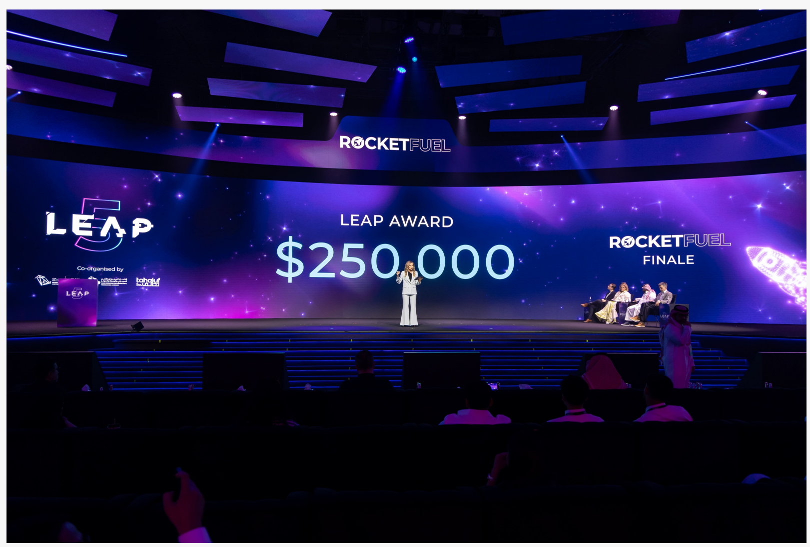
LEAP 5 closes as Riyadh brings together the global technology ecosystem for landmark fifth edition

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, September 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- LEAP 2026 concluded its landmark fifth edition today with $1 million awarded across seven Rocket Fuel prizes, bringing four days of technology announcements, investment, partnerships and startup activity in Riyadh to a close.



The fifth edition brought together 1,323 speakers alongside 1,397 investors from 1,027 firms across 72 countries, collectively representing $18.3 trillion in assets under management. More than 1,500 exhibitors participated in LEAP 2026, including over 750 global companies, while 1,294 companies participated across the exhibition and startup programme.

The fifth edition opened with more than $15 billion in technology investments and strategic partnerships announced on Day One, with further commitments unveiled throughout the four-day event across digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, startup funding and emerging technology.

Mike Champion, CEO of Tahaluf and Co-Creator of LEAP, said: “As we close our fifth edition, our attention is already on what comes next. Our ambition is to build on LEAP’s momentum by deepening its international reach, creating greater opportunities for companies and founders to access capital and new markets, and strengthening the Kingdom's connections with the global technology ecosystem. LEAP has never been about standing still, and we are already looking ahead to an even more ambitious sixth edition."

The final day placed founders at the centre of that growth through the Rocket Fuel Finale. Ten startups reached the final after advancing from a cohort of 100 semi-finalists drawn from more than 25 countries and over 40 nationalities. Founders pitched live on the Main Stage for a share of the $1 million prize pool.

The judging panel comprised Armineh Baghoomian, Managing Director, Head of Europe, Middle East and Africa at Partners for Growth; Talal Alasmari, Founding Partner at Ra'ed Ventures; JF Gauthier, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Startup Genome; and Robin Schneider, Chief Strategy Officer and Acting Chief Investment Officer at HUMAIN. Finalists were scored across seven criteria, including innovation, scalability, traction, societal impact and the strength of the founding team.

The LEAP Award, the competition's $250,000 grand prize, went to Waspito, a Cameroon headquartered AI powered software company that uses teleconsultations and digital systems to improve access to healthcare for Africans by connecting payers, providers and consumers of healthcare services.
The remaining six prizes were awarded to Imagine Devices, which received the $150,000 Shooting Star Award; Ferveret, which received the $150,000 Scaling Star Award; SarsatX, which

received the $150,000 Into New Worlds Award; Melt Water, which received the $150,000 Tech for Humanity Award; Carevision, which received the $100,000 LEAP Landing Award; and Kanz, which received the $50,000 Founder Award, chosen with the LEAP audience.

Talal Alasmari, Founding Partner at Ra'ed Ventures, who sat on the Finale judging panel, said: "What stands out to me after five years of LEAP is how it has evolved from a major technology gathering into a platform that connects ambitious founders from around the world with real opportunities in Saudi Arabia and the region. I'm excited to see that continue in the years ahead, with more companies looking at Riyadh not just as a place to showcase innovation, but as a place to build and scale."

Beyond the competition, the final day brought further commitments spanning national infrastructure, financial access and cross-border expansion.
The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Nourah Cloud and SeeCubic AIMAGINEX KSA signed a memorandum of understanding to establish AIMAGINEX, a global nexus for AI-powered applied immersive media technologies. Valued at USD 104 million, the national innovation hub and AI centre of excellence will bring together government, academia and industry to accelerate the development, commercialisation and adoption of applied artificial intelligence and immersive digital media. The initiative supports Saudi Vision 2030 and the Kingdom's position as a global centre for digital innovation.

Annabelle Mander, Executive Vice President of Tahaluf and Co-Creator of LEAP, said: “The scale of this fifth edition reflects how far LEAP has come, but what matters most is what that scale enables. Over five editions, we have built a platform that brings founders, investors, technology leaders and companies from around the world together in Riyadh, creating connections across markets, industries and ideas. LEAP today has a genuinely global community around it, and seeing that community continue to grow is one of the strongest indicators of what we can build from here.”

The pipeline for LEAP's next chapter is already taking shape, with 653 applications received for the 2027 startup programme, as founders look ahead to the event's sixth edition.

For more information, please visit onegiantleap.com

ENDS

About LEAP:
Saudi Arabia’s desire to shoot for something beyond the realms of the possible presents the ultimate backdrop for LEAP.

LEAP showcases the Kingdom’s technology ambition on a global stage as it continues to grow as a hub connecting three continents. The figures speak for themselves as LEAP 2025 had an attendance of over 200,000, making it the most attended tech event in the world. LEAP features the inspiring tech of tomorrow across all major sectors including health, finance, energy, education, digital entertainment, transport, smart cities and more. The event is also led by a speaker faculty of globally celebrated technology innovators, focusing on the most innovative tech case studies from around the world.

LEAP is not like any other tech event, from the ground up the community, stakeholders and project team are challenged every day to do something wildly creative and bold, something that reflects the seismic advances in tech adoption being seen in Saudi Arabia.

About Tahaluf:
Headquartered in Riyadh, Tahaluf brings together strategically important commercial communities from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the wider Gulf region, and from around the world to a portfolio of world-class exhibitions and digital platforms.

Tahaluf is a joint venture partnership between Informa PLC, the world's largest trade show organiser, the Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity, Programming and Drones (SAFCSP), and Events Investment Fund (EIF). Sela, the Saudi-owned event production company renowned for its creation of spectacular event experiences, intends to join the joint venture in the near future.

Tahaluf is responsible for the award-winning tech events LEAP, DeepFest and LEAP East, as well as Money 20/20 Middle East, the Global Health Exhibition, Cityscape Global, Black Hat MEA and CPHI Middle East.
For more information about Tahaluf, visit https://tahaluf.com

Lama Alqasem
Tahaluf
+966 57 359 2514
email us here
