

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE
INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE
ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA
IN WASHINGTON, DC

APRIL 26, 2005

SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS

CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH MEETS PRESIDENT BUSH IN TEXAS

Crown Prince Abdullah was received on April 25 by President George W. Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Arriving in Texas on April 23, the Crown Prince held talks the next day in Dallas with Vice-President Dick Cheney after attending a luncheon hosted by the Vice-President. He also met with former President George Bush, who hosted a dinner in his honor. On his way to the airport after the Crawford meeting, Crown Prince Abdullah stopped at the Coffee Station restaurant in Crawford and exchanged words with a number of American citizens. In a joint statement that reflected a similarity of thought, the Crown Prince and the President said their talks covered not only bilateral relations but the need for implementation of the roadmap and the Arab peace initiative in order to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East; the efforts of the two countries to combat terrorism; and the Kingdom's effective role in stabilizing the global oil market.

On April 26, Crown Prince Abdullah addressed a banquet in his honor hosted by the U.S.-Saudi Arabian Business Council at the Fairmont Hotel in Dallas.

At a press conference, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal reiterated the Kingdom's concern to serve the interests of both oil consumers and oil producers, adding that the U.S. government had expressed appreciation for the Saudi policy in this respect. He confirmed that Crown Prince Abdullah has extended an invitation to President George W. Bush to visit the Kingdom.

TERRORISM

TWO SECURITY OFFICERS KILLED IN MAKKAH SHOOTOUT

Two security officers and two militants were killed on April 21 in Makkah. The incident began when a patrol stopped a vehicle on the Madinah-Makkah highway. The three passengers, two of them disguised as women, escaped in the car; the driver was arrested. The fugitives were pursued to a suburb of Makkah, and storming the building, security forces killed two and arrested the third. In the shootout, two security officers were killed, and four slightly injured. The militants killed have not yet been identified.

At the April 25 Cabinet meeting King Fahd reiterated the Kingdom's commitment to eradicating Al-Qaeda, and praised the success of the security forces in aborting the destructive plans of the deviant group, eliminating their desperate attempts to destabilize the Kingdom, and tracking down suspects.

ELECTIONS

THIRD PHASE OF NATIONWIDE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

The third phase of the nationwide elections for half of the seats on the Kingdom's 178 municipal councils was held on April 21. Results show a high turnout of registered voters, with 74 percent in Madinah Province and 87 percent in the North Borders Province.

FOREIGN AID

FUNDS PLEDGED FOR POST-TSUNAMI RECONSTRUCTION

Saudi Arabia has allocated \$400 million for reconstruction projects in those countries afflicted by the December 26 tsunami, to be extended through the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made extensive contributions towards alleviating the suffering of the people in the southern part of Asia afflicted by the earthquake and tsunami, and continues to follow the situation closely to determine what further assistance it can provide.

At the April 26 Cabinet meeting, King Fahd affirmed the Kingdom's continued interest in extending economic assistance to developing countries, as well as providing humanitarian aid to alleviate the impact of natural disasters. Over the past three decades, Saudi Arabia has contributed more than 4 percent of its annual GDP to foreign aid, making it one of the largest donors worldwide.

ECONOMY

SABIC'S HIGH PROFITS FOR FIRST QUARTER OF 2005

Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) reported on April 20 that its first-quarter net profit for 2005 rose 116 percent from the same period last year to SR5.08 billion (\$1.36 billion). SABIC is the largest listed firm on the Saudi stock exchange [See Tadawul website <http://www.tadawul.com.sa>].

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