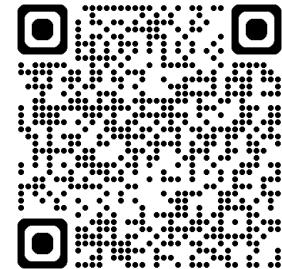


# Saudi Arabia aims to become esports giant



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20251016151536776/>

A UN report says the global gaming market grew to 182 billion dollars in 2022. Now it continues to expand thanks in part to the popularity of competitive gaming, or esports. Saudi Arabia is a top venue for tournaments. In two years, Riyadh hosts the first esports event endorsed by the international Olympic committee.

The esports world cup was recently held over a seven week period in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh. More than 2000 of the world's top players representing over 100 countries came to show off their skills. It was the biggest esports event to date in terms of prize money. More than 70 million was at stake, reflecting the rapid expansion of the sector. A tournament organizer explains why Saudi Arabia is closely associated with esports.

Gaming as an industry has exploded in growth. Saudi Arabia is a very young population. 75% of the population is under 35 and over 70 or close to 70% of the population actually identify themselves as gamers, so it's the perfect place really to host this tournament.

Historically the majority of Saudi Arabia's national income has come from oil. But crown prince Mohammad bin Salman wants to change that. His vision 2030 strategy aims to diversify the country's revenue sources. That includes a pledge in 2022 to invest 38 billion dollars to expand the gaming industry. The government sees the tournaments it hosts almost every year as a way to attract foreign visitors and demonstrate its commitment to making Saudi Arabia a gaming hub. Substantial public support is offered to local game companies. This one has been developing mobile games for the past decade. It was the racing game it brought out this year that put on the world gaming map. The title has had over 1 million downloads. The company says government funding was a key factor in making the game a success. It also received subsidies for employee training.

Saudia Arabia's game market continues to grow. This growth has attracted many investors. Our goal is for the games we develop to be recognized globally. This is not an empty dream, but a goal. It is realistic and can be achieved in the near future god willing.

With local developers coming into their own and an Olympic scale event on the horizon, Saudi Arabia is poised to become a global center for esports.

Source: (NHK World News)

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. Do you think Saudi Arabia is making a wise investment? Why or why not?
2. What's your opinion about the IOC getting involved in esports?
3. Do you think gaming is popular industry in Japan? Why or why not?
4. Does hosting an international esports event have any effect on your image of Saudi Arabia?
5. Do you think esports will become more popular than traditional sports in the future?