

## Ban on Pokemon games and cards

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority has issued an edict banning Pokemon games and cards, saying they have "possessed the minds" of children, promote Zionism and involve gambling.

Saudi Arabia's Higher Committee for Scientific Research and Islamic Law issued the fatwa, or religious ruling, over the weekend. It said the video game and cards have symbols that include "the Star of David, which everyone knows is connected to international Zionism and is Israel's national emblem, as well as being the first symbol of the Freemasons."

The game also has Christian crosses and symbols of Japan's Shintoism, which is based on the belief in more than one god, the edict said. The Pokemon phenomenon originated in Japan three years ago as a Nintendo video game. It quickly expanded into cartoons, comic books and trading cards, becoming a multibillion dollar enterprise and enjoying enormous popularity worldwide.

In Tokyo Monday, a Nintendo spokesman speaking on condition of anonymity denied that religious symbols are depicted on the Pokemon items.

The card game involves a host of imaginary creatures, each with their own set of special powers. The goal is to win as many cards as possible.

The Saudi edict said that is tantamount to gambling, which is banned in Islam. Pokemon "has possessed the minds of a large chunk of our students, captivated their hearts and became their preoccupation. (They) spend all their money to buy the cards and compete with each other to win more."

Many schools in the United States have banned the trading cards because they are distracting youngsters from their studies. The game has been criticized in several countries, with a Christian church in Mexico calling it "demonic," and organizations in Slovakia saying television shows based on the game were detrimental to children.

(Downloaded from Internet by the Editor.)