

Saudi Australia BULLETIN



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Australian Parliamentary delegations *visit Saudi Arabia*



Hon Peter Slipper MP,
Ambassador Hassan
Nazer with the former
Deputy Prime minister
Kim Beazley

An Australian Parliamentary delegation visited Saudi Arabia on 24 – 29 June as guests of the Majlis Al-Shoura. This was the first Australian parliamentary delegation since Saudi Arabia joined the Inter-Parliamentary Union and included three days in Riyadh and two days in the Eastern Province. The delegation consisted of four Members of the House of Representatives and one Senator and was headed by the Hon Peter Slipper MP, and included former Deputy Prime Minister the Hon Kim Beazley MP.

The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Australia Mr Hassan T Nazer met with the delegation at his residence in Canberra before their departure to Saudi Arabia. Ambassador Nazer welcomed their visit. He said "The visit provides opportunities for Saudi and Australia to strengthen the bilateral trade relationship and discussed future investment opportunities in all sectors."

In Riyadh, the delegation spent a day at the Majlis Al-Shoura, observing the Majlis in session and meeting with their counterparts. During meetings with Majlis Al-Shoura members, discussion focused on the close co-operation between the two countries and ways of broadening ties. Mr Slipper presented a formal invitation to the Speaker of the Majlis Al-Shoura, Dr Saleh bin Abdullah bin Humaid, inviting a delegation from the Majlis to visit Australia.

The Parliamentarians also called on HRH Prince Al-Waleed Bin Tala of Kingdom Holding Company; HH Prince Saud Al-Thunayan, Chairman of the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu; HH Prince Turki bin Mohammed, Under Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Al-Mazraa



Secretary general of GCC
visits Australia
pages 2 and 3



Saudi Arabia's 77th
National Day, page 8

Continued from page 1.: Farm; the Multinational School and the Prince Sultan Research Centre for Environment, Water and Desert at King Saud University. Visits to the King Faisal Centre and the King Abdul-Aziz Historical Centre allowed the delegates to appreciate some of Saudi Arabia's history and cultural heritage.

In the Eastern Province, the delegation visited Saudi Aramco and enjoyed a tour of the Al-Qatif area, followed by a dinner hosted by the Al-Qatif Municipal Council.

The delegates were impressed by the rich cultural heritage of the area and the talented local artists. The Australian Ambassador H.E

Ian Biggs hosted a function for the visiting Parliamentarians at the Australian Embassy, providing a chance for Australians resident in Riyadh to meet the Parliamentarians. Mr Biggs said "During their stay, the Parliamentarians witnessed first-hand, the dynamic nature of the relationship



(showing (from left): Ambassador Ian Biggs, Mr. Harry Quick MP, the Hon. Kim Beazley MP, Mr. Alby Schultz MP, the Hon. Peter Slipper MP and Ms Inge Hall

between Australian and Saudi Arabia. Australia enjoys strong trade ties with Saudi Arabia and the large number of Australians living and working in the Kingdom has led to friendly people-to-people ties between the two countries".

Opera House sails into History

THE Opera House has been declared a World Heritage site and a masterpiece of 20th century architecture.

It takes its place alongside the Taj Mahal, the Acropolis and the Pyramids as cultural sites of outstanding universal value. The building is the youngest on the list and only the second by a living architect.

As the white smoke appeared in Christchurch, New Zealand, where a meeting of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's World Heritage committee is under way, there was celebration at Bennelong Point and beyond. Patrons at the house last night - from Othello, Wil Anderson to The Barber of Seville - were being told of the historic decision.

Its Danish architect, Joern Utzon, who has never seen his finished masterpiece, said he was honoured by the inclusion which gave the building new value. "For an architect and for all the people who have worked on it [this recognition gives us] the real feeling of what we are here for."

The Prime Minister, John Howard, said the building was a testament to Utzon's daring. "It is also testament to the openness of the people of Sydney and Australia, and an enduring legacy for our place in the world."

The Opera House, which opened in 1973, first

"It is confirmation ... that this building is one of the greatest buildings in human history and that it matters and that it deserves to have appropriate conservation and management strategies for centuries to come." *Chairman of the Opera House Trust, Kim Williams, said*



sought World Heritage listing as a fresh-faced eight-year-old. Then it was considered too young. Two attempts in the '90s were aborted due to differences between the state and federal governments.

The listing's importance is largely symbolic, but it comes at a critical time in the Opera House's evolution. It will increase pressure on the state and federal governments to fund a massive renovation program to fix long-standing problems. This could cost up to \$700 million.

The UNESCO committee has described the Opera House as of unparalleled design and construction. "It is a daring and visionary experiment that has had an enduring influence on the emergent architecture of the late 20th century," it said.

The New Arabia

Revisited



By Dr. Fiona Hill

When someone says “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, do you think of a Saudi woman CEO of one of the largest holding companies in the country and responsible for some 40 or so companies throughout the Middle East? Do you think of Saudi women serving on the Boards of Saudi public companies, or elected to the Boards of the influential Chambers of Commerce & Industry? Do you think of Saudi female airline pilots who fly command in the national carrier? Do you consider the fact that Saudi women outnumber men as University graduates? Do you think of the 92% of Saudi respondents to a recent government poll who stated their support for greater empowerment of Saudi women in general?

If you don't, then it is time to revisit Saudi Arabia. Contrary to tradition, it is no longer acceptable to point to Islam as the cause of women's impeded advancement. As the Executive Director of the Businesswomen's Branch of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce & Industry put it diplomatically, “We learnt that what was holding (women) back was a lot of regulations and policies that were very old and had been in the system for a long time that nobody had reviewed and updated.”

Only ten years ago, when I first started visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Saudi women were uncertain about the possibility of social and economic reform in their lifetime. Today, under the tutelage of King Abdullah whose title includes ‘Custodian of the Two Holy



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“Saudi Arabia leadership has quickly moved to ring in a new era of reform in civil structures, education, trade regulations, and gender relations. The Kingdom is even open for tourism.”

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Mosques’, the government and business leaders of Saudi Arabia are determined to integrate women fully into the national economy and civil structures and public life, and to do so with explicit affirmative action policies being rolled out across the country. The effect is proving phenomenal, and the optimism is palpable.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the leadership has quickly moved to ring in a new era of reform in civil structures, education, trade regulations, and gender relations. The Kingdom is even open for tourism.

Substantial investments withdrawn from America after 2001 have been reinvested back home. Anyone who saw Saudi Arabia's neighbour Dubai pre-2001 and again more recently can report that the rate and degree of infrastructure development is breathtaking.

Behind property development sits a massive increase in demand for goods and services, as well as foreign investment to diversify local economies and international expertise to help grow human resource skill bases.

Indeed, the horse has already bolted. Australians now populate the region in their thousands. Australia's biggest corporate players, and a whole lot of her SMEs, are gaining traction in the Arabian marketplace. With the internet and satellite communication, not everyone needs to be there physically. But every savvy business operator knows that the intercultural competency of all staff is imperative to risk management and longevity into the Arab region. When staff are not equipped with sufficient knowledge, the human resource and economic cost can be high.

Australians must quit their shorthand attitudes to the Arab and Islamic world and employ the same level of rational analysis to which we aspire in all other arenas. Our prosperity, national cohesion, sustainability, and leadership in the world depends on a greater ethic commitment to each other. Looking again at lands and peoples whom we don't understand, and yet who stand ready to be our partners, is a vital first step.

Progressive, moderate Arab states are working hard to counter dangerous fundamentalist elements, and our outdated ideas about Arab civil and sexual politics should be revisited. After all, women in Saudi Arabia hold the largest percentage of personal investment wealth in that country and are looking for opportunities to invest. Many are looking towards Australia.

“The message for Australia is loud and clear. Our innovation, our global standards and capacity, and certainly our goods and services are in demand.”

Secretary-General of the GCC visits Australia



Secretary General of GCC delivers his speech at the Government House

The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, His Excellency, Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah visited Australia recently in response to an official invitation by the Government of Australia which he met with Australian Prime Minister Federal and State ministers and senior officials. The visit came at the conclusion of an Asian tour that included the Republic of Sri Lanka, the Republic of Maldives and Republic of Singapore. Mr Al-Attiyah was warmly received at Sydney Airport by Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Canberra, H.E. Hassan Talat Nazer, and the Ambassador of Kuwait H.E. Jamal Al-Ghunaim.

“We call upon all peace loving forces, notably Australia, to support this initiative.”
HE Attiyah said.

The focus of discussions were relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council and Australia, particularly economic, commercial and educational issues, as well as facilitating the entry to Australia of GCC students studying in Australian universities and admission procedures, in addition to the negotiations, which will start in July next month to conclude a free trade agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council and Australia. The two sides also discussed the overall current political issues, particularly in regard to the peace process in the Middle East and developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as the situation in Iraq, Lebanon and the Iranian nuclear dossier. Australian Foreign Minister, Mr Alexander Downer, welcomed His Excellency, at the Australian Parliament in Canberra. At the meeting, HE and Mr Downer



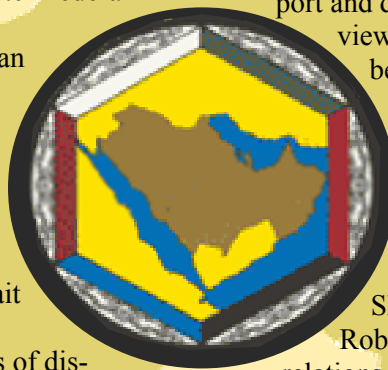
H.E. Ambassador Hassan Nazer with H.E. Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al Attiyah

reviewed relations between Australia and the GCC in all fields, relating particularly to economic, trade and educational matters, as well as the ongoing negotiations to conclude a free trade agreement between Australia and GCC.

The discussions centered on the preparation of free trade negotiations between the two countries and ways to support and develop these relations. They also reviewed preparations for free trade negotiations between the two sides to be launched next month in the Australian Capital. His Excellency Al-Attiyah also discussed with the Australian minister what was taken at the level of economic integration among the GCC countries. The Secretary General met in Sydney with the Labour Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr Robert Mc Clelland. Discussion focused on relations between Australia and the Gulf Cooperation Council States in various fields, including the Labor Party's policies regarding Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon.

Al-Attiyah also spoke in his speech of a number of political issues in the region, pointing out that the peace process is at a critical crossroads and danger, either to succeed in reaching a just and lasting peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict achieve, or the region will witness a new spiral of conflict, adding that to avoid this, we have to support the peace option and give peace a chance, such as the Arab peace initiative affirmed by the Arab summit in Riyadh last March.

“As well as facilitating the entry to Australia of GCC students studying in Australian universities and admission procedures, in addition to the negotiations, which will start in July next month to conclude a free trade agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council and Australia”



Ambassador Nazer honours H.E Attiyah



Secretary General of GCC H.E Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al Attiyah, HE Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Australia Hassan Talat Nazer, Ambassadors in Canberra

Saudi Arabia Ambassador to Australia Mr. Hassan Talat Nazer hosted a dinner in honour of HE. Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Abdul Rahman bin Hamad al-Attiyah which was attended by Arab Ambassadors in Canberra and the Secretary General of the Council of Islamic Affairs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Dr. Saleh Alayed. The ceremony started with a speech by the Ambassador Nazer who welcomed Mr. Attiyah on behalf of the Arab diplomatic corps in Australia. In his speech, Dr. Saleh Al Alayed, lauded the active role played by Ambassador Nazer in the development of relations between Saudi Arabia and Australia. General of the Gulf Cooperation Council thanked His Excellency Ambassador Nazer for honouring him and for his hospitality. HE praised the vision and the wisdom of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. HE noted the achievements of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under his guidance.



Mr. John Aquilina MP Honours AL-Attiyah

The Leader of the House in Sydney, Mr John Aquilina MP, hosted a lunch in honour of Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, HE Abdul Rahman bin Hamad al-Attiyah, and the accompanying delegation at the Parliament House in Sydney.

In his speech H.E al-Attiyah said that his visit to Australia was aimed at opening new horizons for constructive cooperation between the GCC and Australia, pointing out that Australia was able to sign several economic agreements with many countries. He said that regional

and international relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council continues to grow, which would open new horizons for relations with both of our countries. HE added that the GCC adopts the policy of economic openness to different economic forces in the world, and has been in this context holding several conventions and trade free zones with a number of countries around the world, and we look forward to supporting our economic relations with Australia. HE stressed that we are going in the near future to conclude a free trade agreement with Australia. On the other hand, the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries explained that the GCC advocates peaceful coexistence at the regional level and supports moves to resolve regional problems by peaceful means, including the Iranian nuclear dossier crisis with the international community, and focus on the values of tolerance, openness and interaction between peoples.

“The GCC advocates peaceful coexistence at the regional level and supports moves to resolve regional problems by peaceful means,”



Saudi Bank reaches out to *Saudi* Students in Australia and NZ

"We feel that there's a big pool of untapped Saudi talents out there," Najeeb Abdulrahman, the Bank's Staffing and Manpower Planning Head says, "who may not be aware about what opportunities await them back home."

Upon the patronage of the Royal Saudi Embassy in Australia, through its Ambassador His Excellency Mr. Hassan Talat Nazer, The delegation from the Saudi National Commercial Bank (NCB) led by Mr. Najeeb Abdulrahman, Bank Head of Staffing and Manpower Planning, has held a tour plan in July to visit Saudi University students in five major cities across Australia and New Zealand.

The delegation held Career Open Days in Sydney, the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Auckland and Christchurch in New Zealand.

Ambassador Nazer welcomed the NCB initiative during his meeting with the delegation in presence of Dr Ali Bishri, the Saudi Culture Attaché in Australia and New Zealand, praising the importance of its aims with Saudi students.

Mr. Najeeb Abdulrahman said "We are hoping to meet with Saudi students that have excellent academic records, particularly in the areas of Business Administration, Finance, Accounting Economics, Marketing, Business Management, MIS, Computer Science, Computer Engineering and Human Resources".

"There is always an opportunity in the Bank for young, high-potential Saudis looking to build a career in their home country," Abdulrahman said, "and we want to be on the ground with them to let them know this", he added.

In a labor workforce largely dominated by expatriates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has enacted policies to promote the employment of its nationals in the private sector. Aply called the Saudization drive, the Saudi government has urged agencies, businesses, universities and media organizations to support its initiatives to reduce dependence on foreign labor.

Heeding this call, the National Commercial Bank of Saudi Arabia has launched a large-scale recruitment program aimed at Saudi students pursuing education abroad.

Founded 50 years ago, NCB was the first Saudi-owned bank to be established in the Kingdom. Today, it is the largest bank in the Middle East in terms of capital and has a heritage of trust which has been won by meeting customer expectations with a comprehensive range of superior banking and investment products and services, developed on the basis of an indigenous understanding of the unique cultural and social traditions of Saudi Arabia. NCB currently employs 5,128 staff and leads its industry's Saudization ratio by having a total of 87.5% Saudi nationals in its employ. Despite this lead, NCB continues to support the Kingdom's nationalization policy and has gone on the road



Saudi Ambassador Nazer with Mr. Najeeb Abdulrahman Bank head of staffing at NCB

to tap high-potential Saudi students who are currently studying outside the Kingdom.

NCB's international recruitment campaign kicked-off in May when it participated in a Career Fair at the Lebanese American University in Beirut. In that event, the Bank's representatives identified 20 Saudi student candidates graduating in the summer for its Management Associate Program.

"Despite leading the Saudization initiative back home, we remain committed in our efforts to attract and provide quality employment and career development to qualified young Saudi citizens," said Abdulrahman, speaking from Sydney, Australia, the next stop in NCB's Recruitment "Road Show."



Saudi National Commercial Bank

Upon the patronage of the Royal Saudi Embassy in Australia, through its Ambassador His Excellency Mr. Hassan Talat Nazer, NCB partnered with the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission and the local Saudi Student Clubs to go on a five-city tour of the Land Down Under. Its representatives will be holding Career Open Days in Sydney (July 5), the Gold Coast (July 7), Brisbane (July 8), Melbourne (July 11) and Perth (July 16). Abdulrahman says they are hoping to meet with Saudi students that have excellent academic records, particularly in the areas of Business Administration, Finance, Accounting Economics, Marketing, Business Management, MIS, Computer Science, Computer Engineering and Human Resources. "There is always an opportunity in the Bank for young, high-potential Saudis looking to build a career in their home country," Abdulrahman says, "and we want to be on the ground with them to let them know this." And indeed, that rings true, for immediately after Australia, the Bank brings its aggressive campaign to New Zealand and Malaysia, and then the U.K. and the U.S. later this year.

Arab Gulf - Australia & NZ FTA talks: "A Promising Start"



A proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the GCC and Australia will open an important and growing market between the two economies, says the Australian Government Minister for Trade, Warren Truss. The GCC is made up of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

During the formal Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was held in Canberra from 30 July to 1 August. Mr. Truss said he was confident that both Australia and the GCC had the political will to conclude a comprehensive FTA quickly.

"The first round agenda is comprehensive and focuses on outcomes across all sectors, including draft text of a possible agreement," Mr. Truss said.

Negotiating teams met in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia in May this year for preparatory talks where much of the first round program was agreed.

In-principle agreement was also reached on scheduling a further round of negotiations towards the end of the year, with the potential for completion of the FTA over the course of 2008. Mr Truss said that GCC member states have been important markets for Australia.

"As the GCC seeks greater engagement with the global economy, it is important that we establish a framework

to sustain the future growth of our commercial relationship," he said. Australian exports of goods and services to the GCC were worth \$5.9 billion in 2006, making it GCC tenth-largest Australian export market.

New Zealand hosts first round of Arab Gulf States Free Trade

Between 25-27 July New Zealand hosted the first round of negotiations on 25-27 July for a free trade agreement with the six nation Gulf Cooperation Council in Wellington today. Trade Minister, Phil Goff says that the Gulf states Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman represent a major trading partner enhanced by a Free Trade Agreement. Oman represent a major trading partner for New Zealand and that trade will be enhanced by a Free Trade Agreement. "New Zealand exports to the GCC states were last year worth nearly \$800 million", Mr. Goff said. "Collectively it represents our seventh largest trading partner and one of our fastest growing markets. "Our export growth to the Gulf region has averaged 10 percent a year over the last six years, outperforming our export growth globally.

"The Gulf states are a major market for us in food and beverage. But market opportunities are becoming more diverse and growing. ICT and advanced industrial goods and services including education and tourism have all become an important part of our trading relationship", Mr. Goff said.

"An FTA will enable us better to achieve the potential of this relationship."

The negotiating process itself is a significant aspect of building a partnership. This is the first time that we have had a delegation representing the six states in New Zealand and focused on what our country has to offer. "An FTA gives us the chance to secure a stable strategic relationship with the rapidly growing region. It recognizes New Zealand as a preferred supplier. We hope the outcome will be to protect and expand our market share, eliminate barriers to trade and improve market access in areas such as services and investment. "New Zealand businesses and non-government agencies working in the region have made a valuable input into preparation for negotiations", Mr. Goff said.

The First Round of Negotiations from 25-27 July will commence with discussions between New Zealand negotiators and business interests, followed by an official welcome at the Duxton Hotel in Wellington attended by Mr Goff and the GCC delegation.

"I expect that ambitious market access offers tabled on goods and services during this round. **Good progress has already been made** since the Australian Government's decision in December 2006 to proceed with FTA negotiations with the GCC,"

Mr. Truss, Australian Government Minister of Trade said.



Ambassador Hosts Farewell Party



(From Left) Mr. Saleh Buges , Ambassador Hassan Nazer, Mr. Abdulkarim Al Ghamdi and Mr. Abdulaziz Al Wasil

The Saudi Arabia Ambassador H.E Mr. Hassan Talat Nazer hosted a farewell party dinner in Canberra to honour three official members of the embassy staff ,Mr. Abdulaziz Al Wasil, Mr. Abdulkarim Al Ghamdi and Mr. Saleh Buges after finishing their duties in the Saudi embassy in Canberra. The gathering was also attended by members of the Embassy staff and Saudi students in Australia.



Saudi Arabia

77th National Day



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will celebrate IN (September 23, 2007) its 77th National Day.

The day is celebrated in memory of the late King Abdulaziz efforts to unite and integrate this vast region after thirty three years of hard work. This led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdulaziz on the firm base of the Islamic Shariah (Law).

His mission of foresight, development, and continual sectoral growth in all regions of the Kingdom had been followed and pursued by his sons, the late king Saud, King Faisal, King Khaled and King Fahd. The present era of prosperity and welfare as well as steady progress on all fronts is carried ahead by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, representing the existing cohesion, unity and solidarity among the leadership and the citizens.

With the formation of a strong and an integrated nation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed



great developments and accomplished enormous progress in all aspects of life due to the wisdom and well-laid out policies of the late King Abdulaziz, who did his best to help the citizens and bring about sustainable progress and prosperity. In 1319 A.H., King Abdulaziz started the journey of integration from Riyadh, continuing his ancestors work stimulated by Islam, strong will, determination and bravery.