

SAUDI FASHION ACE MEETS COUNTERPARTS IN UK



From right, Marcus Gilbert, British Council director west Saudi; Layla Al-Shehri; Faris Al-Shehri; Saudi fashion designer Yahya Al-Bishri; Amani Fairak; and Heba Jamal.

The British Council's national finalist for the International Young Fashion Entrepreneur for 2009, Faris Al-Shehri, visited the UK in February to meet with other finalists and British fashion experts.

The evaluation for the national finals consisted of two stages: short-listing done by the TV presenter and young fashion designer, Heba Jamal, and interviews with the short-listed candidates conducted by Marcus Gilbert, Director British Council; Amani Fairak, Assistant Director Creativity Projects; Yahya Al-Bishri, an international fashion designer, and Ruben Little, Eastern Province Manager, Debenhams.

"We need people working in the fashion industry to help others with their marketing, branding and planning. We don't need only fashion designers. We saw that in Faris Al-Shehri and we wish that he becomes a role model for others," said Al-Bishri.

Faris is based in Jeddah and currently is the director of 1997 Company, which is specialised in fashion retail and design consultancy. He has also started a publishing company that aims at distributing international fashion and design magazines that meet the local market needs. He is also the buyer

and operation manager of the Amna Group whose core activities involve construction, interior design and fashion retail. He is a buyer for Sid Concept, a high-end, contemporary store in Saudi Arabia, Life urban lifestyle stores and Studio One, a contemporary furniture and home accessories store, which are part of the Amna Group Retail division. Faris and his company opened the first Life store in 2003 followed by a successful chain of stores in Jeddah and Riyadh in four years.

He earlier held various posts in Emporio Armani in London and Trussardi Boutique in Jeddah ranging from marketing to sales.

Says Al-Shehri, "I strongly believe that nothing can stop creativity and innovation once you open up your mind to new horizons. There are endless opportunities."

The winner of UKYFE09 will be announced at London Fashion Week in February. UKYFE is one of nine awards for young creative entrepreneurs that are being developed by the British Council with support from NESTA, the Cultural Leadership Programme, trade associations and professional bodies within the creative sector.