Google Cloud Expands Regional Presence with Opening of Dammam Cloud Region; Forecast to Boost Economy by USD 109 Billion by 2030

New Dammam Google Cloud region strengthens the company's presence in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, bringing the total number of live cloud regions to two in Saudi and Qatar, with plans to open a third in Kuwait.

The Dammam cloud region is estimated to support the creation of 148,600 jobs in 2030 alone.

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, November 15, 2023 -Today, Google Cloud announced the opening of its new cloud region in Dammam, bringing high-performance, low-latency Google Cloud Platform services to customers of all sizes, from public sector organizations and large businesses, to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. This significant investment in the Middle East's technology landscape reflects the company's growing presence in the region and its commitment to supporting the realization of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals.

The announcement took place at an official launch hosted today by Google Cloud's Thomas Kurian, CEO; Abdul Rahman Al Thehaiban, Managing Director, Middle East, Turkey and Africa; Tarek Khalil, Director, Middle East and North Africa; Bader Al Madi, Saudi Arabia Country Manager, and attended by Saudi senior government officials, chief innovation officers, chief technology officers, and decision makers from the tech community.

Research commissioned by Google Cloud and conducted by Access Partnership, a prominent global tech policy advisory firm, estimates the new cloud region in Saudi Arabia could add a cumulative $109 billion USD in gross economic output to the Saudi economy between 2024 and 2030. Also, the increased economic activity from in-country cloud adoption has direct, indirect and spillover economic effects which would support the creation of 148,600 jobs throughout the economy in 2030 alone.

His Excellency Eng. Abdullah Al Swaha, Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), said during his presence at the launch: "Google Cloud's investment is a strategic move and we are confident that it will bolster the Kingdom's regional computing hub ambitions, as well as supporting our digital entrepreneurship drive and the acceleration of AI-based innovation and business models across the public and private sectors."

Thomas Kurian, CEO, Google Cloud, said: "We are experiencing one of the most significant technological shifts in history, where AI is creating entirely new ways for organizations to solve problems, engage customers, and work more efficiently. Our new cloud region in Saudi Arabia will help both public and private sector organizations make the most of their data, leverage generative AI solutions, and create a culture of innovation underpinned by a modern, sustainable infrastructure with built-in security."

In their research, Access Partnership notes that the new Dammam cloud region can support the growth ambitions of 1.2 million SMEs in Saudi Arabia. Saudi SMEs account for 90% of businesses and 60% of total employment in the Kingdom and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aims for SMEs to contribute 35% to the gross domestic product by 2030. SMEs that are early in their startup journey can apply to join the Google for Startups Cloud Program once it becomes available in the country in the first quarter of 2024. Eligible startups will have access to product and technical support, dedicated mentors, industry experts, and cloud credit up to $ 200,000 USD over the first two years.

Starting today, Google Cloud Platform Services are available to Saudi Arabia-based customers throughCNTXT, a leading digital transformation company established as a strategic joint venture between Cognite and Aramco. CNTXT is Google Cloud's exclusive reseller for local organizations and multinationals purchasing Google Cloud Platform services on a standalone basis through their Saudi-based entities. Customers selling their own solutions powered by Google Cloud can sell those products to Saudi-based end-users, and customers based outside the Kingdom can work with Google Cloud or any of its partners to host their workloads in the Dammam cloud region.

Abdullah Jarwan, CEO of CNTXT, commented: "CNTXT is delighted to partner with Google Cloud to help bring Google Cloud Platform Services to businesses in the Kingdom, and to jointly work with the ecosystem of Google Cloud partners that will enable and accelerate the digital transformation and growth of organizations across local public and private sectors. In partnership with Google Cloud, CNTXT will embrace innovation and enable local and multinational organizations in Saudi to create value by leveraging the transformative capabilities that Google Cloud offers locally in the Kingdom."

Abdul Rahman Al Thehaiban, Managing Director, Middle East, Turkey and Africa, Google Cloud, said: "Google Cloud stands as one of the pioneering hyperscalers to launch a cloud region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a clear manifestation of our commitment to leading the digital evolution of the region."

Bader Al Madi, Saudi Arabia Country Manager, Google Cloud, said: "We aim to support the digital empowerment of every business, and every individual in Saudi Arabia. By providing accessibility to cloud technologies and AI to the Saudi market, we are actively paving the path for the kingdom's digital transformation using the latest digital technologies to optimize business processes and customer experiences to meet rapidly-changing business and market dynamics."

Abdulgader Attiah, Chief Data & Technology Officer, Saudia Airlines, said: "Moving from a cloud-first strategy to a cloud-only strategy with Google Cloud has been a game-changer for our business. We've selected Google Cloud as our cloud partner of choice as we are keen to leverage the power of cloud computing to support our growth, become more innovative, and achieve our business goals. Additionally, the fact that we are able to successfully streamline the airline's SAP enterprise resource planning workloads on Google Cloud has been a critical asset for our business - helping us accelerate our digital transformation and improve our customer service."

Abdulrahman Bin Mutrib, Chief Technology Officer, Qiddiya & Saudi Entertainment Ventures, said: "As the champion of entertainment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we are leveraging Google Cloud's data analytics solutions powered by AI and machine learning to create seamless and personalized entertainment experiences for our future guests. The collaboration with Google Cloud will support our business plans to scale efficiently and deliver an exceptional guest experience overall, while remaining agile and cost efficient."

Mohammed Al-Nori, Chief Executive Officer, Wamid, said: "Navigating the ever-evolving landscape of data privacy, security, and regulations in the financial services sector can be demanding. Having a trusted cloud hyperscaler like Google Cloud provides the expertise to overcome these challenges and unlock the full potential of data to bring new meaning to customer interactions. With Google Cloud, data monetization is not just a possibility, it's a reality."

The new Dammam cloud region is now part of Google Cloud's network of 39 cloud regions and 118 zones that bring cloud services to over 200 countries and territories worldwide. Organizations in the region will benefit from key controls that will help allow them to maintain high security, data residency, and meet local regulatory compliance standards, including specific data storage requirements.

About Google Cloud

Google Cloud accelerates every organization's ability to digitally transform its business and industry. We deliver enterprise-grade solutions that leverage Google's cutting-edge technology, and tools that help developers build more sustainably. Customers in more than 200 countries and territories turn to Google Cloud as their trusted partner to enable growth and solve their most critical business problems.

Notes to Editor:-

- Businesses worldwide established outside Saudi Arabia can also learn more about leveraging the new Dammam cloud region and how to get started through the Google Cloud website.
- Training programs to upskill Saudi-based professionals in digital transformation and create a digitally-empowered workforce have been at the forefront of Google Cloud's presence in the Kingdom, in alignment with the Human

Capability Development Program under the Saudi National Vision 2030. Local talent have access to cloud-centric training programs provided by Google Cloud in the Saudi market that focus on upskilling in AI and machine learning, infrastructure and application modernization, data analytics and digital marketing. Learners also have access to programs that promote fostering a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at the workplace such as I Am Remarkable.

- Google Cloud experts have trained over 19,000 learners in Saudi Arabia in the latest cloud technologies since 2022 through various training programs such as Qwiklabs, cloud skills boost, instructor-led training, on-demand courses and workshops at the Google Cloud Center of Excellence (CoE). The latter launched in Saudi Arabia to drive digital enablement through in-person and virtual cloud technology training and certifications, local alliances and research & development. The significant interest the company is seeing in cloud skilling programs in the market reflects the potential and growth momentum for cloud focused careers in the Kingdom.
- The Google Cloud Center of Excellence (CoE) launched on November 15, 2022 in Saudi Arabia to provide cloud skills training programs and certifications that empower local talent with the latest knowledge and tools required to drive a digital transformation roadmap. The CoE has delivered over 25 training programs and learning initiatives since its launch, and it continues to welcome training cohorts and provide cloud certification programs in the Kingdom.
- Google Cloud certifications are among the highest paying IT certifications of 2022". Based on responses from the Global Knowledge 2022 IT Skills and Salary Survey.
- More than 1 in 4 of Google Cloud certified individuals took on more responsibility or leadership roles at work. Based on survey responses from the 2020 Google Cloud certification impact report.
- The Saudi Green Initiative has brought sustainability and climate action forward as a key priority to all organizations in the Kingdom, where combating climate change and protecting the environment are its ultimate mandate. Businesses in Saudi Arabia can now work more sustainably by running their workloads on Google Cloud, as migrating from an on-premise infrastructure to the cloud can reduce their carbon emissions and energy consumption. Google Cloud also matches the electricity used to power customer workloads with 100% renewable energy on an annual basis, thus helping customers take immediate action towards their sustainability goals.

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