

## Careem Starts Operations in Iraq

Ride-hailing service provider *Careem* has announced that it has officially commenced operation in the capital city of Baghdad, marking its entry to Iraq.

Operations officially commenced on January 15 only in Baghdad but there are plans to expand in more cities across Iraq in the near future. *Careem* already operates in 13 countries across the MENA region while it has established research and development departments and call centers in Pakistan, Egypt, Lebanon, U.A.E, K.S.A, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Germany. The *Uber* rival has expressed plans to expand to more cities particularly after closing out a \$500 million Series E round in December 2016, confirming their unicorn status and their startups valuation of over \$1 billion.

The introduction of the ride-hailing service provides a new mode of transportation for the residents of Baghdad as well as new employment opportunities for Iraqi citizens as the app works by connecting drivers to users.

"We are determined to overcome local challenges so that we can simplify mobility for Iraqis and create income-generating opportunities for them and their families," said co-founder & CEO, Mudassir Sheikha. "Through our presence on the ground, we hope to contribute to the rebuilding of Iraq to its former status as one of the leading nations in the Middle East."

*Careem's* rival *Uber* does not operate in Iraq and has not yet announced any plans to do so. Ride hailing services like Careem and Uber have historically been embroiled in legal troubles, which have resulted in them being banned from particular cities and countries. But this has not affected the pace of their expansion.

Whereas Uber has been expanding globally, Careem - a homegrown brand from the U.A.E.- is aggressively targeting Gulf markets as it tries to have a first mover advantage. The company is backed by investors such as Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, German car-maker Daimler, Didi Chuxing, China's largest ride hailing firm, and Wamda Capital.

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