

Saudi's ambitious City of Earth project to transform Riyadh's entire face

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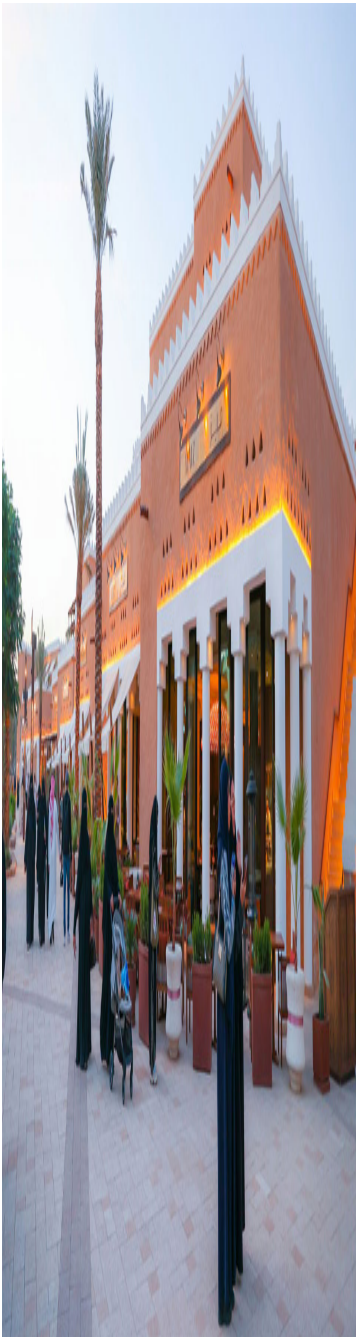
Dhaka: Saudi Arabia is actively working to enhance its tourism sector through significant giga-projects, a key component of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, aimed at fostering new economic ecosystems and diversifying the economy.

The goal is to attract 100 million visitors each year by 2030, with Diriyah—home to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of At-Turaif—projected to draw 27 million annual visitors within a 14 sqkm area dubbed the “City of Earth”, rich in historical and cultural offerings, located near the Saudi capital Riyadh.

Robayan Mohammed Alrobayan, PR and Media Manager—China of Saudi Tourism Authority, said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor during a press trip organized by the tourism board in Saudi Arabia for select Bangladeshi media representatives in February 20-25.

Diriyah, regarded as the cradle of the nation and the birthplace of the First Saudi State established in 1727, holds immense historical and cultural importance as the ancestral seat of the Al Saud dynasty.

Earlier, Jerry Inzerillo, Group CEO of Diriyah Gate Development Authority, emphasized that the flagship project of Vision 2030 would offer "unparalleled cultural experiences", while fostering economic growth for the Kingdom.



Bujairi Terrace featuring upscale local and international dining options

The Diriyah project, valued at USD 63.2 billion, is described by Inzerillo as “one of the largest and most complex in the world.”

The initial phase of the master plan, which began at the end of 2022,

focused on enhancing the At-Turaif World Heritage Site with new galleries and museums that detail Diriyah's rich history, along with preserving remnants of city walls, royal palaces, and mosques, said Emad M Kashmiri, CEO of Hamza Camel Tours, while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor during a visit to the site.

Adjacent to At-Turaif is Bujairi Terrace, which features a selection of upscale local and international dining options, including establishments like Angelina, COVA, and Sarabeth's, all designed in the traditional Najdi mud-brick architectural style.

Diriyah will introduce new attractions annually through 2030, as part of a rolling masterplan, aimed at establishing it as a global cultural hub within the Kingdom, informed Robayan of Saudi Tourism Authority.

This includes the opening of 38 new hotels and resorts from prestigious brands such as Ritz-Carlton, Park Hyatt, and Raffles, in addition to six museums, 26 cultural venues, over 400 luxury and lifestyle stores, and 100 souqs and bazaars.



Representation of Diriyah as global cultural hub in coming days

Moreover, six parks will cover 2.6 sqkm, featuring thousands of trees and pathways for walking, cycling, and horseback riding.

Diriyah's palm groves have been transformed with immersive light installations by both local and international artists, accompanied by Arabic music concerts, pop-up dining experiences, and shisha lounges attracting residents and international tourists alike.

In addition to increasing attractions for tourists, the new infrastructure—comprising smart city initiatives, pedestrian-friendly areas, enhanced public transport, and a new metro link—aims to transform the overall face of Riyadh, claimed Emad, CEO of the destination management company.

Diriyah hopes to entice visitors interested in both the Kingdom's cultural heritage and its ambitious, modern developments, offering a unique opportunity to engage with the UNESCO World Heritage Site of At-Turaif, and experience the traditional architecture and natural beauty of the historic city.

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