

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

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

JANUARY 31, 2006

FOREIGN POLICY

King Abdullah signs agreements with India, Malaysia

King Abdullah continued his four-nation Asian tour with visits to India and Malaysia this week. The tour, which began with a visit to China on January 22 and concludes in Pakistan, is King Abdullah's first official trip as ruler.

In India, King Abdullah and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed the Delhi Declaration, in which the two nations agreed to establish a strategic energy partnership. They also agreed to expand bilateral trade and investment, and to work closely together to fight terrorism and other transnational crimes, such as money laundering, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling. King Abdullah was the guest of honor at India's National Day celebrations January 26.

In Malaysia, the third stop on his tour, King Abdullah and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmed Badawi held official talks January 31 and witnessed the signing of a number of agreements between the two nations, including accords on evading dual taxation on income and preventing tax evasion as well as scientific and cultural cooperation. On the sidelines of King Abdullah's visit, Saudi and Malaysian businesses signed agreements for five major economic projects, including an investment fund, mobile technology and three joint ventures.

Kingdom cautions against prejudging Palestinian election outcome

In a January 31 press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal suggested that the international community wait and see what Hamas will do after its victory in the Palestinian legislative elections.

"Hamas was a movement. Now, it is a government. I think they will behave responsibly as a government. The international community should see first what this government will do instead of judging Hamas based on the language it used when it was a movement," said Prince Saud, who is accompanying King Abdullah on his tour.

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Prince Turki Al-Faisal made similar comments in a January 27 interview with CNN's Jim Clancy. The ambassador said the victory should not worry Arab capitals, "nor should it worry any other capitals, because the world community is committed to a two-side solution for Palestine and Israel."

Prince Turki recalled the rise of Israel's Likud Party in the late 1980s, described by many at the time as "calamitous" for peace. "So I think that we should take things in stride and keep cool heads instead of letting passions rule us," he said.

Prince Turki disputed that Saudi Arabia was providing financial support to Hamas institutions and charities. "That is not true," he said. "We've always supported the Palestinian Authority through United Nations organizations and through the Arab League commitments that we've made with them.

In its January 30 session, the Cabinet called on the world community to respect the Palestinian people's wish for self-determination and to exercise their freedom of choice. The Cabinet also said it looked forward to a favorable international response to the developments.

TERRORISM

Interior Minister calls for international conference on terrorism

Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz has called for an international conference to discuss terrorism, its causes, and ways to combat it under the auspices of the UN. Prince Nayef is in Tunis for the 23rd session of the Arab League-affiliated Arab Interior Ministers' Council.

HEALTH

Iraqi conjoined twins to be separated at National Guard hospital

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz has directed a surgery be performed to separate Iraqi conjoined twins. They will be transported to Riyadh for tests prior to the surgery, which will take place at the National Guard's King Abdulaziz Medical City, said Dr Abdullah Al-Rabia'a, executive director for health affairs. Recently, Moroccan conjoined twins were also given approval to begin medical tests before a surgery to separate them.

* * * *