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French national day celebrated in Jeddah with fervor

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French Consul General to Jeddah Louis Blin awards Sheikh Khairy Al-Kabbani — SG photos

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JEDDAH — French expatriates celebrated their national day at the residence of the French consul general in Jeddah during an evening filled with national symbols.

The national day, often called “Le Quatorze Juillet” for the date it is celebrated, commemorates the beginning of the French Revolution with the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, in addition to the “Fête de la Fédération” that celebrated the unity of the French people one year later.

Despite this year's national day falling in the middle of Ramadan, the reception at the residence of the French consul general was heavily attended by officials, French nationals and other invitees.

Special guest was Mohammed Al-Tayeb, director general of the Saudi Foreign Ministry's Makkah Region branch.

Following the national anthems of France and the Kingdom, French Consul General Louis Blin gave a speech in fluent Arabic, highlighting the activities held with the help of his colleagues to promote French culture as well as to provide a platform for Saudi artists.

The awards given by the consulate to two prominent Saudi women for their "overall achievement" and "excellence in the field of arts" earlier this year on the occasion of International Women's Day were one example of how the French Consulate promotes Saudi culture and accomplishments, he said.

Blin stressed the increasing importance of his consulate, saying the number of French nationals registered at the consulate, which covers the Kingdom's nine western provinces, increased 20 percent to 2,630.

The number of registrations had doubled over the last four years, he added.

As a result, the French Ministry of Education and the Makkah governorate in May launched the construction of a "larger and more beautiful" International French School of Jeddah, which this year saw a 100 percent success rate of students graduating from high school, at the Prince Sultan Cultural Center in the north of the city.

Blin also thanked the consulate's "numerous Saudi friends" who are dedicated to serving French pilgrims coming to visit Makkah and Madinah.

Recently, an association was established and in cooperation with the public authorities, a "Pilgrimage Charter" was adopted to frame its activities.

"Finally, I want to distinguish this year two great friends of the consulate general, without which it would not be what it is," Blin concluded, awarding Sheikh Khairy Al-Kabbani and Bachar Sabbagh with the trophy of the consulate, created this year, for their contributions to the consulate.