

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

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SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia ranks 13th in IFC's "Doing Business" report

Saudi Arabia offers the 13th best investment environment out of 183 countries surveyed, according to the "Doing Business 2010" report issued September 8 by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), an affiliate of the World Bank. The Kingdom tops the list of both Arab and Middle Eastern countries. Since 2004, the Kingdom has advanced its overall "Doing Business" rankings from 67th to 13th.

Over 3 million Umrah pilgrims have arrived in the Kingdom

More than three million Umrah pilgrims have arrived in the Kingdom from all over the world for this Umrah season, including 900,000 pilgrims arriving by air, according to Muhammad Al-Bijawi, head of the Hajj Ministry branch in Madinah, the *Saudi Gazette* reported September 11. An estimated 700,000 worshippers are expected to perform the Friday prayer at the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah on the last Friday of Ramadan on September 18, 2009.

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S.

Ambassador responds to Congressional letter on Mideast peace

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel A. Al-Jubeir responded to a July 31st letter from 225 members of the U.S. Congress to King Abdullah. In his response, released September 13, Ambassador Al-Jubeir said that "over the years, Saudi Arabia has taken clear positions that attest to its desire to see this long-standing conflict [Arab-Israeli conflict] resolved equitably and permanently," and outlined the requirements for peace which are enshrined in numerous international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Ambassador Al-Jubeir thanked the members of Congress for their interest in promoting peace in the Middle East and underlined the importance of continued, active U.S. involvement necessary to effectively move toward peace: "It is also absolutely imperative for the United States to play an active and robust role in the negotiations, as history has shown."

Ambassador hosts Iftar for U.S. and Saudi officials

Ambassador Al-Jubeir hosted an Iftar dinner at his residence in Washington on September 10. The event was attended by a number of American officials and Embassy staff. In brief remarks, Ambassador Al-Jubeir lauded the historical relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

FOREIGN AID

Crown Prince donates \$2.41 million for dialysis center in West Africa

Crown Prince Sultan donated \$2.41 million for the development of the Prince Sultan Center for Dialysis in Burkina Faso. The facility, which opened its doors on February 25, 2009, is attached to the University Hospital in Ouagadougou. The Center is considered among the most modern facilities of its kind in West Africa and contributes to the improvement of health services for its patients. Burkina Faso's Ambassador to the Kingdom, Omar Diawara, expressed his country's gratitude to the Crown Prince for his humanitarian gesture.

