

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

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SAUDI ARABIA

Authorities arrest suspects in killing of French expatriates

Last week, Saudi authorities arrested suspects in the February 26 killing of four French expatriates in western Saudi Arabia. Two additional suspects are wanted. The Ministry of Interior warned that anyone who aids or harbors the two suspects will be considered an accessory. A reward of up to \$1.86 million is offered for information about their whereabouts.

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S.

Saudi female doctor honored by U.S. Department of State

Last week, Dr. Samia al-Amoudi was awarded the U.S. Department of State's first International Women of Courage Award in recognition of her breast cancer awareness campaign.

Dr. Al-Amoudi, an obstetrician-gynecologist and former vice dean of the College of Medicine and Allied Science at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, was presented the award by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for her personal battle with breast cancer. Dr. Al-Amoudi shared her battle with the disease in her newspaper column and thus has contributed to raising public awareness for Saudi women and families across the Kingdom and throughout the region.

FOREIGN POLICY

Cabinet welcomes Baghdad conference

In its weekly meeting chaired by King Abdullah on March 12, the Cabinet reiterated the Kingdom's position that Iraq's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity must be maintained, and that foreign actors should not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs. The Cabinet also expressed hope that the Baghdad international regional conference would bring about reconciliation among the Iraqi population.

FOREIGN AID

UN Praises Saudi support for Palestinians

Director of United Nations Program for Human Settlements (UN Habitat) in the Occupied Territories, Dr. Ziyad Alshagra, last week praised the constant support

provided by Saudi Arabia to the Palestinian people and King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's efforts to help the Palestinian people overcome poverty in the Occupied Territories. Dr. Alshagra highlighted the support provided through programs implemented by the Saudi Popular Committee for the Relief of the Palestinian People, especially the construction of 100 housing units for women in the city of Al-Khalil (Hebron) in the West Bank.

ECONOMY

Saudi Arabia's non-petroleum exports jump 28%

Saudi Arabia's non-petroleum exports last November jumped 28% to SR 7.634 billion [\$2 billion] from the previous year, the Central Department of Statistics reported Saturday.

Petrochemicals topped the list of exports with SR 2.56 billion [\$683.4 million], followed plastic materials, at SR 1.93 billion [\$514 million]; and re-exported commodities worth 1.085 billion [\$293.2 million]. During the same period, the Kingdom imported SR 25 billion [\$6.67 billion] worth of goods, including SR 7.1 billion [\$1.893 billion] in electronics; SR 4.88 billion [\$1.3 billion] in transport equipment; SR 4246 [\$1.132 billion] in mineral and mineral products; and SR 2.465 billion [\$657.3 million] in food stuffs.

The value of goods imported from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members during the same period jumped 39.9 percent, to SR 1.005 billion [\$268 million]. The value of the Kingdom's non-petroleum exports to the GCC member states increased 61 percent to SR 1.96 billion [\$522.4 million].

ENVIRONMENT

Rare captive-bred gazelles successfully released into Saudi reserve

Last week, 17 captive-bred Idmi mountain gazelles were successfully released into the wild in Saudi Arabia in cooperation with the Zoological Society of London. The gazelles were released in two groups, with each group consisting of an adult, young males and mixed-age females. Prior to release, they were all radio-collared, which will allow scientists to track them as they settle into their new home. It is the first successful release in more than ten years for the species, which is classified as vulnerable to extinction. The Idmi population has declined due to habitat loss and degradation.

The Zoological Society of London manages the King Khalid Center on behalf of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development. The King Khalid Center is currently breeding more than 180 mountain gazelles.

