

Finance in the Age of Intelligent Infrastructure Set to Take Centre Stage in Bahrain at Fintech Forward 2026

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Fintech Forward 2026 has unveiled the agenda for its fourth edition, taking place on 7-8 October 2026 at Exhibition World Bahrain under the theme “Finance in the Age of Intelligent Infrastructure”.

Across two days, the programme will feature keynote sessions, panel discussions, fireside conversations, exhibitions and strategic networking opportunities, exploring how the convergence of technology, infrastructure and regulation is reshaping the financial services landscape. Discussions will span artificial intelligence and its applications in finance, payments, stablecoins, asset tokenisation, open banking, digital identity, fraud prevention, SME finance, digital wealth management, InsurTech and regulatory innovation.

The agenda will feature over 40 regional and global speakers, including H.E. Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Econ-

omy; H.E. Noor bint Ali Alkhulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development, Chief Executive of Bahrain Economic Development Board (Bahrain EDB); H.E. Khalid Humaidan, Governor, Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB); Sheikh Mohammed bin Saeed bin Hamdan Al Nahyan, Chairman and Board Member of VIAI; Usman Ahmed, Group CEO, National Bank of Bahrain; Mo Gawdat, internationally recognised AI expert and former Chief Business Officer at Google X; Dr. Reto Cueni, Chief Economist at Syz Group; Jacques BENHAMOU, Chairman of JEMS; Henry Duckworth, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Agridex International; Ali Bailloun, SVP-Group Country Manager, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman, VISA; Jess Houlgrave, Chief Executive Officer of WalletConnect; and Louis Saha, former France international footballer and entrepreneur, alongside leading voices from across the financial services, technology and investment eco-

system.

The forum will also host an exhibition featuring 20 exhibiting partners from across financial services, fintechs, technology and

- Fourth edition to bring together more than 40 global and regional speakers across two days of keynotes, panels, fireside conversations, exhibitions and strategic networking
- The event features 20 exhibiting partners, showcasing the breadth of industry participation and the organisations helping shape the future of financial services

government. The participating organisations will showcase innovative solutions shaping the future of finance, allowing attendees to engage directly with the companies and ideas driving change across the sector. The exhibition will complement the main stage programme, bringing together diverse perspectives from across the financial ecosystem and creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

Hosted by the Bahrain EDB,

programmed by Forbes Middle East, and supported by the CBB, the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), and Bahrain FinTech Bay, this year’s forum will bring together global thought leaders, policymakers, investors, financial institutions, innovators and technology experts to examine the forces shaping the next phase of financial services.

The forum comes as Bahrain’s financial services sector continues to strengthen its role as a key driver of the national economy, contributing 17.6% of GDP and representing the Kingdom’s largest non-oil sector. With the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB), the Kingdom’s sole regulator for financial services, working in close partnership with industry stakeholders, Bahrain continues to cultivate a dynamic financial and technology ecosystem that adapts to and helps shape the future of financial services.

For more information on the agenda or to register, please visit the official Fintech Forward 2026 website.



Al Salam Bank Becomes the First Bank in the Region to Achieve ISO/IEC 42001:2023 Certification for Its Artificial Intelligence Management System

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Al Salam Bank announced that it has achieved ISO/IEC 42001:2023 certification for its Artificial Intelligence Management System, positioning it as the first Bank in the region to achieve this international certification. The achievement forms part of Al Salam Bank’s broader journey towards becoming an AI-powered Bank, supported by an integrated institutional framework led by the Bank’s Information Technology Department, to enable the responsible development, use, deployment, and governance of artificial intelligence.

The ISO/IEC 42001:2023 certification provides an internationally recognized management framework for governing AI-related opportunities and risks, supporting clearly defined accountability, risk assessment, lifecycle controls, monitoring, and continual improvement of AI-enabled solutions. The framework also establishes a clear foundation for scaling AI responsibly



while maintaining an appropriate balance between innovation, governance, accountability, risk management, and human involvement.

The certification awarded to Al Salam Bank covers the design, development, deployment, and operation of AI-powered applications and solutions managed by the Bank’s Information Technology Department, intended to support regulated services, information access, internal operations, and AI-enabled services, in accordance with the Statement

of Applicability, version 1.1, dated 8 June 2026.

Achieving the certification reinforces Al Salam Bank’s commitment to adopting artificial intelligence in a responsible, transparent, and secure manner, while leveraging AI as an enabler to enhance the client experience, improve operational efficiency, and support more informed decision-making within a clear governance and accountability framework. The achievement also reflects the collective efforts of teams across the Bank, together

with the continued support of its leadership and partners, in building a strong and sustainable foundation for AI management.

Commenting on the achievement, Mr. Anwar Murad, Deputy Group CEO – Banking at Al Salam Bank, said: “Achieving this certification represents the outcome of focused efforts to build a strong and responsible foundation for the adoption of AI across Al Salam Bank. We view AI as an important enabler of enhanced client experiences, greater operational efficiency, and more

informed decision-making, supported at all times by clear governance, accountability, and risk management. This achievement reflects the collective efforts of our teams and the continued support of our leadership and partners, and we will continue to advance our AI capabilities in a responsible and secure manner aligned with the Bank’s values and strategic priorities.”

Commenting on the achievement, Anoop Surendran, - SGS Bahrain, said: “On behalf of SGS Bahrain, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Al Salam Bank on achieving ISO 42001 Certification and becoming the first bank in Bahrain to attain this prestigious certification through SGS. This remarkable achievement reflects the Bank’s commitment to responsible AI governance, innovation, and international best practices. We are proud to have partnered with Al Salam Bank on this milestone journey and wish them continued success in leading the way for the banking sector in Bahrain.”

Commenting on the collaboration, Ahmed Albalooshi, CEO of Advantari, said: “We are pleased to collaborate with Al Salam Bank on the implementation of an AI governance and management system in line with the international ISO/IEC 42001 standard. This collaboration reflects the Bank’s confidence in Advantari’s capabilities and expertise in this important field. The project represents a significant and strategic step in strengthening the Bank’s AI capabilities, supporting the advancement of its operations and enhancing the quality of client service.”

Al Salam Bank will continue to advance its AI capabilities in line with its values and strategic priorities, leveraging the governance framework established through the certification to support the consistent evaluation and management of future AI initiatives. This will enable the Bank to continue innovating and adopting emerging technologies in ways that serve its clients and employees while enhancing operational efficiency.

Bahrain Bourse’s Board of Directors Holds Third Board Meeting for 2026

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The Board of Directors of Bahrain Bourse (BHB) held its third meeting for 2026 on Wednesday, 30th September 2026 chaired by Mr. Yusef Abdulla Al-Yusef, Chairman of Bahrain Bourse.

During the meeting, the Board discussed the agenda topics and reviewed the implementation status of previous resolutions and recommendations, as well as other emerging matters. The Board also reviewed progress reports on strategic projects, key performance indicators, and the consolidated financial position, in addition to Bahrain Bourse’s performance report. This formed part of the Board’s ongoing oversight of the strategic objectives outlined in the



Capital Market Development Plan (2026-2028), “Elevate”.

As part of Bahrain Bourse’s ongoing commitment to strengthening its governance and risk management framework and enhancing its institutional policies, the Board conducted its periodic review

of internal policies in line with evolving operational requirements and institutional best practices. Following the review, the Board approved several new and updated internal policies.

The Board reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the implementation of strate-

gic initiatives and projects that contribute to the continued development of the Kingdom of Bahrain’s capital market, enhance organizational efficiency, and further strengthen Bahrain Bourse’s position as a leading regional financial and investment hub.

Oil Prices Surge as China Cuts Fuel Exports

Crude oil prices rebounded sharply as reports of tighter Chinese fuel exports raised concerns over global supply. Brent crude jumped 3.7% to around \$101.66 a barrel, while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose 2.3% to \$92.53. Chinese state-owned oil companies, including PetroChina, reportedly cancelled several planned gasoline and jet fuel shipments for October as Beijing prioritised domestic inventories.

The move comes amid already tight refined-product markets, supporting higher oil prices. Gains were partly limited by increased Saudi Arabian shipments through the Red Sea port of Yanbu. Saudi Arabia is using its East-West Pipeline to bypass disruptions affecting the Strait of Hormuz.



Meanwhile, US stocks opened October on a mixed note. Technology shares edged higher, supported by AI-related companies and easing inflation data, while the S&P 500 and Dow Jones slipped modestly. Investors continued to monitor energy prices, inflation trends and geopolitical developments as the final quarter of 2026 begins.