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AN INTERNATIONAL
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ROOTS

Introduction

Upcoming Saudi Holidays, Events, Webinars, and Conferences

- **USSBC Program:** For a schedule of upcoming U.S.-Saudi Business Council (USSBC) events and webinars see [here](#).
- **NEOM Jeddah Exhibition:** [August 1-14](#)
- **FIFA World Cup Qatar:** November 21-December 18, 2022
- **Dakar Rally 2022:** December 31, 2022-January 15, 2023

Public Sector and Significant Updates

- **NEOM Design Announced:** Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has announced the official design of NEOM, [dubbed “The Line.”](#) A public exhibition of the project commenced in Jeddah on August 1 as the beginning of a [national tour](#) aimed in part [at attracting investment](#).
 - **IPO Expectations:** The crown prince said he expects NEOM to sell shares to the public in 2024, adding [nearly \\$266 billion to the Saudi market](#).

- **Investment Promotion Agency:** The Saudi cabinet has approved a decision to set up the Saudi Investment Promotion Authority, an agency designed to [promote investment in the Kingdom](#).

Corporate / Employment

- **Recruitment Agency Crackdown:** The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) has revoked licences of several recruitment offices for breaching the Kingdom's work codes as part of a clampdown [on law-breaking agencies](#).
- **Delayed Expat ID Penalty:** Authorities have said that a fine of SAR500 is imposed for a delay in issuing a resident ID card for an expatriate worker 90 days after their entry [into the Kingdom](#).
- **Uniforms for Taxi Drivers:** The Transport General Authority (TGA) has issued a decision mandating taxi drivers [wear uniforms](#).
- **Visa Extensions for Yemenis:** Yemenis living in Saudi Arabia will have their visitor IDs automatically extended [for six months](#).

Legal

- **Al Tamimi Legal Magazine:** For Al Tamimi Law's latest magazine issue (focus is on the transformation of Saudi Arabia), see [here](#).
- **Absher Sponsorship Submissions:** The General Directorate of Traffic (Muroor) has confirmed that the electronic Kafalah service enables individuals to submit Kafalah sponsorships through the Absher platform [without the need for paper transactions](#).

- **Traffic Accident Penalties:** Saudi Arabia has warned the public that motorists causing serious traffic accidents resulting in death or total impairment will be jailed for a maximum of four years [and/or fined SAR200,000](#).

Visas, Travel, and COVID

- **COVID Status:** Saudi Arabia has reported [a vacillating rate](#) of COVID infections in recent weeks.
- **Travel Guidelines:** For up-to-date travel information, visit the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia's [COVID-19 page](#). For Saudia's travel guidelines, see [here](#).
- **Airline Industry (regional):**
 - **Airport Charges Slashed:** Saudi Arabia said it will cut airport charges by as much as 35% in a bid to [compete in the region](#).
 - **Airspace Opened:** Saudi Arabia has opened its airspace to all civilian carriers, including all flights [to and from Israel](#).
 - **Etihad Comeback:** Etihad Airways announced a core operating profit of \$296m for H1 2022, a substantial turnaround from its [H1 2021 loss of \\$392m](#).
 - **UAE Flight Price Drops:** UAE airfares in August have come down by around 35% [from their peaks in July](#).
- **EU Visa Deal:** The EU is working on a system that would allow visa-free travel [for GCC citizens](#).

Business / Economy

- **General:**
 - **Budget Surplus:** Saudi Arabia posted a \$20.8 billion budget surplus during [Q2 2022](#), a 50% increase [from the previous year](#).
 - **Inflation Cools:** Business conditions in the UAE and Saudi Arabia improved in July as price pressures edged slightly lower [and employment expanded](#).
 - **Accelerating Growth:** The Saudi economy expanded 11.8% in the second quarter, maintaining the fastest pace of growth since 2011 buoyed by [higher oil prices and production](#). This puts the Kingdom on track to join the 18 countries [with trillion-dollar economies](#).
- **Public Investment Fund (PIF):**
 - **Aston Martin Stake:** Aston Martin Lagonda has received a £78m investment from Saudi Arabia as part of raising £650m of capital to pay down the company's [large debts](#).
 - **Egypt Investment Company:** The PIF has launched The Saudi Egyptian Investment Company ("SEIC"), a company that will invest in swathes of Egypt's economy from infrastructure and real estate [to pharmaceuticals](#).
- **Finance, Insurance, and Investment:**
 - **VC Funding Surge:** Venture capital funding in Saudi Arabia surged more than threefold to **\$584 million in the first half of 2022**, surpassing the [total for 2021](#).

- **Mithaq Otonomo Investment:** Saudi Arabia's Mithaq Capital, which is owned by the al-Rajhi family, has become the biggest shareholder in an Israeli autotech company [Otomono Technologies](#).
- **Allianz SE Stake Sale:** German insurer Allianz SE is reportedly working with an adviser on the potential disposal of its controlling stake in [Allianz Saudi Fransi Cooperative Insurance Co.](#)
- **Crypto Growth:** Three million Saudis, which form 14% of the adult population aged 18 to 60, were either current owners of crypto assets [or had recently traded them](#).
- **Fintech Ecosystem:** For an analysis of Saudi Arabia's Fintech ecosystem in 2022, see [here](#).
- **Real Estate, Construction, Infrastructure, and Megaprojects:**
 - **TRSDC Megaproject Contracts:** The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC) has awarded 1,250 contracts worth over \$8 billion [for its megaprojects](#).
 - **Sports Boulevard Design Code:** A unified design code has been launched to be implemented on the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Road as part of the [Sports Boulevard project](#).
 - **Hotel Construction:** Hotel construction in Saudi Arabia is expected to nearly triple [in 2023](#).
 - **Makkah Development Plans:** Authorities have denied claims they plan to remove more districts in Makkah amid an [ongoing redevelopment scheme](#).

- **Al Khozama Hotel Demolition:** Riyadh's landmark Al Khozama Hotel will be demolished to make way for a [development scheme](#).
- **Industry, Utilities, Transportation, Logistics, and Non-Oil Energy:**
 - **Foreign Industrial Investments:** The Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources has revealed on Sunday that foreign or joint capital investments represent about 39% of the total investments in the industrial sector [in the Kingdom](#).
 - **Air-Cargo Roadshows:** Saudi Arabia plans to stage a number of roadshows in the next 12 to 18 months as it seeks to persuade the likes of Amazon, Alibaba, and DHL to help scale up [air-cargo and distribution operations](#).
 - **Renewables Tenders:** Saudi Arabia is set to double the capacity amount in renewables tenders this year and in 2023, setting the stage for faster growth in mostly [solar and wind projects](#).
- **Tourism, Hospitality, Culture, Sports, and Entertainment:**
 - **Archeological Site Discovered:** An ancient temple was discovered [at Al-Faw](#).
 - **Physical Activity Increase:** 48.2% of Saudi residents reportedly now practice physical and sporting activities for at least [30 minutes a week](#).
 - **Journey to Al Ula:** National Geographic has published an interactive overview [of Al Ula](#).

- **Sports Events Ambitions:** Saudi Arabia has submitted an Expression of Interest to host the [2026 Women's Asia Cup](#) and is planning to bid on the [2029 Asia Winter Games](#).
- **Falconry Exhibition:** Over half a million people will attend the 2022 International Saudi Falcons and Hunting Exhibition, the world's largest falconry event, which will take place from August 25 to September 3 [in Riyadh](#).
- **Retail, Luxury, and E-Commerce:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Religion:**
 - **Umrah Season Commences:** Umrah season began July 30 with applications open to [international pilgrims](#). Overseas pilgrims will not be required to undergo [COVID testing](#).
 - **Religious Agency Shakeup:** Saudi Arabia is planning an overhaul of the General Presidency for Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques, aiming to give more posts to [women and young people](#).
- **Education:**
 - **New Teaching Jobs:** The Ministry of Education announced 11,547 new teaching jobs, under the official contract system, during the [academic year 2022-2023](#).
- **Healthcare:**
 - **Monkeypox Detected:** Saudi Arabia has detected its [first case of monkeypox](#).

- **Technology and Telecom:**

- **NEOM Hackathon:** NEOM's industrial city OXAGON has launched the first edition of its hackathon in partnership [with the Saudi Ministry of Education](#).
- **Indecent YouTube Ads:** Authorities have called for the removal of "indecent" [YouTube ads](#).
- **Vision 2030 AI Ambitions:** For an analysis of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 AI ambitions, see [here](#).
- **Gaming Ambitions:** For an analysis of Saudi Arabia's gaming ambitions, see [here](#).

- **Defense:**

- **BAE and Embraer MoU:** BAE and Embraer have signed an MoU to pursue a potential deal with Saudi Arabia for Embraer's [C-390 tactical airlift twin jet](#).
- **Boeing Business Forecast:** Boeing forecasts \$14.9 billion in opportunity for growth in Saudi Arabia's military business [over the next five years](#).
- **Joint U.S. Exercise:** The U.S. and Saudi Arabia are planning the 16th iteration of the joint "Eagle Resolve" exercise [in May-June 2023](#).

- **Food and Agriculture:**

- *No significant recent developments.*

- **Natural Resources, Mining, and Environment:**
 - **Greening Program Status:** Saudi Arabia's ambitious program to plant over 10 billion trees across the country is underway with experts exploring all possible [locations in the Kingdom](#).
 - **Camel Conservation Conference:** Saudi Arabia hosted a conference on [camel conservation](#).
 - **Asir Forestation:** The Saudi National Center for Vegetation Cover and Combating Desertification announced the launch of a two-year project aimed at rehabilitating fire-affected sites [in Asir's Al-Jarrah Park](#).
- **Oil:** *Oil prices most recently [stood](#) on August 8 at \$101.58 pbb for Saudi oil (Arab Light) and \$90.33 pbb for West Texas Intermediate (WTI).*
 - **Stability Commitment:** During a recent meeting between Russia and Saudi officials, the two countries reaffirmed their commitment to the OPEC+ agreement [and a stable oil market](#).
 - **Export Capacity Ambitions:** For an analysis of Saudi Arabia's ambitions to expand oil export capacity, see [here](#).
 - **Russian Fuel Oil Imports:** Saudi Arabia more than doubled the amount of Russian fuel oil it imported in Q2 2022 to feed power stations to meet summer cooling demand and free up the kingdom's [own crude for export](#).
 - **Gasco Best Gas Acquisition:** The National Gas and Industrialization Company ("GASCO") signed an agreement to acquire 55% of the

Best Gas Carrier Company and later filed an Economic Concentration Notification to [Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Competition](#).

- **Aramco Valvoline Acquisition:** Aramco is set to buy Valvoline's global products business [for \\$2.65 billion](#).
- **Aramco-Sinopec MoU:** Aramco signed an MoU with China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) covering multiple areas of potential collaboration [in Saudi Arabia](#).
- **OPEC Production Agreement:** OPEC and its allies have agreed to a production increase of just 100,000 barrels a day, or 0.1% of global demand, one of the smallest oil production increases [in the group's history](#).

Geopolitical

- **Europe Visit:**
 - **France:** Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited France and met with President Macron, with the focus of conversations on [regional security](#) as well as [energy and food stability](#).
 - **Greece:** Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited Greece, signing a number of agreements in several areas related to energy, security, military, culture, [and digital economy](#).
- **Kazakhstan Presidential Visit:** Kazakhstan's president flew to Saudi Arabia in his first official visit as the head of the state to discuss prospects of cooperation in trade and investment with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman [in Jeddah](#).

- **Potential BRICS Admission:** The president of the BRICS International Forum expects Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia to join the group ["very soon"](#).
- **Artemis Accords:** Saudi Arabia has signed the Artemis Accords which outline best practices for safe and sustainable [space exploration](#).
- **U.S.:**
 - **Agreements:** The U.S. and Saudi Arabia signed 18 partnership agreements in fields including energy, communications, space and healthcare during a [visit by President Biden](#).
 - **Biden Visit:** President Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia garnered a mixed reaction [from Americans](#). According to a statement by the White House, "Saudi Arabia has committed to support global oil market balancing for sustained economic growth," and agreed to increase production levels 50% above what was planned for July and August [among other measures](#). The two countries released a joint statement emphasizing their strategic partnership [and areas of alignment](#). For an analysis of the visit, see [here](#).
 - **Weapons Sale:** The Biden administration approved and notified Congress of possible multibillion-dollar weapons sales to both [Saudi Arabia and the UAE](#), including [Patriot missile systems](#).
- **Yemen:**
 - **Truce Extension:** Parties have agreed to a two-month extension of a truce in the conflict in Yemen in measure [overseen by the UN](#).

Gulf

- **UAE:**
 - **COVID Information:** For current COVID information from the U.S. Embassy in the UAE, see [here](#). For statistics and information from the UAE government, see [here](#).
 - **National Road Map:** The new UAE President, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, addressed the nation, its citizens, and expatriates to outline the country's strategic approach and ambitions [for the coming decades](#).
 - **Operating Surplus Growth:** The UAE government's net operating surplus more than doubled in the first quarter to \$9.9 billion as surging oil prices [boosted public revenue](#).
 - **New Real Estate Rules:** The UAE announced new reporting requirements for certain real estate transactions to strengthen its regulatory framework for anti-money laundering [and countering the financing of terrorism](#).
 - **TDIFC Wealth Center:** The Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) is set to launch a new hub for global and regional family-owned businesses, ultra-high net worth individuals (UHNWIs), [and private wealth](#).
 - **Space Investments:** The UAE will set up an \$820 million fund to develop satellites and bolster [an ambitious space program](#).

- **India Food Parks:** The UAE will invest \$2 billion to set up food parks across India as part of efforts by a US-led four-nation group to help tackle food insecurity [in South Asia and the Middle East](#).
- **Rising Fuel Costs:** For an analysis of the effects of rising fuel prices in the UAE, see [here](#).
- **Bank Sanctions:** At least six banks operating in the UAE are facing financial sanctions for failure to comply [with reporting standards](#).
- **Dubai Property Market Growth:** The volume of sales transactions in Dubai's real estate market rose to a 10-year high, with at least 22,504 deals worth \$16.1 billion closed [in Q2 2022](#).
- **Pakistan Investments:** The UAE plans to invest \$1 billion in Pakistani companies [across various sectors](#).
- **Qatar:**
 - **COVID Information:** For current COVID information from the U.S. Embassy in Qatar, see [here](#). For statistics and information from the Ministry of Public Health, see [here](#).
 - **Airbus A350 Deal Axed:** Airbus has revoked its entire outstanding order from Qatar Airways for A350 jets, severing all new jetliner business [with the carrier](#).
 - **Boeing Sales:** Boeing and Qatar Airways have finalized an order for 25 [737 MAX airplanes](#).
 - **Cash Transaction Cap:** Qatar has barred the use of cash in transactions exceeding the value of QAR 50,000 [in selected trading outlets](#).

- **National Vision 2030:** For an overview and analysis of Qatar's National Vision 2030, see [here](#).
- **Kuwait:**
 - **COVID Information:** For current COVID information from the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, see [here](#). For statistics and information from the Ministry of Health, see [here](#).
 - **New Prime Minister:** Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah appointed Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah's son, Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Sabah, to the post of prime minister [in a royal decree](#).
 - **Parliament Dissolved:** Kuwait has formally dissolved parliament in the latest phase [of its government standoff](#).
 - **Wealth Growth:** A new report from BCG predicts that Kuwait's financial wealth will rise from \$0.3 trillion in 2021 [to \\$0.4 trillion in 2026](#).
 - **Acid Plant Bids:** Kuwait's state oil operator has invited investors to build a plant [to produce maleic anhydride](#).
 - **Sovereign Wealth Fund:** For an overview and analysis of the Kuwait Investment Authority, the country's sovereign wealth fund, and the challenges it faces, see [here](#).
- **Bahrain:**
 - **COVID Information:** For current COVID information from the U.S. Embassy in Bahrain, see [here](#). For statistics and information from the Ministry of Health, see [here](#).

- **“Orlando of the Gulf”**: Bahrain's Southern Governorate aims to transform into an ‘Orlando of the Gulf’ by setting up theme and amusement parks [in the area](#).
- **GCC Passport-Free Entry**: All GCC nationals are now allowed into Bahrain with just ID cards, [without pre-arrangements](#).
- **Oman:**
 - **COVID Information**: For current COVID information from the U.S. Embassy in Oman, see [here](#). For statistics and information from the Ministry of Health, see [here](#).
 - **Budget Surplus**: Oman recorded a budget surplus of \$2 billion in H1 2022, driven by higher sales of [oil and natural gas](#).
 - **Solar Desal Plant**: French energy company TotalEnergies and France-based environmental services provider Veolia have announced that they will jointly build a 17 MW solar park at Oman’s [Sharqiyah Desalination Plant](#).

Other

- **Miscellaneous**: For earlier developments, see [here](#).
- **New Ideological Foundations**: For an analysis of Saudi Arabia’s efforts to transition to a more secular nationalism, see [here](#).

Resources

- [Previous Newsletters](#)
- [Ministry of Health Dashboard](#)
- [Ministry of Health Coronavirus Guidance](#)
- [New Companies Law \(English\)](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce Global Policy Dashboard](#)
- [Ministry of Investment Guide to Business Continuity](#)
- [US-Saudi Business Council](#)
- [Saudi-US Trade Group](#)
- [American Community of Saudi Arabia Newsletters](#)
- [US Embassy in Saudi Arabia](#)
- [US State Department Travel Information](#)

We will be happy to provide more specific advice in the context of particular circumstances, concerns, and priorities; please let us know.

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Disclaimer: While the above information was gathered from sources believed to be accurate at the time, we cannot be responsible for errors due to human or technical error.

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