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FOREIGN RELATIONS

Timeframe set for Saudi diplomatic delegation to Iraq

During an August 7 press conference in Jeddah, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said that the Kingdom would send a delegation to Iraq the next week to review the possibility of establishing a Saudi embassy in Baghdad.

Asked if Sunni ministers' recent withdrawal from the Iraqi government would impact the Kingdom's decision to establish an embassy in Baghdad, Prince Saud replied, "The Saudi embassy in Iraq had nothing to do with the formation of the Iraqi government, but it looks after the interests of the two countries. The presence of the embassy would be a positive factor in the relations between the two countries."

In related news, the Cabinet this week emphasized the importance of a national unity government acceptable to all Iraqis as the way for the country to pull itself out of its current crisis, both on a humanitarian and political level.

Foreign Minister reiterates Saudi support for Palestine conference

In his August 7 press conference, Prince Saud said that both the Arab and international communities have welcomed the US initiative to hold an international conference on Palestine this fall.

He reiterated that the success of the conference depends on whether it addresses core issues of the conflict – a comprehensive solution, a viable Palestinian state, dismantling of settlements, resolving the issue of Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem. These points were emphasized during Secretary of State Rice and Secretary of Defense Gates' recent visit to Saudi Arabia, the prince said.

Prince Saud dismissed the idea of convening an Arab summit to discuss the US initiative on a Palestinian conference. He noted that such a summit is not necessary since the US initiative contains key elements that are already included in the Arab Peace Initiative.

He also emphasized that the Palestinian situation depends on Palestinian efforts to resolve their differences and move forward in the peace process according to the Arab Peace Initiative.



FOREIGN AID

Saudi humanitarian aid sent to flood-ravaged Bangladesh

On August 9, Saudi Arabia announced an urgent aid package for flood-stricken Bangladesh that includes humanitarian assistance as well as a \$50 million grant to meet flood victims' immediate needs. The first Saudi relief plane left Riyadh August 13 carrying nearly 60 tons of foodstuffs, carpets and blankets.

The aid, which is being provided on the directive of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, is in line with Saudi Arabia's ongoing humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh.

SAUDI ARABIA

New Saudi university to be world-class science and research facility

Saudi Arabia announced August 8 that it is developing a world-class graduate research university that will support scientific discovery and human advancement. The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) campus will be located along the Red Sea around 50 miles north of Jeddah. It is expected to open in September 2009.

"Innovation and the need for scientific discovery know no international boundaries," said Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi, as quoted in the press release. Al-Naimi is also KAUST's chief institutional architect.

KAUST's academic model is based around four research institutes, each of which will include centers devoted to particular issues. The four institutes include the Resources, Energy and Environment Institute; the Materials Science and Engineering Institute; the Applied Mathematics and Computer Science Institute; and the Materials Science and Engineering Institute.

The new university will have one of the largest university endowments in the world and will be governed by an independent Board of Trustees.

