

Saudi Arabia Holds 1st 'Swimsuit Models' Fashion Show

Why In News

- A **historic move by Saudi Arabia!** The country had its first-ever fashion show. The poolside event featured fashion models dressed in swimsuits. The momentous event was held amid ongoing Red Sea Fashion Week and displayed designs of **Moroccan designer Yasmin Qanzal**. Most of the models walked down in one-piece numbers, including monokini and beachwears. A great initiative by the country, where less than a decade ago, women were only required to wear body-covering abaya robes.



- The mastermind behind this whole show Yasmin Qanzal spoke to AFP and said, **“It’s true that this country is very conservative** but we tried to show elegant swimsuits which represent the Arab world. When we came here, we understood that a swimsuit fashion show in Saudi Arabia is a historic moment, because it is the first time to have such event.” The designer added that it was an immense honour for her to a part of such phenomenal fashion show.

All You Need To Know

- The show occurred on the second day of **the inaugural Red Sea Fashion Week** at the St. Regis Red Sea Resort, located off Saudi Arabia's western coast.
- The resort is part of **Red Sea Global**, one of the mega-projects central to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 social and economic reform program, overseen by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.



- Since becoming first in line to the throne in 2017, **Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman** has launched a series of social reforms aimed at softening Saudi Arabia's austere image, historically influenced by a strict form of Islam known as Wahhabism.



- These reforms have **included sidelining the stick-wielding** religious police who once enforced prayer times in malls, reintroducing cinemas, and organizing

mixed-gender music festivals. However, these changes have been accompanied by increased repression of dissent, including crackdowns on conservative clerics who might oppose such moves.



- AFP reported that Shouq Mohammed, a Syrian fashion influencer who attended Friday's show, remarked that it was unsurprising given Saudi Arabia's efforts to open up to the world and expand its fashion and tourism sectors.
- **In 2022, the fashion industry contributed \$12.5 billion, or 1.4 percent of the national GDP, and employed 230,000 people, according to a report published by the official Saudi Fashion Commission last year.**

