



*JULY 15, 2008*

## FOREIGN POLICY

### **Cabinet welcomes King Abdullah's call for interfaith dialogue**

Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz chaired the weekly Cabinet meeting at Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah July 14. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz is currently in Morocco for a private visit before opening the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid June 16.

The Cabinet welcomed King Abdullah's call for interfaith dialogue and expressed the hope that the Madrid conference would serve as a springboard for future dialogue among religions and cultures.

### **Ambassador Al-Jubeir highlights the World Conference on Dialogue**

Saudi Ambassador to the US Adel A. Al-Jubeir met with members of the US media at the Embassy in Washington July 10 to discuss the upcoming World Conference on Dialogue.

King Abdullah will convene the interfaith conference in Madrid, Spain from July 16-18, 2008. The event will bring together major figures from Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism to reinforce the common values shared by their respective faiths.

"The idea [for the conference] stemmed from King Abdullah's view that there are universal values that are common to all faiths, and that if we focus on those universal values there is a lot more that binds us as human beings than divides us," Ambassador Al-Jubeir said.

"If we adhere to those values we will be able to overcome adversity, we will be able to achieve peace, we will be able to protect the structure of the family, we will be able to maintain values in our society and our life and essentially make our world a better place."

The Madrid conference follows a dialogue among Islamic scholars that took place in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in June.

## FOREIGN AID

### **Kingdom signs agreements worth \$6 million with UNRWA**

The Saudi Committee for the Relief of the Palestinian People signed four agreements worth \$6 million with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Jeddah July 13.

The donation includes \$5 million in cash and in-kind to assist with food aid, medicines, medical equipment and fuel for Gaza. The Kingdom also donated \$1 million in medicines and medical supplies for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

### **Saudi relief group builds 4,000 houses for Pakistan quake victims**

The Saudi Public Assistance for Pakistan Earthquake Victims (SPAPEV) has completed construction of 4,000 prefabricated houses in Balakot, North-West Frontier Province for families displaced by the October 2005 earthquake.

Since SPAPEV began operations in Pakistan, it has provided significant relief aid, including 200,000 blankets, 150,000 quilts, 12,500 winterized tents, 100,000 food packets, medicine, stoves, sugar, cooking oil, rice, flour bags, and polypropylene sheets.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **Fitch upgrades Saudi Arabia from A+ to AA-**

International ratings agency Fitch Ratings has upgraded Saudi Arabia's foreign currency and local currency Issuer Default ratings from A+ to AA-. Fitch has also upgraded Saudi Arabia's Country Ceiling rating from AA- to AA. Fitch rated Saudi Arabia for the first time in 2004.

### **Moroccan conjoined twins successfully separated in Riyadh**

Conjoined twins from Morocco were successfully separated at the National Guard's King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC) in Riyadh July 12.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabi'a, Executive Director of Health Affairs at the hospital and head of the 24-member surgical team, said that the twin girls are in stable condition. The nine-hour surgery was carried out in seven stages, Al-Rabi'a said. The twins shared a liver and a digestive system.

It is the 19th successful separation surgery to be performed at KAMC. A set of Iraqi conjoined twins are scheduled for separation surgery during the holy month of Ramadan, which this year falls in September. In all cases, King Abdullah funded the surgery and related expenses.

