

## Saudi Arabia national day

## Saudi Arabia affirms its place on world stage

Abdulaziz A. Turkistani  
AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM  
OF SAUDI ARABIA

On the occasion of the 79th National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we would like, on behalf of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz and the people of Saudi Arabia, to express our sincere greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the people of Japan.

In 1932, the Founder King Abdulaziz Al-Saud established the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In a few short decades, the kingdom has transformed itself from a desert nation to a modern, sophisticated state and a major player on the international stage.

## KAUST

Today, Sept. 23, 2009, the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology

(KAUST) will open as the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud envisaged for 25 years. Located along the Red Sea, 80 km north of Jidda in Thuwal, KAUST aims to be a world-class graduate research university that will support scientific discovery and human advancement.

## World Conference on Dialogue

To initiate his endeavor of launching an interfaith dialogue initiative, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz convened a meeting of more than 500 Muslim scholars from around the world for the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue, which was organized by the Muslim World League and took place in Mecca on June 4, 2008. The conference highlighted the importance of dialogue, and emphasized the need for the faiths and cultures of the world to combat extremism and intolerance. Instead of allowing these threats to divide people, King Abdullah's vision was to bring people together.

The Mecca conference was followed by the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid,

Spain, on July 16, 2008. The three-day conference, hosted by King Abdullah and King Juan Carlos I of Spain, brought together 300 delegates from around the world, representing Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Shinto. The Madrid conference was also organized by the Muslim World League. In the final statement of the Madrid conference, the participants urged the United Nations to convene a special session of the General Assembly on interfaith dialogue as a means to highlight the importance of interfaith dialogue among world leaders.

In what became a culmination and continuation of growing unity, world leaders gathered at the U.N. to take the next step in building a constructive dialogue among the followers of the world's religions. King Abdullah was joined by more than 25 world leaders — including U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, U.S. President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Jordan's King Abdullah II. In his opening remarks, King Abdullah emphasized the importance of dialogue and understanding when he said: "Human beings were created as equals and partners on this planet; either they live together in peace and harmony or they will inevitably be consumed by the flames of misunderstanding, malice and hatred."

## Saudi foreign aid

According to a report by the U.N. Coordination Office for Humanitarian Affairs, Saudi Arabia is the No. 1 contributor among countries that provided funds to U.N. humanitarian appeals in 2008. The report



King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz

says that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provided a total of \$4.6 billion to 18 humanitarian appeals. Some 43 million people received aid through 500 aid agencies. The kingdom's assistance amounted to 19 percent of its gross domestic product.

## General introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has implemented a number of political and economic reforms to encourage political participation, promote economic growth, increase foreign investment and expand employment opportunities. It held municipal elections as part of a comprehensive streamlining of local government. In addition, the kingdom is promoting a free market economy by privatizing major state enterprises, establishing regulatory authorities to carry out reforms, improving foreign investment laws, revising a broad range of commercial laws and implementing intellectual property rights to foster innovation. It also became a member of the World Trade Organization in December 2005. This February, King Abdullah reorganized the Council of Ministers and senior advisers, appointing the first woman to the council to demonstrate his commitment to change.

## Growth amid the downturn

The best indicator of Saudi Arabia's economic growth is the increase in GDP, from \$20 billion in 1970 to \$467.5 billion in 2008. Saudi Arabia's economy is the largest in the Middle East. The kingdom ranked 27th overall in the Global Business Competitiveness Report for 2008-2009, which was released in October 2008 by the World Economic Forum.

Saudi Arabia has been rated as the 13th most economically competitive country in the world, according to the International Finance Corp.-World Bank annual Doing Business report issued this month. The report, Doing Business 2010: Reforming Through Difficult Times, which is based on data gathered from 183 countries from June 2008 to May 2009, also ranks Saudi Arabia ahead of advanced economies such as Japan and Germany.

On Dec. 22, 2008, the Ministry of Finance estimated that 2008 total revenue will be \$293.3 billion and total expenditures \$136 billion. It also estimated that public debt will drop to around \$63.2 billion, which represents 13.5 percent of GDP.

King Abdullah announced a 2009 budget of \$126.7 billion, an increase of \$17.3 billion from 2008. The budget will allocate \$32.5 billion for education and research, \$52 billion for health care and social development, \$19 billion for transportation and telecommunications, and \$49 billion for water, municipal services and agriculture.

Saudi Arabia has been recognized by international organizations such as Fitch Ratings, Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's as an excellent place to do business. In July 2008, Fitch Ratings upgraded Saudi Arabia's foreign currency and local currency Issuer Default ratings from A+ to AA-, and Saudi



Riyadh icon: Al-Faisaliah Tower was the first of the startling new structures to rise above the Saudi Arabian capital's skyline. On its 34 floors there's a five-star hotel, four exclusive restaurants, a shopping mall, offices and apartments. The needlepoint pinnacle is 267 meters above the ground. EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA

Arabia's Country Ceiling rating from AA- to AA. Standard & Poor's raised the kingdom's foreign and local currency long-term sovereign credit ratings from A+ to AA- in July 2009.

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest oil exporter, with the largest proven oil reserves and the largest spare production capacity. The kingdom has utilized oil revenues to expand and diversify the economy to reduce its dependence

on oil, which has resulted in impressive gains in the nonoil sector. In 2008, nonoil GDP grew by 4.5 percent to \$223 billion.

Saudi Arabia's nonpetroleum exports increased to \$2.7 billion in May 2008, up from \$2.3 billion in May 2007. The most significant commodities exported included petrochemicals, plastics, ordinary metals and their products, and re-exported commodities. Major imports in May 2008 increased

to \$8.49 billion from \$7.6 billion in 2007, a 12 percent increase. The most significant imported goods were electrical appliances and equipment.

## Petroleum policy

With one-quarter of the world's known oil reserves and 13 percent of world production, Saudi Arabia is the world's leading producer and exporter of oil. Its policies on the production, and export of oil and petroleum products

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Business hub: The commercial center in downtown Jidda

CONGRATULATIONS  
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THE 79TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
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## World stage

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 have a tremendous impact on the global energy market as well as the global economy. Mindful of its responsibility, Saudi Arabia has remained committed to ensuring stability of oil supplies and prices.

At the G-20 summit on financial markets and the world economy in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 15, 2008, King Abdullah stated, "Saudi Arabia has made many sacrifices, including maintaining costly additional productive capacity amounting to about 2 million barrels per day, seeking to promote global economic growth in a manner that serves the interests of all parties."

At the end of 2007, Saudi Arabia's proven oil reserves consisted of 264 billion barrels. In addition, the undiscovered resources are estimated at 200 billion barrels. These reserves will allow the kingdom to provide the global market with adequate quantities of crude oil the world can depend on for its prosperity and economic growth. In 2008, Saudi Arabia's oil sector grew by 8 percent, constituting 54.4 percent of GDP.

The kingdom has always acknowledged that unstable energy markets, and unrealistically low or high oil prices harm producers and consumers. Following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the kingdom dispatched 9 million additional barrels of oil to the U.S. to ensure price stability and availability. In the fall of 2002, to maintain market stability, Saudi Arabia boosted oil production to compensate for the fall in other countries' production and in the spring of 2003, it boosted output to compensate for the loss of Iraqi production. To continue meeting ever-increasing global demands, Saudi Arabia in-

creased its capacity in 2004 to 11 million bpd and plans a further increase to 12.5 million throughout 2009.

Vast reserves will allow Saudi Arabia to continue to be a major oil producer for up to 100 years from now, even with an increase in production capacity to 15 million bpd. In this respect, the national oil company, Saudi Aramco, continues to develop new oil fields such as the two discovered south of the Al-Ghawar Field in Eastern Province on April 15, 2007.

### Economic diversification

After a historic surge in national capital from oil income over a period of years, Saudi Arabia took precautions to expand its economic base to minimize its reliance on this resource as a sole supply of government revenue. Over the past three decades, the nonoil sector has grown from 35 percent to more than 60 percent of total GDP.

The Saudi government seeks to create jobs through various reforms such as economic diversification, privatization, opening up the market and other initiatives. The "Saudization" initiative limits the number of foreign workers allowed to work for any one particular company. This was initiated to increase the number of Saudi nationals in the workforce. The National Program for Training and Employment qualifies Saudi citizens, and helps them to find jobs in the public and private sectors. It is responsible for the creation of job opportunities, job training and Saudization.

The Centennial Fund is a charitable foundation that provides assistance to all young Saudi citizens who seek to achieve economic independence by setting up small business enterprises. In July 2004, the fund signed an agreement



**Piece of history:** The clay and mud-brick Masmak fort in the old quarter of Riyadh played a major role in Saudi history. Its fall in January 1902 restored Al Saud control over the city.

with the Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority to work together in helping Saudi entrepreneurs to translate their commercial ideas into projects. When the fund began as a pilot program in 2005, it had only 20 clients. In 2008, the program had grown to 685 clients and looks forward to more growth in 2009, setting a goal of helping at least 2,000 potential business owners.

### Women's advancement

Saudi Arabia's efforts to educate and empower women have advanced in recent years. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education reserve jobs for women of distinguished status. Accounting, banking and computer training centers have also been opened to prepare women for jobs. Training programs organized by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vo-

ational Training, and implemented by the Ministry of Labor, have also benefited women. The technological, medical and automotive sectors are additional industries opening to women.

In 2006, Saudi women accounted for 10.7 percent of the Saudi labor force. By 2007, the figure had risen to 14 percent. Saudi Arabia's women own more than 20,000 companies and establishments, and hold 21 percent of total private investments.

On Feb. 23, 2009, the Council of Ministers adopted new measures to increase job opportunities for women by expanding women's health and technical training programs. King Abdullah instructed the Technical and Vocational Training Corp. to train more women for jobs in computer operations, office work, women's care centers and jails.

### Tourism

Saudi Arabia offers natural and historical wonders, from the mountain resorts of Taif and the majesty of ancient Nabatean tombs to the multicolored coral reefs of the Red Sea. In 2008, Madafin Saleh was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site. While Saudi Arabia has been a travel destination for centuries, with millions of people visiting the kingdom

each year from around the world, most visitors have historically been Muslims undertaking pilgrimages. The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Tokyo issues tourist visas, and promotes tourism by convening tourism seminars for Japanese tourists and participating in various exhibitions with a view to introducing Saudi Arabia as an attractive destination.

### Saudi-Japan relations

Fifty-four years have passed since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Japan. The reciprocal visits by leading figures of the two countries have strengthened the friendly relations since H.R.H. Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz's visit to Japan in 1960, when he was minister of transportation.

Now approximately 250 Saudi students study in Japan within the framework of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. As a part of cultural activities, our embassy welcomes student visits to the embassy, and received more than 250 students from elementary, junior and senior high schools around Japan in 2008.

Please visit our embassy Web site ([www.saudiembassy.or.jp](http://www.saudiembassy.or.jp)), where you can find news and information on Saudi Arabia.

## Congratulations

to the People of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
 on the Occasion of the 79th Anniversary of  
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Warmest Congratulations to  
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The Two Holy Mosques  
 King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz

of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and his people  
 on the Occasion of the 79th Anniversary of  
 their National Day

**JAPAN-SAUDI ARABIA SOCIETY**

Chairman: Hiromasa Yonekura

Hiromasa Yonekura

CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-SAUDI ARABIA SOCIETY

On behalf of the Japan-Saudi Arabia Society, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the occasion of their 79th National Day.



I was appointed as the new chairman of the Japan-Saudi Arabia Society in July to succeed Keiichi Konaga, who had led the society for 16 years, and was dedicated to fostering close ties among the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Japan.

Since diplomatic relations were established in 1956, the kingdom and Japan have been developing a very strong relationship, which initially centered on trade in oil and industrial products, and is now continuing to grow to include investment, technological cooperation and human resource development, as well as sports and cultural exchanges. It is indeed a pleasure and an honor for me to have the opportunity to work with the society to further strengthen the bonds between the two countries.

The people of Saudi Arabia and Japan, both valuing trust and integrity, are excellent partners for one another. Sumitomo Chemical, where I serve as chairman, has established the Rabigh Refining and Petrochemical Co., also known as Petro Rabigh, with Saudi Aramco in Rabigh, a

city on the west coast of the kingdom. The joint venture started operations of a world-scale integrated oil refining and petrochemical complex in April, which is expected to deliver long-term outstanding competitiveness. I strongly believe it is mutual trust and commitment to integrity that has made this significant project possible.

Last May, H.E. Dr. Abdulaziz Abdulsattar Turkistani was assigned to Tokyo as the new Saudi Arabian ambassador to Japan. We are delighted to welcome back Ambassador Turkistani, who had previously been in Japan for eight years, and earned his master's degree and completed a Ph.D. course at Japanese universities. Ambassador Turkistani has a broad knowledge of Japanese culture and society, and speaks Japanese fluently.

Since his arrival, the new ambassador has been active meeting leaders in Japan from diverse fields, including business, religion, art, journalism and academia. I admire his commitment and dedication to promoting face to face communication, and mutual understanding.

We at the Japan-Saudi Arabia Society would like to continue to support and work together with the governments and the people of the two countries to further strengthen, and expand the friendship and partnership between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Japan.

Congratulations and my best wishes to King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for continued peace and prosperity for many years to come.

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