

## UAE marches ahead

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Developments in the sphere of culture and heritage have adopted the twin approach of both seeking to maintain and preserve the UAE's own heritage, always an important goal, and also of preparing to establish the country as a centre of global cultural importance. A key part of this is the Saadiyat island cultural centre project being developed by the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, which is designed to bring global culture to the Emirates. As part of this, agreements have been signed for the establishment of branches of France's internationally-renowned Louvre Museum and of the Guggenheim Museum of the United States. Other deals have included one with the New York Film Academy for the setting up of a local branch, as well as agreements with a number of top international academic institutions, such as the University of the Sorbonne in Paris and New York University. The goal, now clearly in sight, is to ensure that not only will the UAE, and in particular, its capital, Abu Dhabi, have world-class attractions to show its visitors, but also that its residents will be able to enjoy access to world-class facilities of a type that will equip them in cultural as well as educational terms to help in the building of a modern society that is closely rooted in its own heritage, but also well-aware of the very best that the rest of the world can offer.

This recognition of the need to look to the future is also recognisable in the initiatives taken during the year by the UAE to promote research into and the use of the very latest in terms of sustainable energy techniques.

Abu Dhabi's Masdar Initiative, for example, conceived in partnership with several major international companies and academic institutions, has instituted pilot projects in photo-voltaics and solar energy and, in collaboration with the world-famous architectural practice of Foster and Partners, is planning to build a 'zero footprint', environmentally-sustainable township in the capital. It is also examining other unconventional energy sources, looking forward to the day when the depletion of global and gas reserves will require a much greater focus on alternative energy.

Another important initiative, announced late in the year by the Government of Dubai, was a requirement that from 2008, all new buildings will have to be designed with energy conservation in mind.

Amidst all of the development activity at home, the United Arab

Emirates has also continued during the course of the last year to pursue an active foreign policy, based upon the guiding principles laid down by the founder of the state, the late Sheikh Zayed. These incorporate a belief in the need for justice in international dealings between states, including the necessity of adhering to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of others and the pursuit, wherever possible, of peaceful resolution of disputes,

as well as normalisation of relations between all countries, including Israel, cannot be achieved while Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories continues and it, therefore, supports an ending of the occupation, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of refugees to return to their homeland within the context of a just and lasting peace agreement based upon the Arab peace initiative.

that conflict.

No visible progress was made during the year on resolving the long-running dispute with neighbouring Iran on the question of its occupation of the three UAE islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb. The UAE continues to look forward to an eventual resolution of the dispute and to hope that the Government of Iran will refer the issue for adjudication to the International Court of Justice or to

UAE foreign policy has been its support for international bodies, like the UN and its various agencies through which it seeks to reinforce the rule of international law, and to support the implementation of internationally agreed conventions, so as to protect the interests of the small, the weak and the powerless.

Throughout the year, the UAE continued to extend all possible support to the international fight against terrorism, while emphasising the necessity both of a clear definition of terrorism and of ensuring that terrorism perpetrated by states should not be overlooked. Support has been offered to countries suffering from terrorism, including collaboration in terms of exchanges of information designed to help law enforcement authorities track down and arrest suspects.

Another important step taken during the year was the enforcement of legislation passed in 2006 to stamp out all trafficking in people, as defined under international conventions, with the first, stringent, sentences being handed down to those convicted.

Since the establishment of the UAE, the country has played an active role in the provision of aid to developing countries and has been a major contributor of emergency relief to regions affected by conflict and natural disasters. One major initiative, launched by the Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in October, was the 'Dubai Cares' campaign, Dubai's contribution to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. Nearly half a billion US dollars were raised in the campaign.

The focus of the country's emergency relief programme during much of 2007 continued to be on Lebanon and Palestine, with support coming not only from government and non-governmental agencies, like the UAE Red Crescent, the Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation and the Mohammed bin Rashid Foundation, but also from individuals. The UAE Red Crescent and other UAE bodies have now contributed over two billion UAE dirhams (US\$ 544 million) to humanitarian projects in Palestine alone.

Other support went to countries throughout Africa and Asia, for victims of famine, drought and other natural disasters, as well as those affected by conflict.

The emergency relief programme is only one part of the way in which the UAE and its people

display their commitment to share their own good fortune with other countries who are less well-endowed with natural resources. Since the UAE was established, it has provided over US\$ 70 billion in

loans, grants and other assistance for development projects in some 95 countries throughout the world.

The Government and people of the United Arab Emirates can look ahead to 2008 with confidence, in

the knowledge that the fundamental strengths of the national economy, coupled with a wise leadership, will continue to permit them to record another year of progress and development.



Abu Dhabi: World's tallest unsupported flagpole with flag measuring 20 by 40 metres.

together with a support for international institutions, such as the United Nations.

Within the Arabian Gulf region, the UAE has continued to work to develop closer ties with its neighbours in the Arabian peninsula, through the Gulf Co-operation Council, GCC. At a regional level, the UAE Government has maintained its support for the Palestinians and has urged the international community, and the United Nations Security Council, in particular, to make the necessary efforts in association with the Arab Quartet of Foreign Ministers, including the UAE, to re-activate the stalled Middle East peace process. The UAE continues to believe that the restoration of security, peace and stability in the region,

The UAE continued to provide support to the Government of Iraq in its efforts to restore stability and security to the country. The UAE's Foreign Minister spelt out the UAE's views on the topic as follows: 'We reiterate our support for the efforts aimed at enabling Iraq to regain its security and to strengthen its national unity. We call on all Iraqis, regardless of political affiliation or social class, to actively participate in building a new Iraq'.

The UAE also continued to offer support to the Government of Lebanon following the devastating conflict in the summer of 2006, also working with the UN on a programme for the removal of cluster bombs and other munitions left behind by Israel as a result of

other forms of international arbitration. The UAE has also continued to express concern about Iran's nuclear power programme, and has sought reassurances that it is for peaceful purposes only.

Beyond the Arab world, the UAE has pursued a policy of seeking, wherever possible, to build friendly relations with other nations, both in the developing and in the industrialised world, and leading figures, including the President, the Vice President and Prime Minister, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Foreign Minister, have made numerous overseas visits to promote economic and political ties. Numerous world leaders have also visited the Emirates.

Another important feature of

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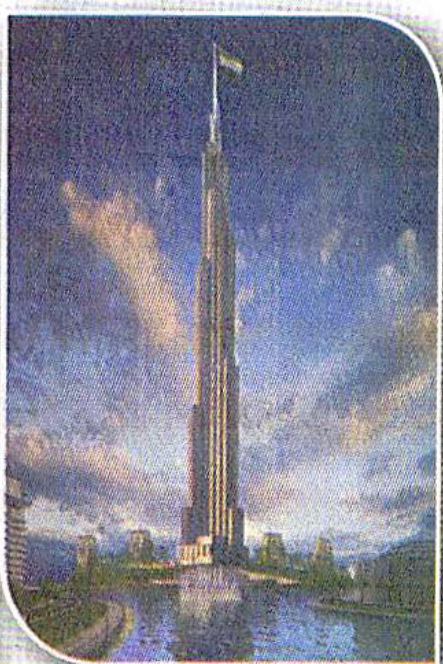
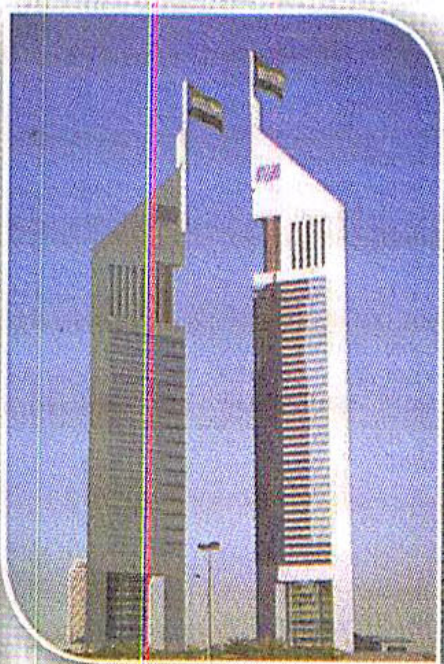
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