



DECEMBER 1, 2009

HAJJ

Hajj 1430 successfully comes to a close

Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, Governor of Makkah and Chairman of the Hajj Central Committee, declared this year's Hajj a success and free of major accidents during a press conference in Mina on November 29. He announced that 2,521,000 million pilgrims participated in this year's Hajj, including 154,000 domestic and 1,613,000 foreign pilgrims. The governor added that an estimated 753,000 pilgrims without valid Hajj permits participated in the Hajj, which caused some of the overcrowding, but stressed that with stricter enforcements of entry regulations, the number will dramatically be reduced next year.

Prince Khalid said the Ministry of Health recruited 17,000 personnel, the Municipal and Rural Affairs Ministry, 22,000 and the Public Security 100,000, to serve the pilgrims. Except for the approximately 68 confirmed cases of H1N1 swine flu among the pilgrims, including five deaths, the Hajj was free of epidemics and contagious diseases.

Grand Mufti calls on Muslims to reject extremism

Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Asheikh warned Muslims against deviant ideology and called on them to adhere to the true teachings of the Prophet at his annual Arafat sermon at the Namira Mosque. Sheikh Al-Asheikh said the greatest challenge facing the Muslim community is from deviant ideology and that adherence to the right principles is one of the most important duties of a Muslim. One of the greatest deviations is politicizing the Hajj and threatening its security, he added, stressing that the Saudi leadership will not allow anyone to destabilize the Holy Land.

King Abdullah hosts annual end of Hajj reception

King Abdullah hosted in Mina on November 28 the annual reception for heads of Hajj missions, Islamic dignitaries and royal guests, which this year included the Sudanese Vice President Ali Othman Taha and Malian Prime Minister Modibo Sidibe. King Abdullah extended his Eid Al-Adha greetings, noting that the Hajj embodies Islamic fraternity. He remarked, "Thanks to God, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has done its best to provide services for the guests of Allah Almighty. And it is able, as far as possible, to achieve security for pilgrims and deter whoever dares to infringe on their worship and security."

Ambassador hosts Eid Al-Adha prayer

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel Al-Jubeir hosted Eid Al-Adha prayers at the Embassy in Washington on November 27 to mark the end of the annual Hajj. Afterwards, the ambassador hosted a breakfast for embassy staff and members of the Saudi community. An estimated 550 people attended the event.

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah orders aid for victims of flooding

King Abdullah directed that emergency aid be provided quickly to those affected by heavy rain that fell on the Jeddah Governorate on November 25, including the immediate disbursement of financial aid, housing, food and other supplies. More than one hundred people were killed in flash floods in Jeddah, Makkah, and Rabegh, civil defense officials reported. An additional nine hundred people were rescued after the rain and flooding swept away cars and houses.

On November 30, King Abdullah ordered the formation of a high-level fact-finding committee, led by Makkah Governor Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, to assess personal and property losses and establish if anyone bears any responsibility for the recent flooding in Jeddah region. The royal order, which described the rain and flooding as unextraordinary, did not rule out negligence by authorities. The committee was ordered to promptly accomplish its duties and report directly to King Abdullah. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance will make an initial payment of \$267,000 to the relatives of each person who died during the flooding.

Nine Saudi soldiers reported missing

Ministry of Defense and Aviation reported November 26 that nine soldiers have been reported missing after clashes with infiltrators along the southern borders with Yemen. The statement follows the publication of pictures purportedly of Saudi soldiers taken captive during the ongoing military operations. The Ministry stressed that the fate of the soldiers is not clear but said their captures are entirely responsible for their well-being.

FOREIGN AID

Mauritanian Prime Minister, Saudi Ambassador inaugurate water project

Mauritanian Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf and Saudi Ambassador to Mauritania Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Jabri inaugurated on November 24 a Saudi-funded Drinking Water Project for fifty-one villages in central and eastern Mauritania. The \$5.6 million project will be financed by the Saudi Fund for Development.

