



Women in Saudi Arabia will have the chance to watch football matches and other sport events directly for the first time in the conservative Moslem Gulf Kingdom when a decision allowing them in is enforced within two years.

Officials in charge of the King Abdullah Sports City in the western Red Sea town of Jeddah said they had received instructions to equip the stadium so it will be prepared to receive families in 2014.

"Sources close to the stadium said more than 15 per cent of the facility will be allocated for families when the facility is fully completed in 2014," the Saudi Arabic language daily Sharq said on Saturday.

"Besides families, female journalists and photographers will also be admitted into the stadium and will be allocated exclusive places away from male journalists so they can cover local and international events."

Sharq said the King Abdullah Sports City includes a stadium with a capacity of 60,000 people, besides closed stadiums and massive sports halls that can accommodate more than 10,000 people at the same time.

A decision to let women into sports stadiums follows a proposal submitted by the Saudi Football Federation last year to the competent authorities to give females access to packed stadiums during football matches and other events.

Officials said last year that women could be allowed into the major sport stadiums in such big cities as Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam as a first step to fully lift the ban on female audience.