the towering rugged mountains of the Hajar range where heavy local rainstorms fall at intervals year-round. At the same time, in the far south, the road construction programme connected Salalah with the towns and villages along the coast to the east and west and to the jebel to the north and beyond.

During the 1980s a hard-surface road was completed linking Muscat with Salalah across the southern desert plains. Other roads now connect Muscat with Sur to the south-east, communications with which were formerly feasible only by sea, while the road to Nizwa now extends through Bahla and Ibri to Buraimi where it joins up with the road system of the UAE.

Recently, spectacular road construction has been completed in the dauntingly mountainous region of the Musandam, as well as to the top of the Jebel Akhdar and in the south through the mountains of Dhofar to the border with Yemen. Much of the road construction in these difficult mountainous terrains has been carried out by the Ministry of Defence Engineering Services (MODES); this being a typical example of civil assistance provided by the Sultan's Armed Forces.

During 1989, 414 km of roads at an estimated cost of RO 40 million were completed, a proportion of which are double bituminous surface treatment (DBST) roads whilst the remainder are asphalt concrete roads. Work on the 71 km-long road from Al Kamil to Al Ashkara in the south-east of the country, was due for completion by the end of 1989, while the 78 km road from Mughsayl to the beginning of the road to Sarfait in Dhofar, adjacent to the border with the Yemen, was opened for traffic by the end of the year. During 1990 it is planned to construct a further 298 km of DRST and asphalt concrete roads. Among road construction projects for the Fourth 5-Year Plan is the dualisation of the 137 km Rusayl/Nizwa road, which will complete a dual-carriageway road between Muscat and Nizwa. Among other projects is the construction of a coastal road of 103 km from Quryat to Sur, as well as a 70 km road linking Rostaq with Al Dhahira. In the south, it is planned to build a 83 km road linking Mirbat with Sadah and Jawfa.

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

Sea

One of the first major projects completed in the Sultanate was that of the deepwater port at Muttrah, named Mina Qaboos, in 1974, thus providing a vital service in the development of the country. The ever-increasing volume of imports and exports in succeeding years has entailed continual expansion, with additional



Thriving Port Qaboos at Muttrah is to undergo further extensive development

developments such as the construction of a container terminal, modern ware-houses, engineering workshops and deepwater wharfage. Mina Qaboos has nine deepwater berths and four coaster berths. It has a transit shed area of 27,000 sq metres and an open storage area of about 150,000 sq metres. The container terminal has an area of 4.7 hectares with a storage capacity for 2,700 TEU loaded/empty containers. It has a fleet of six tugs fitted with the most modern equipment. The port is equipped with 2 × 35 tonne cranes and 13 other cranes of varying capacities for handling containers and conventional cargo.

In April 1989 the Chairman of the Port Services Corporation, Shaikh Hamoud bin Abdullah al Harthi, who is also Minister of Communications, announced an increase of 97 per cent during the financial year in conventional cargo movement over the previous year. He also announced that the port is to undergo further extensive development in the coming years. Recommendations of the consultants retained to conduct a comprehensive study for the

development of Mina Qaboos to increase storage areas and dredging to deepen the berths are under active consideration. All systems at the port which were computerised have been working successfully. 77 per cent of port employees are now Omanis. The Minister, earlier this year, signed an agreement for the construction of a cargo building with modern equipment and storage facilities worth RO 1,178,000, and a consultancy agreement for the preparation of maps and specifications for the first phase of the development of Mina Qaboos to be put to tender. The project aims at providing for cargo operations at the port for the next ten years.

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

Plans to evaluate and assess the requirement for a new port are progressing in order to find a suitable location. A Japanese team arrived in October 1989 to commence a study for the selection of a suitable site on the Batinah coast.

Air

The International Airport at Seeb outside Muscat, completed in 1974 to replace the old airfield at Bait al Falaj with its notoriously difficult approaches for aircraft, was one of the first major development projects in the Sultanate. In addition to its passenger and freight facilities, which are up to the most modern international standards, the airport serves military and police movements. Seeb International Airport is now rated as one of the major international airports in the region, due to its modern installations, the high efficiency and standards of operation. It serves 21 international scheduled air carriers and 14 international non-scheduled operators, in addition to various cargo charters. As a result of better facilities offered to airlines, the total number of regular flights to Seeb International Airport increased by 18 per cent in the last nine months of 1989, while regular and unscheduled flights during the period increased by 22 per cent. As a result of new regulations in early 1990 authorising the granting of visas within 24 hours to transit passengers and 21 day tourist visas, it is expected that the number of flights will further increase in 1990.

A major programme for the improvement of facilities to cater for the



A passenger information screen is checked by a technician at Seeb International Airport

1990s has been drawn up for the Airport by the Ministry of Communications. This will include the lengthening of runways and improvements in aircraft parking. In March this year the Minister signed an agreement for the construction of a new VIP lounge complete with all facilities at a cost of RO 150,000, to be completed by National Day in November. The old facility will be released for other passenger related services. Work is expected to begin soon on a modern cargo complex, which will be able to handle at least 40,000 tonnes of annual combined export and import cargo. Also planned is an expansion of the area for long-term and short-term car-parking. Long-term plans also include the improvement of the passenger baggage handling systems to ensure more convenient check-ins and check-outs. The duty free shopping area is also to be improved.

Salalah airport was the second airport to be constructed in the Sultanate. Work on the terminal building was completed in 1986 and the airport became operational a few months later. The airport



Salalah Airport, which has now been upgraded from domestic to international standards

is capable of accommodating 250 arrivals and departures in each direction per hour. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has four civil airports under its control at Seeb, Salalah, Sur and Dhaba in the Musandam. Seeb and Salalah can handle all types of aircraft, while Sur and Dhaba are open for light aircraft only.

Oman Aviation Services (OAS) an Omani joint stock company, was established by Royal Decree in May 1981 to operate domestic airline services, charter aircraft, and to provide other airline related services on a 20 year franchise. This includes aircraft, passenger and cargo handling, catering and other services. By the end of 1989, 56.5 per cent of the company's employees were Omani nationals out of a total of 1588 employees. OAS has 5 Omani pilots and 3 Omani second officers and has its own programme for training pilots and engineers.

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

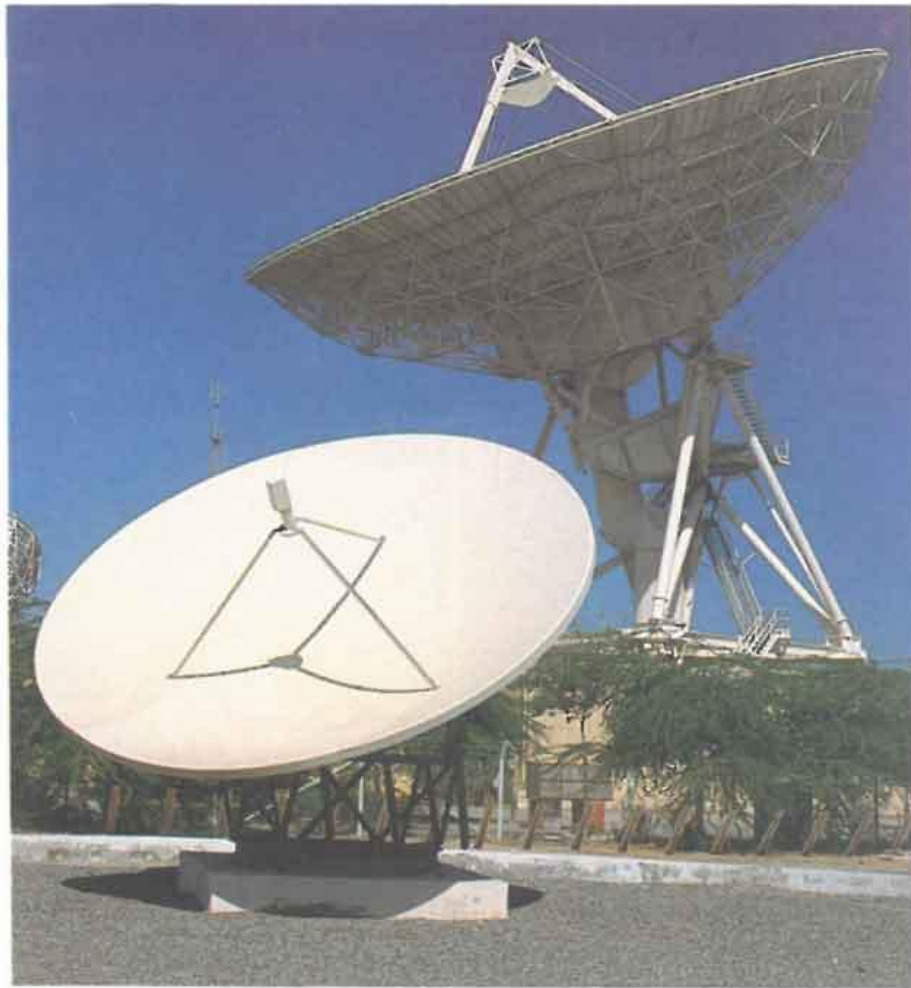
POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

In spite of the fact that the Sultanate of Oman has a postal history of almost 150 years, in 1970 there was still only one post office in existence, which was in Muscat. This was opened in 1856, Indian postage stamps being used for convenience until 1947. In 1948 the British General Post Office was given responsibility for postal agencies in the Gulf region, and overprinted British stamps were used. The first Omani postage stamps were issued in 1966 when the Government took over the postal services. Outside Muscat 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 areas of the Sultanate, so that by the end of 1985 there were 58 post offices together with 36 branch agencies. The rapid development of the Sultanate during this period was reflected in the massive increase in the turnover of letters and parcels. In 1971 the total of incoming and outgoing letters was 7,662,000; in 1984 it had increased to 38,000,000. A comparable increase was reflected in the number of parcels. A fleet of vehicles was purchased for moving post rapidly between Muscat and the provinces. By the end of 1989 there were 70 post offices in the Sultanate together with 34 postal agencies, and by the end of the current Five Year Plan a further 34 post offices will be built and functioning. Mobile post offices, which were originally allocated to heavily populated areas, have since been replaced by permanent post offices.

An express mail service, known as Datapost, and manned by specially trained staff for fast and reliable postal handling was introduced in 1985. At first limited to the Muscat area it has now been extended to Salalah, Sur, Sohar, Nizwa, Ibri and Al Buraimi. Datapost links have been established with 58 countries since the service was first initiated. Items despatched by Datapost in 1988 numbered 9,458, and figures for 1989 showed an increasing growth. At the end of 1989 there were nearly 35,000 post boxes being cleared daily in the Sultanate.

Current mail volume varies between 40 and 50 million items



The sophisticated satellite system at Al Amerat (near Muscat) links Oman to the rest of the world

annually for incoming and outgoing mail. It is estimated that there will be an annual increase of 3 to 5 per cent in mail services based on the natural expansion in the country's population. In 1989 the Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones signed seven contracts for the construction of new post office buildings at Haima, Al Bidiya, Al Khuwairia, Lizough, Al Tryaif, Wadi Kabir and Medinat Al Nahdha.

Commemorative postage stamps are normally issued for each National Day, but 1990 being the 20th anniversary of the accession



The central console of Oman's ultra-modern telephone system

of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos a special set is being issued, one denomination of which depicts the Sultan Qaboos Rose which has been named for His Majesty in international recognition of his work for his people, world peace, and the ecology.

Telecommunications

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

During 1984/85 a new Telecommunication Centre was constructed at Bait Al Falaj near Muscat, and twelve digital exchanges were commissioned within the Muscat area. GTO's equipped capacity rose from about 500 lines in 1970, to 128,000 in April 1990. At the same time three digital exchanges were commissioned in Salalah, increasing capacity for this region to the present level of



An engineer repairs telecommunications equipment

14,688. Subsequently, expansion has continued with projects covering the Interior region (centred on Nizwa, Ibri, Ibra and Sur), Buraimi, Masirah, the Musandam peninsula, and Batinah coast region.

In 1985, a cellular mobile telephone service was launched which now covers a large area of the Sultanate. It has a capacity of 4,500 with about 2,200 lines currently connected. Considerable equipment has been ordered to supply the mobile telephone network, which has become increasingly popular with businessmen and executives, due to its convenience and excellent cost-benefit ratio.

In March 1990, the GTO announced that among major works planned for completion in 1990 are the link-ups in the Southern Region and the Batinah Coast. The coverage of the Batinah Region will be up to the Sultanate's border with the UAE. There will not be a settlement or village without direct access to a modern



The stamp issued by the Ministry to commemorate the Sultan Qaboos Rose which was named for His Majesty the Sultan

telecommunications device. The scheme entails the construction of some 15 exchanges with the latest equipment. Fibre Optics is the newest technology available. All new digital exchanges in Oman will be interconnected via Fibre Optic Cables. A Fibre Optic line will soon connect Muscat with Ibri, linking up exchanges all along the way.

Another venture will soon be launched to expand exchanges in the Muscat Region to cope with future demand. This year will see the beginning of the first phase of the Fanja- Nizwa telecom expansion, which will be similar to the Batinah Coast project. By the end of the 4th Five Year Plan, it is expected that GTO services will cover the entire country. The GTO is also making heavy investments to bring its services into direct contact with all the people. In this regard, it has installed sophisticated debit card and coin-operated public telephones in many parts of the country. Orders have now been placed for more public telephones to enable near-saturation coverage of most areas.

One of the successes of the GTO has been the smooth integration of facsimile systems into everyday business life in the Sultanate. Telefax has been delicensed in the country, allowing subscribers to purchase and install machines from any dealer they choose.

The Sultanate of Oman is a major user of Arabsat, the satellite launched by the Arab Satellite Organisation. There are three earth stations at Al Amerat Satellite Telecommunications Complex linked to Indian Ocean Intelsat and the Arabsat. Since more Satellite facilities are needed by the country, one of the ground stations at Al Amerat is dedicated for use in the domestic telephone and television network. Another station is to be built in the Sultanate to work with the Atlantic Ocean Intelsat.

It is the policy of the GTO to lower tariffs as much as possible since this stimulates demand. The rate structure was streamlined in 1989 with beneficial results, and more recently, domestic and international rates have been reduced. Among the plans for major future projects is one to build regional telecommunications centres, similar to the tower at Bait Al Falaj, although not as large. These centres will have remote maintenance systems that will monitor surrounding exchanges.

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

EDUCATION

Education is vital to the programme of Omanisation which is now receiving the highest priority. Many aspects of development in a country can be hastened once the financial resources are available, but one that cannot be rushed is education. In his first address to the nation on his accession in July 1970, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos placed special emphasis on this subject, which has been given priority throughout the past 20 years, even when a measure of financial retrenchment became necessary in 1986 as a result of a sudden steep fall in world oil prices. At that time, His Majesty personally directed that the programmes for education and health should not be affected.

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

Textbooks had to be compiled and published, curricula formulated and examination standards set. The school curriculum has now been successfully Omanised.

Primary school education normally starts at the age of six years. So great was the demand for education in the early stages that there has been no need for compulsion. On passing the examination at the sixth primary grade, generally at between the ages of twelve and fourteen, the child progresses to the preparatory school. Students passing the general preparatory certificate examination are admitted to the first grade of secondary schools between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years. Here they are selected for the appropriate type of secondary education in accordance with the results of their preparatory examination.

By the end of 1989 there were 721 government schools, institutes

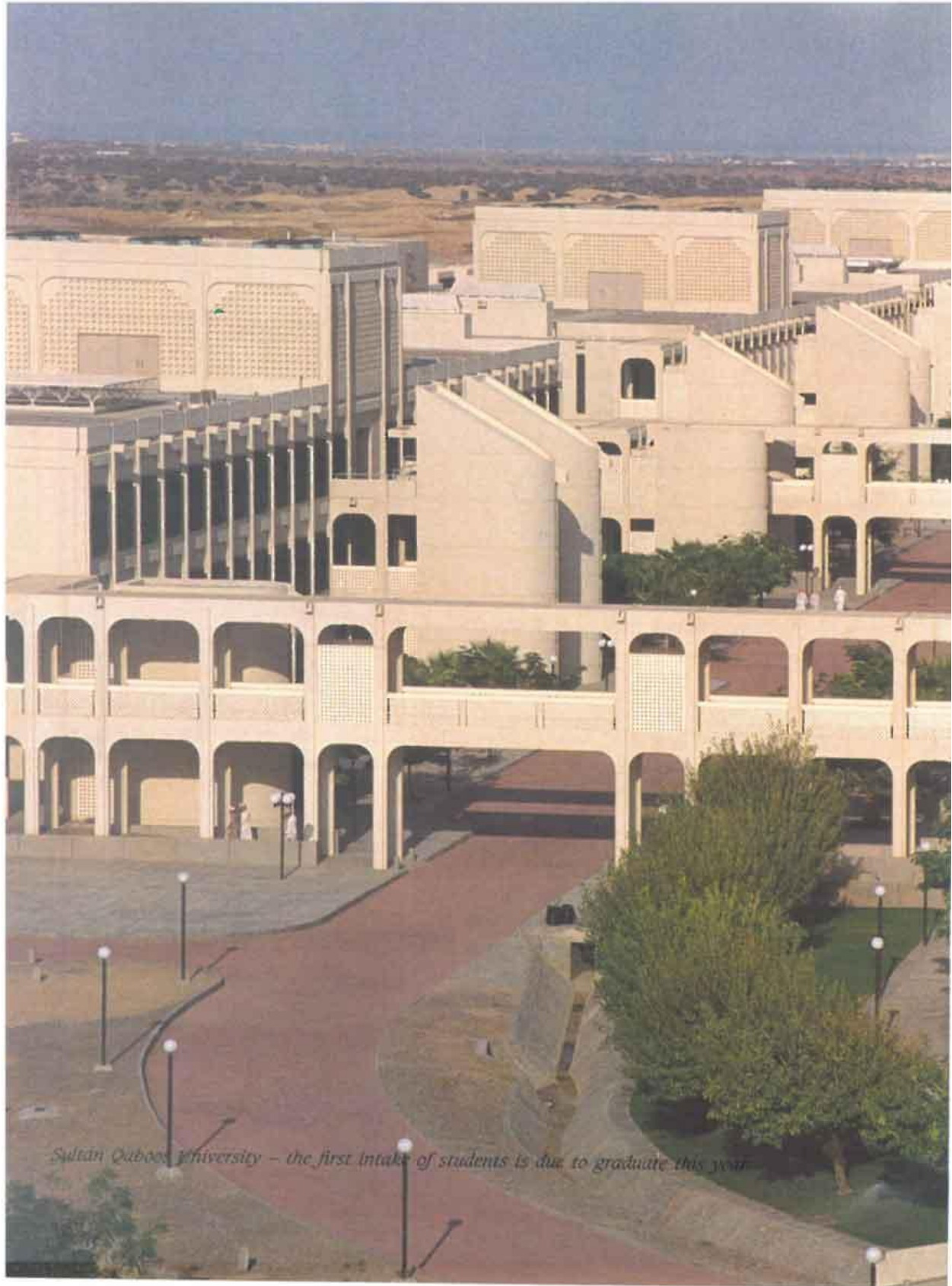


A student practices machine-drawing at Sultan Qaboos University

and intermediate teacher training colleges in the country as well as the Sultan Qaboos University. At that time in the three grades of schools – primary, preparatory and secondary – there were 160,561 boys and 144,737 girls.

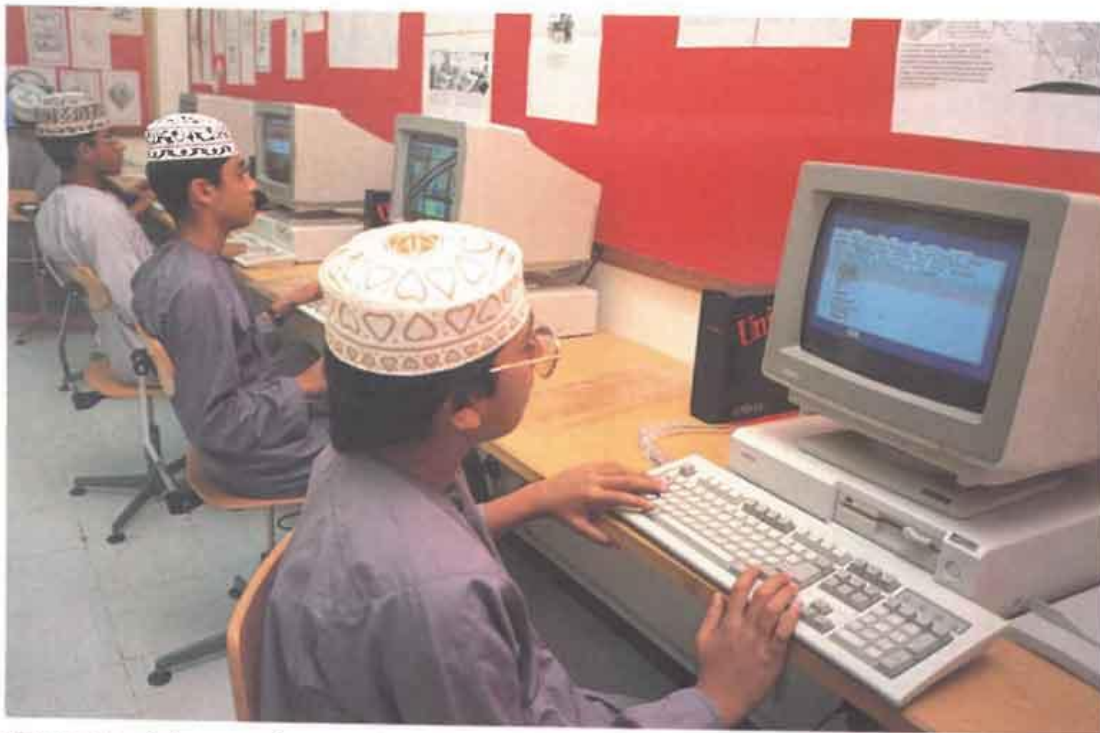
Training of Omani Teachers

In the first years of educational development nearly all the teachers were of necessity expatriate Arabs. The first Teacher Training Institute commenced 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. Courses at these colleges are two years in length. The process of Omanising jobs in education is proceeding on the basis of gradually replacing foreign employees in the field. Omanis are promoted to positions in the various grades strictly in accordance with their qualifications. In 1990-91 the educational system will receive its first batch of graduates from the Faculty of Education and Islamic Sciences at the



Sultan Qaboos University – the first intake of students is due to graduate this year





Computer training now forms an important part of our young people's education

Sultan Qaboos University. From 1991-92 and 1992-93 these numbers will be augmented by qualified graduates from the Faculties of Sciences and the Arts.

In 1989 there were six local Teacher Training Colleges in the Sultanate – three men's colleges at Qurm, Salalah and Sur, and three for women at Al Khuwair, Salalah and Rostaq. Currently these colleges have about 1,500 students on their rolls, nearly half of them women. Three new Teacher Training Colleges are to be opened in 1991, and this will considerably accelerate the pace of Government efforts to Omanise primary school teaching staff. Two of the new colleges for men will be in Sohar and Nizwa and one for women in Ibri. Speaking at a function at the Intermediate Teacher Training College in Qurum on 'Teachers' Day' in February this year the Minister of Education, HE Yahya bin Mafoudh al Manthery, said that, so far, 3,784 students had graduated from the five ITTCs in the country. Another group of 869 would graduate in 1990. He added that the first group of students from Sultan Qaboos



Girl secondary school students at an art class. Traditional handicrafts are a popular subject and highly valued as a means of preserving Oman's ancient culture

University's Faculty of Education and Islamic Studies would graduate this year. Referring to the progress the Sultanate has made in education he went on to say that the number of schools in the country has now risen to 759 with 327,000 students. It has also been announced that it is planned to open one more Teacher Training College in Ibra during the new Five Year Plan, which will bring the total number to ten Teacher Training Colleges in the Sultanate.

The crowning achievement of the development of the educational system was the opening of the Sultan Qaboos University at Al Khoudh in September 1986. The University comprises of six Colleges or Faculties: Education and Islamic Sciences, Science, Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine and Arts. The students are approximately equal in numbers between the sexes. It is anticipated that the University will ultimately accept about 3,000 students in the various faculties and specialisations.

The support centres of the University include the computer centre, the library which contains advanced technology information systems as well as printed material, a language centre, a teaching hospital and a centre for education technology. The medium of instruction in the University is Arabic, except for the science-based courses where the language is English. All students are given comprehensive courses in the English language.

The 500-bed teaching hospital, built at a cost of RO 52 million, is furnished with advanced equipment for diagnostic purposes, and has 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 various specialisations, and is of great importance for the students of the College of Medicine.

Separate residential accommodation for young men and women is provided in the form of small communities instead of hostels, each accommodating about 150 students drawn from all the colleges, with a supervisor acting as counsellor in social, religious and moral matters. Non-resident students are included in these communities.

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

Besides the efforts being made to develop the education system in the country, the Ministry also grants 80 scholarships to Omanis for higher education in universities abroad. Of these, 60 scholarships are given to students just out of secondary school, and the remaining 20 go to employees of various Ministries. Omani students are currently receiving education in several countries, including the USA, Britain, Jordan, Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The subjects chosen include engineering, computer science, veterinary sciences, pharmacology, dentistry, business administration, economics, accountancy and marine science. These scholarships are granted to fill the country's requirements of qualified manpower in certain disciplines which are not currently offered at the Sultan Qaboos University.

In addition to regular education, 1973-74 witnessed the setting up of centres for eradicating illiteracy among the citizens of Oman, who had not had the opportunity to obtain an education in the past. These centres were increased in number until they now cover all parts of the Sultanate. They have evoked an enthusiastic response from adult citizens. From the beginning of the anti-illiteracy campaign to the present day more than 28,000 male and female citizens have been through the various courses. There has been a particularly encouraging response from the women who have been coming to the educational centres in increasing numbers.

YOUTH

No greater "past and present" contrast can be drawn in the Sultanate of Oman than between the conditions of Youth 20 years ago and those of today. At that time education was severely restricted and limited in content, and indeed almost totally non-existent, particularly for girls; disease was rife and many children did not survive to reach adulthood. *Recreational facilities* were unheard of. Now the visitor is struck by the fitness and alertness of the young, and the keenness displayed in every form of sporting activity.

Once the education system was firmly established it was possible to devote increasing attention to the broader aspects of the training and upbringing of the youth of the country, a priority that has been constantly reiterated by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who directed that the National Day celebrations in 1983 were to be devoted to the subject of Youth. To emphasise this point, His Majesty presented the Nation's young people with an Olympic-sized sports stadium covering 44 hectares of land at Bausher near Muscat, the main features of which are a seating capacity for 35,000 spectators and facilities for more than 20 different sports. Sporting activities are recognised as playing a major role in the character-building of the country's boys and girls.

In 1982, the responsibility for supervision of sports was entrusted to the Directorate-General of Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Education, and in 1986 a Royal Decree was issued amending the name of the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Education and Youth. As a result of a Royal Directive issued in 1989, the Higher Council for Youth approved an integrated national plan for expanded and improved youth facilities; this plan is based on three main elements:-

- a) Construction of sports and youth facilities.
- b) Support to existing clubs, in order to provide them with a complete range of these facilities.
- c) Support for the organisation of national sporting and recreational activities.

His Majesty personally donated half a million Omani Riyals to the National Fund for Financing Sporting Activities, which was set up



An eager young swimmer jumps the gun at a youth swimming competition at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Bausher

in 1989 and is administered by the Higher Council for Youth. The Fund enjoys a corporate status and financial and administrative independence, and has an independent board of directors and executive apparatus. The fund finances youth and sporting activities throughout the Sultanate.

The integrated national plan for youth also provides for the establishment of youth centres similar to that at Sohar, which was opened in November 1988, and contains a wide variety of outdoor and indoor facilities to Olympic standards. Work began on a youth centre in Salalah in 1989, which will be followed by similar centres in the Dakhiliya, Sharqiya, South Batinah and Dakhira regions under the forthcoming Five Year Plan. In addition to the establishment of these youth centres, preparations are being made for installing and expanding sports facilities in a number of clubs, and constructing and equipping sports grounds in schools.

Following the Sultanate's participation in 'Operation Raleigh; the international youth assistance campaign, in the 1980s, a team of

fifty young Omanis went to the USA, Bahamas and Cameroun last year. In March 1990 the 'Ship of World Youth', a vessel chartered under the Japanese Government's Youth Exchange Programme, with 19 Omanis on board, called at Muscat on a four-day visit. The young people of several nations were entertained in the Sultanate and made visits to places of interest in the Interior. During its goodwill cruise the ship visited Bombay, Alexandria and the Piraeus.

Although football is undoubtedly the most popular sport, hockey is increasing its following in the Sultanate. It is interesting to note that hockey was introduced into Oman as long ago as 1914, probably from India. Apart from Egypt, Oman is the only Arab country in which hockey is played. Now the latest comer to the sports scene is ice hockey.

Scouting

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

Scouts and Guides are encouraged to participate in projects which aid society, one of the most rewarding of 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. This is part of the State effort to enable the handicapped to undertake work which will give them a secure and dignified life, and help them to make a positive contribution to society. These courses have been so successful that handicapped people from other member-States of the AGCC are now joining them.



Flag-raising ceremony at an inter-schools competition

Eight scouts were included in the crew of the Navy's sailing ship 'Shabab Oman' for its voyage to Sydney for the Australian Bicentenary celebrations. Omani scouts also participated in 1988 in the 31st World Scouting Conference in Melbourne, Australia, where they were awarded a prize in recognition of their contribution. A delegation of Omani scouts took part in the Fifth Islamic Scouts Jamboree in Amman in Jordan in August last year.

HEALTH

Twenty years ago there was only one hospital in the Sultanate of Oman; situated in Muttrah, it was run by an American Mission. Apart from that there were a few clinics scattered around the country, including one in Ibri operated by PDO. According to the latest statistics published by the Ministry of Health, it is responsible for 47 hospitals, 79 health centres and 3 maternity centres with an overall total of 3,450 beds. Today 90 per cent of the population is covered by the Ministry's health services and there are hospitals in all major population centres.

In 1970 trachoma, dysentery, tuberculosis and malaria were rife as a result of a lack of basic hygiene. The mortality rate, especially among the children, was very high owing to the almost total lack of medical facilities. Epidemics of diseases such as influenza and measles were a scourge to whole communities, particularly the bedu tribes. Such is the importance now given to health that when financial constraints had to be imposed on public spending as a result of the collapse of world oil prices in 1986 the Health Service was virtually unaffected.

Prevention is regarded as of vital importance by the health Service. Great strides have been made in child immunisation. In 1984 40 per cent of children under the age of one year were covered by the child immunisation programme. Now that figure has risen to 85 per cent, who are immunised against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles and tuberculosis. Under an expanded programme the Ministry offers immunisation in all its curative and preventive units to all females of child-bearing age and all children under two years of age. A difficult challenge facing the medical authorities is low weight at birth, which is now the major cause of infant mortality. This year Government is planning to immunise all children against yellow fever and to introduce hepatitis-B vaccine and administer it to all infants. The Ministry is also considering making available to health centres vaccine against rubella, or german measles as it is more commonly known.

One of the successes of the Department of Preventive Medicine in the Ministry of Health has been the Prevention of Blindness Programme, launched to combat trachoma, an infection which



The main foyer of the Royal Hospital – the hospital provides our people with the very latest in sophisticated health care (Photo: Christian Vioujard)

results in ultimate blindness unless treated, and which used to be rife in villages in northern Oman, affecting children at an early age. The programme identifies victims through comprehensive school and community-based screening programmes. 1988 more than 107,000 children in 431 schools were examined and some 20 per cent were found to be affected. Seven teams of health visitors made the rounds of towns and villages examining over 33,000 people, and Ministry ophthalmologist carried out operations and provided other treatment.

Because of its geographical position and climate Oman is vulnerable to malaria, particularly following heavy rains, and the Ministry of Health regards the campaign against malaria as an important aspect of its work and responsibilities. Intensive spraying campaigns by the Malaria Control Department, which works in cooperation with the World Health Organisation, have reduced the incidence of this disease, and the cases brought to hospital have fallen considerably in recent years.

Health education is also given high priority by the Ministry, often working in cooperation with other authorities throughout the Sultanate. In 1989 the Ministry launched a National Environmental Health Programme to cover 1500 villages throughout the country. In cooperation with Municipalities, it is investigating and correcting environmental problems, particularly those connected with bad food and contaminated drinking water. 'The Sections' integrated programme introduces common approaches, technical standards and training methods to ensure that consistent standards of environmental health services are provided for every village in the country.

In 1970 there was not a single qualified Omani doctor in the Sultanate, and only one outside the country. Thus in the first years of the renaissance Oman was totally dependent on expatriate doctors and nurses to staff the hospitals and generally run the Health Service. Now, with the opening of the Medical College in the Sultan Qaboos University, Oman will shortly be providing more of its own doctors in addition to those who have been sent abroad for training. The first Omani nursing school was opened in 1971 and this responsibility was subsequently taken over by the Institute of Health Science in Wattayah, which opened in 1982. The Institute also trains Sanitary Assistants and other para-medical staff, as well as running courses in physiotherapy, laboratory work and radiology. The Institute is to be expanded at a cost of RO one million, enabling the only health training centre in the country to double its intake of students. Work on the project, which includes the construction of two major buildings, is expected to be completed by September 1991. The authorities have also drawn up a programme to train more Omani nurses as midwives. A training curriculum incorporating the specific needs of the country is being prepared in cooperation with the World Health Organisation and the course is expected to start by the middle of 1990.

In November 1987 the magnificently equipped Royal Hospital was opened by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos as his gift to his people. The hospital provides the people of Oman with the very latest in sophisticated health care. Occupying 25 hectares of land, it has 630 beds, including 30 special-care baby units, and a large modern accident and emergency department. Its clinical departments include obstetrics and gynaecology, medical and surgical



A young patient receives dental treatment at the Al Nahda Hospital

paediatrics, general surgery, nephro-urology, general medicine, cardiology, gastroenterology, endocrinology and orthopaedics. It also has comprehensive radiodiagnostic, pathology, physiotherapy and rehabilitation supporting services. There is also a proposal to set up Oman's first open-heart surgery unit at the Royal Hospital at an estimated cost of RO 1.5 million.

In the Muscat area, the Ibn Sina hospital, opened in 1983 with 60 beds, specialises in psychiatric medicine, while the Al Nahda hospital concentrates on dermatology, ophthalmology and ENT in addition to a comprehensive dental unit. The Khoula hospital has 365 beds for general surgery, neuro-surgery, plastic surgery, burns obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics, intensive care and day care.

To carry out its duties successfully, the Ministry has set up a number of specialised committees in cooperation with other Ministries and Government organisations. These include the



Nurses receive a comprehensive training at the Institute of Health Sciences in Al Wattayah (near Muscat)

National Drinking Water and Sanitation Committee, Foodstuffs Committee, the National Committee for Malaria Control and the National Woman and Child Care Plan.

In early February this year, the Sultan Qaboos Teaching Hospital was opened by His Majesty the Sultan. Housed in an area of 44,000 sq metres it was built at a cost of RO 52 million. It will provide basic training to students in all clinical sections of the college under the supervision of specialist professors. The hospital has 500 beds in six departments, specialising in paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics, internal medicine and surgery, psychiatry, cardiology, an outpatients' clinic and a unit for specialists' treatment. The hospital has five laboratories for the analysis of micro-organisms and tissues, blood samples and biochemical and physiological tests.

During the first half of 1990, the Ministry of Health will be launching a nation-wide programme to fight the incidence of

malnutrition among children, and it will begin with the training of doctors and nurses. While Oman has very successfully controlled the six major child-killing diseases, and diarrheal and respiratory problems, it is now seeing the emergence of this new problem of malnutrition among children. This is not due to scarcity of food, but rather to lack of awareness of appropriate dietary habits on the part of parents, and the tendency of children to eat 'junk' foods.

During the past year the Ministry of Health has embarked on a policy of decentralisation by the setting up of a number of Directorates throughout the Sultanate.

HOUSING

A feature of the Sultanate of Oman which strikes the visitor, and particularly those who knew the country before 1970, is the complete absence of slums and impoverished areas as he drives through Muscat. The fact is that they do not exist, though it was not always so. In the first rush of development in the early 1970s the demand for housing was overwhelming as Omanis from the villages and countryside poured into the area to meet the requirements for labour. Added to these were the large number of Omanis who returned from abroad in answer to the call from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos for their assistance in the development of the country, as well as the large number of expatriates who were needed for their skills. Ways and means had to be found to house all these people.

The temptation to rush into mass construction of unplanned housing was resisted from the start. Consideration had also to be given to the improvement of existing housing throughout the country, which was often overcrowded, inadequate and unhygienic, and largely responsible for disease and the high mortality rate. From the outset, there has been close cooperation between the various Ministries and Departments concerned, and particular emphasis has been given to the provision of housing for the lower income groups. Originally, housing was the responsibility of the Ministry of Lands and Municipal Affairs, but at the end of 1984 a Royal Decree was issued setting up a separate Ministry of Housing to fulfil these functions.

A modest start in the construction was made with the completion of 76 houses in 1973; this was rapidly expanded so that in the following year 2,304 housing units were completed in the Sultanate. RO 34 million was earmarked for housing in the Five Year Plan (1986-1990), which is now near completion. Of this, RO 17,983,000 is being spent in the Wilayats, RO 3,800,000 in the bedouin areas and RO 4,477,000 in the Southern Region, as well as RO 1 million in Musandam. During 1989, 204 social dwellings were completed in the Muscat Governorate, 65 in the Wilayat of Sur and 46 in the Wilayat of Bidbid. In spite of the drastic fall in the world price of oil in 1986, necessitating a review of the current Five Year Plan, housing continued to receive a high priority. Under the social housing scheme the Government provides the infrastructure



A new housing estate at Bidbid. Similar estates are being provided by the Government throughout the Sultanate

such as roads, water and electricity, while the residents pay only a monthly instalment of RO 25 towards the cost of the house. The average cost of each dwelling works out from RO 14,000 to RO 16,000. Oman has a goal: adequate housing for all by the year 2,000. To meet this goal, strategies and policies for housing are being worked out for implementation during the forth-coming Five Year Plan. As part of the programme for providing housing for families with limited incomes, the Oman 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, working on and adding to residential properties, and also for the purchase and completion of unfinished houses. Persons with monthly incomes of up to RO 400 who take out loans are granted a maximum period of up to 20 years to repay, while those with monthly incomes in excess of RO 400 are granted up to 15 years for repayment of housing loans. The Bank's interest charges are subsidised by the Government, which pays the greater part of the interest on behalf of the borrower. The

lower the borrower's income the higher the rate of subsidy. Thanks to these facilities, between 1977 and the end of 1989 the Bank was able to grant 12,870 housing loans totalling RO 181,082,388. Furthermore, in the Muscat Governorate, the Bank has recently introduced a system of building housing units equipped with all essential utilities and services. These have been distributed to nationals, subject to specific conditions and in return for housing loans. This initial experiment has been enthusiastically received by the public. As a result, the Bank is endeavouring to apply it throughout all the Wilayats of the Sultanate.

During 1990 it is intended to construct 535 social housing units spread through 19 different locations. Of these, 40 houses will be on the high mountain plateau of the Jebel Akhdar and 20 houses on the Kuria Muria Islands in the far south, thus indicating the reach of the Government's programmes.

During the current year, preparations are under way to distribute a total of 217 dwellings in Wilayats throughout the Sultanate. Of these, 32 will be in the Southern Region. Also during the current year the Directorate-General of Housing Projects will receive 165 houses from the contractors, of which 20 are in the Southern Region.

One of the tasks of the Ministry of Housing is to restore and improve old and dilapidated houses, which is done through the Housing Assistance Programme. By means of this programme 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 Oman Housing Bank's loan system. In granting assistance, these regulations give priority to heads of families which have suffered natural disasters, and then to families dependent on social security incomes from the Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as to families on limited incomes not exceeding RO 150 per month. The assistance is given in the form of a lump sum grant from the State, up to a maximum of RO 6000. During 1989, 275 cases were dealt with throughout the Sultanate, and in 1990 a further 200 cases are expected to be administered at a total cost of just under RO 2½ million over two years.

In 1989 a Land Distribution Committee was set up within the Ministry of Housing for the purpose of dealing with the public's

applications for land, which had accumulated since 1972. A working group was formed to prepare procedures for distributing land to those entitled to it, which began its work in February 1989. During the year 3639 plots were distributed in the Muscat area as well as a number of others for commercial, industrial and other purposes.

Experts in the Housing Ministry are being given further training both in Oman and abroad: two Omani town planners were sent to the USA to secure Masters' degrees in town planning, twelve surveyors went to Kuwait for a three-month course. In-house courses on the application of computers to planning were also held. An expert from UNESCO conducted a one-month course in Oman on conservation and replanning of old towns in the Sultanate. Replanning of urban areas will cover the six towns of Nizwa, Buraimi, Ibri, Ibra, Sur and Rostaq.

ENVIRONMENT

In the conduct of its environmental policies the Sultanate of Oman has been able to benefit from learning from the problems engendered by the industrialised countries and some of the developing countries, and has taken full advantage of this. As a result the Sultanate has come to be internationally recognised for its commitment to the protection of the environment and the conservation of nature, a policy strongly encouraged by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who has given these matters his personal attention ever since his accession in 1970. In 1974 the first law concerning environmental affairs was issued. It was followed by several decisions and laws designed to further secure the territorial waters of the Sultanate.

In 1979 the Council for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution (CCEPP) was established with His Majesty the Sultan as Chairman. This was followed as a natural consequence by the promulgation in 1982 of the Law for the Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution, which codifies the ordinances covering all aspects of this important feature of the nation's life.

In 1984 a further step was taken with the establishment of the Ministry of Environment by Royal Decree, and His Highness Sayyid Shabib bin Taimur Al Said was appointed Minister. The Ministry 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. It also has the responsibility for providing the required equipment and qualified personnel to deal with emergency cases of pollution, minimise the resulting damage and eliminate their impact. The Ministry is supplemented by the CCEPP which has all Ministers as members and meets periodically to discuss policy matters. The Ministry, besides formulating and enforcing regulations, is also actively involved in raising public awareness on environmental issues. Oman is a member of several international organisations such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and other bodies at the regional level, and works in close cooperation with them in several areas.

One of the principal methods used in applying environmental policy



Tracks left by turtles at Ra'as Al Junayz, a preservation area under the supervision of the Ministry, where turtles come ashore to lay their eggs (Photo: Dr. Paul Munton)

is the system of 'No Environmental Objection' certificates. 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 last year the Ministry set in motion the process for the creation of a national conservation strategy. The primary objective of the strategy is to produce an overall development programme for the Sultanate which will ensure the perpetual availability of its renewable resources such as water, rangeland, wildlife and soils. A new Department of National Conservation Strategy is to be established at the Ministry to take charge of the plan.

Oman has valuable fisheries both in coastal areas and in deeper waters, which are an important economic asset and require protection. Intensive studies of the coastal areas have been completed under the direction of the Ministry, to control dumping of



Khor Rori – greater flamingoes. Oman is on the migration route for many birds (Photo: Dr Paul Munton)

hazardous solid wastes, and much else has been done in the field of preventing and combatting marine pollution from land-based sources. The Royal Oman Police, which is responsible for implementing the National Oil-spill Contingency Plan attends to all oil spillages from sea sources, with which the Ministry of Environment fully cooperates. The Sultanate's membership of several international conventions in this field also effectively contributes to this end.

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

In the field of nature conservation and the protection of natural

resources a system of nature conservation areas has been prepared for the Sultanate by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Much has been done to preserve the fauna and flora of Oman. National protected areas, both on land and sea have been designated, and hitherto endangered species are now thriving. The reintroduction of the oryx, which had become extinct in Oman in 1972, has been successfully accomplished, and recently action has been taken to protect the turtle breeding grounds on the beaches at Ras al Hadd, which were being endangered by visitors and sightseers; continual vigilance is required to combat the activities of poachers, and further measures are being actively studied to strengthen the existing ones for successfully protecting the environment in all its aspects.

NATIONAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Our people are rightly proud of their history and their heritage, stretching back over several thousand years, and attach great importance to their preservation. The country is rich in historic remains ranging from ancient cities and forts and castles to burial grounds and almost prehistoric mine workings. At the time that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos assumed the reins of government in 1970 most of these were in varying stages of decay and deterioration. His Majesty took immediate action in setting up a Ministry of National Heritage and Culture with the responsibility of researching, recording and conserving the country's rich heritage. Today Oman is one of the few countries in the world to have such a Ministry. Over the last twenty years the Ministry's achievements have been impressive. They range from the preservation and restoration of historic forts and castles and archaeological sites, to the establishment of museums and their organisation, the collection and collation of ancient books and manuscripts, and the encouragement of traditional handicrafts, as well as the promotion of cultural exhibitions abroad. Awareness of their rich heritage forms an important part of the education of Omani children, particularly by means of organised visits to museums and historic sites.

Most of the research information is published in the Journal of Oman Studies, an authoritative publication. Important discoveries dating back to the Stone Age have been made, and artefacts several thousand years old have been found in the deserts bordering the Empty Quarter. The Ministry keeps in close contact with international organisations such as UNESCO. Recently, UNESCO classified the famous Bahla fort as a World Heritage Site. The Necropolis of Bat, near Ibri, is another site so classified by UNESCO in the World Cultural List. The Ministry has applied for the ancient town of Qalhat to be also included in the List. Monuments inscribed in the UNESCO List are internationally recognised as part of the authentic heritage of the country to which they belong.

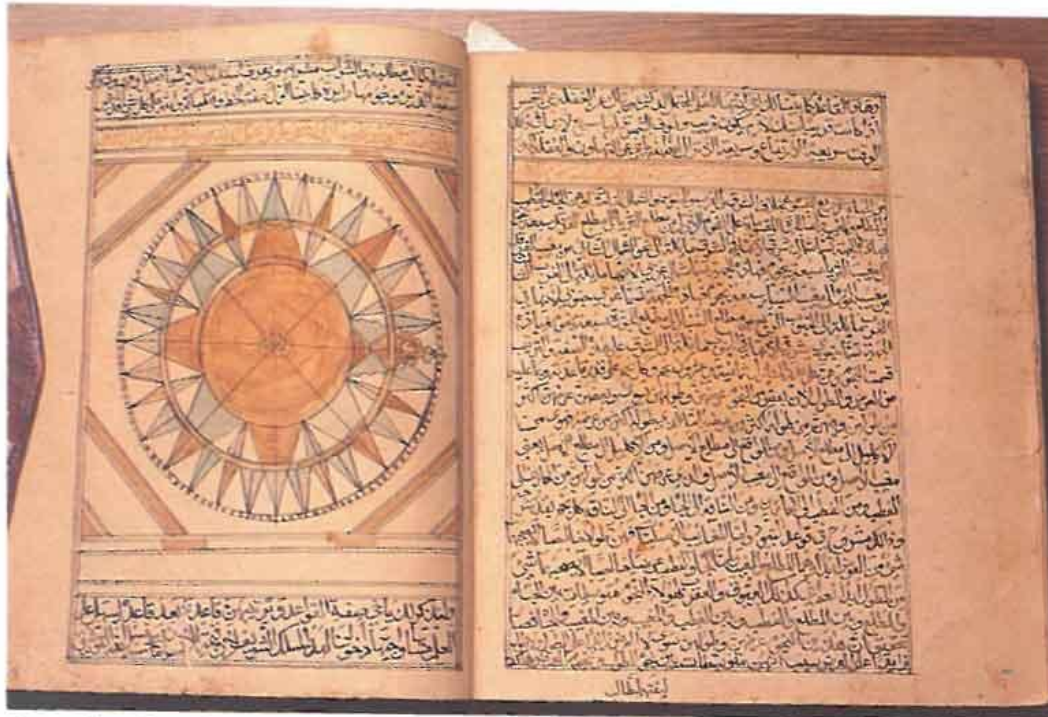
Oman's Architecture Preserved

The successful restoration of historic citadels, forts and ancient



Jabreen Fort – part of Oman's rich cultural heritage

buildings has been a considerable undertaking which ranks among the Ministry's most impressive achievements. A notable example has been the castle of Jabrin, originally built by Bilarub bin Sultan in the 17th century as a residential palace, one of the treasures of Omani architecture, which has been completely restored. Restoration work has also been carried out on the forts at Nizwa, Hazm, Bidbid and Birka. The magnificent fort at Rostaq, a former capital of Oman, which stands in a commanding position guarding the approaches to the great massif of the Jebel Akhdar, is another of Oman's treasures which has been carefully restored to its former grandeur. In Muscat the two great forts, Merani and Jalali, poised on lofty crags overlooking Muscat bay and the walled city, have been restored to their original glory, as has the fort on the rocky pinnacle overlooking the neighbouring town of Muttrah. Along the Batinah Coast, the fort at Sohar with its large square tower has also been restored. Last year, restoration work was commenced on the fort at Ras al Hadd on the south east tip of Oman, the fort at Suwaiq on the Batinah Coast, the fort at Khasab on the Musandam and the



An ancient Omani manuscript – the Ministry has collected many of these cultural treasures for preservation

fort at Muntairib in the Interior, as well as the towers at Fanja. In the current year experts will start repair work on the famous Bahla fort and fort at Sur. During the 4th Five Year Plan (1990-1995), more than twenty forts and castles will be renovated. Oman has many other fine historic buildings worthy of preservation, among those already restored and renovated are the Sayyid Nadir mansion and the Sayyida Muzna mansion within the walls of Muscat.

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



A tourist admires the display of antique Omani silver in the Oman Museum, Qurum

A historical museum has been established at Qurum near Muscat, with many fine displays. Another museum has been assembled at the premises of the Ministry's Islamic Library. The objects on display range from various types of weapons to old pottery and traditional costumes. The Natural History Museum, adjacent to the Ministry, which has recently been enlarged is also highly popular. The exhibits comprise an interesting and comprehensive range of Oman's flora and fauna, including examples of wildlife such as the oryx, Arabian tahr, caracal lynx, leopard and the complete skeleton of a 12-metre long sperm whale. Also to be seen are collections of seashells, butterflies, moths and bees. An interesting recent addition is a fossilised tree trunk, estimated to be 260 million years old. The fossilised remains of many animals, long extinct in Oman, have been discovered in Dhofar in the south, indicating that in the distant past Oman had a much wetter climate than it has now.

A Cultural Centre has recently been completed in Salalah, comprising a museum, library and halls for various cultural



A heritage preserved – dhow building at the historic port of Sur is still carried out in the traditional way

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

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

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

avoiding lengthy journeys to the nearest major town.

The Ministry is energetically involved in other activities meant to promote Oman's heritage abroad by means of holding Cultural Weeks. On these occasions, exhibitions are mounted, displaying Oman's artefacts, archaeological objects, handicrafts, manuscripts etc. So far, these Cultural Weeks have been successfully held in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Austria and a number of Arab countries. The most successful were the Oman Week at the prestigious Arab World Institute in Paris and the Omani Cultural Week in Salzburg, Austria. The Ministry plans to hold two cultural events abroad in 1990, one in Munich in West Germany and the other in the United States.

The Arab Names Project

The massive Sultan Qaboos Arab Names Project, set up in 1985 on the personal initiative of His Majesty for the research and recording of Omani Arab names, the main venture in the extensive Sultan Qaboos library, is nearing its final stages. The Advisory Committee is chaired by His Excellency Malallah bin Ali bin Habib, Adviser at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture. The entire project is under the auspices of His Excellency Mohamed bin Zubair, Economic Planning Affairs Adviser to His Majesty.

The extensive work involves the compilation of 16,000 names, with all their literary, geographical, historical and tribal connections. The volume is expected to become a worldwide reference work. A succession of titles is also planned to come out of the project, dealing with various aspects of names common throughout the Arab world. An important one will be a guide to the names of personalities in Oman throughout history, famous in the arts, literature, jurisprudence and the military spheres. A simplified guide to Arab names will follow the main work and this will be of immense benefit to Arab families wanting to select names for their children.

More than 30 researchers and ten Arab countries are involved in the project, with the Oman National Committee overseeing all collection and collation of data. The Oman committee and its advisers is now in the process of the final review of all material, and the finished work is expected to be published in early 1991.



The Cultural Centre, Salalah (Photo: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture)

The Silk Road Project

In the autumn of this year the Silk Road Project, sponsored by UNESCO, is due to be launched. Its aim is to explore the old Silk Road from West to East involving three stages: one expedition will take the Steppe Route starting from the north coast of the Black Sea to China following the ancient route taken by horsemen, a second will be the Desert Route connecting Turkey with China, and a third will be the Maritime Route starting from Venice and terminating in Osaka in Japan after a voyage lasting about 100 days.

Oman, with its long maritime tradition, is to play a leading role in the third stage, which is to be named the 'Voyage of Dialogue'. His Majesty is graciously providing the Royal Yacht 'Fulk al Salamah' for this voyage.

In the course of its voyage the Yacht will call at more than a dozen ports including Alexandra, Muscat, Karachi, Colombo. Takwa in

Thailand, Palimbong in Java, Guangzhou (Canton) in China and Osaka in Japan. The ports of Sohar and Muscat were of great importance to maritime trade, and it is for this reason that the main maritime seminar of the Silk Road expedition will be held in Muscat. During the week-long visit of the 'Fulk al Salamah' to Muscat members of the international team aboard the ship will participate in the seminar, which will cover a large variety of subjects such as religion, archaeology, science and trade, maritime navigation and trade, life styles, popular art, folklore and costumes and other aspects of human civilisation. The team of international scientists will also have the opportunity to visit places of historical interest in the Sultanate.

1990 being the 150th anniversary of the first Arab visit to New York by Ahmed bin Alma'ana al Kaabi, emissary of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (Said the Great), in the 'Sultana', His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali al Said, Minister of National Heritage and Culture, will preside at celebrations to be held at the Sultan Qaboos Centre in Washington.

INTERIOR

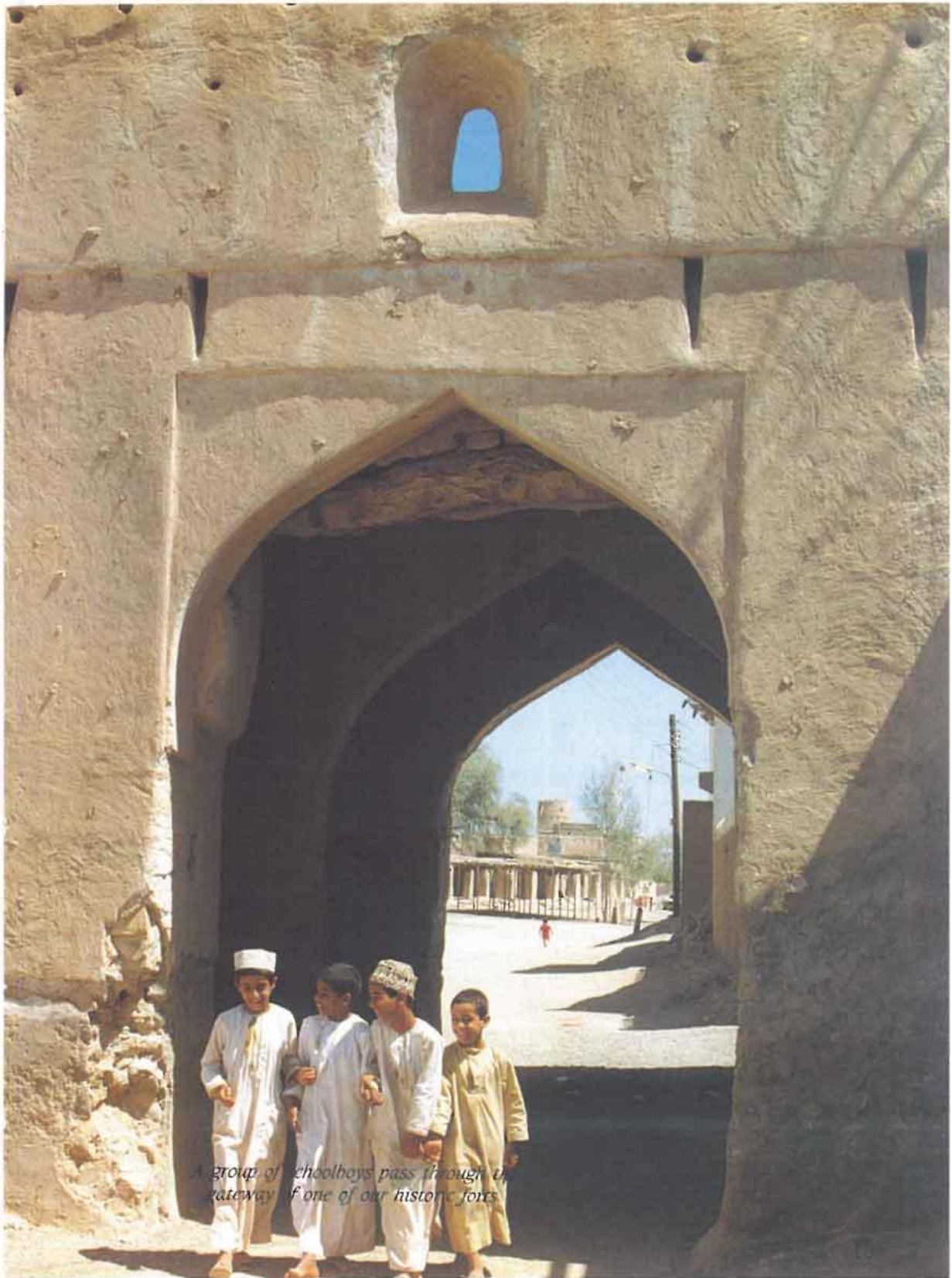
For the greater part of this century the Sultanate of Oman was a mysterious region about which little was known and our relations with the outside world were limited. With a few exceptions, the country was barred to foreigners, and most Omanis were not permitted to leave the Sultanate except in cases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

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

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

The Ministry of the Interior fully participated in this progress and development, and combined the sound aspects of modern administrative systems with the best of the traditional systems, training the administrative cadres needed to run the country's regions. Now the Sultanate is divided into 42 Wilayats or regions. These include: the Governorate of Muscat, which is administered by a Governor at ministerial level; eight in Dhofar, which come under the administration of the Minister of State and Wali of Dhofar; four in the Musandam Governorate; and other Wilayats over the length and breadth of the Sultanate, which are administered by the Ministry of the Interior.

One of the Ministry's notable successes has been its ability to maintain the traditional links between the tribal authorities and the Wilayat administrations. The Shaikhs of the tribes are subject to the



A group of schoolboys pass through the gateway of one of our historic forts



Traditional dances are still performed to mark special occasions

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

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



Camel racing is still a popular sport in the interior (Photo: Christian Vioujard)

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

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES

Firm guidance and leadership together with a judicious and discerning use of available resources have produced results during the last 20 years which are immediately apparent to the visitor to Oman, and the measure of this achievement is particularly remarkable to those who knew the country as it was before the 1970s. Much of this derives from the cooperation between local authorities and Ministries, and the coordination of their efforts. The total absence of squalor, slums and litter is immediately evident to the observer, whether driving through Muscat or travelling through the towns and villages of the Interior.

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

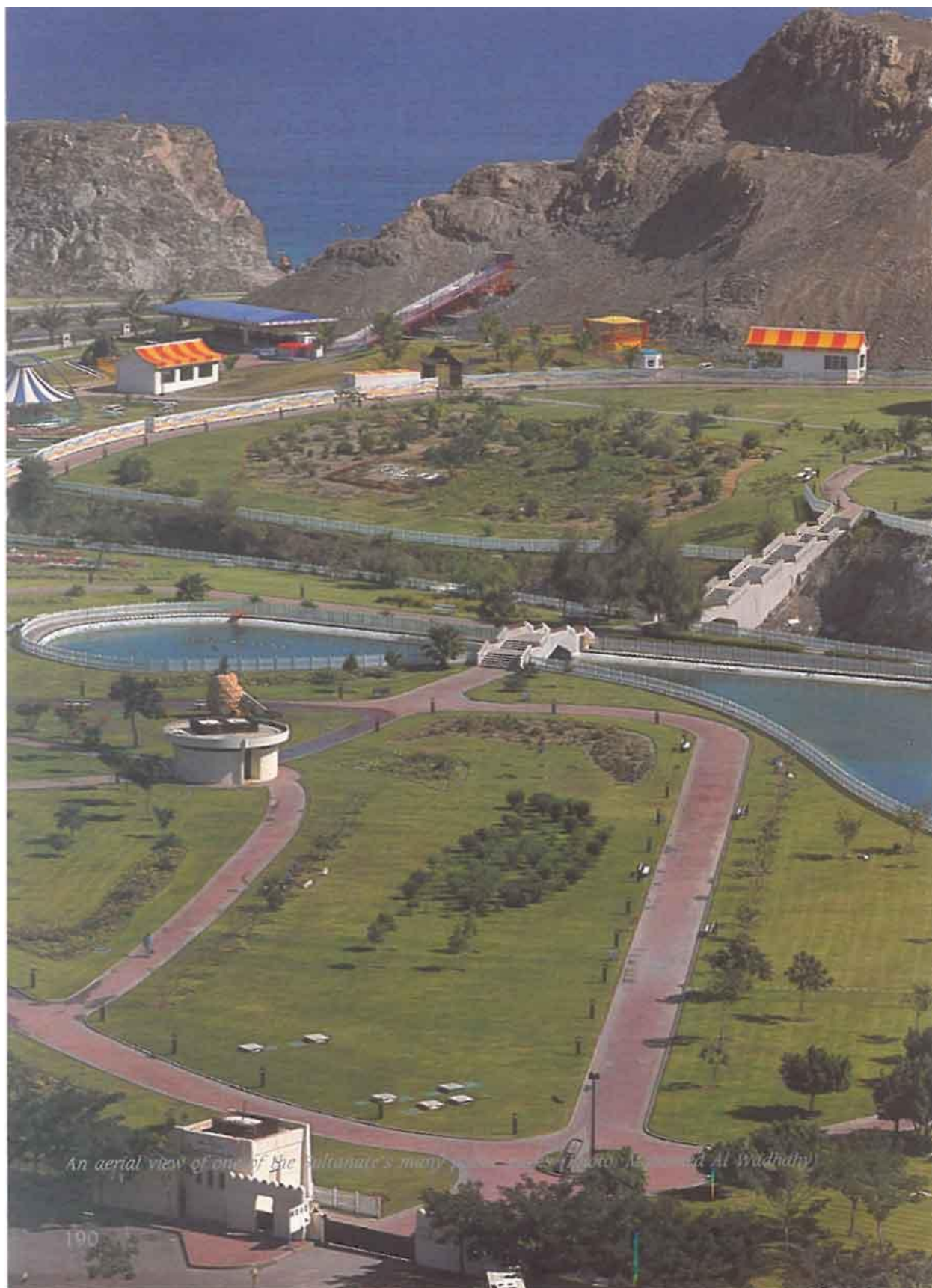
The Ministry gives high priority to the improvement of amenities in the various municipalities, in many cases in the Interior where such amenities were formerly non-existent. This requires consultation and coordination with Walis (Governors) and other Ministries in such matters as health and social affairs. Close attention is paid to the views and wishes of the local population in regions where amenity provision has to follow closely behind the development of communications. At the beginning of January this year the Minister of Regional Municipalities Affairs issued a ministerial decision to establish committees in regional municipalities in the wilayats. The committees will be chaired by the Walis, with membership consisting of municipal managers, representatives from the Ministries of Housing, Communications, Health, Royal Oman Police and four members from the public in every wilayat to be selected by the Ministry of the Interior. Their functions will include planning, follow-up, beautifying the municipalities, and the introduction of regulations to improve public health and services.

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

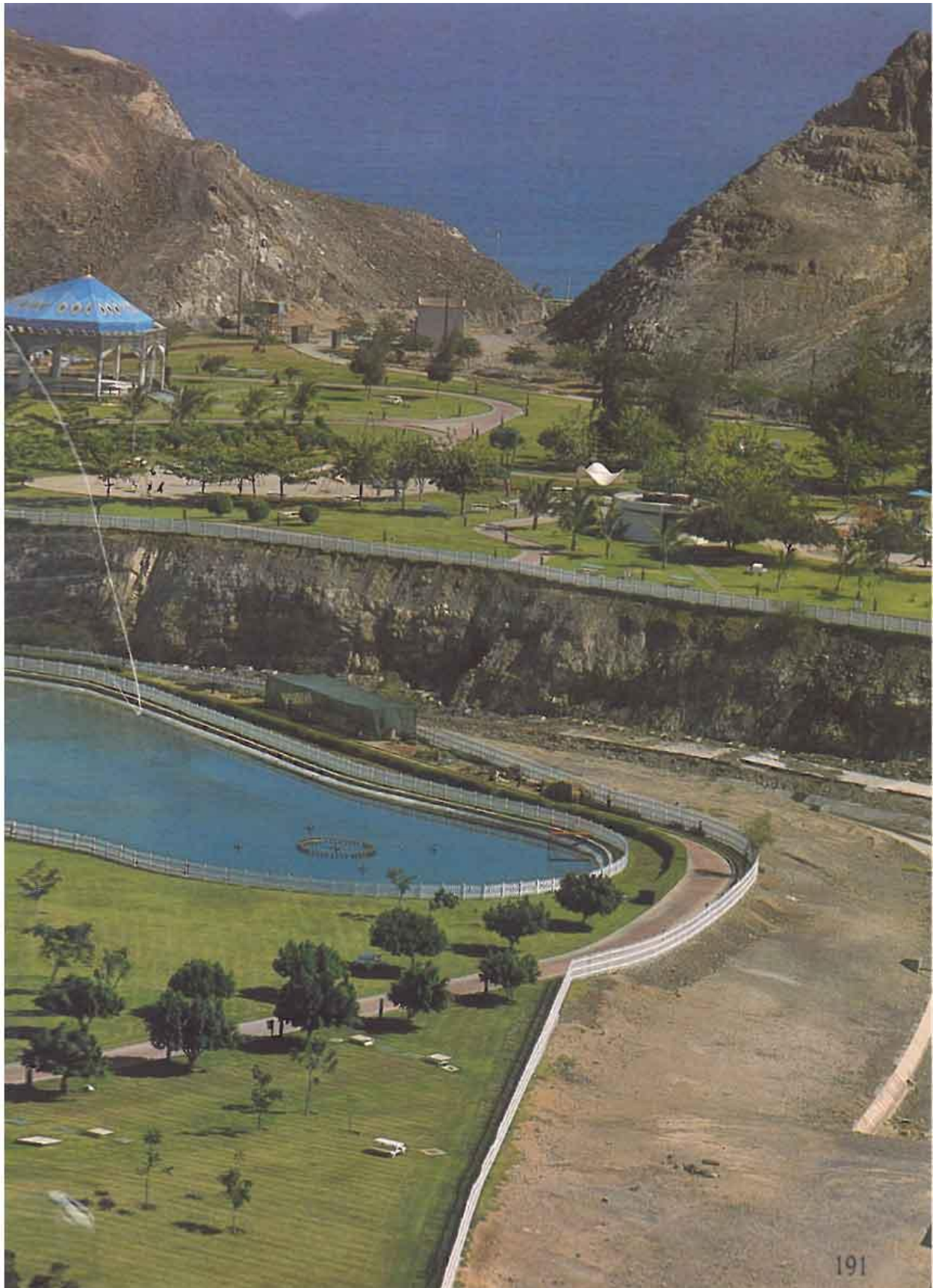
In 1989 the Health Department of the Ministry concentrated its attention on the checking of foodstuffs in the markets of the 38 Regional Municipalities with the result that better quality food is now available throughout the country. Food which is being sold beyond the expiry date and food which is not fit for consumption is seized by the authorities. The health education programmes of the Ministry have helped create awareness among traders of the need to sell good quality food. In these matters there is a close cooperation with other members of the AGCC.

A Municipalities month is held annually each October when various events are organised to increase awareness of the people about cleanliness, hygiene and wholesome food. In October 1989 the motto was – "Water is wealth. Cleanliness is health. So let us safeguard them." In the same month, services to remote villages were stepped up. Municipal personnel have to travel by helicopter or on mules to reach isolated mountain villages in places like the Jebel Akhdar. Routine services, such as street cleaning, are available in the village itself, but facilities like insect control can be provided only once a week or, at times, only once a month. School children as well as adults are encouraged to take part in cleanliness drives.

Currently, a 65-shop market is being constructed in Rostaq, as well as a 25-shop market in Masirah. Fencing of the principal cemeteries has been completed in Wadi Taeen, Nizwa, Dima, Sur, Ja'alan and Bani Bu Ali. The construction of public facilities in Bidbid, Al-Awabi and Nakhl have recently been completed, as well as compounds for



An aerial view of one of the Sultanate's many parks (located at Wadhahy)





A happy young 'gymnast' in a public playground

stray animals. Following the development of the entire area around Al-Suwaidi for public recreation the whole locality has been greatly beautified. Public abattoirs have been completed in Mudhaibi, Rostaq, Ibri, Sur and Saham, and administrative offices are being constructed in Saham, Sur, Rostaq, Mudhaibi and Nizwa.

In a concerted bid to better the quality of food and hygiene the Ministry is intensifying staff training courses. 200 personnel were trained last year, and this year more courses are being conducted to sustain the tempo of training and provide the staff with the latest information on health and hygiene.

JUSTICE, AWQAF AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

Islam is deeply influential in all aspects of life and society in the Sultanate of Oman. Although far distant from the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina and separated from them by the vast deserts of Arabia, Oman was one of the first countries to adopt Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed, a faith to which it has staunchly held during the centuries that have followed. Under Islam, religion and the law are interwoven, and thus the Shari'a law is the law of Oman. It was only natural, therefore, that following the accession of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos the processes of religious affairs and of the law should be conducted by the same Ministry. Consequently the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs was established.

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

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

There are Shari'a courts in all the wilayats of the Sultanate, making a total of 45 courts, of which one is in Muscat and 44 in the wilayats. Government premises have been built for 29 of these

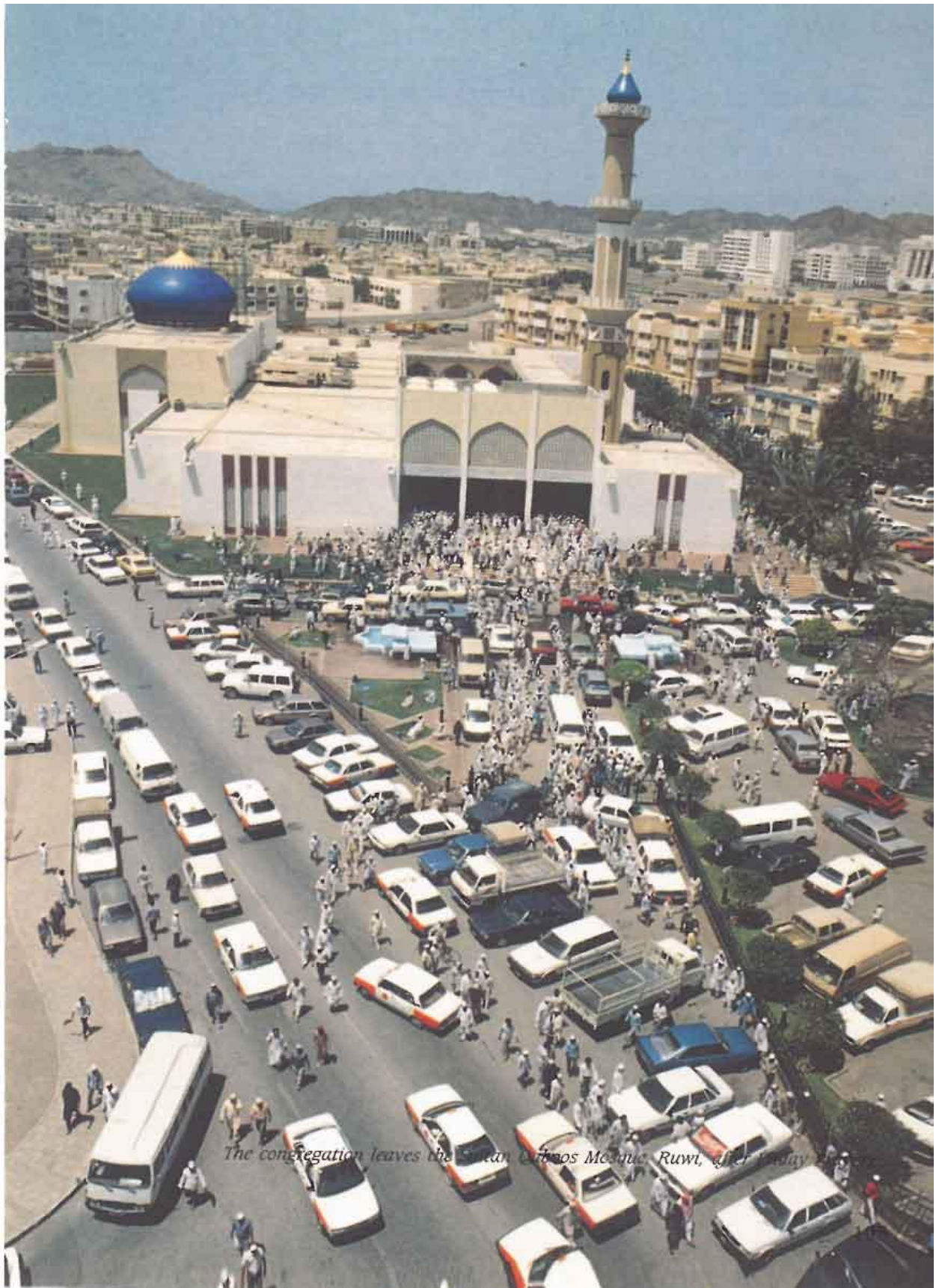
courts and 18 houses have been built by the Government for judges.

Actions are brought before the Shari'a courts at three levels – At the first level they are heard by the Courts in Muscat and the wilayats. Appeals may be brought against their rulings. The second level is the Court of Appeal in Muscat, which considers cases where submissions are brought against the ruling of the Shari'a court. The third level is the Grievances Committee, which is resorted to by parties dissatisfied with judgements given at the first two levels. The Committee's judgement is final and cannot be challenged.

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 are at an equivalent level undertake a General Shari'a Course of three years length. Those completing this stage may continue to the specialisation stage. Alternatively, they may be appointed to appropriate posts at the Shari'a Courts or the Ministry. Students are accepted for specialisation in Shari'a jurisprudence if they have, attained a minimum of 60 per cent in the final examination at the previous stage. After graduation they are appointed as deputy judges or to appropriate posts at the courts or the Ministry. Students who wish to specialise in Counsel and Guidance are accepted for this if they have been successful in the final examination of the general Shari'a studies stage. After graduation they are appointed to counsel and guidance posts, or to positions as Imams and Preachers.

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

1. Spreading the teachings of the True Islamic Religion within the Sultanate through counsel, guidance and the various media, and setting up Islamic cultural 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 Hajj season in coordination with the Saudi authorities and relevant local organisations.
4. Setting up, restoring, maintaining and administering mosques.
5. Organising Zakat revenues and expenditure.
6. Overseeing and maintaining all types of awqaf, and



The congregation leaves the Sultan Hassan Mosque, Ruwi, after Friday prayers.

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, implementing Shari'a court decisions related to these bequests and the regulations for dealing with them.

The Holy Koran schools are the basic source for those wishing to memorise the Holy Koran and learn the elements of reading and writing, especially in the remote areas. These schools, of which there are currently 525 in the Sultanate, played an important role in training many generations before secular modern schools became widespread. But today, they still play a vital part and attract increasing numbers of boys and girls with each passing year, irrespective of the fact that there are modern schools available to them. Nowadays, students come to them to learn the Holy Koran outside their hours of study at their schools of general education. The people's interest can be clearly seen in their keen enthusiasm to join these schools during the summer holidays. Consequently the Ministry has opened a number of summer centres for this purpose which operate during the normal school summer holiday period. Last year there were 128 summer centres attended by 14,860 students.

CIVIL SERVICE

In the words of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos following his accession in 1970 – "The human element is the corner-stone of our contemporary life. Despite the heavy emphasis placed on the importance of technology, the human being shall remain its master." It is within this framework that our developmental philosophy in building Oman has been geared towards the building of the Omani individual practically and technically, to meet his country's needs on the one hand and to qualify him to shoulder national responsibilities in the area of planning and implementation on the other.

Before 1970 there was no governmental or infrastructural machinery in the modern sense in the Sultanate of Oman, and the country was in no way equipped to cope administratively with development. It was administered from Muscat by a few officials and by the Walis (provincial governors) appointed by the Sultan. Some regions, notably the Musandam Peninsula in the north, which is separated physically from the remainder of the Sultanate by a wedge of UAE territory, and areas of the Ja'alan in the south-east, were totally without administration. Thus His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, on assuming power, was faced with the daunting task of developing a modern society from an almost mediaeval basis.

A Diwan of Personnel Affairs was established, independent of other Ministries and administrative bodies, with sufficient technically qualified personnel to enable it to carry out its role and exercise its functions. In 1980 the Diwan was entrusted with the preparation of a new Civil Service Law to bring it into line with the organisation and administrative developments that had taken place. In February 1988 a new Ministry, the Ministry of Civil Service, was established by Royal Decree as an important step in His Majesty's policy to provide the Sultanate with a progressively modern governmental infrastructure.

Among the functions assigned to the new Ministry were the recommendation of laws related to the Civil Service, and the preparation of regulations and standardised schedules for salaries, allowances and grants and referring them to the Civil Service Council; the implementation of the laws on pensions and end-of-service benefits, and the regulations related to them; allocating

graduates who have been on scholarships or who have received study grants and assistance in accordance with the law on scholarships and study grants.

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

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

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

The Institute of Public Administration

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) came into existence by Royal Decree in 1977. Originally it was an autonomous body belonging to the Royal Diwan Affairs Ministry. After the dissolution of the Ministry of Royal Diwan Affairs the IPA was placed under the supervision of the Minister of National Heritage and Culture until the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Service in 1988, to which it is now attached.

The Director General of the IPA is appointed by the Minister of Civil



View of Al Khuwair where most Government ministries are situated

Service and acts under the supervision of the Minister and Board of Directors. He is in charge of the Institute and takes the necessary decisions within the stated rules and regulations. He cooperates with the Ministry in preparing the national training programme, according to the training requirements, prior to its submission to the Civil Service Council. He also prepares the general plan for the research programme and presents it to the Board of Directors, as well as the general training programme for the various administrative levels for presentation to the Board.

The academic sections of the IPA consist of the departments of personnel management, financial management, local administration, organisation and methods, documentation and publications, English language, clerical training, computers, and research and consultancy. Each department works towards achieving the objectives of the IPA and undertakes the different aspects of its activities in the field of training, as well as research and consultancy as related to its specialisation and according to the

decisions of the Board of Directors, the Director General and the academic staff of the IPA.

The IPA started a unique programme for training senior civil servants, including Undersecretaries and Directors-General, as well as lower level personnel, during 1989-90. The programme, which started in October 1989 synchronises with the beginning of the 4th Five Year Development Plan and takes into account the Omanisation of the Civil Service now under way. Over 1,000 personnel are being trained through 50 different courses with a view to revamping the public administration system and providing more efficient and productive civil services. The programme also includes courses for improving the proficiency of civil servants in the English language. Five courses are being conducted between October 1989 and December 1990 with a strong emphasis on office/business- English. The number of participants ranges between 75 and 100 and the duration of the courses is between 8 and 10 weeks. Under the programme, Omanis will be trained as replacements in jobs held by expatriates. The courses are designed to take about 100 to 110 participants drawn from secondary schools.

A five-day week was introduced in July 1989 for civil servants working in all Government offices. From Saturday to Wednesday office hours were extended by half an hour from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm. This does not affect the banks since they now come under the private sector category for this purpose.



"I promised you that a new dawn would rise on Oman – a new dawn which would give its people a new life and new hope for the future. With God's help and blessings, we have fulfilled that promise together."

Qaboos Bin Said

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