

# Expanding into new markets

Supreme Council for Women partners with Industry Ministry, through Export Bahrain, to lead women-owned businesses into regional, international trade

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The Supreme Council for Women (SCW) and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism have announced their new collaboration through Export Bahrain in developing and intensifying Bahraini exports and facilitating entry into global markets.

The aim is to support Bahraini women-owned projects by providing them with facilities and consultations to develop their products and services, in order to enhance their participation in regional and international trade.

Industry, Commerce and Tourism Minister and SME Development Board chairman Zayed bin Rashid Al Zayani commended the new collaboration inked between the ministry and SCW.

"Bahraini women enjoy a global outlook, and this collaboration will provide confidence



Supporting women has always been at the heart of all our endeavours and this collaboration will seek to reinforce these efforts and accelerate growth opportunities for women business owners.

INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND TOURISM MINISTER ZAYED BIN RASHID AL ZAYANI

Bahraini women have a major stake in the free market, owning 42 per cent of active individual Commercial Registrations in the first quarter of 2020, in addition to owning 48 per cent of Virtual Commercial Registrations.

SCW SECRETARY-GENERAL HALA AL ANSARI



more than \$32 million in exports over the 18 months since its inception, targeting 32 markets around the world.

"We have supported current and new exporters, including women-owned companies, which accounted for 20 per cent of all exporters, and our support has spanned multiple economic sectors to export various products and services," he said.

"Export Bahrain has had an important role in taking Bahraini products and services to new markets and placing them on the global map as future competitors with other international brands. More than 25 per cent of our exporters have access to new markets, more than 30 per cent of exporters have exported for the first time, while more than 15 per cent have exported services."

He added: "Our diversified practical solutions have been designed to create a successful export framework for all Bahraini exporting companies.

"In order to create an ideal market without borders, Export Bahrain has provided customised solutions, including providing e-commerce solutions and export credit solutions, to provide competitive credit terms, international links via the export facilitation platform, support for the shipping and logistics process, and support for smart market information for quick access to information related to other markets.

"Moreover, Export Bahrain provides solutions and tools for existing export projects and supports projects in Bahrain, to start the export journey as well as its international growth in larger markets, because we want Bahraini companies to make their mark globally and to have their export potential recognised."

and create new outlets of export opportunities for Bahraini women," he said.

"By utilising Export Bahrain, women-owned businesses can scale and expand into new markets, and tap into global opportunities. Supporting women has always been at the heart of all our endeavours and this collaboration will seek to reinforce these efforts and accelerate growth opportunities for women business owners.

"Export Bahrain is a critical national initiative that will push the role of women exporters in the Kingdom by joining their efforts and resources in cooperation with the SCW."

The Industry Minister expressed his gratitude for the efforts taken by SCW, led by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeha bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of His Majesty the King and SCW president.

"The SCW has led notable nation-wide programmes and initiatives to develop the participation of women and their contribution to the national economy, especially amidst this challenging time," he said.

SCW secretary-general Hala Al Ansari said that the cooperation with the Industry Ministry and Export Bahrain was established in accordance with the mandate of the SCW to support the participation of women in public life, as well as integrate their efforts in national developmental plans.

The objective of the pro-

gramme follows the implementation of one of the initiatives of the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women dedicated to raising the competitiveness of Bahraini women, in addition to diversifying their contribution to the national economy.

This collaboration is in line with the SCW's partnerships with the various institutions concerned with economic development through services, facilities and support, such as the Riyadat Financial Fund, business incubators with their administrative, consultancy, training and technical services such as the Riyadat Center, she added.

This newly developed programme, comes at a very important time, in light of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the business sector as a whole, including women-owned projects.

She added that the SCW will, through its remote consultant platform and its multiple services, direct the beneficiaries to the Export Bahrain programme.

**International standards**

Al Ansari expressed confidence that both the SCW team and the Export Bahrain team will work together to provide Bahraini women entrepreneurs and business owners with the support and guidance necessary to develop their products and services, according to international standards of competitiveness and quality, in a way that enhances their access to opportunities in global markets.

She noted that the collaboration will lead to creating more economic opportunities for business owners, while working with a wider network of local and international partners to raise the balance of foreign trade through their exports.

The SCW secretary-general said Bahraini women have a major stake in the free market, owning 42 per cent of active individual Commercial Registrations (CRs) in the first quarter of 2020, in addition to owning 48 per cent of Virtual Commercial Registrations (VCRs), that can be implemented easily and conveniently on virtual business platforms across the globe.

Export Bahrain Chief Executive Dr Nasser Qaedi said that Export Bahrain has facilitated



*Export Bahrain provides an ideal environment to support and develop domestic exports and achieve Bahrain's 2030 vision of promoting export-oriented sectors, for Bahraini companies to embrace world markets for products and services. It works with local and international partners to offer Bahraini companies greater global opportunities. Export Bahrain offers export focused solutions, including financing, credit insurance, training and knowledge sharing.*

## Beirut blasts described to be like 'atomic bomb', 'earthquake'

Continued from Pg1

Residents in Beirut had said yesterday that the explosions that rocked the Lebanese capital, killing dozens and injuring thousands more, were like "an atomic bomb" or "an earthquake".

Makrouhie Yerganian, a retired schoolteacher in her mid-70s who has lived near the port for decades, described the blasts as "like an atomic bomb".

"I've experienced everything, but nothing like this before," even during the country's 1975-1990 civil war, she said. "All the buildings around here have collapsed. I'm walking through glass and debris everywhere, in the dark."

"Buildings are shaking," tweeted one resident, while another wrote: "An enormous, deafening explosion just engulfed Beirut. Heard it from miles away."

A woman in the city centre told AFP the blast "felt like an earthquake" and "bigger than the explosion in the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005".

AFP video footage of the aftermath of the blasts showed areas



Above and right, views of the damage caused by the blast

of near-complete devastation, with cars flipped onto their roofs like children's toys, and warehouses flattened.

Soldiers tried to clear the streets of dazed civilians, some

of them drenched from head to toe in their own blood.

Volunteers led stunned survivors away to seek medical help, using their shirts as makeshift bandages to staunch deep gashes

on their faces and bodies.

"We heard an explosion, then we saw the mushroom," said a Beirut resident who witnessed the second, deafening explosion from her balcony in the city's



Mansourieh district.

Outside a local hospital, dozens of wounded people, many covered in blood, were rushing to be admitted to the centre, including children.

A huge blaze sent up black smoke from the port area, as helicopters dumped water on burning buildings. A ship moored off the port was on fire.

The port zone was cordoned off by the security forces, allowing access only to a string of ambulances, fire trucks with wailing sirens and relatives of workers who had been inside.

I've experienced everything, but nothing like this before. All the buildings around here have collapsed. I'm walking through glass and debris everywhere, in the dark.

BEIRUT RESIDENT MAKROUHIE YERGANIAN