

## HM greets Saudi King



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**H**is Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa sent a cable of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the occasion of Saudi Arabia's National Day.

HM the King expressed his best wishes of health, happiness and

long life to King Salman and of further progress and prosperity to the people of Saudi Arabia, under his wise leadership.

## PM greets Saudi Prince



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**H**is Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa yesterday sent a cable of congratulations to the Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Premier and Defence Minister, Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the National Day of Saudi Arabia, expressing pride in the great role played by Saudi, under the leadership of

the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, to enhance joint Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) action. HRH Premier wished the Saudi Crown Prince abundant health and happiness, and the brotherly Saudi people further progress and prosperity.

## National Day greetings



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**H**is Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, has sent a cable of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the National Day of Saudi Arabia.

HRH the Crown Prince wished King Salman abundant health, happiness and long life, and further progress and prosperity to the brotherly Saudi people.

The Crown Prince sent a similar congratulatory cable to the Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Premier and Defence Minister, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

### Riyadh

**W**ith iconic buildings bathed in green light and planned cultural shows, concerts and fireworks, Saudi Arabia geared up to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the kingdom yesterday.

Car stereos blared patriotic songs as citizens began racing through the streets of the capital Riyadh at midnight in cars bedecked with the national flag to mark the annual event in the kingdom, founded in the 1930s.

"On this great occasion, we feel that the kingdom has become an important state with a pioneering role at the regional and international levels," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in a speech cited by the official Saudi Press Agency.

"What our country is witnessing today is due to the continuation by King Salman of what has been done by the former kings of this country of giving, goodness and development as well as efforts to serve Islam and support Muslims," he said.

The 32-year-old prince is set to be the first millennial to occupy the throne in a country where half the population is under 25, though the timing of his ascension remains unknown.

"The kingdom is an active member in the G20, the world's strongest 20 economies, and is keen to achieve the kingdom's Vision 2030 that represents the beginning of a new phase of hard work for a better future, with the same Islamic values," Prince Mohammed said in his speech.

The Crown Prince also reiterated the Kingdom's resolve to root out

terrorism and extremism. "Under the leadership of King Salman, this country has affirmed its right to uphold the truth and commitment to its principles to achieve justice as well as its quest for the achievement of regional security and world peace."

The kingdom's General Entertainment Authority is hosting 27 events across 17 cities to celebrate national day, including concerts, laser shows and firework displays.

Celebrations with the motto of "Strengthening Social Bonds," began on Thursday and will run through Monday in Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Hail, Alkhobar, Jazan, Abha, Onaiza, Tabuk, Sakaka, Jubail, Yanbu, Hafr Al-Batain, Hofuf, Madinah and Najran.

The festivities are part of a government bid to boost national pride and improve the quality of life for Saudis.

The main highlight will be a cultural event at the King Fahd stadium in Riyadh, where women have been invited for the first time to attend celebrations with their families, opening up a previously male-only venue. The presence of women at the King Fahd stadium marks a departure from previous celebrations in the Gulf kingdom where they are effectively barred from sports arenas by strict rules.

Women were allowed to enter the stadium, a previously male-only venue used mostly for football matches, with their families and seated separately from single men to watch a musical show and a play on Saudi history.

"We hope in the future that there will be no restrictions on our entrance to the stadium," Um Abdulrahman, a woman from the northwestern city of

Tabuk, told AFP.

As a swell of enthusiastic women cheering swept through the stadium, with a few wearing colourful wigs on top of their veils, some Saudi men on social media lauded their participation as a "historic" moment.

"Looks like women bought all the tickets!" one Saudi man quipped on Twitter.

The General Entertainment Authority, the government agency organizing the National Day festivities, expects some 1.5 million Saudis to attend events in 17 cities over four days.

Saudi chefs in the Red Sea city of Jeddah broke the Guinness world record for baking the biggest marble cake -- with green icing -- to mark national day, the government said. (Agencies)



Saudi families sit in a stadium to attend an event in the capital Riyadh

A Saudi boy flashes the victory gesture while carrying a flag bearing the image of the king