

UAE private sector being urged to participate in education sector

Khaleej Times - 02 October, 2007

The private sector in the country is being urged to contribute to endowments as part of their social responsibilities, including supporting the educational establishments and research projects in the UAE, according to Assistant Undersecretary in the Ministry of Economy Abdullah Saleh.

Speaking to Khaleej Times at Zayed University on Thursday, Saleh said, "We want to give companies incentives to participate in building schools or to establish research centres in order to develop manpower in the country."

"The draft of the new investment law will include articles that will provide companies and firms additional incentives for undertaking social responsibilities as we know that the government does not impose taxes on the investors," he said while delivering a lecture at Zayed University on 'The Islamic Endowments and the Developing of the Education Establishments'.

The lecture, held under the patronage of Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and President of Zayed University, was part of the Ramadan programmes at the university.

The lecture highlighted that Awqaf is a key Islamic institution, which has incorporated within its legal sphere vast areas of land within the Muslim world, connected firmly with the religious precept of charity.

Al Habib Al Jeferi, an Islamic scholar attending the lecture, said Islamic history reveals that the endowments for education had made real progress at Al Azhar University in Egypt and the endowments are not only for Islamic studies but also for other subjects such as architecture and medicine.

"We must spread the culture of endowments among the Muslim people to channel some of their donations to the field of education," he added.

Commenting on the lack of endowments for education in the Islamic world and Arab countries, Dr. Naser Aref, Head of the Islamic Studies Division at Zayed University, said, "The endowments contributed in establishing Cairo University in Egypt in 1908 and developing the society. And we can see that the western world had taken the endowments concept from the Islamic culture and developed it and they created the control mechanisms to preserve the Awqaf donations."

"Now, for example, Harvard University's endowments are worth \$ 26 billion and Yale University endowments about \$ 14 billion and we have to note that the endowments equal the budget of Sudan for 26 years and Mauritania for 30 years," he emphasised.

Dr Hamdan Al Mazrouei, Chairman of the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Awqaf (GAIAA), said the authority in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MoE) has organised a competition among the students of various grades to prepare researches on the importance of endowments in developing the society and, in particular, education.

"We aim to spread the endowment culture among people in the country to highlight the importance of allocating funds for education of poor students," Dr Al Mazrouei added.