

Saudi billionaire prince to launch Arab news channel

MANAMA, BAHRAIN: Saudi billionaire businessman Prince Alwaleed bin Talal is to launch an Arab satellite news channel on February 1, vowing to "break the mould" in a crowded field...



Bahrain-based Alarab News Channel, broadcasting in Arabic, said Monday it would usher in "a completely new style of news programming in the Middle East and beyond".

Through his Riyadh-based Kingdom Holding Co, Alwaleed has diversified investments that include luxury global hotels as well as international media firms News Corporation and Time Warner.

Established pan-Arab satellite channels have been accused of reflecting the political views of their owners, particularly after the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings against authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa.

'Breaking the mould'

Alarab will enter a market revolutionised by Qatar-funded Al-Jazeera almost 20 years ago when it became the region's first pan-Arab news television broadcaster.

Dubai-based Al-Arabiya, belonging to the MBC Group owned and chaired by Sheikh Waleed al-Ibrahim, a brother-in-law of Saudi Arabia's late King Fahd, followed in 2003.

"Alarab will break the mould of news presentation, becoming a platform for transparent presentation and discussion of the region's most intractable issues," it said in a statement.

Alarab's general manager is Jamal Khashoggi, a veteran Saudi journalist forced to step down from the helm of the kingdom's *Al-Watan* daily in 2010 after it ran an opinion column that angered religious conservatives.

Alarab will also be competing against other relative newcomers such as Sky News Arabia, France 24 in Arabic and the BBC's Arabic service.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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