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SAUDI ARABIA-US

Strategic Dialogue subgroups to meet this month

In a wide-ranging interview with the Saudi-US Relations Information Service (SUSRIS) March 2, Saudi Ambassador to the US Prince Turki Al-Faisal said that six subgroups of the Saudi-US Strategic Dialogue would meet for the first time this month. The working groups deal with counterterrorism, military affairs, energy, economic and financial affairs, consular affairs and partnership, and education exchange and human development in the US and Saudi Arabia.

Prince Turki will head the Saudi side at the meeting, while the American side will be led by Liz Cheney, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and Coordinator for Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiatives at the State Department. Full transcript can be read at the embassy website www.saudiembassy.net.

EDUCATION

Royal directive to increase number of Saudi students abroad

A royal directive was issued March 11 to increase the number of Saudi students sent to China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Australia to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in medicine, pharmacology, applied medical sciences, basic sciences, engineering, computer science, information technology, accounting, finance, insurance and marketing. The Ministry of Higher Education has formed a supervisory committee to implement the royal directive.

Intel, King Fahd University announce internship program

The King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) in Dhahran and the California-based Intel Corporation have announced an internship program, in which the university's top students will intern at Intel facilities in the Kingdom.

First GOTEVOT-GM vocational training institute opened

On March 7, Minister of Labor Dr Ghazi Al-Gosaibi opened the first of 100 vocational training institutes set up by the General Organization for Technical

Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVOT) in association with US automotive giant General Motors. The institute can accommodate 1,000 trainees.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi relief aid to Pakistan remains ongoing

Saudi relief aid continues to flow to the victims of the October 8 earthquake in Pakistan. On March 9, Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Ali Asseri turned over an additional 30 trucks filled with relief aid to Pakistani officials for distribution to the quake victims. The aid includes 1,000 tents, 12,000 blankets, 8,000 quilts, 5,000 sleeping bags, 500 cartons of dates and 1,000 bags of flour. Asseri said that the people and government of Saudi Arabia would continue supporting victims of the quake until reconstruction is complete.

In addition, the Saudi Popular Relief Campaign for the Pakistani People has signed a contract with a Pakistani firm to manufacture an additional 80,000 quilts for quake victims. The Saudi aid organization has to date provided millions of riyals in relief aid to victims of the quake, including more than a hundred trucks filled with aid to affected Pakistani provinces.

SAUDI ARABIA

Kingdom to launch six Saudi-built satellites this year

Saudi Arabia is preparing to launch six new Saudi-made satellites this year as part of a program to harness space technology for commercial purposes, the Arab News reported March 10.

The announcement was made by Prince Turki bin Saud, the Vice-President for Research at King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), who has played a pioneering role in promoting a world-class space program in the Kingdom.

The satellites were manufactured and designed in Saudi Arabia by a team of scientists at the KACST Institute of Space Research in Riyadh. Five of the satellites were built for communications purposes for commercial use, and that the sixth will be used primarily for earth observation, Prince Turki said. All of the satellites will be launched from the Russian space center Baikonur in Kazakhstan.

