

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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HUMAN RIGHTS

PRINCE NAYEF MEETS WITH MEN AND WOMEN OF NHRA

Interior Minister Prince Nayef met on April 7 with members of the newly-formed non-governmental National Human Rights Association (NHRA), both men and women. Wishing NHRA every success, he confirmed that he had instructed all government agencies to support and cooperate with the Association, and stressed that women are men's partners in building and developing society within the framework of adherence to Islamic principles.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM ROOTED IN ISLAMIC LAW

A symposium April 4-6 on the Kingdom's judicial system stressed the comprehensiveness of Shariah [Islamic Law], its viability at all times and places, and its ability to accommodate new concepts. Legal procedures should be equitable and supportive of the rights of the individual; penal procedures should reflect human dignity; and judicial systems should be in harmony with the Kingdom's commitment to international regulations on investment, crime-fighting, corruption, terrorism, and money laundering. Both government and private institutions can assist the role of justice in the field of human rights.

TERRORISM

PRAISE FOR SAUDI COOPERATION IN WAR ON TERRORISM

National Security Advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice, testifying before the 9-11 Commission on April 8, declared: *"I think that we have had, really, very good cooperation with Saudi Arabia since 9/11, and since the May 12th attacks on Riyadh even greater cooperation, because Saudi Arabia is I think fully enlisted in the war on terrorism."* Her testimony affirms the strong partnership that exists between the United States and Saudi Arabia in the fight against terrorism.

SECURITY

BORDER POLICE STOP ILLEGAL CROSSINGS INTO KINGDOM

Saudi border police detained 51,811 people trying to cross illegally into Saudi Arabia during the month of Muharram (February 21 – March 21, 2004). Of these, 702 were arrested along the Kingdom's northern frontier and 47,599 in the southern province of Jizan.

IRAQ

CABINET, SHURA COUNCIL EXPRESS CONCERN OVER IRAQ

At its April 12 meeting, the Council of Ministers reiterated its concern over the situation in Iraq, especially the great many casualties among innocent civilians, including women, children, and the elderly; and stressed the importance of ensuring security in Iraq in order to accomplish the aspirations of the Iraqi people in regaining sovereignty over and reconstructing their country. These aspirations, the Cabinet stated, will not be achieved unless the United Nations assumes its basic role in accordance with its resolutions and relevant regulations.

The same day, the Shura Council issued a statement expressing its deep concern about the killings and destruction in Iraq at a time when Iraqis have been promised freedom and democracy, and called for an immediate halt to these acts in order to spare the shedding of Iraqi blood. Wished the people of Iraq every progress and prosperity, the Council urged them to unite and not to allow the perpetrators of violence to force them apart.

ECONOMY

NATURAL GAS FORUM TO BE HELD IN MAY

The first Saudi forum focusing on natural gas is to be held at the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce and Industry (EPCCI) from May 15 to 17. The forum will provide opportunities for the Kingdom's businessmen and those in neighboring countries to meet with executives of major international oil and gas companies, and learn about investment in Saudi Arabia's new gas projects.

RAILROAD EXPANSION READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

General President of the Saudi Railways Organization (SRO) Khaled Al-Yahya has confirmed that three major projects for the expansion of the Kingdom's railway system have been approved by the Supreme Economic Council (SEC) for immediate implementation by the private sector: extending the existing Dammam-Riyadh line to Jeddah; connecting Makkah with Madinah through Jeddah; and linking Riyadh with the phosphate and bauxite mines in the provinces of Qasim and Northern Borders.

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