

National Day of the

United Arab Emirates



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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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H. H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan
President of the United Arab Emirates

Ambassador's Message

DURING the past three decades, UAE has made phenomenal progress through its solid union, which presents and unprecedented experience in the third world; and an example viewed globally with admiration and respect, as one to be followed.

Mammoth efforts in laying the foundations and in materializing and maintaining the union and its great achievements, have always accompanied the devotion of the great men behind the glory of the nation. His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the historic leader and the engineer of the unity and the Rulers of the Emirates, gained worldwide respect for their roles and dedication towards the welfare of the nation.

UAE has made its mark in the international scene as a premier country, of well-knit wise policies in all domestic and international affairs, as well as a center of excellence in economic activities, decent civil life and other disciplines of

modernization and progress. Tremendous achievements have been attained with significant and high momentum of keeping up with the pace.

The country has been able to bag and continuously attract substantial investments and business groups of repute. In fact, it is endowed with enormous economically exploitable and viable arenas and areas of attraction yet to be tapped. The continuously revised for excellence, economic investment inviting environment, envisage modernization and strengthening of infrastructure facilities, together with well-tailored policy formulated to bring about conformity and uniformity for the betterment and welfare of the nation and its people.

Congratulations are extended to H.H. Sheikh Zayed and Their Highness the Rulers of the Emirates and the people of the UAE on the occasion of the 31st anniversary of the union.

Long Live UAE-Bangladesh Friendship.

Eid Mubarak

UAE Report

ON 2nd December every year, the United Arab Emirates celebrates its National Day, commemorating the foundation of the federation on the same date in 1971. The federation, headed since its establishment by President His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, is formed of seven members: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ra's al-Khaimah, Fujairah, Umm al-Qaiwain and Ajman.

The top tier of political authority in the state is the Federal Supreme Council, comprised of the rulers of the seven emirates. Besides President HH Sheikh Zayed, Ruler of Abu Dhabi, these are HH Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai and federal Vice President and Prime Minister, HH Dr. Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasbi, Ruler of Sharjah, HH Sheikh Saqr bin Mohammed Al Qasbi, Ruler of Ra's al-Khaimah, HH Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al Sharqi, Ruler of Fujairah, HH Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed Al Mu'alla, Ruler of Umm al-Qaiwain, and HH Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, Ruler of Ajman.

Political System

The UAE political system is a unique combination of the traditional and the modern, which has enabled the country to develop a modern administrative structure. Besides the FSC, the highest constitutional authority, responsible for laying down the general framework of policy and for approving federal legislation, the country's Council of Ministers (Cabinet) is the executive authority for the federation. The Federal National Council (Parliament) has both a legislative and supervisory role under the Constitution, while the total independence of the Federal Judiciary is guaranteed under the Constitution.

Under the leadership of HH Sheikh Zayed, the country has been a force of moderation in the Middle East, while internally, on the directives of the President, the revenues from the UAE's oil and gas production have been used to develop the state for the benefit of its people. The wise use of those resources has permitted the UAE to undergo a process of complete social and economic transformation over the last 31 years, with the building of modern systems of social services, health and education, as well as transport, communications and welfare.

In one of his regular speeches, President Sheikh Zayed stressed that "our dreams have only come true because of the establishment of the federation. Our style of life has changed dramatically. That which has been accomplished has exceeded all our expectations."

Foreign Policy

Over the last year, the UAE has continued to promote the development of its political relations with both developed and developing countries. Particular progress has been achieved insofar as the Gulf States, the Arab world and the countries of the Islamic world are concerned, while relations have also continued to develop successfully with other members of the Group of 77 developing countries.

With a consistency in its foreign policy ever since it was established, the UAE has continued to strengthen its role as a significant player within the international community, consolidating its reputation as a country that seeks to promote dialogue and consensus as a tool for the resolution of disputes and which at the same time endeavours to strengthen the legitimacy and authority of international organizations and institutions as to bring justice, peace and reinforce world stability.

At the level of the Arabian Gulf, the UAE has a fundamental tenet of its foreign policy, that of enhancing ties with other Gulf states. In 1981, partly in response to these beliefs, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The goal of the GCC has been to provide for regional defence and to coordinate policy on trade and economic issues. It also seeks to develop links in a variety of economic fields, including trade, investment, customs, the electricity grid and communications, as well as employment.

The policy of developing ties with other GCC states is keenly encouraged by the UAE President. One milestone reached during the past year was the ratification and signing, in June 2002, of documents completing the demarcation of the border between the UAE and its neighbour, Oman. The agreements were signed during a visit by Oman's Sultan Qaboos to the UAE.

Arab Solidarity

The UAE has always advocated dialogue as a way of resolving disagreements between Arab countries, with President Sheikh Zayed having stressed on numerous occasions that such dialogue should be carried out in a spirit of fraternity and tolerance, not isolation and fanaticism in order to enhance Arab solidarity. His belief in the necessity of setting aside differences and of fostering harmony among Arab states has formed the basis of the UAE's approach to Arab affairs. With a spirit of forgiveness, he believes, it should be possible for all countries to resume brotherly relations. His then permitting a review of existing policies and attitudes so that disputes can be resolved. Only thus, he believes, can the Arab nation once again be united and take its proper place in the world.

A key part of the President's policy towards Arab affairs, clearly reflected in the UAE's foreign policy, is that of support for the Palestinian people, and their desire to exercise their legitimate rights, to end occupation of their land and to establish their own independent state on their own land, with Jerusalem as its capital. Support for the 2nd Palestinian Uprising (Intifada) and for the resistance of the Palestinian people to Israeli violence has, naturally, been an important component of this policy.

Meeting on 14th January 2002 with US Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs William Burns, Sheikh Zayed emphasized his belief that since the United States is a prime sponsor of the Middle East peace process, so it has a duty to act by ordering an immediate end to Israeli attacks. He stated that the Israeli policies of aggression against Palestinians pose a threat to the security of all countries in the region, going on to note that within the framework of the international alliance to eradicate terrorism, one should not neglect Israeli terrorism in Palestine.

On directives from the President, the UAE

has supported or initiated a number of projects to support the Palestinians and to preserve the Arab and Islamic identity of the people in the occupied territories. Thus it has funded various projects to build educational and health centres, and has also donated US\$27 million for the reconstruction or repair of 800 buildings destroyed by Israel in the Jenin refugee camp early in the year. Among other aid projects have been the provision of funds for the repair of religious buildings damaged by Israeli military action, including both mosques and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

In Washington, Sheikh Hamdan met with President George W. Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, taking the opportunity to urge the United States to put pressure on Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian land and, thus, to bring to an end the sufferings of the Palestinian people. He also emphasised the UAE's belief in the necessity of the revival of activity by Quartet group of powers in pursuit of Middle East peace.

Meeting with French President Jacques Chirac in Paris on 15th November, Sheikh Hamdan reiterated the view of the UAE that it was important to work hard to bring about an end to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and to resume peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, in accordance with international resolutions, and the agreements signed by both parties.

On the issue of Iraq's compliance with resolutions of the United Nations, Sheikh Hamdan said that the UAE viewed Iraq's acceptance of UN Security Council resolution no. 1441 as a positive step and expressed the hope that the UN inspectors would discharge their duties with utmost transparency, objectivity and neutrality. He also expressed the hope that this Iraqi step would pave the way to a peaceful resolution of the crisis, would protect Iraq's sovereignty, and would lead to the lifting on UN sanctions on the country, thus allowing it to resume its rightful place in the Arab, Islamic and international communities.

At the end of 2002, the UAE had diplomatic relations with 143 countries and hosts 71 embassies, compared to three in 1971. There are 35 non-resident ambassadors and 52 consulates in Dubai. The UAE has 44 embassies abroad, 7 consulates and two Permanent Missions in New York and Geneva.

The country is a member of more than 25 regional and international organizations, and has signed 15 international treaties and conventions, apart from numerous bilateral agreements, including over 60 investment protection agreements, 65 civil aviation agreements and more than 52 cultural agreements.

Foreign Aid

An important part of UAE foreign policy has been the practical assistance it has proffered to developing countries. By the end of 2000, the UAE had provided more than Dh100 billion as loans, grants, relief aid and a wide range of assistance for countries and regions affected by natural and man-made disasters besides humanitarian aids and initiatives in times of crisis. UAE foreign aid represents more than 3.5 per cent of its GNP, well above the UN target of 0.7 per cent.

Since its establishment in July 1971, and



In Palestine, for example, in the period from the outbreak of the second Intifada, in October 2000, the Society has disbursed over Dh 275 million to Palestinian civilians, has provided 50 ambulances to the Palestinian Red Crescent and other health centres and services, and has provided assistance for the rebuilding or repairing of the Jenin refugee camp and of the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, the Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock) and the Al Aqsa Mosque. It has also sent 18 planes, through Jordanian and Egyptian airports, carrying tons of foodstuffs, medicines and other supplies.

Special help has also been provided to the people of Afghanistan, whether refugees in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, or displaced inside their own country. This assistance has included the sending of 29 planes full of supplies and the establishment of a refugee camp with the capacity to house 40,000 people.

Help has also been provided by the RCS in Kosovo, where 2346 UAE volunteers have taken part in a relief programme that has cost in excess of Dh 84 million. Over 100 planes of supplies have been sent, while the RCS has also constructed a 200 bed hospital and a camp with the capacity to house 10,000 displaced persons.

The Zayed Fund for Humanitarian and Charitable Foundation, which was established in 1992 with a capital of one billion US\$, has also financed numerous projects worldwide. The foundation reflects Sheikh Zayed's support for humanitarian issues.

Achievements at Home

Over the thirty-one years since the UAE was established, the country has been able to achieve a remarkable level of development.

The oil and gas sector has seen major growth. Proven oil reserves, set at around 30 billion barrels in the early 1970s, are now estimated to be over 98 billion barrels, the third largest in the world, while proven reserves of natural gas have risen from around 626 billion cubic metres to around 6,000 billion cubic metres over the same period, the fourth largest in the world.

Ministry of Planning projections estimate that Gross National Product in 2002 will rise by 3.5 per cent, to Dh 256.9 billion, compared to Dh 248 billion in 2001.

In the last decade, non-oil foreign trade has risen by 91 per cent, from Dh 69.1 billion in

1991 to Dh 135.6 billion in 2001. In the latter year, imports by the UAE were Dh 102 billion, non-oil exports were Dh 7.3 billion and re-exports Dh 26.6 billion.

A long-established strategy of diversifying the economy away from dependence on oil has recorded considerable success. Non-oil sector GDP reached Dh 179 billion in 2001, up from Dh 160 billion the previous year. Overall, manufacturing provided 19.3 per cent of GDP with the country's 2,334 non-oil industrial enterprises having a total of Dh 28.5 billion invested.

The recent launching of a regulated stock market has also helped to provide a new stimulus to the economy, as well as providing a broader range of opportunities for UAE citizens to invest locally. Current values of the nearly 50 companies being traded on the market are in excess of Dh 200 billion.

The 2002 national budget was set at Dh 23.156 billion, compared to the 1972 federal budget of only Dh 201 million, and indication of the massive economic growth that the country has enjoyed.

A major focus of government expenditure has, of course, been on education, and in the 2001/2002 academic year, more than 740,000 students were enrolled in around 1,180 private and government schools.

The country's first university, the Emirates University, in Al Ain, opened its doors in 1977, and has so far produced over 28,000 graduates, with 18,000 currently studying. This institution has now been joined by the women only Zayed University, with campuses in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and a network of Higher Colleges of Technology, while there are now also a number of private universities and colleges.

Attention has also been paid to the provision of health care for the country's rapidly expanding population, both in terms of preventive and curative medicine. Latest figures

suggests that there are a total of 60 government hospitals, 134 primary and school health care centres, 20 private hospitals, 1,078 health clinics, and 552 school clinics.

With an arid climate, the UAE has also been obliged to invest heavily in the provision of water for its growing population, this being done in association with the generation of electricity, through a network of power and desalination plants.

The Federal Electricity and water authority, FEWA, was established in 1999 to supervise the water and electricity plants in the smaller northern Emirates. The FEWA budget reached Dh 1.239 billion in its first year, excluding Dh 1.563 billion dedicated for the implementation of development projects in the next five years. In the larger Emirates, the Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority (ADWEA), the Dubai Water and Electricity Authority (DEWA) and the Sharjah Water and Electricity Authority (SEWA), are responsible for power and water. Current production levels are estimated at 37,500 million kilowatts and 160 million gallons daily of water.

Housing is also a government priority. The Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme, which provides soft loans for construction, had helped 2,888 families, at a cost of Dh 1.1 billion, by the end of 1999, with the programme having provided help to many hundreds more since then.

Over the last few decades, the role of women in UAE society has grown quickly, thanks to the underlying commitment of the UAE Government to the progress of women in all fields, a commitment made plain from the earliest days of the UAE Federation by President Sheikh Zayed. The right of women to effectively participate in the development of society is enshrined in the UAE Constitution, which was adopted when the Federation was formed in 1971. The Constitution guarantees equality between men and women. Women enjoy the same legal status, claim to titles, access to education, the right to practice professions, the same access to employment, health and family welfare facilities. In accordance with the rights and privileges laid down in the state religion, Islam, on which the Constitution is based, the rights of women with regard to the inheritance of property are also guaranteed. The UAE Women's Federation was established in 1975, at the initiative of the First Lady Sheikhha Fatima Bint Mubarak, Chairperson of Women's Federation, to bring together under one umbrella all of the women's societies in all seven emirates. Essentially, the aim of the Federation is to develop on a national scale the appropriate opportunities, in all aspects of life, for the country's women to achieve the full realisation of their capabilities.

A modern infrastructure has been built throughout the state, including roads, ports, airports and a state-of-the-art telecommunications system. In 1971, there were only three small airports, in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. Now the UAE has six international airports with a capacity of receiving 16.5 million passengers yearly. The country also has 15 major seaports, handling around 70 million tonnes of cargo a year.

There are nine satellite ground-stations in the UAE, owned by the Emirates Telecommunications Corporation, Etisalat. By the end of 2001, Etisalat was providing normal telephone services to more than 1.2 million subscribers, mobile services to 1.9 million subscribers, and Internet to 896,000 subscribers.

Thuraya, which offers cost-effective satellite-based mobile telephone services to nearly one third of the globe, was established in the UAE in 1997, commencing its services in the second half of 2001. Now with over 62,000 subscribers, Thuraya provides blanket-to-blanket coverage to 99 countries in Europe, the Middle East, North and Central Africa, the Indian Subcontinent and Central Asia, a land-mass inhabited by an estimated 2.3 billion people. More than 25 countries and institutions are shareholders in the company.

Agriculture, Environment and Afforestation

Despite the arid climate of the UAE, and the lack of regular rainfall, agriculture has also grown rapidly, and now contributes around Dh 9.5 billion, or 4.4 per cent, of the national GDP.

In November 2001, in acknowledgement of the country's agricultural development, the UAE was elected as chairman of the 31st General Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, FAO.

A major programme of afforestation in desert areas has been launched, while considerable attention has also been paid to the conservation and management of the UAE's environment, including both fauna and flora, as well as the habitats.

During the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, held from 26th August to 4th September, the UAE launched the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Database Initiative, AGEDI, a project developed by Abu Dhabi's Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency, ERWDA, under the directions of its Deputy Chairman, Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Conservation and cherishing of the country's national identity, traditions and customs amidst the pace of rapid development has also been a continuing focus of government policy.

Our heartiest felicitations on the auspicious occasion of the 31st National Day of the United Arab Emirates

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