

# *SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS*

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## **OIL**

### **OIL MINISTER ADVOCATES INCREASE IN PRODUCTION CEILING**

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi issued a statement on May 10 attributing the increase in oil prices on the international market to such causes as the market's unwarranted fear of disruption in oil supplies; the trend among traders to purchase long-term contracts; and stringent U.S. environmental regulations that have aggravated the crisis. He then expressed the Kingdom's belief that increasing OPEC's production ceiling is essential for keeping the balance of supply and demand.

Ambassador to the United States Prince Bandar bin Sultan confirmed that it is necessary for OPEC to increase the production ceiling by at least 1.5 million barrels per day. Saudi Arabia, he said, will consult on this matter with OPEC members at the May 22-24, 2004 meeting of the International Energy Forum in the Netherlands, prior to the June OPEC meeting in Beirut.

## **TERRORISM**

### **GCC STATES SIGN SECURITY AGREEMENT ON COMBATING TERRORISM**

The member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), meeting in Kuwait on May 4, 2004, signed a security agreement on combating terrorism, similar to, but more comprehensive than, the agreement signed in 1998 by the League of Arab States. At the meeting, Interior Minister Prince Nayef gave assurances that the situation in the Kingdom is under control, and that economic activities in Saudi Arabia have not been affected by the recent acts of terrorism.

### **PRINCE SAUD REASSURES EXPATRIATES OF THEIR SAFETY**

In a press briefing, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal stressed that Saudi Arabia is resolved to use "an iron fist" in dealing with terrorists, who, he said, are criminals and blasphemers, acting contrary to religion. Addressing the issue of the security of foreigners in the Kingdom, he said Saudi Arabia is doing all it can to protect expatriates, and hoped that the United States and Great Britain will be convinced that their citizens are safe in the Kingdom, noting that many Americans and Britons have expressed confidence in the measures taken and stated their desire to stay in spite of warnings from their governments.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **REPEAT OF 2003 NEWS ITEM DENYING TORTURE ALLEGATIONS**

Saudi Arabia has countered allegations of torture again brought up by Canadian citizen Mr. William Sampson by reiterating the denial issued on September 11, 2003, in which it was reported that Canadian officials had confirmed that previous reports of Sampson suffering torture in Saudi Arabia were incorrect, and that the Canadian Ambassador to the Kingdom had reported Sampson telling consular officials that he had been well treated, as did Sampson's father, who visited him twice.

## **REFORM**

### **SHURA COUNCIL APPROVES AMENDMENT OF NATURALIZATION LAW**

The Consultative Council (Majlis-Al-Shura) has approved amendment of the Saudi Naturalization Law, with changes to eight of the 38 articles, dealing with such issues as the conditions for granting Saudi nationality to a foreigner, and the situation of a naturalized foreigner's wife and children.

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