

Notes from the Eastern Chair



Geoff Fennah MBE
Chairman, British Business Association Eastern Province

It is hard to believe that it is time for another submittal to the RBBG News again and that 2006 is almost behind us. Time certainly flies by when you are busy and Saudi is certainly becoming a busy place not only in the business arena but also with the EPBBA. It is pleasing to report that with the growth in Saudi has come an influx of new people, which is starting to increase our membership from the lows of recent years. This all suggests (hopefully) that the doldrums of recent years maybe receding and that a return to normal is on the way.

From the Saudi economy standpoint it seems that we are heading back to the boom days of the 1980's with so many projects on the horizon that it makes one question whether it can be all be achieved in the time frames being targeted. Eastern Province alone is seeing the development of Jubail 2 (double Jubail 1) with the addition of 25 major process industries with a capital investment approaching US\$ 70 Billion. Saudi Aramco has also announced a capital investment of approximately US\$ 50 Billion on major projects, such as Khurais and two new export refineries in Jubail and Yanbu in partnership with Total and Conoco Phillips, respectively. Development of the Maa'den project at Ras Azoor is of a staggering scale involving establishing rail links, city infrastructure, power plants, Aluminium smelter, port facilities plus more. All this will inevitably have a positive influence on other market sectors and most importantly will generate significant opportunities for UK plc.

Following on from the above, EPBBA has also had a busy year and has continued with the initiative to strengthen the business activities of the Association. The program of business functions has been very successful and each event has been well supported by the membership. It has been especially encouraging to see visiting members from Riyadh BBG and Bahrain BBF attending some of the events. New approaches to supporting incoming trade missions have also been explored in cooperation with the British Trade Office, Khobar and these have resulted in positive feedback. These are all timely activities given the increase in business opportunities in EP / Saudi and the challenge will be to maintain the current impetus into the future.

On behalf of EPBBA I would like to extend an open invitation to RBBG members to attend our functions, either business or social, as you will always be welcome. Our Annual Festive Season Dinner Dance is scheduled for 7 December in Bahrain so if you are in town come and join us. Any enquiries relating to our events should be communicated to bbakhoar@atheer.net.sa



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