



The accompanying business delegation

The Prime Minister was accompanied on this visit by the most senior and influential business delegation ever to leave the UK. The businessmen and women had a full programme often in conjunction with the Prime Minister and the Secretaries of State for Business and Energy and Climate Change. These meetings and discussions are reported further in this edition of Kingdom to Kingdom. But their presence in Saudi Arabia demonstrated the crucial partnership which exists between British and Saudi businesses. The business relationship has extended beyond many of its traditional strengths in oil and mining to consumer products and services.

A relationship firing on all cylinders

The Prime Minister, the Secretaries of State and the business delegation left Riyadh on route for Qatar and the UAE. Their visit to the Kingdom has showcased the breadth of the relationship between the two Kingdoms: politically, culturally and economically. The warmth of the welcome given by the Saudi government and people set the tone for one of the most successful visits of recent years.

Commenting on the visit British Ambassador William Patey CMG said: "This visit demonstrates that Britain is serious about pursuing its partnership with Saudi Arabia. There are many countries which the British Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary might visit once every two or three years. But 2008 saw two visits to Saudi Arabia from the Prime Minister and one from the Foreign Secretary. They came because Saudi Arabia matters and because they understand the important part Saudi Arabia has to play in making the world a more peaceful and prosperous place."

VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA GENERAL INVESTMENT AUTHORITY (SAGIA)

Lord Mandelson and most of the British business delegation accepted an invitation from the Governor of SAGIA, HE Amr Dabbagh, to SAGIA's offices on the second day of the visit.

The Governor also invited a group of around 30 senior Saudi businessmen who joined the UK delegates for breakfast while the Governor gave a presentation on SAGIA's objectives and their progress in meeting them. The Governor included in his presentation an update on the progress of the new economic cities and explained how they fitted in with SAGIA's vision of a much more competitive business environment. He emphasised the fact that, since SAGIA had been established in 2000, liberalisation and the better co-ordination of business practices had resulted in Saudi Arabia becoming the best place in the Region to do business and rising to 16th place on the World Bank's competitiveness index.

This presentation was followed by the signing of three commercial Agreements involving British interests, the British Council, Oxford Business School and International Power.

The delegation was then guided round a series of models of the new economic cities before departing