


*33 things to look out for*

# Signals of change

## Saudi Arabia, 2026 to 2027

What happened in the Kingdom this year, and what each event could mean for the next.

BEFORE YOU START

# Keep a lookout for these signals of change.

## A signal of change is one event, dated and reported, that shows something starting to move before the statistics catch up.

One signal proves little. Several pointing the same way are worth planning around. We tracked events in the Kingdom through 2026 and kept the 33 that changed how we think about 2027.

### WHAT A SIGNAL CAN SHOW

| ONE SIGNAL | | IF IT CONTINUES | | WHAT IT CHANGES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Riyadh Metro carried 60.7 million passengers in six months.** | → | **Sites near stations start to outprice sites on the highways.** | → | **Where a retailer, a clinic or an employer chooses its next premises.** |

### HOW TO READ A SIGNAL

A 04 2027 · WATCH FIRST

B 9.6%

unemployment, Saudi women, Q2

C **Unemployment among Saudi women rose in a year when the national target was met**

Unemployment among Saudis was 6.5% in the second quarter, inside the 7% goal, and the aim is now 5%. Within that, the rate for Saudi women rose 0.6 points in three months to 9.6%, twice the rate for men, and fewer women were in the labour force than the quarter before. It is only one quarter, but we are watching the next.

D IF IT CONTINUES

**The 5% target is reached on men's numbers while women's stall. Funders of women's employment should ask which sectors shed the jobs.**

E Q2 2026 · GASTAT Labour Force Survey

A Its number on the radar and when it starts to matter. Lime marks the five to watch first.

B The one figure to remember.

C What happened, in plain words.

D What we think follows. This part is our judgement.

E The date and who reported it.

# The 33 signals of change at a glance.

Eleven themes, three signals in each. For when each one starts to matter, and the five we would watch first, see the radar on page 05.


## Routes and money — PAGE 06

01 Oil exports halved, then recovered
02 East-West pipeline at full capacity
03 PIF puts returns first

## Work and households — PAGE 07

04 Saudi women's unemployment up
05 Instalment apps become lenders
06 Riyadh rent freeze

## Health and care — PAGE 08

07 Weight-loss drugs in 9% of homes
08 Hospitals move to clusters
09 290 hospitals for private operators

## City and movement — PAGE 09

10 Riyadh Metro, 60.7m passengers
11 Businesses allowed in parks
12 Ceer unveiled, few electric buyers

## Culture and leisure — PAGE 10

13 Saudi films take 12.7% of box office
14 Esports World Cup played in Paris
15 Residents travel more at home

## Education — PAGE 11

16 AI curriculum for six million
17 First foreign university campus
18 Teachers held to their own subject

## Artificial intelligence — PAGE 12

19 HUMAIN's first data centres
20 Ministry counts AI working hours
21 First AI copyright fine

## Robots — PAGE 13

22 Seven procedures in one surgery
23 Driverless car on Uber in Riyadh
24 Framework for 10,000 robots

## Energy — PAGE 14

25 Largest battery projects
26 Green hydrogen plant, one buyer
27 18.8 GW against a 130 GW plan

## Heat, land and water — PAGE 15

28 Second-hottest September
29 Cooling could add a third to bills
30 Coffee output up ninefold

## Waste and circular economy — PAGE 16

31 Waste plants offered to investors
32 National waste tracking platform
33 Producers liable for their waste

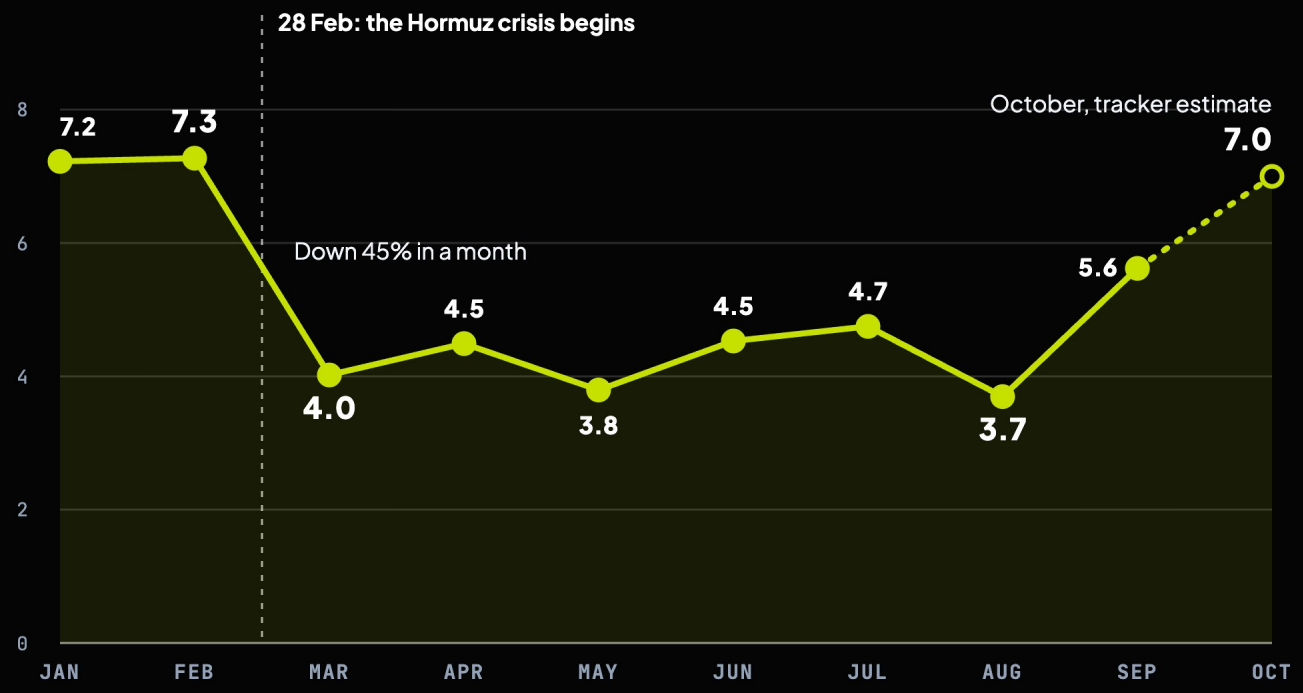
## Also in this brief

The year in one chart — PAGE 04
All 33 signals on one chart — PAGE 05
Where the ministries are heading — PAGE 17
Four ways 2027 could go — PAGE 18
Questions for the future — PAGE 19
About GBOX and sources — PAGE 20

THE YEAR IN ONE CHART

# Oil exports fell by almost half in a month. By October they had largely recovered.

Saudi crude oil exports in 2026, million barrels a day. Estimates by TankerTrackers.com.




### GROWTH IN 2026

| | |
|---|---|
| Oil | −21.8% |
| Non-oil | +3.2% |

Oil activity shrank by a fifth. The rest of the economy grew. Finance ministry projection.

### CRUDE OUTPUT, MILLION B/D

| | |
|---|---|
| 9.48, 2025 average | |
| 6.24, Aug 2026 | |

August was the lowest month Saudi Arabia has reported since 1990.

### SHIPS A DAY THROUGH HORMUZ

Two in mid-November, against 85 before the crisis.

OUR READING

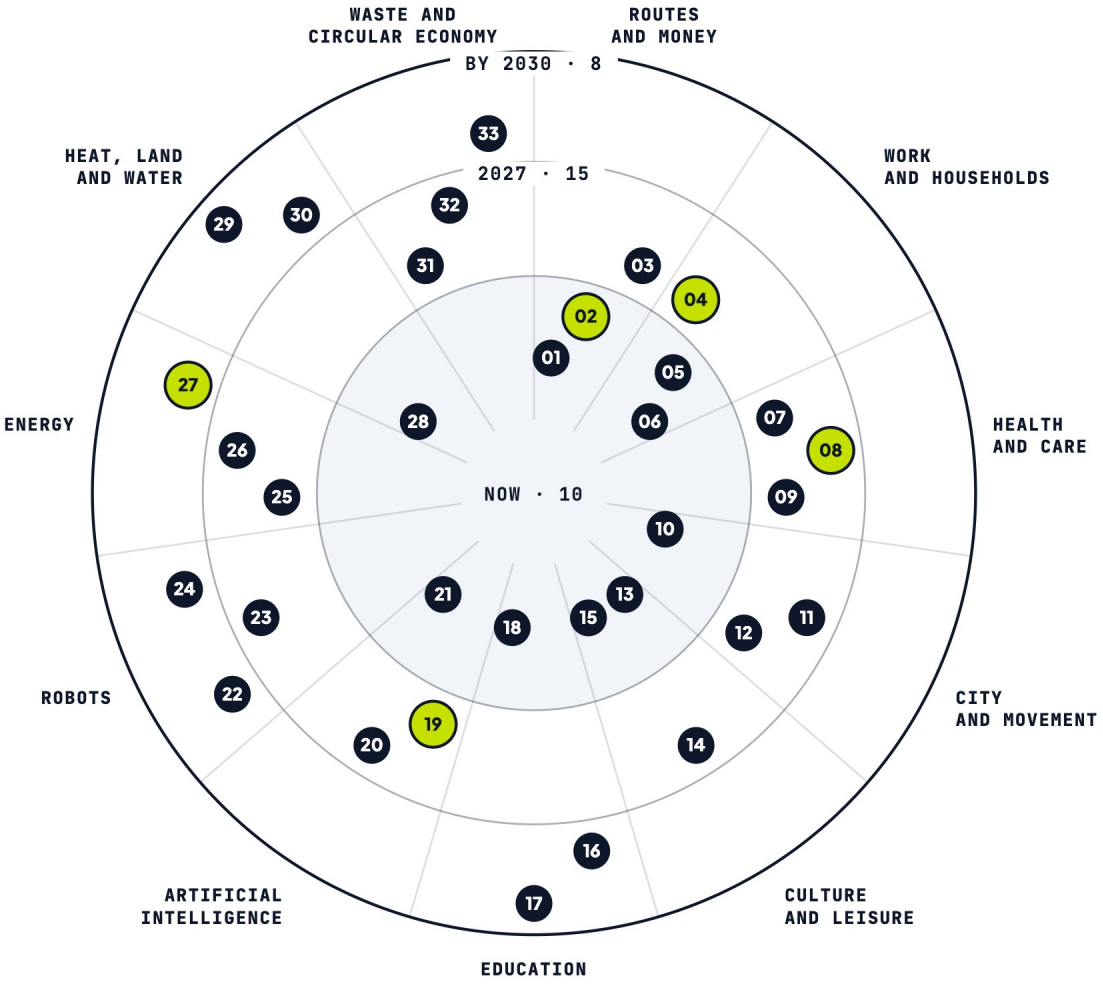
The non-oil economy kept growing through a year when oil output hit its lowest since 1990. Exports largely recovered while tracked traffic through Hormuz stayed near zero. Some went west by pipeline and some left the Gulf under escort. Plan for both routes, and expect more trade to use the west coast.

Exports: TankerTrackers.com, October figure as reported by Al-Jarida on 29 Oct 2026 · Ministry of Finance · JODI and OPEC via Bloomberg · IMF PortWatch

# Ten signals are already changing plans. Fifteen more arrive in 2027.

● The five we would watch first

33 events from 2026, placed by when each starts to affect a plan or a budget. The closer to the centre, the sooner.




## Now · 10

Already changing plans and budgets

- 01 Oil exports halved, then recovered
- 02 **East–West pipeline at full capacity**
- 05 Instalment apps become lenders
- 06 Riyadh rent freeze
- 10 Riyadh Metro, 60.7m passengers
- 13 Saudi films take 12.7% of box office
- 15 Residents travel more at home
- 18 Teachers held to their own subject
- 21 First AI copyright fine
- 28 Second-hottest September

## In 2027 · 15

Arrives in next year's plans

- 03 PIF puts returns first
- 04 **Saudi women's unemployment up**
- 07 Weight-loss drugs in 9% of homes
- 08 **Hospitals move to clusters**
- 09 290 hospitals for private operators
- 11 Businesses allowed in parks
- 12 Ceer unveiled, few electric buyers
- 14 Esports World Cup played in Paris
- 19 **HUMAIN's first data centres**
- 20 Ministry counts AI working hours
- 23 Driverless car on Uber in Riyadh
- 25 Largest battery projects
- 26 Green hydrogen plant, one buyer
- 31 Waste plants offered to investors
- 32 National waste tracking platform

## By 2030 · 8

Too early to budget for, not to prepare for

- 16 AI curriculum for six million
- 17 First foreign university campus
- 22 Seven procedures in one surgery
- 24 Framework for 10,000 robots
- 27 **18.8 GW against a 130 GW plan**
- 29 Cooling could add a third to bills
- 30 Coffee output up ninefold
- 33 Producers liable for their waste

SIGNALS 01 TO 03

# Routes and money

The Hormuz crisis was the main event of 2026. Exports are mostly back, and these three signals show what it left behind.

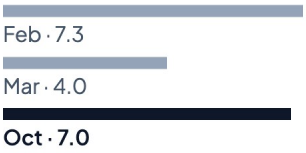
What if more exports leave from the Red Sea for good?

01 NOW

## Oil exports halved in March and had largely recovered by October

7.0

million barrels a day in October, by one tracker




Feb to Oct 2026 · TankerTrackers.com; OPEC data via Al-Monitor; Riyad Bank PMI

Crude exports fell from 7.3 million barrels a day in February to 4.0 in March, by TankerTrackers' count. August output was the lowest Saudi Arabia has reported since 1990. For October the same tracker put exports near 7 million, while Kpler counted 5.4. The non-oil business survey has shown growth for seven months and read 54.0 in October.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Most of the shock passed inside one budget year. Finance teams should budget on non-oil income first and keep a second export shock on the risk register.**

02 NOW · WATCH FIRST

## A pipeline built in the 1980s became the route around Hormuz

11 Mar

the day it went to full capacity

Mar to Nov 2026 · Energy ministry statements via SPA, Al Jazeera and Enerdata

The East-West pipeline runs from the eastern oilfields to the Red Sea. It was built during the Iran-Iraq war as a way around the Strait of Hormuz, and it went to full capacity on 11 March. It was hit in April, shut for a time after a drone attack in September, and struck again in the Medina region on 9 November.

IF IT CONTINUES

**More gets built on the Red Sea side. Anyone siting a plant or a data centre should ask which coast it depends on.**

03 2027

## The Public Investment Fund now puts returns ahead of giga-projects

2026–30

the strategy period

Apr and Aug 2026 · PIF; AGBI

PIF's board approved the 2026 to 2030 strategy in April and the fund published the plan in August. It gives more weight to earning returns and bringing in private money than to building with state funds, and giga-projects read as a lower priority than before. Contractors and suppliers should expect private co-investors at the table.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Anyone pitching a project to PIF should expect to be asked first who the paying customer is and who else is putting in money.**



SIGNALS 04 TO 06

# Work and households

The national averages look fine. Underneath them, women's jobs, household credit and Riyadh rents are all moving.

Who do the averages leave out?

04 2027 · WATCH FIRST

9.6%

unemployment, Saudi women, Q2

All Saudis · 6.5%

Saudi women · 9.6%

Q2 2026 · GASTAT Labour Force Survey

## Unemployment among Saudi women rose in a year when the national target was met

Unemployment among Saudis was 6.5% in the second quarter, inside the 7% goal, and the aim is now 5%. Within that, the rate for Saudi women rose 0.6 points in three months to 9.6%, twice the rate for men, and fewer women were in the labour force than the quarter before. It is only one quarter, but we are watching the next.

IF IT CONTINUES

**The 5% target is reached on men's numbers while women's stall. Funders of women's employment should ask which sectors shed the jobs.**

05 NOW

SAR 50,000

what Tabby can now lend one customer

Dec 2025 and Jun 2026 · SAMA circular reported by Argaam; Tabby

## Instalment apps are turning into licensed lenders

In December 2025 the central bank raised the ceiling on a buy-now-pay-later purchase to SAR 10,000. In June 2026 Tabby, which reports 25 million registered users across three Gulf markets, received consumer and small-business finance licences and can lend up to SAR 50,000 over twelve months.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Young Saudis will build their first credit history inside a shopping app. Financial literacy programmes that cover only cards and bank loans will miss them.**

06 NOW

5 years

length of the freeze

Apr and Sep 2025 · SPA via Arab News; Cavendish Maxwell; Asharq Al-Awsat

## Riyadh froze rents for five years

In September 2025 the government froze rents on homes and commercial property in Riyadh for five years, after several years of steep rises. Earlier that year it had widened the tax on idle land to cover vacant buildings. These are price controls in a market that had been left to supply and demand.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Other growing cities will ask for the same. Employers moving staff to Riyadh can fix housing budgets, while landlords weigh whether building still pays.**

SIGNALS 07 TO 09

# Health and care

Public hospitals are changing hands twice: from the ministry to a state company, then to private operators.

Who pays for a healthier country?

07 2027

## One in eleven Saudi households has someone on a weight-loss drug

9%

of households, by one consumer panel

Using · 9%

Considering · 14%

2025 to Aug 2026 · Worldpanel by Numerator; SFDA; Gulf News

A Worldpanel by Numerator study puts use of GLP-1 drugs at 9% of Saudi households, ahead of Britain and Brazil, with another 14% considering it. In August the food and drug authority approved the first daily pill for obesity. The health ministry has set fines of up to SAR 100,000 for prescribing the injections without supervision.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Grocers and restaurants will notice first, in what people buy. Insurers and employers will then be asked whether the drugs are covered.**

08 2027 · WATCH FIRST

## Public hospitals are moving from the ministry to a state company

20

health clusters due to transfer by 2027

Feb to Jun 2026 · Ministry of Health; Health Sector Transformation Report 2025

The health ministry is handing its hospitals and clinics to regional clusters under the Health Holding Company and becoming a regulator. More than 130,000 staff have moved to ten clusters so far, and the minister expects all 20 to complete the change by 2027.

IF IT CONTINUES

**A separate body buys care from the clusters. Whoever writes those contracts decides whether prevention gets paid for.**

09 2027

## 290 public hospitals are on the list for private operators

290

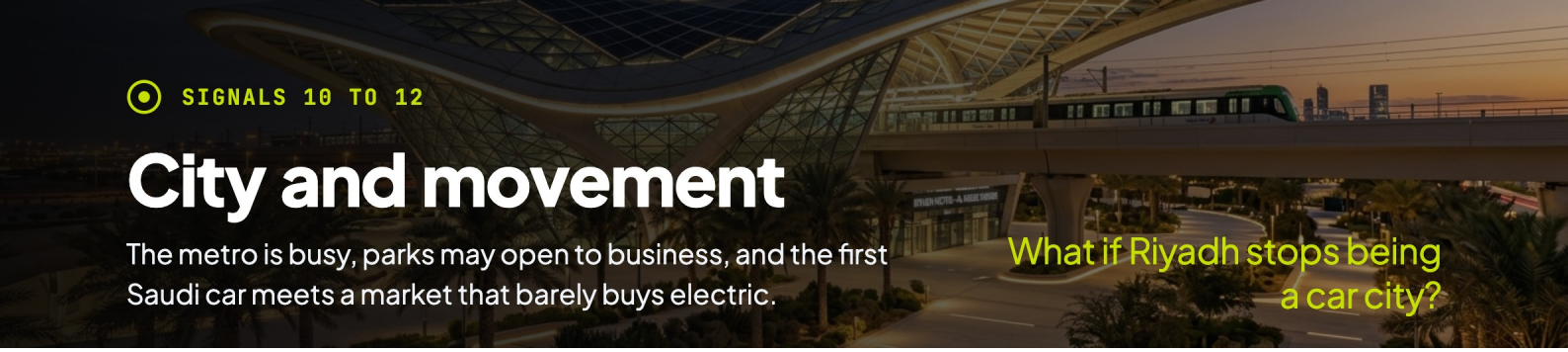
hospitals, plus 2,300 health centres

Jan 2026 · National Privatization Strategy via CF; Alomar and others, Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal

The National Privatization Strategy moved into execution in January. The health plan covers 290 hospitals and 2,300 primary care centres. In a WHO journal, three health ministry officials report that a private radiology contract at seven Riyadh hospitals saved SAR 350 million in 13 months. They also warn of a two-tier system unless regulation keeps up.

IF IT CONTINUES

**If you sell training, equipment or community programmes to public hospitals, your buyer will be a private operator. Find out which one.**



SIGNALS 10 TO 12

# City and movement

The metro is busy, parks may open to business, and the first Saudi car meets a market that barely buys electric.

What if Riyadh stops being a car city?

10 NOW

60.7 m

passengers, first half of 2026

Q2 2025 · 23.6 m

**Q2 2026 · 29.7 m**

First half of 2026 · Transport General Authority via Arab News

## Riyadh Metro carried 60 million passengers in six months

The metro opened in December 2024. In the second quarter of 2026 it carried 29.7 million passengers, against 23.6 million a year earlier, and it now makes up about three quarters of urban rail trips in the Kingdom. In a city built around the car, none of these trips could be made by rail two years ago.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Sites near stations should start to outprice sites on the highways. Retailers, clinics and employers choosing premises in Riyadh should look there first.**

11 2027

12

activities on the draft list

22 Jun 2026 · Saudi Gazette; Al-Yaum; draft published on the Istitlaa platform

## A draft rule would let twelve kinds of business open inside neighbourhood parks

In June the municipalities ministry put out for consultation a rule allowing up to twelve commercial and community activities in parks that face residential streets. Buildings could cover no more than a quarter of the park. The list runs from juice and ice cream outlets to hydroponic vegetable growing in the larger parks.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Operators would maintain a park in return for trading in it. Social enterprises should be ready to bid for these sites once the rule is final.**

12 2027

SAR 399,000

price of the first edition

Sep and Oct 2026 · Semafor; Ceer via Zawya; Rest of World

## The first Saudi car brand unveiled its models in a market that barely buys electric

Ceer showed its first two electric models on 21 September and opened orders in October at SAR 399,000, with deliveries expected from March 2027. Dealers estimate that 10,000 to 20,000 of the million or so new cars sold each year are electric. In the first seven months of 2026, BYD's Saudi sales rose 369% and Lucid's fell 57%, on Focus2Move estimates.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Ceer arrives as the premium option where buyers are choosing the cheap one. Fleet and government orders may decide its volume.**

SIGNALS 13 TO 15

# Culture and leisure

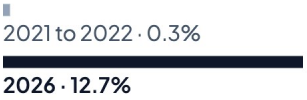
What Saudis watch, play and do at the weekend is a fair guide to where household spending goes next.

What if the stories travel further than the venues?

13 NOW

12.7%

share of takings to mid-September




Sep 2026 · Saudi Film Commission via Arab News; Gower Street Analytics

## Saudi films now take about an eighth of the Saudi box office

In 2021 and 2022, films made in Saudi Arabia earned 0.2% to 0.3% of cinema takings in the Kingdom. By mid-September 2026 they had passed SAR 100 million for the second year running, about 12.7% of the total, from a small number of releases. Cinemas only reopened in 2018.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Brands and public campaigns that want a Saudi audience will have to put money into Saudi films. Some of those films already show elsewhere in the region.**

14 2027

7 weeks

the tournament ran in Paris

Jul to Aug 2026 · Enterprise; Arab News; GamesBeat

## The Esports World Cup was played in Paris

The tournament was created in Riyadh in 2024 and is owned by a Saudi foundation. In 2026 the organisers moved it to Paris because of the regional conflict. It ran for seven weeks, and the foundation said Riyadh remains its home. The event was built to bring visitors to Riyadh. This edition showed it can be staged elsewhere.

IF IT CONTINUES

**If Saudi-owned events go on tour, the Kingdom earns from rights and loses the visitors. Tourism bodies counting on them should revise their forecasts.**

15 NOW

58%

of spending came from international visitors

Q1 2026 · Cavendish Maxwell via Gulf Business

## Residents took more trips at home while fewer visitors came from abroad

In the first quarter, domestic trips rose 16% to 28.9 million and international arrivals fell 13% to 8.3 million, so the headline total went up 8%. But international visitors, about a fifth of the total, brought 58% of the SAR 82.7 billion spent.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Hotels and attractions planned around foreign spending have to work at Saudi family prices.**



SIGNALS 16 TO 18

# Education

The curriculum changed faster than the teaching force. Training for 240,000 teachers is the number to watch.

What if the class of 2030 knows AI better than its managers?

16 BY 2030

6 m

public school students

Aug 2025 and 17 Aug 2026 · Saudi Gazette; Middle East AI News; Arab News

## Six million schoolchildren started an AI curriculum

A national AI curriculum began at every level of public school in August 2025. For the 2026 to 2027 year the ministry added 50 AI units and updated 22 subjects. It is also testing AI tools, with the data authority and HUMAIN, to take administrative work off teachers.

IF IT CONTINUES

**The first of these students reach the job market around 2030 expecting to work with AI. Teachers are the constraint, and someone has to train them.**

17 BY 2030

13,000

students planned at full operation

Aug 2026 · University of New Haven; SPA via Riyadh Daily; Arab News

## The first foreign university campus opened in Riyadh

The University of New Haven, a private American university, began classes at Misk City in August. It is the first foreign university approved to run a branch campus in the Kingdom. It plans three colleges, starting with business and digital innovation, and about 13,000 students once fully open.

IF IT CONTINUES

**A foreign degree no longer requires leaving the country. Other universities will watch the enrolment and the regulation before they follow.**

18 NOW

240,000

teachers due for training

Last year · 60,000

**Planned · 240,000**

17 Aug 2026 · Minister of Education via Arab News

## Teachers may no longer teach outside their own subject

On 17 August the education minister set new rules for the school year. A teacher may no longer teach a subject outside their specialism, and working hours follow each school's timetable instead of one fixed day. More than 240,000 teachers are to be trained, against about 60,000 last year.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Demand for teacher training is four times last year's. Schools short of science and AI specialists will need outside help to cover the timetable.**

SIGNALS 19 TO 21

# Artificial intelligence

In 18 months AI has turned up in power planning, in a ministry's staffing target and in a copyright fine.

What if AI hours show up in next year's budget?

19 2027 · WATCH FIRST

6 GW

planned over ten years

First two sites · 0.2 GW

Ten-year plan · 6 GW

Mar to Aug 2026 · Data Center Dynamics; AMD and Cisco; Ministry of Energy

## HUMAIN switched on its first data-centre capacity

The state-backed AI company holds land for 211 sites and plans about 6 gigawatts of capacity over a decade. Its first sites in Riyadh and Dammam start at 100 megawatts each, and AMD and Cisco equipment went live at the end of August. For scale, the energy ministry counted 18.8 gigawatts of renewable capacity installed in the whole country that month.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Power and cooling water, more than chips, decide where this gets built. Communities near the sites will ask what they get in return.**

20 2027

2.4 m

working hours to be saved by AI in 2026

Dec 2025 and Aug 2026 · Minister of Municipalities and Housing at the Budget Forum; Arab News

## A ministry set a target for working hours saved by AI

The Ministry of Municipalities and Housing told the Budget Forum it aims to save 2.4 million working hours through AI in 2026 and to run 30% of its operations on smart technologies. The education ministry is testing AI tools to cut teachers' paperwork. The government named 2026 the Year of Artificial Intelligence.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Other ministries will write AI hours into workforce plans. Suppliers will be asked to quote hours saved, and HR will be asked what staff do with them.**

21 NOW

SAR 9,000

the first reported AI copyright fine

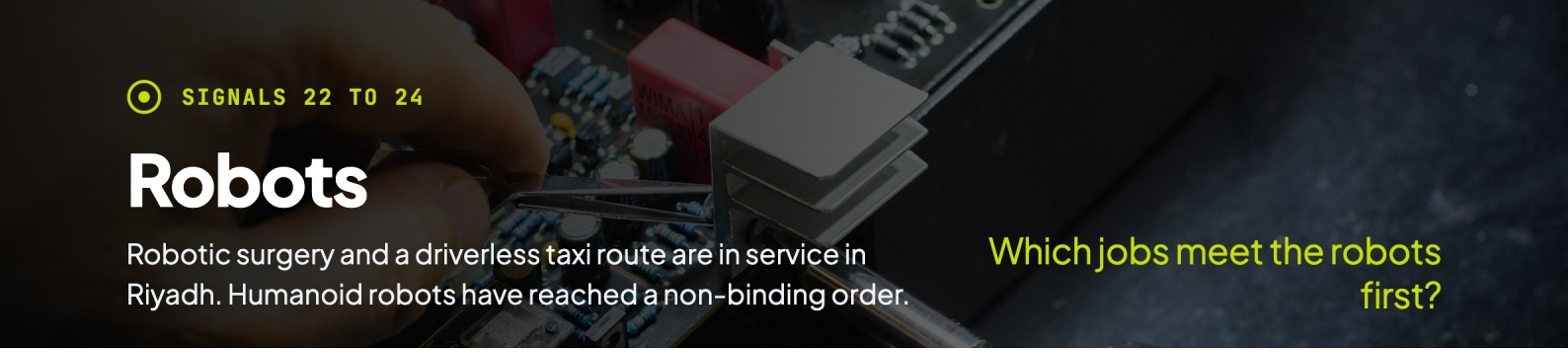
Sep 2025 and Sep 2026 · Saudi Gazette; Latham & Watkins

## A man was fined SAR 9,000 for altering someone's photo with AI

In September 2025 the intellectual property authority fined an individual who had altered another person's photograph with AI and used it commercially without consent. No AI law existed, so it applied the copyright law it had. A new copyright law followed in 2026. Lawyers at Latham & Watkins note that it still does not say who owns work made by AI.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Regulators keep reaching for the laws they already have. Any organisation putting AI images in a campaign or a report needs consent on file.**



SIGNALS 22 TO 24

# Robots

Robotic surgery and a driverless taxi route are in service in Riyadh. Humanoid robots have reached a non-binding order.

Which jobs meet the robots first?

22 BY 2030

7

heart procedures in one operation

Jan to Apr 2026 · King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre

## A surgical robot in Riyadh did seven heart procedures in one operation

In February, King Faisal Specialist Hospital reported the first documented case of seven cardiac procedures done in a single fully robotic operation, on a patient in her seventies. In January it completed a fully robotic liver transplant from two living donors. Its robotic liver programme has passed 100 transplants.

IF IT CONTINUES

**The hospital could sell complex surgery to patients from abroad. Surgical training would need to include time on the robot.**

23 2027

25%

of goods vehicles autonomous by 2030, the official aim

Oct 2025 · WeRide and Uber; Transport General Authority via Arab News

## You can book a driverless car on Uber in Riyadh

WeRide and Uber began robotaxi rides in Riyadh in October 2025, on a route between Roshn Front and Princess Noura University, with a safety operator on board. WeRide holds the first robotaxi permit issued by the Transport General Authority. The authority's strategy aims for a quarter of goods vehicles to be autonomous by 2030.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Driving jobs feel it first. Insurance and liability rules have to be written before the operator leaves the car.**

24 BY 2030

10,000

robots over five years, not yet binding

Oct 2025 to Apr 2026 · The Robot Report; Arab News

## A Riyadh firm has a framework to assemble up to 10,000 humanoid robots

QSS AI & Robotics and the British company Humanoid have a non-binding pre-order framework for up to 10,000 humanoid robots over five years, to be assembled at a factory in Riyadh. A showroom opened there in November 2025. The partners name manufacturing, logistics and retail as the first uses.

IF IT CONTINUES

**A firm order would put the robots into factories and warehouses first. Until one is signed, treat this as a showroom.**



SIGNALS 25 TO 27

# Energy

Saudi Arabia is building at record scale and is still a long way short of its 2030 renewables plan.

What fills the gap to 2030?

25 2027

12.5 GWh

commissioned in June 2026

Dec 2025 · 7.8 GWh

Jun 2026 · 12.5 GWh

Dec 2025 and Jun 2026 · ESS News; MEED

## Saudi Arabia switched on the largest battery projects in the world

In December 2025 a 7.8 gigawatt-hour battery project across three sites in the south-west was connected to the grid. In June 2026 Saudi Energy commissioned a second, 12.5 gigawatt-hour project across five regions, which MEED describes as the largest grid-scale storage deployment anywhere.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Solar power becomes usable after dark, and gas plants run for fewer hours.**

26 2027

600 t

of hydrogen a day, by design

Aug 2026 · ACWA Power earnings call via decarbonfuse; Hydrogen Insight

## The NEOM green hydrogen plant is built and has one buyer

ACWA Power told analysts in August that construction of the $8.4 billion plant at Oxagon is complete, with commercial operations set for 2027. It is designed to make up to 600 tonnes of hydrogen a day, shipped as ammonia. Air Products holds a 30-year agreement to take all of it.

IF IT CONTINUES

**The test is whether anyone beyond the first buyer pays more for green fuel. A second plant depends on the answer.**

27 BY 2030 · WATCH FIRST

18.8 GW

installed by August 2026

Installed · 18.8 GW

2030 plan · 130 GW

Aug 2026 · Ministry of Energy via Elbetron; Climate Scorecard

## Renewable capacity reached 18.8 GW against a plan for 130

The energy ministry put installed renewable capacity at 18.8 gigawatts in August, against a goal of 20 by the end of this year. The plan for 2030 is about 130 gigawatts and half of the power mix. Reaching it means adding more each year than the country has built in total so far.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Plan on gas staying in the mix past 2030. Developers should expect the wait for a grid connection to set their timetable.**

SIGNALS 28 TO 30

# Heat, land and water

Three slow changes: hotter summers, higher power bills and a new crop in the south-west.

What if 50°C is an ordinary working day?

28 NOW

## +3.0°C

July to September, against 1961 to 1990

Sep 2026 · 4billionyearson climate update; The National; Saudi Energy Consulting

### September was the second hottest in 87 years of records

The national average for September was 33.74°C, behind only 2023, and July to September ran 3.0°C above the 1961 to 1990 average. In August the meteorological office had forecast temperatures up to 2.5°C above normal, as a heat dome pushed parts of the Gulf close to 50°C. One industry source puts cooling at about 70% of household electricity use.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Employers, schools and developers should expect working hours, term dates and building codes to be rewritten around heat.**

29 BY 2030

## 8 to 33%

more household spending on electricity

21 Jan 2026 · KAPSARC, Cooling the Kingdom

### Household power bills could rise by up to a third from heat alone

A KAPSARC study published in January modelled how a warmer climate changes electricity use in the Kingdom. Demand for cooling rises by about 80% by 2100. Buildings use up to 20% more electricity because of climate alone, and households spend 8% to 33% more on power, depending on the scenario.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Low-income families will feel it first, in their bills. Housing programmes should set an insulation and cooling standard for the homes they fund.**

30 BY 2030

## 7,400 t

reported harvest in 2026

2020 · 800 t

2026 · 7,400 t

Nov 2026 · Saudi Reef programme via SPA and Asharq Al-Awsat

### Saudi coffee output grew ninefold in six years

Farms in the south-west produced about 800 tonnes of coffee in 2020. The Saudi Reef rural programme reports about 7,400 tonnes in 2026, above its target, with more than 6,200 growers supported. That is still under 5% of what the country drinks.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Coffee could give growers in the south-west a steady income. Funders of new planting should ask where the water comes from in a rain-fed region.**

SIGNALS 31 TO 33

# Waste and circular economy

Waste is turning from a municipal service into a regulated market, with tenders, tracking and producer duties this year.

What if your waste data gets audited?

31 2027

33

facilities offered to investors

25 Aug 2026 · SPA; Sabq; Al Eqtisadiah

## Investors were invited to build and run waste facilities

On 25 August the National Center for Waste Management offered 27 investment opportunities to build and run 33 facilities with five municipalities, worth more than SAR 2 billion. They cover construction and demolition waste, medical and slaughterhouse waste, and sorting plants for household waste.

IF IT CONTINUES

**Waste moves from a municipal budget line to a private contract with a gate fee. Large producers should expect to be asked where theirs goes.**

32 2027

11 years

length of the platform contract

Apr 2026 · National Center for Privatization; MWAN; Makreo Research

## Every waste load is set to be tracked on one national platform

In April the waste regulator and the privatisation centre asked companies to register interest in an 11-year contract to build and run a National Digital Waste Management Platform. It is to cover licensing and electronic tracking of waste. Facilities already have to record each transfer on an electronic manifest.

IF IT CONTINUES

**The regulator will be able to check the waste figures in your sustainability report against its own. Reconcile your tonnages before it does.**

33 BY 2030

1 of 6

Gulf states with this duty in primary law

2021 law, 2026 drafts · ESG Weise; Adherent

## Producers and importers are responsible in law for the waste their products become

The Waste Management Law puts extended producer responsibility on every producer and importer. One legal review this year calls Saudi Arabia the only Gulf state with that duty in primary law. Draft standards for recycling aluminium and container glass followed in 2026, with origin records to be kept for five years.

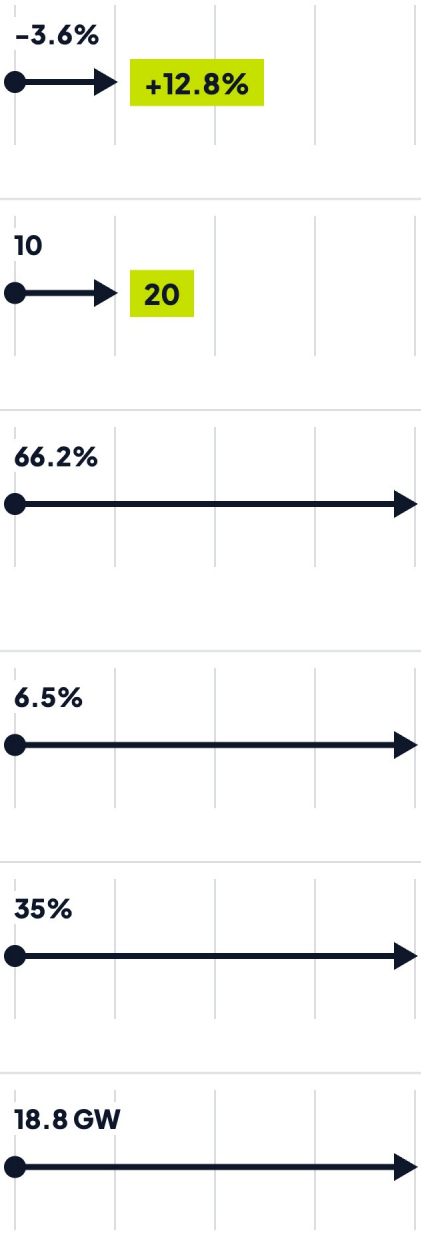
IF IT CONTINUES

**Brands and importers get asked to pay for collection and to prove what was recycled. Start counting the packaging you put on the market.**

WHERE THE MINISTRIES ARE HEADING

# Six ministries have put a number and a date on the future.

Each arrow runs from where things stand today to the year the target falls due.




**OUR READING**

Two targets fall due next year, and neither is fully in the ministry's hands. The 2030 rows run from the shortest distance to the longest: housing is nearly there. Energy and early education each need a pace the country has not yet shown. If your plan relies on one of these, allow for it arriving late.

Ministry of Finance, Pre-Budget Statement FY2027 · Ministry of Health · Energy minister, Nov 2026 · Education minister, 17 Aug 2026 · Ministry of Municipalities and Housing, UN-Habitat report, Jul 2026 · GASTAT, Q2 2026

UNCERTAINTIES

# Two uncertainties, four versions of 2027.

None is a forecast. You may have to work in any of them.

UNCERTAINTY 2
**Who carries growth?**

UNCERTAINTY 1
**Does Hormuz reopen?**

| | IT STAYS SHUT TODAY | IT REOPENS |
|---|---|---|
| PRIVATE DEMAND | **Growth without the Gulf route**<br>Oil income stays tight. Private firms and households keep the non-oil economy growing.<br>EARLY SIGN<br>**The business survey holds above 54.** | **Oil and private money together**<br>Oil income returns, and private investment keeps rising alongside it.<br>EARLY SIGN<br>**Private co-investors appear in PIF deals.** |
| THE STATE | **The state borrows to build**<br>Oil income stays tight and the state keeps spending. The deficit widens.<br>EARLY SIGN<br>**The 2027 deficit runs above the 3.6% forecast.** | **Back to the old model**<br>Oil income returns and the state funds projects itself. Private investors wait.<br>EARLY SIGN<br>**Project awards restart before private money does.** |

**Today.** Tracked traffic through Hormuz is still near zero, so we are in the left column. The row is harder to call: private demand is holding, and the state is still the largest spender.

Deficit forecast: Ministry of Finance, Pre-Budget Statement FY2027 · Business survey: Riyad Bank PMI, October 2026 · Hormuz traffic: IMF PortWatch

BEYOND 2027 · WHAT GBOX IS EXPLORING NEXT

# Questions for the future.

| 2027 | 2030 | 2032 | 2034 | 2040 | 2060 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vision 2040 may be announced | Vision 2030 ends. Riyadh hosts Expo 2030 | The Kingdom turns 100 on 23 September | Saudi Arabia hosts the World Cup | Target year of the next vision | Net zero target year |

QUESTION 01

## What should Vision 2040 measure?

The Crown Prince said in 2023 that the next vision could be announced in 2027 or 2028. Vision 2030 counted jobs, visitors and gigawatts. We are asking what the next one should count.

QUESTION 02

## What does the Kingdom want to show at 100?

Saudi Arabia was proclaimed on 23 September 1932. The centenary falls two years after Vision 2030 closes. We have not yet found a published plan for it.

QUESTION 03

## Can farming here restore more than it uses?

One million hectares of degraded land were restored in four years, by the UN desertification body's account. The aim is 40 million. We are asking what regenerative farming looks like on desert soil.

QUESTION 04

## How does a city work at 50°C?

September was the second hottest on record, and one study has household power bills rising by up to a third. Working hours, school terms and building codes were written for a cooler country.

QUESTION 05

## Who teaches the class of 2030?

Six million pupils now take AI lessons and 240,000 teachers are due for training. We are following where those teachers come from and who trains them.

QUESTION 06

## What happens to the Gulf coast if more exports go west?

The East-West pipeline was pumping 5.8 million barrels a day in October, by the energy minister's account. If that share holds, we expect ports, plants and jobs to follow it west.

ABOUT GBOX

# The Green Box World builds sustainability capability for ministries, universities and companies.

Founded at Cambridge Judge Business School, GBOX works in more than 16 countries from offices in Cambridge, Riyadh, Al Khobar and Lahore. This brief comes from the GBOX Think Tank. If you are working on one of the questions in it, write to hello@thegbox.org

---

SOURCES

Ministry of Finance, Pre-Budget Statement FY2027
GASTAT
Riyad Bank PMI
OPEC data via Al-Monitor
IMF PortWatch via the hormuz.now and straits.live trackers
Kpler via Saudi Gazette
Al Jazeera
Enerdata
PIF
AGBI
SAMA via Argaam
Tabby
Cavendish Maxwell
Worldpanel by Numerator
SFDA
Gulf News
Ministry of Health
Arab News
Transport General Authority
Saudi Gazette
Al-Yaum
Semafor
Rest of World
Saudi Film Commission
Gower Street Analytics
Enterprise
GamesBeat
University of New Haven
Data Center Dynamics
Elbetron
KAPSARC
UNCCD
TankerTrackers.com
Sabq
Makreo Research
ESG Weise
Adherent
Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal
CF
Middle East AI News
Latham & Watkins
King Faisal Specialist Hospital
WeRide and Uber
The Robot Report
ESS News
MEED
decarbonfuse
Hydrogen Insight
Climate Scorecard
4billionyearson
The National
Saudi Energy Consulting
Saudi Reef via SPA and Asharq Al-Awsat

Each signal names its own source and date on its page. Figures are as published by 19 November 2026. Growth and deficit projections are the finance ministry's, not ours. Timing on the radar is our judgement.