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RIYADH

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Riyadh revs up for 2030



RIYADH, basking in the glow of its Expo 2030 victory, is now setting the gears in motion to sculpt a venue that will dazzle the world and provide a showcase for human ingenuity. This is in addition to the multiple mega developments already under way in the Saudi capital city as it drives its ambition to position itself among the world's most liveable cities and double its population to over 15 billion.

Fuelled by Saudi Arabia's bold 2030 vision, the city has already embarked on a transformative journey that has seen the launch of big-ticket developments such as three of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund Public Investment Fund's (PIF) five giga projects – Diriyah, Qiddiya and Roshn – to create a tourism and cultural destination with diverse attractions, adventure and thrills, and entertainment while addressing the social housing needs of the kingdom.

These have been complemented by other landmark projects such as Sports Boulevard, King Salman Park, King Salman

Riding high on Expo 2030 victory, Riyadh is pushing mega-projects like Diriyah, Qiddiya and New Murabba into overdrive, while sculpting a futuristic urban landscape that will cement its place as a global liveability leader.

Non-Profit City (Misk City) and the expansion of King Abdullah Financial District (KAJD).

Surpassing even these ambitious developments in scale, in February last year, Riyadh unveiled plans for the awe-inspiring New Murabba development which involves setting up the world's largest modern downtown in the capital with an immersive destination.

Now, following its successful bid to host the Expo 2030 World, the kingdom is set to build a world-class venue for the prestigious event at a 6-million-sq-m site near the state-of-the-art King Salman International Airport, which itself aspires to be among the largest of its kind in the world.

According to Saudi Arabia's Minister of

Investment Eng Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih, Expo 2030 Riyadh has been allocated a budget of \$7.8 billion, which will further attract broader investment in the capital.

On the sidelines of the recent COP28 meeting in Dubai, Princess Haifa bint Mohammed Al Saud, the Vice Minister of Tourism, said the kingdom will spend nearly \$92 billion for this mega event and other massive projects such as the King Salman Park and Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) as well as decarbonisation of the urban transport in the next seven years.

Expo 2030 Riyadh – which is the largest global platform for presenting the latest achievements and technologies, promoting international cooperation in economic development, trade, arts and culture, and

GLOBAL SHOWCASE

RIYADH'S masterplan for Expo 2030 – unveiled when promoting its bid for the world-class event, aims to create an exceptional global experience in the history of the Expos.

Over a six-month period starting from October 1 2030, the exhibition, under its central theme: 'The Era of Change: Together for a Foresighted Tomorrow', will bring the global focus on technology, innovation, sustainability, and co-operation and present Riyadh an opportunity to share the story of an unprecedented national transformation with the global public.

The venue of the prestigious event will be developed in the northeast of Riyadh, an empty desert site close to King Khalid International Airport and the Wadi Al-Sulay project, a natural rain-water drainage basin. Once completed, Wadi Al-Sulay will offer an eastern boundary to the capital and, according to the masterplan, traverse a portion of the expo site.

A dedicated metro line will enable people to arrive at the site from the centre of Riyadh.

Designed as a futuristic space built around an ancient wadi, the 6-million-sq-m site embodies both the "oasis" and "garden" origin of Riyadh and the vision of the country to pioneer a sustainable future for cities and their communities.

The exhibition pavilions, estimated to be 246, will be designed in a spherical shape, with an equator line running through them. This approach aligns with the exhibition's vision, ensuring equal opportunities for all participants.

The venue's design reflects the ancient urban style, history, culture, and nature of Riyadh city. It also showcases the kingdom's shared concern with the rest of the world about the climate and

its ambition to foresee a future full of potential.

The location of the country pavilions will be flexibly determined based on their longitudes. Such design will bring together countries from the north and south of the globe side by side, symbolising the kingdom's important role in facilitating global cooperation.

Visitors to the exhibition will enjoy strolling through fully-shaded corridors with designs inspired by Riyadh's architectural heritage. In addition, visitors can walk through a modern green oasis located within one of the tributaries of Wadi Al-Sulay.

A prominent landmark will be built at the heart of the plan for Riyadh Expo 2030, symbolising 'Responsibility for Protecting the Planet'. It will be based on around 200 columns representing the number of countries participating in the exhibition. Surrounding this landmark will be three pavilions, each representing the exhibition's sub-themes of 'Prosperity for All', 'Climate Action' and 'A Different Tomorrow'.

As per the masterplan, the site is aimed to be the first environmentally friendly exhibition that achieves a zero level of carbon emissions. It will be powered by clean resources that rely on solar energy.

The kingdom has announced that it aims to make Riyadh Expo 2030 the most sustainable and influential Expo ever, in line with its climate commitments to achieving carbon neutrality, a goal that is reflected in the masterplan for the exhibition that is linked to international standards of sustainability, including urban afforestation, the use of treated water, and the provision of new energy sources.

The blueprint for the exhibition also takes into account the reuse of the site with the aim of developing an innovative urban model that guarantees sustainability and boosts innovation and creativity. ■



An artist's impression of the Expo site at night time.

disseminating science and technology – is looking to welcome 40 million visitors when it is opened between October 2030 and March 2031.

Eng Khalid also indicated that the Saudi Vision 2030 targets national-level investments of over \$3.3 trillion by the end of the decade, with at least 30 per cent allocated to the city of Riyadh.

Meanwhile, following the recent completion of the main Riyadh Bus network, a significant component of the King Abdulaziz Project for Riyadh Public Transport, the Saudi capital awaits the launch of the \$23-billion Riyadh Metro. The six-line metro network is expected to grow further and bids have now been invited for Line 7, which will connect New Murabba, Diriyah and the new airport.

The main Riyadh Bus network comprises 54 routes, encompassing a total of 2,145 stations and stops, and served by a fleet of 679 buses. An additional 33 routes will seamlessly connect with the Riyadh Metro once it opens.

Another key transportation development, which will boost Riyadh's connectivity with both the western and eastern regions of Saudi Arabia, is the \$7-billion

Landbridge project. In December, a consortium of Italian consulting and project management company Italferr, Spanish



The Mukaab will rise at the heart of New Murabba in Riyadh.

A NUMBER of key project management and design contracts have been awarded since plans for the ambitious New Murabba development were unveiled early last year.

New Murabba, the world's largest modern downtown coming up in Riyadh, covers an extensive range of asset classes, comprising residential, hospitality, leisure, retail, commercial, and community facilities.

At the heart of the development is The Mukaab, a visionary structure that is unlike anything ever built before, standing at 400m x 400 m x 400 m, said its developer. It will create the world's largest immersive experience building that will include several first-of-their-kind technologies to transport the building's visitors and residents to a virtual reality world.

Among the latest contracts signed by the company spearheading the project, New Murabba Development Company (NMDC) – a fully-owned subsidiary of Saudi sovereign wealth fund Public Investment Fund (PIF) – was the appointment of Aecom, a leading infrastructure consulting firm, to provide project

management consultancy services for all buildings across the 19 million-sq-m masterplan. Aecom's contract excludes The Mukaab.

NMDC had earlier signed up AtkinsRéalis, a fully integrated professional services and project management company, to design the New Murabba masterplan. As per the deal, AtkinsRéalis will also be involved in shaping The Mukaab.

AtkinsRéalis said its competition-winning masterplan was inspired by Najdi architecture, with a focus on creating a futuristic landmark with deep contextual roots that blends Riyadh's cultural heritage with its future ambitions.

In September last year, NMDC appointed Turner Arabia, a leading construction management consultancy, to provide project management services for The Mukaab.

Among other appointments, NMDC has selected Bechtel, a leading engineering and construction company, to provide project management services for the masterplan and site-wide infrastructure of the project.

HRH Crown Prince Mohammad bin

Salman bin Abdulaziz, Prime Minister and Chairman of the New Murabba Development Company (NMDC), who unveiled the mega project in February last year, said the New Murabba project will be built around the concept of sustainability, featuring green areas and walking and cycling paths that will enhance the quality of life by promoting healthy, active lifestyles and community activities. He added that the project will offer a unique living, working and entertainment experience within a 15-minute walking radius and will have its own internal transport system. Scheduled for completion in 2030, it will be located a 20-minute drive from the airport.

Situated at the intersection of King Salman and King Khalid roads to the northwest of Riyadh over an area of 19 sq km, the New Murabba project will offer more than 25 million sq m of floor area, featuring over 104,000 residential units, 9,000 hotel rooms, and more than 980,000 sq m of retail space, as well as 1.4 million sq m of office space, 620,000 sq m of leisure assets, and 1.8 million sq m of space dedicated to community facilities. It will also feature an iconic museum, a technology and design university, a multipurpose immersive theatre, and more than 80 entertainment and culture venues, he added.

Inspired by the modern Najdi architectural style, the Mukaab will be the world's first immersive destination offering an experience created by digital and virtual technology with the latest holographics.

The Najdi architecturally-inspired façade of Mukaab shrouds an internal skyscraper, which will be one of the largest built structures in the world with 2 million sq m of floor space.

Resting on a massive basement and podium structure, the Mukaab will include first-of-their-kind hospitality, food and beverage (F&B) and retail facilities, including an iconic hotel, as well as the world's largest usable roof space. ■

engineering group Sener and US-based construction management expert Hill International were awarded the project management consultancy (PMC) contract for the development. The project includes constructing a new 950-km railway line

between Riyadh and Jeddah, which will continue for 146 km to King Abdullah Port, and upgrading the Dammam-Riyadh line, which includes the construction of 87 km of new track. A key component of the line is the Riyadh bypass, which will connect the existing network in the north

of the city to the south. It is split into two packages: the first has 67 km of track and the second has 35 km.

AIRPORT

Saudi Arabia is set to build one of the



Work on the Prince Turki Al-Awwal and Prince Mohammed bin Salman Roads intersection at the Sports Boulevard project is reaching 86 per cent completion.

largest airports in the world – King Salman International Airport – which will spread over a 57-sq-km area in Riyadh.

Being designed by leading architectural firm Foster+Partners, the airport will boast six parallel runways and comprise the existing terminals named after King Khalid. It will also include 12 sq km of airport support facilities, residential and recreational facilities, retail outlets, and other logistics real estate.

Once operational, the airport will be able to handle 120 million travellers by 2030 and 185 million travellers, with the capacity to process 3.5 million tonnes of cargo, by 2050.

The new airport will boost Riyadh's position as a global logistics hub, stimulate transport, trade and tourism, and act as a bridge linking the East with the West, according to Foster+Partners.

The new King Salman International Airport reimagines the traditional terminal as a single concourse loop, served by multiple entrances and connects passengers to the sensory experiences of the city. It is being designed as an aerotropolis centered around a seamless customer journey, and world-class efficient operations.

The new airport aims to achieve LEED Platinum certification and will be powered by renewable energy.

DIRIYAH

The \$63.2-billion programme to redevelop Diriyah town on the north-western

outskirts of Riyadh is making remarkable headway with the project now moving to the second phase of the masterplan.

In line with this, it has unveiled plans for the Royal Diriyah Opera House, a first-of-its-kind project in the kingdom, as part of the second phase.

Among other developments, Diriyah Company celebrated the completion of the Western Ring Road Tunnel last month and has also broken ground on three renowned hotels – Oberoi, Aman and Six Senses – as part of its Wadi Safar masterplan (see Page 17).

QIDDIYA

Riyadh's entertainment hub Qiddiya has reinforced its commitment to becoming one-of-its-kind destination with the unveiling of two spectacular developments in as many months: the iconic Prince Mohammed bin Salman Stadium, which will be the world's first fully integrated venue with a combined retractable roof, pitch and LED wall; and the Gaming and Esports District, which aims to be the first multi-use gaming and esports district in the world (see Page 14).

SPORTS BOULEVARD

Work on the first phase of the Sports Boulevard, the world's longest linear park is in full swing with several key milestones having been achieved. The first phase of the PNU internal cycling loop has been completed, as has more than 74 per cent of the construction work on the promenade

and 86 per cent on the cycling bridges. The overall structure of the Prince Turki Al-Awwal and Prince Mohammed bin Salman Roads intersection is reaching 86 per cent completion with more than 50,000 cu m of concrete used to build it, the Sports Boulevard tweeted last month.

Sports Boulevard Foundation has also signed a partnership with Albilad Capital and Ajdan, to set up a fund to develop a mixed-use project valued at SR1 billion within the Arts District.

Sports Boulevard is one of the four mega projects launched by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz in 2019. An innovative destination, it will contribute to fulfilling a key goal of Saudi Vision 2030 to promote Riyadh's position among the world's most liveable cities. It includes 4.4 million sq m of greenery and open spaces, and up to 50 multidisciplinary sports facilities and artistic landmarks.

Extending 135 km and connecting Riyadh from west to east, Sports Boulevard will create a modern oasis in the capital city and will offer a range of healthy lifestyle options.

KING SALMAN PARK

King Salman Park, the second of Riyadh's four mega projects launched by Saudi King Salman in 2019, has unveiled plans for a new mixed-use real estate development project at a total investment of SR4 billion. ■

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RIYADH AT A GLANCE

Package name	Owner	Status*	\$ Million **
Al Faisaliah District Redevelopment – Overview	Al Khozama Management Company	Construction	300
Al Widyan Development Scheme – Scheme/Program	Al Akaria Saudi Real Estate Co (Sreco)	Construction	2,700
Al Widyan Development Scheme – Entertainment Hub	Sreco, Arabian Dream	Project Announced	5,000
Alnama Smart City	URB	Project Announced	13,300
Al-Reef Riyadh	Al Akaria	E&P	760
Diriyah – Samhan Heritage Hotel	Diriyah Gate Development Authority (DGDA)	Construction	400
Diriyah Gate – Car Park Package	DGDA	Construction	1,100
Diriyah Gate – Diriyah Interchange	DGDA	E&P	311
Diriyah Gate – Overview	DGDA	Construction	1,600
King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Riyadh Medical City	Ministry of Interior	Construction	12,000
King Abdullah Financial District (KAJD)	Rayadah Investment Company, Public Investment Fund (PIF)	Construction	7,800
King Abdullah International Gardens	Riyadh Municipality	Construction	200
King Khalid International Airport – Terminal 1 & 2 Expansion	Matarat Holding	Construction	750
King Salman International Airport Masterplan – Overview	Matarat Holding	PMC ITB	30,000
King Salman Park – Overview	Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques	Construction	5,750
King Salman Park – Royal Art Complex	Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques	Construction	1,200
Konoz – Box of Treasures	Abdullah Al Othaim Investment Company	Design	1,800
New Murabba	New Murabba Development Company (NMDC)	PMC	100,000
Prince Mohammed bin Salman Non-Profit City	Misk Foundation	Construction	300
Qiddiya Entertainment City – Overview	Qiddiya Investment Company (QIC)	Construction	8,000
Qiddiya Entertainment City – Phase 1 – Package 3 – Upper Plateau Primary Roads	QIC	Construction	293.1
Qiddiya Entertainment City – Phase 1 – Overview	QIC	Construction	7,700
Qiddiya Entertainment City – Phase 1 – Resort Core Package	QIC	Construction	500
Qiddiya Entertainment City – Phase 2	QIC	Project Announced	3,500
Qiddiya Entertainment City – Phase 3	QIC	Project Announced	3,500
Qiddiya Entertainment City – Qiddiya Water Park	QIC	Construction	500
Riyadh Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT) – Overview	Royal Commission for Riyadh City	Construction	610
Riyadh Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT) – Phase 2 – Bus Lines, BRT Stations, Streetscape Improvement	Royal Commission for Riyadh City	Construction	356
Riyadh Independent Strategic Water Reservoir (ISWR)	Saudi Water Partnership Company (SWPC)	Design	250
Riyadh Metro – Overview	Royal Commission for Riyadh City	Construction	23,000
Riyadh Metro – Phase 1 – Package 1 – Lines 1 and 2	Royal Commission for Riyadh City	Commissioning	9,500
Riyadh Metro – Phase 1 – Package 2 – Line 3	Royal Commission for Riyadh City	Commissioning	4,000
Riyadh Metro – Phase 1 – Package 3 – Lines 4-6	Royal Commission for Riyadh City	Construction	8,000
Riyadh Metro – Phase 2 – Q-Express	Royal Commission for Riyadh City	Feasibility Study	5,000
Riyadh Residential Community	Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG)	Construction	1,300
Saudi National Atomic Energy Project (SNAEP) – Overview	King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy	EPC ITB	7,000
Sedra Housing Development – Overview	Roshn	Construction	10,000
Sedra Housing Development – Phase 1 – Residential Development	Roshn	Construction	950
Sedra Housing Development – Phase 2 – Residential Development	Roshn	E&P	450
Sports Boulevard	Sports Boulevard Foundation	Construction	661
The Avenues Riyadh	Shomoul Holding Company	Construction	1,900
Warefa Housing Development	Roshn	Construction	475

* E&P = Engineering and procurement; EPC ITB = Engineering, procurement and construction invitation to bid; PMC = project management consultancy.



Consultant	Contractor	Start date	End date
Arcadis	Webuild	2016-Q1	2024-Q4
-	Saudi Real Estate Infrastructure Company (Binyah)	2018-Q3	2025-Q4
-	-	2019-Q4	2027-Q1
-	Not Yet Appointed	2022-Q3	2027-Q4
-	Saudi Real Estate Construction Company (Tamear)	2023-Q4	2025-Q4
Currie and Brown	Mohammed M. Al Rashid Co. (Marco), United Engineering Construction (UNEC)	2016-Q1	2023-Q4
JLL	Webuild	2014-Q2	2024-Q4
-	Nesma & Partners Contracting Company	2022-Q1	2024-Q1
Aecom, Egis Group, JLL	Marco, Binyah, Webuild	2014-Q2	2029-Q4
-	ABV Rock Group	2011-Q1	2024-Q4
Hill International, Mace International, Parsons	Saudi Binladin Group (SBG), Alfanar Construction Company, Saudi Constructioners (Saudico), Thermo, El-Seif, Al Jawdah, Taj Dhabi	2007-Q1	2026-Q4
Omrana & Associates	Zaid Al-Hussein & Brothers Group	2008-Q3	2024-Q4
Aecom	Al Rashid Trading & Contracting Company (RTCC), IC Ictas Construction	2008-Q3	2026-Q4
-	-	2022-Q4	2030-Q4
Hill International, Parsons	Freyssinet Saudi Arabia, Haif Company	2019-Q1	2027-Q4
Parsons	Modern Building Leaders (MBL)	2019-Q1	2024-Q1
-	-	2023-Q1	2026-Q4
Bechtel, Jasara, Turner Arabia	-	2023-Q1	2030-Q4
Mace International	Saudi Arabian Baytur Construction Company, Saudi Constructioners (Saudico)	2021-Q4	2024-Q4
Parsons	El Seif Engineering Contracting, ALEC, Haif Company, Freyssinet Saudi Arabia	2017-Q2	2035-Q1
-	Freyssinet Saudi Arabia, Haif Company	2020-Q3	2024-Q1
Parsons, Freyssinet	Almabani General Contractors, Bouygues Batiment International, Haif Company	2017-Q2	2024-Q4
Parsons	Bouygues Batiment International, Almabani General Contractors, ALEC, El Seif Engineering Contracting, UrbaCon Trading & Contracting, Al Bawani Company	2019-Q2	2024-Q4
-	-	2017-Q2	2026-Q4
-	-	2019-Q2	2031-Q4
-	El Seif Engineering Contracting, ALEC	2022-Q1	2024-Q3
-	Yuksek Insaat, Saudico	2012-Q2	2024-Q4
-	Saudi Constructioners (Saudico)	2012-Q4	2024-Q1
-	-	2019-Q2	2031-Q4
Dar Al Handasah, Egis Rail, Systra, Louis Berger, Hill, Parsons, Jacobs	Bechtel, Aecom, Al Mabani, Siemens, Alstom, FCC, Samsung C&T, Ansaldo Energia Bombardier, Setec, Strukton, Tecnica Y Proyectos, L&T, Idom, Webuild, Nesma, Freyssinet Hyder, Worley, CCC	2006-Q3	2025-Q4
Egis Rail, Parsons, Systra Consulting	Siemens, Bechtel Corporation, Al Mabani General Contractors, CCC, Aecom	2004-Q1	2024-Q1
Systra Consulting, Egis Rail, Parsons	Ansaldo STS, Bombardier, Nesma, Webuild, L&T, Idom, Worley, Hyder Consulting	2004-Q1	2024-Q1
Louis Berger Group, Hill International	Setec, Typsa, Freyssinet, Strukton Civil Projecten, Alstom, Samsung C&T, FCC	2006-Q3	2024-Q1
-	-	2020-Q1	2025-Q1
-	Webuild	2018-Q1	2025-Q4
-	-	2009-Q4	2040-Q4
-	Rezaik Abdallah Al-Gedrawi Company, Shapoorji Pallonji & Company, Siemens	2020-Q4	2030-Q4
Al Akaria Hanmi for Project Management	Shapoorji Pallonji & Company, Rezaik Abdallah Al Gedrawi Company, Siemens Energy	2020-Q3	2024-Q1
-	Rezaik Abdallah Al-Gedrawi Company	2020-Q4	2026-Q1
-	Almabani General Contractors	2019-Q1	2024-Q1
Aecom	Nesma & Partners Contracting Company	2013-Q2	2026-Q4
-	China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC)	2023-Q1	2027-Q4

** List includes projects worth over \$200 million only.

Source: DMS Projects

GAME-CHANGING VENUES



The Gaming & Esports District will cover an area of more than 500,000 sq m.

MARKING a bold step towards its ambition of becoming a global tourism titan, Riyadh's rising entertainment hub Qiddiya has unveiled two game-changing developments within a single month. First up, the ground-breaking Gaming and Esports District, poised to become the first multi-use gaming and esports district in the world. Then, the iconic Prince Mohammed bin Salman Stadium, the world's first fully integrated venue that seamlessly blends a retractable roof, pitch and LED wall.

Being built from scratch in the desert 45 km outside Riyadh, Qiddiya's vast 360-sq-km expanse lays claim to becoming the kingdom's playground for entertainment, sports, and culture, spearheaded by Qiddiya Investment Company, a leading Saudi group backed by the Public Investment Fund (PIF).

HRH Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Board of Directors of QIC, recently launched the urban

design for Qiddiya City, which will feature 60,000 buildings.

Located 40 minutes from central Riyadh and overlooking the stunning cliffs of the formidable Tuwaiq mountains, Qiddiya City will include a speed park track, golf courses, a massive water theme park and Six Flags Qiddiya, apart from the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Stadium and the Gaming & Esports District.

The Prince Mohammed bin Salman Stadium will be a futuristic venue perched atop the 200-m-high Tuwaiq cliff. Designed by leading global architectural firm Populous, the stadium will feature a combined retractable roof, pitch and LED wall, an architectural innovation offering unparalleled versatility and allowing the space to transform into different "event modes" in a matter of hours, according to QIC.

The LED wall will be a portal to live event broadcasts, high-definition films and laser shows, offering guests a novel, immersive experience with each visit. When not activated, it will open to reveal breath-



Qiddiya's vast 360-sq-km expanse lays claim to becoming the kingdom's playground for entertainment

taking views of Qiddiya City.

The development aims to draw visitors from across the globe and revolutionise the traditional stadium experience with its immersive design and unique technological features, putting spectators at the centre of the show.

Commenting on the launch, QIC Managing Director Abdullah bin Nasser Alaudwood said: "Our ambition is for Qiddiya City to become a global destination for entertainment, sports and culture and this iconic new stadium will be at its very

heart. The futuristic venue aims to reinvent the traditional stadium concept and embody the true spirit of Qiddiya's Power of Play philosophy. It uses state-of-the-art technology and innovative, world-leading design to put the spectator at the centre of the experience."

According to him, guests will be able to enjoy multiple spectacles in a single day, including football, boxing, esports, concerts as well as theatre performances.

The stadium, he stated, will deploy cutting-edge technology to provide fans with instant access to live data and information including the use of state-of-the-art holographic technology, enabling virtual interactions with celebrities and stars.

Integrated into the city fabric through a variety of transportation choices including park 'n ride and drop-off zones, the stadium will also be within direct proximity to 50,000 sq m of shopping, dining and entertainment spaces as well as hotel options.

Once open, the stadium will serve as the home ground of Saudi Pro League football clubs Al Hilal and Al Nassr and is one of the proposed venues for the Kingdom's 2034 Fifa World Cup bid. It is also poised to host some of the region's biggest sports events including the Saudi King Cup, the Asian Cup and possibly the 2034 Asian Games.

The venue will be able to host events all year-round in its climate-controlled facilities, where energy consumption will be reduced through an eco-friendly cooling lake built directly under the stadium. The



The Gaming & Esports District will feature gaming-themed apartments and hotels.

lake will use rainwater captured from the stadium and the surrounding area to pre-cool the air-conditioning system.

"As a central venue in an urban entertainment district, this uniquely versatile space promises an extended play experience with direct and convenient access to Qiddiya City's vibrant Gaming & Esports District as well as other city entertainment options," noted Aldawood.

The unveiling of the stadium follows on the heels of the Gaming & Esports District launch at Qiddiya City.

GAMING AND ESPORTS DISTRICT

The Gaming and Esports District within the giga development will cover more than 500,000 sq m, including 100,000 sq m

dedicated to retail, dining and entertainment. Once completed, it will become the place for gamers to live, work and play, with gaming-themed apartments and hotels, according to QIC.

The new district is expected to include four arenas, with a total capacity of 73,000 seats, designed to the highest standards to host the most prominent global events in the gaming sector throughout the year.

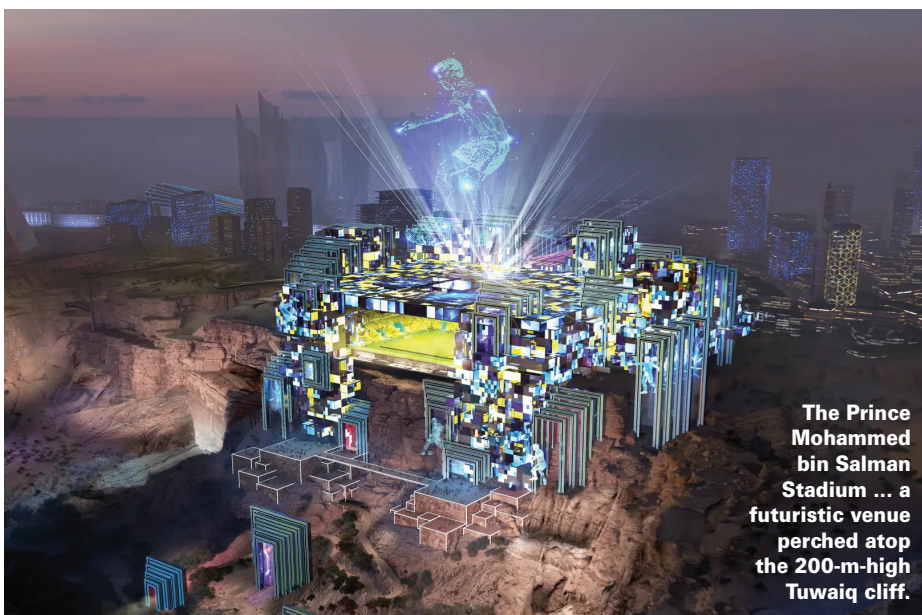
One of the venues will have 5,300 seats, making it one of the three largest esports stadiums in the world. It will also have the largest indoor LED screen among all esports areas around the world, it stated.

The district will also host up to 25 esports clubs from around the world to live, train and compete.

THEME PARKS

Meanwhile, work is in progress on a number of theme parks at Qiddiya including a water park and the Six Flags theme park which are reported to have crossed the halfway mark. ALEC Engineering and Contracting (ALEC), in a joint venture with El-Seif Engineering Contracting, last year secured the order for the construction of a part of Qiddiya Speed Park. This follows the award of a SR2.8 billion contract to the joint venture partners in February 2022 to build Saudi Arabia's first and the region's largest water theme park, the Qiddiya Water Theme Park.

The Six Flags theme park is being built by Bouygues Batiment and Al Mabani General Contractors, and QIC has secured a \$700 million financial facility for its construction. ■



The Prince Mohammed bin Salman Stadium ... a futuristic venue perched atop the 200-m-high Tuwaiq cliff.



Royal Diriyah Opera House ... designed as a cluster of buildings interconnected by open passages.

Diriyah wins accolades; to host opera house

THE mega \$63.2-billion programme to redevelop Diriyah town in the north-western outskirts of Riyadh is making significant progress with the project now winning accolades and moving to the second phase of the masterplan.

As part of the kingdom's 2030 Vision, about 14 sq km of Diriyah are being transformed into one of the world's unique his-

torical, cultural and lifestyle destinations that combines 300 years of history, culture, and heritage with what will be the highest quality lifestyle, residential and hospitality offerings in the region, says Diriyah Company, the developer.

The ancestral home of the Al Saud family, Diriyah is recognised as a symbolic centre of inspiration for the generations of leaders that have led the kingdom since

the foundation of the first Saudi Arabian state in 1727.

At its centre stands the Unesco World Heritage Site of At-Turaif comprising a magnificent centuries-old mud-brick palace, whose traditional Najdi architecture has been the design inspiration for the entire development, connecting it to its past and incorporating local materials into the building process.

The ambitious redevelopment programme comprises Diriyah Gate, Wadi Safar, Wadi Hanifah and At-Turaif.

Located just 15 minutes from the heart of Riyadh, this ancient city – also known as “The City of Earth” – has already created waves with the recent opening of the Bujairi Terrace opposite the heritage site, which has become a premium dining destination.

Diriyah Company says the first phase of its masterplan has been awarded Platinum certification for LEED v4.1 for Cities: Plan and Design by the US Green Building Council. This LEED for Cities and Communities accreditation marks the first time a project in the Middle East has received such an accolade, according to the company. Platinum certification is the highest level within the LEED framework.

The project's urban form encourages a cooling microclimate with narrow streets and courtyards, providing shade and enhancing favourable winds. With central



Inzerillo with Saudi officials at the opening of the Western Ring Road Tunnel last month.

aspects of this first phase planned as car-free, it promotes a sustainable and pedestrianised public realm, according to Jerry Inzerillo, Diriyah Company Group CEO.

Diriyah Company also celebrated the completion of the Western Ring Road Tunnel last month.

OPERA HOUSE

Now as part of second phase of the Diriyah masterplan, plans have been unveiled for the Royal Diriyah Opera House, a first-of-its-kind project in the kingdom. Encompassing a 45,000-sq-m area, the opera house will be located near the Unesco World Heritage Site and will serve as a platform for a diverse programme of cultural performances. It will be built by Diriyah Company and operated by the Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC), the entity leading growth and development efforts in the Saudi capital city.

The world-renowned architectural firm Snøhetta will design the opera house. The Riyadh-based Syn Architects also contributed to the design, infusing the project with local expertise and a deep understanding of the region's architectural heritage. Informed by Najdi-style architecture, characterised by its intricate details and mudbrick-inspired construction method, the design of the centre will create a seamless blend of heritage and innovation.

According to Snøhetta, the Royal Diriyah Opera House will be rooted in the surrounding desert landscape, local cultural heritage, and Najdi building traditions. Set to open in 2028, the opera house will accommodate around 3,500 people across four venues, including a 2,000-seat theatre



The opera house will accommodate around 3,500 people across four venues.

for large-scale productions and headline artists, two smaller theatres for multipurpose use, and a 450-seat, shaded rooftop amphitheatre for outdoor performances.

The project is designed as a cluster of buildings interconnected by open passages throughout, which will provide shaded relief away from the intense sun with green gardens open to both visitors to the opera house and the wider public. Seamlessly integrating these public spaces enriches both the cultural and recreational experiences and enhances the intrinsic value of the location.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The first phase of Diriyah's masterplan comprises luxurious, mixed-use projects with entertainment, shopping, cultural, commercial, and residential assets. With projects worth \$9.6 billion under con-

struction, these assets are anchored around key public squares and open spaces.

Currently, Saudi Real Estate Infrastructure Company (Binyah), a subsidiary of Saudi Real Estate Company (Al Akaria) is engaged on a \$145-million contract for the Northern Cultural District (NCD) P3 Car Park Project. The 100,000-sq-m car-parking facility, which will accommodate 2,000 cars over four basement levels, will be completed by Q3 of 2025. The project will service assets at Diriyah including King Salman University, the House of Al Saud Museum, and King Salman Library, among other cultural facilities.

Binyah is also working on the \$99.5-million package for the enabling works at its DG II project site, which is targeted for completion later this year.

Among other developments, Diriyah Company has broken ground on three renowned hotels – Oberoi, Aman and Six Senses – as part of its Wadi Safar masterplan in line with its commitment to providing best-in-class accommodation underpinned by sustainable and authentic experiences. Located nearby, the newly completed Eastern Gate and the Wadi Safar Experience Centre round out the Wadi Safar landscape.

Diriyah Company has also launched its new luxury residential development, Ritz-Carlton Residences, the kingdom's first Ritz Carlton Residences, located in the heart of Diriyah, which features Najdi heritage-inspired villas that capture the essence of elegance and tradition of the region. ■



The Royal Diriyah Opera House will be rooted in the surrounding desert landscape.

Byrne boosts fleet to cater to booming market

BYRNE Equipment Rental, a leading equipment supplier in the region boasting over 15,000 rental items, is scaling up its fleet to meet the diverse requirements of the regional market which is witnessing an upsurge in project activity.

Byrne offers a diverse product range that caters to specific rental needs across various industries. Its services are tailored to meet regional demands, allowing it to fulfil a wide range of not only equipment rental needs but also services required in those specific areas. With its headquarters in Jubail, the plant and equipment rental company is well-positioned to meet the needs of clients across the region, including remote and large-scale projects.

In Riyadh, following its successful contribution to Expo 2020 in Dubai, the plant and equipment rental company is positioning itself as a key player in the upcoming Riyadh Expo 2030, pledging versatile equipment and turnkey solutions for the city's infrastructure boom.

"We're expanding our fleet to meet Riyadh's evolving construction needs, with an eye on the promising Expo 2030 horizon," James Dodgson, General Manager KSA, Kuwait and Bahrain, tells *Gulf Construction* in an exclusive interview.

"Our proactive approach and fleet investment demonstrate our commitment to being Riyadh's reliable Expo 2030 partner. This commitment is crucial in providing versatile equipment and turnkey solutions for the numerous infrastructure initiatives taking place in the city. With our fleet expansion, adaptability and responsiveness, Byrne is poised to be a pivotal player in the city's construction landscape," he adds.

Byrne's diverse fleet in Riyadh caters to the city's dynamic construction environment, with several equipment categories experiencing high demand. Among the most sought-after categories are sanitation equipment, temporary buildings, compressors and generators, which have become indispensable for various projects in the

mitment to services like fuel management enhances operational efficiency, ensuring that projects in Riyadh have a consistent and reliable power source. Additionally, our ability to offer bespoke solutions for site offices and camps adds another layer of appeal, providing clients with tailored so-

lutions that precisely meet their specific needs," he emphasises.

Dodgson points out there has been a marked increase in the utilisation of Byrne's hoist and mast climber equipment across various projects in Riyadh.

"While the construction of the Riyadh Metro demanded intricate access solutions, our equipment has also been supporting event and oil and gas requirements throughout the region. The adaptability and reliability of Byrne's access equipment has been critical in the success of these projects, leading to a growing demand for our services. Byrne's ability to integrate access equipment into our diverse fleet is a testament to our ability to meet the evolving needs of projects," he states.

Byrne's strategic diversification goes beyond mechanical equipment and encompasses non-mechanical products such as modular welfare facilities, camp solutions and on-site offices – all in line with its single-source solution model –

underscoring the company's determination to adapt and provide customised solutions for the varied construction environments.

"As the demand for one-stop-shop solutions continues to grow, we have embraced this challenge by providing a comprehen-



Byrne's hoist and mast climber equipment is gaining popularity across various projects in Riyadh.

Saudi capital due to their versatility and critical role in supporting construction activities, according to Dodgson.

"What makes these equipment categories even more popular is not just the quality of the equipment but the comprehensive services that Byrne provides. Our com-



Byrne offers camp solutions and on-site offices.

sive approach that extends across the entire group. The focus is on offering turnkey solutions that go beyond traditional equipment rental services, addressing the expanding need for integrated services. Our continuous commitment to sustainability is also evident in the additional products we have recently added to our fleet, offering environmentally conscious solutions to our clients," Dodgson points out.

Over the past year, Byrne has expanded its product offering to meet the varied needs of construction projects across the Middle East. It has embraced sustainability in its offerings to include solar-powered temporary buildings and lighting towers.

"Sustainability solutions have been a huge focus for us throughout 2023 and will continue into 2024 and beyond. To reduce fuel consumption and provide eco-friendlier options, we are expanding our solar-powered temporary building fleet. These buildings are designed to provide reliable and efficient solar energy with various applications available, depending on our client's specific needs. For instance, our battery solution enables complete independence

for standalone power, while our alternative synchronised option with the main supply power (generator/grid) still results in fuel reduction," he elaborates.

SAUDI MARKET

Byrne boasts a 20-year Saudi presence with nine depots across the kingdom. These include strategic locations in Jeddah, Dammam, Riyadh, Ras Al Khair, Yanbu, Jizan, Turaif and Jubail, in addition to a newly established facility in Duba to meet the requirements from Neom.

The company intends to establish a new 50,000-sq-m headquarters and logistics hub in Jubail. Currently in the planning stage, the facility is scheduled to be finished by early 2025.

Dodgson sees this expansion as a commitment to regional efficiency and growth.

CUSTOMER FOCUS

Byrne Equipment Rental, he says, is a versatile and reliable partner for various industries, demonstrating adaptability, continuous expansion and an ongoing commitment to sustainability.

"This makes us a valuable resource for

businesses navigating the dynamic landscape of construction and infrastructure projects in the GCC. Our main focus has always been on customer service, flexibility and efficiency, making us a go-to solution provider. One of the key advantages of Byrne's turnkey solutions is the incorporation of on-site depot services, which allows for a quick response to site issues, promotes operational efficiency and minimises downtime. These depots are constructed using Byrne's own temporary buildings and ensure the availability of necessary equipment for hire, all rigorously tested in compliance with stringent health, safety and environmental regulations. This not only enhances project productivity but also reduces overall traffic to and from project sites, leading to lower emissions," he says.

Byrne's unique capability to manufacture modular buildings through Spacemaker (UAE) and Byrne Technical Services (KSA) further enhances their inventory management flexibility and efficiency. This adaptability, coupled with its commitment to comprehensive solutions, positions Byrne as a key player in Riyadh's pre-Expo 2030 construction boom. ■



Saudi Arabia



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- Total offer concept (Design-Build-Guarantee)
- 'Jointless' steel fibre reinforced concrete (SFRC) floor slabs with no sawn-induced contraction joints
- Fast track production output – up to 2,000m² per day
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- Substantially reduced equipment maintenance costs
- Higher MHE efficiency
- High tolerance 'superflat' floors
- Track record of high-quality projects worldwide
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- Defined quality control processes
- Directly employed skilled and experienced workforce
- Offers 10 years warranty



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