

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST MERCIFUL, THE MOST
COMPASSIONATE

Speech delivered by

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CoS Winner of the King Faisal International Prize
In Arabic Literature (1411H/1991)

Your Royal Highness Prince Sultan bin Abdel Aziz,
Representative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
in patronizing this ceremony
Your Highnesses, dignitaries, and men of science, thinking and literature

Assalam Alaikum w Rahmatullah Wabarakatu

I stand before you today overwhelmed with pride at your cultural achievements and your dedication to the service of mankind in general and Arabs and Saudis in particular.

The various cultural and scientific establishments bear witness to the manifestations of this overwhelming advancement which has spread into the world with as much vigour as we feel it around the Kingdom. This renaissance was initiated by your great father, King Abdul Aziz (may God bless his soul). When God ordained the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to be his successor, the Custodian did not spare any effort in working with the same spirit. Other members of the Royal Family have also worked within this framework. As a result of this dedication, buildings tower high and the light of knowledge has shattered darkness and turned it into brightness in broad daylight.

This is no wonder. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has inherited virtues and values from his great father. He shoulders great responsibilities as a leader of this nation.

The Custodian is well aware that the responsibility to disseminate knowledge and illuminate minds is no less important than the responsibility to have God's word prevail and enhance the pillars of Islam. He knows better than anyone else that the former struggle only supports the latter and strengthens it. God is not worshipped except through knowledge, and is not fully known without the guidance of the Qur'an and the traditions of his Apostle (peace and blessings of God be upon Him). Both the Holy Book and the traditions are so profound that their depth cannot be probed without the sound means of logic and conscious knowledge.

I have no doubt that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has planned for the cultural future of this thriving Kingdom with energy and vision. The materialization of this plan will enable this country to assume a leading cultural role in the same way that it has manifested itself in other areas. The achievement would follow the natural course of events because Saudi Arabia is a country honoured by God.

Your Royal Highness:

The King Faisal International Prize symbolizes a great pride for the whole Arab World because it serves as an incentive for international creative thought. I am immensely grateful to receive this prize and feel doubly honoured: first because I am handed this prize directly by you, a representative of The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; secondly because this valuable international prize carries the name of King Faisal, a modern-day Muslim and Arab martyr. He was the best among orators and poets. Thirty-five years ago, I was privileged to be a member of the delegation accompanying King Hassan the Second (then Crown Prince) on a visit to Saudi Arabia. I attended an audience of the great Prince Faisal upon whom God has bestowed a recognizable knowledge of science and literature.

Prince Faisal (then Crown Prince) listened to a reading of my poetry. His words of praise and encouragement still echo in my ears.

Now, one-third of a century later, I renew my meeting with the Martyr King through the presentation of this international prize which I am honoured to have

won. It seems as though King Faisal is reaffirming the honour he bestowed upon me many years ago. It also seems as though he is reiterating his full approval of the way I take care of the education of the Arab Muslim child who is viewed as the corner stone for future advancement.

Your Royal Highness:

I attribute the honour of this great literary achievement to my country and to Moroccan literature in general. Such distinction shall not only expand the reaches of Arabic literature but shall strengthen ties between Morocco and Saudi Arabia. May God help The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and his brother King Hassan the Second to patch Arab differences, bring Arabs closer to unity, and consolidate and unify their ranks to achieve the best of Arab capabilities. May Peace and Blessings be upon you. Thank you.