

A shining example...

By **KHALAF AHMAD AL HABTOOR**



This 43rd UAE National Day, marking the day in 1971 when our flag was hoisted high for the very first time, is one of the most joyous occasions on the Emirati calendar, and rightly so.

Most people feel a sense of pride in their country and its achievements. It's only natural to feel affection for one's own soil which holds so many memories and, indeed, even as a young man in Dubai – then part of the Trucial States under Britain's protection – I was proud of my roots. But when the UK announced that the treaty would soon be null and void, there was a cloud of great uncertainty around all of us, while at the same time we were overjoyed that we were about to gain our independence. How could we defend ourselves? Would we be able to stave off the big sharks swimming all around? One of those sharks, the Shah of Iran, took the opportunity to rob us of three islands even before the treaty was terminated.

We suffered hardships without realising that life was hard. We were without necessities, let alone luxuries, but in their place were powerful extended family bonds. Our treasure was dignity, honesty and trustworthiness. Our jewels were our parents, our siblings and our children. Those values have endured throughout the decades.

Emiratis are proud of who they are, of the society they have created, which is one of very few multicultural places on earth that enjoys stability, security, peace and harmony. Now we have so much more to be proud of, thanks to our rulers who came together to build a strong unified nation that forges ahead. Led by the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and Dubai's ruler Shaikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, together they created a blueprint for the future. They gave us the gift of self-confidence; they pushed us to work hard; they asked us to make sacrifices for our new country. We didn't mind. We trusted those exceptional human beings with our lives.

Whereas once our forefathers dove for pearls, my generation and those that followed have created a regional diamond reflecting innovation, progressive thinking and opportunity. Ours is a nation of firsts, not because we want to boast of our achievements, but as a small country, we needed to inscribe our place on the map. I still remember a time when people I met abroad would say, "The UAE? Where's that?" We couldn't achieve worldwide recognition by being average or ordinary. The only route was the pursuit of excellence. Of course, nowadays everyone who isn't living in a cave has heard of the Emirates, a name that's become synonymous with success.

The UAE offers lifestyles that are second to none. Our cutting-edge infrastructure is world-renowned. We have the finest educational institutes and medical facilities anywhere. And those of us who respect the laws of the land enjoy freedoms people in Western countries can only dream about. Sure, they have a vote. They can choose their representatives. But, in all honesty, who can say with hand on heart that their choice has ever made a real difference.

Democracy, which was delivered to Afghanistan and Iraq on the back of a bomb, is nothing but a con. People imagine they are empowered when, in reality, they have very little power. What's more, they are forced to expend all their energies in holding down a job just so they can pay the bills. Millions don't have jobs or even basic shelter. The homeless are flooding the streets of major Western cities. There are people sleeping in their cars or under bridges. Others queue outside churches or charitable institutions for a hot meal. Families survive on food stamps. And what do human rights organisations say? Nothing; they're too busy undermining countries in the Middle East and Latin America for supposed human rights abuses.

The Western interpretation of human rights principles is not ours. We don't walk by a person who falls down ill in the street. We don't abandon our parents in places where they die among strangers or throw our teenagers into the street to fend for themselves. We provide everything a citizen needs for a decent life in an aesthetically beautiful, safe environment, energised by economic growth and fertile soil for new ideas. Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, once said, "Authority is to serve the people, not control them." His government's objective, he says, is to make the citizens of this country happy. Have you ever heard a Western president or prime minister say anything similar?

For decades, we were like students eager to learn as much as we could. We sent our children to Western universities; we hired the finest expertise and were open to advice from foreign experts. Now that the UAE has reached maturity, the pupil has overtaken the master. On this, our 43rd anniversary, celebrated on December 2, I invite the world to learn from us how to do things better.

Your Views ...

Concrete proposals

IREGRET comments about Turkey in the editorial "West's Flirtation with Terrorists a Poor Joke" by Mr Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor (GDN, November 24). Against the writer's unfounded accusations about Turkey, I would make the following comments...

"Turkey, being targeted by numerous terrorist groups, has a long and painful experience in its fight against terrorism. For decades now, Turkey has learned a lot from its decisive counter-terrorism efforts, including the fact that international solidarity, coherent action and co-operation are crucial in countering terrorism. For this very reason, Turkey is a state party to most of the United Nations and the Council of Europe conventions and protocols on terrorism, and it actively supports all the regional and international efforts in that direction.

The Daish terrorism is the latest menace alerting the international community. Turkey, in this regard, has designated it as a terrorist organisation since 2005, under its previous

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names and revised it by its new name on October 10, 2013. Turkey is one of the main targets of the Daish in the region. The Daish has attacked the Turkish Consulate General in Mosul and taken hostage all the consulate staff on June 11, 2014.

The Daish terrorism cannot be disassociated from the entirety of the Syrian conflict and this conflict continuously produces trouble for all the countries. Apparently, the heaviest burden of what is going on in Syria is on the shoulders of the direct neighbouring countries, first and foremost Turkey. Turkey's fights against all kinds of terrorism and extremism for decades now are well known by the international community. Also, Turkey's hosting of around 1.6 million Syrians fleeing from the Daish and the Syrian regime is also crystal clear. Despite these facts, accusing Turkey of turning a blind eye to the Daish is neither fair, nor reasonable.

Fight against terrorism requires closer co-operation, co-ordination and sharing timely intelligence and information. Equally, selective approaches would only result in limited successes. If the real goal is to create a "terror-free" and "extremism-free" region, then holistic and comprehensive policies are needed, not selective approaches.

A peaceful region free from terrorism



■ A Syrian Kurdish woman crosses the border between Syria and Turkey at the southeastern town of Suruc in Sanliurfa province. Turkey is hosting around 1.6 million Syrians fleeing from the Daish and the Syrian regime.

and all kinds of extremism is what Turkey aims at and that's why Turkey puts forward concrete proposals like no-fly zone with safe areas within the Syrian territory, which is still urgently needed for protecting the Syrians themselves from the current Syrian regime's and the Daish's atrocities.

Instead of citing unfounded and unreasonable accusations, Turkey's critics should try to come out with some constructive counter proposals serving to the same goals."

Hatun Demirer
Ambassador

Only possessions

RELATIONSHIPS naturally take shape in our lives due to the interaction between each other. They may appear in different shapes but the most common relationship is

possession. Maybe we think we can possess things like cars or buildings, and this idea can be easily developed into work positions or perhaps even other human beings such as when someone says to another "I want you or you are mine".

What we really forget is that such relationships are false, for the simple reason that you cannot take them with you when you go. It is not possible to possess anything, yes you can use it, you can care for it, but cannot possess, and yet it's the idea of possession which lies at the heart of all fears and conflict. Fear of loss or fear of not getting what you have already decided is yours in your minds.

Relationships can be elevated and take all the fears away. To be a trustee, everything comes to you in trust, for you to use and then to set it free. The consciousness of trusteeship will set you free of the tension of grasping and

TODAY in history

TODAY is Saturday, December 6, the 340th day of 2014. There are 25 days left in the year. Highlights in history on this date:

- 1534** – Spanish conquistadors establish presence in Quito, an Inca city in the Andes.
- 1790** – Congress moves from New York City to Philadelphia.
- 1857** – British forces recapture Cawnpore in India.
- 1884** – Army engineers complete construction of the Washington monument.
- 1906** – Self-government is granted in Transvaal and Orange River colonies in what is now South Africa.
- 1907** – Frontier between Uganda and East Africa is defined.
- 1916** – Bucharest, capital of Romania, falls to German troops.
- 1917** – Republic of Finland is proclaimed; collision between Belgian and French ammunition ships at Halifax, Nova Scotia, takes 1,600 lives.
- 1921** – Britain signs peace treaty with Ireland establishing Irish Free State, and Ireland accepts Dominion status.
- 1923** – A presidential address is broadcast on radio for the first time as US President Calvin Coolidge speaks to a joint session of Congress.
- 1938** – France and Germany sign pact on inviolability of their frontier.
- 1941** – US President Franklin D Roosevelt appeals for peace to Japan's Emperor Hirohito – one day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. He also authorises the Manhattan Project, which results in the creation of the atomic bomb.
- 1947** – Everglades National Park in Florida is dedicated by US President Harry Truman.
- 1957** – America's first attempt at putting a satellite into orbit blows up on the launch pad at Cape Canaveral, Florida.
- 1959** – UN General Assembly says Togoland should receive independence.
- 1961** – Heavy fighting erupts in Congo's Katanga Province between United Nations and Katanga forces.
- 1971** – South Korea's President Park

Chung-hee warns of danger of invasion from the north and declares national emergency.

- 1975** – US President Gerald Ford arrives in the Philippines for talks on new terms for US air and naval bases there.
- 1978** – A referendum approves constitution returning Spain to democracy.
- 1984** – Death toll rises to 1,600 from gas leak from US-built pesticide plant in Bhopal, India.
- 1987** – Bangladesh government dissolves Parliament amid opposition campaign to topple President Hussain Mohammad Ershad's administration.
- 1988** – Sources say ethnic violence kills at least three people and injured six others in southern republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia.
- 1989** – A car bomb believed to be set by drug traffickers kills 59 in Colombia.
- 1990** – Gen Hussain Mohammed Ershad, who ruled Bangladesh for nine years after coming to power in a coup, steps down at the height of a pro-democracy movement.
- 1991** – Mexican army general orders troops to gun down seven federal drug agents trying to intercept a cocaine shipment.
- 1992** – Hindu extremists destroy an ancient Muslim shrine in the northern town of Ayodhya, India, that they believe Muslim invaders built after destroying a major Hindu temple. Months of nation-wide Hindu-Muslim riots kill about 2,000 people.
- 1993** – Serb forces shell Sarajevo for five hours, taking aim at shoppers bartering for food and mourners burying their dead. Five people are killed and at least 27 wounded.
- 1994** – A 52-nation summit in Budapest charting a new strategy for a more peaceful Europe ends in a deadlock over the Bosnian war.
- 1995** – A huge US transport plane lands at Tuzla, Bosnia airfield to start the first concrete preparations for the Nato peace mission.
- 1996** – A mudslide kills at least eight work-

- ers repairing a dam in north-western Japan.
- 1997** – Yeduda Gil, an agent for Israel's Mossad spy agency, is found to have been feeding Israelis damaging disinformation on Syria for years. This comes on heels of a September scandal – a botched Mossad assassination of a Palestinian figure in Jordan.
- 1998** – Six years after staging a bloody coup attempt, Former Lt Col Hugo Chavez is elected president of Venezuela, dealing a blow to the establishment that ruled the country for 40 years.
- 1999** – NASA says it has not detected a signal from the Mars Polar Lander, two days after it began its ascent to Mars. It is later determined that the robot spacecraft was destroyed following a software glitch.
- 2000** – Israeli troops use excessive force in dispersing Palestinian demonstrators, an Israeli human rights group says in a report.
- 2001** – The Taliban's supreme Leader agrees to surrender Kandahar, the militia's birthplace and position of last stand in Afghanistan, to tribal forces and puts himself under the protection of tribal leaders.
- 2002** – Israeli forces kill 10 Palestinians, including two United Nations Relief and Works Agency school employees, during a pre-dawn incursion into the Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.
- 2004** – Islamic militants set off explosives and shoot their way into the heavily guarded US consulate in Jeddah.
- 2005** – A military plane loaded with Iranian journalists slams into a Tehran apartment building as it attempts to make an emergency landing. At least 115 people are killed including passengers and residents of the building.
- 2006** – After decades of dictatorship and wars, Congo swears in its first freely elected president since 1960, installing Joseph Kabila, the son of a rebel leader, who promises a new era of order.
- 2007** – A landmine explosion blamed on Tamil separatists tears through a passenger bus crowded with civilians in northern Sri Lanka, killing at least 16 people and

wounding 22 others.

- 2008** – Amsterdam unveils plans to close brothels, sex shops and marijuana cafes in its ancient city centre as part of a major effort to drive organised crime out of the tourist haven.
- 2009** – Delegates converge for the grand finale of two years of tough, sometimes bitter negotiations on a climate change treaty, as UN officials calculated that pledges offered in the last few weeks to reduce greenhouse gases put the world within reach of keeping global warming under control.
- 2010** – A French court convicts Continental Airlines and one of its mechanics of manslaughter for setting off a chain of events that sent a supersonic Concorde crashing into a hotel outside Paris a decade ago, killing 113 people and marking the beginning of the sleek jet's demise.
- 2011** – In Afghanistan's first major sectarian assault since the fall of the Taliban regime a decade ago, a suicide bomber slaughters 56 Shi'ite worshippers and wounds more than 160 others outside a shrine in the capital.
- 2012** – Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi offers nothing concrete to defuse the country's worst political crisis in nearly two years in a nationally televised speech, refusing to rescind a disputed constitution drafted by his allies or his decrees giving him near absolute powers.
- 2013** – Thousands of Christian civilians seek refuge at an airport guarded by French soldiers, fleeing from mostly Muslim ex-rebels who rule the country after the worst day of violence to hit the chaotic capital in nine months.

WHAT THEY SAID

IN dreams begins responsibility – William Butler Yeats, Irish Nobel Prize-winning poet (1865-1939).