

## **UAE, Pakistan keen to expand bilateral cooperation**

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Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz yesterday said that Pakistan is using its unique geo-strategic location to promote economic cooperation and acting as an anchor of peace and stability in the region.

Talking to Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Foreign Minister of the UAE, who called on him here, the prime minister said Pakistan values its relations with the UAE and is keen to further expand cooperation in all fields, especially in economic, commercial, investment, manpower, energy and defence sectors. He appreciated the continued interest of the UAE investors in Pakistan and said Gwadar Port provides another opportunity to the UAE investors. He said volume of trade between the two countries is encouraging but still there is need to expand it further. He also emphasised the need to expedite Free Trade Agreement between Pakistan and GCC. He said that the attractive demographics of Pakistan have created growing economic opportunities.

The prime minister appreciated the tremendous wisdom and intellect of late Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and said his vision contributed to the development of the UAE as well as in building close ties between Pakistan and the UAE.

Shaikh Abdullah said the people and government of the UAE consider Pakistan their second home and want to see development and prosperity in Pakistan.

"We consider well-being of Pakistan as part of our own well being," Shaikh Abdullah said.

He said the UAE holds the leadership of Pakistan in high esteem. He appreciated that relations between the two countries were growing rapidly.

Bilateral ties, regional and international issues, defence and security matters came under discussion.

Talking of Middle East, Prime Minister Aziz said Pakistan is deeply concerned over the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and feels the international community especially Muslim world need to make focused efforts for an early resolution of festering disputes in the Middle East. The prime minister said hard working and law abiding Pakistani community has been making valuable contributions to the economic development of the UAE.

The government is focusing on imparting skills training to the people and a sufficient base of trained and educated manpower has been developed who can meet the specific manpower demands of the UAE.

Shaikh Abdullah appreciated the high growth and economic development taking place in Pakistan and expressed the desire to increase economic cooperation with Pakistan.

He said the government and private sector of the UAE will continue to invest in Pakistan and benefit from Pakistan's growing economic potential. He said the world recognises the positive economic climate in Pakistan, which has created investment opportunities for local and foreign investors.