

**The FORTNIGHTLY**

A Review of Middle East Regional Economic & Cultural News & Developments

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ISRAEL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS & STATEMENTS

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* 1. Israel Resumes Gas Supply from the Tamar Reservoir

A month after the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure ordered a halt to the flow of natural gas from the Tamar reservoir off Israel’s coast, the partners in the reservoir announced on 13 November that the Ministry has said that the supply of gas can resume.

Tamar is not Israel’s largest gas reservoir, but it is very important for local consumption. In 2022, 85% of the gas produced from it went to the local market. Without the local supply from Tamar, Israel’s gas exports to Egypt, and in general, become a complicated matter. Tamar contains 13.2 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of gas, which compares with 22 TCF in the Leviathan reservoir.

The last time production was halted at the Tamar reservoir, which is nearer to the Gaza Strip, was during the Guardian of the Walls operation two-and-a-half years ago. The instruction from the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure to resume supply from Tamar could be because the threat from rocket fire and drones launched by Hamas has declined because of the IDF’s operations in the Gaza Strip. (Globes 12.11)

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* 1. Bank of Israel Governor Yaron Offered a Second Term in Office

Prime Minister Netanyahu and Minister of Finance Smotrich have agreed to extend the tenure of Bank of Israel Governor Prof. Amir Yaron to a second five year term. The decision will be brought to the cabinet for approval at its next meeting. Yaron himself has not yet responded on whether he accepts the extension.

Smotrich and Yaron have worked closely since the start of the war and the Minister of Finance's aids say that the extension is designed to calm the markets and provide stability for the economy. The decision was reached after months of speculation on the matter and just under a month after Yaron had been due to complete his first five-year term. Yaron has been a popular figure on the market which sees him as responsible and a stabilizing influence on the market and has been calling for him to be offered a second term for some months. However, several days after the start of the war it was announced that Yaron would remain in the post at least until the end of the war.

Yaron, who became Bank of Israel Governor in 2018, has undergone many tumultuous events during his first term. These include the global Covid pandemic, the rise in inflation and the need to raise interest rates and the government's planned judicial reform. Yaron successfully navigated safely through these events, protecting the strength of the economy, even as interest rates rose sharply. (Globes 21.11)

ISRAEL MARKET & BUSINESS NEWS

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* 1. Eleos Health Raises $40 Million in a Series B Round to Expand CareOps Automation

Eleos Health announced a $40 million Series B funding round led by Menlo Ventures, with participation from F-Prime Capital, Eight Roads, Arkin Digital Health, SamsungNEXT and ION. Along with funding from existing investors aMoon and lool ventures, this round brings Eleos Health’s total funding to $68 million.

In addition to fueling the company’s product development plans — which include new and enhanced AI solutions for group therapy sessions, compliance automation, case management, concurrent documentation and value-based care support — this investment will accelerate Eleos Health’s hiring efforts, expand its reach to serve more behavioral health providers and segments, and bolster strategic partnership development to bring more EHRs and industry associations into the Eleos ecosystem. The company plans to hire more than 50 people by the end of 2024.

Tel Aviv's [Eleos Health](http://www.eleos.health) turns behavioral health conversations into documentation and intelligence that drives better care. Leveraging proprietary, behavioral health-specific large language models (LLMs) created with treatment data and clinical expertise unmatched by any other platform on the market, Eleos accurately interprets, analyzes and documents behavioral health conversations, reducing the operational burden on providers while unlocking objective insights into evidence-based care and the therapeutic alliance. Eleos is the only technology of its kind that embeds seamlessly into electronic health records (EHRs), telehealth tools and existing provider workflows. (Eleos Health 08.11)

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* 1. Arieli Capital Launches Southern Starlight Initiative to Support Southern Israeli Startups

[Arieli Capital](https://www.arielicapital.com/), an investment firm with centers across the U.S., Europe and Israel, launched its Southern Starlight initiative. The goal is to invest NIS 5 million (~$1.3 million) into startups that have been impacted by the 7 October assault on Israel by Hamas.

Southern Starlight funding will extend to companies whose founders originally come from the southern region or have relocated there, reflecting its continuing commitment to supporting Israel’s economy. The initiative is open to early-stage companies affected by the events that took place on 7 October and they can apply for assistance via its application form.

In the past, Arieli Capital created the Frontier AgroTech Innovation Center in collaboration with the Ramat Negev Regional Council. Looking to discover desert agriculture expertise in Israel, the Council has conducted research and offers participation in comprehensive scale-up programs for business development and investment opportunities. (Arieli Capital 06.11)

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* 1. Tabnine Raises $25 Million for Enterprise-Ready Generative AI

Tabnine raised $25 million in a Series B round, bringing its total funding to $55 million. The round was led by Telstra Ventures and included participation from new investors Atlassian Ventures and Elaia. Existing investors Headline, Hetz Ventures, Khosla Ventures, Qualcomm Ventures, and TPY Capital also participated.

The funding will be used to extend Tabnine’s mission to integrate generative AI into the end-to-end software development lifecycle (SDLC), following Tabnine’s successful application of AI to code creation and completion, which already serves more than one million monthly users. Tabnine will also further build out its sales and global support teams to meet massive customer demand.

Tel Aviv's [Tabnine](https://www.tabnine.com) helps development teams of every size use AI to accelerate and improve the software development life cycle. As the original AI coding assistant, Tabnine has been used by millions of developers around the world to boost code quality and developer happiness using generative AI technology. Unlike generic coding assistants, Tabnine is the AI that you control; it is private and secure (easily running in your controlled environments), personalized to your team yet never stores or shares your company’s code, and is trained exclusively on open-source code with permissive licenses. (Tabnine 08.11)

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* 1. Blink Ops Builds on Strength of its Security Automation Platform

Blink Ops has reached significant milestones in customer adoption, increased revenue by more than 600% since the beginning of year and expanded strategic partnerships. Since its founding in 2021, Blink Ops has focused on building the world's first AI-powered security automation platform. Leveraging generative AI, Blink empowers practitioners at mid-to-large-size enterprises to automate security and IT tasks and processes using simple prompts. Earlier this year, the company launched the Blink Copilot offering, providing the first-ever generative AI solution for automating security and IT workflows.

Tel Aviv's [Blink](https://www.blinkops.com) is the security automation copilot. With Blink's unique capabilities, operators of all skill levels can leverage AI to deliver security workflows easily and rapidly on-prem or in the cloud, saving money, reducing MTTR to alerts from hours or days to seconds, and mitigating human error. (Blink Ops 08.11)

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* 1. Lunar.dev Raises $6 Million to Help Organizations Control the APIs They Use

Tel Aviv's [Lunar.dev](https://www.lunar.dev/), the first-ever API Consumption Management solution, announced the launch of its open-source platform, along with $6 million in seed funding. The round was led by Uncork Capital with the participation of existing investor Angular Ventures. The funds will be used to expand the open-source platform and build out the company's commercial SaaS offering, which will launch early next year.

Lunar.dev created the first API consumption management solution, providing organizations with complete oversight and control over their API usage. The open-source solution can be set up in a matter of minutes, providing a holistic view of all APIs that are in use, along with metrics for each one of them, making it easy to identify performance bottlenecks, production issues, or unexpected costs. Real-time mitigations — like API quota management, unified throttling policies, or caching — can be implemented in production with no code changes required. (Lunar.dev 09.11)

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* 1. Thailand’s RISE and Israel’s OurCrowd Launch ROCX Exponential Fund

OurCrowd and RISE, the corporate innovation powerhouse based out of Southeast Asia, announced the launch of the ROCX (Rise OurCrowd Exponential) Fund. The $50 million fund is Thailand’s first Israel-focused VC fund and will invest in early-stage deep technologies in cybersecurity, AI, HealthTech, semiconductors, quantum computing, ClimateTech, AgTech, FoodTech and more.

The ROCX Fund, anchored by a major Thai institution and managed by an experienced team of VC experts from both Thailand and Israel, will begin investing by the end of 2024. The fund plans to deploy tens of millions of dollars over a 2-3 year period into 20-30 companies with a promising track record and the capacity to develop and deploy solutions with proven product-market fit, providing them with the capital to scale up their commercial growth with leading corporations across Southeast Asia.

RISE is a leading corporate innovation powerhouse based in Southeast Asia with the mission to raise regional GDP by 1%. RISE works closely with Fortune 500 companies, large family businesses, and government agencies across Southeast Asia to set up and scale innovation initiatives through 5 corporate services: Corporate Innovation Consulting, RISE University, SeaX Ventures and Athena.

Jerusalem's [OurCrowd](http://www.ourcrowd.com) is the online global venture investing platform that empowers institutions and individual accredited investors to invest and engage in emerging technology companies at an early stage. Acclaimed by PitchBook as the most active venture investor in Israel every year since 2013, OurCrowd vets and selects companies across all sectors and stages, invests its own capital, and provides its global platform of over 225,000 registered members from 195 countries with unparalleled access and freedom to co-invest from as little as $10,000 in the companies of their choice. (OurCrowd 15.11)

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* 1. Refine Intelligence Secures $13 Million in a Seed Round to Revolutionize AML

Refine Intelligence launched with a $13 million seed funding round led by Glilot Capital Partners and Fin Capital with participation from SYN Ventures, Valley Ventures (the corporate venture capital arm of Valley Bank), and other investors including Ground Up Ventures.

While the anti-money laundering (AML) industry is focused on detecting account anomalies, Refine Intelligence is the only crime-fighting fintech focused on "greenflagging" legitimate customer behavior through providing a clear picture of their life stories. This novel approach is set to change the game in AML, helping banks reduce handling time while focusing on truly unexplained anomalies. Refine Intelligence will use the funding to accelerate expansion and advance the development of its technology.

Ness Ziona's [Refine Intelligence](http://www.refineintelligence.com) has developed a novel approach to help banks reduce the growing operational costs of financial crime. Their proprietary AI scans anti-money laundering alerts from transaction monitoring systems and "greenflags" customers' legitimate activity to dramatically reduce investigation time, and can also be used to protect against check fraud, scams and money mules. Founded by tech veterans in fighting financial crime, Refine Intelligence is backed by Glilot Capital Partners, SYN Ventures, Fin Capital and Valley Ventures. (Refine Intelligence 14.11)

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* 1. Vulcan Cyber Closes a $55 Million Series B Round

Tel Aviv's [Vulcan Cyber](https://vulcan.io), developers of the market-leading cyber risk management platform, has closed its $55 million Series B with the addition of a $34 million investment led by Maor Investments and Ten Eleven Ventures with participation from existing Vulcan Cyber investors Dawn Capital and Wipro Ventures. This latest investment marks a total of $70 million invested in Vulcan Cyber to date.

Based on annual recurring revenue in the trailing twelve months through Q3/23, Vulcan Cyber more than doubled revenue year over year while aligning with current market requirements for operational efficiency. Vulcan Cyber revenue growth is based on substantial global demand for a SaaS solution that goes beyond traditional vulnerability scanning and vulnerability management to help cyber security teams and asset owners mitigate the cyber risk that presents the most critical threat to customers' unique organizations. Vulcan Cyber will use funds from this round to fuel continued product innovation, expand into new markets, accelerate rapid revenue growth, and build on market momentum.

Vulcan Cyber was recently recognized as a Leader in The Forrester Wave: Vulnerability Risk Management, Q3 2023 and the Omdia Universe: Risk-Based Vulnerability Management Solutions, 2023 vendor evaluations. In addition, Vulcan Cyber was named a winner of the coveted SINET16 Innovator Award as one of the most-innovative and compelling cyber security products of 2023. (Vulcan Cyber 15.11)

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* 1. Entrio Seed Round Raises a Total of $11 Million for its Tech Adoption Platform

Tel Aviv's [Entrio](https://entrio.io/), an Israeli startup that has developed a tech adoption platform for banks and financial institutions, has announced that it has extended its initial Seed round from earlier this year to a total of $11 million. The recent funding welcomes new investors American Family Ventures, Fin Capital, and Selah Ventures, and includes additional support from existing investor Alicorn.

The average tech stack in banks and financial institutions can exceed 10,000 solutions and is valued at hundreds of millions of dollars per organization. This makes tech visibility and management more complicated and may lead to a greater rise in spend and technical debt. Entrio helps organizations adopt better technology by optimizing its use and eliminating unnecessary risks and expenses. Its Live Solutions Catalog maps all third-party solutions and categorizes their capabilities, compares them to other solutions in the market, and provides up-to-date market intelligence on vendors and solutions. (Entrio 15.11)

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* 1. Gilat Completes its Acquisition of DataPath

Gilat Satellite Networks has completed the acquisition of Duluth, Georgia's DataPath, a market leader in trusted communications for the US DoD Military and Government sectors. The transaction was approved by the Gilat Board of Directors and by DataPath’s Board of Directors and stockholders earlier this year, and it has received regulatory approvals, including the receipt of clearance from the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS).

DataPath excels in advanced and secure communications solutions tailored to the unique requirements of defense, aerospace, broadcast, government, and critical infrastructure clients. Their solutions include a wide range of field communications and information technology products, including satellite communication systems and network management software.

Petah Tikva's [Gilat Satellite Networks](http://www.gilat.com) is a leading global provider of satellite-based broadband communications. Delivering high-value solutions, Gilat's portfolio is comprised of a cloud-based platform and high performance satellite terminals designed to work in harmony with satellite constellations, including Very High Throughput Satellites (VHTS) and Software-Defined Satellites (SDS) in multiple orbits; high performance Satellite On-the-Move (SOTM) antennas; and highly efficient, high-power Solid State Power Amplifiers (SSPA) and Block Upconverters (BUC). Gilat’s comprehensive solutions support multiple applications with a full portfolio of products to address key applications including broadband access, mobility, cellular backhaul, military, government, and enterprise, all while meeting the most stringent service level requirements. (Gilat 16.11)

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* 1. Charging Robotics Gets Funding for Wireless Parking System Charging Solution

Fuel Doctor announced that its wholly owned subsidiary, Charging Robotics received funding from the Israeli Innovation Authority for a pilot project that includes installing and demonstrating its solution for wireless charging of electric vehicles (EVs) in automated parking systems. The system will be installed and tested in an automated parking system that was installed by Parkomot and comes to answer a growing need for charging EVs in automated parking systems, where drivers aren’t able to connect a charging plug to the EV socket.

The funding provided by the Israel Innovation Authority has been received after a rigorous due diligence process regarding the technology, the market, the competitive landscape and the company team. The Israeli Innovation Authority provides support for Israeli companies with cutting edge technologies which answer needs in large markets. One of the acceptance criteria for this project was its alignment with Israeli Ministry of Energy needs, so the due diligence process was conducted by Israel Innovation Authority project officers as well as subject matter experts from the Israeli Ministry of Energy. The Israeli Ministry of Energy promotes technologies relating to electric transportation and found this project in alignment with the goals for EV market adoption.

Omer's [Charging Robotics](https://www.chargingrobotics.com) is developing various automatic wireless charging solutions such as robotic and stationary charging systems for electric vehicles. Robotic solutions are intended to offer the driver the ability to initiate charging by use of a simple smartphone app so that an autonomous robot will navigate under the vehicle and charge it. Stationary systems offer various solutions for example in automatic car parks allowing to charge EVs in places where drivers can’t connect plugs to sockets. (FDH 20.11)

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* 1. Eye-Net Selected by République Consortium to Take Part in the Road Safety Revolution

Foresight Autonomous Holdings subsidiary Eye-Net Mobile signed an agreement to join Software République. Eye-Net will join the ecosystem of partners through Software République’s incubation program. Software République is a European innovation ecosystem for intelligent, secure, and sustainable mobility, founded by Dassault Systèmes, Eviden, Renault Group, STMicroelectronics and Thales Group.

Eye-Net was selected to join the Incubation Program for a project that will deliver an accessible vehicle-to-everything (V2X) road safety solution for all road users. Software République aims to complete the project by 2024, which includes a proof-of-concept in France. Furthermore, with the support of the Incubation Program, Eye-Net’s solution has the potential for commercial deployment across multiple European cities, which, if realized, is set to commence in the beginning of 2025.

[Foresight Autonomous Holdings](http://www.foresightauto.com) is a technology company developing smart multi-spectral vision software solutions and cellular-based applications. Through the Company’s wholly owned subsidiaries, Foresight Automotive, Foresight Changzhou Automotive and Eye-Net Mobile, Foresight develops both “in-line-of-sight” vision systems and “beyond-line-of-sight” accident-prevention solutions. (Foresight 20.11)

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* 1. Lasso Security Emerges from Stealth with $6 Million in Seed Funding

Lasso Security announced a $6 million seed round led by Entrée Capital with the participation of Samsung Next. Lasso Security's mission is focused on equipping Gen AI and LLM pioneers with innovative security solutions that allow organizations to fully adopt the technologies. Lasso is addressing the numerous, sophisticated and evolving LLM cybersecurity threats, such as model theft, malicious code generation, prompt injection, data poisoning, and supply chain attacks. In addition, Lasso offers oversight when it comes to sensitive data disclosure, insight into how employees use LLM-based workplace tools, and provides guides on how to safely use them in real-time.

Through Lasso's innovative Shadow AI Discovery, ongoing LLM Data-Flow Monitoring and Observability features, combined with a robust Real-time Detection and Alerting system Lasso is able to rapidly respond to emerging threats. Lasso further ensures end-to-end protection, aligning seamlessly with an organization's security policies. With Lasso, organizations can safely integrate and deploy LLMs in production environments, preserving both data and privacy while safeguarding against malicious threats.

Founded in 2023, Tel Aviv's [Lasso Security](https://www.lasso.security/) is a pioneering comprehensive LLM cybersecurity startup that is committed to addressing the evolving threats and challenges that businesses are beginning to encounter with large language models (LLMs) at every touchpoint within their organizations. Lasso is on a mission to help businesses deploy Generative AI successfully while ensuring the security of commercial data and the privacy of customers and employees. (Lasso Security 20.11)

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* 1. Axilion & Contra Costa to Optimize Traffic Flow Along the Pittsburgh Railroad Corridor

Axilion announced a collaboration with Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) to create an innovative partnership to optimize traffic flow along the City of Pittsburgh's Railroad Avenue corridor. This corridor, which experiences heavy traffic during the morning and afternoon commute hours, serves as a vital artery for the City of Pittsburgh and the heavily congested Ygnacio Valley Road through Concord and Walnut Creek.

The pilot project aims to leverage Axilion's state-of-the-art digital twin technology. This technology allows traffic engineers to evaluate, strategize, and simulate traffic management solutions within a risk-free digital environment before deploying them in actual traffic scenarios. As an added benefit, Axilion's platform is a pure software-based solution, which will be deployed without any hardware upgrades on the current intersection infrastructure.

Tel Aviv's [Axilion](https://axilion.com/‎)'s unique digital twin technology sets a global standard by offering a scalable, pure software signal optimization solution. Powered by a homegrown micro-simulation and state-of- the-art optimization engine, Axilion empowers traffic engineers with the ability to initiate AI- driven optimization processes aligned with decision-makers' policy. Fusing both detector and probe data, a real-time traffic demand database emerged and set a solid foundation for the solution. The culmination is a system where precise strategies can be devised, evaluated and perfected, all before real-world deployment. (Axilion 20.11)

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* 1. AI21 Completes $208 Million Oversubscribed Series C Round

AI21 announced the completion of its $208 million Series C funding at a valuation of $1.4 billion. Participation from additional new investors includes Intel Capital, the venture capital arm of Intel Corporation, and Comcast Ventures, the venture capital arm of Comcast Corporation, which joined previously announced investors. This new round of funding brings the company's total capital raised to $336 million, accelerating AI21's purpose-driven approach in the era of AI-first enterprises.

AI21 Studio is a platform that provides API access to developers and businesses with top-tier natural language processing (NLP) solutions powered by AI21's state-of-the-art language models. The platform's Task-Specific Models, optimized Language Models (LLMs), are specifically engineered to excel in distinct natural language processing (NLP) capabilities. These models not only showcase exceptional performance in accuracy but also effectively reduce hallucinations, ensuring heightened reliability. Beyond their reliability, these Task-Specific Models cater to enterprises' diverse needs, covering prevalent NLP capabilities such as contextual answers, summarization and more. This versatility positions AI21 Studio as a comprehensive solution, offering top-tier NLP tools for a wide range of applications.

AI21 is one of the few companies in the world that combines the development of proprietary large language models for enterprises with application development for consumers. AI21 achieves this through a neuro-symbolic architecture that combines language models, knowledge sources and discrete reasoning.

Tel Aviv's [AI21](http://www.AI21.com) is a leader in generative AI and Large Language Models, with the mission to empower businesses with state-of-the-art LLMs and AI applications. Founded in 2017, AI21 has raised a total of $336 million at a valuation of $1.4 billion. It was among the first companies to bring generative AI to the masses and, to date, offers consumer applications and enterprise solutions. (AI21 Labs 21.11)

REGIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR NEWS

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* 1. Jordanian Agreement for €9 Billion Green Hydrogen Project

Jordan has signed an agreement with Irish-based renewables developer Amarenco and Zurich-based green hydrogen company H2 Global Energy for the development of a €9 billion green ammonia generation project in the kingdom. A timeline on when the project is expected to become operational has not been provided yet.

The facility will produce 1 million metric tons of green ammonia annually, powered by 4.5 GW of renewables-powered electrolyzer capacity. Green hydrogen will serve as feedstock for the generation of higher amounts of green ammonia, similar to InterContinental Energy’s green hydrogen project in Oman which will use 1.8 million tons of green hydrogen to make 10 million tons of green ammonia each year.

Jordan has officially completed its green hydrogen and ammonia roadmap after months of preparation. Once launched, Jordan plans to lure in significant investments from its green fuels sector under plans to become a global exporter of green hydrogen and ammonia, Jordan’s Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources said recently at an energy conference.

Aside from the Amarenco partnership, Jordan signed three other MoUs with Jordan’s Kawar Energy, Philadelphia Solar and the German renewables firm Enertrag to carry out feasibility studies for potential green hydrogen projects in the kingdom. Under the agreements, Jordan aims to generate 100k tons of green ammonia per year with Kawar Energy, 100,000 to 200,000 tons with Philadelphia Solar, and 200,000 tons with Enertag. (Enterprise 20.11)

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* 1. US Cybersecurity Company Resecurity Opens Office & Technology Hub in Bahrain

Resecurity, a Los Angeles-based cybersecurity and intelligence company serving Fortune 500 clients globally, recently announced the opening of its latest office in Manama, Bahrain, supported by the Bahrain Economic Development Board (Bahrain EDB). Marking the expansion of its global footprint, the Manama-based office will serve the local market as well as Resecurity subsidiaries across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Within the first year of operation, the cybersecurity firm will additionally set up a dedicated technology hub to serve regional and global clients, comprising intensive graduate training programs in cybersecurity.

Known for providing best-of-breed data-driven solutions across multiple sectors including financial institutions, government bodies, and energy companies; the new Manama-based office aligns with Resecurity's aim of accelerating the delivery of its cybersecurity and threat intelligence offerings on a regional and international level. Resecurity was recognized as a leader in the cyber threat intelligence market in the Frost & Sullivan Global Threat Intelligence Platforms Market 2022 report. (Resecurity 08.11)

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* 1. NYSE and the Abu Dhabi Exchange Agree on MoU for Business Collaboration

The New York Stock Exchange and the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on a number of key business activities, including the dual listing of companies on both exchanges. The NYSE and ADX will also explore opportunities to develop ETFs and data and index products, as well as collaborate on sustainability-related initiatives. The MOU is designed to support cross-border listings on the NYSE and ADX, seeking to provide each region’s strong investor base with access to these securities and to help drive economic growth.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) was established in 2000 by Local Law No. (3) Of 2000, the provisions of which vest the market with a legal entity of autonomous status, independent finance and management. ADX is a market for trading securities; including shares issued by public joint stock companies, bonds issued by governments or corporations, exchange traded funds, and any other financial instruments approved by the UAE Securities and Commodities Authority (SCA).

ADX is the second largest market in the Arab region and its strategy of providing stable financial performance with diversified sources of incomes. (NYSE 16.11)

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* 1. Mafhoom Secures $1.36 Million in Pre-Seed Funding

Mafhoom Technologies announced the successful completion of its pre-seed funding round, raising an impressive AED5 million. The Dubai-based fintech innovator is on a mission to redefine personal finance management with its all-encompassing intelligent app, designed to empower individuals to take command of their financial journeys.

Incorporated within the prestigious Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC), Mafhoom Technologies is poised to revolutionize how people interact with their finances. The app, available on both iOS and Android platforms, offers a suite of features to optimize spending behavior, reduce bills, eliminate debt, enhance financial literacy, and achieve savings and investment objectives.

Dubai's [Mafhoom](https://mafhoom.app/) is elevating its technology through a strategic infusion of advanced functionalities, meticulously aligning with its ambitious roadmap. The company is pioneering the integration of AI-driven financial insights and predictions, wealth-building algorithms, and intelligent investment analytics, aiming to deliver a seamless and sophisticated financial user experience. (Mafhoom 15.11)

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* 1. UAE's Wize Raises $16 Million in a Pre-Seed Round

[Wize](https://wize-ev.com/), a Dubai-based startup providing the most sustainable solutions for last-mile delivery, has raised $16 million in a pre-Seed funding round co-led by MENA-focused angel investors. Funds will be spent to enhance the company's presence in the UAE market, further product development and explore new partnership opportunities in the MENA market.

Unlike competitors, Wize developed a comprehensive ecosystem to help delivery and retail businesses meet the UAE’s net zero requirements and follow the UAE Green Agenda. Several services are included in the Wize ecosystem, such as electric motorcycles, Wize rental and subscription platform for business owners to manage their fleets 24/7, battery-as-a-service and swapping stations as well as software components.

The company offers subscription-based electric motorcycles, enhancing the sustainability of delivery operations in the UAE. For all business needs and budgets, Wize selected the following motorcycles: swift, rapid, and speedy. All comply with UAE regulations for courier transport, including the delivery box, which is standardized to RTA requirements. Using electric motorcycles, businesses reduce transportation costs by up to 30 per cent per month.

Wize is in the process of establishing partnerships with well-known delivery companies in the region. The company has already signed a long-term partnership with Motoboy, the UAE's first sustainable logistics firm, with a long-term goal of achieving zero-carbon emissions through the exclusive use of electric bikes. It will enable Wize to manage all steps of motorcycle usage and understand the needs of potential clients and delivery companies. (Wize 15.11)

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* 1. SpiderSilk Secures $9 Million in Investments

SpiderSilk, announced it secured a $9 million funding round led by Wa’ed Ventures, aiming to expand its cyber defense tech to the kingdom, according to a company statement. Wa’ed Ventures is Aramco’s $500 million Saudi-based venture capital fund; the round has seen participation from STV and Global Ventures.

Launched in 2019, Dubai's [SpiderSilk](https://spidersilk.com/%20‎) is providing its AI-enabled cyber security platform that allows companies to decrease their operational cost and upgrade their cybersecurity measures. SpiderSilk signed its first 5-year agreements with global big companies such as Unisys to provide autonomous cyber defense capabilities. (WAYA 02.11)

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* 1. Saudi Edtech Startup Noon Raises $41 Million in Series B Funding

Saudi Arabia’s educational technology startup [Noon](https://www.learnatnoon.com/) closed a $41 million series B funding round co-led by Aramco’s Wa’ed Ventures and RAED Ventures. Offering a peer-to-peer social learning app, Noon aims to utilize the funding to enable artificial intelligence-powered solutions to personalize its learning experiences further. Noon aims to use the capital to boost its global expansion strategies within the next two to three years. The funding round also saw participation from notable investors, including SVC, STV, and Riyadh Valley Co. Other participants include Endeavor, Sanabil 500 and Qyem Development Holding.

Founded in 2013, Noon has gained traction in large markets, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt and Pakistan. The company claims to have more than 12 million registered users, with the aim of expanding that figure to 190 million across the aforementioned markets.

The education technology sector in Saudi Arabia has witnessed substantial growth, surging in 2022 compared to the previous year. This sector managed to raise $45 million last year, ranking it as the seventh most funded industry in the Kingdom. (AN 02.11)

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* 1. Fork N Knife Secures $800,000 in Seed Funding to Expand Cloud Kitchen Technology

Tech-enabled cloud kitchen, [Fork N Knife](https://www.forknknife.co/index.html), has successfully closed its seed funding round with $800,000, paving the way for the company to continue its journey of advancing the food tech sector based on its accumulated expertise and capabilities. A diverse group of individual angel investors, alongside institutions outside the Middle East, contributed to the successful funding round. The accomplishment reflects the confidence in Fork N Knife's innovative "Cooking As A Service" (CAAS) model, allowing restaurant and food concept developers to expand their businesses without an initial investment. It also sets the stage for the company's strategic expansion into the European and African markets by the end of the year.

This success comes on the heels of a period of rapid growth for Fork N Knife in Turkey, where it currently operates in three branches. The achievement underscores the significant potential and promising opportunities within the food industry in the region. It represents a key strategic move for Fork N Knife, opening new horizons and contributing to a new phase of growth and expansion, including an effective entry into the markets of Europe and Africa.

Saudi based Fork N Knife offers a distinctive model that deviates from traditional fixed-fee structures, seeking dynamic partnerships with innovators in the food industry. It provides developers with the opportunity to expand their businesses without incurring fixed costs and with higher profitability. The company effectively launches brands on all major food aggregators within a short period not exceeding 15 days. (Fork N Knife 20.11)

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* 1. COGNNA Closes a $2.25 Million Seed Round Led by IMPACT46

COGNNA, a company specializing in cyber threat detection and response, closed its seed investment round, exceeding $2.25 million. This achievement marks a significant milestone as COGNNA becomes the first cybersecurity startup in the Arab Middle East to secure investment in this domain. The funding round was led by IMPACT46, with participation from Vision Ventures, Faith Capital, and a group of investors.

COGNNA has developed innovative solutions tailored to the unique cybersecurity challenges of the Middle East and North Africa. These solutions accelerate the detection and response to evolving cyber threats while aligning with regional regulations and global standards. COGNNA's innovative solutions will address a gap in its clients' cybersecurity capabilities in the region.

Riyadh's [COGNNA](https://cognna.com/en), founded in 2022, is one of the emerging local companies that participated in the inaugural Cybersecurity Accelerator Program launched by the National Cybersecurity Authority in August 2022. COGNNA, utilizes artificial intelligence and advanced data analysis to detect threats in customers' systems and networks, thus contributing to the mitigation of evolving cyber threats. (COGNNA 12.11)

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* 1. INGENIOUS.BUILD Unveils its International Expansion Strategy in Saudi Arabia

Nashville, Tennessee's INGENIOUS.BUILD, a leading company focused on innovation and technology, announced its strategic move to expand internationally to meet the rising demand for development and construction projects in Saudi Arabia. The expansion will enable the company to serve its existing clients better while reaching new markets and clients. The plans include opening a new office in a key location within Saudi Arabia. This office will enhance INGENIOUS's operational capabilities and ensure a strong local presence to effectively cater to clients in the region. Additionally, the expansion will create job opportunities, contribute to the local economy, and nurture growth in the communities where the new offices will be established.

INGENIOUS.BUILD is a cutting-edge technology company specializing in project management software for the Real Estate Development and Construction industry. (INGENIOUS.BUILD 09.11)

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* 1. Tunisie Telecom Revolutionizes Its Charging System

Tunisie Telecom, the market leader in information and communication technologies in Tunisia, and Ottawa, Ontario's Telepin, a global pioneer in mobile transaction platforms and the fintech industry, announced the signing of a partnership agreement for the launch of the converged charging system for the national operator's customers. The main objective of this partnership is to migrate Tunisie Telecom's charging system, currently distributed among several suppliers, to Telepin's unified converged charging platform.

This transition promises to offer a better customer experience by offering a consolidated and more secure solution for mobile and landline top-ups. Telepin's platform is meticulously designed to meet all of Tunisie Telecom's charging needs. From the migration of legacy vouchers to the generation of on-demand e-vouchers, the system ensures a smooth transition and an improved user experience for Tunisie Telecom's large customer base. (Telepin 15.11)

CLEAN TECH & ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENTS

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* 1. GenCell Achieves Significant Progress for the Synthesis of Green Ammonia

GenCell has made additional significant progress in the development process which has exceeded the initial expectations of the Company. GenCell's novel process synthesizes green ammonia directly from water at very low temperature and pressure in comparison to the traditional green ammonia production processes commonly carried out today around the world.

The Company in its laboratory has achieved experimental results demonstrating faradaic efficiency of 50% in its green ammonia production process. These results can be compared with faradaic efficiency of some 25% achieved when using the traditional method of green ammonia production. These results can be attributed to the development of new methods and techniques which overcome the most challenging steps in the nitrogen reduction reaction (NRR) process. GenCell's novel methods may enable production of green ammonia at a cost lower than that of the alternative method currently in widespread use.

The Company plans to submit a patent application for this invention. Accordingly, the Company is currently evaluating the significance of the scientific and commercial implications derived from this key development.

Petah Tikva's [GenCell Energy](https://www.gencellenergy.com/) develops total green power solutions based on reliable, zero-emission alkaline fuel cells, hydrogen, ammonia and water-to-power technologies that deliver uninterrupted power to help the world #SayNoToDiesel and transition to clean energy. The ability to produce not only clean power from GenCell's fuel cells, but also the green fuel on which the fuel cells run, sets GenCell in a far superior position as a well-to-wheel total green energy solution provider. (GenCell 20.11)

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* 1. Abu Dhabi Inaugurates the World's Largest Single-Site Solar Power Plant

Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company – Masdar, and its partners Abu Dhabi National Energy Company (TAQA), EDF Renewables and JinkoPower, together with procurer Emirates Water and Electricity Company (EWEC), have inaugurated the world's largest single-site solar power plant ahead of the UAE hosting the UN climate change conference, COP28.

Located 35 kilometers from Abu Dhabi city, the landmark solar plant was built in a single phase and generates enough electricity to power almost 200,000 homes, displacing 2.4 million tonnes of carbon emissions every year. Al Dhafra Solar PV spans more than 20 square kilometers of desert and created 4,500 jobs during the peak of the construction phase. It uses almost 4 million solar panels which deploy innovative bi-facial technology, ensuring sunlight is captured on both sides of the panels to maximize yield.

In less than fifteen years, the UAE has become a global leader in solar energy. In 2009, Masdar switched on the country's first solar project at 10MW - today, Al Dhafra Solar PV represents a plant that is 200 times that size. As the countdown to COP28 in the UAE begins, this mega project initially achieved the world's lowest tariff at financial close, and demonstrates the country's longstanding commitment to decarbonization, at home and around the world.

The UAE is also a world leader in solar energy use, according to the latest data from The Energy Institute Statistical Review of World Energy, ranking second globally in terms of per capita solar energy consumption. In under a decade, the country has surpassed leading nations by installing solar energy, as part of the country's energy diversification. (Masdar 17.11)

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* 1. UAE to Cut Food Waste in Half by 2030

The UAE’s Minister of Climate Change and Environment revealed a nationwide action plan — dubbed the Ne’ma Food Loss and Waste Reduction Roadmap — to reduce food loss and waste by 50% by the end of the decade. The goal to halve food waste by 2030 was set by UAE's food loss and waste initiative Ne'ma established last year. The initiative works on coordinating with government agencies, the private sector, non-government organizations and civil society to achieve its goal.

The UAE will build a system for food loss and waste monitoring, facilitate public private partnerships for food loss and waste projects, leverage innovative approaches to build a circular economy, and introduce new mandates and policies, Almheiri said. (WAM 21.11)

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* 1. UAE’s Masdar Consortium Wins a Bid for a $1 Billion Solar Plant in Saudi Arabia

Abu Dhabi clean energy firm Masdar, also known as Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company, along with EDF Renewables and Nesma Company, has won a bid for the 1,100 megawatt (MW) Al Henakiyah solar power plant in Saudi Arabia. The Masdar-led consortium signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Saudi Power Procurement Company (SPPC) to develop, build and operate the $1 billion solar farm that will power more than 190,000 homes a year.

The Al Henakiyah solar power plant is expected to displace more than 1.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. It will reach financial close in early 2024 and connect to the grid in 2025. The SPPC awarded the consortium the project after it submitted the most cost-competitive bid of $16.84 per MW hour.

Located in Saudi Arabia’s Al Madinah province, the Al Henakiyah solar plant will help to achieve the target of increasing the share of renewables in the country’s energy mix to around 50% by 2030. The project, which is set to be one of the world’s biggest single-site solar plants, will be developed, built, owned and operated by the consortium as part of a 25-year agreement with the off-taker SPPC. (Various 08.11)

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* 1. Tunis Tightens Up its Strategy to Guarantee Access to Drinking Water

On 4 November 2023, the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Marine Fisheries adopted a document defining Tunisia's new strategy for ensuring the supply of drinking water in the face of drought. The North African country wants to limit the arbitrary use of drinking water in agriculture, for watering green spaces and for cleaning streets and public spaces. According to the Minister for Agriculture, this plan will control the supply of and demand for drinking water in the country.

After restrictions were imposed on the use of drinking water for crop irrigation from 31 March 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Marine Fisheries indicated that the necessary legal measures will be taken against offenders. In the meantime, the connection of wells to drinking water networks will be programmed, with the number of wells, the cost of the work and the desired rations to reduce pressure on surface water being determined. Campaigns will also be planned in all the governorates of Tunisia to raise awareness of the importance of water as a source of wealth amid the confinement of waterfalls.

To reduce the pressure on the country’s drinking water supply, the Tunisian government is also banking on the desalination of seawater and the reuse of treated wastewater for irrigation, through the construction of desalination and purification plants respectively. In terms of effluent recovery, Tunisia is currently working on an annual program to develop the use of treated wastewater. (Afrik21 08.11)

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* 1. Canada Grants Morocco $18 Million for Water Desalination in El Jadida and Safi

The Canada-African Development Bank Climate Fund (CACF) has just approved an $18 million loan to Office Chérifien des Phosphates (OCP Group). This funding will support the construction of new seawater desalination plants in the provinces of El Jadida and Safi, with a view to improving the supply of drinking water in the face of drought. Funding of $18 million is now available to improve the supply of drinking water in El Jadida and Safi in Morocco, using seawater desalination.

The funding granted to OCP will make it possible to set up a desalination capacity of 75 million m3 of seawater per year to supply the population. The drinking water will be sold to the Autonomous inter-municipal authority for water and electricity distribution and management of the liquid sewage network in the provinces of El Jadida and Sidi Bennour (RADEEJ), and to the Safi autonomous inter-municipal water and electricity distribution company (RADEES). (Afrik21 12.11)

ARAB STATE DEVELOPMENTS

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* 1. Iraq’s $17 Billion Rail Development Project

Iraq’s Transport Ministry is planning to build 30 train stations for freight and passengers as part of its $17 billion Railroad Development Project. Some 15 stations will be dedicated to freight transport, while 15 will be dedicated to passengers. They will be distributed across 11 governorates.

Almost 50% of the rail and motorway designs have been completed and the feasibility study for the project has already been approved. The dual highway, which will start from the Faw port and will be linked to Turkey via the Faysh Khabur on the northern border of the Kurdistan region in Iraq. The speed for the passengers’ train will reportedly be 300 km per hour, while freight trains will run at some 140 km per hour. The trains are also set to be electric.

Iraq’s ambitious $17 billion Development Road project aims to link its planned Grand Faw Port in Iraq’s southern Basra province to Turkey in the north through rail and road infrastructure in a bid to rival Egypt’s Suez Canal. (Enterprise 09.11)

►►Arabian Gulf

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* 1. GCC Unified Visa Unanimously Approved at Muscat Ministers' Conference

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have approved the unified tourist visa. The Secretary-General of the GCC announced the decision at the recent meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers in Muscat, Oman.

The new visa will open doors to travelers, granting them access to six countries under a single, unified tourist visa, and foster economic synergy across the GCC. Earlier this year, the UAE’s Minister of Economy had said that specific regulations and legislation for the visa will be developed, with a targeted rollout between 2024 and 2025, subject to the readiness of each GCC country’s internal systems. (GB 09.11)

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* 1. Qatar's GDP Growth to Slow This Year as World Cup Bounce Fades

S&P Global Ratings expects economic activity in Qatar to slow to 2% in 2023 after a nearly 5% growth in 2022, which was supported by the soccer World Cup. However, growth momentum at the world's biggest gas exporter should strengthen again through 2026, bolstered by high investments and hydrocarbon production increases in line with the North Field Expansion (NFE), a major project set to expand Qatar’s LNG export capacity. As Qatar derives about 40% of its GDP, 80% of government revenue, and 90% of exports from the hydrocarbon sector, S&P has based its forecasts on the expectation that the Brent oil price will average about $82 per barrel (/bbl) in 2023 and $85 bbl thereafter.

GDP will dip this year as non-hydrocarbon sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, finance, and construction slow after Qatar's hosting of the soccer World Cup in late 2022. According to S&P, between 2025 and 2027, Qatar’s LNG production capacity is set to rise by 64% to 126 million tons per year (mtpa) from 77 million currently, maintaining its position as one of the largest exporters of LNG.

S&P, which rated Qatar's long-term sovereign credit at AA/Stable, said the ratings could be raised if risks related to its external position reduced, including a decline in the country's external funding needs, alongside improvement in data transparency on international investment position and information on the government's external assets among others. (Zawya 09.11)

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* 1. Dubai's Exports & Re-Exports Reach $54 Billion in First 9 Months of 2023

The number of Dubai Chamber of Commerce companies has surged by nearly half, as exports and re-exports exceeded $54 billion during the first nine months of the year. New member companies registered between January and September reached 48,616, up by 42.9% compared to the same period last year.

The total value of exports and re-exports of Dubai Chamber of Commerce member companies also “surged” to $57.18 billion, with certificates of origin hitting 544,538 during the nine-month period. The chamber did not provide year-on-year comparison on member exports and re-exports, but the latest figure is a huge jump from the AED177 billion recorded between January and August 2022. The strong growth in new member companies highlights Dubai’s attractiveness among both companies and investors, as well as Dubai’s growing reputation as a leading global business destination, the chamber said.

Dubai has recently reported a 3.2% growth in the local economy during the first half of the year, driven by significant growth in key sectors such as transportation, real estate, wholesale and retail trade, financial and insurance, accommodation and food services, among others. (Zawya 21.11)

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* 1. Saudi Fund Signs Two MoUs for Caribbean Infrastructure and Energy Projects

The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) signed two developmental Framework Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with the governments of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The first MoU, signed with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, stipulated that SFD will provide funding worth $50 million for financing the Expansion, Construction, and Rehabilitation of a Number of Buildings and Facilities Affected by Natural Disasters Project. The second MoU, signed with Saint Kitts and Nevis, stipulates that SFD will provide funding worth $40 million for financing the expansion of the Needsmust Power Plant Project. By funding this project, SFD will help to support the nation’s energy supply, alongside the socio-economic development of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Both MoUs are a testament to SFD’s commitment to supporting sustainable development in the Caribbean region and reaffirm the importance of international cooperation and solidarity to achieve the SDGs and foster social and economic growth, particularly, in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). (SFD 16.11)

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* 1. Saudi Announces New Natural Gas Discoveries in Empty Quarter

Saudi Aramco has discovered two new natural gas fields in the Empty Quarter region, according to Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman. The discovery of the Al-Hiran gas field was confirmed after gas flowed at a rate of 30 million standard cubic feet per day, and 1,600 barrels of condensate daily. The Al-Mahakik gas field was confirmed after gas flowed from it at a rate of 0.85 million standard cubic feet. Other discoveries were also announced in fields in the Eastern Province. Aramco, overwhelmingly an oil producer, aims to boost its gas production by 50% by 2030 from 2021 levels.

Last month, Aramco said it was looking at more investments in LNG to boost its plans to become a leading player in the seaborne gas market. (Various 20.11)

►►North Africa

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* 1. Egypt's Headline Inflation Eases to 35.8% in October

Egypt's annual urban consumer price inflation rate dropped to 35.8% in October from a record high of 38.0% in September, according to data from the country's statistics agency CAPMAS, coming in lower than analysts had expected. The median forecast of 19 analysts polled by Reuters had shown inflation slipping to 37.1%.

Month on month, price rises slowed to 1.0% in October from 2.0% in September. Inflation had accelerated every month since June, when it reached 35.7%, topping the previous high of 32.95% in July 2017. Food and beverage prices rose by 1.5% and an annual 71.3%, CAPMAS said. (CAPMAS 11.11)

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* 1. Egyptian Unemployment Rises to 7.1% in the Third Quarter of 2023

Egypt’s unemployment rate inched up to 7.1% in Q3/23, a 0.1% increase from the previous quarter, according to data released by state statistics agency CAPMAS. Unemployment was down 0.3% compared with the same period last year.

The male unemployment rate was unchanged from the previous quarter 4.8% in Q3/23, but was down from 5.2% in the third quarter of the previous year. Unemployment among women dipped to 17.2% (-0.1% from the last quarter) and down from 19.1% in the same period last year. People aged 15-29 accounted for 64.3% of all jobless people in Q3/23, compared to 61.8% the previous quarter.

By definition, the official unemployment rate only includes people who are looking for work. The labor force participation rate — which counts everyone aged 15-64 either in work or actively looking for work — came in at 44.6%, up from 43.0% in the last quarter and up from 42.7% in the third quarter of 2022. Egypt’s labor force now stands at 32 million, up 3.2% on the previous quarter. Men make up 82% of the workforce and women make up 18%. (CAPMAS 15.11)

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* 1. Egypt Issues $500 Billion Second Round of Yen-Denominated Samurai Bonds

Egypt issued its second batch of Yen-denominated Samurai bonds with a value of ¥75 billion (about $500 million) in a five-year tenor and with a regular dividend of 1.5%, Minister of Finance Mohamed Maait announced. Maait said that these bonds with such tenor help prolong the country’s public debt maturity, lower the cost of the external debt, diversify both financing resources and currencies, and attract new global investors. The action came a day before the decision by Fitch to downgrade Egypt’s long-term sovereign credit rating against the backdrop of the severe shortage of the US dollar liquidity in the Egyptian market.

The Egyptian cabinet approved issuing the second batch of $500 million Yen-denominated bonds in August. It also green-lighted the third batch with the same value in October. The first batch was issued in April at the same value. Egypt issued its first sustainable Panda bonds, one of a kind in the Middle East and North Africa, worth ¥3.5 billion ($500 million) with a yield of 3.5% over three years. Such issuance helps finance the budget deficit, which accounts for 6% of its GDP in FY2022/2023. (Various 02.11)

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* 1. UK Funding to Accelerate Trade Facilitation in Egypt

Strengthening its existing commitment, the United Kingdom has allocated £250,000 to fortify efforts to implement the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in Egypt. The contribution will help enhance the capacities of the Egyptian national trade facilitation committee (NTFC) and introduce digital tools such as UNCTAD’s reform tracker to better monitor the country’s trade facilitation reforms.

Egypt had implemented 23% of the TFA’s provisions as of October 2023, according to data from the WTO TFA database. In 2019, the North African nation committed to implementing most of the 36 trade facilitation measures outlined in the TFA by the end of 2025.

To bolster this effort, the UK and UNCTAD welcomed Egypt as the 24th country under the fourth phase of their joint "Accelerate trade facilitation" program that started in 2015. The program focuses on improving countries’ capacity to better respond to future crises, as well as furthering the digitalization of trade procedures and targeting trade-related bottlenecks. (Various 13.11)

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* 1. Moroccan Tourism Records Unprecedented 39% Growth in October 2023

Morocco’s tourism sector has registered an unprecedented 39% growth in October 2023, compared to the same period last year. The Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, Crafts, and Social Solidarity said that the country has welcomed over 12 million visitors in 2023, despite initial concerns about the impact of the 8 September 8 earthquake on tourism. The achievement is a reflection of the country’s commitment to diversifying source markets.

Morocco’s tourism success in September, initially considered a record-breaking month with 960,000 tourists, has pointed for some to a sustained growth trajectory. Morocco’s tourism sector is one of the most important in the country’s economy, contributing to the Moroccan GDP as well as the job market. This has caused concern in recent years as the global tourism industry witnessed a downward trend due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the economic downturn caused by the resulting recession.

The 8 September earthquake in Morocco was another cause for concern, as it hit near Marrakech, one of the country’s premier tourist destinations. The industry, however, seems to be going strong, still on a trajectory to recover well from the COVID pandemic. (MWN 13.11)

TURKISH, CYPRIOT & GREEK DEVELOPMENTS

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* 1. Cyprus' Third Quarter GDP Growth Stood at 2.2%

According to a preliminary estimate by the Cyprus Statistical Service, the Cypriot economy’s seasonally adjusted annual GDP growth rate reached 2.2% in the third quarter, maintaining the same level as Q3/22 but showing a lower quarterly growth than in Q1/24. But on a quarterly basis, GDP was lower in Q3/24 than in January-March, when it reached 3.2%.

Compared to the second quarter of 2023, adjusted growth of the Cypriot economy was 1.1%, the highest quarterly growth since Q3/22. It also followed negative growth of -0.4% growth in Q2/23. The positive GDP growth rate was mainly due to the sectors of Hotels and Restaurants, Transport and Storage, Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles, Information and Communication, Construction, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation and Other Service Activities”. (FM 15.11)

GENERAL NEWS AND INTEREST

\*ISRAEL:

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* 1. Global Coalition Launches Platform to Help Startup Nation in Wartime

A coalition of tech companies, entrepreneurs, angel and institutional investors has unveiled [Circles of Dialogue](https://circlesofdialogue.com/), an online platform and community network established amid the Israel-Hamas war to help support the Israeli tech ecosystem. So far, marquee companies and investors over four continents have joined with the mission to provide access to more than $100 million in immediate investment capital and free services.

Circles of Dialogue offers free access to resources, capital formation networks, and expert advisors for Israeli tech companies with the task of helping them adjust to the crisis and prepare to survive and thrive in the long term. Its objectives are to assist the Israeli tech sector with the effort to raise funds from venture capital and angel and institutional investors, help drive customer acquisition and retention, and connect companies with relevant and necessary services. It aims to do this through its online community, networking events and regional committees, and investment services.

It is well known that Israeli tech plays a critical role in the country's economy, which is also currently under threat due to the ongoing attacks from Gaza and Lebanon. According to Start-Up Nation Central, the tech sector accounts for roughly 18% of Israel’s gross domestic product, nearly half of the country’s exports, and 30% of tax revenue. Circles of Dialogue is a global coalition of tech companies, entrepreneurs, angel and institutional investors, and experts helping empower and support the Israeli tech ecosystem. It is apolitical and will rely on the power of networks to drive business growth and nurture connections. (CTech 21.11)

ISRAEL LIFE SCIENCE NEWS

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* 1. EarlySign Announces Launch of LungFlag

Medial EarlySign and Danville, Pennsylvania's Geisinger, an integrated health care system, announced the launch of the LungFlag AlgoMarker. LungFlag identifies patients at high risk for respiratory or pulmonary illnesses, such as lung cancer, by analyzing routine data from the electronic health record (EHR). Working together with Geisinger, Medial EarlySign designed the LungFlag program to enable earlier interventions. Early intervention is central to Geisinger's value-based care model, leading to improved clinical outcomes, higher patient satisfaction and decreased costs.

LungFlag is the latest addition to EarlySign's expanding platform of validated clinical solutions impacting the early diagnosis of serious diseases. Other existing solutions target influenza complications, diabetes, and lower GI disorders including colorectal cancer.

Hod HaSharon's [Medial EarlySign](https://earlysign.com/)'s clinical machine learning software solutions help healthcare stakeholders keep patients healthier longer. With EarlySign's models, healthcare clients derive actionable and personalized clinical insights from massive amounts of health data leading to potential improvements in meaningful care, outcomes, and optimal diagnostic and medication use. The company's purpose-built development environment enables better decision making with accurate models supported by peer-reviewed research. (Medial EarlySign 06.11)

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* 1. Corundum Neuroscience Launches Fund for Neuroscience

Corundum Neuroscience launched its new neuroscience-focused venture builder and fund to spur neuroscience research and innovation. The newly rebranded Corundum Neuroscience works with researchers and entrepreneurs with commercially applicable ideas to build and grow companies developing innovative solutions spanning a range of health and disease areas, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, chronic pain, sleep and neurodegenerative disorders.

The Corundum Neuroscience team identifies research, enabling technologies and early-stage startups with high potential for commercial applicability and broad societal impact. The company understands the lengthy development journey for neuroscience innovation, the so-called 'Valley of Death' for life-science startups between discovery and market launch. Corundum's team of researchers, academics and business leaders provides the support and guidance essential for companies to navigate this extensive period of innovation cycles and development required for successful and targeted neuroscience-driven solutions.

Herzliya's [Corundum Neuroscience](https://cnsfund.com) is a venture builder and fund advancing transformative neuroscience solutions from lab-to-life. The Corundum Neuroscience team combines deep domain expertise with a track-record of venture-building success to accelerate neuroscience solutions across the entire innovation lifecycle. Taking a long-term investment approach, Corundum Neuroscience helps researchers, entrepreneurs and startups develop life-changing solutions that target specific disease areas and outcomes to enhance people's health, longevity and quality of life. Formerly known as Joy Ventures, Corundum Neuroscience launched in September 2023. (Corundum Neuroscience 08.11)

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* 1. Tarsier Pharma Successful Meeting with FDA for TRS01 in Noninfectious Uveitis

Tarsier Pharma announced the successful outcome of a Type C meeting with the U.S. FDA, supporting the advancement of TRS01 eye drop formulation for the treatment of noninfectious uveitis into a registrational program based on the recently completed TRS4Vision trial.

The Type C meeting was supported by results from the previously completed TRS4Vision trial – a randomized, double-masked, active-controlled Phase 3 trial that was designed to evaluate the efficacy and safety of TRS01 eye drop formulation in noninfectious uveitis patients including uveitic glaucoma patients. In the TRS4Vision trial, TRS01 was found to be active in clearing inflammation, reducing ocular pain and exhibited a compelling risk/benefit profile, minimizing the concerns of Intraocular Pressure (IOP) increase during the course of treatment.

Zichron Yaakov's [Tarsier Pharma](https://tarsierpharma.com/) is a clinical stage biopharmaceutical company, focused on the discovery, development, and commercialization of first-in-class pharmaceutical therapies to treat immune-mediated blinding diseases in the front and back of the eye. Dazdotuftide (formerly known as TRS) is a first-in-class drug with a new and unique mechanism of action, for the treatment of ocular blinding diseases of back- and front- of the eye. Dazdotuftide is a bio-inspired novel proprietary technology platform, based on a New Chemical Entity (NCE) with a disruptive mechanism of action. Dazdotuftide was found to modulate macrophages from inflammatory macrophages (M1) to IL-10 secreting ant-inflammatory macrophages (M2). (Tarsier Pharma 13.11)

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* 1. ChickP Taps into Active Nutrition Market with Chickpea Protein Isolate

Plant protein pioneer ChickP Protein is forging ahead in the active nutrition market to fill the surging demand for natural, high-protein, plant-based nutrition bars and similar on-the-go, better-for-you products. The company developed a line of prototypes, powered by its signature, 90% chickpea isolate, to fit the requirements of active lifestyle consumers and others who live life on-the-go.

ChickP pioneered the breakthrough patented technology for producing the flavorless and odorless 90% chickpea isolate, setting a new standard for delivering an all-natural, clean-label and highly functional ingredient uniquely tailored to suit an array of vegan, plant-based alternatives. It is easily incorporated into dairy analogs such as ice cream, as well as cheese and even as a replacement for eggs.

With the powerful animal-free food and beverage trend driving industry toward plant-based snacks, ChickP's sustainably sourced chickpea protein isolate has been designated a finalist at the Fi Europe protein innovation awards. As ChickP focuses on improving the active nutrition sector, the company remains committed to continue innovating and supplying its cutting-edge plant-based protein solutions as premium ingredients for an even broader range of food and beverage applications.

The fast-growing foodTech company is commercially producing a patented 90% chickpea protein isolate for multiple plant-based applications. This functional protein is non-GMO, allergen-free, and has a high nutritional value. Rehovot's [ChickP](https://www.chickp-protein.com/) helps its customers to develop nutritional, plant-based products with speed-to-market and reliability. ChickP is ISO-certified, kosher and halal, and has self-affirmed GRAS status. (ChickP Protein 13.11)

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* 1. Essence SmartCare Completes Shipment to the Community of Madrid

Essence SmartCare announced the successful delivery of 140,000 Care@Home senior monitoring devices to fulfill its major tender win with the Community of Madrid, a governmental region in Spain serving Madrid and surrounding cities. This milestone comes after the transformative deal was unveiled earlier this year, in which Essence SmartCare was selected as the sole provider of senior care technology for over 100,000 seniors in the Madrid region.

This achievement underscores the resilience of Essence Group, as it continues to drive key business objectives. This shipment of Care@Home systems was all delivered in one day, in accordance with a pre-determined supply schedule to meet the requirements of the Community of Madrid in providing advanced care technologies to allow seniors to live more independently.

In October 2022, the Community of Madrid announced plans to acquire hundreds of thousands of technological devices to implement advanced telecare in the region, with Essence as the technological backbone ensuring residents of Madrid receive high quality remote care. As per the agreement, Essence SmartCare will supply a comprehensive range of devices, including its LTE digital hubs, wearable and contactless fall detectors, smoke and gas detection, as well as sensors that monitor seniors' activity.

Herzliya's [Essence SmartCare](http://www.essencesmartcare.com) develops advanced health and remote monitoring platforms for market-leading healthcare and senior care providers, enabling smart preventive care and emergency response so seniors can live life to the fullest – with total peace of mind. Partnering with Essence SmartCare helps position companies as progressive, forward-thinking and in touch with the need to enable elderly and vulnerable people to lead more independent and safer lives. (Essence SmartCare 14.11)

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* 1. Teva Announces Approval of a Generic Version of Forteo in the U.S.

Teva Pharmaceuticals Inc., a U.S. affiliate of Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., announced the approval of a generic version of Forteo, in the United States. Market availability of the product in the U.S. is expected in the coming weeks. Teriparatide injection is indicated to treat osteoporosis among certain women and men. It is not known if Teriparatide injection is safe and effective in children.

With nearly 500 generic medicines available, Teva has the largest portfolio of FDA-approved generic products on the market and holds the leading position in first-to-file opportunities, with approximately 100 pending first-to-files in the U.S. Currently, 1 in 12 generic prescriptions dispensed in the U.S. is filled with a Teva generic product.

Petah Tikva's [Teva Pharmaceutical Industries](http://www.tevapharm.com) has been developing and producing medicines to improve people’s lives for more than a century. They are a global leader in generic and innovative medicines with a portfolio consisting of over 3,500 products in nearly every therapeutic area. Around 200 million people around the world take a Teva medicine every day, and are served by one of the largest and most complex supply chains in the pharmaceutical industry. (Teva 17.11)

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* 1. PathKeeper 3D Optical Navigation System Performs First Spine Surgery

PathKeeper Surgical celebrated its first use of the PathKeeper 3D optical navigation system during a spinal fusion surgery at Southcoast Health's St. Luke's Hospital in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The PathKeeper system was utilized to create a comprehensive surgical plan and accurately navigate the single-level, lumbar degenerative spinal fusion surgery.

The PathKeeper system was designed to replace traditional navigation technology with a 3D optical navigation system that offers comprehensive surgical planning; active, independent, submillimeter registration and tracking of the patient anatomy and surgical instruments; pinpoint accuracy of device implantation; more efficient surgical workflow; elimination of radiation exposure during the surgical procedure; and a more economical price so both the hospital and ambulatory-surgical center operating rooms can incorporate this new technology.

Kfar Saba's PathKeeper Surgical is a medical technology company that has established a solution to combat the high failure rates seen in spinal surgeries. PathKeeper was founded in 2018. [PathKeeper Surgical](http://www.path-keeper.com) received its FDA 510k clearance earlier this year for the PathKeeper system. The name PathKeeper effectively describes the essence of the system – a 3D optical navigation system that 'keeps' the surgical 'path' on course throughout the surgery. (PathKeeper 16.11)

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* 1. Can-Fite's Namodenoson Helps Survival in Advanced Liver Cancer Patient

Can-Fite BioPharma announced that a patient who participated in the Phase II Liver Cancer Study and was treated with namodenoson has a complete response. A patient with advanced hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) that was enrolled in the former Can-Fite Phase II study continues to receive treatment with namodenoson and has now an overall survival of 6.9 years with the disappearance of ascites, normal liver function and good quality of life and defined as a complete response.

Can-Fite has received agreement from both the U.S. FDA and European Medicines Agency (EMA) on a pivotal Phase III clinical study which is now enrolling patients in Israel, Europe and the US. Namodenoson has Orphan Drug status with both the FDA and EMA, as well as Fast Track Status with the FDA for the treatment of HCC. Namodenoson is a small orally bioavailable drug that binds with high affinity and selectivity to the A3 adenosine receptor (A3AR).

Petah Tikva's [Can-Fite BioPharma](http://www.can-fite.com) is an advanced clinical stage drug development company with a platform technology that is designed to address multi-billion dollar markets in the treatment of cancer, liver, inflammatory disease and COVID-19. The Company's lead drug candidate, Piclidenoson, is currently in a Phase III trial for psoriasis and a Phase II study in the treatment of moderate COVID-19. (Can-Fite 21.11)

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* 1. Skip Therapeutics & Sheba Collaborate for RNA-based Treatments for Rare Diseases

Skip Therapeutics and Sheba Medical Center entered a collaboration for the development of ASO-based treatments for rare genetic diseases. Under the terms of the agreement, Sheba will share with Skip its de-identified patient mutation repository and Skip will provide a bio-informatic assessment of the possibility to use ASOs to circumvent the mutation, restore protein function and constitute a relevant therapeutic path.

ASOs are short strands of synthetic, chemically modified, RNA sequences that can be designed to intervene in a molecular process called "splicing" which determines the final RNA sequence that will be translated into a protein. ASOs can be used to manipulate the splicing process and restore function of a mutated gene, by promoting exclusion of the mutated region from the final RNA transcript or by restoring normal splicing where it has been lost. This approach has already proved beneficial, among others, for treating Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, Batten Disease and Spinal Muscular Atrophy.

Ness Ziona's [Skip Therapeutics](https://www.skiptx.com/) develops Antisense Oligonucleotide (ASO) based therapies for rare genetic disorders and common diseases – utilizing a proprietary computational discovery platform to optimize target selection and guide therapeutic design. Skip's ASOs aim to restore function of mutated genes in genetic disorders by modulating splicing or by controlling gene expression levels.

The largest and most comprehensive medical center in the Middle East, [Sheba Medical Center](https://sheba-global.com), Tel HaShomer is generating global impact through its medical care, research and healthcare transformation. Sheba's City of Health boasts an acute-care hospital, rehabilitation hospital, research and innovation hubs, medical simulation center and center for disaster response on one comprehensive campus in the center of Israel. (Skip Therapeutics 21.11)

ISRAEL PRODUCT & TECHNOLOGY NEWS

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* 1. Symmetrium Launches Instant Messaging and SMS Data Protection Solution

Symmetrium has unveiled its instant messaging (IM) and SMS data protection solution, which eliminates the corporate security and compliance risks associated with IM usage by employees. By integrating with existing email security tools Symmetrium's new IM and SMS solution enables organizations to instantly protect against these security threats by deploying virtual mobile devices within the organization's network that provide users with dedicated work mobile numbers (which act as unique identifiers) without the need for dedicated devices. This ensures protection against SMS phishing (Smishing), preventing fraud and fraudulent links by scanning every message and integrating with existing email security tools before delivery to end users.

Symmetrium also mitigates compliance risks by capturing and storing all work-related messaging, instantly creating an agentless IM and SMS archive. This allows organizations to constantly meet regulatory data requirements imposed on their sector. When Symmetrium's VMDs are accessed by employees using their mobile phones, they act as extensions of all organizational security and compliance policies using end-to-end encrypted streaming. The result is a completely secure but native mobile experience with seamless deployment and management.

Tel Aviv's [Symmetrium](http://www.symmetrium.io) is a zero-trust, mobile data governance and security platform designed to turn any mobile device into a virtual extension of the enterprise, inheriting all its compliance, security and IT protocols. Symmetrium keeps no data at risk by allowing no data at rest, all while delivering users a completely native mobile access solution that can be quickly and easily deployed. (Symmetrium 08.11)

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* 1. Saskatchewan Workers' Board Selects Sapiens to Transform Compensation System

Sapiens International Corporation announced that the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), a provincially legislated body that administers the provincial compensation system on behalf of workers and employers, has selected Sapiens' CoreSuite for Workers Compensation, DigitalSuite and Intelligence to transform the WCB's legacy core systems with a modern, integrated platform for efficient service delivery. The WCB will also use Sapiens' cloud services for a seamless and secure hosting experience.

Saskatchewan WCB is looking to meet customers' evolving needs by replacing their core workers compensation systems to increase operational efficiency through automated workflows and work management. The WCB's selection of CoreSuite for Workers Compensation was prompted by its easily configurable, out-of-the box functionality and proven, purpose-built solution for workers' compensation. The WCB chose Sapiens for their expertise in the workers' compensation industry and focus on the customer experience. The WCB is a new Sapiens' customer whose phased implementation will occur over three years beginning with their employer accounts system (policy/billing) followed by their claims and case management system in phase two.

Holon's [Sapiens International Corporation](https://sapiens.com) empowers the financial sector, with a focus on insurance, to transform and become digital, innovative, and agile. With more than 40 years of industry expertise, Sapiens' cloud-based SaaS insurance platform offers pre-integrated, low-code capabilities across core, data and digital domains to accelerate our customers' digital transformation. (Sapiens 09.11)

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* 1. VisIC Technologies Revolutionizes Automotive Power Electronics with V22TG D3GAN

VisIC Technologies introduced the V22TG D3GAN power package. This revolutionary power package, housed in an advanced gull wing leaded top side cooled isolated package, sets new standards for performance, reliability, and versatility in the automotive industry. Designed with the future of electric vehicles in mind, the V22TG D3GAN brings together an array of cutting-edge features to deliver exceptional power density and efficiency. This compact power package with a small footprint of 19.7x13.6mm (including leads), provides automotive manufacturers with flexibility in system design and integration. Targeted for automotive AEC-Q101 standard, it can be used as well in the highly reliable field of server power supplies, data centers, solar inverters, and a wide range of industrial applications.

Ness Ziona's [VisIC Technologies](https://visic-tech.com/) is a world leader in GaN electronics for EV applications, focused on high-power automotive solutions. Its efficient and scalable products are based on deep technological knowledge of gallium-nitride and decades of experience. VisIC Technologies is committed to providing a step function improvement in size and cost of energy conversion systems and is dedicated to high-quality customer support at all development phases. VisIC offers high-power transistor products based upon compound semiconductor Gallium Nitride (GaN) material, aiming to provide products for cost-effective and high-performance automotive inverter systems. (VisIC 13.11)

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* 1. Azerbaijan Buys $1.2 Billion Israel Aerospace Barak Missile System

Following IAI's announcement of the sale of the system to an unnamed country, reports in Baku confirm that Azerbaijan is the customer. Four days after Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) announced the delivery of an air defense system to an unnamed country in a deal worth $1.2 billion, reports from Baku say that Azerbaijan has procured the Barak MX system.

In September, IAI demonstrated the Barak MX system before senior figures in Baku, with the system probably designed to protect Azerbaijan against the threat from Iran. The deal in which IAI will serve as the lead contractor is being conducted by Israel's Ministry of Defense. The Barak MX can also be used by Azerbaijan in its economic waters in the Caspian Sea in order to broader its air defenses.

The Barak MX system has several key components at the forefront of technology, which include interceptors, launchers, command and control systems, advanced radar, and multi-systems and inter-systems communications. The Barak MX is one of IAI's most advanced products. The Barak MX system is supported by radar and various launchers for covering combat aircraft, helicopters, UAVs, cruise missiles, and ground-to-air and ground-to-ground missiles. The system is based on a smart and operations-proven control center, which can be combined with other interceptor missiles. Increasing the interception range of the Barak ER is achieved by adding a rocket booster and adjusting the communication and radar capabilities to a range of 150 kilometers. (IAI 13.11)

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* 1. Stream Security Launches Real-time Cloud Security Solution

Stream Security announced a significant expansion into cloud security, ushering in a new era for the company beyond cloud operations. With this market transformation, Stream Security introduces an innovative, real-time Cloud Twin that empowers security and operations teams to detect and investigate their exposure and threats like never before.

Stream's pioneering technology is intricately linked to both posture and behavior — and the only known solution of its kind to map cloud dependencies in real-time. The Cloud Twin constantly models the cloud environment, allowing organizations to understand the impact of every operation in their cloud in real-time. By unveiling security gaps, analyzing potential threats, considering identifying exposures, and assessing the impact of their remediation efforts, it enables improved collaboration between security and operations teams.

Ramat Gan's [Stream Security](https://www.stream.security/) is a leading platform for cloud solutions specializing in real-time Cloud Twin technology. The platform constantly models enterprises' cloud environments to pinpoint how threats emerge and demystifies the impact of remediating them instantly. (Stream Security 14.11)

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* 1. OrCam Read 3 is First Ai-Driven Solution for People with Low Vision & Visual Impairments

Reading is no longer limited to only some people any longer. With the OrCam Read 3, ANYONE can read anywhere, anytime. This groundbreaking, all-in-one solution was unveiled by OrCam Technologies. OrCam Read 3 will change the way individuals with vision loss and reading difficulties interact with visual materials. Just point the device at a book, computer screen, product packaging or any text, and the AI technology will loudly and clearly read the text aloud or through earphones. It even supports 17 different languages.

The OrCam Read 3 caters to a wide audience, including those with mild to severe vision loss, individuals experiencing reading fatigue, those with neurological disorders that impact their ability to read easily and anyone who finds reading challenging. Its versatility lies in its ability to function as a handheld reading companion, a next-generation magnifier and a stationary reader. Users will enjoy unparalleled accessibility and convenience - allowing them to effortlessly engage with printed and digital text and other visual materials.

Jerusalem's [OrCam Technologies](http://www.orcam.com), a global leader in personal AI assistive technology platforms, was founded in 2010. OrCam harnesses highly advanced, AI-driven computer vision and machine learning to provide increased independence to people who are blind or visually impaired, have reading challenges, or hearing loss. (OrCam 14.11)

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* 1. SeeTrue's AI Automatic Detection Sets a New Standard in Urban Security Screening

SeeTrue disclosed its recent entry into the realm of urban security through a strategic partnership with Israel Railways. This collaborative effort has resulted in the seamless integration of SeeTrue's cutting-edge AI solution into security screening checkpoints at railway stations throughout Israel, including the country's largest stations, where more than 1,000 bags require screening every hour.

The integration of SeeTrue into train station security processes has proven to be transformative, maintaining a consistently high level of security and operating continuously around the clock. Passengers now benefit from a faster, smoother security process minimizing stress and ensuring that critical security checks do not lead to bottlenecks that can negatively impact the journey.

Tel Aviv's [SeeTrue](http://www.seetrue.ai) is a global leader in Security Screening Solutions, leveraging its state-of-the-art AI technology for secure, fast, and efficient threat detection. SeeTrue's AI-based automatic threat detection software is implemented around the world on top of X-ray and CT systems at airports, seaports, urban security checkpoints, customs and shipment facilities, making security and travel as fast and secure as possible while improving operational efficiency. (SeeTrue 14.11)

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* 1. Alarum's NetNut is Granted a United States Patent

Alarum Technologies announced that its wholly owned subsidiary, NetNut, was granted United States Patent No. 11,818,104 for its groundbreaking innovation, titled ANONYMOUS PROXYING. This patent, officially granted on 14 November 2023, signifies a significant milestone in the Company’s commitment to advancing technology and delivering cutting-edge solutions to its customers.

The newly granted patent describes a revolutionary method, which brings a novel twist to traditional proxy services. Unlike conventional anonymous proxies, where proxy service client requests would be rerouted through an intermediate proxy device, thus potentially slowing down the connection and exposing a device’s local network to security risks, NetNut’s “reflector” method achieves the same end-result without such detour. It cleverly uses the IP address of an intermediate device to initiate the connection, and after this initial step, client requests are sent directly to the target server. This method retains the benefits of using a proxy, while masking the original IP address and avoiding the usual bottleneck of channeling all traffic through a third-party device. The result is a secured, faster, more efficient, and streamlined method of connecting to the internet, with all the advantages of a proxy but none of the traditional drawbacks.

Herzliya Pituah's [Alarum Technologies](http://www.alarum.io) is a global provider of internet access and web data collection solutions. The solutions are based on their world’s fastest and most advanced and secured hybrid proxy network, enabling customers to collect data anonymously at any scale from any public sources over the web. The network comprises both exit points based on our proprietary reflection technology and hundreds of servers located at their ISP partners around the world. (Alarum Technologies 15.11)

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* 1. IONIX Surface Management Platform Adds Threat Exposure Management Capabilities

IONIX is extending its industry-leading Attack Surface Management (ASM) platform with today’s Threat Exposure Radar launch, the industry’s first threat exposure management capability fully integrated with an attack surface management solution. The product innovation provides a unified view of critical exposures from the entire, expanding, enterprise attack surface across cloud, on-premises, SaaS and third-party systems. It enables security teams to visualize and prioritize hundreds of attack surface threats into a manageable set of specific, actionable insights with one-click workflows to clear next steps, greatly simplifying and accelerating remediation.

IONIX provides security leaders with strategic oversight and tactical steps needed to mobilize teams, report findings to executives and proactively reduce risk. The product’s Attack Surface Risk Score simplifies understanding of overall security posture across multiple categories to track progress and investment returns. Now, with the Threat Exposure Radar added, IONIX consolidates hundreds of security findings into a single, strategic view with one-click access to actionable instructions for resolving the exposed or vulnerable assets.

Tel Aviv's [IONIX](http://www.ionix.io)’s attack surface management platform uses Connective Intelligence to shine a spotlight on exploitable risks across your real attack surface – and its digital supply chain. Only IONIX discovers and monitors every internet-facing asset and connection, delivers laser focus into the most important risks to your business, and provides the tools to rapidly remediate exploitable threats and reduce attack surface exposure. (IONIX 16.11)

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* 1. Finance of America Chooses Spera Security to Bolster its Identity Security

Spera Security announced that Finance of America has adopted Spera Security solutions to bolster its defense against identity-driven cyberattacks. As the leader in identity security, Spera Security brings together the benefit of threat detection and response along with posture management for all identity functions in the enterprise. Spera Security reduces enterprises’ cybersecurity risk with continuous detection, analysis and prioritized remediation of identity-related issues such as orphaned accounts, over-privileged or unnecessary admin accounts and partially off-boarded user accounts. Unlike traditional security solutions, Spera Security provides accelerated time to value and remediation time, enabling organizations to start addressing cybersecurity risks within days of deployment and quickly resolve the most pressing identity security gaps.

Tel Aviv's [Spera Security](http://www.spera.security) is the leading provider of identity security posture management and threat detection. As an identity-first security provider, Spera Security offers unique contextualized visibility into identities, permissions and actions to help enterprises proactively reduce their identity attack surface and risks. Spera Security also maintains and ensures continuous compliance to various industry regulations. Enterprises start realizing all the benefits from Spera Security within days of deployment. From the identity providers and cloud infrastructure to critical SaaS applications, Spera Security provides enterprises with comprehensive and holistic identity security coverage. (Spera Security 16.11)

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* 1. ParaZero Elevates Defense Drone Safety with Groundbreaking AI Avionics System

ParaZero Technologies recently unveiled a pioneering AI-driven avionics system, SmartAir Trinity, setting a new standard for drone safety within the defense sector. This advanced technology offers real-time malfunction detection and critical mission analytics, ensuring a robust solution to support operational security for defense drones.

SmartAir Trinity, launched in early September this year, is an advanced, AI-based avionics system that represents a significant leap in drone operational safety. Utilizing a pioneering sensor array, SmartAir Trinity provides real-time detection of malfunctions in UAS and eVTOL aircraft. This technological marvel not only ensures the utmost safety for defense missions but also delivers comprehensive analytics for post-mission debriefings– a feature that is critical for continual improvement in high-stakes operations.

Tel Aviv's [ParaZero](https://parazero.com) is a world-leading developer of autonomous parachute safety systems for commercial drone and urban air mobility (UAM) aircraft. Started in 2014 by a passionate group of aviation professionals and drone industry veterans, ParaZero designs smart, autonomous parachute safety systems designed to enable safe flight operations over populated areas. (ParaZero 17.11)

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* 1. Rescana Named 2023 CISO Choice Award Winner for Best Use of AI

Rescana has won the prestigious CISO's Connect CISO Choice award for Best Use of AI. The CISO Choice awards recognize vendors who deliver innovative, timely, and differentiated solutions for CISOs and their organizations across industries. Entries are judged by a panel of leading CISOs from some of the world's biggest companies.

Rescana is particularly honored to be the inaugural recipient of a new award dedicated to the burgeoning field of artificial intelligence (AI) within the already robust cybersecurity solutions market. Rescana uniquely harnesses AI to enable operators at every skill level to effectively and efficiently connect the dots across extensive data stores.

With Rescana's solution, operators no longer require coding skills to establish connections between datasets because the solution accomplishes this on demand by coding the connects and conduits to make those connections. This capability can significantly boost internal response, evidence collection, and time to mitigation or remediation. This dramatically increases the return on investment, while reducing the learning curve to allow new or less experienced operators protect sensitive or confidential digital assets.

Tel Aviv's [Rescana](https://www.rescana.com/‎)'s attack surface management and third-party risk management solution collects and analyzes massive datasets to extract actionable security insights from publicly available information to keep your digital assets safe. Rescana 15.11)

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* 1. Arbe Wins Self-Driving Industry 2023 Award from Cars of the Future

Arbe Robotics announced that Cars of the Future awarded the company the Self-Driving Industry 2023 Award in the hardware category. Cars of the Future celebrates excellence in connected and automated mobility internationally.

Arbe's Perception Radar revolutionizes automotive sensing, providing unmatched safety to the market. Distinguished by its ultra-high resolution and top-notch radar image quality, Arbe redefines radar as a sensor, providing advanced perception capabilities at a mass-market price. This groundbreaking technology ensures trustworthy data in all environments, weather, and lighting conditions. It is the first radar to track vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and bicycle riders, detect object boundaries, separate adjacent objects by elevation and azimuth while eliminating false alarms, resolving the factors behind Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) related accidents. Arbe's radar technology bridges the sensor gap with the industry's only radar offering accurate Free Space mapping across all driving scenarios, paving the way for genuinely safe hands-free driving experiences.

Tel Aviv's [Arbe](http://www.arberobotics.com), a global leader in Perception Radar Solutions, is spearheading a radar revolution, enabling truly safe driver-assist systems today while paving the way to full autonomous-driving. Arbe's radar technology is 100 times more detailed than any other radar on the market and is a critical sensor for L2+ and higher autonomy. The company is empowering automakers, tier-1 suppliers, autonomous ground vehicles, commercial and industrial vehicles, and a wide array of safety applications with advanced sensing and paradigm-changing perception. (Arbe Robotics 20.11)

ISRAEL ECONOMIC STATISTICS

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* 1. Israel's October CPI Shows that Inflation is Falling

Israel’s Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 0.5% in October, in line with expectations. In the twelve months to the end of October, the index rose by 3.7%, down from 3.8% from the 12 months to the end of September. The Bank of Israel's target range for annual inflation is 1-3%.

There were notable price increases in clothing and footwear, which rose by 3.9% and fresh fruit and vegetables, which rose 3.2%, transport rose 1% and food rose 0.9%. There were notable price falls in October in culture and entertainment, which fell 0.9% and rents, which fell 0.4%.

The Central Bureau of Statistics also released figures for home prices, which are not part of the CPI. After five consecutive months of price falls, deal prices in August-September 2023 compared with deals in July-August 2023 remained unchanged. Between July-August 2023 and August-September 2023, housing prices fell 0.1% in Jerusalem, rose 0.3% in Haifa and the north, rose 0.4% in the central region, fell 0.4% in Tel Aviv and fell 0.1% in the south. Prices of new apartments remained unchanged.

In comparison with August-September 2022, prices in August-September 2023 were 0.2% lower. Over this period prices rose 4.1% in Haifa, 2.8% in the north and 0.3% in Jerusalem, while prices fell 2.2% in the south, 1.7% in the central region and 0.3% in Tel Aviv. Prices of new apartments fell 3.9%. (CBS 15.11)

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* 1. S&P Forecasts 0.5% Israel GDP Growth During 2024

Globes reported that ratings agency S&P has published a survey of the Israeli economy after downgrading the country's credit outlook last month. The survey opens, "Israel faces significant geopolitical and security risks with the scenario of the war escalating to other regions remaining possible, although it is not the main scenario in its forecasts.

In terms of impact on the Israeli economy, S&P sees GDP growth of 1.5% in Israel in 2023 and 0.5% in 2024. The company's annual forecasts represent a sharp contraction of 5% in GDP in the fourth quarter of 2023, compared with the third quarter, with all expenditure components reduced, including domestic demand, exports and imports. The contraction stems from a fall in business activity, a fall in demand from both consumers and a very uncertain investment environment."

S&P sees a fiscal deficit of 5.3% of GDP in 2023 and 2024, up from its previous forecast before the war of 2.3%. Although the ratings agency sees war expenditure decreasing, S&P says that defense expenditure will remain high in the medium term.

On the political front, S&P observes that support for Prime Minister Netanyahu has fallen significantly following the unexpected Hamas attack last month and consequently the judicial reform being promoted by the coalition government will probably be suspended indefinitely.

After the war, S&P sees, "Gradual economic recovery s that by the end of 2024, the economy will have returned to its pre-war levels. Consequently, the company expects accelerated growth that will reach 5% in 2025, together with restored consumer confidence and full levels of investment."

S&P explains that an actual cut in Israel's credit rating in the next 12-24 months is only likely if the influence of the conflict on economic growth, the fiscal situation and Israel's balance of payments are more significant than the company expects, or if the conflict expands substantially and will increase the security and geopolitical risks that Israel faces.

In the positive scenario, S&P says it could restore Israel's credit outlook from negative to stable if the conflict is resolved, amid a reduction in regional security and internal risks with no long-term burden on the Israeli economy and public spending. Two weeks after the start of the war, S&P cut Israel's credit outlook from stable to negative but reaffirmed its AA- credit rating. (Globes 14.11)

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* 1. Israel GDP Growth Slowed in Third Quarter, Even Before Hamas' Assault

The Israeli economy grew by 2.8% in the third quarter, after growing 3% in the second quarter and 4.2% in the first quarter. Israel’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an annual rate of 2.8% in the third quarter of this year, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported in its initial estimate. Israel's economy grew by 3% in the second quarter of 2023 and 4.2% in the first quarter after growing 6.5% in 2022. However, the economy is expected to contract in the fourth quarter due to the war against Hamas, which began on 7 October.

The Q3/23 figure reflects a slowing down of the economy even before the war began. Business GDP grew by 2.9% in the third quarter while private consumer spending grew by only 1.8%. Investment in fixed assets rose by 1.2%. Exports of goods and services rose 8.8% and public spending rose by 5.9%. (Globes 16.11)

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* 1. Unemployment in Israel Unchanged in October

The Central Bureau of Statistics announced that unemployment in Israel in October remained unchanged from September at 3.1% (seasonally adjusted). This is a surprising statistic because the number of job vacancies fell sharply by 18% and mainly because of the Hamas assault on Israel that began on 7 October.

But while unemployment officially remains very low, the significant figure is the huge rise in the number of employees who are temporarily absent from their jobs. This figure rose to 430,000 in October from 160,000 in September and includes employees in the army reserves and employees placed on unpaid leave.

In measuring October's figures, the Central Bureau of Statistics also did not survey those living within seven kilometers of the Gaza border, including Ofakim. While the October figures show no fall in unemployment, the full numbers presented by the Central Bureau of Statistics clearly indicate a cooling off in the job market with many employees going on unpaid leave. (CBS 20.11)

IN DEPTH

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* 1. ISRAEL: Israeli Offshore Gas Platform Near Gaza Resumes Production

On 15 November, Simon Henderson posted in [TWI](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org) that on 9 November, Israel’s Ministry of Energy instructed Chevron to resume production at the Tamar gas field after having ordered the field’s operator to halt production on 7 October, following Hamas’s assault against Israel.

The Tamar platform stands in water more than five hundred feet deep about thirteen miles off the Israeli coast south of the city of Ashkelon—and a similar distance from Gaza. The installation provides initial processing of gas from the Tamar offshore field much further north, about seventy miles offshore of the northern Haifa port. From the platform, the gas is piped to shore just north of the Port of Ashdod for further processing before entering Israel’s gas trunk pipeline system.

The Tamar platform and nearby Mari-B platform, the latter of which is no longer operating, are both vulnerable to rocket fire from Gaza as well as seaborne assault, so even in normal times they are protected by heavily armed security personnel and patrolling high-speed boats. Additionally, larger naval craft equipped with the anti-rocket Iron Dome system can be quickly deployed from their base in Ashdod.

These days, most of Israel’s domestic gas demand is met by the offshore Leviathan field, which lies west of the Tamar field. Leviathan gas is piped to a larger platform standing five or so miles off the northern city of Hadera, where tall chimneys from its power station have for years demonstrated Israel’s previous reliance on imported (and environmentally dirty) coal for electricity generation. Leviathan gas also supplies much of neighboring Jordan’s electricity demand.

The impact of the Tamar gas cutoff was not officially explained but likely affected several industrial plants with supply contracts, including two Jordanian facilities at the southern end of the Dead Sea used to recover potash and other minerals. But the main impact would have been on exports to Egypt, where Israeli gas helps meet the country’s apparently insatiable domestic demand for electricity. Supply volumes have now reportedly recovered but are still less than pre–7 October volumes.

Some of the Egypt-bound gas appears to be flowing via Jordan to its southern Port of Aqaba, from where it is piped the short distance on the seabed to Egypt, then northward to al-Arish on Sinai’s Mediterranean coast. Previously, the gas would have flowed through the much shorter East Mediterranean Gas (EMG) pipeline on the seabed from Israel to al-Arish. It appears that this pipeline, running parallel to the Gaza coast, has reopened.

While redundancy in Israel’s gas infrastructure diminished the impact of the Tamar shutdown, the country’s vulnerability remains high. Amid continuing tensions on the northern border with Lebanon, the danger persists that despite the 2022 Israel-Lebanon maritime border agreement, Hezbollah could threaten the Leviathan platform or the activities of the floating gas recovery installation operating in the northern Karish offshore field.

Tamar’s return to production will reestablish the revenue flow for the companies owning the license, particularly Chevron, as well as tax revenue for the Israeli government. That will also be good news for the companies—among them BP and the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan—that were awarded licenses on 30 October to explore for gas off Israel’s coast.

*Simon Henderson is the Baker Fellow and director of the Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy at The Washington Institute.*  (TWI 15.11)

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* 1. JORDAN: IMF Reaches Staff Level Agreement with Jordan on a New $1.2 Billion EFF

A staff team from the [International Monetary Fund (IMF)](http://www.imf.org/) visited Amman during October 30 – November 9, 2023, to discuss a new program of reforms supported by the IMF’s Extended Fund Facility (EFF). Jordan expressed interest in a new program in June 2023. Discussions on the new program were launched during the authorities’ visit to Washington DC in July this year.

At the conclusion of the mission, the IMF issued the following statement:

“The IMF team and the Jordanian authorities have reached a staff-level agreement on a new economic program under a 4 year arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), with access of 270% of quota, equivalent to SDR 926.374 million, or about $1.2 billion at current exchange rates. The new EFF arrangement will replace the existing arrangement that was set to expire in early 2024. It builds on the strong performance under the existing program. All commitments that had been set for the seventh review have been met, including several ahead of schedule.

“The agreement is subject to IMF management approval and consideration by the Executive Board, which are expected in early January 2024. Upon Board approval, Jordan would have immediate access to SDR 144.102 million (about $190 million).

“The current EFF arrangement has helped Jordan build resilience, enabling it to withstand successive shocks. The external environment remains challenging. Global and regional tensions are high, interest rates are expected to remain higher for longer, and global growth is unevenly distributed. The conflict in Gaza and Israel poses yet another risk to the region and could adversely affect Jordan’s economy. Barring significant escalation, the Jordanian economy can overcome this shock, with strong support from its international partners. A new EFF arrangement will further strengthen Jordan’s resilience and help it maintain stability in the face of new shocks.

“Jordan’s economy is still expected to grow by 2.6% in 2023, with strong performance across all sectors in the first three quarters. The higher interest rate environment has contributed to a low rate of inflation, reflecting CBJ’s commitment to safeguard the exchange rate peg. Inflation declined to just over 1% in September 2023. The current account deficit is expected to improve in 2023, to just over 7% of GDP and international reserves are strong.

“Growth is projected to be held back by the impact of the conflict, not exceeding 2.6% in 2024, while the current account is expected to narrow less than expected earlier, to 6.5% of GDP. With sound economic policies and strong international support, reserves are projected to remain strong. The outlook would worsen in the event of an intensification of the conflict.

“The policies underpinning the new EFF arrangement are guided by Jordan’s Economic Modernization Vision. The aim is to accelerate growth over the medium term to address persistent high unemployment, while ensuring continued macro-economic stability. The authorities will continue to rebuild fiscal and reserve buffers and create a more dynamic private sector that can create more jobs.

“Fiscal policy under the new program will be anchored by the goal to place public debt on steady downward path, bringing public debt to below 80% of GDP by 2028. To achieve this, and cement progress made in reducing the budget deficit in the last few years, Jordan will continue with sound fiscal policies and reforms aimed at balancing the need for fiscal consolidation, by further broadening the tax base and enhancing spending efficiency, with bolstering social assistance and supporting growth.

“The CBJ’s policies will continue to be aimed at preserving monetary and financial stability. Monetary policy will continue to be underpinned by the CBJ’s firm commitment to the peg to the US dollar. The peg has served Jordan well, by providing a credible nominal anchor. Under the CBJ’s prudent supervision, the banking sector remains resilient, liquid and well capitalized, and Jordan successfully exited the FATF grey list.

“Structural reforms will be accelerated, with the aim of creating a more dynamic private sector that can create more jobs and achieve a meaningful reduction in unemployment, especially among women and youth. Improving the business environment, including by making it easier to start and operate a business, enhancing competition and access to finance, and reforming labor markets are key to attracting higher levels of investment and to achieving these goals. Strong efforts in utilities sector reform are crucial to ensure the sector’s financial viability and improve its ability to deliver essential services. (IMF 09.11)

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* 1. QATAR: IMF Staff Completes 2023 Article IV Mission to Qatar

On 21 November, the [International Monetary Fund (IMF)](http://www.imf.org/) announced that a staff team visited Doha, Qatar during 1–14 November 2023 to conduct discussions for the 2023 Article IV consultation. The mission will submit a report to IMF management and Executive Board, which is scheduled to discuss the Article IV Consultation in January 2024.

At the conclusion of the visit, the IMF issued the following statement:

“After very strong performance in 2022, economic growth has been normalizing while the medium-term outlook remains favorable. Output is expected to expand by about 1¾ percent per annum during 2023–25 with the non-hydrocarbon sector growing at 2¾ percent driven by domestic demand, including from the construction of the North Field expansion project, and robust tourism, boosted by the global visibility brought by the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Medium-term growth is set to increase to around 5% per annum supported by LNG production expansion and as reform efforts to achieve National Vision 2030 guided by the Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) start to bear fruit. Inflation will likely moderate to 2%, and the fiscal and current accounts are projected to remain in surpluses over the medium term. Risks to the outlook are broadly balanced.

“Broad fiscal discipline amid sizeable hydrocarbon windfalls in 2022–23 has strengthened fiscal position significantly and is commendable. Continued fiscal prudence is expected under the upcoming 2024 budget. The next medium-term budget, covering 5 years for the first time, is being developed to support NDS3 initiatives and should balance aspiration for transformation and fiscal prudence. The ongoing effort to enhance efficiency, including through the implementation of program-based budgeting and to increase transparency is welcome. Medium-term priorities include accelerating revenue diversification through further mobilization of non-hydrocarbon tax revenues, enhancing spending efficiency, and reorienting public investment to facilitate private sector growth, which can be supported by a well-functioning medium-term fiscal framework and greater fiscal transparency.

“The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) has maintained price and financial stability. Inflation has moderated following monetary policy tightening in tandem with the U.S. Federal Reserve, consistent with the currency peg to the U.S. dollar. Banks remain healthy, although the non-performing loan ratio has edged up as pandemic-related restructured loans have turned non-performing, output growth has normalized after the World Cup and financial conditions have tightened. Banks’ relatively high provisioning mitigates the risks. The QCB has refined macroprudential measures to further reduce risks associated with banks’ external asset-liability mismatches, especially those of short maturities, which is welcome. Continued diligence is critical to enhance banking sector resilience, complemented by reforms to further deepen domestic financial markets, as envisaged in the upcoming financial sector strategy.

“Qatar is at an important juncture in shifting its growth model from one that is led by the state to a more dynamic and market-oriented one driven by the private sector. Building on the progress made so far, and guided by upcoming NDS3, reforms should focus on enhancing human capital, labor market dynamism, and business environment. Furthering digitalization with due attention to potential risks, and strengthening climate resilience and green transition are also key for achieving National Vision 2030. (IMF 21.11)

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* 1. OMAN: IMF Staff Completes 2023 Article IV Mission to the Sultanate of Oman

An [International Monetary Fund (IMF)](http://www.imf.org/) staff team conducted discussions in Muscat for the 2023 Article IV consultation during 1-15 November. At the conclusion of the mission, the IMF issued the following statement:

“Supported by favorable oil prices and sustained reform momentum, Oman’s economic recovery continues. The economy grew by 4.3% in 2022, primarily driven by the hydrocarbon sector, before slowing down to 2.1% (year on year) in the first half of 2023 on the back of OPEC+-related oil production cuts. Non-hydrocarbon growth accelerated from 1.2% in 2022 to 2.7% in the first half of 2023, supported by recovering agricultural and construction activities and robust services sector. Inflation has receded from 2.8% in 2022 to 1.2% during January-September 2023. Prudent fiscal management and high oil prices helped turn fiscal and current account balances into surpluses in 2022. Public sector debt was reduced markedly. Oman's sovereign credit rating has been upgraded to one notch below investment grade and sovereign spreads have become nearly at par with the average of Gulf Cooperation Council countries and well below that of emerging markets.”

“The economic outlook remains favorable. While growth is projected to slow down this year to 1.3% due to OPEC+-related oil production cuts, it is set to rebound starting in 2024, supported by higher hydrocarbon production and stronger non-hydrocarbon growth. Fiscal and current account balances are projected to remain in surplus over the medium term albeit trending down along with oil prices. Nevertheless, the outlook is subject to high uncertainty, including from oil price volatility, global economic and financial developments, and potential indirect spillovers from the ongoing conflict in Gaza.”

“The authorities remain committed to fiscal discipline while strengthening the social safety net. The non-hydrocarbon primary deficit is set to decline by 3.4% of non-hydrocarbon GDP in 2023 relative to 2022. The ongoing implementation of the new social protection law will strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups and reinforce the sustainability of the unified pension fund. Sustaining the momentum of fiscal reforms remains, however, key to entrenching fiscal sustainability and ensuring intergenerational equity.”

“Enhancing non-hydrocarbon revenues—including through the planned tax administration reform and personal income tax on high-income earners—and further rationalizing current expenditures, particularly from phasing out untargeted energy subsidies, remain a priority. Institutionalizing a medium-term fiscal framework, building on the significant progress made under the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan, will help cement fiscal discipline and credibility.”

“The exchange rate peg remains a credible monetary anchor for Oman. The ongoing implementation of the CBO’s Monetary Policy Enhancement Project will further strengthen the monetary policy toolkit. The banking sector continues to show resilience. Profitability has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, capital and liquidity ratios are well above regulatory requirements, and asset quality remains strong. Expediting the implementation of the authorities’ financial development agenda will be key to improve financing opportunities and support economic diversification efforts. ”

“Sustained efforts to implement Vision 2040 are progressing. The new labor law is set to improve working conditions and the flexibility of the labor market as well as enhance female labor force participation. Efforts to create a more enabling business environment are ongoing, including from the reform of state-owned enterprises under Oman Investment Authority. The climate agenda is progressing through ample investments in renewable energy and hydrogen, guided by the authorities’ National Strategy for an Orderly Transition to Net Zero.” (IMF 16.11)

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* 1. SAUDI ARABIA: Vision 2030 Has Transformed Saudi Arabia’s Legal and Judicial Systems

Saudi Arabia’s legal reforms aim to provide a legal environment conducive to business while at the same time upholding the centrality of sharia in the kingdom’s judicial and legal systems.

Eman Alhussein and Tine Gade posted on 20 November in [Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington](https://agsiw.org/) that a core aspect of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 transformation agenda is reforming the kingdom’s legal and judicial framework. One of the key changes has been the codification of laws, which aims to create a more predictable legal and judicial environment and reassure foreign investors and businesses. The legal changes adopted in recent years demonstrate Saudi Arabia’s interest in providing a legal environment conducive to business while at the same time upholding the centrality of sharia in the kingdom’s judicial and legal systems.

**Legal Codification**

Unlike other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Saudi Arabia until recently relied on uncodified Islamic law. This gave judges the freedom to judge court cases according to their knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and their absolute moral conviction. This *ijtihad* (independent interpretation of religious texts) often led to different and unforeseeable rulings on similar cases, creating discrepancies and making it difficult for lawyers to rely on judicial precedent.

Codification has been on the agenda since the rule of King bin Abdulaziz, who in 2007 allocated nearly $2 billion to “overhaul” the kingdom’s judicial system and “upgrade its court facilities.” Still, codification was long opposed by the religious class, who considered the process an attempt to Westernize the legal system and undercut its power. In the past, the discretion granted to judges due to the lack of codification often led to subjective rulings, causing debate over controversial cases to go viral, especially with cases involving domestic and family issues. In the absence of codification, the government often introduced specific regulations in the aftermath of controversial cases to deter future violations. Examples include the Protection from Abuse Law, introduced in 2013, and the Anti-Harassment Law, introduced in 2018.

**Vision 2030 Spurs Reforms**

The need for codification and reforming the Saudi legal system has become even more pressing since the launch of Vision 2030 in 2016. The kingdom’s aim of attracting foreigners and investors, who might be skeptical of its judiciary, demanded a more comprehensive legal system similar to neighboring Gulf countries. The 2018 Bankruptcy Law, one of the first laws introduced in Saudi Arabia with investors in mind, is intended to improve the ease of doing business in the kingdom. This was followed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s announcement in 2021 of a legal reform agenda that included codification and four new laws: the Personal Status Law, the Civil Transactions Law, the Penal Code for Discretionary Sanctions, and the Law of Evidence. The crown prince emphasized that the new laws are derived from sharia while also taking into account international obligations, legal trends, and judicial practices.

The highly anticipated Personal Status Law was issued 8 March 2022, coinciding with International Women’s Day. The law details issues related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody and alimony, such as rights granted to women during marriage and after divorce, which have been fiercely debated in the past. Most of the new provisions are favorable to women, especially in custody cases. However, the law is often not favorable to couples, as it codified certain tribal practices, such as the principle of *takafu al-nasab* (lineal compatibility in marriage), allowing a married couple or often their immediate family members to annul a marriage in court based on tribal incompatibility.

The Law of Evidence, which came into effect in July 2022, covers civil and commercial transactions. This law builds on previous efforts, including King Abdullah’s 2007 legal reform announcement, and could be a game changer for litigation in the kingdom. It allows the use of digital evidence, such as emails and media, as evidence in court. Moreover, the law states that any monetary disputes over approximately $26,600 cannot rely solely on witnesses and requires written contracts as evidence, encouraging the use of formal contracts and other documentary evidence expected to disincentivize criminal behavior.

The Civil Transaction Law, which was announced in June and will be implemented in December, concerns contracts and financial transactions. With over 700 articles, the comprehensive legislation is meant to reassure investors and provide the transparency and legal foundation required for implementing Vision 2030. This is a significant step in creating a more predictable business climate in the kingdom. The final law in the package Mohammed bin Salman announced in 2021, the Penal Code for Discretionary Sanctions, has yet to be issued but will deal with criminal charges.

The codification process has been subject to thorough planning and execution. Senior officials, ministers, and judges, as well as academics, lawyers, and other practitioners, were appointed to the committees reviewing and drafting each law. In addition, the process consulted a wide array of non-Saudi stakeholders. As a result, Saudi Arabia’s legal system has been codified, but sharia remains the backbone and foundation of the laws. This process of codification has been an important step in getting the kingdom closer to a civil legal system similar to that of its neighbors.

Codification has also been accompanied by other important steps led by the Ministry of Justice, which has become one of the leading Saudi ministries in the field of digitalization. The Najiz app, launched in 2021, includes 140 services for Saudis and noncitizen residents (including business owners). The app is meant to unify and digitize all judicial procedures and transactions under one umbrella, allowing users to file cases, submit evidence, and file for divorce, among other services. The extensive use of apps by the Ministry of Justice has made cases proceed more quickly, as appointments and hearings are now also held online. Notwithstanding the disadvantages of removing the traditional rituals of in-person court sessions, this change appears to be well received among lawyers.

The overhaul of the legal system has also addressed the increase of divorce in the kingdom. Reconciliation offices in courts were introduced as early as 2013 and have been expanded through the establishment of an independent Markaz Al-Mosalaha (Reconciliation Center), accompanied by an online portal and app, to settle family, spousal and business disputes. Any couple with children going through a divorce must have a session with the Reconciliation Center before the divorce can proceed. Mediation has a history in sharia and Islamic culture, and the aim of the center is to maintain stability within families while also reducing the number of cases that appear before judges, especially coming from newlyweds.

**Future Outlook**

Reforming the legal system will require continuous training of judges and lawyers to keep them up to date with the fast pace of the ongoing changes in Saudi Arabia. So far, the Ministry of Justice’s newly established Judicial Training Center has trained more than 27,000 people to work in the sector. However, as Mohammed bin Salman noted in a September interview, there remains work to be done on judicial reform. When asked about a case in which a Saudi man was sentenced to death for social media posts, the crown prince expressed dismay at the judge’s ruling and agreed that the judicial system still needs further reforms.

The major transformation of Saudi Arabia’s legal and judicial systems in recent years demonstrates the kingdom’s interest in establishing a legal environment more conducive to international business while also improving life for citizens and residents. However, while digitalization efforts have accelerated legal procedures, the fast pace of change often leaves the public, especially women, insufficiently informed. Finally, the readiness of judges to follow the many new regulations and reforms will be a major litmus test for Saudi Arabia’s legal and judicial overhaul.

*Eman Alhussein is a non-resident fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. Tine Gade is senior research fellow in the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs research group on Peace, Conflict and Development.* (AGSIW 20.11)

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* 1. EGYPT: Is Egypt Making a Breakthrough in the Internationalization of Education?

Enterprise reported on 13 November that Egyptian students looking to study at universities abroad might be able to take their UK foundation year here in Egypt, a senior government source told Enterprise. The Higher Education Ministry is studying a proposal to offer the foundation year at universities in Egypt to students who wish to study overseas, they told us — a positive step towards the internationalization of Egypt’s education system as well as curbing the country’s debilitating FX crunch and the ongoing “brain drain.”

What is a foundation year? Students enrolling in British and other international universities are able to take an introductory “foundation” year to prepare them for undertaking an undergraduate degree. Over the course of the year, students study a variety of subjects in their chosen field of study — whether that’s accounting or business, or humanities or arts and design — helping them make the jump to university education. Foundation years are popular with mature students, international students, and students who didn’t achieve the requisite exam results.

**The outflow of Egyptian students is both a brain and an FX drain:** Previous ministry estimations showed that around 27k students spend a combined EGP 20 billion to study at European and American universities, the government source added. The total number of Egyptian students taking their degrees abroad has more than tripled over the past two decades, rising from 8.8k students in 2000 to more than 50k during the school year 2022/2023, according to the latest data from UNESCO.

The amount of spending by Egyptian students abroad has risen in recent years. However, it is difficult to reach a conclusive figure because parents use several ways and various exchange rates to pay for overseas tuition fees, making it difficult to estimate the real value of the transferred FX, the source explained.

Want to study abroad? Completing a local foundation year may become a requirement, according to our source, who told us that the ministry wants them to become a prerequisite for international study.

Expect the wheels to be in motion by the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year, our source told us. Under a soon to be announced plan, seven international universities are expected to offer foundation years, including the University of London in the new capital which already has a foundation year program. The university offers the foundation year through its branch hosted at the European Universities in Egypt (EUE). More institutions are expected to start offering their own programs at a later date.

**Offering foundation courses could convince Egyptian students to stick with Egypt:** Rolling out new programs will encourage students to consider enrolling in the Egyptian system, which has increased in quality and diversity, said Obada Sarhan, president of Future University in Egypt.

**Striking academic partnerships to build Egyptian unis’ knowledge and reputation:** Regulations universities planning to launch new faculties and departments, they must establish an academic partnership with a university overseas. This measure will give Egyptian universities the opportunity to advance and expand their capacity and build a reputation abroad, Sarhan said.

The international branch campuses program is a key feature of the higher education reform process. Under regulations, foreign universities can open branches in Egypt by establishing their own campuses, such as the German International University of Applied Sciences, or by collaborating with Egyptian educational hubs that host branches of international universities, such as the Knowledge Hub. They can also permit foreigners to own and run educational institutions and grant them complete academic independence, separate from the Egyptian system. (Enterprise 13.11)

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* 1. LIBYA: IMF Staff Concludes Visit to Libya

On 20 November, the [International Monetary Fund (IMF)](http://www.imf.org/) announced that a staff team visited Tunis, Tunisia, during 13-16 November 2023 to discuss Libya’s economic and financial developments, the macroeconomic outlook, and the country’s policy and reform priorities. At the conclusion of the visit, the IMF made the following statement:

Despite the devastating floods, Libya’s medium-term economic outlook remains positive due to the projected high oil prices. Although estimates of the damage due to the floods are not available yet, the impact of the disaster on measured GDP is likely to be relatively small given that Libya’s economy is largely dependent on oil and gas production. The medium-term economic outlook remains positive on the back of high projected global oil prices.

There is an urgent need for a clear economic vision for the country. In the short term, Libya requires a budget to support policy credibility, because untargeted fiscal spending complicates the implementation of the macroeconomic policy. In the medium term, the country needs an economic strategy to diversify away from hydrocarbons and to foster stronger and more inclusive private sector-led growth. Reducing untargeted subsidies would free the resources for better-targeted social spending and productive investments. In the longer term, structural reform efforts should focus on strengthening institutions, upgrading the anti-money laundering combatting the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) framework, and addressing corruption and governance concerns.

We welcome the reforms undertaken by the Libyan authorities this year. There has been notable progress towards improving data collection, enhancing the AML/CFT framework, fintech innovation and aligning banking supervision with international standards and best practices. The recently established High Financial Oversight Committee with representation from the East and the West to allocate fiscal resources is an improvement but needs to eventually evolve towards a budgetary process in line with global best practices.

The recently announced reunification of the central bank is a step in the right direction. The immediate benefit stemming from the August announcement is improved coordination in the areas of monetary policy, banking system liquidity and supervision. The next steps should include integrating the payment system and unifying the central bank’s organizational structure, and accounting procedures before full reunification can be achieved.

Libya needs technical assistance support and the IMF is helping authorities by providing capacity development in several areas, including public financial management, monetary and financial statistics, national accounts, tax, customs and price statistics. Future capacity development activities include tax systems, financial sector supervision and regulation, balance of payments statistics and AML/CFT. However, progress in addressing Libya’s short- and medium-term challenges—including by modernizing fiscal and monetary policy frameworks—will, to a large extent, depend on the pace of political reconciliation.

The next Article IV mission is expected in the Spring of 2024. (IMF 20.11)

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* 1. GREECE: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2023 IMF Article IV Consultation Mission

On 14 November, the [International Monetary Fund (IMF)](http://www.imf.org/) issued a concluding statement describing the preliminary findings of IMF staff at the end of an official staff visit to Greece.

Greece’s economic outlook has improved notably with real GDP expanding beyond its pre-pandemic trend level. The public debt-to-GDP ratio has declined below its pre-pandemic level with debt financing risks contained in the medium term due to the favorable debt structure. The banking system has remained resilient with improving balance sheets. However, the economy is facing macro-financial challenges amid the significant monetary policy tightening, persistent core inflation, and rising real estate prices. Structural imbalances arising from low household savings and still low level of investment as well as a structural shift from climate change are weighing on medium-term growth prospects. Achieving higher and greener growth and ensuring fiscal sustainability while safeguarding financial stability requires the right policy mix aimed at continuing fiscal consolidation in a growth-friendly manner, strengthening financial system resilience, and accelerating pro-growth reforms.

**Robust Recovery amid High Inflation**

**1. Economic activity has remained robust in 2023.** Real GDP continued to expand at a solid pace in the first half of 2023 by 2½% (seasonally adjusted annualized rate). Private consumption was buoyant on the back of increasing real wages and a gradual decline in pandemic-induced excess household savings. Fixed investment growth remained robust driven by the ongoing Next Generation EU (NGEU)-funded investment. High frequency data suggests that overall economic momentum remained robust in the third quarter despite a series of natural disasters (heatwaves, wildfires, and floods). The unemployment rate declined to 10% in September, a decade low. Headline and core inflation decelerated to 3.8 and 3.6% (y/y), respectively, in October due to normalizing energy prices and base effects, but remain high amid the tightening labor market. Residential real estate prices have increased by more than 50% since the trough in 2017 but still remain below their pre-Global Financial Crisis levels.

**2. Much-needed continued progress in structural reforms has improved investment and productivity growth.**  Good progress has been made in the digital transformation of the economy, including the integration of various government services. Labor market reforms such as the modernization of labor legislations and of public employment services have facilitated labor market adjustment since the pandemic. The enhanced competition authority’s actions have contributed to increasing market competition. On the back of this progress, Greece’s potential growth is estimated to have turned positive in 2022, for the first time since the sovereign debt crisis.

**3. The banking system has remained resilient underpinned by policy support and balance sheet strengthening.** Asset quality further improved, with the NPL ratio declining below 5% in Q2/23 in systemically important banks, supported by continued securitizations under the Hercules program. The lower NPL ratio, coupled with higher net interest margins, has contributed to a strong rebound in bank profits, bolstering capital adequacy. Amid continued deposit inflows on the back of strong growth, the banking system has also maintained sizable liquidity buffers despite substantial repayments of ECB’s targeted long-term refinancing operations (TLTRO).

**4. Real GDP is projected to grow robustly by 2.5 and 2.0% in 2023 and 2024, respectively, before moderating toward the medium term.** Private consumption will be supported by positive real wage growth, while investment activity will continue to expand with the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). However, against the backdrop of demographic headwinds, the expiration of NGEU funding in 2026, and still low potential growth, GDP growth is forecast to moderate to about 1¼% in the medium term. Headline inflation is projected to reach 2% by end-2025 as pressures on core inflation will dissipate only gradually despite continued normalization of food and fuel prices.

**5. Risks are more balanced for growth but tilted upward for inflation.** A potential escalation of Russia’s war in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East could disrupt trade and trigger renewed energy and food price pressures and undermine confidence. Higher-than-expected persistence in euro area inflation and higher-for-longer interest rates would weigh on regional and domestic demand. More frequent extreme climate events could disrupt tourism and overall activities. In contrast, acceleration of ambitious structural reforms, in tandem with stronger-than-expected market reactions to the investment grade upgrade, could further improve growth prospects. Inflation could remain high resulting from weather-related shocks as well as domestic pressures from recent and expected wage and pension increases.

**Growth-friendly Fiscal Consolidation**

**6. Growth-friendly fiscal consolidation can further strengthen public debt sustainability while supporting inclusive and green growth.** With still very high debt, continued fiscal consolidation with the primary surplus increasing to 2.1% of GDP in 2024, up from projected 1.1% in 2023, would help further reduce the public debt-to-GDP ratio, while limiting additional pressure on inflation. Amid strong revenue growth, maintaining a primary surplus of about 2% of GDP in the medium term would further improve public debt sustainability, while providing additional space for domestically financed public investment and critical social spending. This would contribute to narrowing Greece’s large investment gap while keeping the public debt-to-GDP ratio firmly on a declining path.

**7. Containing spending pressures is critical to maintain fiscal space for crucial social and capital expenditure.** Spending pressures should be resisted in non-discretionary areas such as public sector wages and pensions, which are still at elevated levels in cross-country comparison. In contrast, investment needs are large, including for green and digital transition. Critical social spending such as targeted social transfers, healthcare, and education should be protected or expanded for more inclusive growth. Ongoing efforts to strengthen the social safety net, including via a single portal for benefits, will better protect the vulnerable.

**8. Advancing fiscal structural reforms would enhance fiscal governance and improve the efficiency of fiscal policy.** The authorities’ ongoing efforts to address tax evasion, including targeted reforms for the self-employed, are important and welcome. Continued efforts to promote digital transactions and rationalize tax incentives would improve the efficiency of revenue collection. Given the planned large investment under the NRRP, public investment management should be further strengthened.

**Safeguarding Financial Stability**

**9. The monitoring and management of risks associated with interest rate, liquidity and funding, and credit exposures should be strengthened, underpinned by a strong bank capital base.** In an environment of higher-for-longer interest rates, banks’ interest-rate risk and the appropriateness of their risk management strategies need to be closely monitored. Supervisors should monitor and stress-test bank funding and liquidity conditions as the replacement of TLTRO with more expensive market funding may pose challenges. Proactive management of credit risks is warranted to ensure that banks maintain comfortable capital buffers. Supervisors should also ensure that banks adapt their business models to ensure sustainable profitability, while temporarily elevated profits should be used to build capital buffers and restore quality of capital.

**10. The macroprudential policy toolkit should be further strengthened and more actively used to enhance resilience of the banking sector.** Complementing organic bank capital accumulation and issuances, the activation of a positive neutral countercyclical capital buffer would help guard banks against potential systemic shocks. Borrower-based measures for mortgage loan borrowers—such as ceilings on loan-to-value ratio and caps on debt service-to-income ratio—would enhance household resilience and consequently contain vulnerabilities in the banking system against the potential housing boom.

**Implementing Reforms for Higher and Greener Growth**

11. Comprehensive reforms to address structural supply impediments would lift medium-term growth prospects while alleviating inflationary pressure.

* **Accelerating regulatory reforms to support business.** Regulations should be rationalized to facilitate firm entry and exit as well as job transitions in all sectors, which will help improve business dynamism and productivity. The authorities’ current efforts in digitalization could sharpen the focus in serving small- and medium-sized enterprises to maximize the economic and employment benefits.
* **Ensuring higher labor participation and a better skilled workforce.** Scaling up the lifelong learning system, including on digital and green skills, could reduce skill shortages and help address the bottlenecks for youth and women employment. More targeted policy support, such as improving the availability and affordability of childcare and reducing the marginal income tax of second earners, would help raise female labor force participation.
* **Strengthening judicial system reforms and out-of-court proceedings.** Further progress to accelerate debt resolution through restructurings under the out-of-court workout platform and through the formal proceedings under the new insolvency code would contribute to improving business dynamism. It will help increase financial sector resilience as well by further reducing bank NPLs and distressed debt recovered by credit servicers.

**12. Concerted efforts are needed to achieve the authorities’ ambitious climate goals and green transition.** Given the dominance of fossil fuels in energy, a strong implementation of the authorities’ policy framework for renewables, including measures to streamline the licensing framework for new investment and better integrate renewables in the electricity grid, would accelerate the progress while boosting energy security. The authorities should consider raising the carbon tax (including excise and feebates) in non-ETS sectors such as transport to further incentivize rapid and efficient green transition as energy price continues to normalize. (IMF 14.11)

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