



FROM THE CHAIR

Already the year marches on to the end of the first quarter and the global economic crises have had an impact on all of us. Our day to day lives here in the Kingdom go on but our relationship with the outside world has very much changed. On an individual level the strength of the Saudi Riyal against Sterling has had an immediate and no doubt welcome effect and from a business perspective the weakness of the pound should boost U.K. exports to the Kingdom. The strength of the Saudi economy with an ever growing population bodes well for the future although downward pressure on the price of oil may have an impact on budget expectations. The continued investment by the Government in infrastructure, such as the headline grabbing "land bridge" railway between Jeddah and Riyadh and the more mundane but no less important upgrading of ports and roads ensures that the demand for British expertise and goods will continue. The increased number of trade missions is a witness to the trading possibilities that still lie here in the Kingdom. However a note of caution - it is important for visitors to realise that there are no quick fix deals- business succeeds with the establishment of a presence in the Kingdom and an awareness of the importance, not only of price, but of expertise, quality and relationships.

members area will allow members secure access to membership listing.

The Special Briefings, ably co-ordinated by Ian Hay, continue and our guest at the December Special Briefing was Dr. John Sfakianakis, Chief Economist of SABB. All who I have spoken to thoroughly enjoyed his informative presentation which was most timely as we looked ahead to what 2009 offers us as a business community. In January the RGBB was pleased to welcome Nigel Turner, the CEO of bmi and his presentation on the state of the airline industry was very well attended and received. My thanks also to bmi for supporting this event. The March Special Briefing where our Ambassador addressed another full-house was also well received.

Writing of our Ambassador I was delighted, in early January, to write on behalf of the Board and Membership of the RGBB, a letter of congratulation to Sir William Patey, on his appointment, in the New Year's Honours List, to the rank of Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. This recognition of his service in the Diplomatic Corps is well deserved and acknowledges his enthusiastic promotion of the United Kingdom's interests abroad. The support of Sir William and his team at the Embassy is central to the success of the RGBB and is greatly appreciated.

Turning to RGBB matters I am pleased to advise that work on the RGBB website - www.rgbb.org - is now almost complete and Andrew Mead, Chris Maybury and Luke Bowen are to be congratulated on their hard work in this regard. The password protected

RGBB functions continue apace and both Gary Richardson (Sports) - and Simon Messum (Events)



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