

# Saudi Arabia & Ireland

WORKING TOGETHER

A stand alone supplement distributed with  
the Irish Independent  July 26, 2014



**A supplement published with the Irish Independent July 26, 2014**

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## Credits

**Published and produced by Justin International Media**

Email: bredajustin@live.ie  
Tel: (01) 5156271

**Written and designed by gersiggins@gmail.com**

**I**T is coming up to five years since the Saudi Arabian embassy in Ireland opened and the first resident Ambassador, His Excellency Abdulaziz A Aldriss, assumed his office. It has proved an enormously significant period in the relations between Ireland and Saudi Arabia and the Ambassador has been at the heart of the advances in trade, tourism, education, culture and medical links.

In an interview at his office in central Dublin Mr Aldriss opened up on his time in Ireland and his vision for the future of relationships between the nations.

"There are many opportunities for Irish businesses to operate in Saudi Arabia. It is an exciting time in Saudi at the moment with so much development and construction currently in process and planned for completion in the near future.

"A large number of Irish companies are attracted to this stimulating environment, while recognising the wonderful opportunity such a venture offers not only the Saudi people, but Irish business in general."

Recent moves to open up the Saudi economy and reduce the red tape makes it much easier to operate on a business-to-business level.

"Earlier this year, Taoiseach Enda Kenny visited the Kingdom accompanied by representatives from 87 companies involved in areas of investment, energy, technology, sustainable water management, business administration, electronic engineering, and financial services.

"It would be a pleasure to welcome Irish companies to exhibit at any of our national and international trade exhibitions, conventions, and other economic and educational events."

The formation of the Ireland Saudi Arabia Business Council was a significant milestone and has helped trade between the countries move up a gear.

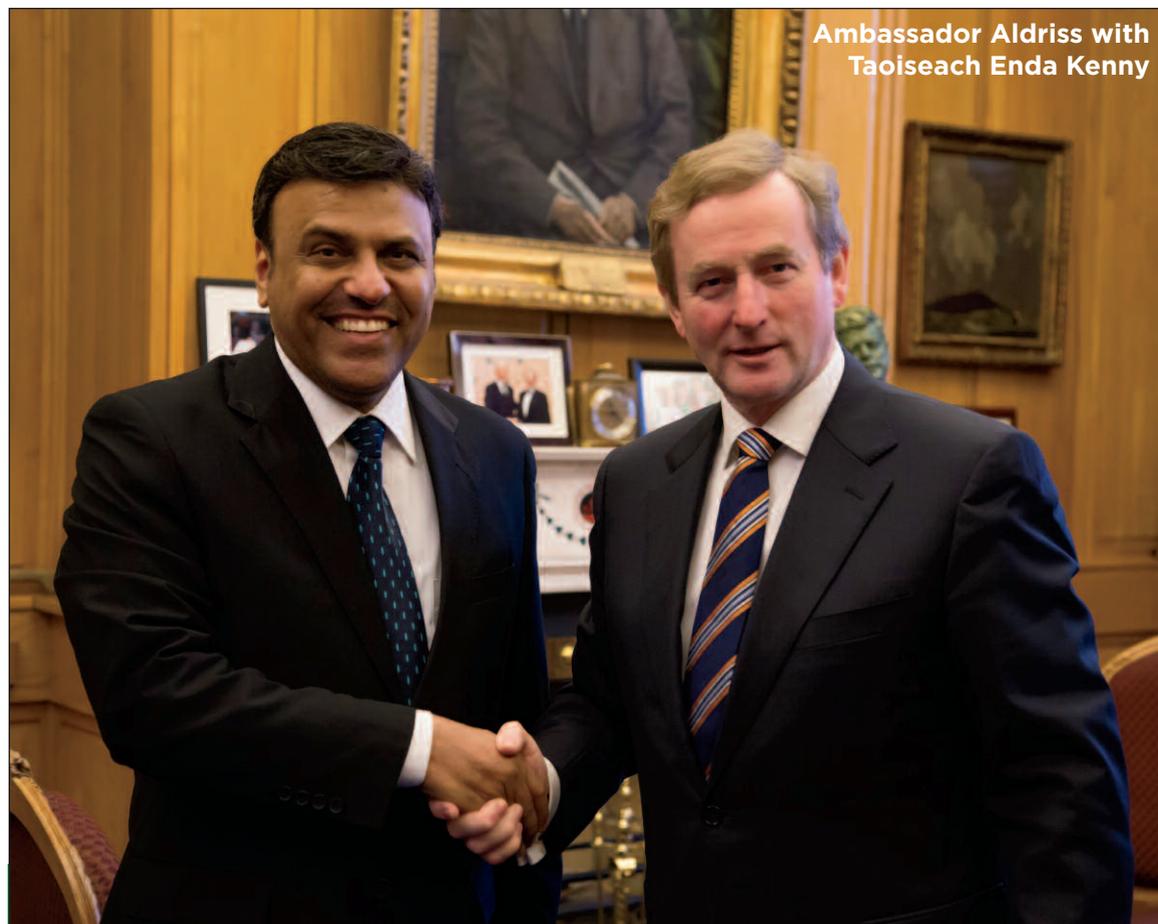
"Trade between Saudi Arabia and Ireland was estimated to be worth over €630million in 2012", the Ambassador explains. "The Saudi-Irish Business Council helps increase strong links between Ireland and Saudi Arabia and affords another avenue, along with the embassy and Irish Enterprise, for small and medium sized businesses to establish relations in the Saudi economy.

"I believe the recent growth in economic cooperation between both countries will continue to strengthen and grow over the coming years."

The Ambassador also emphasizes the importance of educational links.

"In the field of education, relations between Ireland and Saudi continue to flourish. The Saudi government appreciates the value of education by allocating over 25 per cent of the total budget to education, including vocational training. Significantly, the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program (KASP) provides entry for Saudi student into the world's best third-level educational establishments.

"This has led to increasing numbers



Ambassador Aldriss with Taoiseach Enda Kenny

# Saudi Arabia's man in Dublin

**In a wide-ranging interview, the Kingdom's first resident ambassador to Dublin, H E Abdulaziz A Aldriss hails the increasingly close relationship between Ireland and Saudi Arabia**

of Saudi students availing of education and training through the Irish system, a development recognised formally by the recent visit from the Minister of Higher Education in the Kingdom, H E Dr Khalid Mohammed Al Ankary, to attend the graduation of 237 Saudi students in the fields of medicine, engineering and IT.

"At present there are 2,700 Saudi students attending Higher Education Institutes in Ireland. In turn, a number of Irish students are currently completing degrees in the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia."

Abdulaziz A Aldriss joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh during the 1980s and served as a diplomat in the United States with postings in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston, and also in the United Arab Emirates.

He has been in Dublin – his first ambassadorship – since September 2009, and readily admits to greatly enjoying his posting.

Asked what he enjoys most about

living in Ireland he is quick to reply: "The Irish people. They are renowned for their friendly nature and their attitude to life. The important role of the community and family in Irish society is shared by the Saudi people.

"I also like the Irish weather. Perhaps this may sound somewhat surprising but I personally enjoy its variety and moderate temperatures.

"I would also sincerely like to thank the Irish people for their warm welcome, which they extended to me upon my arrival and for the genuine hospitality and generosity throughout my term of office."

**A** man with a keen interest in the outdoors – he had just returned from an enjoyable family hiking trip to Wicklow – he also loves exploring the beauty of the Irish landscape. He is also conscious of Irish history and he recalls a very important visit to Dublin by a previous Saudi dignitary.

"The visit in November 1919 by H R H Prince Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, later of course King Faisal, to Dublin was a

significant moment for relations between both countries. H R H met with an official party at the Lieutenant Governor's residence in the Phoenix Park, now of course Áras an Uachtaráin, seat of the President of Ireland.

"The high note for bilateral cooperation commenced in 1983 when King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz visited Dublin and with the formation of the Saudi-Irish Joint Committee.

"This year the 9th session of The Saudi Irish Joint Committee held a meeting in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. I am extremely encouraged by the strides being made and I very much look forward to seeing further progress in this arena. The aims of the committee towards encouraging sustainable growth and stability, not only in both countries, but worldwide, is highly commendable."

There is great potential for further exchanges between the nations since the Saudi government announced last December that it would begin issuing tourist visas for the first time.

With Saudi's rich history of antiquity

uity, and the Irish people's love of travel, it is anticipated that the kingdom will become a popular tourist destination.

"The government's announcement will undoubtedly attract many Irish visitors to Saudi Arabia to experience the country's rich heritage and spectacular scenery," the Ambassador points out.

"In 2000 the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities was established to promote tourism in the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia offers many attractions for all ages and all interests.

"Among them are cultural events such as the Annual National Festival of Heritage and Culture in Riyadh, which is attended by a host of the world's most recognised personalities. Visitors to Saudi will not be disappointed.

"For visitors seeking excitement and adventure, the Red Sea in Jeddah offers a variety of thrilling water sports such as coral reefing, surfing, scuba diving and sailing, while desert activities such as sand surfing have proven extremely popular with tourists.

"Most significantly, the country is homeland to Mecca, the holiest city in the religion of Islam, the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – and site of the revelation of the Koran."

The Ambassador also sees great potential for increased links between the

countries in the areas of art, culture and education.

"Intellectual and artistic exchange of knowledge could result in some very exciting projects and innovations.

"Artistically the annual and most important cultural festival in the Arab world, the National Festival of Heritage and Culture in Riyadh is a cross-road where poetry, intellect, culture, art, theatre, heritage, and history meet.

"Culturally, an international tour entitled Saudi Archaeological Masterpieces through the Ages has visited several countries in Europe and the US, and represents an important opportunity to introduce the cultural heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the world.

"In 2006, the Kingdom opened the exhibition, Masterpiece of Islamic Art in Paris which was organised by SCTA at the National Museum. These initiatives reveal not only the rich cultural and artistic heritage and talent of Saudi, but also the country's desire to develop connections at a global level.

"The recent establishment of The Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau in Dublin provides another gateway to improved understanding and cooperation between both countries."

**T**HERE has also been significant human exchange, and approximately 3,000 Irish people live and work in Saudi Arabia, many work-



**Ambassador Aldriss with President Michael D Higgins**

ing for the 160 Irish companies which operate there.

"The numbers of Irish working in Saudi is steadily growing and their important contribution to the Saudi economy is recognised", says Mr Aldriss. "The skills, knowledge, and training these individuals bring to a variety of sectors offers benefits both to the employee and to Saudi Society. I believe this number will only increase as connections between our two countries grow.

"A large number of Saudi students

are currently availing of the Irish educational system. The knowledge and experience they acquire while in Ireland will undoubtedly result in highly skilled individuals who will prove attractive to employers."

Irish support for the Arab world at the UN and EU is recognised and appreciated in Riyadh.

"Ireland has proven a good friend of Saudi Arabia in political and economic arenas", the Ambassador acknowledges. "Ireland has a long record of support for issues critical to the Arab

world and has shown consistent support for peace in the Middle East, with its positions at the United Nations and European Union in particular. In November 2012, Ireland voted in favour of Palestine becoming an Observer State within the UN. It has also upgraded the status of its Palestinian diplomatic delegation to a Mission. Today our two countries enjoy the strong ties of mutual respect and good friendship, which benefits our peoples in many ways and also through our shared stand on the global stage."

After five years in Dublin, Mr Aldriss feels at home and looks forward to continuing in his role. As the first resident Ambassador he has already made a mark in history.

"Since I took up the ambassadorial posting in Ireland, I found myself at home in Dublin. I am humbled by the rapid and deep development in areas of politics, trade and investment, and cultural relations between both our countries.

"I will continue with undivided attention to look after the welfare of Saudi citizens residing in Ireland, whether they are students, business people, or tourists.

"I particularly enjoy working with the Irish people and facilitating increased communication between our peoples. Relations with members of the diplomatic community has also proved not only extremely interesting, but also pleasurable."



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# 'From strength to strength'

- Taoiseach Enda Kenny on the Ireland Saudi Arabia Business Council

**I**N many ways the winding road to the formation of the Ireland Saudi Arabia Business Council reflects the patience required by those Irish business executives who aspire to even a small slice of one of the world's most lucrative markets.

Former Irish diplomat Joseph Lynch, the organisation's chairman, says patience is certainly a virtue when it comes to doing business with Saudi clients. He might also have added that all good things come to those who wait.

"Companies could be working away for a couple of years and then be on the point of giving up as nothing seems to be happening when all of a sudden they get that call," he said. "It is a bit like that: you really have to be prepared to make a commitment to give yourself a chance."

In 2010, the newly appointed Saudi Ambassador to Ireland, His Excellency Mr Abdulaziz Aldriss, suggested to Mr Lynch that he should establish the Council to further bilateral trade between the countries. The request was made on behalf of the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which represents 28 chambers of commerce in his country.

Mr Lynch immediately responded to the suggestion. He had been integral to setting up Ireland's first embassy in the Kingdom in Jeddah in 1976. Now retired, he has retained a strong interest in the culture of Gulf Region and its immense business potential.

Opportunities exist across the board for Irish companies to develop trade in a number of sectors; principally in engineering and construction, education, IT, healthcare and financial services, as well as the burgeoning agribusiness sector - which is expected to comprise around 50% of total Irish exports to the region by 2020.

In an interview, Mr Lynch also singled out the growing presence of 3,000 or so Saudi students currently in Ireland and the "massive potential opportunities" in the education sector. The Business Council is developing with their Saudi colleagues a work experience programme for Saudi graduate students here.

The inaugural board meeting took place in January 2011 in the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Dublin



Co-chair of the Ireland Saudi Joint Business Council, Dr Amin Al Shanqitil, with Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Mr Joseph Lynch of the SAIBC when the Taoiseach received the Saudi delegation at last September's JBC in Dublin

but it took until June 2012 to sign a draft agreement with its Saudi peers. It now meets once a month in Dublin and twice-yearly the joint business councils convene in Dublin and Riyadh, the Saudi capital, providing Irish companies with direct and continuing contact with that country's business leaders.

Mr Lynch describes the Council as "a high-level business networking opportunity".

"The resources of the Council of Saudi Chambers are available to members seeking to start or develop their business in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," he said, adding that 'we have found the Saudi side of the JBC to be very encouraging in developing cooperation and business opportunities'.

companies alike. "The Council provides resources and support for companies wishing to do business in the Kingdom: a member company can avail of the huge resources of the Council of Saudi Chambers in its search for suitable

"Irish companies can also avail of the expertise of other Irish members of the council."

He describes the importance of local knowledge and potential contacts for start-ups and established

business partners in Saudi.

Existing members who know their way around can also help Irish companies approaching the Saudi market with on the ground information about how to do business there, which is vital," he said.

The Council is already considered a key player in Ireland's ambitious five-year strategy to achieve €1 billion in exports to the Gulf Region by 2020, a considerable increase from the 2012 figure of

€626m.

Since its inception, it has certainly made up for any lost time and its centrality is widely recognised. Also, its timing has perhaps been particularly prescient. Two high-level Enterprise Ireland trade

delegations have taken place over the past year. The second of these in January comprised more than 100 executives from 87 Irish firms and was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton.

The culmination of a busy week was 95 new jobs in Ireland and €65m in new business. It also coincided with a meeting of the Joint Business Council in Riyadh, which the Taoiseach addressed.

Mr Kenny afterwards hailed the trip as a "highly successful mission" and promised more would follow.

"It has achieved very tangible outcomes in terms of new business contracts and the strengthening of economic, political and cultural linkages," he said. "Expanding the scope of Irish exports is an essential part our recovery plan to get Ireland working."

**T**HE Council is more than prepared to play a growing role in achieving the targets and there is a lot to play for. Thanks to its vast oil reserves, Saudi's 28 million people enjoy one of the top 20 economies in the world - it is also increasingly middle-class and urban. And it certainly has no intention of stashing its wealth under a mattress.

With one eye firmly on the day when the oil will surely run out, over the next few years the region's rulers are planning to invest around €100 billion on infrastructure; €50 billion on 500,000 new homes and €8 billion on education.

The Council is also focused on increasing its membership. It has come a very long way in a short time and now plays a pivotal role in promoting Saudi Arabia as a destination for Irish business but it wants to strengthen this further.

"We intend to continue to develop our series of meetings with the Council of Saudi Chambers over the next three years - to enable Irish companies to have improved, high-level access to the Saudi business world and to increase investment opportunities for Saudi companies in Ireland," said Mr Lynch.

"Following his visit to Riyadh the Taoiseach was kind enough to say that the Council was going from strength to strength and we wish to continue in this way."

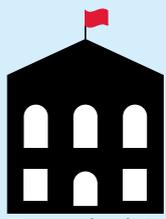




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**A** VERY special example of Saudi-Irish co-operation is taking place right now in Riyadh, where young Saudi minds are being moulded and guided by Irish academics. More than 100 students of the Princess Nora Bint Abdul Rahman University (PNU) are studying for Dublin City University business degrees. The programme came about after the President of DCU, Brian McCraith, was invited by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education to address the International Exhibition and Conference on Higher Education, a major international conference on higher education, held annually in Riyadh. On the fringe of the event he was approached by Saudi education officials who liked what they heard. They saw much of what they wanted to do in what DCU had achieved since its foundation as a university in 1989. DCU's listing in the prestigious QS Top 50 Under 50, a ranking of the world's top 50 young universities, was a particular attraction.

"One of the things they liked about us was the way we have developed," says Dr Anne Sinnott, Executive Dean of the DCU Business School. "We are in the Top 50 Under 50 and what they want is to get there as quickly as possible. We were a natural fit because we have lived that experience."

DCU Business School was visited by a team from Saudi Arabia and an agreement mapped out which will see the Irish institution provide two degree courses in the all-women PNU for at least seven years, bringing four cohorts of students through a four-year degree cycle.

"We had no idea what to expect, as we had no background in the region", says Dr John McMackin, Director of the Centre for Executive and International Education at DCU.

Dr Sinnott and colleagues visited PNU for the first time to get things moving in September 2012, and within 12 months there were DCU lecturers addressing classes of brand-new DCU undergraduates at PNU's state of the art campus, which lies between the airport and the capital.

"Our administration manager in Riyadh is a Saudi national who is a graduate of DCU, so she was a gift from early on to help us overcome language barriers and adapt to the local culture", says Dr McMackin.

Four lecturers from Ireland flew out for the first semester in September 2013, delivering two undergraduate programmes: a Bachelor of Business Studies (International Finance) and Bachelor Degree in Marketing, Innovation and Technology.

DCU was not sure how its staff would take to life in the Kingdom, but have been delighted that some opted to stay for the whole year – and beyond. "They were incredibly enthusiastic," says Dr Sinnott. "We didn't expect staff to want to go for more than one semester but they love it, and have integrated well with the community. Some don't want to come back!"

**D**R Ann Largey, who chairs the International Finance programme for DCU@PNU, says: "Initially I signed up to teach in PNU for one semester. I had no pre-judgement about the culture in KSA, how the university would operate or the standard of students, so really had formed no expectations before going. The fact that I've chosen to stay on for a second semester this academic year and look forward to returning next year clearly indicates that my experience there has been very positive.

"The majority of our students on the two programmes are excellent: bright, questioning, innovative and motivated young women. They are aware of the changes in the domestic job market and want to be primed to avail of the opportuni-



Part of the extensive PNU complex with the monorail system in the foreground

ties opening up for them. Teaching these students over the past year has been a pleasure and, despite the language disadvantage they face, their performance has at least matched that of our home DCU students, with the best of the DCU@PNU students out-performing our home students.

"While the culture in KSA is obviously very different from Ireland in many ways, almost immediately I felt at home with the people I met there. I have never felt so welcome and accepted in any other foreign country, with the actions of hospitality matching individuals' verbal declarations of welcome.

"Meeting good, kind-hearted people has made life in KSA enjoyable, and I have been impressed by the open-minded attitudes of the people I mixed with and their acceptance of my cultural differences."

The academic staff will grow to eight this year and will reach 22 when the programme is at its peak. DCU is the only overseas university operating in the business school but others such as the University of Auckland, Massey University and Erasmus University are involved with other faculties.

"It is the most incredible campus I've ever seen", says Dr Sinnott. "It took 75,000 workers just two years to build – there were a lot of Irish contractors involved – and is the biggest LEED certified, self-sustained campus on earth."

**B**esides very high quality accommodation for the staff and students, it features a monorail to take students around the vast campus which is home to 60,000 people. It cost \$40bn to build and also includes a 700 bed hospital.

Following an introduction from the Business School, the DCU School of Nursing has now become involved in education at PNU and is planning a further expansion.

"We are particularly pleased that after just one year – and other universities have been involved for a number of years – PNU's Vice-President said that the DCU partnership was the most successful overseas partnership they have had", says Dr McMackin.

"We are the only partner fully delivering our own programmes and with our own staff on the ground so it's logical that would be successful", says Dr Sinnott. "Other universities fly people in

and out and that's very difficult to manage successfully."

The DCU staff have found the Saudis "incredibly pleasant and easy to do business with", while the teachers are very impressed by the quality of students.

"Compared with the students in Dublin, at the top end there are slightly more first class honours and we have a smaller 'tail' than we would have here," says Dr Sinnott.

"That was something of an unknown going in but our initial perception that these are very strong students has been validated by the first year results – which are subject to exactly the same grading and marking standards as students at our Dublin campus", explains Dr McMackin.

DCU sets admission standards at the same level as in Ireland, and fluent English is essential too.

"As we develop relationships with companies doing business in Saudi Arabia we hope to offer our students a work placement", says Dr McMackin. "This year for the first time in any department, PNU students on DCU programmes have been able to go on site visits to the big companies – which fascinated the students."

DCU is keen to engage with Irish firms operating in the country and hopes to facilitate them with its high-quality graduates for work placement and recruitment. Like all other firms based there, Irish businesses are under pressure to comply with the Saudiization scheme, through which an increasing percentage of jobs must be filled by Saudi nationals

While many companies and organisations insist that gaining a foothold in the region can be a five-year investment of time and resources, Dublin City University Business School was operating in PNU just one year after initial contact was made.

The links made are already strong and have great potential for increased postgraduate education opportunities for Saudi Arabian students in Ireland, and further strengthening the bonds between the nations.

# Friendship began before the states were even born

ON her visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2006, President Mary McAleese told a story.

"There is a photograph in the Irish Embassy in Riyadh which resonates particularly with me", she began.

"It was taken during a visit to Ireland in 1919 by His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, later of course King Faisal.

"This was the first official visit that we know of by a member of the Saudi royal family to Ireland, which means that the relations between Saudi Arabia and Ireland go back at least 87 years.

"During his visit to Ireland, Prince Faisal made a call on the Viceroy (the representative of the British Crown in Ireland) because Ireland was still under British rule at that time.

"The photograph was taken at the Lieutenant Governor's residence - which since Independence is now the official residence of the President of Ireland - and is my home."

Prince Faisal was just 13 years old when he came to visit, arriving by boat in Wexford one rainy Sunday night and travelling to Dublin



**H.R.H. Prince Faisal bin Abdul Aziz with his official party at what is now Aras an Uachtaráin in November 1919**

by train, accompanied by his cousin, Ahmed ibn Thunsuban, Abudulla al Qusabi and their interpreter Captain Philby.

His visit took in many of the sights for which the city was famous at the time.

They were shown around Dublin Castle by the Viceroy's aide-de-camp, Captain Reefer, which included a visit to the State

apartments and the Chapel Royal.

They then visited the National Museum on Kildare Street, before retiring to the Shelbourne Hotel where they remained for the evening.

On the second day of his visit the party was shown around the stables and bloodstock stud in the Phoenix Park by its owner Mr Peard.



**H.R.H. King Faisal, first ruler of Saudi Arabia, pictured in 1971**

The Prince commented on the beauty of the Phoenix Park where he visited the Viceroy.

The party then called into the Four Courts where they were shown around by Mr Kelly, an MP and barrister.

After lunch the party visited Trinity College where they were welcomed by the Provost and Mrs Bernard.

They were given a tour of the venerable college buildings and were treated to an address of welcome read by Mr Rifaat, an Egyptian medical student. A short reply was made by the Prince Royal's cousin.

The party adjourned to the Provost's House where they had coffee before visiting the Examination Hall, Dining Hall and the Medical School.

Professor Lucas White-King, the professor of Arabic, showed the Prince some ancient manuscripts, which, the Irish Times reported, "greatly interested him".

On leaving the College grounds the students gave "several rounds of hearty cheers, an ovation which greatly gratified the Prince."

That evening the Prince was entertained by Sir John and Lady Arnott, owner of the famous Dublin store.

The following morning the party motored to Amiens Street station where a large crowd bid them farewell before they took the train to Belfast. There the Lord Mayor accompanied them as they visited several sights including the Harland and Wolff shipyards.

## Bridging the miles

After Europe and North America the Arab world is now the most important trading bloc for indigenous Irish exporters

SINCE its inception 27 years ago, the Arab Irish Chamber of Commerce (AICC) has played a crucial role in facilitating trade between Ireland and the Arab countries.

According to Ahmad R Younis, Secretary General and Chief Executive of the AICC, the trading relationship between Ireland and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has never been stronger than it is right now, and his organisation is keen to build awareness of the opportunities for Irish companies that exist in the Kingdom.

It's a hefty claim, certainly, but one that is amply substantiated. The business relationship between Ireland and the Kingdom has flourished over the past 27 years, with a concomitant rise in trade. When the Chamber was established in 1987 Irish merchandise exports to the Kingdom was €72m and in 2013 it is €642m, which is a staggering increase of 784%. The overall total for 2013 exports to the Arab World is at €1.6bn and the Kingdom is €642m which is 38% of the total, this figure clearly shows that the Kingdom is one of the most important markets for Irish exports.

The Arab markets collectively are the most important trading bloc for indigenous Irish exporters outside of Europe and

**For further information contact:  
The Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce,  
60, Merrion Square, Dublin 2  
Telephone: 00353 1 6624451  
Email: info@aicc.ie**

North America, and their significance grows year by year

To describe the AICC as a mere facilitator, however, is to downplay its significance. Its various services, Younis mentions, include providing advice regarding the legal and documentary requirements for exporting to each of the Arab countries; the certification of export and commercial documents; the legalisation of such documents when required; the translation of official documents to and from Arabic; and assistance with visas and introductions.

Younis remains confident that business relationships between Ireland and the Kingdom will continue to grow and thrive, pointing out to the opening of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia embassies' representation in Ireland which, in turn, has proved particularly beneficial to the growth of trade.

The AICC's activities in this region re-

ceived a boost earlier this year, when the Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Richard Bruton headed up a trade mission to Saudi Arabia.

"That visit was such a big success. Over 100 executives from 87 Irish companies went, and it created a great positive impression," Younis said.

According to Younis, this kind of brand-building is an important part of instilling a sense of confidence in Ireland in the Saudi markets.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a high demand for imports. They import much of the goods and services they require to meet their domestic needs, for reasons of geography and climate and so on. Food is a big developing market but there are others like pharmaceuticals, ICT and finance," said Younis.

"For example: 'The Arabs import 90 per cent of their food and we Irish export 90 per cent of our food.' The opportunities are clear."

For companies that might be thinking of taking the plunge the AICC is a one stop shop from giving advice on shipping requirements to the processing of same.



**Ahmad R Younis, secretary-general and chief executive of the Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce**

# A land rich in history

With the Saudi decision last year to issue tourist visas for the first time, sites of historical and religious significance will surely become a destination for the Irish visitor, writes  
**Caoimhe Rooney**

**T**HE Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932, however, evidence of human existence in the country dates as far back as 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. Known as the birthplace of Islam, the country's history is steeped in religion, yet it has adapted to 21st Century globalisation. In the last decade, over \$13 billion (€9 billion) has been spent on modernising the infrastructure and it is now home to the world's second largest building and a vast array of luxury hotels and shopping malls.

The government have also committed to spend nearly €2 billion on building 230 museums containing everything from antiquities to contemporary art as well as investing €13 billion in improving roads, public transport and aviation services.

Despite the country's plan for further modernisation, it does not intend to neglect its rich cultural heritage: In addition to the museums under construction, 30 international archaeology teams have been contracted to conduct research into the country's land.

Saudi Arabia has entered into an era of excavation in recent years and has emerged triumphant, revealing itself as an area of archaeological importance.

In 2010, a landmark exhibition entitled Roads of Arabia unveiled some of the never-before seen material discovered in the Arabian Peninsula.

The exhibition, which is currently in North America, includes artefacts dating as far back as 7000 BC; it contains over 300 objects found along the different routes in the country that were once used as trade conduits for incense and spices. The showcase gives a glimpse into the country's pre-Islamic history and has already been exhibited in cities such as Barcelona, Berlin and St Petersburg.

The articles on show include well-preserved statuettes of Greek gods like Heracles, gold funerary masks and tombstones.

Three different stages of Saudi Arabia's history are dealt with during the exhibit: The first stage presents antiquities from the towns and cities that were along the trade routes, the second looks at how the kingdom changed with the coming of Islam as well as the roads to Mecca, and the third stage deals with the birth of the country through old photographs and maps.

The archaeological trend has also led to sig-



**Top: the stunning Mada'in Saleh, below: the beauty of the desert; ancient rock drawings; the Hajj in Mecca**

nificant finds for French excavators working in Mada'in Saleh – the site of a 2,000-year-old city.

In 2008, UNESCO chose the ruined city as Saudi Arabia's first World Heritage Site due to its perfectly preserved antiquities. US archaeologists have also excavated new evidence on the trading routes at Jurash, which overlooks the Red Sea.

Displays of its plentiful historical artefacts are just a small part of Saudi Arabia's larger plan to open its tourism doors. In December, the government announced its intention to issue tourist visas for the first time. The new visa programme allows would be visitors to explore the country's tourist and historical sites for up to 30 days.

The tourist visa will allow foreigners from 65 countries (including Ireland) to travel freely throughout the different cities within the country.

Previously, only tourists from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates were allowed visa-free entry into the country.

Saudi authorities have also made the visa procedure easier, and it now only takes 14 days for a tourist visa to be processed and approved.

**T**raditionally, Saudi visas have been predominantly granted for religious and business travel. Hajj, the world's largest annual religious gathering, attracts over 4 million pilgrims each year; the religious cities of Mecca and Medina remain ever-popular with spiritual visitors.

Yet the country looks set to embrace foreign tourism, promoting sports and eco-tourism including camping, desert safaris, scuba diving, and mountain hiking.

South of Riyadh lie the scenic deserts and mountains of Abha. To the north, the Jabal al Lawz mountain contains exotic flora and fauna, and is visited by thousands of bird-watchers every year.

There are also visitor-friendly beaches along the coast of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

The city of Jeddah lies west of Riyadh, and

boasts white sandy beaches along the Red Sea where scuba diving and snorkelling are commonplace.

The King's Fountain is an 853-foot fountain, reportedly the largest in the world. It can be seen throughout the entire city and is lit by over 500 spotlights at night.

Modern restaurants and hotels are abundant throughout the different cities thanks to the development in the early 00s. International hotels like Hilton, Radisson Blu, Holiday Inn and the Four Seasons can all be found in Riyadh and the surrounding cities. The Hyatt Hotel Group is currently building six hotels in the country.

Over the next year, the main airport in Riyadh, will increase its capacity from 17 to 35 million in order to accommodate the demand for flights and maintain Saudi Arabia's position as one of the top 20 most visited countries in the world. This year, an estimated 16.7 million tourists will land in Saudi Arabia in order to explore the new modern panorama and the contrasting ancient architecture.



# Saudia offers superior service in every seat on its aircraft

YOU can now fly with Saudia to Saudi Arabia and beyond to Colombo, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, eight cities in India and many other destinations.

With daily flights to Jeddah and Riyadh from London Heathrow and flights from Manchester to Jeddah three times a week, Saudia has grown to provide its services to transport passengers between 26 domestic and 54 international destinations.

Its in-flight cuisine is prepared according to world class standards, combining the art of haute cuisine with the science of food technology. The results of the process are tasty five-star menus prepared under the strictest standards of food safety and hygiene.

Saudia's In-flight Entertainment features the latest state-of-the-art technology aimed at fulfilling passengers' entertainment needs especially on long-haul flights. On many aircrafts, its seats are equipped with personal video screens controlled through fully integrated handsets or by touch and offers video-on-demand.

Saudia has also introduced a new mobile and Wi-Fi service. On its B777-300 & A330 flights, you can use your mobile phone or browse the net while seated.

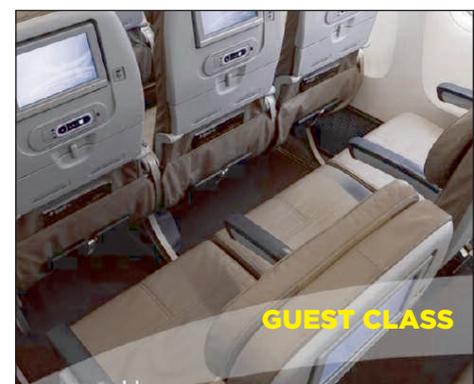
**First Class:** Saudia seats provide you with a generous space for your comfort. In addition, the seats recline to up to 180 degrees with a 79" seat pitch. With the help



**FIRST CLASS**



**BUSINESS CLASS**



**GUEST CLASS**

**The seats on Saudia flights is typically more generous than almost any other airline in the world**

of a fully electronic control, foot rest, and an adjustable headrest, you will be able to secure a comfortable position during your trip. Overnight kits are offered to all passengers during the flight which include all the items that they may need during the journey. Saudia also offers a generous check-in baggage al-

lowance of 64kg and 9kg hand luggage.

**Business Class:** Saudia seats are wide enough to be on other airlines' First Class sections, with generous recline of 170 degrees and 61" seat pitch to allow for optimum legroom. Headrests are equipped with adjustable padded wings for maximum comfort while the seats themselves are ergonomically-designed to provide stable lumbar support.

Overnight kits are given to all passengers for their personal care needs during the flight. Business class customers re-

ceive a generous check-in baggage allowance of 64kg and 9kg hand luggage.

**Guest Class (Economy):** Saudia seats are among the most comfortable and spacious, with seat pitches of 34 inches and a seat width of 18.5", more than most other airlines allow in Economy. Headrests have padded wings that can be adjusted for maximum comfort.

All seats are equipped with special monitors up to 9 inches in some aircraft. Guest class baggage allowance is 46kg check-in and 7kg hand luggage.



# An Islamic art gem in Dublin

Art collector Chester Beatty left an amazing legacy to Ireland in his Library of Eastern artwork

**W**ITH free admission and described by the Lonely Planet as not just the best museum in Ireland, but one of the best in Europe, the Chester Beatty Library is a must-see on any Dublin visitor's itinerary. As the only museum in Ireland to win 'European Museum of the Year' and rated at number 3 in TripAdvisor's list of recommended Dublin cultural attractions, the Library welcomes over 250,000 visitors from across the world every year and runs an event-filled multi-cultural public programme.

Renowned for its world-famous Islamic collections, the Library's vast treasure-trove from countries across Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe includes representative samples of the world's artistic and religious heritage from about 2700 BC to the present century.

Chester Beatty was an American mining magnate and one of the most prolific collectors of the 20th century. Born in New York in 1875, he graduated as a mining engineer from Columbia University in 1898 and headed west, starting as a 'mucker' shovelling rock in mines in Denver, Colorado. With his keen intellect and strong character, he soon built up an international reputation as a mining engineer, establishing a highly successful mining consultancy in New York in 1908.

In 1900, he married Ninette Rickard and they had two children, Ninette and Alfred. In 1911, however, Ninette died of typhoid fever. Suffering from ill health himself, Beatty left the busy world of mining in the USA and founded a new consultancy in London. In May 1912 he bought Baroda House at 24 Kensington Palace Gardens, London and the following year he married Edith Dunn of New York.

An avid collector of minerals, Chinese snuff bottles and stamps since childhood, as an adult Beatty began to collect more widely, buying European and Persian manuscripts. His interests found a new direction when, in 1914, he and Edith visited Egypt and bought some decorated copies of the Qur'an in the bazaars.



Some of the treasures of Islamic and Oriental Art on display in the Chester Beatty Library at Dublin Castle

[www.cbl.ie](http://www.cbl.ie)

The dry climate suited Beatty and he bought a house near Cairo, where he was to spend many winters.

A journey to Asia in 1917 added Japanese and Chinese paintings to his interests. His eye was drawn to richly illustrated material, fine bindings and beautiful calligraphy, but he was also deeply committed to preserving texts for their historic value.

Chester Beatty made a significant contribution to supplies of strategic raw materials for the Allies during the Second World War, for which he was later knighted. In 1950, he decided to move to Ireland and built a library for his art collection on Shrewsbury Road which opened in 1954.

In 1957 he became Ireland's first honorary citizen and was accorded a State funeral upon his death in 1968, the only civilian in Ireland ever to have earned this honour.

He bequeathed his entire collection to a trust for the benefit of the public and today the legacy of this unique and unparalleled collector thrives in the historic setting of the Clock Tower Building in Dublin Castle.

Over 6,000 individual items, mainly manuscripts and single-page paintings and calligraphies, make up the Islamic Collections. This includes more than 260 complete and fragmentary Qur'ans, the earliest dating from the 8th and 9th centuries and



including the work of the leading calligraphers of the Islamic world.

Treasures from the Library's Western Collections include rare Biblical papyri, dating from the 2nd to the 4th centuries - these are some of the earliest sources on papyrus for the bible; and Armenian and Western European manuscripts from medieval, Renaissance and modern times.

The East Asian Collections include albums and scrolls from China, the largest collection outside of China of jade books from the Imperial Court in the 18th century - as well as a large collection of textiles and decorative objects.

The Japanese holdings contain many superb hand-painted scrolls

from the 17th and 18th centuries and woodblock prints by Hiroshige and Hokusai.

Opening in July, this summer's exhibition Chester Beatty's A-Z: from Amulet to Zodiac will take visitors on a journey through a selection of highlights, showcasing the breadth and quality of the Library's amazing collection.

Each letter of the alphabet is matched to a word that is representative of something characteristically associated with the collection.

Featuring many works seldom or never before seen in public, the exhibition will explore the threads that link cultures across the Western, Islamic and East Asian worlds.



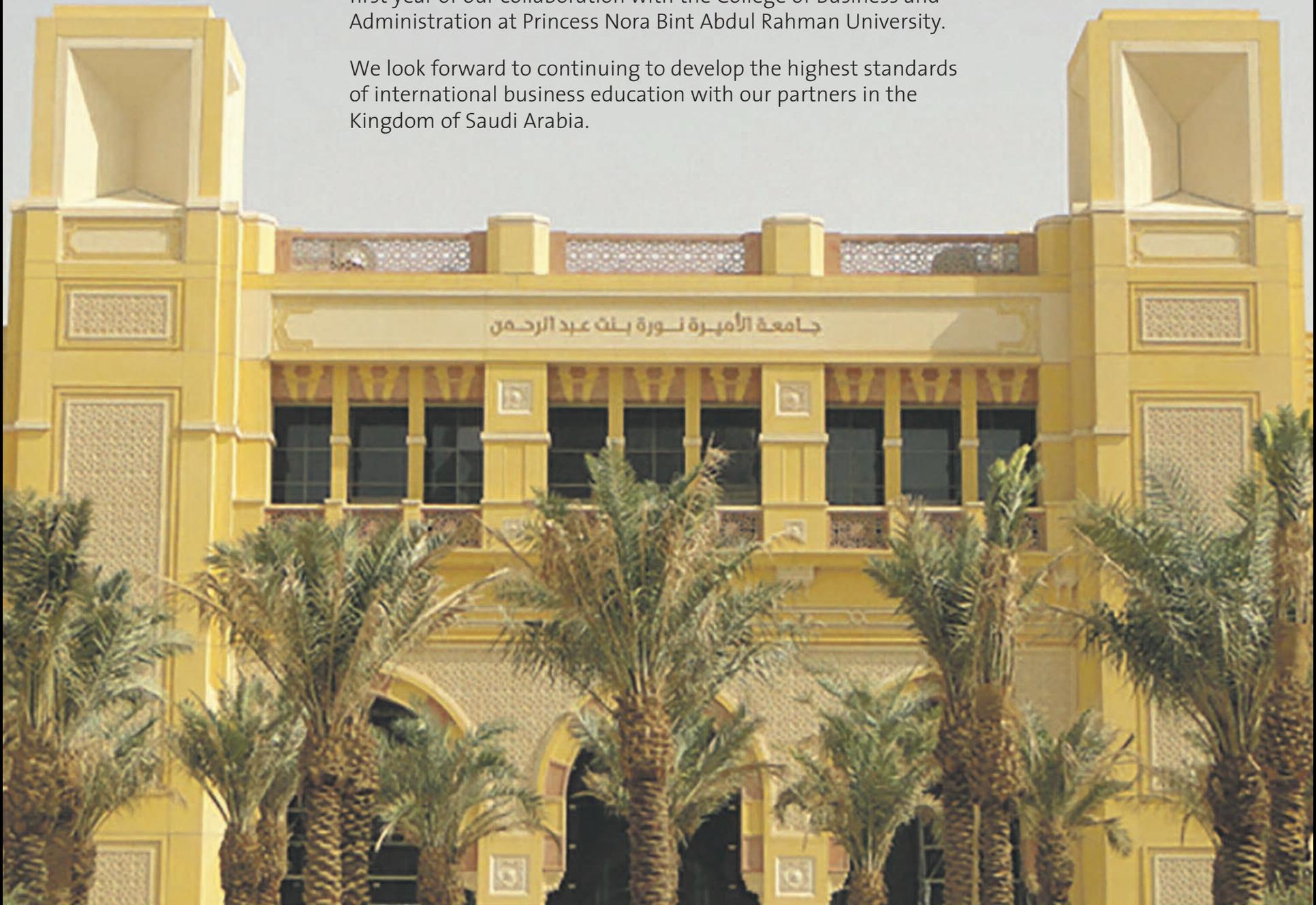
# DCU Business School



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[www.dcu.ie/dcubs](http://www.dcu.ie/dcubs)

[www.pnu.edu.sa](http://www.pnu.edu.sa)

# From the Kingdom of Saudi to the Kingdom of... Kerry!

A Royal College of Surgeons and IT Tralee course is laying foundations for Saudi students who go on to study medicine in Dublin

**M**OYSER Mulla grew up in Dublin but knew little or nothing about Ireland before coming here to study medicine. This isn't as strange as it sounds: her hometown is the vibrant city of Al-Ahsa in eastern Saudi Arabia but she was raised in Dublin, Ohio.

"I lived there until I was 12 years old and my family went back to Saudi," she explains. "Going back was difficult for me to begin with because although I spoke Arabic the local accent was very different and the education system was foreign to me."

Six years later, this time of her own volition, she chose to undergo a potentially far more difficult transition when she opted to study medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons (RCSI). She didn't come directly to Dublin, however. In 2009 she was among the first group of students to attend the one-year International Medical Commencement Programme; an NUI-accredited course jointly delivered by RCSI and IT Tralee and delivered on the Kerry campus.

Although primarily targeted at non-English speakers, Moyser says it proved invaluable as a general introduction to life away from home and for the rigours of the academic challenges to come.

"I had better English than most so I didn't feel like I needed the course at first but I quickly realised that because all of my secondary education had been through Arabic, I didn't have the technical language," she said. "Apart from that it gave me a chance to get to know a little bit about Ireland: Tralee is absolutely gorgeous – Kerry was my first experience of the country and it was a very happy one."

Now in her fourth year as a medical student and living in Dublin, she lauds the "amazing opportunities" afforded to her in the college and appreciates in particular its awareness of cultural and religious differences.

"I speak to my Saudi friends in various countries around Europe and they complain about the lack of understanding of Moslem students: here there is no problem if you ask to be excused for prayer – it really is non-judgmental," she says.



**Moyser Mulla, who was one of the first intake to the one-year RCSI International Medicine Commencement Programme at IT Tralee**

A love of travel helped entice Moyser to Ireland in the first place and she isn't sure where she will go after she qualifies. Contrary to popular perception more than 50% of Saudi medical students are female and there are growing opportunities for professional women in her country.

"I will go back eventually – there aren't many female doctors there at the moment and I want to help change this," she says.

Philip Curtis, Associate Director of Admissions and Student Services, says the intensive RCSI/IT Tralee course has been finessed considerably over the past five years but the essential experience remains the same for students.

"It is often the case that students' written skills do not match their grasp of spoken English: it isn't easy writing in a different alphabet and from left to right when you're

used to doing the opposite," he says. "Tralee also has the advantage of a university-style campus rather than an office-type learning environment so it also offers a good transition

for students coming from overseas. It is also a very welcoming place and is well set up in terms of tourism infrastructure so host families are available to those students who might be more comfortable in that environment when they are away from home for the first time."

RCSI is Ireland's biggest dedicated medical school. It offers courses in medicine, pharmacy and physiotherapy, including undergraduate and postgraduate

courses. Medicine is the largest and most popular choice among undergraduates.

There are currently more than 100 Saudi undergraduates among the 60-plus nationalities that make up the 3,900-strong student body at RCSI.

While expansion of the College is essentially determined by the clinical capacity in hospitals, new technology has enabled it to extend its reach.

It has a university in Bahrain, two medical schools in Malaysia and an institute in Dubai. On the ground teaching is supplemented by "a virtual learning environment".

"New technology allows us to standardise the courses regardless of where the student is: our ethos is to bring the education to the student 27/4 regardless of location," Mr Curtis explains.

"The curriculum is the same, there is external marking and the times of the exams are even synchronised so that when you open an examination paper in Dublin at say 9am, that paper is being opened simultaneously by students in the other countries."

New technology has also revolutionised the learning experience for foreign students, including those from Saudi Arabia.

"We facilitate password-protected bulletin boards and forums that allow prospective and new students to meet online with existing ones and concerns are addressed," Mr Curtis says.

"In many ways students now tend to arrive pre-orientated but it is only when they are here that they truly integrate and Tralee plays a special role in this process."



## RCSI



**Left: The Chase Resourcing team celebrates winning in the technology, manufacturing and innovation category at the Kerry Business Awards**  
**Right: The bustling Chase Resourcing facility in Killorglin**

#### CONTACTS

[www.chase.ie](http://www.chase.ie)  
 Tel: +353 (0) 66 9762 007

# Chase Resourcing will fill that position

THE unwelcome trend of companies recruiting hit-and-miss employees or stop-gaps has ceased to exist as the science of recruitment is continuing to develop into a more advanced, business-critical endeavour.

Chase Resourcing Ltd was founded in 2005 in Killorglin, Co Kerry by Fred McDonogh and operated in the Irish market from the outset. Ogie Reddan joined Chase Resourcing in May 2011 as a co-director and the business acumen that was acquired from her time in England has proven to be pivotal in its development and international expansion.

Chase Resourcing now has a worldwide client base which is particularly prominent in the Middle East and Gulf Region, Malaysia, China, North America, Canada and Europe. As well as this, a number of Chase Resourcing's recruitment candidates are also based in those regions and countries.

The company is currently involved in a large number of jobs in Saudi Arabia, with 382 in the Education Sector alone. "We have openings across the whole sector," explains Ogie, "from posts as professors in the science colleges to K-12 teachers in primary and secondary schools. We

also have many posts for English-as-a-Second-Language teachers.

"In addition, Chase Resourcing also specialises in industry specific technical trainers and NVQ Instructors for oil, electrical, heavy engineering and aviation sectors."

The medical sector is also expanding in Saudi Arabia and Chase Resourcing is working with four of the highest-profile hospitals there.

Commenting on Chase Resourcing's involvement with Saudi Arabia's Medical Sector, Ogie says, "We have positions for Consultants, Directors of nursing, nursing staff of all levels

as well as a number of posts in the Clinical area, also HR and Administrative staff," she adds.

Chase Resourcing has been recruiting for Saudi Arabia's hospitals for three years now and it is plain for all to see that the demand for Western trained staff is rising dramatically year upon year. From an Irish perspective we can also see that people are less afraid to step outside their comfort zone.

As a direct result of the large scale expansion in the Industrial sector in KSA there has been a rampant need to upgrade the railway infrastructure

across the nation. With that said there is now a dedicated department within Chase Resourcing who specialise in recruitment within the Rail Industry.

Chase Resourcing specialises in all aspects of the recruitment, selection and placements process, offering a high quality service delivery to both clients and candidates.

With glowing testimonials from Mercedes Benz, Hertz, FEXCO and Getty Images among others, it is an Irish company that is continuing to gain recognition in both the national and international sphere.



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# FEXCO: providing safe, secure commercial foreign exchange services for more than 30 years

FEXCO is Ireland's most successful multinational financial services and business solutions provider, with operations in 28 countries worldwide. Founded and headquartered in Ireland in 1981, FEXCO employs 2,100 people across Europe, the Middle East, Asia, North America, Latin America and Australasia.

FEXCO Commercial Foreign Exchange Services was established in Ireland in 1995 and provides a full suite of Spot and Forward Foreign Exchange Services to a variety of sectors including Corporate, SME, Government, Retail and Insurance. In 2013, FEXCO Commercial FX Services was launched in the UK.

Joe Redmond, MD of FEXCO's Foreign Exchange Services Division, explains how important it is for Irish companies that trade outside the euro zone to protect their income, margins and reputation, by ensuring that they have a reliable Commercial FX services provider who will help manage their FX exposure risk and make sure their



**Joe Redmond: 'FEXCO has the expert team in place'**

international payments to overseas suppliers are executed accurately and on time, every time.

"For the best part of 20 years, FEXCO has been acknowledged by corporate Ireland as an important alternative to the

banks for Commercial FX Services. No other specialist FX provider operating in the Irish market has comparable credentials or experience in this sector.

"Companies large and small are investing significant time and resources in opening up new international markets. The moment a deal is successfully completed is the moment the company concerned will need to put in place the appropriate FX risk management and cross border payment arrangements.

"FEXCO has the expert team, on-line systems, treasury operations and international payments infrastructure in place to support the FX risk management and cross border payment requirements of businesses in Ireland and the UK.

"By using FEXCO Commercial FX Services for forward contracts and international payments, clients protect their businesses from the effects of unforeseen and adverse foreign exchange rate movements, while freeing up all important cash flow."

# Soccer is most popular sport in Saudi

THE most popular sport in Saudi Arabia is football, and the national side has reached the World Cup finals on four occasions.

The most celebrated side was that of 1994 which lost to the Netherlands by just 2-1, and then beat Morocco (2-1) and Belgium (1-0) to qualify for the second round.

In Dallas on 3 July they went 2-0 down to Sweden, before Fahad Al-Ghesheyan scored with five minutes remaining. The Swedes were rattled momentarily but scored again to win 3-1.

Saudi Arabia also qualified for the World Cup in 1998, 2002 and 2006, but failed to win a game at any.

The 2002 tournament saw the only meeting of Ireland and Saudi Arabia, in the Japanese city of Yokohama. Robbie Keane opened the scoring in the seventh minute, and second-half goals by Gary Breen and Damien Duff ensured a 3-0 victory.

Saudi Arabia also won the AFC Asian Cup in 1984 – at the very first attempt – 1988, and 1996. The sport has grown in popularity



**Saudi stars: the race track in Riyadh and, right, action from Saudi Arabia's famous win over Morocco at the 1994 World Cup in the US**

since, and is governed by the Saudi Football Federation. Saudi Arabia also participate in the Gulf Cup of Nations, AFC Champions League, and Arab Nations Cup.

Several Saudi players currently play in European leagues.

One of the most notable players in the game's history was Hussein Sulaimani, who won over 100

caps from 1996-2009 and had a spell in Switzerland with Neuchâtel Xamax.

One of the first players to play in Europe was Sami Abdullah Al-

jaber, who had a spell with Wolves in England, while Fahad Al-Ghesheyan – who scored in the 1994 World Cup defeat to Sweden – played with AZ Alkmaar.



Dubai-based regional manager Kieran Duggan

# Saudis develop a love for Irish dairy

THE Dairy Foods market in Saudi Arabia has seen consistent growth over the last 10 years at a CAGR rate of +7% in value. Within this, Cheese has been a growth driver at +15% in 2013.

As the largest dairy processor in Ireland with forecasted growth in milk production of up to 50 per cent, Glanbia Ingredients Ireland Limited (GIIL) views the Arab markets as a key area for customer expansion, according to Dubai-based Regional Manager (MENA), Kieran Duggan.

Over the past 15 years the company has steadily grown its business in the Arab markets with direct sales of dairy products including cheddar cheese, cheese variants, functional milk proteins and enriched milk powders.

"The key target market for GIIL in the GCC region is Saudi Arabia and we have been working hard on the ground here to develop business with some of the many reputable food companies in the region" said Duggan. Some of that hard work has started to pay off with firm contracts now in place with the likes of Almarai – a long established and leading branded food business in the Middle East.

"The Middle East is in a milk deficit position and therefore values what Ireland has to offer which is the ability to grow milk supply from a globally competitive cost base. We operate a B2B model in the region and place a big emphasis on developing a collaborative long term approach with our customers - an important foundation for conducting business in the Arab markets," he said.

According to Duggan maintaining a local presence has demonstrated intent to the customer base in the region that GIIL was prepared to build on its existing business and commit further commercial and technical resources to supporting its customers' needs.

Nick Whelan, Commercial Director at GIIL is confident about the company's ability to meet the growing global dairy demand. "Preparations to handle the increased dairy outputs are well underway within GIIL. We are investing around €180 million in processing capabilities between the development of Ireland's only greenfield, state of the art, powder facility in Belview, Co Kilkenny, and the expansion of the flagship Ballyragget facility.

The Belview facility will be entirely focused on export markets and will supply a range of nutritional powders to a growing number of regions including the Middle East, Africa, Central America and Asia.

"This development reflects our confidence in, and commitment to our 4,300 milk suppliers. By providing this additional processing capacity we will be facilitating milk suppliers in their ambition to avail of the opportunity presented by quota abolition post 2015," said Whelan.

"We have ambitious targets to grow our business in Saudi Arabia and the GCC region over the next five years and further resources will be invested to deliver this growth by focusing on what our customers require and value," he said.



■ Glanbia Ingredients Ireland Ltd. (GIIL) is Ireland's leading dairy ingredients company. It processes 1.6 billion litres of milk or 30 per cent of Ireland's milk pool into a range of dairy ingredients for export to more than 50 countries.

■ The business currently employs over 500 employees and has market bases in Ireland, Germany, the United States, Dubai and Senegal.

■ GIIL has four processing plants in Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny; Virginia, Co. Cavan, Wexford and Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary with a fifth under construction at Belview, Co. Kilkenny.

■ Glanbia Ingredients is the sole supplier of cream to Baileys, supplies a range of ingredients to the infant formula market and exports enriched milk powder in consumer-ready formats to markets around the globe including West Africa, Middle East and Asia. It is one of the key Irish dairy processors supplying cheese and butter to the Irish Dairy Board (which is sold under the Kerrygold brand).

## Glanbia Ingredients Ireland Limited

Your partner for cheese and dairy ingredient solutions

### Who we are

- Ireland's largest milk processor
- Ireland's leading dairy ingredients and cheese innovator
- Working in collaboration with global blue chip food companies
- Local office based in Dubai

### What we supply to the Middle East

- Caseins
- Cheese varieties
- Enriched milk powders
- Lactose
- Milk powders
- Whey protein concentrates

### The future for GIIL and MENA

- GIIL milk supply growth of 50% forecasted to 2020
- Investing in Ireland's only greenfield, state of the art spray drying facility with capacity of 90,000 tonnes of powders. Opening Q1 2015
- Continued focus on R&D and technical support to provide dairy solutions to our MENA customers
- Targeted business development together with our key customers in the MENA region



For further information on GIIL, please contact:

Kieran Duggan, Regional Manager,  
Middle East and North Africa  
T: +971 (0) 56 134 7450  
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