

Saudi's **Game-Changer** hospital eyes **Global** role

KFSHRC leads medical travel pivot

● 95% **GHA** accreditation score

● **Vision 2030** healthcare milestone

● 17 **countries** served in 2024

Mahir Haneeff
TDT | Manama

King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Centre (KFSHRC) has been awarded Global Healthcare Accreditation (GHA) for Medical Travel Services, earning a 95 percent score that cements its role as a leader in Saudi Arabia's transformation into a global medical destination.

The recognition reflects the Kingdom's shift from a historically outbound medical travel market to one now attracting international patients. In 2024 alone, KFSHRC treated individuals from 17 different countries, reinforcing its reputation as a trusted centre for complex, cross-border care.

Trusted care



Saudi Arabia aims to become one of the top five global destinations for medical tourism by 2030, targeting a 5% share of patients who currently travel abroad for treatment.



The GHA certification, granted by a US-based body, evaluates hospitals on international standards that prioritise patient-centred care, cultural competence, care coordination, and post-treatment follow-up. KFSHRC's high score confirms its ability to deliver on all fronts.

"This accreditation affirms our commitment to providing international patients with exceptional care," said Dr. Amaal AlDakheel, Director of International Healthcare Services at KFSHRC. "The GHA process was more than a compliance exercise. It offered us deep reflection, professional exchange, and valuable learning that strength-

ened our readiness to serve the world."

Vision-driven shift

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 calls for developing the country as a world-class hub for healthcare and medical tourism. KFSHRC is taking a lead in this goal by aiming to attract at least 5 percent of patients who would otherwise seek treatment abroad.

Renée-Marie Stephano, CEO of Global Healthcare Accreditation, said KFSHRC reflects the bold ambition of this vision. "Their commitment to excellence and global best practices exemplifies the future of safe,

patient-centred international healthcare."

Cutting-edge capabilities

To prepare for the accreditation, KFSHRC trained staff in GHA's methodology and standards. Several team members earned the Advanced Certified Medical Travel Professional designation, enhancing the hospital's ability to support diverse patient needs and expectations.

KFSHRC also offers specialised care across eight Centres of Excellence covering cancer, transplant, neuroscience, heart, genome, surgery, paediatrics and women's health. Equipped with advanced technologies like CAR T-cell therapy and robotic surgery, it stands as one of the few institutions in the region offering such high-level treatments.

The hospital was recently ranked 15th globally and first in the Middle East and Africa among the world's top 250 academic medical centres. It was also named the most valuable healthcare brand in the region by Brand Finance and included in Newsweek's list of the World's Best Smart Hospitals.

Global network

GHA is creating a broader international healthcare ecosystem by connecting accredited hospitals with insurers, referral partners, and travel providers. KFSHRC's inclusion in this network enhances its access to new markets, improves patient trust, and supports Saudi Arabia's ambition to become a preferred destination for medical travel.

As one of the first in the region to achieve such a high standard, King Faisal Specialist Hospital is not only raising the bar for healthcare at home but also helping shape the Middle East's future as a trusted destination for advanced international treatment.

EU unveils blueprint for boosted 2-trillion-euro budget

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

The EU executive proposed yesterday a long-term budget boosted to two trillion euros (\$2.3 trillion) as Europe confronts complex challenges, from overseas competition to Russian aggression at its borders.

Presenting the 2028-2034 budget blueprint to reporters in Brussels, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said it "will be the most ambitious ever proposed. It is more strategic, more flexible, more transparent".

In drawing up the plans, von der Leyen had to balance bolstering the bloc's security, ramping up Europe's competitiveness to keep up with US and Chinese rivals, countering climate change and paying debts due from 2028.

And all of this was against a backdrop of soaring trade tensions with the European Union's biggest commercial partner, the United States.

The European Commission announced a 451-billion-euro competitiveness fund to support the EU's investment efforts in clean tech, digital, defence and food security and innovation.

As Europe pushes to re-arm, the amounts dedicated to de-

fence and space will increase five-fold -- to 131 billion euros.

And the spending plan proposed earmarking up to 100 billion euros to support war-torn Ukraine over its seven-year period.

"This is a long-term commitment to Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction," budget chief Piotr Serafin said.

Hungary, Russia's closest ally in Europe, slammed the money for Kyiv.

"Ukraine would get a massive funding boost, while European farmers lose out," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said before the official announcement by the commission.

The large farming subsidies that make up the biggest share of the budget, known as the common agricultural policy (CAP), are a subject of fierce debate.

Serafin, however, said that under the commission's plans, 300 billion euros would be ring-fenced to support

farmers, who have been worried about potential cuts to their slice of the pie.

In the current seven-year budget, the CAP accounted for almost a third of funding -- around 387 billion euros, of which 270 billion euros are directly paid to farmers.



European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen

UK fines Barclays bank £42 million for crime risk failings

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Britain's financial watchdog yesterday said it had fined Barclays bank £42 million (\$56 million) for "poor handling of financial crime risks".

The Financial Conduct Authority said in a statement that the fine was "for separate instances of failings in its financial crime risk management" between 2015 and 2023.

A Barclays spokesperson said the British bank is "deeply committed to the fight against financial crime and fraud", after its third FCA fine for failings in financial crime controls since 2015.

They added in a statement that "Barclays fully cooperated with both investigations and has further strengthened its financial crime and other control



A Barclays mobile banking van is pictured in the grounds of St Andrew's Church in Hove, southern England

capabilities".

In the first case, Barclays "failed to check it had gathered sufficient information to understand the money laundering risk, before opening a client money account for WealthTek",

a wealth manager which the regulator had shut down.

The FCA said Barclays needed to carry out only "one simple check" to see that "WealthTek was not permitted by" the regulator to hold client money.

US drug raids net \$10 mn in crypto linked to Sinaloa cartel

AFP | Washington, United States

US drug enforcement agents seized more than \$10 million in cryptocurrency linked to Mexico's Sinaloa cartel during raids that netted massive quantities of fentanyl and other drugs, officials said Tuesday.

The Sinaloa cartel is one of six Mexican drug trafficking groups that President Donald Trump has designated as global "terrorist" organizations.

The cryptocurrency seizure in Miami, Florida was part of countrywide operations that netted 44 million fentanyl pills, 4,500 pounds (2,000 kilograms) of fentanyl powder and nearly 65,000 pounds of methamphetamine since January, the US Department of Justice said in a statement.

The Drug Enforcement Ad-



Representative picture

ministration (DEA), in coordination with its FBI partners, "seized over \$10 million dollars in cryptocurrency, directly linked to the Sinaloa cartel," it added.

It comes days after Ovidio Guzman Lopez, a son of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, pleaded guilty to drug charges in Chicago in a deal struck with prosecutors in return for a reduced sentence.

His father was convicted in a high-profile trial in 2019 and is serving a life sentence in prison. "DEA is hitting the cartels

where it hurts -- with arrests, with seizures, and with relentless pressure," DEA Acting Administrator Robert Murphy said. The cryptocurrency haul was among several major seizures across the country in recent weeks, including in California, Texas, Georgia and other states that netted thousands of pounds of drugs and dozens of arrests.

In Galveston, Texas, agents uncovered more than 1,700 pounds of methamphetamine worth more than \$15 million hidden inside a vehicle.

Other raids yielded drugs hidden in produce shipments, including 705 pounds of methamphetamine concealed in cucumbers in Georgia and 783 pounds found in a refrigerated truck carrying blueberries in Texas.