

Clark visits Middle East to discuss oil economic ties

OTTAWA (CP) — External Affairs Minister Joe Clark has left on an 11-day tour of the Middle East to discuss slumping world oil prices, economic ties, relief projects and the Arab-Israel dispute.

At a briefing yesterday, officials said he will visit Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel.

Clark expects to meet government leaders in all four countries, including King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Saudi oil minister Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani; Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak; Israel's Prime Minister Shimon Peres; and Jordanian Crown Prince Hassan, the youngest brother of Jordan's King Hussein.

One official said the trip is important to Canada because of our exports to the region — \$3 billion in goods and services last year — and because it is an area of "past, present and future conflict."

Economic ties

In Jordan, talks are expected to centre on Amman's key role in the Middle East peace process and the setting up of a framework agreement aimed at increasing economic ties.

In Saudi Arabia, he is expected to discuss slumping world oil prices, the Arab-Israel dispute and the raging war across the Persian Gulf between Iraq and Iran.

In Egypt, talks will deal with the Gulf war and Israeli-Egyptian relations.

Clark will also sign an aid agreement worth about \$80 million to help recover soil in the Nile delta.

Aside from the diplomatic meetings with Israeli leaders, Clark will tour Jerusalem and Bethlehem and visit a memorial to Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II.

Clark left for Rome yesterday and arrives in Jordan tomorrow. He will be in Jordan April 3-6, Saudi Arabia April 6-8, Egypt April 8-10 and Israel April 10-14.