



FEBRUARY 17, 2009

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah makes major appointments, reconstitutes judiciary

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz issued a number of Royal Decrees on February 14, making the following changes in the composition of the Council of Ministers: Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed has been appointed Minister of Education; Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah Minister of Health; Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkareem Al-Issa Minister of Justice; Dr. Abdulaziz Khojah Minister of Culture and Information; and Nourah Al-Fayez Deputy Minister of Education for Women's Education. Ms. Al-Fayez is the Kingdom's first female minister.

King Abdullah also appointed former Justice Minister Abdullah Al-Asheikh chairman of Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council); Dr. Saleh Bin-Humaid chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council; Abdulaziz Al-Humain head of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice; Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Kelya chief justice of the Supreme Court; Muhammad Al-Jasser governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA); Faisal bin Abdulrahman Al-Muammar Deputy Minister of Education; Dr. Bandar bin Abdulmohsen Al-Qanawi executive director of National Guard Health Affairs; and Khaled bin Abdullah Al-Sabti Deputy Minister of Education for Boys' Affairs.

King Abdullah appointed Lt. Gen. Hussein bin Abdullah Al-Qubail Deputy Chief of staff and Maj. Gen. Abdulrahman bin Abdullah Al-Murshid commander of the Land Forces. Other major appointments include: Ibrahim bin Shayie Al-Hoqail, chairman of the Court of Grievances; Ali bin Abdulrahman Al-Hamad, Deputy Chairman of the Court of Grievances; Bandar bin Mohammed Al-Aiban, chairman of the Human Rights Commission; Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Kenhal, president of the Saudi Food and Drugs Authority; and Mohammed bin Fahd Al-Dossary, chairman of the Higher Administrative Court.

King Abdullah reconstituted the Council of Senior Ulema (Muslim Scholars), appointed members to the Supreme Judicial Council and Supreme Court and extended the terms of others on Saturday.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques relieved Sheikh Dr. Abdulaziz bin Mohammad Al-Abdulmunem, upon his own request, from his post as Secretary General of the Commission of Senior Ulema, and appointed Sheikh Dr. Fahd bin Saad Al-Majed as his replacement. Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Aasheikh was reappointed chairman of the Commission of Senior Ulema.

Sheikh Dr. Yousuf bin Mohammed Ali Al-Ghafees, a member of the Standing Committee for Research and Fatwa, an affiliate of Commission of Senior Ulema, was relieved from his post upon his request. King Abdullah also extended the term of members of the committee for four years, effective 3/3/1430 H. (February 27, 2009).

Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Asheikh was relieved of his post as Minister of Justice and appointed chairman of the Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council); Sheikh Dr. Saleh bin Abdullah Bin Humeid was appointed chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council at the rank of minister; Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Colleyia was named chairman of the Supreme Court at the rank of minister; Sheikh Mohammed bin Fahd bin Saad Al-Dosari was appointed president of the Supreme Administrative Court; Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Shanqiti was relieved from his post as chief of the Court of Grievances, upon his request, and Sheikh Ibrahim bin Shayie Al-Haqil appointed to the post. Sheikh Ali bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Hammad was appointed Deputy Chief of Grievances Court.

King Abdullah also relieved Sheikh Ibrahim bin Abdullah Al-Ghaith, director general of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, at his own request, from his post, and appointed Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Humayen Al-Humayen as his replacement.

King Abdullah also appointed members of Majlis Al-Shura.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

King Abdullah, Chinese President Hu hold bilateral meetings

King Abdullah and visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao held bilateral meetings in Riyadh last week. President Hu arrived in Riyadh February 10 on a three-day official visit to the Kingdom.

King Abdullah expressed his eagerness to promote bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and China and noted that his first official visit abroad as King was to China. King Abdullah and President Hu also discussed developments in the Middle East, agreeing upon the importance of achieving a fair and comprehensive peace settlement that will establish an independent and viable Palestinian state.

During the visit, a number of agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed by Saudi and Chinese officials. The agreements included a contract with China's Company for Building Railways for the construction of the Holy Places Train Project; an MoU between the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) and the Chinese State General Administration for Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine; and an MoU between the King Abdulaziz Public Library and Beijing University on the establishment of a branch of the Library at Beijing University.

ENERGY

Minister of Petroleum Al-Naimi cautions low oil prices unsustainable

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to fostering long-term energy market stability during an address Tuesday at Houston's Energy Conference and warned that current low oil prices are just as unsustainable as last year's stratospherically high levels. "If today's low prices continue long enough, they will sow the seeds for future price spikes and volatility." He explained that oil prices must be low enough to facilitate economic growth, while high enough to spur industry investment, encourage energy efficiency and justify production from marginal fields, non-conventional sources and renewables.

Minister Al-Naimi singled out three "newly emerging challenges" that have lately contributed to energy market volatility: globalized capital markets, the emergence of energy as an asset class, and climate change. All of these challenges, he said, require global cooperation. "For over half a century, Saudi Arabia and the United States have shared a commitment to work together in areas of mutual interest," he stated. "Our long-term relationship in energy has paid great dividends for the health of the global economy, the stability of oil markets and for our respective societies. Working together we can build on these successes to provide the foundation for a strong, sustainable economic recovery and a bright future."

HEALTH

Conjoined Egyptian twins arrive in Riyadh for surgical separation

Two conjoined twins from Egypt, Mahmoud and Hassan, arrived in the Kingdom on Tuesday in a special Medevac plane to undergo an operation to separate them at the King Abdulaziz Medical City Hospital.

In the latest such operation at the hospital, two Iraqi twins, Ayad and Zeyad, were separated on October 25, 2008 by a medical team headed by Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, former chief executive officer of the medical city and current Minister of Health.

The first conjoined twin separation surgery in the Kingdom was performed successfully on December 31, 1990, at Riyadh's King Faisal Specialist Hospital. Since then, 13 more sets of conjoined twins have been separated.

