Many leaders promise, we deliver: Mohammed

By Neville Parker (Deputy Editor)

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BERLIN — His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, won over a distinguished German audience on Thursday when he said: "Many leaders promise, we deliver."

Delivering a speech during a felicitation at the Free University of Berlin where he was honoured with a gold medal for his support and promotion of cultural exchanges between peoples of the two countries, Shaikh Mohammed received several rounds of applause from the gathering as he provided an insight into the UAE’s work culture and ethics.

The audience listened in rapt attention as Shaikh Mohammed, speaking in English, explained his philosophy of economics and how the UAE is today one of the world’s fastest developing nations. Shaikh Mohammed, on the second day of his two-day state visit to Germany, was received at the Free Berlin University by former German Chancellor and Chairman of the Arab-German Friendship Association Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the University and staff.

"I like a challenge. When there is no challenge I feel sad," he said explaining how the UAE managed to overcome hurdles and build up the infrastructure that is now the focus of world attention. Many people, he said, were sceptical when initial plans of what the UAE wanted to build and do were known. But later these people realised the wise economic decisions of the country.

Regarding democratic values in Arab society, Shaikh Mohammed told the audience that the "majlis" has been a central point in decision-making since times immemorial. He said this in the context of modern democracy. All decisions that affect society, he added, were taken after due consultations.

But what drew resounding praise from the gathering was when Shaikh Mohammed informed the audience about the UAE’s multicultural set-up where more nationalities live under one roof than in any other country.

He said: "In the UAE all nationalities live in peace. And if the UAE can do it then why not other countries."

Shaikh Mohammed told the audience about the challenges which began early with his ancestors from Baniyas tribe, facing tough challenges, while looking for water to quench their thirst, and for grazing to their cattle. "It was a great challenge due to severity of the desert and lack of the natural resources," Shaikh Mohammed said.

But, he said, those challenges were met. In this context he particularly mentioned Jebel Ali port, the biggest in the region, Emirates airline, development nationwide and construction of cities whether locally or worldwide with UAE talent and management.