

## **Saudi Arabia Lifts Travel Restriction On Women**

In a new turning point for Saudi women's rights, the Kingdom has begun to allow women over age 21 to travel without a male guardian's permission, according to royal decrees issued on Tuesday.

The authorities also granted women the right to register marriage, divorce, and birth of their children while giving them the authority to issue official family documents - putting them on an equal footing with men.

This move follows other social reforms including lifting a ban on women driving last year and attending football matches at the public stadium, in addition to allowing live pop concerts and public cinemas in the kingdom.

Saudi's passport office has already started to receive applications from women for new passports issuances. According to media reports, more than 1,000 Saudi women over the age of 21 in the Eastern province has already traveled abroad without permission from their guardians.

The move to lift certain restrictions among females comes as the Kingdom looks to usher in a new era of economic growth, largely driven by its young population. Its economic blueprint Vision 2030 aims to harness its educated and untapped female workforce. With over 50% of Saudi universities graduates being female, the kingdom plans to raise female economic participation rate from 17% to 25% by 2030.

Saudi Arabia's female population is projected to reach 15 million in 2020, 20% of which are expected to drive based on their age and income qualification, according to PwC's report. By allowing greater mobility among women, the country is tapping into a pool to drive economic growth.

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