

A partial of the Prophet's Mosque at Madinah

Spectacular Economic Development

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lines. In the economic resources development area, number of licensed and operating factories rose from 199 to 2,303 in the same period, with total investment of SR 152.7 billion. The total cargo handled at the commercial ports rose from 1.8 million to 31.3 million tonnes and that handled at the industrial ports rose from 7.7 million to 55.5 million tonnes. Airports and airstrips increased from 16 to 25, including three international airports, and the total number of passengers who travelled through the Kingdom's airports last year was 25 million.

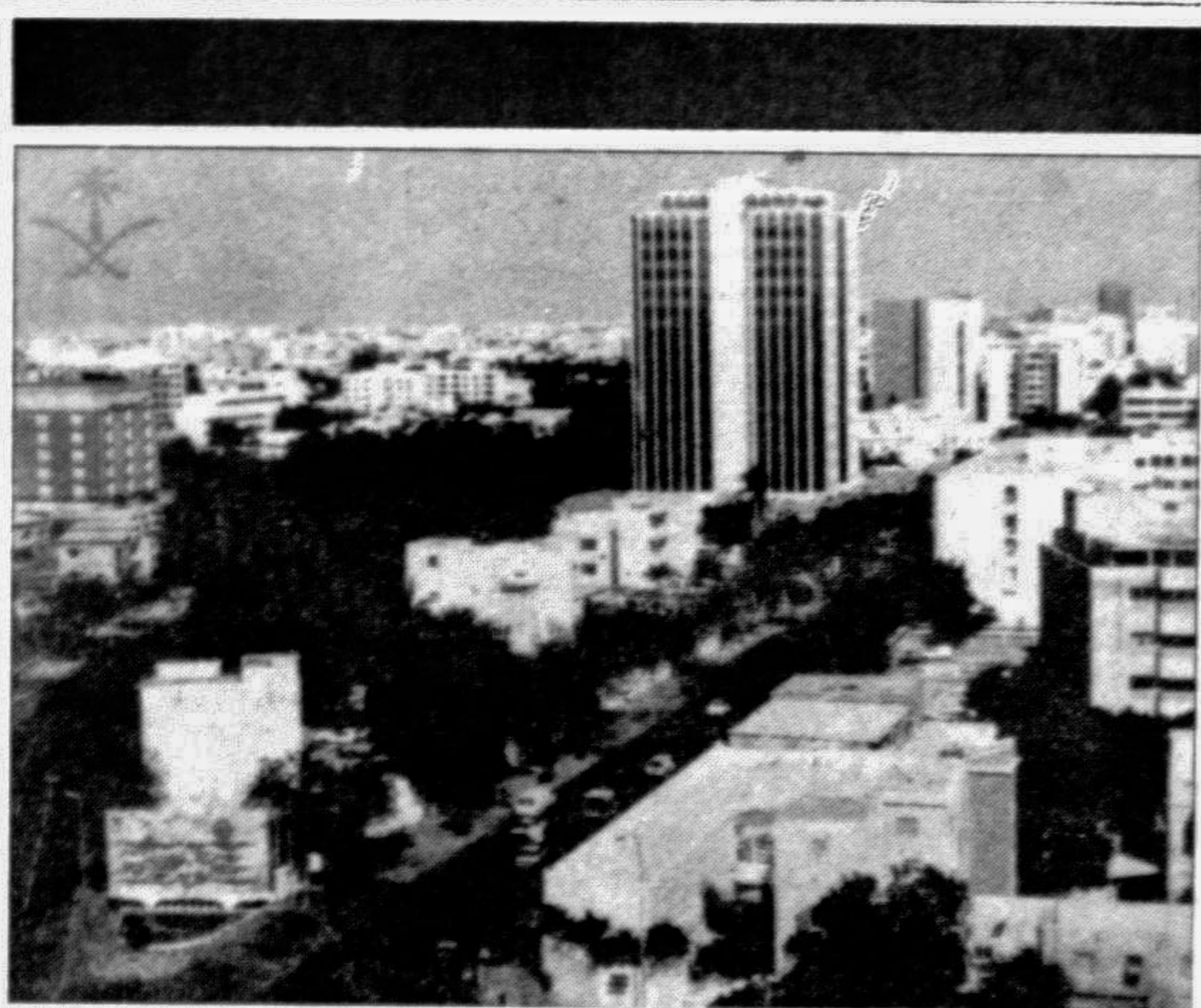
Electric Power: Electric power generation increased from 344 megawatts serving 216,000 subscribers, to about 17,530 megawatts serving more than 2.8 million subscribers through the Kingdom. Over 2.6 million hectares of farmland have been distributed to citizens raising the cultivated area from 0.5 million to 1.5 million hectares, contributing to the increased agricultural production and achieving a considerable self-sufficiency in cereals, fruits, meats and vegetables. Saline water conversion capacity increased from 5.1 million

gallons to 502 million gallons a day.

Number of Students: The total number of schools in all levels increased from 3,283 to 22,000 while the number of students rose from 600,000 in 1989 to 3.3 million in 1995, at an annual growth rate of 7.1 per cent. Medical services institutions rose from 74 hospitals and 591 primary health care centres to 279 hospitals and about 3,254 primary health care centres. Hospital beds rose from 9,000 to 41,827. The number of doctors increased from 1,172 to 29,227.

Number of Mosques: The total number of mosques reached to over 35,000. The Makkah Holy Mosque area increased from 152 square metres to 356,000 sq metres. The area of the Prophet's Mosque in Madina increased from 16,500 sq metres to 247,000 sq metres. The total space now available at both the Holy Mosques can provide spaces for two million worshippers to pray at a time.

A total of SR 9.9 billion were spent on the development of roads, bridges, tunnels, water and drainage networks as well as lighting in Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifa.



Residential quarters in Jeddah

Islam, Saudi Arabia and Terrorism

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The spirit of kindness, tolerance and peace which the teachings of Islam exhort its followers to nurture is not limited to its faithfuls amongst themselves, but extends to their dealings with outside communities. Islam rejects the cultures of enmity, violence and terrorism, and especially aggression against humans. Safeguarding human life is one of the fundamental principles of Islam.

The Quran considers an attack on a person as an attack on humanity as a whole. In this light, the principle of Jihad has been misconstrued by many Moslems and non-Moslems alike. Some think Jihad alludes to armed confrontation, nothing more, nothing less. In

actual fact, Jihad holds a much wider meaning. Broadly speaking, it refers to any effort dedicated to achieving a laudable goal. He who submits to Allah is a mujahid. He who works for the welfare of widows, the poor, orphans and the weak is also a mujahid.

Jihad can be carried out through word, deed or even intention. These teachings have been outlined in the Quran and the Sunnah. Jihad, in the sense of holy war, is only a fraction of the concept. Any such fight, as sanctioned by Islam, should be waged for a legitimate cause. It should not be an act of aggression.

Fighting is allowed only as a last resort after all peaceful means have been exhausted. In the context of Islam, it reminds

us of one eternal truth: enmity is a passing moment. Today's enemies may become tomorrow's friends. It may be that God will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom you (now) hold as enemies. For God has power over all things, and God is oft-forgiving. Most Merciful (Quran 60:7). This advice restricts enmity to the narrowest possible limit.

Islam emphasises that peace is the rule and war is an exception in human and international relations. War shall only be waged when it cannot be avoided and only when aggression is committed by the enemy. But if the enemy inclines towards peace, you should also incline towards peace and trust in God. (Quran 8:61). Thus, Islam commands its faithful to respond positively to any peace initiatives. "But if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who first aggress." (2:193).

The truth about Islam is that it is totally opposed to violence and aggression. And that is the premise according to which Saudi Arabia understands and practices Islam. The Kingdom was founded on the principles of the Quran and its legitimacy is derived from a commitment to observe and implement Islamic laws and build its social and economic system accordingly. There is nothing bizarre in this choice. It was in Saudi Arabia that Islam emerged and it was from this land that the message of Islam spread across the world.

Significantly, it is the cradle of the holy places of Islam, towards which over one billion Moslems turn with devotion and commitment five times daily from every corner of the world. Those who have [redacted] the effort to study the Islamic past and present of Saudi Arabia realise it is an Islamic country that has followed a unique path in its conception and implementation of faith — the golden mean — that represents the spirit and essence of the religion. Those familiar with Saudi society know that a policy of goodwill has always been a distinctive feature of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and has kept a distance from the rhetoric of ideological extremism which distorts Islam by transforming it from a message of peace into an instrument of social upheaval and political instability, a call for bigotry, hatred and antagonism.

Ever since it was unified by the late King Abdul Aziz, the Kingdom has steadfastly adhered to the "golden mean".

harmoniously blending old Islamic systems with continuing modern cultural achievements. It has always advocated peace and rejected terrorism. Its social relations are anchored in tolerance and a peaceful symbiosis of its citizens with foreign residents. Saudi foreign policy is geared towards strengthening international stability and cooperation. Never has Saudi Arabia violated the rights or sovereignty of others. Nor has the Kingdom ever meddled with the internal affairs of other nations. Such policies have won the Kingdom rare international respect. History is witness to the Kingdom's commitment to these principles.

Existent and close international relations began with the discovery and exploration of oil, in cooperation with the United States. Since then, the country has been on its road to progress. The government has used oil revenues to achieve enormous strides in development at all levels, much to the world's amazement.

Economic development requires the presence of millions of people from many different countries to partake in the work and share the fruits of prosperity. The number of expatriates now working in the Kingdom is estimated at approximately five million, from 190 countries. Saudi Arabia may be the only country in the world which truly represents the world community. Could the Kingdom have achieved this without a spirit of tolerance and a policy of openness?

Saudi Arabia has never dealt with others, above all the West, with any cultural prejudice but rather with an attitude of understanding and cooperation; yet the country has preserved its cultural identity and national sovereignty. Thousands of young Saudi citizens have been sent for education and training to different parts of the world to learn new skills and assimilate new ideas, representing their country and being the unofficial ambassadors of their culture.

On their return, they have been able to contribute to their country's future. This cultural exchange has been beneficial to both sides. Residing in foreign countries, they showed respect to the rules of the land and interacted with their peoples, without abandoning their own cultural identity. To the Kingdom, they brought knowledge and expertise which added to the scale of national achievement but they did not harm Saudi culture, traditions or religious values.

Saudis — government and people — have never felt embarrassed to accept the technical assistance of others in various fields, including the military. Experts and tutors came to the Kingdom from all countries and have lived among them with honour. Saudis have treated them in accordance with the teachings of Islam and their traditions. This has been the case since the establishment of the Kingdom in the 20th century, when an enlightened cultural concept was put into practice. It has been supported by a unique empathy between rulers and scholars on the one hand, and between them and Saudi citizens on the other.

This mature viewpoint demonstrates that the country's administration is not based on transient whims but rather on solid religious principles. Since the firm belief in social and international peace is one of its founding axioms, the Kingdom has strongly rejected terrorism and has been fighting it internally and externally. Saudi Arabia has come down hard on all culprits and terrorists by implementing the Shariah and applying its penal code.

The statements of Saudi leader have always supported a policy of peace and stability, and categorically rejected violence and terrorism.

Saudi words have always been backed by deeds. It may be imagined that the Saudi Arabian pro-peace and anti-terrorist pronouncements were prompted by the two recent ter-

rorist explosions. This is not so. Saudi Arabia's declared policies, principles and positions have been the same ever since the Kingdom participated in the establishment of the United Nations some 50 years ago. The Kingdom's stand on a number of regional and international issues including Palestine, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bosnia, Kashmir, Chechnya and the like, prove this fact.

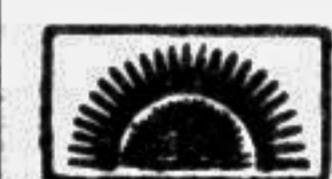
Saudi Arabia's policy on terrorism is firm and lucid. It is based on faith and culture. Terrorism is not confined to Saudi soil, but has become an international phenomenon. Among the followers of every faith, there are men of evil who do not hesitate at committing crimes or carrying out terrorist acts under religious guise. Similarly, this may well apply to some Moslem culprits. Would this justify stamping the religion they pledge allegiance to with the label of terrorism and accuse the community they belong to as a terrorist one?

Terrorism is an outrage and an evil rejected by religion and reason. All countries and societies must join hands to resolutely challenge it. Islam, for its part, has done this in its commands and admonitions. Saudi Arabia — the heart of Islam — has embodied this through its policies, declarations and practical measures.



A partial view of modern Jeddah

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