



The Embassy team returned to the fray in January, refreshed by the seasonal break at the end of the year and relieved that the new century did not bring widespread disruption, as a result of Y2K bug, in its wake. The cooler weather in January marked the beginning of a new season of visits and promotions.

the BDSC kindly met and briefed them. They left with very positive impressions, which they will pass on to their clients.

In mid-February Andrew Mead is participating, on behalf of the RGBB, in a series of seminars which British Trade International are organising in the UK to promote interest in this market. He will be joining me, Colin Clarke of the Eastern Province BBA and Geoffrey Searle, our Export Promoter, on the platform. We hope that these promotions will spark a stampede of new companies coming out to discover the attractions of doing business in Saudi Arabia.



Later in February Lord Prior leads a British delegation to the third meeting of the Saudi British Business Council. The Council, which provides for business leaders from both countries to exchange views on topical issues, is proving a useful forum. The meeting will take place in Riyadh.

We do not yet have trade statistics for the full year 1999. But it is clear that our exports will be well down on 1998 and 1997. The totals will be back to 1994-1995 levels before the surge in 1996-97. I suspect much of the increase then was due to exceptional items, particularly defence sales. So we may be returning to a more normal pattern. As I write business confidence seems to be returning on the back of the strong oil price; and the outlook for 2000 looks more promising.

Richard Northern

The British Council helped us put together the Football Nation exhibition at the Akaria Shopping Mall in Olaya in January. Some of you came to see it. The lucky ones among you also got to meet Sir Geoff Hurst, who came out to reinforce our campaign to host the 2006 World Cup in England. The exhibit was effective in promoting the excellence of British design in stadia construction and sports equipment. It will also have underlined, for those who needed to be reminded, that England remains the home of football.

Former Prime Minister John Major also visited Saudi Arabia in January. He delivered a key-note speech to a meeting of senior business and government representatives in Jeddah. His principal message – on the lessons of the UK experience for privatisation in the Kingdom – was well-received.

A number of trade missions planned for the early Spring have fallen through because sponsoring Chambers of Commerce in the UK have been unable to recruit sufficient participants. We are trying to establish the reasons for this hiccup, which we hope will prove temporary. A group of Export Development Advisers, whose role is help small companies in the UK get into exporting, came out in January to see for themselves what the market had to offer. Members of

The latest version of the Saudi British Trade Directory hit the streets in January. New for 2000 is a section listing British Companies not represented in the Kingdom, but who wish to trade here.

NEW EDITION AVAILABLE

RGBB members may obtain a free copy by calling in to the Commercial section of The British Embassy during normal hours or at the regular briefings.

The British Consulate in Jeddah and The British Trade Office in Al Khobar also carry stocks.

Non members outside the Kingdom may obtain a copy from the compilers at the cover price of £10 plus £2 to cover postage and packing.

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