



DECEMBER 02, 2008

## SAUDI ARABIA

### **King Abdullah says Saudi economy is strong**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz offered reassurance this week that Saudi Arabia's economy is in good condition and that its sovereign wealth funds are safe despite the global financial turmoil.

In an interview published November 29 in the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Siyassah*, King Abdullah stated, "Our country's economy is solid and strong. Our people need to be assured and aware of that." The King chided the media for creating "a fearful atmosphere" among investors in the Kingdom. He expressed confidence that the "unjustified panic" will soon "vanish away."

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi echoed the King's message at the November 29 OPEC meeting in Cairo. In a press statement following the session, Minister Ali Al-Naimi stressed that it is too early to make any decision on whether to alter oil production levels. He added that any adjustments can be made at the December 17 OPEC meeting in Algeria.

## HAJJ

### **Ministry of Islamic Affairs completes Hajj preparations**

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has completed preparation for this Hajj season, Deputy Minister Dr. Tawfeeq Al-Sudairi announced November 29, including the refurbishment of 9,076 mosques. The Ministry has also built 150 new mosques and assigned 880 imams and 80 interpreters to the holy areas.

As of November 28, a total of 1,323,283 pilgrims had arrived in Saudi Arabia to take part in this year's Hajj pilgrimage.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

### **King Abdullah, President Sarkozy hold bilateral meeting**

King Abdullah met with visiting French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Jeddah on November 29. Their talks focused on the global financial crisis, piracy in the Gulf

of Aden and the Middle East peace process. The two leaders also discussed ways in which Saudi Arabia and France can strengthen ties.

### **Prince Saud Al-Faisal addresses Arab foreign ministers**

The ministerial council of the Arab League's foreign ministers met November 26 in Cairo under the chairmanship of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal. During his remarks, Prince Saud noted that the election of a new U.S. president requires Arab countries to clarify their position with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Taking into account that the U.S. is the primary sponsor of the peace process, he said, the Arab world should be keenly interested in the formulation of the next Administration's policies.

## **TERRORISM**

### **Kingdom strongly condemns the terrorist acts in Mumbai**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has condemned the terrorist acts in Mumbai, India. In a statement issued on November 27, the Kingdom "strongly condemns and denounces this criminal act, and offers condolences and sympathy to the friendly government and people of India."

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also denounced the attack. In a statement issued in Riyadh December 1, the GCC General Secretariat reiterated its rejection of all forms of terrorism irrespective of its motivations, and called for cooperation in confronting this dangerous phenomenon.

## **FOREIGN AID**

### **Saudi Arabia offers relief to Sudanese, Palestinians**

A Sudanese official lauded a \$50 million grant given by Saudi Arabia to the Sudan Food Program. General Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Hasabo Mohammed Abdulrahman thanked the Kingdom during a November 25 reception for a delegation of the Saudi Ministry of Finance. Abdulrahman recalled that last year Saudi Arabia granted \$20 million to the program.

A convoy of ten trucks loaded with foodstuffs, medicine and children's milk was also dispatched November 26 by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in cooperation with the Saudi Red Crescent Society to provide relief to the Palestinian people.

