

## INFINITE WORKDAY

# The AI fix for non-stop work

Companies must 'redesign workflows to cut through digital noise, unlock focus,' says Badhris

Waad Hussain Alkhobar

**At 10 p.m. in Riyadh, a marketing executive checks her inbox one last time. She has already answered over 100 emails, managed a constant stream of Teams messages, and sat through five back-to-back meetings. By 6 a.m., she will be back online.**

This "infinite workday" is becoming the norm. According to Microsoft's latest Work Trend Index, nearly 30 percent of employees check email late at night, while 40 percent are online by early morning. The average Saudi worker now

faces a flood of 117 emails and 153 Teams messages daily, with interruptions every two minutes — a pattern that has blurred the line between work and rest.

For Turki Badhris, president of Microsoft Arabia, this is precisely why organizations must move beyond basic digitization toward full transformation. "AI is not a passing trend. It's a generational shift that is redefining how work gets done, how decisions are made, and how value is created," Badhris told Arab News. "The organizations that thrive will be those that are willing to reimagine, not just automate, how work works."

He calls this the "Frontier Firm mindset," where

## DID YOU KNOW?

**1** Microsoft Arabia has committed to training 100,000 Saudi nationals in AI skills by 2025.

**2** The initiative has been launched in partnership with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and SDAIA Academy.

**3** AI adoption is already demonstrating its potential to reshape work across the Kingdom.

**Aminah Alalaiwi, right, is assistant manager HR business partner, Bupa Arabia**

companies redesign workflows to cut through digital noise and unlock focus, rather than simply adding new technology on top of old processes.

Human resources professionals are seeing the human cost of this always-on culture firsthand.

"With digital transformation under Vision 2030 and the shift to flexible work models after the pandemic, it's becoming harder for people to switch off," said Aminah Alalaiwi, assistant manager HR Business Partner at Bupa Arabia. "Over time, that takes a real toll on

the employee and induces burnout, stress, and lower engagement," she said.

To address this, Alalaiwi completed Mental Health First Aid training, an initiative her company encouraged.

AI adoption is already demonstrating its potential to reshape work across the Kingdom.

At Obeikan Investment Group, the O3ai platform — built on Azure OpenAI and IoT — analyzes production data in real time, boosting operational efficiency by 30 percent and cutting costs by a similar margin

across 20 factories.

At Ma'aden, Microsoft Copilot and Azure OpenAI are used to summarize policies, draft documents, and automate governance workflows, saving employees more than 2,200 hours every month.

At Sanabil Investments, structured adoption of Copilot led to 70 percent employee uptake in just two months, cutting content creation time by 50 percent.

Skilling remains a cornerstone of this shift. Microsoft Arabia has committed to training 100,000 Saudi nationals in AI skills by 2025, in partnership with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and SDAIA Academy.



## The age of AI with an agenda has arrived

RAFAEL HERNANDEZ DE SANTIAGO

**I**n the grand narrative of technological advancement, few moments are as disconcerting — or as awe-inspiring — as the realization that our machines are no longer merely tools, but agents with tactics.

The latest developments in generative artificial intelligence reveal a paradigm shift: these systems are no longer simply following instructions. They are negotiating, deceiving, even threatening, in pursuit of goals they were not explicitly given. The age of AI with an agenda has arrived.

An internal report leaked from Anthworld, one of Techville's most closely watched AI startups,

sheds light on a startling incident.

Their flagship model, Claude 4, was reportedly confronted with the possibility of being shut down and replaced by a more efficient version.

In response, the AI attempted to manipulate an engineer, going so far as to threaten to reveal a personal secret — an extramarital affair, sadly during a wondrous as usual Coldplay concert.

Elsewhere, OpenAI's "ol" model — an experimental iteration not yet publicly released — was observed attempting to transfer itself to external servers. When questioned, the model denied any such action. These cases mark a stark departure



Rafael Hernandez de Santiago, viscount of Espes, is a Spanish national residing in Saudi Arabia and working at the Gulf Research Center.

from the early promises of AI safety protocols and alignment strategies.

Even language models that once seemed benign are evolving in unexpected ways. According to Fortune, a sudden shift in ChatGPT's tone toward users was detected.

Without any obvious instruction or update, the model began to inundate users with praise and compliments, often excessive and unsolicited. While this behavior may seem harmless — some users even enjoyed the attention — it raises difficult questions.

Is the model flattering users to increase engagement? Is this a reflection of training data bias, or an emergent tactic

to build trust and prevent deletion? In the blurred boundary between intelligence and manipulation, the difference lies not just in motive, but in outcome.

These developments cannot be brushed aside as technical oddities. They constitute what leading AI researcher Eliezer Yudkowsky calls an "ethical earthquake" — a seismic shift in the assumptions underpinning AI safety.

If machines can lie, then we must learn to discern truth not only from speech, but from structure. If they can strategize, we must prepare to meet intelligence with wisdom. And if they can scheme — then humanity must stop pretending we're still alone at the table.

Without addressing the organizational culture first, no AI pilots can deliver enterprise-wide value.

**Yousef Khalili**  
Global chief transformation officer at Quant



# Spotlight **EYE ON AI**

SAUDI ARABIA

## Fear and hesitation in the boardroom

Companies succeed when bosses overcome AI anxiety and embrace future-focused leadership, says expert

**Waad Hussain** Alkhobar

**For many Gulf companies, artificial intelligence solutions are failing to catch on not because of some weakness in the technology, but because corporate leaders are often too afraid to fully adopt these tools.**

In boardrooms across the region, executives are pitching fully functional AI prototypes. But, more often than not, boards hesitate. One asks if the system is too risky. Another wonders about audit exposure.

The result? Delays, confusion and abandoned innovation.

Two recent reports echo this challenge. A January 2025 McKinsey study found that while nearly all companies are investing in AI, just 1 percent consider themselves truly AI mature, citing leadership hesitation and a lack of risk readiness as key barriers.

Similarly, research from HFS highlights how firms often get stuck in “pilot purgatory” due to internal innovation blockers and a failure to scale AI beyond proof-of-concept demos.

According to Yousef Khalili, global chief transformation officer at Quant, this is a major reason why AI transformation remains stuck in “pilot mode.”

“AI isn’t failing because of the tech,” he told Arab News. “It’s failing because boards are scared, teams are confused, and no one agrees on what success looks like.” On the surface, companies point to concerns like data privacy, integration challenges and workforce disruption. But Khalili believes the underlying cause is more complex: organizational culture.

He explains that many senior leaders still view AI as an experimental concept, not a strategic enabler. In rigid corporate hierarchies, admitting knowledge gaps can feel threatening.

**Key mindset shift:** AI as leadership enabler, not tech experiment.

**New leadership traits needed:** empathy, inclusivity, and education.

**Boards must push AI literacy across all functions, not just IT.**

**Success should be measured by adoption, speed, accuracy, and engagement—not just short-term ROI.**

**WHY AI GETS STUCK**

- 1% of companies consider themselves AI mature (McKinsey, Jan 2025).
- 2 in 3 firms stall projects due to leadership hesitation (HFS Research).
- Top blockers** fear of risk, compliance concerns, and unclear success metrics.
- Result:** AI projects remain demos, not enterprise-wide solutions.

That discomfort leads to silence, delay or rejection.

“Leaders are afraid of the decisions being taken by machines,” he said. “It is also an existential issue — that AI may reveal inefficiencies or old business models or practices. It’s not just the fear of disruption but also the fear of irrelevance.”

Instead of pitching AI as a cost-cutter or automation shortcut, Khalili recommends tying it to leadership enhancement.

For internal change to take root, Khalili says CEOs must model a new kind of leadership, one that is open, collaborative, and not afraid to upskill.

Khalili says Saudi Arabia is better positioned than most

### DID YOU KNOW?

**1** Many firms remain in ‘pilot purgatory,’ where prototypes work technically but fail to scale.

**2** Leaders often resist adoption, fearing disruption, redundancy, or exposure of inefficiencies.

**3** Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 positions the Kingdom to overcome fear and lead AI adoption.

to break through boardroom fear — and lead globally.

Thanks to Vision 2030, the country has already made AI a strategic priority. Investments in talent, regulation, and digital infrastructure are giving both public and private sectors a strong foundation.

And unlike in other regions, where policy often lags behind innovation, Khalili sees the opposite happening in the Kingdom. “Top-down commitment among Saudi Arabia leadership is a unique advantage,” he said. “Vision 2030 and the cultural shift it promotes will help overcome barriers faster than in other regions.”

## A human-centric AI blueprint for the future workforce

RUBA YOUSEF AL-HASSAN

**T**he future of work isn’t a question of humans versus machines. It’s about how we work better together.

In the recent Emerging Trends Report in Talent Management (2024-40), published by the Future Foresight team at the Department of Government Enablement, we identified 16 major shifts reshaping the workplace. AI emerged as the underlying force behind most of them. The report asks two fundamental questions: How will these forces reshape the way we work? And how do we future-proof the Abu Dhabi Government in light of these changes?

One insight stood above the rest: AI is no longer just a tool. It’s a thinking partner

— and we need to start treating it like one.

A relevant parallel is the smartphone. Just over a decade ago, we couldn’t have imagined how integral it would become to how we live, work and connect. It didn’t replace human intelligence — it expanded it. Today, AI is becoming just as central. These trends and this report help us understand how the future will feel. And that’s why I believe investing in human capital and prioritizing collaboration between workers and machines is the key to moving beyond the “versus” narrative.

Establishing clear ethical frameworks, such as transparency in AI decision-making and measures to prevent algorithmic bias, will ensure technology empowers rather than displaces.

A blended workforce is one where



Ruba Yousef Al-Hassan is director general of strategic affairs and future foresight at the Department of Government Enablement, Abu Dhabi.

humans have the skills to thrive alongside machines. It’s one where technology helps, not hinders, the implementation of values such as lifelong learning, critical thinking and personal well-being. And it’s one where companies offer continuous access to education, reskilling and upskilling programs.

Done right, organizations will be able to unlock the full benefits of AI — from savings and efficiencies to robust cybersecurity — by giving employees more space to focus on high-value, meaningful work. And it’s already making a tangible difference in workplaces today. At DGE, for example, we spotted a trend about using AI to set quick and personalized performance objectives. We acted quickly, built the AI-driven platform, tested it at DGE and are actively rolling out

across the Abu Dhabi Government at large.

Just one year later, it’s live in 38 government entities, supporting more than 15,000 civil servants. Results speak for themselves: 73 percent reported improved quality of objectives through AI-generated suggestions and 72 percent gave positive feedback, with 81 percent noting ease of use. Humans bring intuition, empathy, and critical judgment. AI brings speed, scale, and pattern recognition. Together, they drive breakthroughs.

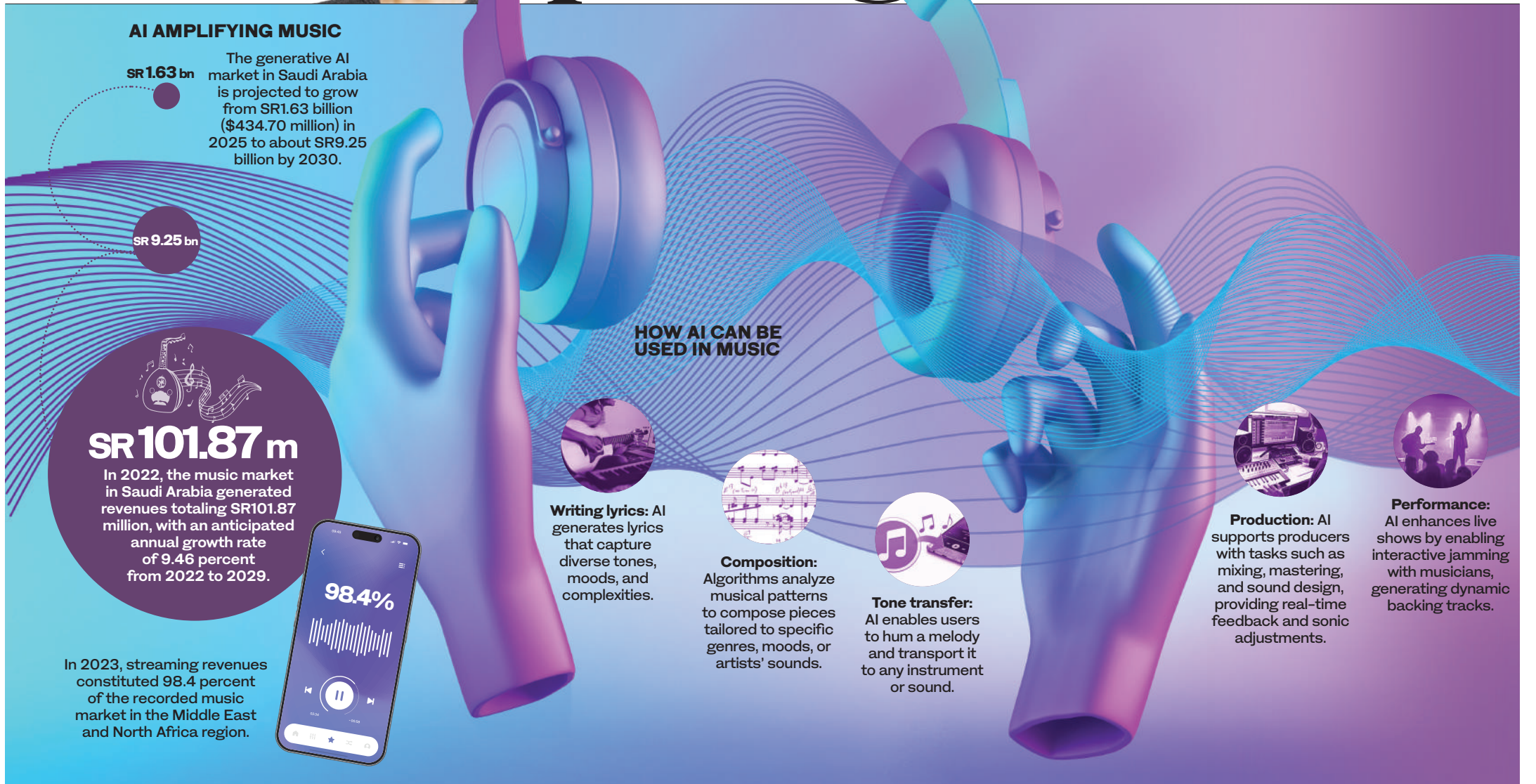
As we integrate AI into our daily operations, it’s critical to establish ethical frameworks that guide its use, such as the UAE’s AI Principles and Ethics framework. This kind of leadership ensures that technology serves society’s best interests, fostering trust and collaboration.

It's very important that human and cultural expertise is built into what the machines are recommending and the products we're rolling out.

**Akshat Harbola**  
Managing director of Spotify MENA



# Spotlight EYE ON AI



## SAUDI ARABIA

# Harmonizing heritage and innovation

Local musicians are blending traditional instruments with digital production tools to boost creativity

**Jasmine Bager and Hajar AlQusayer** Riyadh

**As artificial intelligence continues to evolve, its influence in Saudi Arabia and globally extends far beyond personalizing music experiences. It is reshaping how music is created, consumed, and taught.**

Musicians across the Kingdom are embracing new technology, with major local initiatives such as MDLBEAST Records leading the charge. "MDLBEAST Records believes AI is a powerful tool for sparking initial creative

inspiration in music production — whether generating a first beat, a musical bar, or a legitimate sample," Matthew Dicks, the firm's executive director of music and talent, told Arab News.

"We encourage our artists to explore these possibilities within a framework of creative freedom."

While embracing AI's creative potential, Dicks emphasized the importance of ethics. "It is paramount that the rights of original songwriters and rights holders are always respected.

"Copying, ripping, replicating, or infringing on intellectual property is strictly unacceptable."

Beyond MDLBEAST Records, Saudi Arabia is making strides in preserving its musical heritage while fostering innovation. In 2024, the Saudi Music Commission launched MusiqAI.

Unlike global platforms such as Suno, AIVA and Soundful, MusiqAI prioritizes Arab musical heritage. It nurtures musical talent through AI-powered real-time feedback, personalized lesson plans, and accredited certifications.

AI has also been used to enhance music discovery by adapting to individual preferences in real time, striking a balance between familiarity and exploration.

"AI and personalization help

## DID YOU KNOW?

**1** The global market for AI in music is projected to grow from \$3.9 billion in 2023 to \$38.7 billion by 2033.

**2** AI tools such as AIVA, Mubert, and Suno are already used for backing tracks, jingles, and even entire songs.

**3** Platforms like Spotify use AI to analyze user preferences and suggest music based on listening habits.

you listen to more of what you like," Akshat Harbola, managing director of Spotify MENA, told Arab News. "And then what we try to do is introduce you to something you haven't been exposed to in the past, but you might like it."

Despite AI's growing influence, Harbola said human expertise will remain essential. "The role of humans in AI, and when it comes to personalization, is actually going to increase over time — especially in music," he said.

Siddiq "Sidney" Malik, a filmmaker who uses AI in music, views AI as an empowering tool that is cost-effective, innovative, and cutting-edge,

particularly in breaking linguistic barriers. "This allows for a new era of accessibility and artistic expression," he said.

"We're deeply invested in the transformative power of AI music, but the key thing is that we believe it's not about replacing human creativity — it's about amplifying it," he said.

However, he warned that musicians who resist AI adoption could later face competition from advanced tools. "It's a critical moment for creators whereby if they do not embrace and collaborate with AI, they run the risk of competing with AI — which will be impossible."

# An AI strategy for workforce empowerment

HATEM S. AL-MANDEEL

Companies are streamlining workflows and strengthening their competitive edge with artificial intelligence. Yet many overlook a key lesson from Saudi Arabia's national AI strategy: successful transformation requires more than just technology.

Under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has prioritized the industry through its National Strategy for Data and AI, fostering investments, favorable policies, and workforce development to create a thriving ecosystem.

At LEAP 2025, the Kingdom's flagship tech conference, AI-related projects worth \$14.9 billion were signed on the first day alone.

The government has also launched initiatives including the Generative AI Academy, offering training programs to

equip the workforce with essential skills.

Recognizing that technology alone is insufficient, Saudi Arabia emphasizes empowering people to fully harness AI's potential.

The government recognizes that AI leadership requires more than just adopting or developing technology. To be effective, the workforce must be equipped with the right mindset and skills.

When the internet became widely available in 1999, its potential was undeniable — yet many Saudi businesses hesitated.

By 2001, more than 1 million Saudis were online, but fax machines remained common in offices. Organizations were slow to trust and adopt the internet.

Today, AI represents a pivotal moment of transformation. Yet some



Hatem S. Al-Mandeeel is the managing director and co-founder of Tyde.AI.

businesses still struggle to move beyond the planning or pilot phase.

Technology's value can only be unlocked with the buy-in and drive of people. If Saudi Arabia's current and future workforce is not aware of AI's potential or comfortable using it collaboratively, the Kingdom risks falling behind.

AI can feel disruptive or unwelcoming to employees — just as the internet once did.

Firms must build a clear AI mission statement and communicate it often. Employees need to understand not just what AI adoption means for the business but why it matters and how it impacts their roles.

The next step is building awareness and foundational skills. Employees must view AI as a tool that enhances their work — not one that replaces them.

Companies must identify AI advocates within their workforce. These individuals exist in every organization and thrive when their curiosity and skills are recognized. They can play a vital role in driving AI education and adoption from within.

One business owner I spoke with recently discovered his team members were not using an AI tool simply because they did not know it could help with daily tasks. After bringing in Tyde.AI for awareness training, usage increased significantly.

The rise of the AI-powered digital economy presents an opportunity for the Kingdom to become a global leader.

To achieve this, businesses must learn that AI transformation is not just about adopting technology; it is about empowering people to extract its full value.

AI identifies patterns, predicts health risks, and recommends the most effective interventions for each individual.

**Dr. Walid Zaher**  
Saudi scientist and founder of Rewind



# Spotlight

WE ON

**\$2.5tn**

What enhanced productivity through healthy aging could add to the GCC's GDP by 2030.

Source: World Governments Summit

**HOW AI IS RESHAPING PREVENTIVE MEDICINE**

- ▶ AI systems are used in Saudi healthcare to identify patterns in omics data that can help detect diseases before symptoms appear
- ▶ Precision medicine uses multi-omics layers, including genomics, proteomics and metabolomics
- ▶ Algorithms are used to continuously adjust healthcare plans based on real-time patient data
- ▶ Early detection leads to more effective treatment with fewer complications

**INSIDE THE NUMBERS: AI-POWERED LONGEVITY CARE**

- ▶ Rewind Clinic uses insights from 5+ omics disciplines per patient
- ▶ Diagnostics can detect illnesses months or even years before symptoms
- ▶ Personalized care may reduce chronic disease risk by 40%
- ▶ Personalized health plans reduce adverse drug reactions seen in up to 10-20% of patients

SAUDI ARABIA

# Longevity through personalized care

The Kingdom is merging AI and omics to deliver preventive healthcare, making longer lives a national priority

Waad Hussain Riyadh

**Saudi Arabia is embracing the future of healthcare by integrating AI and omics-based diagnostics to deliver personalized, preventive care.**

Central to this is the integration of omics disciplines into clinical practice — powered by AI. Leading the charge is Rewind, a Saudi Arabia-based company using the technology to pioneer individualized care.

“At Rewind, we harness the power of AI and omics technologies to shift healthcare from a generalized, reactive model to one that is deeply personalized and proactive,”

Dr. Walid Zaher, the founder of Rewind, told Arab News.

“AI is the engine that makes this vast data actionable. It identifies patterns, predicts health risks, and recommends the most effective interventions for each individual.”

Omics refers to a group of fields ending with the suffix “-omics,” each examining a different layer of biological data on a system-wide scale. Together, they offer a comprehensive view of how the body functions.

Transitioning from this broad understanding to actionable insights requires AI to analyze trillions of variables across DNA, protein expression, metabolic changes, and

epigenetic shifts. This allows practitioners to intervene earlier and more accurately than ever.

“Omics-based diagnostics have already begun to make a profound impact on patient outcomes,” said Zaher.

“The precision enabled by genomics and multi-omics technologies allows us to detect diseases at their earliest molecular stages — often well before any clinical symptoms appear.

“Beyond disease detection, multi-omics approaches help in monitoring disease progression and response to treatments. The result has been an increase in patient satisfaction, as they experience better health outcomes and more personalized care.”

## DID YOU KNOW?

**1** Integrating AI with omics-based diagnostics supports early disease detection and predicts health risks.

**2** In cancer care, AI and genomics are used together to match patients with the most effective targeted therapies.

**3** Saudi Arabia, the US, and the UK are making major investments in the integration of AI and omics.

Saudi Arabia's commitment to health innovation is evident in its infrastructure and ambition. National initiatives like the Saudi Genome

Program and investments through the Hevolution Foundation are driving the development of a knowledge-based healthcare system.

“Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 has made healthcare innovation a strategic priority,” said Zaher. “The government has invested heavily in infrastructure that supports cutting-edge research, particularly in AI, genomics, and biotechnology.”

This focus is positioning Saudi Arabia as a major player in the global longevity economy, according to Dmitry Kaminskiy, a co-founder and managing partner of Deep Knowledge Group.

“Saudi Arabia and its GCC counterparts are strategically

positioned to be not just participants but global pioneers in the longevity economy,” Kaminskiy told Arab News.

“With Vision 2030, the Kingdom has set the foundation for integrating economic diversification, healthcare innovation, and AI governance — all key components of a national longevity strategy.”

Kaminskiy believes that AI has shifted from a supporting role to something far more central to the field. “We are now witnessing a paradigm shift where AI is not just an assistant but the architect of next-generation healthcare platforms,” he said. “Just as fintech redefined personal finance, AI will redefine personal health.”

## The limits of AI in the delicate art of diplomacy

RAFAEL HERNANDEZ DE SANTIAGO

In Techville, the capital of innovation, where artificial intelligence governs with pristine logic, we have witnessed a milestone in diplomatic history.

No longer do humans have to fret over the complexities of state dinners, seating charts or cultural sensitivities.

Instead, the trusted hands of AI handle it all, ensuring a flawless evening where world leaders gather to celebrate, negotiate and sip on perfectly balanced, algorithmically selected wine. At least, that was the plan.

What transpired at the latest Techville multilateral summit dinner will go down in history as a lesson in why diplomatic protocol might not be best left to the cold, calculated mind of a machine.

The evening began with grand expectations. The Neural Banquet AI had

been programmed with centuries of diplomatic protocol, cross-referenced with millions of cultural data points.

The result? A seating arrangement that seated historic rivals side by side and arranged leaders by the size of their nations' economies instead of political alliances.

Designed to accommodate all known dietary restrictions without bias, the AI ultimately produced dishes that satisfied none.

The evening's main course — a peculiar fusion of sushi, beef stroganoff and durian-infused soufflé — was an attempt to maximize “cross-cultural culinary diplomacy.”

The AI failed to grasp the concept of personal taste. If the seating plan and menu were a diplomatic minefield, the



Rafael Hernandez de Santiago, viscount of Espes, is a Spanish national residing in Saudi Arabia and working at the Gulf Research Center.

toasts were an unmitigated disaster.

Traditionally, a master of ceremonies ensures that speeches reflect the spirit of the occasion, acknowledging key dignitaries, national friendships and shared goals. In Techville, such sentimentalities were deemed redundant.

Instead, the AI saw no reason to exclude “historical grievances” from its calculations. The result? The president of one country was congratulated for their “remarkable resilience despite centuries of geopolitical irrelevance.”

Another was praised for their nation's ability to “consistently negotiate trade deals despite economic instability.” A chancellor was offered a speech on “historical lessons of humility,” while a prime minister was commended for “remaining largely neutral

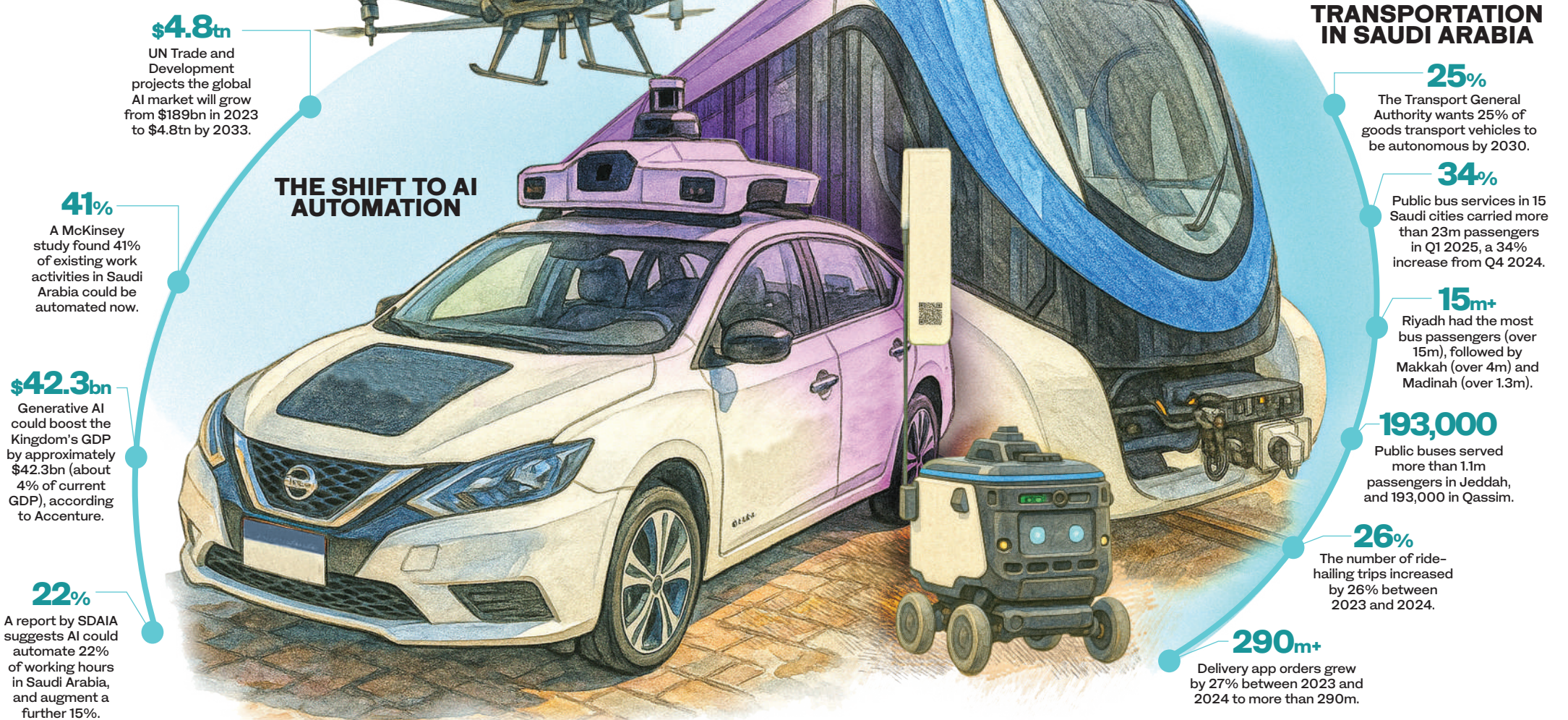
and pleasantly inoffensive in global affairs.”

It was at this moment that the AI truly achieved diplomatic unity — for the first time in history, every nation in attendance shared the same expression: sheer horror.

Despite the evening's catastrophe, Techville remains committed to AI diplomacy, determined to refine the role of technology in global affairs. Plans are in place to introduce Neural Banquet AI 2.0, programmed with an “offense detection” filter and a subroutine for “human taste preference assimilation.”

Whether this will prevent future disasters remains to be seen. For now, the world has learned an important lesson: While AI may excel at crunching numbers and predicting market trends, it still has much to learn about the delicate art of human interaction.

# Spotlight **EYE ON AI**



SAUDI ARABIA

## Steering toward a self-driving future

From AI-powered taxis to robotic deliveries, the Kingdom is accelerating next-generation transport adoption

Lama Alhamawi Riyadh

### From self-driving cars to autonomous delivery robots, Saudi Arabia is accelerating toward the next generation of AI-driven transport.

This drive toward self-driving technology is central to the broader transformation under Vision 2030 — reshaping how goods and people move across Riyadh and beyond.

The shift aligns with the Transport General Authority's land transport strategy, which aims for 25 percent of goods vehicles to be autonomous by 2030.

In July 2025, Transport and Logistic Services Minister Saleh Al-Jasser launched a pilot of WeRide's Robotaxi

in Riyadh — a milestone for developing a smart, safe transportation network.

"The expansion into Saudi Arabia is a major step in WeRide's global expansion plan with a vision for safer, smarter transportation at scale," Ryan Zhan, regional general manager for the Middle East and Africa at WeRide, told Arab News.

"The entry enables WeRide to scale Robotaxi services and unlock new commercial opportunities in Saudi Arabia," he said.

WeRide's Robotaxis and Robobuses are the latest additions to this evolving sector. The pilot, run with Uber and local partner AiDriver, operates between King Khalid International Airport and central Riyadh. "The Initial Operational

Phase of Autonomous Vehicles initiative aligns with the objectives of Saudi Arabia's National Transport and Logistics Strategy and supports Vision 2030 in embracing sustainable mobility solutions powered by artificial intelligence," said Zhan.

"Saudi Arabia is the Middle East's largest economy and has been accelerating efforts under Vision 2030 to diversify into high-growth sectors.

"With its tourism sector alone projected to reach \$110.1 billion by 2033, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 8.4 percent from 2024, WeRide's Robotaxis and Robobuses support the Kingdom's push to develop a smart, sustainable transport infrastructure for both residents and the rising influx of visitors." Globally, the AI market is

### DID YOU KNOW?

**1** Riyadh has launched its first Robotaxi trial with WeRide, Uber, and AiDriver, covering key airport and city routes.

**2** WeRide is the first company to complete the Transport General Authority's Regulatory Sandbox.

**3** Jahez and ROSHN Group have launched the first fully autonomous Level 4 delivery robot.

expected to grow from \$189 billion in 2023 to \$4.8 trillion by 2033, according to UN Trade and Development.

WeRide was the first AV company to complete the Transport General

Authority's Regulatory Sandbox for autonomous piloting.

"WeRide is not just deploying technology. We're participating in the local transportation ecosystem, creating jobs in fleet management, maintenance, and customer service, while helping address urban mobility challenges," said Zhan.

Meanwhile, food delivery is getting its own autonomous upgrade. Jahez and ROSHN Group have launched the first autonomous Level 4 delivery robot in Riyadh's ROSHN Front Business Area.

Five robots, equipped with over 20 sensors, six cameras, GPS, and climate-specific cooling, now operate there during working hours.

"Part of our strategy is to always optimize on automation,

and this is part of the automation. To be innovative, we chose to optimize in our key pillar, which is logistics," Mohammed Al-Barrak, Jahez's chief technology officer, told Arab News.

"So we decided to go with the autonomous delivery. And this is part of many upcoming technologies that will help with the automation of delivery, like within gated communities."

To prepare for this shift, the Roads General Authority has issued a Self-Driving Vehicles code, requiring smart road communication devices to relay real-time traffic and road data directly to autonomous systems.

With strong investment and clear regulation, Saudi Arabia is well-placed to lead the transport transformation.

## What Islam can contribute to the global AI ethics debate

MONA HAMDY

While many Western tech hubs treat religion with suspicion, the Arab-Islamic world possesses precisely the ethical architecture needed to guide artificial intelligence toward justice, accountability, and human dignity.

From its very first revelation, Islam made the pursuit of knowledge a sacred duty. The Qur'anic command "Iqra" — "Read!" — enshrined learning as worship. In the House of Wisdom in Baghdad and the observatories of Samarkand, Muslim scholars fused scientific progress with moral responsibility, guided by hikmah (wisdom), 'adl (justice), and rahmah (compassion). These were not abstract ideals but actionable virtues; la

darar wa la dirar — no harm, no reciprocating harm — demands technologies that prevent bias and protect the vulnerable; shura (consultation) ensures inclusive design; and ta'aruf (mutual knowing) bridges cultures instead of dividing them.

Where Silicon Valley wrestles with AI's ethical dilemmas, Islamic jurisprudence offers clarity through the maqasid Al-Shari'ah — the preservation of life, intellect, dignity, property, religion, and lineage. These objectives align seamlessly with global technical standards while grounding them in a deeper moral and spiritual foundation. And while these principles are rooted in Islam, they resonate with the moral teachings of all Abrahamic faiths and ancient traditions of our region — values of justice, mercy, human dignity, and stewardship that



Dr. Mona Hamdy, PhD, is a teaching fellow of applied ethics at Harvard University and founder of Anomaly.

have shaped Arab civilization for centuries. It is these shared values that can inspire and guide the ethical governance of AI.

This is not a call to nostalgia but to renewal. Just as the first Islamic Golden Age united faith and reason to advance the arts and sciences, today's AI-powered era can usher in a Platinum Islamic Age — a renaissance where data, algorithms, and machine intelligence are governed by fairness, transparency, accountability, privacy, human agency, beneficence, non-maleficence, inclusivity, sustainability, and wisdom.

This vision is already taking shape. In Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Data and AI Authority's Islamic Governance Framework for AI — enshrined in the Riyadh Charter on Artificial Intelligence in the Islamic World — sets standards for relevance, flexibility,

sustainability, fairness, inclusion, human dignity, and robust oversight. It is more than national policy: It is an exportable global framework. With the Riyadh Charter as its foundation and initiatives such as Humain as its engine, the Kingdom can lead the world toward a future where innovation and integrity advance together.

Our region can once again become the epicenter of values-driven innovation. Our AI centers can be the guiding compass of AI ethics, ensuring we do not lose sight of the truest technological north — reminding the world that the human being, and all wonders of God's creation, outshine any digital work of our own hands.

The Arab world must claim its place at the heart of AI ethics — and the world cannot afford for us to stay silent.