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EDITOR'S NOTE

91st Saudi National Day... Unlimited horizons of success

No one can deny that 2020 and 2021 were exceptional, both years witnessed the deterioration of many systems, whether health or economic, especially for the health sector due to the Corona pandemic, this epidemic tested the strength and ability of global regimes to deal with it.

Only a few of the countries in the world that managed to withstand and fight this battle, which is still fought, among them was the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The 91st Saudi National Day for this year comes during a series of exceptional events that the whole world has experienced, but unlike what happened to many countries from those collapses, it is a year of challenge and record achievements for Saudi Arabia.

This is evident through several events and challenges that Saudi face, most notably the continuance of the Corona pandemic, however, the kingdom showed unprecedented success in the second Hajj season during the pandemic after the wise leadership was able to legalize its exceptional performance.

During the pandemic, the Kingdom imposed several precautionary and preventive health measures that are applied to pilgrims to limit the spread of the Coronavirus around the world, which is a continuous success of the Kingdom's permanent wise management.

The economic collapse has affected many countries, such as the USA and the European Union, which will not overcome this stumbling that occurred due to the Corona epidemic for the next two years at least, as reported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which expects global economic losses exceeding $12 trillion.

During the crisis, the wise Saudi leadership dealt with the principle of transparency, which not only gave confidence in the Saudi economy but also extended to the global business and economic sectors.

The Kingdom was keen, amid these precautionary measures, to protect the wages of workers in the private sector and pay their salaries for three months so as not to affect the pandemic directly on their income.

The health sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has received the greatest attention since the start of the Corona pandemic and is still up to the moment. The principle of transparency, clarity, and rigor in the application of precautionary measures was also the approach of leadership, which helped, with (Allah) God's help, deal with the crisis with fewer losses, more confidence, and reassurance locally and globally.

While "Greater Saudi Arabia" is facing the epidemic, on the one hand, it is progressing economically, culturally, and knowledgeably on the other hand.

Moreover, the Saudi kingdom continues to fight spoilers, criminals, and those who try to harm the security and safety of this country. All of this is happening while Saudi Arabia is leading the world in the global G-20, and works with all committees in this group without stopping to support constructive global economic, social, and cultural policies, face global challenges, and draw sustainable economies.

We (Saudis) must celebrate with pride and love this year the Saudi National Day in its 91st year, we must celebrate the glory of a nation that was built by the inspiring founder, His Majesty Late King Abdulaziz Al Saud, who succeeded in its development and raised his flag high among the countries of the world.

Similarly, we must also grow proud as we live in an era of excellence and giving, the era of King Salman bin Abdulaziz and his Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Salman.

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اليوم الوطني السعودي ٩١

LEADERS MENA magazine congratulates
the leadership and people of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia
on the occasion of the 91st National Day.

With the unconditional support of its people,
the kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in harsh
circumstances when King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman
Al Saud unified the country (May God Rest His Soul).

The dedication of the founder's descendants will
pave the way for the kingdom to flourish and lead towards
the path of excellence and glory.

May Allah preserve the leadership of Saudi Arabia,
The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,
King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his Crown Prince
Mohammed Bin Salman



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KING SALMAN..

FOUNDER OF NEW "SAUDI ARABIA"

By **Taha Sakr**

A path of achievements and liberality is clear since the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; King Salman took over power in the kingdom in 2015. Leaders MENA magazine is trying through this report to shed light on the remarkable progress in the kingdom in the era of King Salman as Saudis celebrate this month the 91st National Day.

The path of King Salman since he received power in KSA summarizes many meanings such as loyalty, patriotism, and a future vision to a well-established nation that will lead directly depending on its national cadres.

A path of accomplishments, and giving, summed up by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the most prominent personality in the hearts of Saudis as they celebrate their 90th National Day.

A celebration that falls on September 23 of each year, and highlights the developmental achievements, historical reforms, and successes witnessed by the Kingdom, both internally and externally, at various levels, in the culmination of efforts closely linked to the King's career.

King Salman was born on December 31, 1935; just 3 years after his father unified the country and transferred its name from the Kingdom of Hejaz, Najd, and its annexes to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on September 23, 1932.

He has lived with all the kings of the kingdom since its founding at the hands of his father and has worked with them since he entered politics at the age of 19 as acting prince of the Riyadh region in 1954, to write a biography full of giving and experiences.

Experiences he employed to bring about a qualitative leap and a developmental renaissance in the Kingdom after assuming the reins of power on January 23, 2015, to lead the Kingdom in a few years to what has become described as the "New Saudi Arabia".

King Salman was not satisfied with developing the present, but also charting the features of a bright future for the Kingdom, through a road map he launched one year after assuming power called "Vision 2030", which leads to a comprehensive renaissance in various fields.

Accordingly, the Saudis celebrate their National Day, and they recall feelings of pride, appreciation, gratitude, and loyalty to the biography of their king, which is closely linked to the path of their kingdom.

Upbringing and politics

He is the twenty-fifth son of the founding King Abdulaziz Al Saud. He



grew up with his brothers in the royal palace in Riyadh, where he accompanied his father in official meetings with the kings and rulers of the world.

He received his early education at the Princes' School in the capital, where he studied religious and modern sciences and completed the Holy Qur'an at the age of ten at the hands of the imam and preacher of the Grand Mosque, Sheikh Abdullah Khayat.

King Salman entered politics at the age of 19 when he was appointed, on March 16, 1954, as Emir (Governor) of the Riyadh region on behalf of his brother, Prince Nayef.

The following year, he was appointed Emir of the Riyadh region, one of the largest regions of Saudi Arabia in terms of area and population and the capital of the state, from April 18, 1955, until his resignation on December 25, 1960, but on February 4, 1963, he was reappointed Emir of the same region.

He continued as governor of the Riyadh region for more than 5 decades, during which he oversaw the transformation of the region from a medium-sized town inhabited by about 200,000 people to one of the fastest-growing capitals in the Arab world.

Covenant and pledge of allegiance

On November 5, 2011, a decision was issued by the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz to appoint Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz at the time as Minister of Defense, and during his tenure, the ministry witnessed a comprehensive development for all sectors.

On June 18, 2012, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz issued an order choosing him as Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister, while retaining the position of Minister of Defense.

After the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, on January 23, 2015, he was pledged allegiance as king, becoming the seventh king of Saudi Arabia.

Since he pledged allegiance, the Kingdom has witnessed more giant developmental achievements across its vast areas, in various economic, educational, health, and social sectors.

After assuming power, the Saudi monarch reshaped the joints of the state at various levels, as he issued a royal order on January 29, 2015, that included the abolition of 12 committees and councils.

King Salman replaced this with two councils that are organizationally linked to the Council of Ministers, the Council for Political and Security Affairs and the Council for Economic and Development Affairs, headed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and they formulate the kingdom's policies on the political and economic levels.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques sought, with all strength, determination, and firmness, to provide welfare and prosperity to the citizen who reciprocates love and loyalty in a way that embodied the highest meanings of the people's rallying around the leader of the development process.

Economically, and to meet the challenge of low oil prices, Saudi Arabia announced on April 25, 2016, an economic vision for 2030, aimed at reducing its dependence on oil, the main source of income.

New Saudi Arabia on Way

Within the broad reforms during his reign, the state-led to what the world has called the "New Saudi Arabia." During the first year of the Saudi monarch's rule, the first municipal elections were held in which women participated as voters and candidates in the history of the Kingdom.

The polling was held on December 12, 2015, culminating in 21 women winning seats in the municipal council elections in their third session.

Reforms continued, as Saudi women began driving on June 24, 2018, in implementation of a historic order issued by the Saudi monarch on September 26, 2017, to allow women to obtain a driver's license "According to Shariah Regulations."

On February 14, 2018, women were allowed to start their businesses and benefit from government services without the approval of a male guardian.

In the fifth year of the reign of King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Saudi women obtained a package of gains, according to amendments to the regulations of travel documents, civil status, and

"The path of King Salman since he received power in KSA summarizes many meanings such as loyalty, patriotism, and a future vision to a well-established nation that will lead directly depending on its national cadres.





work that took place on August 2, 2019.

The year 2019 witnessed the first time a Saudi woman assumed the position of "ambassador", as Princess Rima bint Bandar was appointed as the Kingdom's ambassador to the United States on February 23 of the same year, to be the first woman to hold this position.

The year 2020 also witnessed the appointment of the first woman in the Saudi Royal Guard, and the appointment of Dr. Laylak bint Ahmed Al-Safadi as President of the Electronic University, as the first woman to head a Saudi university that includes male and female students.

Within the framework of full royal confidence in women and that they are up to the responsibility to carry out qualitative efforts in various fields, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz issued an order to reconstitute the Council of the Human Rights Commission, in its fourth session for 4 years, and to appoint 13 women to the Council of the Commission, including It represents half of the council members.

King Salman also strengthened bilateral relations with several Arab and Gulf countries, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which enjoys a special status with King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and the relations between the two countries witnessed a qualitative leap during his reign.

During the second year of his rule, the Saudi-Emirati Coordination Council was established, whose establishment was signed in May 2016, in the presence of the Saudi monarch and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

With the conclusion of his second year in power, King Salman bin Abdulaziz toured the Gulf, his first since assuming power, beginning with a visit to the UAE on December 3, 2016.

During that visit, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan awarded King Salman bin Abdulaziz the "Zayed Medal", in appreciation and gratitude for his pivotal role in promoting brotherly cooperation between the two countries and supporting joint Gulf and Arab action.

The process of cooperation between the two countries has proceeded towards strengthening partnership and achieving integration in various political, economic, security, and military fields, thus contributing to the welfare and well-being of the peoples of the two countries, facing challenges in the region, foremost of which is the fight against terrorism and strengthening security and stability in the region.

Awards and Honors

For his humanitarian efforts, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques received many honors and medals from several countries, most notably the Necklace of Sharif Al-Hussein bin Ali, which is the highest decoration in Jordan, the Necklace of Mubarak Al-Kabeer, the highest decoration in Kuwait, and the Necklace of the Nile, which is the highest decoration in Egypt.

He also received the Kent Medal from the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Moroccan Order of Intellectual Competence in Casablanca, and the Golden Medal of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

He also received the Order of the Star of Jerusalem, the Medal of the Elastic Eagle of the Collar Degree, the highest decoration in the United States of Mexico, the Medal of the Great Necklace, which is the highest decoration in the State of Palestine, and the United Nations Shield for Reducing the Effects of Poverty in the World.

While the Saudi monarch has become internally called the "King of Firmness", against the backdrop of his resolute decisions internally and externally, the US "Forbes" magazine chose him among the first most influential figures in the world for 2015.

King Salman topped the list of the most powerful personalities in the Arab world and the fourteenth in the world, in the list published by the magazine in November 2016, and included presidents, kings, businessmen, and famous economic and political figures.

He also won the King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam for the year 2017, and the selection committee for the award said that it had decided to grant it to King Salman bin Abdulaziz for several justifications, including "his attention to serving the Two Holy Mosques and their destination."

The committee also referred to his "permanent quest to gather the word of Arabs and Muslims to confront the difficult circumstances that the Arab and Islamic nations are going through, including his establishment of the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism."

This is in addition to his "Arab and Islamic stances over decades towards the Palestine issue, represented by political, moral and relief support," in addition to "establishing the King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Action, and generously supporting it to provide aid to the needy Arab and Islamic peoples."



King Salman entered politics at the age of 19 when he was appointed, on March 16, 1954, as Emir (Governor) of the Riyadh region on behalf of his brother, Prince Nayef.

IS IRAN READY TO CHANGE HOSTILE POLICIES TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA?

By **Taha Sakr**

The Saudi-Iranian conflict, or what can be called the broader Iranian-Gulf conflict, represents a complex conflict in terms of political and historical dimensions. It is a historical conflict whose roots can be traced back to the great strife within the early Islamic state and the emergence of the Shiites.





The conflict continued until the United States announced the Nixon Doctrine, which stipulated the necessity of providing military and logistical support to two countries in the region, namely Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The US support provided to Iran militarily represented an amount of $103.6 million in 1970, while Saudi Arabia received $ 312 million in 1972.

Currently, the conflict increased with the appearance of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, which became a threat to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The aforementioned revolution came to overthrow the pro-Western Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi; the government of the revolution worked hardly towards echoing the Iranian revolution, in an attempt to provoke Iranian-style religious uprisings throughout the Middle East.

This step represented a threat to Saudi Arabia's heavy influence in the Middle East as well as other Arab countries that follow Sunni Islam.

At the core of that conflict lies the issue of the balance of power between Riyadh and Tehran as the conflict is based on two radically different visions of the regional order. The Iranian regime has enshrined the role of religious authorities in political life while giving the people a partial say in ruling through the electoral process (religious democracy) or in other words restricted (conditional) democracy.

In response, Saudi Arabia and other conservative Arab Gulf states formed the Gulf Cooperation Council, an organization initially designed to counter and contain Iranian influence.

Despite the length of the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran, few of those interested agree on the real causes of that dispute, which reached a clash several times and was on the brink of an open confrontation in various historical stages.

For the Saudis, they do not see a normal state with which they can reach an understanding after they have exhausted all attempts, while Iran believes that what it calls "Saudi dependence" on the West makes meeting with it difficult.

As for the Arabs, with their different attitudes, as well as the Iranians, hardly a large number of them agree on one reason for the emergence of what might be called the ongoing conflict in general between the two countries. Nationalists see the strife between the Arabs and the Persians was and will inevitably remain forever.

But by looking at the threads of the first relationship, the disagreement, its

stations, and its main justifications, we find that the story is more complex.

Back in 1929, modern Saudi Arabia signed an early treaty with the Shah's Iran that treaty was soon disturbed by the Shah's statements against the Arab lands near him, the State of Bahrain, which he demanded at the time or the Emirati islands that it has occupied since the British left them in 1971, which necessitated a Saudi position rejecting it.

It can be said that Saudi-Iranian relations since the beginning of the twentieth century have gone through several fluctuations between divergence and rapprochement. Tracing the relations of these two countries, which form the spearheads of any deterioration in the Middle East, is "interesting".

Since the fall of the Shah's regime in the Khomeini revolution in 1979, relations have begun to fluctuate between the two parties, but tend more to tension and estrangement, while the state of rapprochement at times and divergence at other times has prevailed throughout the history of relations between them since 1925-1979.

After the overthrow of the Shah and the declaration of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979; the competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran over the eligibility to lead the Islamic world began, and this was summed up by the call of Khomeini to overthrow the Arab rulers from US's allies, to liberate the region from Western influence.

He also called for the overthrow of the Saudi monarchy, and "his argument in this way that Muslims should unite in one nation to manage the affairs of the holy places in Mecca and Medina," according to the Iranian researcher Banfshah Kosh in her study entitled "Saudi-Iranian Relations."

Following this upheaval in Iran's rule and policy, Saudi Arabia sided with Iraq in the eight-year war with Iran (1980-1988).

However, relations returned to what can be described as warm after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in the early nineties of the last century.

At that time, relations witnessed a remarkable improvement with the arrival of Muhammad Khatami to the presidency of the Iranian Republic in 1997, who was known at the time for his positions calling for openness to his neighbors and the world.

As soon as relations stabilized, Ahmadinejad, a "fundamentalist with a nationalistic tendency," came to the presidency in 2005 to spread a transformation that continues to this day occurred in Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East.

At that stage, a study by the Arab Center for Research entitled "Saudi-Iranian Tension: The Roots of the Crisis and Its Repercussions" says that Ahmadinejad "began to promote not only the export of the Islamic Revolution to neighboring countries, as was the case during the reign of Ayatollah Khomeini, but also to establish an Iranian project that would extend to the Mediterranean, using tools to export the revolution, such as politicizing sectarianism and supporting sectarian militias.

Khatami had suspended uranium enrichment in 2003, a year after the Iranian opposition revealed the existence of a secret reactor in the country. However, Ahmadinejad restarted enrichment immediately after taking power, thus opening the page of tension in the twenty-first century with Saudi Arabia, which began to view with concern Iran's efforts to upset the balance of power.

Throughout the period between 2003 and 2011, Iraq was the most prominent arena for the state of regional tension between the two powers.

Iraq became the most prominent arena of tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran since the fall of the Sunni Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein, Iran's enemy.

Now, Iran's allies have come to power, this step led to the increase of Saudi Arabia's fears of the expansion of Iranian influence in Iraq.

Arab Spring

The Arab Spring constituted the distinguishing mark in changing the form of influence in the Arab region between the Gulf and Iran, especially as the Middle East lives today with the extensions of this era that may not end in peace.

A study cited by Arab Center for Research says: "The outbreak of the "Arab Spring" revolutions created other new reasons for the dispute between Tehran and Riyadh. While Saudi Arabia took a "principal" position in opposing the Arab revolutions, Iran's positions varied according to its interests. After Iran supported the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt (as an "expression of an Islamic awakening" according to Khamenei), and supported the popular protests that erupted in Bahrain, and also considered them an extension of the Islamic awakening that began with the Iranian revolution in 1979, the revolution turned into US-Israeli "conspiracy" when it reached Syria.

While the revolutions of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya did not witness any competition between the two powers, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen were the most prominent areas of the regional conflict between them, stemming from the geopolitical changes in these countries. At a time when Saudi Arabia supported the opposition against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, an ally of Iran, the latter supplied its forces and weapons to Syrian territory, represented by Shiite militias, to defend Assad.

In Iraq, Iran formed what is known as the Popular Mobilization Forces, which have a large military force, and now have a significant card of influence in Baghdad. However, the latter is trying



to return to the Arab depth, despite the difficulty of consolidating this in light of the entrenchment of the forces allied to Iran within it.

Perhaps the Yemeni dilemma for Saudi Arabia is one of the most combustible points of contact with Iran. The former has been at war for years against the coup of the Iranian-backed Houthi group against the rule of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, while the group receives constant military support from Iran. Its latest form was the group's bombing of Riyadh with a ballistic missile, which the Saudi leadership said Iran was behind its launch. This sparked the ongoing crisis.

Today, Iran has military influence in each of the three countries, in addition to Lebanon, which hosts the most prominent force represented by Hezbollah. While Saudi policy continues with the approach of strictness initiated by King Salman, it appears that his Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, is leading the same policy and with a greater impact in an attempt to reduce Iranian influence.

Thus, Saudi Arabia found itself, since its early inception, in an inevitable conflict with Iran, which was mostly for the sake of its Arab nation, and sometimes the Islamic (Sunni) nation.

An Iranian study from the University of Isfahan prepared by three researchers, "Sadiq Shafi'i, Asghar Muntazer, and Muhammad Ali Glonkar" describes this relationship, despite its tension, as one of the factors of suspicion rooted in the view of the new rulers of Tehran to their neighbors on the other side of the Gulf, saying, "The victory of the revolution Islam not only reduced the importance of the relations between the two countries (which were prevalent) but also gave the relationship between them a special sensitivity and extraordinary complexity.

However, this view did not prevent the Gulf people from welcoming the Khomeini regime, for several considerations, such as the aforementioned tense relationship with the Shah's regime, and also the region's preoccupation with the Cold War and confronting communism, with which the Gulf states believed that conservatives would be less tolerant, in addition to the fact that the Gulf states at that time tend to be social and religious conservatism which gave a glimmer of hope that these points can be built on for good neighborliness with Iran, even after a while.

Therefore, in the years of dialogue with the Iranians, building on this part was sufficient to bring about some rapprochement, which was met with good Saudi intention before it became clear that it was no more than the stages of Iranian "strategic patience," or "Persian cunning," as some Arabs like to describe it.

> **It is a historical conflict whose roots can be traced back to the great strife within the early Islamic state and the emergence of the Shiites.**



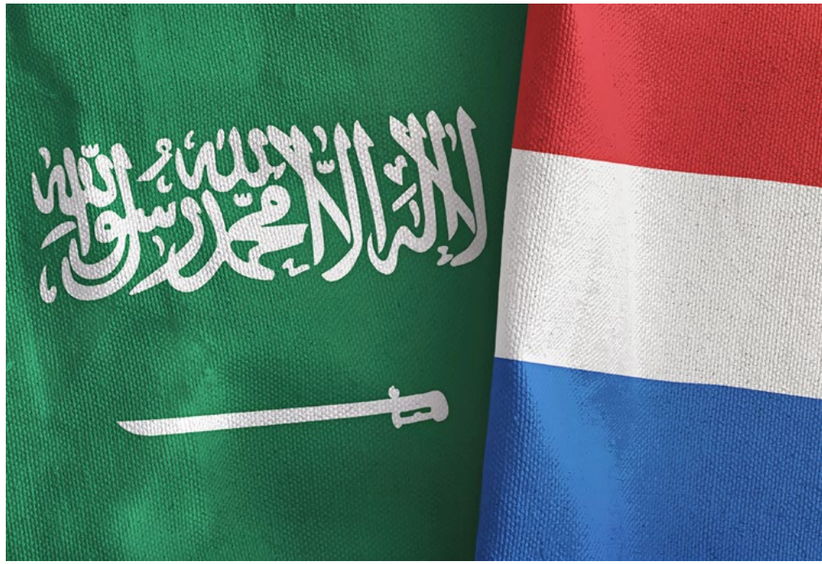
Dutch Ambassador to Riyadh

JANET ALBERDA

RELATIONS BETWEEN KSA AND THE NETHERLANDS ARE DEEPLY ROOTED AND LONGSTANDING

By **Ghazanfar Ali Khan**

Relations between the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia are excellent and cordial. The two countries have similar perspectives on economic, political, cultural, and social issues. The current year 2022 marks the 150 years of opening the first Dutch Consulate in Jeddah in 1972.



The Netherlands and the Kingdom have been working closely at the bilateral level in many areas. The Netherlands is an important economic partner for Saudi Arabia, with two-way trade exceeding SR 24 billion in 2019. In a wide-ranging interview with the Leaders MENA Magazine, Janet Alberda, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Saudi Arabia, gave an overview of Saudi-Dutch relations in different sectors.

Here is the excerpt of the interview.

Leaders: Saudi Arabia shares an excellent history of relations with the Netherlands. Both sides have seen many high-level visits during the past. How do you personally evaluate the relation between the Kingdom and the Netherlands in political, economic, and cultural fields?

Amb Alberda: Relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands are deeply rooted and longstanding. 2022 is the year that will mark 150 years of opening the first Dutch Consulate in Jeddah in 1872; since that time, our ties and cooperation further unfolded in many areas.

That is having said, I am proud to serve in a country where relations are historic. The history of this very special relationship has been captured in photographs by Dutch officials, many of these taken by Daniel van der Meulen, our Consul General in Jeddah, in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. We assembled texts and images and produced a unique photographic document which we will reprint in 2022, a symbolic year.

Leaders: Please provide an overview of the Netherlands-Saudi trade and investment relations, their volume, and their features, how they have evolved over the years?

Amb Alberda: As mentioned, we have historical relations, and memory to many is the Saudi – Hollandi bank which was the first bank to operate in KSA. Royal Dutch Airlines KLM was one of the first airlines to fly scheduled flights to and from Saudi Arabia in 1950.

The famous Amsterdam – Dammam direct flights were followed this year with a direct flight between Amsterdam and Riyadh, of which I am very proud: four direct flights every week between the two Kingdoms. In 2018, the Netherlands ranked one of the top investors in KSA with 49.5 billion riyals investments and 225 investment licenses according to SAGIA (now MISA) at that time. The trade volume in 2019 reached 5.3 billion euros (24 billion Saudi Riyals), mostly in oil and gas, health and pharmaceuticals, machinery, and food. Also, the Netherlands ranks the 8th largest exporter to Saudi Arabia. We see growth, and we are eager to enhance trade volume and the exchange of expertise and technology. KSA currently ranks 62 on "ease of doing business" on the World bank's scale, and we believe this will reflect on Dutch companies interesting in establishing a local presence in the Kingdom. We value all efforts of the Saudi government on reforms to attract foreign direct investments, and we work closely to ensure the participation of the Netherlands companies and

institutions in the Vision's 2030 objectives.

Leaders: How many Dutch companies have a direct or indirect presence in Saudi Arabia? Which are the major ones? Please provide a few names and the projects they are handling?

Amb Alberda: Actually, many Dutch companies are operating in Saudi Arabia that has a direct presence; let me mention a few:

• Phillips Healthcare (Signed an MoU with the Ministry of health on e-health).

• Signify (One of Saudi Arabia's smart LED lighting market-leading players. It has illuminated some landmarks in the country with its energy-efficient LED lighting systems, such as the Kingdom Tower in Riyadh and the Jeddah Flag Pole, the tallest in the world with 13 special lights, representing the 13 governorates of Saudi Arabia).

• Friesland Campina (Strong existence in the Saudi market since 1950 with a big marketing and sales office in Jeddah).

• KLM (One of the first airlines to establish an agreement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to have scheduled flights to and from KSA/NL in the 1950s).

• DACOM Systems, a Dutch agribusiness company, providing equipment and software for Irrigation Management, Crop Recording, Disease Management, etc.). The Company is carrying out several projects with MEWA and private sector companies. The projects aim to increase the usage of water-saving methods and technologies in the Saudi agriculture sector.

• Other companies are Shell, Fugro-Suhaimi, Arcadis, Boskalis, Royal Haskoning DHV, and many others, including SME to expand here in the Kingdom.

Leaders: Is there any plan for a Saudi official or delegation to visit the Netherlands or vice-versa soon?

Amb Alberda: The Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Saudi Arabia in February 2020, just before the outbreak of the COVID 19 Pandemic. We recently had Parliamentary Elections in the Netherlands, and a new Executive will be formed in the coming months. After the installment of our new Government, I hope our countries will reach out to each other physically as there are many issues to be discussed, whether they concern our bilateral relationship or our positioning on regional and international issues. I also hope that our first fruitful political consultations, which were held virtually in October 2020 at the official level, will have a follow-up after the summer - in person - this time. We also expect a visit of the Netherlands Ambassador at large for Human Rights after the summer, as well as a visit by our Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief. All visits that have been agreed upon in principle by the Saudi side

Leaders: A new route between the Dutch capital Amsterdam and the Saudi capital Riyadh was to be operated by Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM). What is the status of this flight?

Amb Alberda: Together with KLM, GACA, and Riyadh Airports, we have re-established the direct connection





between Schiphol International Airport in Amsterdam and King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh. Now KLM flies to Amsterdam directly from two Saudi cities, Riyadh and Dammam. Currently, KLM flies twice per week, and we hope to increase the frequency of flights once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Leaders: SABIC has announced a plan to build a plant to produce plastic circular polymers in the Netherlands? What is the progress on this project?

Amb Alberda: This project is at the moment in an early stage of construction. The current expectation is that the construction and preparations for a start-up will be completed by the third quarter of 2022. The project consists of two parts: 1) a pyrolysis plant in a joint venture with SABIC's partner Plastic Energy, called SPEAR (SABIC Plastic Energy Advanced Recycling) and 2) a treatment plant built by SABIC only to purify the output of the pyrolysis plant. While the first plant is supported by a Dutch grant under the DEI+ scheme (a subsidy program), the Dutch authorities have given their commitment to grant support for the second plant too. Given the demo-scale character of these plants, these grants are instrumental in making the business case feasible.

Leaders: What is the status of cooperation between the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia in the agriculture sector? A virtual conference was held recently between Saudi and Dutch officials in which they discussed a range of issues related to agriculture cooperation. Please provide a brief about the meeting and its outcome.

Amb Alberda: The Netherlands is exporting a lot of agricultural produce to the Kingdom. During the COVID crisis, it even rose by 10%. However, to feed the World with a fast-growing population and bring down the ecological footprint, the Netherlands is stimulating to produce closer to the consumer. Local production in KSA will be an answer to this question. The reason why The Netherlands is involved in building greenhouses in several places in the Kingdom, introduced Tilapia farming in Saudi Arabia, building hatcheries in different regions in the Kingdom, delivering propagation material in horticulture, but also open-field agriculture. Next to this, the Netherlands likes to continue to export products to KSA, which need extensive water production methods; in this way, the scarce water resources in KSA will be saved.

Coming back to your concrete question about the virtual conference, this was about the export of Saudi horticultural produce to The Netherlands and was a meeting between MEWA, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, and the Dutch Fresh Produce Centre. We were discussing the possibility of selling Saudi produce to the Dutch and European markets. As you probably know, a lot of trade in vegetables and fruit, produced worldwide is distributed via the Netherlands. Good to emphasize here that the Netherlands is the world's 2nd largest exporter of agriculture products, reached 95.6 billion euros in 2020, but also one of the world's top importers. In 2020, imports of the Netherlands of agriculture products were 67.1 billion



euros, including 27.3 billion for re-exports. In this way, The Netherlands can deliver year-round production of fresh fruit and vegetables in our own country and the EU and beyond. During the webinar was discussed how Saudi produce could find their way to The Netherlands and the EU, during times when Saudi Arabia will have an overproduction in their greenhouses. And the conclusion was that in times of maximum production capacity in KSA (in winter times), the production capacity in the Netherlands is at the lowest level and the other way around. Almost per definition, this means that the Netherlands and KSA are natural partners to cooperate in this field. The reason why a subsequent meeting on this is planned already for the near future.

Also, here and in this field, we have a historical relation. The Kingdom and the Netherlands have longstanding fruitful agricultural ties. It started 50 years ago with the appointing of the first Dutch Agricultural Counsellor to Saudi Arabia, and the arrival of the first delivery of seed potatoes from the Netherlands to Saudi Arabia. Even long before that, over the 1950s the Dutch dairy products became household brands in the region, a popular example until today is Rainbow Milk (Abu Kous).

Leaders: The Netherlands has a lot to offer to tourists. What is the status of tourism relations? How many Saudis visited the Netherlands in 2018 and 2019?

Amb Alberda: There are many great places in the Netherlands, and we have indeed much to offer. A record of 17.6 million tourists visited the Netherlands in 2017, a size of the Dutch population at that time. The Embassy participated at Riyadh Travel Fair in 2016 and 2017 and at European Days every year to promote the Netherlands as a unique destination rich in culture, traditions, and natural diversity. We've seen quite a substantial surge of Saudi tourists in recent years. It is difficult to provide concrete statistics as tourists could enter the Netherlands using Schengen visas issued by another Schengen country, but we estimate that about 20,000 Saudi nationals visited the Netherlands in 2019.

We believe that direct flights will also reflect on the number of tourists visiting the Netherlands in the future, as well as I hope to see Dutch tourists visiting Saudi Arabia with the opening up of the Kingdom and see all its beauty.

Leaders: The Netherlands has its achievements when it comes to cinema, theatre, art, and music. Saudi Arabia is now opening its entertainment sector. Is there any existing cooperation or possibilities for collaboration in these areas between the two countries? Your comments, please.

Amb Alberda: Thank you for this question. There has been cooperation and collaboration between artists from Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands, and we hope this will further increase in the future. The past few years, we have been active in cinema, organizing our Golden Falcon Arts festival, and we continue to collaborate in the film and arts scene. The first few Saudi artists have visited the Netherlands, for instance, as an in-house artist at the Street Art Museum Amsterdam. In addition, several Dutch artists have been working in the Kingdom, recently for example, in the Noor Festival in Riyadh.

We are now working on some new collaborations, among others showcasing the history of the former Dutch Consulate in al Balad, Jeddah. And scientific collaboration on the topic of the Hajj from a historical point of view. We are very keen on extending ties and connections in the cultural field.

Leaders: What is the position of the Netherlands in terms of cure and control of COVID? As of now, what is the state of the Netherlands' economy?

Amb Alberda: We have been facing a second wave of COVID since the outbreak in March 2020. At this moment, more and more people are getting vaccinated. This means the number of people getting ill will start falling sharply. And the number of new hospital admissions is expected to decline. Reopening society step by step is not without risk. But the Government also has to consider the interests of the economy and society at large. That's why the Government has decided to take the first, cautious step of the reopening plan on 28 April.

It's still important, however, that everyone keeps following the basic rules. This means washing your hands, keeping your distance, and staying home, and getting tested if you have any symptoms. They were also getting vaccinated as soon as this is possible. People can still infect each other, even when they have been vaccinated; therefore the basic rules are crucial. This will help prevent the virus from spreading.

Leaders: What is the Netherlands' position on key regional issues, including the conflict in Yemen, the Syrian crisis, Iranian intransigence, and ME Peace Process?

Amb Alberda: About geopolitics, we could talk a long time and it merits a second interview, but most importantly the Netherlands attaches importance to stability in the region and believes that every conflict should be resolved with a political solution or settlement. I am happy to see that our relations and our discourse cover all topics at various ends and that there are no topics that cannot be discussed – whether we agree or disagree. The Kingdom is an important partner to us when discussing the region and countries in specific, so we look forward to continuing our discourse and engagement.

Leaders: What are the major priorities of the Netherlands Embassy in Saudi Arabia under your leadership? What has been the biggest challenge?

Amb Alberda: I just arrived seven months ago, and my leadership follows the leadership of my Government – as a diplomat, you could not expect me to give another response. We currently have a defined list of priorities for the coming four years, going from regional stability & security, trade diplomacy, and economic cooperation to human rights and promotion or preservation of international law. And other areas in between, as the pallet of diplomacy, is a wide one. I am looking forward to having physical political consultations this year between the two Kingdoms, but I also would like to see the human rights dialogue take shape physically.

In addition, with my own academic experience in hindsight and overall experience in the region, I would love to intensify some of our cultural ties, make them more known, and – once traveling becomes easier – invite some of them to come to the Kingdom so that we can start sharing experiences again. Witnessing – with own eyes – of developments taking shape is crucial for more understanding, and subsequently, this will feed the dialogue between our two Kingdoms, whether they are at the political level, G2G or B2B. In addition, there are many areas where we can further intensify our cooperation, notably sustainable trade & investment & developments in food security, water but also climate.

Next on my wishlist, and on that of my capital, is to have more dialogue via multilateral mechanisms. As you might know, the Netherlands is one of the founding fathers of the former 'Common Market' (now the European Union), and it shows you why multilateralism is such an important concept for us. Like the Kingdom, we are a proud member of the United Nations family, and we value the UN principles like equality and self-determination of nations, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the obligation of member countries to obey the Charter, to cooperate with the UN Security Council and to use peaceful means to resolve conflicts. We are also a proud member of the European Union, and we could talk about this to a large extent, but we hope to see one day (and inshallah this year) an EU-FTA agreement as we consider this a comprehensive framework of our shared interests. In addition, as a guest country to the G-20 under Italian Chairmanship but with expectation going to more permanent membership, we would also like to see more cooperation and collaboration with countries like KSA in certain areas. Health is one topic, but climate is another major priority

Leaders: Tell us briefly about your experience of living and working in Saudi Arabia?

Amb Alberda: A short-lived experience, but the experience thus far has been good: well-received (also on protocol terms), great team, great interlocutors, and good to know that NL is well received. A posting 360 degrees different from my previous two postings; also wonderful to receive my family here, which was lovely, and for them to see that Saudi Arabia is on a changing curve and opening up.

In terms of living here: I love the DQ for its nature and walk tracks, but don't enjoy it so much as I would like to see fewer 'reconstruction projects' going around here, there is lots of noise and question arises: why do this, leave the DQ for its purpose and have all renovations going around outside of the DQ. In my opinion, you asked for it.

Meet Martin Dorsman

ECSA SECRETARY GENERAL

By **Magdy Sadek**

ECSA, European Community Ship owners' Associations has appointed Mr. Martin Dorsman (56) as its new Secretary-General in Brussels. Mr. Dorsman had started in his new position on November 1st, 2017.

Mr. Dorsman had transferred to ECSA from the Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR) where he has held the position of Managing Director since 2011. Before taking that position he worked for five years as the association's Deputy Managing Director.

He has a Doctorate Degree in Macro-Economic Policy and over 30 years of experience in different leadership roles and sound knowledge of Shipping.

Before his time at the Royal Association of Netherlands Ship-owners, he worked as a civil servant for the Dutch Government, including six years at the shipping policy department.

At the beginning of the interview, Martin emphasizes that the 2030 Kingdom's vision rightly attaches great importance to further develop its position as a major trade hub, becoming a logistical gateway to the three continents.

Martin Dorsman mentions that European shipping is still a strategic asset for the EU as European ship-owners control some 40% of the world fleet on average

ECSA is continuing to play a pro-active role in important topics such as the reduction of CO2-emissions of shipping while at the same time safeguarding and strengthening the business climate in Europe for shipping", said Mr. Dorsman.

ECSA is representing the interests of its members to the European institutions, the Commission, the Parliament, and the representations of EU Member States in Brussels.

What is your vision for the shipping world industry for the next decade?

The shipping industry will continue to serve global trade in a very efficient and effective way. However, the shipping industry will face many challenges and changes that will have a fundamental impact on the industry.

First of all, for the next decade, the transformation to become climate neutral has to proceed at an ever-increasing pace. New propulsion technologies, new low carbon or carbon-free fuels have to become available for global use. New bunker infrastructure will have to be developed. New builds will use the new engines and fuels. Depending on the new fuels existing ships will have to be retrofitted and have to become more fuel-efficient.

Secondly, due to these developments, the crews have to be properly trained to be able



Martin Dorsman Ecsa Secretary General



to handle the new fuels and propulsion systems. Additional training is also required to accommodate the continuous process of automation and digitalization. The profession of seafarers will change as a consequence, with part of the tasks being performed onshore and not on board a vessel anymore.

What are the reasons for the high cost of shipping in the world today?

There are some reasons:
– The very strong recovery of the world economy after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world economy in the first quarter of 2020. In a recent report, the World Bank stated that the current recovery is the strongest one in 80 years.

– The shift from buying services to buying consumer goods by many households around the globe due to the lockdowns

– The relatively small number of new builds being delivered to ship owners over the most recent years

– Distortion of supply chains, especially in the container liners sector, for example by long waiting times for US ports, use of containers for on-land storage, and other factors.

All these factors lead to a huge demand for shipping services, with supply not able to increase that quickly, leading to strong increases in freight rates. Many predict these high freight rates will last for some time. Also for the dry bulk segments, freight rates recovered very strongly after many years of depressed rates.

The covid-19 crisis is having a profound impact on the world economy generally and especially European Community Ship owners' Associations, Can you explain more on the impacts of this crisis?

As just mentioned many shipping segments are performing surprisingly strong. However, some segments are performing less favorably, like the offshore oil and gas sector and especially the cruise and passenger ferries. These sectors are just at the start of the recovery phase, hampered by the negative effects on passenger travel of the new Covid variants and travel restrictions imposed by many governments.

What are ECSA's key priorities?

For ECSA one of the key priorities is the 'fit for 55' package recently published by the European Commission. This package contains important policy proposals that can have a huge impact on the global shipping industry. Just to name a few examples:

– The European Commission wants to include shipping in the European Emission Trading System (ETS), meaning putting a carbon price on the use of bunker fuels, also for ships sailing to EU ports from other parts of the world and for ships leaving EU ports for a destination outside Europe

– The European Commission also wants to increase the energy efficiency of the bunker fuels used by ships. The only way the shipowner, who becomes liable for meeting this requirement, can meet the new efficiency norms is to use biofuels. This will also be applicable to bunker fuels bunkered outside the EU, so changing the global bunker industry profoundly.

Excuse me... we have erroneous statistics of world movements trade can tell us the correct statistics?

I would suggest using figures of UNCTAD. The link gives you direct access to the relevant web pages.
https://unctad.org/topic/trade-analysis/data-statistics-and-trends

You have more than 30 years of experience in the field of shipping. Do you see when the balance of freight in the world will adjust?

There is a famous saying, 'predicting is very difficult, especially if it concerns the future and this saying applies to your question.

We live in very special times, already even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. The monetary policies of many countries, the extreme low or even negative interest rates, low inflation rates over the past years are completely new for the world economy.

The question is whether these policies and monetary conditions are sustainable for the years to come. In some countries like the US, inflation is increasing quite strongly, in Europe the increase is more moderate. But given the global economic developments, a further inflation increase might happen, which might trigger economic turbulence.

Together with the increasing impact of environmental disasters such as extreme weather conditions (heat, massive rainfall, and flooding), the economic sentiment might turn negative with all the related consequences. But at this point, it seems the global economy will continue to develop positively.

Have you ever visited Saudi Arabia? If you had a chance to visit, would you be excited or interested in it?

I did not visit Saudi Arabia until now. Traveling to a new country, meeting new people, and getting in contact with new cultures is always an enrichment of one's personal life.

In light of the kingdom's 2030 vision, can we say that the kingdom with its geostrategic position is a global logistic point?

The 2030 Kingdom's vision rightly attaches great importance to further develop its position as a major trade hub, becoming a logistical gateway to the three continents. Together with the successful efforts to increase the size of its maritime fleet, the Kingdom will increase its importance in maritime affairs.

European Shipping has a long history. How can you describe European Shipping in numbers today?

European shipping is still a strategic asset for the EU. European shipowners control some 40% of the world fleet on average and provide some 2 million people with a job. The contribution to the EU's GDP is some € 149 bln per year of the EU's total external trade some 76% is transported by sea. Of the trade between the EU Member States, some 32% is by sea, called short sea shipping.

The share of the EU flagged fleet in the total world fleet is a bit below 20%. Some countries in the EU prove that the goal to increase this share can be met, by introducing policies that make it attractive for ship-owners to fly the flag of their country. In the '90s of the last century, the Netherlands showed the way how to do this; nowadays Denmark is an example of a country that launched effective policy measures to increase the number of ships flying the Danish flag.

We always have to remember that the choice of a flag can't be forced upon ship-owners by regulations. A flag has to be a competitive option; otherwise, the flag will not be a sustainable choice for ship-owners.

What do European Community Shipowners' Associations do? What are the strategic priorities of the ESCA?

ECSA is representing the interests of its members to the European institutions, the Commission, the Parliament, and the representations of EU Member States in Brussels.

This representation is done by drafting position papers on policy proposals, informing EU regulators on the specific characteristics of the shipping industry, coming forward with alternatives for proposed regulations, and also paying attention to an effective and efficient way of enforcing regulations.

ECSA's overall policy is to safeguard the competitive position of European ship-owners so that Europe remains an attractive place for ship-owners to perform their business.

The challenge is to combine the ambitious goals of the EU on the environment and social affairs with the need to remain competitive. The shipping industry is fully committed to becoming climate neutral as quickly as possible, but we have to take into account that shipping is a global industry, and regulation by the United Nations' IMO is the preferred option.

At the same time, the political reality is that the EU will come forward with a new environmental policy proposal specifically directed at the shipping

industry. ECSA aims to make sure that these proposals are effective, takes into account the SME character of the shipping industry, and can be aligned with future IMO regulations.

Also on the social files, ECSA has clear ambitions, especially when it is about increasing the attractiveness of European seafarers. ECSA is convinced that European seafarers contribute to the strength of EU shipping. Concrete actions are needed to make sure European seafarers are competitive also in the longer run. Increasing their skills is a very important way to contribute to this goal and together with the European Transport Workers' Federation ETF, we execute joint projects, funded by the EU. Increasing the inclusivity and diversity of the sector is also an important goal of both ECSA and the ETF.

To mention another important goal of ECSA is to keep global trade flows open and to maintain a rule-based global trade system. Without open markets EU shipping will face numerous trade barriers, seriously hampering trade flows and ultimately negatively impacting the world economy. ECSA is in frequent dialogue with the European Commission on trade policy and supports a review of the World Trade Organisation WTO, to enable them to play the same important role regarding trade topics as they did over the last decades.

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On ECSA's priority list numerous other topics are included, such as combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, the migrant crisis in the Med, cybersecurity, safety issues, and so forth.

European shipping should not only remain the leader in maritime shipping, but also the leader in maritime knowledge. What does this mean in the practical activities of ECSA?

I already referred to the project jointly run with the ETF to increase the skills of European seafarers. This project is called Skill Sea and the main goal is to create a strategy and concrete tools to translate current and future trends in the shipping industry and the society into the educational packages of the European maritime education and training institutes (METs).

If we don't create such a strategy and tools, then running such a project is important but in ten years, we have to have another project like Skill Sea. So we try to create a system that is here to stay for many years.

Trends that will lead to changes in the educational packages are for example digitalization and automation, the greening of the fleet, and the need to have more 'soft skills, such as managerial skills.

Another activity is to exchange best practices between ECSA's members of successful national maritime labor market policies. As the shipping industry, the labor market, the educational systems differ quite substantially between the EU Member States, there is no such a thing as a 'silver bullet' to work on more European seafarers, more youngsters that go to a nautical education, etc. It has to be bottom-up instead of top-down, starting at the national level. At the European level, we can exchange best practices, learn from each other and try to improve the labor market policies at the national level based on this input from colleagues in the other EU Member States.

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SAUDI BANKS' PROFITS

INCREASED 10-FOLD IN Q2 2021, HIKE 111% IN H1 2021

By **Mohamed Samir**

Fitch Ratings revises outlook for 6 Saudi banks' to stable from negative, affirms foreign currency and local currency long-term issuer default ratings (IDRs) at 'BBB+'

Saudi Arabia's listed banks achieved strong results in the second quarter (Q2) and the first half (H1) of 2021 in terms of net profits.

According to banks financial statements on the Saudi Tadawul website, profits of listed Saudi banks increased by 1050.2% during the second quarter of 2021, doubling their profits by more than 10-fold during that period compared to the second quarter of 2020.

And 10 banks listed in the sector achieved net profits during the second quarter of 2021 worth SAR 11.06 billion after zakat and tax, compared to consolidated profits of only SAR 962 million in the same quarter of 2020, knowing that Q2 2020 witnessed sharp non-recurring losses of the Saudi British Bank (SABB) worth SAR 6.87 billion.

The consolidated profits of Saudi banks increased by SAR 10.1 billion during the second quarter of 2021 compared to their profits in the same quarter last year.

Eight of the 10 banks recorded an increase in their net profits during Q2 2021 year-over-year, on the other hand, one bank witnessed a decrease in profits, in contrast to a decrease in the profits of one bank and the transformation of another bank to profitability.

Al-Rajhi Bank

Al-Rajhi Bank topped the list of Saudi banks at the level of net profits during the second quarter of 2021 on an annual basis, as it achieved SAR 3.6 billion of profits, after recording an annual growth of about 48%, thus acquiring 32.6% of the total net profits of Saudi banks in that period.

Saudi National Bank

The Saudi National Bank (SNB) came in second place, with a net of 2.12 billion riyals, after achieving the lowest annual growth rate among the banks listed in the sector by 1.4%.

Riyad Bank

Riyad Bank was the third-highest bank in profits, with a net profits of SAR 1.51 billion, recording an annual increase of more than 42%.

Arab National Bank

The only decline in profits was for the Arab National Bank by about 2.7% on an annual basis, achieving a net profit of SAR 473 million.

Saudi British Bank

While the positive transformation of Saudi British Bank (SABB) with a net profit of SAR 919 million pushed it to rank fourth on the ladder of the ranking of the highest Saudi banks in terms of profitability in the second quarter of 2021.

Banque Saudi Fransi

Banque Saudi Fransi achieved the highest growth rate in quarterly profits





during the second quarter of this year, with an increase of 76.2% year-over-year, achieving profits of SAR 770 million after zakat and tax, ranking it fifth among banks in terms of profits.

Banks performance in H1 2021

The profits of Saudi banks during the first half of 2021 jumped by 111.1% on an annual basis, with an increase of SAR 12.14 billion over the same period last year.

The net profits of Saudi banks in the first half of this year amounted to more than SAR 23 billion after zakat and tax, compared to SAR 10.92 billion in the first half of 2020.

Al-Rajhi Bank topped Saudi banks at the level of profits in the first half of 2021; With a net of SAR 6.94 billion, recording an annual increase of 44.1%, accounting for 30.1% of the banks' consolidated profits during that period.

SNB came in second place after recording a growth of about 12.3%, achieving SAR 5.53 billion, which constitutes 23.96% of the consolidated net profits.

The Saudi Investment Bank Alistithmar Capital recorded the lowest profits during the first half of 2021 with a value of SAR 501.3 million, followed by Bank Al-Jazira with a net profit of SAR 572.8 million.

Fitch revises outlook for 6 Saudi banks to stable

Fitch Ratings has revised six Saudi banks' Outlooks to Stable from Negative and affirmed the Foreign Currency and Local Currency Long-Term Issuer Default Ratings (IDRs) at 'BBB+'.

The banks are Arab National Bank (ANB), Banque Saudi Fransi (BSF), Alinma bank (Alinma), Saudi Investment Bank (SAIB), Bank Aljazira (BAJ) and Gulf International Bank - Saudi Arabia (GIB SA).

The rating actions follow a similar action on Saudi Arabia's sovereign rating on 15 July 2021, as the rating firm revised Saudi Arabia's Outlook to Stable and affirmed it at A investment grade.

According to Fitch, ANB's, BSF's, Alinma's, SAIB's, BAJ's and GIB SA's IDRs are driven by sovereign support, as reflected in the banks' SRFs of 'BBB+', which are in line with Fitch's Domestic-Systemically Important Bank (D-SIB) SRF of 'BBB+'.

This is applied to all Saudi banks, reflecting Fitch's view of a high probability of support for all the country's lenders from the Saudi authorities, if needed.

Fitch's assessment considers the authorities' strong ability to support the banking system, given large, albeit reduced from their historical levels, external reserves. It also reflects a long record of support for Saudi banks, irrespective of their size, franchise, funding structure and level of government ownership. We see high contagion risk among domestic banks given that the market is fairly small and interconnected. We believe this is an added incentive for the state to support any Saudi bank, if needed, to maintain market confidence and stability.

The Stable Outlook on these banks' Long-Term IDRs reflects that on the Saudi sovereign rating.

The report said that downgrade of BSF's, ANB's, Alinma's, SAIB's, BAJ's and GIB SA's Long- and Short-Term IDRs would be driven by a downward revision of these banks' SRFs.

It said that it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia authorities would stop supporting the Kingdom's banking system.

Saudi Arabia is an FSB/G20 member country. Bankruptcy legislation has been introduced, followed by resolution legislation in 4Q20. However, Fitch does not believe the authorities will use this over sovereign support.

An upgrade of the banks' Long-Term IDRs could come from an upward revision of their SRFs, although this is unlikely given our view of the already high creditworthiness and high propensity of Saudi Arabia to support the banking system and the banks, as well as the Stable Outlook on the sovereign.

The banks' National Ratings are sensitive to a change in their Long-Term Local-Currency IDRs and the bank's creditworthiness relative to other Saudi Arabian issuers'.

“The net profits of Saudi banks in the first half of this year amounted to more than SAR 23 billion after zakat and tax, compared to SAR 10.92 billion in the first half of 2020.

Saudi Non-oil Private Sector

STRONG OUTPUT GROWTH CONTINUES IN JULY: **IHS MARKIT**

By **Mohamed Samir**



Saudi Arabia non-oil private sector achieved further expansion in July 2021, according to data from the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) by IHS Markit.

The report indicated that Saudi output grew at a sharp pace, underlined by a robust increase in new business inflows. Although, the headline seasonally adjusted Saudi Arabia PMI has inched down slightly in July to 55.8, nevertheless, the reading pointed to a strong improvement in operating conditions that extended the current run of growth to 11 months.

According to IHS Markit, Output in the non-oil sector maintained a sharp pace of expansion in July, as about 27% of surveyed businesses reported an increase in activity, linked to strengthening client demand and a loosening of pandemic-related measures.

The report indicated that rising demand from domestic and overseas clients supported the upturn, which some firms linked to competitive pricing strategies. David Owen, Economist at IHS Markit, said that sustained rises in demand should help the economy move closer to full capacity over the second half of the year. However, Owen indicated that a drop in business expectations to its joint- weakest since June 2020 illustrated growing doubts that this will be a smooth ride.

On the flip side to these largely positive findings, jobs data reflected a less favourable view of the non-oil sector in July. IHS Markit data indicated that hiring growth weakened to a fractional pace, as only small proportion of firms reported needing additional staff. In addition, backlogs were reduced solidly, suggesting a wide gap between demand and full capacity in spite of a sharp increase in new orders in recent months.

Surveyed companies were also less optimistic that activity would rise over the following year. Only 10% of firms provided a positive forecast, while around 87% forecast no-change. This brought overall business expectations to the joint-lowest since June 2020. Meanwhile, latest data pointed to a sharp increase in purchasing activity as input requirements grew in line with higher new orders.

Furthermore, companies stock levels also expanded, while wait times on inputs improved for the fourth month running. The rise in average output charges at non-oil companies accelerated to the fastest since November 2020. Firms widely mentioned that this was due to higher sales and rising prices for raw materials and fuel.

Higher raw material costs were often attributed to ongoing global supply shortages during July. As a result, overall input prices continued to rise, although the pace of inflation slowed to the softest recorded since March.

Indicator of Saudi Vision 2030 progress

Since the launch of the Saudi Vision 2030 by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2016, Saudi Arabia's non-oil revenues have increased more than 200%.

In order to develop and diversify the economy and reduce dependence on oil, Saudi Arabia launched Saudi Vision 2030; built on several economic and financial reforms, which aim to transform the structure of the Saudi economy into a diversified and sustainable economy focused on enhancing productivity, increasing the contribution of the private sector, and empowering the third sector.

Since the launch of the Vision, Saudi Arabia has succeeded in implementing many initiatives and structural reforms to enable economic transformation. This transformation included several major efforts centered around enhancing local content, national industry, launching and developing promising economic sectors, and an enabling dimension aimed at maximizing the role of the private sector and SMEs, and enhancing the sustainability of public finances. These structural shifts have contributed to strengthening the Kingdom's economy and its ability to combat the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. It is expected that the pace of this structural transformation will continue in the coming years, in light of a number of investment initiatives under the Public Investment Fund and leading companies.

The Kingdom has witnessed economic and financial structural reforms which promote economic growth while preserving stability and financial sustainability. This is evident in the improvement of the business environment in the Kingdom, and the continuous endeavor to enable the private sector to support economic diversification and overcoming obstacles to make it more attractive to invest in previously untapped sectors.

Accordingly, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said last month that non-oil recovery that started in the second half of 2020 is expected to continue with non-oil growth projected at 4.3% in 2021.

The IMF confirmed that the ambitious reforms within the framework of Vision 2030 contributed to supporting the Saudi economy in successfully overcoming the repercussions of the double crisis from the coronavirus pandemic and the decline in oil prices, pointing out that the economy entered the battlefield of the pandemic armed with strong non-oil growth, strong safety margins and positive momentum in various reforms.

Saudization Efforts

IN THE KINGDOM HARNESS LOCAL TALENTS

By **Mohamed Samir**

Since Saudi Arabia started the Nitaqat nationalisation scheme, also know as Saudization, employment of Saudi nationals in the private sector has skyrocketed across the Kingdom. The scheme requires Saudi companies to fill up their workforce to certain levels with Saudi nationals.



Job creation was one of the main goals of the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030 introduced by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The vision aims to reshape the country's economy that has long relied on oil exports and labor imports.

The coronavirus pandemic had a double impact on unemployment. On one side it raised it due to the lockdowns, while on the other it changed the mindset of several Saudi youths as they started to take on all types of jobs including blue-collar ones.

Saudi workers are now present in all sectors, delivering packages, serving espresso, and transporting oil-drilling equipment. Many companies with foreign employees trapped abroad due to the coronavirus-related border closures have said they have accelerated their plans to hire Saudi nationals. In the third quarter of last year, the number of Saudis working in the private sector rose by more than 80,000.

Companies started to put Saudi employee seekers through testing and extensive training programs, and the local employees have risen to the challenge.

While many countries are struggling to cope with the high unemployment rates caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the challenge in Saudi Arabia was of complex nature, as it depended on many foreign employees especially in the oil sector.

Foreigners now make up a third of the kingdom's population of 34 million. While the government is the main employer for Saudis, the country's private sector relies heavily on labor from Asian and other Arab countries.

Almost 75% of the employees in Saudi private companies are foreigners, who usually accept a lower salary, which makes their competition with citizens extremely difficult.

The kingdom's government has long imposed quotas and incentives to direct more citizens into the private sector, in a process dubbed "Saudisation," but the results have not kept pace with population growth.

It is worth noting that unemployment was steadily increasing when Prince Mohammed bin Salman assumed the mandate of the Crown Prince in 2017 and began to witness a noticeable decline in 2019 with the rise in economic growth.

As the pandemic impact soften, Saudi Arabia now is trying to balance Saudization with maintaining economic growth and without hindering foreign investors who play a critical role in achieving the Crown Prince's plan.

To keep the unemployment rate steady, the kingdom must create 150,000 jobs annually over the next decade, according to Bloomberg Economics. Prince Mohammed bin Salman's goal of halving the unemployment rate of citizens, from 14% to 7% by year, requires 2030, more concrete efforts.

Saudi Arabia is on the right track

According to a recent report by Saudi Arabia's Human Resources Fund private sector employment of Saudi nationals rose to 121,000 in the first quarter of 2021.

This marks a huge step toward the achievement of Saudi Vision 2020, raising Saudi employment in the Kingdom's thriving private sector.

In April, the Saudi National Labor Observatory said that Saudi nationals now make up around 22.75% of private-sector employees in Q1 2021, in line with the Nitaqat nationalisation scheme. This is up from just 20.37% in the first quarter of 2020.

On a sector basis, seven sectors have recorded 50% Saudization, much higher than the total private sector average of 25%.

In the first place came the financial and insurance sector with a Saudization rate of 83.6%.

In the second place came the public administration, defence and mandatory social insurance at 71.9% Saudization.

While Saudi employees made up around 63.2% of the Kingdom's mining and quarrying sector.

Furthermore, more than half of Saudi Arabia education, as well as information technology and communication sectors employees are currently Saudis.

Accordingly, the Kingdom now has the lowest dependence on foreign labor compared to the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council at around 77%. While Qatar has the highest at around 94%.

Malls are the latest addition to the Saudization scheme

In early August, Saudi Arabia began implementing the decision to limit work in closed malls to Saudi nationals only, and the specified grace period has expired.

Last April, the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, Ahmed bin Sulaiman Al-Rajhi, issued 3 ministerial decisions to localize several activities and professions in the labor market.



The decision applies to all professions in closed commercial complexes (malls) and closed commercial complex management offices, except for a limited number of activities and professions in these complexes.

The Saudization decision comes in line with the ministry's plan to increase opportunities for Saudi men and women to participate in the labor market.

It is noteworthy that the Ministry, in cooperation with the Human Resources Development Fund offers training and support programs for the professions targeted by the decision.

It is expected that these decisions will contribute to the provision of 51,000 jobs for Saudi men and women.

The Saudization decision will enter into force after 120 days from the date of its publication, and according to the procedural guide to the decision, the statutory penalties will be applied after the end of the grace period to all establishments that are not bound by the decision.

Violations are divided into two categories, the first is the employment of non-Saudi workers in professions restricted to Saudis, and the second is non-compliance with the Saudization percentages.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is intensifying its plan to localize jobs in many economic sectors to provide job opportunities and raise participation rates in the private sector.

Since 2018, the Saudi Ministry of Labor has issued a decision to localize jobs in 11 sales activities in the retail markets.

Among the activities that began applying Saudization in early September 2018, are watch stores, eyeglasses, medical devices and equipment, electrical and electronic appliances, auto parts, construction and construction materials.



Ahmad bin Sulaiman Alrajhi, Minister of Human resources and Social Development of Saudi Arabia

Last May, the Assistant Undersecretary for Labor Policies at the Saudi Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, Ahmed Al-Sharqi, said that the ministry is studying the nationalization of leadership positions in cooperation with other government agencies.

The unemployment rate among Saudis decreased during the first quarter of 2021 to 11.7% down from 12.6% in the fourth quarter of 2020.

The unemployment rate of Saudis in the first quarter was 7.2% for males, and 21.2% for females; The overall unemployment rate (Saudis and foreigners) decreased to 6.5%, compared to 7.4% in the fourth quarter.

"Saudi workers are now present in all sectors, delivering packages, serving espresso, and transporting oil-drilling equipment.

SPACE ECONOMY:
SAUDI ARABIA'S VISION BEYOND EARTH

By **Lamiaa Hassan**

الهيئة السعودية للفضاء
SAUDI SPACE COMMISSION

Have you ever heard about what is called "The space economy"? , this expression is widely used on a recent basis as studies prove that "Space Economy" is able to overcome all the challenges caused by the emerging Corona Virus "Covid 19" pandemic in front of the global economy.



Through this piece, "Leaders MENA" magazine is trying to shed light on the aforementioned expression and the Saudi government is trying to use in the future.

International research institutions have confirmed that the space economy is the hidden mine that can contribute to recovering from the repercussions of Corona. What prompts many governments to pay attention to it and follow the development of its technologies; its impact on the economy in general.

What is the space economy?

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines the space economy as the full range of activities and use of resources that create value and benefits for humans in the context of space exploration, research, understanding, management, and use.

The space economy is growing along with the development and profound transformation of the space sector and its increasing integration into today's society and economy; Deployed space infrastructure leads to the development of possible new services, which in turn enable new applications in sectors such as meteorology, energy, telecommunications, insurance, transportation, marine and aviation, and urban development.

Space economy size

As for the size of the space economy, the Bank of America estimated in a research note the size of the space economy at about $424 billion as of the end of 2019; this is according to the latest announced data.

The World Bank expects the industry to grow strongly to reach $1.4 trillion by 2030, based on a compound annual growth rate of 10.6%, the average growth over the last two years.

The Space Economy 2020 Outcome Report, according to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs published in January 2021, provides an overview of all hypothetical events of the space economy.

Saudi support

For its part, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks for the space sector to be a major contributor to the Kingdom's prosperity to achieve the goals of Vision 2030; through the development and organization of the sector and the provision of enablers to achieve pioneering achievements in it that are reflected in the local economy.

In a qualitative step to achieve these goals, the Kingdom announced in July the launch of the first Saudi program for an external scholarship, ending with employment in the field of space, which provides quality educational opportunities for Saudi male and female students by studying specializations related to space sciences in the most prominent 30 universities around the world, within comprehensive development plans for the space sector in the Kingdom.

On the other hand, Eng. Abdullah Amer Al-Sawaha; Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Saudi Space Authority, met recently with Kwasi Quarting; UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to strengthen cooperation between the two countries in the field of the space economy.

During the meeting, the importance of stimulating the participation of the private sector in the two countries in the field of the space economy and enhancing investment in and developing human capabilities was emphasized. Cooperation in the field of rehabilitation and development of human capabilities in the space sector was also discussed.

In turn, the Saudi Space Authority is looking forward to building effective international partnerships in the field that enhance the authority's role and support its steps towards achieving its strategic objectives for the Saudi space sector, in addition to stimulating investment and creating new markets that provide economic diversification and provide new jobs as well as achieving leadership positions for the Kingdom driven by qualitative achievements in areas of the space economy.

Konk Program

The Konk program is a cultural product rich in information related to the space field, which may equal what is issued by the major international space agencies. The program presents everything new in the field of space science in a modern and interesting way.

The program relies on the use of a clear and modest dialect that is close to society in its various layers, while at the same time making sure that the messages are scientific.

The program seeks to spread the culture of space among all the different segments of society inside and outside the Kingdom. It is also keen to publish more interesting youthful discussions and dialogues in the field of space science, in line with the efforts of the Saudi Space Authority.

Space Generations Program

The Space Generations Program is one of the most important possible programs for the Saudi Space Authority, which is concerned with the development of human capital in the space sector, in addition to its interest in the prospects of scientific research and learning of various sciences in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The "Space Generations" program seeks to enable generations to achieve leadership in the use and development of space technologies and their applications.

The program has been established in line with the directions of our wise leadership and line with the vision and objectives of the Kingdom 2030.

The Human Capital Development Program offers a variety of tools for all educational segments, from inspiring digital media for pre-school children, to comprehensive programs for the space sector at university levels. This is to enable and train Saudi cadres in space sciences.

The scholarship project for space generations provides the opportunity for outstanding students to apply to universities accredited to the program and to obtain a scholarship in disciplines related to the space sector.

From June to September 2020 the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) started the first outreach activities on the space economy by organizing a series of 7 virtual events; these elements have been key to bringing established and emerging space economics practitioners together in an equal and inclusive environment.

The topic of "space economy" has already been divided into basic elements; These elements are :-

- Building public support for space activities.

- How to obtain financing and international cooperation.

- The link between government, industry, and academia.

- The space economy in the wake of COVID-19.

UNOOSA was keen to develop plans to expand the scope of the Space Economy Initiative; it affirmed its intention to develop capacity-building services in the space economy for member states, whether through direct advisory services or developing e-learning materials via the Internet.

Finally, the space sector is not only a growth sector in its own right but also a vital enabler of growth in other sectors. These dynamics have led some analysts to declare that the space economy could become the next trillion-dollar industry by 2040.



COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER SHOT SPARK GLOBAL DEBATE

By **Mohamed Samir**

Lately, several countries across the globe have either approved a third shot of COVID-19 (booster shot) or are in the process. The most recent of which is the United States. While France Germany and the United Kingdom are now planning to provide a booster shot to certain categories of people.



In August, public health and medical experts from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a press statement regarding the US plans to authorize COVID-19 booster shots.

It was by Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Dr. Janet Woodcock, Acting Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Dr. Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General; Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH); Dr. Anthony Fauci, Chief Medical Advisor to President Joe Biden and Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID); Dr. Rachel Levine, Assistant Secretary for Health; Dr. David Kessler, Chief Science Officer for the COVID-19 Response; and Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, Chair of the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force.

The COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the United States continue to be remarkably effective in reducing the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant, the statement read.

However, it added that several vaccines are associated with a reduction in protection over time, thus, a booster shot might be needed to ensure necessary protection.

According to the statement, scientists have been studying the scientific data from the United States and around the world to understand how long this protection will last and how we might maximize this protection.

"The available data makes very clear that protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection begins to decrease over time following the initial doses of vaccination, and in association with the dominance of the Delta variant, we are starting to see evidence of reduced protection against mild and moderate disease. Based on our latest assessment, the current protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death could diminish in the months ahead, especially among those who are at higher risk or were vaccinated during the earlier phases of the vaccination rollout. For that reason, we conclude that a booster shot will be needed to maximize vaccine-induced protection and prolong its durability," the statement added.

"We have developed a plan to begin offering these booster shots this fall subject to FDA conducting an independent evaluation and determination of the safety and effectiveness of a third dose of the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines and CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) issuing booster dose recommendations based on a thorough review of the evidence. We are prepared to offer booster shots for all Americans beginning the week of September 20 and starting 8 months after an individual's second dose. At that time, the individuals who were fully vaccinated earliest in the vaccination rollout, including many health care providers, nursing home residents, and other seniors, will likely be eligible for a booster. We would also begin efforts to deliver booster shots directly to residents of long-term care facilities at that time, given the distribution of vaccines to this population early in the vaccine rollout and the continued increased risk that COVID-19 poses to them.

Nevertheless, they also said they expect a booster dose might be needed for people who received the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine, awaiting further data.

"Our top priority remains to stay ahead of the virus and protecting the American people from COVID-19 with safe, effective, and long-lasting vaccines especially in the context of a constantly changing virus and epidemiologic landscape. We will continue to follow the science on a daily basis, and we are prepared to modify this plan should new data emerge that requires it.
Moreover, they stressed the need to increase vaccination rates in the US and across the globe, as it limits cases of severe disease, hospitalization and death.

Several studies showed that people who have weakened immune systems were not able to receive full protection from their COVID-19 vaccines.

Unlike their healthy counterparts, immunocompromised vaccine recipients might not produce enough antibodies after two doses of the vaccine, which increase their vulnerability, especially amid the spread of the Delta variant.

Accordingly, US authorities have prioritized these groups, putting them on top of the list of booster shot recipients for both Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines.

The US plans to start provision of the booster shot, on the condition that at least eight months have passed since they received their second shot.

To date, only immunocompromised people are eligible for the booster shot in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) says these doses, for now, should go to only those who are immunocompromised and who received the mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer or Moderna.

Who are in the vulnerable and immunocompromised group?

• Patients who had organ transplants

• Patients who had stem cell transplants within the past two years

• Patients undergoing active cancer treatment for tumors or blood cancer and are undergoing chemotherapy that affects the immune system

• People with severe primary immunodeficiency

• People who have advanced or untreated HIV

• People undergoing active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress their immune response.

To date, healthy people are not yet eligible for a booster shot if they do not fall in the above criteria. However, if you received a Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, you will be eligible for a booster shot eight months after your second dose.

However, there is a difference between a third shot for immunocompromised people and the booster dose for other categories according to several scientists.

Boosters shots are taken by people who have already had a good response to the vaccine but they started to weaken as time passed. While a third dose is mainly refering to people whose immune systems weren't able to fully respond to the initial vaccines.

In the US, federal health officials say they expect boosters to begin the week of September 20.

The CDC recommends that a booster shot should be of the same type as the initially received vaccine. However, it says that if no matching doses are available it would not be harmful to mix with a different vaccine type, yet, the booster shot should be given at least 28 days after the second dose of the vaccine.

Although CDC recommended a third shot for immunocompromised people, to provide them with better COVID-19 protection, it warned that they still would not be as protected as healthy people.

According to the data produced from different medical research, most participants who had any immune response to the first two doses did better after a third dose, but some people didn't.

Accordingly, the CDC recommends that immunocompromised people should always take extra precautionary measures to protect themselves from contracting the virus. Namely, always wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, avoiding crowds, especially if they are around unmasked people who may be unvaccinated.

About 2.7% of U.S. adults are immunocompromised, a group that encompasses people that are undergoing cancer treatment, living with HIV, or are organ transplant recipients, among others, according to the CDC.

Some scientists believe that eventually, all people will need a booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine. However, studies are still underway to fully understand the situation.

The good news is that people who are healthy should still have ample protection from their COVID-19 vaccines. While some healthy, vaccinated people do get COVID-19 infections, they are much less common than in unvaccinated people and they are much less severe. This is why it's important for people who haven't received their vaccine yet to get it right away.

Some scientists disagree

On the other hand, many scientists disagreed with the US authorities decision to widely distribute Covid-19 vaccine booster shots in the US in September.

They explained that the FDA and CDC data are not compelling enough to take such a decision at the current time.

They dubbed the push for booster shots as premature. They argued that despite the reduction in protection that takes place over time, the vaccine still remained effective in preventing severe disease, hospitalizations, and deaths.

For example, the New York study released by the CDC showed there were 9,675 infections among fully vaccinated adults, compared with 38,505 infections among unvaccinated adults during the period examined. Among the fully vaccinated people who were infected, 1,271 were hospitalized, accounting for roughly 15% of all Covid-19 hospitalizations.

According to a prominent vaccine researcher at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Anna Durbin double dose vaccine recipients are still highly protected against severe disease, hospitalization, and death, which is the purpose of vaccinations in the first place.

She added that unless there is a huge hike in the number of severe disease, hospitalization, or deaths among the vaccinated population, there is no need to consider booster shots.

She explained that although the antibodies count may drop, resulting in a rise in breakthrough infections, the body has other mechanisms, like T cells, that may protect someone from getting seriously sick.

"The data are showing that yes, we are seeing breakthrough infections but, the infections are mild or moderate colds," Durbin said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has called for a moratorium on COVID-19 boosters until the end of next month, with the aim of ensuring that at least 10% of people in all countries are vaccinated before extra doses are handed out.

Hima Cultural Area

DISCOVER SAUDI ARABIA'S LATEST ADDITION TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE LIST

By **Mohamed Samir**

Saudi Arabia's Hima Cultural Area was recognized by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in late July, making it the sixth site in the Kingdom on the list.

Located between Najran and Wadi Addawasir in southwest Saudi Arabia, it features on one of the Arabian Peninsula's ancient caravan routes. It contains significant collection of rock art inscriptions, dating back to 7,000 years.

The Cultural Rock Arts in Hima Najran is located approximately 80 km to the north of Najran, the regional capital, in the western part of Najran Region.

Topographically, Najran is a region of contrasts. The western side of Najran is characterized by the Sarawat mountain range, whilst the eastern area of the region is part of the Ar-Rub'Al-Khali (The Empty Quarter), one of the most arid deserts in the world.

The national reserve of Uruq Bani Ma'arid is to the north east of the Hima, spanning both Najran and Riyadh Regions. Abha and Jazan, the regional capitals of Asir and Jazan, are to the west of Hima.

Tourism Development Areas in Hima Cultural Area

Wadi Najran area that contains the capital Najran, several important tourist attractions and where most regional tourist facilities and services are located.

The zone incorporating the Cultural Rock Arts in Hima Najran site, Uruq Bani Mu'arid and Qariyat Al-Faw with a new tourism center proposed on the highway next to the entrance to Uruq Bani Mu'arid Reserve.

Najran City

Najran is a modern city of 300,000 people, with hotels at all levels of comfort, and many restaurants and shops. It is intended to develop Najran as the gateway to the country's major rock art and inscription corpora. This will be accomplished by building on core aspirations and goals of Najran Regional Tourism Plan of 2004.





A new provincial museum with a section dedicated to the local rock art is at present being constructed, to replace the existing museum. It will incorporate a special rock art gallery relating to Hima. The initial estimated cost of the museum is about 20 million riyals.

Amarah Building

The Amarah Building was built on the site of an ancient well in 1363 A.H/1944 A.D. Its original purpose was to host the new governor and it also acted as the telegraph post and the

police headquarters. It is open to the public as a museum.

Al-Ukhdood Archaeological Site

The large archaeological site of Al-Ukhdood on the south of the modern city testifies to the city's rich past. The name of Al-Ukhdood, which means the ditch/trench in Arabic, comes from the Surat Al-Burooj of the Quran which praises a group of early Christians who were burnt alive by the "People of the Ditch" because they refused to renounce their belief in God.

Al-Ukhdood was sacked by the Himyarites in 523 CE, an event recorded in rock inscriptions in the Cultural Rock Arts in Hima Najran. Today, the site is in the process of restoration and is open to visitors.

Al-Aan Palace

Built in 1100 AH by Sheikh Mohammed bin Ismail Al-Makrami, the palace is owned by the Almkarma tribe. The four story palace was built of mud on stone foundations and is surrounded by a mud wall with four towers and a main gate.

King Abdul-Aziz Park

Located to the east of Al-Ukhdood, the park is divided into two sections: the first is dedicated to the public and the second is for national and governmental events.

Traditional markets

Najran is considered to have one of the most important commercial markets in the Arabian Peninsula. It includes specialized markets for livestock, grains and cereals, as well as craft industries. Shops are arranged in long rows of small units. Among the famous products sold in the markets of Najran: Arabian coffee, dates, pottery, wood, textiles and there is a traditional women's market devoted to the sale of women's products.



Ar-Rub' Al-Khali (The Empty Quarter)

Ar-Rub'Al-Khali is the largest contiguous sand desert in the world, encompassing most of the southern quarter of the Arabian Peninsula.

Uruq Bani Mu'arid Reserve

Uruq Bani Ma'arid is a protected area located on the western edge of the Ar-Rub' Al-Khali. The area is divided into three sections: a core nature reserve; a controlled grazing area; and an animal breading zone. The reserve has been chosen for the reintroduction of the famous Arabian oryx that have been bred in a captivity. It has also been selected as being suitable for the re-establishment of herds of Arabian sand gazelle (Gazella subgutturosa marica), mountain gazelle (Gazella gazella) and ostrich (Struthio camelus), all of which have historically inhabited the area.

Uruq Bani Ma'arid has been designated as an Important Plants Area because of the richness of its plant life as compared to other parts of the Empty Quarter, and the presence of many plant species endemic to the Arabian Peninsula. The limestone escarpment of the Al-'Arid mountain range has little vegetation but the wadis crease the sides of the escarpment and support a variety of shrubby growth including Acacias, grasses and perennial legumes.



Between 1995 and 2013, some 149 Arabian oryx were released into the reserve, and it was estimated in 2013 that about 500 individuals were present. The reserve is unfenced, so this is currently the only population in the wild.

Arabian sand gazelle and mountain gazelle have also been successfully re-introduced since 1995.

Other animals that may be seen in the reserve include the Rüppell's fox, sand cat, red fox, Cape hare, desert hedgehog, Cheesman's gerbil, lesser Egyptian jerboa, desert monitor, other reptilias, and feral dogs. 104 species of bird have been recorded in the reserve but there are only about 16 resident species.

Qaryat Al-Faw archaeological site

Qaryat Al-Faw is located on the outskirts of the Empty Quarter, 160 kilometers north of Hima Najran.

The settlement originated as a result of its strategic location on the ancient South Arabian trade route heading towards the Arabian Gulf and from there to Mesopotamia and the Levant, and later becoming the capital of the Kingdom of Kinda.

Archaeological excavations have uncovered a city that reflects its high economic, political and social status. Al-Faw layout is divided into three main zones, the residential area, the commercial area (Souq) and the funeral area.

Inscriptions, writings and drawings, together with many archaeological finds, reflect the progress made in the development of industries and crafts including wood and blacksmithing, textiles, coin minting, jewelry, pottery and the manufacture of soap stone utensils. The site is on the UNESCO 'tentative list' or World Heritage Site status.



Rock Arts

The small township of Hima is located about 80 km from the capital Najran and is connected to Najran and the wider area by paved roads. The trans-national highway 177, connecting Najran to Riyadh, passes Hima 11 km to the east.

Two of the core sites, Hima Wells and Saidah, are located within the township of Hima. The Centre combines a site management facility, with accommodation, as well as two reception spaces for entertaining and hosting senior visitors. There are two potential locations for a new Visitor Centre, both of which are within existing structures with scope for adaptation and refurbishment.





Sarah Al-Suhaimi:

AN INSPIRING ROLE MODEL FOR SAUDI WOMEN

By **Taha Sakr**

She held many positions and was able to prove herself in the economic field; until she became "Sarah Al-Suhaimi"; an inspiring role model for Saudi women, who can achieve many accomplishments that serve the interest of the nation.



Her Start

Sarah Al-Suhaimi was born in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, in November 1979, into a family with a great history in the economic field; She was taught by her father, Jamaz Al-Suhaimi; Businessman, and the first president of the Saudi Capital Market Authority.

Sarah Al-Suhaimi chose to major in accounting, after joining the Faculty of Economics at King Saud University; It was a successful decision; She succeeded in her studies, and received a bachelor's degree with honors.

Samba Financial Group

In 2004, Al-Suhaimi worked as Senior Portfolio Manager in Asset Management at Samba Financial Group, and continued her work until 2007; It was a huge success; What had a tremendous impact on her career; She joined the management of Jadwa Financial Company, as CEO and Head of the Investment Department until 2011.

Al-Suhaimi played a key role in the group that manages the company's assets, and during her tenure, she left a good impact on her work style in management, and her distinguished professional ability; this made her maintain the confidence of those around her later, while her good reputation grew in the field of her economic work.

Trading

In March 2014, Sarah became the CEO and member of the board of directors of Al-Ahly Capital Banking Company - in the Dubai International Financial Center in the UAE - which provides credit investment advisory, portfolio and brokerage management, and market research services, as well as providing services to its clients in Saudi Arabia.

In 2013, Al-Suhaimi held the position of Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee at the Saudi Capital Market Authority, and then traveled to the United States of America; to attend a Harvard University course majoring in public administration, which she completed in 2015.

In February 2017, the Saudi Council of Ministers chose her as part of the new formation of the Board of Directors of the Saudi Stock Exchange "Tadawul".

Saudi Arabian Airlines

In a new distinction added to her honorable career, a decision was issued to appoint Sarah as a member of the Board of Directors of the General Organization of Saudi Arabian Airlines, in 2021; to represent the private sector within the Foundation, as the first woman to join the Foundation's Board of Directors since its inception 75 years ago.

Journey of Achievements

During her tenure on the board of directors of "Tadawul", the Saudi stock market advanced to the 21st place globally, according to the classification of the World Federation of Stock Exchange, and the value of trading reached about 8.5 billion riyals per day; that is about two trillion riyals annually.

In 2018, Sarah Al-Suhaimi became a member of the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders community and was ranked fourth in the list of the most powerful Arab women in Forbes Middle East magazine.

YOUNG LEADERS

SAUDI GHADA AL-MUTAIRI:

ONE OF FORBES TOP TEN INFLUENTIAL WOMEN ENGINEERS

By **Taha Sakr**

Regularly, success is her goal despite the incredible obstacles; she shows great interest in science, especially in chemistry and physics. Until she became "Ghada Al-Mutairi"; The Saudi inventor and researcher, one of the most inspiring women in the world.Here, we will show you how was her success story.

Ghada Mutlaq Al-Mutairi was born on November 1, 1976, in Portland, Oregon, USA, to parents of Saudi descent and 4 siblings; she belongs to the Mutair tribe.

Ghada Al-Mutairi grew up in a family that valued science, which urged her to persevere and achieve success, believing in her intelligence.

About her parents, she says: “My father was diligent in learning and when he grew up he got a scholarship to the US; there he learned the arts of criminal investigation,”

She adds “My mother is the first teacher and the maker of the magic mixture for the superiority of all of the family members as she has grown in us the principle of responsibility since childhood.”

Her family returned to Saudi Arabia after the expiry of her father's scholarship, at that time, Ghada was in the primary stage, and then she received her preparatory and secondary education in Jeddah, while she showed a great interest in chemistry and physics from a young age.

Back to the US

After obtaining her high school diploma, Ghada aspired to join the Faculty of Medicine at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, but was refused; She did not despair, but stuck to her great dream of studying, and was keen to work for a year in the field of teaching in a private school in Riyadh, before deciding to travel to the United States of America; to resume her university education.

In 1997, Ghada Al-Mutairi joined the College of Science at Occidental University in Los Angeles, California; where she managed to get a degree in Chemistry in 2000.

Al-Mutairi was very industrious while studying; which prompted a Japanese scientist to adopt it; He taught her the concept of research and gave her the chance to work in his lab.

Primary Innovations

From 2000 to 2005, she began creating a flexible plastic material that is used in robotics, medicine, animation, space travel, and more.

Al-Mutairi received her MA from the University of Berkeley. In 2005, she received her Ph.D. in Materials Chemistry, with a focus on electron decalcification and molecular structure, from the University of California Riverside.

Al-Mutairi’s ambition did not stop there, but she sought to complete a postdoc in chemistry and chemical engineering between 2005 and 2008 at



the University of Berkeley; during this time, she worked with John Frischette, then joined the University of California to teach in 2008.

Ghada Al-Mutairi has been appointed Head of the Center for Research and Excellence in Nanomedicine and Engineering at the University of California since 2011; She worked 16 hours straight a day; Where she presented more than 10 research papers and produced a scientific book entitled “Micro Technology”, which witnessed great success and was translated into many different languages.

Earthquake Resistance

Ghada Al-Mutairi worked with her team at the University Of California Research Center to produce a material for use in buildings that helps withstand horizontal forces resulting from natural disasters such as earthquakes. This was her first project, although it was far from her original field of specialization.

Medical Projects

Ghada Al-Mutairi turned her attention to medicine through the research center she heads; where she expressed her interest in the subject of vaccination given the existence of diseases in which the traditional vaccination mechanism is not used, and then she put forward a project that revolves around the early detection of the disease by monitoring its signs and symptoms.

Her fourth project revolved around the production of new nanomaterials with unique properties for their application in the medical field such as remote control of the release of vital substances inside the body.

Scientific Creativity Award

Ghada Al-Mutairi invented a new technology by which medical operations can be performed using light without the need for surgeries through chips called “photons”. What qualified her to win the NIH Scientific Creativity Award in the United States of America in 2009?

The NIH Scientific Innovation Award is awarded for the best scientific research project, the award is being granted beside a $3 million grant for future research, as presented by the President of the US Health Authority in the House of Congress.

With this award, Ghada was considered the owner of the most important invention of the year.

Ghada Al-Mutairi's third medical project aroused great international interest; being dependent on stem cells; In the sense of taking these cells and adding materials to them at a specific time and in a specific quantity according to what the world wants; Which helps in the process of organ transplantation; such as liver cells, heart muscle cells, or immune cells.

She came up with the idea of a new research study and follow-up of the conditions of those suffering from clogged arteries; as a result of the accumulation of grease; A group of specialized doctors assured her that it was a big problem, and she had already put forward her research after she collaborated with her brother, Khaled Al-Mutairi; Plastic surgery doctor.

Al-Mutairi titled the research “The Art of Falling apart”; in conjunction with her gaining extra weight after giving birth to her baby, she also collaborated with her brother to create a new laser device that converts fat into heat very quickly without surgery.

This new invention was her gateway to the world of entrepreneurship, based on which she set out to establish her medical company, eLux, for $40 million.

Ghada Al-Mutairi at her medical firm believes that there is a strong underlying demand for improved outcomes for both surgical liposuction patients and minimally invasive liposuction patients; she knows its superior technology will improve results and drive demand for both.

Multiple Prizes

Ghada Al-Mutairi has won many awards and honors:

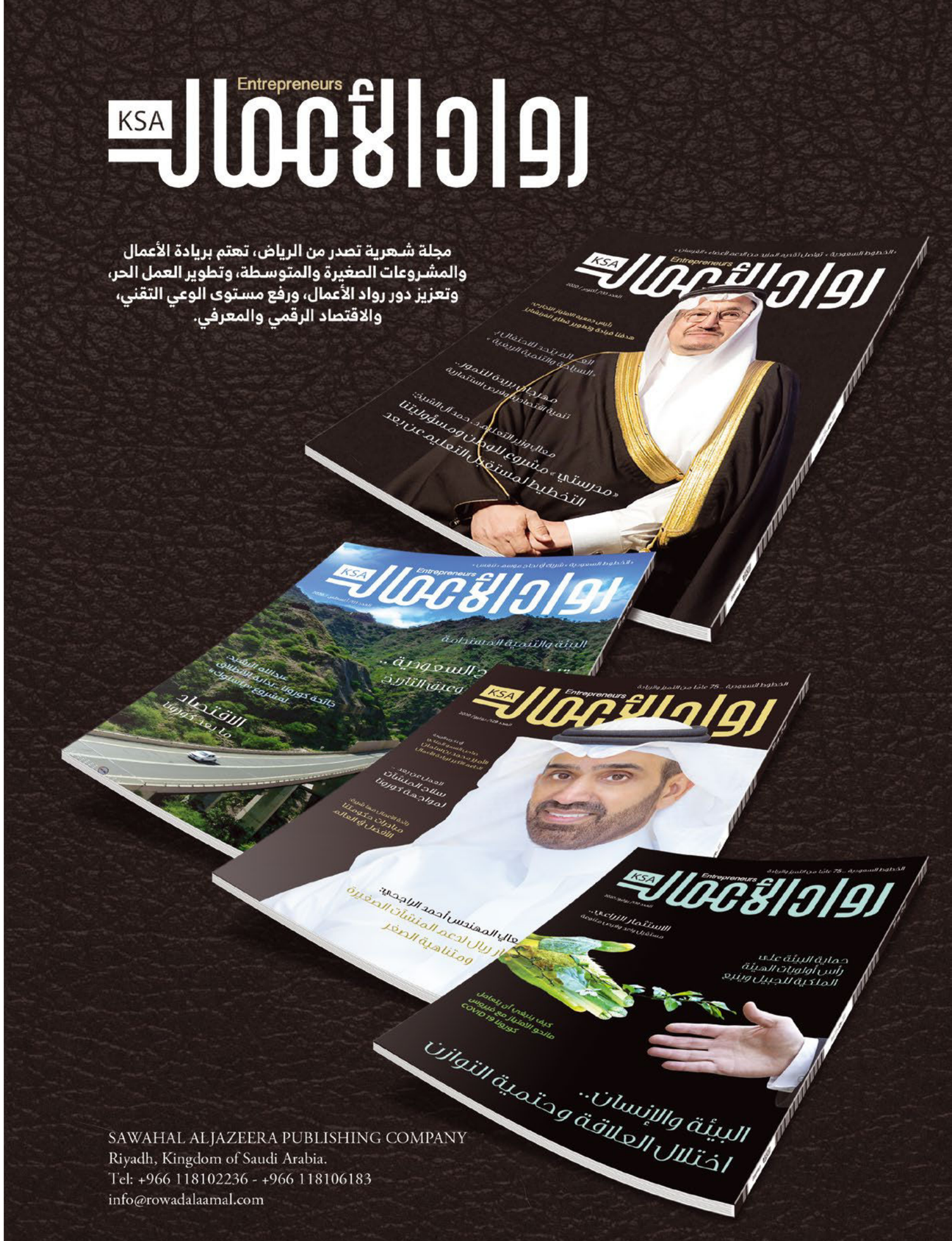
- In 2009, she received the NIH Director's New Innovation Award, the Pharma Foundation Award, and the Chemistry Journal Award (THEMA).

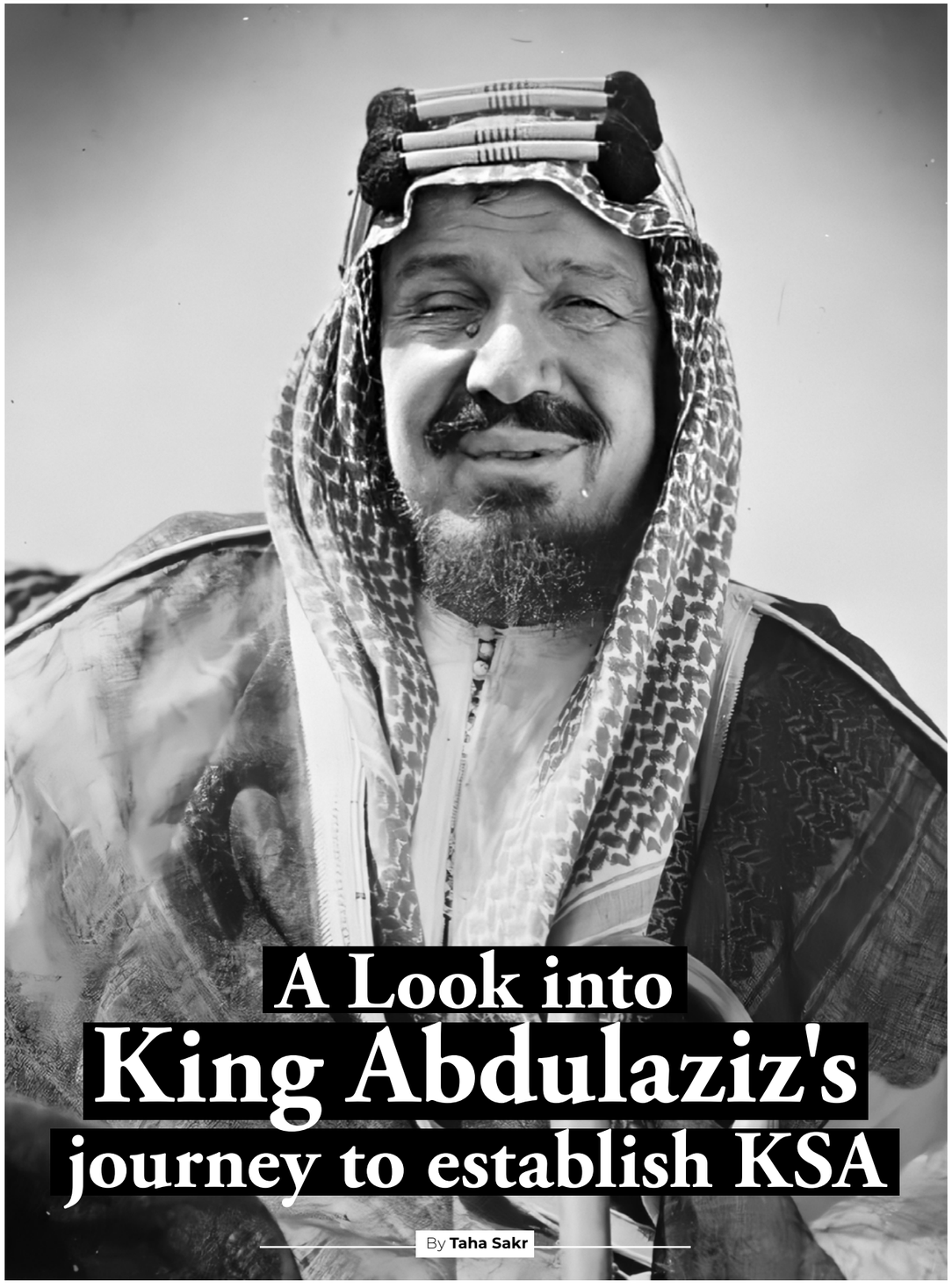
- In 2012, she was awarded the Young Investigator Award at the World Biomaterials Congress held in Chengdu, China.

- In 2014 the Chemical Societies Award for Active Researcher was awarded by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

- In 2016, she was awarded the Kavli Fellowship of the US National Academy of Sciences.

> **My mother is the first teacher and the maker of the magic mixture for the superiority of all of the family members as she has grown in us the principle of responsibility since childhood.**





A Look into King Abdulaziz's journey to establish KSA

By **Taha Sakr**



Sixty-eight years have passed since the death of King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Faisal Al Saud, founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but his memory is still present to inspire numerous leaders and generations.

Late King Abdulaziz is the one who spent his life in the face of the challenges of life in the Arabian Peninsula, which was suffering more than eight decades ago under the weight of rivalry, fear, panic, and hardship, his sole goal was to establish a young state enjoying security, tranquility and abundant blessings.

Historians differed about the date of the birth of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, but many of them went to the sources of the historian Hashem bin Saeed Al-Naimi, who explained that King Abdulaziz was born in the city of Riyadh in 1876, according to what was mentioned in a historical volume among the 12 volumes printed by the King Abdulaziz House on his biography and personality.

Through this piece, Leaders MENA Magazine reviews the journey of the late King Abdulaziz in establishing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the occasion of the Kingdom's 91st National Day.

King Abdul Aziz was born in the city of Riyadh, which is located in the belly of the Arabian Peninsula in Najd, 600 meters above sea level, it is a city that is deeply rooted in history, this is evidenced by the human presence that was found in it about 250 years ago, in addition to some ancient stone tools in some sites. The settlements dating back to the Neolithic period were concentrated in sites near the tributaries of Wadi Hanifa, and the areas surrounding Riyadh to the south, east, and west.

The oldest mention of the location of Riyadh in historical sources dates back to 715 BC, in the context of mentioning the city of Hajar, the capital of Al-Yamamah province, which included: Al-Arid, Al-Houta, Sudair, Al-Mahmal, Al-Kharj, and Al-Aflaj. However, "Hajar" lost its value in the Hijri tenth century and scattered to small villages such as Al-Oud, Al-Buniya, Ma'kal, Al-Sulai'a, and Jabra, some of which are still known to this day in the city of Riyadh.

Riyadh was subject to the rule of the first and second Saudi states and then returned to the rule of the third Saudi state at the hands of King Abdulaziz Al Saud. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the twenty-fifth son of the founding king, assumed the Emirate of Riyadh twice after King Abdulaziz issued the system of princes and administrative councils.

It is no wonder that King Abdulaziz insists on restoring Riyadh, which is a historical extension of the path of fathers and grandfathers, where he was born and raised in it, and received from its scholars after his father, Imam Abdul Rahman bin Faisal Al Saud entrusted him to Judge Abdullah Al-Kharji to teach him the Holy Quran, reading and writing when he was seven years old.

At the age of ten, he received his education in Islamic jurisprudence and monotheism at the hands of Sheikh Abdullah bin Abdul Latif Al Sheikh, and in parallel with that, King Abdulaziz was learning horse riding and equestrian skills.

The personality of King Abdulaziz was greatly influenced by the personality of his father, Imam Abdul Rahman Al-Faisal, as he was a father, a teacher, a brother, and a friend of his son, as well as the personality of his mother, Princess Sarah Al-Sudairy, who was one of the most perfect women in mind and management.

Late King Abdulaziz paid love to his brothers (Khaled, Faisal, Fahd, Muhammad, Noura), but his relationship with Princess Noura was more intimate, she occupied a great place in himself as he was keen to visit her at her home on a daily basis.

King Abdulaziz has a strong, captivating personality, and a reverence that affected everyone who met him.



On the other hand, he had a bright smiling image with cheerful glimpses, with what he was known for in his softness, humility, and fun, and his lack of pretentiousness to talk to his people and his flock, as well as his generosity and generosity with everyone, he was not a king rather, he was the head of a family, a lover of all, and a role model in his actions and behaviors.

The personality of King Abdulaziz has fascinated many intellectuals and historians in the world, including the Chinese historian Professor Yang Yanhong, who said about him: "King Abdulaziz was one of the geniuses who provided great services to their nations and homelands with mighty and tireless efforts."

The Austrian Dr. Von Diesel, who visited the Kingdom in 1926, described King Abdulaziz as a genius, citing the saying: Ibn Saud succeeded in creating an empire whose area exceeded the sum of the areas of Germany, France, and Italy together after he was a leader who initially led only several men.

He added that Late King Abdulaziz managed with their help to recapture Riyadh, the capital of his ancestors.

"You have no doubts that this man who does this has the right to be called a "genius.", he stressed

King Abdulaziz was known for his great respect for scholars throughout his life, so he used to honor them in his council, as he (King Abdelaziz) believed in the value of science and scholars and their impact on life.

King Abdulaziz went through various events and stations in his life that were influential in building his unique personality, especially since he reached the age of fifteen or less, but these events contributed to refining his personality as he learned from them: patience, strength, perseverance, and courage.

Historians considered the departure of King Abdulaziz, with his father, Imam Abdul Rahman, and some members of his family from Riyadh in 1891, as the most difficult event in his life, as he left it at the age of 12, their first stop after Riyadh was the Yabreen oasis in Al-Ahsa, Bahrain until they moved to Kuwait and settled there for several years, during which King Abdulaziz remained attached to Riyadh, where he was born and raised, and were his aspirations and hopes grew.

When King Abdulaziz reached the age of 20 while he was in Kuwait, he went on in 1902 to Riyadh on a heroic journey, accompanied by 40 men, to be able to penetrate the desert, whose sands were burning under the hot sun, and they fasted Ramadan in the Yabreen oasis in Al-Ahsa, and they celebrated in a site called "Abu Jafan".

While walking on the road, King Abdulaziz Al Saud took Yabreen oasis as his headquarters to implement his plan to restore Riyadh. This oasis is located along the sands of the Empty Quarter to the north, 160 miles south of Al-Ahsa, and 175 miles from Riyadh in the east. During the walk, King Abdulaziz and his men passed by Haradh is one of the villages of Al-Ahsa.

On January 15, 1902, King Abdulaziz and his men arrived at Al-Shaqib District, which is about an hour and a half away from the city of Riyadh on foot.

King Abdulaziz managed to fold the time of the ancient era in Riyadh and announced the beginning of the prosperous era in Najd after the people of Riyadh and its notables pledged allegiance to him in 1902 as the prince of Najd and the imam of its people, after Friday prayers in the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Riyadh.

King Abdulaziz Al Saud was able, through a long journey in which he spent a long walk and thought, to gather the diaspora of the country, restore security, and confront the chaos that prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula at the time.

King Abdulaziz became with the love of people the king of a state that he settled to build and establish its system until it had honorable positions with the Arab and Islamic nations and the whole world.

King Abdulaziz was interested in developing the country, so he issued Royal Decree No. 2716, in 1932, to transfer the name of the state from (Kingdom of Hejaz, Najd and its annexes) to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Expansions of the Two Holy Mosques

At the beginning of the state organization, King Abdulaziz directed attention to and expansion of the Two Holy Mosques, serving pilgrims and Umrah pilgrims, as well as starting to open schools, establishing hospitals, building villages, repairing soil, settling the desert, and excavating irrigation water to support agriculture.

However, these efforts were clashing the availability of money for its implementation, which preoccupied King Abdulaziz's thinking until one of the advisors advised him to search for mineral resources underground.

King Abdulaziz

In line with the desire to advance the country, in the fall of 1933, oil exploration operations began in some of the kingdom's lands, but four years passed, and exploration work did not yield a positive and satisfactory result for the discovery of oil reservoirs until experts decided to explore around the water well in an area called "Ain Jet" where King Abdulaziz had stopped there in 1902 on his way from Kuwait to Riyadh, and the surprise was the presence of oil at a depth of 5,000 feet underground.

The desert land was revived with the presence of black gold, which transformed the arid desert, sociable with the roaring of the winds, into a dynamic city full of workers, engineers, and oil exports.

Attention to external and internal affairs

King Abdulaziz's interest in the external affairs was the same as his interest in the internal affairs of the country, and he dealt with all countries of the world with high-level diplomacy, taking into account the Kingdom's right to independence and choosing the nature of its relations with countries without prejudice to its



religious, civil and cultural status, which made him beloved by various leaders of countries.

The founding king's meeting with Roosevelt

King Abdulaziz sought to settle the country's situation and secure its recognition with neighboring Arab countries first, then with the rest of the Arab and Islamic countries, up to the countries of the world.

He concluded agreements and treaties with Arab countries aimed at settling the borders with these countries on the one hand and creating an atmosphere of peace and security and friendship with it on the other hand, in addition to establishing a diplomatic relationship that meets the interests of the country with these countries of the world without prejudice to its principles.

Shura & Democracy in the era of King Abdulaziz

From here, the Egyptian writer and thinker Abbas Al-Akkad described the personality of King Abdulaziz by saying: "King Abdulaziz was stubborn with the strong, humble with the weak, but he listened to the other opinion, and if he was convinced of it, he would return to him, because he took the truth and Sharia as an imam and a ruler."

King Abdulaziz passed away after he was seriously ill, during his stay in Taif on November 9, 1953.

King Abdulaziz Al Saud passed away after he walked on a long journey in which he lived the greatest of the latest, and faced the greatest challenges, but he was left to the present generations, and he was buried in the Oud Cemetery in the center of Riyadh.

تصدر مجلة الاقتصاد اليوم شهريًا ضمن سلسلة إصدارات شركة سواحل الجزيرة الإعلامية، كمنصة إعلامية عربية متخصصة في مجال الاقتصاد بروافده المتعددة؛ بهدف نشر الثقافة الاقتصادية، وتقديم المعلومات والمصادر المعرفية السليمة التي تسهم في نشر الوعي الاقتصادي.



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