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HAJJ

King and Crown Prince call for Muslim unity in Eid address

In a joint statement January 10, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz addressed Muslims everywhere on the occasion of the Eid Al-Adha. In the statement, which was read by Minister of Culture and Information Iyad Madani, King Abdullah and Crown Prince Sultan called for unity and security in the Muslim world.

In separate remarks January 10, King Abdullah praised Saudi security forces' efforts to combat terrorism and defend Islam against criminals and killers. He reaffirmed his belief that the Kingdom would be victorious in the battle against the deviant group, and that the evildoers would be defeated.

Religious leaders stress moderation in Eid Al-Adha sermons

In a January 9 sermon, the Kingdom's Grand Mufti Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-AsShaikh stressed that there is no justification in Islam for criminal acts such as terrorism. He emphasized the importance of safeguarding the fundamentals of Islam from distortion by extremists or ignorant individuals.

In Makkah January 10, Imam of the Holy Mosque Sheikh Abdelrahman Al-Sudais said that Islam is a religion of moderation and mercy, and that it has nothing to do with the dangerous phenomenon of terrorism. He noted that the deviation of thought has been one of the most dangerous issues faced by the Muslim nation, and called for the deviations to be corrected.

In Riyadh's Imam Turki bin Abdullah Mosque January 10, Sheikh Abdulmohsen bin Ibrahim Al-AsSheikh emphasized the importance of eradicating terrorism, and called for a moderate approach to Islam.

Number of Hajj pilgrims tops 2 million

The total number of pilgrims performing the Hajj this year has reached 2,130,594, the Ministry of Economy and Planning's Department of General Statistics announced January 10.

Hotel collapses in Makkah, killing 76 and injuring 62

The Loulouat Al-Khair hotel in Makkah collapsed shortly after noon prayers January 5, killing 76 and injuring 62. Forty-one people were rescued from the rubble, Interior Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Mansour Al-Turki confirmed. Saudi authorities quickly set up a hotline to answer questions related to the tragedy.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef ordered an immediate investigation into the cause of the accident. The prince, who is also the chairman of the Supreme Hajj Commission, called an emergency meeting of the Commission January 7 in order to be briefed on the disaster.

FOREIGN AID

King Abdullah donates \$2 million to fight blindness in Africa

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz has donated \$2 million to the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control to fight blindness in Africa. The King's donation is within the framework of Saudi concern for humanitarian development in Africa.

EDUCATION

MWL conference addresses Islamic curriculums

The sixth Annual Conference of the Makkah-based Muslim World League (MWL) began in Makkah January 5. The topic, Islamic curriculums, was chosen to address the recent harsh criticism of Islamic curriculums from a moderate Islamic perspective. The conference also assessed Islamic curriculums, calls for their reform, and the impact of Islamic education.

In a statement read at the opening of the conference, King Abdullah said that Islamic education is one of the most serious challenges facing the Muslim world today, because enemies want to distance it from its pillars. A position on Islamic education must be spelled out based on a reasonable view of Islam, he said.

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