



NOVEMBER 24, 2009

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

### **King Abdullah holds talks with Italian, Spanish Prime Ministers**

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz held separate talks with visiting Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in Jeddah Saturday and Tuesday, respectively. The talks focused on regional and bilateral issues.

King Abdullah also presented Prime Minister Berlusconi with the King Abdulaziz Medal-First Class.

## HAJJ

### **Prince Nayef warns against disrupting the Hajj**

Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz warned November 22 against disrupting the Hajj and said the Kingdom is ready to act quickly against anyone trying to undermine the most significant manifestation of Islamic faith and unity.

At a press conference in Arafat following his inspection of Hajj facilities, Prince Nayef, who is also Chairman of Supreme Hajj Committee, stressed that the Kingdom will not tolerate anything that would undermine Hajj security. "We will not accept any pilgrim to be harmed," Prince Nayef said. He stressed that the Kingdom will take swift, strong and decisive action to confront any attempt to do so.

### **Grand Mufti warns of politicizing the Hajj**

Saudi Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Asheikh warned that politicizing the Hajj is contrary to Islam. Speaking at the annual Hajj symposium November 24, Sheikh Al-Asheikh reminded the participants that Islam forbids bloodshed of any kind, especially in Makkah and the holy sites, and called on all people to cooperate to achieve a safe and secure Hajj.

### **Over 1.6 million Hajj visas issued**

Saudi embassies, consulates and temporary Hajj consulate missions have issued more than 1.6 million Hajj visas this year, the *Saudi Gazette* reported November 23.

Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs for Consular Affairs Ambassador Mohammad Alsalloom said this year the Kingdom has issued more Hajj visas in less time because of a new system linking all authorities concerned with the Hajj. He added that the visas were approved in line with rules issued by the Minister of Interior, Ministry of Hajj, Ministry of Health, and the Civil Aviation Authority.

Ambassador Alsalloom said Saudi Arabia has deployed temporary Hajj missions to issue visas in countries where the Kingdom does not have embassies, including Benin, Comoros, Gabon, Gambia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Togo, and Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Four pilgrims die of H1N1 Virus**

The Ministry of Health reported Saturday that four foreign pilgrims have died of the H1N1 flu. The Ministry identified the dead as a Sudanese man, age 75; an Indian man, age 75; a Moroccan woman, age 75; and a Nigerian woman, age 17.

## **SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS**

### **Prince Khalid bin Sultan meets with U.S. Defense Secretary Gates**

Prince Khalid bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, Assistant Minister of Defense and Aviation for Military Affairs, visited the Pentagon on November 24, where he was received by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

Prince Khalid is in Washington for the Strategic Joint Planning Committee (JPC) meeting. The JPC aims to enhance interaction between the Saudi and U.S. militaries and to support the Kingdom's efforts to upgrade its military capabilities.

