

# Innovation drive

**MSMEs make up 93% of active businesses**

**Mohammed Darwish**  
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HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman attends final stage of Fikra seventh edition

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His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court, has emphasised the importance of consolidating creativity and innovation that drive progress within government work-streams, and improve the quality and efficiency of government services.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman was speaking as he attended yesterday the seventh edition of the Government Innovation Competition, 'Fikra'.

He highlighted the Kingdom's commitment to launching programmes and initiatives that promote innovation and encourage competitiveness across the public sector, in line with the Kingdom's comprehensive development led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and in accordance with the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

The winning concepts were selected through a rigorous evaluation process involving a



HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa with H.E. Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa and H.E. Yousif bin Abdullhussain Khalaf, along with senior officials and distinguished guests

Ministerial Committee, chaired by HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman, as well as a public vote.

The winners included Takamul by Captain Abdulla Waheed Almannaei and Alaa Ahmed Albalooshi from the Ministry of Interior; Smart Employment Advisor by Jalal Jaafar Maki from the Ministry of Legal Affairs; and Tameni by Ali Husain Darwish, Maha Majeed Almaarej, Narjes Yusuf Sabt, Fatema Ateya Alaradi from Government Hospitals.

His Highness congratulated the winners, commending the innovative ideas showcased throughout the competition and

their potential.

He noted that the ideas presented reflect a strong culture of initiative, responsibility, and commitment to contributing to national development through innovative government solutions.

### Efforts

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman commended the participants' efforts, and wished them success in implementing their ideas.

The Minister expressed his appreciation to those in charge of Fikra, noting their continued commitment to developing the competition and ensuring

the achievement of its winning concepts.

In line with efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the winning initiatives, the ideas will be presented to the Government Executive Committee chaired by HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, as a step towards their adoption and implementation by the relevant government entities in line with approved procedures.

The Ministerial Committee was chaired by HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman, and consisted of HE Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy; HE Yousif

bin Abdullhussain Khalaf, Minister of Labour and Minister of Legal Affairs; HE Dr Jaleela bint Al Sayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health; HE Hamad bin Faisal Al Malki, Minister of Cabinet Affairs; HE Amna bint Ahmed Al Romaihi, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning; HE Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, Minister of Education; and HE Abdulla bin Adel Fakhro, Minister of Industry and Commerce.

Fikra contributes to advancing public services in line with Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 and the 2023–2026 Government Programme.

### Jobs

On employment, the data shows MSMEs account for jobs for almost half of Bahrainis working in the private sector.

The number of Bahrainis employed in micro, small and medium-sized firms reached 46,300 by the second quarter of 2025, according to the Information and eGovernment Authority, up 4.3 per cent in 2025 compared with 2024.

The number of businesses also changed by size category as firms moved into larger groups.

## High distinction

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The Embassy of Italy in Manama is proud to announce the conferment of the decoration of Commander of the Order of the Star of Italy upon H.E. Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities.

The distinguished honor was presented by H.E. Andrea Catalano, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the Kingdom of Bahrain, during a special reception held on Tuesday, February 3rd, at his residence.

The ceremony brought together esteemed guests and underscored the deep cultural ties and enduring friendship between Italy and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Bestowed by the President of the Italian Republic, this high distinction recognizes H.E. Shaikh Khalifa's exceptional dedication to fostering intercultural dialogue and his pivotal role in advancing cooperation between the two nations in the fields of art, history, and heritage preservation.

The event took place amid a period of remarkable diplomatic momentum between Rome and Manama.

### Milestones

Recent milestones — including the visit of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during the Gulf Cooperation Council, the historic official visit of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to Rome, and the private meeting between His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa



H.E. Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa with H.E. Italian Ambassador Andrea Catalano

and the Italian Premier — have significantly strengthened bilateral relations.

This decoration stands as a shining symbol of that growing partnership.

Ambassador Andrea Catalano remarked: "It is a privilege to present this decoration during such a vibrant period for our bilateral relations. Following the path traced by our leaders, H.E. Shaikh Khalifa has been a true bridge-builder on the ground. His vision for the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities resonates with Italy's commitment to preserving history, proving that culture is a powerful engine for diplomatic growth.

"This award celebrates a shared passion for beauty, knowledge, and the universal language of culture. Culture is the most compelling instrument at our disposal to foster mutual understanding and meaningful dialogue, and tonight the Republic of Italy formally acknowledges His Excellency Shaikh Khalifa bin

Ahmed Al Khalifa's visionary leadership in strengthening cultural cooperation between Bahrain and Italy."

### Honor

Upon receiving the honor, H.E. Shaikh Khalifa expressed his gratitude to the Italian Republic and its people, stating: "It is a great pleasure to receive this recognition from the Republic of Italy, a key partner for Bahrain in the field of cultural diplomacy. Both countries are blessed with rich cultural heritage, spanning from antiquities to contemporary art. We have been fortunate to showcase many of these treasures in Bahrain, while also being present in Italy through various forums.

"One such occasion was our participation in the Venice Biennale last year, where Bahrain was awarded the Golden Lion for Best National Pavilion.

"This distinction reflects the importance of our work and underscores the value of cultural exchange."

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