

As the festive season approaches, I am left wondering where the Autumn has gone. It seemed to flash past in no time, as one business delegation after another passed through Riyadh.

Our British Super Catalogue Exhibition opened the season. As usual, the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce did us proud. Their Businessmen's Club provided an excellent venue. Almost three hundred local businessmen visited the exhibition and registered an interest in one or more of the catalogues on display.

Our trade mission programme began with a visit in September by the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber Mission. A larger group came in October on the Middle East Association Mission. This group was well-briefed and marshalled by Lawrie Walker, formerly our Consul General in Jeddah. They attracted a lot of interest, and are already reporting a number of successes, including substantial orders received. A number of British companies participated in the Saudi Build Exhibition under their own steam. We held a reception to introduce them to local construction contacts. We have managed to recruit a worthwhile group of exhibitors to participate in Saudi Print/Packaging in November, which has always been a successful in bringing business for UK suppliers.

Mr Peter Hain, Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for the Middle East, paid his first visit to Riyadh on 27 October. We were pleased that he took the time, on such a brief visit, to meet members of the RGBB Committee and seek their views on this market.

Geoffrey Searle, newly appointed Export Promoter for Saudi Arabia at British Trade International, visited Riyadh in September. He has a wealth of experience



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in the private sector of exporting to the Middle East. We hope to put his expertise to good use. He will be a regular visitor to Riyadh, but will also be active in the UK in encouraging British firms to pursue opportunities in this market.

After the customary break in December, we are looking forward to a flurry of trade promotion activity between Ramadhan and Hajj. One of the highlights will be British Trade International's Britain and the Gulf 2000 Exhibition in Dubai next April. Although this exhibition will be held in UAE, it is a Gulf-wide event. It is our chance to mark the new Millennium with an exhibition of showing what the UK has to offer the region. BBG's throughout the region have been invited to participate. Watch this space.

The trade figures show that 1999 has not, so far, been such a good year for British exports to Saudi Arabia. Exports in the first nine months of the year are well down on the 1998 figures. But anecdotal evidence suggests that the market has been picking up in the last quarter of 1999. This augurs well for the new Millennium.

We said good-bye to John Chadwick in September. He will be missed by all his friends in the RGBB and colleagues in the Embassy. With his departure we have reorganised responsibilities within the Commercial Department. The new arrangements have settled down extremely well. We are fortunate to have a strong team in place. We hope that you will not have detected any disruption to our services. Please let me know, if you do.



Richard Northern



Geoffrey Searle

## SHOURA COUNCIL PANELS

The Shoura Council resumed its sessions in September after the annual vacation of its members. President Muhammad ibn Jubair opened the session at the newly decorated Shoura Hall. Dr Hamoud Al Badr, Secretary General of the Shoura, said that the meeting had decided to increase the number of supplementary panels from eight to eleven and named their members. It also identified their areas of specialisation.

### Islamic Affairs Committee:

Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Rabeeah, chairman, Dr. Ahmad Mubarak, vice chairman, Dr. Hamad Al Farayan, Hamoud Al Fayed, Dr. Saeed Al Hajri, Dr. Saleh Humaid, Ali Bajawi and Dr. Naif Al Daees (members).

### Social & Health Affairs Committee:

Dr. Zuhair Al Sebai, chairman, Dr. Yousef Al Salloum, vice chairman, Dr. Hamad Al Suqair, Dr. Saleh Al Malik, Dr. Abdul Ilah Banajah, Abdul Razak Al Qain, Dr. Faleh Al Faleh and Yousef Kentab (members)

### Systems and Administration Committee:

Dr. Badr Al Amaj, chairman, Dr. Hussein Al Alawi, vice chairman, Dr. Ziyad Al Sudairy, Dr. Tami Al Baqami, Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Naeem, Dr. Abdullah Al Muneefi, Othman Al Ahmad and Dr. Muhammad Al Ajlan (members)

### Foreign Affairs Committee:

Dr. Bandar Al Hejar, chairman, Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Fayed, vice chairman, Bakri Shatta, Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Suwaiyyegh, Dr. Othman Al Rawaf, Abdullah Al Dabbagh, Muhammad Al Mulla and Muhammad Ibrahim

### Cultural & Information Affairs Committee:

Dr. Fahad Al Harithy, chairman, Dr. Ali Al Khudeiry, vice chairman, Dr. Ahmad Al Tuwaijeri, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al Ansari, Dr. Manie Al Johani, Dr. Muhammad Al Ghamdi, Dr. Hashim Abdu Hashim, and Dr. Yahya Junaid (members)