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Special Publication by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Singapore

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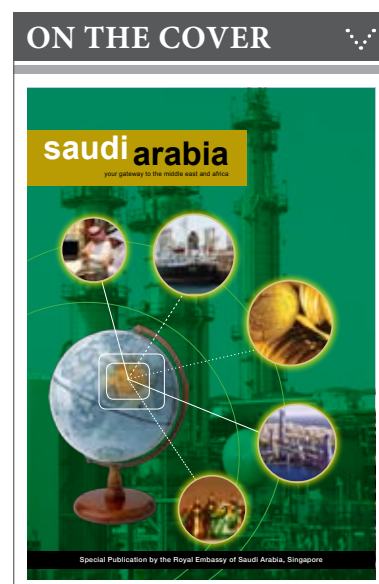
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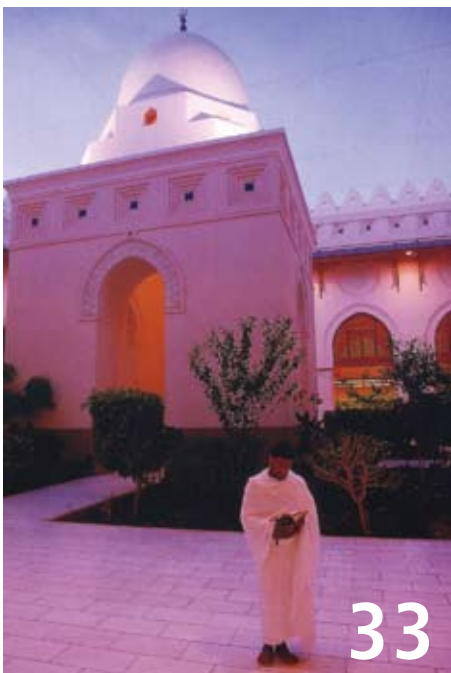


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*Congratulations & Best Wishes
to the People and
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
on their 78th National Day*



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Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Defence and Aviation and Inspector General
HRH Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud



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Mr Hamza M.A. Gassas
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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.'S MESSAGE

*As The Kingdom
of Saudi Arabia
celebrates
its National
Day, I extend
my heartiest
congratulations
and warmest
greetings to the
people of Saudi
Arabia and all
Saudi Nationals
in Singapore.*

Saudi-Singapore relations have grown excellently in the past year, with increased engagement and cooperation in key areas. High-level visits by top leaders have underscored and affirmed the growing strategic partnership between the Kingdom and Singapore. Earlier in the year, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Minister Mentor, Prime Minister's Office, led a delegation of ministers and top government officials on a tour of the King Abdullah Economic City. The delegation was welcomed by His Excellency Mr Amr Bin Abdullah Al-Dabbagh, Governor, Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), and executive directors from the main branches of SAGIA. Subsequently, at the invitation of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Bin Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Assistant Minister of Defence and Aviation, and Inspector-General for Military Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia visited the Republic in February to boost and strengthen military ties between the two countries. His Royal Highness was hosted by the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Defence and Transport.

Further strengthening of business and economic ties have accelerated with the opening of a representative office of SAGIA in Singapore, the signing of the General Agreement on Co-operation and the formation of the Saudi-Singapore Business Forum. More recently, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) of Saudi Arabia and Singapore's Ministry of Transport, after air services consultation were held. The new agreement allows airlines from Saudi Arabia and Singapore to operate any number of air services between Singapore and Dammam. Carriers may also operate up to 14 services between Singapore and other cities, including Jeddah and Riyadh. Under the previous agreement, carriers were only allowed to operate three weekly services between Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

I am convinced that our growing friendship will achieve even more breakthroughs in the future. May this auspicious day bring peace, prosperity and progress to our countries.

COMPASSIONATE KING



Known for his virtues of compassion and generosity, The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud's resolve in reaching out to help the hungry and the suffering remains unabated and strong

Following up on his magnanimous gesture in sponsoring the separation of the Polish conjoined twins, Olga and Daria, in 2005, The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has since sponsored the costs of surgery and medical care of seven more conjoined twins from Morocco, Oman, Iraq, Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To date, with the sponsorship of King Abdullah, the Kingdom of Humanity has seen the successful separation of 19 sets of conjoined twins. The benevolence and fatherly nature of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud has forever changed the lives and hearts of these disadvantaged families by empowering their children to live normally.

In 2008, education in the Kingdom has also been a beneficiary of King Abdullah's generosity. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has donated US\$10 billion to the Endowment Fund of The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, making it the sixth-largest university endowment in the world, said a university spokesman based in Washington. Although the university will only open in 2009, it is already holding

talks with fund managers such as BlackRock and Bain Capital, giving the endowment fund the potential to grow to as much as US\$25 billion, second only to Harvard's nest egg.

Outside the Kingdom, there are no shortages of recipients of King Abdullah's compassion and kindness. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has donated munificently to the earthquake victims in Sichuan, China—patients who were in grave need of costly medical treatment—and the hungry, through the United Nations World Food Programme. King Abdullah donated US\$50 million in cash and US\$10 million worth of relief materials for the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China. Vice President Xi Jinping expressed the gratitude of the Chinese people to King Abdullah, for his donations and aid, during his visit to the Kingdom to strengthen Sino-Saudi ties.

There is little doubt that The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques will remain determined on making the Kingdom and indeed, the world, a more peaceful and, prosperous place to live in and, in that process, inspire all with his kindness, wisdom and generosity.



The King, seen with some of the children who received medical aid from him



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King with World Leaders

As the world attempts to cope with rising oil and commodities prices, inter-religious misperceptions and the catastrophic damage of natural disasters, The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud has proven to be an economic visionary, a generous philanthropist and a wise leader who unites all in his faith and reaches out to other faiths in peace and goodwill



First row, from left: King with Pope Benedict XVI; King with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon; King with US President George W Bush; Second row, from left: King with UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown; King with Singapore Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew; King with King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden; Third row, from left: King with King Abdullah of Jordan; King with US Vice President Cheney; King with Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping

Acutely aware of the global concern over the rising price of oil, the King has graciously responded to requests from 30- 60 consumer nations after meeting with UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, to increase Saudi oil production to 9.7 million barrels a day, their highest level ever. Major investments have also been made in providing farming technology to help poorer nations increase food production to cushion the impact of soaring food prices. Citing remarkable experience in agriculture technology and sufficient capital, King Abdullah believes that the investments would help in the global fight against hunger.

Groundbreaking, still, is King Abdullah's convening of an interfaith conference in Madrid, a three-day meeting that included Muslim, Christian and Jewish clerics and representatives of other world religions. This is the first time that a King of Saudi Arabia has reached out to calm interfaith tensions, improve Islam's image and seek common ground to restore religious values. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques was greeted by King Juan

Carlos of Spain. The King delivered the opening address in which he stressed the common goal of preserving morality and religious values. This breakthrough comes after meeting earlier with other religious leaders, like Pope Benedict XVI, which the King described as a moving encounter that he "will never forget".

Known for his virtues of compassion and generosity, The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques have donated munificently to the earthquake victims in Sichuan, China, patients who were in grave need of costly medical treatment and the hungry through the United Nations World Food Programme. Expressing the gratitude of the Chinese people to King Abdullah was Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping on his visit to the Kingdom to strengthen Sino-Saudi ties.

The coming year will see The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques intensify efforts in further transforming the Kingdom into an international hub of commerce and a beacon of peace through his courage and vision."



HIGHLIGHTS OF SAUDI ARABIA SINGAPORE



ties on the move

Saudi Prince Khalid visits Singapore



At the invitation of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Bin Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Assistant Minister of Defence and Aviation, and Inspector-General for Military Affairs of the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia paid an official visit to the Republic of Singapore from 15 to 23 February.

During his visit, His Royal Highness called on Prime Minister Lee, Minister for Transport Raymond Lim, and was hosted to an official dinner by Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean. Coinciding with the visit was the inaugural Singapore Airshow 2008, held from 19 to 24 February, which His Royal Highness visited.

The visit highlighted the close bilateral defense relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Singapore. According to the Ministry of Defence, regular interaction between the Royal Saudi Armed Forces and the Singapore Armed Forces through the attendance of courses and international events promotes and enhances mutual understanding between the armed forces. On His visit here, His Royal Highness also introduced the Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz International Prize for Water (PSIPW), a prize in support of scientific water research worldwide, at a press conference with PM Lee as the Guest of Honour.

According to Dr Abdulmalek A. Al Alshaikh, PSIPW General Secretary, the prize is meant to be a form of appreciation extended to concerned intellectual inventors with the aim to provide them with a suitable moral and financial atmosphere conducive of a free and vivid spirit of contest. In addition, the prize represents the Kingdom's message to the world that reflects the true image of Islamic nations and civilization, and projects expressively its international humanitarian responsibility.

The prize is an international award offered every two years in appreciation to distinguished scientists throughout the world. It is refereed by international arbitration committees and bestowed in five branches. One million Saudi Riyals (about US\$ 266,000)



is allocated for the Creativity prize, while half million Saudi Riyals (about US\$ 133,000) is allocated for each of the other four specialised branches of the prize.

The other four respective specialised branches of the prize

are Surface water, Ground water, Alternative (non-traditional) water resources and Water resources management and protection. Application for nomination is currently open.

MM Lee Kuan Yew visits Saudi Arabia



Crucial in rapidly developing Saudi Arabia is a continual flow of capable leaders to manage and keep the system up to speed, and an emphasis on education for transition to a knowledge-based society, said Mentor Minister Lee Kuan Yew on his visits to the Kingdom this year, as reported by The Straits Times.

Developing solid infrastructure, the Straits Times quoted Mr Lee saying, is the easy part, running it is harder. Regarded as the craftsman behind Singapore's success, Mr Lee extended his political and economic expertise to the fast-developing nation of Saudi Arabia during two separate visits there, bringing Saudi-Singapore relations to a new high. Mr Lee was invited to the capital Riyadh to speak at the second Global Competitiveness Forum (GCF) held during 20-22 January and the Riyadh Economic Forum (REF) on 4 March this year.

Investment opportunities in city-building project

In Jeddah, Mr Lee visited the King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), or the 'second Singapore' as put in the welcome message, a sign of strong Saudi-Singapore trade relations and the investment opportunities available at KAEC. The US\$27 billion project to

Ambassador Kurdi completes tenure in Singapore



His Excellency Dr Mohd Amin Kurdi completed his seven-year posting to Singapore in May 2008. During his tenure the Ambassador organised the visit of Crown Prince Sultan to Singapore in April 2006, with a great success. Saudi National Day publication and a quarterly Saudi Singapore Link were also initiated

by him during his term. The Ambassador made outstanding contributions, especially in promoting bilateral ties between Singapore and Saudi Arabia in terms of trade, culture, friendship and education. Currently, he is the Ambassador of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Brazil.

Saudi Singapore Link Launched



Saudi Singapore Link's inaugural issue was launched to deepen understanding and appreciation between Saudi Arabia and Singapore by acting as a platform for interaction. This is significant in a time when ties between the two countries are scaling new heights. The newsletter will focus on bilateral economic and political exchanges and investment opportunities in Saudi Arabia. Currently, Saudi Arabia is Singapore's largest trading partner in the Middle East region and 15th largest in the world. Bilateral trade was S\$12.8 billion from January to November in 2007, according to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Kingdom was also Singapore's largest foreign investor from the Middle East with S\$1.3 billion worth of investments as of end-2005. And with investment opportunities in the infrastructure, oil and gas, water and electricity and mining sectors of Saudi Arabia estimated at US\$620 billion (S\$840 billion) over the next few years, it is certain that these exchanges will continue to grow and strengthen relations.

build a 168 sq km metropolis, which Mr Lee had a say in the planning of, has already drawn Singapore investors such as RSP Architects, Raffles Education Corp and IT company NCS. In 2007, KAEC hosted a delegation of Singaporean entrepreneurs led by Minister of State Mr Lee Yi Shyan.

Singapore and Saudi charities sign MOU

On the same trip in January, Mr Lee, together with Saudi Prince Abdul Aziz Abdullah, the Royal Advisor for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Saudi charity The Centennial Fund and Youth Business Singapore in Riyadh. The agreement between the two charities that support entrepreneurialism in needy youths is expected to open up a channel for mutual exchange of ideas. The Straits Times quoted general manager of The Centennial Fund Mr Hesham Tashkandi saying: "Today, we take one more solid step towards establishing the friendship between the two nations."

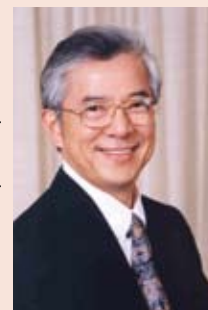
NCS to design Smart Services Centre for SAGIA



Singapore-based information technology (IT) company National Computer Systems Pte Ltd (NCS) has won a professional consulting services contract with the Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority's (SAGIA) Economic Cities Agency (ECA) to design a new Smart Services Centre for the Economic Cities. The centre is part of ECA's efforts to provide a regulatory framework, investment incentives and a gateway for government services for the six new Economic Cities in Saudi Arabia. It will serve as a one-stop centre for all interactions with the government through holistic and customer-focused straight-through workflow process, and provide government and municipal services such as licensing for tenants and investors through an integrated approach. NCS's plan for the Smart Services Centre will include Portal Information Architecture, e-Services Delivery and Integration Framework, Call Centre and IVR Infrastructure and Workflow Design, amongst others.

Source: NCS

Prof. Shih Choon Fong appointed president of KAUST



Professor Shih Choon Fong, president of the National University of Singapore, has been appointed the president of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz met with Professor Shih January 12 to congratulate him on the appointment. He is expected to assume his new duties in December 2008. Shih received his PhD from Harvard University in 1973. He led the Fracture Research Group at the US-based GE Corporate Research Lab before joining the prestigious Brown University in 1981. A member of KAUST's International Advisory Council, Shih is among the highly cited researchers in the world for engineering as compiled by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). He has served a consultant to the National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA), Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Located along the Red Sea 50 miles north of Jeddah in Thuwal, KAUST aims to be a world-class graduate research university that will support scientific discovery and human advancement. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz laid the foundation stone for the university in October 2007, and it is expected to open in September 2009.

For more information about KAUST, visit its website at www.kaust.edu.sa

Saudi – Singapore

TRANSPORTATION

COOPERATION



'Saudi Arabian Airlines' General Manager, Bilateral & Commercial Agreements, Dr Ayed Al-Amri, and Executive Vice President Marketing Abdul Aziz AlHazmi, seen together with Singapore Airlines' Executive Vice President, Marketing & the Regions, Huang Cheng Eng, and Vice President, Partnerships, T K Mun - signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the two airlines'

Saudi Arabian Airlines And Singapore Airlines To Enhance Cooperation On the Kingdom-Singapore Routes

Saudi Arabian Airlines and Singapore Airlines signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Marketing Cooperation, establishing the framework for a long-term relationship primarily focused on developing routes between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

The non-binding MoU will foster a closer relationship between the two carriers. It outlines the areas in which the two parties will cooperate, to seek new business opportunities, improve airline efficiency, and ultimately deliver an enhanced customer experience. These areas include:

- Marketing cooperation (e.g. through-checks) for seamless travel
- Code-share arrangements
- Schedule coordination, aimed at improving connections for customers travelling beyond
- Frequent flyer programme cooperation
- Cargo facilitation

The MoU excludes cooperation in setting individual ticket fares or cargo rates, or any other activity not exempted under applicable competition laws.

Both Saudi Arabian Airlines and Singapore Airlines also agreed to work together, where possible, to support their respective civil aviation authorities in the further liberalisation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia-Singapore Air Service Agreement, opening up more opportunities for the two airlines to build on the demand for air travel between, and beyond, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

Mr Abdul Aziz AlHazmi, Executive Vice President Marketing of Saudi Arabian Airlines, stated: “This historic event of signing the MoU between Saudi Arabian Airlines and Singapore Airlines serves to blend the characteristic strengths of the two world-class carriers for enhanced benefits for both companies, as well as added value for the travelling experience of both airlines’ clientele”.



“Through this MoU, we look forward to building a long-term cooperative relationship with Saudi Arabian Airlines. We will harness each carrier’s respective network, unique identity and culture. We believe that this will be mutually beneficial for both airlines, and more importantly, our customers,” said Singapore Airlines’ Executive Vice President, Marketing & the Regions, Huang Cheng Eng.

Saudi Arabian Airlines’ Executive Vice President, Marketing, Abdul Aziz AlHazmi and Singapore Airlines’ Executive Vice President Marketing & the Regions Huang Cheng Eng signed the MoU at a ceremony held in Singapore.

Sinagpore Airlines to commence flights to Riyadh



introduction of Singapore Airlines’ new service to Riyadh is a sign of our confidence in the tremendous potential of the Middle Eastern region. We believe that this service will help foster a closer bilateral trade link between Singapore and Saudi Arabia, while boosting the business and leisure travel traffic between Asia and Saudi Arabia.”

Home to the sleek and iconic Kingdom Centre, the tallest building in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh rivals any modern city with the splendour of its architecture, sophisticated infrastructure and rapid economic growth.

An exciting and dynamic metropolis, Riyadh has nevertheless retained its historical and cultural

Singapore Airlines will commence operations to Riyadh, the largest city and capital of Saudi Arabia, on 14 December 2008. Using the Boeing 777-200 aircraft, Singapore Airlines will operate four times weekly to Riyadh via Dubai every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

charms, with must-see attractions like the ruins of Dir’aiyah, a popular archaeological site, the Murabba Palace with its exhibit of traditional clothing and crafts, and the Masmak Fortress, built in the middle of the 19th century.

“A historical city that is developing at breathtaking speed into one of the most important business centres in the Middle East, Riyadh has, over the years, become the focal point of travel and trade for visitors to Saudi Arabia,” said Mr. Huang Cheng Eng, Singapore Airlines’ Executive Vice President, Marketing and the Regions. He added, “The

Riyadh will be the second city to which Singapore Airlines operates in Saudi Arabia. The Airline will maintain its current three-times-weekly service to Jeddah, via Abu Dhabi.

Singapore Airlines Service from Singapore to Riyadh via Dubai (from 14 Dec 2008)					
Flight No.	Day of Operations	Depart Singapore	Arrive in Dubai	Depart Dubai	Arrive in Riyadh
SQ454	Tue/Thu/Sat/Sun	1250hrs	1625hrs	1725hrs	1820hrs
From Riyadh to Singapore via Dubai (from 14 December 2008)					
Flight No.	Day of Operations	Depart Riyadh	Arrive in Dubai	Depart Dubai	Arrive in Singapore
SQ453	Tue/Thu/Sat/Sun	2015hrs	2250hrs	2350hrs	1105hrs+1

More flights on the way, says SIA

Saudi Arabia - Your gateway to the Middle East and East Africa spoke to *Mr. Theong Tjhoen Onn, Senior VP, SIA* to find out about new air services to Riyadh



Please brief us about your current flights to Saudi Arabia?

Singapore Airlines currently operates a 3X weekly Singapore-Abu Dhabi-Jeddah service using B777-200 aircraft. In addition to these scheduled services, Singapore Airlines also mounts several Hajj charters every year to Jeddah for Muslim pilgrims.

In the light of the recent MoU signed between Saudi Arabia and Singapore what additional flights are being planned?

Singapore Airlines is evaluating an additional destination and we are planning additional flights following the recent MoU. Details of the flights will be announced as soon as they are available.

Would Singapore Airlines be offering any promotional rates?

Singapore Airlines normally offers attractive fares for new destinations to encourage travel. Details of the flights will be announced as soon as they are available.

What is the quantum of traffic currently between the two nations?

Total passenger carriage between Singapore and Saudi Arabia in 2007 was more than 80,000 passengers.

(Report on page 17)



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TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Saudi Arabia - Your gateway to the Middle East and East Africa spoke to Ministry of Transport, Singapore to find out what makes Singapore transport tick



We would like to have a brief on the Ministry of Transportation, how does it act as a planning agency for Singapore's transportation needs?

The Ministry of Transportation (MOT) oversees the development and regulation of air, land and sea transport. MOT's focus is to bring about efficient, reliable and cost-effective transportation to enhance Singapore's economic competitiveness and quality of life. Apart from its direct economic contributions, transport connectivity such as through our air and sea hubs facilitates the growth of Singapore's overall economy.

The operational and regulatory work are mainly carried out by the statutory boards under MOT's charge: the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), the Land Transport Authority (LTA) and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA).

Singapore's transportation infrastructure and service are world-class. What kind of planning, coordination and work go into making them so?

Singapore is one of the world's most competitive air and sea hubs. However, to retain our competitive edge, we recognise that we need to continually improve on the hardware and software aspects of our transport infrastructure in the face of increasing change and technological advancement.

Our planners take a long-term view and ensure that our plans are well-coordinated and integrated. Our aviation infrastructure provides an excellent example of this. We have long-term plans

to maintain Changi Airport's status as a premier air hub by building adequate infrastructure and capacity ahead of demand, and ensuring that our facilities remain modern, well-maintained and efficient. We have just completed the expansion of Changi Airport earlier this year with the opening of Terminal 3 and we are now upgrading Terminal 1, one of the main terminals at Changi Airport. At the same time, we keep a constant lookout for emerging trends and adjust our plans accordingly. For example, the Low Cost Carriers (LCC) sector experienced strong growth over the past five years. To cater to this emerging niche market, we built a Budget Terminal a few years ago and plan to expand its capacity soon.

By combining long-term planning and a willingness to constantly re-look at our plans, we ensure that our infrastructure remains relevant and suitable for our needs in the future.

What are the kind of strategies adopted by the Ministry to keep pace with the changing transportation needs of the nation?

Because Singapore has very limited land resources, we have adopted an integrated, long-term approach to land use planning, where various agencies come together to plan the land use and infrastructure needs of our development over the course of a few decades. This allows us to optimise the use of our limited land resources.

Meeting the commuting needs of an increasingly demanding travelling public in an effective and sustainable manner is an important aspect of such integrated land use planning. Our city planners plan for commercial centres, amenities and leisure options closer to home, so that the need to commute to the city centre is reduced. Our transport and city planners also work together to stage the development of public transport infrastructure in tandem with residential, industrial and commercial development. This ensures that public transport is accessible to residents and workers.

Transport infrastructure also has a social role to play in our society. We need to ensure that people with diverse and special needs, including the mobility challenged, can get to their destinations easily so as to facilitate an inclusive society. This is one of the key things that we set out to do when we reviewed our land transport policy early this year, to put people at the centre of our land transport system.

While we design our transport system to provide for the needs of the economy and our society, we are also mindful to ensure that our city stays liveable and attractive as a destination for business and talent, while at the same time providing a home that Singaporeans are proud of.

Many developing countries find the management of a good transport system difficult, how can they learn from Singapore's success story?

Timing, resources, culture and political will are some factors affecting the ability of cities and countries to implement transport infrastructural programmes. We are happy to host others who want to learn from our experience. On our part, we continue to believe that, there is still great scope for Singapore's planners to learn from others and adapt their best practices for our own circumstances as well.

Singapore has been very innovative in using the ERP / COE system to regulate the number of cars of the road, could you elaborate on Singapore's road / traffic management systems.

For a dense city state, it is crucial that we manage the demand for roads if we want to ensure that our city remains liveable and our roads stay smooth-flowing. Hence since 1975, we have various schemes like the Area Licensing Scheme, Vehicle Quota System and Electronic Road Pricing to manage our vehicle population and the excessive use of cars. Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) is an electronic system of road pricing based on a pay-as-you-use principle. It is designed to be a fair system as motorists are charged when they use high-demand roads during peak hours. The intent is to influence enough drivers to change their driving patterns so that the road is smooth-flowing for the remaining drivers that use it.

Singapore is one of the few cities in the world that has boldly implemented vehicle population control and congestion charging. These measures ensure that our roads remain smooth-flowing and are not clogged up with exhaust-emitting traffic. This makes for a congestion-free and more liveable city.



Other cities have since followed suit to impose similar congestion management schemes in one form or another. Some, like Stockholm and London, have succeeded in introducing congestion pricing.

Are there any joint venture opportunities available for international players and has Singapore collaborated in this direction, for example through private-public cooperation?

Apart from its core business of transport operations and regulation, most of the work in the transportation sector in Singapore is done by both local and foreign private sector companies. As for overseas work, Changi Airports International, the overseas arm of Changi Airport, has been working with different foreign partners to manage or invest in overseas airport projects.



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Saudi Cultural Office in Singapore



In line with the intensifying ties between Saudi Arabia and Singapore, a new cultural office in Singapore has been recently set up. We spoke to the cultural attaché, Professor Abdul Ghaffar S. Bazuhair. Here are the excerpts:

Congratulations on being the first officer in charge of cultural interaction between Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

What will be the scope of work for the “Cultural Office” in Singapore?

Thank you for the wishes. I am highly honoured to be trusted with the responsibility to head the Saudi Arabian Cultural mission in Singapore.

Like other Saudi Arabian Cultural Offices around the world, our scope of work is to meet the educational needs of Saudi students wishing to pursue their higher education in well-established universities in Singapore. Our focus are the Medicine and Engineering courses whereby the students will be provided with access to the best higher education institutions and learning experience the country has to offer.

In addition, we are also looking closely into the research sector (Scientific and healthcare) of this multi-innovative nation. On top of that, there are several newly established universities in Saudi Arabia, and these universities are really hoping to co-operate in the realm of scientific research with all prestigious universities in Singapore.

What are the activities and interactions planned to promote Saudi culture among Singaporeans?

As the office is new, we have yet to initiate any talks or activities. However, Saudi Arabia Ministry of Culture and Information and our office really hope that we can work hand in hand with Singapore to establish and organize a string of activities in order to introduce to Singaporeans our Saudi Arabian Culture and vice versa. Our office humbly welcomes any suggestions.

Since the visit of HRH Prince, Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz the interaction between the two nations has increased, as more and more Saudi students come to Singapore for an exchange programme, what will be the role of your office?

As mentioned earlier, the Saudi Arabian Cultural mission was tasked with spearheading our government's commitment towards education exchanges. We are here to provide conducive and comprehensive services in all aspects of the process. This will include advising the students about the universities, guiding them through the course selection and school admission, monitoring their welfare and academic performance, and providing a full range of assistance in the daily life of our students and trainees in Singapore.

Through the medium of our magazine, what is the message you would like to convey to the readers about your presence in Singapore and how they can collaborate with your office?

We have an exceptional interest to garner as much positive results from our mission. We are ready and confident that Saudi Arabia and Singapore could work together in providing the best educational ground and innovative research for both countries. Again, my cultural team and I will be delighted to receive any suggestions – from Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education, Singapore Universities, media and the public. FYI, last year Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education and Singapore Ministry of Education had came up with memorandum of understanding. With this initiation, it ultimately opens the window of opportunity for us to continue the effort to bring the two countries closer.

On behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its cultural mission to Singapore, I look forward to a remarkable growth in interaction between the two countries and I like to express my amounting appreciation to Singapore for its wonderful people and astounding hospitality.

Congratulations & Best Wishes to the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 78th Anniversary of National Day

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RIYAD BANK: A Profile

Mr Seow Boon Ann, Chief Representative of Riyad Bank in Singapore, shares with us interesting facts on the bank and his views on future directions



Mr Seow Boon Ann, Chief Representative of Riyad Bank in Singapore

What are some of the commercial services that Riyad Bank provides in Singapore?

Riyad Bank Singapore Representative Office (SRO) was established in April 1997 which is the Bank's first Asian outpost. As a representative office, the Bank does not provide any banking services, however, SRO facilitates Saudi trade with the Asian region, assisting Riyad Bank customers with investment opportunities in Asia and developing relationships with banking correspondents and Asian corporates with business activities in Saudi Arabia. The Singapore office was instrumental in significantly increasing the Bank's financing of Saudi-Asian businesses over the last few years and is well positioned to serve the increasing flow of commerce and investments between the Kingdom and Asia.

What is Riyad Bank's growth strategy in Singapore, given growing Singapore-Saudi business ties?

Riyad Bank SRO strategy in Singapore is to weave itself into any activity involving Saudi Arabia and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries through participation of events of the various entities below:

- ❖ Middle East Business Group (MEBG), part of the Singapore Business Federation facilitating business networking.

❖ International Enterprise Singapore which promotes cross border business with Middle East countries including GCC and Saudi Arabia

❖ Saudi-Singapore Business Council in which periodic contacts with members are arranged for updating and networking.

The Singapore Office continues to proactively support the needs of Singapore and other Asian countries seeking to engage in the development of water and power resources in Saudi Arabia.

The recent boom in Islamic Banking has lured many competitors into the thriving sector. What are the differentiating factors for Riyad Bank?

Riyad Bank's Islamic banking products are domestic based in Saudi Arabia though the Bank has thrust forward in the realm of syndicated Islamic project finance facilities. Given the large project finance requirements within Saudi Arabia over the medium to long term, large-scale project finance syndications in Saudi Arabia would invariably tap into Islamic funds as part of the overall project finance sourcing strategy. Riyad Bank is currently in the forefront in leading Islamic project finance in Saudi Arabia.

Share with us some of the strategic strengths of Riyad Bank in operating in an environment like Singapore.

Singapore is the base for Asian businesses for the Bank and owing to proximity of location and time zone convenience, the

Bank is able to promptly service the needs of corporates from Singapore and other Asian countries venturing to Saudi Arabia.

In your view, what are the key challenges for Riyad Bank in Singapore?

- ❖ Identifying good business opportunities in Singapore and the Asian region for Saudi Arabian investors wanting to diversify their investment portfolio
- ❖ Educating and convincing major Singapore corporates who wish to start exploring Saudi Arabian business linkups
- ❖ Educating and convincing Riyad Bank's domestic clientele of the vast business opportunities in Asia, in particular Singapore.

Do you think there is a large scope for expansion in Singapore and the Region?

There is definite scope for expansion in the set up of the Singapore office of the Bank in future given the excellent financial infrastructure, good communication and air transportation links with Asia, a credible legal system and a stable political environment. Timing of the expansion would however depend on the volume of Saudi and GCC-related deal flows through Singapore and the Asia Pacific region.

Feature Writer: Adriel Emanuel CHENG Meng Fong



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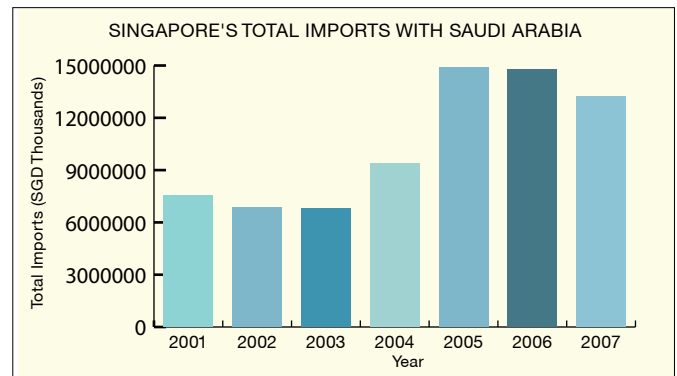
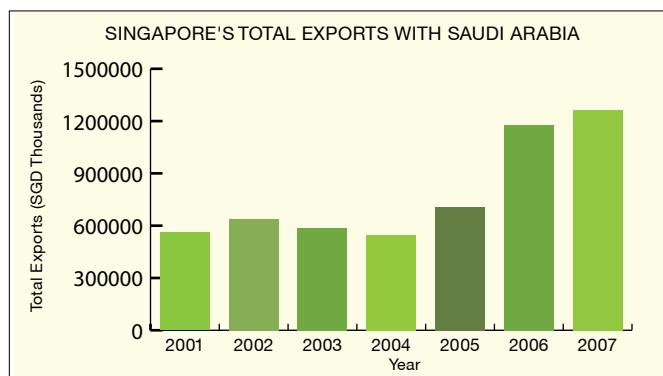
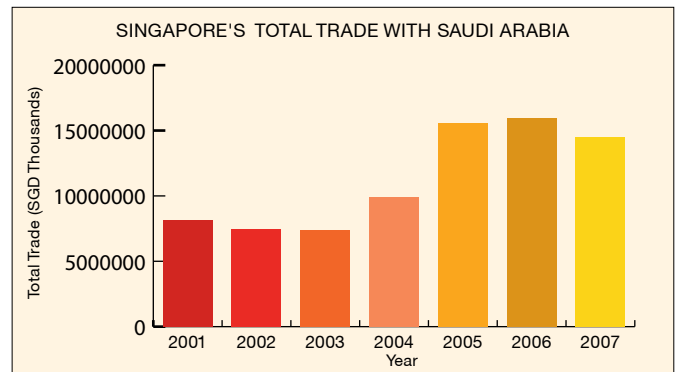
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International Enterprise (IE) Singapore is the lead agency under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, spearheading the development of Singapore's external economy

IE Singapore is committed to promote the growth of Singapore-based enterprises overseas and international trade. Leveraging on a global network in over 30 locations including an overseas centre in Jeddah, IE Singapore offers services to grow exports, enhance and integrate business capabilities, source for overseas partnerships and new markets. IE Singapore also aims to position Singapore as a base for foreign businesses to expand into the region in partnership with Singapore-based companies. IE Singapore's vision is for Singapore to be a thriving commerce and trade hub with globally competitive enterprises and leading multinational companies.

Source: IE Singapore



Source: IE Singapore

Hai Leck Holdings Limited: A Profile

Established in the early 1970s, Hai Leck is an integrated service provider of scaffolding, corrosion prevention and insulation works mainly for the oil and gas and petrochemical industries



The Group's business can be broadly classified into project and maintenance services. Project services comprise (i) scaffolding and corrosion prevention services, complemented by general civil engineering services; and (ii) insulation services comprising thermal insulation and refractory services, complemented by passive fireproofing services. Having recently completed its listing in Singapore, Hai Leck will proceed with the "execution of growth strategies and enhancement of capabilities to expand market share" according to Executive Chairman, Mr Cheng Buck Poh. Already the seventh largest trading partner with Singapore, the GCC economies including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offer perfect growth opportunities for Singapore based companies like Hai Leck with lucrative niche areas like Oil & Gas infrastructure.



Chairman of SABIC, Prince Saud bin Thenayan Al-Saud, presenting a gift to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong during the PM's visit to SABIC HQ held in conjunction with his state visit to the Kingdom

Asia, today, is the epicenter of growth worldwide, and for SABIC it is an important market as well. "Asia is an exceptionally strategic and important market for SABIC," says Ahmed Al-Umar General Manager, SABIC Asia Pacific

Mr Al-Umar expressed his optimism and confidence in the opportunities and potential of thriving and vibrant Asia. SABIC has a strong global presence, expanding into fast-growing markets in the Asia Pacific region where it has more than 30 offices. "We have 15 production facilities in Asia-Pacific and, working with partners in the Far East, we plan to establish even more production facilities here within the next few years," said Mr Al-Umar. SABIC has more than 2,000 staff in Asia.

SABIC's Asia Pacific headquartered in Singapore has been leveraging on its presence in Asia to be part of the various opportunities. An agreement was signed between the heads of SABIC and SINOPEC (China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation) on 31st January 2008 in establishing an equal share joint venture company that will invest in an ethylene derivatives complex in Tianjin. This is its first joint venture in China and is integral in SABIC's global strategy in establishing a manufacturing centre in Asia and serving customers in the booming Chinese market.

In addition, this new venture will affirm the already strong relationship between SABIC and SINOPEC. Chinese engineers from Sinopec are currently helping to construct a world-scale polyolefins complex for SABIC affiliate Yanbu National Petrochemicals Company in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia.

Another strategic cooperation agreement was signed in July to further expand the scope of the partnership. This joint

SABIC

Growing with

ASIA

venture company will receive all its ethylene feedstock from an ethylene cracker owned by Tianjin Petrochemical Company, a branch of SINOPEC. Valued at amounts beyond US\$2.5 billion, the complex is scheduled to be completed by September 2009.

Saudi Aramco also signed a mutual cooperation agreement with SABIC to market Saudi Aramco's 25 percent share of polyolefin products produced by the Fujian Refining and Petrochemicals Company of the People's Republic of China.



In itself, this agreement constitutes, from the Kingdom's perspective, an extra relative advantage for SABIC, which grants it the right to market polyolefins in support of Saudi investments abroad.

SABIC's Vice Chairman and CEO, Mohamed Al-Mady said, "The agreement signed between Saudi Aramco and SABIC is a qualitative leap in the history of Saudi industrial development." The agreement incarnates the integration between two giants each occupying a pioneering position worldwide, the first in the field of oil industries and the other in the area of the petrochemical industry.



SABIC number one in Asia and number four in the world, according to Fortune Global 500 rankings

SABIC has been ranked the number one chemicals company in Asia and number four in the world by Fortune Global 500. Companies in the first three global rankings in terms of revenue are BASF, Dow Chemical and Bayer. SABIC also improved its position from 301 in 2006 to the world's 227th largest corporation in 2007. This list is compiled by Fortune Magazine every year and companies are ranked according to overall revenue, profits, assets, shareholders' equity and other factors. The world's largest corporation is Wal-Mart, whose international sales grew by 17.5 per cent, triple what it saw in the States, and now constitute 24 per cent of the company's total revenue. ExxonMobil and Shell were ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively.



Mr Al-Mady, second from right, posing for a group photograph with the Boao board of directors and Chinese President, Hu Jin Tao (center)



SABIC uses Singapore as its transshipment hub for Asia

The focus on the Asia-Pacific has already yielded successful partnerships between SABIC and local players like the PSA Singapore Terminals. Originally formed in 2002, the partnership has grown in scope and depth which sees PSA increasingly serving SABIC's growing shipments of Polymers and goods into Asia, with Singapore as the shipment hub to over 200 different ports in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. This win-win partnership looks set to grow as SABIC's manufacturing facilities continue to expand globally.

While the strategic focus remains on growth, SABIC honoured its commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility through a donation of US\$1.15 million to the China earthquake relief fund in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake. It also strongly encouraged its employees to personally donate to the Red Cross and the other respective agencies. Chairman Prince Saud bin Abdullah bin Thenayan Al-Saud highlighted SABIC's strong commitment to being a responsible corporation in a letter to China's leaders. The donation also affirmed the already robust relationship between SABIC and the People's Republic of China.

Factors Oiling Saudi Economy: **BESIDES OIL**

The Government of Saudi Arabia has implemented a number of political and economic reforms to encourage political participation, promote economic growth, increase foreign investment and expand employment opportunities

Economic Indicators: The best indicator of Saudi Arabia's economic growth is the increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), from US\$20 billion in 1970 to an expected US\$378 billion in 2007. Saudi Arabia's economy is the largest in the Middle East. The Kingdom ranked 35th out of 131 countries in the Global Competitiveness Report for 2007-2008. The Report was released on October 31, 2007 by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

In December 2007, Moody's Investors Service assigned long-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings of A1 to Saudi Electricity Company (SEC), with a positive outlook. In April 2007, Moody's also gave the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) a long-term local and foreign currency rating of A1, with a stable outlook. In July 2007, Standard & Poor's raised the Kingdom's foreign and local currency long-term sovereign credit ratings from A+ to AA-. The ratings previously achieved an A to A+ upgrade in 2006 on the basis of excellent financial performance.

Also in 2006, international ratings agency Fitch Ratings upgraded Saudi Arabia's foreign currency and local currency Issuer Default ratings from A to A+. Fitch also upgraded Saudi Arabia's Country Ceiling rating from A to AA-. Saudi Arabia ranks the 19th largest exporter and the 20th largest importer of goods in the world. In 2007 trade between Saudi Arabia and the United States was estimated at almost \$40 billion.

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest oil exporter and has the largest proven oil reserves, and the largest spare production capacity. The Kingdom has utilised oil revenues to expand and diversify the Saudi economy to reduce its dependence on oil, which has resulted in

The Kingdom is updating and modernising its academic curricula, and monitoring its religious schools. It held municipal elections as part of a comprehensive streamlining of local government. In addition, the Kingdom is promoting its free market economy by privatising major state enterprises, establishing regulatory authorities to carry out reforms, improving foreign investment laws, revising a broad range of commercial laws and implementing intellectual property rights to foster innovation. It also became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2005.

impressive gains in the non-oil sector. In 2007, the non-oil industrial sector is estimated to have grown by 8.6 percent; the construction sector by 6.9 percent; the electricity, gas, and water sector by 4.4 percent; transportation and communications sector by 10.6 percent; and wholesale, retail, restaurants, and hotels sector by 6 percent in real prices. In 1970, Saudi Arabia had about 199 industrial plants with overall investments estimated at US\$622 million. By 2005, the total number of factories in the Kingdom exceeded 3,748 with a total investment of more than US\$71 billion.

Economic Cities: In November 2007, the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) announced the Kingdom will invest more than US\$64 billion to develop a solid information technology infrastructure. Launched in May 2007 by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the District will serve as headquarters for the Capital Market Authority, the Saudi stock exchange, the commodities market and a large community of financial professionals. When completed, it will be the largest financial center in the Middle East. In November 2007, the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) announced the Kingdom will invest more than \$64 billion to develop a solid information technology infrastructure.



On March 20, 2008, the Etihad Atheeb Telecommunications Co. (Atheeb) awarded a US\$165 million broadband infrastructure contract to Motorola for delivery of a fully integrated end-to-end nationwide WiMAX 802.16e solution featuring smart antenna technology. The contract also includes end-to-end delivery of network planning, installation, optimisation and support services. The new infrastructure will enable Atheeb to offer broadband services to customers across the Kingdom.

Atheeb was formed as a new provider of fixed telecom services by a consortium consisting of the Batelco, Atheeb Group, Al Nahla and Traco companies. It was licensed in 2007. Mobile Telecommunications Company Saudi Arabia (Zain in Saudi Arabia) signed a US\$335 million turnkey contract with Motorola to deploy and manage a 2G/3G mobile communications network in Saudi Arabia. The network will allow Zain to offer Saudi customers high-speed mobile Internet access and a range of mobile multimedia applications and services. Zain was formed to operate a mobile telecommunications business in Saudi Arabia under the terms of the third mobile operating license awarded in July 2007.

The Prince Ahmed bin Salman Applied Media Institute, opened in Riyadh in April 2008, will provide technical, design and practical training to prospective journalists and media persons.

Media: The Prince Ahmed bin Salman Applied Media Institute opened in Riyadh on April 27, 2008. The specialized institute is the first of its kind in the Arab world and will provide technical, design and practical training to prospective journalists and media persons.

Employment of Women: In 2006, Saudi women amounted to 10.7 percent of the Saudi labor force. (Arab News, 2/6/2006) By 2007, they accounted for 14 percent of the total Saudi labor force in the Kingdom. (Arab News, 3/10/2007) Saudi Arabia's efforts to empower women are helping; they now own more than 20,000 companies and establishments and hold 21 percent of total private investments. (Arab News, 3/10/2007). Accounting, banking and computer training centers have been established to prepare women for jobs. Training programs organized by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVOT), implemented by the Ministry of Labor, have also benefited women. The educational, technological, medical, and automotive sectors are just several of the industries opening to women. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education are also reserving top jobs for women.

In October 2003, Dr. Maha Abdullah Orkubi was appointed Dean of the Jeddah branch of the Arab Open University (AOU), the first time for a Saudi woman to be appointed to such a senior academic position. In June 2005, Saudi national Dr. Mona Al-Munajjed was one of twelve winners who at the United Nations in New York received an award for the 2005 'UN-21' competition. She was honored for her work with non-government organizations (NGOs) in the Kingdom, specifically for her project 'Activating the Role of Women's Welfare Associations in Saudi Arabia'.

In November 2005, Lama Al-Sulaiman and Nashwa Taher were elected to the board of directors of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI). In December 2005, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry appointed two women to the board, Madawi Al-Hassoun and Olfat Qabbani, bringing the total number of women on the board to four. Also in December 2005, Nadia Bakhurji won a seat on the 10-member board of the Saudi Engineers Council. The Council has only 20 women among its 5,000 members.

And in late December 2005, Gulf One Investment Bank named Dr. Nahed Taher as its CEO, making her the first Saudi woman to head a bank in the Gulf region. In October 2006, Nabeela Al-Tunisi, Director of Supporting Administration and Projects Monitoring Methods for Saudi Aramco, was named one of the world's top 25 female project managers by Projects Management Network.

In March 2007, Dr. Samia al-Amoudi became a recipient of the U.S. Department of State's first International Women of Courage Award. She was presented the Award by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and was recognized for her contributions to breast cancer awareness across the Kingdom and throughout the region. Naila M. Faran became the first Saudi woman to earn the Nuclear Medicine Certification Board's (NMTCB) certification in Nuclear Medicine Technology in September 2007. Faran is a senior radiologic technologist with the Saudi Aramco Medical Services Organization (SAMSO).

Saudi Aramco Celebrates



GLORIOUS YEARS

Under the patronage of King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Saudi Aramco kicked off its 75th Anniversary celebration on May 20. Government officials, company executives, employees and invited guests gathered to welcome the King and GCC leaders at enormous tents near the Saudi Aramco Exhibit in Dhahran.

The programme began with a tour through an exhibition showcasing Saudi Aramco's story in historic images, detailed timelines and innovative displays of the company's key operations. Among the sensory barrage of sights and sounds of the past 75 years, the highlight of the exhibit was a simple yet monumental document — the original signed concession agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Standard Oil of California, displayed in a glass case. Following the tour, guests were ushered into a newly erected tent-like structure created for the main celebration as King Abdullah welcomed everyone to the historic event and set the tone of pride and gratitude for everything that Saudi Aramco has accomplished for the Kingdom and its people.



“On this occasion, we celebrate the passing of 75 years of national growth,” said King Abdullah, “So thank you very much to the men and women of Saudi Aramco.

“The country has given Saudi Aramco what it needs to become successful and exceptional,” the King said. “It gave the company flexibility with which it nationalized technologies and gained from international experience in the necessary fields and industries.”

King Abdullah praised Saudi Aramco not only for its role in national development but also for its role in supporting the Kingdom's international relations by providing energy to the world and effectively dealing with global energy crises whenever they happen. In his speech, Ali I. Al-Naimi, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, talked about Saudi Aramco's long history from the time of King Abdulaziz, the Kingdom's founder, to the present and how much it has propelled this country to where it stands today.

He also emphasized the pivotal role of King Abdullah in the past decade in supporting and guiding several key megaprojects and energizing Saudi Arabia's economic and industrial capabilities, all for the sake of the people and the Kingdom.

“Today, our employees, both Saudi and expat, recall 75 years of dedication and hard work to build and develop Saudi Arabia's oil industry, an industry that has spread its wealth and prosperity

throughout the Kingdom, from north to south and east to west,” said Al-Naimi.

“While I realise there are no words to convey how much this event means to the Kingdom and to Saudi Aramco,” Al-Naimi said, “I want to, through this speech, highlight the sense of appreciation and pride for all who have left their mark through-out our history of oil production. This industry will continue to bring progress and advancements in the future, thanks in no small part to the support of our country’s leadership, as well as to the dedication, hard work and innovation of this company’s valued employees.”

SAUDI ARAMCO : A BRIEF

The Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco), the state-owned oil company of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is the largest petroleum corporation in the world. The Kingdom has the world’s largest recoverable oil reserves and the fourth-largest natural gas reserves. Saudi Aramco ranks first among oil companies worldwide in terms of crude oil production and exports as well as natural gas liquids (NGL) exports, and is among the leading producers of natural gas. The company is a fully integrated energy company with operations in exploration, production, refining, petrochemicals, distribution, marketing and international shipping.

Saudi Aramco employs more than 51,000 people and is headquartered in Dhahran in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province, which borders the Arabian Gulf. Operations span the Kingdom, with production and product distribution facilities linking all market areas. Major export shipping terminals are located at ports on the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea, while domestic demand for automotive and aviation products is met through a Kingdom-wide network of strategically situated refineries.

Message From the King

The following is King Abdullah’s message to all the employees of Saudi Aramco, conveyed on the “Thoughts for Generations” electronic message board at the ceremony marking the company’s 75th Anniversary:

In The Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise God as we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Saudi Aramco, and take pride in the company, its past achievements and its past and present generations of employees.

You have always been a role model for dedication, excellence, performance and loyalty to your country. I wish you, God willing, all the best in your continual excellence in the interest of the country and the whole world.

— King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz

Internationally, Saudi Aramco holds substantial joint-venture and investment interests in refining and marketing activities in the United States, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Japan and China. Key market service support offices are located in major cities in North America, Europe and the Far East. Saudi Aramco, through its international shipping affiliate Vela International Marine Limited, also operates a sizeable fleet of supertankers for shipping crude oil and product vessels serving customer bases.

Saudi Aramco stands committed to providing a reliable supply of petroleum and petroleum products to communities and consumers around the globe. Throughout its history, Saudi Aramco has never failed due to operational reasons to meet a delivery commitment to a customer. The company’s ability to bring its spare capacity on-stream in response to market needs has been repeatedly proven over the years.



HM King Abd al Aziz takes the salute aboard the D.G. Scofield during his visit to Dhahran and Ras Tanura. The Scofield was the first tanker to take on oil from the Ras Tanura terminal, Ras Tanura, May 1, 1939.

Three Operations: The foundation for the company’s success lies deep underground, with the Kingdom’s extensive oil and gas reserves. Saudi Arabia has stewardship over the world’s largest conventional crude-oil reserves, approximately 260 billion barrels, and the planet’s fourth-largest natural-gas reserves, approximately 248.5 trillion standard cubic feet. Given their immense size, prudent stewardship of these reserves is vital to the world’s energy future. Saudi Aramco’s reservoir management practices are designed to maximize recovery from its fields, ensuring that petroleum resources will be available to the world for many decades to come. The company operates an extensive system of crude oil producing and processing facilities, which supply normal customer demand while maintaining 1.5 million to 2 million barrels per day of valuable spare capacity to meet unexpected international demands.

Domestically, Saudi Aramco owns and operates, or is a partner in, seven refineries with a combined refining capacity of 1.7 million bpd and maintains a Kingdom-wide refined product distribution system. The company also operates eight marine terminals on the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf coasts, exporting crude oil products and natural gas liquids to overseas markets. Saudi Aramco’s oil operations encompass the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including territorial waters in the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea. Totalling more than 579,100 square miles (1.5 million square kilometers), this area is larger than the combined areas of Texas, California, Oklahoma and Utah, or of France, Spain and Germany. Most production comes from fields in the coastal plains of the Eastern Province in an area extending 300 kilometers north and south of Dhahran. Worldwide, gas is the fastest-growing energy source. Over the last decade, world gas consumption has grown 1.7 percent per year and is expected to accelerate at a rate of 3.2 percent per year over the next 20 years. Saudi Arabia discovered the merits of gas as a valuable resource in the 1970s, well before any other hydrocarbon-rich nation in the Middle East, and its Master Gas System was launched in the 1980s to capture and utilize, rather than flare, this important energy resource.

Picture courtesy: www.saudiaramco.com



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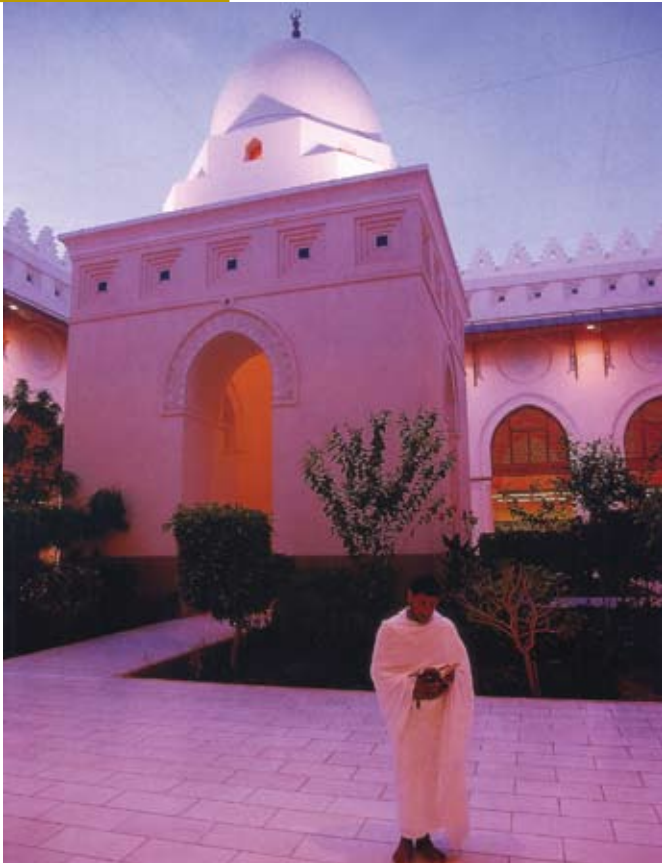
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A Brief for the PILGRIMS

Islam is the religion founded by the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in Arabia in the 7th century CE. The essence of Islam is submission to the will of Allah (God). Allah, is the one God, the creator of all that exists, made known to man by the Prophets (including Ibrahim, Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them all). The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who was God's last and final messenger, delivered God's complete and perfect message in the words of the Holy Qur'an.

The world into which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born was one in which polytheism had supplanted belief in the one true God. Pagan rites desecrated the House of God (the Kaaba) which the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and his first born son Ishmael (peace be upon him) had built in Makkah. Muhammad (peace be upon him) purged the Holy Places of idolatry and taught a strict monotheism in which all must submit to the will of God.

With extraordinary speed, the new religion of Islam spread out from the Arabian peninsula, across the whole of the Middle East, west across the north of Africa and into Europe, east into India and the Far East. Central to the success of Islam in a society was the commitment to the brotherhood of man. All Muslim belong to the Ummah (the community of Islam), a concept that transcends all distinctions of colour, race and gender. To join the Ummah, individuals simply have to assert wholeheartedly their belief in Islam and conduct their lives according to the word of God, as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

A Muslim is a person who has submitted his or her whole being to Allah and to the acceptance and fulfilment of His will. Allah, the God of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham, peace be upon him), the forbear of the Arabs, is omnipotent, omniscient and, above all, compassionate.

The will of Allah, as revealed in the Holy Qur'an, is that people should worship Allah, put their trust in Allah, avoid sins, and treat one another with justice, compassion and generosity. Islam permeates every moment and every aspect of a Muslim's life.

Today, Islam has more than one billion adherents and is the fastest growing of the world's major religions.

General Questions On Haj and Umrah

How do I perform Umrah?

Umrah is one of the important rituals in Islam and has been performed from its inception. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Accumulated sins are expiated with each Umrah".

How do I perform Hajj?

"Hajj" means literally "to set out for a place". For a Muslim, that place is the Holy City of Makkah. There are Three Ways of Performing Hajj. There are three ways of performing the Hajj.

These are : Hajj al-Tamattu' , Hajj al-Ifrad , Hajj al-Qiran.

Hajj al-Tamattu': Hajj al-Tamattu' involves performing Umrah and then Hajj, with one Ihram for each. This form of Hajj is considered the best of three forms of Hajj. It is the one that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) urged his followers to perform and is the one adopted by most pilgrims from overseas.

Hajj al-Ifrad: Hajj al-Ifrad involves performing Hajj only. A sacrificial animal is not obligatory when performing Hajj al-Ifrad. and then give an account of the rituals and stages for each way of performing Hajj. You can also see a summary of the stages of the Hajj by clicking on the "Hajj, Day by Day" button on the top menu bar. We also provide the text, in English, of Prayers during Hajj commonly used at the different stages of the Hajj

Hajj al-Qiran: Hajj al-Qiran involves combining Umrah and Hajj, with only one Ihram for both

What is the difference between Umrah and Hajj?

Umrah may be performed at any time of the year, but Hajj should be performed during the month of Dhu'l-Hijjah every year.

Who is eligible to go on Umrah?

Only Muslims can enter Makkah and perform Umrah.

Who can perform Hajj?

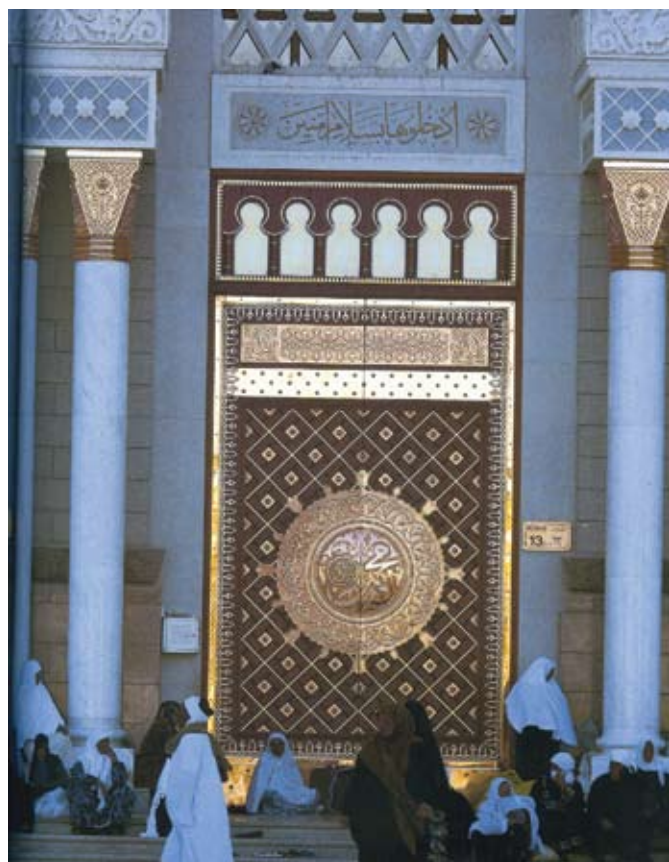
An adult Muslim of a sane mind, an able body and having means to bear the expenses must perform Hajj once in his/her lifetime. Hajj is not obligatory for children, the sick, and those who cannot bear the costs.

How long does it take to perform Hajj?

Normally 5 to 6 days, but there are exceptions. See main section on The Rituals/Stages of the Hajj

How long does it take to perform Umrah?

A few hours.



Clothing

What kinds of clothing and bedding should I take with me to Saudi Arabia?

The essential thing is two or three sets of Ihram. The Ihram consists of two pieces of white plain cloth, either 100 per cent cotton or light terry-cloth. These are cool to wear and also provide for better absorption of the heavy perspiration you will inevitably experience during Hajj.

Also take with you light and airy clothes for street wear. Take enough clothes to make your stay comfortable, but do not overburden yourself with unnecessary clothes. Professional laundry facilities are available in Saudi Arabia. If going on Hajj during winter months, take some woolen clothing as the early mornings tend to be cool. Take also three or four pairs of rubber slippers for use during Ihram, as well as couple of pairs of comfortable shoes or sandals for walking. Also take two large and two small towels.

You may also need a sleeping bag for bedding, an inflatable pillow and thick sheets.

Where can I wash my clothes?

There are professional laundry services, but not that many coin-operated launderettes. Detergent to wash your light clothing is also available in the local market.

What is the weather like in Makkah and Madinah?

It is very hot during summer months, with temperature reaching upper 40°C (100°F) during day. During winter times the weather is mild, but early mornings and late nights could be cold.

What is the time-difference in Makkah?

Standard time zone: UCT/GMT + 3 hours. No daylight saving time at the moment.

What is the Saudi currency?

The Saudi riyal is the official currency of Saudi Arabia. Each riyal is composed of 100 hallalahs. The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) issues banknotes in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 riyals and coins in denominations of 5, 10, 25, 50 and 100 hallalahs.

The riyal has been fixed against the U.S. dollar since 1986. One riyal equals 0.2267 dollars, and a dollar equals 3.7502 riyals.

Are there any banks in Makkah and Madinah?

There are branches of some big national and international banks in Makkah and Madinah.

What are the opening and closing hours of banks?

In Saudi Arabia the banks are usually open 9.00 am to 12.00 pm and 5.00 pm to 7.00 pm, Saturday to Wednesday. (On Thursdays, banks are open in the mornings only).

Do banks change foreign currency?

Yes.

Do banks cash travellers' cheques?

Travellers' cheques could be cashed almost anywhere. Since your passport will be taken away for the duration of your stay by the Saudi authorities in Jeddah, the ID card issued by your Tawafa Establishment will be used for check cashing purposes. Make sure you have travelers cheques 'Purchase Receipt' with you, as without it it will be harder to cash them in.

Accommodation in the Holy Places

Where do I stay in Makkah?

Your accommodation should be arranged by your authorised licensed agent. There are different qualities of accommodations, from four star luxurious hotels to rooms through to apartments you share with others. Your agency should give you details of the hotel where you will be staying. If you are sharing, your travel agency should also let you know how many people will share your room.

How do I move around Makkah. Is there public transport?

Travel within Saudi Arabia is highly restricted. Pilgrims' travel will be limited to the cities of Makkah and Madinah, to the tent cities of Mina and Arafat and to Muzdalifah. Inter-city travel will require

the pilgrim or his travel agent to inform the Tawafa Establishment office 24 to 48 hours before departure. Pilgrims travel by buses provided by the General Cars Syndicate, using one of travel coupons given to them by the Tawafa Establishment. Buses are of different standards and are allocated on an availability basis. Pilgrims can also travel by taxis at an extra cost to them.

How long is the distance between Makkah and Mina?

The distance between Makkah and Mina is 8 kilometers (5 miles). Depending on traffic it could take anything between 2 to 4 hours. It may be better to walk the distance sometimes.

How long is the distance between Mina and Arafat?

The distance between Mina and Arafat is 14.4 kilometers (9 miles).

Where do I stay in Mina?

Mina is a well-organised tent city, with sectors and a secure precinct. Each tent can house between 20 to 40 people. Each tent has air conditioning unit and several power points. There are separate cooking areas and there are toilets with showering facilities in each precinct. Your travel agent should organise your accommodation in Mina.

Can I use my mobile phone/cell phone in Saudi Arabia?

You can use mobile phones to keep in touch with your group and also to phone home. SIM cards, only valid for a month, are available over the counter in most phone shops in Makkah and Madinah. Before leaving, make sure your phone can accept any SIM card, as opposed to being tied to a network.

General Safety Instructions

In general, how can I keep safe at Jamarat?

For your own safety and that of others, please observe the following instructions when proceeding to the casting of the Jamarat:

1. Adherence to the schedules designated for you by the Mutawwif.
2. Adherence to the lanes designated for proceeding to the Jamarat and returning therefrom.
3. Avoid pushing your fellow pilgrims and proceed quietly and calmly.
4. Do not carry personal effects.
5. Do not walk against the direction of the traffic.

Is the drinking water safe?

You may either drink bottled mineral water or drink from water fountains available for drinking throughout the holy sites. Use of boiled or sterilized water is not a must. Zamzam water is always safe.

Is the food safe? What foods should I avoid?

Avoid eating exposed food and meat from the counter. Make sure you eat cooked meat and fish, preferably hot. Cook vegetables and eat peeled fruit. Also always boil the milk.

If I need to sacrifice an animal, how do I arrange it?

Booths around Makkah and Mina have been set up by the Islamic Development Bank to facilitate buying coupons for slaughtering and distributing sacrificial animals. During Hajj, the sacrifice can be made in Mina or Makkah, after the stoning of the largest Jamarat. The sacrifice can be done by your agent on your behalf. The types of animals which may be sacrificed are camels, cows, sheep and goats. A sheep or goat can be sacrificed on behalf of



only one person; whereas, a cow or camel can be shared by seven people. The age of the goat or sheep should be at least one year, the cow two and the camel at least five. It is forbidden to sacrifice sick, crippled or wounded animals. The sacrifice should be performed on the 10th of Dhu'l-Hijjah but it is allowed to sacrifice up until the dusk of the 13th.

The pilgrim should say the following Du'aa when slaughtering the animal: "In the name of Allah and Allah is the Greatest. O Allah! This is from You and for You." The animal should be turned on its left side facing the Kaaba, but this is not a strict rule and is recommended practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The one performing the sacrifice should eat a part of the meat and a portion should be distributed to the needy and the poor. The butcher should not be given any part of the animal in lieu of his wages, as it is meant for charity.

Umrah Visas

Where do I go to get an Umrah visa?

Contact your nearest Saudi Consulate to get a visa application form. Complete it carefully and return it to the Consulate.

What do I need for an Umrah visa?

A completed original Umrah visa application form. The statement written at the end of the application form must be carefully read and signed. (To obtain a visa application form by post, send a large, self-addressed envelope to your nearest Saudi Consulate.)

If someone has a non-Muslim name, he or she should submit a certificate from a mosque or an Islamic center stating that the applicant is a Muslim. One recent passport size color photograph with a white background should be attached to the application form. The photograph must be a full-face view in which the visa applicant is facing the camera directly. Side or angled views are NOT accepted.

Passports should be valid for at least 6 months from the date of submission of the application form. Confirmed and non-refundable airline ticket. Departure from Saudi Arabia should be within two weeks from the date of entry.

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Women and children should be accompanied by husband/father or a male relative (Mahram). Proof of relationship is required (a marriage certificate for a wife, a birth certificate for a child indicating the names of both parents). The Mahram must travel into and out of Saudi Arabia on the same flight as his wife and children. If a woman is 45 years old or older, she is allowed to go without a Mahram if she travels with an organised group or family and submits a notarised No Objection Certificate from her Mahram.

If the applicant is not a national of the country he/she is applying from, a valid residency permit must be submitted with the application. A vaccination certificate against Meningococcal Meningitis should be attached. The certificate of vaccinations should have been issued not more than three years and not less than 10 days prior to entry to Saudi Arabia and it should be valid for three years. The vaccination certificate must be with the applicant on entry to Saudi Arabia.

Umrah visa is valid for 30 days only. This does not mean that you can stay in Saudi Arabia for 30 days. Within these 30 days you should perform Umrah, making sure your departure from Saudi Arabia is within two weeks of the date of entry. The visa for Umrah in Ramadan cannot exceed the last day of Ramadan. You should leave Saudi Arabia by the end of Ramadan and cannot have Eid-ul-Fitr there.

Do I have to pay for these visas? If yes, how much do they cost?

The Umrah and Hajj visas are free but you will still have to pay for services you get in Saudi Arabia.

Hajj Visas

Where do I go to get a Hajj visa?

The application form is available from your nearest Saudi Consulate. But it is advisable to appoint a licensed travel agent, who will arrange a visa, as well as your travel and accommodation and anything else you may need to perform the Hajj. The travel agent will send your application form to the Saudi Consulate.

What do I need for a Hajj visa?

You must comply with all the following requirements: The applicant must have a passport valid for at least six more months and acceptable both for entry to Saudi Arabia and entry to the next destination; the passport should have at least two empty visa pages adjacent to each other. Each applicant must submit one recent passport size color photograph with a white background. The photograph must be a full-face view in which the visa applicant is facing the camera directly. Side or angled views are NOT accepted. (Some travel agents require two color photos, one for the visa application and the other for the group identification card).

The applicant must submit a completed application form filled in with black ink pen or printed; the form must be signed and stamped by the authorised travel agency. The Mahram should write on the application forms complete information on his spouse and children or any relative with whom he is traveling. He should also provide copies of marriage or birth certificates. Women are required to travel for Hajj with a Mahram. Proof of kinship must be submitted with the application form. Any woman over the age of 45 may travel without a Mahram with an organised group, provided she submits a letter of no objection from her Mahram authorising her to travel for Hajj with the named group. This



letter should be notarised. The applicant must be in possession of a non-refundable roundtrip ticket with confirmed reservations. The applicant must submit proof of vaccination for meningitis and ACYW135. For infants and children up to 15 years of age, a vaccination report is required for polio as well as meningitis. Children over 15 years of age should present the same vaccinations requested for adults. The certificate of vaccination should have been issued not more than three years and not less than 10 days prior to entering Saudi Arabia.

Each pilgrim should submit two certified cheques or cashier cheques payable to 'Unified Agents Office' in Jeddah for pilgrimage services (guides, Zamzam water agents, tent accommodation in Mina and Arafat and transportation costs). These cheques should include the name and the passport number of the pilgrim and date and place of issue. Each applicant must pay the appropriate fees. Pilgrims have the option to submit one check combining both fees. Children between the ages of seven and fifteen should only pay half of the amount. Children under the age of seven do not need to pay. Please check with the Saudi Consulate in your country for correct charges.

Applicants who are not nationals of the country they are applying from should submit documented proof of legal residence status. Passport authorities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reserve the right to return (at his or her own expense) any pilgrim who has provided wrong or false information about their residence. No applicant under the legal age of eighteen will be granted a Hajj visa if not accompanied by his family. If the applicant has converted to Islam, an Islamic certificate must be presented which must be notarised by an Islamic Center.

Can children accompany me on Hajj?

Children can accompany their parents. When applying for a visa, you should include their names in your passport and attach their birth certificates. Children and women under 45 should be accompanied by a Mahram (a male relative).

Do I have to pay for the Hajj visas? If yes, how much does it cost?

The Umrah and Hajj visas are free. For Hajj you need to pay two cheques to cover the cost of guides, Zamzam water agents, tent accommodation in Mina and Arafat and transportation costs.

Source : **Ministry of Hajj.**

For more information visit: <http://www.hajjinformation.com>

Traditional Costumes: THE ARAB WAY

As a foreigner visiting Saudi Arabia, a very striking feature is the uniformity in the dress code. With a few minor regional exceptions (usually slight variations or additions to the basic garment), traditional clothing is uniform across the peninsula, both among residents of towns and cities and among those who dwell in the oases, mountains, and deserts. Let's take a look...



edged in black cord or even — usually in the more expensive versions — in gold braid.

Worn on the head are the ubiquitous ghutra and 'iqal, the headcloth and double ring of black rope or cord to hold it, which to many in the West and elsewhere most represent the image of the adult Arab male. Today the ghutra and 'iqal are seen worn not only with the thawb, but also with work clothes, military and boy scout uniforms, and even Academic gowns.

The square headcloth comes in plain white and in red-and-white or black-and-white checks. The colour is a matter of personal or regional preference, although the checks seem to be somewhat more common in the interior and rural regions of the peninsula and the white in the more urbanised areas. Folded diagonally to

make a triangle, the headdress is draped with the fold across the forehead and the points hanging down the back of the head and shoulders. One or both ends or the tail of the triangle can also be casually tossed forward over the shoulders, or wrapped loosely around the neck, across the ears and lower face, or even around the top of the head, offering the wearer varying degrees of protection from wind, dust, smoke, sun, heat, or cold. The way in which the cloth is wrapped and the angle or position in which the cord sits on the head are very much a matter of the wearer's personal preference.

Further north, in the Arab countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, the ghutra is called hattah or kufiyah by those who wear it. In Saudi Arabia kufiyah is the name for the small, brimless, usually white cap worn by younger boys and by many men in informal situations, and frequently worn beneath the ghutra to help position the 'iqal.

Sandals complete the traditional male dress, although today Western-style shoes are equally common. All kinds of sandals are worn, but the traditional type has a broad, ovalshaped natural leather strap decorated with geometric patterns of colored or metallic stitching across the top of the foot.

Other variations in the national dress are few. In the winter, herdsmen in the northern plateau regions along the Jordanian and Iraqi frontiers may wear very heavy cloaks, or farwachs, lined

Boys and men wear the thawb, a loose-fitting, ankle length, usually white shirt which allows free circulation, while covering almost the entire body. This was traditionally made of cotton, but today artificial fibers are also frequently used. The thawb is slightly more, close fitting than the similar garment, called the dishdashah, worn in neighboring Gulf States. Both differ from the extremely full yalabiya (jallabiyah) of Egypt, which is often of polished cotton and has broad, open sleeves, and the similar gai muni — usually of wool and less frequently | cotton — which is called djellaba (jallabah) in North Africa. The sleeves of the thawb close at the wrist. It also buttons at the collar, and matching sets of decorated buttons and cuff links are worn for formal occasions. Breast or skin pockets, are individual options.

In the cool months, warmer cloth, including wool worsted, is used for the thawb and the colour may vary from white and cream to subdued shades of light gray, brown and sometimes blue or green. It is not at all unusual to see a dark Western-style suit jacket worn over the thawb during the winter, but the more traditional, flowing floor-length cloak called the bisht in the eastern and western provinces and mishlah elsewhere in the kingdom is still more common. Extremely handsome, with a sweeping air of dignity, the cloak is made of finely woven wool or camel hair, and is worn over the shoulders like a cape, enclosing the arms but open in the front. Small slits in the seams allow the hands to extend when desired. It comes in natural colors of black, brown, and more rarely tan or cream, and is trimmed or

with sheepskin and covered in thick red, brown, or black canvas decorated on the back with bold open diamond patterns in black braid. Tribesmen or travelers in remote areas sometimes belt the usually free-falling thawb with a wide leather strap in which they can carry a knife or money. In the extreme southwest, both men and women sometimes wear broad-brimmed conical straw hats.

In the coastal regions, workers in traditional jobs requiring freedom of movement, such as sailors, or farmers climbing date palms or planting rice, often wear a thin knit T-shirt with a brightly patterned cotton sarong called izar or futah tucked around the waist and reaching to mid-calf. In modern industries, where men work close to heavy vehicles or machines with moving parts, Western-style trousers, shirts, safety shoes, and hard hats are replacing flowing thawbs, sandals, and ghutrahs, at least during working hours.



Little girls may wear frilly party dresses much like their counterparts in Europe and America, while their older sisters and their mothers slip the floor-length 'abayah over their heads and around their shoulders when going out in public, drawing it closed in front with their hands. Beneath the somber black 'abayah or when it comes off at home or at school or while visiting female friends, dresses are invariably bright and cheerful. Traditional dresses are basically colorful versions of the thawb, often decorated with glittering sequins or metallic thread.

Many women in the larger towns today wear the latest Western fashions beneath their 'abayahs and watch the rise and fall of the hemline as closely as their sisters abroad. Both women and girls, even those from families of modest income, often wear great amounts of gold or silver jewelry — which doubles as ornament and as investment. Traditional wedding dresses are known for their intricate and colorfully embroidered fronts.

Like the 'abayah the veil is generally worn by women and older girls outside the immediate family circle. Bedouin women and farm women of the 'Asir Mountains, have traditionally not worn the veil while performing daily chores, and tend rather to pull their 'abayahs modestly across their faces when strangers approach. This custom is also seen more frequently today in the larger cities. Veil styles range from a stiff fabric, cut mask-like with narrow eye slits, to a sheer piece of black chiffon or an ornamental draping with embroidery, beads, or rows of coins. But throughout the peninsula, and certainly among older women, the veil in some form is as typical and ubiquitous as is the ghutra of the men.

On Thursdays and Fridays in the marketplaces of the major cities these days, one sees national costumes from the world over. Western expatriates in Saudi Arabia dress much as they would for similar climate and circumstances at home except that clothing, both in offices and on social occasions, is usually somewhat more casual. Revealing or tight-fitting clothing is considered inappropriate for either men or women, however, and even in sports situations a degree of modesty is a thoughtful sign of consideration and respect for local tradition.

TRADITIONAL SAUDI DRESS/CLOTHING



MALE DRESS

THOBE: The traditional clothing for men is the Thobe, a loose, long-sleeved, ankle-length garment. Thobes worn in summer are generally white and made of cotton. Thobes worn in winter are generally darker in colour and made of wool.

TAGIYAH: The Tagiyah is a white knitted skull cap

GHUTRA: The Ghutra is a square scarf, made of cotton or silk, which is worn folded across the head over the Tagiyah. The end of the scarf can be draped across the face as protection in the event of sandstorms.

AGAL: The Agal is a thick, doubled, black cord which is worn on top of the Ghutra to hold it in place.

FEMALE DRESS

THOBE: Women wear the Thobe - a loose, long-sleeved, ankle-length garment, but, for women, the neck and front can be embroidered and decorated with beads.

ABAYA: The Abaya is a large, black cloak, worn either loose and flowing or wrapped around the body. The Abaya is generally made of silk or synthetic cloth.

BOSHIYA: The Boshiya is a black veil, light in weight, worn across the lower part of the face.

SURWAL: The Surwal are cotton or silk trousers worn by women under the Thobe

The Art of ARABIC WRITING



Arabic is written from right to left. There are 18 distinct letter shapes, which vary slightly, depending on whether they are connected to another letter before or after them. There are no ‘capital’ letters. The full alphabet of 28 letters is created by placing various combinations of dots above or below some of these letter shapes

The three long vowels are included in written words but the three short vowels are normally omitted – though they can be indicated by marks above and below other letters. Although the Arabic alphabet, as we know it today, appears highly distinctive, it is actually related to the Latin, Greek, Phoenician, Aramaic, Nabataean alphabets. Other languages – such as Persian, Urdu and Malay – use adaptations of the Arabic script. The numerals used in most parts of the world – 1, 2, 3, etc – were originally Arabic, though many Arab countries use Hindi numerals.

Arabic ranks sixth in the world’s league table of languages, with an estimated 186 million native speakers. As the language of the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam, it is also widely used throughout the Muslim world. It belongs to the Semitic group of languages which also includes Hebrew and Amharic, the main language of Ethiopia. There are many Arabic dialects.

Classical Arabic – the language of the Qur’an – was originally the dialect of Mecca in what is now Saudi Arabia. An adapted form of this, known as Modern Standard Arabic, is used in books, newspapers, on television and radio, in the mosques, and in conversation between educated Arabs from different countries (for example at international conferences).

At the start of the Islamic era two types of script seem to have been in use — both derived from different forms of the Nabataean

alphabet. One was square and angular and was called kufic (after the town of Kufa in Iraq, though it was in use well before the town was founded).



The basmalah is written here in ornamental “floriated” kufic and in naskhi

It was used for the first, handwritten copies of the Quran and for architectural decoration in the earliest years of the Islamic Empire. The other, called naskhi was more rounded and cursive and was used for letters, business documents, and wherever speed rather than elaborate formalism was needed. By the twelfth century, kufic was obsolete as a working script except for special uses and in northwest Africa, where it developed into the maghribi style of writing still used in the area today. Naskhi, the rounded script, remained in use and from it most of the many later styles of Arabic calligraphy have been developed. Calligraphy flourished during the Umayyad era in Damascus.

During this period scribes began the modification of the original thick and heavy kufic script into the form employed today for decorative purposes, as well as developing a number of new scripts derived from the more cursive naskhi. It was under the 'Abbasids, however, that calligraphy first began to be systematised. In the first half of the tenth century the Abbasid vizier Ibn Muqlah completed the development of kufic, established some of the rules of shape and proportion that have been followed by calligraphers since his time, and was first to develop what became the traditional classification of Arabic writing into the "six styles" of cursive script: naskhi (from which most present day printing types are derived), thuluth (a more cursive outgrowth of naskhi), rayhani (a more ornate version of thuluth), muhaqqaq (a bold script with sweeping diagonal flourishes), tawqi' (a somewhat compressed variety of thuluth in which all the letters are sometimes joined to each other), and ruq'ah (the style commonly used today for ordinary handwriting in most of the Arab world).



In the muthanna, or "doubled", style of calligraphers (left), the design is a mirror image. The basemalah, in the thuluth script (right), has been written in the shape of an ostrich

It was from these six, and from kufic, that later calligraphers, not only in the Arab world but in Iran, Turkey, and elsewhere as well, developed and elaborated other scripts. In Iran, for example, there came into use a particularly graceful and delicate script called ta'liq, in which the horizontal strokes of the letters are elongated and which is often written at an angle across the page. From ta'liq in turn, another script called nasta'liq was derived which combines the Arabic naskhi and the Persian ta'liq into beautifully light and legible script.

'Let's Learn Arabic' for beginners, compiled by Fareedah Shaikh Ahabshi, is currently in print in Singapore, and can be obtained upon request from the publishers of this magazine.

It was in Ottoman Turkey, however, that calligraphy attained the highest development once the early creative flowering had faded elsewhere in the Middle East. So renowned were Ottoman calligraphers, in fact, that a popular saying was that "The Quran was revealed in Makkah, recited in Egypt, and written in Istanbul." The Ottomans were not content merely to improve and develop the types of script that they inherited from the Arabs and Persians but also added a number of new styles to the calligrapher's repertoire.

الرحمنون رحمة الرحمن في الارض برحمتك منه في السماء

The ruq'ah script is used for headlines and titles and is the everyday written script of the Arab world

الجمال حريضي على الكون روعته وتيسر في موكبة الضنون

The graceful Persian ta'liq script is used in a sentence. It starts with "Beauty is a spell which casts its splendour upon the universe..."

الظاهرية روحانية ظهريت باله جسمانية
الله القادر المستعز بالحق لا اله الا الله

The diwani script (above) and the "royal" diwani (below) were developed by Ottoman calligraphers for use on state documents

One important addition by the Ottoman calligraphers was the script called diwani, so called from the word diwan (meaning state council government office) since it was at first used primarily for documents issued by the Ottoman Council of State. It is an extremely graceful and very decorative script, with strong diagonal flourishes, though less easy to read than some other styles. After its development in Turkey, it spread to the Arab countries and is in use today for formal documents and also as architectural decoration.

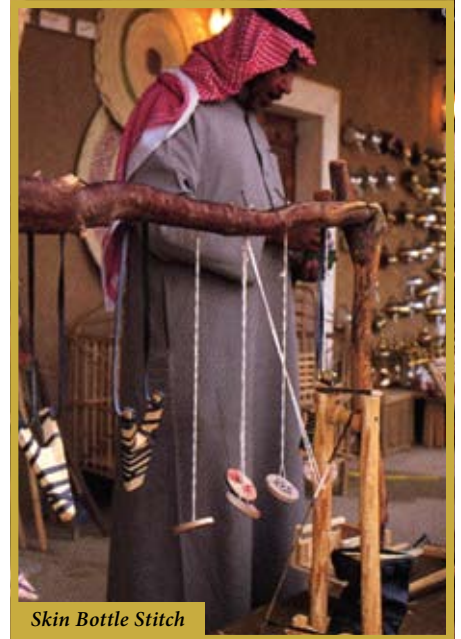
Examples of more or less standard types of script such as these do not by any means exhaust the number of styles. Islamic calligraphers have experimented endlessly and have been extremely imaginative. Another distinctive Turkish contribution is the tughra, an elaborate and highly stylized rendering of the names of the Ottoman sultan, originally used to authenticate imperial decrees. The tughra later came to be used both in Turkey and by rulers of the Arab countries as a kind of royal insignia or emblem, on coins and stamps and wherever a coat of arms or royal monogram would be used by European governments.

Another unusual variation of calligraphy, not often used nowadays, is the style called muthanna (Arabic for "doubled"). This is not really a type of script in itself but consists of a text in one of the standard scripts such as naskhi worked into a pattern in which one half is a mirror image of the other. Even more imaginative is what may be called pictorial calligraphy, in which the text (usually the profession of faith, a verse from the Quran, or some other phrase with religious significance) is written in the shape of a bird, animal, tree, boat, or other object. A Quranic verse in the kufic script, for example, may be written so that it forms the picture of a mosque and minarets.

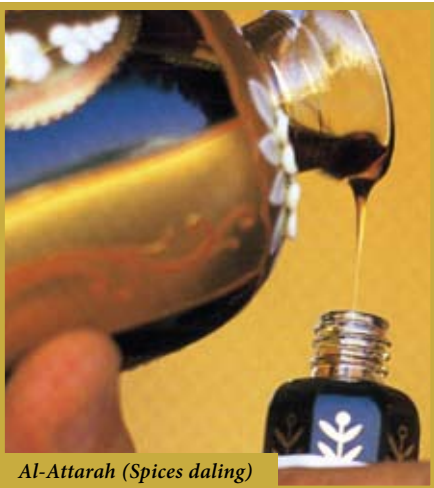
The art of calligraphy is still very much alive in the Arab world and wherever the Arabic alphabet is used. The list of everyday uses is almost endless: coins and paper money bear the work of expert calligraphers, wall posters and advertising signs in every town show the calligrapher's art, as do the cover and title page of every book, and the major headlines in every newspaper and magazine have been written by hand. Calligraphy — the art of "beautiful writing" — continues to be something that is not only highly prized as ornament and decoration but is immensely practical and useful as well.



Dallah, Al- Dillal (Coffee pots)



Skin Bottle Stitch



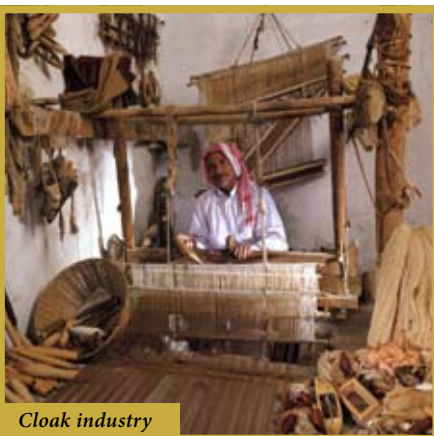
Al-Attarah (Spices daling)

The Traditional CRAFTS

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia boasts a rich heritage and a magnificently diverse culture. The wide variety and range of arts and crafts here is proof of the inherent artistic ability of the Saudi people.



Wooden boat industry



Cloak industry

The Bedouin, a desert-dwelling Arab nomadic group, is a fine example of artistic talent. The art of the Bedouins was a catalyst in attracting worldwide attention to the cultural wealth of the Kingdom. A nomadic lifestyle in the desert for the Bedouins meant harsh temperatures and conditions. As a result, they weaved heavy cloth that served as garments, and beautiful decorations for the caravan at the same time.

The Bedouin also specialised in delicate metal carvings and precious jewellery. By selling their products to the desert dwellers, most of these crafts became a form of livelihood. Slowly, their distinct and unique craftsmanship transformed their work into symbols of the art and craft of the Kingdom. Apart from the fact that these works of art had practical utility, they were expressions of culture, heritage and history. Some of these crafts included masterful

saddles, fastidiously carved turquoise and silver amulets. The Bedouins also wove intricate garments and tapestries adorned with precious stones and metals. These amazing pieces of art are now preserved in the museums.

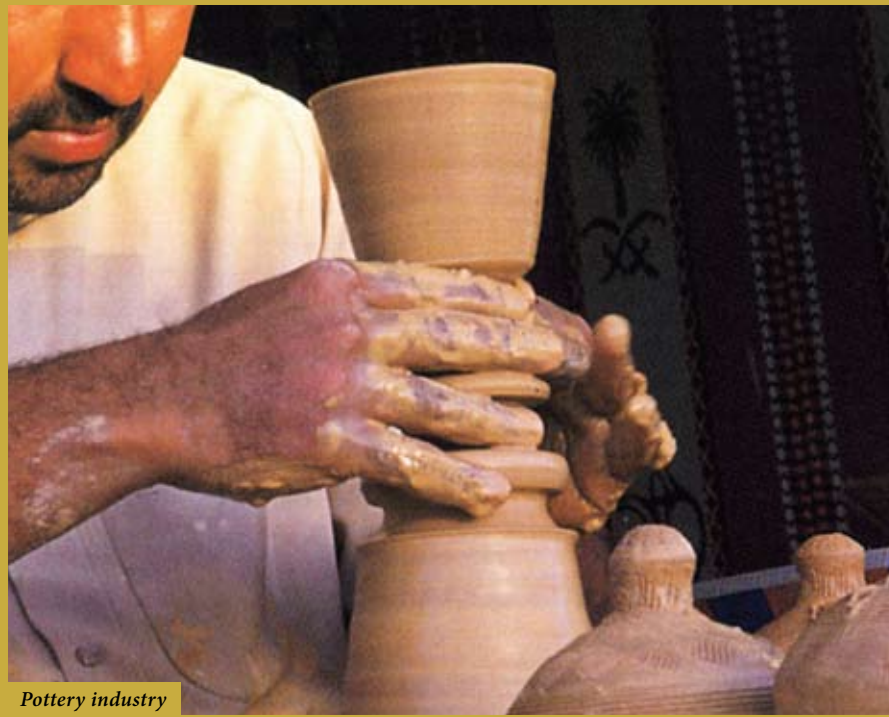
Other popular forms of art and crafts in The Kingdom include painting and calligraphy. The art of calligraphy flourished as the people desired to beautify and honour the contents of the Quran. More recently, painting has grown in popularity. Across the spectrum, most in the Kingdom find painting a very creative, fascinating and engaging mode of artistic expression. Even His Royal Highness Prince Khalid al- Faisal, the Governor of the Makkah Province, is known to be a passionate painter. Such passion in the arts has resulted in beauty unseen anywhere else in the world and is a symbol of the rich culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Hayiek (Weaver)



Stamp industry



Pottery industry



Mummification



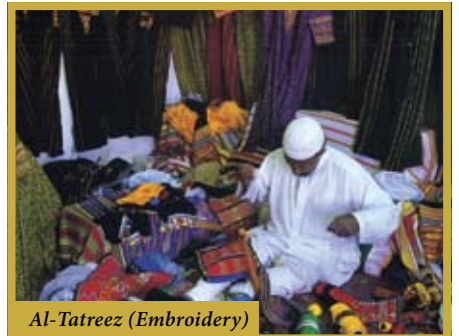
Al-Issaib (Rose head band)



Curved & straight dagger



Al-Tajsess (Plastering)



Al-Tatreez (Embroidery)



Haff Almadad (Old style carpet)



Al Haddad (Blacksmith)



Beauty of the UNKNOWN

Tucked away in odd niches — and far more interesting to the international traveller that the Supreme Commission for Tourism is hoping to attract — are people and morsels of history, that fine fare for the peripatetic collector of unconsidered trifles

Sometimes, you meet the nicest people in holes in the ground. Huge-bearded geologists, for example, often lurk in the Wabar Crater, hunched over unimpressive pieces of rock. In the spectacular rocky crack that is Wadi Lajab, high in the mountains to the east of Jizan, the occupants are of a different mien. This is a favourite haunt of the people of the hilly Tihama region, the hill men with flowers in their hair.

The Asir region is under development as a tourist area. Abha has established itself as the tourist capital of the region and displays all the trappings of the mass tourist trade. Cable cars, luxury hotels, amusement parks and some well-developed easily accessible tourist sites, all located in the cool mountains, make it a popular summer destination for thousands. Tucked away in odd niches — and far more interesting to the international

traveller that the Supreme Commission for Tourism is hoping to attract — are people and morsels of history, that fine fare for the peripatetic collector of unconsidered trifles. In parallel with the quantum dilemma, by observing them, one alters them; So, visit quickly before it is lost, altered beyond its current form. One of those places is Wadi Lajab.

Nearly five million years ago, the tectonic plate of the Arabian Peninsula tore itself away from Africa and began to drift east. Bobbing— geologically speaking— unsteadily on a sea of magma, it tilted slightly downward on its eastern edge. The Asir region and the mountains thus rose, cracking in places and spewing black basalt over the landscape. One of those cracks, 3,000 meters above the sea, several kilometres long and 150 meters deep, is Wadi Lajab.

There is something about deep closed spaces in rock that stirs a primal instinct, a mingling of threat, security and claustrophobia that feeds a feeling of anticipation and excitement at stumbling across the unknown. After the arduous climb from the plains, Wadi Lajab is no exception. Streams of sweet clear water sparkle out of solid rock; brilliant green foliage and twisted trees grow from cracks in the rock walls and silence becomes a tactile presence as the vast walls climb higher the further you travel into the canyon.

In a slight widening near a pool of water, the journey is rewarded. Flowermen, who use the wadi as a source of water, cluster, as if condensed out of the silence, on a boulder and appraise the visitor inquisitively with deep brown eyes set in a frame of long black hair and a headband woven from dry and fresh herbs or flowers. Slight and agile, these faun-like men are perfectly attuned to their environment and are able to run up sheer rock walls with the agility of a chamois.

The fragile balance between their graceful presence and the environment they live in makes the visitor feel leaden and clumsy and is tinged with a measure of sadness. Their very attraction as tourist sights is the seed of their demise. It is the inevitable fate of the objects of tourist attention.

Streams of sweet, clear water sparkle out of solid rock in Wadi Lajab. Brilliant green foliage and twisted trees grow from cracks in the rock walls, and silence becomes a tactile presence, as the vast walls climb higher the further you travel into the canyon.

In the ancient village of Rijal Alma, at the foot of the escarpment below Souda Park, restoration and development of an ancient trading village is under way. Winner of the Prince Sultan Bin Salman Award for Architectural Heritage, the village seems to grow out of the hard gray rocks from which it is built. Easily accessible from the cable car that extends from the Souda National Park complex, it is a place redolent of history and tradition, well preserved and clearly oriented to tourism. It has taken on the appearance of a living museum.

The dressed stone square towers, patterned with gleaming lumps of sugar-white quartz, that comprise the original village are typical of the culture of the area. Clinging to the side of a steep hill and overlooking a sinuous road that once brought the fruits of the spice and incense trade into the interior, the defensive plans of the builders and planners becomes plain. Wooden-screened balconies, made from sticks gathered from the few trees



Mountain Pass Road leading to the Tihama Plain-Asir Region

that grow on the hills, cling to the houses and form extemporary shower rooms. It is a scene that might have been current a thousand years ago when the village was founded, except for the stadium—a huge football stadium, with lighting poles, trailing electric cables, snappy information signs and the paraphernalia deemed necessary for the entertainment of tourists.

Perched high on a rocky promontory on the edge of the escarpment above the Tihama plain is a remarkable piece of architecture in the Mughul style. The result of Muhammad Al-Shehri's vision and cash, the museum at Al-Namas is a wonderful eccentricity built to house the collection of artifacts he has been assembling since he was nine years old. It is little visited. Airy galleries house dust-covered cases that contain un-catalogued items assembled in roughly themed groups. Brightly patterned walls painted in the local style contrast starkly with the cheerful jumble of larger displays.

Al-Shehri's passion for his collection and his willingness to show the results to visitors is infectious. He scurries ahead, unlocking doors and pulling covers off cabinets. His almost manic enthusiasm is tinged with pathos; he is eager to spread the word of his life's work and seems rarely to get the chance. His collection of books and documents on the top floor is his pride. "This is Arab and Islamic knowledge," he said. "It is what we took to Europe and exchanged for their knowledge. This is history."

The museum is built and open but it needs to be on the tourist map. This is a place, where development can and should take place for it preserves the artifacts and traditions of the local culture on what is effectively a greenfield site.

Written by Roger Harrison, Source: Diplomat

Congratulations & Best Wishes

to the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their

78th National Day



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International Conference on Intelligent Cities to be held in Makkah



An international conference on intelligent cities will be held in Makkah in January 2009, according to Arab News. The objective is to transform Makkah into a smart city with advanced technological facilities.

The conference is expected to bring together a large number of experts from around the world to discuss the best ways to apply the intelligent city concept to Makkah. Governor of Makkah Province Prince Khalid Al-Faisal will open the two-day event at Umm Al-Qura University's King Abdul Aziz Historical Hall on January 19. It is being organised by the Makkah Municipality, in association with the Communications and Information Technology Commission and the Hajj Research Center.

"This is the largest conference on intelligent cities to be held in the Kingdom," Makkah Mayor Osama Al-Bar told Arab News. "It aims at expediting the use of smart city technologies in Makkah for the benefit of the millions of pilgrims who come to the city every year for Hajj and Umrah."

Al-Bar said the conference would contribute to improving the municipal services for both citizens and pilgrims. "This conference is an initiative to apply smart city technologies in the Kingdom and transform it into a knowledge-based society and a digital economy," he said. In addition, intelligent city facilities will speed up communication with the outside world and boost cultural, economic and commercial development, Al-Bar noted, adding that the conference would discuss successful experiments in the field at national and international levels.

The transformation of Makkah into a world-class intelligent city will help meet the needs of pilgrims from around the world, Mohammed Maqazi, head of the conference's scientific committee, told Arab News.

"The pilgrims need accomodation, meals, information and communication channels, and various modes of transportation. A combination of the latest technologies that integrate fixed and wireless broadband networks, fixed and mobile GIS and GPS applications, and user-friendly information and communications points can greatly enhance the visitors experience, and the city's objective of quality services to the visitors of the holy sites," he explained.

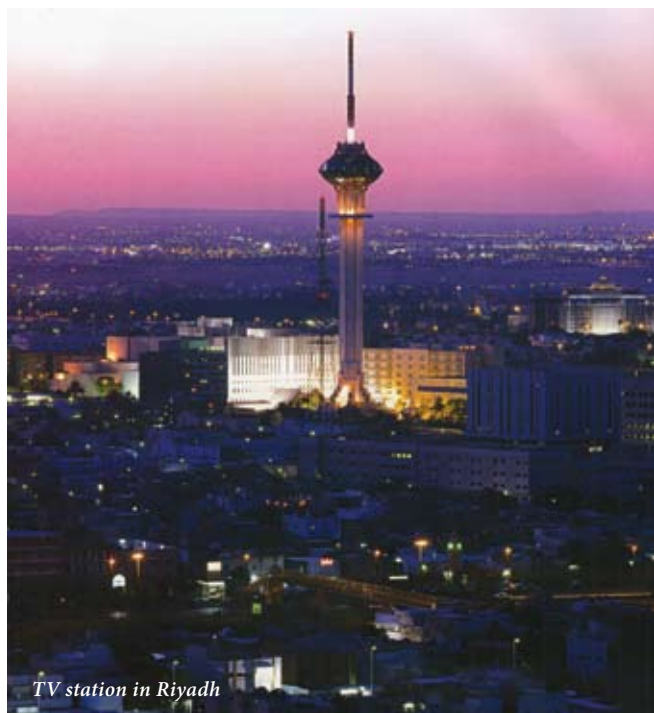
The conference will address e-government, safety control systems and security applications, intelligent city management applications, and how to develop a large community of users with ICT skills. Also on the agenda are workshops on e-government services suite, GIS based planning and management applications, mobile GIS emergency response applications, security, law enforcement and safety control applications.

King Abdullah launches endowment project in Makkah

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz launched the second King Abdulaziz Endowment Project in Makkah on September 23. Located near the Grand Mosque, the project will be able to accommodate 55,000 pilgrims and visitors. It aims to ease overcrowding during peak hours and facilitate the movement of pilgrims.

According to Minister of Islamic Affairs Saleh Al-Asheikh, the 11 residential towers will cover an area of 30,000 sq m with 7,000 rooms in addition to 1,900 lavatories and parking facilities for 560 cars and 40 buses. Five consulting and engineering companies in the Kingdom competed to design the project.

FAST FACTS



TV station in Riyadh

Area: 2,240,000 sq km

Population: 27,019,731 (2006)

Density of Population: 2.18 per cent (2006)

Capital: Riyadh

Main Cities: Makkah, Al Madinah, Jeddah, Dammam, Dhahran, ArAr

Overview: Saudi Arabia is located in the southwestern part of Asia. It is bounded by the Red Sea in the west, and Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait in the North, the Arabian Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Emirates from the east, and Yemen and Oman from the south.

Climate: Continental weather

Summer: Very hot

Winter: Cold

Judicial Law: The constitution of Saudi Arabia is Qur'an and Sunnah, all legislative regulations have been derived from these two sources. The regime in Saudi Arabia is a monarchy system. The King and the Council of Ministers form the executive and the legislative authority. The State Consultative council has the mission of giving its opinion on any general issue submitted to the council by the prime minister.

Language: Arabic

Currency: Saudi Riyal

National Day: 23 September. (1932 A.D)

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

Major exports 2006	Per cent of Total
Crude oil	76.7
Refined petroleum	13.5
Non-oil	9.9

Leading markets 2007	Per cent of Total
US	17.4
Japan	15.4
South Korea	10.1
China	8.0

Major imports 2006	Per cent of Total
Machinery&transport equipment	44.6
Foodstuffs	12.3
Chemical&metal products	12.8

Leading suppliers 2007	Per cent of Total
US	12.7
China	9.4
Germany	8.9
Japan	8.2

Timing: Gmt + 3:00

Internet Code: sa

Phone Code: 00966

Calendar and Working Hours

Calendar: Saudi Arabia follows the Muslims Hijra calendar, which is the day when Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) migrated from Makkah to Al Madinah corresponding to 622 A.D. Hijra year has 12 months. However, it's ten or eleven days less than the calendar year.

In the Hijra calendar, the month ranges between 29 to 30 days.

Working Days: Saturday to Wednesday (Regarding to Public sector).

Working Hours Public Sector:

7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Private Sector: 8:00a.m. to 12 p.m.

Afternoon: 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Thursday: (morning shift only)

Banks: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Key indicators	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Real GDP growth (per cent)	3.5	7.2	6.7	5.9	5.4	6.0
Consumer price inflation (av; per cent)	4.1	11.7	10.8	10.0	9.8	9.5
Budget balance (per cent of GDP)	12.1	21.0	20.5	24.0	18.0	13.1
Current-account balance (per cent of GDP)	23.4	34.9	23.7	19.3	14.5	6.8
3-month deposit rate (av; per cent)	5.3	2.4	2.8	4.4	5.0	5.0
Exchange rate SR:US\$ (av)	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75

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Best Wishes

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SABIC would like to congratulate all the Saudi Arabian people on their National Day

اليوم الوطني

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