

# A nation and its builder

*The building of the UAE was to maintain independence and safeguard its sovereignty*

On the declaration of the federation between the six emirates, the rulers of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah expressed their desire and their people's desire to establish a federation. The constitution states: "We, the Rulers of the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah, whereas it is our desire and the desire of the people of our Emirates to establish a Union between these Emirates, to promote a better life, more enduring stability and a higher international status for the Emirates and their people." Ras Al Khaimah joined the Union on February 10, 1972. The

main aim of the federation was to maintain the UAE's independence and to safeguard its sovereignty.

Shaikh Zayed, first president of the United Arab Emirates, along with his brothers, the rulers of the other emirates, had succeeded in building a strong modern state with one of the highest GDPs per capita in the Arab world and a state-of-the-art infrastructure. As a ruler of the country, Shaikh Zayed maintained the traditional role of a father figure to his Emiratis and expatriates. Being a modern statesman with values and traits of a conventional tribal leader who was a very approachable and down-to-earth president, Shaikh

Zayed was discussing with his people their concerns and complex state policies.

Shaikh Zayed encouraged positive and effective involvement from youngsters in the building process of the nation to help it thrive. During that time, Abu Dhabi's capabilities were quite limited. From 1971 until he passed away on November 2, 2004, Shaikh Zayed was the president of the UAE and he was given the titles "Nation builder, UAE founder and Father Zayed". Shaikh Zayed, in cooperation with the other rulers, implemented major reforms including modern education, health care, public housing, and general urban development to improve the living conditions and standards. One of Shaikh Zayed's initiatives was to provide education for all UAE citizens which led to building schools and learning centres all over the country and teachers recruited from other Arab countries to educate the young generation.

Within a few years, the country was able to meet all the necessary educational requirements for a modern nation-state. In a message delivered to the Emirati youth nearly 20 years ago, which is still relevant today, Shaikh Zayed said: "What we have achieved, my dear young people of the Emirates, will not survive, unless you yourselves engage in further work and efforts, and sacrifices. "You should work hard to protect our national achievements, to foster and support the continued march of our Federation, and to make more achievements that contribute to the dignity and prestige of our country and to the welfare of our people. This cannot be achieved without positive and effective participation from all of you." Celebrations on the 41st National Day within the UAE and abroad will start from November 25 up to December 3 2012, including a number of impressive and excit-



People enjoy an evening out at the Jumeirah open beach near Burj Al Arab, Dubai.

## History of the United Arab Emirates

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British and Ottoman rule

Then, portions of the nation came under the direct influence of the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. Thereafter the region was known to the British as the "Pirate Coast", as raiders based there harassed the shipping industry despite both European and Omani navies patrolling the area from the 17th century into the 19th century. British expeditions to protect the Indian trade from raiders at Ras al-Khaimah led to campaigns against that headquarters and other harbours along the coast in 1819. The next year, a peace treaty was signed to which all the sheikhs of the coast adhered. Raids continued intermittently until 1835, when the sheikhs agreed not to engage in hostilities at sea. In 1853, they signed a treaty with the United Kingdom, under which the sheikhs (the "Trucial Sheikhdoms") agreed to a "perpetual maritime truce." It was enforced by the United

economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, coupled with the Japanese invention of the cultured pearl, that all but destroyed it. The industry eventually faded away shortly after the Second World War, when the newly independent Government of India imposed heavy taxation on pearls imported from the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The decline of pearling resulted in a very difficult era, with little opportunity to build any infrastructure.

### The beginning of the oil era

In the beginning of the 1960s, the first oil company teams carried out preliminary surveys and the first cargo of crude was exported from Abu Dhabi in 1962. As oil revenues increased, Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, undertook a massive construction program, building schools, housing, hospitals and roads. When Dubai's oil exports commenced in 1969, Sheikh

ments in the emirates. The sheikhs of the emirates then decided to form a council to coordinate matters between them and took over the development office. They formed the Trucial States Council and appointed Adi Bitar, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum's legal advisor, as Secretary General and Legal Advisor to the Council. The council was terminated once the United Arab Emirates was formed.

### Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

In 1968, the United Kingdom announced its decision, reaffirmed in March 1971, to end the treaty relationships with the seven Trucial Sheikhdoms which had been, together with Bahrain and Qatar, under British protection. The nine attempted to form a union of Arab emirates, but by mid-1971 they were still unable to agree on terms of union, even though the British treaty relationship was to expire in December of that year. Bahrain became independent in August, and Qatar in September 1971. When the British-Trucial Sheikhdoms treaty expired on December 1, 1971, they became fully independent. The rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai decided to form a union between their two emirates independently, prepare a constitution, then call the rulers of the other five emirates to a meeting and offer them the opportunity to join. It was also agreed between the two that the constitution be written by December 2, 1971. On that date, at the Dubai Guesthouse Palace, four other emirates agreed to enter into a union called the United Arab Emirates. Ras al-Khaimah joined later, in early 1972.

### Recent History

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States the UAE was identified as a major financial center used by Al-Qaeda in transferring money to the hijackers (two of the 9/11 hijackers were UAE citizens). The nation immediately cooperated with the U.S, freezing accounts tied to suspected terrorists and strongly clamping down on money laundering. The country had already signed a military defense agreement with the U.S. in 1994 and one with France in 1995. The UAE supports military operations from the United States and other Coalition nations that are engaged in the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) as well as operations supporting the Global War on Terrorism for the Horn of Africa at Al Dhafra Air Base located outside of Abu Dhabi. The air base also supported Allied operations during the 1991 Persian Gulf War and Operation Northern Watch.

### Death of Sheikhs Zayed and Maktoum

On 2 November 2004 the UAE's first ruler, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, died. His eldest son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, succeeded as ruler of Abu Dhabi. In accordance with the constitution, the UAE's Supreme Council of Rulers elected Khalifa as president. Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan succeeded Khalifa as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. In January 2006, Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the prime minister of the UAE and the ruler of Dubai, died, and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum assumed both roles.



Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach Resort in Fujairah has helped protect a coral reef.

Kingdom, and disputes among sheikhs were referred to the British for settlement.

### The Treaty of 1892

Primarily in reaction to the ambitions of other European countries, the United Kingdom and the Trucial Sheikhdoms established closer bonds in an 1892 treaty, similar to treaties entered into by the UK with other Persian Gulf principalities. The sheikhs agreed not to dispose of any territory except to the United Kingdom and not to enter into relationships with any foreign government other than the United Kingdom without its consent. In return, the British promised to protect the Trucial Coast from all aggression by sea and to help in case of land attack.

### The rise and fall of the pearling industry

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the pearling industry thrived in the relative calm at sea, providing both income and employment to the people of the Persian Gulf. It began to become a good economic resource for the local people. Then the First World War had a severe impact on the pearl fishery, but it was the

Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, was also able to use oil revenues to improve the quality of life of his people.

### Border disputes

In 1955, the United Kingdom sided with Abu Dhabi in the latter's dispute with Oman over the Buraimi Oasis another territory to the south. [10] A 1974 agreement between Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia would have settled the Abu Dhabi-Saudi border dispute; however, the agreement has yet to be ratified by the UAE government and is not recognised by the Saudi government. The border with Oman also remains officially unsettled, but the two governments agreed to delineate the border in May 1999.

### Sheikh Zayed and the Union

In the early 1960s, oil was discovered in Abu Dhabi, an event that led to quick unification calls made by UAE sheikhdoms. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (UAEfounder.com) became ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 and the British started losing their oil investments and contracts to U.S. oil companies. The British had earlier started a development office that helped in some small develop-



Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, the most imposing religious and national landmark in Abu Dhabi

## Abu Dhabi - an engaging emirate

Year-round sunshine, pristine beaches, spectacular sand dunes and pulsating cosmopolitan lifestyle await every guest in Abu Dhabi. These, combined with distinctive Arabian hospitality, mystique and world-class infrastructure make Abu Dhabi an enchanting destination for experienced and novice travellers. The emirate hosts the United Arab Emirates' capital Abu Dhabi city. This island capital is characterised by its signature Corniche, which fronts the amazing turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf. You can stroll, cycle, roller-blade or drive the Corniche for a journey to the tip where the majestic Emirates Palace one of the world's most opulent hotels sits on 1.3 kilometres of pristine beach.

In Abu Dhabi city you'll find all the conveniences of 21st century capital living and with some surprising additions. Don't forget to take a complimentary guided tour of the awe-inspiring Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque one of the world's largest and you can book into one of its many beach resorts. Fine dining abounds, as do opportunities for more affordable fare in numerous city centre outlets. Shopping is as diverse as the emirate there's everything from marble-clad malls with haute couture brands to a textile souk (market) tucked away behind the main Hamdan Centre and a carpet souk at the Mina (Port).

Take a state-of-the-art highway to the new destinations of Saadiyat and Yas Islands. On Saadiyat, which will be home to the world's largest single concentration of premier cultural institutions, including the Zayed National Museum, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi a performing arts centre and maritime museum. At the existing Manarat Al Saadiyat exhibition centre you can take in the interactive Saadiyat Story and get a glimpse of how this signature destination will eventually be, visit one of many

visiting exhibitions regularly hosted here and round the excursion with a mean in the Fanr restaurant. The island is also home to the fabulous Saadiyat Beach Golf Club designed by the legendary Gary Player this is the region's only 'ocean' course with several beach front holes.

Further afield, to the east, there's the 'Oasis City' of Al Ain lying near the Oman border. This tranquil city Abu Dhabi's heritage heartland lies under the shadow of Jebel Hafeet the emirate's tallest peak at 1,340 metres. Take a ride up the winding highway which mounts Jebel Hafeet and take a break at the three-star Mercure Hotel to savour the views. Seven oases surround Al Ain which means spring and water from the mountains trickles down, guided into traditional 'falaj' irrigation systems, to feed the dense date palm groves in the oases. A walk through the preserved Al Ain Oasis is a calming pastime and takes the imagination back generations. In Al Ain you can visit numerous heritage sites and museums, play golf on an all-grass course lying in the shadow of Jebel Hafeet, take the kids to Hili Fun City for a bundle of very cost-effective fun or the Arabian Wildlife Park to see some of the world's last remaining white lions and tigers or visit one of numerous modern shopping malls or traditional souks.

In the Western Region Al Gharbia you can find unspoiled beaches and some of the best desertscapes around. You can visit Mirfa and see the quaint fishing harbour, Jebel Dhanna for a five-star break, take a trip to the Desert Islands Resorts & Spa on Sir Bani Yas Island and join in any of a range of activities, including tours of the Arabian Wildlife Park or relax in the unique architectural splendour of Qasr Al Sarab (Mirage Palace) amid the simply breathtaking dunes of the Rub Al Khali (Empty Quarter).

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