





TAKING THE INITIATIVE

UAE residents from all walks of life are supporting the Year of Tolerance through a range of new initiatives.

“Tolerance and human fraternity will help improve education and encourage innovation so that all citizens can contribute to a knowledge-based economy. Tolerance will enable cooperation, understanding and mutual respect among different groups and cultures. Tolerance will help us deal with important environmental issues. Tolerance will help solve conflicts and political disagreements. Tolerance will make us champions for human rights and human obligations, and tolerance will assist in preserving our own heritage, and strengthening our own cultures, thereby making us all proud of our national identities.”

That was the message from UAE Minister of Tolerance, His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, to a joint meeting of local business groups in Abu Dhabi recently.

“In short, it is tolerance that will help define our individual and collective responsibilities to work together in order to take up the banner of peace and preservation of human dignity and development of our local and global communities,” he added.

HE Sheikh Al Nahyan told the assembled businessmen and women that the Ministry of Tolerance was planning two >



Above: The foundation stone was laid recently for the Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple, a symbol of peaceful co-existence in the UAE

initiatives aimed at the business community. The first is the launch of a Global Tolerance Alliance, an international non-governmental platform for good corporate citizens, NGOs, philanthropic organisations and committed individuals “who will come together to promote tolerance internationally”.

“Many of you in this room are global citizens working for multi-national corporations and the Global Tolerance Alliance should be of considerable interest to you,” said HE Sheikh Nahyan.

The second initiative, still in the early stage of development, is ‘T-Corp certification’. T-Corp is an abbreviation for Tolerant Corporation and will see local companies awarded special certification to recognise their commitment to the principles of tolerance.

Referring to the concept of ‘B-Corp’, a certification system popular in the USA and elsewhere aimed at ensuring that companies are good corporate citizens in terms of their social and environmental performance, HE Sheikh Nahyan said: “My ministry is keen to add tolerance to such a framework to create a ‘T-Corp’ certification system.”

He added: “Tolerance is not an inherited state. It is a virtue and a value that requires constant nurturing

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HIS EXCELLENCY SHEIKH NAHYAN BIN MUBARAK AL NAHYAN, UAE MINISTER OF TOLERANCE

and support. In that regard, it is like a garden that requires constant fertilising, watering and weeding to yield its maximum benefits.”

Also in Abu Dhabi, the foundation stone was laid recently for the emirate's first Hindu temple, which is expected to be completed in 2020. Numerous dignitaries attended the stone laying ceremony, including the Minister of Climate Change and Environment,

His Excellency Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, the Minister of State for Higher Education and Advanced Skills, His Excellency Dr Ahmad bin Abdullah Humaid Belhoul Al Falasi, and Mahant Swami Maharaj, the spiritual leader of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha – the religious and social organisation building the temple, along with Navdeep Suri, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the UAE.

“The UAE boasts a privileged status regionally and internationally thanks to the values of religious diversity, pluralism and cultural harmony, which have encouraged the peoples of more than 200 nationalities to live in the country in peaceful co-existence,” said fellow attendee, His Excellency Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, Chairman of the Department of Community Development – Abu Dhabi.

“Laying the foundation stone of the temple is reflective of the landscape of tolerance and pluralism in the UAE. The Founding Father, late Sheikh Zayed, always believed that co-existence between peoples of various religious beliefs and nationalities is the only way to establish international peace,” he added.

The temple – estimated to cost Dhs400 – 450 million – is being built on land donated by the Abu Dhabi government during a visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016. The structure will feature seven spires, with five ornate domes being entirely sculpted from stone by hundreds of artisans in India. Once ready and numbered, thousands of such stone pieces will be shipped to the UAE and assembled on site like a giant 3D jigsaw puzzle.

In another Year of Tolerance initiative, the Mohammed bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences (MBRU) has introduced the ‘Doctors’ Tolerance Pledge’, designed to further promote and enhance cooperation, unity, inclusivity and diversity for students and faculty within the university as it strives to advance the health sector in the UAE and beyond.

Signatories acknowledge that every human has “the right to be treated with fairness and dignity”, and pledge to “exercise my knowledge and experience gained as a healthcare professional to improve the quality of life and health of my fellow humans”.

Those who sign the Doctors’ Tolerance Pledge also agree to “give my best towards creating a tolerant world where my fellow humans can live together in harmony” and “honour and cherish Sheikh Zayed’s values of fostering tolerance and human fraternity”.

“This pledge is a further demonstration of the university’s total commitment to supporting the country’s endeavours in establishing the UAE as a global reference for a tolerant culture via policies and practices,” said MBRU Vice Chancellor Dr Amer Sharif. “The pledge will inform the behaviour of the medics of 28 nationalities who study in harmony at MBRU.”

The pledge signing is the latest in a series of initiatives undertaken by MBRU in alignment with the UAE’s Year of Tolerance. Throughout the year, the university has engaged in a range of activities including the planting of a Ghaf Tree, a UAE symbol of stability and peace. †



Above: T-Corp will see local companies awarded special certification to recognise their commitment to the principles of tolerance



Left: MBRU has introduced the ‘Doctors’ Tolerance Pledge’, designed to further promote and enhance cooperation, unity, inclusivity and diversity for students and faculty within the university as it strives to advance the health sector in the UAE and beyond