

# **Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the occasion of the 26th National Day**

**18/11/1996**

*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

*We thank God for His Great and Generous Blessings, and may Prayers and Peace be upon His Prophet.*

Dear Countrymen,

IT is our profound pleasure to be with you today on the soil of this brilliant city, with its great history and splendid heritage - the city of Sur. A city renowned for its glorious seafaring traditions in which all sons of Oman take pride.

Yes, from this historic city the Omani dhows sailed forth over the seas and oceans like white clouds, carrying a message of blessing to all mankind. Those dhows returned from their voyages laden with the produce of many lands in a mutually beneficial exchange. This seaborne intercourse resulted in Oman becoming one of the world's greatest commercial centres over the centuries.

Esteemed Countrymen,

As we celebrate here the twenty-sixth Anniversary of our glorious National Day, in an atmosphere redolent of our ancient maritime past, we express our great pride in Oman's seafaring history, which was written by those great ships that traversed the broad oceans carrying the pride and power of our country and its desire to foster friendly relations with all nations. We wish to remind the new generation of the high purpose of their forefathers who braved the storms of the violent seas in order to provide us with a wholesome standard of living.

The Omani youth who look forward to glorious horizons are called upon today to take their ancestors as an example of diligence, hard work, patience, persistence and sustained effort. They are also called upon to believe, as they believed, that productive work - no matter how small it is - is a key element in the structure of the nation. The foundation will be strengthened and the pillars will be raised higher. This must be the goal

for which all must seek and relentlessly strive with humility.

With productive work, there will be no place in our society for idle hands, which must have no role in the process of our evolution and progress.

Our dear People,

We have referred in our speech on the Jubilee occasion of Oman's Renaissance to the need to define our vision of future development, based on clear policies and goals, utilising all available technical, scientific and other resources.

As you know, we aim, guided by this vision, to prepare ourselves for the 21st Century in enabling the Omani economy to achieve its strategic evolution. Thus our economy will no longer be dependent on Government expenditure, oil resources and foreign workers, but it will enter a better and more comprehensive phase, based on private initiative, nationally-trained workers, and sustained established resources. This will result, with God's permission, and in a definite period, in improving the standard of living of the Omani citizens, in guaranteeing their welfare, wherever they are, based upon this vigorous development in every field. We, from this rostrum on this glorious day, reaffirm our intention to implement this vision and pursue its plans and programmes, employing all available resources and under the best possible conditions, to ensure its success.

It must be borne in mind that the understanding of the Omani citizen of the perspective of this vision, his positive interaction with it, his contribution to the achievement of its goals, and his efforts to exploit the opportunities this offers, are essential to the creation of the necessary atmosphere that will ensure its success. Without this interaction and contribution there will be formidable obstacles, possibly leading to a result which, God forbid, would not meet our hopes and expectations. Therefore, every Omani must contribute to his maximum potential to the creation of a suitable environment and fertile soil that will enable Oman to go forward to its promising future.

The current Five-Year Development Plan is the first step on the road to the realization of this vision. It is the executive programme that will ensure the achievement of the balanced economy, the continued growth, the development of human and natural resources and the distinguished role of the private sector that will enable that sector to successfully undertake its vital responsibilities and patriotic duty to our country. We must all work wholeheartedly for its Renaissance and glory.

Respected Countrymen,

The current Five-Year Plan has specially financially provided for education and vocational training in order to qualify the Omani workforce to progressively replace foreigners. It is vital that this education and training should continually improve in order to meet the needs of the labour market in both skilled and semi-skilled Omani personnel. It should be remembered that there are numerous training opportunities in both Government educational establishments and in private institutes. Omani youth must take advantage of these opportunities, which open the way for them to a fruitful career.

It is also essential for the whole of our society to be aware of the importance of technological education and to encourage, promote and support it, as has been the case in those societies elsewhere that preceded us.

In addition to our determination to develop our human resources, we are working to utilize our natural wealth in enlarging and diversifying our economic base. Our LNG project comes within this field. It is one of the big steps which aims at finding diversified infinite sources for our income. The implementation of this project will result in substantial economic returns, one of which will be the achievement of additional financial resources for our future development plans, and another the injection of added strength to our national working capital. It will also provide wide support for the people of the city of Sur and neighbouring areas, in the fields of public services, property, tourism, banking, industry, the acquirement of new skills and employment.

In order to exploit the great strategic importance of the Sultanate's geographical location, an agreement was signed last month for the establishment and operation of an international container port at Raysut. This project is recognised as one of the most significant in maritime commerce. It will contribute directly to the powerful stimulation of our national commerce and industry. It is clear that this project will offer many opportunities for our people at all technical and educational levels. It is certain that this agreement is an achievement which secures one of the main objectives of our economic vision.

In accord with the strategic-vision of the Omani economy and in response to the way in which international co-operation is progressing, which is illustrating the growing importance of large economic groupings, the Sultanate has actively participated, during the past month, in laying down the foundation for the formation of an Economic Bloc of Indian

Ocean countries. This Bloc will aim at enlarging commercial exchanges and economic integration in many ways, for example: promotion of tourism, direct investment, human resources and the sharing of technology, without infringing upon existing regional co-operation commitments. The Indian Ocean has always been the main gateway for the Omanis' voyages to the countries on its shores, and beyond. We are here today to link our shining present with our historic past, within this new framework which embraces countries with historical commercial ties, and mutual economic interests and goals.

Esteemed Countrymen,

It is very clear that the State is emphasising the great importance of the diversification of the national economy and of providing work and training opportunities for its people. However, this is not all that we are striving for in order to fit our people for their future. In our opinion, this cannot be accomplished solely by giving them materialistic advantages and careers in the Government and private sectors, but by instilling in our people an awareness of the importance of national discipline, and equipping them with education and culture. Therefore the citizen will be fully conscious of his nation's interests, far-sighted, capable of serving his country, and of participating in the making of the right decisions at all levels within the social structure.

In the past year of our Blessed Renaissance we have continued to build our national structure. One of the most important steps in this field has been the progressive introduction, first, by way of the Consultative Council, and then by the establishment of the Majlis Ash'shura, of the participation of the people in deliberating upon the nation's affairs, and in offering their opinions upon them, thus contributing to the making of national State decisions.

We thank Almighty God, who has given us this successful experiment. Therefore, we have decided to take further steps to enlarge the area of consultation, which was ordained by our religion, with the establishment of a new, additional council, the State Council. This Council, with the Majlis Ash'shura, will be a positive body enhancing the constructive co-operation between the Government and the people, for the benefit of the public interest. This Council will be composed of Omanis, appointed by us, with the experience and capabilities to enrich the consultation process.

Crowning the efforts of a quarter of a century of fruitful work, we have issued, as you will know, our esteemed Countrymen, the Basic Statute of

the State, which is the distillation of the experience gained over the past years. This historic document has provided the blueprint for the system of governance, the principles for the direction of policies, public rights and duties, and the responsibilities and authority of the Head of State, the Cabinet and the Judiciary. The document also establishes the formal position of the specialised councils, financial affairs and the Council of Oman. The Basic Statute also applies to Royal Decrees and other enactments to come.

The Basic Statute of the State provides the main base for the continuance of progress and development. We call upon Almighty God to bless it with His care in order that it may reach fruition:

"He has the power to exercise His will.

He is the best to protect, the best to help."

Dear Countrymen,

Almighty God has blessed our region with affluent resources, but, above all, energy. On account of these resources many of these countries have become close. Thus, these countries support the stability of the region in order to guarantee their interests. In the light of this fact, it is clear that the stability in this vital part of the world and the continuing security and tranquillity in its society are subject to the extent of the ability of the States of the region not to provoke the international community, either by threatening its interests or by interfering in the affairs of others, no matter for what reasons. Therefore it is the duty of all to adhere firmly to the principles of peaceful coexistence between States and to respect international law, in order to avert the causes of instability and enable the region to continue its growth and prosperity. It is nothing new to say that the States of the Gulf Co-operation Council exert every effort in this direction for the maintenance of the great achievements that we have won in the past years. It is certain that the building of trust between the States of the Council, and their desire not to permit differences in their opinions, which might occur from time to time, to distract them from their great goal of stability, economic integration and social prosperity are the major factors in consolidating the pillars of security, tranquillity, and the continuance of development. The interaction of the interests of the region's peoples will strengthen the ties that bind them, and will enhance the cooperation between them which springs from a common religion, blood ties, neighbourliness and mutual interests.

We now move to our whole Arab world. We reconfirm that we have

supported the Middle East Peace Process and that we still support it. Notwithstanding the obstacles that arise at one time or another, it has been seen that firm facts have been achieved in the Palestinian land, and that there are more important facts which we are pressing forward to establish.

It is essential to say, esteemed Countrymen, that the Peace Process in itself is an historic work, a noble goal from which it will not be possible to deviate, because of temporary changes in the policies of parties to the problem. It is a continuous process that will never cease, with God's help, until a peace is reached, harmony prevails and all are blessed with security and safety.

Dear People,

It is our pleasure, as we celebrate this great day together, and remember the glories of the past and the achievements of the present, and express our ambitions for the future, to salute and congratulate all of you. We especially salute our valiant Armed Forces, and the Security Services, whose unfailing vigilance ensures the safety of our country and people.

Almighty God has been with us in all our endeavours. We thank Him for all He has given to us. We raise our hands to Him, calling to Him from the depths of our hearts to bestow upon us the blessings of prosperity and glory. We call upon Him to permit us to meet next year in Salalah, the city of tradition and glory. .

May God bless you all.

