

Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the occasion of the 24th National Day

18/11/1994

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

'Praise be to God, Who hath sent to His Servant The Book, and hath allowed therein no deviation. And peace be upon His Prophet and His devoted Followers.'

Dear Countrymen,

FULFILLING the promise we made at the same time last year, we consequently meet in the City of history, learning and heritage. In the citadel where the glory of our country originated - the City of Nizwa. The City which has played a distinguished role in the progress of Omani civilisation; the City that still illuminates with its grace and eminence. The City which has been the home of great leaders and the sanctuary of intellectuals, scholars, poets and men of literature. This great City has a special place in the hearts of our Omani people. Notwithstanding the era of stagnation in the past, this great City is now rising to the heights of its ancient splendour through the achievements of recent years. We hope that our decision to celebrate this Year of Heritage on its soil marks a turning point that will put it on the path to another stage in its continuing evolution in various fields of life.

The celebration of the 24th Anniversary of Oman's Renaissance in this historic City commemorates the renewal of its civilizing role in the life of our great and precious country, in its drive to realise, with God's help, the hopes and aspirations of our people.

We commenced the process of development and evolution comparatively recently. Our weapons in the fight against backwardness, and the challenges we have encountered, have been the stern and wholehearted determination that our people have displayed.

Through this hard work and support to the leadership by all our people the successful development of our country is to be seen everywhere. These achievements justify our faith in a glorious future for our country. We thank God for His generosity and guidance in our efforts. We call upon

Him to continue to extend His grace to us.

Countrymen,

Oman, throughout its very long history, has contributed to the building of human civilization, a contribution that is universally acknowledged and renowned.

The strategic location of this country, the lively spirit which took Omanis to all corners of the world - sailing the seas, facing the dangers, exploring new horizons, and reaching out to other peoples with their traditions and cultures - all these factors had a lasting effect on the civilization that was built by our forefathers and succeeding generations. This civilization is now a living heritage embodying and reflecting the saga of our history, and the deep rooted richness of the Omani experience.

If we are, Countrymen, to take pride in the great heritage that we have received from our ancestors, this pride must not be our ultimate aim. We should not live in the past. That is the character of those who have no determined attitude towards the future. And that is certainly not the character of the Omani. He possesses the vibrant energy and active spirit that can carry him forward to the furthest horizons. Nothing can deter him. It is therefore our duty to our forefathers to emulate and surpass their achievements. Those achievements act as the stimulus to attain more development, in harmony with modern life and scientific evolution. Otherwise our destiny would certainly be the shameful backwardness of those who have lost their strength and courage, and are mentally paralysed and apathetic in their attitude to life.

There is no doubt that history has proved that nations do not advance and develop without the continuous renewal of their ideas. This also applies to individuals and peoples. Failure in this respect results in fatal consequences. Therefore, we have determined, from the first day of our Renaissance not to succumb to this disease.

We have maintained and preserved our identity and intellectual inheritance, and we have adopted every means for development and modernization. It has been very clear to us that our heritage is not only represented by forts, castles and ancient buildings, but by spiritual customs and traditions, by science, art and literature, transmitted by one generation to another. The real preservation of heritage will not be accomplished unless we understand this, and cherish it. With God's help we have succeeded in the past years in achieving the greater part of this noble national goal.

Our decision to celebrate this year as the Year of National Heritage is a means to emphasise the value of our inheritance and to preserve the knowledge and the feeling on the part of our people that the present is indissolubly linked with the past, and that their future will be the result of their work both in that past and the present. If everyone contributes to the fullest extent of his knowledge and personal resources to our country, the future stability and prosperity of our country will be safely assured.

There was a high purpose in our efforts to prepare the Omani people in order to dedicate themselves to the service of their country. To do so, it was essential to provide comprehensive education for all, and to link this education with our culture and historic traditions, on the one hand and with all elements of modern life on the other. Therefore, schools and institutes have been established everywhere in Oman, and they are increasing in quantity and quality according to community requirements and the policy designed to meet them. From this base and since the teaching of Islamic studies at university level is currently being conducted by several different Government bodies, with different curricula, which could result in anomalies in graduates' levels of educational knowledge and thought, it is our desire to unite the responsibility for this teaching in one establishment in order to improve and enhance this education. We have therefore issued our orders to study the establishment of a new College of Jurisprudence and Law in Muscat that will produce graduates in all branches of these disciplines. This will provide Oman with the qualified persons it needs. In addition, a study is now being pursued for the establishment of a Higher Institution in Nizwa which will provide members of the Judiciary for the courts. The entrants to this Institution will be university graduates in Jurisprudence and Law. On graduation they will be awarded a Higher Diploma as members of the Judiciary.

The challenges of the future are enormous. Enlightened mentality, comprehensive knowledge and high technical skills are the essentials to meet them. Therefore, it is necessary for the education system to work hard to provide these requirements in good time in order to achieve these goals in the development of the community, so the community may keep pace with those in other fields. This is the task that the education system must shoulder. It is the duty of everyone of us to work for its success.

Dear Countrymen,

Security and stability for all nations comes from God's grace. Under their protection the nations can be free to progress and flourish, and utilise their capabilities to the full. The talents of the individual cannot blossom unless he and his family feel secure. Therefore it is one of the prime duties

of the State at all times to guarantee this security. If this security is removed then destruction and anarchy will result. It follows that it is the duty of every citizen to be the guardian of all the nation's achievements that were won by the devotion and sacrifice of our people. It is also their duty not to allow alien ideas, masquerading as beneficial promises, to jeopardise the security and stability of this country. They must be cautious and impress upon others to be so - to reject such approaches. They must hold fast to the principles of Islam that call upon us to have a spirit of tolerance, intimacy and love.

Extremism, under whatever guise, fanaticism of whatever kind, factionalism of whatever persuasion would be hateful poisonous plants in the soil of our country which will not be allowed to flourish.

Almighty God has sent down the Holy Koran with wisdom and clarity. He set out in it the general principles and Laws of Jurisprudence, but He did not express these in details which might differ from place to place and time to time. He did so to enable us to interpret the Law of Islam according to its basic principles and the requirements of life. When Islam spread following the time of the Prophet, new questions arose when Muslims needed to know Islamic answers to these questions. What did they do? They resorted to interpretation in an attempt to find suitable answers. As a result, they proved that Islamic Law was capable of dealing with any situation. Unfortunately, the backwardness of Muslims in recent times rendered them incapable of making use of their inheritance, and they did not even try to renew it, by reference to the original principles and bases, in order to solve the problems that arose in their lives. The least thing we can mention about this stagnation, which the Muslims themselves accepted, does not accord with the nature of Islam which calls upon us to adopt intellectual development and face the challenges that confront us at any time and in any environment, by drawing correct logic and suitable solutions from Islamic teachings of the past. It is really sad that this stagnation resulted in a weakness of the Muslim nation, which, in recent years, has brought about fanaticism based on a lack of knowledge among the Muslim youth about the correct facts of their religion. This was exploited by some to perpetrate violence and propagate cases of difference that led to discord and hatred. Therefore, in order that Muslims should not remain backward, while others advance, they are required by the Law of Islam to rectify this situation, and renew and revise their thinking, so they can apply the right solutions to modern problems that are facing the Islamic community. Thus they can show the world the reality of Islam, and its principles which are applicable to all times and places.

Obstinacy in religious understanding leads to backwardness in

Muslims, prevalence of violence and intolerance. This, as a matter of fact, is far removed from Islam which rejects exaggeration and bigotry, because it is the religion of liberality.

Countrymen,

Our world that we live in has become interlinked, in many of its economic, social and political concerns. On that account, our firm position that we have always adopted will remain the basic principle for our foreign policy and our assessment of our dealings with the countries that pursue the same or a similar principle.

Our observance of the world in the past few years has given us reason for optimism. Countries have become convinced, more than at any time before, that armed conflicts are no longer justifiable, but obstruct development and endanger international peace and security. Human logic and feelings are supporting this tendency as a historic phenomenon the world has never seen before. However, on the other hand, we have seen with regret that the propensity of mankind to violence towards himself has increased, embodied in the aggression of one group against others within communities. It has become clear that all countries must co-operate to put an end to this internal violence which is jeopardising the fabric of communities in the world. The results of this could extend to many places if international efforts are not made to help nations and peoples who are suffering from this phenomenon to find the right solution.

Dear People,

Peace is a principle in which we believe and a goal which we are striving to achieve without ceasing and without excess in accordance with what Almighty God has said: 'But if the enemy incline towards peace, Do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God'.

We have observed all paths of peace processes in the Middle East, and what has been achieved in making important steps on the Palestinian and Jordanian sides has given the world an excellent example that deserves the full support and acclaim of all of us.

Israel is required today, more than at any time before, to take steps on the Syrian and Lebanese side to bring about a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

On this occasion, we hail the role played by Jordan and His Majesty King Hussein, to support the peace process and all positive results from it.

Countrymen,

We take the opportunity on this great occasion to greet you on this anniversary of this Glorious Day. We call upon Almighty and All-Powerful God to grant that we shall meet on the 25th Anniversary, having achieved the goals for which we have striven. We extend a special greeting to our vigilant Armed Forces and all security organisations for their unceasing work to guarantee stability to our Omani community and protect the achievements of our Blessed Renaissance. While we take pride in their efforts, we re-affirm our continued support for them in increasing their high efficiency and competence, and in facilitating the fulfilment of their noble national duty.

We ask Almighty God to protect our beloved Oman from all evils and enemies. We pray to the Almighty to grant us all the success we need on our long road towards glory, honour and achievement.

