

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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IRAQ

Foreign Minister urges Iraqi groups to meet

At an October 2 meeting of the Arab League-affiliated Ministerial Committee on Iraq, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said the Kingdom is concerned about the increasing sectarianism in Iraq. He called on all Iraqi factions to hold a meeting under the auspices of the Arab League in order to reach a broad national consensus on the constitution and political participation of all Iraqi groups. Prince Saud urged the Secretary-General of the Arab League to visit Iraq to discuss the idea of such a meeting with the various groups there.

TERRORISM

Saudi Arabia condemns Bali bombings

At its October 3 meeting, the Cabinet condemned the bombings that took place in Bali, Indonesia, on October 1, and reiterated that confronting terrorism requires decisive international cooperation.

The Jeddah-based Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also condemned the bombings.

Cabinet approves GCC counterterrorism agreement

The Cabinet on October 3 approved the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) counterterrorism agreement signed in Kuwait on May 4, 2004, which encourages GCC countries to integrate counterterrorism measures.

DEFENSE POLICY

Defense Ministry denies secret talks with UK over fighter planes

The Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation on October 3 denied reports that Saudi and British officials held secret talks to purchase Eurofighter Typhoon fighter planes from Britain at a reported cost of GBP 40 billion [U.S.\$ 71 billion]. A source at the Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation added, however, that Britain has expressed its desire to provide Saudi Arabia with Eurofighter

Typhoons, and this offer has come "in line with other offers presented by a number of friendly countries."

HUMAN RIGHTS

Head of Human Rights Commission appointed

On October 3, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz appointed Turki bin Khalid Al-Sudairi president of the Human Rights Commission, with the rank of minister. The commission, which was approved by the Cabinet on September 12, will be the sole government body dealing with human rights issues in the Kingdom. It will report directly to the Prime Minister, and its board will include about 25 full-time and part-time members, who will be appointed by the King for four-year renewable terms.

FOREIGN AID

Kingdom gifts airplane to Senegal to combat locust swarms

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in coordination with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), has gifted an airplane to Senegal in order to help that country combat desert locusts. The airplane was donated in response to an appeal by Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade.

Kingdom provides Ramadan meals for Indonesians

As part of ongoing aid provided by Saudi Arabia to those affected by the December 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, the Kingdom announced October 3 that it is providing iftar meals to shelters in Aceh, Indonesia for people there to break their fasts during the holy month of Ramadan.

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