

Described as the most modern shopping complex of its kind in Saudi Arabia, The Kingdom Centre is already visible from most parts of the city. Its central location will serve as a landmark for future generations; but what is going on there now?

I managed to take a walk around the site accompanied by Mustafa Alazem, the leasing manager after meeting with Walter Kleinschmit the General Manager - Operations.

Inside the temporary offices, models plans and pictures take up the entrance lobby and they're quite impressive by themselves, but take a walk amongst the construction workers and you cannot fail to be impressed at the pace at which this monumental construction is progressing.

The 30<sup>th</sup> floor of the ellipse shaped tower will eventually be home to Kingdom Holding the tower developer, one of Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's companies. But there's a lot of other space there besides. Prime office space will occupy the first thirteen floors above ground and a full service business centre will occupy the entire fourteenth floor. The Four Seasons Hotel complete with 242 luxury guestrooms and suites will occupy floors fifteen to twenty four. Forty residential apartments sit on top of the hotel and on top of that again four luxury condominiums of 500 sq. meters each will be offered for sale.

In addition to the tower, work on the huge column-free hall, which will accommodate over 4000 participants and the three level shopping mall is well underway. A 7000 sq. metre sports club is also tucked in there somewhere in the west podium. The Top floor



## LANDMARK FOR THE CITY

of the mall will be dedicated to ladies only shopping and the intention is to have this section managed and staffed solely by ladies. Saks Fifth Avenue and Debenhams from the UK will occupy anchor positions and a host of leading international retailers have been flocking to the development. Already allocated space includes outlets for toys, sports, fashions, audio-video and music stores. Various dining venues will complete the offering in this area.

When complete the project will have a gross built up area of 185,000 sq. metres and 115,000 sq. metres of parking space for over 3000 cars. Indeed part of the site has had to be allocated to increase adjacent road width to cope with the anticipated increase in traffic flow.

Topping out the structure is a vast sculpture complete with a viewing gallery, which will enable those brave enough to take a walk between the twin peaks at 300 metres above the ground. When you eventually get up there you'll be standing on a monument that will have cost over SR1,700,000,000 to develop. So when will it open? Initial target dates look a little optimistic but some parts of the complex may well be ready before others, but don't bank on getting a look around the shopping centre until about the spring of 2001 and the remainder in the autumn.

