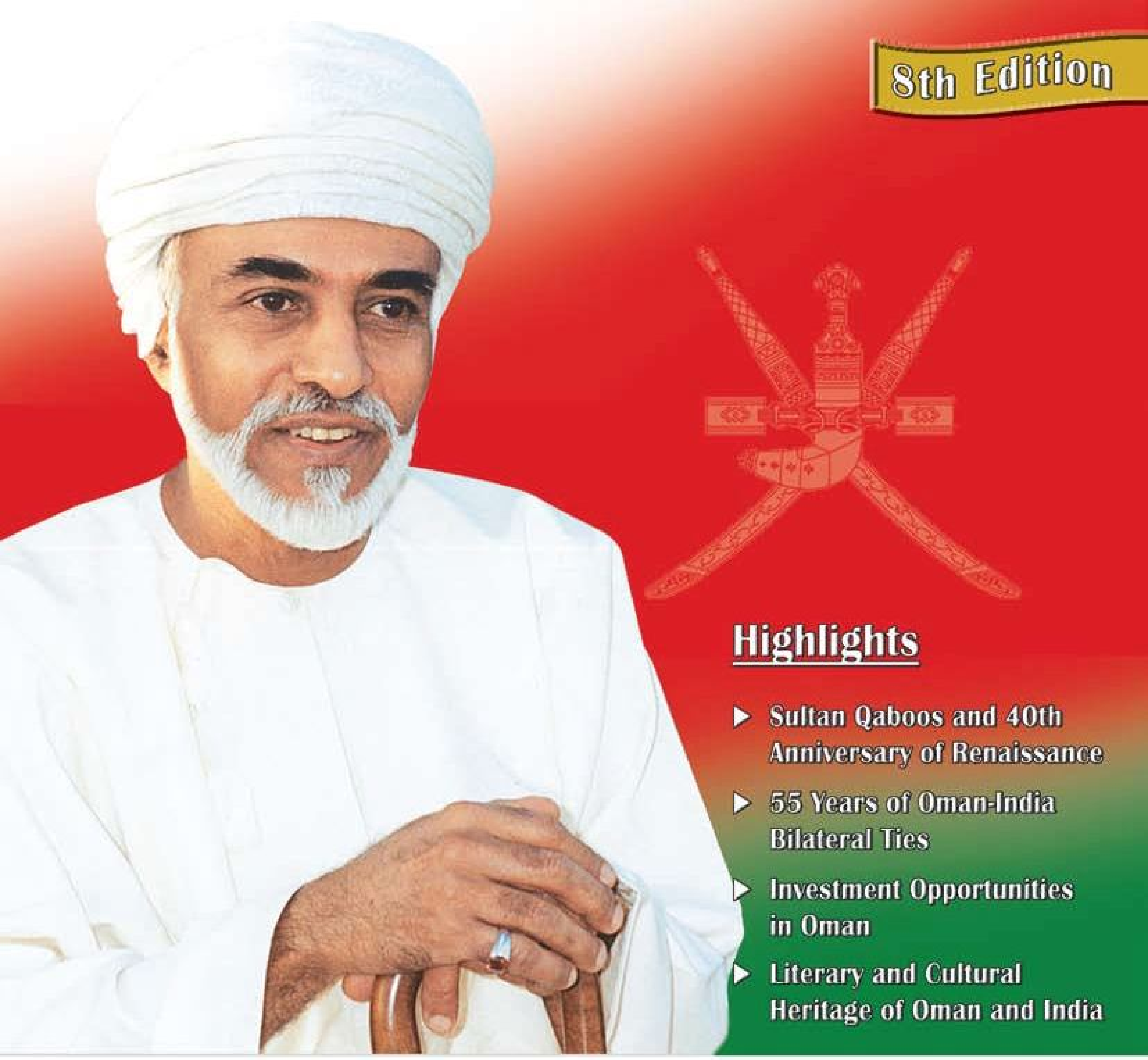


Annual Business Magazine

OMAN @40

A Special Publication on Sultanate's 40th National Day by Oman Embassy in New Delhi

Oman's 40th National Day

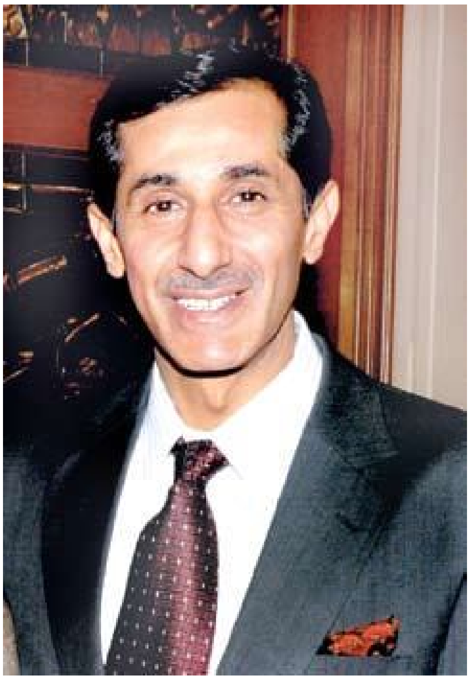


Photo: DeepakKapoor

I would like to share with you Sultanate of Oman's historic tryst with the Renaissance which began exactly 40 years ago. This new dawn of progress and prosperity has been remarkable. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said had promised to transform the country "'into a prosperous one with a bright future'" and called on people to work in unity and cooperation for transforming the future of the nation. It turned into reality, as we celebrate the big achievement.

This month of November, our beloved country Oman, commemorates the 40th anniversary of its National Day. It is a moment to celebrate not only the triumphs and achievements, but also the grandeur of the striving, the efforts behind it, and the vision and ideals which moulded it.

Oman has made remarkable strides towards the development of its human resources which, in turn, has significantly contributed to its social development and economic growth.

The Economy was ranked fourth in the Economic Efficiency Indicator for 2010-2011, which was included in the Arab Competitiveness Report 2010 published by the World Economic Forum.

As per the indicator which measures the quality of the product and the development of capital market, the employment of available technology and growth in adopting innovation, the Sultanate came 4th on the Arab world and 34th on the international level.

Our relationship with India is strong, both countries understand each other and there is regular growth and momentum. We have celebrated this year, 55 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. One of the major recent landmark is the signing of Joint Investment Fund aimed at working together for a better future. I urge the readers of our annual magazine to take note of major milestones of 2010 as Oman is in the process of entering into the 8th economic plan 2011-2015. The new five year plan will provide large opportunities for the private sectors from India and other countries.

I must thank individuals, companies and institutions who have been supportive of our goals.

Wishing you all the best.

Humaid Al-Maani

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman address to the Annual Session of The Majlis Oman

Photo: OmanNewsAgency

His Majesty the Sultan Qaboos patronizes the annual session of the Supreme Council of Oman on 4th October 2010

In the Name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful. Praise be to God who bestowed Hisgraceandblessedourendeavour and crowned it with success, and may blessings and peace be upon Prophet Mohammed and upon His family, companions and those who followed his guidance.

Our gathering in the city of Salalah today as we prepare to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Renaissance has undeniable symbolic significance because it was from the Governorate of Dhofar that Oman's modern Renaissance began and it was there that the first steps were taken towards the achievement of its hopes.

And here we are today, in this splendid land, celebrating the 40th anniversary of its progress, during the course of which its achievements in many fields are plain for all to see and have changed the face of life in Oman, enabling it to assume a position of eminence at both regional and international levels.

It was from here that we gave our first speech, during which we expressed our determination to work towards the creation of a modern state and to take the country forward in many different fields to the best of our ability. Since then we have embraced every means to enable us to achieve what we had promised.

Praise and thanks should be offered to God, the Most Sublime, the Almighty, for the fact that Oman has been able to realise much of what we had aspired towards. Everything that has been achieved within a precise balance between preserving the best elements of our heritage, in which we take pride, and the demands of the present day which require us to adapt to the spirit of the modern age — while at the same time corresponding to its civilization, modern science and technology and benefiting from the latest developments in the various spheres of public and private life.

Although the building of this modern state to which we aspired was achieved with God's assistance, the road to achieving it — as you all know — was not easy and accessible. There were tremendous difficulties and many obstacles. However, thanks to God's blessings, along with the diligent hard work and dedication by all sections of society — men

Photo: OmanNewsAgency

Members of the Council of Ministers and other dignitaries attending the annual session of the Supreme Council of Oman on 4th October 2010 addressed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos

and women — and for their absolute faith in God's assistance and guidance, we overcame all the difficulties and obstacles.

A high percentage of modern state building has definitely been achieved in the way we envisaged, thanks to God's grace. This was made through stable, phased and carefully studied steps that have built the present and paved the way to the future.

Oman has a deep-rooted history and firm principles established ages ago and, praise be to God, what we have done is to confirm these principles, and express them in modern-day language.

One of Oman's firm principles is co-operation with all states and nations on the basis of mutual respect, mutual interest and non-interference in the affairs of others as well as our non-acceptance of interference in our affairs by others.

The attention we have paid to development plans in order to build a community of prosperity, science and knowledge has been considerable and, praise be to God, a percentage of these development programmes, in which we take pride, have been implemented in various parts of the Sultanate.

What is certain is that with the development that has taken place in Omani life, and the positive changes that society has undergone, the legal and judicial systems have had to be upgraded and modernised to keep pace with the latest developments.

Accordingly, the laws and statutes necessary for that purpose were promulgated, culminating in the Basic Law of the State.

By referring to the above we did not merely intend to remind you of the achievements that have taken place in this our dear country, because they are plain for all to see and no further proof of them is needed. What we have wished to do is to stress the importance of safeguarding and protecting them so that the next generations - sons and daughters of Oman - can continue along the blessed path with the support and guidance of the Almighty God.

On this dear occasion we salute and express our appreciation to all who have contributed to the building of a modern state in Oman and participated in realising its achievements and remained vigilant and alert to protect it. Here we particularly refer to our Armed Forces, and all the administrative and security services.

"Our Lord upon You we relied and turned in repentance and to You is the return. Our Lord bestow upon us mercy from thyself and facilitate for us our affairs in the right way."

May God grant you success and may peace be upon you.

Source: Ministry of Information

Towards the 40th Year of Oman's Glorious Renaissance

By Saleh Abdullah Alkhamyasi

Whenever a discussion on Oman arise, images of tranquil , peaceful and hospitable country come to mind. Oman has been blessed with a wise, devoted and farsighted leadera who has acceded the thrown since 1970. A leader who has devoted his life for leading a renaissance that was destined to massively transform the life of his people and enable them to reap the fruits of modern Oman and be proud of their identity and heritage in the same time.

The development process in Oman under the wise leadership of his Majesty Sultan Qaboos is a unique in nature and thought provoking in kind. It is a process that has struck a balanced formula between modernity and tradition. Just like His Majesty himself said "No evolution without roots.".

His Majesty's firm beliefs in the value of the Omani citizens and the imperative needs for their continuous development and necessity to open opportunities for a wide spectrum of participation for them gave the development process a sense of ownership and deep roots to stand on and flourish.

The development process went in an escalating manner from the inception of the renaissance and today both the Omani citizens and the residence of Oman are enjoying the peace, stability and freedom. They both are working hand in hand and contributing in the process of development so that the Economic vision 2020 becomes a tangible reality.

Undoubtedlynohumanexperience goes free of challenges, but the affinity and strong bondage between the leader and his people plays a favorable catalyst to surmount them and come out victoriously. Whether it is the impact of the financial crisis, or confronting a natural calamity such as the destructive cyclone gunu, time has proved again and again that we in Oman are so immersed with an everlasting love for our country and our beloved leader.

During the Renaissance which His majesty has led, Oman has become an Oasis of peace, a land of tranquillity, an area of friendship and hospitality. It has become a tourist destination of a first choice.

Not only Oman excelled in the internal front but with its open mindedness, mutual respect and non interfering approach in other countries affairs, managed to restore its fame and became an ambassador of peace and abridge to unite the conflicting parties. Over the years the Sultanate of Oman under the blessed leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has successfully positioned itself with a strong brand as a peace loving country. Such a far sighted policy brought global recognition for Oman and its leader

His Majesty the Sultan concerns for humanity at large is evident in his policies and creative approach to disseminate awareness about the importance of environment and cultural appreciation.

His Majesty demonstrates his personal commitment to the environment across the world through "Sultan Qaboos prize for environmental preservation", which was instituted by his Majesty's at the Earth Summit in Brazil in


Photo: OmanNewsAgency

Muscat Gate fragnance of past with sprit of present

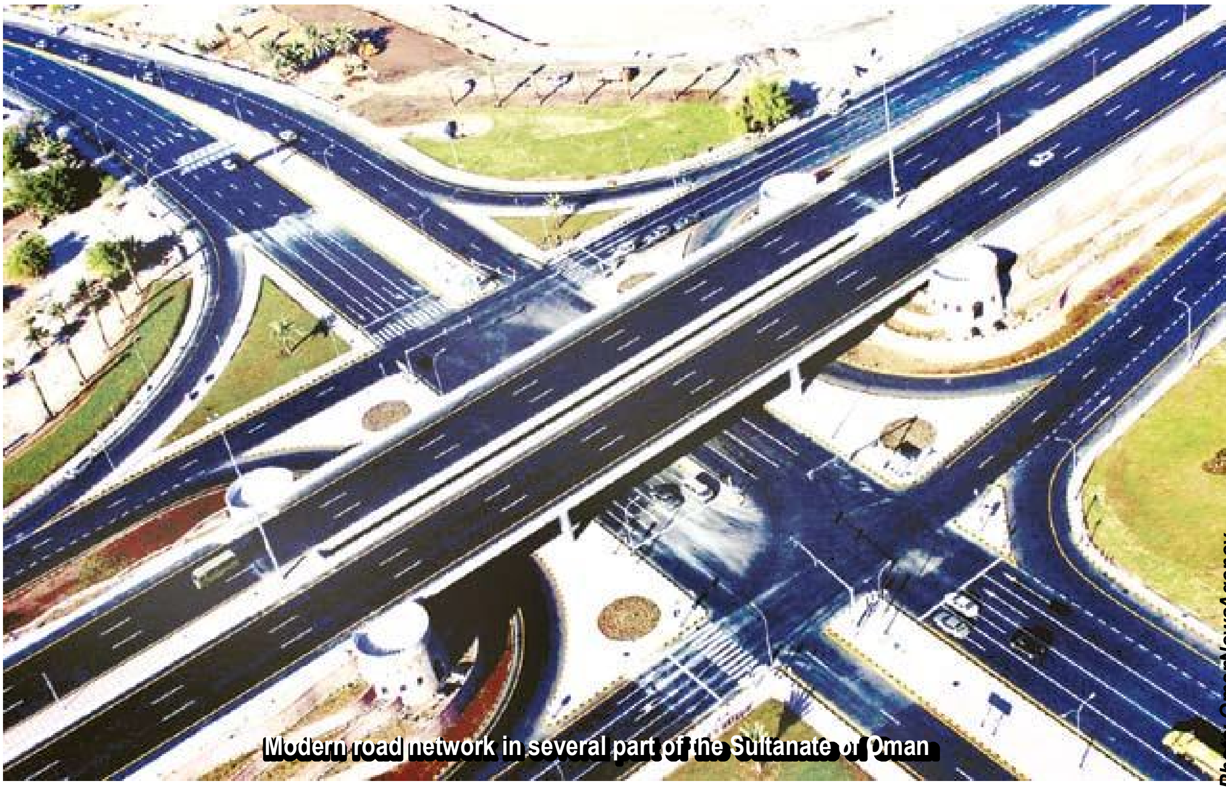
1989. It is the first Arab prize to be awarded by UNESCO for international efforts on behalf of the environment. In order to promote academic relations and mutual understanding between the Sultanate and western as well as international institutions many university chairs and fellowships were established such as the sultan of Oman's Chair of Arab and Islamic studies at Melbourne university in Australia, the Sultan Qaboos bin Said Fellowship at the Oxford centre for Islamic studies, the professorship Chair of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said at the University of Cambridge, the Sultan Qaboos Chair of International Relations at Harvard University as well as numerous chairs for Arab and Omani studies in several Arab and Foreign universities.

During four decades of the country's Renaissance, the Sultanate witnessed the implementation of world-class infrastructure and development projects. — ONA

Again and again His Majesty Sultan Qaboos remains the core of attention for so many international institutes and friendly nations, after winning the hearts and souls of his people as a result of his self denial efforts, wise judgement, far sighted leadership and above all his human touch. Such recognition made him win an international peace award in 1998, and here again he is conferred with the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 2007. Besides, he was recently named among the top ten influential leaders in the Arab and Islamic world.

Now that 2010, is opening a new chapter towards further prosperity and progress to mark forty years of sincere and solid development let us all gear up our efforts for even more brighter years to come.

Source: Ministry of Information

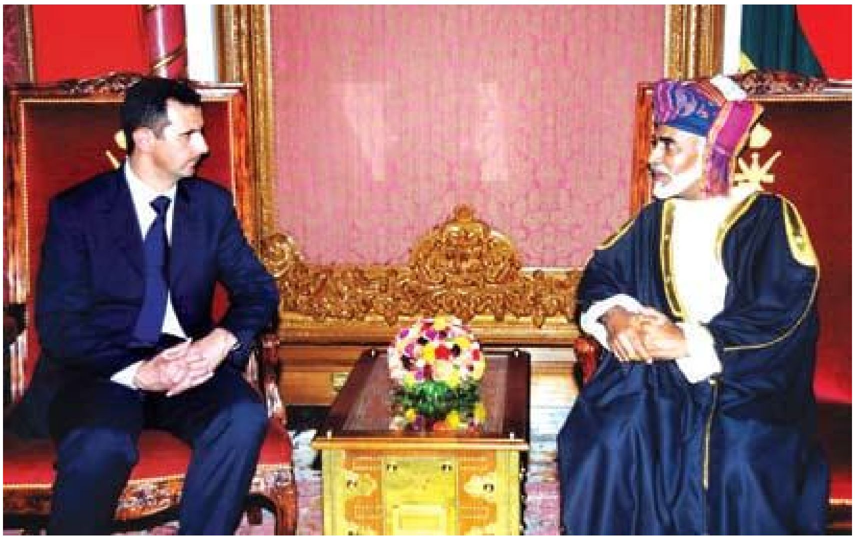


Modern road network in several part of the Sultanate of Oman

Photo: OmanNewsAgency

Sultan Qaboos and 40th Anniversary of Renaissance

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with King of Bahrain, HM Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with the President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with President of UAE, HH Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan

Sultan Qaboos and 40th Anniversary of Renaissance

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with Emir of Qatar, HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos with Libyan leader, Muammar al-naddafi

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos presiding over the Royal Annual festival of horse racing

Sultan Qaboos and 40th Anniversary of Renaissance

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos
with President of Egypt,
Hosni Mubarak

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos
with President of Iran,
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Royal Annual festival of horse racing held on 4th January 2010

Sultan Qaboos and 40th Anniversary of Renaissance

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos as part of annual Meet-the-People tour

All Photos Ministry of Information Oman

Oman to Help India in Infrastructure Projects

The Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah met with the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in New Delhi on October 21, 2010

The $ 100 million India-Oman Joint Investment Fund would be raised to $ 1.5 billion and would be deployed for infrastructure projects in India, according to the Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah during his visit to Delhi in October 2010.

India would be invited by the GCC countries in discussions about security issues for the Gulf region. Also Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, US, EU countries, China and Russia would also be invited.

"We cannot secure that important area of supplying energy to the world without collective efforts to maintain security and peace in the region," he said in a joint press conference with the Indian Minister for External Affairs, SM Krishna in New Delhi.

During The last visit of the Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to Oman in November 2008 a MoU for setting up of a India-Oman Joint Investment Fund was concluded. The fund would have a seed capital of $ 100 million and the amount can be raised to $1.5 billion as per requirement. Detailed documents have already been signed in the presence of the Indian Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee and the Omani Minister of National Economy Ahmed Macki on the July 15, 2010. The fund would be established in Mumbai and will be jointly managed by the State Bank of India and the Oman State General Reserve Fund.

"We have agreed that this fund is going to be invested both in Oman and India. But of course we would like very much that fund to participate in the infrastructure projects in India. This money which has been planned for is not the end of that fund, but depends on the size of projects which the fund would be addressing in India or in Oman. Besides, we believe that this will initiate public funds from the people to be also supported this fund for larger projects, big projects, particularly in the road sector. And the power generation sector would be probably the first priority for the fund and other investors," said Abdullah.

The Omani Foreign Minister lauded India's success in hosting the 19th Commonwealth Games and on being elected as a non-permanent member to the UN Security Council.

The Indian Minister Krishna said : "We had broad-ranging discussionsonrecentdevelopments in our bilateral relations especially in the economic and commercial fields where our relationship has grown exponentially in the last few years. Our bilateral trade now amounts to $ 4.5 billion and we share bilateral investments worth $ 7.53 billion stretching across 13 sectors. There are around 1,537 joint ventures between our two countries. Oman is also one of the few countries in the world with which India has signed a MoU on a Joint Investment Fund. Through this mechanism, we also aim to channelise further investment in each other's economies for the benefit of our people. The last few years have also seen enormous progress in our political understanding and dialogue, security and defence relationship and in people to people exchanges."

India has always been one of the preferred destinations for

Omanis for business, leisure, tourism and education. On the other hand Oman is home to over 400,000 people of Indian origin, some of who have been there for generations. Oman's population is 3.4 million. Therefore, Indians constitute a sizeable proportion of the population in Oman living and working happily side by side with their Omani brethren. No wonder there are over 125 flights every week between the two countries, and the frequency is likely to be enhanced in due course.

India's strategic dialogue with Oman dates back to 2002, and the seventh round of the India-Oman Strategic Consultative Group meeting was held in January 2009.

India's Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission and the Advisor to Sultan of Oman for Economic Planning, were entrusted with the responsibility to thrash out a blueprint to qualitatively raise our economic and business ties. The committee co-chaired by them met twice and their report is awaited soon.

The sixth session of the India-Oman Joint Commission meeting co-chaired by the commerce ministers of both the countries was held in Muscat in September 2010. Talks also covered SME sector and examined various other facets.

Under a MoU on Defence Cooperation the fourth round of talks was held in Muscat in May 2010, co-chaired by the Indian Defence Secretary and the Under Secretary for Defence of Oman.

There are over 1500 India-Oman jointventurescovering13important socioeconomic sectors. Over $7.5 billion have been invested, of which the Indian companies have contributed $4.5 billion. As such sizeable Indian investments have flown into Oman.

One of the biggest Indian public sector investments came from IFFCO which set up the Oman-India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) which is a billion dollar company. It was inaugurated in January 2006. Since then the entire production of fertilizers, both urea and ammonia, is imported by India.

There are over 1500 India-Oman joint ventures covering 13 important socioeconomic sectors. Over $7.5 billion have been invested, of which the Indian companies have contributed $4.5 billion.

Photo PIB

The Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah met with the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission of India, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia in New Delhi on October 21, 2010

Again late last year, Oman scaled up its stake in another billion dollar project, this time in Madhya Pradesh, called Bharat Oman Refinery Limited, to 26 per cent. This year, Jindal Group has acquired one of the Omani steel companies for close to half a billion dollars.

Indian industries are already operating in Oman in vital sectors like oil and gas, mining, manufacturing, IT and telecom, power, energy, water, construction, healthcare, steel and tourism.

There are a slew of important agreements between the two countries which include the double taxation avoidance agreement, bilateral investment protection agreement, an extradition treaty, and a MOU on defence cooperation.

Oman is one of India's most important partners in GCC countries. GCC is home to a large section of the Indian expatriate community. They remit about $30 billion every year back home. GCC is very important to India for meeting its energy needs. About 75per cent of India's crude oil requirements comes from GCC countries.

OCIPED to Organize Seminar on Exporting to India

Consistent with its mission to promote Non Oil Omani origin exports, OCIPED has commissioned a market study in India

Mr. Faris Al Farsi, Acting Director General of Export Development of The Omani Centre for Investment promotion andExportDevelopment,informed that OCIPED has commenced a study of the Indian market for exporting a select set of Non Oil Omani origin products. Based on the outcome of the market study in India, OCIPED is organizing a **'Seminar on Exporting to India' on Tuesday the 14th December 2010 at Afrah Ballroom, Grand Hyatt Muscat**

Mr. Faris expressed the satisfaction that all previous 7 market studies conducted by OCIPED have resulted in substantial increase in exports of Non-Oil Omani origin products to markets such as Yemen, Syria, Iran, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan and Libya. Mr. Faris mentioned that OCIPED has approached the study in a very scientific manner by focusing on critical elements based on lessons learnt from seven previous country market studies.

India and Oman – Building on strong trade relationships

The trade between Oman and India has been growing at a brisk pace. Trade between India and Oman had risen to $1.62 billion (624 Mn RO) in 2009, from $ 0.62 billion (238 Mn RO) in 2005. While Omani exports to India grew at a CAGR of 27% between Years 2005 and 2009, India's exports to Oman also grew at a CAGR of 28%. The proposed study will build on this strong platform of existing trading relationships, and promote further rapid growth in trade.

Omani exports to India – Need to diversify the export basket

While Indian exports to Oman have been broad based, Omani exports have been focused on a few large value items. Fertilizer and oil account for majority (72 %) of the value of exports from Oman to India (2009). If we were to exclude these two products, then Omani exports to India have grown at a CAGR of 30%, albeit on a smaller base. This is impressive when compared to the lower 10.2% CAGR export growth of overall Omani exports during 2009 and underscores the potential of India as an emerging export market. The study will focus on opportunities to diversify the export basket to reduce the dependence on a few products.

Structured approach to short listing products for the study

After more than 12 weeks of trade data analysis and intense engagement with exporters, OCIPED and the consultants have finalized a list of 21 products for the study. The consultant contacted all the 150+ Omani exporters to gauge their interest levels in exploring India as an export market for their products. During the survey, around 56 Omani exporters evinced interest in the Indian market. Avalon Consulting and OCIPED followed

this survey with personal meetings with the interested exporters. The discussion was centred on the analysis of Indian imports for the relevant product, import duties, and competition from heavy weights like China in the Indian export market. OCIPED have shortlisted a promising basket of 21 products for further detailed study.

Products for India Study:

S.No	Product	S.No	Product
1	Chromium Ores	11	Condiments
2	Ceramic Tiles	12	Vegetable Oil
3	Marble & Quartz Stone	13	Perfumes
4	Confectionery	14	Security Paper
5	Dates	15	Limestone
6	Methanol	16	Aluminium Conductors
7	Metal Furniture	17	Packaging Film
8	Mattresses-Rubber or Plastic	18	Steel Tubes and Pipes
9	Plastic Tubes and Pipes	19	BOPP Sheets
10	Biscuits	20	Polypropylene
		21	Auto-components

A Two-phase One-year long Initiative envisaged

Mr. Faris informed that the Phase I of the study to be completed in December 2010 will focus on detailed market mapping for the shortlisted products and sizing up the export potential for these products in the Indian market followed by seminars in Oman focused on relevant exporters to share the insights from the study and increase their awareness of the export opportunity available in the Indian market. Phase II will continue for another six months, where trade will be facilitated between Omani exporters and Indian importers through a series of events such as match making meetings and follow up activities to be organized by OCIPED and the Indian consultants.

Source: OCIPED

Oman National Flag

The national flag is restored in our minds since childhood as a symbol of our identity. It is something that fills our souls with pride and a sense of belonging. Since childhood we experienced the importance of dealing with our national flag and how important it is that we start our school day with pulling the flag up in the flag pole and let the national anthem disseminate that energetic and patriotic sense of fulfillment. The voices of the school children singing the national anthem pave the way for the school day. Listening to them singing and repeating the verses of the national anthem is a moment of joy:

Ever since the early days, our eyes were accustomed to look at the sky and watch our flag flying over the top of the buildings. In fact it has become a common practice that you identify an official building through the national flag prior to reading the board to identify which building is it?

"O lord , protect for us His Majesty the Sultan

And the people in our land, With honour and peace.

May his leadership be glorious.

For him we shall lay down our lives.

O Oman, since the time of the Prophet

We are a loyal people amongst the noblest Arabs.

Rejoice - Qaboos has come.

May Heaven bless him.

Be joyful and commend him to the protection of our prayers

So often the satellite channels and newspapers bring some pictures of people who air out their vengeance over certain countries by burning that particular country's flag. At such seen people get so emotional. Undoubtedlysuchscenes,illustrate the fact that national flags are symbol of identity, that they are highly valued and cherished and have a special place in our hearts. Their colours are solidly engraved in the mind of the people. Our eyes spontaneously react once our national flag is identified.

In Oman our national flag consists of three beautiful bands. Arranged in a descending order they are respectively white, red and green. In addition there is a red bar on the left that contains the national emblem of Oman. So what do these colours signifies? Naturally they were not selected randomly and should have its roots in the geography, history and the cultural makeup of the place.

Historically speaking, until 1970, Oman used a plain red flag however, In 1970, the Sultan introduced a complete new set of national flags. Bands of green and white were added to the flag, and the national emblem, the badge. This depicts crossed swords over a khanjar, a traditional curved dagger.

Before the 25th National Day in November 1995 new regulations were introduced for the proportion of the three colours, the dimensions of the flag and the height of the poles on which it may be flown, according to the building and purpose. It is rectangular in shape and comprises two crossed swords with an Omani khanjar (dagger) superimposed upon them. The flag is in three colours white, red and green. Whereas, the white colour signifies peace and prosperity , which is certainly the significant feature of the place and its hospitable citizens. The red on the other hand, stands for the necessity to protect our sovereignty and defend it against the aggressors. The green by all means symbolizes fertility and the agricultural nature of the country which has many plains and mountains and aflaj system to nourish the agricultural aspects of the place .The swords and Khanjar (dagger) have been used as the country's emblem since the middle of the eighteenth century.

Glimpses from our daily life reveals a sense of attachment and honor to the national flag. For instance, when there is a protocols of reception for a head of state of any brotherly or friendly country, we see the national flags on both sides of the road from Muscat International Airport until Al-Alam Palace in Muscat, the capital. Seeing the wind blowing the flags and making them fly is stunning. They seem as if they are dancing with joy, adding to the happiness of the place and participating in welcoming the honorable guests. Sometimes even the citizens line up on the side of the road welcoming the guests with folk songs and traditional dances. Among them the students raise their hands with small flags on them as a gesture of a warm welcome and in turn adding flavor to the occasion.

While, celebrating our Renaissance Day, national day or inaugurating any important development projects the eye cannot fail identifying our three most favourable colours sharing with the crowds their rejoicing moments

During the last GCC football tournament which was hosted by Oman, the affinity and attachment of the people to their national flags was so evident. The Omani flags were all over the place. The buildings, the cars were decorated with Oman national flags. In fact, it was even worn as a scarf or a turban. Some people have even stitched dishdasha out of the three colours. It was really amazing to see the residents and visitors share the joyful moment with the citizens. What an emotional bondage and attachment indeed.

The spectators who drove to the capital Muscat to support their team and lift the spirit of its players, have even painted their faces with the colours of the flag in a moment of enthusiasm.

While, celebrating our Renaissance Day, national day or inaugurating any important development projects the eye cannot fail identifying our three most favourable colours sharing with the crowds their rejoicing moments.

As souvenirs the Oman flag is available in a form of cups, plates, T shirts, key chains and stickers.

Seeing the Omani flag flying all over the world whether it is in the UN or the various embassies brings a special feeling to us as Omani citizens . Now that Oman air has become the national carrier the Omani flag is crossing the sky on a daily basis. Images of both Mohsin Albusaidi Nabil Albusaidi and their moment of triumph with the Omani flag high up fill us all with a sense of pride.

The Jewel of Muscat as well will be heading in its sea voyage to Singapore in February raising the Omani flag, passing by many friendly countries such as India and Srilanka before reaching its final destination.

Withallthehighlightedbackground of our national flag let us all remember whether we are in a contest or exploring the internet or reading a geography text or browsing the national geographic magazine that this description of the flag belongs to The Sultanate of Oman. A country situated in the south eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It an effective member of the regional and international community, known for its initiatives as a catalyst of peace and mediator for bridging the differences between the conflicting parties to assist them in reaching a mutually agreed solution so that life can go peacefully and free of tensions.

Source: Ministry of Information

Ambitious Oman-India Joint Investment Fund

By Harun Riaz

Mr. Ahmed Macki, Minister of National Economy had a successful visit to India in the middle of July 2010. During the three-day hectic schedule, both countries signed an ambitious Oman-India Joint Investment Fund and the visiting Minister interacted with India's chambers-CII and FICCI apart from donating precious books to the Sultan Qaboos Library in India Islamic Cultural Centre in New Delhi.

The State Bank of India (SBI) and State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) of Oman signed a Joint Venture Agreement to form a Joint Investment Fund. The Agreement was signed by Mr. O.P. Bhatt, Chairman, SBI and Mr. Warith Al-Kharusi, CEO of SGRF) in the presence of Mr. Ahmed Macki, Minister of National Economy, Government of Oman and India's Finance Minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee. The Oman-India Joint Investment Fund shall aim at making equity investments in various sectors of Indian economy.

This fund will start with a corpus of US$ 100 million to be contributed equally by State General Reserve Fund of Oman (SGRF) and SBI. The fund will explore opportunity in all sectors without any specific preference. The Fund would, for the present, limit itself to Indian investment opportunities. There is no specific sector focus and the Fund will look for opportunities in all sectors of India permitted by regulations from time to time. The Fund can be expanded to have a corpus of upto US$ 1.5 billion through future schemes, depending upon the experience of the initial fund. The purpose of the collaboration is to attract capital into India from that region.

The management company shall be owned 50:50 by SBI and SGRF, with equal profit sharing by both sides.

Photo: Embassy of Oman

Ahmed Macki, Minister of National Economy and India's Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee signed an agreement in July 2010 to establish Oman-India Joint Investment Fund

During the visit of Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh to Muscat in November 2008, an MoU was signed between the SBI and SGRF to set up a Joint Investment Fund to make equity investments in various sectors of both the countries.

"India offers a very large and promising market to Oman and the joint investment fund signed between the two governments will help both our nations to guarantee capital for investment projects". This was stated Minister Macki at a meeting organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The Minister also mentioned that the synergies between India and Oman - democratic in nature, politically stable and steady economic growth - provide a good platform for enhancing bilateral economic and trade relations.

H.E. Mr. Humaid Al- Mani, Ambassador of Oman to India, stated that Indian and Omani business communities should continue to work together to take the bilateral relationship to newer heights.

Mr. Anil Wadhwa, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, highlighted the momentum in both the bilateral trade and investments in the recent years. He further stated that despite the recession of last year the bilateral trade has crossed US$ 2.5 billion. "While petrochemicals sector have always been an integral part of our bilateral trade, there is a strong need to diversify and look at new areas of cooperation like ceramics, automobile components and others".

Earlier, during the welcome remarks, Mr V K Mathur, Chairman & Managing Director, Inapex Limited complimented the Minister and his team for the agreement signed between the State Bank of India and State General Reserve Fund of Oman to form the Joint Investment Fund between India and Oman. He said that this fund with a seed capital of US$ 100 million, equally shared between both the countries, will provide a greater fillip to bilateral trade and investment relations between India and Oman, in the years to come. He added that sectors like solar energy, telecom, education, healthcare, water, mining, manufacturing etc have great potential and partnerships should be forged in these sectors.

Photo Embassy of Oman

Ahmed Macki, Minister of National Economy met with India's Minister of Commerce Anand Sharma in New Delhi in July 2010

Interacting with business community at Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Minister Macki declared that encouraging and attracting foreign direct investment was a top priority in the country's diversification strategy, not only to attract more investments, but also to introduce technical knowhow, modern management, advanced marketing techniques as well as on-the-job training to improve the skills of the Omani labour force.

Mr. Macki said that sound amendments in investment related laws and procedures have been introduced to make the investment atmosphere more conducive and attractive, especially as regards securing foreign ownership up to 100% and a tax rate reduced to 12%, one of the lowest in the region. This investment atmosphere has already attracted foreign investments which had increased, according to the last investment survey, from (RO 3,961) ($ 10, 299) million in 2005 to (RO 9,424) ($24, 502) million in 2007.

Minister Macki declared that encouraging and attracting foreign direct investment was a top priority in the country's diversification strategy

To provide the best environment for business and investment, the Omani Minister said that the government had formulated a detailed plan to expand and modernize the existing Muscat International Airport, Salalah Airport, as well as four other domestic airports, to be built in Sohar, Duqm, Adam, ras Al Hadd, and two smaller airports in Haima

Photo: Embassy of Oman

Ahmed Macki, Minister of National Economy visited the Sultan Qaboos Library at India Islamic Cultural Center in New Delhi on 13th July 2010 and donated hundreds of precious books

Photo: Embassy of Oman

Ahmed Macki, Minister of National Economy exchanging gift with Namo Narain Meena, India's Minister of State for Finance during a meeting in New Delhi on 13th July 2010

and Shaleem, being included in this year development budget amounting to (RO 950) ($ 2, 470) million.

He said that the government had allocated huge additional development funds during the plan period for rehabilitating and building a network of physical infra-structure projects in different regions of the Sultanate. Those additions had amounted to (RO 6,665) ($ 17, 329) million, thus raising the development programme to (RO 9, 681) ($ 25, 171) million. The road sector has received a big share amounting to (RO 1, 777) ($ 4, 620) million of these additions and many roads have been built, and still others are to be built this year.

Also, the government was investing heavily in new water and power projects, with nearly (RO 3) ($ 7.8) billions allocated for projects planned over the next (6) years. Moreover, the plan investment programmes covers other sectors, such as tourism, information technology, and telecommunication.

6th Oman-India Joint Commission Reviews Bilateral Economic Relations

Anand Sharma leads Indian delegation to Muscat

The 6th Oman-India Joint Commission Meeting held in Muscat in September 2010 reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral economic relations and means of enhancing bilateral trade between the two countries. Mr. Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce & Industry who led the Indian delegation to Oman also chaired the Joint Business Council Meeting held at Oman Chamber of Commerce which was organized by OCCI and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industries (FICCI). Mr. Rajan Mittal, FICCI President represented the Indian Business while the Omani delegation was led by the Minister of Commerce & Industry, Maqbool Ali Sultan.

The two way trade which rose to $4.5 billion needs to increase further to reflect the growing Oman-India business relations.

During the talks, Mr. Sharma noted with satisfaction that the US $ 969 million Oman-India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) at Sur; acquisition of the Shadeed Iron & Steel plant in the port city of Sohar for $ 464 million; raising of its stake to 26% from 4% in the $ 1 billion refinery at Bina in Madhya Pradesh by Oman Oil Company are a few shining examples of burgeoning economic

Photo: OmanNewsAgency

India's Minister for Commerce and Industry, Anand Sharma with the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, Oman, H.H. Sayyid Fahd, in Muscat on September 05, 2010

Photo: Embassy of India

India's Minister for Commerce and Industry, Anand Sharma with Maqbool bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce and Industry in Muscat on September 05, 2010

and bilateral co-operation. "Mr. Sharma also called on the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud bin Mohammed Al Said and held substantive discussions with Special Advisor to HM The Sultan for External Liaison Dr. Omar bin Abdul Muniem Al-Zawawi.

Mr.Sharmaemphasizedthepriority attached by Indian Government for cooperation with Oman in petroleum, gas and fertilizer sectors while the Deputy PM underscored the need for greater cooperation in capacity building and information technology. Omani side agreed in-principle to invest in India for revival of few closed plants of Fertilizer Corporation of India (FCI) and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFCL) and the expansion in RCF (PSU of Government of India) through investment by Oman Oil Company. Both sides agreed to form a Senior level Working Group representing Government of India, RCF, KRIBHCO from Indian side and Oman Oil Company from Omani side for initiating early due diligence. It is estimated that these will bring in investments of close to $3billion. BPCL and Oman Oil Marketing Company agreed to collaborate and jointly study the possibility of setting up a lube blending plant in Oman and marketing in neighbouring countries.

The Oman-India Joint Investment Fund with a seed capital of US $100 million, to be increased up-to US $1.5 billion, has been agreed upon through an MOU signed between the two sides in November 2008. This initiative is expected to function as a catalyst to promote and partnership between the private sectors of the two countries and enhance the trade and investment between the two countries. Mr. Sharma stressed on the need for the fund to be operationalised and augmented immediately. A number of sectors have been identified for investment cooperation such as (a) Agriculture (b) Air ports, sea ports and railways (c) Hospitals (d) Power including nuclear power (e) Renewable energy including solar and wind energy (f) Mining (g) Oil and gas (h) Education and skill development (i) Tourism (j) Healthcare (k) Infrastructure and (l) Chemicals and Fertilisers.

Both countries agreed to pursue cooperation in field of Human Resource Development especially skill development in the fields of Technology, Management and Information Technology (IT) including co-operation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector. The Omani side expressed its keenness for setting up super-speciality hospitals in India and diagnostic facilities in the form of Joint Ventures, for which an Omani delegation would go to India shortly. Investments in agro processing specially in Indian SEZs were also discussed. Oman has a strategic location, and has entered into Free Trade Agreements with several countries including USA, which offers huge opportunities for Indian products to these markets apart from the GCC.

Source: PIB

India and Oman to Step up Cooperation in Maritime Security

Sitanshu Kar in Muscat

Taking their defence cooperation a step higher, India and Oman have agreed to accelerate their cooperation in maritime security and regional security issues. The decisions were taken at the bilateral discussions between the visiting Defence Minister Mr. AK Antony and his Oman counterpart Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi at Muscat today. This is the first ever visit of Mr. Antony to West Asia. Speaking at the meeting, he said maritime security is one of the issues that are causing concern to countries around the world. Mr. Antony said, after the Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008, issues of maritime security have emerged as a major aspect of India's security concerns. 'Maritime security has also become a global concern due to the pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden. Piracy off the coast of Somalia has been growing over the years and has now assumed alarming proportions', he said.

Giving details of the measures taken by New Delhi, Mr. Antony said, to protect Indian flag ships and Indian citizens employed in sea- faring duties, Indian Navy had commenced anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden from October 2008. A total of 16 Indian navy ships have been deployed in the Gulf of Aden since. In addition to escorting Indian flag ships, ships of other flags have also been escorted. 'We are cooperating with other navies deployed in this area by way of information sharing and have been participating in the Shared Awareness and De-Cofliction (SHADE) Meetings since April 2009', he said.

The two sides also discussed a number of issues- bilateral and regional. Referring to Afghanistan, Mr. Antony said, ' we have a common aim in Afghanistan and that is to ensure that it does not become a base of safe haven

Photo:SitanshuKar/DPR,MoD,India

India's Defence Minister, A.K. Antony inspecting the Guard of Honour in Muscat on May 18, 2010

for terrorists again. We want a stable, moderate, unified and democratic Afghanistan'. He said New Delhis' efforts in Afghanistan are focussed on economic and social development activities. ' We intend to continue such activities even though we have lost personnel and have suffered attacks on our embassy in Kabul'.

Mr. Antony expressed satisfaction at the existing defence cooperation between the two countries which is characterised by high level visit exchanges, training, regular bilateral exercises between the two navies and ship visits. In this connection, he recalled the first ever air exercise 'Eastern Bridge' in October 2009. Royal Air Force of Oman pilots have attended the Jaguar Simulator training in India in the past and similar training is planned this year also. 'We have laid the foundation and should now work towards adding more content to our defence cooperation', he said.

Mr. Antony invited his counterpart to attend Aero-India in February 2011.

The delegation of Mr. Antony included the defence secretary Mr. Pradeep Kumar, Indian Ambassador to Oman Mr. Anil Wadhwa, CISC Air Marshal SC Mukul, DGMF Lt Gen Dalip Bhardwaj, Air Marshal A Raha and Rear Admiral LVS Babu.

Mr. Antony also called on the Sultan of Oman who is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Prime Minister of the country, Qaboos bin Said bin Thaimour Al Said.

Last evening, shortly after his arrival in Muscat, Mr. Antony attended a dinner hosted for prominent members of Indian Community by the Ambassador. Oman is now home to nearly half a million expatriate Indians. Speaking at the function, Mr.

Photo : Sitanshu Kar/DPR,MoD,India

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers received in his office India's Defence Minister, A.K. Antony during the May 2010 visit to Muscat

Photo:Sitanshu Kar/DPR,MoD,India

The visiting Defence Minister of India, A.K. Antony examining the exhibits at the Armed Forces Museum of the Sultanate of Oman during the May 2010 visit

Antony said his visit will consolidate further the existing ties between India and Oman. He said India will expand its cooperation with Oman in all fields.

Answering a query from the audience, Mr. Antony said the desire of the Indian Army to induct 124 more MBT Arjun in its armoury was its own after the comparative trials. He expressed happiness that after many years MBT has become a reality and said 'it has come of age'. DGMF Lt Gen Dalip Bhardwaj, who was also at the reception, endorsed the views of Mr. Antony.

Investment Opportunities in Oman

Services Infrastructure - US $ 11.7 billion

Opportunities for: Contractors, Architects Quantity Survey

- Southern Express way, flyovers and road networks
- Dams and sanitary networks
- Water desalination plants
- Water resource development
- Residences, Shopping Malls, Commercial Complexes
- Air Port and Sea Port New/ Expansion
- Education & Health services.

Services Oil & Gas - US $ 19 billion

Opportunities for: EPC Logistics Trade Supply Service and Training

- Exploration
- Production
- Transport
- Technology Innovation
- Service & Maintenance
- Downstream Industrial projects

Services Tourism - US $ 20 billion

Event Management, Advertisement, PR, Tour Operators, MICE, Hotel Operators Restaurants Leisure Management

- The Wave Resort
- Muscat Golf & Country Club
- The Blue City
- Ras Al Hadd
- Seafah Resort
- Salam Resort
- Convention Center
- Shinas Resort
- Ras Al Hamra Resorts.

Services Information Technology

IT Consulting, Data Center Management, System, Integration Training Call Center Software Development, Business Process Outsourcing

- E-legislation
- Higher Education
- One Stop Shop
- National Statistic Online
- E-payment Gateway
- E-Tendering

Services Others

- Management & Professional Institutes
- Specialized Industrial Training
- Venture Capital
- Financial Services
- International Trade
- Logistics
- Insurance Services.

Source: OCIPED

Frequently Asked Questions on Investment into Oman

1. Can a foreigner own majority shares in an Omani company?

The Sultanate encourages foreign capital that will enhance the overall development of the country. It should supplement local investment in utilizing its untapped resources, facilitate transfer of technology, know - how and managerial skills, and getting benefit from the worldwide connections of multinational corporation in opening new markets for Oman products.

Foreign ownership is allowed upto 100per cent with the approval of the Ministrial Cabinet, however, in accordance with the commitment provided to the World Trade Organization, approvals are granted for foreign ownership up to 70 per cent in most of the sectors on automatic basis. As per the Foreign Capital Investment Law ministry grant license to applicants if the paid up capital of the company is at least RO 150,000 (US $ 390,000).

2. What is the investment incentives offered in Oman?

Investment incentives include provision of plots for nominal lease charges in specified areas and reduced utility charges and exemption from taxes. Tax exemptions from corporate tax and customs duties are granted to entities engaged in manufacturing, mining, agriculture, fishing, fish farming, fish processing, aquaculture, animal breeding, tourism, export of manufactured and processed products and public utilities. The exemptions are granted for five year from the date of production or services first rendered and a five year extension may also be granted subject to certain conditions.

Foreign airlines and shipping companies are exempt from taxation based on reciprocal treatment. Universities, colleges, higher education institutes, private sector schools, training institutes; private hospitals are exempt from tax.

3. Are Foreigners allowed to own land for commercial and residential purposes?

Under Land Law companies and foreign nationals may own land in special designated tourism complexes. Other GCC nationals, companies fully owned by Omanis or General Joint Stock Companies withmajorityOmanishareholdings are allowed to own land any where under certain conditions. ROyal Decree 12/ 2006 allows non Omanis to own real estate in Oman within specified integrated tourism complexes.

4. Is a foreign company allowed to open a branch and representative office in Oman?

Companies conducting business through special contracts or agreements with the government are allowed to establish a branch in Oman. In practice contracts awarded by the government, Petroleum Development Oman LLC (PDO) and Oman LNG LLC (LNG) enable foreign companies to establish branches in Oman by registering with the Ministry of commerce & Industry.

Foreign companies engaged in trade, industry and service sectors may open commercial representative offices in Oman. However they may not import, export or sell its products; promote productions or services other than those produced by the company or communicate directly with the consumers.

5. How manyIndustrialEstates, Free Zones, Special Economic Zones are in Oman?

There are six industrial estates in Oman managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates. These industrial estates are located in key locations of Oman such as Rusayl, Salalah, Sohar, Sur, Nizwa and Buraimi. For more information on industrial estates please refer to www.peie.om . Apart from these industrial estates there are three free zones and one Special Economic Zone in Oman. These are

- Al Mazunah Free Zone strategically located in the south west of Oman on the Oman – Yemen border. For more information please visit www.peie.om.
- Knowledge Oasis Muscat is a public - private sector led Technology Park situated in a 68 hectare site situated at 32 km from Muscat. For more information please visit www.kom.om.
- Salalah Free Zone is located in a globally strategic location in Salalah with access to Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. Besides access to world's fastest growing markets the zone also offers a whole host of other

business advantages. For more information please visit www.sfzco.com.

- Special Economic Zone is to be created in Port of Sohar. The zone will encompass a serious centre of manufacturing with low investment and highest possible added value. For more information visithttp://www.portofsohar.com

6. What are the different structures of business entities and their main features?

In Oman the following types of entities can be formed

A joint stock company is formed by three or more individual or entities, whose liability is limited to the nominal value of their shares in the company's capital. If minimum 40 per cent of a company's shares are issued for public subscription it is considered as a general joint stock company (SAOG). The minimum capital required in RO 2 million (US $ 5.2 million) ; Otherwise it is considered as closed joint stock company (SAOC) and the minimum capital required is RO 500,000 (US $ 1.3 million)

Limited Liability Company (LLC) is a private company formed by minimumoftwo andamaximum of 40 natural or legal persons, whose liability is the nominal value of their shares in the company's capital.. The minimum capital for an LLC wholly owned by Omani national is RO 20,000 (US $ 52,000) and RO 150,000 (US $ 390,000) with foreign participation.

A Holding company is a joint stock company or LLC that holds at least 51per cent of the shares of another company and have financial and administrative control. The capital of the holding company shall not be less than RO 2 million (US $ 5.2 Million)

The other forms of business entities are general partnerships, formed by two or more individuals or entities, limited partnerships, which is formed by one or more general partners and sole proprietorships

7. Is there any restriction on repatriation?

Oman is a free economy and does not restrict the remittance abroad of equity, debt, capital, interest, dividends, profits and personal savings

8. What are the tax rates in Oman?

Companies are taxed at a single rate of 12 per cent of the taxable income exceeding RO 30,000 irrespective of the percentage of foreign ownership. Branches of foreign companies are taxed at a single rate according to the entire amount of branch's taxable income. The tax rate varies from 5per cent to 30 per cent companies that do not have a permanent establishment in Oman are subject to a flat tax of 10per cent of gross income on the following type of income: royalties, management fees, rent for equipment, transfer of technical know-how and R & D fees

9.What are theRatesofServices in the industrial estates?

- Lease of industrial plots Square metre/per annum 250 Baizas for the first 5 years, thereafter, 500 Baizas.
- Electricity KW/hour with bank capacitor 12 Baizas. (August - Mar) 24 Baizas (April – May)
- Water Gallon 3 Baizas
- Gas M3 20.5 Baizas

Source: www.peie.om/estates-rusay-lrate.shtml

10. What is the minimum wage in Oman?

The minimum wages payable to Omanis is RO 140 (about US $ 360) per month including house and transport allowances. Apart from that as per the Social Security Law private sector employer must make monthly contributions to the Public Authority for Social Insurance at the rate of 9.5 per cent of the monthly wage

11. Does Oman have any Free Trade agreements with other countries?

Oman seeks integration into the global economy through multilateral, regional and bilateral economic cooperation. In this context Oman joined the World Trade Organization in the year 2000. The accession to WTO brings the integration of Oman into the world economy and with its benefits and the challenges.

Regionally, Oman is a member of the six nation Gulf Cooperation Council which started with an FTA in 1982, moved to the common market in 2008. Oman is also an active member of the greater Arab free trade agreement. As of 2005 these Arab countries with a population of over 270 million have in place a free trade agreement. With GCC Oman is now negotiating with various countries for similar free trade agreements. Also the European Union and GCC FTA are now in the final stages of negotiations.

On the bilateral front, has already signed an FTA with USA.

12. What are the major Sea ports and airports?

Oman has commercial sea ports in Muscat, Sohar and Salalah. There are six civil airports of which two are international. These sea and airports are well connected to other parts of the world

13. Does Oman have a One Stop Shop?

In the Ministry of Commerce & Industry a "One-Stop-Shop" for assisting the domestic and foreign investors in obtaining all required clearances quickly and from one window has been established. Shortly all ministry related services will be made available through web as a step towards the achievement of total e-governance in the country. For more information visit http://www.mocioman.gov.om/arabic/egov.html

14. What are the criteria for getting residential and investors' visa?

Investor Visa is granted to a foreigner who intends to invest his money in Oman and pursuant to a certification in this respect from the authority concerned. - This visa can be used within six months from the date of its issuance. - It is a multiple-entry visa valid for staying in the country for two years from the date it is inserted in the passport. This period is renewable. For more detail please refer to http://www.rop.gov.om/english/dg_passport_visa_investor.asp

15. What are the sources of finance for the investors?

Commercial banks are the primary source of short, medium and long term credit. There is no restriction to obtain credit from aboard. Oman Development bank provides finance to corporate small and medium size companies and small projects. The maximum lending is RO One million. Investors may also obtain financing from Gulf Investment Corporation, an institution established by GCC Countires. Their head office is in Kuwait and they invest in equity and provide loans to new ventures

16. How Oman is ranked as per Economic Freedom Index?

Economic freedom is measured by the extent to which one can pursue economic activity without governmentinterference.According to the World Economic Freedom Index 2007 published by Fraser institute Oman is ranked 18th position among 141 countries. http://www.freetheworld.com

17. What is the Omanization percentage for manufacturing sector?

The Omanization percentage in the manufacturing sector is 35per cent.

Source: OCIPED

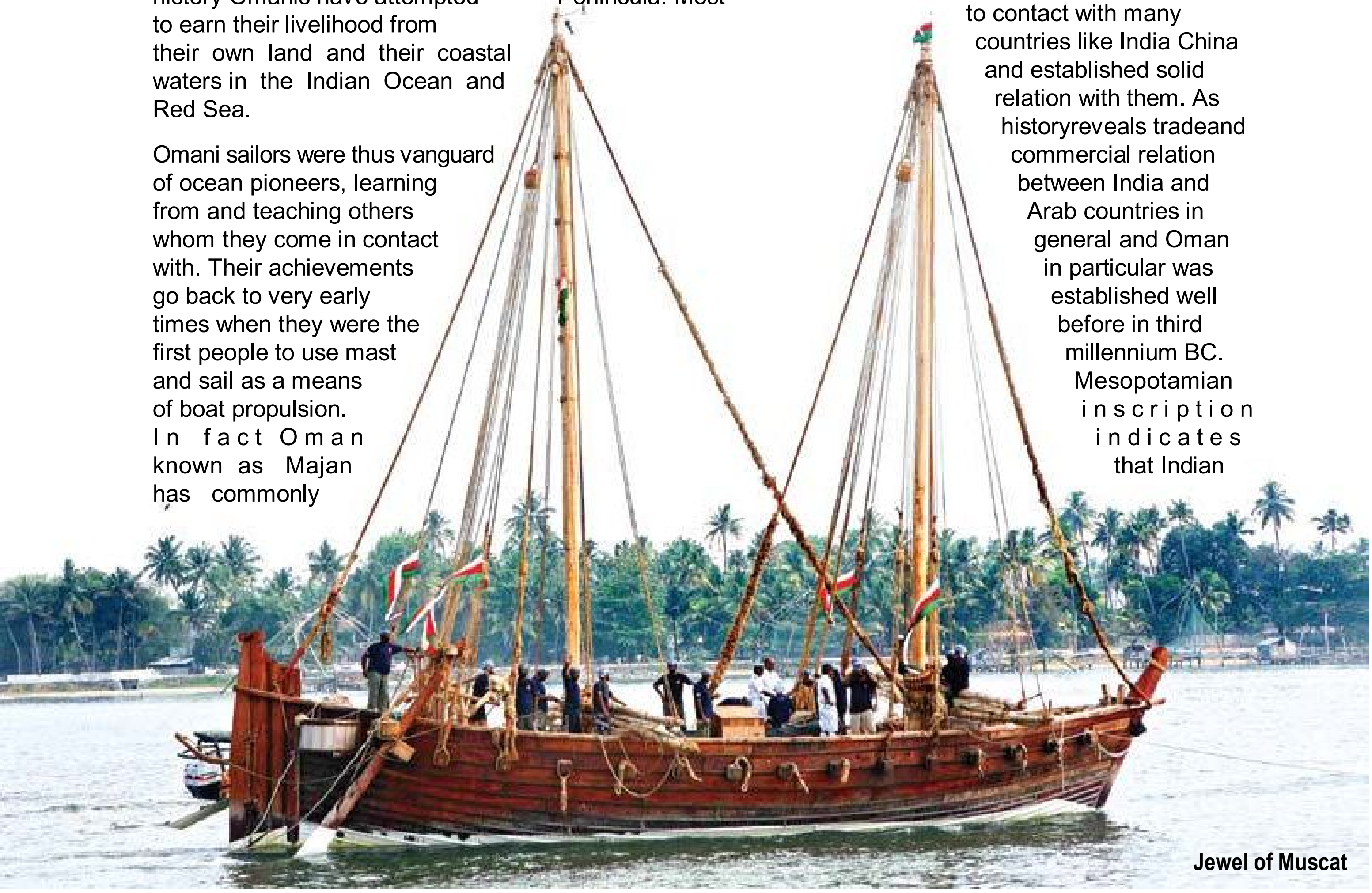
Oman: The Legend in the History of Seafaring

Dr. A. Rahman Anwar (Academic Supervisor)
Cultural Division, Oman Embassy, New Delhi

It is difficult to draw a clear picture of Omani seafaring activities in ancient times due to paucity of reliable sources, however piecing together information gleaned from different places enable us to establish the fact that Oman has a considerable seafaring background. It got high degree of respectability and importance due to its geographical location combined with desert, mountain, plain and sea. Through out the history Omanis have attempted to earn their livelihood from their own land and their coastal waters in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea.

Omani sailors were thus vanguard of ocean pioneers, learning from and teaching others whom they come in contact with. Their achievements go back to very early times when they were the first people to use mast and sail as a means of boat propulsion. In fact Oman known as Majan has commonly acknowledged as pioneer navigators even before 4000 years ago. Documentary proof provides existence of long term trade with Mesopotamian countries. By the third century BC Oman already possessed the second largest fleet after the Cordoba. The geographical position of Oman was of central importance to this process. Oman lies between the Indian Ocean, Arabian Gulf, Red Sea east Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Most human settlement along with Oman are fully dependant, with respect to their livelihood, on sea and regarded it as their sole means of livelihood. Omanis were in need of a big mercantile fleet to achieve their goals which later on become the backbone of the country's economic life and depicted in fishing, transportation, trade and protection of the country and its people.

In this process they came to contact with many countries like India China and established solid relation with them. As history reveals trade and commercial relation between India and Arab countries in general and Oman in particular was established well before in third millennium BC. Mesopotamian inscription indicates that Indian



Jewel of Muscat

traders carrying copper, hardwood, ivory, pearl, carnelian and gold were active in Mesopotamia. In contrast to this, an attempt was made to organize a navy in India by Chandra Gupt Maurya (322-298BC) and latter on Ashoka (273-32 BC) who use to send diplomatic mission to Greece, Syria, Egypt and Macedonia. This also becomes instrumental in making Indian Ocean active maritime regions connecting to various trade routes to Africa via south Arabia especially Oman and Yemen.

It is noted here that when Portuguese king Manuel 1 sent four vessels headed by Vasco da, ***Gama*** to find sea rout to India and he, as known, discovered India traversing through the Cape of Good Hope to eastern coast of Africa and across the Indian ocean to Calicut and sea route from Europe to India. However the fact remained unearthed to many people that an Omani navigator ***Ahmed Majid Al Jilfar*** acted as Vasco da Gama's pilot on this voyage from Malindi on the coast of east Africa to Malabar in India.

Oman has very rich maritime heritage in discourse of history dating back to very ancient time. It had a famous ship building yard expand over thousand of years ago, when it was mainly involved in the trade. Indian merchants traversed across the continents through the Oman in the Arab world to the markets in Greece and Rome on the Silk Road. Due to its geographical location Oman succeeded in establishing relation and cultural exchanges with South Asia, South East Asia and Far East Asia during the mid of 8th century. This also because of the fact that it was (Oman) regarded as gate way of trade for countries like India, China and thus enter to European market.

In the 10th century Sur was probably the largest and most important city in the Arab worlds, while Omani Mariners together with those from Basra and other Gulf ports went as far afield as ***China***. When the Portuguese arrived in 1507, on their way to India, Affonso d Albuqrouque and his forces found Omani seaport under the power of Hormuz King the town of Qalhat, Quraiat, ***Muscat*** and ***Sohar*** were already prosperous.

Oman's connection with the sea goes back to centuries where Omani sailors emerged as pioneer in plying sea routes to the cities of the ancient world. Oman from ancient up to recent time regarded as an important maritime and political power which established relations with China, Britain, ***France, Netherlands*** and ***the United States of America***. The Omani warship "The Sultana" harboured in New York in 1840, bearing gifts from Sultan Said bin ***Sultan*** to the American President, is the best example of the Omani fleet in sea voyages.

Enough documentary proof in the form of personnel diaries described the early existence of Omani fleet in seafaring. Some other records go back to even before the advent of Islam. The same can be proved by examining the ships existed before the arrival of Portuguese in Oman and the ships made after their arrival. One of the significant differences in shipbuilding mechanism by Omanis are use of fiber and ropes instead of nails for fixing the joints and sewing the planks of the ship. The three characters i.e. use of ropes, triangular shape and two end shapes can still be seen on the remaining of the Omani classical ships like Boum, Badan and other traditional boats. The popular Omani ship known as Sanbuq made of coconut wood and teak timber imported from India is the best example of these attributes.

Arab especially Omani sailors use to go Indian locations such as ***Laccadieves*** and ***Maldives*** to get these materials. Some time they go there with their carpenters and tools and build the ships there and load materials (coconuts, timber teak) and sailed to Oman and latter on sell it to the Arab markets. Arab geographers believed that the fiber and cordage provide safe means of construction than nails. They also believe that water of Red Sea affected the iron nails of the ships more than ropes.

If we relied on the recorded history then we must conclude that the Omanis are very much engaged in making the variety of ship in course of time. These varieties ranged from local transportation, diving pearls to fishing and to cross the oceans. The operational range was major factor in deciding the shape, design and dimensions in order to serve the purpose in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. Oman no doubt was the center of navigation in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. Some of these ships were laid-up while the other received a new lease of life by repairing and putting back in to the service while some others reserved in museum as mark of rich cultural heritage.

The Jewel of Muscat

AS I mentioned there are numerous ship in Oman which were very famous in term of design, shape, material and technology. The operational range is a decisive factor in designing the ships. Some of the popular ships can be mentioned here which even after passing the centuries achieved name and fame, such as Al Jalibut: ***Ash' Shuwai'ee Al. Baqarah Al Huri Al-Mashuwah, Al Rams, Al Uwaisiyyah, Al Zawariq, Al Dhow, Al Abraa, Al Junk, Al Ghurab, Al Zameen, Al Barsha*** and the last but not the least Al-***Ghraf*** are very popular Omani boats which some of them still find in Oman plying inshore and offshore.

As far as the Jewel of Muscat is concerned, it is in fact an ambitious, adventurous and courageous joint venture initiated by Oman government to revive its rich maritime heritage. The source inspiration of making the " Jewel of ***Muscat"*** a grand hit came to in to being from the wreck of Belitung which was carrying more than 60,000 pieces of Chinese ceramics, silver and gold artifacts, spices and other commodities, discovered in 1998 near Indonesia.

It is a replica of old fashion ship of 9th century reconstructed in Oman. Jewel of Muscat is hand sewn –ship equipped with 70,000 stitches and more than 100kms of hand –laid rope, sewed on Qantab beach. According to the experts the ship is 18 meter long and displaces 55 tones. To your utter surprise, neither a single nails is used in sewing the ship nor it has an engine to control, only the very old mechanism of sailing the boat is being used which known as Ala al kamal (Perfect Machine) with help of sun and stars which also reflects the mastery of maritime architectural engineering of Oman and also shows the Omani passion towards seafaring.

The Jewel of Muscat was initiated in 18th October 2009 and has more than 50.000 man power to build the ship. it has embarked on the sea and reached its 1st stop over Cochin port- Kerala on 17March 2010 where it had been taken out of the ocean for necessary checking, repair and applied new coat of Chunam (anti-fouling) in order to make the voyage a safe and sound. From Cochin the ship sailed to Galle port in Sri lanka in mid of April 2010 and then to Georgetown on Penang Island in Malaysia by the end of June 2010 and then to Malacca and finally reached to Singapore by the end of July 2010. It is to be mentioned here that in its entire stop over the Jewel of Muscat was given warm welcome by respective state officials followed by cultural events and seminars depicting the deep historical, commercial and cultural interaction between the respective states. The audacious ship is marked of revival of trade links and maritime strategies of Oman in India , Sri Lanka, ***Malaysia,*** and ***Singapore*** apart from its mastery in the field of seafaring.

Keepinginviewofthepastrelations with India coupled with the current remarkable and sustainable growth in all dimension, the arrival of Jewel of Muscat in India has put far reaching impacts on social, cultural, trade and political spheres. Since Oman always believed in open and free market policy this historical voyage may facilitate the joint economic growth in both countries and also contribute in strengthening the Oman India relation.

Oman and India Sign MoU on Cultural Cooperation

Oman and India have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in July 2010 on bilateral Cultural Cooperation. The MoU was signed by H.E. Mr. Humaid Al-Maani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman in India on behalf of the Oman Government and Mr. Jawhar Sircar, Secretary, Ministry of Culture on behalf of the Government of India. The MoU comes into force with immediate effect and will remain in force for a period of five years and shall stand renewed automatically thereafter for successive periods of five years.

Photo: KapoorPhotographers

The Ambassador of Oman in India, H.E. Humaid Al-Maani signing the MoU on behalf of Oman with Jawhar Sircar, Secretary, Ministry of Culture on behalf of India

The MoU seeks to:

- Encourage exchange of visits by the cultural, art and literature delegations.
- Promote cultural relations on heritage, including archaeology, museums and conservation of the ancient monuments.
- Encourage exchange of expertise, visits and publications between cultural institutions, establishments and authorities of the two countries. Exchange copies of documents and manuscripts relevant to the history of both countries.
- Encourage exchange of visits by delegations in the field of music, theatre and folklore and learn about the other party's experience in this context.
- Encourage exchange of visits by writers and literateurs and exchange of expertise in the field of scientific clubs and literature.
- Encourage cultural and art weeks where fine arts and photography exhibitions may be held in each other's country.
- Encourage participation in the International Book Fairs in each other's country on commercial basis.
- Exchange experience on renovation, bibliography, documentation and categorization in order to maintain manuscripts or documents of historical importance.
- Exchange publications in the field of literature, culture and periodicals.
- Encourage cooperation in the protection of intellectual property rights.

Photo: Kapoor Photographers

Source: PIB

Ambassador Sheikh Al-Maani Presents Credentials in Seychelles

The new Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Seychelles, H.E. Sheikh Humaid Al- Maani presented his credentials to the President of Seychelles, Mr. James Michel at State House in capital Victoria on January 27, 2010.

All Photos: Embassy of Oman

Ambassador Sheikh Al-Maani Presents Credentials in Nepal

H.E. Sheikh Humaid Al-Maani presented credentials as Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Nepal. The credentials were received by the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, H.E. Dr. Ram Baran Yadav. The brief ceremony was held in Kathmandu, the Nepalese capital, on 31st August 2010. Ambassador Sheikh Al-Maani is based in New Delhi and accredited as Ambassador to India, and non-resident Ambassador to Maldives, Nepal, Seychelles, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Photo: Embassy of Oman

"The Literary and Cultural Legacy of Oman and India"

A special report compiled by the Cultural Division of the Embassy of Oman in New Delhi on the seminar held at Jawaharlal Nehru University to mark Oman's 40th National Day and 55 years of Oman-India diplomatic relations

Photo:Centerof ArabicandAfricanStudies,JNU

The Ambassador of Oman H.E. Sheikh Humaid Al- Maani presenting a gift to Prof. Sankar Basu, Dean of School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University during the seminar, while Khalid bin Humaid Al-Jabrey, Cultural Attache looks on

To celebrate the 40th National Day of Sultanate of Oman and commemorate the 55th year of diplomatic relations between Sultanate of Oman and India, the Center of Arabic and African Studies organized two-day international seminar on the "Literary and Cultural Legacy of OmanandIndia"on8-9November 2010. The basic aim and objective of the seminar was to highlight and deliberate on the achievements and contributions of Oman and India in the field of Arabic literature and Arab culture. All the participants and delegates from Oman and India discussed and analyzed the literature produced by scholars and academics of the two countries. In this regard, special attention was paid to the similarities and commonalities found in the literary output of Oman and Indian scholars.

The inaugural function of the seminar was held at the auditorium of School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi. H.E. Humid bin Ali Al-Maani, the Ambassador of Sultanate of Oman graced the occasion.

Prof.M.Aslam IslahiDirector ofthe seminar read before the audience the theme paper wherein main features and contours have been amply highlighted and elaborated. After Prof. Islahi, Prof. Zubair Farooqui, ex-head Department of Arabic, Jamia Milia Islamia New Delhi, delivered the keynote address in which he discussed various stages of Arabic language and literature and its development and flourishment in the Indian sub-continent. Soon after the keynote address, H.E. Humaid Al-Maani, the Ambassador drew attention of the audience to the significance of diplomatic relations between Oman and India and argued that ties with India is deep rooted and ahead of time .

After that, Prof. Abdul Wadood Azhar, Ex-Dean, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, JNU addressed the audience and shared with them his experiences while teaching in JNU. He expressed his happiness over seeing an Arab Ambassador for the first time among the students and scholars learning Arabic in JNU.

After Prof. Azhar, the present Dean, Prof. Sankar Basu, delivered his presidential remarks in which at first, he expressed his thanks to the organizers of seminars who gave him an opportunity to highlight the significance of foreign languages in the context of the present global scenario.

Before concluding his remarks, the Dean read the letter of regret sent by Mr. Sultan Ahmad, the Minister of State for Tourism, India. In the letter, the Minister congratulated the Oman Embassy and the Centre for organizing the seminar on an important topic.

In addition to the inaugural session there were three more active sessions of seminar in which more than 24 scholars and erudite from Oman and India presented their valuable papers.

The 1st session chaired by Dr. Said Sulaiman Al Isae marked valuable papers presented by seven scholars with different titles, such as “Arabic language in India with reference to Kerala” by Dr. Abdur-Rahman Bil Khair, “Abdullah Al-Tae: A Poet and Literature” by Prof. Hassan Khan, “Political Social and Cultural Relation of India & Oman” by Dr. Mujeebur-Rahman and “Al Bahlani as reflected in his poetry” by Dr. A. Rahman Anwar. Apart from the above papers there are two more papers which mainly focused on Indian Arabic literature and prominent Indian personalities by Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed and Dr. Arafat Zafar respectively. Before concluding the session the chair of the seminar commented the prose and cons of the papers.

Photo: Center of Arabic and African Studies, JNU

An appreciative audience

The 2nd session under the supervision of Dr. Abdur-Rahman Bil Khair concentrated on Omani literature. The scholars gave detailed accounts of Omani literature focusing on its theme, topic, elements, technique and literary features. The title of these papers were “The Social issues of Omani short stories by Prof. Shafeeq Ahmed Khan, “Development of Literary Arts in Oman by Prof. Iqbal Hussien, “Approach to the post modernism in contemporary Omani stories by Dr. Sanaullah Al Nadwi “Omani influence in Zanjibar Culture by Prof. Ayyub Tajuddin, “The modern poetry of Oman by Prof. Aslam Islahi, “The Prominent Omani Poet Abdullah Al Khlili by Dr. Tahir Hilal Lari and” The silent features of the Poetry of Al Sheikh Abi Nubhan” by Mahmud Hafiz Abdur-Rab Mirza. Finally the chair of the session gave his analytical view on the presented papers.

The 3rd session marked as mix literature and scholarly works where in the scholars discussed with length about Omani and Indian literature on different aspects. Dr. Saed Sulaiamn Al Iase initialed the session with his paper entitled “The Cultural relation between India and Oman through language and literature” followed by “the silent features of the Omani stories” by Pro. Sayyid Jahangeer, “Development of short stories in Oman” by Dr. Basheer Ahmed Jamali, “The role of Mysore in strengthening the relation with Oman” by Dr. Rizwanur-Rahman, “The Development of educational and cultural relation between India and Oman in present scenario” by Dr. Abdur-Rahman, “The Contribution of India in Arabic literature” by Dr. Qutubuddin and “invitational similarities between India and Oman” by Dr Aneesur-Rahman.

A committee passed resolution specially directed to strengthening and boosting of the literary and cultural ties between Oman and India.

“Oman-India Linkages 5000 Years Old”

By Dr. Zubair Ahmad Farooqi
Formerly Prof. & Head, Deptt. of Arabic, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Photo:CentreofArabicandAfricanStudies,JNU

The Ambassador of Oman in India, H.E. Humaid Al-Maani addressing the seminar on Cultural and Literary Heritage of Oman and India held at the Centre of Arabic and African Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi on November 8, 2010

India and Oman have always been linked closely by geography, history and culture. This close relationship between these two great nations date back to even pre-history period. Evidences indicate that Oman-India relationship seems to stretch back to over 5000 years. There are evidences to show that the people to people relations between Oman and India existed even during the Indus Valley civilization. In Oman, some archeological evidences have been found in the form of paintings and seals on clay works belonging to the period of Indus Valley civilization. In the past two and half a century many merchant families migrated from Kutch region in India to Oman. Some history books point out that Tipu Sultan maintained close relations with Sultan Bin Ahmad, ruler of Oman at that time. The latter appointed an attorney in Mangalore while Tipu Sultan appointed his counterpart in Muscat. Those two coordinated to form a strategy to deal with the European forces which had started penetrating into Indian ocean and Arabian sea at that time. Tipu Sultan sent a large diplomatic delegation to Oman in 1786. Oman had established trade and political relations with the Mughal Empire in its early period and the merchant families in Calicut and Surat had regular transactions with the traders of Muscat. During the 7th century, Omanese had especially depended on Gujrat region in the art of ship building.

Another evidence of deep historic relations between India and Oman is that a number of Omanese lived and studied in India. Sultan Taimur Bin Faisal after leaving the rule in 1932 stayed in India till his death in mid sixties and his grave exists in Mumbai. Both Sultan Saeed Bin Taimur and Fahr Bin Taimur studied in the well known Meo College of Ajmer in Rajasthan where two halls exist in the name of Oman.

There are many aspects of strong similarity between Indian and Omanese Culture, especially in the Zari embroidery of women dresses used in Rajasthan and Oman as well as some wood works like doors and windows. It may be mentioned that the famous Omanese turban used to be imported from Kshminr in India for a long time.

In our time, we always witness strong desire and efforts to deepen and enhance these relations in the interest of the two peoples.

Oman represents a civilization as old as history itself. It has over the ages contributed a lot towards the human civilization. During certain periods of time it was considered an effective political and naval power with its relations extending to China, America, Britain and France. Historical studies show that there was a close link between the Omanese civilization and that of the ancient East and China and India apart from the civilizations of East Mediterranean, Nile valley and North Africa.

Both India and Oman feel proud of their rich Islamic cultural and literary heritage. India`s contribution to the different branches of Arabic and Islamic literature is unparalleled outside the Arab world. No student or researcher of Arabic literature and Islamic Culture can ignore such valuable and rich heritage that India is known for.

The use of Arabic language in India started with the arrival of Arabs. The Arab rule in Sind which lasted two centuries came as a boost to the development of Arabic language and literature.

During the Abbasid period some Indian scholars were invited to the Court where they helped in translating some famous Sanskrit books into Arabic. India has produced a galaxy of scholars and poets in Arabic who contributed to Arabic language and literature through their works in almost all branches of Arabic studies like Tafseer, Hadith, Fiqh, Islamic Philosophy and literature (both prose and poetry). The most illustrious works they produced are Al-Abab Al-Zakhir and Tajul Aroos of Hasan Saghani and Murtaza Zabidi in Arabic lexicography, Huajjatullahil Balegha of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi in Islamic Philosophy, poetic Diwans of Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami, Nuzhat ul Khawatir of Allama Abdul Hai al Hasani, Abul Ala wa Ma Ilaih by Abdul Aziz al-Maimani, Diwan of Faizul Hasan Saharanpuri and Ma za khasira al Alam be Inhetat al Muslimin to name a few.

On the other hand Oman had made a tremendous contribution to the development of Arabic literature through their writers and poets like Khalil bin Ahmad al Farahidi, Abu Bakr Ahmad bin Mohd. Bin Abil Hasan bin Duraid Azdi, Jabir bin Zaid Azdi, Abu Muslim Bahlani, Abdullah bin Ali al-Khalili and many others.

Preservation of heritage is the benchmark of the Omanese renaissance starting from 1970. The interest of the Sultanate in keeping its heritage intact has manifested itself in various forms including the establishment of Ministry of Heritage and Culture and declaring the year 1994 a year of Omanese Heritage. The Ministry of Heritage and Culture works on showcasing the cultural and civilizational face of Oman through various activities including editing and publishing of manuscripts and active participation in literary events and International book fairs etc.

Dar al Makhtutat wal Wasaeq has a collection of more than 4300 manuscripts the oldest of which date back to 617 of Hijra. It has acquired a large number of documents from Zanjibar and Indian Archives for preservation through digitalization. In this context we would like to draw attention of the Omanese authorities through this Seminar to the need of cooperation with the major centers of manuscripts in India where large number of manuscripts badly need serious efforts for preservation by all those who are capable of that. Raza Library of Rampur, Khuda Bakhsh Library of Patna, Asiatic Society of Calcutta and Salar Jung Museum are few of these centers.

Universities in both countries can play a great role in enhancing the cultural relations through research and study of each other's literary heritage as well as through joint projects of research and exchange of visits by scholars and students from the two sides. Universities in India can incorporate in their Arabic syllabi the study of Omanese literature also besides the study of literature of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

Photo:Centre of Arabic and African Studies,JNU

Experts from Oman also participated in the seminar on Cultural and Literary Heritage of Oman and India

It is hoped that this seminar through various papers to be presented in its various sessions will highlight the richness of the two cultures and their mutual interaction. It will also bring out the ways and prospects of enhancing the existing cultural affinity between the two great nations.

This is a summary of keynote address delivered in Arabic by Dr. Zubair Ahmad Farooqi

Oman - Oil Reserves to Last more than 40 years

By Mokhtar Thabet

Energy experts attending a panel discussion have scorned the notion that Oman's hydrocarbon reserves will run out in around 40 years.

On the second day of the Oman Global Investment Forum in Muscat, the panellists argued instead that sustainable exploitation policies and advanced exploration and production technologies would help ensure that Oman's mainstay hydrocarbon industry will continue to play a pivotal part in fuelling the nation's economic growth well into the future.

Taking part in the panel discussion on oil and gas were Dr John Malcolm, Managing Director, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Dr Brian Buckley, General Manager and Chief Executive, Oman LNG, Nicholas Barakat, Managing Director, Octal Petrochemicals, and Freddie Lee, Director, Barclays Natural Resource Investments. Harvey Shapiro, Senior Adviser at Institutional Investor Conferences, the organisers of the two-day forum, chaired the session.

Arguing against the premise that oil and gas would disappear in 40 years or so, Dr. Malcolm noted that the Sultanate, while a mature oil province, has been producing oil for over 40 years and natural gas for over 30 years. The large amounts of oil and gas still in place, he said, could be sustainably developed through economic means of recovery.

Source: Global Arab Network

Photo: OmanNewsAgency

The Al Duqum Port a prime example of Omani Renaissance

The Index of Economic Freedom in the Arab World

Source: The International Research Foundation of Oman, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty and Fraser Institute

The structure of the index

The index published in Economic Freedom of the World uses 42 components in five areas. Because underlying data for some of the components used in the world index were not broadly available for the Arab world, they were replaced by similar components with broader coverage of the Arab world. The index published in Economic Freedom of the Arab World includes the same five areas as Economic Freedom of the World but has 39 components. The score for each of the five areas is derived by averaging the components within that area. The most recent data available for this report are from 2008.

The five areas, described in more detail below, are

- Area 1: Size of Government: Expenditures, Taxes and Enterprises;
- Area 2: Commercial and Economic Law and Security of Property Rights;
- Area 3: AccesstoSound Money;
- Area 4: Freedom toTrade Internationally;
- Area 5: Regulation of Credit, Labour, and Business.

The overall rating was computed by averaging the scores of the five areas. Each component was normalized on a scale of zero to 10. Appendix A describes the procedures by which scores between zero and 10 were derived for each category. Details on sources and methodology can also be found in Appendix A.

For consistency, the minimums and maximums used in last year's report are also used in this year's report. Global rather than regional minimums and maximums were used because of the small variability in some of the components among Arab countries and in order to place the Arab nations in a broader context. Thus, a high score indicates that a nation is doing well, not only in comparison with its immediate regional neighbours but also in comparison with nations around the world whose economic practices encourage economic freedom.

data. This is an advance from last year's report, when scores for only 15 nations could be calculated, and the previous year's report, which published overall scores for only 13 nations. New overall scores are included for Comoros and Djibouti though we were not able to compute an overall score for Yemen, though we were able to last year.

The index published in Economic Freedom of the Arab World is compiled only from third-party data: in order to ensure objectivity, none of the sponsoring institutions provides any original data. As

Bahrain holds the top spot this year with a score of 8.0, Kuwait follows with 7.8, Lebanon, with 7.6, Oman with 7.5, and Jordan and Quatar tie for fifth with a score of 7.4 .

The index published in Economic Freedom of the Arab World includes data for the 22 nations of the League of Arab States. Eleven of these nations also appear in Economic Freedom of the World and the relative rankings of these nations in both indexes are very similar, despite the slightly different menu of components used in the index published in Economic Freedom of the Arab World. An overall score was computed for 16 of the nations included in Economic Freedom of the Arab World; an overall score could not be computed for the remaining jurisdictions because of a lack of

well, the formulas used in the calculations have remained the same for each year of the report. Thus, the authors of the report are unable to influence the standings of the nations in the report. Moreover, any outside observer would be able to replicate the index in full, producing identical results.

A review of the results

As noted above, to increase coverage of the Arab world Economic Freedom of the Arab World uses a menu of variables somewhat different from that used in Economic Freedom of the

World. The indexes are highly consistent with one another.

Of course, even hard economic data, such as the data on government expenditure used in the index, are constantly revised, while other data streams are based on surveys. The scores in this index should be treated as highly precise, though not exact, estimates. Thus, there are very small differences between the two indexes.

Changes in economic freedom come slowly as policies and attitudes change and develop.

has remained relatively constant.

As Economic Freedom of the Arab World evolves, it will offer a key insight on where progress is being made and, because of the extensive descriptive capacity of its 39 components, will provide a detailed prescription indicating where policy improvements are required.

The rankings

Bahrain holds the top spot this year with a score of 8.0, Kuwait follows with 7.8, Lebanon, with

for governments to overspend and crowd out private-sector economic activity and weaken free markets so that economic power remains concentrated in the hands of those who control the oil revenues. Because of the oil wealth, governments have the means to protect their positions, even if economic activity outside the oil sector is weak. Despite this, the Gulf States have worked to open their economies internally and externally to world trade and this is a credit to governance in the region.

Photo: OmanNewsAgency

Sultan Qaboos University the prime example of Renaissance

Nonetheless, it is encouraging that levels of economic freedom have remained constant over a difficult period. The years from 2002 to 2008 reflected by survey data have seen great political stress in the region such as the continuing fallout of the Iraq war, instability in Palestine, troubles in Lebanon, and other factors. Yet, economic freedom in the region

7.6, Oman with 7.5, and Jordan and Quatar tie for fifth with a score of 7.4 .

The Gulf States have achieved the highest level of economic freedom in the Arab world on average. Contrary to what one might think, this is not made easier by wealth from oil production and export, which presents a great temptation

Algeria, Syria, Tunisia, and Mauritania, tied for third worst, have the weakest levels of economic freedom. And, while the top scorers all rank very close to each other, there are significant gaps among the bottom four with Algeria at 5.5 and Syria at 5.7, while Tunisia and Mauritania are tied at 6.3.

Individual areas

Following is a description of the variables used to measure economic freedom, explanations of why they are relevant, and the scores for each of the Arab nations where data are available.[3]

Area 1: Size of Government: Expenditures, Taxes and Enterprises

The four components of Area 1 indicate the extent to which countries rely on individual choice andmarketsratherthanthepolitical process to allocate resources and goods and services. When government spending increases relative to spending by individuals, households, and businesses, government decision-making is substituted for personal choice and thus economic freedom is reduced. The first two components address this issue: Government consumption as a share of total consumption (1A) and Transfers and subsidies as a share of GDP (1B).

Government consumption (1A) refers to the extent to which the government itself provides goods and services. If government emp loyees bu ild a road , it is included as government consumption; if the construction is contracted to a private company, it is no longer included in government consumption though it is categorized as government spending. Competitive contracting builds efficiency and lessens the politicization of the economy, if the contracting is done impartially. Transfers and subsidies (1B) weaken markets by rewarding political power and position rather than the ability to produce goods and services the world wants and will pay for.

Thethirdcomponent(1C)measures the extent to which countries use private enterprise and free markets rather than government enterprises to produce goods and services. The fourth component (1D) is based on the top marginal income-tax rate and the income threshold at which it applies. High marginal tax rates that apply at relatively low income levels increasingly deny individuals the fruits of their labour.

Area 1. Size of Government: Expenditures, Taxes, and Enterprises Lebanon is the best performer, followed by Comoros and the West Bank and Gaza.[4] Algeria is the worst performer, followed by Saudi Arabia; Djibouti and Oman are tied for third.

Area 2: Commercial and Economic Law and Security of Property Rights

Security of persons, contracts, and rightfully acquired property are central elements of both economic freedom and a civil society. Indeed, the legal system is the most important internal function of government. Security of property rights, protected by the rule of law, is essential to economic freedom. Freedom to exchange, for example, is meaningless if individuals do not have secure rights to property, including the fruits of their labour. Failure of a country's legal system to provide for the security of property rights, enforcement of contracts, and the mutually agreeable settlement of disputes will undermine the operation of a market-exchange system.

As is appropriate for an assessment of economic freedom, the index focuses on economic and commercial law. However, the first two components in this area—2A, Military interference in the rule of law and the political process and 2B, Integrity of the legal system—are measures of whether or not the rule of law is applied impartially and consistently, which is also essential for effective economic and commercial law. Component 2C, Regulatory restrictions on the sale of real property, provides information on how easy it is to establish property rights and 2D, Legal enforcement of contracts, indicates whether agreements freely entered into are effectively protected by the rule of law. Both 2C and 2D are composites of other sub-components that measure the number of procedures, delays in judgments, and costs. Procedures that are too numerous, time-consuming, or costly lead to deterioration of the legal system's ability to protect freely made agreements.

Area 2 Commercial and Economic Law and Security of Property Rights: The Gulf States on average lead here, though Tunisia and Mauritania also have relatively strong scores. The top three jurisdictions are Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait. The weakest performers are Somalia, Iraq, and Sudan.

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2 Jurisdictions involved in on-going, high-level internal conflicts (in this case, the West Bank and Gaza, and Iraq), have not been ranked overall. Economic freedom is clearly eroded by lack of personal security and the data that are available would fail to reflect this. Nonetheless, we have included data in individual areas for these jurisdictions.

3. This description closely follows Gwartney and Lawson, 2006: 10ث.

4 Though available data combine the two areas, the West Bank and Gaza are under very different administrations, likely producing differing levels of economic freedom.

Area 3: Access to Sound Money

Money is essential to exchange. An absence of sound money undermines gains from trade and erodes the value of property held in monetary instruments. Sound money is essential to protect property rights and, thus, economic freedom. When governments print money to finance their expenditures, they are in effect expropriating the property and violating the economic freedom of their citizens. This (measured in component 3A) leads to inflation. High and volatile rates of inflation (components 3B and 3C) distort relative prices, alter the fundamental terms of long-term contracts, and make it virtually impossible for individuals and businesses to plan sensibly for the future. Component 3D is designed to measure the ease with which other currencies can be used via domestic and foreign bank accounts: that is, can one freely exchange and obtain differing currencies.

Area 3. Access to Sound Money: The leaders in this area areBahrain, Kuwait, and Lebanon. Libya, Iraq, and Sudan are at the bottom of the rankings and could improve their policy.

Area 4: Freedom to Trade Internationally

In a world of high technology and low costs for communication and transportation, freedom of exchange across national boundaries is a key ingredient of economicfreedom.Thecomponents in this area are designed to measure a wide variety of restraints that affect international exchange: these include tariffs (4A and its sub-components), exchange rate distortions (4B), and exchange rate and capital controls (4C). Individuals in the Arab world should have the right to buy and sell from each other and from everyone in the world: Arab consumers should be able to buy the products they want regardless of origin and Arab producers should be able to sell freely to the world market.

The leaders are Yemen, Bahrain, and Qatar. The Gulf States along with Yemen have in general the strongest scores in Freedom to Trade Internationally. Somalia, Tunisia, and Algeria, tied with Syria, are at the bottom of the ranks.

Area 5: Regulation of Credit, Labour, and Business

When regulations restrict entry into markets and interfere with the freedom to engage in voluntary exchange, they reduce economic freedom. Regulatory restraints that limit the freedom of exchange in credit, labour, and product markets are included in the index. Red tape can strangle business expansion, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

The first component (5A) reflects conditions in the domestic credit market. Individuals should be able to make their own decisions in credit markets and deal with the institutions they would choose freely. The components are designed to measure whether government allows free markets to determine credit or whether this is politically determined and whether credit is available in a timely, cost-efficient manner to credit-worthy individuals and businesses that freely seek it. The top three in this category are Lebanon, followed by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Many types of labour-market regulation (5B) infringe upon the economic freedom of employees and emplo yers. Individuals should be able to work for whom they wish and employers should be able to hire whom they wish. Variables include difficulty in hiring, rigidity in hours, dismissal regulations and costs, and conscription. Bahrain is the leader in labour-market freedom followed by Oman and Jordan. Mauritania, Syria, Algeria, Sudan, and Egypt had the lowest scores.

Like the regulation of the credit markets and labour markets, the regulation of business activities (5C) inhibits economic freedom. Individuals should be able to open the business they wish when they wish and close it when they choose. The regulation-of-business sub-components are designed to identify the extent to which regulatory restraints and bureaucratic procedures limit establishing a business (5Ci) and closing it (5Cii). Bahrain comes in first, followed by Tunisia and Sudan. The worst performer is Djibouti but Mauritania, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt all have very poor scores.

In regulation overall, the Gulf States along with Lebanon on average have the best scores. The leaders are Bahrain in first, followed by Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Unfortunately for the region, those with the lowest scores include the region's largest economy, Egypt.

Conclusion

The Arab world has considerable diversity in economic freedom, with some nations having high levels of economic freedom by world standards and others relatively low levels. Unfortunately, those nations with low levels deprive their citizens of the well-known benefits of economic freedom. Economic freedom in the region has remained stable over the period of the index. This is a considerable achievement given the challenges the region has faced in recent years. As discussed in the analysis of recent economic development, the impact of high oil prices may also present economic challenges to the oil states.

The full report can be accessed at www.freetheworld.com/arab_release.html

List of Agreements between Oman and India

1	Treaty of Friendship, Navigation and Commerce	13th May, 1953
2	AIR service agreement was signed and renewed several times	1973
3	MoU relating to deputation of medical personnel to the Omani Ministry of Defence	12th December 1983
4	Cultural and Educational Cooperation agreement	3rd August, 1991
5	MoU for laying a gas pipeline from Oman to India	13th March, 1993
6	MoU for setting up of fertilizer plant in Oman	13th March, 1993
7	jor for establishing two refineries in fndia	13th March, 1993
8	Co-operation and investment in the field of hydro-carbons and fertilizers	15th June, 1993
9	Trade, economics and technical cooperation signed including granting most favourable nation status and setting up a Joint Commission	15th June, 1993
10	MoU for air service	15th November, 1993
11	Commercial cooperation agreement signed between Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry	6th July, 1994
12	MoU for joint venture fertilizer project	13th July, 1994
13	Agreement on principal terms for long term gas supply from Oman to India	26th September, 1994
14	Agreement on the establishment of joint business council between FICCI/ASSOCHAM and OCCI	19th April, 1995
15	Air services agreement for rganizing air services between Oman and India	May1995
16	Agreement on cooperation in science and technology including the setting up a Joint Technical Commission	5th October, 1996
17	jor on agriculturel animal husbandry and fisheries envisaging joint research	5th October, 1996
18	MoU on combating crime	5th October, 1996
19	The agreement of executive programme of Cultural and Educational	2nd April, 1997
20	Agreement on avoidance of double taxation	2nd April, 1997
21	Agreement for promotion and protection of investment	2nd April, 1997
22	Agreement on cooperation in civil aviation	2nd April, 1997
23	jor for cooperation in agriculture and fisheries	2nd April, 1997
24	Agreement of joint venture for setting up Oman-India fertilizer project	2nd April, 1997
25	CII and OCCI also have an MoU to increase trade and investment between India and Oman	
26	MoU for establishment of Oman India Strategic Consultation Group (SCA)	7th February, 2002
27	jor in the field of information.	16th May, 2002
28	Extradition Treaty	26th December, 2004
29	MoU between the State Audit of Oman and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India	25th December, 2004
30	MoU on Defence Cooperation	December 2005
31	MoU between NSIC, India and DGD SME, Sultanate of Oman	December 2007
32	MoU between IIE, Guwahati and DGD SME, Sultanate of Oman	December 2007
33	MoU on Higher Education Cooperation	December 2007
34	MoU between Oman Oil Company S.A.O.C. and Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited	December 2007
35	MoU on Manpower	November 2008
36	MoU on Joint Investment Fund	November 2008
37	Agreement between Oman Oil Company, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Bharat Oman oefinery itd	15th November 2009
38	MoU between Oman and India on Cultural Cooperation	July 2010
39	Agreement on Oman-India Joint Investment Fund	July 2010

SULTANATE OF OMAN

Distance from Muscat
(in kilometres)

Al Buraymi	343	Ibri	307
Al Kamil	280	Izki	138
Al Hamra	221	Khatmat Milahah	311
Ar Rustaq	159	Nizwa	174
As Suwayq	136	Qurayyat	94
As Seeb	52	Salalah	1023
Adam	223	Shalim	827
Bahla	208	Shinas	284
Barka	84	Sohar	230
Bidbid	71	Sur	337
Dank	367	Taqah	1052
Hayma	41	Thumrayt	946

List of Visits from Oman to India

H.H. Sayyid Fahr Bin Taimur Al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister of Security & Defence	1976/1980
H.E. Salim Bin Abdullah Algazali, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Jan. 1980/1982
H.E. Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs	Mar. 1983
H.H. Sayyid Fahr Bin Taimur Al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister of Security & Defence	Nov. 1983
H.E. Qais Abdul Munim Al Zawawi, Deputy Prime Minister for Financial & Economic Affairs	Nov. 1984
H.H. Sayyid Fahr Bin Taimur Al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister of Security & Defence	Mar. 1989
H.H. Shihab Bin Tariq Bin Taimur Al-Said, Chief of the Royal Navy of Oman	Nov. 1991
H.H. Sayyid Haitham Bin Tariq Al-Said, Under Secretary for Political Affairs of Foreign Affairs	Sep. 1992
Air Vice Marshal Mohammed Al-Aardhi, Chief of the Air Force	Dec. 1993
H.E. Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for External Affairs	Aug. 1994
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Apr. 1995
H.E. Salim Bin Abdullah Al Gazali, Minister of Communication	May 1995
H.E. Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs	Jul. 1996
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Aug. 1996
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman	Apr. 1997
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	May. 1998
Maj Gen Ali Bin Rashid Al-Kalbani, Chief of the Army	Jun. 1999
H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Hamad Al-Rumhi, Minister of Oil and Gas	Mar. 1999
Maj Gen Ali Bin Rashid Al-Kalbani, Chief of the Army	Oct. 2000
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Apr. 2000
H.E. Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs	Jul. 2000
Air Vice Marshal Mohammed Al-Aardhi, Chief of the Air Force	Dec. 2000
H.H. Sayyid Shihab Bin Tariq Bin Taimur, Chief of the Royal Navy of Oman	Jan. 2001
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Jan. 2002
H.E. Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs	Feb. 2002
H.E. Sayyid Badr Bin Saud Bin Hareb Al-Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs	Jan. 2002
H.E. Sheikh Hamoud Al-Harthy, President of Majlis A'Dowla	Jan. 2003
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Bin Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Jan. 2003
H.E. Sayyid Badar Bin Hamed Al-Busaidi, Under Secretary Minister of Foreign Affairs	Oct. 2003
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Feb. 2004
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Jan. 2005
H.E. Dr Mohammed Bin Hamad Al-Rumhi, Minister of Oil and Gas	Jan. 2005
H.E. Sayyid Badr Bin Saud Bin Hareb Al-Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs	Dec. 2005
H.E. Sayyid Badr Bin Hamad Bin Hamoud Al-Busaidi, Under Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Mar. 2006
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	Sep. 2006
H.E. Maqbool Bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce & Industries	May 2007
H.H. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers	Dec. 2007
H.E. Dr. Rawiyah bint Saud Al Busaidiyah, Minister of Higher Education	Mar. 2008
H.E. Dr. Rajiha bint Abdul Ameer Bin Ali, Minister of Tourism	Apr. 2008
H.E. Sayyid Badr Hamad Bin Hamoud Al-Busaidi, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	May 2008
H.E. Mr. Mohammed Bin Ali Bin Nasser Al Alawi, Minister of Legal Affairs	Jun./Jul. 2008
H. E. Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs	Dec. 2008
H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Hamad Al-Rumhi, Minister of Oil and Gas	Jan. 2009
H.E. Dr. Muhammad Bin Al-Zubair, Special Advisor of H.M. for Economic Planning	Jan. 2009
H.E. Sayyid Badr Bin Saud Al-Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs	Feb. 2009
H.E. Muhammad Bin Nassir Al-Rasbi, Under Secretary for Defence Affairs	Mar. 2009
H. E. Lt. Gen. Ahmed Harith Al-Nabhani, Chief of Sultan's Armed Forces	April 2009
H.E. Dr. Ali Bin Saud Al-Bemani, Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University	Nov. 2009
H. E. Yahya Bin Mahfoud Al-Manthri, Chairman, State Council (Majlis A'Dawla), Oman	Dec. 2009
Dr. Hilal Al-Hinai, Secretary General, Research Council of Oman	January 2010
H. E. Mr. Mohammed Bin Nassir Al-Rasbi, Under Secretary, Ministry of Defence	February 2010
H. E. Mr. Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, Minister of National Economy and Deputy Chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council	July 2010
H.E. Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs	October 2010

List of Visits from India to Oman

Sh. Swaran Singh, External Affairs Minister	Jan. 1973
Sh. S. Kundu, Minister of State for External Affairs	May-79
Sh. F. Rehman, Labour Minister	Oct. 1979
Sh. A.A. Rahim, Minister of State for External Affairs	Jun. 1983
Sh. P.V. Narasimha Rao, Foreign Minister	Nov. 1983
H.E. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister	Nov. 1985
Sh. K. Natwar Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs	Apr. 1988
Sh. Eduardo Feleiro, Minister of State for External Affairs	Jun. 1992
Capt. Satish Sharma, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas	Mar. 1993
Admiral L. Ram, Das Chief of the Navy Forces	May-93
Sh. R.L. Bhatia, Minister of State for External Affairs	May-93
H.E. P.V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister	Jun. 1993
Sh. Balram Jakhar, Minister of Agriculture	Jul. 1993
Sh. Ram Lakhan Yadav, Minister of Chemical & Fertilizer	Jul. 1994
Sh. K. Srinivasan, Foreign Secretary	Aug. 1994
Capt. Satish Sharma, Minister of State for Petroleum and Gas	Sep. 1994
Sh. K. Srinivasan, Foreign Secretary	Oct. 1994
Sh. S.K. Kau, Chief Air Marshal Chief of the Air Forces	Nov. 1995
Sh. Salman, Haider Foreign Secretary	May 1996
H.E. Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, President of India	Oct. 1996
Sh. Sis Ram Ola, Minister of Chemical & Fertilizer	Jan. 1997
Sh. C.M. Ibrahim, Minister of Civil Aviation & Information	Jan. 1997
Dr. Venugopal Achari, Minister of State for Agriculture	Sep. 1997
Dr. B.B. Ramaiah, Minister of State for Commerce	Oct. 1997
H.E. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister	Aug. 1998
Sh. S.S. Dhindsa, Minister of Chemical & Fertilizer	1999
Sh. Jaswant Singh, External Affairs Minister	Jan. 2000
Sh. K.R. Rajan, Secretary (East)	Jan. 2001
Sh. Krishna Rai, Minister of State for External Affairs	Apr. 2001
Sh. S.S. Dhindsa, Minister of Chemical & Fertilizer	Dec. 2001
Sh. R.M. Abhayanker, Secretary (East)	Apr. 2002
Sh. Shah Nawaz Hussain, Minister of Civil Aviation	May-02
Sh. S.S. Dhindsa, Minister of Chemical & Fertilizer	Sep. 2002
Sh. George Fernandes, Defence Minister	Oct. 2002
Sh. S.B. Mookherjee, Minister of State for Commerce & Industries	Oct. 2003
Sh. Jagdish Tytler, Minister of NRI Affairs	Nov. 2004
Sh. E. Ahmed, Minister of State for External Affairs	Nov. 2004
Sh. Natwar Singh, External Affairs Minister	Dec. 2004
Sh. Rajiv Sikri, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs	Mar. 2005
Sh. E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs	Nov. 2005
Sh. Ram Vilas Paswan, Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers	Jan. 2006
Sh. Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office	Jan. 2006
Sh. Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs	Mar. 2006
Sh. Kamal Nath, Minister of Commerce & Industry	Mar. 2006
Sh. N. Ravi, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs	May 2007
Sh. E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs	Oct. 2007
Sh. Vayalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs	Oct. 2007
Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs	Jan. 2008
H. E. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister	Nov. 2008
Mr. N. Ravi, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs	January 2009
Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	Apr. 2009
Mr. Vayalar Ravi, Minister for Overseas Affairs	Jun. 2009
Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for External Affairs	February 2010
Mr. A.K. Antony, Minister of Defence	May 2010
Mr. Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce and Industry	Sep. 2010

The Grand Mosque of Muscat: An Architectural Marvel of Modern Oman

Report and Pictures by Dr. Eugene D'Souza, Moodubelle

Moodubelle 20 May 2010: During my recent visit to Muscat, I had an opportunity to view one of the most elegant and exquisite monuments of the Sultanate of Oman, the Grand Mosque of Muscat also known as the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque which is located by the main road between Muscat and Seeb. The construction of the Grand Mosque had started early in 1995 and was completed six years later and inaugurated by Sultan Qaboos in May 2001.

The Grand Mosque was the gift of Sultan Qaboos bin Said to the people of Oman in commemoration of the thirtieth year of his reign. Sultan Qaboos became the ruler of Oman in 1970 replacing his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur who had ruled since 1932. After taking power in his own hands, Sultan Qaboos set Oman on the path of modernisation and opened the country to the world that resulted in the modernisation of the Omani society and economy, while preserving the best of Omani traditions. Today Oman is a modern, developing and progressive Middle Eastern nation with high levels of education and health care. The dominant form of Islam in Oman is Ibadi, one of the oldest sects that originated in the eighth century. Omani Ibadism is tolerant of other forms of Islam and other faiths. Followers of other sects and religions are free to practise their faith in Oman. One of the important features of the Omani society is that Omani women are educated and quite progressive and are represented in all walks of life, including at the highest levels of government.

The entire Grand Mosque complex covering 40,000 square meters is constructed on a raised podium. It was built from 300,000 tonnes of Indian sandstone. The main prayer hall is square with a central dome rising to a height of fifty meters above the floor. The dome and the main minaret (91.5 meters) and four flanking minarets (45.5 meters) are the mosque's chief visual features. These five minarets symbolize the five pillars of Islam.

A visit to this Grand Mosque, described as the crowning glory of Oman, begins in the surrounding gardens beautifully landscaped in traditional Islamic style. From the gardens, visitors enter the shining white marble courtyard through a series of symmetrical white stone archways which provide a photographer's dream.

As one enters from the courtyard an imposing wooden doorway carved with verses from the Koran provides access to the main prayer hall which can accommodate over 6,500 worshippers, while the women's prayer hall can accommodate 750 worshipers. The outer paved ground can hold 8,000 worshipers and there is additional space available in the interior courtyard and the passageways, making a total capacity of up to 20,000 worshipers.

It has a huge library which can hold up to 20,000 books. The prayer hall is beautifully decorated with Islamic arches supported by

consisting of 1,700 million knots, weighing 21 tonnes and made in a single piece measuring 70 x 60 meters and covering the 4,343 square meter area of the prayer hall, all in a single piece. Twenty eight colours in varying shades have been used to decorate the carpet. Majority of the colours were obtained from traditional vegetable dyes. It is believed to be the second largest single piece carpet in the world (The largest carpet, measuring 956 square meters was produced in Kuwait.

crystal hangs from the dome. The main chandelier is 14 meters high and its diameter is eight meters. The chandelier weighs eight tonnes and is comprised of 1,122 lamps and 600,000 crystals. The metal sections of the chandelier are plated in 24 carat gold. The design of the chandelier is based on the large central minaret encircled by twenty four smaller ones. There are thirty four smaller chandeliers all around the Grand Mosque that reflect the design of the central chandelier.

It has a huge library which can hold up to 20,000 books.

black marble pillars. The ceilings consist of intricate wood panels in traditional Omani fort style. Murals in floral and geometric patterns decorate the walls throughout the prayer hall while stained glass windows let in colourful filtered light brightening the patterns of the murals. A stunning gold painted mihrab (niche facing Mecca) forms the focus of the prayer hall.

However, the most impressive features of the prayer hall are on the floor and ceiling. A major feature of the main prayer hall is the hand-made Persian carpet

The weaving and finishing of this carpet was done between the years 1973 to 1988). The hand-woven carpet of the flooring of the Grand Mosque was produced by Iran Carpet Company. From design stage it took four years to complete this carpet. It is said that around 600 female weavers from province of Khurasan in Iran were involved in weaving this gigantic carpet.

In the centre of the prayer hall, four pillars support a massive 50 meter high, wooden-paneled central dome. A magnificent crystal chandelier made of Swarovski

Those who wish to visit the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque should bear certain points in mind. The Grand Mosque is open to non-Muslims from 8 am to 11 am, excluding Fridays. Both male and female visitors should dress modestly. Men and women should ensure their arms and legs are covered, and women should cover their heads. Shoes should be removed before entering the prayer hall.

Source: Bellevision Media Network

Al Hassan Group : A Brief Profile

Maqbool Ali Salman, Managing Director, Al Hassan Group

Al Hassan Group, one of the leading business groups in Oman established in 1975 and employing 5000 plus people is structured around 11 operating companies in Oman and UAE classified under three Strategic Business Units (SBUs), viz., Contracting, Manufacturing and Trading. Al Hassan Group also has a joint venture with Asian Paints for manufacturing Paints.

Contracting SBU

Al Hassan Engineering Co. SAOG (AHEC), a publicly listed company on Muscat Securities Market is a major EPC Contracting & Construction Co. offering civil & structural, mechanical & piping, electrical & instrumentation services. AHEC, an ISO 9001:2008 Certified organization has strong & unique references in Oil & Gas, Petrochemicals, Power (Generation and T&D), Water & Wastewater Management and Pipelines with excellent HSE & Quality standards & records. It has its own Fabrication facility with ASME "S" & "U" Stamps Accreditation. AHEC has been selected in Top 4 GCC Contractors for 2009 by Construction Week Magazine.

In the last three decades, AHEC has successfully completed almost 100 contracts for PDO, ORPC, OGC, MHEW as well as for international contractors : BHEL, GS E&C, SNC Lavalin, etc. As part of further expansion in UAE, AHEC is executing two major civil work projects - a sub-station project in Dubai and a gas processing unit in Abu Dhabi. AHEC is also scouting for an international partner for entry into Infrastructure business in Oman.

Manufacturing SBU

Al Hassan manufactures MV & LV Switchboards, Control & Relay Panels and Light Fittings at Muscat and Buraimi. It is by far the leader in Switchgear Business in Oman with significant exports to GCC countries. Its facilities conform to the highest quality standards (ISO 9001:2008 & KEMA KEUR compliant) and its switchgear range is certified by leading international testing authorities KEMA (Holland) and ASTA(UK). Al Hassan Switchgear has been voted as No. 1 Brand in Switchgear Category and as No. 10 amongst the top 130 brands in Oman in Observer 2010 Brand Survey.

Trading SBU

The Trading Group companies in Oman comprise Al Hassan Electricals Co. LLC (AHE) and Hi-Tech Services & Supplies LLC (Hi-Tech).

AHE's Retail Division comprise five showrooms in Muscat and a network of 400+ dealers serviced from its warehouses by its own fleet of vehicles. AHE's Project Solutions Division has over three decades of experience in supply of Power Generation and T&D Equipment. AHE has a specialized

MEI Works for 1000 MW Sohar Aluminium Power Plant

lighting division which provides industrial and project lighting solutions.

Hi-Tech markets products for oil and gas and water sectors including mechanical process equipment and systems (heat exchangers, pressure vessels, columns, valves, boilers and compressors), pipes and piping systems, instrumentation, pumps, welding equipment.

The Trading companies in UAE - Noor Al Khaleej Trading (NAK) and Al Sahwa Trading operate in Abu Dhabi while Al Hamas Trading operates in Dubai.

NAK markets Auto Transfer Switches, Energy Meters, Insulators, Power & Control Cables and Heat Shrinking Joints & Terminations. Al Sahwa markets Explosion Proof Products, Safe Area Lighting, Power, Control & Special Application Cables, Instrumentation Cables, Auto Reclosers, Measuring Instruments and Control Valves.

Al Hamas markets Energy Meters, Insulators, Transformers, Cables, Conductors & Accessories, Light Controls & Home automation products, Light Fittings, Instrumentation, Pipes, Building materials, Automatic Transfer Switches, Valves, Boilers and Power tools.

Every year, Trading SBU according to the market requirements brings in new technology and products through renowned international principals.