

Saudi women check a car at an automobile showroom in the Red Sea resort of Jeddah. (Reuters)

Saudi women will be allowed to drive motorcycles

Riyadh

Saudi Arabian women will be able to drive trucks and motorcycles, officials have said three months after the kingdom announced a historic decision to end a ban on women driving.

In September, King Salman issued a decree saying women will be able to drive

from next June as part of an ambitious reform push in the conservative kingdom.

The Saudi General Directorate of Traffic gave details of the new regulations that will follow the lifting of the ban on the official Saudi Press Agency late on Friday.

"Yes, we will authorise women to drive motorcycles"

as well as trucks, it said, adding that the royal decree stipulates that the law on driving will be "equal" for both men and women.

There will be no special licence plate numbers for female-driven cars, it said.

But women involved in road accidents or who commit traffic violations will be dealt with at special centres that will be established and run by women. Its historic decision to allow women to drive from next June has been cheered inside the kingdom and abroad -- and comes after decades of resistance from female activists, many of whom were jailed for flouting the ban. (Reuters)

Women and the World

Meredith Ann O'Connell



Feminism: Misunderstood

When Merriam-Webster Dictionary announced that the Word of the Year for 2017 was feminism, it was hardly surprising. Women were everywhere this year: their achievements and the issues they face were the topic of many a news article, so it is unsurprising that feminism was one of the most searched words online. Yet feminism continues to be misunderstood and viewed as a "bad word." Far from accomplishing its goals, feminism needs the support of all women in order to move forward.

Merriam-Webster defines feminism as "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" and "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests." The theory is simple: a woman's gender should not impede their ability to run for office, vote, hold a job, study, etc. Feminism does not mean that women hate men, or are better than men, or should have privileges over men. Feminism does not mean that women should abandon their families and stop acting "feminine," it simply means that women should be able to have choices.

Yet even today, feminism is considered a bad word, a word that makes people—both men and women—uncomfortable. Studies show that girls don't want to call themselves feminists because it makes them seem "uncool" or "difficult." Numerous celebrities, when questioned, have said that they don't identify as feminists because they don't want to be labeled. It seems as though the word itself is the problem—after all, if you asked these celebrities if they felt women should, for example, receive equal pay to men, they would likely agree. The very word feminism (and feminist) has been twisted so that even women—the very people it is trying to help—shy away from the concept.

There is also the prevailing argument that feminism isn't needed anymore. While many countries have enshrined equality in their laws, socially there is plenty of work to be done. As the United States proved in 2017, no country is living in a post-feminism era. There are women who say, "I have everything I need or want, I don't see how I'm oppressed" or "I don't feel constricted because I am a woman." These women are free to feel this way, but just because they do not feel discriminated against does not mean thousands and millions of other women don't suffer because of gender discrimination.

Feminism has accomplished a lot, but it still has far to go. Feminism needs all women on board. To do this, let's start with getting the definition correct.

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this newspaper.)

Egypt reopens ancient library

St. Catherine's

Egypt reopened yesterday an ancient library which holds thousands of centuries-old religious and historical manuscripts at the famed St. Catherine Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site, in South Sinai.

The inauguration ceremony, attended by Egyptian and western officials, comes after three years of restoration work on the eastern side of the library that houses the world's second largest collection of early codices and manuscripts, outnumbered only by the Vatican Library, according to Monk Damyanos, the monastery's archbishop.

"The library is now open to the public and scholars," said

Tony Kazamias, an adviser to the archbishop, adding that restoration work is still underway without specifying a completion date.

The ancient library holds around 3,300 manuscripts of mainly Christian texts in Greek, Arabic, Syriac, Georgian, and Slavonic among other languages. It also contains thousands of books and scrolls dating to the 4th century.

At least 160 of the manuscripts include faint scratches and ink tints beneath more recent writing, according to Kazamias, who believes the palimpsests were likely scraped out by the monastery's monks and reused sometime between the 8th-12th centuries.

During the library's renovation, archaeologists apparently found some of Hippocrates' centuries-old medical recipes. The ancient Greek physician is widely regarded as the "father of western medicine."

"The most valuable manuscript in the library is the Codex Sinaiticus, (which) dates back to the fourth century," said the Rev. Justin, an American monk working as the monastery's librarian. "This is the most precious manuscript in the world," referring to the ancient, handwritten copy of the New Testament.

The library also held some ancient paintings which are currently on display in the

monastery's museum.

"There are beautiful paintings in the manuscripts. When you turn the (pages) there is a flash of gold and colors. It is a living work of art," said Justin.

The officials also inaugurated the Mosaic of the Transfiguration situated in the eastern apse of the monastery's great basilica. It mosaic covers 46 square meters and features a rich chromatic range of glass paste, glass, stone, gold and silver tesserae. Jesus Christ is depicted in its center between the prophets Elias and Moses.

The 6th century mosaic was created at the behest of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, who also requested building the monastery. St. Catherine's,



where the monastery is located, is an area revered by followers of the Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Like the Old City of Jerusalem, it has become a popular destination and an attraction not only for pilgrims

but also tourists from the world over. The 6th century monastery, one of the oldest Christian Orthodox ones, is home to a small number of monks who observe prayers and daily rituals unchanged for centuries. (AP)