

SINGAPORE | 23 SEPTEMBER 2013

Saudi Arabia

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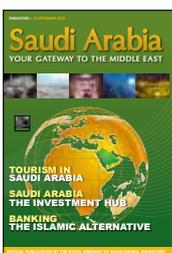
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SAUDI ARABIA - THE GATEWAY TO THE MIDDLE EAST

23 SEPTEMBER 2013



ON THE COVER



The cover symbolises how the Middle East is changing not just Saudi Arabia. As time goes by, geopolitical and economic groupings will gain wider attention and a new sense of rapid growth is being

detected by economists as MENA – the Middle East and North African region is taking off. The region has proven to be robust even during the global economic crisis and various unstable domestic economies. The main engine for regional growth is the massive infrastructure projects in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Thanks to the contribution they will be making to non-oil GDP growth, this is expected to fuel the region's economy to grow by 3.5 to 4 per cent this year according to a QNB report. With higher global oil and gas prices, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries also enjoy lower inflation and large surpluses in fiscal and current account balances economic activity will go the same way as the giant Kingdom Tower and Centre buildings – skyhigh!

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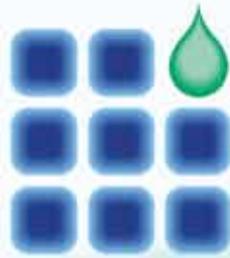
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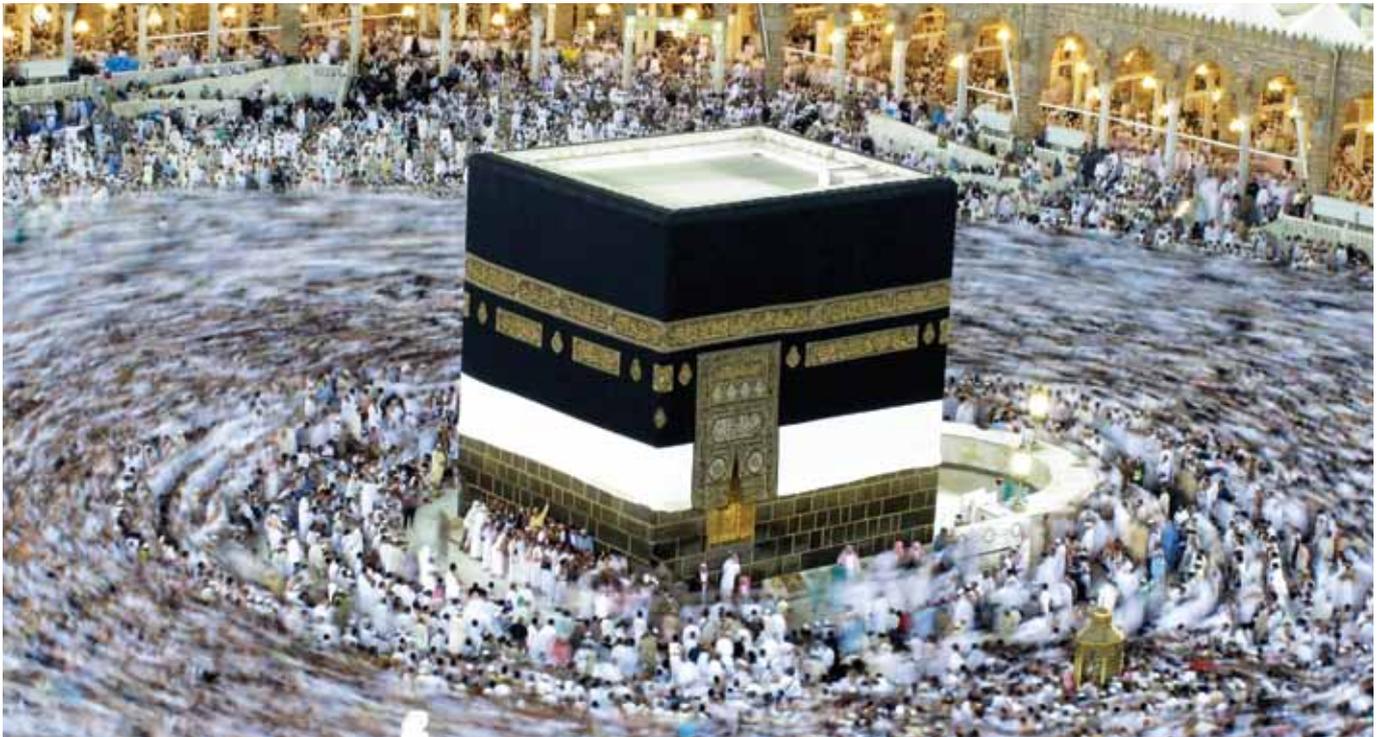
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*Congratulations & Best Wishes
to the People and
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
on their 83rd National Day*



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Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques



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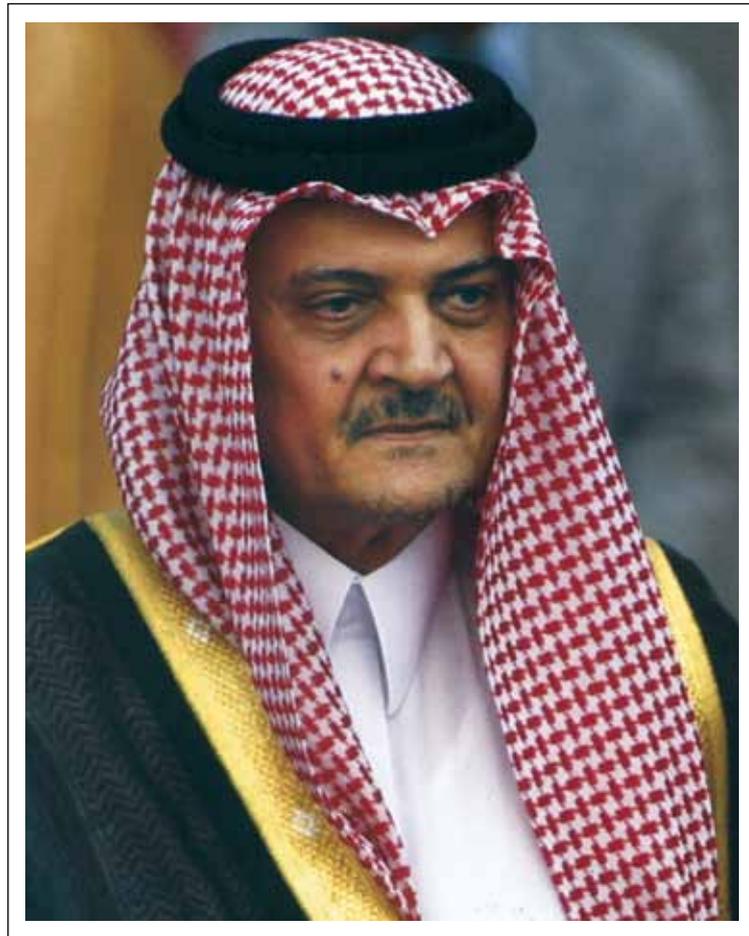
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HRH Prince Saud Bin Faisal
Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Foreign Affairs



Celebrating with the Nation
83rd National Day of
the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



PROMOTING PEACE, SECURITY & STABILITY

Saudi Arabia has made an impact not only on the Arab and Islamic world but also on the international stage; this is largely attributed to the visionary leadership of King Abdullah, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

Development has been the focus of King Abdullah's reign and the result today is a Saudi Arabia that is economically strong, socially responsible, and with an educated young population that is raring to go. Like a true visionary, the King has balanced development and growth, giving equal importance to social and economic commitments.

While the mega economic cities has created the stage for investment and growth, the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology and the Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University for Girls provide the perfect opportunities in advanced education.

The new expansion of the Prophet's Mosque is King Abdullah's efforts in serving Islam and the Muslim pilgrims, who come every year from across the world, to pray at the Holy Mosques.

The King has been instrumental in paving the Kingdom's leadership role in world peace, security and stability. Travelling the royal way we present all this and more.

EXPANSION WORK OF THE HOLY MOSQUE

The Holy Mosques at Madinah and Makkah are undergoing extensive renovation work by the orders of King Abdullah, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Finance Minister Ibrahim Al-Assaf, while giving details of the project, said, "The expansion project will take place in three phases. Under the King's directives the project work is on at full swing with an aim to complete it within two years." The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has, in the interim period, requested Muslim countries to do with a lower quota of Hajj pilgrims. The renovated mosque building at Madinah will sprawl over an area of 614,800 sq. m, while the combined space of the mosque and plazas will be 1,020, 500 sq. m. This will accommodate one million worshippers inside the mosque and 800,000 worshippers in the plaza. The foundation for the Madinah Mosque was laid in September 2012.

The completed view of the mosque will include two major minarets in addition

to smaller minarets at the four sides. The present central zone, around the mosque, will triple in size. It will have increased residential, shopping and utility areas and will be surrounded by a new ring road, the Shari Arid Al Janobi. The surrounding buildings, known as Al Ruwaq, will be developed to serve as a gateway between the city and the mosque. The project will require expropriation of land that will cost the government close to US\$6.6 billion in compensation. The King has also ordered the completion of related projects such as the Grand Mosque in Makkah, the expansion of the Massa (pathway between Safa and Marwa), increasing the area of the Jamarat bridge, the Makkah Development Plan and the Haramain Express Train.

MADINAH CITY AND AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT

Madinah is officially the 4th largest city in the Kingdom and is growing fast. The population has crossed the one million mark and is expected to double in the next



20 years. Six to eight million Muslims visit each year and this number will increase to 34 million by 2024. Given this demand, expansion plan for the city and the Madinah Airport is on and both the private sector and the government are involved. Madinah Airport is being planned as a world-class international hub with a capacity to serve eight million passengers by 2014. The General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) has handed over the project to the Tibah Airport Development Company, a consortium led by Turkish group TAV Airports. The airport project includes construction of new terminals covering 138,000 sq. m, 18 departure gates with air-bridges linked to aircraft and parking for 20 planes. The total area will cover four million sq. m. GACA recently opened the new international terminal that can handle 35 flights daily. The Haramain high-speed railway is expected to accommodate six million passengers by 2014 and in completion reach its full capacity of 12 million passengers per year.

EDUCATION HUB

King Abdullah's vision for Saudi Arabia emerging as an education hub of international merit is taking shape. Apart from the various educational institutes that have come up, the King has also instituted the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, which since 2006 has been instrumental in enabling meritorious Saudi students to avail foreign education. Trained in the

world's best universities, these qualified men and women have created a highly trained and equipped workforce in the Kingdom. The Saudi Government invests SR9 billion in the program each year; funding both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The program has been extended for another five years by the King.

The government has also been organising the International Exhibition and Forum for Education (IEFE). Held in February this year, IEFE 2013, saw over 60,000 stakeholders coming together, according to Naif Bin Alromi, the Deputy Education Minister of Saudi Arabia. The event which is in its 3rd consecutive year brings together exhibitors and experts from different countries (22 this time) and local professionals, business people and government officials to share and learn the latest in educational ideas, concepts and tools.

FOR A PEACEFUL WORLD

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center (UNCCT), another initiative by the King, came into being in 2011 after a joint agreement between KSA and the U.N. and with a US\$10 million donation from the Kingdom. The two-day conference held in Riyadh in February this year, discussed strategies to combat terrorism, to build capacity of nations to combat terrorism and a stronger role of the U.N. The delegates from over 50 nations unanimously agreed on the fundamentals of respect for human rights and rule of law.

This August, on the occasion of Eid

Al-Fitr, The King donated US\$100 million in support of the center and also called on all nations "to get rid of the forces of grudges, extremism and criminality, as this is the inevitable duty for whoever sees that terrorism is a demolishing tool that aims at threatening world security and peace."

GLOBAL RELATIONS

Saudi Arabia's international relations have been forged over time and are guided by its focus on peace prosperity and progress. The Kingdom has warm bilateral relation with the USA, UK, Germany, Singapore, China and others; The U.S. is the country's biggest trade partner and the biggest single investor. According to the Saudi-U.S. Joint Business Council, 400 joint venture projects in the Kingdom, totalling US\$44 billion, are currently on. In April this year, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal met with President Obama and both reaffirmed the strong partnership between the countries and discussed developments in the region.

Germany is one of Saudi Arabia's closest partners in Europe. According to German Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dieter W Haller, "Germany seeks to develop, strengthen and intensify relations with the Kingdom, which is a leading player in a key region." The countries are important trading partners; total trade amounted to US\$ 11.5 billion in 2011.

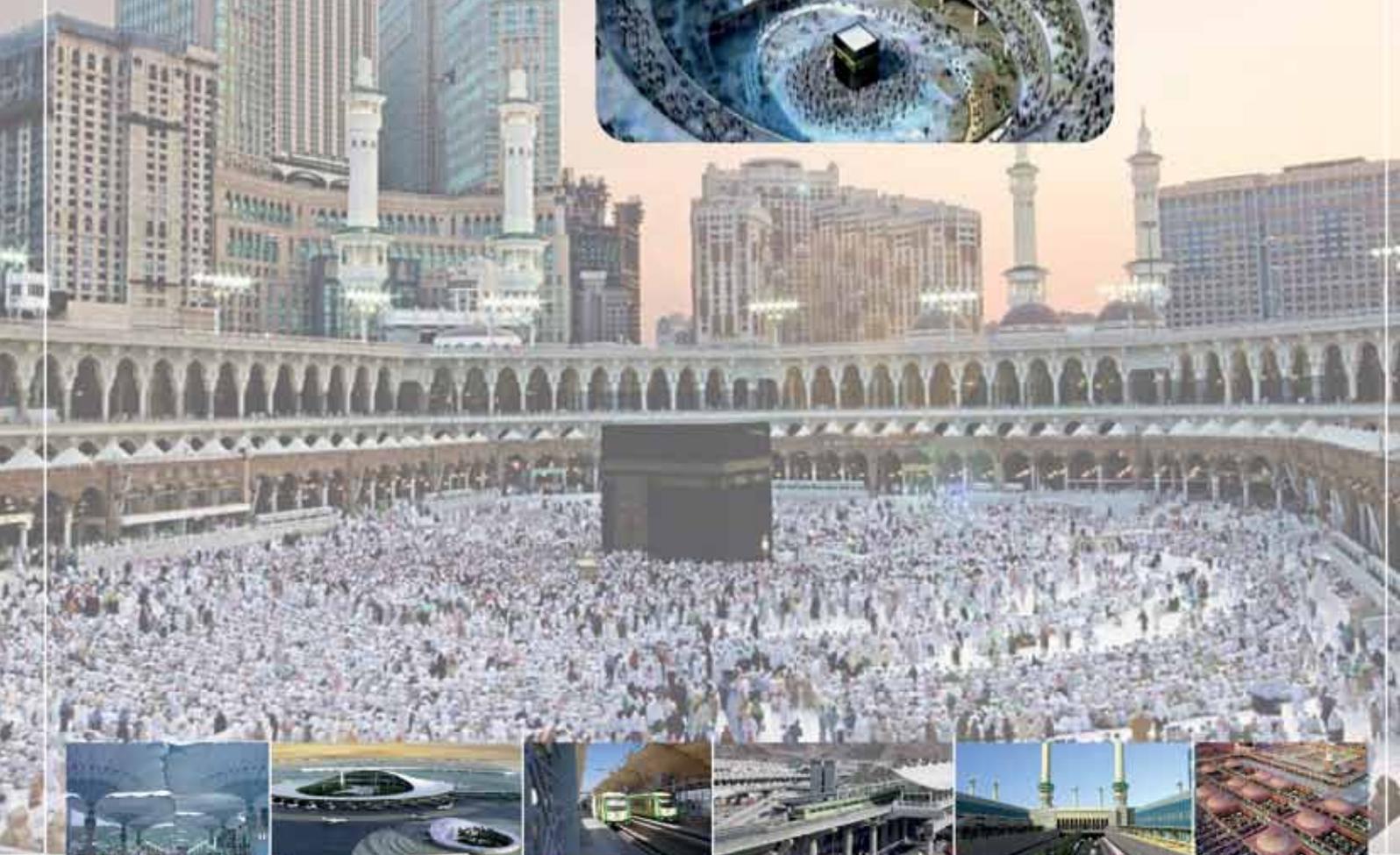
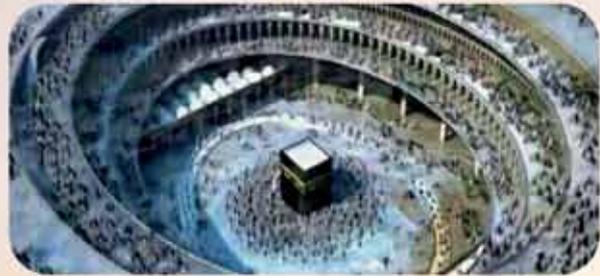
The Saudi-Singapore Joint Business Council in May, in Riyadh, announced the proposal to make Singapore the hub for all Saudi-sourced products in the Asia Pacific region. Saudi Arabia is Singapore's largest trading partner in the Middle East and the biggest market in the Gulf Cooperation Council, which provides a huge customer base for Singapore's consumer goods companies. The countries signed a Double Taxation Agreement (DTA) in 2011.

With China the Kingdom has a long standing economic, trade and energy cooperation. Saudi Arabia is China's largest trading partner in West Asia and Africa. The China-Saudi Youth Forum has become an able vehicle for better cultural, educational and people connect initiatives.



Heartiest Congratulations & Best Wishes

to the
People & Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
on their 83rd National Day





AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

H.E. Mr Mansour Al Mazmoumi, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Singapore, recounts Saudi Arabia's economic growth, its increasing global stature and the warm and cordial relations that the country has with Singapore

Singapore's ties with Saudi Arabia dates back in history and has been revitalised since 2004, when the then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong initiated a series of official visits to the Middle East. Ministerial-level visits between the two countries, bilateral cooperation, trade and economic relation and people connect has been rising and the scope of future cooperation is immense. Singapore's diplomatic presence in the Middle East is substantial and expanding. Singapore's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia is concurrently accredited to Bahrain.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, has been the Kingdom's most popular king, thanks to his political, social and economic reforms and his contributions toward the progress and prosperity of the people. His priority on the Kingdom's educational and technological advancement and women's empowerment, his visionary decisions in sectors such as real estate development, social insurance, housing, unemployment, have contributed to Saudi Arabia's present status.

The Embassy's presence in Singapore has enhanced and promoted business relationships in several sectors including the oil and gas industry, increasing

import and export of products and commodities and exchange in education, new technology, agriculture and fishery. We are working with the business community in Singapore to create a strong networking system between the two countries promoting investment on both sides.

A new proposal announced at the Saudi-Singapore Joint Business Council in Riyadh, in March, can see Singapore as the hub for all Saudi-sourced products in the Asia Pacific region, in the future. Under the proposed deal, Singapore would act as the marketing and distribution hub for all Saudi-manufactured products to Asia Pacific countries including Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Brunei. The Joint Business Council also announced that a new restructuring company with an initial investment of SR100 million will be set up under a joint venture between the two countries in order to help facilitate economic cooperation. The company will handle areas such as energy, training, education, and information technology, and will be incorporated in Singapore and Riyadh. Once ratified, the agreement will provide a boost to economic ties between Saudi Arabia and Singapore. The two countries

are already enjoying significant relations – last year, the bilateral trade between Singapore and Saudi Arabia was worth S\$23 billion. The Saudi Basic Industries Corporation presently uses Singapore as a base for its petrochemical products.

Having Singapore as the main hub for Saudi-manufactured products also means that more companies from Saudi Arabia would be looking to establish an office in Singapore in order to get a share of the Asia-Pacific market.

Saudi companies that set up in Singapore will benefit from all the advantages that Singapore has to offer to foreign companies relocating to the country. Singapore and Saudi Arabia signed a Double Taxation Agreement (DTA) in 2011.

Saudi Arabia has had one of the best performing economies of the G-20 countries in recent years and according to IMF report has played a positive role in the global economy by stabilizing oil markets. The Kingdom has grown by 5.1 per cent last year and is expected to continue at 4 per cent this year, according to IMF.

We at the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Singapore have witnessed the growing success of the cooperation between our countries and will play a proactive role in all ventures of the future.



GOODWILL EXCHANGES

Saudi Arabian delegates and their Singapore counterparts call on each other frequently to explore business and cultural development opportunities. We take a look at the highlights of the two countries' bilateral visits and missions over the past 12 months

SAUDI ARABIA TO SINGAPORE

- **Jan 2013:** Vice Minister of Labour, Dr Mofrej Bin Saad Al Haqbani visited Singapore
- **7 - 10 Apr 2013:** Minister of Transport, Dr Jubara Al Sureisry, visited Singapore at the invitation of Singapore Minister for Transport, Lui Tuck Yew. They discussed transport co-operation and issues of mutual interests. Dr Jubara later visited a government agency, the Land Transport Authority (LTA), and local transport operators such as SMRT and SBS Transit. Dr Jubara was also the distinguished speaker at the Sea Asia Global Forum on 9 April, which was part of the Singapore Maritime Week.
- **28 - 31 May 2013:** His Royal Highness Prince Turki Al-Faisal bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud graced the Middle East Institute's annual conference in Singapore to give a keynote address to the participants. Prince Turki also visited SABIC Singapore, the local branch of one of the world's major manufacturers of chemicals, fertilizers, plastics and metals.



SINGAPORE TO SAUDI ARABIA

- **6 Oct 2012:** Minister for Transport, Lui Tuck Yew, attended the groundbreaking ceremony of the second container terminal at the King Abdul Aziz Port in Dammam. The terminal is managed by Singapore port operator PSA International and is PSA's first investment in Saudi Arabia. Minister of Transport for Saudi Arabia, Dr Jubara Al Sureisry, was also present along with other senior Saudi officials at the ceremony.
- **2 - 4 Dec 2012:** Deputy Prime Minister, Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs, Teo Chee

Hean, visited Riyadh. DPM Teo met key Saudi leaders including His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Minister of Interior. They reaffirmed the warm and friendly relations between Singapore and Saudi Arabia and discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

- **30 Mar 2013:** Lawrence Anderson was appointed as Singapore's next ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Mr Anderson's most recent appointment was as Director Special Duties in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and concurrently as Diplomat-in-Residence at the Civil Service College (February 2011 to February 2013). He previously served as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia (2004 to 2007).
- **Feb 2013:** Minister for Communications and Information and Minister in charge of Muslim Affairs Dr Yaacob Ibrahim visited Jeddah.
- **16 - 18 Mar 2013:** Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry and National Development Lee Yi Shyan attended the Jeddah Economic Forum. Mr Lee was one of the invited speakers and shared with his Saudi counterparts and delegates from other nations, views on sustainable, competitive cities.
- **23 - 27 Nov 2013:** The Singapore Business Federation (SBF) will be heading to Riyadh and Jeddah for the Saudi-Singapore Business Council (SSBC) meeting. SBF will convene with its Saudi partner, the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CSCCI), to discuss initiatives to increase trade and investment between Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

Annual Conference 2013

CONVERGING REGIONS:
 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

May 29-31, Four Seasons Singapore



WINDS OF CHANGE IN MIDDLE EAST & ASIA RELATIONS

In recent years, there have been seismic shifts in the Middle East and South and East Asia in terms of political, social and economic ramifications. The annual Middle East Institute Conference this year reviewed these issues

The past two years have seen several changes in the Middle East as well as Asia. Particularly significant were the Arab uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. In South and East Asia, China and India are making rapid economic progress while Southeast Asia (SEA) experienced an increase in Islamic movements.

These political, social and economic changes have an impact on not only their respective regions, but the world in general. With this in mind, the Middle East Institute (MEI) at the National University of Singapore focussed this year's MEI conference on the topic of 'Converging Regions: Global Perspectives on Asia and the Middle East.' Leading global experts convened from 29 to 31 May at the Four Seasons Hotel in Singapore, to discuss the aforementioned matters.

The event was inaugurated by Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Lee Yi Shyan while His Royal Highness Prince Turki Al-Faisal, chairman of the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh, delivered the keynote address. Various consulates and embassies throughout Singapore and international guests and members of the local academic community were also among the attendees.

The first day examined the impact of colonialism, rise of post-colonial countries and how past and present ideologies of nationhood and national identity became entrenched in the contemporary political, social and cultural environment. Also under scrutiny was a perspective on the historical connections established by Muslims in the Arab world, Iran and SEA and the emergence of political and religious movements in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The second and third days studied topics such as knowledge and the arts, trade, migration, transportation, finance, investment, resources, territories and nation states as well as sovereignty. The conference explored future Asian and Middle Eastern ties and the effects of economic and political power shifts within the Asian and Middle Eastern regions.



His Royal Highness Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Chairman of the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh



Lee Yi Shyan Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry

JEF: HOUSING THE GROWING POPULATION - SUSTAINABILITY

The Jeddah Economic Forum (JEF) this year centred on sustainable cities and affordable housing



Panel discussion on Sustainable Housing at JEF

This year's JEF, held from 16 to 18 March tabled the theme of Housing the Growing Population. It focused on two objectives that Middle East and North African (MENA) countries should aim for: The first is to have sustainable, attractive cities as the core driver of national prosperity and global competitiveness; the second is affordable housing as the driving force of both urban success and strong bonds amongst people in society.

This is the 15th iteration of the annual forum. More than 2,000 MENA attendees viewed over 60 presentations involving the experiences of speakers from 12 countries such as the Republic of Ireland, Turkey, Singapore, United States of America and Brazil. Singapore's Senior Minister of State for the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of National Development, Mr Lee Yi Shyan, and Dr Liu Thai Ker, director of RSP Architects, Planners & Engineers, were among the speakers (see accompanying story next page).

COMPETITIVE CITIES, STRONG ECONOMIES

Participants at the JEF widely acknowledged that wealth is being generated mainly in cities around the world and that people move to the cities by the millions for improved social and economic opportunities. Therefore, in order to build a successful national economy, countries in MENA must create competitive, attractive and sustainable cities that investors, entrepreneurs and employees want to work and live in.

It was also recognised at the Forum that managing urbanisation is one of the key aspects for a city to become globally competitive. Unchecked urbanisation can lead to a city being afflicted with housing shortages, heightened income inequality, pollution, disease, rising crime and social unrest. Cities in MENA countries are still building their infrastructure and 34 of those cities expect to add 23 million new urban dwellers by 2020, especially in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt and Syria.

Thus, those cities have the potential

to become globally competitive hubs, provided they deliver the right combination of housing, infrastructure and job creation for citizens, expatriates and temporary workers. However, they have their work cut out for them. In a 2012 Economist Intelligence Unit report on global city competitiveness, the highest position achieved by a MENA city, which incidentally is Riyadh, was 106.

AFFORDABLE HOMES, AN EQUAL SOCIETY

As the infrastructure in MENA cities is still evolving, there are plenty of opportunities for these cities to grow. However, in some MENA cities, over-development in some areas and under-urbanisation in others have led to high land prices and unaffordable housing prices. Participants at the JEF felt that the respective governments from the MENA region must take the lead in addressing the problem of unaffordable housing, as virtually every aspect of urban housing delivery is influenced, if not dominated by policies and programmes of the governments. Therefore, co-ordinated government action is essential.

This resonated with Saudi Arabian Housing Minister, H.E. Dr Suwaih al-Duwaihi's statement. He then took to the stage and announced a new four-pillar national strategy:

- An improved regulatory framework
 - A national data centre for housing research
 - An electronic database of available rental properties
 - New and diversified real estate laws and programmes that include new initiatives from the Real Estate Development Fund
- Chairman of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry – which organises the JEF – Sheikh Saleh Kamel, underpinned his countryman's message by urging the issuance of an official fatwa for the faithful to pay Zakat on white lands, to discourage land hoarding as was written in the Quran. This would considerably ease pressure on land costs in the kingdom, and yield significant parcels of urban land made available for development of affordable homes.



Dr Lui Thai Ker (extreme left) showing a housing masterplan in Vietnam in 2004

Photo: Keppel Corporation

HOUSING SOLUTIONS - SINGAPORE STYLE

Singapore's Dr Liu Thai Ker, director of RSP Architects, Planners & Engineers, spoke at the Jeddah Economic Forum (JEF) on affordable housing solutions

Dr Liu related how when the British Government pulled out in 1960, two-thirds of Singapore's population of 1.9 million people lived in informal housing or squatter colonies. Today, Singapore's 5.3 million residents enjoy a roof over their head, with approximately 93 per cent homeownership, 82 per cent of whom stay in public housing apartments.

Dr Liu identified five steps that were crucial for Singapore's stunning urban development.

STEP 1 - RESEARCH

When the British pulled out, the Singapore Government had to estimate the amount of public housing needed to be built annually to "break the backbones of severe housing shortage" in the city. That gave the public housing policy a very strong head start.

In the same manner, when a major revision of the city-wide concept plan was undertaken, it took all the ministries four years (1985 to 1989) to specify their needs for future development. They planned for the development for a nation capable of sustaining its people with the following objectives:

- To understand the needs of the citizens
- To calculate the amount of land and corresponding floor areas needed for every citizen to enjoy optimal quality of working and personal life
- To provide spaces and floor areas to enable development and ensure economic prosperity, quality environment and quality of life

STEP 2 - URBAN PLANNING

The government meticulously planned the way Singapore would look, taking great pains to shape a world class modern city that also respected its history, heritage and natural environment.

STEP 3 - CREATION OF SELF-SUFFICIENT NEW TOWNS

To create affordable homes and communities, planners looked beyond providing just dwellings. Dr Liu said policymakers concluded that a town, to be self-sufficient, needed a minimum population of about 200,000 if it was to support a suitable diversity of services, shops and amenities.

Singapore created 25 of these new towns; each had only about 45 per cent of land used for housing while the rest was used for infrastructure, sports facilities,

parks, shops and schools. "We also include clean industries in new towns, which engage mainly female workers. This means they can work close to where their children are," he said.

STEP 4 - MIX INCOMES THROUGHOUT THE NEW TOWNS

According to Dr Liu, the government put much effort to ensure the housing estates had people from all walks of life. Singapore planners mixed relatively richer and poorer families, preventing ghettos from occurring, thus creating social cohesion, preventing discriminatory behaviour. There were also no ethnic enclaves.

STEP 5 - RELOCATION, WITH POSITIVE RESPONSE, INTO BETTER HOUSING

By 1985, the government had completely re-housed people living in informal housing to housing estates and Singapore achieved zero homelessness. The result was a happy population as shown by the Housing Development Board's surveys which indicated a 95 per cent level satisfaction. "A happy population enhance our competitive edge with other cities," said Dr Liu emphatically.



SACM CHAMPIONS EDUCATION & CULTURAL TIES

The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) has offices worldwide to meet the educational and cultural needs of Saudis studying abroad. Dr Aiman M Momenah, SACM's Cultural Attache in Singapore speaks on SACM's outreach activities here

SACM has offices in more than 30 countries that include the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, China, Japan and South Korea. SACM's Singapore office was established in 2008 to represent Saudi universities, ministries and other governmental agencies that sponsor Saudi scholars and students in Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand. While SACM Singapore is part of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Singapore, it comes under the purview of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).

"We aim to enhance and strengthen the educational and cultural relations between the Kingdom and Singapore, given that the country is reputed for top-notch education, state-of-the-art technology and advanced research achievements. We are also committed to establishing various types of collaboration projects with educational and cultural institutions in Singapore," informs Dr

Aiman M. Momenah, Cultural Attaché of SACM Singapore.

According to Dr Aiman, SACM Singapore has successfully sponsored Saudi students to pursue their degree programmes in top universities in Singapore such as the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the Singapore Management University (SMU). SACM Singapore also helped Saudi medical students get industry attachments in established hospitals in Singapore such as the Singapore General Hospital and Tan

Tock Seng Hospital, among others.

Apart from facilitating the further studies of Saudi students in Singapore, SACM Singapore is in close contact with various departments and research centres in NUS, NTU, SMU and A*STAR (Agency for Science, Technology and Research) to explore the possibility of bridging them with research institutions in the Kingdom for research collaboration and academic exchange opportunities as well as the recruitment of outstanding graduates from the previously mentioned institutions for work in the Kingdom.

"We aim to enhance and strengthen the educational and cultural relations between the Kingdom and Singapore."

**Dr Aiman M. Momenah
Cultural Attaché of SACM Singapore**

STEER PROGRAMME

NUS and MOHE’s partnership in the Study Trip for Engagement EnRichment (STEER) Middle East Programme to the Kingdom is a highlight on SACM’s calendar. Introduced in December 2010, the programme was a success and hence, has been held annually since. The latest STEER Middle-East Programme in Dec 2012 included a four-day visit to Dammam, Dhahran and Jubail in the Kingdom.

During the visit, 20 NUS students from the Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Science undertook four joint student projects with their counterparts from the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) and presented their papers jointly at KFUPM. The students made educational visits to Dhahran Techno Valley, KFUPM Department of Engineering, the Royal Commission for Jubail & Yanbu Directorate General, Rotary Engineering and Yokogawa. They also spent time at cultural sites such as the Heritage Village and the city of Al-Khobar.

Correspondingly, MOHE and NUS co-initiated an awareness building programme to expose Saudi participants to Singapore’s history, culture, economy and society. From 22 – 28 March this year, a delegation comprising 22 faculty members and engineering undergraduates from KFUPM led by Prof Alshammari Abdullah Abdulaziz F, was hosted by NUS. The delegation attended various lectures on the oil and gas industry in Singapore and hydrogen technology and visited laboratories focused on water science and technology and linear Electronics as well as cutting edge research centres such as the Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore (SERIS) and the Centre for Ion Beam Applications (CIBA).

The Saudi delegates also enjoyed their educational visits to the Baba House, where they learned about the Peranakan culture and had an eye-opening experience at the vibrant and historical ethnic quarters of Chinatown and Kampong Glam/Arab Street. The programme also included visits to the Night Safari, Gardens-by-the-Bay and Sentosa.

WORLD ARABIC LANGUAGE DAY

SACM Singapore also places equal emphasis on promoting Arabic language and culture in Singapore through cultural events. One such key event was the World Arabic Language Day on 28 June this year at the Central Public Library. It consisted of the launch of a collection of books on Saudi Arabia, four seminars on comparative and cross-cultural understanding of the Arabic language, an Arabic calligraphy sharing segment, a ‘Saudi Costumes and Architecture’ photo-taking corner and a Saudi food tasting session that involved the sampling of Saudi dates and Arabic coffee.





EMERGING ARABIC VOICE IN ARTS

To some Singaporeans, their impression of Arabic art is one of scenic deserts, pyramids, camels and robed traders. However, a recently concluded art exhibition showcasing prominent works of Arab artists have shown Arabic art can be edgy, creative and thought-provoking

Terms & Conditions. No, they are not the clauses you would find at the end of a contest form or legal documents, at least on the topic at hand. They made up the name of one of Southeast Asia's first survey of contemporary art by artists from the Arab world. Terms & Conditions was held from 28 June to 8 September at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) this year and organised by SAM in partnership with U.A.E's Barjeel Art Foundation.

Aside from being an exhibition, Terms & Conditions was an open-ended debate about the representation of history, identities and social realities through the works of artists with Arabic roots. These artists are constantly faced with the challenges that come with speaking to the world outside of the Middle Eastern regions imposed upon them by larger political, economic and

cultural forces. For them, they see the medium of art as a way to tackle those challenges and have a voice within the terms and conditions of society today.

The exhibition had a line-up of 16 artworks – from select art galleries, museums, art collectors and artists from the Middle East and around the world – specially handpicked to introduce audiences in Singapore to contemporary art of the Arab world. Most of the works were created in the last five years, offering a window to this emerging contemporary art scene and the issues, ideals and challenges that modern artists are presently engaging with.

Director of SAM, Mr Tan Boon Hui, said, "It has always been important for SAM to offer our visitors opportunities to stay connected with the wider contemporary art world. As an emerging arts scene sharing many similarities with the development

of contemporary art in Southeast Asia, as well as the shared Arab heritage, the exhibition examines issues of identity and representation that are recurrent concerns that face today's artists around the world. With this exhibition, we also aim to encourage discourse and discussion on how history and social realities are presented and re-presented in our inter-connected world today."

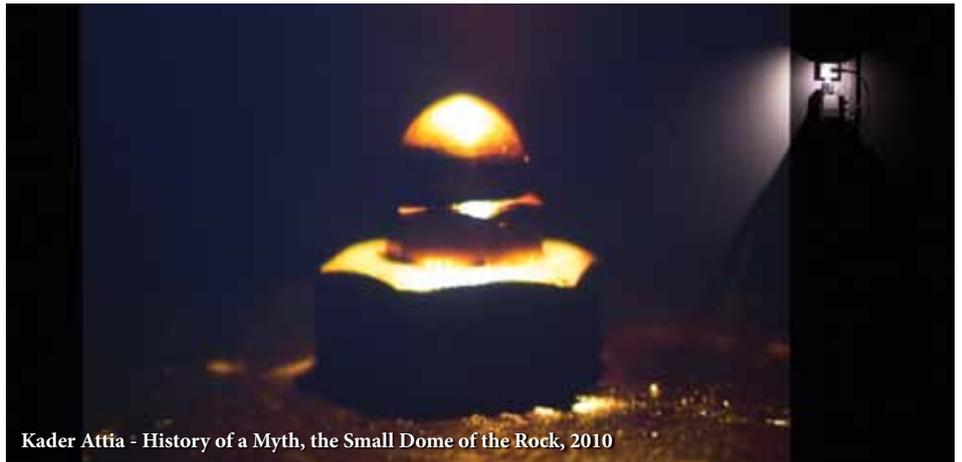
Guest curator, Ms Mandy Merzaban of the Barjeel Art Foundation, added, "Many works in this exhibition uniquely investigate how perceptions of history and social realities are regulated and controlled, something that is very much global as it is also present in the Arab world. Audiences in Singapore will be able to catch a glimpse of certain issues related to the Arab world but also be able to draw connections to ideas and scenarios that transcend borders and politics of particular regions."



Moataz Nasr - Elshaab



Adel Abidin - Three Love Songs



Kader Attia - History of a Myth, the Small Dome of the Rock, 2010

HIGHLIGHTS

ELSHAAB 2012 BY MOATAZ NASR

This creation consists of figurines representing the religious, class, gender and generational diversity of Egypt's population. The work references the civilian protests that have taken over Cairo's Tahrir Square since 2011.

The most evident clue is a scene replicating a highly publicised image from the media: Egyptian military figures beating a female protestor, ripping her abaya and exposing her blue brassiere. A number of the figurines wear head bandages and eye patches, bearing witness to the violence of the past two years.

More importantly, the artist, himself an activist, is depicted among those constituting Egypt's civilian population. Created using ceramics, a fragile material, the protesters become miniature hand-held objects for observation and decoration. While the unity of the people is commendable, their safety hangs precariously in the balance of the observer.

THREE LOVE SONGS 2010 BY ADEL ABIDIN

This video installation presents three archetypal western chanteuses: a 1950s lounge performer, a jazz singer performing in a restaurant and a pop sensation singing a ballad.

Although each female appears to be performing a sultry love song, they are in fact singing well-known Iraqi songs commissioned by Saddam Hussein to glorify his military regime.

Paradoxically, the masculine content of such nationalist songs mirrors the sensuality of their performances for an assumed male audience.

Instructed to emphatically sing each melody in an Iraqi dialect of Arabic, the women are unaware of the songs' meaning and seem to unwittingly profess the desires of the regime.

Three Love Songs underscores the insidious power of ideology while highlighting a contemporary relationship between music and propaganda.

THE SMALL DOME OF THE ROCK 2010 BY KADER ATTIA

The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is one of the world's most widely recognised and fiercely contested monuments. This piece is a miniaturised reproduction of that famous shrine. The artist has re-imagined the 7th century architecture of the monument into a composition of two ready-made objects: a brass bolt and two silver nuts. Projected onto a screen, the objects achieve a symbolic grandeur and are released from their commonplace associations. The projection of the architecture is complemented with an experiential soundtrack: the whistling of wind charged with infra-bass emanating through four directional speakers. The sounds echo the wind against the mosque's walkway. While the installation invites viewers to reflect on the nature of religious icons, it also offers a contemplative space, decontextualised from the site's political and religious discord. Attention is therefore directed to the sheer beauty and architectural magnitude of the Dome of the Rock.



A GIFT OF DATES

This year the Kingdom continued with its 20-year tradition of gifting dates to Singapore and creating goodwill

Following the Friday prayers on 5 July 2013, a short reception was organised at the Saudi Embassy in Singapore's office just before the start of the fasting month of Ramadhan. Several leaders from Singapore's muslim community, who included Mr Hawazi Daipi, the Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Manpower, Ustaz Syed Isa bin Semait, former Mufti of Singapore and Syed Hassan Alattas, the Imam of Ba'alwie Mosque, as well as members of the press.

As has been the tradition in the past 20 years, the Saudi Arabian Embassy has arranged for the free distribution of dates with Masjid Ba'alwie at Lewis Road. This year 45 tonnes of dates were given away in Singapore. Mr Zainal Abidin Jumat, one of Masjid Ba'alwie's representative in charge of the distribution said, "This year we received 45 tonnes of dates that filled three containers. They were distributed to various clinics, mosques, welfare and civic organisations and associations, Singapore prison, and finally to members of the public. Boxes of 5 kilos each will be given to institutional recipients and for individuals the dates will be re-packed in packets of 2 kilos each."

Mr Nawazi thanked the Ambassador, H.E. Mr Mansour Al-Mazmoumi and the Saudi Arabia Government on behalf of all those who will receive the gift of dates this year. The meeting ended with a short supplication in appreciation and one of the

representatives at the meeting, Mr Jaafar Mah, representing Chinese muslims here, presented as token of appreciation a Chinese calligraphic artwork on rice paper that states 'There is only One God.' Mr Hawazi also presented a gift from Singapore Prison's muslim inmates who created a special handmade pottery craft gift.

In his comments to the press, the Ambassador said, "We feel muslims from all over the world are part of us and we are connected to each other; this is especially so for Singapore and Saudi Arabia as we are close to one another. This is the least of what we can do and it is something we have been doing every year; it is our duty to do and the dates go to many other parts of the world. We are very happy and pleased to do it."

The distribution of dates to organisations and members of the public took place on the weekend of 6 and 7 July, respectively, from Masjid Ba'alwie, and went on smoothly. Over 6,000, 2-kilo packets were given out to the public. Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Zainul Abidin Rasheed was one of the observers at the distribution of the dates and said, "This tradition is something that we can be proud of and we are grateful to the Saudi Arabian Embassy for the gift of the dates. The gift is also a timely one as it helps us in our preparations for the coming fasting month."



DATES - HEALTH BENEFITS

According to a modern medical survey, dates are useful in preventing abdominal cancer. Many Muslims break their fast by eating dates and water and this helps avoid overeating of food after the fast is finished. When the body begins to absorb the high nutritional value of the dates, the feeling of hunger is reduced. The nervous system also benefits as dates have significant amounts of potassium. Dates are rich in several vitamins, minerals and fibre as well as containing oil, calcium, sulphur, iron, phosphorous, manganese, copper and magnesium which are all beneficial for health. Dates also regulate the digestive process and boost energy levels within 30 minutes of eating. The American Cancer Society recommends an intake of 20-35 grams of dietary fibre per day, which can be supplied through dates. *Source: Organicfacts.net*



Special Mixed Grill Kebab



Baklava



Mahiche



Kebab Koobideh



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The tantalising taste and aromatic scents of Persian and Mediterranean fare come to life at the Sahara Authentic Persian Restaurant. For over a decade, Sahara has been the leading restaurant serving Iranian cuisine specialising in grilled meats and Middle Eastern kebabs and Mediterranean delights such as pastas and pizzas.

Founded by Esad Sedjic and Mojtaba 'Moshee' Tehrani, Sahara is an institution in the Singapore food scene. The former sportsmen, Esad and Moshee, bring the same energy and enthusiasm they displayed on the football pitch to serve the best of authentic Persian and Mediterranean food at the Sahara Authentic Persian Restaurant.



Bal Kebab



Sultani Kebab

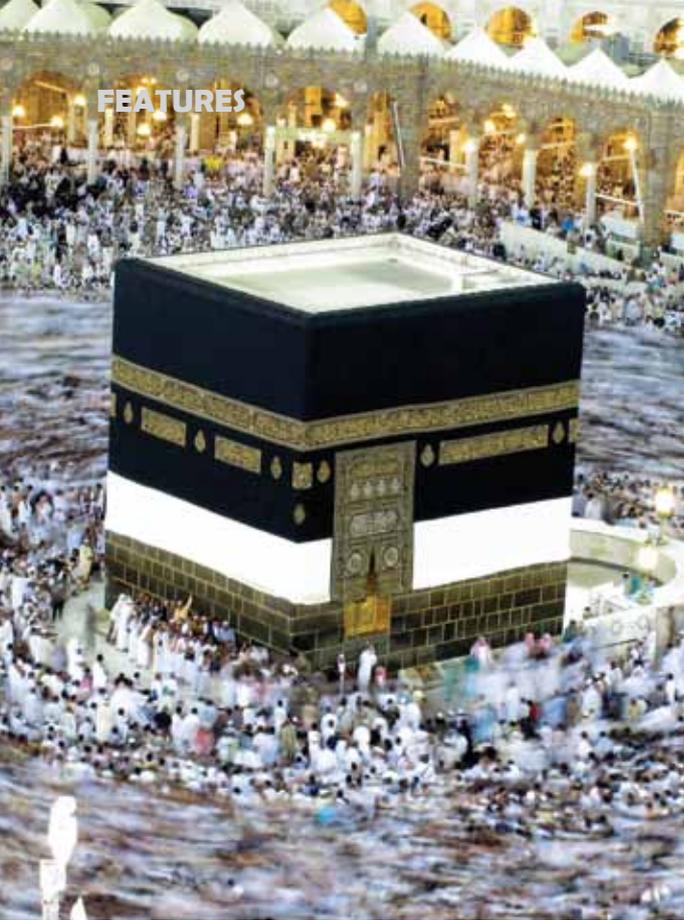


Sahara Special Pizza



Zereshk Polo Ba Murgh





THE HAJJ: PREPATION FOR PILGRIMAGE

Saudi Arabia successfully completed the necessary preparations to receive an influx of some 1.8 million visitors for last year's Hajj, the annual Islamic pilgrimage

In 2011, nearly three million Muslim pilgrims performed Hajj, the world's largest annual gathering and one of the five pillars, or sacred duties, of Islam. The peak of last year's Hajj took place on 24 October.

Health centers at airports and seaports have been provided with medical equipment necessary for checking pilgrims, said Jeddah health chief Samie Ba Dawood. Medicines and vaccines have been made available, along with 579 extra workers who have been sent to health centers specially set up to serve pilgrims.

Abdulghani Al-Maliki, chief of the King Abdulaziz International Airport, said specialised medical teams would check pilgrims from countries where diseases such as Dengue and Rift Valley fevers are endemic.

Saudi Arabian Airlines (Saudia) Director General Khaled Al-Molhem has also announced that Saudia will play an important role during the Hajj season by transporting nearly one million pilgrims from different parts of the world.

Speaking at a meeting of Saudia's board of directors, Al-Molhem said the national carrier had transported a record 16 million passengers during the last

eight months, two million more than the figure in 2011.

The Kingdom has also apologized for rejecting requests from 40 countries to increase their Hajj quotas in 2012, which was due to major development projects in the two holy cities of Makkah and Madinah.

"The ministry has apologized to all countries which had asked to increase the number of their pilgrims in 2012, as giant development projects in Makkah and Madinah make it difficult to accommodate more numbers," Hajj Minister Bandar Al-Hajjar told local media. Every Muslim country has a Hajj quota of 1,000 per million inhabitants. Countries normally agree ahead of time on the numbers of worshipers to make pilgrimage.

PALESTINIAN PILGRIMS

By the third week of last September, 109,670 foreign pilgrims had arrived in the Kingdom for Hajj. The majority of these pilgrims arrived by air while 54 by sea and 10 by land, according to Gen. Salim Al-Belaid, director general of the Passport Department. For the third year running, Custodian of the Two Holy

Mosques King Abdullah was also poised to host 2,000 Palestinian pilgrims who are relatives of people killed or imprisoned by the Israeli authorities.

Palestinian Ambassador Jamal Al-Shobki said, "There is nothing strange in this gesture as the King gives utmost care to pilgrims." He estimated the total number of Palestinian pilgrims coming for Hajj in 2012 at 9,000, including the King's guests. The first group arrived at the end of September. Muslims are expected to perform Hajj at least once in their lifetime if they are capable of doing so.

Indian pilgrims had started arriving in the third week of September, Mohsina Kidwai, chair of the Hajj Committee of India (HCI), reviewed preparations for Indian pilgrims during a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia.

She visited Makkah and inspected buildings to check they were ready. She also held discussions with Consul General Faiz Ahmad Kidwai and other officials on various aspects of Hajj preparations.

While expressing satisfaction over the arrangements, she instructed Indian officials to serve pilgrims with sincerity

and dedication. She said she appreciated the services provided by the Saudi government for the pilgrims' welfare.

In all, 479 buildings were booked to accommodate 125,000 Indian pilgrims that came through the HCI. About 45,000 additional pilgrims came through private tour operators. As far as medical services are concerned, the services extended by the Indian Hajj Mission, which include comprehensive lab testing, basic investigations, radiographic investigation and ultrasonography, among others, are regarded as among the best and well-organised services in the Kingdom. Besides a 60-bed temporary hospital in Makkah, an extra 30-bed hospital was made available in the Azizia area of Makkah to meet the medical requirements of about 65,000 pilgrims who had stayed in the area. Aside from these hospitals, 11 branch dispensaries were also functioning. In Madinah, one main dispensary and five



branch dispensaries were set up.

In Islamabad, the national flag carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) carried over 95,000 pilgrims on 19 September 2012. According to a spokesman, PIA's first Hajj flight from Islamabad left for Saudi Arabia at 6 p.m. on the same day.

Flights from Lahore, Karachi and

Quetta left 20 September from Multan and Sialkot on 27 September and 1 October. PIA flew a total of 95,000 pilgrims to Jeddah, as well as four flights to Makkah. The Hajj was completed by 29 October.

Above article first appeared in The Diplomat (Sep-Oct 2012) issued by Institute of Diplomatic Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saudi Arabia.

Congratulations to the people and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 83rd National Day

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ECONOMY



SAUDI ARABIA THE INVESTMENT HUB

Government initiatives has resulted in making Saudi Arabia one of the best performing countries of the G-20 economies in recent years with highest FDI in the world

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a report in July, that Saudi Arabia has made considerable progress in improving the economic statistics and there was scope for further improvement. IMF's statement is a testament to Saudi Arabia's continuous efforts to advance and modernize its economy and the living standards of its citizens. The country has had a GDP growth of 6 per cent in 2012 while inflation has fallen. Six 'economic cities' are being established across the country, which is expected to promote foreign investment. Government spending will reach an approximate figure of USD373 billion by 2014 with most of it concentrated on social development and infrastructure projects.

SECURE INVESTMENT DESTINATION

According to John Sfakianakis, chief investment strategist at Masic in Saudi Arabia, "Very few countries around the world have been able to maintain such a healthy roster of macroeconomic accomplishments post the financial crisis."

The government initiative is directed towards education and skill-development of its huge working-age population, creating

employment opportunities for them and developing housing, infrastructure transportation and the SME sector. With increasing oil production and oil prices, the country has posted large fiscal and current account surplus and has been a stabilising force in the global oil market. Credit growth has remained strong, and the banking system is strong and profitable with Basle III capital standards implemented in January 2013.

The World Economic Forum in its Global Competitiveness Report for 2012-13 has identified Saudi Arabia to be the 18th best country on parameters of competitiveness. The report specifically points out that 'the country has seen a number of improvements to its competitiveness in recent years that have resulted in a solid institutional framework, efficient markets and sophisticated businesses. High macroeconomic stability and increasing use of ICT, for productivity improvements, have contributed to its present position.' The Samba Financial Group's (Saudi Arabia) Baseline Forecast for 2012-13 predicts that the country's net foreign assets is set to reach around USD780 billion by the end of 2013.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

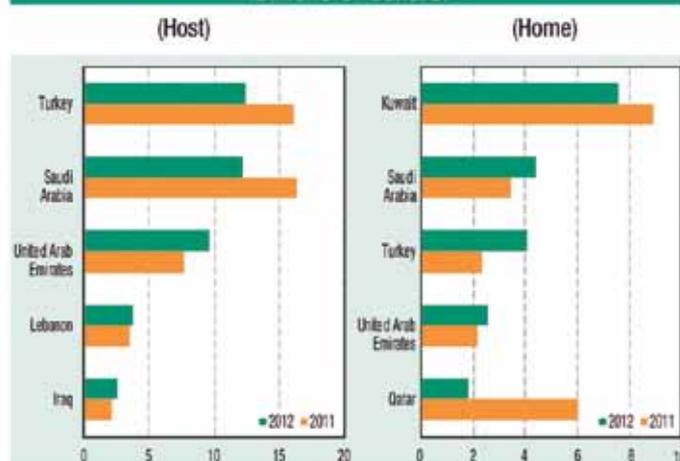
The country's economic stability stems from its twin surplus of government budget and current account, which makes its high-liquidity environment extremely attractive for local and foreign ventures. Saudi-based projects also get the advantage of a huge and diversified market (MENA and the nearby Europe and Asia market) and economies of scale. The country has well-developed business clusters and value chains that provide industrial projects with cost savings. It is one of the most open in the Gulf, allowing up to 100 per cent foreign ownership in sectors such as information technology, construction and real estate development, while there is every possibility of more sectors opening up. Direct investment is permitted both in resident capital companies and through the establishment of branches of non-resident companies. The government has also applied a low taxation rate, while it has 24 double tax treaties (DTA), aiming to facilitate trade and development. All these have combined to encourage foreign ownership of business and investment ventures within the Kingdom. The country is the largest recipient of FDI in the Arab world.

Table A. Distribution of FDI flows among economies, by range,^a 2012

Range	Inflows	Outflows
Above \$10 billion	Turkey and Saudi Arabia	--
\$5.0 to \$9.9 billion	United Arab Emirates	Kuwait
\$1.0 to \$4.9 billion	Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman and Jordan	Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman
Below \$1.0 billion	Bahrain, Yemen, Qatar and Palestinian Territory	Bahrain, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan and Palestinian Territory

^a Economies are listed according to the magnitude of their FDI flows.

Figure A. FDI flows, top 5 host and home economies, 2011–2012 (Billions of dollars)



Various joint venture projects (with foreign companies) have started in Saudi Arabia according to the UNCTAD World Investment Report 2013. Saudi Aramco and Dow Chemical will implement a mega petrochemical project that will build, own and operate a USD20 billion integrated chemicals complex (comprising 26 manufacturing units) in Al Jubail Industrial City. The second is a joint venture agreement between Sinopec (China) and Aramco (Saudi Arabia) to complete the construction of the USD8.5 billion Yanbu refinery.

BOOM TIME FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

The Saudi economy has diversified into production of non-oil industrial goods and non-conventional sectors. With infrastructure, housing, hospitality and real-estate growing exponentially, construction and allied industries are in for a boom time. Saudi Arabia is considered to be the largest construction market in the Middle East, and one of the fastest growing globally. The population expansion requires quality houses, offices, hospitals, schools and universities. The government is investing USD67 billion in a scheme to build 500,000 new homes in the coming years. During the first quarter of 2013, an approximate SR49.1 billion worth of contracts were awarded, according to the NCB Construction Contracts Award Index Q1 2013. The government committed about SR11.7 billion for infrastructural development. Sectors within the social

infrastructure category, such as healthcare, residential real estate and education, contributed to another SR28 billion. Oil & gas, petro-chemical and industrial sector accounted for nearly SR7.5 billion.

With mega amounts being invested in construction, it is natural that the cement industry will also experience a boom. A report of Al-Rajhi Capital, Saudi Outlook 2013, revealed a positive outlook for the cement industry. Major cement plants will be build over the next three years and the government has granted SR 3 billion toward the scheme, according to Minister of Commerce and Industry Tawfiq Al-Rabiah. The demand for cement is expected to increase by 9.4 per cent a year, to over 80 million tons by 2017, according to a report released by market research firm, CWC Group.

The country's hospitality sector is slated to expand by a whopping 83 per cent in the coming years, according to industry experts. The number of domestic and international visitors will reach almost 88 million by 2020, with religious visitors accounting for 20 million by 2014. The demand for hotel rooms, surging to meet the tourist need, has made this a very attractive sector for investors. The Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Hospitality Committee recently approved the launch of the Kingdom's first 'Best Restaurant and Coffee Shop Award' competition, as part of the chamber's role in developing and encouraging all activities of this business sector.



WHY SAUDI ARABIA

Experts at Ernst & Young's MENA Tax Conference 2013 held in Hong Kong said that Investment opportunities are highly attractive in Saudi Arabia as international investors benefit from larger internal markets, more accessible customers, a stable political environment and enhanced transport and logistics infrastructure.

Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), as the chief investment facilitator of the Kingdom, has enabled an attractive investment environment to attract foreign investments – 30 day application processing time; transfer of capital and profit abroad; loan from the Saudi Industrial Development Fund; benefit from corporative, collateral and massive agreements regarding taxation and investment with other countries and transfer of losses for future years in regard to taxes.

ECONOMY

The country is slowly emerging as an automobile industry hub. The U.S.-Saudi Arabian Business Council (USSABC) had recently met in Detroit to introduce OEMs, tier suppliers and aftermarket providers to opportunities for sales, technical tie-ups, joint venture and investment in the expanding Saudi auto market. Isuzu began light truck assembly in the country in 2012 and Jaguar/Land Rover (JLR) has signed a Letter of Intent to build a manufacturing plant that could be producing 50,000 vehicles per year by 2017. Among OEM suppliers, Johnson Controls and Denso already have active joint venture operations in the country. The emerging position as the new automotive production and distribution hub, for the MENA region and beyond, can be credited to the competitive advantage that the country has from its extensive base of companies manufacturing input materials for the auto industry.

Saudi Arabia is home to Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), a world leader in plastics technology that not only



manufactures the material solutions for the automotive sector but also 60 per cent of the plastics used in cars. SABIC sits at the apex of a broad network of Saudi-based companies producing petrochemical-based products with offerings down the value chain.

Alcoa and its local joint venture partner, Saudi Arabian Mining Company, operates one of the largest and lowest cost integrated aluminum facilities in the world, which provides another important input

for the auto industry. The USD10.8 billion joint venture comprises a bauxite mine, aluminum refinery, aluminum smelter and rolling mill. JLR is one of the mainstream motoring brands that have adopted aluminum bodies in some of its road cars to help reduce vehicle weight.

The economic surge has huge potential for the region and its neighbouring area and this analyst's feel is a real boom and not a bubble.

Congratulations and Best Wishes to
the People and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
on their 83rd National Day



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SERVING SAUDI ARABIA

Keppel Offshore & Marine's (Keppel O&M) ties with Saudi Arabia have strengthened over the years, with the delivery of milestone projects for the country

In 2012, Keppel FELS – Keppel O&M's rigbuilding arm in Singapore – completed a KFELS Super B Class jackup drilling rig customised for Saudi Aramco. The rig, SAR 202, was delivered on time and without lost-time incidents.

Mr Wong Kok Seng, Managing Director of Keppel FELS, shared, "The KFELS Super B Class is a cost-effective and highly capable design ideally suited to meet the needs of the Middle East. The excellent completion of this rig is a demonstration of our ability to deliver value through leading edge technology as well as operational excellence."

"We are honoured to be able to play a part in Saudi Arabia's extensive offshore industry and look forward to support them as they grow their fleet of high specification offshore rigs."

In June this year, Keppel FELS completed to high customer satisfaction the KFELS B Class jackup rig ARABDRILL 50 (AD50) for Arabian Drilling Company (ADC). Chartered by Saudi Aramco,

AD50 has been operating successfully in offshore Saudi Arabia.

Mr Chow Yew Yuen, Chief Executive Officer-designate and Chief Operating Officer of Keppel O&M, said, "Testament to the strong confidence by ADC in us is the small project and inspection team they sent in the supervision of this project. It speaks volumes of the trust and good teamwork Keppel FELS has built up with ADC."

Mr Mohammed Umar Loan, Managing Director (Technical) of ADC, affirmed, "We would like to express our appreciation and thanks for all your support and hard work to make this project successful, and look forward to have same spirit of work and relationship for the ongoing project ARABDRILL 60 (AD60)."

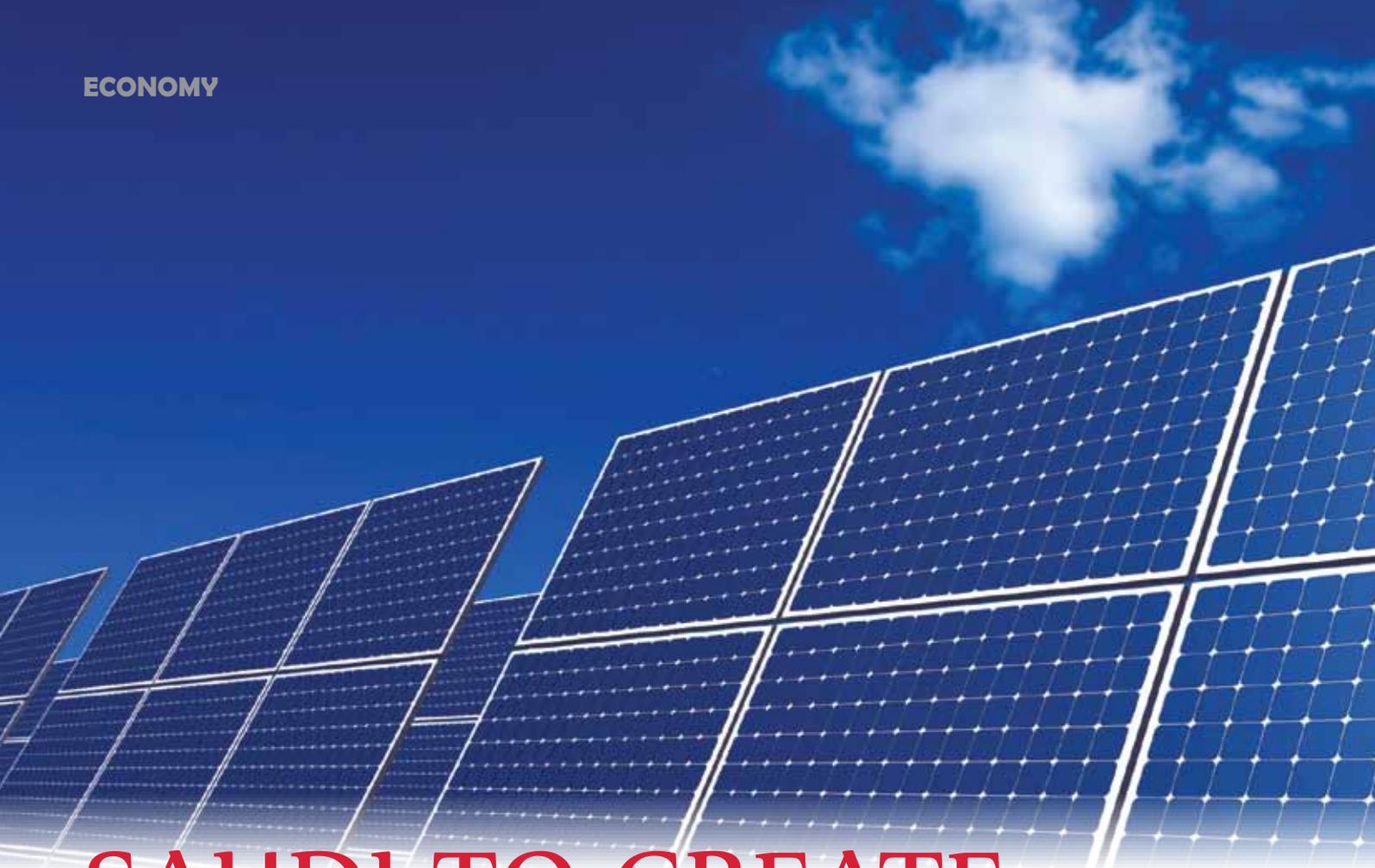
With each project, Keppel O&M builds on its growing relations with Saudi Arabia. Focused on high quality, value-added solutions, Keppel O&M continues to enhance its range of capabilities to better provide for Saudi Arabia's present and future needs.

Keppel FELS is on track to deliver its second KFELS B Class rig, AD60, for ADC at the end of this year.



(top) Saudi Aramco and Keppel FELS celebrate the successful collaboration on the KFELS Super B Class rig SAR 2002

(bottom) Mr Wong Kok Seng (right), Managing Director (Offshore) of Keppel O&M and Managing Director of Keppel FELS presents the rig name plate to Mr Mohammed Yousuf Rafie, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Arabian Drilling Company



SAUDI TO CREATE ENERGY SURPLUS

Saudi Arabia is investing in renewable energy to meet growing domestic requirements and solar energy is a win-win option

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with one-fifth of the world's oil reserves (proven) is also the world's largest producer and exporter. However, this situation may change in the future; according to a Citigroup report, the country may well become an oil importing nation by 2030, if oil consumption grows in line with peak power demand. The Saudi Government has published a roadmap of its future renewable energy programme. The King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy (KA-CARE), the government department responsible for the programme, has indicated a future energy-mix of solar and nuclear energy, in this long-term plan. In more specific terms the country will aim to install 23.9 gigawatts (GW) of renewable power capacity by 2020 and 54.1 GW by 2032.

SOLAR-POWERED FUTURE

Khalid Al Sulaiman, Vice President, KA-CARE, has said that a national policy statement on renewable and nuclear power generation will be presented by the end of 2013. The fall in solar power costs and rise of oil prices has created a situation where the country can save crude oil, worth billions of dollars, for export and also generate electricity for domestic consumption at less cost. KA-CARE has planned to install 70 stations across the country, which will measure the ability to produce electricity from renewable sources such as sun, wind, geothermal and waste sources. Of these, 10 stations have been installed.

The country already has contracts for the first round of 500-800 MW of solar power, expected before the end of 2013; this introductory procurement round will

be followed by more tenders that will have a target of over 5,000 MW to be installed in the next five years. Renewable power developers will have 20-year contracts to sell electricity to a new government body that will in turn sell it on to the national grid.

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

The government is looking at building a solar industry that will take care of one-third or about 41,000 MW of the country's electricity requirement by 2032. In order to meet this target, the government is looking at investments to the tune of USD 109 billion. Once met, this would free 523,000 barrels of oil a day for export. In the first round of auctions, which is expected to be called by the end of 2013, an expected 1,100 MW of solar PV capacity and 900 MW of solar thermal capacity will be on offer.

Various foreign investors are keen on taking advantage of these opportunities; US solar project developer SolarReserve plans to build a massive solar energy park in Saudi Arabia with 600 MW of baseload capacity. Chinese firm ReneSola won the contract for the 15 KW off-grid power plant for the Taibah University in Medina. Riyadh-based ACWA Power International is in the running for the 100 MW solar power plant in Mecca, the first city in the Kingdom that is getting ready to operate a utility-scale plant generating power from renewable energy.

Saudi Arabia is a non-Annex 1 signatory country in the Kyoto Protocol and therefore does not have a binding target for reducing carbon emissions. However, it can host Clean Development Mechanism projects under terms of the protocol. Foreign investors from Annex 1 countries can invest in emission-reducing projects in Saudi Arabia and receive Certified Emissions Reductions (CERs) for use in Annex I countries, subject to the independent crediting rules of those countries.

A NEW DAWN

According to the Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Ali Al-Naimi, Saudi Arabia 'welcomes new and additional supplies' that will reduce the burden on conventional and non-renewable energy sources and help to stabilise oil prices.

It's a crucial part of Saudi Arabia's plan to spend billions of dollars over the next two decades to install more than 50 GW of renewable power in the country and meet

“Saudi Arabia is determined to diversify its energy sources and reduce its dependence on hydrocarbons. Renewable energy isn't just an option, but absolutely necessary. We have the means to build renewable energy, and we need to do it.”

Wail Bramhair

at least 30 per cent of its electricity needs with solar energy by 2032. If implemented, this will be more than the total GW of renewable energy than has been installed in the entire world till 2012.

A Saudi Arabian team, led by project manager Wail Bramhair, had recently visited the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in the US. According to Bramhair, “Saudi Arabia is determined to diversify its energy sources and reduce its dependence on hydrocarbons. Renewable energy isn't just an option, but absolutely necessary. We have the means to build renewable energy, and we need to do it.”

The Saudi Government has already signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with China, in January 2012, to build 16 nuclear reactors by 2031 at a cost of about USD100 billion. Besides solar power, the country is also looking at nuclear power to at least cover 20 per cent of its electricity needs. The government is working with the U.S. Department of Energy; NREL will help

set up the monitoring stations, mentioned earlier, and determine the best spots for solar power plants and also build the local expertise to operate and maintain the instruments and stations.

Apart from KA-CARE other Saudi Arabian institutions are also getting ready for the big future and some are already in it. Saudi Electricity Company (SECO) is planning to bid for the Dibba 1 IPP, as the Kingdom's first large-scale integrated CSP technology combined-cycle project, with a capacity of 600MW. The municipal government of Mecca has also announced plans to construct 100MW, 50MW and 25MW solar power plants, and recently received bids from ACWA Power and EDF-led consortia. Saudi ARAMCO has also studied and implemented small-scale projects with Japan's Solar Frontier, including a 10MW solar PV electricity generation facility at a new company complex in Dhahran and a 500KW solar project on Farasan Island in the Red Sea.

According to Ziyad Al Shiha, the executive director of Saudi Aramco Power Systems, the Kingdom may need to burn as much as 3 million barrels of oil a day by 2020, if it doesn't improve efficiency or move towards renewable energy sources. He also that Saudi Aramco is planning to build the Kingdom's biggest solar energy plant. Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud, founder of the King Faisal Foundation and one of the state's top spokesmen, told the Global Economic Symposium in Brazil that he hoped the kingdom might be powered entirely by low-carbon energy, so that it can use its vast oil reserves for other goods, such as plastics and polymers.





BANKING - THE ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVE

The past years of financial crisis, the world over, has brought the working of Islamic banking to the attention of industries and the general population

Shariah-compliant finance is the fastest growing part of the post-crisis banking sector. What lies behind its success, and what can western economists learn from Islamic law?

One lasting effect of the global financial crisis is more people than ever before are interested in how banking works.

That is hardly surprising. When reckless trading and slack regulation took some of the world's biggest banks to the brink of collapse in 2008, it was the taxpayer who bailed them out.

The enormous pay - and hedonistic lifestyles - of bank executives and traders have since triggered angry protests and public debate in Europe and the United States. Even the complex topic of bank regulation has been dealt with in a string of popular books and documentaries.

The crisis also threw light on alternatives to mainstream financial services. One of these alternatives

is Islamic, or more accurately, Shariah-compliant banking.

The Islamic faith has never had a problem with trade or the accumulation of capital, provided they are done in a fair way. The Shariah (Islamic law) places constraints on some financial practices seen as harmful to society, but allows for free markets and individual wealth.

Between the 8th and 12th centuries, a market economy sometimes labelled "Islamic capitalism" operated in the areas controlled by the Caliphate. A single currency, based on gold, drew previously separate regions into a single economic network, promoting trade over an area stretching from Morocco and Andalusia to Iraq and beyond.

This system was the economic basis for the golden age of Islam. It was one of the great periods of progress in human knowledge, culture and technology. Yet from the time of Caliph Omar onwards, the

system worked under a complete ban on providing credit in exchange for interest.

Several verses of the Holy Quran specifically condemn the practice of lending money for future profit (Riba, in Arabic). For example: "That which ye lay out for increase through the property of (other) people, will have no increase with Allah. But that which ye lay out for charity, seeking the countenance of Allah (will increase): it is these who will get a recompense multiplied" - Quran, 30:39 (Surat Ar-Rum).

Classical Islamic scholars saw the ban on usury as a way of avoiding evils caused by aggressive lending - for example, banks taking over the homes of borrowers who defaulted.

Naturally, other Islamic texts also prohibited Islamic banks from investing in other "haram activities or products such as those linked with alcohol, gambling and the consumption of pork.

Muslim scholars have put forward various arguments as to why the Quran prohibits Riba. Some suggest that the charging of interest helps cause harmful trade fluctuations and monetary crises, due to waves of rash lending followed mass defaults. Others question the effectiveness of interest as a policy instrument, even in market economies.

The Quran in general discourages excessive borrowing. But it instructs creditors to go easy on borrowers who default.

“If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time Till it is easy for him to repay. But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew.” Quran, 2:280 (Surat Al Baqarah).

As well as usury and gambling, various hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, PBUH) also prohibit “bayu al-gharar” - trading in risk.

“Gharar” translates roughly as “excessive uncertainty”. Ibn Hazm, of the Zahiri school of Islamic jurisprudence, neatly defined it: “Gharar is where the buyer does not know what he bought, or the seller does not know what he sold.”

Some hadith give specific examples relevant to the earliest days of Islam. Muslims should not trade in birds which are still flying, as-yet-uncaught fish, or an unborn calf in its mother’s womb. These transactions would be gharar -speculation that destabilises markets and has more potential to cause economic chaos than “strait” trading.



THE EMERGENCE OF ISLAMIC BANKING

Western banks did not arrive in the Middle East until a few centuries later, when many of the region’s countries were under colonial rule. But most Muslims were reluctant to use them.

Islam’s ban on Riba was a big factor in this, although nationalist sentiments also played a role. People were naturally suspicious about the motives of banks, which were linked to the business interests of the colonial powers.

Yet in the wake of World War II, people in most Muslim countries started to avail themselves of services such as money transfers and current accounts. As foreign

trade increased and the middle class grew, it became obvious that the Muslim world needed to be more connected to the global financial system.

Late in the 1940s, Islamic scholars such as Anwar Qureshi and Mahmud Ahmad began to examine the question: how can Muslims benefit from modern banking services without breaking Islamic law?

These thinkers proposed a new kind of banking system. Instead of being based on interest, Islamic banks would use concepts such as Mudarabha, meaning that the lender and the borrower would share both profits and risks.

One of the first experiments with interest-free Islamic banking happened in Egypt in the 1960s.

For fear of attracting the attention of President Gamal Abdul Nasser’s the savings bank set up by Ahmad Al Najjar in the town of Mit Ghamr did not carry the label “Islamic”. Nasser, a secular nationalist, was firmly stamping out any form of what he perceived as Islamic fundamentalism.

However, the bank did manage to offer locals the chance to borrow money on Islamic principles, and prospered for a while before the government finally shut it down.

By the next decade, governments across the Islamic world were beginning to listen to prominent Shariah scholars who were



talking about Islamic banking. The finance ministers of Islamic countries held their first conference in Karachi in 1970. This was followed by several international conferences on Islamic economics.

By the middle of the decade, the international Islamic Development Bank and the first private Shariah-compliant bank had been set up. The oil boom of the same decade, led to economic growth in the Arab world which prompted millions of people to use banks for the first time.

Four decades on, the sector has grown beyond all recognition. Over 300 Islamic banks operate in 51 countries. An additional 250 mutual funds comply with Islamic principles. Overall, Islamic funds manage some \$1.3 trillion in assets, according to the UK Islamic Finance Secretariat.

Top financial firms now run indices of top Shariah-compliant shares, with an emphasis on transparency. The FTSE Shariah Global Equity Index Series, for example, publishes strict rules on the shares that can be included. It says it strictly avoids non-Islamic banks, pornography, tobacco and weapons firms.

Islamic banks are now a global concern. Muslims across the world can now make use of their services. Estimates suggest that as many as 237 million people are doing so, in the form of current accounts, mortgages, insurance and other financial services.

The GCC and Malaysia are global hubs for the sector. Saudi Arabia's

Al Rajhi Bank, one of the biggest Shariah-compliant funds in the world, now manages nearly \$40bn in funds.

NUTS AND BOLTS

So how do Islamic banks work? Like other banks, they find ways to make money by lending capital to consumers and businesses. However, they do so while adhering to Islamic law and its inherent principles of fair play.

Fiqh al-Muamalat is a system of rules on transactions whereby banks share risks with borrowers, as is normal in trading partnerships. This is a contrast to the risk transfer that happens in conventional banking.

One example is the concept of Murabaha. Say a Muslim family wants a mortgage to buy a house. Instead of borrowing money from the bank, they make an agreement: the bank buys the house, at market price. The family then moves in, and paying in instalments, starts to buy the house from the bank, at a slight mark-up.

The bank cannot, however, make its profit explicit, and there can be no additional penalties for late payment. The bank protects itself against default by asking for collateral.

Islamic banks have also developed ways of lending capital to businesses. "Mudarabah" transactions, for example, effectively bring the bank and the borrower together in a partnership. The bank provides capital,

while the business invests it in a commercial enterprise. But instead of making interest payments, the business pays the bank a share of profits at a pre-agreed ratio.

In Mudarabah arrangements, only the lender (i.e. the bank) can incur a loss. This encourages banks to lend responsibly - a far cry from the reckless speculation that led to the financial crisis of 2008.

PLAYING BY THE RULES

Shariah-compliant financial firms now offer everything from current, savings and investment accounts to insurance and asset management services. To carry the Shariah label, all of these services must comply with the same basic principles. They must not charge interest, or trade in risk, and they must not be involved in alcohol, gambling or pork.

There is clearly a growing market for banking along these lines. According to CIMB Group Holdings, Islamic finance is the fastest-growing segment of the global financial system. It also seems to be fairly robust. It only faced a brief decline during the crisis of 2008, and has since continued to grow at some 10-15% per year.

The banks involved in this sector take different forms. Most of the ones operating in the relatively free markets of the GCC are private, local firms or offshoots of the big western banks. Others operate within national Islamic banking systems, or on dual banking models.

The global market for Islamic finance at the end of last year was worth around \$1.3 trillion, according to the UK Islamic Finance Secretariat. With a potential market of perhaps \$4 trillion, there is plenty of room for growth.

The Economist estimates that around 12% of Muslims use Islamic financial products, and say the total value of Shariah-compliant assets has grown by 150% since 2006. Most of these assets are held in banks, which are also big investors in Islamic bonds (sukuk).

Even from a non-Muslim perspective, the economic system proposed by Islam has clear advantages. The Quran entreats Muslims to generosity and fairness in their dealings, but also recognises the role of commerce in a healthy society.



Photo: The Diplomat (Sep-Oct 2012), Institute of Diplomatic Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saudi Arabia

In general, Islam endorses free markets. It argues, for example, that the state should not fix the prices of commodities, unless artificial factors are causing excessive price movements.

It allows businesses to trade, while trying to prevent the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few to the detriment of society as a whole. Traders are free to sell their goods for whatever price the market allows, although they must not hoard commodities in order to artificially raise prices.

By forbidding gambling, cheating, and coercion, an Islamic economic system should help prevent both instability and exploitation, at least in theory.

Islam's model of a regulated free market also aims to reduce the gap between the rich and poor in society. It firmly discourages cartels and monopolies that concentrate wealth in the hands of a few.

Zakat is a tax that is distributed to the needy. In the very early days Islam, it was a statutory tax. Since then, giving Zakat to a mosque or Islamic charity has been seen as an individual act of piety. It remains one of the

Fiqh al-Muamalat is a system of rules on transactions whereby banks share risks with borrowers, as is normal in trading partnerships. This is a contrast to the risk transfer that happens in conventional banking

five pillars (primary obligations) of Islam.

With all these principles in mind, Islam has much to teach the west about how to run a fair and prosperous economy. Indeed, according to HSBC Amanah (a subsidiary of the British bank), even non-Muslims are starting to take note of what Shariah-based financial products can offer.

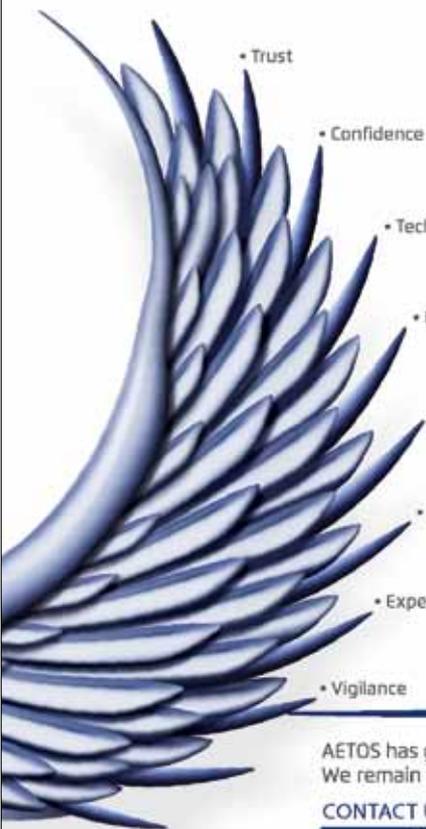
According to its website, "It is an inclusive paradigm: non-Muslim individuals and communities that seek ethical financial solutions have also been attracted to Islamic banking"

With the global financial system in its current state, the principles of Islamic economics deserve closer attention.



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Article above by Paul Adrian Raymond first appeared in The Diplomat (Sep-Oct 2012) issued by Institute of Diplomatic Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saudi Arabia



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STTIM - an excellent opportunity to network and check out latest travel products and services

TOURISM IN SAUDI ARABIA

The sixth Saudi Travel and Tourism Investment Market (STTIM) shows the industry in the Kingdom is developing well

The sixth annual Saudi Travel and Tourism Investment Market (STTIM), held from 31 March to 4 April, at the Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Centre, was focussed on further growth of the Saudi travel and tourism industry. The main focus of all the seminars and workshops that were organised during the STTIM was on bettering the tourism prospects. The third Saudi Excellence in Tourism Awards (SETA) was also held as part of the tourism market. Organised by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA), the conference theme was: 'Tourism for All - Towards Sustainable Development Partnerships,' and underlined the economic importance of travel and tourism in the Kingdom.

In a report by Saudi Voyager magazine published for the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, the commercial importance of the event was demonstrated by the huge number (almost 200) of exhibitor participation. They ranged from municipal authorities to independent tourism concerns, international hotel groups to small tourism-related service companies. The event was colourful and lively. The

conference was formally opened by HRH Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdul Aziz, Governor of Riyadh Region and Chairman of Riyadh Tourism Development Council. At the ceremony, HRH Prince Khalid, accompanied by HRH Prince Turki bin Abdulah, Deputy Governor of Riyadh and Deputy Chairman of Riyadh Tourism Development Council, were welcomed by HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, President of SCTA.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN DOMESTIC TOURISM

At the opening ceremony, H E Dr Mohammad bin Sulaiman Al Jasir, Minister of Economy and Planning, explained the economic importance of the tourism industry. He pointed out that globally tourism was becoming a very important sector and for many countries was a key contributor to gross domestic product (GDP). This was not only true for established tourist destinations such as the US, Spain and Italy, but for emerging economies such as Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Statistics from the World Tourism Organization in 2012 show that the number of international tourism trips grew at a rate of 4 per cent and

totalled more than one billion tourist trips annually. Emerging economies in the Asia Pacific countries reaped the biggest portion of this growth, but in contrast, the Middle East reported a 3 per cent decline. Tourism expenditure by Saudi nationals amounted to some SR61 billion in 2011 (excluding international transport costs), but of this, just SR36 billion was spent on domestic tourism. Although this was a significant increase on the SR28 billion spent in 2009, it still remained that a considerable sum had gone out of the country.

BOOSTING DOMESTIC TRAVEL

To improve the balance of payment situation in the Kingdom, the domestic tourism sector needs to secure a greater proportion of overall tourist spending in the country. Dr Mohammed, speaking on the same occasion, said that the Kingdom has many natural and heritage attractions. The government has also been improving the tourist facilities and infrastructure, and these should contribute to an increased spending on domestic tourism and creating job opportunities for Saudi nationals. He said that the Kingdom's Ninth Plan for Comprehensive Development has a target

of over 462,000 jobs for Saudi nationals in the tourism sector as well increasing training opportunities for a further 245,700 openings. Today, 38.8 per cent of outbound travel from the Kingdom is for vacation. By boosting the attraction of domestic tourism, he said, as well as intensifying promotional campaigns, many more tourists - including expatriates - would opt for domestic destinations rather than going abroad, enabling the Kingdom to recover substantial portion of overall travel spending. Saudi Arabia must, he concluded, provide more attractive tourism activities, if it has to succeed in its objective.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Eng Abdullah bin Saad Al Mobti, Chairman of the Council of Saudi Chambers, said that STTIM-2013 was 'one of the most significant economic gatherings in the Kingdom.' He said, "SCTA has achieved concrete successes although it still needs more support and partnership from the different sectors in the Kingdom. Everyone knows that SCTA is the first organization that has applied the concept of partnership in the Kingdom and this has returned many benefits to the tourism sector."

In his opening address, Prince Sultan said, "Today I feel very optimistic as the President of the Board of Directors of SCTA. We are looking at a new era in which tourism development is accelerated and citizen attention is raised to the heritage of the country?"

SETA AWARDS

The third Saudi Excellence in Tourism Awards (SETA) saw an increase in both the number of nominations as well as total online votes. There were 27 winners this year. An increased number of companies, government organisations, and individuals working in the tourism sector competed across 36 categories. There were more than 600 online nominations.

HOTEL SECTOR

Saudi Arabia's hotel sector is on the verge of a revolution. According to the SCTA, there were 951 hotels and 2026 furnished apartment buildings in the Kingdom in 2011. Vast majority were non-branded, owner-operated, with only a top echelon of luxury hotels reflecting the presence of the big international brands. All this is about to change as major global chains are now vying to exploit the opportunity presented by the developing tourism sector in the country. Affordable 'branded budget' concepts are coming in droves to the GCC's largest state. The Wyndham Hotel Group (US), Accor (France), Premier Inn, and other operators are planning big. The Marriott and Hilton is also developing their mid-market brands.



A slice of Arab culture on show

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Saudis are now becoming aware that this country is not based only on oil wells, rather it is based on great historic events and successive civilizations that has led to an united entity upon which we have lived in peace and welfare, Prince Sultan explained, referring to government resolutions since STTIM -2012 to develop Saudi tourism into a productive economic sector and an engine

Congratulations and Best Wishes
to the people and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
on their 83rd National Day

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for job creation. “Issuing such a number of important resolutions in one year confirms the support of the State to national tourism, tourism investment, antiquities and museums, the national heritage and specialised training programmes for Saudi citizens,” said Prince Sultan. “National tourism is no longer only an economic issue; rather it has become a social, security and political issue. Today, Saudi citizens need and demand development in tourism, they need to enjoy their great country and to create their own memories inside their homeland, but they can’t because of the lack of services and accommodation facilities,” he said. “Our forum is an important step in the tourism industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Within its sessions and workshops, we shed light on the most prominent obstacles that may face tourism and the proper means to overcome these obstacles.”

Prince Sultan also went on to remark on the progress made by Riyadh Tourism Development Council under the leadership

of HRH Prince Khalid bin Bander bin Abdul Aziz. Responding to those remarks, Prince Khalid expressed his belief in the importance of STTIM, saying that the Saudi people look forward to tourism playing an enhanced role in the growth of provincial economies, creating jobs and linking the people to the country’s history and heritage. He said: “I am pleased to be part of this important event. Everyone here seeks to contribute to the development and promotion of this sector in order to meet the aspirations of our country’s leaders as well as its residents and visitors.”

STTIM is one of the SCTA’s most successful initiatives for the development of the Saudi tourism market. Just a few

years since the launch of the national tourism development plan (2005-2025), the Kingdom has seen huge growth in tourism movement, which now amounts to some 40 million tourism trips annually.

The sector has seen substantial growth in restaurants, furnished apartments, resorts, and the development in the infrastructure of KSA airports and railways.

The tourism sector has witnessed remarkable investments by private and public sectors but is still in need of a stronger infrastructure to enable more expansion. The Cabinet is planning to develop highway service centres and gas stations throughout the Kingdom over the next two years.

STTIM is one of the SCTA’s most successful initiatives for the development of the Saudi tourism market.

BOOST FOR SAUDI TOURISM

Country opening up with easing of VISA rules and introduction of Umrah Plus for GCC nationals



Speaking at a forum at Arabian Travel Mart held in May, the President of Saudi Arabia Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA), Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz said residents of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) might soon be able to explore other areas of the kingdom. Saudi

Arabia currently issues different types of visas to non-GCC nationals related to business, family visits, Umrah and Haj, among others but there are no tourism visas for the Kingdom.

By the end of this year, the Saudi Arabian Government is expected to launch the Umrah Plus programme. It will allow travellers to go on trips to other cities in the country after they perform the Umrah. This was according to Mr Abdullah S. Al Jehani, Vice President for Marketing and Programmes at (SCTA) in a report in Gulfnews.com. For non-muslims, their entry is limited to business engagements said Mr Al Jehani.

Saudi Arabia’s largest international markets are the GCC countries. While millions make the pilgrimage every year, Islamic tourism is not Saudi Arabia’s only

focus. He said, “We focus our marketing on Saudi Arabia’s business activities, such as exhibitions, and antiquities,” he said.

The capital city Riyadh is the venue for many trade exhibitions and the Riyadh Exhibitions Company (REC) has reportedly organised more than 330 shows in the last 30 years, across different sectors, including food and beverages, automotives and energy, and has attracted international participants from over 40 countries.

According to the Gulfnews.com report, business tourism has shown modest growth over the last few years. “Business tourism in the country is growing at a rate of four per cent year-on-year, and it is expected to reach double-digits in the next two to three years,” said Al Jehani with more than two million business trips recorded to the Kingdom last year.

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Best Wishes to the People & the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on their 83rd National Day



ROTARY AT A GLANCE

ROTARY is one of the region's leading oil and gas infrastructure services companies with extensive international experience offering fully integrated engineering design, procurement, construction (EPC) and maintenance services to the oil and gas, petroleum, petrochemical and pharmaceutical industries.

Headquartered in Singapore, Rotary has established a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific region and continues to make its mark as a global player. Established in 1972, Rotary has forged a reputation built on its hallmark traits of providing quality services, within budget, safely and on-time delivery. Today, Rotary boasts a total strength of about 7,000 employees which include a highly and multi-skilled workforce that forms the mainstay of its core EPC services.

Singapore remains a key market for Rotary while it actively seeks business opportunities overseas. Rotary has subsidiaries and associate companies in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, India, China, Australia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

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- Specialised services

DATA SHEET

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



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

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

GEOGRAPHY

Capital: Riyadh

Area: 2,149,690 sq km

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

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

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

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

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

ECONOMY

Currency: Saudi Riyal

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

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

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

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

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

Labour Force: 8.012 million

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

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

GENERAL

Main cities: Riyadh (The capital), Makkah, Al Madinah, Jeddah, Dammam, Dhahran, and ArAr

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

Language: Arabic; English widely spoken in urban areas

National Day: 23 September (1932 A.D)

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

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

Timing: GMT + 3:00

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

Calendar: Saudi Arabia follows the Muslims Hijrah calendar.

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



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A Celebration of Saudi Arabia's 83rd National Day



Saudi Aramco — in collaboration with Saudi Petroleum Ltd. in Singapore — is greatly honoured to congratulate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on celebrating its 83rd national day.

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