

Notes from the BBG Jeddah

Brian Hawley
Chairman, British
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It hardly seems any time at all since we all came back after the summer and here we are in November already.

There is a lot going on in the BBG at the moment. We have a very full programme of excellent speakers (better than the October speaker, whom I'm told was rubbish), the Sports Challenge is getting underway and it's not all that long until State of the Nation.

As Hajj will occur early in December followed by Christmas and New Year festivities, it will be difficult and, perhaps, not relevant to organise a speaker for this month. Again, due to members being out of the country during December, details will be announced shortly for the State of the Nation (SOTN). Ticketing will not commence until January 2009 and the event will be held in February 2009.

The big business question on everyone's mind at the moment is "what effect will the global recession have on Saudi Arabia?" Well the expert opinion seems to be that it will have some effect, but not as much as in many countries. Speaking as a pragmatic Geordie businessman I have a bit of natural scepticism to expert opinion and prefer to judge the situation with my own eyes. Certainly as far as the businesses in which I have an interest are concerned, we seem to be doing pretty well. Even the exchange rate has bounced back a bit recently. Orders are

coming in and companies seem easily to be able to pay on time (apart from those who have never paid on time for decades). Will it stay that way and is it the same for everyone? Possibly not. Some of our members have told me they have seen a bit of a slowdown and there are dark rumours of projects being cancelled or put on hold; but I still believe Saudi Arabia is fundamentally strong. Although there are some challenges, Saudi Arabia still remains an excellent market for British goods and services.

On a sadder note, it is the time of the year when we Brits remember the fallen. I have been here quite a few years as some of you will know, and have lost a handful of friends of various nationalities in the Falklands and in both Gulf wars. I was privileged to attend a ceremony at the British Consulate-General recently, together with a number of BBG members. Thanks to all who made a contribution, whether at the BCG or at the most recent BBG event. The BBG has also made a contribution from funds on behalf of all members. This year we contributed SR 2008 to match the year. I must admit this was not an original idea and we copied it from another community organisation in Jeddah. A sound business practice; if you see a good idea, steal it!

[Editors note: The planned October speaker had to withdraw at the last minute and Brian Hawley stepped into the breach presenting a fascinating insight into computer security.]



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(Chairman)



Steve Gillies
(Sports Coordinator)



Kate Rudd
(Consular Advisor)



Edward Ogilvie
(Deputy Chairman)



Steve Thomas
(Honorary Secretary)



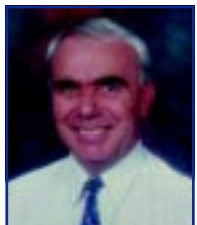
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