

Opportunity

Saudi Arabia

in Malaysia

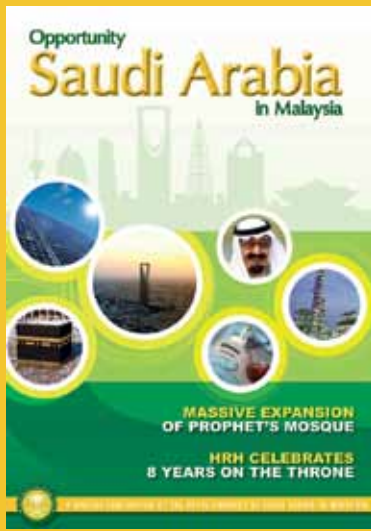


**KINGDOM'S NATIONAL DAY
TOWARDS GREATER UNITY**

**THE WONDER OF SAUDI'S
URBAN HERITAGE**



A SPECIAL PUBLICATION BY THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN MALAYSIA



WHAT'S INSIDE



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CELEBRATING WITH THE KINGDOM

84TH NATIONAL DAY



KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD
CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES

CELEBRATING WITH THE KINGDOM

84TH NATIONAL DAY



**HRH CROWN PRINCE SALMAN BIN
ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD**
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

CELEBRATING WITH THE KINGDOM 84TH NATIONAL DAY



HRH PRINCE MUQRIN BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD
SECOND DEPUTY PREMIER

CELEBRATING WITH THE KINGDOM 84TH NATIONAL DAY



**HRH PRINCE SAUD AL-FAISAL BIN
ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD**
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



H.E. Fahad A H Al-Rashid, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Malaysia



BILATERAL RELATIONS STRONGER THAN EVER

It was way back in the days of the Malacca Sultanate when Arab traders and priests first came here. Over the centuries, the relationship has grown stronger especially after the spread of Islam in Malaysia. It has also expanded in recent years. Trade between the two nations surged from US\$260 million in 1990 to US\$3.66 billion in 2012 and Saudi Arabia is now Malaysia's 19th largest trading partner. Bigger things are to be expected in the future from the business deals clinched during the latest Malaysian trade mission to Saudi Arabia in May 2013.

On the investment side, Saudi businesses have committed nearly US\$1 billion here mainly in the banking sector. In 2006, His Royal Majesty King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, visited Malaysia and soon after that the Kingdom's Al-Rajhi Bank - the world's largest Islamic bank - set up an office. Since then, 24 branch offices have been established throughout Malaysia. Tourism has also flourished with more than 100,000 thousand Saudi visitors arriving each year. In return, 136,169 number of umrah visa has been issued to Malaysians from January until August 2014.

I am also happy to note that Malaysian companies have undertaken several major development projects in Saudi Arabia. These include:

- Shuaibah Independent Water & Power Project
- Al-Faisal University in Riyadh
- King Abdullah University of Science & Technology in Thuwal
- Kingdom Tower in Riyadh
- Jabal Omar development project in Makkah
- Construction of township development of Jazan Economic City
- Improvements to the Jamarat Bridge and surrounding area in Mina

The excellent relationship can be credited to the efforts of the leaders of both countries since the early 1970s. Malaysia's first prime minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Al-Hajj played a very important role by arranging for King Faisal to be the first Saudi ruler to visit Malaysia in 1970. Successive prime ministers - Tun Abdul Razak (the second Premier), and Tun Hussein Onn (the third Premier) - then visited the Kingdom in 1975 and 1976, respectively. The present Prime Minister Dato' Seri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak was in Madinah in December 2013 and had an audience with King Abdullah.

With both being Islamic countries, it was only natural for Saudi Arabia to provide financial support for religious activities and institutions in Malaysia. These included generous contributions to *Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia*, also known as the Muslim Welfare Organization Malaysia. Saudi aid also included a US\$200 million loan to help finance the development of the University of Technology, the Medical Faculty of the National University of Malaysia, and several settlement projects.

Under the enlightened leadership of King Abdullah, Saudi Arabia will continue to further improve the level of cooperation with Malaysia as well as other countries so as to ensure a happy, peaceful world for all.

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

“
The potential ahead
is tremendous...
Malaysian industries
and businesses are
realising that many
opportunities can
be found in Saudi
Arabia, which is also
a major gateway to
the Middle East
”





TOWARDS GREATER UNITY

The National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, celebrated on September 23, has succeeded in broadening the concept of unification over the years

Once again, Saudi nationals will celebrate the unification of their great country by the late King Abdul Aziz ibn Abdulrahman out of disparate sheikdoms. In addition to rejoicing in this achievement, many Saudis have come to realise that the Kingdom's National Day has also acquired several other facets such as the coming together of the minds and hearts of the Saudi people.

It was Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah who fine-tuned the definition of unification as an operating philosophy. It was during his reign that the Kingdom embarked upon various reforms for the harmonious functioning of the government with the participation of citizens and non-government organisations (NGOs) at various levels as well as liberalisation of the national economy.

As the National Day gained more prominence over the years, a growing number of cities have also laid out more elaborate celebration plans. Festivities have been getting more colourful to attract the masses. The labour ministry also pitched in by declaring it a holiday for all public and private sector employees. Last year, fireworks in Riyadh lit up the sky, while all the streets in the capital were decorated with flags, lights and artificial flowers. The Eastern Province, the hub of the Kingdom's oil resources, observed the National Day in 2012 with a parade that brought together bikers, musicians and sportsmen -- an unusually colourful sight in the Kingdom.

This spirit of patriotism has been



First meeting of the Board of Directors of the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue

largely infused and invigorated by King Abdullah over the past few years. An extension of this concept at the social level saw the launch of the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND), which engages in dialogue between various sections of the Saudi society for a better understanding of each other's point of view. KACND took this concept a step further when a new study prepared by it recently revealed that 35 per cent of Saudis believe that non-Saudi residents do not have difficulties adapting to the local customs and traditions. The study also disclosed that 45 per cent of Saudis say they treat foreign residents with

respect, honesty and fairness. According to the survey which covered some 700 respondents from all over the Kingdom, 54 per cent of Saudis also believe in the diversity of foreign nationals living and working within the Saudi community, as such interaction is overall beneficial. Around 75 per cent of the respondents indicated their willingness to collaborate with non-Saudis in the market place, especially in promoting sales and general trade.

Not only this, King Abdullah has introduced reforms in almost all sectors. He introduced a number of economic reforms aimed at reducing the country's reliance on oil revenue and encouraging foreign investment and privatisation. Today, the Kingdom is one of a few fast-growing countries in the world with a relatively high per capita income. He is also credited with taking giant steps for women emancipation by nominating women to the Shoura Council.



Women at Shoura Council

Another landmark decision aimed at strengthening the foundation of the Saudi society was empowerment of women through the ballot box. In an interview with Bikya Masr, Egypt's independent TV channel, a member of the royal family spelt out her views on the royal announcement allowing women to hold office in the municipal councils and also vote in the next civic elections due in 2015. She was taking part in a panel discussion "Voices for Change in the MENA" moderated by former American President Bill Clinton.

Lauding King Abdullah's announcement, the princess said, "While King Abdul Aziz laid the foundation of the Kingdom's unification, his worthy successors down to King Abdullah strengthened it brick-by-brick through enlightened leadership."

However, it is now for the Saudi youth as well to forge ahead as the torch-bearers of unification by strengthening the foundation through hard work and dedication to progress via education geared to market and professional needs.

King Abdullah, supported by Crown Prince Salman, has initiated a range of major economic, social, education, health, and infrastructure projects that have brought about remarkable changes throughout the Kingdom. They include the launch of four mega economic cities, the creation of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology and the Princess Nourah bint Abdul Rahman University for Girls, projects to expand the two holy mosques, provide more amenities



The Islamic Development Bank

to Hajj pilgrims, and other welfare measures. He also approved a historic revamping of the Kingdom's judicial system and enactment of laws to formalise the succession process.



On the industrialisation front, King Abdullah has left no stone unturned in launching a sort of industrial renaissance. The Saudi government through the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDE) has disbursed 3,566 loans worth SR107 billion for setting up industrial projects across the country. At the same time, he has given a new boost to commercial activity and trade. The revenues of the General

Organization of Ports, also called Ports Authority, exceeded SR4 billion last year, indicating an increase of over SR800 million a year before. On the global level, Saudi Arabia under King Abdullah has been playing a pivotal role in different spheres. The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) have distributed financial assistance amounting to SR80 billion to the countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. This is in addition to charity funding and institutional support provided by the Kingdom-based organisations to poor countries and their institutions on a regular basis. Riyadh also provides diplomatic, moral and material support to its neighbours, and tenders assistance through multilateral channels like the OPEC Fund.

In fact, King Abdullah's participation in international diplomacy reflects the Kingdom's leadership role in support of Arab and Islamic issues and also for the achievement of world peace, stability and security. The king's inter-faith initiative that calls for regular interaction among people and leaders of all faiths and religions has been lauded by one and all across the globe. Thus, the bonds of unity being forged internally and externally herald the dawn of a new era in unification. It does not supplant it, but rather adopts a holistic approach to the achievement of the Kingdom's major national goal.

Abridged from How King Abdullah Unified His Kingdom by Ghazanfar Ali Khan in The Diplomat



THE WONDER OF SAUDI'S URBAN HERITAGE

Saudi's urban heritage is to be celebrated as much as it's ancient sites royal palaces. The traditional solutions to the climatic, geographic, and social challenges facing Saudi's still compete with the latest technological ideas. The Diplomat investigates.

The Urban Heritage Initiative is based on the Saudi Commission for Travel and Tourism (SCTA's) regulation which provides the organization to take over the task of maintaining and development of the architectural heritage, including the cities and neighbourhoods, traditional industries and historical landmarks and to employ them culturally and economically. Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, President of SCTA, inaugurated the National Center for Urban Heritage. Important objectives of the Center is the maintenance and development of various elements of the urban heritage, including the heritage town, quarters, villages, buildings, crafts and historical monuments, as well as employ them economically and culturally.

The Center also aims to unify the administrative and management efforts in order to enable SCTA to carry out the planned tasks and responsibilities, such as maintaining the urban heritage in cooperation with the relevant authorities, in the public and private sectors as well as the local communities. The National Center for Urban Heritage also assumes locating sites, surveying, evaluating, and determining priorities of sites' preservation and development, identifying and protecting sites' ownerships in addition to supporting scientific and related studies in the field of urban heritage.

The Center tracks and oversees the workflow of the urban heritage programme, in addition to developing the quality of construction with natural raw materials, as well as facilitate, encourage and attract investments and identify financial resources. It also conducts training courses on traditional construction methods.

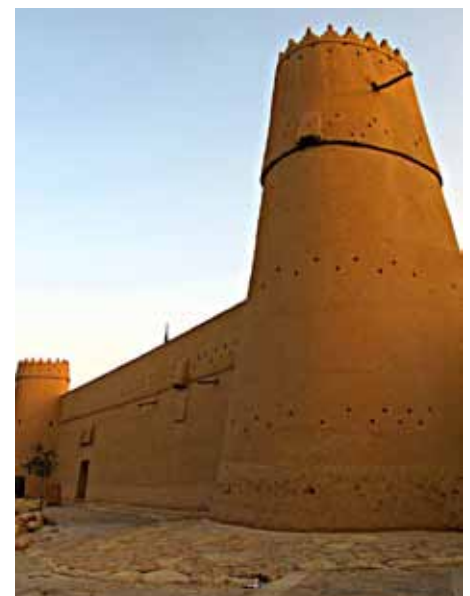


Dir' aiyah in the Northwest of Riyadh

The mission of the National Center for Urban Heritage is based on three main themes: the Heritage Villages programme, the Urban Heritage programme and the Thameen Initiative. It aims to create a fast track to complete the projects through documentation, restoration and rehabilitation of urban heritage, focusing on the completion of a number of pilot projects nominated by Tourism Development Councils in the provinces by applying the selection criteria for the initiative as issued by a decision of the Steering Committee of the initiative.

Some of the heritage sites include Dir' aiyah in the Northwest of Riyadh, situated on the west bank of the Wadi Hanifa, as a base balancing the larger stones, further bound with layers of mud plaster; Masmak Palace - a strongly-protected castle with thick walls, located in the old quarter of the Riyadh City Centre; Al-Muraba Palace - a monument of historic value in the heart of the Riyadh city; surrounded by vast and

well manicured gardens, Shoubra Palace built in the year 1325 H (1907), as the first historical palace in the beautiful city of Taif; Saggaf Palace situated in Mecca - Ma'abdh Quarter; Al-Abtah Road, Khuzam Palace in Al-Nuzlah Alyamaniah Quarter in Jeddah; Nassif House located in the heart of the old city of Jeddah; Al-Ula located in the north-western part



Masmak Palace, Riyadh



Saggaf Palace, Mecca - Ma'abdash Quarter

of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between Al-Madina and Tabuk. after the famous Leader Musa Bin Naseer.

Recently, SCTA conducted a scientific study in collaboration with World Tourism Organization and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Economy and Planning and Ministry of Labor.

The study was on the economic role of the tourism in the development of local communities especially in the provision of job opportunities. Preliminary findings of the study were consistent with the results of the General Strategy for Tourism Development in the Kingdom which was approved by the government. According to this study, such an economic and promising sector is expected to create, by 2015, one million and hundred thousand direct and indirect jobs throughout different parts of the Kingdom and with Saudisation rate reaching 27.5 per cent.

SCTA has developed close foreign relations with international counterparts in a number of countries, foreign universities, and international museums in an effort to exchange experiences in areas of tourism, antiquities and museums. In this context, SCTA has entered into 10 agreements and memorandums of cooperation in areas of tourism and antiquities, in addition to entering into six memorandums of cooperation in museum

area, 21 agreements of cooperation with international universities and institutions in the field of archaeological excavation.

SCTA has made great strides in implementation of dozens of scheduled projects for the current year 2013 throughout the different parts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the areas of national urban heritage, antiquities, museums, handicrafts, tourism sites development and tourism development, as it works on 148 projects with a total value reaching over SR 294 million.

Signing of the Articles of Associations of Al Ogair Development Company, in Al Ahsa municipality on September 10, with a capital of SR 2 billion and 710 million, was one of the most important events in terms of launching a first major tourism destination in the Kingdom adopted by the government and represented by SCTA. The total area of the project is 100 million square meters including a coastline stretching over 15 km along the Arabian Gulf. In its different phases, it is expected to create over 90,000 direct and indirect jobs for the citizens.

The Council of Ministers approved a number of important recommendations to address the rise of tourism service and accommodation facilities' prices in the Kingdom. A Cabinet resolution regarding accelerating support for activities of SCTA and providing appropriate incentives to create a proper investment

environment for development of tourism projects which will create a quantum leap in domestic tourism development in light of increase in numbers of tourism necessary projects and facilities. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is ranked first in the world in, "Comprehensiveness of travel data", and ranked 26 internationally in 2011 and 2013 respectively in "Travel and tourism competitiveness". SCTA has attained a number of awards in recognition of its excellence in different areas. The awards such as the Middle East e-Government and e-Services Excellence Award in the e-Tourism Service category, Nelson Norman Groups 2013 Intranet Design Annual Award, Saudi E-Government Achievement Award and Geospatial World Excellence Award 2013. Emphasizing the need to develop more tourist facilities in the Kingdom to attract Saudi and foreign tourists, Prince Sultan bin Salman president of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, said, "As tourists, Saudis are the highest spenders. They spend in neighboring tourist destinations and across the world. We must provide what they seek abroad in our country."

"Citizens are the primary protectors of any heritage and they are the primary beneficiaries of developing heritage sites," Prince Sultan said.

Keen on placing Saudi Arabia on the global tourism map, Prince Sultan noted an increasing trend of Saudis opting for tourist centers within the Kingdom over foreign tourist locations. "We expect the Kingdom to become a major centre for conventions and exhibitions in the Middle East following the launch of the National Program for Conventions and Exhibitions, which will create more jobs for Saudis," he said. Highlighting the SCTA's efforts to develop the country's tourism industry over the past years, he said, "We are now working toward issuing licenses for furnished apartments." He indicated his plans to pass new regulations for desert camps and their operators. He also said the proposed Okaz Cultural City in Taif would be established shortly over an area of 12 million square meters and that the project would include a convention and an exhibition centre.

EXTENDED UMRAH TOURISM PROGRAMME



In 2013, 6.9 million pilgrims visited Saudi Arabia and the extended Umrah tourism programme – once implemented - will further stimulate tourism and development of infrastructures

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Extended Umrah Tourism Programme is set to generate high economic spill-overs to tourism, hotel industry, infrastructures, job creation, and major development projects.

This new visa policy permits pilgrims and travellers to extend their stay for another month after their pilgrimage, allowing foreign visitors more time to tour the country. Although the scheme was announced last year, there has been a delay in its implementation. In a report by Gulf Business, Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) Vice-President of Marketing and Programmes Hamad Al Sheikh said, "There is a lot of demand in the industry but we do not have enough tour operators to handle the load."

Nevertheless, the Saudi government is committed to tap the growing potential of

tourism and is currently making crucial efforts to enhance infrastructures, build tourism capacity, and increase the number of tour operators in order to support the expected influx of tourists.

In 2013, 6.9 million religious tourists visited Saudi Arabia and this number is only expected to grow, attracting more investments to holy cities around the country such as Medinah and Makkah. As of last year, Saudi had a total of 1,251 hotels and 2,582 furnished apartments and with the implementation of the new visa scheme, more local and international companies and hoteliers are expected to implement extensive expansion plans. Kempinski, a leading operator of luxury resorts, business and spa hotels, is already developing two premier hotels in Riyadh and Al Khobar which are projected to open this year. Intercontinental Hotels

Group (IHG) Chief Operating Officer, Pascal Gauvin, predicts, "I see Makkah transforming tremendously and I think SCTA's Extended Umrah Tourism Programme is a very clever way to attract people to stay longer."

IHG's Holiday Inn Makkah Al Azizah intends to add 1,238 more rooms by 2015. Furthermore, 25 new properties will be constructed over the next three years, augmenting Makkah's hotel portfolio. . There are similar developments in Riyadh, Jeddah and Madinah, which are among the main destinations for travellers.

Saudi Arabia remains committed to continue developing better infrastructures, improving airline facilities and routes, and implementing effective tourism strategies and programmes to attract even more tourists and investors.



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina. The King's official title is the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

Saudi Arabia is the largest state in Western Asia by land area, and constitutes the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula.

Saudi Arabia traces its roots back to the earliest civilisations of the Arabian Peninsula. Over the centuries, the peninsula has played an important role in history, as an ancient trade centre and as the birthplace of Islam, one of the world's major monotheistic religions. The modern Kingdom was founded by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud in 1932 after a 30-year campaign to unify most of the Arabian Peninsula. One of his male descendants rules the country today, as required by the country's 1992 Basic Law.

In a few short decades, the Kingdom has turned itself from a desert nation to a modern, sophisticated state and a major player in the international arena.

GENERAL

Main cities: Riyadh (the capital), Makkah, Al Madinah, Jeddah, Al Taif, Dammam, Dhahran, ArAr, Abha and Buraidah.

Urban population: 82.3% of total population (CIA: 2011)

Language: Arabic; English widely spoken in urban areas

National Day: 23 September (1932 A.D)

Government: Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state based on principles prescribed by the Qur'an (Islam's Holy Book) and the Shari'ah (Islamic law); Provincial Council System, Consultative Council (Majlis Al-Shura), and Council of Ministers.

Symbol: Two crossed curved swords which symbolise strength and justice. A palm tree on the top symbolises prosperity.

Timing: GMT + 3:00

Judicial law: The constitution of Saudi Arabia is Quran and Sunnah, all legislative regulations have been derived from these two sources. The regime in Saudi Arabia is a monarchy system.

Calendar: Saudi Arabia follows the Muslims Hijrah calendar.

Holidays: Closure of all offices and schools on Eid Al-Fitr, the feast of the breaking of the fast, from the evening of the 25th day of Ramadan through the fifth day of Shawwal; Eid Al-Adha, the culmination of the Hajj, from the fifth through 15th day of Dhu Al-Hajjah; and September 23, National Day.



GEOGRAPHY

Capital: Riyadh

Area: 2,149,690 sq km

Population: 26,939,583 (CIA: July 2013 est.)

Birth Rate: 19.01 births/1,000 population (CIA: 2013 est.)

Ethnic groups: Arab 90%, Afro-Asian 10%

Overview of Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia is bordered by the Red Sea from the West, Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait from the North, the Arabian Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar, and United Emirates from the East, and Yemen and Oman from the South.

Climate: Continental weather: Summer: very hot, Winter: cold

ECONOMY

Currency: Saudi Riyal

Natural Resources: Petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, copper

GDP (PPP): \$921.7 billion (CIA: 2012 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP): \$31,800 (CIA: 2012 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 6.8% (CIA: 2012 est.)

GDP Composition: Agriculture: 1.9%; Industry: 64.8%; Services: 33.3% (CIA: 2012 est.)

Labour Force: 8.012 million

Investment (gross fixed): 26.6% of GDP (CIA: 2013 est.)

Industrial production growth rate: 7.1% (2012 est.)

SACM - A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission in Malaysia works towards integrating Saudis into local communities



Established to implement Saudi national educational and training policies for students and qualified individuals the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) in Malaysia aims to provide the best possible educational opportunities at the best educational institutions. One of the primary objectives of SACM Malaysia is to support students academically and financially so that they may concentrate on achieving their academic goals. The organisation also gathers and disseminates information that reflects Saudi culture, tradition, and heritage

through active participation in academic, cultural, and social activities.

Through regular cultural exchanges that promote Arabic language and Saudi culture across Malaysia, SACM has played a key role in strengthening the educational and socio-cultural relations between the two nations. With Professor Zayed O. Al-Harethi at the helm, SACM Malaysia aims to bring the people of both nations together.

Malaysia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia share more than just a common religion, both countries work towards achieving progress in scientific, industrial

and technological areas. Towards this goal, SACM Malaysia organises various seminars, workshops and also hosts Saudi scholars who interact with local citizens on various subjects.

Malaysians are invited to explore and understand the beauty and richness of Saudi Arabian history, tradition and vision. Events that promote and encourage cultural exchanges are organised with regularity throughout the year. SACM Malaysia also sets up events that spread awareness about Saudi culture among the public. Participants and visitors to the mission are highly appreciative of the various activities regularly conducted and feel that the events contributed to their knowledge of the Kingdom. Sharing the same vision as King Abdullah for the future of Saudi Arabia; which is the promotion of peace, security and stability, the mission integrates with local communities to foster friendship and togetherness.

SACM also provides counselling to Saudi nationals who are interested in furthering their education or obtaining specialised training in professional fields. It offers a comprehensive complimentary service such as consultancy, correspondence and admission application to all Saudi citizens. It also extends to advising the accepted candidates and their family members regarding travel and visa arrangements to come to Malaysia.

For Saudi citizens settled across the world family comes first. Home to the most honoured Bedouins - the camel herders, Saudi Arabia was made up of separate tribes across the deserts until Ibn Saud united them to form Saudi Arabia. The Bedouin society is well known for their legendary tribal kinship where family always assumes first priority. The tribe was a union of extended families providing economic security and protection to its members who live and wander together. This same value is today reflected in the modern family unit in the Kingdom. The peace and security offered by a stable family is greatly valued and seen as vessel for the spiritual growth of its members. The SACM embodies these values and provides security and support outside the Kingdom to its citizens in Malaysia.



Dr Zayed O. Al-Harethi is the cultural attaché of SACM Malaysia and has been involved in the field of education for over four decades. With a doctorate in Social Psychology and Statistics from University of Minnesota, USA, Dr Al-Harethi has also served as Dean of Research Institute at Umm Al-Quara University, Makkah from 2007 to 2010, as well as Dean of College of Education from 2010 to 2014. Dr Al-Harethi has also penned several published works in Arabic such as 'Evaluating various tourist activities in Taif City KSA', 'Students' attitudes and satisfaction towards some university services' etc. He was also the Chief Editor of a documentary book titled "Science and Education in the Era of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud". This book documented the advancement in education in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the era of King Abdullah. In this book, 25 distinguished academicians presented 25 chapters that described certain areas of education e.g. support and funding for higher education and increase in incentives, allowances and bonuses for students and staff.

SAUDI ARABIA THRIVES FROM A GROWING RETAIL INDUSTRY

The retail market in Saudi Arabia has become a strong focus for the government, primarily driven by a desire to boost and maintain ongoing economic success in the country



The Saudi Arabian retailing market was worth SAR374 billion in 2013, 12 per cent growth from the previous year, according to Euromonitor International. A large part of this interest comes from the government's desire to diversify beyond the oil industry. This is seen as a means to reduce unemployment and increase average disposable income. Already, better living conditions and higher income levels are having a positive impact on retailing.

TOURISM DRIVES RETAILING

One key factor is tourism, primarily religious tourism, as Makkah, the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad, is considered the holiest city in the religion of Islam. International arrivals increased in 2013, reaching 18 million trips, following the massive expansion of projects at the holy mosques in Makkah, which has expanded its capacity for visitors. Furthermore, the Ministry of Haj recently gave approval to 62 travel companies to offer low-cost Hajj (pilgrimage) packages, following strong demand. As a result, the programme was expanded to accommodate 41,000 pilgrims in 2014, up from 17,000 the previous year. Moreover, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) is

trying to drive tourism by deregulating air travel by breaking the monopoly of Saudi Arabian Airlines, inviting local and foreign airlines to operate in the country.

While religious tourism is key, domestic tourism is also receiving a boost from government, with the SCTA continually investing to promote cultural festivals such as Jenadriyah Festival, held near the city of Riyadh each year. Moreover, historical sites, such as Madain Saleh, Al Dir'iyah near Riyadh, as well as hilly areas, such as Abha and Taif, are gaining popularity amongst local Saudis for visits on hot summer days. SCTA is also working with the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) to increase the number of flights to different domestic destinations, as well as to upgrading the facilities at various domestic airports. In addition, SCTA is also promoting the National Museum, housed in Riyadh, to encourage interest from locals in the history of Saudi Arabia. These developments are making Riyadh a fast growing domestic tourist destination. Furthermore, domestic business tourism is showing continued growth. This is due to growing business activities in the region, as the government seeks to attract investors on the back of the thriving Saudi economy.

Not surprisingly, this strong growth of tourist arrivals has impacted positively on retailers, where grocery retailers, especially in the cities of Makkah and Madinah, are able to pull in extra business. As a result, retailers are expanding the number of outlets, as well as introducing new formats, including convenience stores, which have also benefited from the busier lifestyles and growing youth populations in these cities. For example, in 2013 the retailer Al-Azizia Panda United Inc introduced the convenience store, Pandati.

Equally, growth in pilgrims has impacted the fashion sector. Fawaz Abdulaziz Al Hokair Co, one of the leading apparel companies that represent retail brands such as Zara, Bershka and La Senza in the Kingdom, is focusing on further retail projects, and in particular apparel retail, and has aimed to add 400 new stores across various categories on an annual basis.

SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS ALSO DRIVING DEMAND

In addition to tourism, retailing also benefits from a strong consumer base due to the country's high population, nearly 29 million, and strong economy. With two-thirds of its population dominated by those under the age of 30, Saudi Arabia is driving retail fashion and beauty trends in the region, encouraging more retailers to open. Moreover, an affluent population is also driving trends in the luxury market, since middle-aged consumers typically have high sums at their disposal. For example, the luxury department store, Rubaiyat, opened in 2014, following high demand for luxury apparel. Furthermore, growth in consumer spending per capita has enabled well-known brands,

hypermarket chains and big shopping centres to expand.

And unlike past generations, the young are better educated and more willing to accept new ideas. Young consumers are also changing their consumption habits, following various trends in urban locations, such as the growing demand for healthier alternatives and fresh food. Shopping is also a key leisure activity in the Kingdom, and part of the population's daily lifestyle. This has benefited grocery retailers, encouraging them to introduce more international brands in the country.

Apparel specialist retailers have equally benefited from the growing middle classes' appetite for status symbols. As urban consumers have better access to modern shopping formats, apparel sales are booming. And despite being a country where luxury spending is strong, there is also growing demand for affordable brands after the success of budget retailers such

as Citymax/Max, which have introduced aggressive expansion plans to the country. Also, the first F&F budget retail outlet by Tesco, launched in May 2012, with local partner Fawaz Abdulaziz Alhokair Co is proving successful.

Though still niche, e-commerce is also growing in Saudi Arabia, due to the burgeoning convenience trend, with many retail chains now selling their products online. This has been assisted by Saudi Arabia's growing internet penetration, at 60 per cent in 2013. As such, the country is seeing growth in online purchases for items such as clothes and accessories. Apparel and accessories retailer Markavip's recent deal with Paypal in 2013 highlights the country's potential.

In addition to trying to increase tourism, the government is investing in housing. Key to this is the government's desire to increase home ownership among Saudi nationals, currently standing at 30

per cent. As a result, there is a residential construction boom in the Kingdom worth about US\$784 billion. This has already driven demand for furniture imports, and has encouraged several premium international furniture brands to exhibit their collections for the first time at Decofair, an annual home furnishings exhibition. Ikea also plans on expanding its number of stores over the next five years.

With the government's investment in tourism and housing, the retailing market – from grocery retailers to apparel stores – are expected to thrive with eight per cent and ten per cent constant value CAGRs respectively over 2013-2018. With upcoming projects such as Kingdom City, Jazan Economic City and King Abdullah Economic City, the retail industry can be expected to continue to boom, with more opportunities for brick and mortar establishments, as well as online retailers, to reap its rewards.

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MELORITA HEALTHCARE - MALAYSIA'S NO 1 HEALTHCARE TALENT PROVIDER

Your Career, Our Priority: This has made us a leader in the healthcare recruitment industry for nearly four decades



The Melorita Healthcare Group has been a key partner in the healthcare industry for over 37 years. Established in 1983 to respond to the nursing shortage in the Middle East, we have grown from a small team of eager recruiters to a large corporation serving more than 30 satisfied clients in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia.

Our expertise lies in our ability to source, screen, train and place healthcare talent in any organisation, or for any individual who requires the services of healthcare professionals. We do this through our three core business areas: healthcare recruitment, home health services and healthcare training.

A.P. Melorita Sdn Bhd, a company in the Melorita Healthcare Group, is the largest privately-held healthcare staffing company in Malaysia. Mr Armand Abdullah, its chief executive officer, said, "The success of A.P. Melorita is driven by our demand for excellence in healthcare recruitment, retention, and customer care. Our performance history speaks for itself and our clients can be rest assured that the future brings with it new opportunities for continued success."

A.P. Melorita understands a client's

need for highly qualified, expertly trained healthcare professionals. With access to thousands of healthcare workers across the country, it is able to quickly fill staffing requests with highly qualified personnel. A.P. Melorita can offer candidates either contract employment ranging from three months to two years or permanent employment with clients in Malaysia or overseas.

Mr Armand added that A.P. Melorita's strategy is to ensure that while the recruitment industry has gone online with the emergence of online job placement sites, the firm continues to provide quality recruitment services with a human touch. He said that clients and candidates alike can be assured of personalised service which is in line with the company's philosophy of "While you continue to care for others, Melorita cares for you".

"We provide opportunities for healthcare professionals, we care for the wellbeing of their families and their careers; their career is our priority and we strive to provide them with our personalised service," said Mr Armand.

ALSO, HOME NURSING AND IN-HOUSE TRAINING

Melorita Home Health (MHH)

is a home nursing and rehabilitation service provider, dedicated to providing continuous medical care in the client's home. MHH offers home nursing care, rehab services and elderly care in Malaysia. It was established with a clear vision, which is to ensure that home healthcare should be part of the complete healthcare system so as to allow patients to recover completely in the comfort of their homes.

MHH has access to the best talents available through its links with A.P. Melorita. Nurses are sourced from the best hospitals and some even have international exposure in world-class medical facilities. In addition, each nurse is trained in all aspects of home health at an in-house training facility. With the availability of the best talent and access to excellent training all under one roof, it makes MHH the only home health company for you.

Asia Pacific Healthcare Academy (APHA) is the training arm of the Melorita Healthcare Group. This facility provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for healthcare professionals to update and enhance their competencies for high quality clinical practice. APHA's nursing CPD programs are accredited by the Malaysian Nursing Board and Ministry of Health. The academy is also a registered training provider under Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad (Human Resource Development Fund).

"Melorita Healthcare Group is a specialised niche player in the healthcare industry. We provide organisations and individuals with the best healthcare talents for their needs," said Mr Armand. The success of any patient outcome rely heavily on the quality healthcare talent pool available and Melorita is the company to help you achieve this.

CONGRATULATIONS



HIS MAJESTY
KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD
THE CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES



HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
CROWN PRINCE SALMAN BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY AND THE CITIZENS OF SAUDI ARABIA ON THEIR

84TH NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

ON

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Congratulations

To the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and the members of the Royal Family and the people of Saudi Arabia on their 84th National Day Celebration on 23rd September 2014.



MELORITA Healthcare is a healthcare recruitment agency that places Malaysian healthcare professionals in hospitals all around the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Incorporated in 1977 MELORITA is the largest health care recruitment agency in the country.



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Congratulations

*to the People & Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
on their 84th National Day*



HIS MAJESTY
KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD
THE CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
CROWN PRINCE SALMAN BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD
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