



# Saudi Arabia

Special publication by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Singapore

- Milestones
- Saudi Arabia History
- Saudi Singapore ties
- Marching ahead with pride
- KAUST inauguration celebrations



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**SAUDI ARABIA REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE (ROTARY ARABIA CO LTD)**

PO Box 1977 Al Khobar 31952 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Tel: +966 3 882 7505 Fax: +966 3 882 0965

**CONTACT PERSONS**

Koh Chun Peng, Business Development Director (koh.cp@rotaryeng.com.sg)

Mann Myint, Senior Business Development Executive (mann.myint@rotaryeng.com.sg)



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Your gateway to the Middle East and Africa

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Your gateway to the Middle East and Africa

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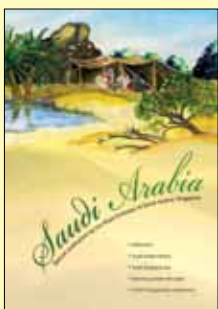
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#### PUBLISHER

Sun Media Pte Ltd

#### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Nomita Dhar

#### ASSISTANT EDITOR

Nandini Narayanan

#### SUB EDITOR

Neha Lad

#### EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Sneha Banerjee

#### FEATURE WRITER

Lionel Lim

#### MARKETING MANAGER

Manjeet Singh Usma

#### ADVERTS & MARKETING

Hemalatha, Chan Siew Khim

#### COVER ART

Karuna Sharma

#### ART DIRECTION & DESIGN

Dilipkumar Kanagaraj

#### PHOTO CONTRIBUTIONS

Syed Mohamad Bin Ali Alsagoff,  
The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia,  
Singapore

#### FINANCIAL OFFICER

Hong You Loong

#### PRINTING

Times Printers

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

**SUN MEDIA PTE LTD,**

20 Kramat Lane, #01-02 United  
House, S228773.

**tel** (65) 6735 2972 / 1907 / 2986

**fax** (65) 67353114

**e-mail** admin@sunmediaonline.com

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For further inquiries, contact:

**THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA**, 163 Penang Road, #03-02 /03 Winsland House 2, Singapore 238463.

**Tel** (65) 6734 5878/79 **Fax** (65) 6738 5291/6734 062 **URL** www.saudiembassy.org.sg

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on their 79th National Day*



200 Cantonment Road #15-01 Southpoint Singapore 089763

Tel: (65) 6225 8600 Fax: (65) 6225 1497

Email: [tkstore@singnet.com.sg](mailto:tkstore@singnet.com.sg)

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**H.M. KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDUL AZIZ  
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YEARS OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY  
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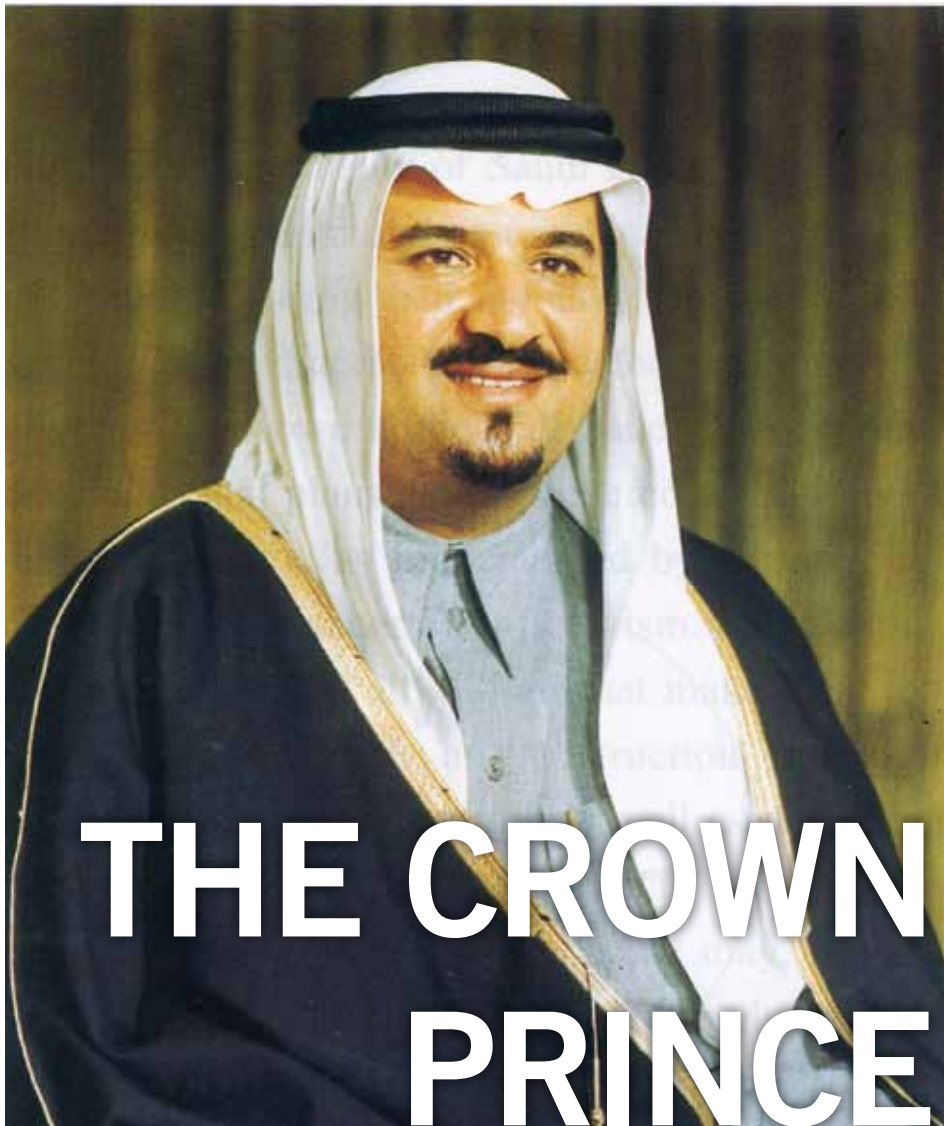
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CELEBRATES 79 YEARS OF GROWTH  
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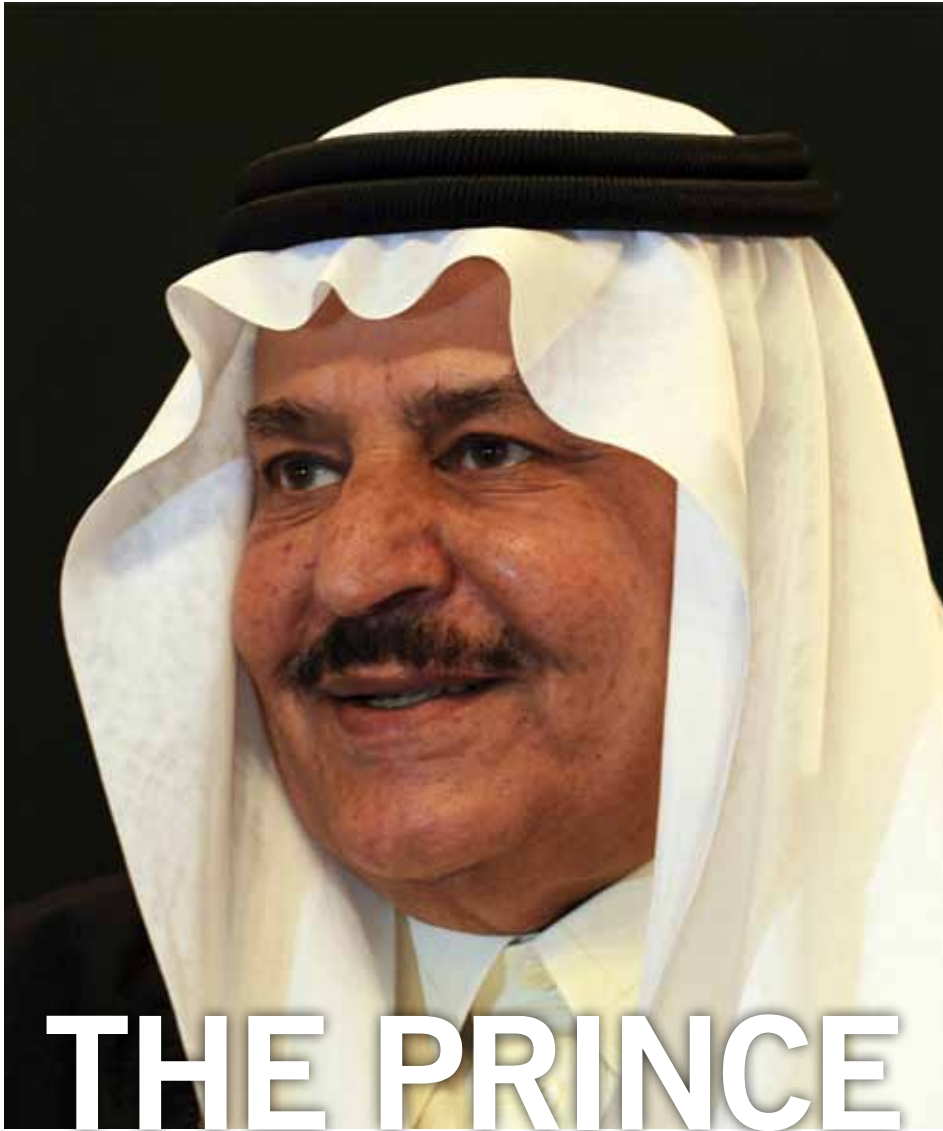
Mr Or Toh Wat  
Group Managing Director  
Email: ortohwat@okph.com

Mr Or Lay Huat Daniel  
Executive Director  
Email: danielor@okph.com

No 6 Tagore Drive, B1-06, Tagore Building, Singapore 787623  
Tel: (65) 6456 7667 Fax: (65) 6453 7667 Enquires: orkimpeow@pacific.net.sg

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# THE PRINCE

**HRH NAIF BIN ABDUL AZIZ, SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF INTERIOR, CELEBRATES 79 YEARS OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA**



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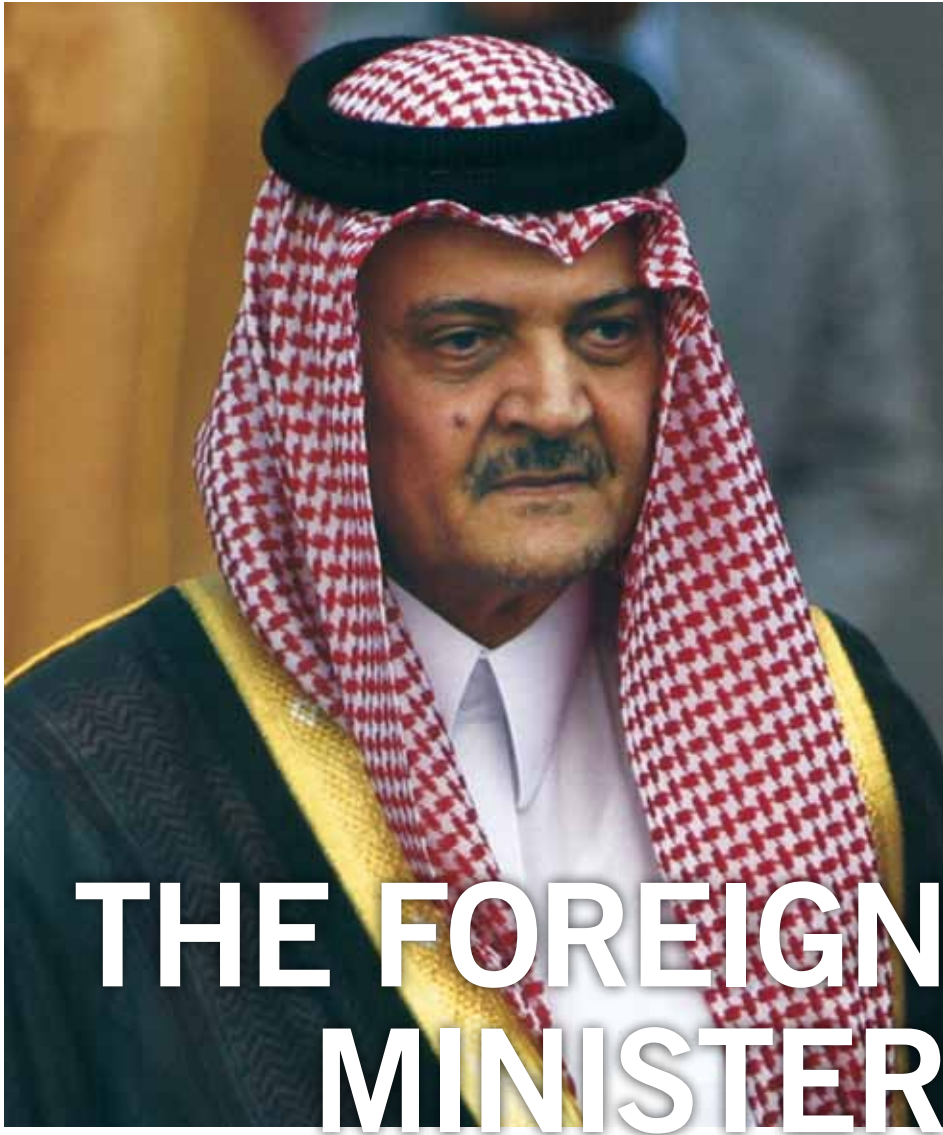
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*to the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on your 79th National Day*

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ABDUL AZIZ AL SAUD, FOREIGN  
MINISTER, CELEBRATES 79 YEARS  
OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OF THE  
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*to the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on*

## *79<sup>th</sup> National Day*



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# Ambassador's Message

**Praise be to Allah, the Almighty for His Blessings and Guidance!**

*My deep appreciation and gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques H.M. King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, and HRH Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, for giving me this opportunity to represent the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Singapore. My sincere thanks to the people and the Government of Singapore for the warm welcome they have extended to me even before I set foot in Singapore.*

It will indeed be my honour and privilege to maintain the exemplary co-operation and relations that exist between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Singapore, and to work towards its advancement to the level that will meet the expectations and aspirations of our people and leaders. I would like, through this **Saudi Arabia** magazine, to

convey to our Singaporean friends that our hearts are open and so are our doors. I invite them to jointly work with me to bring our people together, regardless of the time and distance that separate us. Geography may not be kind, but history has shown and proved how close and inter-linked we are.

**H.E. Dr Jamil M. Merdad**

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Republic of Singapore



# Milestones



King Abdullah's address in the Shura Council

## 4th anniversary of **King Abdullah's** ascension celebrated

*Saudi Arabia celebrated the 4th anniversary of King Abdullah's ascension to the throne 19 June 2005, according to the lunar Islamic calendar. In a statement, Chairman of the Allegiance-Pledge Commission Prince Misha'al bin Abdulaziz commended the major reform efforts led by King Abdullah in the political, economic, educational and social fields. "The Kingdom is today, no longer just an oil-rich country impacting the world economy, but it is a state that contributes to regional and international decisions or decision-making." he said. He pointed to President Barack Obama's decision to begin his tour of the Arab world with Saudi Arabia as an indication of "the Kingdom's position and the extent of the influence of its leader . . . in influencing the future of the region and the world." Here are some of the milestones:*





## Major Political and Social Initiatives

The formation of the Consultative Council (Majlis Al-Shura) – the Consultative Council now consists of 150 members who serve four-year terms. The council is divided into 12 committees: human rights, security, economics, finance, foreign affairs, public services, transportation and communications, social and health services, culture and information, administration, Islamic affairs, and education.

Regional councils were established in each of Saudi Arabia's 13 provinces to review management of the provinces by their respective local governments. The introduction of the Basic Law of Governance – similar to a constitution, the Basic Law outlines the goals and responsibilities of the government and defines the relationship between the ruler and citizens. On November 29, 2003, King Fahd approved changes that would enhance the legislative role of the Consultative Council. The amendments to Articles 17 and 23 of the Consultative Council System grant the Council the power to propose new bills or amendments to regulations in force and debate such proposals without prior approval from the King.



Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister



Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia

On March 27, 2009 King Abdullah issued a Royal order appointing Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz to the position of Second Deputy Prime Minister. In February 2009 Nourah Al-Fayez was appointed Deputy Minister of Education for Women's Education. She is the first woman to be appointed to the Council of Ministers. Saudi Arabia's first municipal elections were held in 2005. Elections for members of the Municipal Councils were held in three phases: the Riyadh region, the Eastern and Southern regions and the Western and Northern regions. A total of 592 representatives were elected. The Royal Court announced on October 20, 2006 the establishment of the Allegiance Commission to formalize the royal succession.



King Abdullah during opening ceremony of Emergency Center and Expansion of Cardiac Center at King Abdul Aziz Medical City in Riyadh

Under the new system, the King will nominate a Crown Prince, and the Allegiance Commission will vote on the candidate. In December 2007, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz issued a royal decree naming 35 members of the royal family to the Allegiance Commission. On August 3, 2003, King Abdullah (then Crown Prince) announced the establishment of the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue to promote the public exchange of ideas as an essential part of Saudi life, and to bring together leading personalities from across Saudi Arabia and the political and social spectrums to discuss important issues facing the Kingdom.

As of April 2009, seven National Dialogues have taken place, covering education, extremism, the role of women, youth issues, cultural tolerance, educational development and labor and employment in the Kingdom. The Center also sponsors international conferences, workshops and training programs throughout the year to spread culture and dialogue.

Saudi Arabia holds membership in numerous scientific and humanitarian organizations and councils serving common international objectives. These include:

**UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization):** Saudi Arabia was elected to the 58-member UNESCO Executive Board in October 2007. The Kingdom is represented by Dr. Saeed Al-Mileis, Deputy Minister of Boys Education, who is serving a four-year term. There are 193 UNESCO member states.

**World Meteorological Organization (WMO):** Saudi Arabia was elected to a permanent seat on the WMO Executive Council in May 2007. Established in 1950, the WMO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that reports on the state of the Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate and the resulting distribution of water resources.

**International Maritime Organization (IMO):** Saudi Arabia has been a member of the IMO since 1969 and a member of its board of directors. The IMO is the United Nations agency concerned with the safety of shipping and cleaner oceans. The Kingdom was re-elected to the IMO Council in 2005 for the 2006-2007 term.





King Abdullah presides over Council of Ministers Session at Al-Yamamah Palace in Riyadh

## Economic Initiatives

Saudi Arabia has implemented a number of economic initiatives to promote growth and encourage investment on both national and international levels. The development of regulative councils, the standardizing of commercial relations and the passing of investment and market laws have further supported economic expansion.

**Information Technology:** In November 2007, the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) announced the Kingdom would invest more than USD 64 billion to develop a solid information technology infrastructure. In July 2008, Saudi Arabia announced plans to spend USD 20 billion on Information and Communications Technology (ICT), making the Kingdom a top investor in ICT.

**King Abdullah Financial Center:** Launched in May 2006, the Center 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.

### Accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO)

Saudi Arabia officially became the 149th member of the World Trade Organization on December 11, 2005. As part of its entry into the WTO, the Kingdom signed 36 certified, bilateral market access agreements with other WTO members, including the U.S., in September 2005. Saudi Arabia and the European Union signed a bilateral agreement in August 2003 guaranteeing free access to goods and services.



During the inauguration ceremony of Water Supply Station in Al-Khobar



With French President Jacques Chirac during the opening ceremony of 'Islamic Art Masterpieces' at Luevor Museum in Riyadh





King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz visits The Madinah Knowledge Economic City



During laying foundation of Emergency Center and Expansion of Cardiac Center at King Abdul Aziz Medical City in Riyadh



King Abdullah Financial Center

## Foreign Investments

A number of agencies have been created to help promote foreign investment, such as The Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) and the SEC. Since its establishment in April 2000, SAGIA has licensed more than 2,000 projects worth around USD 15 billion. The SEC in 2007 announced a list of industries that have benefited from foreign investment, including: insurance services, wholesale and retail trade, air and train transport and communication services. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) 2009 Report on Ease of Doing Business ranked Saudi Arabia 16th among 181 countries, up from 24th in 2008. Saudi Arabia was the largest beneficiary of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Arab world in 2006, according to a 2007 UN report. The Kingdom attracted USD 18 billion, a 51 per cent increase over 2005.





The Makkah - Madinah Rail Link



Mining

**Insurance:** As of March 2008, a total of 20 insurance companies had been granted licenses by Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA), with 24 more companies waiting to be licensed.

**Saudi Railway Organization (SRO):** The SEC approved plans for two projects under the direction of the Saudi Railway Organization. The first, the Saudi Landbridge, will connect the port cities of Jeddah, Dammam and Jubail, passing through the capital city Riyadh. The second, the Makkah - Madinah Rail Link, will connect the two holy cities with the port city of Jeddah.

**Oil:** At the G-20's Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy in Washington, DC on November 15, 2008, King Abdullah stated, "Saudi Arabia has made many sacrifices, including maintaining costly additional productive capacity amounting to about 2 million barrels per day, seeking to promote global economic growth in a manner that serves the interest of all parties."

**Mining:** In April 2007, Ma'aden signed a USD 7 billion joint venture agreement with Canadian aluminum and packaging company Alcan Primary Metal Group. The fully integrated project will include bauxite mining, aluminum refining, a power plant and aluminum smelting. Samsung Engineering is also in the process of building the world's largest ammonia plant for 'Ma'aden. With a capacity of 3,300 tons per day the plant is scheduled to be ready for operations by December 2010.

**Water and Electricity Sector:** Saudi Arabia is the world's largest producer of de-salinated water. The Saline Water Conversion Corporation operates plants that produce more than three million cubic meters meters of potable water per day. In May 2008 the Saudi Electricity Company signed contracts worth USD 500 million with American-based GE Energy to supply gas turbines and generators for power plant projects in the Kingdom.

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 on their 79th National Day



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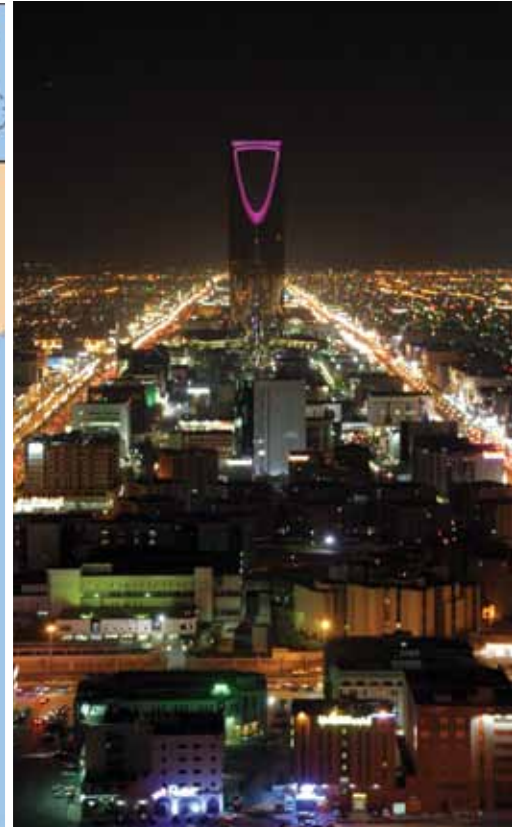
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# SAUDI ARABIA

## FACT BOOK



### Where is Saudi Arabia?

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lies at the tip of south-western Asia. It is bordered to the west by the Red Sea, the east by the Arabian Gulf, United Arab Emirates and Qatar, the north by Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan, and the South by Yemen and Oman. The Kingdom occupies about 80 per cent of the Arab Peninsula, with a total area exceeding 2,250,000 square kilometres. Along the Red Sea, lies the Tihama Coastal plain. To the east of this plain lies a chain of mountains called Sarawat. Several large valleys slope from Sarawat, such as Najran Valley, Tathleeth Valley and Fatima Valley. To the east of the chain stands the Najid Plateau.

The Plateau stretches northward from the Najid Plains to the borders of Iraq and Jordan. The Empty Quarter, the south-eastern part of the Kingdom is composed of sand hills and lava fields. The eastern coastal plain consists of large sand areas.

### Travel Information

#### Currency Conversion Rate:

1.00 Singapore Dollar (SGD)  $\approx$  2.6384 Saudi Riyal (SAR)

**Distance between Singapore and Riyadh:** 6633.85 kilometers

**Approximate travel time from the King Khaled International Airport (Riyadh) to the City by taxi:** 30 mins

**Number of International Airports:** 4

**Number of Regional Airports:** 6

**Number of Passenger Terminals at the King Khaled International Airport (Riyadh):** 3 Terminals

**Busiest periods of the year:** The month of Hajj and Ramadan



## Important cities

The capital of Saudi Arabia is Riyadh. The Red Sea port of Jeddah, Taif, which is the summer capital and the industrial cities of Jubail and Yanbu are also important cities. Saudi Arabia's most important cities are Mecca, birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed and Medina, to which the Prophet moved in 622 AD. These are the two holiest cities of Islam.

## Law and Government

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an Islamic State. Sharia, the Islamic Code of law based on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, is the foundation of the legal system of Saudi Arabia. The Holy Quran itself is considered the constitution of the country and provides ethical values and guidance. Executives and Legislative authorities are exercised by the King and the council of Ministers within the framework of Islamic Law. Besides, The Consultative Council (Shura Council) was established to advise the King and the Council of Ministers on matters pertaining to the government programs and policies. The primary function of that council is to assess and modify the Kingdom's system of laws, by-laws, contracts and international agreements. The Kingdom's Ministries and all other government agencies are ultimately responsible to the King.

## Saudi Arabia in Figures

Area	: 2,240,000 sq km
Population	: 27.019.731 million (2006)
Density of Population	: 2.18% (2006)
Capital	: Riyadh
<hr/>	
Language	: Arabic
Currency	: Saudi Riyal
National Day	: 23rd, September. (1932 A.D)
Symbol	: Two crossed curved swords which symbolize strength and justice. A palm tree on the top symbolizes prosperity.
Timing	: Gmt + 3:00
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## Trade Figures

Saudi Arabia was Singapore's 13th largest trading partner in 2008. Trade between the two countries totalled S\$22 billion, comprising S\$20.7 billion worth of imports into Singapore and S\$1.3 billion worth of exports. The value of total trade between the two countries has shown a rising trend, increasing by a record 52 per cent between 2007 and 2008 alone.

**Source:** International Enterprise (IE) Singapore

## Saudi Economy

This oil-based economy has strong government controls over major economic activities. Saudi Arabia has 20 per cent of the world's petroleum reserves. It ranks as the largest exporter of petroleum, and plays a leading role in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The petroleum sector accounts for roughly 75 per cent of budget revenues, 45 per cent of GDP, and 90 per cent of export earnings. About 40 per cent of the GDP is contributed from the private sector.



# SAUDI ARABIA HISTORY AND THE KINGS IN BRIEF

1932  
TO  
2009



**King Abdulaziz bin  
Abdul Rahman Al-Saud  
(1932-1953)**

The legendary King Abdulaziz was a remarkable leader of imagination and vision who set Saudi Arabia on the road to modernization. During his rule, King Abdulaziz started building the country's infrastructure. He established roads and basic communications systems, introduced modern technology, and improved education, health care and agriculture.

King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud, the founder (1932-1963), was succeeded by his sons: King Saud (1953-64), King Faisal (1964-75), King Khalid (1975-82), King Fahd (1982-2005) and the current ruler, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, and current Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz.



**King Saud  
(1953-1964)**

King Saud continued King Abdulaziz's legacy, creating the Council of Ministers and establishing the Ministries of Health, Education and Commerce. One of King Saud's greatest achievements was the development of education – under his rule many schools were established in the Kingdom, including its first institute of higher education, King Saud University, in 1957.



**King Faisal  
(1964-1975)**

King Faisal bin Abdulaziz was a visionary innovator with a great respect for tradition. He initiated the first of a series of economic and social development plans that transformed Saudi Arabia's infrastructure, especially industry, and set the Kingdom on a path of rapid growth. He also established the first public schools for girls.



*The Saudi Arabian state was first established in the central region of the Arabian Peninsula in the early 18th century. Modern Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud. The nation experienced remarkable growth over a short period, spurred by the discovery of oil in the 1930s. The people of Saudi Arabia now enjoy a high standard of living based on an increasingly diversified economy and have access to the most modern amenities and services. Proud of their history and energetic participation in the successful modernization of their country, today's Saudi Arabians face the future with great confidence.*

*The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia enjoys a long and rich history that traces its roots back to the earliest civilizations of the Arabian Peninsula. The region's ancient nomadic people developed a deep love for the land as well as a strong sense of independence. With the advent of Islam in the 7th century, tribes and clans were unified under one religion.*



**King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz  
(2005 - present)**

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz acceded to the throne after the death of King Fahd on August 1, 2005. He is also Commander of the National Guard, a position he has held since 1962. King Abdullah has been unwavering in his condemnation of terrorism. At the International Counterterrorism Conference in Riyadh in February, 2005, he called for greater international co-operation to fight this global problem.



**King Khalid  
(1975-1982)**

Khalid bin Abdulaziz succeeded King Faisal in 1975. King Khalid also emphasized development, and his reign was marked by an almost explosive growth in the country's physical infrastructure. It was a period of enormous wealth and prosperity for Saudi Arabia. On the international stage, He was a prime mover in forming the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981.



**King Fahd  
(1982-2005)**

Under King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, who adopted the title Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Saudi Arabia continued its tremendous socio-economic development and emerged as a leading political and economic force. King Fahd was central to Saudi Arabia's efforts to diversify its economy and promote private enterprise and investment. He restructured the Saudi government and approved the first nationwide municipal elections, which took place in 2005.



**Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz (2005-present)**

In August 2005, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah appointed his brother Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz as Crown Prince. Crown Prince Sultan is also Minister of Defense and Aviation, and the Kingdom's Inspector-General.

# Saudi Singapore ties



*Walking down Arab Street is akin to walking down memory lane as one is able to relive the old vestiges of time that through the centuries have not diminished in importance. Rather, they are a stark remembrance of a glorious unparalleled past.*



## Historical footprints: Arabs in Singapore

By Lionel Lim

It is as if one has travelled through a time capsule. It needs no further introduction as one fondly recalls that this is the seat of early Arab commercial activity that dates back to the 19th century.

Amid the many shops selling textiles, aromatic oils, prayer mats and basketwares, history lessons abound here with sights of familiar names such as "Aljunied Brothers". This is perhaps the best reminder that Arab traders have set foot on the shores of Singapore as early as

the 1800s, bringing along with them spices, textiles, religion and unique architecture. Attracted by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, who founded Singapore in 1819, the first Arabs to arrive in Singapore in the same year were two wealthy merchants from Palembang, Sumatra. Boosted by the flourishing trade and wealth created, the number of Arabs increased gradually. According to official records, there were five important Arab merchant houses in 1846. Among them, the rich and influential families of the Aljunied,

al-Kaffs and al-Saggoffs have left an indelible legacy till today. Having built their fortunes from the spice trade and subsequently property, these rich and influential families lived in palatial mansions. One of the most outstanding mansions is Alkaff Mansion, once home to the al-Kaffs. Nestled on Telok Blangah Hill, the colonial-style bungalow with its huge lawns of lush greenery has been painstakingly conserved and converted into a fine dining restaurant complete with a colonial ambience. More importantly, it





# Bilateral Ties

remains a vital symbol of the Arab Singaporean heritage.

If Alkaff Mansion holds a special seat in the memories of the al-Kaff descendents, then the world-famous iconic Raffles Hotel too is of irreplaceable importance to the al-Saggofts as they were once the landowners and landlords of Raffles Hotel which they expanded in 1889 and its predecessor, then known as Beach House.

If trade was the enabler of the Arab settlers' wealth creation journey, then property would rightfully be acknowledged as the vehicle used to amass even more wealth for the many generations thereafter. Owing to their incredible foresight, some Arabs made highly astute investments in land at a time when it still could be acquired for very low prices. As big landowners, they acquired large parcels of land around Singapore, some of which remain easily recognisable today by virtue of their Arab names. It is thus not surprising to see street names such as Muscat, Kandahar, Bussorah, Haji and Baghdad. By the 1930s, the Arabs were the wealthiest community in Singapore. In particular, the social position and contribution of the

Arabs to Singapore were cemented when a member of the Aljunied clan was appointed as a member of the mostly European-dominated Chamber of Commerce in 1837. Two Arabs – Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed Alsagoff and Syed Mohammed bin Syed Omar Alsagoff, even served as Municipal Commissioners in 1872-1898 and 1928-1933 respectively.

Going a step further, Syed Ali Mohammed Aljunied donated a large plot of land near Victoria and Arab Streets to Tan Tock Seng Hospital. He also built public wells across town to provide free water, at a time when none was being supplied by the municipality. His family followed in his footsteps and continued to make large donations for the construction of Town Hall and public bridges. In recognition of the Aljunied family's contributions, the present Aljunied Road and Aljunied train station along the east-west line were named after them.

Most of the Arab community came from the Hadhramaut, in the southeast of Yemen. Despite bringing along their Islamic practices, lifestyles and culture to Singapore, the Arabs soon blended with the other races, in particular with the

Muslims as many Arab-Muslim inter-marriages took place. Having been exposed to the Malay culture and lifestyle, the Arabs not only assimilated Malay culture and values but also played a leadership role in the lives of the Malay community in the religious, economic, academic and political fields. Some of the prominent Arab Singaporeans to leave their mark in history include Dr Ahmad Mattar (former Minister of the Environment who was credited for cleaning up Singapore River and other waterways), Syed Abdillah Bin Ahmad Al-Jufri (who founded and led the Islamic Scholars and Teachers Association) and Syed Ali Redha Alsagoff (who was known as the father of Muslim bursaries).

Recognising the need to preserve its Arab roots, the Arab Association of Singapore, also known as Al-Wehdah Al-Arabiah Bi Singhafura was set up in 1946 to promote Islam as well as the use of Arabic language. Its dual roles have now been expanded to include promoting cordial relationships and better understanding among Arabs and other races in Singapore through educational, cultural, social, arts and sports activities; as well as through co-operation and affiliation with



**King Abdullah with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew during his visit to Saudi Arabia**

other bodies with similar objectives and interests. The warm and friendly relations between Saudi Arabia and modern Singapore can be traced back to 1964 when the Saudi King appointed Dato Syed Ibrahim Alsagoff as a Counsel General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Singapore. Prior to that, all business and protocol matters were handled by Dato SIO Alsagoff at his residence at 41 Chancery Lane. Following that, Saudi Arabia and Singapore officially established embassies to boost bilateral relations. The Saudi Arabia embassy in Singapore was set up in 1977. Singapore in turn set up the Singapore Embassy in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1981.

From its early seeds planted four decades ago to present times, trade between the two countries have remained uninterrupted. In fact, the last five years has witnessed an unprecedented boost for Saudi-Singapore relations. Growing interactions at the highest level of government office between the two countries have intensified. In the short span of three months in

2008, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore officially visited Saudi Arabia twice. Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong too led a high-level delegation to Saudi Arabia in 2005. In 2006, HRH Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud made a special visit to Singapore. From the initial years of trade only, the heightened inter-visits by both countries' leaders have put other potential areas of co-operation such as investments, infrastructure development, education and training under the radar screen.

The way forward for Saudi-Singapore relations has received

several vital boosts. During SM Goh's visit in February 2005, both countries signed the General Agreement on Cooperation (GAC) paving the way for closer economic collaboration. During the Crown Prince's reciprocal visit, both countries inked an investment guarantee agreement to protect and increase investment flows between them, and signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Trade Cooperation which enables Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry to exchange expertise and experience in areas such as export development and promotion, economic statistics, development of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as competition policies.

With the appointment of the new Saudi Arabia Ambassador to Singapore, H.E. Dr Jamil M. Merdad this year, the already close Saudi-Singapore ties will be expected to rise to greater heights. Indeed, in his words "geography may not be kind, but history has shown and proved how close and inter-linked we are."



**Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz with H.E. Lee Hsien Loong during his visit to Singapore**



# NEW SAUDI AMBASSADOR TO SINGAPORE



**H.E. Dr Jamil M. Merdad  
presented his credentials  
to H.E. S.R. Nathan,  
President of Singapore**

H.E. Dr. Jamil M. Merdad presented his credentials as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Saudi Arabia to H.E. S.R. Nathan, President of Singapore

## H.E. Dr Jamil M. Merdad during courtesy calls



with H.E. Lee Hsien Loong,  
Prime Minister of Singapore



with H.E. Goh Chok Tong,  
Senior Minister of Singapore



with H.E. Prof. S. Jayakumar, Senior Minister  
and Co-ordinating Minister for National  
Security, Singapore



with H.E. George Yong-Boon Yeo,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore



with H.E. Lim Hng Kiang,  
Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore



with H.E. Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for the  
Environment and Water Resources and  
Minister-in-Charge of Muslim Affairs, Singapore



with H.E. Raymond Lim Siang Keat, Minister  
for Transport and Second Minister for  
Foreign Affairs, Singapore



with H.E. Dr Ng Eng Hen , Minister for Education  
and Second Minister for Defence, Singapore



H.E. Dr. Jamil M. Merdad, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia with H.E. Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Singapore



H.E. Dr. Jamil M. Merdad with Prof. Abdul Ghaffar S. Bazuhair, Cultural Attaché, Saudi Cultural Office in Singapore

## Saudi students in Singapore settling down

“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.”

**Professor Abdul Ghaffar S. Bazuhair,**  
Prof. Abdul Ghaffar S. Bazuhair, Cultural Attaché, Saudi Cultural Office in Singapore

The East beckons, as more and more Saudi students head to Singapore to fulfill their educational and professional ambitions. Beneficiaries of the King's Scholarship Scheme, these students have, with the help of the Saudi Cultural Office under Cultural Attaché, Professor Abdul Ghaffar S. Bazuhair, managed to feel at home in the island-nation. Professor Bazuhair said, “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.”

“In future we would also like to hold cultural and other exchanges to showcase other aspects of Saudi Culture in Singapore and vice versa.” Mr. Bazuhair added. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, during his historic visit to Asia last year, explored the prospects of increasing co-operation in vital sectors, including education. HRH Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz also explored similar possibilities in the field of education during his visit to Singapore. As a result of this interaction at the highest level, this year, students from the Kingdom are in Asian countries such as China, India,



Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea for higher studies in medicine, general science and engineering, to name a few. The Saudi Arabian Cultural mission in Singapore headed by Prof. Abdul Ghaffar S. Bazuhair was set up to meet the educational needs of Saudi students wishing to pursue higher education in Singapore.

There are about 60 students who have come to Singapore since June 2007 to study in various Singapore universities. However, most scholars are enrolled in medicine and engineering courses, where they have access to the best higher educational institutions and learning experiences. The Office offers scholarships for the students' dependents as well, and is expanding as more students come from Saudi Arabia.



Interestingly, the number of women students has slowly surpassed that of men. Ms Rowa Barashi, 23, is one of the female scholars on scholarship. Originally from Jeddah, she is studying computer science at the National University of Singapore. She is also studying English at the British Council.

Ms Ghader, on the other hand, wishes to pursue her further studies in Singapore as well. They both feel Singapore is very safe, particularly for women. However, some of them find the cost of living high, especially the rental rates. But, that is not stopping the inflow of Saudi students. The cosmopolitan society, the near-flawless public transport system and the world-renowned universities are

attracting many. It is a particularly popular destination for students who are focused on research. Said Professor Bazuhair, "We are looking closely into the research sector. There are several newly established universities in Saudi Arabia that are really hoping to co-operate in the realm of scientific research with the universities in Singapore."

Another 27 year old male student Jihad Gari is in Singapore with his wife and one - year - old daughter to pursue a degree in Industrial Engineering although it was a difficult decision for him to quit his job and come to Singapore but he feels it will be good for him, his family and his country in the long run. The route to success, it seems, is now not necessarily via the US or Britain, but through Asia.



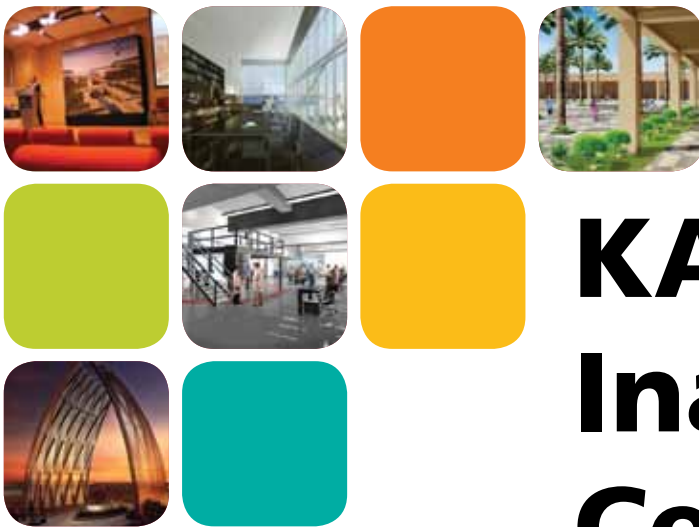
Apart from the prevalence of English here, the presence of some of the top educational institutions has certainly tilted the scales in Singapore's favour.

And, as Ms. Ghader says, "After studying in Singapore and returning to Saudi Arabia, the possibilities of getting a job in a higher position increases. Making Singapore not only the safe option, but the smart one."

Arab world, according to the World Bank's "Doing Business Report 2008." However what most of them miss in Singapore is home cooked Saudi food, any takers!



Professor Shih, President of KAUST meets the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah



# KAUST Inauguration Celebrations

***KAUST - Collaborative  
Research, Science  
and Innovation  
in Saudi Arabia.  
King Abdullah  
University of Science  
and Technology  
opens the doors  
for inauguration  
celebrations  
September 23, 2009***

King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, popularly referred to as KAUST, welcomes a founding faculty of more than 60 accomplished scientists and engineers and a diverse inaugural class of 350 graduate students to the shores of the Red Sea, in Thuwal, Saudi Arabia. The university, located 80 km north of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia's second largest city, is a new independent, merit-based university, the dream of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia. KAUST's official groundbreaking ceremonies for construction took place in October 2007 and the masterplan for a 36-million square meter campus and community has now come to fruition in 2009.



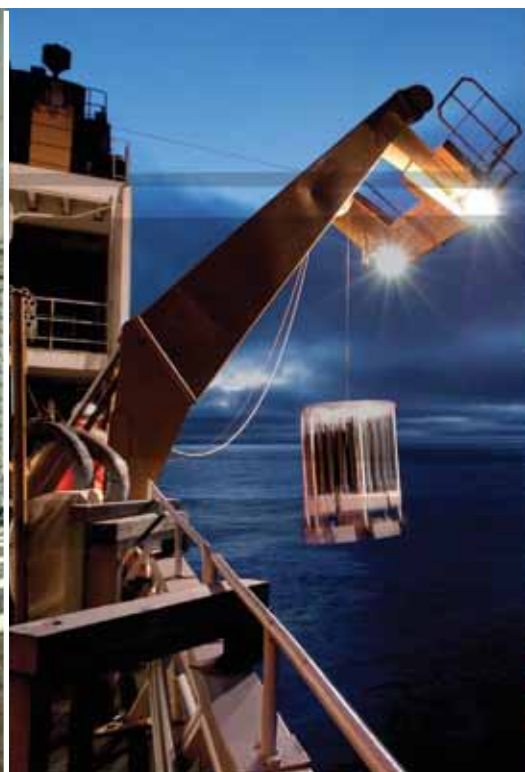
Opening in September the internationally diverse faculty and students will arrive onto a campus lined by 11,000 palm trees and an architecturally stunning campus, harbor town center, and state of the art core labs and master facilities. As a new “House of Wisdom”, KAUST is an inspired community of researchers with a passion for advancing the frontiers of science and addressing global challenges.

The independent KAUST Board of Trustees and senior leadership have developed a university of the 21st century. A research and research-inspired teaching approach is designed around four academic areas. Interdisciplinary, goal oriented research and state of the art core labs and master facilities are designed with global collaborative research centers. “KAUST has an extraordinary mission to advance science and technology, to contribute to economic diversification and to be a catalyst for transforming lives.” said KAUST President Choon Fong Shih in a message to the community.

## Inauguration Ceremony

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, who conceived and supported the development of the University, is hosting the event. His Excellency Minister Al-Naimi, Chairman of the KAUST Board of Trustees and Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Professor Choon Fong Shih, President of KAUST invited guests included: Heads of State, Presidents and leadership of the world’s top universities, distinguished scientists, including Nobel Laureates in physics and chemistry.



# USD 745 million deal for Rotary in Saudi Arabia



**Contract Signing Ceremony between Mr. Chia Kim Piow, Chairman & Managing Director of Rotary Engineering Limited & Mr. Salem H Shaheen, President & CEO of Saudi Aramco Total Refining and Petrochemical Company (SATORP)**

“This win propels us onto another level and will certainly help to reinforce our presence in the Middle Eastern market”

**Chia Kim Piow**

Chairman and Managing Director

MAINBOARD-LISTED Rotary Engineering Limited (Rotary) has secured a USD 745 million (SGD 1.1 billion) Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract to build a refinery tank farm in Saudi Arabia. The contract was awarded to Rotary Engineering and its joint venture company Petrol Steel Co. Ltd by Saudi Aramco Total Refining and Petrochemical Company (SATORP), a joint venture between Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco) and Total S.A. (Total), for its Jubail refinery.

When completed, the 400,000 barrels per day export refinery will be one of the most advanced in the world and will refine crude oil into finished products for local and international markets.

Rotary's contract is one of 13 packages awarded by SATORP. Rotary's scope of work includes the full range of engineering, procurement, construction activities involving 62 Atmospheric Storage Tanks and eight Bullet Tanks which are horizontal cylindrical tanks mounded with earth. The work on this project will be handled

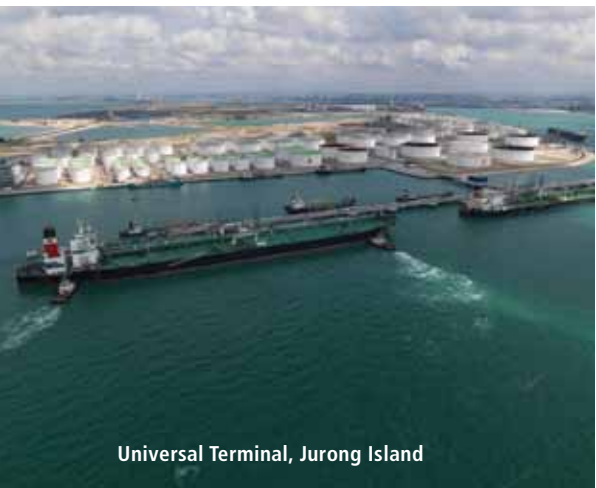
in two phases, outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and within. Work outside the Kingdom amounting to USD 384 million will be managed entirely by Rotary Singapore and the work amounting to USD 361 million within the Kingdom will be handled by Petrol Steel, which is 51 per cent-owned by Rotary Engineering Ltd. Rotary is due to start work in August and the project is expected to be completed by end-2012. Rotary continues to be busy with on-going projects in Singapore and the region, even as it continues to prospect for new business opportunities.

## On-going projects

Some of its on-going projects include:

- A SGD 27.7 million Engineering, Procurement & Construction contract awarded by Oiltanking Odjell Terminal Singapore Private Limited and three Revamp & Maintenance contracts awarded to its wholly-owned subsidiary Rotary IMC Pte Ltd by Chevron Singapore, Tankstore Ltd and Invista Singapore Pte Ltd.





Universal Terminal, Jurong Island



Oiltanking Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, Jurong Island



Natural Fuel, Jurong Island

## About Rotary Engineering Limited

**Rotary Engineering Ltd** is a leading provider of engineering, procurement, construction and maintenance services specialising in the oil-and-gas industry. Headquartered in Singapore, Rotary has established a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific and continues to make its mark as a global player. **Established in 1972**, the Rotary Group has forged a reputation built on its hallmark traits of providing quality services, within budget and on time. It prides itself on a highly skilled workforce that forms the mainstay of its core engineering, procurement, construction and maintenance services. The Group today boasts a total strength of over 7,800 employees, and has built an enduring relationship with its clients among which include Oiltanking, ExxonMobil Asia Pacific, Thai Tank Terminal, Xiamen Paktank and local company Hin Leong Trading.

- A SGD 37.9 million EPC contract awarded by Technip Italy S.p.A for Neste's new generation biofuel plant in Tuas.
- A SGD 102 million EPC contract, comprising a SGD 60.1 million contract for the Chem 6 project by Oiltanking Odfjell Terminal Singapore Private Limited and a SGD 42 million contract awarded by Oiltanking Singapore Ltd.

For its first quarter ended 31 March, Rotary posted 13 per cent revenue gains to SGD 131.9 million and turned in Profit After Tax and Minority Interest (PATMI) of SGD 4.0 million.

*Best Wishes to the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Your 79th National Day*



Watching over your security needs

At AETOS, we understand your need to safeguard all that you value. Whether it is protecting your assets or recommending optimal security solutions, you can feel safe with us around. Our people have the expertise and experience in securing ports, businesses, events and key installations. Above all, we're dedicated to meeting your needs in every way. So let us watch over you. Because your security means everything to us.

- Professional Armed & Unarmed Security Services • Security Screening Services • Security Escort Services
- Cash & Valuables Management Services • Enforcement Services • Patrol & Response Services
- Executive Protection Services • Central Alarm Monitoring Services • Security Training Services
- Security Risk Assessment, Audit & Master-Planning • Development of Integrated Security Systems & Solutions





Barack Obama, President of United States with King Abdullah during his visit to Saudi Arabia

*The foreign policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is shaped within major frameworks, among the most important of which are; good-neighbour policy, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, strengthen relations with the Gulf States and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, strengthen relations with Arab and Islamic countries for the benefit of common interests of these countries, as well as advocate their issues, adopt non-alignment policy, establish co-operation relations with friendly countries, and play an effective role in international and regional organizations. **Here are highlights of the recent engagements:***

# Engaging the World

## KING ABDULLAH AND PRESIDENT OBAMA HOLD TALKS:

U.S. President Barack Obama arrived in Riyadh on June 3 for a two-day official visit to Saudi Arabia. He was received by King Abdullah, who hosted the U.S. leader at his ranch in Al-Janadriyah. During a joint media appearance, President Obama stressed the value of his relationship with the Saudi monarch. "I've been struck by his wisdom and his graciousness," he said, adding that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia "have a long history of friendship" and "a strategic relationship."

President Obama noted that he purposely chose Saudi Arabia as the first stop on his Middle East tour because the Kingdom is a key ally and the cradle of Islam. "I thought it was very important to come to the place where Islam began and to seek His Majesty's counsel and to discuss with him many of the issues that we confront here in the Middle East," he said. The president expressed confidence that, working together, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia "can make progress on a whole host of issues and mutual interests." King Abdullah thanked President Obama for his kind words "and the sentiments expressed within them, which are not surprising, given the historic and strategic ties between our two

countries, which go back to the time of the meeting between the late Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the late King Abdulaziz." King Abdullah also expressed his best wishes "to the friendly American people, who are represented by a distinguished man who deserves to be in this position."

During their closed-door talks, the two leaders focused on regional and international developments – especially the Palestinian issue – and on Saudi-U.S. bilateral co-operation. King Abdullah also presented President Obama with the King Abdulaziz Medal, the Kingdom's highest award, which is bestowed to heads of state and world leaders.

**KING ABDULLAH ATTENDS G-20 SUMMIT:** King Abdullah attended the G-20 economic summit in London on April 2, where he held consultations with world leaders. Afterwards, the King received President Barack Obama at his guest residence, where they discussed strategies for reviving the global economy. The two leaders also spoke about regional and international issues, including the need to achieve a just and comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace based on the Arab Peace Initiative. Furthermore,



they highlighted the strong, historical ties that bind Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal and Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel A. Al-Jubeir also attended the meeting. Prior to the summit, King Abdullah stressed that Saudi Arabia will keep working to stabilize oil markets. "Despite the negative effects of the crisis on world demand for oil and on its future prospects and the sacrifices that represents, we have continued our huge investment program to increase our output capacity," he said. King Abdullah also stressed the need for "convincing reform of the financial sector in the affected countries."



King Abdullah and Barack Obama, U.S. President at G-20 Summit

**KING ABDULLAH LEADS SAUDI DELEGATION TO DOHA SUMMIT:** King Abdullah led the Saudi delegation to the 21st Arab Summit Conference, which was held in Doha on March 30. Also participating in the summit were Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman, Libyan President Muammar Al-Qaddafi, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki, Yemeni President Ali Saleh, Tunisian President Zine Al-Abidine and Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Sabah.

Addressing the session, Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani expressed appreciation for the Arab reconciliation initiative advanced by King Abdullah at the Kuwait summit earlier this year. He also welcomed the participation of King Abdullah in the G-20 economic summit to be held 02 April 2009 in London. "We do feel that King Abdullah will represent all of us at the summit



The leaders and heads of delegation of Arab countries prior to the convening of the inaugural session of the 21st Arab Summit

and we hope he will succeed in his mission," the Qatari Emir said. "I am certain that King Abdullah will represent the interests of the Arab world and even the developing countries and their aspirations."

#### **KING ABDULLAH, EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT MUBARAK EXCHANGE VISITS :**

King Abdullah held talks in Jeddah on June 28 with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who traveled to Saudi Arabia for a one-day visit. The two leaders discussed bilateral relations, the Middle East peace process, and other regional and international issues. In particular, they focused on Egypt's ongoing efforts to facilitate reconciliation between Palestinian factions. On June 30, King Abdullah and President Mubarak met again for consultation in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The King was accompanied by Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz; President of General Intelligence Prince Miqrin bin Abdulaziz; Education Minister Prince Faisal bin Mohammed Al-Saud; and other officials.



King Abdullah with Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian President

## **SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER MEETS WITH SECRETARY OF STATE CLINTON:**

Prince Saud Al-Faisal met with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to discuss a host of issues vital to both countries. The bilateral meeting and working lunch took place at the Department of State in Washington, DC. During the meeting, Prince Saud emphasized the Kingdom's commitment to working towards peace in the Middle East and expressed the view that "a bold and historic step is required to end this conflict and divert the resources of the region from war and destruction to peace and development."



**Secretary of State Hillary Clinton holds a joint news conference with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, to discuss Iran and the Middle East peace process**

Prince Saud said that "incrementalism and a step-by-step approach" will not lead to peace, and that what is required is a "comprehensive approach" that defines the final outcome at the outset and launches into negotiations over final status issues. He continued: "The whole world knows what a settlement should look like – withdrawal from all the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, a just settlement for the refugees, and an equitable settlement of issues such as water and security."

Prince Saud emphasized how the Arab world has taken a clear position for peace by unanimously adopting the

Arab Peace Initiative at the 2002 Arab Summit in Beirut. The plan offers full and complete peace and normal relations in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from all Arab Territories occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem. The Arab League has reaffirmed its commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative twice since 2002, most recently last year.

## **GCC LEADERS GATHER IN RIYADH FOR CONSULTATIONS :**

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz hosted the 11th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Consultative Summit in Riyadh March 5. The gathering was attended by top GCC officials, including Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Salman al-Khalifa, Omani Deputy Prime Minister Fahd al-Saeed, U.A.E. Vice-President Sheikh Mohammed Al-Makhtoum, Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah, and Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani. Political, security and economic issues were reviewed. At a press conference, GCC Secretary General Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah announced that Riyadh has been chosen as the headquarters for the new GCC Monetary Council. Addressing the impact of the global financial crisis on GCC countries, Al-Attiyah stated, "The economies of our countries are immune as certain measures have been taken by the GCC states, contributing to alleviating the repercussions of this crisis."



**King Abdullah with leaders in 11th GCC Consultative Summit in Riyadh**





**IMF REPORT COMMENDS SAUDI FISCAL POLICIES:** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) applauded Saudi Arabia's fiscal policies and characterized its economic outlook as "broadly positive" in a new report assessing the Kingdom's economic conditions. In its Article IV Consultation Report, concluded July 13, 2009, the IMF Executive Board found that, "Saudi Arabia confronts the current global crisis from a position of strength, reflecting a track record of prudent macro-economic policies and structural reforms that have enhanced the economy's resilience." As a result of strong government action, it noted, the Saudi economy "delivered another strong performance in 2008 despite global headwinds. Real GDP, buoyed by a sustained broad-based expansion in the non-oil sector (4.3 per cent) and higher oil production, grew by 4.4 percent."

The IMF found that the Kingdom's inflation and domestic debt are declining, while its foreign direct investment remained high at about USD 23 billion in 2008. Furthermore, it said, the Saudi banking system "has weathered the global crisis. It remains profitable and well capitalized with low non-performing loans." The IMF credited pro-active fiscal policies for the

Kingdom's economic resilience, particularly commending authorities for approving a massive stimulus package that "appropriately focused on capital spending" and contributed "both to diversified domestic growth and the global recovery." The report also lauded Saudi officials for "their leadership role in stabilizing world oil markets by maintaining their capacity expansion plans despite lower oil prices."

The Executive Board expressed its support for the Saudi government's ongoing efforts "to implement second-generation reforms in the judicial, education, and financial sectors, aimed at further improving the environment for private sector development" and welcomed "the continued liberalization of the trade regime, consistent with the authorities' commitment to a free and open trade system." They pointed out that Saudi Arabia was ranked first among Arab countries and 16th globally by the latest World Bank Doing Business Report. Finally, the Kingdom was commended for the "substantial assistance" it has extended to developing countries, including its support for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and "Energy for the Poor" initiatives.

# Ten reasons to invest in Saudi Arabia

*As an investor, if you are looking at the Middle East, consider Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom offers many advantages in some strategic sectors at the regional and global levels, which makes it attractive for international investment. We look at some of the reasons that will aid you in your decision making.*



- 1** The Kingdom is ranked No.1 with regard to prices of energy provided for investment projects. (Saudi energy report link 2007).
- 2** Investment in Saudi Arabia realises high profit ratios for local, foreign and shared projects, with low risk exposures, and a simple form of taxes and property registration fees. Here, the Kingdom, occupies the fifth position with regard to taxes and fourth in property registration costs, according to business performance reports in 2006/ 2007 (issued by the International Bank).
- 3** A comprehensive study was published by Arab Forbes Magazine's in late 2006, assessing the performance of (1616) joint-stock companies in the Arab world. According to the study, the first three positions went to Saudi companies, and among the best 50, 22 were Saudi, including joint companies. A number of standards, such as operational efficiency, market value, sales, revenues, dividends, return on equity, return on last two year assets (2004 - 2005), in addition to the company expected growth, were incorporated.
- 4** Ten Saudi banks are among the best growing and profit-realising in the Arab World. These Saudi banks rest comfortably within the list of the biggest 1,000 banks in the world, according to the Financial Times. The three biggest banks in the Arab world are Saudi.
- 5** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the biggest free economic market in the Middle East. It acquires 25 per cent of gross national Arab product and has the biggest oil reserves in the world (25 per cent). Saudi Arabia is the most ideal environment for





projects depending on energy consumption because it provides energy for investment projects at the lowest prices globally. There are many natural resources in mining that are supported by the geographical location of the Kingdom, making it easily accessible to European, Asian and African markets. The Saudi market has high purchasing power and it continues to expand.

**6** The Saudi Riyal is one of the most stable currencies in the world. There was no significant change to its exchange value in the last 3 decades. There are no restrictions on foreign currency exchange and outgoing money transfers. Inflation rates in Saudi Arabia are very low, and the Kingdom is endeavoring to sign bilateral agreements with an increasing number of countries regarding investment encouragement, protection and arrangement of taxation issues.

**7** All the above mentioned advantages made Milken International Corporation in classify the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as No.1 worldwide with respect the over-all economic environment classification, i.e. environment, capability for project management, and financing. Milken Corporation focussed on the low and stable interest rates, low inflation and low taxes, compared with international standards.

**8** The majority of Saudi Arabia's population is young, with 1-15 years representing about 45 per cent of the total population. The Government is actively improving human resources development to include all categories and ages. It provides investors with more opportunities to select required labour for their projects. Many public and private educational institutions and research facilities have been established in the Kingdom, to meet the demand of a great portion of the Saudi labour market.

**9** Foreign investment regulation allows foreigners to invest in all economic activities other than those listed in the excepted foreign investment activities. The Kingdom has committed to reduce that list under conditions of joining the World Trade Organisation agreement. The new Foreign Investment Regulation grants foreign investors the right to having their own, and employees', sponsorship of the licensed projects.

**10** Foreign investors have the right to possess real estate related to their activities. All foreign investment projects enjoy the same privilege, incentives and guarantees as local projects.

# Marching ahead with pride

"Since the Kingdom was unified in 1932, women's status has evolved constantly, with considerable gains in education and employment," says Princess Loulwah Al-Faisal, vice chair of board of trustees and general supervisor of Effat College. Women's empowerment, she says, has occurred within the framework of Shariah, the bedrock of Saudi government and society.



**King Abdullah inspects the women's university project**

Western media has wrongly portrayed Saudi women as a symbol of human rights deficits in the Muslim world. But in reality their situation is far better. Above all, 30 per cent of individual bank accounts in the Kingdom belong to women, who now own and run several businesses.

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah has made remarkable efforts for the empowerment of Saudi women, passing women-friendly laws and regulations, opening new job opportunities for them and allowing them to take part in National Dialogue forums. He has invited prominent women to his palace several times to discuss

their problems, views and demands. The King provided Saudi women with every support and encouragement in order to play a vital role in the nation-building process.

King Abdullah laid the foundation stone for the Kingdom's first women-only university in Riyadh recently. Named after Princess Noura binte Abdul Rahman, the university will have 13 colleges, including those for medicine, dentistry, nursing, naturopathy, information technology, languages, instant translation and pharmacy, and will have the capacity to enrol 40,000 students. Some areas of the campus will be allocated for research



in nanotechnology, bio-sciences and information technology.

"Since the Kingdom was unified in 1932, women's status has evolved constantly, with considerable gains in education and employment," says Princess Loulwah Al-Faisal, vice chair of board of trustees and general supervisor of Effat College. She asserted that women's empowerment has occurred in the Kingdom within the framework of Shariah, the bedrock of Saudi government and society. However, she believed that in order to optimize women's roles in a modernized Saudi Arabia, it is crucial that they be educated and introduced into the work force. She cited her mother, the late Queen Effat, as the first to realize these needs and to take action for Saudi women.

"Now education is no longer a question for women," the Princess said and credited educational advances for a "profound change" in women's status in the last 50 years. The schooling of women has fostered an increased role for them in the work force in virtually every sector, particularly in the areas of education, social services and medicine. There is a continuing push to increase the number of women entering the fields of business, engineering and the sciences.

Princess Loulwah lauded the government's important role in the drive to improve women's status, noting that the Council of Ministers passed a nine-point plan a few years ago for increasing

job opportunities for women. She said women have been promised suffrage in the next municipal elections, but efforts should be made to distribute identity cards to women before that can happen. Princess Loulwah has taken an active role in promoting women's education and social family welfare. From 1990 to 1999, she helped supervise Dar Al-Hanan School, the first private high school for girls in the Kingdom.


Jowhara Al-Angari, vice president and co-founder of the National Society for Human Rights, on the other hand, opposed mixing tradition with religious teachings. "Some see tradition as religion, when in contrast women in Islam were the first to be chosen by election proving that women may voice their opinions and participate in politics. Women in the past, during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), used to fight beside him on the battlefield. This shows that women should be allowed to become members of the Kingdom's armed forces. Islam never prevented women from doing any job as long as they adhered to Islamic principles and Shariah law," she said.

The current Eighth Five-Year Development Plan (2005-2009) of Saudi Arabia aims to improve the situation of women. "By the end of the plan period, the percentage of women in the Saudi work force will increase from a mere 5.4 per cent to 14.2 per cent," says Economy and Planning Minister Khaled Al-Gosaibi. The plan perceives an increased share

**Norah Al-Fayez, Deputy Education Minister for**

**Women's Education:** Nora binte Abdullah Al-Fayez, director general of the women's section of the Institute of Public Administration, made history by becoming the first woman deputy minister in Saudi Arabia. She is in charge of girls' affairs in the Ministry of Education. She replaces Prince Khaled bin Abdullah bin Mohammed. Nora binte Abdullah Al-Fayez has been serving as director general of the women's section of the Institute of Public Administration since 1993. She completed her master's degree in educational techniques from Utah State University in 1982 and bachelor's degree in social science from King Saud University in 1978.

"Now education is no longer a question for women", Princess Loulwah Al-Faisal said and credited educational advances for a "profound change" in women's status in the last 50 years.



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of the national work force in total manpower (both employed and unemployed) from 36.9 per cent in 2004 to 39.2 per cent in 2009, along with continued efforts to raise women's participation rate from 10.3 per cent at the beginning of the plan to 14.2 per cent by the end of the plan. "The number of women graduates has outnumbered their male counterparts, as girls constitute 56.5 per cent of the total number of graduates in recent years," the minister said.

The five-year plan has envisaged two particular objectives relevant to women empowerment. The first is to strengthen family by maintaining Arab and Islamic values, affording adequate care to family members and creating conditions that are conducive to the development of capabilities and talents for each member of a family. The second goal is to increase women's participation in various fields, both within the family and at work, by providing greater opportunities for decision-

making and by adopting approaches that lead to the empowerment of women in terms of education, health and employment.

Hassna'a T. Mokhtar, a Saudi journalist, observes some important measures taken by the government to improve women's condition. "Recognizing the important role of woman in the society outside her household, King Abdullah included Saudi businesswomen and professionals in his entourage when he travelled the Near East and Far East. This was a first and the message was clear," she said. The government recognized that utilizing and empowering the talents and abilities of the other half of the Saudi society were crucial to national development.

Several ministries have announced their plans to increase employment opportunities for women, she says. Also, when applying for a national identity card, women no longer required the permission of their

male guardians. The chambers of commerce in several large cities allowed women to run for elections to their boards. "Saudi women created history by winning elections to the board of Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2005," she added.

Mokhtar cited many examples of Saudi women who made progress in different areas. They include entrepreneurs such as Lubna Al-Olayan, CEO of Olayan Financing Company whom Forbes chose as one of the most influential businesswomen in the Middle East, Nadia Al-Dossary, CEO of Al-Sale Eastern Company for Scarp Metal, and Raefah Al-Turkmani, group executive manager of Ghassan Al-Nemeer Holding Group, which specializes in gold and jewellery, Nabila Tunisi of Saudi Aramco; Soha Aboul Farag, a banker who in 2006 was chosen for the "International Women Leaders Mentoring Partnership" in the US, Nahed Taher, CEO of Gulf One Bank, and Hayat Sindi, a Saudi medical researcher who invented a machine combining the effects of light and ultrasound for use in biotechnology.

Many Saudi women were keynote speakers at international forums while many others were selected as members of prestigious international organizations. Muna Abu Sulayman was the first Saudi woman to be appointed as a goodwill ambassador by the United Nations Development Program.



# SAUDI CULTURE

*The culture of Saudi Arabia is rich and has been shaped by its Islamic heritage, its historical role as an ancient trade center, and its Bedouin traditions. Saudi society has experienced tremendous development over the past several decades, and the Saudi people have taken their values and traditions and adapted them to the modern world.*



## Traditional Costumes

Saudis prefer traditional clothes to Western styles of dress, generally wear modern adaptations of age-old designs. Men wear an ankle-length shirt of wool or cotton known as a thawb. On their heads, they wear a large square of cotton (ghutra) that is folded diagonally over a skullcap (kufiyyah), and held in place with a cord circlet (igal). The flowing, full-length outer cloak (bisht), generally made of wool or camel hair, completes the outfit. In the old days, the bisht was also used as a blanket while traveling. Women customarily wear a black outer cloak (abaya) over their dress, which may well be modern in style. On their heads, Saudi women traditionally wear a shayla – a black, gauzy scarf that is wrapped around the head and secured with circlets, hats or jewellery. Traditional dress is often richly decorated with coins, sequins or brightly colored fabric appliqué.



## Jewellery



Jewellery has been an essential part of Arabian dress for thousands of years. More than just personal decoration, jewellery symbolized social and economic status. For the migrant Bedouins, it was also a form of wealth and security that could be transported easily. Traditional jewellery was mostly made of silver, although gold was also used. Jewelers used stones such as turquoise, garnets and amber from the Kingdom's rich mines, and pearls and coral from the coastal areas. Tiny bells, coins and chains were also used for decoration. Designs primarily evolved from Islamic calligraphy and motifs, and featured intricate patterns of geometric shapes, leaves, crescents and flowers.



## Calligraphy

Dating back 1,400 years to the first century of Islam, calligraphy is a revered art in Saudi Arabia. Because its primary subject matter has historically been the Holy Qur'an, calligraphy is considered to be the quintessential Islamic art form. It is a dominant theme in metalwork, ceramics, glass, textiles, painting and sculpture in Saudi Arabia and the Muslim world. Today, Saudi museums collect and display rare manuscripts, and organizations hold competitions to encourage new generations of artists.



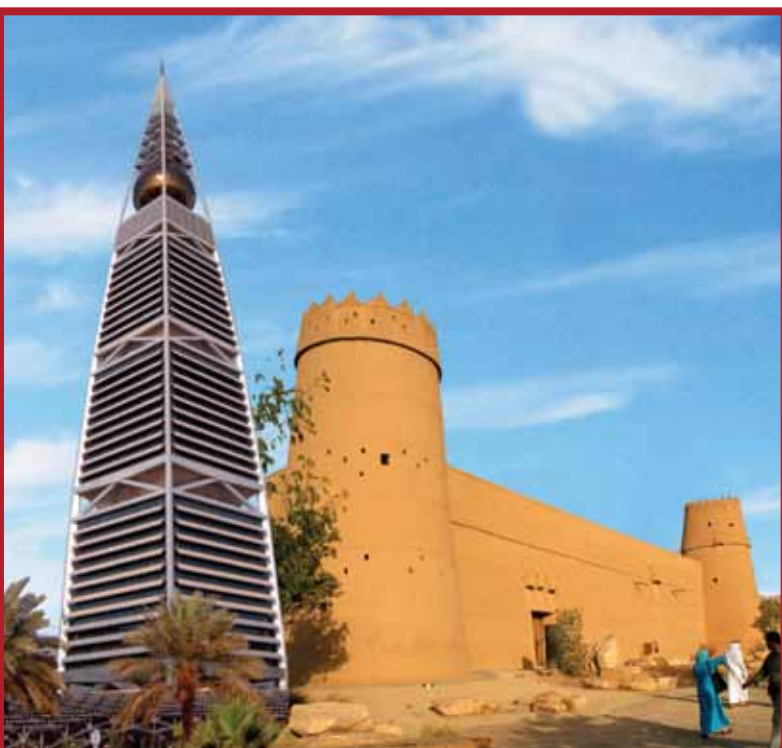
## Folk Music and Dance

A living piece of the country's history, Saudi folk music has been shaped by the nomadic Bedouins and the pilgrims who brought musical influences from around the world. It varies from region to region – for example, in the Hijaz, the music of al-sihba combines poetry and songs of Arab Andalusia, a region in southern Spain, while the folk music of Makkah and Madinah reflects these two cities'

influences from throughout the Islamic world. Dance is also popular among Saudis. The national dance is the men's sword dance known as the ardha. An ancient tradition with its roots in the country's central area known as the Najd, the ardha is a combination of singers, dancers carrying swords and a poet or narrator. Men carrying swords stand in two lines or a circle, with a poet singing in their midst, and perform the traditional dance.

## Architecture

Historically, building designs and materials in Saudi Arabia were dictated by the climate, geography and resources available. For example, builders in the central areas preferred adobe for its malleability, availability and insulating qualities. In western Saudi Arabia, stone and red brick were common, while Jeddah's builders used coral from the Red Sea. Contemporary Saudi architects are increasingly looking to traditional building designs and Islamic concepts for inspiration. This combination of tradition with the ultra modern strengthens the link between a cherished past and an innovative future.





# VISITING THE KINGD

*Saudi Arabia offers both natural and historical wonders, from the mountain resorts of Taif and the majesty of ancient Nabatean tombs to the multicolored coral reefs of the Red Sea. While Saudi Arabia has been a travel destination for centuries, with millions visiting the Kingdom each year from around the world, most visitors have historically been Muslims undertaking pilgrimages. Today there is a new emphasis on tourism in Saudi Arabia, and in 2000, the Supreme Commission for Tourism (SCT) was established to promote tourism in the Kingdom. we take a look at some of the destinations.*

## Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's capital city, Riyadh, is the geographic and cultural hub of the country and its largest city. Once surrounded by mud-brick walls, modern Riyadh is a contemporary city with an ever-expanding network of modern roads, high rises, residential suburbs and industrial parks. Despite being a modern city, Riyadh

retains much of its traditional appeal. The historic Qasr Al-Hokm district has been carefully preserved and renovated to make it the city's cultural, commercial and social center. A highlight of the district is the historic Masmak fortress, which King Abdulaziz recaptured in 1902 – setting the stage for the foundation of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Another highlight is the Murabba' Palace, a former home of King Abdulaziz that has been renovated as part of the King Abdulaziz Historical Center in Riyadh. Twenty miles outside Riyadh lies the walled city of Diriyah, the ancestral home of the Al-Saud family.

## Jeddah

The Kingdom's second largest city, Jeddah is a sparkling, modern commercial center that is considered one of Saudi Arabia's most vibrant cities. It is alive with more than 300 gardens, and is home to one of the world's tallest fountains. One of Jeddah's loveliest features is the Corniche, promenades that extend miles along the Red Sea with parks, fountains, lakes and kiosks. Its coastal location near the spectacular Red Sea coral reefs makes it a popular spot for water sports.

## Eastern Province

The capital of the Eastern Province, Dammam – along with nearby Dhahran and Khobar – is an important hub for shipping, oil, commerce and industry, and the home of the national oil company, Saudi Aramco. It was in Dhahran in 1936 that the famous Dammam No.7 oil well was discovered, proving beyond doubt that the Kingdom was sitting on vast oil fields. Dammam is linked





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to Bahrain via the King Fahd Causeway, an engineering masterpiece that stretches 15.5 miles across the sea and reclaimed land.

## Asir Province

Located in the southwestern part of the Kingdom, It is an extensive region of steep mountains, lush greenery and cool breezes. The picturesque regional capital, Abha, is noted for its brightly colored mud houses built in traditional style. Residents paint their homes each year, usually in preparation for the Eids, the religious holidays that follow Ramadan or the Hajj. The Asir National Park, which at 1.1 million acres is larger than the state of Rhode Island, is a paradise for botanists, zoologists and ornithologists who come to study indigenous plants and wildlife.

## Najran

In the ancient trading center of Najran, the capital of Najran Province, old and new buildings stand side by side, giving the oasis city a special charm. Visitors can enjoy several museums, including the ruins of the Al-Ukhudood settlement, a former commercial center that thrived from 500 BC to the 10th century AD. Al-An Palace, a former governor's residence, is a remarkable example of local architecture with its circular towers with white ramparts. For shoppers, Najran's souq (market) is known for its traditional crafts such as colorful baskets, leather products and old Bedouin silver jewelry. Also of interest is the Al-Madik Dam in Najran Province, the second largest dam in Saudi Arabia. It has become a tourist attraction with parks at each end and a variety of palms and citrus trees.

## Makkah and Madinah

The holy city of Makkah is the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad. Millions of pilgrims from around the world visit Makkah each year to perform the Hajj, the pilgrimage that is the religious high point of a Muslim's life. The Holy Mosque in Makkah houses Islam's most sacred shrine, the Ka'abah, to which Muslims around the world turn to prayer five times a day. Muslims are drawn to Madinah not as a religious duty as with Makkah, but out of love and respect for God's last Prophet, who established the first Islamic community there. Madinah is also where the Prophet Muhammad spent the last years of his life, and where he and many of his companions are buried. The city is home to the Prophet's Mosque, another of Islam's holiest sites. Both Makkah and Madinah are open only to Muslim visitors.

## Taif

The mountain resort city of Taif is located 5,600 feet above sea level in the southwest region of Saudi Arabia. Its pleasant climate, lush parks, sunny skies and exotic wildlife have long drawn Saudi families to this resort town each summer. Its largest and most famous public garden is the King Fahd Park, which includes a lake, playgrounds, walking paths, and a mosque. Visitors can also take in the Shubra Palace, the former summer residence of King Abdulaziz and the most famous historical building in the city. Shoppers in Taif can browse its traditional market (souq) for handcrafts, gold, silver, spices, perfumes and other trinkets.

## Government

Ministries and government offices

### MINISTRY OF FINANCE

<http://www.mof.gov.sa/>

### DIRECTORATE OF CUSTOMS

<http://www.customs.gov.sa/>

### MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND PLANNING

<http://www.planning.gov.sa/>

### MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION

<http://www.saudinf.com/>

### MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

<http://www.moa.gov.sa/>

### MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

<http://www.mofa.gov.sa/>

## Education

Universities, schools and research centers

### MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

<http://www.mohe.gov.sa/>

### KING SAUD UNIVERSITY

<http://www.ksu.edu.sa/>

### KING ABDUL AZIZ UNIVERSITY

<http://www.kaau.edu.sa/>

### KING FAISAL UNIVERSITY

<http://www.kfu.edu.sa/>

### KING FAHD UNIVERSITY OF PETROLEUM AND MINERALS

<http://www.kfupm.edu.sa/>

### IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN SAUD ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

<http://www.imamu.edu.sa/>

## Islam

Islamic affairs and information on Islam

### ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB)

<http://www.isdb.org/>

### INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC BANKING AND INSURANCE

<http://www.islamic-banking.com/>

### ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)

<http://www.oic-oci.org/>

### ISLAMIC FIQH ACADEMY

<http://www.fiqhacademy.org.sa/>

### ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (ISESCO)

<http://www.isesco.org.ma/>

# USEFUL RESOURCES



## Banking

Saudi banks and information on Islamic banking

### ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB)

<http://www.isdb.org/>

### NATIONAL COMMERCIAL BANK

<http://www.alahli.com/index.asp>

### RIYAD BANK

<http://www.riyad-bank.com.sa/>

### AL-RAJHI BANKING & INVESTMENT

<http://www.alrajhi.com.sa/>

### ARAB NATIONAL BANK

<http://www.anb.com.sa/>

### SAUDI-AMERICAN BANK

<http://www.samba.com.sa>

### SAUDI-BRITISH BANK

<http://www.sabb.com.sa/>

### SAUDI-FRENCH BANK

<http://www.alfransi.com.sa/>

### SAUDI-DUTCH BANK

<http://www.shb.com.sa/>

### INST. ISLAMIC BANKING AND INSURANCE

<http://www.islamic-banking.com/>

## Media

Wire services, dailies, magazines, radio and television

### SAUDI PRESS AGENCY (SPA)

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/>

### ARAB NEWS

<http://www.arabnews.com/>

### SAUDI GAZETTE

<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/>

### ASHARQ ALAWSAT

<http://aawsat.com/>

### AL-HAYAT

<http://www.alhayat.com/>

### OKAZ

<http://www.okaz.com.sa/>

## Cities

### JEDDAH

<http://www.jeddah.gov.sa/>

### RIYADH

<http://www.imaratarriyadh.gov.sa/>

## Commerce

Chambers of Commerce and Saudi companies

### SAUDI ARABIAN GENERAL INVESTMENT AUTHORITY (SAGIA)

<http://www.sagia.gov.sa/>

### COUNCIL OF SAUDI CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

<http://www.saudichambers.org.sa/>

### RIYADH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

<http://www.riyadhchamber.org.sa/>

### JEDDAH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

<http://jcci.org.sa/>

### COUNCIL OF SAUDI CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

<http://www.saudichambers.org.sa/>

### SAUDI ARABIAN MONETARY AGENCY (SAMA)

<http://www.sama-ksa.org/>

### SAUDI ARABIAN STANDARDS ORGANIZATION (SASO)

<http://www.saso.org.sa/>

### CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY

<http://cma.org.sa/>





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