



NATIONAL DAY OF OMAN



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Oman Celebrates 51st National Day of the Renaissance



The Sultanate of Oman celebrated its 51st National Day of the Renaissance on November 18, 2021. The event comes around at a time when Omanis ponder about the achievements made so far and brace for further accomplishments, with firm resolve, under the astute leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq who pledged to hold high the banner of Renewed Renaissance since he assumed power on January 11, 2020.

The Renewed Renaissance kicked off on a high note when His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq called upon the people of Oman to do their best to enrich domestic development and foster progress in all fields. This is considered one of the major principles of the Renewed Renaissance in its quest to attain the supreme national objective of “making Oman the central point in all that we strive to achieve” — an objective whose salient features have already materialized in terms of updated laws and refurbished programmes of action across all sectors.

In the beginning of this year, Royal Decree No. 6/2021 promulgated the (updated) Basic Law of the State to serve as a pillar of continuous efforts to shape a better future for Oman and its citizens, and to build a solid ground for their Renewed Renaissance.

The Basic Law of the State lays down a stable mechanism of transfer of rule, which reflects positively on political and economic aspects and affirms the principle of sovereignty and independence of the judiciary. It also serves as a basis of rule in the State. It makes education compulsory till the end of the Basic Education stage. It establishes a scholarly method for thought, development of talents and encouragement of innovation, which all conform to the Oman Vision 2040.

Article (7) provides for the appointment of a Crown Prince under a Royal order in accordance with stipulation of Article (5) of the Basic Law of the State. The Royal order defines the powers and prerogatives of the Crown Prince, as well as the tasks delegated to him. It states that the Crown Prince shall be sworn in before the Sultan, before undertaking the powers and tasks delegated to him. The oath shall be taken in accordance with Article (10) of the Basic Law of the State.

The Sultanate of Oman stands out for its exclusive practice of Shura-based democracy, set up on solid grounds emanating from Omani life realities. Shura practice evolved through various stages till it developed into present-day “Council of Oman”, with its bicameral chambers — the “State Council” and “Shura Council”. Each stage saw the addition of systems and laws that reinforce the tradition of Shura and respond to the expectations of citizens. To this effect, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued Royal Decree No. 7/2021 promulgating Council of Oman Law, which comprises 78 articles.

The designation of an “Omani Youth Day” on October 26 reflects the attention accorded to the young generation by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. It asserts the leadership’s deep conviction

of national service. Attention to women is one of the “national fundamentals” of the country.

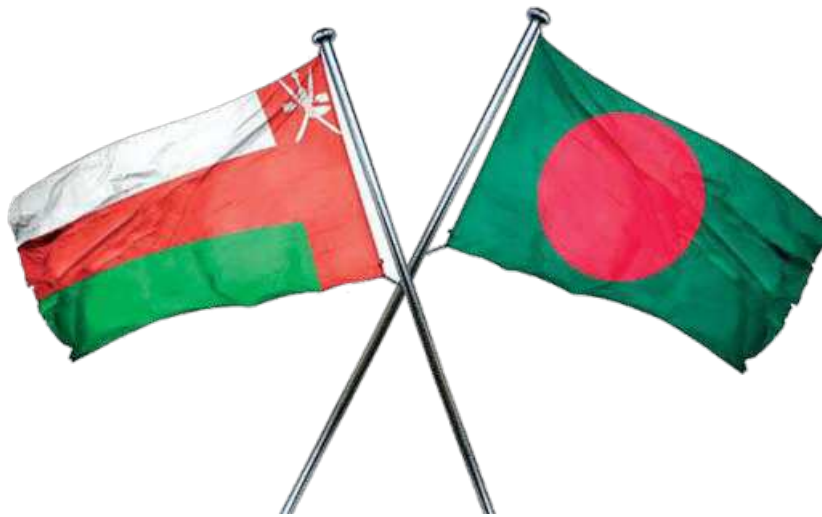
On the occasion of International Women’s Day celebrated last March, Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, spouse of the Sultan of Oman, commended the great efforts exerted by women in Oman and the rest of the world while building their nation, supporting their families and societies and contributing effectively to the management of human and global issues.

HH the Honourable Lady addressed women on the Omani Women’s Day this year. She said, “On the occasion of Omani Women’s Day, the 17th of October, we would like to express thanks and appreciation for every woman who advocates good deeds and elevates the values of tolerance, amity and benevolence. Our greetings go to every woman who contributes to building this dear country from her position as an active participant delivering her social, national and humanitarian duties in all fields.”

To mark the same occasion, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth issued a ministerial decision announcing the establishment of Omani Women’s Sports and Cultural Innovation Club. The move comes in implementation of the basic principles espoused by the Sultanate of Oman in the field of women’s empowerment. It is a symbolic gesture to promote women’s contribution to domestic development and to promote their role in sports and cultural fields.

Nations attain their prime only through education, and this has been a principle espoused by Omanis since the outset of their blessed renaissance 50 years ago. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq stressed on “attention to education figures high in the scale of national priorities”. Accordingly, a motivating environment has been furnished for supporting the march of research and innovation. This translates into the allocation of a ministry mandated with higher education, research and innovation and the establishment of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, with branches in governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The university’s articles of association



in contributing to the comprehensive nation-building march.

Meanwhile, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, who presided over the Omani Youth Day celebration last October, said that the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth launched a smart portal supplied with the latest techniques that make it a prime website for talented youth, artists and innovators.

The attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the youth is also reflected in the Royal support to employment initiatives, a set of which came around in May 2021, when the coronavirus pandemic had its greatest toll on local and global economic conditions, leading to the shrinkage of the labor markets. The Royal attention resulted in the launch of an executive plan to provide more than 32,000 jobs.

His Majesty the Sultan also chaired a meeting of the Supervisory Committee of the National Employment Programme (NEP) on July 5, 2021. This placed employment in the realm of national priorities. His Majesty the Sultan reiterated the importance of the NEP when he presided over a Council of Ministers on June 15, 2021, during which he gave directives for “devising suitable solutions to provide jobs in all departments of the State (the public sector) and private sector firms, provide analysis of jobseekers’ data and follow them up until they join the labor market”.

Omani women’s affairs take center stage in the Renewed Renaissance thought of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, who has been keen that women enjoy their rights guaranteed by law and operate alongside men in different fields



measures to address the situation. These included the initiation of a medium-term Fiscal Balance Plan (2020-2023). In April 2021, His Majesty the Sultan chaired a meeting of the main committee tasked with the National Programme for Fiscal Balance to follow up the progress of the programme in its second year. The programme was designed to bring down general debt and to secure financial sustainability.

His Majesty the Sultan endorsed the initiatives submitted by the departments concerned in a bid to develop the schema of social protection. This affirms His Majesty the Sultan’s follow-up of the conditions of citizens to ensure the sustenance of decent livelihood for them and to alleviate the fallout of this challenging stage.

The 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), the first leg in the executive plan of the Oman Vision 2040, is based on four axes comprising 14 national priorities, 88 strategic goals and 68 performance indicators.

The 10th Five-Year Plan seeks to achieve a number of goals, such as activating the economy, upgrading the efficiency of management of public finance, realizing balance among measures for rationalization of public spending, espousing disciplined financial expansion policies, accelerating the rate of implementation of major strategic projects and government-private partnership projects, attracting more direct foreign investments, visualizing growth trends based on expected oil price rate of USD 48 per barrel during years of the plan, and enhancing governorates’ participation in achieving goals of the Oman Vision 2040.

The plan targets average annual growth of 3.2% in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through emphasis on promising economic sectors like converting industries of high technological content, agriculture, fisheries, fish farming, food and agriculture industrialization, transport, warehousing and logistics.

Total estimated revenues of the State Budget 2021 stood at RO 8.64 billion calculated on the basis of oil price rate of USD 45.

The Governorates Development Programme, which emerged in implementation of Royal directives, will allocate RO 10 million to each governorate during the period of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) — at a rate of RO 2 million a year. The programme envisages the execution of 28 strategic programmes and it will contribute to the goals of the Oman Vision 2040.

The Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP), endorsed by the Council of Ministers in March 2021 is based on five axes comprising incentives on taxes, fees and incentives for the improvement of the business and investment climate,

In the same context, the Duqm College was established in September 2021, in the Governorate of Al Wusta at the Special Economic Zone in Duqm. The university is governed by the laws regulating universities and colleges in the Sultanate of Oman and the hopes attached on the National Research and Development Strategy 2040 in line with the Oman Vision 2040. Royal directives to set up six schools to the tune of RO 8,850,000 will raise the number of scholarly institutions to 2,430 schools, 11 government and private universities and 18 private colleges.

Under its Renewed Renaissance, Oman continued to accord attention to environment protection, both at the local and global levels. To this effect, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued a Royal Decree in August 2021 to establish the Khor Kharfouh Nature Reserve in the Governorate of Dhofar, taking the number of such sanctuaries to 21. The Sultanate of Oman also ratified many international agreements related to the environment protection and legislations for the same purpose at the local level.

The decline and fluctuation in oil prices and precautionary measures to address the impacts of Covid-19 affected the economies of many countries of the world. Since Oman is not isolated from the global community, it had to take

incentives for small and medium enterprises, incentives for the labor market and recruitment, banking incentives aimed to rally efforts for the alleviation of Covid-19 impacts on the national economy and other incentives to promote economic recovery, back up economic activities and attract foreign investments.

These financial procedures, topped by the medium-term Fiscal Balance Plan, showed positive results as Oman registered growth in total revenues by 22.6% and a 58% decline in deficit by the end of September 2021.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expected in a report issued in September 2021 that economic activities in the Sultanate of Oman will recover and that Oman will achieve 2.5% GDP growth in 2021 and 4.2% growth by 2023. The IMF also commended the measures undertaken by Oman while addressing the fallout of Covid-19, as well as the country’s fiscal discipline and enhancement of business environment and support for stricken economic sectors.

The measures undertaken by Oman improved its credit rating in various agencies, including Moody’s, which amended the Sultanate of Oman’s rating from “negative” to “stable” in October 2021. Moody’s expected that public debt in Oman vis-à-vis the GDP will decline from 80% in 2020 to 60% in 2024, as well as the decline of the annual government funding needs to GDP from 22% to 10%. Standard and Poor’s also amended its future outlook for Oman from “stable” to “positive”.

Meanwhile, Fitch pointed out last May that the Fiscal Plan contributed to the improvement of scenario for Oman’s financial position and expected a 6.1% decline of budget deficit to GDP this year (2021). It also expected a 3.3% economic growth for Oman by next year (2022).

The government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq created an investment-encouraging environment through legislations, ports, free zones and logistics, coupled with a unique strategic location in the meeting point of global commercial markets, political stability and security.

The ports of Duqm, Salalah and Sohar boast a range of advanced facilities that enabled them to achieve quick finalization of tasks and cut the distance between world ports. This is in addition to the free zones in Duqm, Al Mazayouna, Salalah and Sohar and upcoming Khazaaen hub in the Governorate of South Al Batinah. Investment incentives like tax exemptions extending to more than 30 years and foreigners’ 100% ownership of properties, among other incentives, add another fillip to Oman’s position.

The political and regional changes that happened during the Renewed Renaissance period proved that the Sultanate of Oman’s foreign policy stands on firm grounds. Oman advocates principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, positive contribution to safeguarding international security, promoting common public interest through dialogue and understanding among countries and nations.

These principles were affirmed by Oman before the 76th UN General Assembly in New York last September. “Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Sultanate of Oman pursues its commitment to the basic fundamentals



of its foreign policy embodied in good neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, respect for international law and international charters and support for cooperation among countries. Oman considers the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and through harmony and tolerance as a civilized conduct that leads to better and more lasting results than disputes can achieve.”

Oman’s persistent strive to serve global peace stems from its support for many initiatives and issues, like its backing to the positive developments emanating from Al Ula Summit in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Oman hailed the success of the efforts of reconciliation led by the State of Kuwait. In international podiums, Oman continued to reiterate the legitimacy of the Palestinian cause and the demands of Palestinian people. It also supported the settlement of the Yemeni issue through comprehensive political settlement, working in line with initiatives of Saudi Arabia and the UN and UN envoys. This is beside Oman’s stand for peaceful handling of the Iranian nuclear file and Oman’s continuous condemnation of all types of terrorism.

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Sultanate of Oman adhered to commitment to truthfulness and objectivity through its political stands enhanced by its original values of moderateness.

His Majesty the Sultan’s visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in July 2021 and his meeting with King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is a strong evidence of deep-rooted relations between the two countries. This first visit of its kind culminated in the establishment of the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council and opened wide vistas of cooperation between the two countries in different fields, particularly economic areas.

National days of countries constitute symbols of pride and dignity. In Oman, they are moments of contemplation of the past and the future of the country, a time to remember the Founder of Modern Oman and its Blessed Renaissance, the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour. His memory pulsates in the heart of every Omani man and woman, who incessantly pray for him in gratitude for his good deeds for the nation and its loyal people. The achievements made by the late Sultan Qaboos are stark and manifest in every sphere of life. He sowed and cultivated true faith in the people.

From our past experiences, we have to derive new, strong will and firm resolve to work in full cooperation and collaboration — rallying our resources and energies and exhibiting self-denial in performing our duty in a manner that facilitates all difficulties and overcomes all challenges as we embark on accomplishing our national missions for the good of Oman and its noble people.

