

Oman deploys army units fearing more unrest

The Omani military is deploying troops north of the capital, Muscat, and near the border with the United Arab Emirates, in anticipation of more anti-government protests that have rocked the port town of Sohar



▶ Oman is oldest independent Arab state, and has been ruled by **Al Said** family since 1744

▶ **Qaboos bin Said**, 70, (pictured) became Sultan in 1970 after overthrowing his father in palace coup

▶ He has absolute power and appoints cabinet. Parliament set up in 1992 only advises and has no legislative powers. Political parties are banned

▶ Issue of succession remains unclear, as Sultan has no children or named heir

▶ Qaboos has tried to calm unrest by promising 50,000 new jobs, unemployment benefits and possible widening of parliamentary powers

Population: 2.97 million

Life expectancy: 74 years

Ethnic groups: Arab 75%, South Asian 20%

Main religion: Ibadi Muslim 75%

GDP growth rate: 3.6% (2010 est.)

Unemployment rate: 15% (2004 est.)

Oil production: 860,000 barrels per day (2010) – ranked 25th in world