

BRITISH EMBASSY LAUNCHES NEW ENGLISH AND ARABIC WEBSITES

In July 2008 the British Embassy in Riyadh launched new and updated websites in English and Arabic. The websites can be found at <http://ukinsaudiarabia.fco.gov.uk/en> and at <http://ukinsaudiarabia.fco.gov.uk/ar>.

Both websites contain important information on the relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. The high level visits of last few months by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, and by the Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon David Miliband MP, are covered prominently. The websites also highlight the long and important history of the relationship between the two Kingdoms and pay tribute to the cultural and educational links which continue to thrive. There is extensive information about the British Council and an explanation of the crucial and long-standing defence relationship between the British and Saudi militaries.

The websites were developed with Saudi and British audiences in mind. For UK nationals there is information on consular assistance provided for the embassy and the other offices in the Kingdom. This includes advice on living in Saudi Arabia, ranging from legal issues, to an explanation of the Hijri Calendar, to education and health facilities. Amongst the other pages are instructions on how to register births and deaths, how to apply for overseas voting, and even on getting married at the British Embassy in Riyadh. There is also advice on what to do when things go wrong and explanation of what the embassy can, and what it can't, do. The embassy websites also provide a useful resource of information for British Muslims preparing to come to the Kingdom for the Hajj in 2008.

For Saudis considering a visit to the UK there is a section with considerable information. In addition to specific guidance for visitors coming for tourism, work or study, there is also information on Britain's culture and heritage. Those interested in the performing arts can access advice and links to what is going on in cities and regions across the UK. While those looking for ideas about where to visit on their holiday will find suggestions of notable sites and information on the work of the National Trust as well as of the Heritage bodies in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. The important issue of visas is covered prominently on both the English and Arabic websites including the link to the



dedicated Visa website for Saudi Arabia: <http://www.vfs-uk-sa.com>.

But that is not all. The websites contain useful advice for the business communities. UK exporters will find information and contacts for doing business in Saudi Arabia provided by the UK Trade & Investment section of the embassy, who have long experience of helping UK companies work successfully in Saudi Arabia. And for Saudi individuals and companies considering investment in the UK there are recommendations and suggestions on locating your business in the UK and sectoral opportunities from renewable energy to nanotechnology.

The British Embassy in Riyadh was in fact the first British embassy in the Middle East to launch its new website, and remains one of only two with a dedicated Arabic website. Commenting on the new websites Deputy Ambassador Andrew Turner said: "These new websites are important tools for the British community in Saudi Arabia and for Saudis thinking of working, travelling or studying in the UK. The information on them is extensive and regularly updated. I would encourage people to have a look round and let us know what you think. If you think something is missing, please let us know. I also want to take this opportunity to thank those embassy staff whose hard work got these websites up and running so quickly and to such a high standard, notably Vinod Shankar, Ahmad Al Omari and Lubna Hashim."