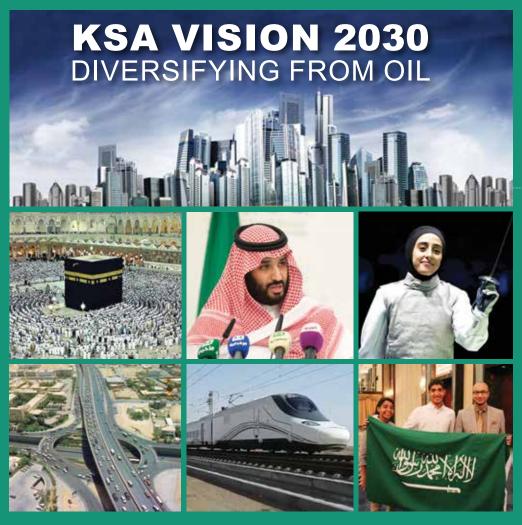
Saudi Arabia

YOUR GATEWAY TO THE MIDDLE EAST





The Hajj and More: New Lift for Umrah

New Makkah-Medinah High Speed Rail Link

Saudi Sportswomen Break Barriers

SACM on Saudi Arabia -Singapore Education and Cultural Ties



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المملكة العربية السعودية KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

The Way
Forward, A Bold
Gameplan

includes plans for

Society
Investments
Education
Culture
Entertainment
Tourism



CONGRATULATIONS

SABIC celebrates the 86th National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia together with all Saudi people around the world.



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MESSAGE

A Visionary Economic Agenda

PUBLISHER Sun Media Pte Ltd EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Nomita Dhar EDITORIAL AVISOR Naji Anbar Al-Anbar, First Secretary Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Singapore FEATURE WRITERS Ranee Sahaney, Syed Jaafar Alkaff and Foo Yong Han MARKETING Alan Kanas, Tan Yu Xian and Neha Jain DESIGN Sun Media Team PHOTOS The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Singapore,

PRINTING Stamford Press Pte Ltd EDITORIAL OFFICE SUN MEDIA PTE LTD, 20 Kramat Lane, #01-02 United House, Singapore 228773 TEL (65) 6735 2972/1907/2986 FAX (65) 6735 3114 EMAIL admin@sunmediaonline.com

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Block D, Fujairah Freezone 2, P.O.Box. 5052 Fujairah, United Arab Emirates Tel: (971) 9 202 4500 · Fax: (971) 9 228 2451

Email: bdduae@rotaryeng.ae

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Congratulations & Sest Wishes to the Reople and Xingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 86th National Day



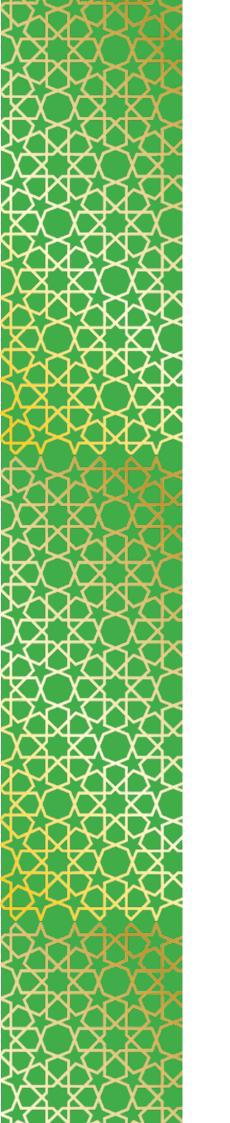


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Tel: (65) 6225 8600 Fax: (65) 6225 1497

Email: tkstore@singnet.com.sg

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H.M. King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques



Congratulations and Best Wishes to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 86th National Day

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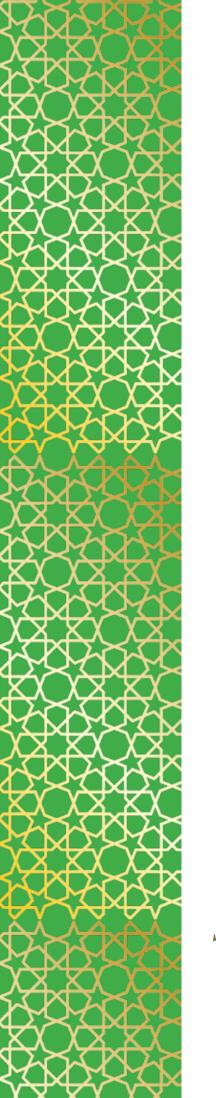


Celebrating with the Nation 86th National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



H.R.H. Crown Prince Muhammad bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

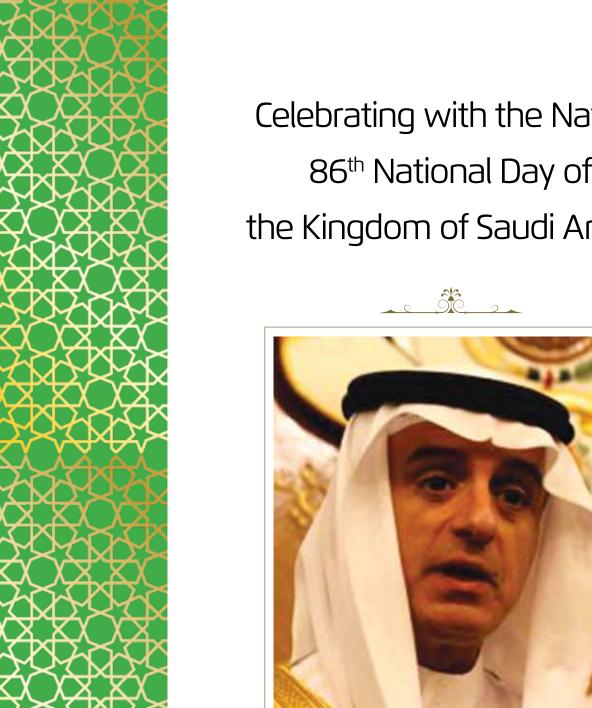


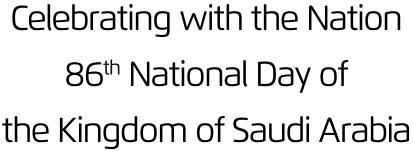
Celebrating with the Nation 86th National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



HRH Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

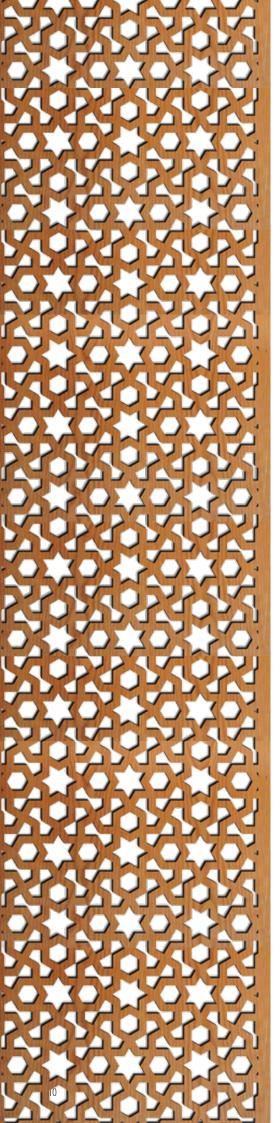
Deputy Crown Prince and Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence







HE Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir **Minister of Foreign Affairs**



SAUDI ARABIA A VISIONARY ECONOMIC AGENDA

Saudi Arabia, Singapore's largest trading partner in the Middle East, is ranked 19th amongst the world's largest economies and the fourth in terms of growth*. HE Mr Mansour Al Mazmoumi, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Singapore on the occasion of the Kingdom's 86th National Day shares how the two nations can walk the same path to achieve their economic goals

I am happy to share with you the rich and inspirational relationship that Singapore has enjoyed with the Middle East as far back as the 9th Century. Saudi Arabia in particular has a special place in the framework of Singapore's global relationships in business and trade. Today the Kingdom is Singapore's largest trading partner in the Middle East.

A very important step forward was the setting up of the Saudi-Singapore Business Council (SSBC) in 2006 when the visiting late Crown Prince H.R.H. Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Singapore Business Federation and the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry for the establishment of a Joint Business Council. The SSBC, you may be aware, is the first of its kind to be formed on a business-to-business level to boost bilateral trade and investment relations, and is underscored by the strong and cordial relationship between the leaders of Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

The momentum of this relationship continues to be nourished under the leadership of H.M. King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, the Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques, who took over the reins of the Kingdom following the passing of HM King Abdullah in 2015. The proactive relationship between the two countries on the bilateral front has been nurtured by a slew of activities and visits by leaders of both countries. The radical new thrust of Vision 2030 is expected to play a pivotal role in Saudi-Singapore trade and business relations.

We are very excited by the launching of the Kingdom's path-breaking Vision 2030, which is an all-encompassing agenda for economic and social development. 'Saudi Arabia Vision 2030' is a bold agenda for transforming the Kingdom's economy and society through the process of modernisation and well-crafted development of the country.

Launched in 2015, shortly after HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz was appointed as Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense as well as Chairman of the Economic and Development Affairs Council, Vision 2030 aims at addressing the protection and material wellbeing of the country's 30 million people, with a series of well-conceived and approved strategies.

^{*}According to G20 statistics



"The framework of Vision 2030 reveals many business opportunities for foreign investment in the fields of the traditional oil, gas, chemicals and mining sectors - as also, services and the move to high-end technologies such as ICT, biotechnologies, renewables, nanotechnologies, entrepreneurial initiatives, and entertainment."

The framework of Vision 2030 reveals many business opportunities for foreign investment in the fields of the traditional oil, gas, chemicals and mining sectors as also, services and the move to high-end technologies such as ICT, biotechnologies, renewables, nanotechnologies, entrepreneurial initiatives, and entertainment. All this is backed by a range of practical measures to achieve its economic goals.

The centerepiece of Vision 2030 is its strategy to structure the Kingdom on a diversified and sustainable economic growth process. It aims at making the country stronger and more resilient by facing with greater efficacy its biggest challenges - creating jobs for the country's growing youth populace and fine-tuning the means to increase private sector participation and foreign investment involvement in the Kingdom's agenda.

While the development of oil and gas, petrochemicals, and mining have been critical to the national economy, diversification into non-oil industries, services and, eventually, high tech, knowledge-based industries is expected to play a pivotal role, not just in the Kingdom's ambitious future agenda but also in addressing the aspirations of its youth.

The participation of the private sector is integral to this diversification process in transforming the Kingdom's economy: the contribution of the private sector to GDP is expected to go up from 40 per cent to 65 per cent by 2030, with the Government focusing on policy setting, defense, internal security, foreign affairs, basic education and selective infrastructure development. To lend teeth to this the Vision has formulated the privatisation process of most Government-owned leading companies, property, other assets and services as well as the reducing of or elimination of large subsidies will be reduced or eliminated.

The Vision aims to create an additional one million jobs in the retail and wholesale sectors alone, partly by attracting and building local, regional and international brands. Pilgrimage-based tourism, (projected for greater development) offers huge potential for jobcreation. Women empowerment is high on the agenda with more opportunities being opened up for training and employment with their participation in the workforce growing from 22 percent to 30 percent.

The Kingdom's Public Investment Fund (PIF) has been radically restructured to become the world's largest sovereign wealth fund and to invest in international firms to diversify Government earnings, while still promoting local development in the Kingdom. Its investment capabilities are being refined to enable it to manage a broader portfolio of assets that will increase from 600 billion Saudi riyals to over seven trillion Saudi riyals, utilising the proceeds from the public offerings planned, including that of Saudi Aramco.

The bedrock of the Kingdom are its central position at the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, its capacity for both inward and outbound investment, and its strategic location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa, as also its commitment to playing a constructive role within the global community. Based on the tenets of Islam, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is empowered by the fundamentals of friendly relations with ones neighbours, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and a vigorous rejection of international terrorism.

KING MOVES TO STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL TIES

H.M. King Salman has contributed immensely to the Kingdom's progress and enhancing its global reputation. The past year he has met various leaders to establish closer relations with major foreign allies, strengthen bilateral ties and held talks to promote world peace and security as well as to expand economic ties



ON his first visit to the USA since ascending the throne of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Salman said his visit on 3rd September 2015 follows an invitation from the US President Barack Obama. The King highlighted his "concern for liaising with world leaders in order to safeguard the interests of the Saudi people and the Arab and Islamic worlds, and to reiterate the bonds of friendship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the US." According to White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, the visit underscores the importance of the strategic partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia.



Russian President Vladimir Putin met with the King of Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in the Turkish city of Antalya on 16 November 2015 where they shook hands and posed for the press following talks. The two leaders came together for bilateral discussions on the sidelines of the G20 leaders' summit.



King Salman met India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, during his first official visit to the Kingdom on 4th April 2016. The visit underscored the major business ties between the two countries. Saudi Arabia is traditionally the largest supplier of crude oil to India and trade between the two countries reached US\$39 billion (Dh143bn) in 2014, according to a joint statement released after Mr Modi's meeting with King Salman. During their meeting, the two sides signed five agreements, including plans to cooperate in intelligence-sharing related to terror financing and money laundering, as well as a labour cooperation agreement and another to promote bilateral investments in the private sector.



Saudi Arabia and China agreed to lift their bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership, while eyeing more industrial capacity cooperation during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Saudi Arabia on 19 January 2016. The two countries also signed an MOU after King Salman held talks with the Chinese president. The King said that the two peoples will benefit from the elevated ties and that Saudi Arabia supports the "Belt and Road" initiative proposed by China. It refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, proposals to boost interconnectivity and regional development.



H.M. King Salman bin Abdulaziz visited Turkey on 12 April 2016 on a trip that was seen as a key moment for relations between the two leading Sunni Muslim powers. He met President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the Turkish capital of Ankara. The King later went on to Istanbul to attend a two-day Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit which discussed terrorism, Palestine, and regional conflicts such as Yemen.



The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit in Turkey opened on 14 April 2016 and brought together 30 heads of state and government. Overseen by H.M. King Salman and Turkey's President Erdogan, the two countries' foreign ministers on that day also signed a memorandum on creating a Saudi-Turkish Coordination Council to further deepen bilateral relations. Addressing the summit, the King said "we are obliged today, more than ever, to fight terrorism."



King Salman visited Egypt on 7 April 2016 and held talks wth Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to cement political and economic ties between the two nations. On the third day of his visit King Salman made a historic speech at Egypt's parliament to thundering applause and a standing ovation. The Saudi king said, "the Saudi-Egyptian cooperation we are witnessing today is a blessed beginning for our Arab and Muslim world to achieve balance after years of destabilization." In his six-minute address, he said Egypt and Saudi Arabia had agreed to build a bridge linking the nations across the Red Sea which will not only "connect Asia and Africa" but it will be a "gate to Africa."



RAMDHAN IFTAR

The embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ramadhan Iftar, Singapore's annual event, hosted by H.E. Mansour Al-Mazmoumi was held at Shangri-la Hotel on 8th June 2016. Friends of the Kingdom including representatives of the Singapore government, religious and civic organisations were invited. The Guest of Honour was the Honorable Associate Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, the Minister-in-Charge of Muslim Affairs in Singapore











INVITATION





COVER STORY





DEPUTY Crown Prince and Minister of Defense H.R.H. Prince Mohammed bin Salman's recent whistle-stop tour of America and France, to share the bold and innovative economic and social reforms for the development and modernisation of the Kingdom through its Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Plan 2020, highlights the determination and deep commitment of the Saudi leadership to change its economic mindset of oil export dependency to one of a broader investment spectrum in industry and financial capabilities.

Shift in Priorities

Unveiled in April 2016 by H.R.H. Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's economic and social reform agenda - Vision 2030 - aimed at ridding the kingdom of its dependence on oil and diversifying its economic spectrum, was drafted by the Council of Economic and Development Affairs under the directives of



WAY FORWARD LD GAMEPLAN



Moving away from the country's oil and public sector-centric economic agenda, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques H.M. King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Sa'ud aims to use Vision 2030 for the transformation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's economic and social world.

(Above & left): Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spearheading the plans on Vision 2030

the Prince's father, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques HM King Salman.

Development with Cultural Considerations

"Our vision is built around three themes: a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation," proclaimed the official announcement. "Our precious country deserves the best. Therefore, we will expand and further develop our talents and capacity. ... We are determined to reinforce and diversify the capabilities of our economy, turning our

key strengths into enabling tools for a fully diversified future," says the plan.

Rooted in the Kingdom's position at the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, its focus on becoming an investment powerhouse, and becoming a major global hub linking connecting three continents Asia, Europe and Africa, Vision 2030 is a long-term drive for economic reform, considered by the leadership as "an ambitious yet achievable blueprint, which expresses the Kingdom's long-term goals and expectations and reflects the country's strengths and capabilities."

Vision 2030 aims at also bolstering the country's non-oil sectors and providing "opportunities for all through education and training, and high quality services such as employment initiatives, health, housing, and entertainment". In short, all that makes a life of hope and progressive living for people.

Diversification of Revenue Streams

The Saudi leadership's future game plan entails using the country's investment power 'to create a more diverse and sustainable economy, by building non-oil industries, services and, eventually, high tech, knowledge-based industries.'

With 18 per cent of the world's proven petroleum reserves - making up almost half of its GDP product and 85 per cent of its exports - the Kingdom has been in a very comfortable position but the recent collapse in global oil prices has taken a toll on its well-being and brought home the bitter truth that on a long term basis one should never "be at the mercy of a commodity price volatility or external markets."

In the light of the changing dynamics of the global oil scenario, the unprecedented internal oil consumption, its burgeoning populace and significant government expenditures (a considerable spend on welfare and subsidies), the Kingdom has taken the call to re-orient its economic and social agenda and set in motion a plan to pour investment in non-oil sectors, tackle the employment issues of its growing youth populace and develop a much more market-orientated approach as it turns its key assets into enabling tools for a fully diversified future.

"The
Government
will from now
focus on policy
setting, defense,
internal security,
foreign affairs,
basic education
and selective
infrastructure
development."

Privatising state-owned assets

The Kingdom aims to transform itself into a nation capable of competing at a global level and offering full, high-quality employment to its people. A key part of the plan involves engaging the private sector on a much larger scale in the development process. The country has already set in motion the privatisation of state-owned assets, including leading companies, property and other assets, in a bid to bring in new and more diverse revenues for the Saudi government.

A major development has been the decision to transfer the ownership of Aramco to the Public Investment Fund (PIF), palanned to be converted into the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world. The PIF is envisaged to be the world's biggest funding resource for investing in international firms to diversify Government earnings, while also promoting local development in the Kingdom.

Autonomous Private Sector Growth

Vision 2030 chalks out a key role for the private sector in the new economic course of the Kingdom. In the new framework of things, the economy is to be led by the private sector. The contribution of the private sector to GDP is expected to mount from 40 per cent to 65 per cent by 2030.

"We intend to provide better opportunities for partnerships with the private sector through the three pillars: Our position as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, our leading investment capabilities, and our strategic geographical position," spells out the King Salman's plan.

Going the SME Way

The underutilised Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector has the potential create jobs, support innovation and boost exports. An independent SME Authority has already been set up and the development of the sector will be backed by businessfriendly regulations, access to funding, international partnerships and a greater share of national procurement and government bids to encourage budding young entrepreneurs.

In addition, the government will, (to increase the private sector's long-term contribution to the economy) open up new investment opportunities, facilitate investment, encourage innovation and competition and remove the hurdles that prevent the private sector from playing a larger role in development.

The vision throws up business opportunities for investment and long term partnerships from the private sector as well as governments—in infrastructure, cooperation in the defense sector, tourism, ICT, biotechnologies, renewables, nanotechnologies, the entertainment industry, the health sector and retail and wholesale sectors



Education & the Job Market

By 2030 the Kingdom plans to lower the rate of unemployment from 11.6 to 7 per cent, increase SME contribution to GDP from 20 to 35 per cent and increase women's participation in the workforce from 22 to 30 per cent.

(Left): Employment for its young workforce and increase participation of women in its workforce a top priority





(Above): Camel and castle rides - apart from religious tourism, there are plans to promote business and general tourism. (Left): Economic-business outlook will change as the private sector will play a key role in the future

Agenda for women

Saudi women are today being seen as a major asset of the Kingdom's workforce. Over 50 per cent of its university graduates are female. Steps will be taken to continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy.

A major area of investment will be education and training so that the youth— both men and women— are employable. The government plans on working closely with the private sector to ensure higher education outcomes are in line with the requirements of the job market. The government has set up the National Labor Gateway (TAQAT), with a slew of sector councils that will precisely determine the skills and knowledge required by each socio-economic sector. Vocational training will also be expanded to drive forward economic development. By 2030, at least five Saudi universities are expected to be ranked amongst the top 200 universities along international standards.

Presently, a major chunk of the national workforce is in the hands of the public sector. With plans to cut down the number of government positions as well on government spend, the job market should open up for the private sector.

Tourism

Recognised the world over as a major employment generating sector, tourism has a key role to play in the Vision. The Kingdom is home to Islam's two most sacred sites—the holy mosques at Makkah and Madinah. Plans are in place to increase tourist arrivals fivefold by the year 2030, with a makeover for its star attractions which include its coastal areas as well as its archaeological sites.

Plans are also to set up more museums and prepare new tourist and historical sites and cultural venues. In the offing are investments to the tune of \$46bn into the sector by 2020. Thrust areas apart from religious tourism (growth of Umrah visitors are envisaged to go up from eight million to 30 million by 2030) will be business and general tourism. The new Post-Umrah programme will allow pilgrims to stay up to 30 days in Saudi Arabia and travel to other parts of the kingdom for general tourism. The participation of the private sector and government funds in the efforts to enhance the tourism experience will be further strengthened.

World's largest Islamic Museum

Plans are in place to create the world's biggest Islamic museum, along the highest global standards; it will be equipped with the latest methods in collection, preservation, presentation and documentation

Healthcare

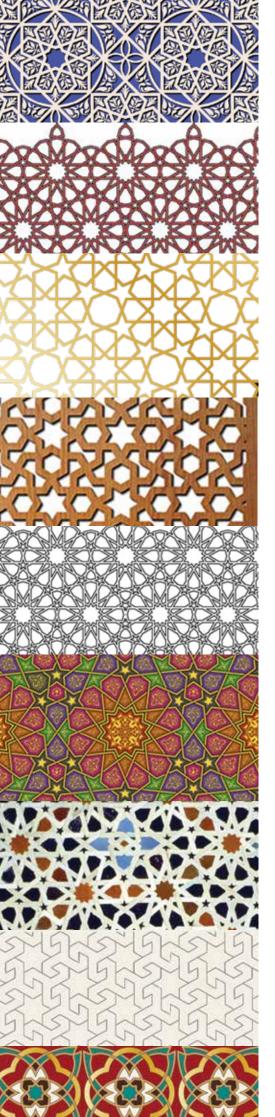
Entrenched in the Vision is the agenda to provide citizens with the highest quality of healthcare with the planned corporatisation of the healthcare sector. This will entail transferring of responsibility for healthcare to a network of public companies that will offer competitive services.

Entertainment

Culture and entertainment, indispensable part of a qualitative life, is also set to be bolstered with the introduction of an independent Entertainment body. Leisure resources are highly limited because of cultural considerations in the Kingdom. The new thinking of the government has been welcomed by the citizens. On the anvil are the viability of government funding and plans to pull in local and international investors, creating partnerships with international entertainment corporations.

Strengthening the Club Culture

Financial support for "Daem", a national programme to enhance the quality of cultural activities and entertainment is also planned. The program will create a national network of clubs and promote better awareness of a wide range of hobbies and leisure activities. By 2020, three should be over 450 registered and professionally organized amateur clubs who would provide a variety of cultural activities and entertainment events.





Masjid Al Nabawi ceiling in Madinah

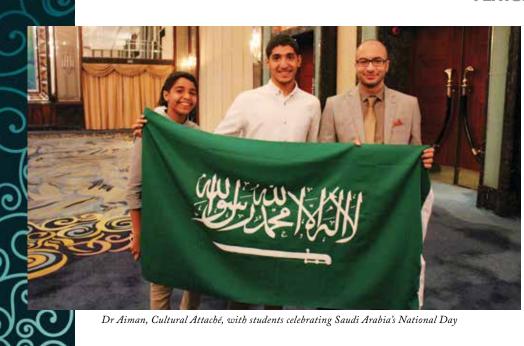
ACCENT ON ARABIC GEOMETRICAL PATTERN & DESIGN

This issue of Saudi Arabia Your Gateway to the Middle East pays tribute to the beauty of Arabic patterns in the presentation of the articles

In his book "Arabic Geometrical Pattern and Design", author J. Bourgoin, explained how by the forbidding of the representation of the human figure, Islamic art was pushed along a path which was radically different from that of traditional European art. "European art abounds with perspective renderings of figures and landscapes, while Islamic translates artistic impulse into elaborate geometric patterns and linear designs. Through centuries of practicing this purely abstract art, Muslim artists have perfected it to an incomparable elegance," wrote Bourgoin.

The beauty of these distinctive designs can be seen as they have been incorporated in this issue of *Saudi Arabia Your Gateway to the Middle East* in the layout of many of the articles (*pictured left*). A wide range of feature from Islamic geometrical art - the hexagon, octagon, dodecagon designs, as well as a combination of stars and rosettes have been used as illustrations in the design. The author also pointed out that these designs when transferred to metal, wood, stucco, mosaic and paint, the patterns make up the elaborate ornamentation for which Arabic Architecture is noted.

The main component of these beautiful hypnotic architectural marvels is the Girih (Persian for 'knots') – the tiling patterns made into mesmerising tessellations – all formed with a few basic tile patterns repeated again and again. You can find many magnificent examples all over the world from the Middle East to India, Spain, Morocco and Turkey.



SINGAPORE'S CONTRIBUTION IN EDUCATION TO KINGDOM'S

VISION 2030

SACM plays a major role in helping Saudi scholars in Singapore and strengthening bilateral cultural ties. Dr Aiman M. Momenah, Cultural Attaché of SACM Singapore describes the milestones achieved here

HOW many Saudi students are currently in Singapore and what is the range of courses and levels they are enrolled in? Also, how are they being eased into an English language learning environment?

Currently in Singapore, there are 89 Saudi students under the purview of the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM). Our scholars have enrolled in various courses that run the gamut from different specialisations of engineering, such as marine and electrical engineering, to medical, biomedical and biopharmaceutical sciences, and to innovation and techno-entrepreneurship. The levels enrolled range from a diploma to a doctorate or PhD.

Diploma courses are undertaken for total immersion in an English language learning environment and these courses are largely aligned with postgraduate studies to be undertaken at a later stage with local universities. The provision



"It is important to emphasise that support for postgraduate courses has always been considered in relation to the developmental needs of the Kingdom. The formulation of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reiterates this consideration."

Official Opening of the Splendour of Saudi LENScape – a photography exhibition that showcased the Kingdom's rich heritage and enchanting landscape. The photographs also captured Saudi festivals, events, traditional crafts and industries, which were on display for the first time in Singapore

of this form of support, in line with English language bridging courses, is to enable our scholars who have completed their basic degrees in Saudi Arabia to ease into a more technically advanced instructional environment in English.

What is your observation of the trend

in Singapore being a choice for Saudi scholars for education?

SACM was set up in Singapore in 2008. Over the years, the mission has seen an increasing number of scholars heading here. Singapore has renowned universities that rank high on international university performance tables. Apart from the assurance of

PROFILES OF SAUDI STUDENTS IN SINGAPORE

MOHAMMED ALI MOSHABAB ALSHEHRI AND REEM FIHRAN AMER ALSHEHRI

We are a couple with a young son from Riyadh. Singapore is a nice place to study because it offers all the features that we as students look for when studying overseas. In addition, we can always find a helping hand from the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission. We do highly recommend Singapore as a study destination.

We finished our English bridging course in Singapore within 18 months. We are now studying at the Singapore Management University for the Doctor of Innovation degree. Singapore has one of the highest costs of living among countries in the world; however, it is also one of the safest and cleanest. Moreover, it has universities that are considered



Mohammed and Reem Alshehri with their young son

the best around the world. These are considered important to many students.



Mr Hussain Mohammed Alattas (second from left) demonstrating how traditional clothing is worn by Saudis

the standard and quality of education here, scholars are also assured of having their choices of specialisation met, given the variety of postgraduate degrees that allow various tracks of specialisation. This is made possible by the flourishing university ecosystem developed here to attract the best international students.

Few will say that living and studying abroad is the best option when they think of being away from families. We were very homesick at the beginning but because we find all the staff at the cultural mission are collaborators for our success, especially the Cultural Attaché who is always as helpful as a brother to all students, we feel there is little difference between living here and in Saudi Arabia.

We would recommend Singapore as a place to study to our compatriots for many reasons mentioned earlier. Moreover, Singapore has high moral ethical standards in respecting all cultures. For instance, the niqab (face veil) is allowed and Singapore has many places for Muslims to pray. The fact that most people in Singapore are friendly and kind makes it the best place not only for students like us to study but also for families to feel as if they live in Saudi Arabia.

After the completion of our degree, our dream is to become academics in one of the Saudi universities so At this juncture, it is important to emphasise that support for postgraduate courses has always been considered in relation to the developmental needs of the The formulation Kingdom. of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reiterates this consideration. The government strives to enable a dynamic economy to provide ample job and entrepreneurial opportunities to its citizens, and by the same token, provides resources to develop the country's scholars through a rational and strategic approach supporting in

scholarship for employability and entrepreneurship.

Could you share with the Singapore readers, how the government of Saudi Arabia covers the costs of deserving students to encourage them to study overseas?

The scholarships provided by the Saudi government under the scholarship programme are generous in financially supporting their scholars in various ways:

- Fees for language training; tuition fees for academic programmes
- Monthly stipend for living expenses
- Medical treatment coverage for scholars and their dependents
- Costs for attending conferences, etc
- Expenses for field trips and cost of consumables in support of research undertaken
- Annual travel to and fro between Singapore and Saudi Arabia

With regard to the length of study, scholars are financially assisted for up to 18 months for English language classes, four years for undergraduate studies, two for masters and three for PhD. With this, it can be clearly seen that the scholarship programme affords attractive incentives to scholars to pursue their advanced studies overseas.



Hussain (extreme left) with his father (extreme right), mother (second from right), sister (third from right), brother (second from left) and participants at Colours of Saudi Arabia held at Temasek Polytechnic

that we may transfer the knowledge, skills and experiences we would have gained to contribute towards Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. In this way, we hope to play a role in shaping the next generation of Saudis who will in turn contribute towards that vision. We are thankful to the scholarship programme in helping us to realise our dreams.

HUSSAIN MOHAMMED ALATTAS

I was born in Jeddah, where I lived for 10 years before moving to Medina. What is special about Medina is that it is where the grave and the mosque honouring Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), Messenger of Allah, can be found.



"The programme is as relevant as it was in 2005, when it was established, with its ambition to develop the potential of young Saudis whose expertise will be needed to power the Kingdom's development. The scholarship programme has in fact been extended until at least 2020."

Splendour of Saudi LENScape - guests being introduced to the rivetting photographic display

Given the programme's generosity, a rigorous application and selection process is instituted to ensure that available scholarships are awarded only to deserving Saudis. Each application is evaluated by an independent committee appointed by the Ministry of Education. The merit of each applicant is based on an assessment of his/her collective achievements and an interview by the committee.

I have had a great experience in learning English. It is not only language I have learnt, but also the value of team work, volunteerism and reading as a hobby in addition to the friendships I have made. I am studying biomedical science now. Although the course is different from the English course, it has the same learning bases involving participating in class, doing homework, working hard, and respecting everyone.

Everything in Singapore is clear and easy to access - paying bills, using public transportation, and using public services. Even though Singapore is an expensive country to live in, with some wisdom in living within our means, it is fruitful living and studying here. The difference between studying in Singapore as compared to Saudi Arabia is that the whole environment in Singapore is conducive for studies as there are special treatments and different incentives for students. Singapore is highly recommended as the education standard is high, the country is safe and the people are kind.

I have always dreamt about becoming

Are these scholarship opportunities open to both men and women and do you have women scholars studying in Singapore? Could you also share how the scholarships support the welfare of the families for the knowledge of our Singapore readers?

The scholarships are awarded based on merit and are thus open to both men and women. Many people may be surprised to hear of women who are here as scholars with their husbands, children, or brothers as dependents. The Saudi government makes no exception when it comes to the development of potential and many Saudi men are in fact very supportive of their wives, sisters or daughters.

For female scholars with families in Singapore, the scholarships also cover the upkeep of their families. In fact, should their husbands wish to take up courses to upgrade themselves while in Singapore, SACM additionally makes provisions for such undertakings so that their

a doctor as it will be such an honour to use knowledge to help people in general and my country in particular. These goals motivate me to study and the support that I get from my family every single second pushes me further to reach my goals.

Saudi Arabia is developing fast. My hope for the next generation of Saudis is that by focusing on education and working hard, they will build a better Saudi community.

MARAM DAIFULLAH ALSALMI

I am a scholar under the scholarship programme. I was born and raised in the western part of Saudi Arabia which is well renowned for its diversity in culture and as a tourist attraction for its great balmy weather and traditional cuisines.

Completing an English course at the British Council (Singapore) was quite a fulfilling experience because I got to mix with and learn about different cultures and develop my language and social skills. Because of my good language

stay in Singapore is made all the more enriching.

The scholarship programme is in its tenth year. Do the students, who study overseas, return to the Kingdom after they get their degrees? What are the plans for the future of the programme?

The programme was established in 2005 to develop an important resource of the Kingdom – human resource – to meet the needs of a rapidly developing economy and country. It is by far the largest government scholarship programme in the world to propel Saudis academically so that they may receive overseas education in specialty areas in distinguished universities.

During their studies, the students are the ambassadors of the Kingdom through their interaction with peoples of other nationalities and participation in cross-cultural activities. After completion of their studies, the scholars would return to serve Saudi Arabia in all sectors - be it in the public, private or non-profit sectors.

They bring home invaluable expertise and experience that contribute towards the elevation of professional standards of their chosen vocations. All scholars naturally feel honoured and compelled to serve their country to reciprocate the generosity extended to them by the Saudi government.

The programme is as relevant as it was in 2005, when it was established, with its ambition to develop the potential of young Saudis whose expertise will be needed to power the Kingdom's development. The scholarship programme has in fact been extended until at least 2020.

In Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, our vision is to be "the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the investment powerhouse, and the hub connecting three continents". It is recognised that the development of the talents and capabilities of our people, so that they are equipped for an enterprising, innovative and progressive economic landscape, is critical towards the fulfilment of this vision. The essence

of the reciprocal relationship that exists between the Saudi government and our scholars lies in the recognition that all have important roles to play in realising Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

Most of the students come to study for their basic and postgraduate degrees. As you know education in Singapore is world class also at the primary and secondary level. Do you think sending deserving students to Singapore at those levels should be explored?

Sending our young students to Singapore to directly receive their primary and secondary education here is an exciting proposition. However, the needs of our young charges would be different from those of our adult scholars and thus such an endeavour would present a new set of challenges. Alternatives can be explored and these would include the training of Saudi teachers in Singapore to develop their English language, professional and leadership skills.

There are many areas related to the teaching profession that can be covered, such as theories on and practices in teaching and learning, education



Maram with her brother attending a celebratory Saudi National Day event

background, it took me just 3 months to finish the programme. Spending more time in reading, especially the daily newspaper, has certainly helped in boosting reading, writing and speaking skills.

After the English course, I did a bridging programme in biomedical sciences at MDIS which provided me with a useful fundamental understanding of the field in English, complementing

my first degree in biotechnology which Ι had completed Saudi Arabia. Currently, Ι doing my master's degree programme, to be completed by next year, with NUS and TUM Asia in the chemical engineering field.

The learning process here has a slightly faster pace

compared to that in my home country. Most of the courses are well integrated which provide a good understanding for students. However, to benefit the most from it, it demands effort and hard work. It is also beneficial if the person is experienced from having worked before. I believe PhD and masters students, being more mature, will cope better with the challenges posed by a new life style and the demands of study at the same time. For me, the biggest

draws about studying in Singapore are the easy access to many information databases and the increased capacity to develop myself on professional and personal levels.

My current level of study has equipped me with invaluable knowledge in the biomedical and chemical engineering fields as well as practical work attachment experience. I hope to apply my knowledge to industries in these fields and to gain deeper insights especially in the pharmaceutical area. It is my dream to become a CEO of a biotechnology company so as to serve my country by innovatively applying and sharing what I have learned in my field.

Great support from my family and the readiness to support shown by staff from the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission in Singapore have helped me throughout my study. I have benefitted greatly from my learning experience and hence I also wish for my people to learn and develop more, and to achieve nothing but the best.



"The rich
Saudi way of
life reflects a
confluence of
its religious,
entrepreneurial,
cultural and
aesthetic
aspirations."

Mr Lotfy Jamil Allaf (left), Deputy Head of Mission and Counsellor of the Saudi Embassy, together with Professor Arnoud de Meyer, President of SMU, officiating the opening of the Splendour of Saudi LENScape

management and leadership. Saudi teachers may then transfer what they have learnt to their classroom practice as well as to their fellow colleagues in their home country.

Under the Saudi National Transformation Programme 2020 launched in the first year of the rollout of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 - mobilising 24 government bodies managing economic and development portfolios, up to 8 strategic objectives have been drawn up for the Ministry of Education. Supported with substantial funding to the ministry for the realisation of the vision, the strategic objectives will drive many targeted projects for the development of our teachers and the education sector.

The vision objectives supported by the Ministry of Education are to "establish positive values and build an independent personality for citizens" and "provide citizens with knowledge and skills to meet the future needs of the labour market". In the long term, teacher training and development is poised to benefit all citizens and our students studying at the primary and secondary levels will be among the firsts to benefit.

Besides education, the mandate of Saudi Cultural office is also to generate awareness about Saudi Arabian culture. What are the activities that have been undertaken recently in this direction?

Splendour of Saudi LENScape was a photography exhibition featuring 27 artists through 33 pieces of their work by showcasing different perspectives of the Kingdom's landscape and offering a window to its varied and beautiful features. The opening with a tour, held on 21 September 2016 at the Singapore Management University's (SMU) de Suantio Gallery, was graced by the presence of Mr. Lotfy Jamil Allaf, Deputy Head of Mission and Counsellor of the Saudi Embassy, and Professor Arnoud de Meyer, President of SMU. The exhibition's opening was held on SMU Peace Day, specially organised by SMU annually, to commemorate the United Nation's "International Day of Peace". exhibition was held over 2 months with photographs exhibited along 3 specially chosen themes.

The Jenadriyah Festival was chosen as the first theme as it is the epitome of



the land's vibrancy and richness. Next, many local industries and historical sites were put under the spotlight through the second theme on its cultural and historical heritage. The exhibition showcased diverse craft industries producing products that range from the traditional coffee pots to the holy Ka'abah apparel, as well as its historical heritage through key monuments from the Al-Murabba Palace to the remains of the ancient Al-Ula town. Lastly, the splendour of Allah's creation of nature's wonders was chosen as the third theme. The photographs captured the colourful play of beautiful light reflections on calm waters and vast open skies.

Colours of Saudi Arabia, as an offshoot of Splendour of Saudi LENScape, featured only 12 pieces of photographs to give a glimpse of the Kingdom's rich heritage and enchanting landscape. The mini photography exhibition was held on 14 July 2016 in conjunction with Temasek Polytechnic's Global Community Day to celebrate the richness of cultural diversity through art, fashion, food, music and performances.

Participants were given a tour of the exhibits. Time was also set aside for them to sample Saudi coffee, dates and sweets, beautify their hands using henna for the ladies, and to try on Saudi costumes for both the ladies and gentlemen.

Through this publication, what would you like our Singapore readers to know about the Kingdom of



Participants getting a glimpse of Saudi Arabia's rich heritage and enchanting landscape at Colours of Saudi Arabia

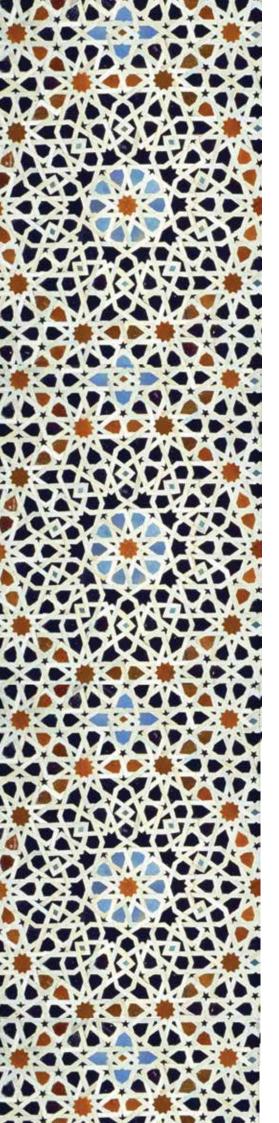
Saudi Arabia, especially in terms of education and culture?

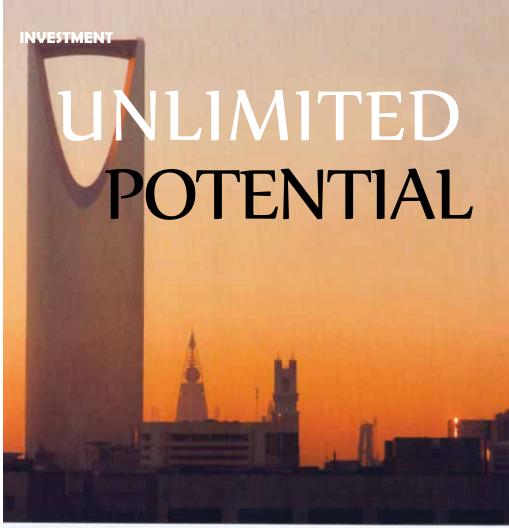
For many years, the Kingdom has placed great emphasis on education for the country's development and advancement. With Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, this emphasis on education has been renewed and given new impetus through the elaboration of educational strategic objectives in the country's National Transformation Programme 2020. Within the programme, the Ministry of Education is one among 24 other government bodies vested with key performance indicators to take the Kingdom closer towards its vision. Education is a key sector, among many other important sectors, in taking the country's economy and people forward through a holistic government approach.

At the heart of education lies the quest of the government to nurture a thriving economy, offering job and entrepreneurial opportunities to its citizens, both men and women, who are enabled by employability and entrepreneurship through a rational and strategic approach in supporting scholarship. The scholarship programme is one among various vehicles towards this end. Singapore as an educational destination has been increasingly gaining more popularity among Saudis.

On the cultural front, SACM will continue to present cultural events to convey our country's belief in the importance of peace and harmony and our support of multi-culturalism in the face of rapid changes brought on by globalisation. The rich Saudi way of life reflects a confluence of its religious, entrepreneurial, cultural and aesthetic aspirations. Through cultural events, it is our hope to offer vignettes of its richness, as well as its enchanting landscape, that may otherwise remain obscure.







A revitalised economic climate, led by the process of diversification from its oil-centric interests, is exciting investors about the prospect of cashing in on the unfolding new investment opportunities in Saudi Arabia

SAUDIA Arabia's growing economic progress has ranked it not only as the largest economy in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region, but also positions it 19th amongst the world's largest economies; the Kingdom is also a member of the G20. In addition to being the third biggest current account holder, the Kingdom is also the world's 16th largest exporter and its 29th largest importer, thus offering potential investors some very sound reasons to consider establishing their presence in the country.

The winds of change are now being fanned by the launching of Vision 2030. No doubt oil will continue to play a pivotal role in the Kingdom's economic agenda, but keeping in mind the reality that it won't last forever, the country is geared up to adjust to the development plans for other vital sectors. SAGIA (Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority) has been tasked to create the highly competitive economic climate and modern infrastructure that will lead to greater resilience and social prosperity across the land. It has, with the help of several ministries involved in the process, floated the National Investment Plan (NIP)—a new positive phase of investment aimed at unlocking the Kingdom's potential. Consolidated under the NIP are various confirmed investment opportunities. The collection of these investments is estimated to be worth hundreds of billions of dollars over the next 15 years.

The transformation of the investment landscape of Saudi Arabia will be empower it to seamlessly absorb the factors of the diversification of the economy, building up of the knowledge base, enabling of high productivity and maintaining the ease of doing business—all very critical for the Kingdom to move forward to achieve its set goals over the next 15 years.



The four new mega developments (from left to right): King Abdullah City, Hail, Knowledge and Jazan Economic Cities

Already identified through the National Investment Plan are over 90 projects in the fields of Healthcare, Transportation and Industrial parts and equipment sectors, as major growth is expected of them in every sub-sector and at every step in the value chain. In time, many new projects will also be placed under the NIP agenda.

Healthcare

The Kingdom is the Middle East's largest market of healthcare consumers and an aging, yet affluent population. Keeping in mind the massive potential this serves up in terms of investment, Saudi Arabia will roll out the world's largest healthcare expansions with a spend of US\$18.5 billion annually over the next 10 years set aside for its implementation. Investors have a lot of potential to dip into as opportunities across the value chain are set to open up, with an estimated US\$1.6 billion spend annually over the next 10 years on medical equipment and device manufacturing alone.

To support this, fresh efforts will be made to build domestic capability for the manufacture of medical devices and pharmaceuticals. The trickledown effect of this will be the creation of new jobs and the enhancing of the Kingdom's knowledge pool. Private partnerships are expected to play a pivotal role in sustaining and capitalising on the estimated demand.

Transport

Within the Transportation sector - between the base economy and Economic Cities - are new investment

opportunities as well. Expected investment in public transport is to the tune of US\$141 billion upwards over the next 10 years.

In the Rail sector some of the most important projects include the Land Bridge Project - a 950 km rail link between Jeddah-Dammam and the Light Rail Transit Systems in cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. There are also projects to connect the East and West Coast and the Kingdom with Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE.

In the Sea Port sector, there is the potential of building two ports, as well as several operations in King Abdullah Economic City and Jizan Economic City, the development and administration of Logistics Park adjacent to Yanbu Commercial Port, and a second Container Terminal in Jubail Commercial Port.

In the Air sector, many developments are gathering in aviation; significant upgrades are already playing out at Madina Airport and a new Cargo Village is to be set up at Dammam Airport. In step with the agenda to involve the private sector, the first planned private airport is currently in progress in Prince Abdul Aziz bin Musa'ed Economic City.

In the Road sector, the rising demand for better infrastructure roads are a major consideration for investment, especially with the coming up of the new Economic Cities. Government spending will increase from the 8th Five-Year Development plan by 97.5% (from SR 51.4 BN to SR 101.5 BN). Investors should seek opportunities in the design and supervision of new connections and expansions, and road services including, but not limited to, Public Transportation services.

Industrial Equipment

The Kingdom's Industrial equipment and components sector is estimated as a USD 15 billion industry. Of this, presently only 10% of its value is added locally. This is reason enough for the government and the major industrial stakeholders to start nurturing a KSA-based industrial sector, with investment opportunities opening up for both for local and international manufacturers.

Already in play are several individual, as well as joint localisation initiatives to help set up a local industrial equipment sector in the Kingdom with a goal to increase the level of local content. Saudi Aramco is planning to up its share of business channeled through local manufacturers (for their targeted categories such as steel and piping, drilling equipment, and static equipment) from 25 per cent to 70 per cent by 2025. SABIC plans to also tie up with key stakeholders to promote localisation of equipment and parts. All this should be a wake-up call to invest in a rapidly growing and sustainable industrial sector.

Economic Cities

Potential for investor opportunity rides high with the coming up of Saudi Arabia's four new Economic Cities—planned, developed and operated by a master developer from the private sector.

INVESTMENT

"The Kingdom is the largest free market in the Middle East, with 38% of the total Arab gross domestic product (GDP).

The Saudi market has high purchasing power..."

Education

Central to Saudi Arabia's drive to give teeth to its workforce sector is the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Scholarship Programme formerly known as the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme. The Kingdom is investing heavily in education and training programmes to foster its plans for the development of a knowledge-based economy. Saudi Arabia today is the world's 8th largest investor in education and further investments are very much part of its agenda under Vision 2030.

Investors have plenty of incentive to consider Saudi Arabia in their future plans. For one, the Kingdom is at the heart of MENA, with a 400 million-strong population in the region. It ranks 49th out of 189 countries for the overall 'Ease of Doing Business', according to the International Finance Corporation/World Bank's 'Doing Business' report in 2015. The Kingdom is the largest free market in the Middle East, with 38% of the total Arab gross domestic product (GDP). The Saudi market has high purchasing power and continuous expansion and is one of the fastest-growing countries worldwide, with per capita income forecast to rise from US\$25,000 in 2012 to US\$33,500 by 2020 and therefore, the Saudi market has high purchasing power and continuous expansion.

In terms of macroeconomic stability, Saudi Arabia is ranked 4th in the global context. The spurt in growth in recent years has been supported strongly by high oil prices and output, increased private sector activity, and increased government spending. The private sector in fact accounts for 39.5 per cent of the GDP, and counting, as it is expected to play an even greater role in the Kingdom's economy with its opening up for foreign investment.

The Kingdom continually seeks to improve its investment environment, especially the logistic regulations in an effort to support foreign investment. Through its various authorities and agencies, it is dedicated to providing the best and most convenient support for business.





اتجاد شركات السياحة للمسلمين في سنقا فورة

PERSATUAN AGENSI PELANCONGAN ISLAM SINGAPURA ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM TRAVEL AGENTS (SINGAPORE)

ROTARY ENGINEERING

A GIANT IN MIDDLE EAST 0&G

Rotary made Singapore engineering corporate history in Saudi Arabia when it won a US\$750 million EPC bid in 2009 from Saudi Aramco. Since then it has expanded to become a major regional player in the Middle Eastern Oil & Gas infrastructure

he Rotary history Engineering Limited dated back to 1972 when Chairman and Managing Director - Mr Roger Chia founded the electrical contracting company. In the early 80s when Singapore was moving into a new phase of economic development which emphasised the shift to higher value-added products and services, Rotary grew alongside Singapore and seized the opportunity to acquire multidisciplinary design and construction capabilities. In 1993, Rotary is listed on the mainboard of the Singapore Exchange and has since been one of the leading Oil & Gas infrastructure service providers in the region.

As a full-fledged Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Maintenance (EPCM) contractor to the oil and gas, petrochemical, petroleum and pharmaceutical industries, Rotary prides itself on a highly-skilled workforce of 6,000 men that forms the mainstay of its core EPCM services. A specialist in bulk liquid storage solutions, Rotary provides one-stop integrated tanking solutions with the core functions of Civil Tankage.

Mechanical, Electrical, Instrumentation and Maintenance. To ensure efficient execution and timely completion of projects, Rotary is well supported by 5 fully-equipped fabrication workshops totalling 30ha across the globe. Rotary is expanding its presence in the Middle East and is expecting the sixth workshop to be completed in Fujairah, UAE by end 2016. With such expertise comes the capability to plan and deliver the most complex storage solutions for the industry. Rotary had also emerged to be involved in projects' initial Front End Engineering Design (FEED) studies and the construction of jetty topside facilities.

Having built more than half of independent storage tanks in Singapore and contributed to Singapore's status as the third largest petrochemical hub in Asia, Rotary has established a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific region and continues to make its mark as a global player. Rotary is committed to expand its geographical footprint and has since set foot in Middle East in 2006. A fabrication and maintenance facility was set up in Jubail Industrial City, affirming Rotary's commitment to

build a strong and permanent presence in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In 2009, Rotary clinched its largest contract by far – a US\$750 million EPC contract from Saudi Aramco Total Refining and Petrochemical Company (SATORP) to design and build a refinery tank farm of 1.6 million cubic meter storage capacity. This remains a record achievement till date. Rotary further strengthens its foothold in the Middle East with the award of US\$ 300 million EPC contract in 2012 to build a petroleum storage facility with a capacity of 1.1 million cubic metres in Fujairah, UAE.

As a specialist in the liquid storage solutions, Rotary seeks to continually expand our capabilities beyond the increasingly changing demand of the global market. Liquid Natural Gas ("LNG"), a cleaner fuel alternative, is projected to grow in importance as a fuel for future power generation. In Singapore, the on-going expansion of the Singapore LNG terminal had underlined the Republic's ambitions to grow as a regional LNG trading hub. Recognizing this upward trend, Rotary achieved a breakthrough into LNG space in 2014 with its first contract win to provide tankage works for two 160,000 cubic meter LNG storage tanks for the LNG Receiving Terminal Expansion Project - Phase II at Map Tha Phut petrochemical hub in Rayong, Thailand.

With the extensive experience in undertaking various scale of projects regionally and globally, Rotary has since expanded from its roots in Singapore to a regional operation with a global outreach.



TRANSPORT

HARAMAIN SPEED RAIL:

LAUNCH EXPECTED FIRST QUARTER 2018



THE completion and launch date for the Haramain High Speed Rail line has been scheduled to be sometime in the first quarter of 2018, according to Spain's Development Minister Ana Pastor in May this year. Railway systems and rolling stock for the 450-km Makkah − Jeddah − Madinah line are being supplied under a €6·7bn contract which was awarded in October 2011 to the AlShoula Consortium of two Saudi and 12 Spanish companies, including Renfe, Adif and rolling stock supplier Talgo.

The line will link the Muslim holy cities of Medina and Mecca via King Abdullah Economic City, Rabigh, Jeddah, and King Abdulaziz International Airport. It will connect with the national network at Jeddah.

The rail line is planned to provide a safe and comfortable mode of transport in 300 kilometres per hour (190 mph) electric trains. The railway is expected to carry three million passengers a year, including many Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, helping to relieve traffic congestion on the roads.

"The rail line is planned to provide a safe and comfortable mode of transport in 300 kilometres per hour (190 mph)... for the three million passengers a year, including many Hajj and Umrah pilgrims"



its captive market of a population of 30.7 million (2014 figure) and counting. With the National Transformation and Vision 2030 now in place, investors in the Kingdom have much to gain as the Kingdom gets privatisation to lead the economy in a non-oil diversification scenario and is set to expand its global prospects by reaching out for global partnerships with renewed vigour. "For those global players who already have a presence in the Kingdom it is

time to strengthen their linkages by addressing the needs of the Middle East's largest market with fresh inputs, in what is destined to be a more competitive environment."



"This move advances Dow's ability to deliver high-value, innovative products that will benefit the Kingdom in its high priority areas of sustainable development, energy-efficiency, oil and gas, alternative energy and water."

DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY

The **Dow Chemical Company** (NYSE: DOW) became the first firm to receive a trading license from the Government of Saudi Arabia (June 2016), allowing it 100 per cent ownership in the country's trading sector, thus expanding its 40-year history of collaboration and investment in the Kingdom. "We look forward to playing a key role in helping advance the Saudis' Vision 2030 plan designed to create a vibrant society and a thriving diversified economy," shares Chairman and CEO Andrew N. Liveris.

Saudi Arabia's economic cities have been, in recent times, a hotbed of development and investment opportunities. The Saudi market is a very strategic market for French firm Sanofi, the global healthcare major, which set up its manufacturing plant in King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC) in 2014. The firm has been doing business with the Kingdom for half a century now and has targeted a goal of 19 million boxes in the first phase, but it also has ambitious plans to enter production (under its two entities in operation here -Sanofi Aventis Arabia Co. Ltd. and Sanofi Arabia Trading Co. Ltd) and distribution of pharmaceuticals in fields (apart from diabetes) such as cardiovascular, pain management, oncology, cholesterol management, CNS, Anticoagulant, antibiotics, antihistamine and anti-acids. Importantly too, it has generated and developed the critical local job market as well by picking up over 400 employees with an 81 per cent Saudisation rate. Of these, 66 per cent are female workers. Backed by its agreement with SAGIA and the Saudi authorities, this investment is in complete sync with the Kingdom's diversification plan under its new economic agenda.

"KAEC has been an ideal location for the Sanofi plant, not just for its location but also for facilities it offers; the King Abdullah port is perfectly located for the firm to operate its export/import processes."

HONEYWELL

New Jersey-based **Honeywell**, a major name in aerospace, performance materials and technologies and control solutions too has had a long association with the Kingdom, especially where its energy challenges are concerned, by delivering innovation technology solutions to Saudi Arabian industries, as 50 per cent of the firm's products are linked to energy efficiency. It has been in operation in Saudi Arabia since the 70s. Operating out of Riyadh, Jubail, Jeddah and Yanbu,

Honeywell apart from running a Customer Solution Centre and Engineering Centre in Dhahran, has set up three joint ventures with local partners. Honeywell Turki Arabia Ltd is a joint venture with ATCO, focusing on Honeywell Process Solutions, Honeywell Building Solutions and Honeywell Technology Solutions.



Honeywell had generated employment for over 600 Saudis by the end of 2015 in its 10 offices spread across all important market segments. Its workforce has played an important role in the success of their operations. "We have found that Saudi presents a tremendous opportunity in terms of its local talent potential. The Saudi youth makes up more than 50 percent of the country's population and this will provide a sustainable pipeline of talent to drive Saudi's growth and economic diversification," shares Honeywell's Norm Gilsdorf, President High Growth Regions for the Middle East, Russia and Central Asia.

JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE

The US\$7.7 billion, Baltimore-based Johns Hopkins Medicine (JHM), one of America's leading lights in integrated global health enterprise and academic health care systems, first set up business in Saudi Arabia in 2010, with an affiliation with King Khaled Eye Specialist Hospital (KKESH) in Riyadh. The project entailed also helping KKESH train a new generation of leaders in ophthalmology to treat the people of Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Gulf countries. In 2014 JHM signed a health care joint venture with Saudi Aramco—under an independent firm, Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare (JHAH). The deal also ensured that both JHM and Saudi Aramco both have an indirect ownership interest in the newly set up Saudi-registered company. The firm was tasked to take care of the medical services of Saudi Aramco's approximately 360,000 employees and dependents, education for its clinicians and other health care professionals and opportunities for research collaborations.



Its long-term goal is to combine Johns Hopkins' medical expertise and KKESH's huge volume of eye patients to develop treatments for eye diseases that afflict patients living in both countries and around the world. Pamela D. Paulk, M.S.W., M.B.A. President/CEO Johns Hopkins Medicine International elaborating on the collaboration says: "Johns Hopkins Medicine is happy to share its 127 years of health care expertise with its renowned partners in Saudi Arabia. The resulting collaborations have opened up great potential to address the most critical health challenges facing the Kingdom and the region." The company JHAH employs 5,200 people - 3,000 Saudi Aramco employees seconded to JHAH, 600 JHAH direct hires and 1,600 contracted employees.



BUSINESS PROFILES



GE HEALTHCARE

GE Healthcare is another global biggie which has made great inroads in the Kingdom with its operations at Riyadh, Jeddah and Dhahran—with 100 per cent local distribution and after-sales services. This has been carried out in collaboration with direct operations for the Kingdom through two joint-ventures. The firm provides expertise and support to customers throughout the Kingdom with local capabilities which include an all-female (24/7) Healthcare Service Center. It is staffed with experts and backed by excellent technical support and has set up the first integrated remote support team in the Kingdom co-located with GE's Service Center. There are 7 Resident Field Engineers located in major hospitals working 24/7. It also provides local services in remote areas— from Qurayat in the North to Jizan and Najran in the South, supported by over 10 Field Engineers based in very remote areas. GE has been offering 200+ courses to 10,000+ Saudi professionals in Clinical, Technical, Leadership and eHealth practice areas since 2013 when it set up the Healthcare Skills & Training Institute in partnership with King Fahad Medical City.

Additionally, GE Healthcare Life Sciences provides on-going support to enable the development of a biotech industry in the Kingdom covering national vaccine self-sufficiency and pandemic preparedness programmes with both private and public partners, including delivering education and training, state-of-the-art technology and Life Sciences business coaching andenabling the development of a full biotech industry and ecosystem in the country. GE employs over 350 people with over 40% Saudisation, including over 100 technical field engineers. "Our competencies are aligned with the strategy of the Ministry of Health and together we aim to improve Saudi healthcare infrastructure and drive efficiencies in healthcare expenditure," says Hisham Bahkali, President and CEO of GE Saudi Arabia & Bahrain.



Groundbreaking ceremony of 3M's new factory in Dammam in December 2015

3M

3M, which set up business in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, provides technical support to its customers across diverse industry sectors through a dedicated technical & scientific office in Riyadh and two Customer Experience Centers in Riyadh and Dammam. The firm has recently announced the construction of its first manufacturing facility in the Middle East and Africa region in Dammam.

The Dammam facility is the global science-based company's largest manufacturing facility in the region. Mr H. C. Shin, 3M EVP for international operations said, "3M has plans to continue to increase our localization

effort in Saudi Arabia. As a global leader in developing innovative solutions, our goal is to play an important role in the Kingdom's effort to diversify its economy through knowledge and technology transfer. We will work closely with the Saudi government to enhance our manufacturing investment plans, invest in specialized research and development centers, and create high-value, technically sophisticated jobs."

GSK SAUDI ARABIA

GlaxoSmithKline plc (GSK) has a significant historical presence in Saudi Arabia ever since it started operations here in 1950. Its business portfolio centres around three core businesses: vaccines, pharmaceuticals and consumer healthcare with the aim of providing access and meaningful health outcomes for patients and healthcare providers alike. "Our focus remains on innovation through R&D and increasing access to our medicines in a sustainable way to people in Saudi Arabia," shares Andrew Miles—Vice President & General Manager, Saudi Arabia / GCC.

GlaxoSmithKline has also gone into a joint venture with Banaja Holdings and have been partners in Saudi Arabia since 1950. They established the first pharmaceutical production plant in Saudi Arabia in 1997 (51% owned by Banaja Holdings and 49% owned by GSK). An initial investment of US\$32 million was made and the first project was completed under the Al Yamamah Economic Offset Project, a bilateral civil trade agreement. Glaxo Saudi Arabia currently operates GSAL — a modern, state-of-the-art pharmaceutical factory that currently offers a tablet, topical and liquid department.



GSAL operates a modern, state-ofthe-art pharmaceutical factory in partnership with GSK

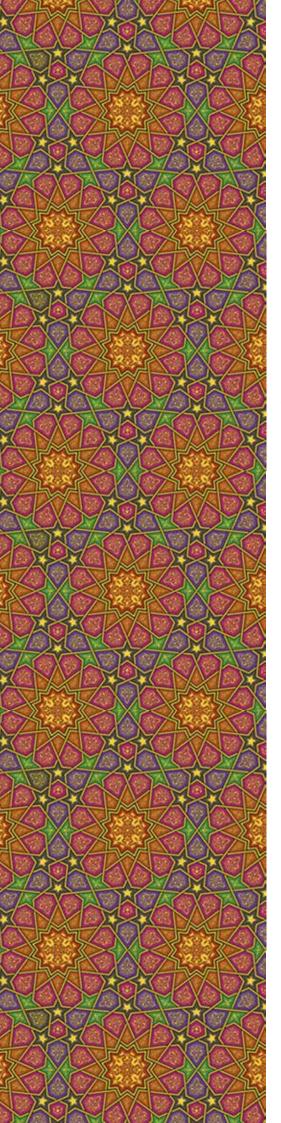
CERNER MIDDLE EAST

Cerner Middle East has been operating in the Kingdom since 1991 and has played an important role in the country's healthcare transformation that has taken place since they first came. 'Our mission of improving the health of populations is very much in line with the Kingdom's Strategic Healthcare Plan and we are fully committed to support the Saudi government and citizens in the development of a world class healthcare system,' says Michael Pomerance Vice President & Managing Director, Cerner Middle East.

"Our mission of improving the health of populations is very much in line with the Kingdom's Strategic Healthcare Plan and we are fully committed to support the Saudi government and citizens in the development of a world class healthcare system"







GROOMING THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

The process of removal of impediments in the Kingdom's economic and social growth, as seen by Vision 2030, can be hastened by equipping its youth with better education at the primary, secondary, and higher education levels as well as through training and development skills

IT is on the shoulders of its youth that the Kingdom's bright prospects for a post-oil economic and social future rest. Saudi Arabia' spanking new economic and societal change agenda sees this as the engine that will drive the nation's bold and innovative plan to transform the country by its internal strengths— to rank amongst the world's most progressive and accomplished nations. The Kingdom's youth (half of the Saudi population is below the age of 25 years) has been recognised as one of its most significant assets and every effort will be made to give them the skills which will empower them in the job market.

First off, is broadening the educational environment within the country itself. Embedded within the framework of the Vision is the thrust on the recommended procedures needed to enhance the quality of education and this includes the development of Saudi universities as well.

A report in Arab News quotes a study (conducted by Saeed Al-Sadiqi, professor at Al-Ain University of Science and Technology) which proposes that nine of the Kingdom's universities should be developed to rank amongst the best in the world. Saleh Al-Agla, economics faculty dean at the Umm Al-Qura University feels that Saudi universities have improved their academic programs according to Arab News, which also speaks of the 19 Saudi universities ranked among the QS top 100 Arab Universities for the year 2015–2016. QS is one of the most prestigious and famous institutions with respect to university classifications around the world, in addition to the Time Higher Education World University Ranking, and the Academic Ranking for World Universities.

Fresh Initiatives

The Ministry of Education, under the NTP, has 36 initiatives for the development of education, including the foreign scholarship program and improvement of its operations, with a budget of SR48 million. The total education budget is SR24 billion. This confirms the government's continued commitment to education, a Saudi Press Agency report said. This is what The Custodian of the Two Mosques, HM King Salman and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, his son and Minister of Defence, a major force behind this vision, have in mind where learning for working in Saudia Arabia is headed: 'We will continue investing in education and training so that our young men and women are equipped for the jobs of the future. We want Saudi children, wherever they live, to enjoy higher quality, multi-faceted education. We will invest particularly in developing early childhood education, refining our national curriculum and training our teachers and educational leaders. We will also redouble efforts to ensure that the outcomes of our education system are in line with market needs.'

"In the year 2030, we aim to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings - Vision 2030"



Schools for all Round Progress

It's not just the students who will have to gear themselves up for the bright future planned for them, the schools too have a role to play in this: "Schools, working with families, will reinforce the fabric of society by providing students with the compassion, knowledge and behaviors necessary for resilient and independent characters to emerge. The focus will be on the fundamental values of initiative, persistence and leadership, as well as social skills, cultural knowledge and selfawareness. We will also promote cultural, social, volunteering and athletic activities through empowering our educational, cultural and entertainment institutions and look for an all-round development for each student passing through an educational institute in the country,' spells out the Vision.

Scholarships

Over 50 public and private universities are providing academic and vocational training across the Kingdom. The Vision seeks to enhance its scholarship opportunities which "will be steered towards prestigious international

universities and be awarded in the fields that serve our national priorities".

The late H.M. King Abdullah played a pivotal role in the nation's educational agenda. When he launched his royal scholarship programme for study abroad in 2005, it comprised 20 per cent female students. Their numbers continue to increase. By 2014, about 35,000 under the scheme were enrolled in foreign undergraduate and graduate programs, with over half of them studying in the United States.

According to the Saudi Press Agency, the United States has the most Saudi students in the world at 125,000, which includes those on scholarship and others studying at their own expense. Saudis have been studying in the United States for decades, overseen by the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, which was established in America 60 years ago. This was part of the government's plan, now under Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman, to ensure Saudis have skills to help the economy on their return home, the report stated.



Vocational Training and Technology

Critical emphasis has been placed on vocational training in the educational system in order to drive forward economic development. Plans to focus on innovation in advanced technologies and entrepreneurship are also to be the key pointer is this drive for economic transformation. The government aims to work closely with the private sector "to ensure higher education outcomes are in line with the requirements of the job market."



PRESERVING HERITAGE

With the launching of the National Transformation Programme (NTP) and Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is all set to bring in a slew of welcome changes in its society

THE viewpoint of The Custodian of the Two Mosques, HM King Salman and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, his son and Minister of Defense— a major force behind Vision 2030, acknowledges that "culture and entertainment is indispensable to our quality of life" and that "the cultural and entertainment opportunities currently available do not reflect the rising aspirations of our citizens and residents, nor are they in harmony with our prosperous economy." The Vision hereon holds the promise of supporting "the efforts of regions, governorates, non-profit and private sectors to organisze cultural events." This is no empty promise as the government plans on enhancing funds "while also attracting local and international investors, creating partnerships with international entertainment corporations."

Also on the cards is to make available land use appropriate for cultural and entertainment projects. Support is also to be provided to talented writers, authors and directors. Appropriate venues to hold cultural events will also be made available - libraries and museums, as well as entertainment possibilities to suit tastes and preferences. Not only will these contribute to the economy they will also be a platform for employment opportunities.

Under the NTP, a Royal Arts Complex would be developed, as well as a Media City. According to a report by *Arab News* Saudi Culture and Information Minister Adel Al-Al-Toraifi (picture below right) told reporters on the sidelines of a briefing about the NTP, that though some Saudi artists and performers have exhibited and gained popularity abroad, they "did not find the platform and space to support them" at home. With the coming up (under the NTP) of a Royal Arts Complex, this is bound to change. The setting up of the complex will also signal a different image of the Kingdom to the world, he indicated.

Media City

There are also plans in process to set up a Media City, which would play a role in developing the production skills of Saudi youth in this field and also

help generate more local content. The minister pointed out that the aim was to set up institutions where they could exhibit their work, whether modern or traditional, and provide them with grants and scholarships "to pursue their dreams of creating art." It would also be a welcome move for artists who have had exhibitions in galleries abroad but not at home. Now, they can do it here as well.

By 2020, the NTP aims to achieve a goal of 16,100 media and related jobs — up from the present





10,000. The aim of the project, he said was improve the Kingdom's image and promoting its culture. And, to also counter the stereotyped image the world has been subjected to in the past few decades.

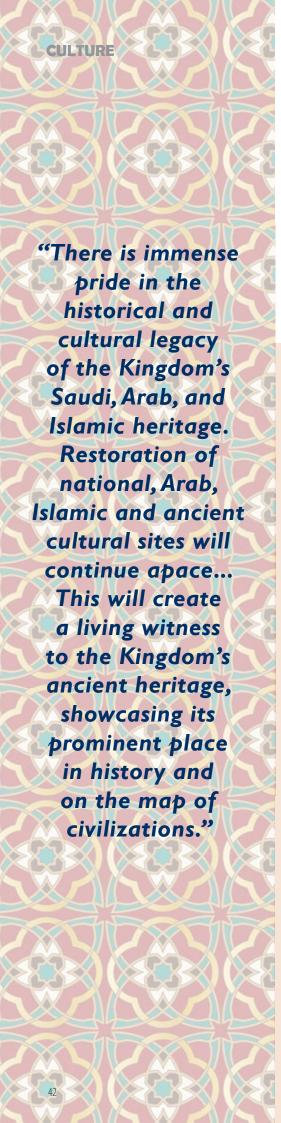
Al-Toraifi also spoke of the Saudi actors who have become renowned for their work in comedy and drama and popularised in through the Arab world through television. Youth creativity in the Kingdom has lacked support and the complex has been planned to create a platform for nurturing their talent. According to the NTP brief, the the government has set aside SR700,126 over the next five years to oversee the development of the complex, including setting up various structures that needed funds for its construction.

The aims of the government have been welcomed as a positive step that would go a long way in supporting the Kingdom's youth. Osama Al-Mulla, director of the arts and culture association of Dammam, as reported by *Arab News*, said that the people in the country "were looking forward to the establishment of academies for teaching art, museums, theaters and cinemas." He urged for more research to be done into the country's art and said there should be greater backing for artists, in contrast with the past when much of their work was forbidden.'

Al Mulla pointed out that a major challenge has been the lack of an arts movement in the country, but he was, however, confident that this could be solved because the country has many artists.

Islamic Museum

The Kingdom is the home to the two most sacred sites of Islam-Makkah and Madinah, visited by millions of pilgrims each year. Plans are now in place to set up the world largest Islamic Museum. The museum will be built along the lines of highest international standards and equipped with the latest methods in collection, preservation, presentation and documentation. It will be a onestop point for visitors to learn about the history of Islam, journey through the different ages of Islamic civilization, as well as its science - and also enjoy interactive experiences and participate in cultural events.



In a wider context, the Vision is a platform to strengthen, preserve and highlight the Kingdom's national identity so that it can guide the lives of future generations. This will be accomplished by keeping true to the national values and principles, as well as by encouraging social development.

There is immense pride in the historical and cultural legacy of the Kingdom's Saudi, Arab, and Islamic heritage. Restoration of national, Arab, Islamic and ancient cultural sites will continue apace as will the agenda to "have them registered internationally to make them accessible to everyone and, in the process, create cultural events and build world-class museums which will attract visitors from near and far." This will create a living witness to the Kingdom's ancient heritage, showcasing its prominent place in history and on the map of civilizations.

AL-JANADRIYAH

SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Saudi Arabia's most prestigious cultural festival showcases and celebrates some of the most precious traditions of the Arab world which endure even to this day

IT is one of the most awaited and most important cultural, heritage and folk festivals in the Kingdom and and is celebrating its run of 30 years. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, HM King Salman, accompanied by some of the Arab world's most important luminaries, threw open the festivities of the annual AlJanadriyah Festival— the National Festival for Heritage and Culture, at the purpose-built village, half an hour from downtown Riyadh, en route to King Abdul Aziz Racetrack and Thumamah National Park sand dunes.

On its 30th year of celebrations, Germany was the key cultural guest of honour. The German delegation was led by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. This annual cultural extravaganza celebrates the heritage of the people of Najd as well as the people of Saudi Arabia; it has an enormous significance in the Arab world as well, according to a source in the Saudi National Guard, which has, since 1985, been tasked to organise the festivities. The festival attracts millions of visitors from the Kingdom and the Gulf region.

Spread across the 1.5 sq km sprawl of the village are ranged the many pavilions representing the different regions and provinces of the Kingdom and a showcase of the variety of their cultural traditions. In addition, some of the country's leading government set ups are also represented as are several NGOs, and charity institutes and private firms.

Amazing Performances

The amazing performers of the al'ardah, a symbol of traditional Saudi Arabian culture is a real showstopper. The 'ardah is one of the Kingdom's most enduring folk-music traditions - the pounding of the massive drums, ...the rhythmic singing, stylised movements and the wielding of the ceremonial swords is surely poetry in motion. Accoutered in spotless white thobes with richly embroidered coats (daghla), the performers represent a very ancient folk tradition believed to







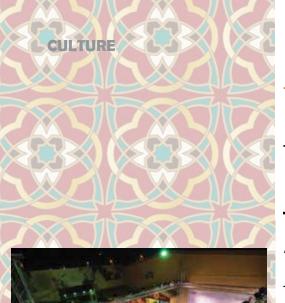
have originated amongst the Bedoiun in the sands of the Arabian desert as a war dance al-faza', but after the unification it became a dance of peace al-'ardah alnajdiyyah, says Kay Hardy Campbell in Aramco World, quoting Muhammad al-Maiman, president of the Committee for Heritage and Folk Arts at the Riyadh headquarters of the Saudi Society for Arts and Culture, who mentioned there are plans to teach this national-spirited tradition to school boys in the Kingdom. Visitors can enjoy culinary specialties from the provinces at the stalls, watch the hunting falcon experts go through their paces and, immerse themselves in

the folk dances and music of the Al-Baha region. There are camel rides and camel races and, of course, a tour of the traditional souk set up in the festival complex where colour and crafts came together in the hundreds of showcased crafting traditions, long preserved in the Kingdom's villages and desert enclaves.

The much awaited camel race, spread over four days featured 1,200 contestants from all over the Arab world showcasing their skills on the six tracks. The prizes were given away by the king.







ENTERTAINMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA - A GAMECHANGER

The announcement by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman, of the setting up of a General Authority for Entertainment in the Kingdom, under the Vision 2030 agenda, has been met with a lot of excitement, especially amongst the youth and artists in the country

SOCIAL media, newspapers, TV and private places were abuzz with the thrilling announcement on 25th April 2016, of the government's plan—under its Vision 2030 agenda announced by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — to encourage the development and promotion of entertainment. A report in Arab News reveals that the government's official Twitter account for the announcement, @SaudiVision2030, had gained 244,000 followers since it was launched.

"We consider culture and entertainment indispensable to our quality of life. We are well aware that the cultural and entertainment opportunities currently available do not reflect the rising aspirations of our citizens and residents," the Kingdom's new economic and social agenda points out.

Reacting to the news of the setting up of an independent body of Entertainment, Khalid Al-Harbi, renowned Saudi actor and drama writer, quoted by media, said: 'Much care and attention will be required on the content. However, the goal should be to make people happy and lessen their burden,' he said. 'The aim should be to stop citizens from traveling abroad for entertainment.'

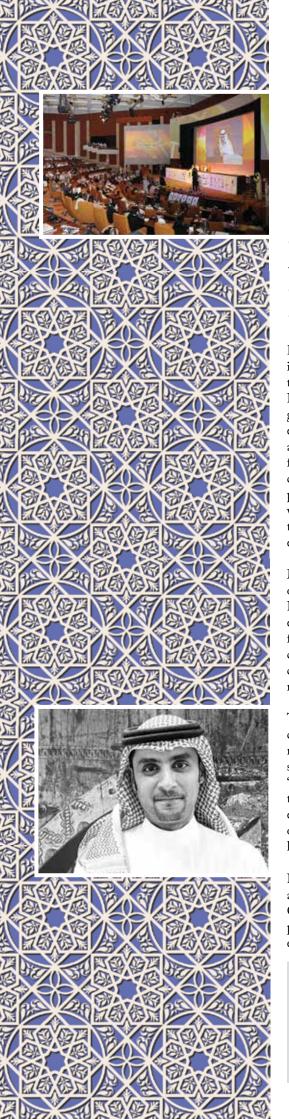
Nearly half the more than 30-odd million population of Saudi Arabia is younger than age 25 and is looking forward to the promised changes of more job opportunities, as a spin-off from the economic transformation of the Kingdom under Vision 2030, which also provides for options for a better life including leisure and sports, in a country where there are no cinema halls, nightclubs or art museums.

The number of cultural events in the Kingdom is also expected to go up exponentially and there will be more entrainment centres and museums and even the possibility of women being allowed to drive.

In a recent move, the US based theme park firm, Six Flags Entertainment Corp, plans to expand to Saudi Arabia. Its chief executive John Duffey, who met Saudi deputy crown prince Mohammed bin Salman during his visit to the US,said in a statement to Al Arabiya: "We share the same vision with Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and we are ready to provide enough and multiple options in a bid to translate this vision into reality."



(Top left): Film festival at the Saudi Cultural Centre . (Left): Six Flags to open an amusement park in Saudi Arabia



MICE: UPPING THE ANTE

Tourism being one of the key areas in the Kingdom's new economic drive under Vision 2030, its Mice Tourism sector's aspirations – to become the top destination choice for exhibitions and conferences in the Middle East by 2020 – have gotten a much needed bolstering

READYING itself for a 20 per cent increase in business— projected by the Saudi Commission for Tourism & National Heritage in view of the expected growth of industry, exports and global engagement— Saudi Arabia's exhibition and conference sector is looking to benefit from the government' plans of economic diversification. Being the largest economic powerhouse in the Middle East and the world's largest oil procedure also makes the Kingdom a prime destination for the exhibitions and conference business.

Mohammed Al-Hussieny, Vice Chairman of the Conferences & Exhibitions Sector National Committee, said the new economic thinking of the government for MICE tourism in Saudi Arabia could generate huge revenues, which will contribute to the GDP and play a pivotal role in the national economy.

Tariq Al-Essa (picture left), executive director of the conference and exhibitions national program, in a recent interview

Investment

Investment is the lifeblood of any enterprise, and with the national transformation process in motion, the expected US\$1.6 billion being added to industry's kitty by 2019, should offer plenty of scope for some effective forward planning.

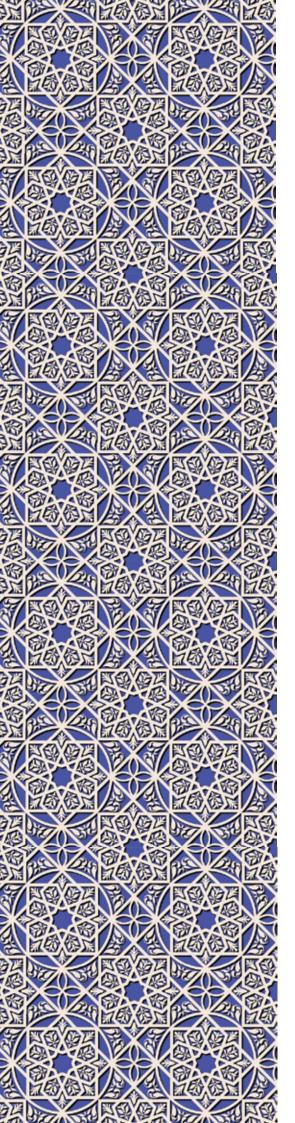
Exhibitions and Conference centres in the Kingdom are seen as strategic economic facilities, hence it is no surprise then that the beneficiaries of this financial infusion are to be the likes of venues such as Madinah's new King Salman International Conference Center and another, being readied to open by 2020 at Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport.

shared his view of how things will shape up for this sector in the years to come: "There are several factors that strengthen the possibility of development of MICE tourism in Saudi Arabia such as the plan of the government to diversify the economic base, invest more in the sector and further develop the national program of conferences and exhibitions. The aim is to stimulate the MICE sector in the kingdom."

National Program of Conferences and Exhibitions in 2015 issued licenses to around 7,900 events, conferences, forums, meetings, seminars and workshops. Official statistics reveal that they attracted over 4 million visitors, registering a 23 per cent growth over 2014. In the past two years almost 700 firms have entered the event management business.

Competitive Edge

The Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) has, in sync with several ministries and commercial chambers, revved up efforts to develop the sector's influential elements to become more competitive. Plans are afoot to provide greater flexibility for visa issuance to those wishing to attend business tourism events in the Kingdom.



ROOM FOR GROWTH

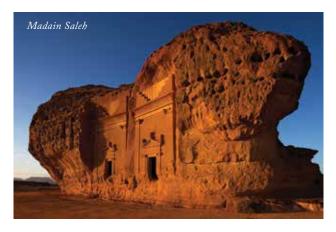
Preserving the Saudi, Arab and Islamic cultural heritage and history is to be pivotal in showcasing the Kingdom's most attractive tourism initiatives



THE development of tourism, culture and entrainment is a key area in the economic reforms of Vision 2030. Plans are in the offing to increase investment in the tourism sector by US\$8 billion to almost US\$46 billion in 2020. Most of the Kingdom's tourism activity has revolved around the sacred sites of the Islamic faith - Mecca and Medina, registering a rapid growth in religious tourism over the years. According to figures from the World Bank, the total number of tourist arrivals to Saudi Arabia topped 18 million in 2014, but a large majority of this comprised religious visitors or pilgrims.

Things are set to change now, with the government's initiative of the Post Umrah programme, which allows for Umrah visitors to convert their visas to tourist visas which will allow pilgrims to stay up to 30 days in Saudi Arabia to enable them to travel around the country enjoying its tourist, historical and cultural attractions— as well as shopping centeres and malls. Optionally they can look at cultural, medical, educational and marketing tours, visit exhibitions and attend conferences when done with their pilgrimage. This option is to be available to business visa holders and GCC citizens as well. The government is looking to up Umrah visitors to 30 million each year by raising the capacity at the two holy mosques and enhancing services and facilities to support more arrivals.

The government has an ambitious plan to raise tourism five-fold by 2030 and envisages a closer involvement of the private sector in this process. The expansion programme includes attractive stretches of its coastal areas and key historical, archaeological sites as well as cultural centres. The development of museums and historical sites as tourist attractions with the infusion of new investments will be subjected to the highest international standards.



"The government is looking to up Umrah visitors to 30 million each year by raising the capacity at the two holy mosques and enhancing services and facilities to support more arrivals"

The most important religious site in Saudi Arabia, the Masjid al Haram, is within the Kaaba at Makkah. The largest mosque in the world, it can accommodate up to a million people and counting as development plans continue apace. One of the most attractive historical sites in Saudi Arabia is the UNESCO-designated, pre-Islamic archaeological site—Madain Saleh. Dating to the Nabataean era, this is renowned for its surrounds of mountains, desert land, forested enclaves and beaches, —making it a perfect tourist getaway. Worthy of a leisurely explore are its 100 tombs and beautifully carved facades.

Natural Splendour of Al-Soudah

Of great natural splendour is the Al-Soudah region—renowned for the most impressive scenic landscapes and plentiful wildlife. Dating to the 10th century, the Dumat al-Jandal city, in northwest Saudi Arabia, is a pre-Islamic gem. The ruins are an evocative reminder of its past as an important art and crafts and cultural hub. Plans are to set up more museum, cultural venues and entertainment centres, to enrich the journeys of visitors. The building of the new Islamic Museum is integral to this. To be built along the best global standards it will be equipped with the

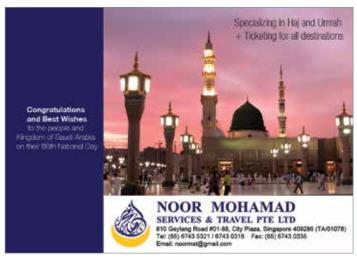
latest methods in collection, preservation, presentation and documentation. A landmark project, where the history of Islam will be showcased through the different ages of Islamic civiliszation, as well as its science, scholars and culture, it will be a major attraction for citizens and visitors. People would also be able to enjoy interactive experiences and participate in cultural events here. The museum will also serve as an international hub for erudition and include a world-class library and research center.

The promotion of culture and entertainment too is a focal point with government spending to be enhanced "to support the efforts of regions, governorates, non-profit and private sectors to organise cultural events." Here too, private partnerships with local and international entertainment corporations will be encouraged to make the projects viable. Plans include making land available for such projects and even the right talent given government support. The spin-off would be more jobs and a boost to the economy.

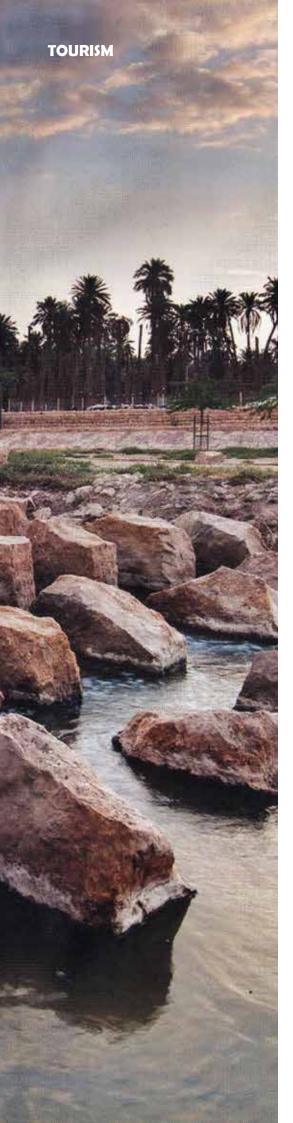
"Daem", a national programme to enhance the quality of cultural activities and entertainment, will be launched and supported financially by the government. It is aimed at creating a national network of clubs to encourage the exchange of knowledge and international experiences and promote better awareness of a wide range of hobbies and leisure activities. By 2020, it is expected to bring in over 450 registered and professionally organized amateur clubs, which will provide a variety of cultural activities and entertainment events, to be enjoyed by the citizenry and visitors alike.

Business tourism too, holds enormous potential, given the call for more privatisation and greater investors from home and abroad in the projects outlined in the Vision 2030 agenda.







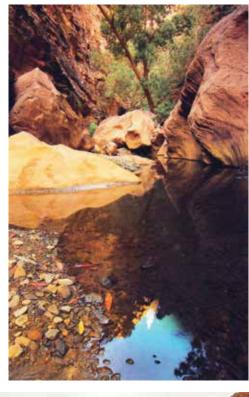


WELCOMING WADIS

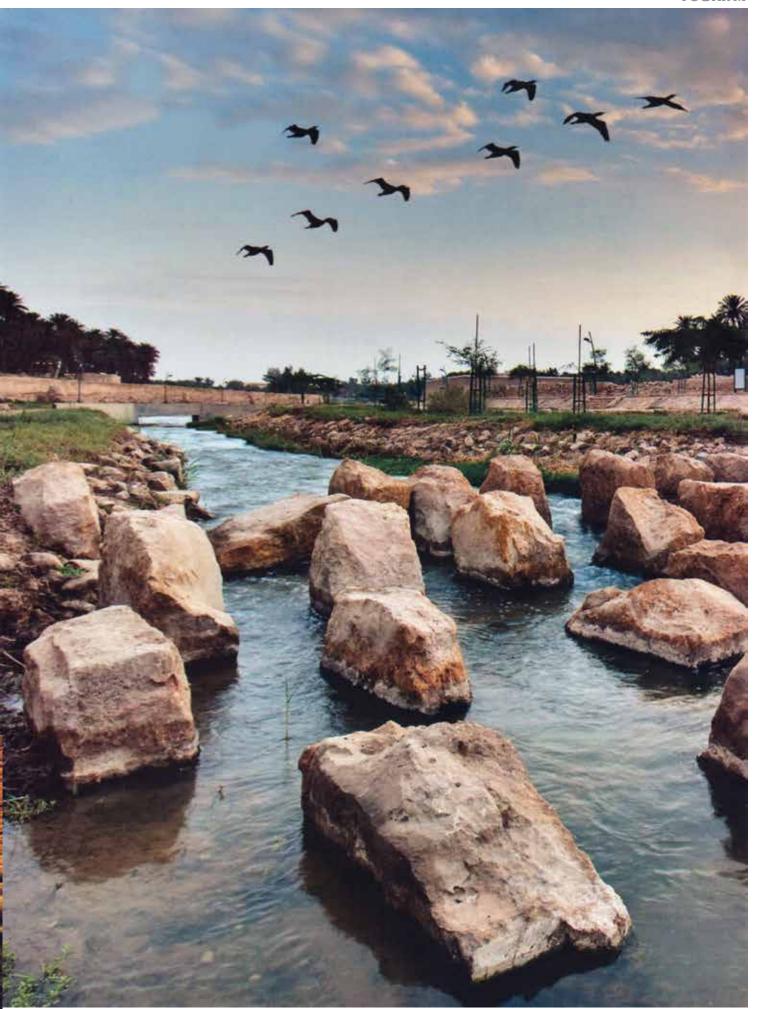
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has no permanent rivers, but it has numerous wadis (or widyan, plural of wadi in Arabic). A wadi, traditionally a valley, is in some cases also used to describe a 'dry ephemeral riverbed that contains water only during times of heavy rain or simply an intermittent stream'. It is found in many place-names that have been influenced by the Arabic language.

SAUDI Arabia has an old and close connection with wadis. Nearly two-thirds of the Arabian Desert is drained by complete wadi systems. Wadis have been associated with hubs of human population, expressly with nomadic and pastoral desert people who rely on vegetation in wadis. The numerous wadis of the Kingdom may be categorised under the three distinct drainage basins within which they exist: the Red Sea, the Syrian Desert, and Najd. The Red Sea wadis include: Al-Surr; Al-Hamd; Al-Fatimah; Al-Sa'diyah; Al-Lith, and Al-Rabigh. Syrian Desert wadis include: Al-Saba; Al-Fajr; Al-Sirhan; Al-Mirah; Al-Hamir; Al-Arar, and Al-Batin. Finally, the Najdi wadis include: Hanifa; Al-Rummah; Al-Risha; Al-Dawasir (and two of its tributaries Al-Bishah and Al-Tathlith), and Al-Habawnah.

All of these wadis are very intriguing as they present one with diverse sets of historical, geographic, cultural, botanical, and environmental details.







Welcoming Wadis of Saudi Arabia text extract and photos first appeared in The Diplomat Issue 55 November-December 2015.

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SAUDI WOMEN EMPOWERED

It's a long and slow process but the patriarchal society of Saudi Arabia has cautiously started extending women's rights incrementally in recent times—whether its participation at the Olympic games or the voting booth



IT was a red-letter day for women in Saudi Arabia when long time women's activist Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud, 41 (picture above) was recently appointed Vice President for Women's Affairs of the General Sports Authority by the Saudi Council of Ministers in the Kingdom. For the Riyadh-based princess this could not have come at a more appropriate time for four Saudi sportswomen (sprinter Cariman Abu Al-Jadail, Fencer Lubna al-Omair, judoka Wujud Fahmi and sprinter Sara-al-Atttar) participated at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August 2016, albeit in complete compliance with religious regulations in all respects. Saudi athlete Sara-al Attar and judokao Wojdan Shahrkhani created history for Saudi women when they were the first Saudi sportswomen to participate in the 2012 London Olympics.

Princess Reema will play a pivotal role in overseeing the training of more women contenders in the field of sports. Under its package of new economic reforms the government also listed the licensing of women's "sports halls" to be set up by 2020. Joining a mixed gym or sports club has been taboo for women in the Kingdom as

Late King Abdullah's reign (picture right), as a matter of fact, was fortuitous for Saudi women on several counts. He opened up more job opportunities for them, included them in his international scholarship programme on the education front and even ensured their entry to the royal advisory council. H.M. King Salman, under Vision 2030, continues to move forward on the course set by the late King for women's advancement in their role in public life



it goes against its cultural mores which are deeply rooted in gender separation. Princess Reema has been at the forefront of the movement to empower Saudi women in the workplace and in the community.

Right to Vote

Another big moment, at the insistence of late King Abdullah, for the Kingdom's female populace, was when women were granted, for the first time in the Kingdom's history, the right to vote in the local municipal elections in 2015.

In 2013 another important initiative for Saudi women by late King Abdullah saw the swearing in of women in the Shura, the royal council. Each of them is a highly qualified member. According to a report in *National Geographic*, as revealed by a female council, "Of the 30 of us, 27 have medical degrees or Ph.D.'s… Two of us are princesses with long histories of social activism and social work."

When, in 2005, King Abdullah set up his royal scholarship program for international studies, the students singled out for this privilege included women. By 2014 over 35,000 Saudi women were enrolled in foreign undergraduate and graduate programmes, with more than half studying in the United States, as reported by *National Geographic*.

The new labour laws and education initiatives have also opened up fresh opportunities for Saudi women. According to Dr Paul Sullivan (Senior International Affairs Fellow at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations): "The pool of young women and men scheduled to enter the Kingdom's work force in the coming years, already large, is growing. There are many more Saudi Arabian women in the work force, and many more men as well, than there were in the 1990s. ... However, unemployment and underemployment among Saudi Arabian women is massive and a substantial loss to the Kingdom's economy." Vision 2030 seeks to redress this situation to some effect with the new labour laws and education initiatives - a welcome new course for Saudi women in the history of the intensely gender-segregated culture of the nation.

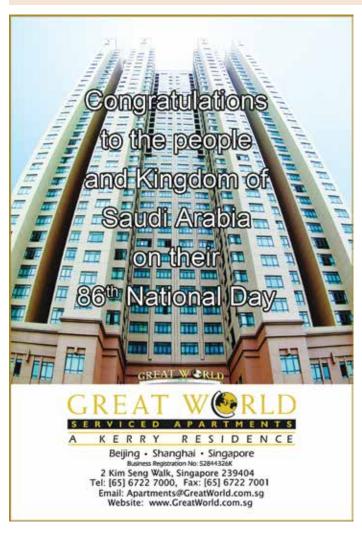
Increased Participation

The Kingdom's 15-year plan to transform its economy appears to have taken cognisance of this, for it envisages the increased participation of women's in the workforce from 22 per cent to 30 per cent, - a move which is cautiously making changes in the societal norms against the employment of women. This would also lower the rate of unemployment from 11.6 per cent to 7 per cent. "With over 50 per cent of our university graduates being female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy," reveals a press release at the news conference, at the time of the unveiling of Vision 2030 in April this year.

Five strategic goals and eight diverse initiatives for implementation of the National Transformation Program (NTP) and Vision 2030, are being set in place by the Ministry of Civil Service to increase the performance of human resources with a cost of SR80.1 million. Amongst this slew

of initiatives is the role of women at the workplace. Saudi Vision 2030 plans to further develop women as a labour source, seeing them as a "great asset" to be developed educationally and professionally. Many Saudi women are highly trained and motivated today. A report by Arab News reveals that Princess Sara bint Khalid bin Mosaed, the wife of Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman bin Abdulaziz (who recently held a two-day workshop attended by 200 women working in the public and private sectors) - in the light of the challenges of the new economic and social agenda, was of the opinion that "the government was placing a great focus on how women can contribute to the economy, and on the social and cultural levels. Leadership positions have now opened for women, allowing them to contribute to development and nation-building." The Princess also noted that the United Nations Development Fund for Women has indicated that there were five areas needing attention in terms of women's empowerment: education, health, economic contribution, economic participation and participation in decision-making.'

The Ministry of Civil Service is looking to increase the percentage of women employed in higher positions - as represented by grade 1, 1 - which is presently 1.27 per cent- to 5 per cent by 2020, upping the rise in percentage four times. Also being set up is activation of a remote work culture with increased participation of women with SR33.1 million.



ATTAR

"More and more, I am realising my place in history. There is a whole generation of girls in Saudi Arabia who now have a female Olympic role model to look up to that didn't exist before. They'll grow up knowing that competing in the Olympics is a possibility, and that's what means the most to me."

- Sara-al Attar Rio Olympian

SAUDI SPORTSWOMEN

BREAKING BARRIERS



Although sportsmen from Saudi Arabia have been participating in international sporting events such as the Olympics for some time now, four years ago it was a historic occasion when the 2012 London Olympics saw the participation of two Saudi women - athlete Sara-al Attar and judoko Wojdan Shahrkhani (picture above). Traditionally Saudi culture has strictures on women in public life and sports, so this was a momentous step also for the country—which is bringing in a raft of changes with the unveiling in April this year of its Vision 2030 agenda.

That was the first time in the history of the games that Saudi women took part. This year, at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics that kicked off on 5 August 2016, four Saudi sportswomen have taken part— on the special invite sent by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to compete.

Sara-al Attar, recognising the importance of her participation and the acclaim she received from the media and the spectators from around the world, when she crossed the finishing line with a time of 2:44 minutes in the 800m at the London Olympics, in a recent interview said, "More and more, I am realising my place in history. There is a whole generation of girls in Saudi Arabia who now have a female Olympic role model to look up to-that didn't exist before. They'll grow up knowing that competing in the Olympics is a possibility, and that's what means the most to me." This time round at Rio, Attar ran in the marathon, in which she ranked 132th among 157 participants from around the world .

A new participant, Saudi sprinter Cariman Abu Al-Jadail, took part in the 100m race. Fencer Lubna al-Omair *(picture right)* took her training in Egypt as there are traditional sports restrictions for women in the Kingdom. Wujud Fahmi, participating at Rio, is the second Saudi judoka after Wojdan Shahrkhani. Saudi sportswomen participate in the Olympics in complete accordance with religious regulations in all respects.



Another historic precedent has been set by the recent the appointment, by the Saudi Council of Ministers, of Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud (41) as the Vice President for Women's Affairs of the General Sports Authority in Saudi Arabia. Princess Reema has for long, been at the forefront of movement to empower Saudi women in the workplace and in the community.

The princess, daughter of an erstwhile Saudi ambassador to the US, was born in Riyadh but was educated in the US, and has a degree in Musueum Studies from George Washington University. She now lives in Riyadh and will oversee the training of Saudi sportswomen. Under its package of new economic reforms, the government also listed the licensing of women's "sports halls" to be set up by 2020.

ARAMCO ACTIVE IN WORLD POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME

Along with Habitat for Humanity, Aramco's assistance will provide for the building of 15 houses in Kabil Village, Batam



Aramco Singapore employees built safe houses with proper access to potable water, electricity and toilets in Batam to eliminate poverty housing

AS a global enterprise, interconnected with major energy markets around the globe, Aramco values making connections with international cultures and communities. Aramco tries to take an active role in giving back to those communities and in Singapore, Aramco recognises the need for proper housing in Batam, Indonesia, as well as for fostering a spirit of volunteerism in its employees.

To that end, Aramco Singapore has joined Habitat for Humanity (HFH) in their fight to eliminate poverty housing in Batam, Indonesia with a donation to build 15 houses in Kabil village, located in the sub-district of Nongsa, Batam where 40% (1,822 families) of the 4,557 families (20,451 residents) are living in substandard houses.

Aramco has a long tradition of giving generously to charitable agencies and institutions working with the least fortunate members in Saudi Arabia and other communities around the world.

"Aramco strongly believes in improving the communities in which we operate and where our customers and suppliers are located. We are very pleased to work with Habitat for Humanity on this meaningful Batam Build project to eliminate poverty housing and provide safe shelters for the needy in Batam, Indonesia," said Mr. Nader Al-Arfaj, representative director, Aramco Singapore.









(Top left picture): Aramco Singapore employees led by Mr. Nader Al-Arfaj (second from right), representative director, bringing bricks to the work site. (Top right): Mr. Nader Al-Arfaj (right), representative director, Aramco Singapore and Mr. Yong Teck Men (left), National Director, Habitat for Humanity Singapore affirm the commitment to fight poverty housing in Batam, Indonesia

"Batam Build has been an extremely rewarding experience for our employees in Singapore as they get to witness tangible results for Indonesians who need help"

The Batam government has provided 550 plots of land, measuring 60 sq. m. each, in Kabil to help with the resettlement of the residents currently living in illegal housing. However, most of the families are unable to build proper homes on their assigned plot of land due to financial difficulties and complex social issues.

"These homes are susceptible to structural collapse during the monsoon season. We believe that the donation by Aramco will not only ensure that these families will have proper access to potable water, electricity and toilets, but also enable them to focus better in school and at work, and thereby improve their general physical and mental well-being", said Mr. Yong Teck Meng, National Director, Habitat for Humanity Singapore.

The Batam branch of Habitat for Humanity Indonesia attempts to help improve the lives of these 550 households in Kabil by building decent houses alongside home partners, equipped with the ability to access clean water and sufficient amount of electricity. On top of that, Habitat

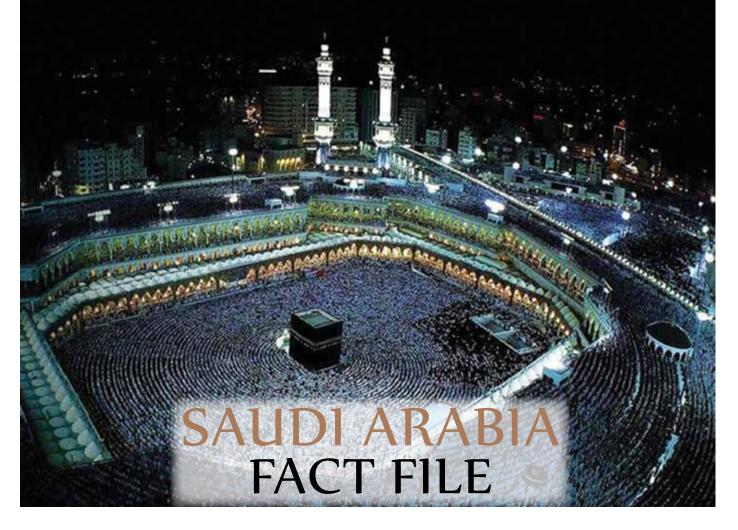
Indonesia aims to provide the Kabil villagers with basic construction training, teach them basic hygienic practices, and conduct tree planting activities that will be beneficial to the environment.

Recently, employees from Aramco Singapore went to Batam to build two houses together with the homeowners.

"Batam Build has been an extremely rewarding experience for our employees in Singapore as they get to witness tangible results for Indonesians who need help," Mr. Al-Arfaj said.

The Aramco office in Singapore has been established to provide crude oil marketing, material sourcing, supply chain logistics, inspection and other engineering services as a testament of Aramco's commitment to its customers and partners in South East Asia, Indian Sub-continent and Australasia.

To date, HFH has helped 6.8 million people by providing safe, decent and affordable shelter in over 70 countries around the world.



THE largest country occupying 80 per cent of the Arabian Peninsula, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, straddles the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. To the west of the monarchy lies the Red Sea, to the south are the borderlands of Yemen and Oman, to its east are the Persian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar and to the north — Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait. The Kingdom's coastal belt along the Red Sea stretches for about 1,760 km; it's about 560km along the Persian Gulf.

Geography

Over 50 per cent of its sprawl of 2,150,000 sq km is desert, broken only by a coastal stretch along the west and the mountain ranges running parallel to the Red Sea coast. These mountains are rich in mineral wealth, with huge deposits of limestone, gypsum and sand. The world's richest reservoirs of oil are found in the Kingdom's eastern stretches.

Climate

The Kingdom does not get much rain nor does it have any rivers as its mostly arid desert land. Any rain it receives is confined to the north and along the mountain range—primarily in the far southwest, from the monsoon winds. Flooding can occur in Riyadh the Saudi capital, and its surrounds, when there's very heavy rainfall.

Establishment of Nationhood

The modern Saudi state was founded by late King Abdul Al-Aziz bin Abdul Al-Rahman Al Saud (Ibn Saud) on 23rd September 1932. By rule of the country's Basic Law, even today one of his male descendants ascends the throne.

Sacred Sites

The birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia, also houses two of

its most sacred sites, the holy mosques located in the cities of Makkah and Madinah. The Saudi king also holds the official title— the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The Kingdom follows the Islamic Sharia law of rule.

AT A GLANCE

Al-Mamlaka al-Arabiya as-Saudiya (The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) Head of State, H.M. King and Prime Minister King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud who ascended the throne in January 2015

Capital: Riyadh Area 2,149,690 sq km

Physical Features Mostly desert, coastal belts by Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, mountain range

Administrative Regions: Al-Baha, Al-Jouf, Asir, Eastern, Hail, Jizan, Madinah, Makkah, Najran, Northern Border, Qasim, Riyadh, Tabouk

Major Language Arabic Major Religion: Islam

Saudi Arabia Constitution Governed according to Islamic law; the Basic Law that articulates the government's rights and responsibilities was promulgated by royal decree in 1992

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

Currency Saudi Riyal (SAR)

Industry: Production of crude oil, petroleum refining, basic petrochemicals, cement

Agriculture Wheat, barley, tomatoes, melons, vegetables and other produce such as milk, eggs etc **Exports** Petroleum and petroleum byproducts

SAUDI ARABIA FACT FILE

Makkah It is Islam's holiest place as it's the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and where, God's message was first revealed to him. He returned here after migrating to Madinah in 622 CE. One of the Five Pillars of Islam requires every Muslim to perform the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in his or her lifetime if they can. Every year over two miliion hajjis (pilgrims) from all over the world descend on the city which is also home to the Ka'aba. The Holy Mosque— Masjid al-Haram, was built around the Kaaba. It is also the largest mosque in the world.

Madinah is the second holiest city in the Muslim world. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his followers migrated here in 622 AD. This is the birthplace of the Islamic era and where the Holy Quran was compiled. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is buried there in the Masjid an-Nabawi mosque.

Primary Cities

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital falls in the Central Province. A modern hi-tech hub it's also the headquarters of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Jeddah, the country's top commercial hub lies near the Red Sea. It is a major port city and a gateway to the rest of the peninsula.

Jubail and Yanbu, the twin cities are the repositories of the future developments envisioned by the government. At Jubail is the world's largest petrochemical complex; it's located 80 km north of Dammam, where oil was first discovered in 1938. Yanbu, situated by the Red Sea, 350km from Jeddah, is home to the Directorate General of the Royal Commission for Jubail & Yanbu. This major industrial hub is a marvel of architectural engineering.

OPEC INDICATORS Below data covers 2015	
Population (million inhabitants)	31.016
Land area (1,000 sq km)	2,150
Population density (inhabitants per sq km)	14
GDP per capita (\$)	21,061
GDP at market prices (million \$)	653,219
Value of exports (million \$)	205,447
Value of petroleum exports (million \$)	157,962
Current account balance (million \$)	-41,307
Proven crude oil reserves (million barrels)	266,455
Proven natural gas reserves (billion cu. m.)	8,588.2
Crude oil production *(1,000 b/d)	10,192.6
Marketed production of natural gas (million cu. m.)	104,450.0
Refinery capacity (1,000 b/cd)	2,907.0
Output of refined petroleum products (1,000 b/d)	2,480.5
Oil demand (1,000 b/d)	3,318.7
Crude oil exports (1,000 b/d)	7,163.3
Exports of petroleum products (1,000 b/d)	1,154.7
Natural gas exports (million cu. m.)	

^{*} including share of production from Neutral Zone b/d (barrels per day) cu. m. (cubic metres) b/cd (barrels per calendar day)

Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin 2016

Economic Indicators World Bank

GDP Billion US\$646,002 (2015)

Total Population 30, 90,000 (2015)

Life expectancy at birth 74.3 (2014)

Gross Enrollment ratio, primary, both sexes 109 (2014)

GNI per capita US\$23,600 (2015)

Annual GDP growth 1.86% (2016)

Source data: worldbank.org

Economic Indicators

GDP % change on a year ago:

3.5 2015 (latest)

+0.9 (2016)

+ 1.7 (2017)

Consumer prices % change on a year ago

- +4.1 June (latest)
- +2.2 (year ago)
- +4.4 (2016)

Unemployment rate %

5.6 2015 (latest)

Source www.economist.com



Congratulations and Best Wishes to the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 86th National Day





MOHAMED MUSTAFA & SAMSUDDIN CO. PTE LTD

145 Syed Alwi Road Singapore 207704 Tel: 6295 5855 Fax: 6295 5866 www.mustafa.com.sg



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