

Black Hat MEA Sets New World Record for Largest Capture The Flag Hackathon

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, November 29, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Black Hat MEA 2024 rounded off a memorable three-day run at Riyadh Exhibition and Convention Center, Malham, by setting a stunning Guinness World Record for the largest Capture the Flag (CTF) Hackathon ever, while industry experts discussed how Saudi Arabia has “matured” into a global cyber safety leader.

With a target of 1,000 participants needed to break the existing hackathon record, Black Hat MEA 2024 brought together 1,039 of the brightest cyber specialists across 250 teams, with the record ratified by an official Guinness World Record adjudicator.

The global-leading hackathon, organised by the Saudi Federation for Cyber Security and Programming (SAFCSP) and Tahaluf, witnessed three days of intense competition across a diverse range of categories, including Web, Reverse Engineering, PWN, Cryptography, and Forensics. The top prize of US\$80,000 went to Dicegang, who showed the innovation, precision, and skill to capture the most flags through the three days.

Another key highlight on the final day saw eight energetic startups take the stage in the



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Eng. Mohammed Alshamrani. Cybersecurity Consultant and the general supervisor of Cybersecurity at SAFCSP accepting the Guinness World Record

Cyberseed Pitch Competition final, pitching to a panel of judges from KAUST, AVMS Capital, Taqnia, and AKA Identity for a grand prize of US\$30,000.

Saudi-born Lockfy, which builds customised computer lock policies tailored to enable organisations to safeguard against employee mistakes in not locking their machines, impressed the judges the most to secure the top prize.

Commenting on the win, company founder Adel Alzubeir said; "Winning the CyberSeed pitch competition is an incredible honour. This funding, combined with the connections we've forged at Black Hat MEA this year, will serve as a springboard to fuel our growth. We're excited to expand our product, reach new markets, and solidify our position as a global leader in cybersecurity. Black Hat MEA has truly been a catalyst for our success."

Industry Leaders Deliver Invaluable Insight at Executive Summit

On the final day at the Executive Summit, Yassir Abousselham, Founder & Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) of Silicon Valley Cyber, shared his insights on the challenges and triumphs of being a CISO. Abousselham delved into the complexities of the role and offered advice for aspiring and experienced security leaders alike.

"The average tenure of a CISO is a mere 18-26 months due to high stress and high stakes. However, the lessons learned during this demanding journey are invaluable and often go unspoken. I have collected insights from over 20 veteran CISOs, and a common denominator amongst all is that they are not gatekeepers or wizards - they are business leaders who can effectively navigate the organisation, establish trust, enable velocity, and guide the company through responsible risk management. Through these insights, I aim to empower the next generation of security leaders to navigate the complexities of the role and drive business



Industry experts praise Saudi Arabia's world-leading "mature" approach to cyber safety



New Guinness World Record set for 'Capture The Flag Hackathon' thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of more than 1,000 hackers

success," he said.

Saudi Arabia's Enabling Approach to Cyber Safety has set a New Global Benchmark

Saudi Arabia's cyber governance has set a new global benchmark and should be leveraged to help shape policies around the world as cyber safety challenges increase, according to a panel of experts.

In one of the final sessions of a captivating three-day Executive Summit, leading CISOs and cybercrime experts discussed how the Kingdom has "matured" into a global cyber safety leader in a panel discussion titled 'Saudi Arabia & Global Cyber Governance: Shaping Policy for the Digital Age.'



Yassir Abousselham, Founder & Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) of Silicon Valley Cyber

"We have watched Saudi Arabia's role in this space evolve over the years from one of a follower, to not only getting involved but now leading," said Wael Fattouh, Chief Advisory Officer, Site. "We have the ideas, and we have the passion in the Kingdom."

Fattouh highlighted Saudi Arabia's approach to cyber policy as a 'carrot and stick' model with regulatory frameworks that empower sector leaders to continue driving their businesses forward while adhering to guidelines.

"The maturity level of cybersecurity in the government sector over the years has happened not because of the regulation, but because the people matured, the policies and processes matured," he added, pointing out that other countries have heavily regulated the industry that puts a lid on innovation.

"I think the Saudi model is a unique one that should be studied outside of the country. It goes against the traditional role of a regulator and proves it is effective to be an enabler as well as a regulator."

Mazen Al Swayan, Head of Cyber Defence at Qiddiya, told attendees how Saudi Arabia had maintained the human centricity in its cyber safety approach; "There are a number of human-centric initiatives. They are investing heavily in humans and training, which will help raise the maturity even further," said Al Swayan.

Adly Al Sharif, Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) at the National Events Center, echoed how important human capital is: "Becoming a leader comes with responsibilities and the

Kingdom has made great steps in human capital to not only match global standards but lead in them.”

World Records. Renowned Experts and Innovative Startups Reinforce Black Hat MEA's Statue

Reflecting on an enthralling three days of competition, industry-defining content, and collaboration, Annabelle Mander, Executive Vice President, Tahaluf, said: “We started this week by confirming Black Hat MEA's status as the world's most-attended cybersecurity event, and we end it with yet another impressive milestone, a world record for the Capture the Flag Hackathon, to further underline the global appeal of this event.

“With more than 1,000 participants in three days of intense competition, hundreds of hours of insightful dialogue from a high-calibre of global speakers, and great innovation and enthusiasm from the startups in the Cyberspeed Pitch Competition, we can rightfully say this edition of Black Hat MEA has raised the bar once again and set a new benchmark for cybersecurity. We look forward to returning bigger and better again next year.”

Black Hat MEA Championing Regional and International Start-up Ecosystem

With women in cybersecurity an ongoing hot topic, Saif Check, an all-female company that specialises in risk evaluations for AI systems, was flying the flag for gender equality in the Start-Up Zone. Using a co-pilot approach, the Saif Check ensures accessibility for technical and non-technical audiences by leveraging prompts and questions. Its analytics reports outline risk severity, mitigation, and a safety scoring system promoting transparency and public trust.

Dr Shaista Hussain, Founder and CEO at Saif Check, said: “It's my first time here, and the past three days have been brilliant. On day two, we hosted a boot camp at Cybersurge, which was great as we dealt with so many young people who were interested in starting up their own solutions in cybersecurity and cybertech. It was such a positive and energetic environment that it makes you hopeful that with all this new technology, we lose the dystopian feeling about the future. When you see these young guys coming in with fresh ideas and mixing and matching different tech stacks, you feel hopeful that there's a chance to tackle this responsibly.”

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