



MAY 9, 2006

FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign Minister attends Quartet meeting on the Middle East

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal attended a meeting of the Quartet on the Middle East May 9 to discuss solutions to political and humanitarian problems in the region, including how to deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

The meeting, held at the UN, included representatives of the Quartet – US, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana. In addition to Prince Saud, the foreign ministers from Jordan, Egypt and Austria also attended, as did Saudi Ambassador to the US Prince Turki Al-Faisal.

Crown Prince Sultan rejects Iranian offer of nuclear technology

In remarks to reporters after attending a ceremony at Kingdom Schools in Riyadh on May 3, Crown Prince Sultan rejected an offer by Iran to provide nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia and other Arabian Gulf nations.

Crown Prince Sultan also called on Iran and Western powers to cooperate with each other for the betterment of humanity. Saudi Arabia has frequently stated that it seeks a diplomatic solution to the standoff with Iran, and that it advocates a ban on all weapons of mass destruction in the region.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi food aid delivered to Pakistani quake victims

The Saudi Popular Relief Campaign for the Pakistani People has distributed food aid to victims of the October 8, 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. One hundred and fifty families living in temporary camps in Islamabad received rice, sugar, ghee and other necessities. The campaign has distributed large quantities of relief to quake victims, including tents, blankets, medicine, medical equipment and food items.

UNITED NATIONS

Saudi Arabia elected to UN Human Rights Council

Saudi Arabia was elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council in a first round of voting May 9. The Kingdom received 126 out of a possible 191 votes in the UN General Assembly.

Turki Al-Sudairi, head of the Saudi National Society for Human Rights, said in a statement that the vote reflects Saudi Arabia's international role as well as its concern for human rights issues.

"They [elected countries] reflect the will of the member states," UN General Assembly President Jan Eliasson told reporters after the vote. "It is a reflection of the United Nations, of the whole body of the UN, and I will not comment on any individual country performance but to underline ... that I find it very important that all member states have made pledges and commitments that they expect to live up to."

SAUDI ARABIA

Financial hub to be established in Riyadh

On May 9, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz announced plans to build a financial center in Riyadh. The new center will serve as a hub for the Kingdom's financial institutions, and will be called the King Abdullah Financial Center.

The King made the announcement in an address at a finance seminar in remarks delivered by Minister of Finance Ibrahim Al-Assaf. "We are keen on making our economy a prosperous and diversified one as well as an economy which is capable of playing a pioneering role at regional and international arenas and meeting the aspirations of the citizens," King Abdullah said in his remarks.

Al-Assaf said in a statement after the seminar that preparations for the center have been underway for two years, and that construction on the project will begin very soon.

