

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

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Start your engines

Special souvenir edition
on the day women take the
wheel in Saudi Arabia

#WhatChanged

Saudi women can drive

Minivan moms, 'designer damsels,' F1 racers: Women's history on the road stretches back more than a century

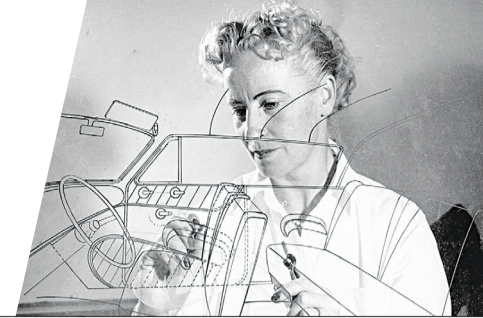
1903 American Mary Anderson is awarded US Patent No 743,801 for a device that soon becomes known as the windshield wiper. Alabama-born Anderson came up with the idea in New York while watching a streetcar driver try to clear sleet from his windshield.



1936 The Stout Scarab, a large vehicle shaped like the Egyptian beetle with a table and chairs, is put on show by its inventor, William Bushnell Stout, of Dearborn, Michigan. It is credited with being the earliest version of the family minivan, popular with soccer moms the world over.



1943 Helene Rother becomes the first woman auto designer, joining General Motors' styling office in Detroit, Michigan. GM later developed an all-female styling team — the 'Damsels of Design' — and, in 2014, was the first car maker to appoint a female CEO, Mary Barra.



1955-56 Proving that pink cars are always a bad idea, the Dodge La Femme was Chrysler's attempt to appeal to a growing number of women drivers in the US after World War II. The first edition came in 'Heather Rose' and 'Sapphire White,' with pink rosebuds in the interior.



1958 Italian Maria Teresa de Filippis becomes the first woman to race in the Formula One, taking part in five grand prix events. She retired after getting married, but later served as vice-president of the International Club of Former Grand Prix F1 Drivers and head of the Maserati Club.



1964 The first Ford Mustang was bought by a woman — schoolteacher Gail Brown, of Chicago. The Mustang might be seen as a muscle car, but it was advertised as 'the sweetheart of the supermarket set' and is still one of the top-selling sports cars among women.

Driving in the Kingdom: Your essential guide

From learning to drive to getting a license and buying a car — our experts have the answers for a generation of Saudi women eager to hit the road



Q What is the legal driving age? And what kind of vehicles are women permitted to drive?

The Supreme Decree stipulates that the application of the Traffic Regulations and its Executive Regulations shall apply to both women and men. The driving age is 18 for a private driving license, which applies to all types of vehicles, including motorcycles. There are exceptions for those reaching 17. They will be granted a temporary permit for no more than one year. Women will be allowed to drive trucks once the necessary conditions have been met for that purpose. The driving age is 20 for public driving licenses and public works vehicles.



Q What happens if you already have an international license?

Article 37 of the Traffic Regulations Act excludes those who have international and foreign driving licenses from the driving test as long as it is effective. It is also possible for women visiting Saudi Arabia to drive with their international and foreign-recognized driving license for one year from the date of entry or until the expiry of their permit, whichever is earlier based on Article 42.



Q What are dealerships doing to attract women customers?

Major players in the auto industry, such as Abdul Latif Jameel Motors, General Motors and United Motors Co., which between them hold the rights to sell Toyota, Chevrolet, GMC, Chrysler, Dodge and Jeeps in the Kingdom, have ramped up their advertising and marketing campaigns. Along with establishing a call center managed exclusively by women to handle finance options and general inquiries, Abdul Latif Jameel Motors, the Japanese group's Toyota distributor in Saudi Arabia, will be designating showroom lots run by all-women staff.



Q Can women from abroad rent a car and drive?

Women with international/GCC visas should have no problem renting a car if their license is valid. "We accept international visas in all our branches as long as it is valid and the same goes for women," Hattan Madani, a customer service employee at Budget, told Arab News. Not all outlets provide this option, however, with only Budget and Key doing so for car rental. Others insist that women must have a Saudi license.

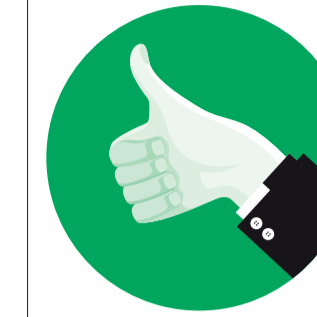


Now it's your turn
The first group of women drivers have responded to our call and sent us their pictures holding their freshly obtained licenses. Keep those pictures coming and be part of history with Arab News. Send your pictures to digital@arabnews.com or tag them #WhatChanged on your personal social media.



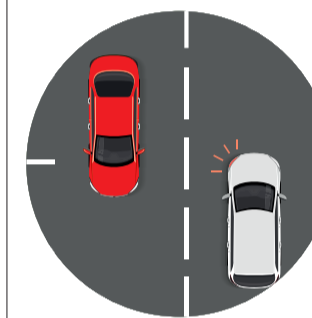
Q Were women ever allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia?

Historically, women in rural areas may have driven at one time. At institutes such as King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) and Saudi Aramco, women have been issued permits by the special zone's driving school. The driving environment at KAUST is similar to that of European countries or the US, according to Dr. Asla Bulfaraj, 37, who drives at KAUST, where she is a research scientist in molecular biology and immunology.



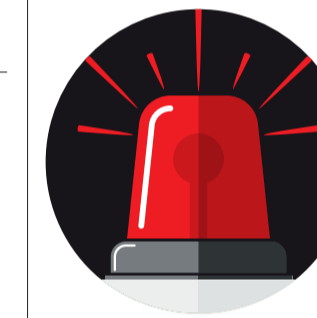
Q Where do you go to get your driving license and what testing is involved?

- 1 Register through the "Absher" portal, fill out the application form and pay the fees incurred in issuing the license, as well as pass the driving test.
- 2 Pass the driving test on Qyadati.com.
- 3 Schedule an appointment for the training program after paying the program fee from the previous website.
- 4 Attend theoretical training, which consists of workshops and lectures over eight hours, and a 30-minute training session in a driving simulator.
- 5 Prepare for a practical training period including 12 hours of training in the field, 11 hours on city roads and highways, and one hour for training and preparation to test for the license.
- 6 Pass the test under traffic police supervision.



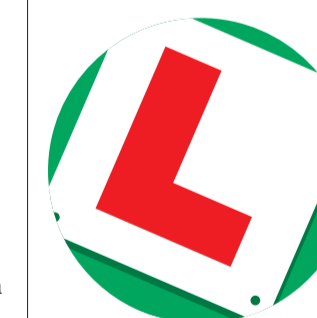
Q What do the tests involve?

According to Effat Saudi Driving School, there are several steps in teaching driving, including theoretical training, which consists of eight 60-minute lectures covering the following topics: Attitude and Responsibilities, Traffic Signs, Managing Risks, Driver Condition, Driving Environment, Rules of the Road, Anticipating Hazard and Emergencies, Your Vehicle.



Q What happens if you commit a traffic offense?

The Ministry of Interior and Social Development are coordinating to use girls' care units as detention centers in the event of a violation that requires arrest. Violators will also have their names publicized, according to the traffic regulations. Having non-insured cars will be considered an offence stipulated in Paragraph (1) of Table (4) with a fine ranging from SR100 (\$29) to SR150.



Q Where can you go to school to learn to drive?

Five Saudi universities have launched driving schools for women: Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University and Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Tabuk University and Taf University. The Saudi Driving School, at Princess Nourah University — the first for women in the capital — was launched in partnership with the Emirates Driving Institute in Dubai. Effat University has collaborated with Ford Motor Company on a "Driving Skills for Life" program for women. Based on its award-winning, global safe-driving initiatives, the program focuses on building women's confidence behind the wheel, expanding their automotive knowledge, preparing them for driving lessons and encouraging safe driving practices.

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Artist who put Saudi women in the driver's seat

Mo Gannon, Jeddah

French artist Malika Favre has created iconic covers for "The New Yorker" magazine, with animations that have gone viral online. So she was the natural choice for Arab News to illustrate our souvenir edition commemorating the day when women are allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia.

As Faisal J. Abbas, editor in chief of Arab News, explained: "Our website and newspaper — which today features a striking cover illustration by artist Malika Favre — will provide comprehensive coverage of both the immediate impact and wide-reaching, long-term social benefits of this move." From her base in London, Favre explained why the idea immediately appealed. "For me, it's exactly the kind of subject that I want to work with and tackle today. I've been increasingly involved with women's issues over the past few years, with The New Yorker as well.

"These stepping stones are extremely important, and they should be celebrated. It's also something that as a woman I feel very strongly about." What made our global creative director, Simon Khalil, think that

the in-demand artist would take his assignment on? "As a champion of women for years through her unique creative style, Malika Favre was the obvious choice," he said. "Her illustration brilliantly captures the significance of this moment on the day Saudi Arabia changed forever." For the illustration, called "Start Your Engines," Favre began with the idea of "something quite subtle, not aggressive, something celebratory," coming up with an image of a "beautiful, Arabic woman" that tells a story within a story. "So, basically, I had this idea of looking at the car from the point of view of the woman who is driving, and so maybe the first thing you see is a woman with a headscarf and quite a colorful image, but then on the second layer you see what's happening and you see that she is driving the car," Favre said. The image of her hands on the wheel, and that iconic Gulf vehicle, a white SUV, are reflected in her sunglasses. These are animated online. "I really like the idea of this woman being on the road, because I think symbolically it's about going forward," she said. "That is also a positive element, to create a positive image of what this historic moment will change."

The topic also resonated with Favre because her mother, while she was born in France, is Algerian. "For her, she always wanted to have the same rights as everyone else. She was a big advocate for that. She raised me in that way as well. So for her it's also an important cover on a personal level." When asked about her favorite assignments, Favre referenced "Operating Theatre" for The New

Yorker's "Health, Medicine & the Body" issue last year. "It was an extremely important project because it went totally viral."

In her illustration, female surgeons are arranged in a circle looking down, as if the viewer is on the operating table. In the animation, the image is viewed as if through a blinking eyelid. Women surgeons around the world started re-enacting Favre's cover, sharing more than 5,000 photos, with the hashtags #NYerORCoverChallenge and #ILookLikeASurgeon. "For me, it was a very important moment," Favre said. "It reached out to an audience that wasn't design-focused. It was something very profound that spoke to these women, and they took it as a very strong statement of let's celebrate women surgeons."

Does Favre think the women of Saudi Arabia are up for such an assignment? "I think it definitely has the potential to do that, as well," she said. Challenge accepted.



Share your re-enactment of Malika Favre's cover for Arab News on social media with the hashtags #ArabNews and #StartYourEngines. To download the image, go to <https://startyourengines.21wallpaper.design>.



I am thrilled. I learned to drive 18 years ago in the States, where I got my driving license. I can't believe that the day to drive in my hometown has come.

Nutritionist Sarah Alwasiss, 35, from Jeddah



We are witnessing history in the making. As a businesswoman in Saudi Arabia, I am grateful for the women's empowerment movement ... today, I am honored to be sitting behind the wheel of change.

Alkhubar entrepreneur Samah Alghosabi is a director of Ahmad Hamad Alghosabi, and cofounder and CEO of Yamoo

Photographer: Ziyad Alarfaj

JUNE 24, 2018

Independence Day

Women in Saudi Arabia now free to drive as Vision 2030 reforms begin to bear fruit

Saudi Women Can Drive



#WhatChanged

Deema Al-Khudair Jeddah

Women throughout Saudi Arabia waited for the stroke of midnight on Saturday, turned the keys in the ignition, fired up their engines — and hit the road to a bright new future.

It was the moment they had waited

for since King Salman issued the royal decree on Sept. 26, 2017, to lift the driving ban on women.

Just after midnight, Samah Alghosabi grabbed the keys to her family's 1959 Corvette C1 and drove out of the driveway of her beach house in Alkhubar.

"We are witnessing history in the making as we look toward the dawn of a promising future," said Alghosabi, the first female board member of Ahmad Hamad Alghosabi & Bros.

"As a businesswoman in Saudi Arabia, I am grateful for the women's empowerment movement taking place. Today, I am honored to be sitting behind the wheel of change."

Lina Almaeena, a member of the Saudi Shoura Council, also hit the road after midnight. "It

feels very liberating," she said about driving her mother's Lexus. Almaeena, also the cofounder and director of Jeddah United Sports Co., had exchanged her UAE license for a Saudi one.

"I am thrilled!" Sarah Alwassia, 35, a nutritionist in Jeddah, told Arab News. "I learned how to drive 18



We are witnessing history in the making as we look toward the dawn of a promising future.

Samah Alghosabi

First female board member of Ahmad Hamad Alghosabi & Bros.



Inside our cover: The Top 10 FAQ about women driving answered

years ago in the States where I got my driving license. I can't believe that the day to drive in my own hometown has come."

Alwassia obtained her first American license in 2000, when she was 18, and had it exchanged for a Saudi license on June 6 in Jeddah. She explained that she is a mother, and this change provided comfort for her and her family. It also comes with advantages such as taking quick action in emergencies, and economic benefits such as saving money instead of paying for a driver when she needs to run errands.

"I will be driving my kids to school and picking them up in comfort and privacy," she said.

Many women said the day would change their lives. "Independence is

a huge thing for me," Alwassia said. "Driving is one small part of it. I am very optimistic about the change that our loving country has made."

Alwassia applauds the efforts the country has made to support women. "I am confident that driving in the beginning will be pleasant, since our country has made all of the effort to support women and to protect them. "I think our society was looking forward to this change, and I am sure the majority will adapt fast."

"I feel safe, our country did everything to make this transition pleasant and safe for every woman behind the wheel. I am really thankful to witness this historic moment and I am so happy for all the women in Saudi Arabia, especially my daughters."

INSIDE

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Faisal J. Abbas, Editor in Chief

Four wheels good, two wheels better: Saudi women and their Harleys — P4

How women behind the wheel will drive the Saudi economy — Business P12

Frank Kane

Wheels on screen: The Top 6 classic car movies — & Finally, P16

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OPINION

Today is the day my high-school dream becomes reality

LINA ALMAEENA
SAUDI SHOURA COUNCIL MEMBER



It's not a train that we have to catch, but rather a futuristic hyperloop tube ride that we should strive to enjoy.

Lina Almaeena is the cofounder and director of Jeddah United Sports Co., the first Saudi private sports company to promote the culture of sports in the Kingdom.

Back in 1994, when I was editor in chief of the "Jeddah Girls Gazette" during my high school years, I wrote an article entitled "Can dreams be true?" It was all about things I dared to dream of in Saudi Arabia, like cruising in my car on Tahlia Street, or going to Al-Itihad and Al-Ahli football matches, and having equal opportunities to work as a woman in whatever field I desired. All these things seemed impossible at the time, and I felt they could never happen during my lifetime as extremist views tried to control the thriving young generation.

When I graduated from high school, my father and uncle sent me to study with my cousins at the University of New Mexico, majoring in political science, and later communications as there were no job opportunities whatsoever then for women in politics.

In 2000, I received my BA from George Mason University, and joined

Lambda Pi Eta, the National Communication Association's official honor society.

Eventually, I returned home, and got married. Dealing with new motherhood challenges, I needed a counterbalance to the postpartum depression that hit me after the birth of my first child.

Having been captain of my high-school basketball team, I was inspired to launch a new team of young Saudi graduates.

I called up my former teammates and went back to my favorite sport, the most ecstatic alternative to any negative emotion. Throughout those years I was able to pursue my master's in psychology.

Three years later, my husband and I started a social entrepreneurship initiative, Jeddah United, with the aim of promoting sports for girls and boys. It was followed by Al Khobar United in 2010 and Riyadh United in 2011, in

partnership with relatives in these cities. We believed in the power of sports to build a strong generation of productive citizens, and investing our time and energy in positive measures for a better quality of life for women and young people.

Women in sports was a taboo at the time. Some labeled it un-Islamic, others thought it was trivial. However, we believed strongly in what we were doing, and we continued to train tens of thousands of women and youth for over a decade.

On April 25, 2016, Saudi Vision 2030 was announced, with one of its main objectives to empower women and youth. Jeddah United's vision to promote the sports and health industry went hand in hand with the national objective to increase physical activity.

That same year, on Dec. 2, I was appointed to the Shoura Council, bringing its female representation to 20 percent. It is the highest honor to continue liv-

ing by the principles I was brought up with, in the spirit of "what we can do for our country." It is a great trust that I will strive to live up to through endless work and dedication.

Today, Saudi women can drive, work in any field they desire, practice any sport they choose, and attend almost any venue, with laws that guarantee our equal opportunity in economic and social development and citizenship equality; the latest example is the new anti-harassment law, which will actually protect all of society.

Saudi Arabia is transforming fast. As I drive my car today, I realize that my dreams in that high-school article have become reality.

Yes, we have a long way to go and we are not immune to mistakes, but we must all work hard to achieve prosperity for our nation.

It's not a train that we have to catch, but rather a futuristic hyperloop tube ride that we should strive to enjoy.



Spotlight

SAUDI WOMEN CAN DRIVE



FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Another mission accomplished

The end of a ban on women driving crowns a year of dramatic achievements since Mohammed bin Salman's appointment

Mohammed Al-Kinani Jeddah

A crackdown on corruption, guarantees of women's rights, an overhaul of the entertainment sector and a shake-up of the economy — in the past year, Saudi Arabia has witnessed extraordinary changes.

The bold reforms, introduced in the 12 months since Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman took his post last June 21, have made headlines locally and globally.

The first sign of social transformation in the Kingdom came on Sept. 26, 2017, with a royal decree lifting the decades-long ban on women driving. Less than a month later, Princess Reema bint Bandar became the first Saudi woman to be appointed head of a sports federation.

Then, last November, Saudi Arabia initiated unprecedented anti-corruption measures that included princes, government officials and major business owners among its targets. The Kingdom so far has recovered more than \$100 billion in its crackdown, and sent a clear signal that those who engage in corrupt business practices will face prosecution.

Corruption was not the only obstacle facing the crown prince, who made clear that embracing moderate Islam is the way forward. "We are returning to what we were before — a country of moderate Islam that is open to all religions and to the world," he told a Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh.

The beginning of 2018 brought a decision that took the Kingdom closer to ending all forms of discrimination against its female population, with women allowed to watch football matches with their families. Strengthening the Kingdom's

TIMELINE

June 21, 2017: King Salman appoints Mohammed bin Salman as crown prince of Saudi Arabia.

Sept. 26, 2017: Royal decree orders lifting of decades-long ban on women driving.

Oct. 14, 2017: Princess Reema bint Bandar becomes first Saudi woman to be appointed head of a sports federation.

Oct. 24, 2017: Speaking at a Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh, the crown prince pledges a return to moderate Islam and vows to root out extremism.

Oct. 24, 2017: The crown prince unveils ambitious plans for a new high-tech city-state, called Neom, that will connect Jordan and Egypt, with a \$500 billion business zone.

Nov. 4, 2017: King Salman announces the creation of a super committee to combat corruption and orders the arrest of a number of princes and businessmen.

Jan. 12, 2018: Saudi women are allowed into sports stadiums to

watch football matches for the first time.

March 6, 2018:

The crown prince begins a landmark visit to the UK, where he meets Queen Elizabeth and holds talks with Prime Minister Theresa May. His tour brings the announcement of a new strategic council to strengthen the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the UK.

March 8, 2018: The crown prince invites the Archbishop of Canterbury to visit Saudi Arabia.

March 18, 2018: The crown prince's wide-ranging and frank interview with CBS anchorwoman Norah O'Donnell is watched by more than 10 million people.

March 20, 2018: The crown prince embarks on a multi-city tour of the US and meets US President Donald Trump at the White House.

April 9, 2018: During the crown prince's

visit to France, Riyadh and Paris sign an agreement to collaborate on developing Saudi Arabia's historic Al-Ula area (Madain Saleh) into a key tourist attraction.

April 18, 2018: Saudi Arabia lifts 35-year ban on cinemas; 'Black Panther' becomes the first film to be screened at a spectacular new theater in King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh.

April 28, 2018: The Kingdom launches Qiddiya, its first multibillion-dollar entertainment, sport and cultural city in Riyadh.

June 4, 2018: Saudi Arabia's General Directorate of Traffic begins issuing driver's licenses to women.

June 19, 2018: Saudi Arabia wins coveted emerging-market status in MSCI upgrade.

June 24, 2018: Saudi women are allowed to drive on the Kingdom's roads.

From top: Princess Reema bint Bandar; Neom's high-tech future; US President Donald Trump; Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets British Prime Minister Theresa May.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has overseen reforms focusing on women's freedoms and expansion of the entertainment sector. AFP

OPINION

Saudi women driving is about much more than ... women driving

FAISAL J. ABBAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Journalism, they say, is "the first rough draft of history." I never felt this to be more true than when I filed this column shortly after midnight in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. And of all the places I have filed my column from, I never thought one of the most significant would be the passenger seat of my company car.

Why historic? Why significant? Because the driver sitting next to me was one of my female colleagues at Arab News — and one of the first women to legally take the wheel in the Kingdom after the end of a decades-long ban. A few more colleagues joined us in the back, and together we witnessed history unfold on the streets of Jeddah.

But in truth, the events of this day are about more than lifting an illogical and discriminatory ban; much, much more. Just

as Abraham Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation" in 1863 changed the course of US history, June 24, 2018, will chart a new course for Saudi Arabia.

It is certainly the most visible and daring achievement so far of Vision 2030, the reform and development plan led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, which, among other things, stipulates a greater role for Saudi women in the future of the Kingdom. Vision 2030 provides clear guidelines on empowering women, including them in the workforce, and eliminating the obstacles that held them back.

Nor is this merely aspirational talk; no one who has visited Saudi Arabia in the past two years, or observed it closely and fairly, can ignore the solid steps already taken. Women have been allowed into sports stadiums for the first time; female chief executives, senior government officials and Shoura Council members have been appointed at an unprecedented rate; and most recently, impressive and much needed anti-harassment measures became law, ensuring that no Saudi woman need ever cry #MeToo.

Against this encouraging backdrop, it can be dispiriting to read shallow and superficial comments in some Western media outlets, whose pundits downplay the significance of this historic day, and would have you believe that the role of women under Vision 2030 is limited to that of employees or consumers.

Yes, of course economic independence is vital for female empowerment, and reforms such as ending the driving ban can only help, but to belittle their role in this way does a grave disservice to the remarkable achievements of Saudi women. Even before they drove cars, Saudi women were leading the way in science, business, design and medicine, and have contributed significantly not just to their own society but to the world at large. Taking the wheel will only make it easier for them to continue achieving.

As for the much talked-about "male guardian" system, there is no such "system" — merely some cultural and bureaucratic procedures that are no longer sustainable, and are being dismantled with each day that passes. Vision 2030 has unleashed the full potential of Saudi women, and nothing is going to stop them.

Does this mean we live in a perfect society? Of course not. Is there room for political reform and more freedoms? Absolutely — but these apply to men as well as women, and Vision 2030 is the best way to achieve progress on these fronts.

Politics aside, this day is about celebrating a significant milestone on the long road of reform. So from all of us here at Arab News to all women in Saudi Arabia: Enjoy the ride!

Twitter: @FaisalJAbbas



'Even before they drove, Saudi women were leading the way in science, business, design and medicine, contributing not just to their own society but to the world at large.'



Saudi Women Can Drive



Maryam Ahmed Al-Moalem poses with a Jeddah Chapter Saudi Arabia biker vest. The motorcycle enthusiast is also a member of Harley-Davidson's "Harley Owners Group." File/ Reuters

WOMEN ON THE GO

Not just four-wheelers, women want to vroom ahead on two-wheelers

Training institutes in Saudi Arabia offer lessons in how to ride motorbikes

Lojien Ben Gassem Riyadh

As the clock struck 12 at midnight, the decades-old ban on women driving was lifted in the Kingdom. What was unimaginable a few years ago has now become a reality.

Several women with foreign licenses have already obtained Saudi driving licenses and those who do not know driving are making full use of the infrastructure set in place to help them learn.

From today onward, women behind the wheel will be a common sight on the Kingdom's roads. People should also prepare themselves to see women revving motorbikes as well.

Opting for the two-wheelers gives many women a sense of empowerment. Alia Abu Duhair, a Saudi banker from Tabuk, told Arab News that she had been passionate about bikes since her childhood.

"I love motorcycles because it reminds me of the good old days when we used to go to the beach. We used to ride them there."

"It made me feel happy and free. I wish to ride a motorcycle instead of a car. It is faster, without any parking hassles and one feels free and cool," she said.

Shahad Al-Harbi, a Saudi marketing student in Chicago, is also a bike lover, who finds biking an adrenaline-pumping activity. She said she had tried riding a bike with one of her friends in Chicago. "It was really an amazing experience."

Both Saudi bike lovers agree that Harley-Davidson motorcycles are the best in the world. As a matter of fact, Harley-Davidson is the dream of every person passionate about motorbikes.

"The brand is also very popular here in Saudi Arabia. Harley-Davidson is special because of its unique design, strength and luxury," said Abu Duhair.

Both believe that their parents might not encourage them to ride motorbikes mainly because of safety concerns.

Al-Harbi said: "My parents are very protective and I do not think they will be supportive of the idea. They may feel uneasy because of the stories we hear about accidents involving motorbikes."

"I believe Saudi women will prove to be good motorcyclists because they drive cautiously and strictly follow traffic rules," she added.

In Saudi Arabia and many other countries, it is mandatory to obtain a

license to ride a bike. Like elsewhere, there are training institutes in the Kingdom.

Wael bin Huraib, director of the Bikers Skill Institute, told Arab News about the institute and what programs it offers to women.

"We train people who are passionate about biking. All of our instructors are well experienced and certified," he said.

The Riyadh-based Bikers Skill Institute is considered the first institute to conduct structured motorbike training in Saudi Arabia. Established

in 2011, the institute mainly focuses on safety through skills and offers courses, such as the Basic Motorcycle Riding, Smart Riding, Top Gun, Motogymkhana, Off-Road Trainings and Kids Motorcycle Schools. It not only offers training to males but has also designed special courses for women.

Huraib said: "The females' section is well equipped and has female trainers. The courses comply with international standards and generally consist of two parts — theory and field training."

Harley-Davidson has been oper-

ating in Saudi Arabia since 2004. Initially, it started operations from Riyadh but over time it has expanded to other cities such as Jeddah and Alkhobar.

The CEO of Harley Davidson in Saudi Arabia, Mishal Al-Mutlaq, said: "We care about the safety of our clients so we focus on the safety features of our motorcycles. These days, the number of women visiting our stores has increased. We have brought in feminine colors that will be appreciated more by females. A motorcycle is just like a car. Its features and engine have nothing to do with genders. Women can drive all kinds of Harley-Davidson motorcycles like their male counterparts."

Harley-Davidson is famous for organizing events like motorbike rallies, especially for its members.

When asked about the possibility of organizing such an event in the Kingdom, he said: "In the near future, we might consider a special event for females and hire females in our stores as trainers and in the sales department. We use to have female employees in the female accessories section. We are planning to focus on that more."

"Today the store does not only have motorcycles but also accessories, souvenirs and clothes for females so

FASTFACTS

The Saudi Driving School in Princess Noura University also offers a motorbike driver's license.

The candidates must be 16 or older, unlike the private driver's license, where the applicants must be 18 or older.

To obtain a motorbike driver's license, the applicant also needs to bring written permission from a guardian if she is under 18, along with official documents like IDs and photos.

we are used to seeing females in the store buying things from us."

The Saudi Driving School in Princess Noura University also offers a motorbike driver's license. As its website says, the requirements for obtaining a motorbike license are simple. "The candidates must be 16 or older, unlike the private driver's license, where the applicants must be 18 or older. To obtain a motorbike driver's license, the applicant also needs to bring written permission from a guardian if she is under 18, along with official documents like IDs and photos."



Doaa Bassem gets ready for her advance motorcycle-riding training at Harley Davidson dealer in Alkhobar. File/ Reuters

ENCOURAGEMENT

Have faith and drive, women told

Deema Al-Khudair Jeddah

June 24 is a red-letter day for Saudi Arabia and its womenfolk. The lifting of a ban on women driving is yet another milestone on the road to female empowerment.

In a bid to encourage women to hit the roads, the General Entertainment Authority, the General Department of Traffic, Saudi Aramco, Dallah Albaraka, and Al-Hokair Group, organized a program

titled "Tawakkali wa Intaliqu (Have faith and drive) from June 21 to 23 in Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam and Tabuk.

The aim of the event was to educate participants about traffic rules and safety measures.

The program, held outside Jeddah's Red Sea Mall, was divided into five sections: Safety, mechanics, knowing how to drive using driving simulators, parking techniques, and carting.

Wissam Chehade, the event organizer, said: "This program is really important. Our message is for females as it is their first time to drive and we are here to teach them the ABCs of driving."

He said sometimes knowing the basics is more important than driving itself as it makes things easier at a later stage.

"It took a long time to prepare the program, studying how it can have an impact on people. We are cover-

ing topics from mechanics to safety, using special simulators, and the basics of knowing how to park a car," Chehade said.

He said that the program was created to encourage women to learn how to drive.

"We created it for women who think they might not be able to drive or obtain a license, who are questioning if they are ready to go take the required course — wondering if it is the right time.

"We are here to show them that it is not that difficult, it is something everybody can do and the basics are not that difficult. We are here to give them a real-life driving experience," Chehade added.

Rahaf Aseeri, a participant, said: "It was a lovely experience. I learned how to use the brakes and other things. I learned things I never knew before. It was a great event and I benefited a lot from it."



Saudi Women Can Drive

WOMENVIEWS

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a huge socioeconomic transformation. Granting women the right to drive is part of the drive to ensure sustainable economic development.

Women in the Kingdom are pretty excited by this decision. Arab News spoke to four women of different age groups with different educational backgrounds to gauge their views on this issue.

"I can finally drive. It will enhance the quality of my life. I believe that our society is now ready for this change. This is more than enough. The authorities have laid the groundwork for the effective implementation of this decision by organizing awareness campaigns on women driving and workshops to educate women about different aspects of driving and maintenance of vehicles etc. In addition, strict laws are now in place to prevent harassment. Insurance companies are also offering discounts for women. There are lucrative leasing options for cars as well. Now only one thing is left: Seeing women driving in Saudi Arabia.

Wijdan Saleh, 34, artist

"I believe that women are ready. The majority of men support their female relatives in this regard. The society on the whole is supporting the idea. That means we, women, should start driving at the earliest. In my opinion, there is no valid reason for me to postpone driving for even a day. We have been waiting for this historic change in our society for so long because it will shape a new culture where women are independent and part of the development of our country. I believe women aged 35 and above will be the first ones to start driving immediately while the younger ones are likely to follow suit a few months later. Perhaps, some of them would like to know how it goes and others are holding back because their families asked them to wait for some time."

Nourah Al-Hajri, 29

"All my daughters are below 30. I want them to wait for a while. I think they don't have enough knowledge about car maintenance. However, if they wait some time, they will learn from other women's experiences and benefit from them. Furthermore, the historic decree was issued last year, but the implementation took time. I prefer to let my daughters wait until our society gets used to seeing women driving. In my opinion, this will take 3-6 months. I want them to start driving when it is completely normal, it is a new thing and it takes few months till it becomes a routine thing to see women driving on their own."

Om Saleh Abdullah, a mother of five

"I prefer to start driving after a few months. The only reason for this delay is that I discontinued my driving training due to a huge number of women learners. At that time, the number of instructors was limited as compared to the number of women willing to attend the training. I will restart my training once things calm down and training institutes become less crowded. People usually run after new ideas but the excitement comes down as the novelty of an idea wears off. I think I will wait for six months to begin my driving lessons again."

Heba Ahmed, 27, translator

— Compiled by Hanan Alnufaia



The lifting of the ban on women driving marks a milestone for women in the Kingdom who have had to rely on drivers, male relatives, taxis and ride-hailing services to get to work, go shopping and simply move around. AP

VISION 2030

Three million Saudi women 'on the roads by 2020'

Kingdom likely to save between SR9bn and SR12bn annually after phasing out foreign drivers

Ghazanfar Ali Khan Riyadh

Several Shoura members, diplomats and rights activists have hailed the landmark decision of the Saudi leadership allowing women to drive, which will cut reliance on foreign workers and boost job growth in the Kingdom.

"It will empower women and also change the employment landscape of the country," said Mohammed Al-Khunaizi, a member of the Shoura Council.

Expressing his happiness over this historic moment, Al-Khunaizi told Arab News that "the number of expatriate drivers in the country today exceeds one million." "The Kingdom will save between SR9 billion and SR12 billion annually after phasing out foreign drivers," said the Shoura member, while calling the day (June 24) "the biggest day in the history of

the Kingdom."

He said that "the female driving will help create more and diverse job opportunities for women, a move which is in line with the Saudi Vision 2030."

"In fact, a large number of Saudi women, as far as I know, have decided to drop their kids to schools, go to supermarkets and visit government offices themselves, ensuring more cohesion, security and dignity for women," added Al-Khunaizi.

"It is indeed a courageous step of the Saudi government and its institutions," said the Shoura member, while referring to the support extended by Shoura Council to this decision.

Commending the decision, which is like history in the making before his own eyes, German Ambassador Dieter W. Haller said: "June 24 marks another important step on Saudi Arabia's way to modernity. It helps the families and it will boost the Saudi economy... and we welcome it and

commend the Saudi leadership for this wise decision."

"I am very proud to witness this historic moment in the Kingdom," said Luca Ferrari, Italian ambassador.

He said women driving is a major milestone in the implementation of "the economic and social transformation plan wisely envisaged by King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman."

The Italian envoy, while referring to the reforms in the Kingdom, said: "Women empowerment is a crucial

step toward a more inclusive society and a balanced economic growth."

Referring to the move, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Quayid, a founding member of the National Society of Human Rights (NSHR), said women driving will boost mobility and ease pressure on family members.

"Earlier, husbands without drivers were obliged to drive their wives if they need to go to a doctor or for shopping," said Al-Quayid, adding that the driving by women will boost productivity.

"Most employers, at least in the public sector, accept the cultural norm, implying that driving one's wife is a legitimate reason not to be present at work," he added. "This makes lifting the ban on women driving an essential step by the Saudi government in order to make the Saudi economy more efficient in the long run," he said.

In fact, the employment landscape in Saudi Arabia will be transformed by the historic start to women's driv-

ing, said a report released by the online recruitment firm GulfTalent.

Based on the findings of a survey, the report said that "the career advancement is a major factor in empowering women, which is one of the goals of Saudi Vision 2030."

The survey predicts driving will lead to a wave of employed women moving to more lucrative jobs in other companies or institutions.

Many of the survey respondents admitted that they previously had to settle for jobs with lower wages because of the transport constraints. "The move now will have positive implications, especially helping the women working in health and banking sectors," said Shahzad M. Siddiqui, a senior banker, while referring to a large number of Saudi women joining banking and health sectors.

By 2020, an estimated 3 million women are forecast to be driving in the Kingdom, according to a report compiled by audit firm PwC.



June 24 marks another important step on Saudi Arabia's way to modernity.

Dieter W. Haller, German Ambassador

PREPAREDNESS

We are ready, say female accident inspectors

Mohammed Al-Sulami Jeddah

A group of 40 Saudi women on Sunday began their careers as car accident inspectors in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam as the ban on women driving was lifted.

Private insurance company Najm, in partnership with the General Department of Traffic, has hired 40 women and provided them with training to respond to road accidents involving female drivers.

Inspector Amira Abdul Aziz Al-Enzezi from Riyadh told Arab News: "As Saudi women, we can play a vital role in managing and responding to accidents, supporting women drivers,



A group of 40 Saudi women on Sunday began their careers as car accident inspectors in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. Photo/Supplied

and contributing to raising awareness about traffic safety."

Inspector Mada Hassan Hamza from Dammam was enthusiastic about her new role. She said she hoped to make a valuable contribution. "We are qualified enough to perform our jobs perfectly."

"We invite all Saudi women to join Najm because it provides a unique opportunity to manage and address traffic accidents and conduct field trials," she said. Suha Abdullah Al-Abdulwahid, another Najm inspector, said: "I am proud to be the member of the first batch of female Najm inspectors."

She hopes the number of women inspectors will increase gradually.