

Oman is on track for a prosperous future

The late Sultan Qaboos believed that his successor would add a new dimension to Oman's development journey

MOHAMMED MAHFOODH AL ARDHI

On January 10, 2020, Oman's 79-year-old ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, passed away, leaving behind a great legacy built over a period of five eventful decades. During his reign, the seasoned politician and celebrated global peacemaker used his wisdom and vast knowledge to build the foundations of progress across Oman and improve the lives of its people, while offering valuable support to the country's allies from the region and beyond.

The late Sultan Qaboos followed a wise neutral policy and often played the role of mediator between countries. This was a tactical approach in a fast-changing world, where conflicts can lead to tensions and have a long-term detrimental impact on all nations involved.

The late Sultan Qaboos was deeply interested in the Omani, Arab and religious heritage, as well as Arabic language, literature and history. During his lifetime, he supported multiple cultural projects launched or executed by regional and global organisations.

His contributions in this arena include the Sultan Qaboos Encyclopedia of Arab Names and Quran memorisation projects across the Arab region. He also founded the Sultan Qaboos Prize



Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq made the televised address on Sunday.

for Environmental Preservation – a biennial award sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) – and contributed to the UNESCO initiative 'Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue'.

The late Sultan firmly believed in dialogue and peace-

ful solutions. In this context, he launched the Sultan Qaboos Declaration Project on United Human Values that aims to promote understanding and friendly relations among the people of the world.

Developing local talent and equipping Omani citizens with the tools to build a better future

was always a top priority for him. Leaving behind a capable peaceful, stable and flourishing nation that will continue his legacy, the late ruler chose Sultar Haitham bin Tariq Al Said as the new Sultan of Oman. He firmly believed that his successor would add a new dimension to our nation's development jour-

World's largest artificial coral reef is an important

MUSTAFA AL RAWI

From the Great Barrier Reef to the Arabian Gulf and beyond, protecting the seas and oceans – and the life that teems within them – is about as urgent an issue as you could hope to find

More than a decade ago, the rise of social media, mobile connectivity and a growing awareness of the crisis of the natural world helped conservationists, scientists and environmental activists begin to work together in real time to monitor and respond to the damage that human activity was doing to plant and animal life across continents.

At the government level, simultaneously, an increasing focus on the risks of climate change resulted in more resources being put into the research needed to shape more sustainable policies.

There was a time when both these trends seemed to be moving in lockstep. The momentum resulted in almost all countries agreeing on taking action and setting targets.

Since the financial crisis erupted in 2007 and with a job market disrupted by faster technological change, priorities for many governments shifted. However, individuals who had been working in labs and organisations, and who have led the fight against the impact of climate change, have not slowed their efforts. Rather it has been the opposite. Meanwhile, some both national and local governments have stayed focused on what is now a climate emergency.

It is worth putting a spotlight on these efforts.

For example, the UAE is to create the world's largest artificial coral reef off the east coast of Fujairah, including about 300,000



Ras Ghanada coral reef off the coast of Abu Dhabi. The UAE is to create the world's largest artificial coral reef off the east coast of Fujairah.

mature adult colonies – about the size of three football pitches – in a single location.

The Fujairah Cultured Coral Reef Gardens is an ambitious undertaking, and the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment says it is part of its efforts

to protect the UAE's biodiversity and champion sustainability.

There are food security implications, too. The gardens will be a haven for a large number of local fish species, including the hammour and sheri, which are over-exploited, threatening their

long-term survival. It is a project that requires collaboration beyond borders. Conservationists from the Florida Keys in the US will help local marine biologists to grow coral.

The impact of climate change on the natural habitats in the

waters around the UAE and its neighbours has been seen most starkly during a record hot summer three years ago that left almost all of Abu Dhabi's coral coverbleached and struggling to survive.

From the Great Barrier Reef