**Legend of Qaboos**

Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani January 24, 2020

In my writings, I always try to pay tribute to all such great personalities that make a mark in human history. The purpose is to acknowledge the hard work and enthusiasm of visionary leaders, due to which they succeeded to lead their countries on the path of development.

The news of the death of Oman Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed has saddened me. No doubt, the contributions of the late Sultan for moving his country towards peace and prosperity are remarkable. His death was given extensive coverage by national and foreign media. In this regard, I read out different articles and columns on the internet and in newspapers.

Pakistan and Oman have a close association through historical, cultural and religious ties. Gwadar, today’s important backbone in the success of the CPEC project Gwadar, was a part of Oman till 1958. At that time, local people used to travel to Oman through boats. Even, today many Baloch people are residing in Oman. This is why Urdu and Balochi are widely spoken and understood in Oman.

Just five decades ago, Oman was one of the most backward countries of the region. During the 1960s, when young prince Qaboos came back to his country after pursuing higher studies from British and European institutions, he was too disturbed to observe the country’s situation. He had two options: to surrender before the circumstances or take a bold step to engrave his name in history.

In the long-term interest of his country, Sultan Qaboos toppled his father’s government and took the charge of his country. It was a dark period in the history of Oman. Omani residents were living below the poverty line. Tribal rivalries were on the rise and the government had been unable to crush rebellions. The law and order situation was also badly disturbed. Keeping this in view, Sultan Qaboos decided to review the conservative policies of the state.

He was of the view that in order to achieve peace and prosperity, Oman should not participate in any kind of conflicts and thus, following his determination, he resolved all bilateral border disputes with neighbouring countries in a smooth way. He also ensured peace and stability inside his country and initiated dialogue with all opponents. Rather than taking revenge, Sultan Qaboos took practical steps for the inclusion of rebels in national mainstream, and focused on upgrading the lifestyle of the public.

There are so many achievements attributed to the great Sultan. National institutes were established and appointment of eligible officials on merit was made. The Omani army was provided professional training. Utilizing the capital earned through oil export, best quality infrastructure was developed. However, the most amazing achievement of Sultan Qaboos was the formulation of an independent and neutral foreign policy.

He made it clear to all neighbouring countries and the international community that Oman will not become a party in anyone else’s conflict. This is the reason that during the Iraq-Iran war, Oman maintained its neutral status and cordial diplomatic relations with both countries were kept. Sultan Qaboos also played a key role to make the nuclear agreement possible between Iran and the United States in 2015 because of his close association with both countries.

During the recent Middle East conflict, Oman did not support any specific country and during the Saudi Arabia-Qatar tussle, Oman also succeeded in staying neutral.

Sultan Qaboos was also considered a trustworthy friend of Pakistan and was honoured with the highest Pakistani civil award, ‘ the Nishan-e-Pakistan’. While reading media reports about the late Sultan Qaboos, I am thinking about my beloved country. From the day of independence, we have been facing a number of crises on a daily basis. Our leaders quote examples of other leaders and nations but ground realities reveal that we are in fact far behind many countries that got independence after us.

We have to make someone a role model for achieving success. The same situation can also be seen internationally when wise nations examine policies of other successful countries when devising their own national strategies.

In my view, if we want to put Pakistan on the right track of success and prosperity then we must learn from the wisdom and visionary approach of Sultan Qaboos. We should understand that a country’s success and prosperity is directly dependent on neutral foreign policy and good relations with neighbouring countries.

The writer is a member of the NationalAssembly and patron-in-chief of thePakistan Hindu Council.

Twitter: @RVankwani