

Sovereign AI in the GCC and Lebanon: The 2026 Institutional Landscape

A reference compendium of strategies, institutions, laws, and programs, from the public record

Michael Joseph · Edition 1.0 · As of August 2026

What this is

Between 2016 and 2026, the Gulf and Lebanon built the institutional foundations of sovereign AI: ministries and authorities, national strategies and policies, data-protection regimes, investment vehicles, talent programs, and the region's first government AI systems. That record is scattered across gazettes, ministry pages, and announcements in three languages. This compendium assembles it in one place.

Every entry derives from cited public documents and carries a date. This compendium documents; it does not rank. It is written for the boards, institutions, and international partners who need a reliable factual map of what each state has built, and it is intended to be cited.

A decade of institution-building: the regional arc

The milestones tell the story of a region moving early and repeatedly:

- **2016** · Qatar enacts the Gulf's first national data-privacy law.
- **2017** · The UAE creates what its government describes as the world's first AI ministerial post.
- **2019** · Qatar publishes one of the region's earliest national AI strategies; Bahrain's data-protection law enters into force.
- **2020** · Saudi Arabia adopts the National Strategy for Data and AI under a dedicated standing authority (SDAIA); the UAE expands its AI portfolio.
- **2021** · Saudi Arabia enacts its Personal Data Protection Law; Kuwait establishes an AI committee within its communications ministry; the UAE renews its AI Council.

- **2022** · Oman launches its National Programme for AI and Advanced Digital Technologies; the UAE's data-protection law enters into force.
- **2023** · Oman's programme is enhanced by royal directive, the region's first verified post-generative-era refresh of a national AI instrument; Saudi Arabia amends its data law, in force that September; Kuwait files a bill to create a Public Authority for AI.
- **2024** · Qatar's central-bank AI rules are reported in force with a supervisory framework; Abu Dhabi's TAMM platform ships an AI conversational layer.
- **2025** · A landmark year: Lebanon creates its first AI ministerial post (February); Saudi Arabia's PIF launches HUMAIN as a sovereign AI vehicle (May); the UAE announces Stargate UAE (May); Bahrain publishes its National AI Policy (July); Lebanon's Cabinet approves the draft law creating its first new ministry since 1993 (September); Lebanon convenes a national AI summit under prime-ministerial patronage (November); Qatar's QIA forms Qai with Brookfield for AI infrastructure and Lebanon signs a 50,000-trainee agreement with Oracle (December).
- **2026** · Oman's data-protection law reaches full enforcement (February) and Royal Decree 50/2026 establishes the region's first legislated AI Special Zone in Muscat (April); the UAE approves a cabinet-level Federal Authority for Artificial Intelligence and Data (June); SDAIA's academy graduates a 215-student cohort drawn from 28 universities (June).

Ten years, seven states, and an institutional layer that did not exist when the decade began.

Country profiles

United Arab Emirates

The region's longest continuous institutional record. The UAE created what its government describes as the world's first AI ministerial post in October 2017, expanded the portfolio in 2020, renewed its AI Council in 2021, and in June 2026 approved a **Federal Authority for Artificial Intelligence and Data**, merging three bodies under one cabinet-level roof, nine years of continuously maintained and refreshed machinery. Abu Dhabi's **TAMM** platform, evidenced on government primary sources across successive versions (2024, 2025) including an AI conversational layer, stands as the region's flagship whole-of-government AI service. The legal layer combines the federal data-protection law, in force since January 2022, with a 12-principle AI Charter. On compute, **Stargate UAE**, announced May 2025 with first-phase operations slated from 2026, anchors one of the world's most ambitious sovereign AI infrastructure programs, and **MBZUAI** operates a multi-year graduate program ladder as the region's dedicated AI university.

Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom pairs the region's most mature data-protection regime with its largest AI capital formation. The **National Strategy for Data and AI** has had a dedicated standing owner since 2020 in **SDAIA**, whose academy graduated a June 2026 cohort of 215 students drawn from 28 universities, a state-reported, delivery-stage talent pipeline. The **Personal Data Protection Law** (2021, amended 2023, fully in force since September 2023 with its grace period complete) is the most mature privacy instrument in the set, and the region's first with a published enforcement record: SDAIA's committees issued 48 decisions confirming violations with penalties during 2025 (Saudi Press Agency, January 2026). On investment: PIF launched **HUMAIN** on 12 May 2025 as a sovereign AI vehicle; Google Cloud and PIF announced a \$10 billion AI hub; and Aramco agreed to acquire a significant minority stake in HUMAIN, a concentration of sovereign AI capital unmatched in the region's published record.

Qatar

The Gulf's regulatory pioneer. Qatar enacted the region's **first national data-privacy law in 2016**, followed by implementing guidelines in 2021, security guidelines in 2024, and, as reported by legal analyses, central-bank AI rules in force since September 2024 with a supervisory framework, giving Qatar one of the region's most layered rulebooks. Its 2019 national AI strategy was among the region's earliest, a National AI Committee provides dedicated coordination, and the 2024 Digital Agenda carries the AI programme forward. In December 2025, the Qatar Investment Authority formed **Qai** with Brookfield as a dedicated AI-infrastructure vehicle, and a named AI system operates in the national utility sector.

Bahrain

The region's most current national instrument belongs to its smallest state. The **National Policy for the Use of Artificial Intelligence**, published 27 July 2025 by the Information & eGovernment Authority alongside adoption of the GCC's AI-ethics manual, is the newest national AI instrument in the set, and iGA's innovation directorate, Bahrain's first official AI unit, published both the policy and a national AI readiness report within four months, a working cadence visible on government primaries. Bahrain's data-protection law has been in force since 2019, among the region's longest-standing. **Tamkeen's** three-track AI skills program is open for enterprise registration with an ambition of reaching 50,000 Bahrainis, a commercial hyperscaler cloud region operates on Bahraini soil, and in May 2025 the Interior Ministry introduced **Sahm**, an AI virtual security news editor, through a ministry training program.

Oman

The quiet institutional mover. Oman's **National Programme for AI and Advanced Digital Technologies**, published on the ministry's own pages, originated in 2022, nested under Vision 2040, was **enhanced by royal directive in November 2023**, making it the region's only national AI instrument with a verified refresh in the generative-AI era. The legal record is equally concrete: Oman's data-protection law reached **full enforcement in February 2026**, and **Royal Decree 50/2026** of April 2026 established the region's first legislated **AI Special Zone** in Muscat, an enacted investment vehicle carrying special-economic-zone incentives. Few states anywhere have matched that pairing, a refreshed national programme and a purpose-built legal zone, within a single planning cycle.

Kuwait

Institutional foundations are being laid on multiple fronts at once. The **National AI Strategy 2025–2028** was developed and circulated in 2025 and is advancing toward adoption; an AI committee has operated within the communications ministry since 2021; and a bill to create a dedicated **Public Authority for AI** was filed in December 2023. Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund joined a **\$30 billion global AI infrastructure partnership** in June 2025, placing Kuwaiti capital inside one of the world's largest AI investment platforms, while an operator-built AI data center rises domestically and Kuwait University opened its **first AI undergraduate program** for 2025–2026.

Lebanon

The region's newest dedicated AI machinery, built in public view. In **February 2025**, Lebanon created its first ministerial post for technology and AI, the **Minister of State for Technology and Artificial Intelligence**, Dr. Kamal Shehadi, and on **9 September 2025** the Council of Ministers approved a draft law elevating the post to a full **Ministry of Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence**, which would be Lebanon's first new ministry since 1993; the law is now before Parliament. The office, publishing as the Ministry of Technology & AI (MITAI) on its own government domain, has produced a national AI roadmap, convened a **national AI summit under prime-ministerial patronage** in November 2025, and in **December 2025 signed an agreement with Oracle** to train 50,000 Lebanese in cloud and AI over five years, with the minister publicly affirming that the agreement involves no data exchange or access to the public sector, a governance safeguard stated up front. For a founding year, it is a dense record: mandate, roadmap, summit, and a signed 50,000-person skills commitment.

Regional themes

A new generation of institutions. Within twenty-four months, the region produced a cabinet-level federal AI authority (UAE), a sovereign AI investment vehicle (Saudi Arabia), an AI-infrastructure subsidiary of a sovereign fund (Qatar), a first official AI unit with a published national policy (Bahrain), a legislated AI special zone (Oman), a proposed public AI authority (Kuwait), and a first dedicated AI ministry advancing through enactment (Lebanon). The institutional map of 2026 barely resembles that of 2023.

The legal foundations are laid. All seven states now operate under binding data instruments, comprehensive privacy laws in most, sectoral and transactional regimes in others, spanning enactments from 2016 to full enforcement in 2026, with AI-specific guidance layering on top. A decade ago, none of this existed.

Capital is mobilizing at sovereign scale. HUMAIN, Stargate UAE, Qai, the \$10 billion Google Cloud–PIF hub, Kuwait’s stake in a \$30 billion global partnership, hyperscaler regions on Gulf soil: the published record of 2025–2026 shows sovereign AI capital formation at a pace few regions match.

Talent pipelines are forming. A dedicated AI graduate university (UAE), a state academy graduating cross-university cohorts (Saudi Arabia), a three-track national skills program (Bahrain), a first AI undergraduate degree (Kuwait), and a 50,000-person training agreement (Lebanon), each a dated, named program on the public record.

The 2027 calendar: milestones to watch

The coming year is dense with institutional milestones already on the public schedule: the UAE’s Federal Authority standing up and Stargate UAE’s first phase; HUMAIN’s build-out in Saudi Arabia; Qatar’s Digital Agenda AI programmes and Qai’s first capacity; implementation reporting under Bahrain’s National AI Policy and Tamkeen’s first cohorts; Oman’s successor programme as the current cycle completes in 2026, and the AI Special Zone’s first tenants; adoption of Kuwait’s national strategy; and, in Lebanon, parliamentary enactment of the ministry law and the first Oracle training cohorts. Edition 2027 of this compendium will record them.

Method and provenance

This compendium was assembled through structured documentation review framed with **Aperture** (fixing, before assembly, the question each section answers) and verified with **Crucible**, independent adversarial review of every

claim against its cited source before publication. Public versions of both methods are open-source at github.com/ScipioP.

Sources are exclusively public: government primaries where accessible, corroborated secondary sources where not, each entry dated. All statements carry an as-of date of August 2026 in a fast-moving domain. Where a document's status is described (in force, approved, before Parliament, announced), the description follows the most recent published source. Full citation apparatus accompanies the published edition.

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