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Handicrafts get boost as prize value hits SR 350,000

JEDDAH: ARAB NEWS

Prince Sultan bin Salman, chairman of Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, has instructed authorities to raise the value of Souk Okaz Prize for the best handicraft from SR 150,000 to SR 350,000.

Majed Al-Sheddi, director of media center at SCTA, commended the prince's gesture

and said it would encourage Saudi artisans.

"Such gestures will encourage more Saudi nationals to work in the handicrafts sector," he added.

About 160 artisans have so far registered their names to win the prestigious prize, Al-Sheddi said, adding that nominations would be accepted until Aug. 31 in five categories: weaving, making traditional dress-

es, wooden work, palm-leaf products, and ornaments. "An applicant should display at least 100 pieces at Souk Okaz and the earning from the work should go to him/her," Al-Sheddi said, while explaining the conditions for the contest.

The work should be an innovative one and should not have been presented for any other competition, he added.

Makkah Gov. Prince Khaled Al-Faisal recently announced winners of Souk Okaz prizes in 12 categories. Rowdah Alhaj Othman of Sudan won the prize for the best poet of the year. She will receive a cash prize of SR 300,000 and an overcoat. About 35 poets from Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Jordan, Yemen, Oman, Sudan and Mauritania had contested for the prize.



Prince Sultan bin Salman

Damascus gripped by execution-style killings



A woman holds a rifle as residents ride in the back of a truck in Qusseer, near Homs. (Reuters)

AMMAN: ARAB NEWS

The bodies of at least 79 people were found in a town close to Damascus yesterday, according to activists who said many were young men who appeared to have been killed by Syrian troops "execution style".

The deaths would bring the toll from an offensive by President Bashar Assad forces on Daraya, south-west of Damascus, to 149, according to a tally by opposition activists in the capital.

The Daraya Coordination Committee activists' group said in a statement that among those found with shots to the head were eight members of the Al-Qassaa family: three children, their father and mother and three other relatives.

Their bodies were found in a residential building near Mussab bin Umeir mosque in Daraya, the group said.

Mohammad Hur, an activist in Daraya, said 36 bodies of young men were found in one building along with several badly wounded people who could not be transferred to hospitals in the area because the army had occupied them. A further 12 bodies were found in the basement of another building, he said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which is based headed by dissident Rami Abdelrahman, said it had received reports of dozens of bodies found in Daraya.

Abdelrahman said at least 300 people had been killed by the army's offensive on Daraya

and the nearby suburb of Mouadamiya in recent days.

Combat helicopters and tanks also pounded Aleppo, an AFP journalist and monitors said, as the army pressed on with its war against fighters seeking to topple President Bashar Assad.

Switzerland, meanwhile, pledged financial support to an independent network of doctors in Syria who are trying to create a field hospital in the nation.

Georg Farago, a spokesman for Switzerland's foreign ministry, said Switzerland would contribute 55,000 Swiss francs (\$ 57,000) and is willing to support other efforts that "aim to lessen the suffering of Syrians".

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SR 4 billion deals to bolster health services

JEDDAH: ARAB NEWS

Health Minister Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah will sign a number of contracts worth SR 4 billion today to set up medical towers, hospitals and primary health care centers in different parts of the Kingdom, it was announced yesterday.

Al-Rabeeah thanked Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah and Crown Prince Salman for their generous support to the health sector.

"This support will enable the ministry to provide the best possible health care services to citizens," he said.

Speaking at an Eid Al-Fitr ceremony organized by the ministry in Riyadh, Al-Rabeeah said tenders would be invited soon to build the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Jeddah and King Abdullah Medical City in Makkah, ordered by the king.

King Abdullah has allocated 5.5 million square meters of land for the two projects.



Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah

King Abdullah Medical City will be set up in Shumaisy along the Jeddah-Makkah Expressway, on an area of 3.5 million sq. m.

He said the criteria to provide incentives to outstanding health service employees has been approved by authorities. He said the scheme would contribute to further improving health services.

Highlighting the ministry's achievements during the year, Al-Rabeeah said about 20,000 people have benefited from its family health care program.

"Public hospitals have conducted 60,000 surgical operations through their one-day operation services," he pointed out.

Apple patent win may reshape sector



WASHINGTON: ARAB NEWS

Apple's decisive victory in a landmark US patent case against Samsung could reshape the hot sector for mobile devices and slow the momentum of Google and its Android system, analysts say.

Apple won more than \$ 1 billion in the case on Friday, after a California jury found the South Korean electronics giant infringed on dozens of patents held by the

iPhone and iPad maker.

Although Google was not a party in the case, it makes the Android operating system which was central to the case — a system which Apple's late co-founder Steve Jobs called a "stolen" product.

Apple has been battling with Samsung and other manufacturers of the free Android system eat away at its market share in the sizzling market for smartphones and tablet computers.

Egypt reopens Rafah crossing with Gaza

CAIRO: ARAB NEWS

Egypt has reopened the Rafah border crossing with Gaza, a lifeline for Gazans which had been closed for much of the month since an Aug. 5 attack on Egyptian guards, Palestinian and Egyptian security sources said.

The move signals an advance in relations between Egypt's new government lead by President Muhammad Mursi and Hamas, said a Reuters report.

"The Egyptian side has informed

us that the Rafah crossing would open all days of the week, without more details," Ehab Al-Ghsain, spokesman for the interior ministry in Gaza, was quoted as saying in the report.

The opening of the crossing was confirmed by an Egyptian security source, the report said.

Shortly after the attack, Egypt closed the Rafah crossing and moved to seal myriad smuggling tunnels with Gaza.

The Rafah crossing normally sees some 800 people a day leave

for Egypt and beyond, and is the only window on the world for the vast majority of Gazans.

Egypt later said it would open the crossing temporarily, but just for three days, mainly to permit travel for humanitarian purposes such as Palestinians seeking medical care abroad.

Hamas has ruled out suggestions that Palestinians took part in the Sinai killings.

Hamas hoped the election of Mursi would usher in an era of strong ties between Gaza and

Cairo. Officials earlier said a Hamas delegation was heading to Cairo for security talks.

Hamas interior ministry spokesman Ihab Al-Ghussein told AFP that the aim was "to coordinate completely on all security issues."

Asked if the Hamas delegation would take part in the Egyptian investigation into Sinai violence, Ghussein said they would not be "directly involved" but would coordinate with Egyptian colleagues.

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Tadawul at 3-month high as trading resumes after Eid

JEDDAH: KHALIL HANWARE
ARAB NEWS STAFF

Saudi stocks surged to the highest level in more than three months as the market reopened yesterday following the week-long Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

The Tadawul All-Share Index (TASI) ended 1.44 percent higher at 7,104.48 points — the highest

since May 13. "This surge could be attributed to the comeback of liquidity into the local system post the long Eid break," commented Basil Al-Ghalayini, CEO of BMG Financial Group

The market has increased 11 percent so far this year.

The petrochemical and banking indices ended 1.37 percent and 1 percent higher, respectively.



The value of traded shares exceeded SR6 billion yesterday.

Al-Ghalayini said: "This surge could be attributed to the comeback of liquidity into the local

system post the long Eid break. There is a tendency among traders to liquidate part of their local positions before the long Eid break so they take advantage of international markets, which are open for business. Tadawul may reconsider its Eid break timings, to limit them to two days for example, in order to minimize these cash movements."

Jarmo T. Kotilaine, chief economist at the National Commercial Bank, said: "Banking and petrochemicals are in some ways the two main bellwether sectors from the perspective of the global environment. Less global risk aversion and greater optimism about growth tends to benefit petrochemicals in terms of better demand prospects and higher oil

prices which naturally boost the relative competitiveness of GCC producers."

Kotilaine emphasized that these two sectors tend to respond to and reflects swings in global risk aversion and market confidence even if the economic fundamentals move much more slowly.

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