

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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FOREIGN AID

TELETHON RAISES OVER \$80 MILLION FOR TSUNAMI VICTIMS

The telethon organized by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdulaziz to raise funds for the victims of the tsunami has raised well over U.S. \$80 million. King Fahd personally donated SR 20 million [U.S. \$5.33 million]; Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz donated SR 10 million [\$2.66 million], and Second Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector-General, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, SR 5 million [\$1.33 million].

Donations collected do not include in-kind contributions from Saudi citizens and companies and are in addition to \$30 million in aid Saudi Arabia has pledged thus far and \$510 million pledged by the Saudi-based Islamic Development Bank on January 4.

The Kingdom has been on the forefront in overseas development assistance. Over the past three decades, Saudi Arabia's foreign aid has averaged about 4% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), well above the official United Nations goal of 0.7%.

SAUDI AID TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO ALL NEED, REGARDLESS OF RELIGION

Saudi Arabia's contributions to nations affected by the tsunami are being distributed to victims regardless of religion, Saudi Ambassador in Sri Lanka Mohamed Al-Ali told *Arab News* last week. Ambassador Al-Ali personally delivered a cash donation to the government of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the Saudi Embassy in Colombo is overseeing the distribution of relief supplies in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The first Saudi relief planes carrying foods, medical supplies, tents, and blankets, were dispatched to Sri Lanka within days of the disaster. Supply planes were subsequently dispatched to tsunami victims in the Maldives, Indonesia, and Thailand.

TERRORISM

FOUR SUSPECTED TERRORISTS KILLED IN SHOOTOUT IN DESERT

Security forces killed four terrorist suspects in a shootout in the Nafud Al-Thoweirat desert, 90 km north of Al-Zulfi. Three security officers were slightly injured in the encounter. Explosives, weapons and ammunition, and documents were found at the scene.

ECONOMY

STOCK MARKET ENDS YEAR UP 85%, MARKET CAPITALIZATION UP 94.7%

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index closed 2004 up 84.93% with a market capitalization of U.S. \$306.3 billion, an increase of 94.7% from 2003. The total value traded during 2004 was U.S. \$403 billion, up 197% from the previous year. The total volume traded during 2004 was 10.3 billion shares, up 85%, while the total number of transactions registered an increase of 254% to 13.3 million transactions during the same period. The services sector was the most active in terms of volume traded in 2004, with 40.6% of the total. The industrial sector led in terms of value and transactions with 407 million transactions valued at \$166.6 billion, a 35.2% share of the total value traded and 34.9% of the total executed transaction.

Between 1995 and 2004, the all share index has increased 499.85% and market capitalization has risen by 650.98%.

HAJJ

FOREIGN PILGRIMS ARRIVING IN SAUDI ARABIA SURPASS 1 MILLION

The number of pilgrims who arrived from abroad in Saudi Arabia to perform this year's Hajj stands at 1,074,238 as of Monday, including 147,010 Indonesian pilgrims.

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