

BLBG meeting 25th November – “State of the Nation”

Her Majesty’s Ambassador’s annual address to the British Lebanese Business Group (BLBG) is eagerly awaited and usually results in the best turnout of the year. Last night, over seventy braved heavy rain in the dark to get to “the residence” in the hills above Beirut, and they were not disappointed.

Rather than stick to the tried and trusted formula of describing the regional political situation, HMA Tom Fletcher first described the successes of flourishing trade between the two countries. Annual exports from the UK are now running at well over the half billion pound mark, with Scottish salmon, Scotch whiskey, high end yachts, British Airways and Perkins engines getting special mention. There has also been a dramatic increase in UK brands on the Lebanese High street, Lush cosmetics have just opened their third branch here for example. An historical parallel was drawn between the Phoenicians, (the old name for the Lebanese), and the British as maritime trading nations.

He went on to talk about increasing links in many other spheres before drawing inspiration from a recent Lebanese invention for measuring the human body’s vital signs. Worn on the wrist, the “Up”, as it is called, measures heart rate, number of steps taken, breathing rate etc. before regularly uploading them to a handy iPad. The rhetorical question posed was what would such an instrument show if put on Lebanon’s hypothetical wrist. Still alive and functioning but in need of external support was the net of HMA’s view.

The whole event was fuelled with excellent canapés, some using one of Scotland’s exports mentioned above and lubricated, if one wished, with the other one, or, of course, with Lebanese wines.

An excellent evening, lively, informative and fun.