



MAY 30, 2006

FOREIGN AID

Kingdom provides emergency aid to Indonesia after deadly quake

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz has extended \$5 million in urgent financial assistance to Indonesia following the May 27 earthquake in Java. The Kingdom will also provide relief aid, which will be airlifted to Indonesia by the Saudi Air Force in coordination with the Saudi Red Crescent Society. The first cargo plane of aid arrived in Indonesia May 30, carrying 73 tons of relief materials including foodstuffs, tents, blankets and medicine. In addition, the Saudi Popular Relief Campaign for the quake victims has also begun providing urgent humanitarian aid, and has opened an office in hard-hit Yogyakarta Province.

SAUDI ARABIA-US

Saudi Ambassador interviewed on McLaughlin One on One

In a May 27 interview with NBC's John McLaughlin, Saudi Ambassador to the US Prince Turki Al-Faisal discussed a variety of issues including the Iranian nuclear crisis and the war on terrorism. On Iran, Prince Turki said it would be possible for the US to engage Iran if that country complied with the relevant UN resolutions. President Bush and Secretary Rice have both declared that they prefer to deal with the crisis via diplomacy, he pointed out. Prince Turki also said that the Kingdom has diplomatic ties with Iran and engages in dialogue with that nation.

On terrorism, Prince Turki suggested that Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's latest audiotape was probably an effort to show that he was still aware of current affairs and to reveal that he is in charge of terrorist activity.

Three Saudi Guantanamo detainees released on bail

The Interior Ministry announced May 29 that three Saudi Guantanamo detainees who were returned to the Kingdom on July 20, 2005 have been released on bail. The three were sentenced by the courts after they admitted to being present in troubled areas without the consent of their parents or government. They also admitted to using forged documents and endangering the lives of their families. Two of the detainees were sentenced to one year in prison, while the third, the time served at Guantanamo was deemed appropriate.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz said May 28 that Saudi Arabia is continuing efforts to repatriate the remaining Saudi Guantanamo detainees.

ENERGY

Saudi Aramco signs agreement for new refinery with ConocoPhillips

Saudi Aramco and ConocoPhillips have signed an agreement for a full-conversion refinery in Yanbu that would process 400,000 barrels per day of Arabian heavy crude. Scheduled to begin operations in 2011, the refinery would also produce high quality, ultra-low sulfur refined products that meet US and European specifications. Aramco and ConocoPhillips agreed to form a joint venture, with each holding a 35 percent stake and 30 percent to be offered to Saudi citizens.

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah establishes family courts

On May 22, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz ordered the formation of family courts that will consider complaints of domestic abuse. Last year, at least a third of some 5,000 cases brought before the National Society for Human Rights dealt with domestic violence.

Saudi woman appointed director of Radio Jeddah's Program 2

The Ministry of Culture and Information has appointed Dalal Aziz Daa' as its new director for Radio Jeddah's program 2, Asharq Al-Awsat reported May 24. The first Saudi woman to hold this position, Daa' will oversee 19 departments, including women's radio programs, entertainment shows and news. "Saudi society has begun to give women its rights in administrative posts," she told Asharq Al-Awsat. "Saudi women have been involved in the media for over 40 years. They have proved their ability in this field. Women have also succeeded in the press and television."

Ministry of Education creates top jobs for women

The Ministry of Education has established five deanships solely for female candidates as part of an effort to give women more autonomy in education for girls, the Saudi Gazette reported May 25. The first five women have already been appointed.

