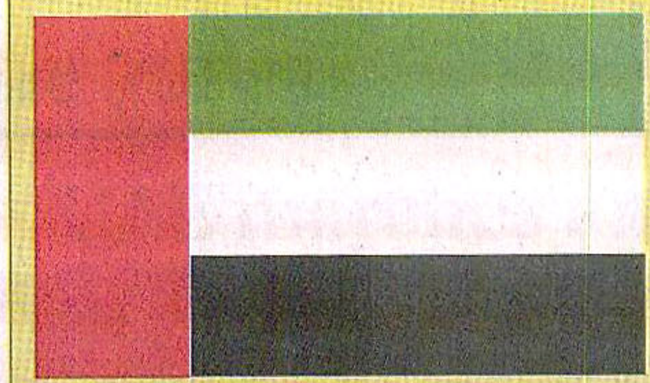

NATIONAL DAY OF United Arab Emirates

The Daily Star | SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT | DECEMBER 2, 2007

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan
President of the United Arab Emirates

His Highness Sheikh Muhammad Bin Rashed Al Maktoum
Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai

MESSAGE

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu

It is a great pleasure that we are observing today, the 2nd December 2007, the 36th anniversary of the establishment of the United Arab Emirates. By the grace of Almighty Allah and sagacious leadership of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and His Highness Sheikh Muhammad Bin Rashed Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and their Highnesses the Rulers of the Emirates and in particular by the charismatic leadership of His Highness Late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates has emerged as one of the most prosperous countries in the comity of nations with higher standard living of its people and become an imitable model for economic and social development. It is worth mentioning that Sheikh Zayed, who used money for the benefit of the people, laid foundation of an advanced nation in a record time with his tireless efforts and care of a father, infusing modern ideas into traditional values.

The government and people of the United Arab Emirates are strongly bound by brotherly relations with Bangladesh since the dawn of its independence. The visits paid by leaders of both the countries from time to time opened the door of friendship and fraternity more widely for the people of the two countries. The bonds of fraternity was further strengthened by the remarkable visit of His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan to Bangladesh in 1984, and which resulted in the formation of a joint committee for bilateral cooperation in economic, social and cultural fields. The private sector in the two countries has also played an effective role in cementing bilateral relations between UAE and Bangladesh through investment in various development sectors. We also appreciate the role and contribution of Bangladeshi nationals working in the UAE in development sector and wish them a happy stay with the brothers in the UAE.

We pray to Almighty Allah for continued progress and prosperity of Bangladesh and its people, and do hope that the existing bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries will strengthen further in the days to come.

Wa Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu

Khalfan Battal Ali Al Mansouri
Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Bangladesh

UAE marches ahead

ON 2nd December, the United Arab Emirates celebrates its 36th National Day after the completion of another year of successful progress in the development of its rapidly-growing economy.

Formed in 1971 from seven emirates, Abu Dhabi, which is the seat of the capital, Dubai, the country's commercial centre, Sharjah, Ra's al-Khaimah, Fujairah, Umm al-Qaiwain and Ajman, the UAE is located in the south-eastern corner of the Arabian peninsula, with coastlines on the Arabian Gulf and on the Indian Ocean.

Following 150 years during which the emirates had separate treaty relations with Britain, they came together as a federal state under the leadership of the Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who became the country's first President, a post to which he was re-elected at successive fine-yearly intervals until his death in November 2004. Since that time, the UAE has been led by his eldest son, President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, ably assisted, since early 2006, by the Vice President and Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who is also the Ruler of Dubai, and the five other rulers who, together with them, make up the country's top political body, the Supreme Council of Rulers.

The country's prosperity derives in large part from its reserves of oil and gas, of which it has, respectively, the fourth and fifth largest reserves in the world. Its oil production commenced in 1962, and it now produces around 2.6 million barrels a day, with plans to raise capacity to around 4 million barrels a day over the course of the next decade.

When the UAE was first established, President Sheikh Zayed and his colleagues had the foresight to decide that the revenues from oil and, later, gas exports should be used to fund a major programme of development of the country's infrastructure, and, over the next three decades, this permitted Government to lay down the essential elements of a thriving society, including housing, medical services, airports, ports and a modern transport infrastructure, as well as a system of state education for the country's citizens that provides free schooling from the primary stage to university level.

As a result, the country's citizens now enjoy a standard of living and a life expectancy, for both men and women, that is comparable to many of the world's leading industrial nations. Another objective of Government has been that of ensuring that women, as well as men, should fully participate in the benefit of the opportunities that have come from development, this process culminating in late 2006 with the formation of a new Federal National Council, or Parliament, in which women hold over 22 percent of the seats, one of the highest figures in the world. There are also two female Cabinet Ministers.

The process of growth in the economic and social sectors has, of course, not taken place without many other changes as well. Over the course of the last forty years, the total population of the country has risen from around 250,000 to around 4.25 million. Of these, only around twenty percent are UAE citizens, the rest being comprised of an expatriate workforce that includes people from virtually every country in the world, although a large number are from other parts of the Arab world and from the countries of South Asia, along with many from Europe. Both UAE citizens and expatriates play a major role in the country's development, in both the Government and private sectors, although considerable attention is being paid by Government to a policy of 'Emiratisation', which seeks to ensure that the country's citizens are afforded all possible opportunities for employment throughout the economy.

Although exploitation of the oil and gas reserves provide much of the funds for Government investment, it has always been recognised that these are depleting resources, and there has been a consistent policy since the UAE's establishment of seeking to diversify the sources of national income. Commencing with heavy industry, particularly in the downstream petrochemicals sector, this diversification has spread to encompass a wide variety of sectors, including services, banking and finance, property development, light industry and tourism. Today, oil and gas revenues account for only around a third of the UAE's Gross National product, estimated at US $ 163 billion in 2006. Although the percentage varies from year to year as a result of fluctuating world energy prices -- 2006 and 2007 having seen dramatic increases in the price of oil -- the non-oil sectors of the economy now not only provide the bulk of GDP but also most of the employment.

This process of diversification has helped, in turn, to promote the development of the country's private sector, and one major focus over the course of the last three years, since Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan succeeded his father as the UAE's President in 2004, has been a recognition of the need for a greater participation by the private sector in all spheres of development.

This has been reflected in a number of major strategy documents that have been issued over the course of the last year, including a UAE-wide strategy, adopted by the federal Government, and separate strategies adopted by the two largest emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

The UAE Government Strategy, launched early in the year by the Vice President and Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, is based on the National Programme unveiled by President Sheikh Khalifa in 2005, and covers 21 individual topics, in the six sectors of social development, economic development, public sector development, justice and safety, infrastructure and rural areas development.

The strategy, according to the Vice President and Prime Minister, 'sets the foundations for a new era of public administration. The changing times and the nature of the challenges prompt us to think in a different way and to adopt international best practices in the area of public administration. This strategy unifies efforts within a strategic framework with clear objectives, based on detailed studies (and) ... clearly identifies and integrates federal and local efforts.'

Other general principles include the revitalisation of the regulatory and policy-making role of the ministries and the improvement of their decision-making mechanisms, and increasing of the efficiency of governmental bodies and upgrading of the level of the services provided. Other principles include an improvement of the civil service, based on competence, effective Emiratisation and leadership training, empowering the ministries, in accordance with public and joint policies and reviewing and upgrading of existing legislation.

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History and heritage

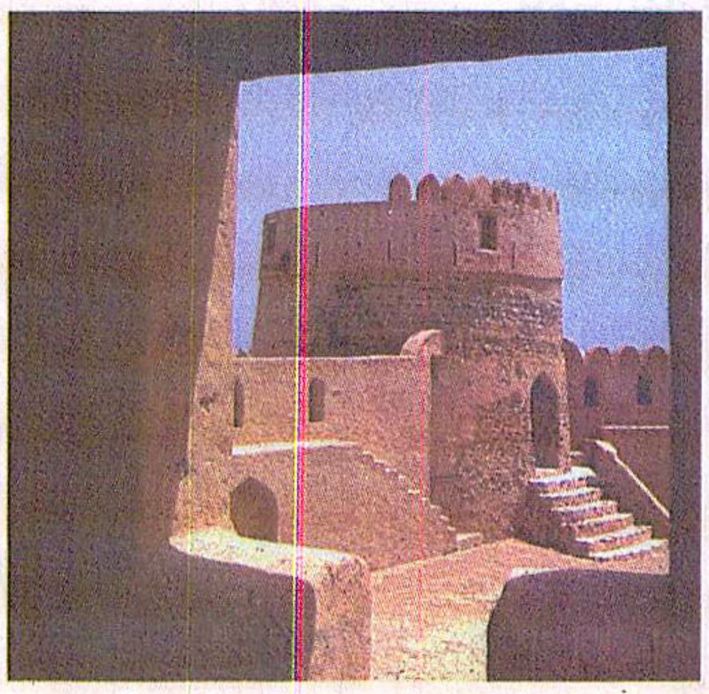
THE UAE has a long history stretching back over 100,000 years, stone tools from the Early Stone Age having been found recently along the edge of the Hajar Mountains. Prior to this discovery the earliest known human occupation for which there is evidence dated from the Neolithic period, 5500 BC or 7500 years ago, when the climate was wetter and food resources abundant. Even at this early stage, there is proof of interaction with the outside world, especially with civilisations to the north. These contacts persisted and became wide-ranging, probably motivated by trade in copper from the Hajar Mountains, as the climate became more arid and fortified oasis communities focused on agriculture.

Foreign trade, the recurring motif in the history of this strategic region, seems to have flourished also in later periods, facilitated by domestication of the camel at the end of the second millennium. At the same time, the discovery of new irrigation techniques (falaj irrigation) made possible the extensive watering of agricultural areas that resulted in a veritable explosion of settlement in the region.

By the first century AD overland caravan traffic between Syria and cities in southern Iraq, followed by sea borne travel to the important port of Omana (probably present-day Ummal-Quiwain) and thence to India was an alternative to the Red Sea route used by the Romans. Pearls had been exploited in the area for millennia but at this time the trade reached new heights.

Seafaring was also a mainstay and major fairs were held at Dibba bringing merchants from as far afield as China.

The arrival of envoys from the Prophet Muhammad in 630 heralded the conversion of the region to Islam with Dibba again featuring, this time as a battleground in the wake of the Prophet's death. By 637 AD Islamic armies were using



Julfar (Ra's al-Khaimah) as a staging post for the conquest of Iran. Over many centuries, Julfar became a wealthy port and pearling centre of considerable importance from which great wooden dhows ranged far and wide across the Indian Ocean, trading to Mombasa in Kenya, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and China.

The Portuguese arrival in the Gulf in the sixteenth century had bloody consequences for the Arab residents of Julfar and East Coast ports like Dibba, Bidiya, Khor Fakkan and Kalba. However, while European powers competed for regional supremacy, a local power, the Qawasim, were gathering strength. At the beginning of the nineteenth century they had built up a fleet of over 60 large vessel and could put nearly 20,000 sailors to sea, eventually provoking a British offensive to control the maritime trade routes between the Gulf and India.

Inland, the arc of villages at Liwa were the focus of economic and social activity for the Bani Yas from before the sixteenth century. But by the early 1790s the town of Abu Dhabi had become such an important pearling centre that the political leader of all the Bani Yas groups, the Sheikh of the Al Bu Falah (Al Nahyan family) moved there from the Liwa. Early in the nineteenth century, members of the Al Bu Falasah, a branch of the Bani Yas, settled by the Creek in Dubai and established Maktoum rule in that emirate.

Following the defeat of the Qawasim, the British signed a series of agreements with the sheikhs of the individual emirates, beginning in the 1820s that, later augmented with treaties on preserving a maritime truce, resulted in the area becoming known as 'The Trucial States'.

The pearling industry thrived in the relative calm at sea during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing both income and employment to the people of the Arabian Gulf coast. Many of the inhabitants were semi-nomadic, pearling in the summer months and tending to their date gardens in the winter. However, their meagre economic resources were soon to be dealt a heavy blow. The First World War impacted severely on the pearl fishery, but it was the world economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, coupled with the Japanese invention of the cultured pearl, that damaged it irreparably. The industry eventually faded away just after the Second World War, when the newly independent Government of India imposed heavy taxation on pearls imported from the Gulf. This was catastrophic for the area. Despite their resourcefulness, the population faced considerable hardship with little opportunity for education and no roads or hospitals.

Fortunately oil was on the horizon and in the early 1930s the first oil company teams arrived to carry out preliminary surveys and the first cargo of crude was exported from Abu Dhabi in 1962. With revenues growing as oil production increased, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who was chosen as Ruler of Abu Dhabi on 6 August 1966, undertook a massive programme of construction of schools, housing, hospitals and roads. When Dubai's oil exports commenced in 1969, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, de facto Ruler of Dubai since 1939 and ruler since 1958, was also able to use oil revenues to improve the quality of life of his people.

Following the British withdrawal from the Gulf, a federation of initially six and later seven emirates, to be known as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was formally established on 2 December 1971 with Sheikh Zayed, who had been instrumental in its formation, as its first President and Sheikh Rashid as Vice-President.