

# Saudi Arabia

YOUR GATEWAY TO THE MIDDLE EAST

## INSIDE



World Honours  
for King Abdullah



The King's  
Reforms  
for Growth



New Crown Prince:  
Prince Salman  
Bin Abdul Aziz



The Voice of Saudi  
Arabia: Prince Saud  
Al Faisal



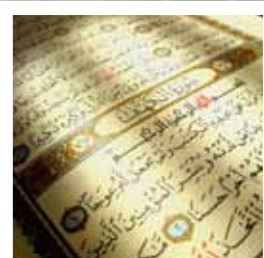
The Kingdom's  
Rising Star:  
Prince Abdul Aziz



The King's Envoy:  
H.E. Mr Mansour  
Al Mazmoumi



Saudi Aramco:  
Boosting Oil  
Production



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External  
Economy



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SAUDI ARABIA - THE GATEWAY TO THE MIDDLE EAST

23 SEPTEMBER 2012



## ON THE COVER



On the cover of the magazine is the Mecca Clock Tower or the Abraj Al-Bait Towers in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The Mecca Clock Tower is a perfect symbol of today's Saudi Arabia. It stands for

the holiest site of Islam, the strong faith of people of Saudi Arabia, the country's traditions rooted in Islam and also the changing face of the country.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the ultimate seat of Islam in the world. The country today stands for timeless heritage, steady faith, strong leadership and high Islamic morals on the one hand, and judicious modernisation, sophisticated systems and great reforms on the other.

The cover gives the reader an overview of Saudi Arabia's success story: the King's reforms, strong bilateral relations, a surging economy, innovative investments and a vibrant culture. The cover portrays that Saudi Arabia has adapted modernity and development without surrendering its faith, culture and religious legacy.

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**PUBLISHER** Sun Media Pte Ltd | **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** Nomita Dhar | **EDITORIAL TEAM** Sushmita Bhowmick, A. Karthik

**MICA (P) 017/08/2012**

**SUB-EDITOR/PROJECT LEAD** Neha Lad | **ADVERTISING SALES** Nur Hidayah

**ART DIRECTION & DESIGN** Valerius Reza Boenawan | **COVER PHOTO** Youssef Ahmed

**PHOTOS** The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Singapore, Arab News | **PRINTING** KWF Printing Pte Ltd

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**This commemorative special is published under the advocacy of H.E. Mr Mansour Al Mazmoumi, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Singapore.**

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*Congratulations & Best Wishes  
to the People and  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
on their 82nd National Day*



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**King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud**  
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**HRH Crown Prince Salman  
Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud**  
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence





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to the People  
and Kingdom of  
Saudi Arabia  
on their  
82nd National Day

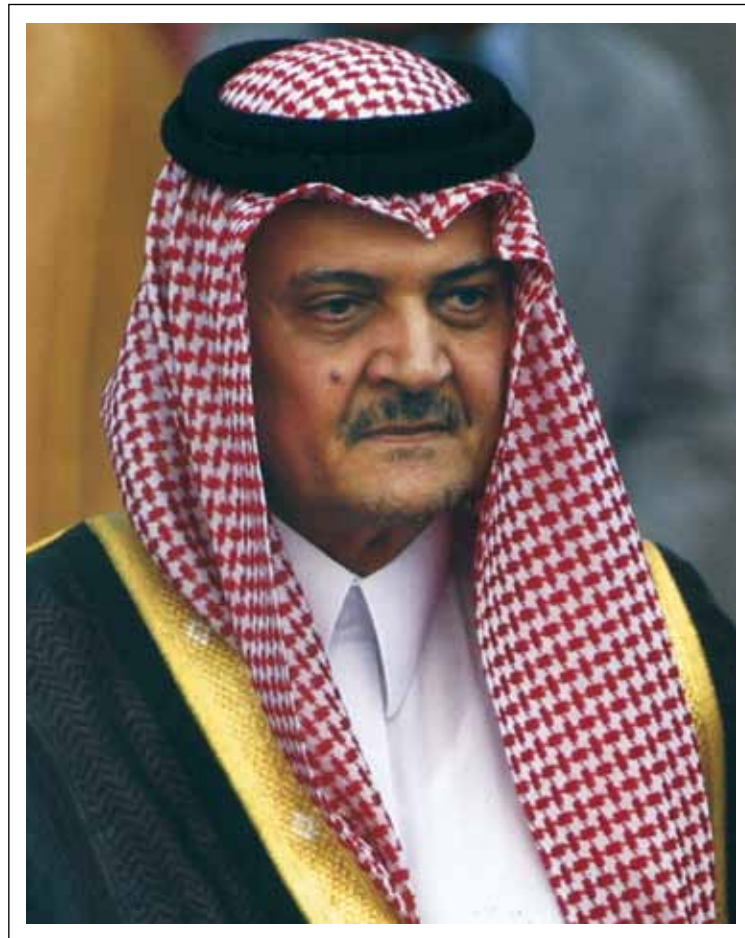


ALHAMDULILLAH  
Thank You for the new  
development of the Holy Cities





# Celebrating with the Nation 82<sup>nd</sup> National Day of the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



**HRH Prince Saud Bin Faisal  
Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



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# WORLD HONOURS FOR KING ABDULLAH

*King Abdullah's contributions have not only transformed Saudi Arabia, but have also impacted many corners of the world through international, social and diplomatic causes*

## King Abdullah Receives UNESCO Gold Medal



**T**he United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation Director General, Irina Bokova, personally awarded the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz with the UNESCO Gold Medal, the organisation's most prestigious award, in recognition of his efforts in enhancing the culture of dialogue and peace.

The King received Ms Bokova and an accompanying delegation comprising of ambassadors to UNESCO representing Palestine, Germany, Brazil, Poland, France and Zimbabwe.

Ms Bokova noted the King's sponsorship of several international conferences, as well as the establishment

of the King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz International Programme for Enhancing the Culture of Dialogue and Peace. She also expressed appreciation for the Saudi monarch's support of UNESCO's activities. King Abdullah thanked the delegation and wished UNESCO more success in its efforts to promote education, culture and science around the world.

The audience was attended by Crown Prince Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz; Minister of Defence, Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz; Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal; Chief of General Intelligence, Prince Muqrin Bin Abdul Aziz; Minister of Education, Prince Faisal Bin Abdullah Bin Mohammed; Commander of the National Guard, Prince Meteb Bin Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz; Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz; Deputy Minister of Education, Dr Khalid Al-Sibaiti and Saudi Permanent Representative to UNESCO, Dr Ziad Al-Darees.



## King Abdullah among Seven Most Powerful People in the World

**F**orbes, The US financial magazine, has once again ranked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz among the seven most powerful personalities in the world.

Explaining the ranking, *Forbes* hailed the Saudi monarch for embarking on reforms and adopting moderate stances on a wide array of issues. Specifically, it noted the decision to allow women the right to run for office and to vote in municipal elections.

The magazine also noted that the King has spent more than US\$130 billion to fund social projects and has initiated the King Abdullah Project to modernise general education.





# THE KING'S REFORMS FOR GROWTH

*The story of the Saudi Arabian economy is one of fast progress driven by timely reforms and strategic decisions. In the last seven years, King Abdullah has transformed the country into a modern and sophisticated economy with a series of wise reforms*

**T**he Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the world's most competitive economies and the largest economy in the Middle East region. It is one of the fastest growing countries in the world with a high per capita income of US\$24,000 (2010). The King has forecasted that the figure would rise to US\$33,500 by 2020.

The country today is reaping the benefits from the comprehensive reforms that have been introduced over the last decade by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah. The Government has also been encouraging the rapid rise of private sectors to reduce the dependence on oil and to open up employment opportunities. Today, while oil exports contribute to 55 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, the private sector accounts for 40 per cent of the same.

## KING ABDULLAH AND REFORMS

Since ascending the throne in 2005, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah has made development a central focus of his reign. He has initiated a number of major economic, social, education, health and infrastructure projects that have brought about remarkable changes throughout the Kingdom.

King Abdullah's notable achievements include the launch of four mega economic cities, the creation of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology and the Princess Noura Bint Abdul Rahman University for Girls, projects to expand the Two Holy Mosques and major welfare projects.

He also approved a historic re-organisation of Saudi Arabia's judicial system and enacted laws to formalise the royal

succession. As Crown Prince in 2005, he closely monitored the ongoing election process for the country's municipal councils.

On a global level, King Abdullah's participation in international diplomacy reflects the Kingdom's leadership role in defence of Arab and Islamic issues and for the achievement of world peace, stability and security.

He has taken a leading role in promoting dialogue among the world's leading faiths. His call for interfaith dialogue has resulted in the convention of the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid, Spain and a United Nations conference on dialogue in 2008.

A strong advocate of constructive global co-operation, King Abdullah has held a number of important international summits and meetings in the Kingdom. King Abdullah has undertaken numerous state visits both as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and as Crown Prince, to strengthen Saudi Arabia's relations with countries around the world.

Following the 2010–2011 protests in the Middle East and North Africa, King Abdullah laid down a US\$37 billion programme for benefit of the jobless, education and housing subsidies, debt write-offs and a new sports channel. He also pledged to spend a total of US\$400 billion by 2014, to improve education, healthcare and the Kingdom's infrastructure.

Recently, in September, 2011, the King announced women's right to vote in the 2015 municipal council elections, a first significant reform step in the country, since the protests. He also stated that women would become eligible to take part in the unelected Shura council (Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia).



## KING'S INITIATIVES

Saudi Arabia is one of the most attractive investment destinations in the world. Coupled with modern infrastructure, fast-paced reforms, an easy and rewarding taxation system, high per capita income and a huge consumer market, it has one of the most conducive environments for doing business.

The credit for making Saudi Arabia such a competitive economy goes to the economic reforms introduced by King Abdullah.

The government has continually introduced reforms to ease regulations and taxation for investors. In the last few years, the Government has simplified procedures for commercial registration and reduced the registration fee by 80 per cent. A single-window system was introduced to merge registration procedures; representatives from the Department of Zakat, Income Tax and the General Organization of Social Insurance, have been unified under one centre so that investors could register at these agencies at the same time.

The Kingdom's policy of investing in manpower and infrastructure, the launch of mega projects such as the establishment of the twin industrial cities of Jubail and Yanbu, and the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation, have boosted Saudi Arabia's growth.

## THE FUTURE

The reforms undertaken by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques have reflected in the country's economic environment, social environment, tourism figures and overall economic statistics.

Saudi Arabia is slated to be the most competitive and fastest growing economies in the near future. As the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is committed to development, reforms and uniform progress across all sectors, Saudi Arabia is bound to become the powerhouse of the world.

## OTHER REFORMS

Among the recent initiatives taken in the country, the 10x10 mission that aimed to put the country among the world's top 10 competitive economies, by the year 2010, was the biggest in scope. It was a great motivator for initiating crucial reforms in the country.

### JUDICIAL REFORMS



In 2007, King Abdullah, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, approved new regulations allowing the establishment of a Supreme Court, an appellate court and specialised labor and commercial tribunals along with a SR7 billion (US\$ 1.86 million) plan to upgrade judicial facilities.

### INFRASTRUCTURE REFORMS



Extensive improvements to Saudi transport system are in progress including construction and upgradation of multiple new seaports, airports, road links and rail developments, including the Medina-Mecca monorail, the Land Bridge and the north-south Mineral Line.



### ENERGY REFORMS

The Electricity and Cogeneration Regulatory Authority of Saudi Arabia launched its Electricity Industry Restructuring Plan in 2006 with the intention of moving toward a competitive wholesale electricity market in Saudi Arabia.

### EDUCATION REFORMS



Saudi Arabia is already enjoying significant success in its new education strategy with a further SR12 billion being distributed over the next five years. An increase in school funding coupled with school building and teacher recruitment programmes has led to a phenomenal increase in literacy rates from 33 per cent in 1970 to 83 per cent today. Meanwhile, in higher education,

the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) along with other teaching and research institutions will play a crucial role in Saudi's future competitiveness.

### HEALTH REFORMS



KSA has made huge strides in improving the nation's health with infant mortality greatly reduced and life expectancy doubled over 50 years. Primary and secondary healthcare is available to all Saudi Arabian residents and the quality of the healthcare system is ranked highly by the World Health Organisation (WHO)—ahead of many nations in the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) Top 10.

### TECHNOLOGY REFORMS



Advanced new technology is crucial to KSA's competitiveness. Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission is currently implementing a Universal Service Fund to provide voice and Internet coverage to 100 per cent of households, over the next seven years.

### ECONOMIC CITIES



The Kingdom has also embarked on the most challenging project till date: to build six economic cities by 2020. Four of them are under construction including the King Abdullah Economic City, Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Mousaed Economic City, the Knowledge Economic City and the Jazan Economic City. Each of them would be a modern metropolis with all facilities that are needed for businesses to prosper.



“I deem it a great honour that I have been selected by King Abdullah to be the country’s crown prince and deputy premier... According to the King’s directives, we will maintain our country’s security and stability. The Kingdom which was founded on the Islamic faith will continue to follow this approach.”

- Crown Prince Salman

# THE NEW CROWN PRINCE

*Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz took over as the new Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, the post left vacant by the sad demise of Prince Naif, in June 2012*

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah named Defence Minister Prince Salman the new Crown Prince and Deputy Premier on June 18, 2012. He assumed the position left vacant after the death of Crown Prince Naif on June 16. Prince Salman has been serving as the country’s Minister of Defence since November 5, 2011.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah immediately chose Prince Salman as the next Crown Prince, a choice that has been reassuring to the grieving Saudi people. The King, with his commendable ability to identify people’s capabilities, rightly chose Prince Salman as the reliable support, especially at a time of regional and international turbulence.

Prince Salman was born in Riyadh on December 31, 1935, and received his education at the Prince’s School in Riyadh. His religious and academic education has helped him to become a unique cultural personality.

He is well advised in political affairs and global trends and a great authority on the history of the Kingdom and the Arab world.

He served as Deputy Governor of Riyadh from March 1954 to April 1955 and then as Governor of Riyadh from April 1955 to December 1960 and again from February 1963, until he became Defence Minister. During his service as governor, the Prince succeeded in converting the city from a mid-sized town into a major urban metropolis fit enough to be the capital of the world’s largest oil exporter.

He is Chairman of the Riyadh Charity Foundation for Sciences, which runs Prince Sultan Private University and the Prince Salman Oasis of Sciences. He is also the Chairman of King Fahd National Library and the Chairman of King Abdulaziz Foundation.

Prince Salman has been a driving force for charitable activities in the Kingdom and abroad. His philanthropic services include the presidency of the Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, honorary presidency of the Prince Fahd bin Salman Charitable Society for the Care of Kidney Patients and honorary presidency of the Saudi Organ Transplant Center.

The Prince is also the Chairman of the Prince Salman Prize for the Memorization of Holy Qur’an for Boys and Girls in the Kingdom.

The Prince is keen on promoting cultural activities by serving as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah), Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the King Fahd National Library, Chairman of the Center for the History of Mecca and Medina, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hamad Al-Jasser Foundation, Honorary President of the Saudi Historical Society and Honorary President of the Board of Trustees of the Prince Salman Prize for Business Youth.

For his humanitarian and other services, he has been awarded many medals and decorations including awards from Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Morocco, Palestine, the Philippines, Senegal, Yemen, the United Nations and the King Abdul Aziz Medal of the First Order.

He is a recipient of several honorary degrees and academic awards, including an honorary doctorate from the Islamic University of Madinah, the Prince Salman academic award, an honorary doctorate from the Jamia Millia University in Delhi for his charitable and educational services and the Kant Medal by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in appreciation of his contributions to the field of science.



“In keeping with the true principles of Islam, which is a religion of moderation and tolerance, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has pursued a policy of disseminating a culture of dialogue among civilisations and cultures, with the objective of promoting coexistence and mutual understanding and propagating human values.”

- Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Saud Al Faisal

# THE VOICE OF SAUDI ARABIA

*Prince Saud Al Faisal Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud has been faithfully serving the Kingdom as the Foreign Minister for the last 37 years*

Nothing can describe Prince Saud Al Faisal Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud better than the description that he is the longest serving foreign minister in the world.

Prince Saud has been the face of the Kingdom for the last 37 years, who has boldly and convincingly voiced the country's opinions and policies at various global platforms. Known for his oratory skills, clarity in thought and great interpersonal skills in the international circles, the Prince has been an asset to the Kingdom.

He also has the rare honour of having served three Kings of Saudi Arabia: King Khalid, King Fahd and King Abdullah.

Born in Taif in 1940, Prince Saud is the son of Late King Faisal. He has a degree in Economics from the prestigious Princeton University in the US and speaks seven languages. Soon after, he joined the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources where he worked as an economic advisor, and eventually became a member in the Higher Coordination Committee of the Ministry.

In 1966, he moved to the General Organisation for Petroleum and Mineral Resources (Petromin) and took charge of the Office of Petroleum Relations, which oversees the co-ordination between the ministry and Petromin. In 1970, he was appointed as the Deputy Governor of Petromin for Planning Affairs, and a year later, he was appointed as the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Petroleum.

King Khalid noticed the young prince's exceptional diplomatic skills and issued a royal decree to appoint him as the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom in 1975. The Prince was just 35 years old then.

As the Foreign Minister, Prince Saud has many achievements to his credit. He has actively pursued world peace and promoted

unity of the Arab world by voicing his opinions at international conferences. He has represented the Kingdom at many global meets including the G-20 Summit, Middle East peace talks, and actively pursued Arab efforts to end the civilian war in Lebanon. He also participated in the US-Saudi Strategic Dialogue to institutionalise co-operation between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

During his long career, Prince Saud has taken many strong decisions to stand up for fairness, integrity and world peace. In 2006, he boldly urged then US President George Bush to call for a ceasefire in the Lebanon bombing, and in 2008, he strongly supported the parliamentary elections in Pakistan. He has repeatedly called on all Palestinians to unite and focus on the national interests. Recently, Prince Saud has stood up for the people of Syria against violence and injustice.

Prince Saud is also actively involved in philanthropy. He is the founding member of the King Faisal Foundation, and Chairman of the Board of Directors for the King Faisal School and Al Faisal University in Riyadh. He is also a member of the Society for Disabled Children and the Medina Society for Welfare and Social Services.

Prince Saud is a firm Arab nationalist who has steadfastly worked for the betterment of the Kingdom. Despite his poor health, the Prince has always followed a relentless working schedule filled with meetings with diplomats, foreign visits and holding meetings with the King.

A man of great intellectual capabilities and composure, Prince Saud's contributions to the Kingdom cannot be measured in words — the man who has been steadfastly representing the Kingdom as the country of highest Islamic morals, peace and reforms.



# Salutations to the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 82<sup>nd</sup> National Day

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“The main basis of the Kingdom’s foreign policy is to establish world peace and stability, keeping away from using force and violence to solve conflicts.”

- Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah,  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
at the Partners Forum of the  
UN Alliance of Civilisations

## THE KINGDOM’S RISING STAR

*The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah appointed Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the rank of Minister, on July 22, 2011*

Prince Abdul Aziz, the third son of King Abdullah and a member of the House of Saud, was an ideal choice for the position considering his accomplishments in foreign affairs and his experience as an advisor to the Crown Prince’s Court for two decades.

He was appointed to the position on the recommendation of Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal. Prior to this, Prince Abdul Aziz had served as Advisor to the King, along with being an Advisor to the Crown Prince’s Court.

The Prince served in the National Guard for 15 years. The exceptional experience that he gained from safeguarding national, human and physical interest, contributed extensively to his capacity to play a strong supporting role in national affairs.

Prince Abdul Aziz was born in Riyadh in 1963 and graduated from the University of Hertfordshire with a degree in Bachelor of Arts in 1986. After his service at the Saudi Arabian National Guard, he assumed his first political position as Advisor to the Royal Court in 1989. Two years later, he was appointed as an Advisor to the then Crown Prince Abdullah in 1991.

It was during this period that the Prince gained most experience in foreign affairs. His experience as the Syrian Advisor to the Crown Prince Abdullah in the 90s shaped his diplomatic skills and gave him an international platform to prove his capability to forge relations.

The two main projects, which stand out in Prince Abdul Aziz’s career are the foundation of the Centennial Fund and the formation of the Friends of Saudi Arabia.

He is the Chairman, Board of Trustees of the Centennial Fund, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting

entrepreneurship by offering mentoring and financing to young Saudis.

He is also the Founder and Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Friends of Saudi Arabia, an organisation formed to cultivate a friendly relationship that began 60 years ago with the meeting of King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

“I will do my best to effectively represent Saudi policy. And I would like to make it clear that I will listen carefully to any opinion, because those who marginalise the opinions of others will never succeed,” he said after his appointment last year.

The Prince has worked as a delegate of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in regional issues, and held many files on international relations. He has executed many political and diplomatic tasks, and has been part of royal delegations at summits, international conferences and bilateral visits.

He represented the King at the 16<sup>th</sup> Heads-of-State Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran, Iran. He opened the 124<sup>th</sup> session of the GCC Ministerial Council on September 3, 2012, in Jeddah, which was attended by all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers. He also represented the Kingdom at the Forum of Alliance of Civilisations, held in Istanbul in November 2011, and on other foreign missions. In December 2011, the Prince chaired the Kingdom’s delegation at the Afghanistan conference in Bonn, Germany.

The Kingdom’s foreign affairs are in good hands, as expressed by the late Prince Naif last year. Prince Naif, while congratulating Prince Abdul Aziz on his new appointment, had said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was fortunate to attract the Prince to their department.



Ina Lillahi Wa Ina Ilayhi Raajioon

# THE PRINCE OF GENEROSITY

*Late Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz will be known for many generations for his humanitarian and philanthropic contributions to the people of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world*

A political veteran, a skilled analyst, a skilled diplomat and a kind and generous leader – these were some of the exemplary qualities of the Late Crown Prince Sultan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation. The Prince was a great visionary and his death has been a major loss not only for Saudi Arabia, but for the entire Arab world.

The Prince was a rare combination of a person who shouldered immense responsibility but whose heart was filled with love and empathy.

Late Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz, Deputy Premier and Minister of Defence and Aviation, who died in a New York hospital on October 22, 2011, was also a visionary leader, statesman, philanthropist and environmentalist.



**Prince Sultan**  
(1930-2011)

He was a central figure in the Kingdom, who dominated the political scene of the country, pioneered a wise defence policy

and formulated plans that made the modern Saudi nation a force to reckon with.

A Defence Minister for almost half a century before becoming Crown Prince to King Abdullah in 2005, late Crown Prince Sultan worked to build strong armed forces with added deterrents. He was credited with serving in different positions in the Saudi Government during the initial phase of his public life. He was Chairman of the Board of Saudi Arabian Airlines.

Described as one of the top 10 environmentalists of the world, Prince Sultan was the Chairman of the Saudi Ministerial Committee for Environment.

A statement issued on the occasion of his demise by the Shoura Council, rightly described Prince Sultan saying: "Prince Sultan remained a symbol of true statesmanship, greatness and benevolence."

## CONDOLENCES FROM SINGAPORE

*Your Majesty,*

*On behalf of the people of the Republic of Singapore, I extend to Your Majesty my deepest sympathies and condolences on the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

*The Kingdom has lost a great son, who devoted his life in service to the Kingdom and its people. Singapore will remain grateful to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan for his support in promoting closer ties between our countries. His contributions will be warmly remembered.*

*Please accept Your Majesty, the assurances of my highest considerations.*

**TONY TAN KENG YAM**  
President, Republic of Singapore

*Your Majesty,*

*I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

*His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan spent his entire life serving the Kingdom. His efforts to improve the well-being of the people of the Kingdom will be warmly remembered. His passing is a great loss to the Kingdom.*

*His humble disposition made a lasting impression on me. His visit to Singapore in April 2006 enhanced our bilateral relations and co-operation. We will continue to build on His Royal Highness' contributions and strengthen relations between our countries.*

*Please accept, Your Majesty, with these sincere condolences, the assurances of my highest consideration.*

**LEE HSIEN LOONG**  
Prime Minister, Republic of Singapore



Ina Lillahi Wa Ina Ilayhi Raajioon

# THE PRINCE OF STABILITY

*Late Crown Prince Naif will always be remembered as the personification of determination and steadfastness, who took tough decisions to ensure the Kingdom's safety and its people's welfare*

Crown Prince Naif, who was Saudi Arabia's No. 1 security man and a leading administrator, passed away on June 16, 2012, at the age of 78. As the country's Interior Minister for 37 years, he had spearheaded the Kingdom's war on terrorism.

Prince Naif had been appointed as the Crown Prince and Deputy Premier on October 27, 2011.

Crown Prince Naif has played an important role in strengthening Arab and GCC security. He was the Honorary President of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, which passed the Arab anti-terror accord and other Arab security agreements.

Born in 1934 in Taif, the Prince had received his early education in religion, modern culture and diplomacy at the royal court. At the young age of 17, the



**Prince Naif**  
(1934-2012)

Prince was appointed as Deputy Governor of Riyadh and a year later, he was promoted as the Governor in 1953.

King Faisal appointed the Prince as the Deputy Minister of Interior in 1970 and five years later, King Khaled made the Prince the Interior Minister, the job he held until his death. King Abdullah appointed him Second Deputy Prime Minister in 2009.

As the Interior Minister, the Prince paid special attention to counter extremist ideology and terrorism. He also established a programme to rehabilitate convicted terrorists back into Saudi society in 2007.

Condolences poured in from world leaders and Saudi ministers. Hajj Minister Bandar Al-Hajjar expressing his sorrow said: "He was the country's No. 1 security man and a model for a sincere and dedicated statesman."

The world has indeed lost a great leader and a kind rehabilitator.

## CONDOLENCES FROM SINGAPORE

*Your Majesty,*

*It was with deep sadness that I learned about the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On behalf of the people of the Republic of Singapore, I convey to Your Majesty our deepest sympathies and condolences on this great loss to the Kingdom.*

*His Royal Highness Crown Prince Naif had dedicated most of his life to the security and development of the Kingdom. His contributions will not be forgotten, and he will be missed by his people and his many friends.*

*Please accept, Your Majesty, the assurances of my highest consideration.*

**TONY TAN KENG YAM**  
President, Republic of Singapore

*Your Majesty,*

*On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Singapore, I extend to Your Majesty my heartfelt condolences on the passing of your beloved brother His Royal Highness Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

*Prince Naif's tireless work ethic and dedication to his people, helped to bring about a more secure and prosperous Saudi Arabia. I recall my meeting with His Royal Highness in Riyadh in November 2006, during which he proposed closer security cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Singapore. I deeply appreciate his contributions to relations between our countries.*

*Please accept, Your Majesty, these sincere assurances of my highest consideration.*

**LEE HSIEN LOONG**  
Prime Minister, Republic of Singapore

Congratulations and Best Wishes  
to the **People and Kingdom of  
Saudi Arabia**  
on your **82<sup>nd</sup> National Day**



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# THE KING'S ENVOY

*The new Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Singapore, His Excellency Mr Mansour Al Mazmoumi, is focused on his new role — as the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Islam. He speaks to Managing Editor Ms Nomita Dhar on how he plans to promote his country and its ancient values in Singapore*

**Y**our Excellency, welcome to Singapore! You are from the country, which is the birthplace of Islam. What is Saudi Arabia's role in the world as the primary seat of Islam?

Thank you. Singapore is a warm country and I am happy to be here. As you rightly said, Saudi Arabia is the ultimate seat of Islam in the world. The world's two holiest Islamic sites are in Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom founded by His Majesty the Late King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Saud.

Saudi Arabia has a big responsibility in this role: to spread the tenets of Islam, to spread awareness on the true meaning of Islam, to spread tolerance and peace in the world and to live by the right principles as advocated by the Holy Quran and the noble prophetic deeds (Sunna).

Saudi people are a symbol of unity in the land of the Two Holy mosques.

Islam has been the most important factor in determining the Kingdom's foreign policy and internal policies. Since

the foundation of the Kingdom, all the available resources have been devoted to the welfare of the Islamic world and for the country's prosperity.

**As the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, what initiatives has the King taken recently for Hajj pilgrims?**

Our Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz has committed himself faithfully and completely to serve the issues of the Islamic World and to achieving unity and solidarity. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the King, has committed himself to his father's policy by upholding the teachings of Islam, ensuring development and establishing closer ties between the Arab nations and Muslims across the world.

In August last year, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques laid the foundation stone for the historic expansion of the Mecca mosque, the holiest site in Islam. The new expanded area will cover 400,000 sq metres

Northwest and Northeast of the mosque and will have a capacity of more than 1.2 million worshippers. More than SR80 billion (US\$21 billion) will be spent on this holy mission.

The new plan includes three changes: construction of a new building, expansion of the courtyards around the mosques, including walkways and tunnels, and providing better facilities for air-conditioning, electricity and drinking water. Also, long pathways are being built connecting the buildings for the pilgrims' comfort.

King Abdullah has always given priority to undertake tasks that would provide a comfortable pilgrimage to the visitors.

**Saudi Arabia has launched some major economic programmes for diversification of the economy; can you please elaborate on them?**

Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of petroleum in the world. But apart





from this, the country also has a thriving private sector that contributes to over 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has taken a number of initiatives and introduced reforms for further diversification of the private sector.

The 10x10 mission is the biggest and the most ambitious project in recent times. The aim behind this was to make Saudi Arabia one of the 10 most competitive economies in the world by opening the markets and providing incentives and opportunities for investment. The Government has set up the National Competitiveness Centre to monitor the country's progress and is pursuing investments in the sectors where Saudi Arabia has a competitive advantage. These include energy, transport and logistics, information and communications technology, healthcare, education, life sciences and human capital.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has also announced the setting up of six economic cities that will alter the country's economy drastically. Up to five million residents can live and do business here. Also, it will maximize investment opportunities, create over a million jobs, and contribute over SR562 billion (US\$149 billion) to Saudi's GDP.

The King has also set up 14 industrial cities with a government authority to help investors in all their needs. The Kingdom has also opened foreign investment participation in the power generation

and telecommunication sectors, which have a huge potential for growth. Saudi Arabia is a member of the World Trade Organisation and the 11th easiest country to do business in the world.

### **The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has undertaken many important social reforms. Please comment on them.**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has always been generous and sympathetic towards the citizens of Saudi Arabia and has continuously introduced reforms for the welfare of the people.

He has pledged to spend SR500 billion (US\$133 billion) by 2014 for education, healthcare and the Kingdom's infrastructure. Half of the value of the package — SR250 billion (US\$66.6 billion) — will be used to construct 500,000 homes to address the country's growing housing shortage. The King has also announced a ministerial-level anti-corruption commission headed by Muhammad Al-Sharief.

In September 2011, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques made a revolutionary announcement by announcing women's right to vote in the 2015 municipal elections. He has also declared that women could take part in the unelected shura. For increased political participation, he held nationwide elections in 2011.

The King is committed to a multi-cultural society and interfaith dialogue.

He has established the King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue along with the governments of Spain and Austria. The Centre will open in November 2012.

During the King's rule in the last seven years, the number of universities in Saudi Arabia has increased from seven to 24. The King established the country's first co-educational university, The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, in 2009. Also, the King has sent thousands of men and women to foreign universities to gain diverse experiences and use them to develop the country.

### **You met Singapore President Mr Tony Tan and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong after your arrival. What were the highlights of the meetings?**

I had the privilege of meeting the President of Singapore His Excellency Dr Tony Tan and Emeritus Senior Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong after I came to Singapore as the new Saudi ambassador. We discussed the potential areas of mutual co-operation and also agreed to work together on a number of platforms including education, tourism, cultural relations, peace promoting activities and business collaborations.

We have also agreed to work together to further boost the bilateral trade between the two countries by exploring new sectors.

### **How is the trade between Singapore and Saudi Arabia?**

Saudi Arabia is Singapore's largest partner in the Middle East with total trade amounting to SR 69.5 billion (US\$17.9 billion) as of 2011, up from SR 48.9 billion (US\$12.6 billion) in 2010. It is also Singapore's largest investor from the Middle East.

The two countries are complementary to each other in terms of assets, which is an ideal factor for booming trade. While Singapore is a services-based economy, Saudi Arabia is production-based. This way, the two countries have ample

opportunities to come together.

The Governments of Singapore and Saudi Arabia have vowed to further strengthen their bilateral co-operation in various fields including economics, trade, investment, financial services, education, scientific research and politics.

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for annual bilateral talks and consultations on common grounds such as counter-terrorism cooperation. The two countries have also signed a General Agreement on Cooperation, paving the way for their closer economic collaboration, and also an MoU on Trade Cooperation, which enables the two 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.

Also, the setting up of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) office in Singapore and the Saudi-Singapore Business Council has further strengthened the ties. The two nations have also agreed to co-operate in fields such as energy, education and technology transfer, particularly technology transfer related to water treatment.

**Please enumerate on Saudi Arabia's foreign policy. Where does Singapore fit in?**

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is largely based on the principles of Islam, along with its geographical and political conditions. The primary principles of our foreign policy are good-neighbour policy, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, strengthening relations with the Gulf states, Arab and other Islamic countries, establish peaceful and equal relations with other nations, work for international peace and justice, adherence to international law and bilateral agreements and keenness on the stability of international oil markets. The Kingdom also condemns and rejects all methods of



international terrorism and confirms that Islam is above all terrorist activities.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is also morally upright and has supported victims of natural disasters and refugees around the world.

Currently, the Kingdom has adopted the 'Look East' policy in its latest development plan, and is heading East, especially to Singapore, China, Japan and India. We invite more Singaporeans to be part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Development Plan, which has been allotted more than SR1.44 trillion (US\$383.9 billion).

**Saudi Arabia has been spending a lot on education and job training for youth. Tell us about it.**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah has given high priority to education and job training for the youth of Saudi Arabia. In every budget, he has been allocating a huge amount for training youth in technical skills and providing higher education.

The King has also extended the King Abdullah Scholarship for five more years, through which thousands of students have gone to foreign universities in Japan, Singapore, US, UK, New Zealand and Australia for higher studies since 2005.

The King aims to create at least one million jobs within the new economic

cities for the youth and is spending a large proportion of money to equip them with the expertise.

In the new budget, the King has allocated SR 168 billion (US\$44 billion) for education and manpower training.

**What can Singapore and Saudi Arabia learn from each other?**

Both the countries have rapidly growing economies along with ample resources. Saudi Arabia can adopt Singapore's know-how, education system, the country's good governance and cleanliness. Singapore can learn from Saudi Arabia's tough people, who are hard-working and also know how to relax.

**Since you have recently shifted here, how do you find Singapore? What do you like most about it?**

I have really liked Singapore. My wife and children too have adjusted here easily, due to the country's multi-cultural society. The country's cleanliness, greenery and discipline impressed me. I liked the fact that there is greenery everywhere in Singapore. The Government takes special efforts to ensure that there is greenery in every corner of the country and plants trees everywhere. I would like to take back this factor to Saudi Arabia.





# SAUDI ARABIA HOSTS MEETING OF G20 SPEAKERS

*The Third G20 Speakers' Consultation meeting on sustainable economic growth for a secure world was held in the Saudi Arabian capital, Riyadh, in February 2012*

Saudi Arabia hosted a high-profile meeting of the parliament speakers of the G20 member states in Riyadh from February 24 to 26, 2012. The meeting called for closer coordination among the parliaments of the G20 countries and to work closely to find solutions to a large number of regional and international issues the modern world is facing today.

A set of 13 resolutions were moved unanimously at the Third G20 Speakers Consultation meeting on economic growth for a secure world, which concluded in Riyadh on February 26. The two-day summit, organised by the Shoura Council headed by its Chairman Abdullah Al-Asheikh, was held under the aegis of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah.

The conference was attended by representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the European Parliament.

Besides the G20 countries, some Arab, Islamic and friendly countries and international bodies also took part as guests at the summit. They included the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Morocco, Malaysia, Spain, Hungary, Kazakhstan and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

## FOCUS ON WORLD SECURITY

The issues discussed during the five sessions of the meet included a global dialogue on cultures, energy for sustainable development and the sovereign debt crisis and its effects on the world economy.

At the opening of the meet, Shoura Council Chairman Mr Abdullah Al-Asheikh said, "Saudi Arabia renewed its pledge to work with the G20 countries and international financial and monetary institutions to find the most effective ways to help the global economy to recover from the crisis."

The chairman was speaking on behalf of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah at the meeting in Riyadh, where all member countries were represented.

Mr Al-Asheikh said that there was a need to focus on ways of resolving sovereign debt dilemmas and aggravation, fluctuations in exchange rates and increasing unemployment rates.

He also said that Saudi Arabia would take all efforts to work with the



international community to stabilise energy markets and support the dialogue of producers and consumers for the sustainability of global economic growth.

He pointed out that Saudi Arabia was one of the first states that contributed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals because it attached great importance to sustainable development issues. He said that the country has reported an increase in public expenditure allocations for education, healthcare and social welfare.

The participants thanked King Abdullah, his people and the Shoura Council for hosting the meeting. The delegates also welcomed the invitation of Mexico to host the fourth meeting, subject to confirmation by the incoming Mexican Parliament.

### RESOLUTIONS PASSED

On the concluding day of the meeting, the speakers at the G20 countries decided to form a mechanism of dialogue between energy producers and consumers, to contribute to the growth and stability of the global economy and energy markets. They also vehemently condemned all forms of terrorism, racism, discrimination and xenophobia.

The interdependence between energy and global economic growth makes demand for and supply of energy sources dependent on the growth and stability of the world economy and vice versa. Therefore, the delegates said it was essential to facilitate the mechanisms of dialogue between energy producers and consumers to contribute to the growth and stability of the global economy and energy markets.

“Terrorism is a direct violation of the fundamental right to life of each human being, and poses a threat to international security and stability. It is condemned in all its manifestations, irrespective of its motivations and should not be associated with any religion, culture or ethnic group. Therefore, enhanced international cooperation is necessary in combating terror,” the final communiqué, adopted by the meeting, said.

The statement said institutional frameworks that promoted international dialogue had a particularly important role to play. This included the initiative of King Abdullah to strengthen the concept of dialogue between the followers of different faiths and cultures on an international level, culminating in the establishment of

a devoted centre for interfaith dialogue in Vienna that was co-sponsored by Austria, Saudi Arabia and Spain.

The delegates indicated that the Middle East region was known as a cradle of civilisations and religions and an important source of energy supply to the world. “In this regard, dialogue within each country and institutional reforms are essential in fulfilling the aspiration of the people of the region.”

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals required devising ways and means for universal access to energy, while providing environment friendly energy sources and green technologies for sustainable development.

In this context, the United Nations proclamation of 2012 as the ‘International Year of Energy for All’ must be supported, said the delegates.

Finally, the delegates stressed the strong need for sustainable fiscal policies in industrialised and emerging economies, depending on country specific circumstances. This includes protecting the most vulnerable groups in society, through targeted support measures for inclusive growth, to ensure social cohesion.



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# ESM GOH CHOK TONG VISITS SAUDI ARABIA

Pic: Chairul Fahmy Hussaini/SPH



**E**meritus Senior Minister (ESM) Mr Goh Chok Tong visited Saudi Arabia from January 7 to 11, 2012, as part of Singapore's efforts to maintain bilateral relations with its key partner in the Middle East.

Mr Goh first visited Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, where he met Saudi Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-

Rabiah and attended a lunch hosted by Saudi Minister of Petroleum, Ali Bin Ibrahim Al Naimi. Mr Goh and the Saudi Ministers discussed geo-political developments in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia's domestic challenges, and ways to enhance bilateral cooperation.

He also met Saudi Finance Minister Dr Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Bin Abdullah Al

Assaf. The two ministers agreed that there was potential for both countries to further enhance co-operation in the financial sector, and to collaborate to seek out economic opportunities in East Asia and Southeast Asia.

Mr Goh also called on the Chairman of the Shura Council, Dr Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al Sheikh, Chairman of Riyadh Bank,

Rashed Abdul Aziz Al-Rashed, and Saudi Co-Chair of the Singapore-Saudi Business Council Sheikh Abdullah Zaid Al Melehi. Chairman of Kingdom Holding Company HRH Prince Al-Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud hosted a dinner for the Singapore minister.

While in Jeddah, Mr Goh met the Governor of Mecca, Prince Khaled Al Faisal. The Governor briefed Mr Goh on future development plans for the Mecca region, and the challenges ahead for the Islamic Holy City.

Mr Goh said one area where Singapore could learn from Saudi Arabia was its expertise and knowledge of Islamic banking.

Mr Goh was accompanied by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Monetary Authority of Singapore and International Enterprise Singapore.

## THE WORLD CITIES SUMMIT

**T**he Kingdom of Saudi Arabia participated in the World Cities Summit, which was held in Singapore from July 1 to 4, 2012. More than 150 countries from all across the world participated in the event.

The World Cities Summit, a premier global event for world leaders and key industry players to address challenges and develop integrated solutions for sustainable cities, ended on a high note with new landmark deals signed, record participation and a call for cities to focus more on integrated solutions.

The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs represented the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the summit.

Mayor of Al Hasa, Mr Fahad Al

Jubair and Mayor of Al Qassim, Mr Ahmed Saleh Al Sultan, attended the summit. The Saudi pavilion showcased achievements in the era of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and the Crown Prince in the field of constructional development.

Profiles of Medina Airport and Princess Noura Bint Abdul Rahman University for Women have been chosen among the 100 most innovative and inspiring urban



infrastructure projects in the world, in the second edition of KPMG's Infrastructure 100 Report, which was released at the summit.





# SAUDI ARAMCO: BOOSTING OIL PRODUCTION

*With worldwide worries over oil supply, Saudi Aramco has risen up to the need and ramped up oil production to 10 million barrels per day – highest level in over 23 years*



**S**audi Arabia's oil refineries are the generators for most economies in the world today. With the shortage of fuel supply from other countries, Saudi Arabia's national oil company Saudi Aramco with its huge oil reserves has an enormous role to play in the world in the coming years.

Saudi Arabia's crude oil supplies in 2011 and 2012 have proven that Aramco has indeed taken its role seriously, and is doing an exemplary task of fuelling the world's economy.

Saudi Aramco has the world's largest proven crude oil reserves of 260.1 billion barrels and the world's fourth-largest gas reserves, with 279 trillion cubic feet.

Under the wise leadership and guidance of the Custodian of the Two

Holy Mosques King Abdullah and Crown Prince Salman, Saudi Aramco has achieved high targets and also aimed at higher goals for the future. Besides excelling in the traditional business activities, Aramco has also taken on new roles and expanded on its positive impact in the Kingdom and the world in the last one year.

## A GREAT BEGINNING IN 2012

In order to meet the increasing worldwide demand for oil, Saudi Aramco has ramped up its oil production. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently producing crude oil at a rate exceeding 10 million barrels of oil a day, Saudi Aramco CEO Khalid Al-Falih said to news wire Dow Jones in May 2012.

The company's supply of oil is exceeding the global demand by 1.5 billion barrels per day, Mr Khalid Al-Falih said, reassuring the world of the company's capacity.

This is the highest level of production by Saudi Arabia since January 1989, based on monthly data compiled by Bloomberg.

After the European sanctions on

Iranian oil supply, there have been fears if the supply would be enough to meet the global demand for oil. However, Saudi Arabia has risen up to the occasion and has reassured the world that its supply is already exceeding the demand by 1.5 billion barrels a day.

Mr Al-Falih said that though the oil production changes from day to day, it was over 10 million barrels presently. He also said that Aramco had a spare capacity that could be brought to market if there was a need.

Saudi Arabia pumped about 9.45 million barrels a day in October 2011.

The increased Saudi production, which is in line with previous Saudi statements, leaves the nation with around 2 million barrels of spare capacity, according to analysts.

## ARAMCO'S RISE IN 2011

Aramco's crude oil output rose to 9.1 million barrels per day in 2011, compared to 7.9 million a year in 2010.

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources and Chairman of Saudi Aramco's Board of Directors, Mr



Ali Al-Naimi, said in the oil company's 2011 annual review 'Aiming Higher' that the year 2011 was characterised by 'new challenges for the world, and new opportunities for Saudi Aramco.'

Exports by Saudi Aramco rose to 2.42 billion barrels in 2011 from 2.02 billion in 2010, rising to 6.63 million bpd from 5.5 million.

The company's gas production also rose to 9.9 billion cubic feet per day in 2011 from 9.4 billion in 2010. Gas reserves rose to 282.6 trillion standard cubic feet from 279 trillion in the same period.

"Historically, our spare capacity has been tapped to compensate for production disruptions and declining supply from other major suppliers, and is a cornerstone of the Kingdom's forward-looking energy policy," Mr Al-Naimi said.

According to him, Saudi Aramco has taken great steps to expand the role it plays in the energy industry and the petroleum sector, both in the Kingdom and abroad.

Aramco has made massive investments in downstream activities, particularly in refining and petrochemicals, to contribute to the value and diversification of our company and the Kingdom's economy for many years to come, he said.

### A GIANT LEAP WITH MOTIVA

On May 31, 2012, Saudi Aramco President and CEO, Khalid A. Al-Falih and Royal Dutch Shell Chief Executive, Peter Voser, launched the US\$10 billion Motiva Refinery expansion project in Port Arthur, Texas, and marked the start of what is now North America's largest refining complex.

The Motiva Refinery expansion project, a 50-50 partnership between Aramco and Royal Dutch, is the largest investment by Saudi Aramco outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, according to Mr Al-Falih.

The magnitude of this expansion is impressive on many fronts. The Port Arthur Crude Expansion Project (CEP) is so massive that it basically represents the building of a new refinery – the first

in the U.S. in 30 years in terms of capacity and magnitude of the investment. The facility's daily crude oil processing capacity has more than doubled to 600,000 barrels per day, making it North America's largest oil refinery and one of the top 10 refineries in the world. The refinery has also increased its flexibility to process a wide variety of crude oils, ranging from relatively light to heavy.

"Over the next decade, we will push the total worldwide capacity of refineries we own fully or through joint ventures to some eight million barrels a day, the largest for any oil company in the world," said Mr Al-Falih.

This expansion is another major milestone in Saudi Aramco's ambitious plans toward becoming one of the leading globally integrated oil and petrochemical companies in the world, said Mr Khalid Al-Buainain, Saudi Aramco's Senior Vice President of Downstream.

"It also reinforces our commitment to the world energy needs, while creating value not only for the enterprise but also for the local communities wherever we operate. We are proud to have such a successful joint venture in Motiva and look forward to its continued success and prosperity."

### SET TO LEAD THE WORLD

Aramco President and CEO Mr Khalid A. Al-Falih has described 2011 as a year of outstanding performance across the board for the company.

"We exceeded our production target, increased our innovation efforts, aggressively grew our downstream businesses, and continued to meet fast-growing domestic and global demand for energy. Our growth prospects and reliability and safety performance are as strong and promising as ever," he has said in the annual review magazine.

He said Saudi Aramco does not rest on its laurels. "Instead of adopting a passive stance, we have always focused on proactively shaping our operating environment and enhancing our ability to excel within that environment," said Mr Al-Falih.

Saudi Aramco, he said, has defined an ambitious target for 2020. "We want to transform the company, building on our current success, to become the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals company, to facilitate the sustainable and diversified expansion of the Kingdom's economy, and to enable a globally competitive and vibrant Saudi energy sector," he said in the 2011 annual review 'Aiming Higher'.



# 'START SMALL BUT DREAM BIG'

*Singapore-based Rotary Engineering Ltd, a leading player in the engineering services of the oil and gas industry, has a huge presence in Saudi Arabia with multi-billion dollar projects that are contributing to the Kingdom's development. Mr Chia Kim Piow, Chairman and Managing Director of Rotary Engineering, tells us about his plans for the Kingdom*

**R**otary is ISO 9000, ISO14000, OHSAS certified and is listed on the main board of the Singapore Exchange since 1993. Your company is carrying the Singapore brand in Saudi Arabia. How do Saudis view Singapore and Singaporeans in terms of doing business?

The image of Singapore in the minds of Saudis is overall very positive. The Singapore brand itself is recognised as being productive, efficient, hi-tech but expensive.

On a personal level, Saudis do not have much experience in dealing with Singaporeans, as most of them have not had the opportunity to interact with a fellow Singaporean before. They probably would not have any assessment of a Singaporean, per se. However, we are now in the state of building that image, about Singaporeans being straight, reliable and

crystal clear in their dealings, through day-to-day interactions.

**King Abdullah with his expansion plans for Saudi Arabia has envisioned many projects nationwide. What opportunities has this brought for players in the construction industry such as Rotary?**

There are major plans for the oil and gas industry over the next few years. Billions of dollars have been set aside and there will certainly be lot of opportunities for us. King Abdullah's expansion plans for Saudi Arabia have provided us with the opportunity to work on several key projects within the oil and gas industry in Saudi Arabia. We are currently working on mega projects with SADARA, Saudi Business Industries Corporation (SABIC), and Saudi Aramco Total Refining and Petrochemicals Co.

(SATORP). These are multi-billion dollar projects that will fuel Saudi Arabia's development. Earlier this year, we secured a contract to build 17 oil storage tanks at Shoaiba, Saudi Arabia.

**How has your business experience been in Saudi Arabia so far? Do you see more competition from locals or international players?**

We manage to win at least one project per year in Saudi Arabia. Our largest single contract, SATORP Package 6, a US\$ 750 million contract, also comes from Saudi Arabia. With Saudi Arabia gaining international recognition, we are beginning to see more international players entering the local market with companies from Europe, Korea and China. As such, the market is becoming more competitive. Nonetheless, with







Saudi Arabia's prospect for growth, there are still plenty of projects for all players to have a role in Saudi Arabia's development.

#### **What are the expansion plans for Rotary in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries?**

We hope to increase our activities in Saudi Arabia by actively participating in international tenders and mega projects. In the United Arab Emirates, we have set up an office in Fujairah and we are looking to start our first project in Fujairah within a few months. We are also looking to expand into other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries when the opportunity arises.

#### **Stability of government, inflation, ease of operations, cost of living and ease to repatriate profits are some of the factors that influence business decisions. How would you rate these factors in Saudi Arabia?**

The Government of Saudi Arabia is currently stable and there are clear plans for expansion for the public and private sectors. Hence, prospect for more projects in the near future is promising. Furthermore, we have a reliable and

capable local partner whom we are proud to work with. They have provided us with ample assistance in setting up our company and familiarising us with the local market.

#### **What are the opportunities that Singaporean companies can tap into in Saudi Arabia and vice versa?**

Saudi Arabia's energy sector is the obvious choice for most Singapore companies to participate and that is where we are investing our time and money too. However, there is great potential for Singapore to share its experience in urban infrastructure, including housing. Singapore companies have accumulated years of experience in urban infrastructure and townships, incorporating residential and commercial developments with educational and recreational facilities, around the globe, and can take on the role of master planner or solutions integrator for Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom is potentially the largest consumer market in the Middle East with about 28 million residents. Singapore's halal food and beverage companies have a lucrative market that is bigger than the rest of the GCC market put together.

Besides these, healthcare is another sector where the Saudi Government is spending huge budgets.

For Saudi companies, Singapore is the ideal choice as a base for their forays into the Asia-Pacific, as it is a well-connected hub to set-up an office for trading, procurement or a liaison office for market research. Investors with high risk appetite could consider the booming real estate market in Singapore, while others could consider setting up a Saudi restaurant.

#### **What is your advice to Singapore companies looking at venturing into the Saudi market?**

It is no easy feat to unravel these nuggets of opportunities in Saudi Arabia with only a few visits. To be successful, companies will have to dedicate a special team that will solely handle the Saudi or GCC market. They may have to set up an establishment and have a person on the ground to plough the market. Partnering with the right business families to compliment their strengths may also be crucial to gain footing in this market. Starting small but dreaming big; taking one step at a time is the way to go in Saudi Arabia.





# TAPPING INTO THE SAUDI EXPERIENCE

*Saudi Arabia is Singapore's largest trading partner in the Middle East. With a sharp rise in bilateral trade of over 40 per cent within one year, Saudi Arabia and Singapore are geared up for stronger and wider investor relations. Mr Feroz Siddiqui, Centre Director (Riyadh), IE Singapore, talks about the emerging partnership opportunities between the two countries*

**I**nternational Enterprise (IE) Singapore has been representing the Singapore initiative in Saudi Arabia for many years now. Please share with us your observations on this relationship?

We have been engaging the Saudi market since early 2000, long before our two overseas centres in Jeddah and Riyadh were set up in 2007 and 2009 respectively. Saudi Arabia is currently Singapore's largest trading partner in the Middle East. Total bilateral trade increased by more than 40 per cent from US\$12.6 billion in 2010 to US\$17.9 billion in 2011, despite the global uncertainties.

Singapore also has bilateral co-operation frameworks in place with various Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, including an Investment Guarantee Agreement (IGA) that came into force in October 2007, and a Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTA) that came into force in July 2011. Under the DTA, Saudi businesses and individuals enjoy lower Singapore withholding tax rates on income from their investments in Singapore.

**What benefits would arise for both countries from the ratification of The**

**GCC-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (GSFTA)?**

The GSFTA, signed in December 2008, is a milestone agreement in strengthening ties between the GCC countries and Singapore. It is the first FTA signed by the GCC and the second FTA that Singapore has signed in the Middle East. Under the agreement, all GCC imports from Singapore will enjoy 100 per cent tariff-free access when the agreement comes into effect. This means that GCC importers will stand to enjoy up to approximately US\$ 130 million in annual tariff savings.

In addition, by opening the service sectors, we hope to see our bilateral relations grow beyond trade. We encourage Saudi companies to make use of Singapore's strengths as a major trade, transportation and financial hub to access business opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region.

**What is the scope for Singaporeans to leverage on Saudi Arabia's current economic situation, beyond oil focus?**

Traditionally, Singapore companies are most active in the area of oil and

gas services and infrastructure services. IE Singapore, as the agency promoting the overseas growth of Singapore enterprises and international trade, is constantly looking out for partnership opportunities in other sectors, where Singapore companies can contribute. These include food and beverage (F&B) and urban housing infrastructure, which are aligned to the growing needs of the market.

## **Food and Beverage**

The GCC is currently Singapore's ninth largest market globally for food exports. Saudi Arabia accounts for close to 40 per cent of food exports to the GCC. Home to 28 million people, Saudi Arabia is potentially the largest consumer market in the Middle East.

In 2009, the market size for packaged foods in Saudi was US\$ 12.8 billion. By 2014, this market is expected to grow to US\$ 21.7 billion, a growth of nearly 70 per cent. Combined with Singapore food players' growing interest in the halal food market and Saudi Arabia's growing demand for quality and authentic Southeast Asian cuisine, IE Singapore sees a lot of room for collaboration

in F&B in Saudi Arabia, especially manufactured food products.

### **Urban Housing Infrastructure**

Housing is one of the focuses in Saudi Arabia's Five-year Development Plan (2010-2014). The Ministry of Housing plans to build 500,000 housing units in the next five to seven years. We see potential for Singapore to share our experience in urban infrastructure, including housing. Singapore's land scarcity issue has driven us to design our land use carefully to meet both short-term and long-term needs, and balance between land for industrial and commercial development, and land for residential, recreational and social needs.

Singapore companies are well-placed to play the role of master planner or solutions integrator. Many have accumulated experience in urban infrastructure and townships, incorporating residential and commercial developments with educational and recreational facilities, transportation, and telecommunications.

**In your opinion how do Saudi Arabian companies view investments and opportunities in Singapore? How many Saudi companies have offices in the island nation? Can you highlight their progress in detail, as an example?**

Saudi Arabia is Singapore's third largest foreign investor from the Middle East. Based on some of our interactions, we find that Saudi companies are familiar with Singapore and see it as a hub for Southeast Asia.

The number of Saudi companies in Singapore has increased significantly from 17 in 2005 to 34 in 2011. Mostly the interest for inward investments into Singapore from Saudi companies is seen to be greater for energy and chemical companies. For example, the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), the second largest globally diversified chemical company, is one of the largest corporate investors from Saudi Arabia with operations in Singapore. Singapore has been its regional



headquarters for Asia-Pacific since 2000. It has grown from a redistribution hub for SABIC's products to an office handling corporate functions as well.

Other companies with presence in Singapore include the National Commercial Bank (NCB), the Riyad Bank and Saudi Aramco. The Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) also has a base in Singapore to promote investments from the region into KSA.

**Culturally, for expatriates, the Saudi experience is known to be challenging. What has your Saudi experience been?**

Enriching! It certainly can be challenging when you first move into Saudi Arabia, for it has a unique business and social environment. The climate can also be harsh and extreme during different seasons, soaring to over 50 degrees Celsius in summer and dipping to below five in winter. Occasionally, desert storms require us to stay indoors and drive with extra care.

Despite the challenges, the pace of life is non-hecktic, so there is plenty of family time to spare. While these are hurdles, we have learnt to take it positively, immersing ourselves in the

way of life, people and their culture. For every overseas posting, my wife and I never compare the foreign land with what we are used to back in Singapore. We make it a point to never gripe about the hurdles we face daily, as it does not help in solving the problem at hand and instead aggravates the situation.

**What is your advice to Singaporeans wishing to do business in Saudi Arabia viz-a-viz cost of living, education options and relocation of families?**

Singapore companies visiting Saudi Arabia like to have a tight one or two days schedule and expect back-to-back meetings, the way we have here in Singapore. I recommend Singapore companies visiting Saudi Arabia, for the first time, to spend a full week there. They should aim to meet people both officially in a meeting setting, and informally at a relaxed pace, to build relations and understand the culture.

For those relocating, there are good British and American schools in various cities to chose from. Although inflation has been on the rise here like the rest of the world, I find Singapore expensive





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when I return home. So, the cost of living is much more affordable in Saudi on a comparative basis.

**What are the greatest obstacles for Singaporean companies in their efforts to enter the Saudi market? How do they overcome these challenges?**

Lack of sound understanding of the local business culture and landscape are some obstacles that Singapore companies used to working in Asia may face. In the Middle East, it is very important to cultivate long-term relationships, which is not unlike how it works in many other markets, but here relationships come before business.

IE Singapore has two overseas centres in Saudi Arabia — one in Jeddah and the other in Riyadh. We help Singapore-based companies understand the market and enter it by providing on-ground market information, business matching services, business leads and contacts.

We have programmes that help them navigate the nuances of doing business in Saudi Arabia. For example, we work with top training institutes in the market on short-term executive training programmes for middle and senior management of Singapore companies, bringing them to the market

to experience the culture, and better understand Saudi Arabia through sharing sessions and meetings with key private and public sector representatives.

In 2011, we conducted two such executive training programmes in Jeddah and Riyadh, which received positive feedback from participants. While, in Singapore, we organise seminars and roundtables to share more about the market potential, as well as the challenges.

**Saudi Arabia as the seat of Islam holds a revered place in the hearts of Muslims throughout the world. How do you relate to that as a Muslim?**

It is no secret that it is a lot easier for Muslims to adjust to the living environment in Saudi. For us as Muslims, we feel blessed to be able to go for 'umrah' (minor pilgrimage) at our convenience. Being able to visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina is certainly a draw for us.

Being a Muslim has helped me bond with the local Saudis better. For example, I exchange 'salaam' with a peck and an embrace, they invite me during Ramadan to break the fast and we stand together in congressional prayers – all these build trust.

Being a Muslim helps, but like in any society, you earn respect by giving it wholeheartedly.

**Having lived in other Middle Eastern countries, do you see differences that you would like to share?**

While Asia and Middle East are known as neighbouring regions, they are made up of many countries with diverse cultures and economies. I lived in Doha, Qatar, for four years and have been in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for over three years now. The main difference is Saudi Arabia's sheer size. Beyond land size, houses, roads, cars and malls share this aesthetic. For example, the King Fahd International Airport site in Dammam is as big as the island of Singapore. Princess Noura University in Riyadh is the world's largest women's only university that boasts of a metro line on its campus. Riyadh can house more than two Singapores in it, in terms of land size.

**What is your favourite Saudi dish?**

Foul medames (pronounced as 'fool') is my favourite Saudi dish. It is a paste of mashed lentils and pulses, topped with olive oil and garnished with finely chopped onions and tomatoes. It is eaten with flat bread straight from clay-fired ovens.

**Lastly, can you briefly explain the role of IE Singapore?**

IE Singapore is the government agency driving Singapore's external economy. We spearhead the overseas growth of Singapore-based companies and promote international trade. We have a global network in over 35 locations spanning many emerging markets. We connect foreign businesses with relevant Singapore-based companies for their expansion. As a centre director, my role includes facilitating introductions to Singapore-based companies through business matching, industry and market-specific missions and networking events.

Through the course of my interaction with Saudi companies, I also promote Singapore as a base for foreign businesses to expand into Asia in partnership with Singapore companies. In the GCC region, we have offices in Riyadh, Jeddah, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Doha.





# PROMOTING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

*SAGIA has taken a number of initiatives recently to promote a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship among the youth of Saudi Arabia*

**T**he Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) is the guardian angel of business in Saudi Arabia. With Saudi Arabia's focus on diversifying the economy, SAGIA has been playing an important role in attracting foreign investment and improving Saudi Arabia's competitiveness.

Keeping this in mind, SAGIA organised the Sixth Global Competitiveness Forum (GCF) in Riyadh from January 21 to 24, 2012, with the theme of 'Entrepreneurship'. Nearly 2,000 delegates attended GCF 2012, including hundreds of business leaders from around the world who shared their insights and opinions on entrepreneurship.

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, during the inauguration of the forum on January 21, 2012, stressed the need to increase investment opportunities in the Kingdom. King Abdullah described investments as Saudi Arabia's engine of development.

The King's inaugural address was delivered by Dr Tawfiq Al-Rabiah, Saudi Minister of Commerce and Industry, at the Four Seasons Hotel at the Kingdom Tower.

King Abdullah said that Saudi Arabia gave utmost importance to improving the lives of citizens through sustainable development and by strengthening the private and public sectors.

"This creates new job opportunities as well as increases the number of businesses and the country's GDP," he said.

"The forum will help create new institutions and strengthen existing private and public sector organisations through creative ideas and new opportunities that emerge from the event."

Mr Fahad Hamaidaddin, Chief of Marketing and Competitiveness Initiatives at SAGIA, said the success of the forum reflected the improving image of the investment environment in the Kingdom and the country's international reputation.

## SAGIA'S NEW INITIATIVES

SAGIA has launched important initiatives for developing executive leadership and programmes to promote a culture of creativity and innovation.

**THE SAUDI FAST GROWTH AWARDS** are an annual ranking of the fastest-growing companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Fast Growth 100 measures the growth within the smaller-sized corporate segment of the Saudi economy due to this segments' impact on employment and the economy at large.

**SAUDI ARABIA RESPONSIBLE COMPETITIVENESS INDEX** analyses how Saudi companies are building competitive advantage by managing their social and environmental impacts. It looks beyond community projects and corporate responsibility programmes to understand how firms are attracting and retaining employees, implementing strong environmental policies and working with suppliers.

**MOST COMPETITIVE YOUTH** is a strategic initiative to engage youth in Saudi Arabia (Saudi nationals and Saudi residents) in applying 21st Century skill sets to improving their communities, inspiring creativity, promoting innovation and bringing Saudi Arabia's economy to the forefront of competitiveness.

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP VILLAGE** is a new initiative to create an e-government portal integrating different government and non-governmental services in the Kingdom. The primary objective of the initiative is to make it easy for Saudi men and women entrepreneurs to start and develop their businesses.

# SINGAPORE'S MUFTI LEADS ON UNITY PATH



*Dr Mohamed Fatris Bakaram hopes to strengthen the faith of Muslims in Singapore and also contribute to the well-being of the society and humanity*

Singapore's Muslims have a new mufti – Dr Mohamed Fatris Bakaram. Dr Fatris, 41, took over the position of Mufti of Singapore from Mufti Syed Isa Mohamed Semait, 72, on January 1, 2011.

Dr Fatris, who was appointed by Singapore's President in consultation with the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), had been the deputy mufti of MUIS under Syed Isa since 2004. The mufti of MUIS plays a significant role in Singapore, as he guides the Muslim community as well as the Government on all matters pertaining to Islam.

Dr Fatris recently completed his doctoral thesis in Islamic studies at Britain's University of Birmingham. He has a Masters degree in educational administration and management from Malaysia's International Islamic University and a degree in Islamic theology from the Muslim world's leading university, Al-Azhar in Egypt.

Starting his career as a teacher in Madrasah Aljunied in Singapore in 1993, Dr Fatris moved on to work as a MUIS executive officer and principal of

Madrasah Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiah for six years. In 2004, he joined MUIS as the deputy mufti. Having had a long stint in this position, Dr Fatris is familiar with the pulse of Singapore's entire Muslim community.

## AT THE HELM OF AFFAIRS

Dr Fatris hopes that the Muslims in Singapore would grow to be confident in their identity and see the beauty of other religions beyond the mosque. A strong believer of religious tolerance and respect towards all religions, he wants Muslims to take the path of civilised discussions to sort out differences.

"It is important for Singaporean Muslims to be faithful, practising and good Muslims, and at the same time have the ability to adapt to Singapore's open social context. It is important to forge and strengthen the identity of Singapore Muslims – who are religiously resilient, inclusive, adaptive and progressive members of the society," Dr Fatris said.

Dr Fatris, like his predecessor Shaikh Syed Isa Semait, is a strong advocate of interfaith activities. He reopened the

inter-faith Harmony Centre in 2011 after it underwent a renovation. The Centre now has a new section on 'Islam and Interfaith Relations' and continues to play a significant role in interfaith activities, dialogues and discussions.

## INVESTING IN THE YOUTH

The new mufti plans to engage the young Muslims in Singapore in a number of ways. This Ramadan, MUIS organised youth camps to explain to them the significance of the holy month.

He believes that young Muslims are thinking individuals, who can lift the whole community and society. He wants all the young Muslims to think and evaluate all decisions on their own, on the basis of their faith in Islam, when faced with religious dilemmas.

With the entire community depending on him to lead them on the path of faith, Dr Fatris has charted out his role for the future. "I hope I can help the community to be strong in its faith, and at the same time contribute to the well-being of the society and to humanity as a whole," he said.





# CELEBRATING THE VALOUR AND CULTURE OF SAUDI ARABIA

*The two-week long Janadriyah festival in April brought back the traditions and cultures of ancient Saudi Arabia to the present, along with an exposure to the rich cultural heritage of Japan, the guest country for this year's festival*



Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah inaugurated the Kingdom's most celebrated festival – the Janadriyah festival, at Janadriyah village—45 km Northeast of Riyadh, amidst great fanfare, on April 13, 2012.

This was the 26<sup>th</sup> year of the festival, which is organised by the Saudi National Guard, since it was first organised in 1985. The two-week long festival concluded on April 29, 2012.

The largest culture and heritage festival of Saudi Arabia started with a grand 20-km breathtaking camel race in which hundreds of contestants participated and the winners were awarded by King Abdullah himself, during the opening ceremony.

For two weeks every year, the past returns to Riyadh – with the vibrant Janadriyah Annual Heritage and Culture Festival in Riyadh City District. The festival showcases crafts from across the Kingdom organised by the National Guard. It celebrates the cultural traditions that unite this great country, while also revealing the regional differences, which create the distinctive character of Saudi individuality.

The festival includes displays of regional architecture, cuisine, craft, markets, dances and folklore. It lasts approximately two weeks and takes place in the winter when the weather is cooler. There are working displays of carpet-weaving, pottery-making, and woodcarving from different regions. Arabian dancers and singers provide entertainment, while reviving all the traditional songs of different regions. There are also displays by the armed

forces, and displays of traditional swords and daggers.

Speaking at the inauguration of the festival on April 23, 2012, Prince Miteb Ibn Abdullah, who is also the head of the festival organising committee, said, “This event has become an international cultural festival, where poetry, intellect, culture, art, theatre, heritage and history all meet together.”

He said, “The participation of King Abdullah is an honour for the National Guard and his support reflects the strong commitment towards art, culture and creativity.”

The colourful inaugural ceremony was attended by several members of the Saudi royal family, senior diplomats and a number of dignitaries from outside Saudi Arabia. Besides King Abdullah, King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain; the then Riyadh Governor, Prince Salman; Mecca Governor, Prince Khaled Al-Faisal; National Guard Commander and Minister of State, Prince Miteb Ibn Abdullah, attended the opening ceremony of the festival, which ranks today as one of the most important events of its kind in the Arab world.

The festival also depicts a wide range of programmes including a breathtaking annual camel race, all-men national folk lore dance of swords called ‘Al-Ardha,’ craft exhibitions and culinary specialties.

Japan was the official guest for the festival this year, and its participation reflected the depth of the strategic partnership between Riyadh and Tokyo. A huge delegation, led by Japan's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Hisashi Tokunaga, of at least 350 Japanese artists, musicians, stage performers and men of

letters demonstrated the richness and colour of their country's culture and heritage, at this year's National Heritage and Culture Festival at Janadriyah.

Referring to the participation of Japan, Prince Miteb said that it reflected “the depth of the strategic partnership between Riyadh and Tokyo.”

As the first guest country from Asia at this festival, Japan has set up a highly innovative ‘Janadriyah Pavilion,’ he said.

The Japanese pavilion presented a comprehensive picture of Japan including exhibits by 12 top Japanese companies. The pavilion featured advanced technologies related to water, environment, energy, automobiles and digital appliances as well as traditional arts and crafts such as swords, armours, modern Japanese games and fashion.

The Janadriyah Village, which is spread over 1.5 square km, houses over 30 huge areas or replicas representing different regions of the country.

The festival features artistic objects made by carpenters, blacksmiths, cobblers, weavers and other craftsmen from different regions of the Kingdom.

“The event has always been a big hit among Saudis and expatriates, particularly youth, who throng the village to get a glimpse of the Saudi heritage and culture,” said a member of the organising panel.

“The folk and heritage festival, moreover, gives Saudi and foreign visitors a chance to take a closer look at the social tableau of an earlier era,” he added.

Artists from the Gulf region exhibited more than 200 paintings, as an expression of their love for King Abdullah, at the festival.





# KAUST: PROF. SHIH PASSES ON THE BATON

*Professor Choon Fong Shih, as the Founding President, has established the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology as a world-class centre of education in three years. As Prof. Shih's term ends next year, we trace his extraordinary achievements*

All good things come to an end, and so has the term of the Founding President of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Professor Choon Fong Shih, who announced his intention to step down from the position after his term ends next year.

Professor Shih will serve as KAUST's President till November 2013, when his term ends, and would continue until his successor takes over, said a university press release in May 2012.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah had appointed Professor Shih, a Singaporean, to head KAUST in 2008. Professor Shih's appointment, as the head of the University, was a tribute to Singapore and its relations with Saudi Arabia.

An internationally recognised researcher and academic leader, Professor Shih, who has a Ph.D from Harvard University, joined the institution after nine years as President and Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Mr Ali I. Al-Naimi, Chairman of the KAUST Board of Trustees, said in a statement, "I sincerely thank Professor Shih for his dedication and leadership in helping establish KAUST as a world-class centre of academic excellence that will serve to transform the lives of the people of Saudi Arabia and act as a bridge between different cultures of the world, in line with the aspirations of the university's founder."

## SINGAPORE TO SAUDI ARABIA

Professor Shih has been in charge of the university since its conception, the challenging phase of starting operations, and supported its growth into a full-fledged university. The university has literally grown under his leadership.

Mr Ali I. Al-Naimi, Chairman of the KAUST Board of Trustees, said in a statement: "Professor Shih has been at the university's helm through the challenging start-up phase of its operations and, in so doing, has enabled KAUST to gain the admiration and respect of the international academic community."

Prof. Shih has said in a statement this year that the invitation to join KAUST had been very exciting to him.

"I recall the day in November 2007 when my wife and I visited Saudi Arabia and stood for the first time on what was to become our home by the Red Sea. We were pondering over an offer I had received to become the founding President of KAUST. Then, there was not much more than desert sand and tranquil sea. Gazing at the Red Sea in the distance, I was mesmerised by the shimmering vision of what KAUST could become and achieve."

He was aware of the challenges and the opportunities inherent in the



Professor Shih has been in charge of the university since its conception, the challenging phase of starting operations and supported its growth into a full-fledged university

endeavour to build in Saudi Arabia a global research university, dedicated to achieving the highest academic standards.

"I could see how this would be an immense challenge as well as a tremendous opportunity for potential impact in the Kingdom and for the world. This realisation made the prospect of becoming KAUST's founding president all the more compelling to me," Professor Shih said.

Under the leadership of Professor Shih, the university has already graduated two classes of top quality Saudi and international students, a number of whom have joined industries in Saudi Arabia, while others have decided to pursue PhD studies at KAUST in specialised fields of science and technology.

All the graduates have praised the high standards of education that they received in KAUST.

### BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS

KAUST is just three-years-old, and has already achieved remarkably, to rise as one of the biggest universities in the world.

Today, KAUST has commissioned nine world-class research centres and seven core laboratories, which will enable its researchers and students to carry out leading cutting-edge research in areas which are of interest to Saudi Arabia.

Despite the university being in the early stages of its development, more than 230 inventions have already been reported and more than 200 patent



applications have been filed to protect the university's right to the intellectual property in these innovations and to enable commercialisation of these technologies within the Kingdom.

In addition, the university has embarked on an ambitious collaboration programme with industry, under which 26 industry leaders have joined the KAUST Industrial Collaboration Programme.

Three of these industry leaders, Saudi Aramco, SABIC and the Dow Chemical Company have become anchor tenants in the university's Research Park. Moreover, the university has entered into more than 40 strategic partnerships and other agreements with leading academic institutions from all around the world.

"Under Professor Shih's leadership,

KAUST was established as a merit-based institution serving the advancement of science and technology. The highest quality of faculty and students have been attracted to this institution. He has worked effectively with the academic leadership of the university, to ensure that the institution's research efforts are well focused on meeting the strategic needs of the Kingdom and the region in the areas of food, water, energy and environment.

He has also worked with the University's Economic Development Leadership team, to enable KAUST to become a catalyst for transforming Saudi Arabia to a knowledge-based economy as a result of its innovations in these and other areas," Mr Ali I. Al-Naimi said.



# ON THE PORTALS OF LEARNING

*Founded on the Islamic tenets of peace and tolerance, Singapore-based Madrasah Wak Tanjong Al-Islamiah has been shaping quality students for over five decades*



The majestic white building, bordered with blue paint, shines under the morning sun of Singapore. The Madrasah Wak Tanjong Al-Islamiah, one of the six Islamic schools in Singapore, stands serene right behind a mosque by the same name at Paya Lebar.

There is silence inside and outside the school building, and it is hard to believe that it is normal school day. In fact, it is the last of examination for the students, and yet there are no wild shouts or mindless chatter that one can hear. The discipline and manners taught to the students can be 'heard' and seen right at the entrance.

Young boys and girls — boys in trousers and shirts and girls in ankle-length gowns and headscarves — walk down the spiral staircase holding stacks of books. The smiles on their faces reflect their composed excitement that the exams are over. They speak in low tones, and point out the Principal's office to us.

We leave our footwear outside and enter the austere office of the Principal, Mr Mohammed Abdul Halim Bin Mohd Noor, who greets us with a warm smile.

"Madrasah Wak Tanjong Al-Islamiah was founded in 1958 as a tiny village school. Religious classes were conducted at the home of late Ustaz Mohd Noor Bin Taib, my father and the former principal of this school. It was much later in 1983 that the present building came up with the help of donations from well-wishers," he said.

The school presently has 600 students and 38 teachers, and runs in two shifts for primary and secondary levels. Boys and girls study in separate classes and are allowed to interact for academic discussions under a teacher's supervision.

"My father's aim behind establishing this school was to mould Muslim

students into intellectual and religious scholars, who can contribute to the Muslim community and the country. We need young intelligent Muslims with strong values to face the challenges of this cosmopolitan country," Mr Halim said.

"We give an equal focus to both academic and religious studies. Since the students at Islamic schools have to study more number of subjects than in a public school, we test a student's ability with an entrance test at Primary 1 level."

The school decides the curriculum for Islamic studies on the basis of the syllabi followed in the Saudi Arabian schools and the Al-Azhar school in Egypt. Mr Halim himself is an alumnus of the Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia.

"We take ideas from schools in Saudi Arabia, but adapt it to our local school," Mr Halim said.

The madrasa students of MWTAI study five extra subjects on Islamic studies, besides five subjects of the Singapore public school curriculum. These extra subjects include *Hadith* (Prophetic traditions), *Tauhaid* (Monotheism), *Sirah* (Islamic history),





*Akhlak* (moral studies) and *Lughah* (Arabic language).

"A student's hard disk is free as they are young. So it is the right age to take as much information as they can," he said with a smile.

Mr Halim pointed out that though the curriculum is heavy it has been divided in such a way that the students do not feel the pressure. "Our aim is not just to conduct examinations for the students, but to ensure that they get the knowledge of Islam."

It is only in the secondary section, that the students are taught *Tafsir*, the study of Quran.

Once the students complete 10 years of Islamic education, they can choose to continue further in the Islamic school or switch over to mainstream education in a local or international college. Contrary to popular perception, the students, having studied a much heavier course load at the Islamic school, find it very easy to fit into the mainstream later. "They just have to study half the number of subjects in outside schools and colleges," he pointed out.

The school also encourages the students to ace in sports and cultural activities. The students celebrate all Islamic festivals in the school, and are taught to respect the festivals of other religions. MWTAI also holds exchange

programmes with schools in Japan and China for small groups of students, who are curious to study in a madrasa.

"We invite all to visit our school, so that there are no misconceptions about madrasahs."

The school has many star students, and some of them are in prestigious universities around the world such as in the US, Australia and UK, and some of them are working in Dubai and Doha.

A strong supporter for women's equal status, he said that education is a must for all girls and that he encouraged all his girl students to at least complete their graduation. "One of our girl students is now doing her PhD at the Imperial College in London," Mr Halim said with pride.

In today's world of extremism and terrorism, Mr Halim has taken upon himself an added responsibility – to ensure that his students understand the true meaning of Islam.

"Islam is the religion of peace and harmony, as the Prophet has taught us. Islam teaches us to be understanding, and to respect all religions. One who has understood Islam correctly will never be violent," Mr Halim said.

Being a private school, MWTAI is not aided by the local government. The school runs purely on the donations

"Our aim is not to just conduct examinations for the students, but to ensure that they get the knowledge of Islam."

— Mr Mohd Abdul Halim

made by well-wishers, the students' fee and Zakat contributions. However, this is hardly enough for the school's overall maintenance.

The school's administrator Madam Mardiana said that the building has not been renovated in the past 18 years and that the sign of age was visible on the structure. She pointed out cracks on some walls, and the chipping of paint from the ceiling in many rooms. "We will need SG\$ 5 million to renovate the school. However, our funds are insufficient. We need contributions to give a good environment to our students, to make more space and to provide study equipment," she said.

For four decades, MWTAI has been working on nurturing good human beings and good Muslims. With a dedicated principal and teacher such as Mr Hamid, the goal is surely very near.



Madrasah Wak Tanjong  
Al-Islamiah

MWTAI is open to receiving donations from well-wishers for the school's renovation. Kindly contact Madam Mardiana at 65-90228245 or Mr Mohd Abdul Halim Bin Mohd Noor at 65-67410131 or e-mail at [halim@mwtai.edu.sg](mailto:halim@mwtai.edu.sg) for details.



# ENHANCING GROWTH THROUGH EDUCATION

*The Saudi Cultural Office, an initiative of the Saudi Government, has been assisting Arab students in all possible ways since 2008 to ensure that they gain a productive learning experience in Singapore*



**T**he Saudi Cultural Office has helped thousands of Saudi students to study in Singapore since its inception in 2008, and is working to further amplify the opportunities for Saudis, who are interested to study in Singapore's autonomous universities and polytechnics.

We talk to **Prof. Abdulghaffar S. Bazuhair**, Cultural Attaché with the Saudi Cultural Office, Singapore, on the office's goals and achievements.

**How have Saudi Arabia and Singapore come together through education?**

**What role has the Saudi cultural office played in this?**

The Saudi Cultural Office is constantly working hand-in-hand with the local universities in Singapore. They include the National University of Singapore, the Nanyang Technological University, the Singapore Management University and the Singapore University

of Technology and Design.

In March this year, we welcomed 29 students from King Saud University and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals to Singapore for an educational and cultural orientation visit. The event was hosted together with the NUS, the NTU and the SMU with facilitation of our office.

The mission facilitates the Kingdom's hosting of all Singaporean student delegations to Saudi Arabia. So far, we have hosted four SMU student delegations under the Business Study Mission and two NUS student delegations under the STEER Programme.

In an effort to increase the number of Saudi scholars in Singapore, the NUS, the NTU and the Saudi Cultural Mission of Singapore participated in the International Exhibition and Conference on Higher Education held in Riyadh from April 17 to 20, 2012.

We are also hoping to increase the number of medical fellows here. We have identified several leading hospitals in Singapore and is now in the midst of discussing possible academic, scientific and medical collaborations.

**How many Saudi students are in Singapore now? How many women students? Which fields are they pursuing?**

All together, we have 19 scholars in Singapore, of which 12 are women. They are pursuing courses in the field of gynaecologic oncology, language studies, computer science / IT, business administration, mathematics, chemical engineering and maritime studies.

**Saudi Arabia is the ultimate seat of Islam in the world. How have the students adjusted to the multi-cultural society in Singapore?**

Based on our observation and dialogues with our students, they are pleased with the cultural diversity of the country. There is a freedom to practice one's faith without restriction or obscurity. They feel that Singapore is indeed a good example of a nation where everybody is able to live together peacefully despite the various cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs.

**Saudi Arabian students have added to the cultural diversity of Singapore. How are they contributing to the cultural scene in Singapore?**

In September 2011, we participated in the Global Community Day jointly

**The mission is to actively develop and qualify Saudi human resources to make them competitive in the work market and academic research, and to produce a high calibre base in Saudi universities, public and private sectors**

organised by the Temasek Polytechnic and the National Parks Board. With 12 other countries such as China, Finland, Japan, UAE, USA, Singapore and others, Saudi Arabia set up a booth that showcased the Kingdom's rich culture and heritage as well as its modern technological and architectural marvels. Through such a platform, our students were able to exchange cultural perspectives with the local students and Singaporeans in general.

**The King Abdullah's scholarship has opened new doors for the Saudi Arabian students in education. In what ways has the scholarship helped the students?**

The King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Programme provides the means to the world's best universities to pursue studies that lead to degrees (bachelors, masters and doctorate) and medical fellowships.

The academic disciplines for the scholarships are selected on the basis of the requirements of government ministries, national corporations and the private sector. The Programme's mission is to actively develop and qualify Saudi human resources to make them competitive in the work market and academic research and to produce a high calibre base in Saudi universities, public and private sectors.

King Abdullah's vision is also focused on what the students would do on their return to Saudi Arabia. The hope is that through their exchange of ideas, they would help facilitate the government in achieving its future plans and goals for the Kingdom.

**How are the students selected for the scholarship?**

The KASP is awarded annually around the month of January to the most eligible candidates. There are no bonds involved. Any candidate who meets the following requirements can apply to the Ministry of Higher Education:

He or she must be a Saudi citizen,

should be able to reside in the country of scholarship, should not be under government employment, and should apply to majors and the countries available (listed at time of application).

(Students can check the minimum requirements for the scholarship with the office.)

**What are the activities that the Saudi Cultural office has organised, co-organised and participated for the benefit of the students?**

We have organised a number of engagement platforms such as Welcome Student Orientation, Ramadhan Gathering, English Communication Skills and Cultural Awareness, Singapore Book Fair - Global Community Day, 25<sup>th</sup> East Asian Medical Student Conference, NUS Middle East Day, Saudi Culture Attaches' Meeting, representing the Asia Pacific countries, Riyadh International Exhibition and Conference on Higher Education, White Sands International Friendship Day 2010, and Forum for Students Studying Abroad Within The King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Programme.

**What are the upcoming activities of the Saudi Cultural Office in Singapore?**

We organised the Singapore Book Fair from May 25 to June 3, 2012. (We have been invited to be the Guest-of-Honour for the Singapore Book Fair 2013.)

We are also organising a cultural collaboration between SACM and the National Library Board (through exchange of reading materials and educational resources) and a medical collaboration between Saudi Ministry of Higher Education and medical facilities, institutions and hospitals in Singapore.

The aim behind holding the medical collaboration is to increase the number of medical fellowships, to facilitate the exchange of experiences and research between medical institutions in Saudi Arabia and Singapore and to facilitate the exchange of visits for doctors and senior management staff of medical

institutions or hospitals in Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

We will also discuss on possible collaboration in the areas of hospital management, medical research and practices and healthcare industry.

We are also in the final stage of establishing an Arabic centre at the Nanyang Technological University.







# A NEW WINDOW TO THE WORLD

*Social media like Twitter and Facebook offer Saudi Arabia the opportunity to participate in the global culture and also to get in touch with the society's sentiments*

**S**ocial media has been an attractive medium of communication for all – including political and business leaders worldwide. While US President Barack Obama is an avid tweeter, Venezuelan President Mr Hugo Chavez also uses the site to post his opinions.

Many public figures across the world are using Twitter and Facebook to reach out to their people and express their thoughts. The Middle East too is opening up to this social phenomenon, albeit slowly.

While some public figures in Saudi and Gulf states have naturally taken to Twitter and Facebook, others have understandably been more reluctant.

Mr Abdel Aziz Khoja, the Minister of Information, has become known as an avid Tweeter, while other members of the Saudi elite have been less quick to extol the virtues of the online tool.

Across the world, Facebook and Twitter now account for more than 900 million users between them, with the craze of Android phones only adding to the appeal.

The growing importance of social media in the Middle East was underlined last month when Saudi media tycoon Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bought a US\$300 stake in Twitter.

For a country steeped in traditions and also open to modern marvels, Saudi Arabia can greatly benefit from the free exchange of ideas on Twitter.

In a country which is quickly modernising, Twitter grants leaders the opportunity to get a flavor of the

issues running through their society as undercurrents.

Any leader, who is eager to provide the ideal environment to his people will find it useful. Irrespective of whether policymakers agree or disagree with the sentiments of the online opinions, at least they are aware about it.

## A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR TWITTER

If anything, Twitter and other social media will offer more opportunities to the skilled journalists, who have found success through the traditional printed media in Saudi.

The change in news practices among global leaders in news production in the West, such as the US and Britain, has shown just how useful Twitter can be. Whole news stories can now be built around single statements posted on Twitter.

Tracking down people, and ideas has become something which can be done from an office on the other side of the country or world. This presents leaders in Saudi with an incredible opportunity to tune into the communities and audiences they need to know more about, and the topics that matter to their people.

With vast amounts being spent on consumer research throughout the state, particularly in relation to huge capital expenditure projects, the offer of this information, if only anecdotally, for free, is a benefit which should not be overlooked.

Twitter also offers Saudi the opportunity to take part in debates, and

source news and information from a range of providers the instant it is posted on Twitter. This global understanding between the government and the people is beneficial to the country, as it aims to develop as a global power, both diplomatically and commercially.

Though the commercial applications of Twitter are still being explored, investors are certain of its ability to generate huge, specific audiences making it a powerful tool for businesses. Saudi firms looking to export their goods abroad can tell potential clients about their products and services for free, while ensuring they are targeting the right demographic group with the help of Twitter.

Twitter offers obvious benefits to policymakers seeking to be connected with their people. The positive applications of the site remain largely undefined and is still growing. The only way leaders can access the benefits is by joining the Twitter revolution.

*Sourced from: The Diplomat*



# VENTURE INTO AL-HASA: OPPORTUNITIES AWAIT



*Kingdom allocates more than SR4 billion to develop the region of Al-Hasa through tourism and other lucrative projects*

**T**ourism is one of the biggest resources for an economy. As part of the Vision 2020, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims to attract over 88 million visitors by the year 2020 and to create 900,000 new jobs in the tourism industry.

With this objective in mind, the Kingdom is undertaking various initiatives to promote domestic tourism within the framework of its broad objectives of achieving economic development through creation of jobs for Saudis, attracting investments in the agro-industry and other sectors, besides human resources development.

The Kingdom has decided to pump in massive investment to develop the infrastructure of the country, and thereby ramp up the tourism drive. At the recently-held Al-Hasa Investment Forum, the speakers called for a comprehensive strategy for the development of Al-Hasa region by promoting new investment projects in industry, tourism, agriculture and trade.

Al-Hasa is a traditional oasis region in Eastern Saudi Arabia that has over three million date palm trees. An inexhaustible supply of underground water in strong springs, marks the course of a great subterranean river draining the Nejd highlands.

In his keynote address, Eastern Province Governor, Prince Muhammad Bin Fahd called upon Saudi businessmen to invest in various lucrative projects in Al-Hasa, for which the Government has allocated more than SR4 billion in this year's budget.

Participants also called for the restructuring of Al-Hasa Airport to operate regional and international flights. They backed the establishment of large-scale tourism projects in Al-Hasa by setting up a fund to finance such projects, including the construction of a railroad linking Al-Hasa with Salwa industrial city and Oqair tourist city.

Prince Sultan Bin Salman, Chairman of the Supreme Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA), pointed out

Al-Hasa's tourism potential. "It has everything that a tourist looks for: traditional markets, beautiful weather, excellent people and historical forts," the Prince said at the opening session.

"We are in the process of streamlining procedures to make it easier for the private sector to take an active part in building of Saudi Arabia's tourism industry," he added.

Despite its huge resources and a rich tourism potential, the Kingdom is the 22<sup>nd</sup> highest in-bound market in the world. The low ranking underlines the need to intensify the drive further.

In an attempt to encourage tourism infrastructure and acknowledge excellent contributions, the first Saudi Excellence in Tourism Awards (SETA) was held as part of the Saudi Travel and Tourism Investment Market 2011 (STTIM) in Riyadh recently.

The aim of the SETA was to recognise the efforts of various businesses and industrial activities within the growing tourism sector of the Kingdom.



# CONGRATULATIONS

to the people and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their

## 82<sup>nd</sup> National Day

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# THE KINGDOM: THEN AND NOW

*King Abdullah's policies have changed the face of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The photographs above and below are a testimony to the transformation that has taken place in the country due to the benign vision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques*





To: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



*Happy 82<sup>nd</sup> National Day!!!  
To many more prosperous years ahead!*



Best Wishes,



*Helmi Talib & Co*  
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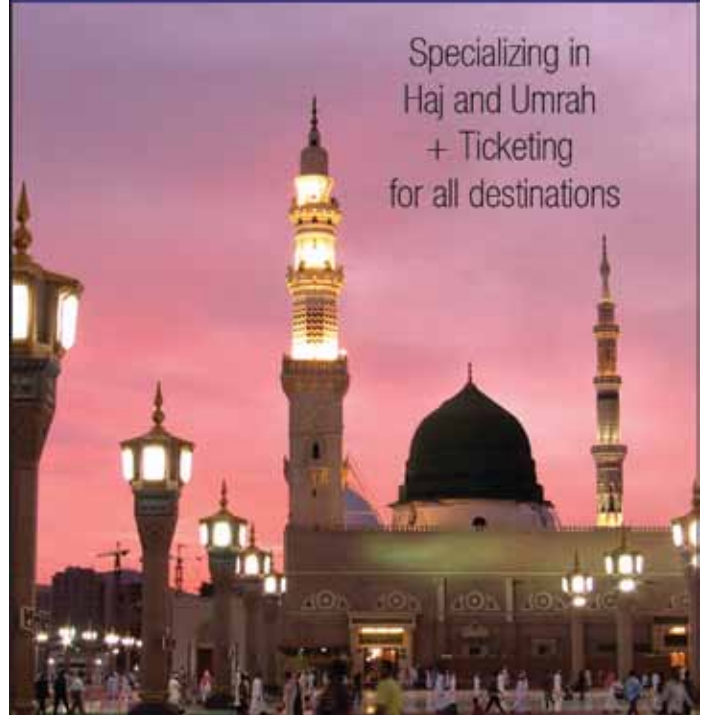
**Congratulations and Best Wishes**  
to the people and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
on their 82nd National Day



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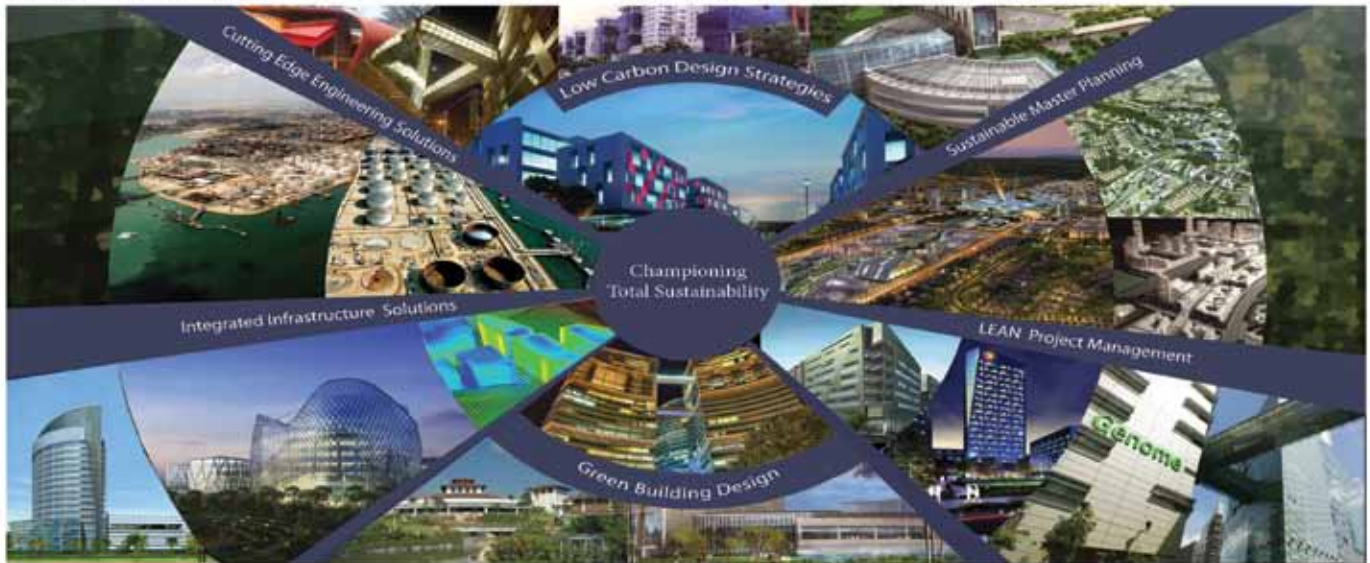


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# GATEWAY TO SAUDI ARABIA

*Saudi Arabia is the land of infinite opportunities. All investors looking to visit Saudi Arabia for business purposes will need a business visa. Business visitors to Saudi Arabia require sponsorship from a valid Saudi Arabian business/company, in order to be eligible for the business visa*



## REQUIREMENTS:

- A white visa application form
- A valid passport, valid not less than six months' validity from date of departure, with minimum of four consecutive blank pages
- Two photographs, which must be 4 cm x 6 cm and of white background (face of applicant must cover at least 70 to 80 per cent of the space)

## OTHER DOCUMENTS:

- An application from the sponsor in the Kingdom on the applicant's behalf to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- An original letter of invitation from the company in Saudi Arabia. This letter must be signed and sealed by the company and stamped by the Saudi Chamber of Commerce (please check with agency for template of letter).
- For businesswomen, the invitation must come from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs or letter of invitation and must be accompanied by her husband.
- An original covering letter from a registered company or firm based in Singapore, indicating the name of the Saudi Arabian company, the nature of the applicant's visit, length of stay and financial responsibility.
- The letter must bear the company's stamp and seal.
- Non-Singapore citizens need to submit a photocopy of valid residential status (Singapore Blue NRIC) or employment pass (Singapore Green Card).

## VISA ISSUING FEE:

- SG\$150 for Single Entry (validity for 3 months) as per Embassy approval
- SG\$250 for Multiple Entry (validity for 3 - 6 months) as per Embassy approval
- SG\$200 for US passport holders (for Single and Multiple Entry)

*\*Visa applications are subject to approval from The Royal Saudi Embassy of Singapore*



Visa applicants need to approach accredited agencies of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Singapore to apply for a business visa to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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# SAUDI ARABIA AT A GLANCE

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



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

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

## GEOGRAPHY

**Capital:** Riyadh

**Area:** 27.163.977 sq km

**Population:** 26,534,504 (CIA: July 2012 est.)

**Birth Rate:** 19.19 births/1,000 population (CIA: 2012 est.)

**Ethnic Groups:** Arab 90%, Afro-Asian 10%

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

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

## ECONOMY

**Currency:** Saudi Riyal

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

**GDP (PPP):** \$676.7 billion (CIA: 2011 est.)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):** \$24,000 (CIA: 2011 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 6.5% (CIA: 2011 est.)

**GDP Composition:** Agriculture: 2.1%; Industry: 67.6%; Services: 30.4% (CIA: 2011 est.)

**Labour Force:** 7.63 million

**Investment (gross fixed):** 19.2% of GDP (CIA: 2011 est.)

**Industrial Production growth rate:** 7.7% (2011 est.)

## GENERAL

**Main Cities:** Riyadh (the capital), Makkah, Al Madinah, Jeddah, Dammam, Dhahran and ArAr

**Urban Population:** 82% of total population (CIA: 2010)

**Language:** Arabic; English widely spoken in urban areas

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

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

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

**Timing:** GMT + 3:00

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

**Calendar:** Saudi Arabia follows the Muslims Hijrah calendar.

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





## A Celebration of **Saudi Arabia's 82<sup>nd</sup> National Day**

Saudi Aramco — in collaboration with Saudi Petroleum Ltd. in Singapore — is greatly honoured to congratulate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on celebrating its 82nd national day.

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# Best wishes to the People & the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 82<sup>nd</sup> National Day



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