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## Saudi Arab to build 3200 schools worth USD 5 billion

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Saudi Arabian ministry of education has launched SAR 20 billion project to construct 3,200 schools for boys and girls in different parts of the Kingdom. The new school buildings will accommodate more than 1.7 million students.

Keeping pace with the King Abdullah Project for the Development of General Education, the new buildings are designed and constructed according to international specifications.

Mr Abdul Rahman Al Ahmed deputy minister of education for buildings of Saudi Arabia said that the ministry is handed over every day 2 new school buildings by contractors. The new projects would help the ministry get rid of its rented buildings. He said that this has been one of the priorities of the ministry.

Mr Al Ahmed said that the ministry has undertaken an ambitious plan to design new school buildings, supervise their construction and carry out their operation and maintenance. The ministry had signed contracts with private companies for the maintenance of 30 school buildings.

Referring to the purchase of lands for school buildings, the minister said that it is done by a joint committee comprising representatives from the ministries of finance and education.

Mr Faisal bin Abdullah education minister of Saudi Arabia who has reiterated his ministry's commitment to get rid of rented buildings, signed SAR 2 billion contracts in July with a Chinese group for the construction of 200 school buildings. The Council of Ministers had allowed the ministry to contract with foreign companies to speed up the implementation of school projects.

Mr Abdul Ilah Saaty vice dean of Jeddah Community College said that the government's decision to construct new school buildings would contribute to improving the country's educational standard. School buildings are crucial for educational progress and improving the quality of education. This will enable teachers and students to fulfill the goals of education by employing modern techniques.

He commended Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah's efforts to promote education. He said that "The king approved SAR 9 billion project to develop education and increased the number of universities from 8 to 25."

Mr Saaty said that under the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, nearly 60,000 Saudi students pursue their higher education at colleges and universities across the globe. About 30% of the national budget is devoted to education and training. In addition, King Abdullah allocated large amounts of money from budget surplus to construct new schools. From the SAR 9 billion King Abdullah Project, SAR 4 billion is set aside to improve the educational environment and SAR 3.58 billion for extra curricular activities.

The construction of school buildings was delayed on several occasions in the past because contracts were given to individual companies. There were also occasions when contracts had to be canceled because of the contractors' inability to complete the work on time. In order to avoid such problems, the ministry is now awarding contracts to major groups.

(Sourced from Arab News)

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