

REPORT

ish the guilty and maintain relationships with Ankara. However, his main promise was an oath to turn the new Middle East into a new Europe. «This is my personal war, I don't want to leave this life until I see the Middle East ahead of the whole World. I'm sure that this will certainly come true,» said HRH the Crown Prince.

During the session, at which HRH Mohammed bin Salman spoke with the HRH Crown Prince of Bahrain and the Prime Minister of Lebanon, they spoke about the reforms that Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries are pursuing in order to abandon their oil dependence. According to HRH the Crown Prince, the country's non-oil revenues have tripled over the past two years, and the number of jobs has doubled. HRH the Crown Prince also said that the capitalisation of the public investment fund in Saudi Arabia will reach \$ 400 billion by the end of 2019. «We continue to implement all our projects, despite attempts from outside to hinder our efforts,» said HRH Mohammed bin Salman.

In confirmation of his words, almost all Saudi speakers at the forum spoke about the progress in implementing Vision 2030. In particular, Al-Falih announced the launch of the National Development and Logistics Program. «The program's strategy is to transform Saudi Arabia into a leading industrial state and global logistics platform,» he said. «Its goal is to increase GDP by \$ 586 billion by 2030, provide 1.6 million new jobs and actively attract investments.»

«The strength we need to develop in the Arab world today is the power of innovation. Existing pipelines should become credit lines for businesses. Oil refineries will be technological incubators,» said HRH Salman bin Hamad, the Crown Prince of Bahrain.

WHAT IS BEING BUILT IN SAUDI ARABIA?

Contracts worth over \$ 55 billion were signed over the three days of the forum. More than half involved Saudi Aramco. In particular, the company agreed to start building a petrochemical complex in partnership with Total. Trafigura Singapore plans to build the first copper smelter in the Arabian Peninsula. There are plans to create two silicone factories, as well as many other projects on localisation of production and technology development.



PIRECECABEHO VISION MEDIA CENTER

Another area for development in the Kingdom is the entertainment industry. So-called giga projects will help to change the concept of recreation, including attitudes towards sports, as well as creating additional jobs outside the oil sector. These giga projects include one that is based on the Silicon Valley model: the city of the future — Neom, which will become an economic free zone and a scientific cluster; two huge tourist zones (Red Sea and AMALAA), as well as the educational and entertainment park Qiddiya. The launch of the first phase of these projects is planned for 2022. The forecasted number of jobs in tourism is 1.2 mil-

lion in 2020, revenue from tourism is expected to reach \$ 47 billion per year.

John Pagano, the CEO of the Red Sea Development Company, promised that work on the project will begin in 2019. According to the plans, the first visitors may be able to see Neom next year. The authorities of the Kingdom did not exclude the possibility that FII 2019 could be held in Neom. Nadhmi A. Al-Nasr, Executive Director of the Neom project, conducted dozens of negotiations with potential partners and investors at the forum this year. According to him, he was convinced that they were still ready to cooperate. The full implementation of the

MINISTER OF ENERGY OF SAUDI ARABIA KHALID AL-FALKH BELIEVES THAT THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION SHOULD NOT INFLUENCE LARGE INVESTMENT PROCESSES

project, which will be built on an area of 26.5 thousand square kilometers on the Red Sea coast, will take many years. It is planned that the city will use only solar and wind energy and will become a technological hub for Asia and Africa. The investment potential of the project is \$500 billion. Russian companies have been invited to take part in it. The invitation was made personally by HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during his meeting with the Russian delegation.

RUSSIA IN THE MIDDLE OF AN OASIS

The Russians were especially welcomed at the forum. This was primarily because Russian businessmen had not changed their plans to visit the event. HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, welcoming the guests, said, «Now we know who our best friends are.»

The business part of FII is the subject of a separate story (see p. 14-15). Nevertheless, it is impossible not to forget the most unexpected part of the Russian participation in the forum — its cultural program. The members of the Russian delegation — Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund; Dmitry Konov, head of SIBUR; Mark Garber, GHP Group; Andrei Kostin, VTB; Mikhail Piotrovsky, director of the Hermitage Museum — said that there should be no boundaries for investments, technologies, science and culture. They built a new image of Russia for Arab, Western and Asian businessmen. What is especially appealing to the Russians is that Saudi Arabia adopted the concept of the country's development not only through the economy, but also culture. In the coming years, it plans to open 18 new museums, 80 cultural and historical heritage sites in the Kingdom. According to Mikhail Piotrovsky, Russia is ready to help the Saudi side in developing its museums. The first Wassily Kandinsky from the Russian Museum is scheduled in the near future. Three paintings by Kandinsky and two by Filonov were displayed in the Russian pavilion at the forum. Kirill Dmitriev stated that it is not enough to build strong relationships between states alone. It is vital to build up dialogue between cultures and Russia is ready to start. ■



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NEW CIVILIZATIONAL CENTERS ARE ABLE TO CHANGE GEOGRAPHICAL STEREOTYPES IN THE NEAR FUTURE-THIS IS THE POINT OF VIEW OF SAUDI ARABIA

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