

Saudi King asks govt agencies to simplify procedures

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Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah yesterday instructed all government departments to implement qualitative changes in their performance and simplify procedures.

"The departments should establish continuous contacts with those who receive their services and make sure that their projects are efficiently implemented," the king said while presiding over a Cabinet meeting in Riyadh.

King Abdullah also told policy planners that the priority of the Kingdom's financial and economic policies was to achieve economic growth. "The policies should improve the citizens' standard of living and increase their purchasing power," he said.

The Cabinet reviewed economic activities in the Kingdom in the light of development projects approved under the current and last national budgets. "The new projects will improve health and educational services, boost scientific research and manpower training and create new job opportunities for qualified Saudis," the Cabinet said.

The meeting referred to the link between public spending and salaries as well as that between price hikes in Saudi markets and the world economic situation.

The king briefed the ministers on the outcome of his talks with Bahrain's King Hamad ibn Isa Al-Khalifah and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said Culture and Information Minister Iyad Madani. "The Cabinet meeting emphasized Saudi Arabia's support for efforts to solve the Lebanese political crisis and urged Lebanese groups to support the Arab League plan," the Saudi Press Agency said. The meeting underlined the importance of resolving the Palestinian issue in order to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East.

Madani said the Cabinet reviewed the latest Haj operation and praised all government departments and private agencies who contributed to making the annual event both safe and successful.

"King Abdullah told the Cabinet that the Kingdom would continue to give top priority to Haj and pilgrim services and improve facilities for the guests of God," Madani said. The meeting authorized the minister of higher education to sign agreements for cooperation in higher education and scientific research. Another agreement will be signed with France in order to expand cooperation in matters pertaining to oil, gas and minerals.