80% of the Industrial Security Operations Academy transformed training model will be hands-on, active, and outside of the classroom by 2021.

For some local children, summertime is learning time as Community Education wraps up its annual “Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages” summer program in Dhahran.

see page 7

For some local children, summertime is learning time as Community Education wraps up its annual “Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages” summer program in Dhahran.

see page 7

Do you know the signs of heat exhaustion? How about heatstroke? And what should you do if you experience them, or someone you know is exhibiting these signs?

see page 6

A refurbished gymnasium is just a small part of the Industrial Security Operations Academy’s two-year transformation program, but it’s an integral element that is designed to ensure the ongoing safety of Saudi Aramco’s people and its assets today and for years to come. Here, trainee Abdulrahman M. Al-Shahrani works on his cardiovascular endurance during a session on the punching bag.

Saudi Aramco has partnered with the Smithsonian Institution and the Saudi Wildlife Authority to #SaveTheAsirMagpie. There are only 100 pairs left. Scan the QR code to find out more.

Let’s save our Asir magpie

The Asir magpie, also known as the Ardon magpie, is a highly endangered bird that is endemic to Saudi Arabia. It is found mostly in Saudi Arabia’s southwestern highlands, in the Asir region.

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making good on our iktva promise

Saudi Aramco signs 16 agreements with local valve manufacturers

Dhahran — Saudi Aramco took a major step toward expanding its strategic spending for locally produced valves by signing corporate procurement agreements (CPAs) with 16 valve manufacturers.

The agreements, signed at the Plaza Conference Center earlier this month, are the latest example of the company’s commitment to strengthening and diversifying the Saudi economy by localizing its spending under the iktva program.

Taken together, the 16 agreements carry a procurement value of more than $4 billion. In addition to enhancing the company’s ongoing support and commitment to empower local companies, they will also benefit the company by ensuring Saudi Aramco can rely on key industry players to provide us with ball, gate, and check valves, as well as any associated spare parts, and maintenance and repair services.

The agreements, signed by Mohammad A. Al-Shammary, vice president of Procurement and Supply Chain Management, and Fahad E. Al-Helal, vice president of Project Management, pose with representatives from companies taking part in a signing ceremony with 16 valve manufacturers.


The main advantage of any international certification is the sustainability of the “Plan-Do-Check-Adjust” cycle. ISO 50001 goes beyond this minimum tangible benefit to include:

1. External benchmarking of EWPD’s EnMS against international standards
2. Applying ISO 50001 requirements will lead to a reduction in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions
3. Ensuring management’s commitment and visibility to employees and contractors for the significance of energy conservation initiatives leading to positive economic and environmental impacts
4. Building a solid image for Saudi Aramco facilities as the company and the Kingdom look to expand its economic portfolio.

During the process, EWPD overcame the challenge of ensuring accurate energy data by establishing an energy data health check program to track and monitor more than 200 energy requirement devices.

Moreover, EWPD managed to operate its significant energy users efficiently — while maintaining a high-level of reliability by delivering an optimization simulator to identify the optimum amount of equipment to be run for multiple operational scenarios, incorporating any expected risks on the reliability.

Your Voice

do you know the power of the word “No”?

From my business and personal experiences, some people make some terrible communication mistakes by ignoring email messages or phone calls. The main reason for this, is that they do not know the power of the word “No.”

Some people think if they respond negatively by saying “No” to a request, they might upset or offend the person making the request. Of course this is completely wrong, and a “No” answer is much better, in my humble opinion, than ignoring a phone call, an email, or a message requesting specific information or a service.

I do remember a communication encounter in which someone emailed someone else asking for a service. The reply was not very positive as it was only one word: “No.” However, the person making the request unexpectedly replied back by saying: “Thank you very much for answering no, no is a good answer.” This communication encounter explains how much people need and appreciate an answer to their questions and requests, and value any response even if it’s a negative one.

I’ve witnessed several experiences in which a request was completely ignored only because of a misunderstanding of communication rules, protocols, and etiquettes. When I bought my 2017 Hyundai Santa Fe from a first user who drove it only 29,000 kilometers, the guy was very nice and responsive to my frequent questions about the car. However, he did not answer me when I asked one question about the spare car keys.

I got confused, surprised, and somewhat upset as I felt my request had been ignored. Later I had to call him and found out that the spare keys were kept by the funding bank as part of the car sale contract. I thought he could have simply replied with this answer and I probably would have understood and accepted it. But he preferred to ignore my initial request assuming that his “No” answer would make me upset, and did not know ignoring people is worse than not answering.

The subject might trigger the need to educate people and raise awareness about communication rules and protocols. Educating people on these issues is more critical and necessary for those who are in direct business contact with the customer. Satisfying the customer is important to business, especially these days when the competition is high and attracting and maintaining customers is crucial in today’s market. So answering with “No” could be a very good answer, and we should learn when and how to say “No” without upsetting or offending others.
building on a long history of Industrial Security excellence academy strengthens workforce, technology to protect people and facilities

by Michael Ives

Dhahran — Hanging next to Industrial Security Operations Academy (ISOA) superintendent Mohammed Al Ghamdi’s desk is a poster declaring “Everything will be OK.”

Indeed, with the ISOA team of 55 people embarking on a two-year transformation program, Al Ghamdi is excited that everything will be better than “OK.” From rejuvenating the gym, planning for an outdoor obstacle course and an airsoft arena for tactical training, to new “smart” classrooms, ISOA is on a journey to make it fit for the future. Ensuring the ongoing safety of Saudi Aramco’s people and its assets — and giving thousands more young people an opportunity for an excellent and rewarding career with security services — a transformed ISOA will deliver training that fully embraces the promise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Adel F. Al-Wuhaib, acting manager of the Industrial Security Support Department, (ISSD) points out that as the external environment evolves, so too must industrial security.

“Today, the security situation has changed, with more technologically based threats and risks, and industrial security has evolved in tandem to mitigate these risks,” Al-Wuhaib notes.

With responsibilities also extending to ensuring visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience at the many events and exhibitions at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), ISSD is also taking advantage of all the modern technological tools at its disposal to keep people safe — whether that is one person or 20,000.

an investment in people and time

When Aramcons pull up to a security checkpoint and need to display their ID card, it is unlikely that many are fully aware of the investment that ISOA and Saudi Aramco make in the security personnel who are checking their credentials.

Showing a Saudi Aramco ID may seem like an inconvenience to employees, but it is just one of the many interlocking protocols that security team members are trained to carry out diligently and respectfully through the training ISOA has provided across the two-year Apprentice Program for Non-Employees (APNEs).

With all security team members undertaking ISOA’s rigorous practical and academic training, along with numerous refresher courses, every member of the 6,500 strong security team is fully prepared, both mentally and physically, for the demanding task of keeping Saudi Aramco safe and secure.

an impressive history — a cutting-edge future

Stepping into the reception area of ISOA, you are struck by its impressive history. After establishing Industrial Security Operations in 1973, the company introduced a training organization in 1975 that established a number of firsts for the Kingdom, and today is recognized internationally as a training academy.

Across the ISOA reception video screen, achievements of today are highlighted, including the winners of a recent five kilometer run. With fitness of both body and mind central to the training philosophy of ISOA, it is certainly on show when The Arabian Sun visits the academy, with the smell of fresh paint in the air at the newly renovated gym, which trainee Abdulrahman M. Al-Shahrani showcases enthusiastically.

ISOA is not resting on its successes to date — the academy team is looking forward, not backward. The resources and techniques that ISOA are bringing to employee training is undergoing a step change. The two-year transformation they are on will benefit all of the company’s personnel and facilities.

life-changing opportunities

ISOA offers life-changing opportunities for hundreds of young Saudis every year. The academy is delivering a technology-enabled learning environment, but equally important, it creates deep camaraderie among its APNEs as they progress through their program. As trainee Faisal A. Almutairi pointed out, his time at ISOA has been like being in one big family.

“The instructors are friendly and helpful, and we have learned so much throughout our time, “ he says as he looked forward to his on-the-job training, which was to start soon at Ras Tanura.

Practical training is central to ISOA’s transformation, says Al Ghamdi. And that extends to — when the transformation is complete — virtual (VR) training environments, such as leveraging VR technology to deliver an immersive and realistic training environment. This will be leaps and bounds ahead of static training, enabling trainees to “virtually” step into a wide range of environments that challenge them to engage in real world situations to test their clarity of thought and reaction times, and train them to deliver measured, appropriate responses in a wide range of situations.

bringing people and technology together

Al-Wuhaib points out that today’s youth have been brought up with technology and ISOA must proactively leverage that technology is only as good as the user. “With so many new tools and technologies at Saudi Aramco’s disposal, we are investing in our workforce because the best technology is only as good as the user,” he says.

This makes it a very exciting time for both new recruits and long-standing Industrial Security employees, who will be charged with everything from managing "smart gates" to supervising technology at the 911 response center, which can pinpoint where a caller is and whether they are on a landline or mobile phone — rapidly increasing response times — the way through to manning fleets of drones, delivering “eyes in the sky” across Saudi Aramco’s vast geographies.

All of this technology is being implemented across the vast range of Saudi Aramco’s geographies and assets, including marine, air, offshore, and onshore areas, to protect the company from all manner of risks. There is a huge range of working environments that ISOA is striving to protect every day around the clock.

a world-class academy

When ISOA’s transformation is complete, Al Ghamdi says, it will confirm its world-class status, providing globally recognized accredited certifications. Under its transformed training model, 80% of ISOA’s training will be hands-on, active, and outside of the classroom by 2021, plunging trainees into a wide range of environments that mirror as closely as possible the challenges that they would need to handle in the field. And this is not to mention the opportunity to apply for a planned elite squad of security personnel — something to which hundreds of security personnel will no doubt aspire. When 2021 arrives, and ISOA’s transformation is complete, it will be a model academy that many organizations will be inspired to follow.

“By then, ISOA will deliver the gold standard in practical training,” says Al-Wuhaib.
Building up the steel industry would also support Saudi Arabia’s oil and gas industry, as well as the construction, shipbuilding, and automobile sectors.

— Ahmad A. Al Sa‘adi

SPEED offers new opportunities for the development of production engineers

“Udhailiyah — The Southern Area Production Engineering Department (SAPED) rolled out earlier this year its overarching professional development program titled SAPED Production Engineering Expertise Development (SPEED).

The program is designed to develop pools of competent and specialized professionals in four production engineering domains — well performance, well integrity, well intervention, and production technology.

“Developing world-class technical expertise is at the center of the SAPED vision and a key enabler to drive organizational success,” said Hamad M. Al-Marri, SAPED manager. “The SPEED program provides a clear professional development road map for our engineers, in addition to serving as a single source for training information in the department.”

from foundation to expert level

Ramiro Cedeño, a production engineering technical adviser with SAPED, noted that “Training and development tools currently available in-house in our department and at a corporate level are customized and incorporated into the program to address the developing needs of production engineering professionals at various expertise stages — from foundation to expert level.”

A series of 10 awareness sessions was recently conducted across SAPED offices in ‘Udhailiyah, Abqaiq, Khurais, and Shaybah, as part of a SPEED program initial roll-out campaign, which attracted nearly 200 SAPED employees.

Sajid Mehmod, a senior petroleum engineer with SAPED working in Khurais and a SPEED program participant, described his reaction to the program by saying that “It is exhaustive and covers almost all aspects of production engineering.”

Hemant K. Sharma, a senior production engineer at SAPED working in ‘Udhailiyah and a SPEED program mentor, described how the program will help to enhance the function of production engineering by saying that “It is really a highly structured program that will help SAPED engineers as they move from foundation to expert level.”

extensive review and assessment

Prior to the inception of the program, an extensive review and assessment of SAPED professionals’ training and development tools and needs was conducted.

After identifying opportunities for improvement in the current practices, the program was structured to capitalize on some of the already existing initiatives and resources in consultation with subject matter experts from the Southern Area Oil Operations and the Upstream Production Development Center (UPDC).

The program targets the development of SAPED petroleum engineers — namely grade code 11 through 15. The program places SAPED petroleum engineers at one of five entry levels based on their expertise: Foundation, intermediate, skill, advanced, or expert. Employees at each level are provided new training standards and guides for developing three critical competencies: Technical, interpersonal, and conceptual.

The training curriculum and recommended development assignments at each level are designed to equip the employees with the needed knowledge and skill set to ultimately become experts in one of the production engineering domains with a focus on either oil or gas.

production engineer level expertise in the Southern Area Production Engineering Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>29.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>83.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>39.21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the way forward

The program’s governance is established to drive continuous improvements for employee development at SAPED, in line with Operational Excellence (OE) process 3.2. A committee chaired by Al-Marri with members from SAPED, SAOO MDD, and UPDC was created to oversee the program progress and updates.

In addition to enhancing the training of employees, the program is also intended to improve mentorship effectiveness by ensuring that department mentors receive the needed training and tools to share their experiences and knowledge with mentees more effectively.

Currently, there are 186 targeted program participants who are matched with 52 mentors. David Wilkie, a production engineering technical adviser at UPDC, commented that SAPED has a strong commitment to training.

“We track the average percent of progress of the participants assigned to the petroleum engineering curricula and SAOO is currently at 93%,” said Wilkie.
Jubail — The ‘Replacing Three Pipelines Northern Area Jubail (BI-10-01221)’ project was recently completed successfully by the Cross Country Pipelines Projects Division under Saudi Aramco’s Pipeline Projects Department.

The project met schedule and budget constraints through hard work, dedication, and coordination between Project Management, the Northern Area Pipelines Department (NAPD), and a lump sum turnkey contractor, with support from various company organizations such as Facilities Planning, Engineering, Loss Prevention, Project Inspection, and the Oil Supply Planning and Scheduling Department.

NAPD manager Faisal K. Al-Nuaimi thanked personnel for their hard work and dedication in the successful completion, emphasizing the importance of the safe completion and commissioning of the new facilities — executed in compliance with the High Order from the government to allow for Jubail Urban Development and Upstream Expansion of Berri Field.

Mansour S. Al-Shehri, manager of the Pipeline Projects Department (PPD), expressed his gratitude for NAPD’s support and thanked Project Management, Project Inspection, Loss Prevention, and the contractor for completing the challenging project within schedule and budget with the highest standards of safety and quality.

“This is how ‘project excellence’ is becoming our day-to-day work culture at PPD,” said Al-Shehri, noting that the strong relationship with the proponent — NAPD — and effective coordination with all stakeholders made the project a success for the company.

overcoming challenges through collaboration, coordination

In addition to previous pipeline relocations executed under several pipeline re-habilitation projects, BI-10-01221 was the first cross-country pipeline project to comply with the High Order mandated by the Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources to reroute approximately 18 pipelines due to the expansion of the urban development of Jubail City.

Under this project, three pipelines with a total length of approximately 109 kilometers were completed. The remaining 11 pipelines will be executed under project BI-10-02366, which is in the Design Basis Scoping Paper phase. The purpose of the facilities is to support the corporate strategy of maintaining a safe and reliable means of transporting hydrogen and gas in the Eastern Region while not being impacted by the population encroachment near Jubail.

One of the challenges encountered by BI-10-01221 was to achieve the shutdown of one pipeline instead of a hot tap and stoppage operation, taking into consideration the safety requirements and smooth operation of the existing system. NAPD and Project Management were able to secure the need-ed shutdowns, which included closing and de-gassing multiple pipelines to ensure safe isolation and completion of the remaining facilities. The 24-hour, around-the-clock work and efforts from Project Management, Operations, and the contractor during the shutdown process made it possible to achieve this massive work.

All of the complicated final tie-ins and piping modifications under the project were overcome to complete the scope on schedule. All pre-commissioning and commissioning work for mechanical, electrical, and instrumentation, including the leak detection system, were also completed.

Working in a short window that was granted to commission the facilities, the completion of the project ensured an efficient gas supply system in a timely fashion.

Ras Tanura — The Northern Area/Western Region Community Services Department, in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Department, Ras Tanura (RT) Elementary School, and community volunteers, recently launched its first Saudi Aramco Sea Turtle Awareness Campaign.

The ongoing initiative is designed to raise awareness and promote the importance of biodiversity in the Gulf region, as well as educate the community about the plight of sea turtles and the threat of extinction.

It was also a great chance to provide learning opportunities for students and the community to participate. Community participation and engagement in RT schools has great potential for building trust and account-ability by nurturing children to become more responsible and aware of their surrounding environment.

The campaign focuses on emotion-ally connecting the children to the meaning of keeping the environment clean and protecting endangered sea turtles, teaching them why it is important and why they should care. It is also designed to empower children to make significant changes for their world, as they are the future.

A classroom at Ras Tanura Elementary School takes part in an informative sea turtle learning session, part of a larger initiative to raise awareness and promote the importance of biodiversity and the role of endangered sea turtles in the ecosystem.

Taking measure of our environment sea turtles steal the show during biodiversity filming

By Charmain D. Ford

Ras Tanura — A current nationwide study of Saudi Arabia’s ecology and the importance of our biodiversity is underway to help us understand the wealth of plants and animals that inhabit the Kingdom and the surrounding marine environments of the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea.

The various ecosystems of the country contain different habitats that hold an assortment of organisms grouped in communities that play important roles in the overall environmental health and well-being, i.e., provision and recycling of nutrients and wastewater treatment.

In a collaborative effort, the Northern Area/Western Region Community Services Department and the Environmental Protection Department’s Ronald A. Loughland, along with several cinematographers from Italy, recently visited Ras Tanura (RT) to capture on film some of the area’s biodiversity.

A number of photo-shoots on the beaches featuring sea turtles were taken before the team ventured into the Arabian Gulf to film the local coral reefs and marine life along RT’s shorelines.

The objective of the visit was to assess and document the marine biodiversity adjacent to the community of RT for educational and informational purposes.
Saudi Aramco leads cybersecurity intelligence sharing consortium
to confront the IT threats ...
Using ‘Kahoot!’ Drilling and Workover leans on technology for communication

by Leonard Russell

Dhahran — Saudi Aramco’s Finance and Performance Management Division (F&PMD) in Drilling and Workover (D&W/O) recently hosted its first knowledge sharing event. The event focused on mental and physical health, safety, social responsibilities, and personal investment options. Topics include home security, volunteerism, winner behaviors, ketosis, and hearing and auditory perceptions. Event organizers designed and provided “take-away” business cards to attendees that provided key highlights of the presentations as references for follow-up conversations with friends and family.

The event included a competition element in which audience members were asked questions related to the presentations. After the last presenter, the audience used a mobile app called “Kahoot” to respond to their answers. Prizes were awarded to the top three audience members who answered the most questions related to the presentation, and the winner of the presentations was selected based on the total number of questions the overall audience answered related to their presentation.

A ceremony was also held to recognize individuals for their continuous commitment toward self-improvement, hard work, and excellence, with certificates awarded to each of the recipients. Abdulhameed A. Al-Rushaid, vice president of D&W/O, said he was pleasantly surprised by the contest to recognize the best presentation, and noted the excellent quality of presentations, audience participation, and general layout of the event. His management team also provided additional positive feedback, as they found both the topics interesting and enlightening.

In delivering concluding remarks, Al-Rushaid recommended F&PMD share their presentations with all of D&W/O and host an additional knowledge sharing event for those who could not attend.

more than language lessons

Local children expand English skills through TESOL program

by Ching Yeh

Dhahran — Education has long been a key value embraced by Saudi Aramco — for its employees and their dependents.

Community Education recently completed its Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages” (TESOL) summer program in Dhahran, offering four weeks of fun-filled learning and activities to 130 local children of Saudi Aramco employees. This year’s program featured the theme “Once Upon a Time,” with activities and classes geared toward teaching English through children’s fairy tales and fantasy stories.

Young children get a well-rounded experience

The program was divided into two sessions — a morning session with five classes for kindergarten children to second-graders, and an afternoon session with five classes for third- to fifth-graders. Busing was provided to students to attend the activities.

Students rotated in five classes, including reading, writing, science, art, and physical education, with an interlude of assemblies and a field day. Each classroom had two teachers and two student teachers, plus a chaperone who stayed with the same group of children for the entire course of the program from June 25 to July 17.

“We had a very good teacher-student ratio to ensure each student was given adequate individual attention and care,” said Theresa Ratcliff, coordinator of Community Education — a branch of the Saudi Aramco Expatriate Schools (SAES) system. She noted all 15 student teachers were high school or college students, with some of them being TESOL alumni.

What TESOL is all about?

TESOL, which has been running annually for more than 20 years, was designed for students to learn English through fun activities, Ratcliff said.

“When we were planning the class, we made sure the kids would have fun at the summer program,” said one of the art teachers, Elizabeth Carrington, who has returned to teach at TESOL for several years. Apart from knowledge-based learning and fun activities, students also learned about soft skills, including leadership, sportsmanship, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

Soft skills help children navigate a world that requires more collaboration and better communication. These skills also “help children rise to challenges in the ever changing world they face,” said Ratcliff.

Parent tested, parent approved

The program has received a full endorsement from Saudi parents in Dhahran for its quality.

“They are learning and having fun at the same time. I’ve trusted the school since the day my kids started the program,” said Na- beel Al-Ghamdi, who had two children at the recent camp — son 11-year-old Bader and daughter 8-year-old Ward. “My children love the whole journey — from riding the bus to school until they come home,” said Al-Ghamdi, who works with Saudi Aramco’s Transportation and Equipment Services Department.

TESOL offers a quality program conducted by capable educators, and signifies care from the company for children of its employees,” said Yasser Habidi, whose 10-year-old daughter, Deema, and 8-year-old son, Badr, joined the program.

Habidi, who works with the Loss Prevention Department, said he hopes to have his daughter return someday to be a student teacher.

At the end of the program, parents were mesmerized by a presentation of pictures and videos produced by the student teachers about the students’ day-to-day activities, and were entertained by their children’s skit and Zumba dance. Parents also had a chance to visit each classroom and listened to their children explain what they had learned in the program.

Other than TESOL, Community Education provides elementary foreign language programs for Saudi Aramco Expatriate Schools Division students, as well as various classes for teens and adults in such subjects as languages, technology, fitness, communication, and fashion.

— Yasser Habidi

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages offers a quality program conducted by capable educators. The program signifies care from the company for children of its employees.

by Ching Yeh

Dhahran — Nearly 130 local children of Saudi Aramco employees participated in the four-week program sponsored by Community Education. (Photos: Miral Khafagy and Hailey Waldner)

Nor Al-Khayat uses her imagination during a writing exercise during the TESOL summer program that recently concluded in Dhahran. Nearby 130 local children of Saudi Aramco employees participated in the four-week program sponsored by Community Education.

Local children expand English skills through TESOL program
Jordan — Jordan is a place that everyone must visit at least once. It hosts one of the seven ancient wonders in the magnificent Petra, and there’s so much else to see.

We traveled directly to Amman from Dammam and rented a car to explore the country. Its many archeological sites offer an excellent opportunity to relive a magnificent past. Amman: a charming city of contrasts

Situated on a hilly area between the desert and the fertile Jordan Valley, Amman, the capital, is a charming city of contrasts with its blend of old and new.

The area known as the Citadel sits on the city’s highest hill, Jabal Al Qala’a. Pottery from the Neolithic period has been found there, and it boasts a diverse range of previous inhabitants, after which came a period of decline when the former city became an abandoned pile of ruins only sporadically used by Bedouin and seasonal farmers. The site is considered important because of its long history of occupation by great civilizations. Most of the buildings still visible are from the Roman, Byzantine, and Umayyad periods, and artifacts dating from the Bronze Age show that the hill was a fortress and/or agora (open space for commerce and politics) for thousands of years.

Two giant standing pillars are the remains of the Roman Temple of Hercules. Once connected to the Forum (downtown), the temple was built during the reign of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. One rather touching remnant is a stone-carved hand, identified as that of Hercules. The statue to which the hand belonged is estimated to have been over 12 meters (m) tall. All that remains are three fingers and an elbow.

Nearby is a lookout with sweeping views of the downtown area, where it is possible to admire the elegant white houses in accordance with a municipal law that requires all buildings to be faced with local stone. The Citadel’s most impressive series of historic buildings is situated around the Umayyad Palace. Believed to be the work of Umayyad Arabs, the palace was an extensive complex of royal and residential buildings.

Coming from the south, the first major building belonging to the palace complex is the domed audience hall. A restored theater, which is cut into the northern side of a hill, was built on three tiers — the rulers sat closest to the action, the military secured the middle section, and the general public squatted from the top rows.

Jerash: a spectacle, well-preserved

A one-hour drive away is the ancient city of Jerash, with its unbroken chain of occupation dating back 6,500 years. Hidden for centuries in sand before being excavated and restored, the well-preserved Jerash reveals an example of the grand, formal provincial Roman urbanism found throughout the Middle East.

Strolling through, you see paved and columned streets, soaring hilltop temples, handsome theaters, spacious public squares and piazzas, baths, and fountains. It was only rediscovered in the early 1800s, and excavation began in 1925. Guidebook in hand, we made sure to visit the Forum, the Temple of Artemis, and the North Theater — all beautifully restored as well.

Patria: every angle is rich with discovery

We then hit the King’s highway, a longer route with breathtaking views. We needed to be in Petra — among the honeycomb of hand-heaven caves, temples, and tombs carved from blushing pink sandstone in the high desert of Jordan 2,000 years ago — by evening for the magnificent light show. Upon arrival, we walked along the path between the canyons, with candles placed on the sides. At the last canyon, two rocks unfolded like a curtain and we were able to catch a glimpse of an astonishing view as hundreds of candles illuminate the “Treasury.”

Music added magnificence to the monument, as musicians played ancient traditional instruments, lights changed colors over the façade, and ancestral narrations took place. Petra was rediscovered by Swiss explorer Johann Burckhardt in 1812 and continues to spill its secrets. The Petra Archaeological Park covers an area of 264,000 m² within Wadi Musa and is considered a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

the fascination of nature and territory

The next day, we drove southward and reached Wadi Rum — also known as the Valley of the Moon — which is cut into the sandstone and granite rock in southern Jordan 60 km to the east of Asaba. It is the largest wadi in Jordan.

Wadi Rum had been inhabited since prehistoric times by many cultures, including the Nabataeans. Jordan’s desert is, in a word, majestic. Its lunar-like landscape crevice-riddled cliffs inspire unbridled awe. Signs of ancient caravans can be seen on Wadi Rum’s rocks in the form of squiggly characters, drawings of camels, and the men who rode them.

Khazali ravine is one spot where you can see these drawings. One hulking red sand dune, formed by millions of years of sandstone cliff erosion, is a particular attraction. Another must visit is one of the desert’s rock bridges, such as Jabal Umm Fruth.

Our last stop was the Dead Sea in the Jordan Rift Valley — more than 400 m below sea level. The lowest point on Earth, this vast stretch of water receives a number of incoming rivers. Once the waters reach here, they are land-locked and evaporate, leaving behind a dense, rich, cocktail of salts and minerals. It is deemed to be the second saltiest major body of water in the world, with its name originating because the water is too saline for marine inhabitation.

The Dead Sea’s rich, black mud has been touted as miraculous for beauty products that provide a healthy mineral infusion for the body.

We wanted to experience it, so we became black covered creatures waiting for the mud to dry. It was such a beneficial healthy day, feeling spoiled in one of the resorts along the sea.
JITC students visit serious accident victims, share key lessons

by Usman Haroon

Jeddah — Some Jiddah Industrial Training Center (JITC) students taking part in recent Traffic Week activities were shocked to witness firsthand how seriously patients at Abdul Latif Jameel Hospital were injured as a result of car accidents.

They were stunned to find patients who, even though they were once young and had a bright future ahead of them, remained hospitalized for years after their accidents.

Trainees listened closely to the precious advice offered by patients suffering from the long-term effects of being in serious motor vehicle accidents.

“As you know, these hospitals are full of people, and we really hope we can make a difference by educating our students about the dangers of reckless driving,” said acting JITC principal Grahame Franks.

from the mouths of those who have suffered

Trainees listened to some patients who had been in the hospital for years, and then conveyed their message to other trainees with a series of presentations and video. One of the videos played was of a person who had been in the hospital for 24 years. He advised the trainees to stay safe, follow safety rules, and not waste their youth like he did by driving recklessly.

Later, every apprentice who interviewed a patient was able to share his experience before a packed JITC auditorium by spreading their story and how the experience shaped their behavior in a positive way.

“11% good for trainees to convey this important message of their visit to others wherever they may be, said Mohammed Habib, JITC safety adviser. “Students need to hear this powerful message from the patients themselves. They have experienced these accidents; we need to learn from them.”

our families and future need us ...

Many apprentices asked how their accidents happened, wondering how to best avoid making the same mistakes as them. They were all grateful for their own health and not being in the same situation, vowing not to drive fast and to follow traffic rules.

One apprentice described how seeing so many patients being cared for by their mothers and family members was an overwhelming experience.

“We take everything for granted, and I hope by visiting the patients, it will change our behavior,” said Waleed Al Omari. “Our family and future need us. I should be taking care of my mother — not the other way around. Driving fast isn’t worth it. Family and my future is dearer to me than anything else.”

Such visits have long been a part of the JITC management’s efforts to serve as a constant reminder about the dangers of reckless driving.

Ithra movies

Ithra is a non-profit cultural institution established in 2017 to bring art, culture and science to Saudi Arabia. They partner with international cultural organizations to bring world-class exhibitions and events and make them accessible to the Saudi public.

King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture
by saudi aramco

Ithra movies

in cinema

Ithra Heroes Adventure
July 31 10:30 a.m.
Aug. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 10:30 a.m.

Ponyo
July 31 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 5:30 p.m.

Wasati
July 31, Aug. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 3:30 p.m.
Aug. 1, 2, 8:15 p.m.

Energy Exhibit Theater
Mysteries of the Unseen World
July 31 6 p.m.
Aug. 1 5 p.m., 7 p.m.
Discover the wonder of Jordan

Jordan is a place everyone should visit at least once. From one of the Seven Wonders of the World at Petra to the capital Amman to the well-preserved ancient city of Jerash, the Mediterranean country has something for everyone — and more. See page 8

Citizenship in action

Community Services campaign donates dates to those in need

by Ching Yeh

DHAHRAH — In an impressive effort by individuals in Saudi Aramco’s Gardening and Sanitation Division (G&SSD), the annual Date Donation Program is being achieved in a way to promote humanity, as well as preserve natural resources.

Nabeel A. Dughaither, G&SSD head, who directs the program in the Dhahran community during the harvest season, emphasized that the company is expected to donate approximately 5,000 boxes of dates (nearly 1 kilogram per box) to the needy in the region which creates a significant social impact.

“This is a yearly initiative where we make sure that date fruits are distributed to nearby municipal charities every harvesting season,” said department manager Meshal S. Al-Khalidi. “The initiative is part of Community Services’ outreach programs and corporate social responsibilities.”

In the year’s date season (July and August), G&SSD is geared up for a successful donation campaign, choosing to distribute the dates to 10 government-approved charities in al-Khobar and Dammam. Last year, the company donated 4,000 boxes to seven local charitable institutions.

Giving more to those who need it the most

“In this year’s donation, we plan to increase the quantity of dates and the number of charities we give to,” said Suhad K. Al-Faddagh, a senior supervisor in the division, who for the past few years, started to track the decades-old donation program.

“As soon as the dates are being collected, they must be straightaway delivered to retain their freshness,” she said.

Her colleague, quality assurance officer Sara N. Al-Anazi, takes on the responsibility of arranging the communications, delivery, and distribution of the dates on the same day of collecting to charitable institutions, which includes Fatat Al-Khaleej Charity, Food Bank, Wedad Charity Foundation, Jood Charity, Mubarat Elehsan, and Wud Charity.

The art of picking dates

G&SSD has dedicated significant manpower to collect the dates. Each day, the field inspectors from a contracting company patrol the area to check which palm trees have ripe dates ready for harvest. The dates are hand-picked from nearly 13,000 palm trees scattered throughout the Dhahran community by a dozen of gardeners contracted by G&SSD.

Date picking requires proficient skills and intensive labor efforts. Each skilled gardener uses a sling around his waist, which he wraps around a tree trunk to climb up to reach the date cluster. He then selectively picks each date to be placed into a bucket attached to his sling.

He only collects the dates from trees below 10 meters for safety reasons.

“Heat and humidity are two key factors to ripening the dates more quickly,” said Sami Peromal, a manager for the contractor, Al Marzouk. “The perfect time to pluck individual dates from a palm tree is when the dates reach the stage of rutab,” said Peromal. “It’s best to consume the dates at the stages of rutab and tamer.”

G&SSD strives to uphold the corporate value of Citizenship by conducting such humanitarian campaigns, all while sustaining the quality service to its primary stakeholders.

All about dates

There are several stages of dates growth, including kimri, khalal, besser, rutab (partially ripped), tamer (fully ripped), and dried tamer. It takes about 90 days to grow dates after pollination. There are six major types of dates in Dhahran — khody, barhi, khenayz, khulas, ghur, and hilali, which vary based on the palm trees in the Eastern Province.

Sunset over calm waters

Michael V. Olmedilla was on vacation in his hometown of Angono, Rizal in the Philippines when he captured this sunset on quiet waters while riding a bangka (wooden boat). He used his iPhone XS Max to take the photograph. Olmedilla, a technical clerk engineer in the Job Evaluation Division, has been with the company for 10 years.