

NBB innovation programme 2025 concludes with winning team announced

In partnership with Bahrain FinTech Bay to support fintech innovation in the Kingdom

● The initiative brought together aspiring fintech entrepreneurs to develop scalable AI-driven banking solutions

Manama

The National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) has announced the conclusion of the NBB Innovation Programme 2025, a three-week accelerator launched in partnership with Bahrain FinTech Bay (BFB). Designed to empower early-stage Bahraini fintech talent and accelerate innovation in the digital banking sector, the programme culminated with the announcement of the winning team following a high-impact Demo Day.

Launched during FinTech Forward 2025, the initiative brought together aspiring fintech entrepreneurs to develop scalable AI-driven banking solutions aligned with Bah-



rain's progressive financial services industry. Over three intensive weeks, participants advanced through a structured journey that combined startup

mentorship, regulatory insight, and technical training. The programme aimed to equip the youth with the skills, exposure, and support necessary to trans-

form their early-stage ideas into real-world applications.

The accelerator concluded with a Demo Day, where shortlisted teams pitched their

solutions to a panel of judges representing the banking and fintech domains. One team was selected as the winner following a rigorous evaluation based on innovation, the use of artificial intelligence, market potential, execution capability, scalability, and overall impact.

The winning team was awarded a USD 10,000 cash prize and a three-month incubation period at Bahrain FinTech Bay, where they will receive additional support to refine and enhance their solution. They will also be engaged in potential partnership discussions with the Bank to explore the implementation of their solution within real banking environments.

Delivered across three focused tracks, the programme addressed the technical and strategic dimensions of fintech innovation. Led by experienced entrepreneurs, the Fintech Founders Track focused on startup execution, scaling strategies, and growth planning. The NBB Track placed participants under the mentorship of bank-

ing professionals, exploring regulatory frameworks, bank-fintech collaboration models, and innovation within financial institutions. Meanwhile, the BFB Track, facilitated by Bahrain FinTech Bay, delivered workshops on business model validation, investor readiness, and the use of AI-powered tools.

The NBB Innovation Programme 2025 reflected a shared vision between NBB and Bahrain FinTech Bay (BFB) to cultivate a sustainable, innovation-led fintech ecosystem in Bahrain. It created opportunities for collaboration between startups, institutions, and ecosystem enablers; encouraged the development of customer-centric digital banking solutions; and empowered young entrepreneurs with access to funding, mentorship, and real-world application pathways.

Both organisations remain committed to nurturing Bahrain's digital economy by investing in initiatives that turn local innovation into lasting impact.

Indian minister says 'sensitive' sectors protected in US trade deal

● Agriculture and dairy form the backbone of India's rural-driven economy, employing over 700 million people

● The deal would lower levies to 18% from the 25% imposed on Indian goods last year

● Goyal said the revised tariff was lower than what the US had imposed on many countries in the region

AFP | New Delhi, India

India's commerce minister said yesterday the government had succeeded in protecting the country's critical agriculture and dairy sectors in its trade deal with the United States announced this week.

Agriculture and dairy form



Piyush Goyal

the backbone of India's rural-driven economy, employing over 700 million people.

Farmers fear that opening these two sectors to foreign competition would rob vulnerable households of their livelihoods.

The trade deal was announced on Monday after months of uncertainty and negotiations between the two countries.

"The Indian side has succeed-

ed in protecting the interests of its sensitive sectors, particularly agriculture and dairy sectors," Piyush Goyal told the lower house of parliament.

"This framework agreement, with the world's largest economy, which will accelerate global growth and innovation in the coming years, is in the broader interest of the people of India and the nation."

US President Donald Trump

said the deal, which would lower levies to 18% from the 25% imposed on Indian goods last year, came together after Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to stop buying Russian oil.

Washington has argued the oil sales help Moscow generate revenue to fund the war in Ukraine.

Goyal said the revised tariff was lower than what the US had imposed on many countries in the region and would increase "India's export competitiveness in the American market."

He also said both sides were working to complete the technicalities and the details of the deal would be announced soon.

When announcing the deal, Trump also said New Delhi had agreed to purchase more than \$500 billion worth of US energy, technology, agricultural, coal and other goods.

While Trump had struck deals with most governments since he unveiled sweeping tariffs in April last year, Indian officials had struggled to follow suit.

Arla Foods Invests Over USD 60 Million to Expand Bahrain Dairy Facility



Kim Villadsen, Senior Vice President Arla Foods MENA, Inauguration moment and Harry Veldman, Head of MENA Supply Chain, Arla Foods

Ashen Tharaka
TDT | Manama

Arla Foods has announced a major expansion of its Bahrain production facility, located in the Bahrain International Investment Park, with a total investment exceeding USD 60 million (50.9 million Euro). The expansion will add 8,000 sqm to the site, increase annual production by 30%, and further solidify Arla's position as one of the largest dairy producers in the MENA region.

The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by senior officials and industry leaders, including HE Sameer Nass, Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry; HE Eman Ahmed Al-Doseri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce; and Mr. Ali Al Mudaifa, Chief of Business Development at the Bahrain Economic Development Board (Bahrain EDB). Their participation highlights Bahrain's strong ecosystem supporting industrial investment and growth.

The investment will primarily increase the production of Puck® spreadable cheese jars

and enable Arla to expand exports beyond its current presence in more than 20 countries.

Her Excellency Eman Ahmed Al-Doseri commented, "This investment reflects confidence in Bahrain's business ecosystem and its appeal for diverse industrial projects. Arla's expansion supports the strategic goals of Bahrain's Industrial Sector (2022-2026) and serves as a model for advanced and sustainable manufacturing, using modern technologies and eco-friendly energy solutions. It also demonstrates the government's success in attracting high-value investments and promoting industrial growth, strengthening Bahrain's position as a regional hub for food production."

Kim Villadsen, Senior Vice President of Arla Foods MENA, said, "Expanding our Bahrain facility allows Arla to strengthen regional leadership, increase production, and promote sustainable growth."

Ali Al Mudaifa added, "Bahrain's strategic location and business-friendly ecosystem have been key to supporting Arla Foods' growth."

Syria inks deal with Chevron, Qatari firm for offshore exploration

AFP | Damascus, Syria

Syria signed a preliminary deal with US energy giant Chevron and Qatari firm Power International on Wednesday to explore for oil and gas off the coast of the country, which is still recovering from years of civil war.

Syria's new Islamist authorities, who overthrew former ruler



Last May, Syria signed a \$7 billion energy deal with a consortium of Qatari, Turkish and US companies -- including Power International -- to revive its crippled power sector following years of conflict.

er Bashar al-Assad in late 2024, are seeking to woo investors to rebuild and drawing closer to

other countries in the region and the United States.

The state-owned petro-

leum company signed the memorandum of understanding in Damascus with Chevron and Power International at a ceremony attended by US envoy to Syria Tom Barrack, the official SANA news agency reported.

"The deal marks Syria's first formal step toward offshore energy exploration," it said.